

The Historical Depth of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew

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Cover image: T-S AS 8.129. A leaf from a Cairo Geniza biblical codex containing Gen. 30.17–20 and showcasing Moshe Mohe's non-standard Tiberian pointing of the standard Tiberian pronunciation of *Issachar* (see within, ch. 4), courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

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3. *KETIV-QERE* EUPHEMISMS

A rather rare type of *ketiv-qere* mismatch involves the evidently euphemistic replacement of a written form deemed inappropriate for public reading with a more acceptable alternative (Ofer 2019, 98–99; see also Yeivin 1980, 56; Cohen 2007, 264–71). Words deemed impolite or vulgar may refer to objects, notions, or actions, often involving such ‘unmentionables’ as excreta, shameful infirmities, and rape, but can also extend to potential theological misunderstandings.

Euphemistic *ketiv-qere* instances are mentioned explicitly in the Talmud (b. Megilla 25b):

כל המקראות הכתובין בתורה לגנאי קורין אותן לשבח, כגון ישגלנה ישכבנה, עפולים טחורים, חריונים דביונים, לאכל את חוריהם ולשתות את מימי שיניהם לאכול את צואתם ולשתות את מימי רגליהם, למחראות למוצאות.

All of the scriptures that are written in the Torah in impolite language are read in language beyond reproach, such as *‘ravish her’* is read *‘lie with her’* (Deut. 28.30); *‘with haemorrhoids’* is read *‘with tumours’* (Deut. 28.27); *‘dove-droppings’* is read *‘dew-droppings’* (2 Kgs 6.25); *‘to eat their excrement and drink their urine’* is read *‘to eat their excrement and drink the water of their legs’* (2 Kgs 18.27); *‘latrines’* is read *‘toilets’* (2 Kgs 10.27). (Ofer 2019, 98)

1.0. Euphemistic *Ketiv-Qere* Cases in the Tiberian Tradition and Other Ancient Witnesses

1.1. Excreta

The terms written but not pronounced are *חרא 'faeces', *שין 'urine', and *מחראה 'latrine'. They are replaced in the reading tradition with the respective synonyms דב or צאָה, *מימי רגלים, and *מוצאָה.

In (1) the *ketiv* חרי is read aloud as *qere* דב.

- (1) וַיְהִי רָעָב גָּדוֹל בְּשֶׁמְרוֹן וְהָנָה צָרִים עָלֶיהָ עַד הָיְתָה רֹאשׁ־חֲמוֹר בְּשֶׁמְנַיִם כֶּסֶף
וּרְבַע הַקָּב חָרִי (K) דָּב (Q) יוֹנִים בַּחֲמֶשֶׁת־כֶּסֶף:

‘And there was a great famine in Samaria, as they besieged it, until a donkey’s head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and the fourth part of a kab of **dove’s dung** for five shekels of silver.’ (A 2 Kgs 6.25; Greek σόκρου περιστερῶν; Vulgate *stercoris columbarum*; TJ זיבל מפקת יוניא, Syriac ܙܝܒܠܐ ܡܦܟܬܐ ܝܘܢܝܐ)

Cohen (2007, 265) observes a difference between L and A regarding this *ketiv-qere*. In L, it applies to the entire graphic string in חרייִוִּנִים, read as דָּבִיוִּנִים; no space separates the two words in either the internal text or the marginal note and a *shewa* is written beneath the ר in the internal text, i.e., חַרְיִיוִּנִים.¹ By contrast, in A the *ketiv-qere* is restricted to the elements חרי and דָּב; a space separates the words חרי and יונים in the internal text, the marginal note

¹ Indeed, the singular דביון is found in the Hebrew of Saadia Gaon (see יוצרות לשבתות השנה, ויקרא, ln. 19, accessed via the *Ma'agarim* website of the Academy of the Hebrew Language).

has only דב, and no *shewa* is written beneath the ר in the internal text, i.e., חרִי יֹנִים. A's testimony is preferable, with דב the substitute for חרִי, and יֹנִים 'doves' serving as the *nomen rectum* in a construct formation.

The lexeme דב* is a *hapax legomenon* in BH. It is thought to be an Aramaism or dialectal form related to Hebrew זָב 'flow' (Cohen 2007, 266, cites Rashi and Qimḥi). Since the *ketiv* and *qere* forms are synonyms, the testimony of the ancient versions is rather opaque with regard to the identity of the term being translated, i.e., the *ketiv* or the *qere*, though TJ's explanatory gloss is reminiscent of the *qere*'s circumlocution.

Examples (2)–(5) deal with parallel verses that include both חרִי* and יֹנִים.² According to the *qere*, they are to be read aloud, respectively, as צוֹאָה and מִימֵי רַגְלִים.³

² HALOT (1479) notes that the two terms also occur together in Ugaritic. Intriguingly, the written and reading components of the Tiberian tradition consistently agree on a verbal form related to *ketiv* שִׁין* 'urine'. Six occurrences of the word מְשִׁתִּין 'urinator' (1 Sam. 25.22, 34; 1 Kgs 14.10; 16.11; 21.21; 2 Kgs 9.8) come in BH. Thought to be a Gt-stem participle (BDB 1010; HALOT 1479), the form was reanalysed as a *hif'il* of שָׁתַן, from which the noun שִׁתָּן 'urine', first attested in Talmudic Hebrew (t. Bekhorot 7.5 [44b]), was secondarily derived.

³ Cf. the development in select English translations of 2 Kgs 18.27, which testify to the shifting acceptability of English terms for excreta:

'...toordis... pisse' (Wycliffe, 1380s)
 '...donge... stale' (Coverdale, 1535)
 '...dounge... pisse' (KJV, 1611)
 '...vilest excretions' (Webster's KJV Revision, 1833)
 '...dung... urine' (RSV, 1946)
 '...excrement... urine' (NIV, 1978)

- (2) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם רַב־שָׁקָה הֵעַל אֲדֹנֶיךָ וְאֶלֶיךָ שְׁלַחְנִי אֲדֹנִי לְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה הֲלֹא עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַיֹּשְׁבִים עַל־הַחֹמָה לֶאֱכֹל אֶת חֲרִייהֶם (K)
צוֹאֲתָם (Q)...

‘But the Rabshakeh said to them, “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed to eat **their own dung**...”’ (2 Kgs 18.27a; Greek κόπρον αὐτῶν; Vulgate *stercora sua*; TJ מפקתהון; Syriac ܐܬܬܝܬܐܢܐ)

- (3) ...וְלִשְׁתּוֹת אֶת־שִׁינֵיהֶם (K) מִימֵי רַגְלֵיהֶם (Q) עִמָּכֶם:
“...and to drink **their own urine** with you?”. (2 Kgs 18.27b; Greek οὖρον αὐτῶν; Vulgate *urinam suam*; TJ מימי רגליהון; Syriac ܐܬܝܬܐܢܐ)

- (4) וַיֹּאמֶר רַב־שָׁקָה הֲאֵל אֲדֹנֶיךָ וְאֶלֶיךָ שְׁלַחְנִי אֲדֹנִי לְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
הֲלֹא עַל־הָאֲנָשִׁים הַיֹּשְׁבִים עַל־הַחֹמָה לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־חֲרֵאֵיהֶם (K) צוֹאֲתָם
(Q)...

‘But the Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed to eat **their own dung**...”’ (Isa. 36.12a; 1QIsa^a 29.19 חריהמה; Greek κόπρον; Vulgate *stercora sua*; TJ מפקתהון; Syriac ܐܬܬܝܬܐܢܐ)

- (5) ...וְלִשְׁתּוֹת אֶת־שִׁינֵיהֶם (K) מִימֵי רַגְלֵיהֶם (Q) עִמָּכֶם:
“...and drink **their own urine** with you?” (Isa. 36.12b: 1QIsa^a 29.19 שניניהמה; Greek οὖρον; Vulgate *urinam pedum suorum*; TJ מימי רגליהון; Syriac ܐܬܝܬܐܢܐ)

The *qere* lexeme צֹאָה is variously analysed as reflecting the roots צו"א ‘be foul’, יצ"א ‘exit’, and וצ"א ‘pollute’ (BDB 844a; HALOT 992a). Beyond the *qere* usages under discussion, it is attested in BH at Isa. 4.4; 28.9; and Prov. 30.12, where it possibly has the

more general sense of ‘filth’. It may be related to the lexeme צֶאֱה ‘excrement’ (Deut. 23.14; Ezek. 4.12). The lexeme צֶאֱה is common in RH for reference to ‘excrement’.⁴ Among the ancient versions, TJ’s rendering might be evidence of an etymological translation of the *qere*, but this is not the only explanation. It is significant that 1QIsa^a explicitly agrees with the *ketiv*.

The *qere* parallel for שִׁנִּיהֶם in מִיָּמֵי רְגֵלֵיהֶם is not found elsewhere in BH. It is a common term for ‘urine’ in RH.⁵ 1QIsa^a reflects the *ketiv*, TJ the *qere*. The Latin rendering in Isa. 36.12b, *urinam pedum suorum* ‘urine of their feet’, is noteworthy because it seems to reflect a conflation of the respective *ketiv* and *qere* traditions, ‘their urine’ and ‘water of their feet’. Other ancient renderings furnish arguably ambiguous evidence of the term being translated.

In (6), the *ketiv* noun מַחְרָאוֹת, denoting a place for defecation is read as מוֹצְאוֹת, apparently representing a common nominal pattern of the יצ"א root.

- (6) (K) וַיִּחְצְזוּ אֶת מַצֵּבַת הַבָּעַל וַיִּחְצְזוּ אֶת־בֵּית הַבָּעַל וַיִּשְׁמְהוּ לַמַּחְרָאוֹת
(Q) לְמוֹצְאוֹת עַד־הַיּוֹם:

‘And they demolished the pillar of Baal, and demolished the house of Baal, and made it **into a latrine** to this day.’ (2 Kgs 10.27; Greek: εἰς λυτρώνας; Vulgate: *latrinas*; TJ: לְבֵית מַחְרָאוֹת; Syriac: ܡܚܪܐܘܬܐ)

⁴ E.g., m. Berakhot 3.5; Shabbat 16.7; ‘Avoda Zara 4.5; ‘Avot 3.3; Ḥullin 3.5; Kelim 10.2; Miqwa’ot. 9.2, 4; Makhshirin 5.6.

⁵ E.g., m. Shabbat 9.5; Bava Batra 2.1; ‘Eduyot 5.1, 4; Kelim 1.3; Tohorot 4.5; Miqwa’ot. 10.6; Nidda 4.3; 9.6, 7; Makhshirin. 6.5, 6; Zavim 5.7.

The MS form מוֹצֵא ‘place/time of going out, utterance, source’ is common in the Bible, while the FS מוֹצֵא* occurs only here and in Mic. 5.1, where it may mean ‘origins’ or ‘goings out = activities’. The form in 2 Kgs 10.27 is possibly a homonym that derives from צו"א ‘be foul’ or וצ"א ‘pollute’ (see above). The lexical tradition reflected in the ancient versions is not sufficiently clear to identify the source word—though, again, TJ’s circumlocution בית אנש מפקת אנש looks to be a calque of the *qere*—on the assumption that מוֹצֵא* here means, or was understood to mean, ‘place of excretion’ or ‘outhouse’.

1.2. Shameful Infirmities

Six times in the Tiberian tradition, the *ketiv* plural עפלים is replaced by the *qere* טחורים. These are given in (7)–(12).

- (7) יִכְבֶּה יְהוָה בְּשָׁחִין מִצְרִים וּבַעֲפָלִים (K) וּבִטְחָחִירִים (Q) וּבִגְרֵב וּבְחָרָס
אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תוּכַל לְהִרְפָּא:

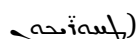
‘The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with **tumours** and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed.’ (Deut. 28.27; SP ובעפלים *wbāfālām*; Greek ἐν ταῖς ἔδραις; Vulgate *et parte corporis per quam stercora digeruntur*; TO ובטחורין; Syriac ܬܚܝܪܝܢ)

- (8) וַתִּכְבֵּד יְדִי־יְהוָה אֶל־הָאֲשֻׁדּוֹדִים וַיִּשְׁמֶם וַיַּךְ אֹתָם בַּעֲפָלִים (K) בִּטְחָחִירִים (Q)
אֶת־אֲשֻׁדּוֹד וְאֶת־גְּבוּלָיָהּ:

‘The hand of the LORD was heavy against the people of Ashdod, and he terrified and afflicted them **with tumours**, both Ashdod and its territory.’ (1 Sam. 5.6; Greek εἰς τὰς ναῦς; Latin *in secretiori parte natium*; TJ בטחורין; Syriac ܬܚܝܪܝܢ)

- (9) וַיְהִי אַחֲרַי | הִסְבּוּ אֹתוֹ וַתְּהִי יַד־יְהוָה | בְּעִיר מְהוּמָה גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד וַיֵּךְ אֶת־
אֲנָשֵׁי הָעִיר מִקֶּטֶן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל וַיִּשְׁתְּרוּ לָהֶם עֲפָלִים (K) טַחְרִים (Q):
‘But after they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD
was against the city, causing a very great panic, and he af-
flicted the men of the city, both young and old, so that **tumours**
broke out on them.’ (1 Sam. 5.9; 4Q51 5b–c.6:
ב[עפלים; Greek *ἔδρας*; Latin *extales*; TJ בטחוריא; Syriac
ܥܦܠܝܢܐ)
- (10) וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר לֹא־מָתוּ הָבּוּ בַּטַּחְרִים (K) בְּטַחְרִים (Q) וַתַּעַל שְׁוֹעַת
הָעִיר הַשָּׁמַיִם:
‘The men who did not die were struck with **tumours**, and
the cry of the city went up to heaven.’ (1 Sam. 5.12; Greek
εἰς τὰς ἔδρας; Latin *in secretiori parte natium*; TJ בטחוריא; Syr-
iac ܥܦܠܝܢܐ)
- (11) וַיֹּאמְרוּ מָה הָאֲשָׁם אֲשֶׁר נָשִׁיב לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִסְפַּר סַרְנֵי פִלְשֹׁתַיִם חֲמִשָּׁה
עֲפָלִי (K) טַחְרִי (Q) זָהָב וְחֲמִשָּׁה עֶבְרִי זָהָב כִּי־מִגִּפָּה אָחַת לְכֻלָּם
וּלְסַרְנֵיכֶם:
‘And they said, “What is the guilt offering that we shall re-
turn to him?” They answered, “Five golden **tumours** and
five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of
the Philistines, for the same plague was on all of you and
on your lords.’ (1 Sam. 6.4; 4Q51 6a–b.13 עֲפָלִי; Greek *ἔδρας*;
Latin —; TJ טחורי; Syriac ܥܦܠܝܢܐ)

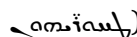
- (12) וַעֲשִׂיתֶם צִלְמֵי עֲפֻלֵיכֶם (K) טָחוּרֵיכֶם (Q) וְצִלְמֵי עַבְבְּרֵיכֶם הַמְשֹׁחִיתִם
 אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וְנָתַתֶּם לֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבוֹד אוֹלֵי יִקַּל אֶת־יָדוֹ מֵעֲלֵיכֶם וּמֵעַל
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּמֵעַל אֲרָצְכֶם:

‘So you must make images of **your tumours** and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel. Perhaps he will lighten his hand from off you and your gods and your land.’ (1 Sam. 6.5; 4Q51 6a–b.14: העפ[ל]י]ם; Greek: —; Latin: *anos*; Targum: טָחוּרֵיכֶם; Syriac: )

The matter is complicated by apparent textual divergence in the Samuel narrative, as well as by a lack of semantic certainty regarding the meaning of the *ketiv* and *qere* terms. Suffice it to say that, whatever its meaning, *ketiv* עֲפֻלִּים ‘tumours, haemorrhoids’ was deemed inappropriate for public reading and was replaced in the reading tradition with *qere* טָחוּרִים ‘tumours, haemorrhoids’.

As is their wont, TO and TJ agree with the *qere*. Where extant, 4QSam^a (5Q51) preserves the *ketiv*. Whether the *ketiv*, *qere*, or another reading lies behind the other ancient witnesses cannot be determined with anything approaching certainty. Interestingly, the *qere* טָחוּרִים is shared by the written and reading components of the Tiberian tradition in two instances in the Samuel narrative; see (13) and (14), neither paralleled in DSS Samuel material and one without a parallel in the Greek.

- (13) וַיִּשְׂמוּ אֶת־אֲרוֹן יְהוָה אֶל־הָעֲגֹלָה וְאֶת הָאָרְגָז וְאֶת עַבְבְּרֵי הַזָּהָב וְאֶת צִלְמֵי
 טָחוּרֵיהֶם:

‘And they put the ark of the LORD on the cart and the box with the golden mice and the images of their **tumours**.’ (1 Sam. 6.11; Greek —; Latin *anorum*; TJ טָחוּרֵיהֶם; Syriac: )

- (14) וְאַלֶּה טַחֲרִי הַזֶּהב אֲשֶׁר הָשִׁיבוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים אֲשֶׁם לִיהוָה לְאַשְׁדּוֹד אֶחָד לְעָזָה
אֶחָד לְאַשְׁקֶלֶן אֶחָד לְגַת אֶחָד לְעֶקְרוֹן אֶחָד:

‘These are the golden **tumours** that the Philistines returned as a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron.’ (1 Sam. 6.17; Greek *ἔδραι*; Latin *ani*; TJ טחורי; Syriac ܐܢܝܐ)

1.3. Rape

Four times in the Tiberian biblical tradition, the *ketiv* has a verb with the root שג"ל in a context of wartime rape. On all occasions the *qere* calls for a verb with root שכ"ב ‘lie (down)’.

- (15) אִשָּׁה תֵּאָרֵשׁ וְאִישׁ אַחֶר יִשְׁגַּלְנָהּ (K) יִשְׁכַּבְּנָהּ (Q) בֵּית תִּבְנֶה וְלֹא-תֵשֵׁב
בּוֹ כִּרְם תִּטַּע וְלֹא תִחְלֶלְנּוּ:

‘You shall betroth a wife, but another man **shall ravish her**. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit.’ (Deut. 28.30; 4Q30 f50.3 [ישג]לנה; SP ישכב עמה *yīškāb imma*; Greek *ἐξει αὐτῇ*; Latin: *dormiat cum ea*; TO ישכבנה; Syriac ܝܫܬܝܒܢܐ)

- (16) וְעַלְלֵיהֶם יִרְטָשׁוּ לְעֵינֵיהֶם יִשָּׁסוּ בְּתֵיחֶם וּנְשֵׂיהֶם תִּשְׁגַּלְנָהּ (K) תִּשְׁכַּבְּנָהּ (Q):

‘Their infants will be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses will be plundered and their wives **ravished**.’ (Isa. 13.16; 1QIsa^a 11.24 תשכבנה; 1Q8 6a–b.2 תשגנה; 4Q55 f8.13 תשגלנה; Greek *ἐξουσι*; Latin *violabuntur*; TJ ישתכבן; Syriac ܝܫܬܝܒܢܐ)

- (17) שְׂאִי-עֵינֶיךָ עַל-שָׁפָיִם וּרְאֵי אֵיפֹה לֹא שָׁנִלְתָּ (K) שְׂכַבְתָּ (Q) עַל-דָּרְכֵימָּה
יֵשְׁבֶת לָהֶם כְּעֶרְבִי בַּמִּדְבָּר וּתְחַנִּיפִי אֶרֶץ בְּזוּנוֹתֶיךָ וּבְרָעָתָךְ:

‘Lift up your eyes to the bare heights, and see! Where **have you not been ravished**? By the waysides you have sat awaiting lovers like an Arab in the wilderness. You have polluted the land with your vile whoredom.’ (Jer. 3.2; Greek ἐξεφύρθης; Latin *prostrata sis*; TJ אתחברת אתחברת לידך למפלה לטעותא)

- (18) וְאֶסְפְּתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם | אֶל-יְרוּשָׁלַם לְמִלְחָמָה וְנִלְכְּדָה הָעִיר וְנִשְׁסוּ הַבָּתִּים
וְהַנָּשִׁים תִּשְׁנַלְנָה (K) תִּשְׁכַּבְנָה (Q) וְיֵצֵא חֲצִי הָעִיר בְּגוֹלָה וְיִתָּר הָעָם
לֹא יִכָּרֵת מִן-הָעִיר:

‘For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses shall be plundered and the women **shall be raped**. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.’ (Zech. 14.2; Greek *μολυνθήσονται*; Latin *violabuntur*; TJ ישתכבן ישתכבן)

The euphemistic employment of שָׁכַב ‘lie (down)’ in reference to sexual relations is common throughout BH (and is matched by euphemistic renderings in the ancient versions). This usage was also extended to cases of *ketiv* שג"ל ‘rape’. The change could not be effected, however, without certain grammatical modifications. First, in reference to sex, שָׁכַב normally takes one of the comitative prepositions *עִם* or *אֶת* both ‘with’ (Orlinsky 1944). On seven occasions one encounters שָׁכַב with a form of *אֶת*—apparently the definite accusative/direct object marker—but in six of the seven, the vocalisation alone indicates that the particle is not

the preposition *אֶת* 'with'.⁶ Second, the verb *שָׁכַב* nowhere in BH bears an object suffix except where it is read as the *qere* for presumably *qal ketiv* *שָׁגַל*, as in (15) above. Third, BH lacks a *nif'al* *נִשְׁכַּב* except where it is read instead of apparently *nif'al* *נִשְׁגַּל**, in examples (16) and (18) above. Finally, and of crucial significance, unambiguous consonantal *nif'al* *נִשְׁכַּב** is first attested in material in the NBDSS⁷ and persists in RH. Relatedly, no passive *qal* or *pu^{cc}al* cognate of *שָׁכַב* is known from ancient Hebrew beyond that in the *qere* of (17) above.⁸ All of the above point to the likely secondary development of *שָׁכַב אֶת-*, perhaps in the early Second Temple Period (cf. *שָׁכַב אֶת-* with *mater waw* in Ezekiel) (Beuken 2004, 663). In other words, the expression *שָׁכַב אֶת-* is itself a case of *ketiv-qere* mismatch unacknowledged within the Masoretic tradition and is in line with the *שָׁכַב-שָׁגַל* correspondence under discussion.

1.4. Potential Misunderstanding

Cohen (2007, 269–71) lists a final instance of euphemistic *ketiv-qere*, as seen in (19).

(19) (Q) וְאֵלֵי יִרְאֶה יְהוָה בְּעֵינַי (K)

'It may be that the LORD will look **upon my eye**...' (2 Sam.

16.12; Greek *ταπεινώσει μου*; Latin *adflitionem meam*; TJ

דַּמְעַת עֵינַי; Syriac ܕܡܥܬܐܐܝܢܐ)

⁶ *אֶת-*: Gen. 34.2; Lev. 15.18, 24; Num. 5.13, 19; 2 Sam. 13.14; *אֹת-*: Ezek. 23.8.

⁷ 4Q270 f5.19; 4Q271 f3.12.

⁸ Ancient Hebrew attests no *pi^{cc}el*.

The *ketiv* is doubly problematic, in that the context calls for a word meaning ‘suffering, misfortune, plight’, whereas, on the one hand, *נָוָה* presupposes an element of guilt not evident from the context and, on the other, it does not generally denote mere suffering. Some modern commentators assume that the text should reflect *נָוָה* ‘suffering’ or *נָוָהִי* ‘my suffering’ (BDB 730b; cf. the Greek, Latin, and Syriac). Cohen (2007, 269–70, fn. 29) posits a semantic shift, whereby the meaning of *נָוָה* developed from ‘sin, guilt’ through ‘punishment’ to ‘trouble, suffering, torment, anguish’. Even if the proposed semantic shift is valid, the *ketiv* remains contextually difficult, given the standard force of *נָוָה*. The *qere* *נָוָהִי* can be taken either elliptically, for ‘tear of the eye’ (cf. the Targum), or metonymically, with ‘eye’ standing for the entire self (Cohen 2007, 270–71).

2.0. Diachronic Considerations

Given the obvious euphemistic status of the *qere* forms discussed above, there seems no need to prove their secondary status. Even so, the regular apparent agreement of the *ketiv* with the DSS (where extant) and the ancient versions is evidence of the primacy of the *ketiv* tradition (though many of the individual renderings of the ancient translations leave room for doubt).

Against the general agreement of the other ancient versions with the *ketiv*, the Targums regularly accord with the *qere* tradition. Sometimes, the *qere* and the Targums both resort to terms common in RH, as in the case of *נָוָה* and *מִימֵי רִגְלִים*. The Vulgate’s *urinam pedum* also seems partially influenced by the rabbinic idiom.

However, it is also important to point out non- or pre-rabbinic evidence for *qere* forms. For example, the *qere* form קְחוּרִים used in place of *ketiv* עֲפָלִים is not restricted to the Tiberian reading tradition, but appears twice in the Tiberian consonantal tradition, as well. Also, *qere* שֶׁב"ב for *ketiv* שֶׁג"ל finds support in the combined Samaritan biblical written and reading tradition, the BDSS, and is in line with both general biblical euphemistic use of שָׁכַב in relation to sex as well as with an apparently secondary usage according to which the verb came to be used transitively. This latter development, manifested in the verb's use with the accusative/direct object particle, with object suffixes, and in the appearance of cognate *qal* internal passive or *nif'al* verbs, is clearly one rooted in the Second Temple Period, its initial stages seen in the orthography of exilic or post-exilic biblical passages and DSS Hebrew.

3.0. Conclusion

While the euphemistic *qere* alternatives for public reading are secondary and reflect relatively late sociolinguistic concerns, where clear evidence exists, it shows that the readings are in the main Second Temple developments, no later than Tannaitic Hebrew, and are sometimes validated by DSS and, albeit rarely, even Tiberian CBH written evidence.

