

THE ORIGIN OF THE KETHIB/QERE IN THE ARAMAIC PORTIONS OF EZRA AND DANIEL: AN EVALUATION OF TWO PROPOSALS

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The origin of the *Kethib/Qere* in the Aramaic portions of the Bible (Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26, and Daniel 2:4-7:28) has been discussed fairly recently in two articles in *Vetus Testamentum*.¹ The writers of these two articles disagree in their assessment of the origin of the *Kethib/Qere*.² In this essay, I will attempt to analyze and describe the approach of these scholars to this problem, and then I will evaluate their work. In the last part of my essay, I will offer my solution as pertaining to the origin of the *Kethib/Qere* in the Aramaic portions of the Bible.

I. A Summary of W. S. Morrow and E. G. Clarke

a. *Introduction*

The article of these scholars “is concerned with the date and character of the Aramaic language represented by the Tiberian vowel points in the biblical text (Q).”³ The current research is to suggest that the Aramaic of K in both Ezra and Daniel antedates the emergence of

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¹See the articles of W. S. Morrow and E. G. Clarke, “The *Kethib/Qere* in the Aramaic Portions of Ezra and Daniel,” *VT* 36 (1986), 406-422 and S. E. Fassberg, “The Origin of the *Kethib/Qere* in the Aramaic Portions of Ezra and Daniel,” *VT* 39 (1989), 1-12.

²See the analysis below.

³Morrow and Clarke, *ibid.*, 406. Unless otherwise stated, the statements in this chapter refer to the text and approach of Morrow and Clarke. Note that Q stands for “*Qere*” (what should be read), and K stands for “*Kethib*” (what is written).

Middle Aramaic dialects with distinctive Western or Eastern features,⁴ but the opinions regarding the identity of the Q vary. To establish the provenance of the Q, the researchers “have typically appealed to the language of the Targums to support their positions.”⁵ The problem is that the provenance of the Targumic literature is more or less uncontrollable, and it is always possible that the Targums have been re-worked in the course of their transmission as is often the case with texts in Mishnaic and Medieval Hebrew.

This “methodological impasse” has been somewhat solved by the recent discoveries of a large number of texts from Palestine, texts which are possible to date and whose provenance is known. The texts that should help Aramaicists to solve the problem of the provenance of the Q are written in Early Palestinian Aramaic (EPA) from approximately 200 B.C. to 135 A. D., which display a vocabulary similar to that found in the BA (Biblical Aramaic). Therefore, comparison is justified. The Bar Kochba texts which reflect the spoken language of the texts are also considered valuable for this study. A few other texts which are more formally literary are also useful: the texts from Murabba’at and the Synagogue Inscriptions, and the literary texts such as the Genesis Apocryphon and the Targum of Job. The Aramaic texts from Palestine which deviate from the K of the BA towards the Q of the BA are of primary significance.

b. *Prior Studies*⁶

In 1937, R. Gordis argued that the Q was not a correction or improvement of the K as much as it “was the preservation of the text as it reached the Masoretes.” He notes that some K/Q provided a substitute for the divine name and for indecent terms; others were intended to aid the reader before the consonantal text was vocalized, and a third part reflected variant manuscript readings. The purpose of

⁴The Middle Aramaic phrase is dated approximately to 200 B.C.-200 A.D. See J. A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979), 61. See also the more recent analysis of Stephen A. Kaufman, “Aramaic,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, edited by David Noel Friedman *et al.* (Doubleday: New York, 1992), 173-178. He is in general agreement with the dating of Fitzmyer.

⁵Morrow and Clarke, “The *Kethib/Qere*,” 407.

⁶The summary on prior studies is based on Morrow and Clarke, *ibid.*, 408-409.

the operation was, in Gordis' opinion, to safeguard the correct pronunciation of the main text.

In 1959, H. M. Orlinski suggested that the K/Q system was an almost mechanical collating of three manuscripts. Thus, where there were two manuscripts in agreement over against the reading of the third one, that one became the Q.

In 1981, James Barr again picked up this subject to answer some of the questions raised by the previous theories. He noted that except for the K/Q which are substitutions for the divine name or for an indecent term, most K/Q represented the change of only one consonant. This important point is also acknowledged by Morrow and Clarke. Barr suggested that "the K is the consonantal graphic tradition accepted for the MT, the Q is the reading tradition." This Q tradition may be very old, if one accepts the assessment that the Q of Samuel is the written form in Chronicles.

In his research of this problem, Barr establishes five categories of Q: (1) instances where there is neither semantic nor phonetic change, but only "a change of spelling convention;" (2) instances where there is "a real morphological or syntactic change;" (3) instances of phonetic but no semantic change; (4) instances of semantic but no phonetic change; and (5) instances with both a semantic and phonetic change. A second major category consists of instances where certain aspects of the K/Q system are connected with language change.

c. *Difficulties in the Study of the K/Q*⁷

A major difficulty for this study is the fact that the total number of K/Q is not the same in all manuscripts, not even in *BHK* (*Biblia Hebraica Kittel*) and *BHS* (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*). The list of K/Q used in this study is taken directly from the Mp (Masora Parva) of L (*Codex Leningrad*). The cases of K/Q which are recognized in the Rabbinic Bible and BHS, but not specifically noted in the Mp of L, are excluded from the present study. The list compiled for this study has two types of K/Q notations. First are the cases where *qop* appears as an abbreviation for the *qere* in the Mp, and second are notes containing the word *ytyr* ("excessive/otiose"). Therefore, the analysis below seeks to

⁷See Morrow and Clarke, "The *Kethib/Qere*," 409-411.

classify and discuss all the examples of notes with *qoq* and/or *ytyr* found in the Mp of L, understanding each to be an indication of a K/Q.

The authors of this article are aware of the textual problems found in the Mp of the L, and for the purpose of their study, they “ignore inconsistencies in the Mp and unmarked situations and concentrate on those examples where a K/Q situation is actually indicated in the Mp of L.”⁸ The Mp of L appears in its more accurate form only in the *BHK* edition.

d. *The Analysis of the Texts*⁹

This study has established two major categories of Q: (1) orthography, and (2) morphology. According to the authors, the first category takes into consideration the K/Q readings that deal mainly with “spelling,” while the readings in the second category reflect changes in the language itself. Thus, the first group of K/Q reflects the alternative spelling conventions of the day, exclusive of language shift, which can be further classified as follows: (1) proper spelling; (2) historical spelling; (3) Hebrew versus Aramaic forms; (4) vowel variations; (5) foreign words; (6) purely textual; and (7) gender corrections.

I. 1. A Number of K/Q Make Clear the Proper Aramaic Spelling

An example of this category is found in Daniel 4:5: *'hryn/'hrn*. The Q without the *yodh* suggests that this is an adverb. The extra-biblical evidence from EPA supports the Q. Another spelling convention which the K/Q notes concerns the verb *'ll*: Daniel 4:6, 5:8 – *'llyn/'lyn*, and Daniel 5:10 – *'llt/'lt*. In this case, all the evidence from EPA and Egyptian Aramaic supports the Q. In Daniel 7:10 (*rbwn/rbbn*), the Q signals the proper pronunciation of *waw* by reading *beth*. Another example given is Daniel 5:8 (*psr'/psrh*). In this case the *aleph* has a dagesh and the Q indicates a 3 m. s. suffix.

⁸Morrow and Clarke, “The *Kethib/Qere*,” 411.

⁹This is a summary of Morrow and Clarke, *ibid.*, 412-420. Note that the notations of the sections also follow those found in the article analyzed.

I. 2. A Number of K/Q Signal the Conventional/Historical Spelling of Aramaic

One example has to do with the quiescence of *aleph* which was part of the root: Daniel 4:16,21 (*mr'y/mry*), and in Ezra 4:12 (*b'ysth/bysth*). In most of these instances which deal with the quiescence of *alephh*, the Q is attested in EPA. In Daniel 7:10, *'lpym/'lpyn*, the Q has the plural in Aramaic acceptable to the Masoretes. In another example (Daniel 2:9 – *hzmntwn/hdzmntwn*), the Q finds support in EPA. In thirteen instances of *'nth/'nt* in Daniel (2:29, 31, 37; 3:10 etc.), the Q reflects the historical spelling found both in OfA (Official or Standard/Imperial Aramaic), and in Ezra 7:25. In EPA there are three forms of this personal pronoun: *'nth* predominates (11x), as opposed to *'nt* and *'t*. In Ezra 5:15 (*'lh/'l*), the Q reflects a historical spelling found in OA (Old Aramaic).

Another aspect of the group of K/Q related to historical spelling concerns the spelling of foreign words, which could be expected to be the one in vogue at the time the Q was established. In the Aramaic portions of Ezra and Daniel, there are five foreign words occurring in some sixteen instances. In the case of the Q for the name of Artaxerxes in Ezra (4:8, 11, 23; 4:14; 7:12, 21), it considers the final *'aleph* of the K as paragogic, with the exception of the Hebrew section in Ezra 4:7. Generally, in EPA the final *'aleph* represents a long vowel and not a *shewa*.

I. 3. Hebrew versus Aramaic Forms

This category concerns the verb *khl* “to be able.” In all cases (see Daniel 4:16) the Q reading stresses the Aramaic pronunciation (r.g. *tkwl* for *twkl*). In EPA all the instances lean toward the Q form.

I. 4. The Cases of Vowel Variations

In Daniel 2:22 (*nhyr'/nhwr'*), the K may be corrupt or reflect a noun form related to the abstract *nhyrw* in Daniel 11:14. In any case, the Q reading is supported by the EPA examples. In Daniel 4:13, 14 (*'nwš'/'nš'*) the authors suggest that the Q is a clarification or possible harmonization with the same word as it appears elsewhere in BA. Both forms are found in EPA, but *'nš'/'nš'* predominates. Other vowel variations are found in Daniel 3:29 – *šlh/šlw* (where the Q is confirmed

in Daniel 4:5 and Ezra 4:22 and 6:9), and Ezra 7:26 – *šršw/šršy*. In the latter case, both the *yodh* and the *waw* can be taken as abstract noun endings.

I. 5. Foreign Words

Some of these words are those of musical instruments. The first is *qytrws/qtrws* (Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15). It is clear that the *pataḥ* vowel of the Q indicates the acceptable pronunciation. The next musical instrument is found three times with two different spellings: *swmpynyh* (Daniel 3:5, 15), and *sypnyh* (Daniel 3:10). Two other examples of foreign words with a Q are found in Daniel 3:21 (*ptysyhwn*), and in Daniel 5:7, 16, and 29 (*hmwnk'/hmnyk'*). There are no known parallels for these words in EPA.

I. 6. Purely Textual Changes

Most of these examples seem to be due to textual transmission errors. The following are some of the examples: Daniel 2:43 (*dy/wdy*), Daniel 4:15, 16 (*prš'/pršh*), Ezra 4:12 (*šwry 'šklw/šwry 'šklw*) etc. A difficult textual situation is found in Daniel 4:19 with the K/Q *rbyt/rbt*. Because the K is most likely a 2 m. s., the Q is unique. It is not supported by the EPA, and may be the result of some older corruption which has worked itself into the reading tradition.

I. 7. Gender Corrections

There are corrections toward the 3 f. plural gender in personal suffixes and verbal forms. The following are two examples: *bynyhwn/bynyhyn* (Daniel 7:8; 2:33, 41, 42; and 7:19), and *npqw/npqh* (Daniel 4:9; 5:5; 7:8 and 20). In these cases it seems that the Q may arise from deliberate editorial activity in order to “improve” the grammar of the Q.

A second major group of K/Q, according to Morrow and Clarke, has to do with the morphological changes in the language. There are three subcategories under this major group.

II. 1. The Loss of the Plural Inflection on Certain Forms of M. Pl. Nouns and Prepositions

The loss of the plural inflection occurs on certain forms of the suffixed masculine plural nouns and prepositions. This feature is visible throughout BA and involves the 3 f. s., 2 m. s., and 1 c. pl. suffixes. The following are some of the examples found by Morrow and Clarke:

K	Q	
<i>rglyh</i>	<i>rglh</i>	Daniel 7:7, 19 (cf. 4:14, 21; 7:5, 6, 19)
<i>qdm^{yh}</i>	<i>qdm^h</i>	Daniel 7:7, 8, 20
<i>'bdyk</i>	<i>'bdk</i>	Daniel 2:4 (cf. 2:26; 3:12, 18 etc.)
<i>'lyk</i>	<i>'lk</i>	Daniel 3:12; 4:34, 20 etc.
<i>'ytyn'</i>	<i>'tn'</i>	Daniel 3:18 (cf. Ezra 4:18, v. 17)

In these cases, the form of the Q cannot be explained as a phonological shift, because the only shift apparent in BA results in the reduction of the diphthong *ay* to *ē*, not *qameš* or *pataḥ*. It seems that the singular suffixal patterns have been substituted for the original plural patterns. No good evidence for this phenomenon can be found in EPA material, but it seems that the EPA writers were not always consistent when applying suffixes to prepositions which use the plural pattern as opposed to those which do not.

II. 2. The Dissimilation of *yodh* to *'aleph*

This dissimilation of the *yodh* to *'aleph* is visible when the *yodh* is preceded by the vowel *qameš* and followed by another vowel. Thus the shift from *āyā* to *ā'ā* is found in singular nouns which are in the feminine absolute state and in the masculine determined state (e. g. *rby'yh/rby'h* – Daniel 2:14, 3:25, 7:7 and 23; and *ksdy'/ksd'h* – Daniel 5:30 and Ezra 5:12), but this shift is not completely consistent in BA. It has not taken place in infinitival forms with a similar pattern (cf. *llhwyh* – Daniel 2:10, 16, 27; *lhsnyh* – Daniel 4:19, 16 etc.). This phonological shift is also found in the plural gentilics (e.g. *ksdy'*

regularly appears in Q as *ksd'y* – Daniel 2:5, 10; 4:4, 7), but again, this shift does not take place in other examples of this pattern. The authors conclude that in light of this mixed situation the evidence from EPA is of some value (examples are adduced which reflect a similar state of affairs), and one must date this Q tradition to an era in which the dissimilation was occurring but had not yet taken place completely. Thus, the Q tradition of BA seems to suggest a gradual displacement of an older conservative form of pronunciation preserved in K, by the young vernacular. The same situation, where historical spelling traditions have begun to be supplemented by the vernacular, is observable in EPA.

II. 3. The Dissimilation of *'aleph* to *yodh* in Masculine Participles of Medial Weak Verbs

The following are some examples of this dissimilation from *'aleph* to *yodh*:

K	Q	
<i>d'ryn</i>	<i>dyryn</i>	Daniel 2:38; 3:31; 6:26

<i>d'ry</i>	<i>dyry</i>	Daniel 4:32 (2x)
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These examples are striking because they appear to be a reversal of the dissimilation of *yodh* to *'aleph*. It should be noted that the form of the participle with the original *yodh* is still observable in OfA texts, while the dissimilation to *'aleph* can be dated as early as the third century B. C. Therefore the Q would appear to be a restoration to the original root letter, but it is unlikely to be a return to the older form. The authors suggest that this return to *yodh* is due to a shift of stress.

None of the Q readings in this section can be observed in the consonantal writing of the EPA studied. Therefore, the authors conclude that the Q readings reflect the influence of a later form of pronunciation on the reading tradition in the MT.

Conclusions of Morrow and Clarke¹⁰

The authors of this article are convinced that their analysis sets out evidence for a probable date and provenance of the reading tradition, and also for the origin and meaning of the K/Q notes in the Mp of L. The divergences from the consonantal text have arisen for a different number of reasons: deliberate editorial activity, language change, and even mechanical transmission error. Textual collation or corrections are unlikely to explain any of the K/Q readings of the BA. In a number of categories, grammatical or morphological divergences are found. But, it is noteworthy that the Masoretic notes involved merely draw the reader's attention to the differences, much as they would do for an unusual form or spelling. Thus the authors draw a sharp distinction between (1) the processes involved in the creation of the reading tradition, and (2) the making of the K/Q proper. They assume that the Tiberian Masoretes were in possession of a received, fixed reading tradition, as well as a received consonantal text (as suggested by James Barr). Therefore, the Masoretes are best perceived as recorders of the reading tradition rather than having a direct part in its creation. When these two traditions were brought together (text and reading), the discrepancies were noted where the reading tradition did not mesh with the vocalization suggested by the consonantal text. The divergences were the source for the present K/Q notes in the Mp.

Morrow and Clarke do not believe that the Masoretic activity can be said to have as its only concern the preservation of the consonantal text (as Barr has suggested). For them, it is likely that the Masoretes also had an interest in preserving the reading tradition which they had received. Therefore, it seems possible that the purpose of the K/Q notes was to avoid mutual contamination of the K by the Q, or the Q by the K.

After the examination of the data collated from EPA, the conclusion is that the reading tradition of BA can be considered to be a dialect related to early Palestinian Aramaic. The position is based on the observation that there is congruence between the orthography of the Aramaic in the Q notes of the Mp and that of EPA.

¹⁰See Morrow and Clarke, "The *Kethib/Qere*," 420-422.

A major assumption underlying this thesis is that the Tiberian Masoretes spoke a dialect of Aramaic current in Palestine, and the orthography used in creating the Q notes would have reflected the spelling conventions alive in their own dialect. The orthography analyzed in cases I. 1-5, 7 and the spellings in II. 2 can all be said to reflect orthographic patterns present in EPA. The question remains whether this observed congruence between the Q notes of BA and EPA, can be used to argue for a Palestinian provenance of the entire reading tradition. The authors of this article find no linguistic grounds for separating the Q readings (assumed to be congruent with Palestinian Aramaic) from the rest of the reading tradition.

When discussing the problem of dating this dialect, the writers note that no evidence has been uncovered in EPA for the language shifts of II. 1 and II. 3. Therefore, they can only establish a *terminus post quem* (later than 135 A. D.) for the dialect of the Q. The *terminus a quo* is more difficult to determine, but the authors end up suggesting (assuming that the Tiberian Masoretic activity began within the period of 600-800 A. D.) that “the reading tradition of BA most probably reflects a dialect of Aramaic spoken in Palestine some time between 200-600 C. E.”

III. A Brief Evaluation of W. S. Morrow and E. G. Clarke

Morrow and Clarke’s article display a very good knowledge of the Aramaic texts from the Early Palestinian Aramaic (EPA) period. One of the strengths of their article is due to the fact that their argument is based on texts whose date and provenance in Palestine are secure. These texts also contain a vocabulary similar to that in Biblical Aramaic. The placement of some of his K/Q readings under his two main categories (orthography and morphology) are surprising,¹¹ but the authors are probably right when they say that the rearranging of these K/Q readings would not change the basic thrust of their analysis.

Morrow and Clarke go through each one of their categories and try to find out whether the *qere* in BA is supported by the EPA material. They conclude that in most cases (I. 1-5, 7 and II. 2) the BA *qere*

¹¹For example, the placement of the K/Q *’lpym/’lpyn* under “historical spelling” can be debated. This could also be placed under the “proper spelling” section.

reflects orthographic patterns present in EPA, but this statement is not altogether true. For example, sub-category I. 5 (foreign words), because of the lack of evidence, cannot be used to support their previous statement, and the same is true about I. 7 (gender corrections). These gender corrections (toward the 3. f. pl.) could have taken place at almost any time between the actual writing of the BA texts and the activity of the Masoretes. However, these minor points do not affect the validity of the authors' main argument.

There are two sub-categories that cannot be supported by the EPA material. These are the language shifts found in II. 1 (loss of plural inflection on certain forms of suffixed masculine plural nouns and prepositions), and the dissimilation of *'aleph* to *yodh* in masculine plural participles of II-*w/y* verbs found in II. 3. Because these categories do not support the *qere* tradition found in BA, they conclude that they must be the result of Late Aramaic interference. Following this analysis based on Palestinian texts from the Middle Aramaic period, they end up suggesting that the reading tradition for BA reflects most likely a dialect of Aramaic spoken in Palestine some time between 200-600 A. D.

IV. A Summary of S. E. Fassberg's Article¹²

Fassberg begins his article with a brief assessment of the article by Morrow and Clarke. He rightly notes that these authors base their conclusion on the evidence pulled from Palestinian documents of the Middle Aramaic period (c. 200 B.C. to 200 A. D.). The fact that many of the *qere* readings are attested in Palestinian texts of the Middle Aramaic period, and that there is an absence of other *qere* readings, suggests that it received its final form after the close of the Middle Aramaic period, but before the Masoretic activity. He also notes that Morrow and Clarke rule out the Targumim for comparison because of the uncertainty concerning their date, origin, and transmission.

Fassberg thinks that the authors, by limiting their data, have excluded material that is directly relevant to the discussion. Comparative data is important when discussing K/Q because: (1) the history of the Tiberian Biblical Aramaic stretches more than a

¹²This summary is based on the article of Fassberg cited in note 1 of this paper.

millennium, and (2) parallels to the K/Q phenomenon are attested in additional sources, both within and beyond the borders of Palestine. According to Fassberg, the oral tradition of BA was put down only during the latter part of the Late Aramaic period (c. 200 to 700 A. D. or later) by speakers (the Tiberian Masoretes), whose phonetic habits were formed by contemporary Late Aramaic speech. The K/Q is best understood in the context of Aramaic dialectology, where one can judge when a phenomenon represents an inherited feature, an innovation, a borrowing, or later redacting of manuscripts.

The author begins by discussing the two *qere* categories that Morrow and Clarke do not find in Palestinian Middle Aramaic texts: (A) the K/Q of the 2 m. s., 3 f. s., and 1 c. pl. possessive pronominal suffixes on dual and plural nouns; and (B) the K/Q of the m. pl. participle of verbs of verbs II-*w/y*.

Before reviewing Fassberg's arguments, the following preliminary comments should be made. The author relies considerably on two additional sources as parallels to the Tiberian *qere*: Targum Onqelos (as well as Targum Jonathan to the Prophets), and the Second Column of Origen's Hexapla. These two documents "appear to be Palestinian."¹³

A. The K/Q of the 2 m. s., 3 f. s., and 1 c. pl. Possessive Pronominal Suffixes (Dual and Plural Nouns)

The examples for this category are found in Daniel 3:4 – *'bdyk/'bdk* "your servants"; Daniel 7:19 – *ṭpry/ṭprh* "her claws"; and Daniel 3:18¹⁴ – *'ytyn'/'itanā* "we are." In these cases, the *ketib* either reflects the diphthong *-ay-* or a contracted reflex *-ē-*, and lines up with what is known from texts from the Old Aramaic period to the end of the Late Aramaic period. Therefore, the BA *ketib* reflects an old tradition of Aramaic prevalent in Palestine up to the end of the Late Aramaic period.

Morrow and Clarke remark that there is no good evidence for the *qere* in Palestinian Middle Aramaic documents. Fassberg agrees with their assessment, but only for the corpus that they examined. He then

¹³Fassberg, "Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*," 3-4.

¹⁴Here Fassberg, *Ibid.*, 2, has the wrong reference (Daniel 4:18). He is referring to Daniel 3:18.

introduces the two other documents (admittedly problematic) already mentioned above: Targum Onqelos (as well as Targum Jonathan to the Prophets), and the Second Column of Origen's Hexapla.

Fassberg continues his analysis by arguing for a Palestinian provenance (possibly Judea) of the Targum Onqelos, which was probably composed in the Middle Aramaic period, and received its final form at a later period in Babylonia. He then notes that both the consonantal and the vocalized texts of the Targum Onqelos agree with the corresponding Tiberian Aramaic *qere* for the suffixal forms seems to be corroborated by the Greek transliteration of Hebrew (not Aramaic) in the Second Column of the Hexapla. Also, the date from the Second Column of the Hexapla clearly shows that the 2 m. s. pronominal suffix on dual and plural nouns was replaced by the 2 m. s. suffix on singular nouns (-αχ) in this tradition of Hebrew. There was also a tendency to replace the 3 f. s. suffix on dual and plural nouns with the 3 f. s. on singular nouns (-α), and the same phenomenon is attested in Jerome's Latin transliteration of Hebrew from the 4th and 5th centuries A. D. The 1 c. pl. suffix in the Second Column differs from the form found in the Tiberian Aramaic *qere* and in the Targum Onqelos.

The author then accepts Ben-Hayyim's hypothesis (based on the 2 m. s. and 3 f. s. suffixes from the Second Column and Jerome's transliteration), that Hebrew was pronounced during the time of Origen and Jerome "after the fashion of Aramaic."¹⁵ He then concludes that this evidence "demonstrate that the BA *qere* suffixal forms existed in Palestine during the Middle and Late Aramaic periods."¹⁶ Also, because of the similarity of the BA *qere* and the Targum Onqelos pronominal suffixes, he concludes that these suffixes are of an early Palestinian and not later Babylonian origin.

When other non-Palestina sources of the Middle and Late Aramaic periods (Nabatean and Palmyrene inscriptions, dialects of Babylonian Talmudic and Mandaic etc.) are analyzed, no regular merging of suffixes is detected (as in the BA *qere* or in Targum Onqelos), or they exhibit (in differing degrees) confusion and merging of suffixes. The author appeals again to Targum Onqelos and Origen's Hexapla to

¹⁵Fassberg, "Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*," 6.

¹⁶Fassberg, "Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*," 7.

conclude that the Tiberian Aramaic *qere* of 2 m. s., 3 f. s., and 1 c. pl. possessive pronominal suffixes on dual and plural nouns, represent a Palestinian tradition from the Middle Aramaic period.

B. The K/Q of the M. Pl. Participle of Verbs II-*W/Y*

The following are some of the examples cited for this category: Ezra 7:25 – *d'nyn/dynyn* “judging”; Daniel 4:32 – *d'ry/dyry* “dwellers of.” Morrow and Clarke observed that this *qere* tradition is not found in Middle Aramaic texts from Palestine, and therefore concluded that it must be the result of Late Aramaic interference.

According to Fassberg, the *qere* participial forms are attested in Official Aramaic (c. 700-200 B.C.). The earliest Palestinian evidence appears to be from the Middle Aramaic period and is found in Targum Onqelos and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets. The *ketib*-like forms are attested earliest in the Middle Aramaic manuscripts of Qumran: *d'nyn* and *q'myn*. Both the *qere* and *ketib* traditions are paralleled in Palestine during the Late Aramaic period, but the *qere*-like forms far outnumber the *ketib*-like forms in texts of Galilean Aramaic. The *qere* forms alone is attested outside Palestine during the Late Aramaic period.

Therefore, Fassberg concludes that if one accepts the Targum Onqelos forms as authentic Palestinian Middle Aramaic, then the *qere* of participles II-*w/y* (just as in the case of the pronominal suffixes) in Tiberian BA is already attested in Palestine during the Middle Aramaic period, and it is even older (these *qere*-forms appear even in Official Aramaic documents from Egypt).

On the other hand, the *ketib* forms are not attested in any extra-biblical Official Aramaic sources, the earliest examples being found in manuscripts from Qumran. This testifies to the fact that the *ketib* tradition was known in Palestine during the Middle Aramaic period (just like the *qere*). In Palestine of the Late Aramaic period, the *qere* and *ketib* II-*w/y* participial forms existed side by side.

Following his discussion, Fassberg concludes by saying: “it would appear that the Biblical Aramaic *qere* of the pronominal suffixes on dual and masculine plural nouns, as well as the participles II-*w/y*, are

Palestinian phenomena of the Middle Aramaic period”¹⁷ The parallels to the *qere* tradition of the pronominal suffixes can be found in Middle Aramaic Palestine in Targum Onqelos and the Second Column of the Hexapla, and the *qere* of participles II-w/y is also attested in the same period in Targum Onqelos, and even appears in documents of Official Aramaic. The corresponding *ketib* forms also reflect old Palestinian traditions. Thus, the *ketib* of the pronominal suffixes is attested already during the Old Aramaic period, and is found in Palestine from the Middle Aramaic period down to Western Neo-Aramaic. The earliest examples of the *ketib* of participles II-w/y are documented in the Middle Aramaic period at Qumran, and are also attested in Late Western Aramaic dialects. They are not found outside of Palestine.

V. A Brief Evaluation of Fassberg’s Article

Fassberg displays a wide learning in Aramaic dialectology and his study is very well researched. However, his reasoning and argumentation for placing both the *ketib* and *qere* of the forms studied in the Middle Aramaic period are difficult to follow and unconvincing. There are some major weaknesses in his article. The first one has to do with the introduction of Targum Onqelos and Origen’s Hexapla into the discussion, two “admittedly problematic” sources.¹⁸

Indeed, these are problematic sources, and most of his argument is based on the assumptions that these documents are both Palestinian in origin, and that they belong to the Middle Aramaic period. Suffice it to say that Targum Onqelos cannot be used as a reliable guide for the understanding of Palestinian Middle Aramaic forms. Even if this Targum originated in Palestine during the first two centuries A. D., it seems that when this version became the official Targum in Babylonia, the text was subjected to a thorough revision. A Babylonian reduction of Targum Onqelos probably took place in the 4th or 5th centuries A. D. (Late Aramaic period).¹⁹ Therefore, Morrow and Clarke are most likely right when they say that “the date and provenance of Targumic

¹⁷Fassberg, “Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*,” 8.

¹⁸Fassberg, “Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*,” 3.

¹⁹See P. S. Alexander, “Targum. Targumim,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. VI, edited by D. N. Freedman *et al* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 321.

literature remain more or less uncontrollable,”²⁰ and to base one’s arguments on these “uncontrollable” points is methodologically unsound. Fassberg recognizes that it is possible that the *qere* came into being during the Late Aramaic period in Babylonia (under the influence of the Babylonian reduction of Targum Onqelos), but he dismisses this point by appealing to the Second Column of the Hexapla.²¹

But, Origen’s Hexapla creates different problems. While the date of this document is fairly secure, the provenance is debatable, and the use of the Hebrew transliteration to understand the Palestinian Aramaic of this period (transition between Middle Aramaic and Late Aramaic period) is questionable. Even Fassberg admits that it is not clear whether Origen himself transliterated the Hebrew in the Second Column or whether he merely passed on a transliteration that was centuries older.²² More important and devastating to his case is the fact that this is simply a Hebrew and not an Aramaic transliteration. It can also be noted that the 1 c. pl. suffix in the Second Column differs from the form found in Tiberian Aramaic *qere*, and therefore counts against Fassberg’s conclusions regarding the origin of the *Ketib/Qere* in Biblical Aramaic.

VI. Final Conclusions

By analyzing these two articles, it is clear that the approach of Fassberg is less methodologically sound than that of Morrow and Clarke. His heavy reliance on both Targum Onqelos and the Second Column of the Hexapla has nothing to commend. It follows that his conclusion is at least as questionable as the dating of Targum Onqelos. However, Fassberg adds some important needed information to this discussion: the evidence from the Late Aramaic period.

Morrow and Clarke have one major weakness in their article, the fact that they suggest interference from the Late Aramaic period (on their categories II. 1 and II. 3) without supporting their argument with examples from that period. Fassberg provides this evidence (even if he does not give specific examples sometimes) by always pointing out that

²⁰Morrow and Clarke, “The *Ketib/Qere*,” 407.

²¹Fassberg, *Ibid.*, 9.

²²*Ibid.*, 5.

the categories that he is analyzing are also supported by the texts from the Late Aramaic period.²³

Morrow and Clarke make some important and insightful contributions to the discussion about the *ketib* and *qere* in Biblical Aramaic. I consider that their statement that “the Masoretic notes involved merely draw the reader’s attention to the differences”²⁴ between the received reading tradition and the received consonantal text is probably correct.

The following conclusions add to an understanding of the K/Q notes. In the process of bringing the received (not created) reading tradition and the consonantal text, discrepancies were noted and these became the source for the present K/Q notes. And the purpose of these notes was not only to protect the consonantal text (as Barr suggests), but also to avoid mutual contamination of the K by the Q, or the Q by the K.

Considering that Morrow and Clarke’s approach is more methodologically sound than Fassberg’s, I agree with their suggestion that the reading tradition of the BA most probably reflects a dialect of Aramaic spoken in Palestine just before the Masoretes began their activity (c. 600-800 A. D.). While it is possible that the reading tradition of BA can be found in Palestine as early as the Middle Aramaic period, there is no clear evidence at this point to support this conclusion. Targum Onqelos and the Second Column of the Hexapla cannot be used to support this point for the reasons mentioned earlier in this essay.

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²³See for example Fassberg, “Origin of the *Ketib/Qere*,” 10. He points out that both the *ketib* and the *qere* of the masculine plural in the medial weak verb is found in Palestinian texts from the Late Aramaic period. But note that Fassberg suggests that the *qere* appears earlier, during the Middle Aramaic period.

²⁴Morrow and Clarke, “The *Ketib/Qere*,” 420.

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