

observe, what different senses may be put upon a word by its being differently pointed, which they propose to consideration, as if it was thus, or thus pointed; but then this supposes the points to have been in being or they could not divert themselves after this manner: and it should be observed, that this phrase is used chiefly in giving allegorical expositions, and is not by way of authority and command, as enjoining such a reading; but by way of concession; or supposing it was read so, it would yield a commodious sense, especially if allegorical^c: nor can I see how this phrase could be used in writing by giving instances as above, without expressing the very marks and figures of the points as put to the words in debate; or otherwise they must act like delirious men indeed: nor can I see how the ridiculous story, concerning *Joab's* slaying of his master for teaching him to read wrong could be related in the *Talmud*^d without the vowel-points being put to the word in it, which is told thus; after *Joab* had cut off every male in *Edom*,

1 *Kings*

^c Vid. Maimon. Moreh Nevochim. par. 3. c. 43. Hottinger. Thesaur. philolog. l. 1. c. 2. p. 214. Buxtorf. de Punctuat. par. 1. p. 97, 98. Surenhuf. Biblos Kattalages. p. 4. 69. 60.

^d T. Eab. Bava Bathra, fol. 21. l. 2.

1 *Kings* xi. 15, 16. when he came before *David* he said to him, what is the reason that thou hast so done? (i. e. that thou hast not destroyed the females, as the gloss is) he replied, because it is written (*Deut.* xxv. 19.) thou shalt blot out זכר of *Amaleck*; *David* said unto him, but behold we read זכר; *Joab* answered, I was taught to read it זכר: he went and asked his master, saying, how didst thou teach me to read, he told him זכר; he drew his sword to kill him. Now where is the difference? they all say the same thing, *David*, *Joab*, and his master, as the bare letters of the word without the vowel-points are given. What sense can be made of this story, thus told? No doubt but in the *Talmud*, as originally written, the several vowel-points were put to this word; as said to be read by *Joab*, it was *zacar*, male, with two *Kametzses*; as by *David* and *Joab's* master, it was *zecer*, remembrance, with two *Segols*; and so in other cases, of a similar kind, the points were put, though in process of time left out, through the carelessness or sloth of transcribers; and two instances of this I have met with where the very
figures

figures of the vowel-points are used; thus having quoted *Numb. xiii. 31.* it is directed^h dont read מִמֶּנּוּ *than us* (with a *Sbureck*) but מִמֶּנּוּ *than him* (with a *Cholem*); and in another placeⁱ, with respect to the passage in *Deut. xxiii. 18.* they say, do not read זִמָּה (with a *Kametz*) but זִמָּה (with a *Segol*); the first word, pointed as directed, signifies a *whore*, being feminine, the other, differently pointed, is masculine, and signifies a *fornicator*^k. My *Talmud* is of the *Amsterdam* and *Frankford* edition, and I have no opportunity of consulting another: should it be said, these points are annexed to the words by the *editors* of this work; I ask why they are not added to the words in the other instances? no doubt the reason is, because they were originally so in the *Talmud*, and so I found them; and I make no question of their being put in all other instances, though omitted by copiers. To these observations I would add, the prick or point on the *Vau* in the word for *arose*, in *Gen. xix. 33.* is taken notice of in the *Talmud*^l; and so are the 15 pricks
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^h T. Bab. Sotah, fol. 35. 1.
fol. 29. 2.
esh. 495.
fol 21. 1.

ⁱ T. Bab. Temurah,
^k Vid. Schindler. Lexic. Pentaglott.
^l T. Bab. Horayot, fol. 10. 2, & Nazir,

on several words in the bible, among which this is one^m and on the word for *unless*, in *Pf.* xxvii. 13.ⁿ and on *Deut.* xxix. 29.^o Now if these pricks and points were so early, which are of so little use, much more the vowel-points; and as for the accents, they are expressly mentioned: thus those words in *Nehem.* viii. 8. are interpreted, *so they read in the law of God*, this is the Scripture; *distinctly*, this is the *Targum*; and *gave the sense*; these are the verses pointed, as *R. Nissim* on that place in the *Talmud* interprets it, *and caused them to understand the reading*, these are פִּסְקֵי טַעְמִים *the distinctions of the accents*^p; and so in other places mention is made of the distinctions of the accents^q, and of the accents of the law^r, which might be shewn and pointed at by the hand, and therefore must be visible marks or figures; and which are to be understood both of vowel-points, and of accents; and so the *gloss* on that place interprets it, both of pointing and the elevation of the voice in singing according to

^m Aboth. R. Nathan, c. 34. fol. 18. Sopherim. c. 1. f. 3.
ⁿ T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 4. 1. ^o T. Bab. Sankhedrin, fol. 43. 2.
^p T. Bab. Megillah, fol. 3. 1. & Nedarim, fol. 37. 2. ^q T. Bab. Chagigah, fol. 6. 2.
^r T. Bab. Beracot, fol. 62. 1. & Gloss in lb. Pefachim, fol. 119. 1.

to the accents. And the marks and figures of them, they say in the *Talmud*, *Solomon*^e instructed the people in; for so those words are paraphrased in it, *he taught the people knowledge*, for he instructed them טעמים בסימני in the signs, marks, figures, or characters of the accents: and on the phrase, *his locks are bushy*, it is observed; from hence we learn that he (*Solomon*) sought out and explained every tittle, prick, or point (in the law) heaps of heaps of the constitutions or decisions of it^f: and in one of the above places^g referred to, they dispute about giving a reward to such who taught the accents; which surely could never be thought of, if the accents were not yet invented; to which may be added, that in the *Talmud*^{*} mention is made of some words in the Bible, “written but not read,” and of others, “read but not written;” those that are written but not read are alone without the vowel-points, as in *Jer.* li. 3. &c. Those that are read but not written, are those whose

^e T. B. Eruvim, fol. 21. 2. ^f Ibid. ^g Nedarim, fol. 37. 1. * T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 37. 2. Mafsechet. Sopherim, c. 6. f. 7, 8.

whose vowel-points stand alone in the text, and the consonants in the margin, of which there are ten, *Jud.* xx. 13. *Ruth* iii. 5. 17. *2 Sam.* viii. 3. and xvi. 23. and xviii. 20. *2 Kings* xix. 31. 37. *Jer.* xxxi. 38. and l. 29. This shews that the state of the *Hebrew* text, with respect to these *Keries* and *Cetibs*, was the same at the composition of the *Talmud* as now; and that the *Talmudists* must have been acquainted with pointed Bibles, and consequently points must have been in use before the finishing of the *Talmud*; and so before the pretended men of *Tiberias*: the ablation of the scribes is spoken of in the same *tract*, which forbids the reading the superfluous *Vau* in five places; and also the reading of the scribes, which shews how they read and pronounced some words, as *Arets*, *Shamaim*, *Mitzraim*; as *Aretz*, sometimes *Aratz*, and sometimes *Erets*, according to the diversity of the accents, as *Buxtorff* observes*; and *Shamaim* sometimes with *Kametz* and *Patach*, and sometimes with a double *Kametz*, because of the pause; and so *Mitzraim*. The note of R. *Nissim* on

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the

* *Tiberias*, c. 8. p. 11.

the place is, because of the *Athnach*, *Arets* is read with a *Kametz*, and *Sbamaim* and *Mitzraim*, though they have no *Aleph* in them, are read as if they had.

A. D. 400.

THE *Masorah*, or *Masoreth*, as it is sometimes called, which signifies *tradition*, is a work consisting of remarks on several things in the Bible, handed down to posterity from one to another ; it does not appear to be the work of one man, nor of a sett of men, and living in one age or place, who were jointly concerned in it, but of various persons, in several ages : it might be begun by the men of the great synagogue of *Ezra*, to whom the *Jewish* writers generally ascribe it ; and be carried on by scribes and copiers in after ages, and at last finished by the men of *Tiberias* ; not the *Utopian* men of *Tiberias*, after the year 500, who lived in the 6th and 7th centuries, as pretended, but by those who lived in the 2d and 3d centuries, and in the beginning of the 4th ; men of fame and note among the *Jews*, and whose names are given, and an account of them in the *Jerusalem Talmud*, of whom more hereafter ; though in

later times, some things have crept into this work, and additions made to it, in which the names of *Jarchi* and *Ben Gersom* are mentioned, and even some are the notes of *Ben Chayim* himself, the first editor of it in printed Bibles; who with much pains brought it into some form and order, and disposed of it in the manner it is in some printed copies: however, it is certain the work was in being before the *Babylonian Talmud*; for the just now mentioned editor of the *Masorah*, in his preface which stands before *Bomberg's Bible*, and which *Buxtorff* also has placed before his, asserts, that in many places the *Talmud* contradicts the *Masorah*; and besides it is expressly mentioned in it. Such phrases are sometimes* to be met with in it as *אם למקרא*, and *אם למסורת*; the meaning of which is, that such an exposition of a word or passage, has its foundation in the Scripture, or is according to that, and is the literal sense of it, as it is commonly read; and that such an exposition or interpretation of a word or passage, has its foundation in the

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* T. Bab. Pefachim, fol. 86. 2. Succah, fol. 6. 2. Kiddushin, fol. 18. 1. Sanhedrin, fol. 4. 1.

Masorab, or is according to that §; and is the traditional sense of it, as it may be read and pronounced by other vowels: yea, those men who are said to have numbered all the letters in the law, and the verses in it, and to have pointed out the letter which is exactly the middle of the pentateuch, and in other books, are called ראשנים the *antients*; who had lived long ago, and with whom the compilers of the *Talmud* were not to be named *; and are thought by the learned bishop *Usher* † to be the men of the great synagogue of *Ezra*; false therefore it is what *F. Simon* says ‡, from *Elias Levita*, that the *Masorab* is later than the *Talmud*: yea, Christ himself, in his time, speaks of a traditional set of men, who, he says, were of old time, and are called by him, αρχαιοι, the *antients*; who delivered down peculiar senses of the law from age to age, and may be truly said to be a sort of *Masorettes*, *Matt.* v. 28. the same who elsewhere are called *elders*, and to whom traditions are ascribed, *Matt.* xv. 2. *Mark* vii. 3, 5. though perhaps the *mif-*
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§ Vid. *Halicot Olam*, par. 4. c. 3. p. 187. * *T. Bab. Kiddushin*, fol. 30. 1. & *Sabbat*, fol. 112. 2. † *Epist. ad Capell.* in calce de sept. interpr. p. 211. ‡ *Disquis. Critic.* c. 4. p. 23.

nic doctors are rather more peculiarly intended: and certain it is, that the several parts of the work of the *Masorettes* ascribed to them, are made mention of in the *Talmud*; as not only the numbering of the letters and verses in the law before asserted; but the distinction of verses themselves is spoken of in it, and is ascribed to *Moses*, though by *Elias Levita** made to be the work of the *Masorettes*; in the *Talmud* † it is said, “ whatever verse *Moses* did not distinguish, we do not distinguish:” yea, we read of the distinction of verses in the *Misnah* ‡, which was compiled some hundreds of years before the *Talmud*. The various readings which the *Masorettes* are said to be the authors of, even divers sorts of them are mentioned in the *Talmud* §; and their concern with the points and accents will be presently observed: but not only these parts of the work assigned them, but the forms of letters, greater, lesser, or suspended, marked by the *Masorettes* in the Bible, are observed in the *Talmud*;

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mud;

* Sepher Tob Taam, c. 2.
Megillah, fol. 22, 1.
c. 4. f. 4.

† T. Bab.

‡ Misn. Megillah,

§ T. Bab. Nedarim, fol. 37. 2.

mud ||; yea, the *Masorah* itself is mentioned in it. In the interpretation of *Neb.* viii. 8. taken notice of in the preceding section, that part of it, *and caused them to understand the reading*, as some interpret it of the distinction of accents; others say, these are the *Masorah*^s, or *Masoretic* notes, or as R. *Nissim*, on the place, explains it, what is delivered in the *Masorah*; yea, not only in the *Jerusalem Talmud*^{*} mention is made of it, but in the *Misnab*^t itself, finished in the year 150, as a saying of R. *Akiba*, who died in the beginning of the second century; “the *Masorah* is an hedge “to the law;” the note of *Bartenora* on it is, the *Masoretib*, which the wisemen have delivered to us, concerning words defective and redundant in the law. I must be safe therefore in placing this work 100 years before the *Babylonian Talmud*, it certainly must be in being so early at least, and much earlier; and *Walton*, an opposer of the points, acknowledges^u that some part of the

|| *Massech. Sopherim*, c. 9. f. 5. 7. T. Bab. *Bava Bathra*, fol. 109. 2. & *Gloss* in *Ib.* T. Bab. *Kiddushin*, fol. 30. 1. T. Bab. *Sanhedrin*, fol. 103. 2. ^s T. Bab. *Nedarim*, fol. 37. 2. *Megillah*, fol. 3. 1. * *Megillah*, fol. 74. 4. ^t *Pirke Abot*, c. 3. f. 13. ^u *Prolegom.* 8. f. 12.

the *Masoretic* notes were collected before the *Talmud* was finished; and thinks it probable, that though not immediately after *Ezra*, yet about the time of the *Maccabees*, when the sect of the *Pharisees* rose, some might begin to make those observations; and Dr. *Prideaux*† supposes that they began a little after the time of *Ezra*: now the observations of the *Masorettes* were not only about entire words, nor about letters or consonants, but also about the points and accents: take a few instances, instead of many which might be produced, on *Gen.* i. 5. the note of the *Masorab* is, לֵאמֹר is written several times with a *Kametz*; on *Gen.* xiv. 5. *Chedarlaomer*, one word with two *Shevaks*; and on *Exod.* xxxii. 6. it is observed the word לִצְהָק is no more found with *Segol* and *Silluk*; on *Job* xix. 7. אֶעֱנֶה is no more written with *Segol* and *Kametz*; and on *Pf.* lxxxiv. 11. it is remarked, that אֱלֹהֵי is twice with a *Patach* and *Athnach*. See also on *Gen.* xvi. 13. and xix. 2. *Exod.* xxvi. 5. *Lev.* x. 4. 19. *Numb.* ix. 2. *Deut.* xviii. 17. *Josb.* vi. 14. *1 Sam.* x. 21. *Pf.* xxvii. 4. *Jer.* xvii. 17. and iii. 32. *Dan.*

M 4

i. 3.

† *Connect.* par. 1. B. 5 p. 353.

i. 3. and iii. 21. *Ezra* viii. 16. and other places; wherefore the points and accents must be before the *Masoretes*, and not invented by them.

A. D. 385.

JEROM died in 420, being upwards of 90 years of age, and therefore must flourish about this time. He was the best versed in *Jewish* literature of any of the antient writers, having had no fewer than four *Jews*, at different times for his instructors; and that he had knowledge of the points and accents, which therefore must be in his time, I think is most clear from his writings. I do not insist upon the marks and figures of the vowel-points, which go along with the *Hebrew* words used by him, which I suppose are added by the editors of his works; though I confess, I cannot persuade myself that so sensible and learned a man as *Jerom* was, would ever say what he does, unless not only he saw the *Hebrew* words he mentions, with the vowel-points to them, but put them to them himself, when he wrote them; though in length of time they might be disused in the copies transcribed from him; for how

otherwise could he say, of such and such a word, it is not written so, but so, in the *Hebrew* text, and yet gives the word either way with the same consonants exactly; so he gives the word *במה*, in *Is.* ii. 21. and others, as will be presently observed: what is there then to distinguish them? or how could he expect to be believed, or to convince any by such a method? this was to make him appear very ridiculous; but supposing the vowels put to the words by him, these would distinguish one word from another, and make him act like himself, and like a true critic; and this being the case, it is easy to account for it, why the vowel-points and accents are not mentioned by him, there being no need of it; since they were presented to the eye of the reader, and supposed to be understood by him. However, the same *Hebrew* words expressed in *Roman* characters, I take for granted were done by himself, and this I think is owned by *Walton* *. I have indeed no other edition of his works, than that of *Erasmus*, nor an opportunity of consulting any other; now the words, as thus read, greatly agree with, and very rarely differ from

* *Bibl. Polyglott. prolegom.* 3. f. 47.

from the modern punctuation, and where they do, it may be owing to inadvertency, or to too great confidence in his memory, or to copiers; but be this as it may, it is certain he often speaks of the *Hebrew* points and accents, and of the variety of them, and that the same words are pronounced by different sounds and accents, and that *Hebrew* names are variously interpreted, according to the diversity of accents, and change of the vowel-letters^w; now, besides the notice he takes^x of the prick or point on the word *Kumah*, in *Gen.* xix. 34. which he calls pointing; he makes many observations on divers words, which manifestly shew his knowledge of the *Hebrew* points, without which he could never have made them: thus he observes^y, that in *Psf.* xc. 8. in the *Hebrew* it is written עלמנו, *alumenu*, which he translates *our neglects*, and wonders at the *Septuagint* interpreters, that they should translate it *our age*, as if it was *olamenu*; and now how could he say it was written in the *Hebrew*, *alumenu* and
not

^w Epist. ad Evagr. fol. 13 F. Tom. 3. Comment. in Ezek. c. 28. fol. 220. C. Tom. 5. & in Hagg. 1. fol. 101. & fol. 102. B. 1. 6. & in Ephes. fol. 95. F. Tom. 9. ^x Quæst. Heb. in Gen. fol. 68. 1. ^y Epist. ad Cyprian. fol. 33. B. Tom. 3.

not *olamenu*, since the word without points may be read either way, if he had not seen it himself, nor had been told that it was so pointed? nor could he say ^z that in *Exod.* xiii. 18. he found it written in the *Hebrew* volume, carefully examining its characters, *Hamufim*, and not *Hamifim*; if the *Hebrew* volume he examined had no points; for this he had not from tradition, nor from use and custom of reading, but found it so written: he also observes^a, that the word שְׁעָרִים, written with the same letters, has a different signification, as it may be differently read; if *Searim* (i. e. with a *Kametz*) then it signifies *estimations*, but if *Seorim*, (i. e. with a *Cholem*) then it signifies *barley*; again^b he remarks, that רֵעָה, written with the same letters, if read *Re*, (i. e. with a *Shevab*) then it is a *friend*, if *Ro*, (i. e. with a *Cholem*) then it is a *Shepherd*; a like remark^c he makes on the word בְּמָה, in *Jf.* ii. 22. that if it is rendered *wherein*, then it must be בְּמָה, *bameb*, but if an *high place* or *high*, then it must be read בְּמָה *bamab*; so the three letters זָכַר, when we say they signify *memorial*,

or

^z Ep. Damafo. 2 qu. fol. 12. A. B. ^a Quæst. Heb. in Gen. fol. 70. 4. ^b Ib. fol. 72. C. ^c Comment. in Is. c. 2. fol. 7. D. T. 5.

or *remembrance*, then he says^d the word is read *zecer*, (i. e. with two *Segols*) but if a *male*, then it is read *zacar*, (i. e. with two *Kametzses*); again^e, these three letters דבר signify according to the quality of the places, if read *dabar* (i. e. with two *Kametzses*) it signifies a *word*, but if *deber*, (i. e. with two *Segols*) then it signifies the *plague*; so the word שקר, he observes^f, that if the accent is varied, that is the point, it signifies either a *nut* or *watching*; that is, if it is pointed for a verb, then it signifies to *watch*, but if as a noun, then it signifies a *nut*, an almond-nut. And whereas in the *Septuagint* version of *Jonab* iii. 4. it is three days instead of forty; *Jerom* wonders^g how they should so translate, when there is no likeness in the *Hebrew* words, for *three* and for *forty*, neither in the letters nor in the syllable, nor in the *accents*, that is vowels; and again he observes^h, the ambiguity of the *Hebrew* word שני, which is written with three letters, ם and ן and ש; if, says he, it is read *Shene* (i. e. with a *Shevab* and a *Tzere*)
it

^d Ib. in c. 26. fol. 50. H. ^e Ib. in c. 9. fol. 19. H. & in Habac. c. 3. fol. 87. H. Tom. 6. ^f Comment. in Ecclef. fol. 43. G. Tom. 7. & in Jerem. fol. 133. C. ^g Comment. in Jon. c. 3. fol. 57. M. ^h Comment. in Ezek. 15. fol. 194. C.

it signifies *two*, but if *Shane*, (i. e. with a *Kametz* and a *Tzere*) then it signifies *years*, and so in many other places. *Jerom* must have knowledge of the point placed sometimes on the right hand of the letter *ש*, and then called *Yamin*, and sometimes on the left hand of it, and then called *Smol*, which gives it a different pronunciation, and the words a different sense : he observesⁱ, that from *Ish*, a woman is rightly called *Isha*, but *Theodotion*, he says, suggests another etymology, saying, she shall be called *assumption*, because taken from man ; and, adds he, *Issa* may be interpreted *assumption*, according to the variety of the *accents*, that is, the points ; his meaning is, that if the word is derived from *אש*, with the point on the left hand, then it may signify *assumption*, since the word, so pointed, signifies to assume : again, *Bersabee*, he says^k, as differently *accentuated*, that is pointed, may be translated the *well of the oath*, or the *well of satiety*, or of the *seventh* ; the reason of which is, because *עשבע* with a point on the right of *ש*, signifies *seven*, and to *swear* ; but with the same point on the left of

ⁱ Quæst. Heb. ad Gen. fol. 65. I.
in Amos, c. 8. fol. 99. B.

^k Comment.

of the letter, it signifies *fulness* and *satiety*, the same is observed by him in another place¹, that it has different senses according to the variety of the accents. Now could *Jerom* possibly make such observations as these without the knowledge of the points? for though from some of these passages it may be gathered, that unpointed books had been used, and so some were deceived thro' the ambiguity of words without points; yet how came it to pass that he himself was not deceived? and how could he be sure of the true *Hebrew* reading, if he had not seen pointed Bibles, or had not been taught that they were so pointed in such and such places? to suppose otherwise is quite incredible. And it appears also, that the punctuation in his time was the same with the modern punctuation, which he follows and scarce ever departs from; take, for instance, his reading the title of the 45th *Pfalm*, “ Lamanazeah al
 “ Sofannim, libne Corah, Maschil fir je-
 “ didoth ^m”; there is but one point missing, and that is the *Shevab* in the first word, and which is sometimes not pronounced,
 and

¹ Comment. in Is. c. 65. fol. 115. C.
 cipiam, fol. 34. F. Tom. 3.

^m Ad Prin-

and had no certain pronunciation with the antients; sometimes by *a*, sometimes by *i*, sometimes by an *e*, as now usually; according to the *Hebrew* grammarians, it has the nature of all the rest of the vowels, and is equal to them, and pronounced like them, at certain times under certain conditions §. Three whole verses in *Gen.* xvi. 18, 19, 20. are exactly pronounced according to the modern punctuation^a; his version of the *Psalms* agrees with the *Hebrew* text, as it now is, and as it is with the points: besides what can he mean by saying^o, that he then in his old age could not read the *Hebrew* text by candle-light, since the letters were so small, that they were enough to blind a man's eyes at noon-day? for the *Hebrew* letters, let them be wrote as small as they well can be, can not be lesser than the common *Roman* character; he must be understood surely of the small pricks or points which belonged to the *Hebrew* letters. How came he to put *Adonai* instead of *Jehovah*, in *Exod.* vi. 3. if he is the author

§ Vid. Balmes. Heb. Gram. five Mikneh Abraham, p. 28. Sepher Coffi, par. 2. f. 80. & Muscatum, in 1b. fol. 128. 1. & R. Judah Chijug, & Aben Ezra, in Muscat. ^a Ad Evagrium, fol. 13. 6. 1b. ^o Proem. in Sept. Comment. in Ezek. c. 20. fol. 208. G.