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 Moḥe'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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CONCLUSION

This collection of research has presented twenty-five cases of dissonance between the written and reading components of the Tiberian reading tradition—seven in the Introduction and eighteen in the subsequent chapters. The argument has been twofold.

1.0. The Secondary and Late Character of Tiberian Written-reading Dissonance

First, it has been argued that the relevant cases of dissonance reflect relatively late, secondary developments of the Tiberian pronunciation tradition in line with Second Temple linguistic trends vis-à-vis its orthographic counterpart. This carries with it the implication that the pronunciation tradition, despite marked conservatism regularly safeguarding genuine Iron Age features, in large part crystallised in the Second Temple Period. It therefore occasionally manifests contemporary phenomena anachronistic for First Temple texts.

2.0. The Antiquity of Secondary Features in the Reading Tradition

Second, despite the late character of the pronunciation features involved in these cases of dissonance, it has been maintained that they do not derive from medieval or Byzantine Period developments, but are rooted in Second Temple linguistic conventions. To be sure, they often appear to continue evolutionary processes already documented in pre-exilic material, whether biblical or

epigraphic. Notwithstanding the medieval origin of the Tiberian vowel signs, the fact that the secondary features of the Tiberian pronunciation tradition reflect Second Temple linguistic developments strongly suggests that the tradition's primary features—i.e., the ones on which there is consensus between the written and reading components of the tradition—are even older. This all points to a reading tradition which, in the main, is a remarkably ancient and conservative linguistic artefact.

It is readily admitted here that the individual arguments made in the case of the features discussed in this volume are unlikely to have equal cogency. It is, however, hoped that even if certain explanations have been rejected, the combined evidence and argumentation will have been sufficient to convince even the sceptic of the major prongs of the argument. If one accepts the reality of written-reading dissonance, the secondary nature of vocalic developments in line with Second Temple conventions, and a degree of continuity between such developments and minority Iron Age features, the resulting acknowledgement of the historical antiquity of the Tiberian reading tradition should affect its perceived value for exegetical, textual, literary, and linguistic research. Allowing for the historically composite nature of the Tiberian vocalisation tradition, there is no reason to disfavour its testimony in contrast to traditions characterised by earlier written attestation. The combined evidence points to an ancient interpretive tradition that largely coalesced in the post-exilic period. The vast majority of the tradition seems reliably to preserve Iron Age features, whereas the small minority that must be considered anachronistic reflects linguistic and interpretive

trends that need be dated no later than the Second Temple Period.

In the rest of this concluding section, an attempt is made to summarise findings with regard to the principal corpora cited as representative of First and Second Temple Hebrew and to highlight certain ancillary ramifications of the research.

3.0. Linguistic Affinity between Second Temple Chronolects and the Tiberian Reading Tradition

3.1. Tiberian Late Biblical Hebrew

Though some scholars reject the diachronic import of the CBH/LBH distinction, there is no doubt that the core LBH books exhibit linguistic profiles especially marked by features characteristic of other Second Temple sources in concentrations not found in acknowledged CBH material.

The significance of LBH in the present connection centres on features common to both LBH and the Tiberian reading tradition in which both differ from the Tiberian written tradition. Such features discussed in this volume include spelling of the toponym ירושלים reflecting diphthongisation (Introduction, §3.1); univerbalisation of the proposition -ל and the infinitive construct (Introduction, §3.2); constructions of the type היום השישי instead of יום השישי (Introduction, §3.3); the nifalisation of originally *qal* יִכָּשֵׁל-כָּשַׁל* (ch. 10, §§1.1.1; 2.1.1); the shift from *qal* internal passive to *nifʿal* (ch. 10, §§1.1.2; 2.2); hifilisation of the originally *qal* form נָחָה (see ch. 11, §1.1.3; 2.1); hitpaelisation of forms with

assimilated *t* (see ch. 13, §§1.1.2; 2.1); relativising *ha-* + *qaṭal* (ch. 15, §§1.1; 2.0); long *yiqṭol* (*yaqtulu*) morphology in 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms, especially II-*w/y qal* and *hifʿil* forms (ch. 17, §2.1).

3.2. The Dead Sea Scrolls

While the designations QH or DSSH might be understood to indicate a sort of monolithic Hebrew in use in the Judaean Desert at the turn of the epoch, the diversity of Hebrew types there has long been acknowledged (Morag 1988). At the very least, it is necessary to distinguish between BDSS Hebrew and NBDSS Hebrew (see above, ch. 6, §9.0; ch. 17, §1.1), though even this dichotomy is problematic (Hornkohl 2021b, 134, fn. 19).

3.2.1. The Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls

Among the BDSS, it is well known that the Hebrew of 1QIsa[a] stands out against the Hebrew of the rest of the manuscripts that reflect material eventually canonised as Jewish Scripture (Tov 2012, 100–10; Young 2013; Reymond 2014, 11; Rezetko and Young 2014, 138–39; Hornkohl 2016a, 1020). Despite 1QIsa[a]'s biblical content and style, its linguistic character—which has been described as 'contemporised' and 'popular'—includes many features that stray from the classical norms reflected in MT Isaiah and 1QIsa[b] in favour of acknowledged Second Temple alternatives. For this reason, it might be expected that 1QIsa[a] would share many features with the reading component of the Tiberian biblical tradition. And, indeed, just such a scenario obtains. Consider the following list of affinities: the spelling אדני for יהוה, like

the Tiberian *qere perpetuum* ʾăḏōnā́y (ch. 1, §1.0); agreement with the Tiberian *qere perpetuum* שכ"ב for שג"ל (ch. 3, §1.3); the spelling לקרת || MT לִקְרַאת (ch. 5, §4.1); 2MS כה- || MT ךְ- (1QIsaᵃ 28–54 only; ch. 6, §5.1.1); 2MS תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §5.2.1); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.2.1); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §1.2.1); I-*y qal we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §1.2.1).

More generally, the BDSS often show affinity with the Tiberian reading tradition in terms of agreement with *qere* over *ketiv* (Introduction, §1.0 and fn. 5); realisation of יששכר (ch. 4, §2.0 [?]); 2MS כה- || MT ךְ- (1QIsaᵃ 28–54 only; ch. 6, §§5.1.1; 9.0); 2MS תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §5.2.1); 2/3FPL endings written נה- || MT ־נָ (ch. 9, §2.1); hifilisation, specifically of יס"ף (ch. 11, §1.2.1); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.2.1); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §1.2.1); long II-*w/y qal* and *hifʿil* 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §1.2.2); I-*y we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §1.2.1).

Notwithstanding the foregoing lists of features in which BDSS material appears to side with the Tiberian reading tradition against the Tiberian written tradition, it should be emphasised that—with the notable exception of 1QIsaᵃ—the linguistic profile of the BDSS is largely consistent with standard BH as reflected in the combined Tiberian written-reading tradition. From this perspective, there is a marked difference between the linguistic profile of the BDSS and that of the NBDSS, which are evidently more representative—than even 1QIsaᵃ—of contemporary Second Temple language usage.

3.2.2. The Non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls

Despite a pronounced degree of resemblance between DSSH and Tiberian BH against RH, the NBDSS exhibit far greater departure from BH than do the BDSS. This should not be surprising, since the BDSS represent copies of already traditional First Temple texts, while the NBDSS appear to be Second Temple compositions. It should come as no surprise, then, that the NBDSS share many features with the Tiberian reading tradition, including constructions of the type היום השישי instead of יום השישי (Introduction, §3.3); realisation of ישכר (ch. 4, §2.0 [?]); 2ms כה- || MT ךָ- (1QIsaᵃ 28–54 only; ch. 6, §5.1.2); 2ms תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §5.2.2); nifalisation, especially replacement of *qal* internal passive with *nifʿal* (ch. 10, §1.2.2); hifilisation (ch. 11, §§1.1.3; 1.2.2); pielisation (ch. 12, §§1.0; 1.2.2); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §1.2.2); past tense *ṭɛrɛm qaṭal* for *ṭɛrɛm yiqṭol* (ch. 14, §2.1.3); long II-*w/y qal* and *hifʿil* 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §1.2.2); I-*y we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §1.2.2).

3.3. Samaritan Hebrew

Like the combined Tiberian biblical written-reading tradition, the Samaritan tradition is composite, comprising a written component that, in view of its orthography, appears to reflect a somewhat later crystallisation than that of the Tiberian Torah, together with a significantly later pronunciation component. The pronunciation tradition, though not lacking in classical features, is strikingly replete with late linguistic features, especially typical of Second Temple Hebrew and Aramaic, but also including even later elements. Characteristic Second Temple linguistic features

common to both SH and the Tiberian reading tradition include univerbalisation of the proposition ־ל and the infinitive construct (Introduction, §3.2); syncopation of the 3MPL gentilic ending *-īm* < *-iyyim* (Introduction, §3.4); consistent replacement of the tetragrammaton with an alternative form (ch. 1, §§1.0; 2.0); *nifʿal* analysis of לֵרָאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה and similar (ch. 2, §§1.0; 2.0); euphemistic שכ"ב for שג"ל (ch. 3, §§1.3; 2.0); 2MS תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §§4.0; 5.2.1); היא *i* || Tiberian *qere perpetuum* הוּא in the Torah (ch. 8, §2.0); 2/3FPL endings written נה- || MT נָ- (ch. 9, §2.1); nifalisation (ch. 10, §1.3); hifilisation (ch. 11, §1.3); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.3); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §1.3); *ha-* + *qaṭal* (ch. 15, §§3.2); long II-*w/y qal* and *hifʿil* 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §§1.2.2; 1.3); I-*y we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, 1.3).

3.4. Ben Sira

Due partially to its wisdom genre, partially to its poetic style, and partially to the archaising predilections of its author, the linguistic profile of BS is a mixture of classical, even archaic, features, especially in terms of vocabulary. Even so, there is no mistaking the book's inclusion of diagnostically late features, lexical as well as grammatical, in both its Second Temple and medieval manuscript evidence. Diachronically significant late features common to BS and the Tiberian reading tradition include the following: univerbalisation of the proposition ־ל and the infinitive construct (Introduction, §3.2); syncopation of the 3MPL gentilic ending *-īm* < *-iyyim* (Introduction, §3.4); היא || Tiberian *qere perpetuum* הוּא in the Torah (ch. 8, §2.0); nifalisation (ch. 10, §1.4); hifilisation (ch. 11, §1.4); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.4); hitpaelisation (ch. 13,

§1.4); past tense *ṭɛrɛm qaṭal* for *ṭɛrɛm yiqṭol* (ch. 14, §2.1.4); long II-*w/y qal* and *hifꜤil* 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §1.3.1); I-*y we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §1.4).

3.5. Rabbinic Hebrew

It has been argued that in the cases of written-reading dissonance in the combined Tiberian biblical tradition, the Masoretes were influenced in secondary pronunciations by RH (see, e.g., Blau 2018, 115, §3.5.6.3.7n, 213–14, §§4.3.4.2.2–4.3.4.2.2n). While it is difficult definitively to disprove such a notion, several considerations combine to show that such an extreme view is unwarranted. First, if RH influenced the Masoretes, it did so very sparingly, since in most distinguishing features, BH and RH remain distinct. Second, as has already been indicated, since in its departures from the Tiberian written tradition, the Tiberian reading tradition resembles not just RH, but several late traditions and corpora, including the combined Tiberian LBH written-reading tradition, there is no reason to insist specifically on RH influence on the Tiberian reading component. Finally, as emphasised below, secondary features standardised in the Tiberian pronunciation tradition often find precedent in minority features in the Tiberian CBH written tradition and/or in Iron Age epigraphy. This implies that many characteristic Second Temple Hebrew features constitute standardisations of earlier features no matter the Second Temple tradition or corpus in which their extension took place, including the Tiberian reading tradition and RH.

Even so, it would be misleading to deny the reality of significant diachronic affinity between RH and the Tiberian pronun-

ciation tradition, though this should not necessarily be considered a result artificial RH influence on the Masoretes. Salient features discussed in this volume include univerbalisation of the proposition -ל and the infinitive construct (Introduction, §3.2); syncopation of the 3MPL gentilic ending *-īm < -iyyim* (Introduction, §3.4); *qere* euphemisms (§§1.1; 1.3); the vocalisation לִקְרָאת (ch. 5, §§1.0; 2.0); 2MS תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §4.0); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.5); הִיא || Tiberian *qere perpetuum* הוּא in the Torah (ch. 8, §§1.0; 2.0); 2/3FPL endings written נה- || MT ֶן- (ch. 9, §2.2); nifalisation (ch. 10, §1.5); hifilisation (ch. 11, §1.5); pielisation (ch. 12, §1.5); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §1.5); I-*y qal we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §1.5).

4.0. Iron Age Epigraphy and the Classical Biblical Hebrew Written Tradition

4.1. Iron Age Epigraphy

It has been argued that all of the linguistic features discussed in this volume are secondary pronunciation features vis-à-vis the relevant written tradition alternative. Occasionally, however, there is evidence of the pronunciation feature as a minority Iron Age epigraphic alternative. This occurs in the case of syncopation of the 3MPL gentilic ending *-īm < -iyyim* (Introduction, §3.4); 3MS possessive suffix on plurals ו- *-āw* for polythongal יו- (Introduction, §3.6); the spelling לקרת *liqrat* [?] || MT לִקְרָאת (ch. 5, §4.2); 2MS כה- || MT ְך- ch. 6, §7.0); 2MS תה- || MT תָ- (ch. 6, §7.0); nifalisation (ch. 10, §3.1); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §3.1).

4.2. The Tiberian Classical Biblical Hebrew Written Tradition

The late, secondary features which the Tiberian reading tradition standardised as divergences from the corresponding written tradition also sometimes appear as minority features in the Tiberian CBH written tradition. Consider the following cases discussed in this volume: univerbalisation of the proposition -ל and the infinitive construct (Introduction, §3.2); אדני for יהוה (ch. 1, §2.0; 2ᴍꜱ ‑כה ‖ MT ‑ךָ (ch. 6, §2.0); 2ᴍꜱ ‑תה ‖ MT ‑תָ (ch. 6, §2.0); nifalisation (ch. 10, §3.0); hifilisation (ch. 11, §3.0); pielisation (ch. 12, §3.0); hitpaelisation (ch. 13, §3.0); past tense *ṭɛrɛm qaṭal* for *ṭɛrɛm yiqṭol* (ch. 14, §§2.3; 4.0); *ha-* + *qaṭal* (ch. 15, §§1.2; 3.2); long II-*w/y qal* and *hifʿil* 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §2.2.1); I-*y qal we-yiqṭol* for *wayyiqṭol* (ch. 18, §3.0).

5.0. Further Ramifications of the Study

Various combinations of data gathered in the foregoing studies support a number of hypotheses, each of which merits further investigation.

5.1. Diachronic Diversity within Classical Biblical Hebrew: The Torah versus the Rest

The data pertinent to several features discussed in this volume are interpretable as evidence of diachronic development within Tiberian CBH, especially, between the Torah and the rest of the CBH corpus. However such a linguistic disparity is most convincingly explained—whether as evidence of the actual linguistic antiquity of the Tiberian Pentateuchal traditions vis-à-vis the

traditions in other CBH material or as a result of early consolida-
tion and careful preservation of the Torah's linguistic profile rel-
ative to other CBH texts[1]—it is clear that in terms of select
features, the Pentateuch is characterised by striking linguistic
conservatism. Such features include 3FS הוא, which, it has been
argued, may well reflect an early phonetic reality standardised as
הִיא in the rest of the Hebrew Bible (ch. 8, §3.0), but as הוא in the
Torah (ch. 8, §2.0); hifilisation of certain *qal* II-y verbs, most no-
tably יס"ף 'add, continue' (ch. 11, §§1.1.3; 2.4), the preservation
of archaic *hifʿil*-like *qal* forms (ch. 11, §2.4), and hifilisation in
general (ch. 11, §3.0); short rather than long or pseudo-cohorta-
tive 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms (ch. 17, §1.4.3).

Scholars who accept a diachronic distinction between CBH
and LBH do not generally attempt finer gradations. Though Horn-
kohl (2013a; 2016) has argued for the heuristic value of TBH,
CBH is generally considered a single broad chronolect that in-
cludes regional, social, and genre diversity. More rarely, it is sug-
gested that CBH can usefully be divided into chronological
phases, i.e., CBH[1] and CBH[2] (Elitzur 2015; 2018a; 2018b; 2019;
2022). A previous study lending support to such an approach is
Hornkohl's (2013a, 83–91) analysis of proper names ending in
the theophoric element -יָה(וּ). There it is observed, *inter alia*, that
"The books of the Torah and Joshua present no examples of
names with either ending, apparently reflecting a time before the
use of such names was prevalent" and "To be sure, the Penta-
teuch has only two names containing any form of the tetragram-

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[1] See above, ch. 17, §§1.4.2–3, on the need for a nuanced approach to
complex data.

maton, in both cases a prefix: יְהוֹשֻׁעַ 'Joshua' and יוֹכֶבֶד 'Jochabed'"
(Hornkohl 2013a, 86 and fn. 35). It would seem that the onomas-
tic tradition preserved in the Pentateuch is consistent with pre-
monarchical times. The linguistic conservatism that distinguishes
the language of the Torah from that of the rest of CBH may sim-
ilarly be construed as evidence of the preservation of genuine
linguistic antiquity within the tradition. Alternatively, it may be
that the classical linguistic profile of the Torah was kept espe-
cially pristine, whereas the formerly more classical profile of
other CBH material was allowed to drift in the direction of LBH,
though it never reached the level of concentration of late features
characteristic of the acknowledged LBH books. Whatever the ex-
planation, there is a palpable difference between the CBH of the
Torah and that of the Prophets and Writings.

5.2. Suppletion and Orthographic Constraints on Linguistic Development within the Tiberian Reading Tradition

In the above treatments on movement between verbal stems (chs
10–13), suppletive paradigms are highlighted as a common result
of linguistic evolution and the resultant written-reading disso-
nance. Again and again, some or even most of a given verb's or-
thographic forms amenable to secondary interpretation shifted
binyanim, whereas other instances were excluded from the shift
because their written forms were unsuitable to the new stem. One
of the clearest examples is the well-known case of *nifʿal-qal* נִגַּשׁ-
יִגַּשׁ 'approach', whose principal Tiberian biblical forms are given
below in Table 1 (see also above, ch. 10, §2.1.2).

Table 1: Tiberian biblical forms of the suppletive *nifʿal-qal* verb יִגַּשׁ-נִגַּשׁ 'approach'

	nifʿal	*qal*
suffix conjugation	נִגַּשׁ	—
participle	נִגָּשׁ	—
imperative	—	גַּשׁ/גְּשָׁה־/גְּשִׁי/גְּשׁוּ/גְּשׁוּ
prefix conjugation	—	יִגַּשׁ
infinitive construct	—	(לְ)גֶשֶׁת/גִּשְׁתְּ-

It is assumed that the verb was originally consistently G-stem (as it remains in SH; see above, ch. 10, §1.3.6) and was refashioned as *nifʿal* where possible in line with its intransitive semantics, for which *nifʿal* morphology was considered a better fit.

   The consistently suppletive biblical paradigm invites scrutiny. One question involves the extent to which the unambiguous *qal* spellings effectively prevented more extensive *qal* > *nifʿal* evolution. In other words, does the Tiberian biblical suppletion reflect genuine language use? Or is it an artificial arrangement relevant specifically to the Hebrew Bible's written-reading dissonance? There is no definitive answer, but it is striking that the NBDSS attest the *nifʿal* infinitive construct בהנגשו 'when he approaches' (4Q512 f40–41.2; see above, ch. 10, §1.2.1). This may indicate that nifalisation of the verb in question was more extensive than indicated by Tiberian BH, i.e., where not anchored by unambiguous *qal* orthography, Second Temple Hebrew exhibited greater or even full nifalisation of this verb. Even so, as Hornkohl (2021a, 14–15) observes, "ancient Hebrew sources never present the prefix conjugation יגש*, the existence of which would confirm the verb's wholesale niphalisation."

   In other cases, it seems clearer that suppletion in the combined Tiberian written-reading tradition reflects an artificial sit-

uation unrepresentative of any genuine chronolect. Consider the case of the suppletive *pi‘‘el-qal* verb מָאֵן-מֵאֵן. In this instance, the entire paradigm is *pi‘‘el* except for the active participle, which is *qal*, and the infinitive absolute, which is equally analysable as *pi‘‘el* or *qal*.

Table 2: Tiberian biblical forms of the suppletive *pi‘‘el-qal* verb מָאֵן-מֵאֵן 'refuse'

	pi‘‘el	*qal*
suffix conjugation	מֵאֵן	—
prefix conjugation	יְמָאֵן	—
participle	—	מָאֵן/הַמֵּאֲנִים
infinitive absolute	מָאֵן	

In this case, all biblical spellings are interpretable as *qal*, while the pronunciation tradition reflects a shift to *pi‘‘el* where permitted by the orthography. It should also be noted that, on the assumption of originally *qal* stative *qāṭēl* morphology, the extant vocalisations of the MS participle and the infinitive absolute, both מָאֵן, can be considered faithful preservations of ancient morphology (the vocalisation of the MPL participle הַמֵּאֲנִים, by contrast, is appropriate for neither G- nor D-stem). Clearly, the suffix and prefix conjugation spellings might well also reflect original *qal* forms.

But if the forms of the written component of the Tiberian biblical tradition point to original *qal* morphology, SH and RH confirm the pielisation seen in the pronunciation component of the Tiberian biblical tradition (ch. 12, §2.1). Again, the question may be asked: does the Tiberian biblical suppletion reflect an authentic linguistic situation or is it an artificial combination of diachronic snapshots? While in any given case of linguistic evolu-

tion there must be intermediate stages of development char-
acterised by mixed usage, it is not clear that the Tiberian biblical
suppletion should be so explained. Since there is no unequivocal
orthographic evidence of *pi*ʿʿ*el* מֵאֵן until the Mishna, it may well
be that D-stem analysis of the verb is entirely foreign to the Ti-
berian BH written tradition. But this remains unverifiable, since
Tiberian LBH lacks participial forms that might unambiguously
(dis)confirm the antiquity of the process of pielisation.

Even beyond BH, biblical orthography seems partially to
have anchored ancient Hebrew and prevented fuller evolution.
Even in post-biblical Hebrew, where it might be expected that
biblical spelling relics would no longer influence language use,
the biblical linguistic tradition still exerts force. Consider the very
early pielisation of דִּבֶּר 'speak', which left only a small residue of
qal infinitival and active and passive participial forms (ch. 12,
§3.1). While one might expect that beyond BH, such residual *qal*
forms would be completely eclipsed, use of the active participle
continues in BS, the NBDSS, Tannaitic RH, and Amoraic RH, de-
spite the extensive pielisation of the verb in all of these traditions.
Indeed, the active and passive participles continue to be used in
Modern Hebrew. Evidently, the existence of clearcut archaisms
in the Tiberian written tradition and the prestige of the mixed
Tiberian written-reading tradition resulted in the conservation of
linguistic relics that would probably otherwise have been lev-
elled in forms of post-biblical ancient Hebrew.

5.3. Diversity within the Tiberian Reading Tradition

Not unrelated to the topic of the preceding section, it might be assumed that the Tiberian reading tradition would exhibit uniformity wherever possible. That is, outside of ancient orthographic forms not amenable to secondary reclothing, it would be reasonable to expect a homogenous and level reading tradition. But such consistency does not obtain. Consider the case of 1st-person *wayyiqṭol* forms in the Tiberian Torah (ch. 17, §2.2.2). In view of the prevalence of short spellings of 1st-person forms in the Torah, 1CS and 1CPL might be vocalised similarly. But such is not the case. 1CPL forms are vocalised with short morphology in accord with their orthography, whereas in the case of 1CS forms long vocalisation is regularly imposed upon short orthography.

Similar diversity with the Tiberian reading tradition is noticeable in the case of 2MS and 2/3FPL endings (chs 6 and 9). Against the backdrop of standard vowel-final morphology, the Tiberian pronunciation tradition also testifies to minority consonant-final realisations.

The above diversity indicates that the Tiberian pronunciation was not simply a monolithic tradition mechanically wedded to the corresponding written tradition. Rather, each component of the tradition itself reflected a complex and varied linguistic reality, each component influenced the other, and their merger resulted in a layered and multifarious combination of great variety and depth.[2]

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[2] See Khan (2020, I:69–85) for a balanced discussion of heterogeneity within the Tiberian reading tradition, including different perspectives on diachrony.

5.4. Majority and Minority Features in Classical Biblical Hebrew

A major thrust of the present volume involves the claim that many late secondary departures of the Tiberian reading tradition find precedent in minority CBH features. In other words, rare CBH features at some point became dominant in the Tiberian tradition and were standardised at the expense of earlier dominant features. It is worth stating explicitly the corollary of this statement, namely, that by dint of including minority features among majority features, CBH was inclusive of a great deal of diversity.

As an example, consider the case of standard CBH past tense *ṭɛrɛm yiqṭol* versus minority CBH past tense *ṭɛrɛm qaṭal* (ch. 14). One, perhaps two, of the exceptional past tense *ṭɛrɛm qaṭal* cases are explicable as secondary revocalisations. But the other two are evidently genuine. And their genuineness calls into question the necessity of explaining away the cases that can be attributed to secondary processes (see above, ch. 14, §3.0). It is admittedly tempting to formulate a theory capable of accounting for all non-standard features, but some allowance must be made for simple synchronic linguistic variety attributable to no factor beyond human inconsistency.