To Read or Not to Read?
Translating the Qere/Ketiv in
Modern English Translations of the Old Testament

Tim Hegg • TorahResource Institute • thegg@torahresource.com • ETS Annual Meeting, 2015 • Atlanta, GA

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is (1) to give a brief overview of what constitutes the *Qere/Ketiv* in the Masoretic notes of the extant codices, (2) to survey the history of interpretation as to the origins, purpose, and classifications of the *Qere/Ketiv* and to offer a brief evaluation of the various scholarly perspectives, and (3) to present the *Qere/Ketiv* involving לא and לו as a test case to see how modern English translations of the OT choose either the *Qere* or *Ketiv* in their respective translations. The translations chosen for this test case are:

> *New American Standard Bible* (The Lockman Foundation, 1995) – NASB
> *New Revised Standard Version* (NCCC, 1989) – NRSV
> *The Revised English Bible* (Oxford Univ Press, 1989) – REB
> *New International Version* (Zondervan, 2011) – NIV
> *English Standard Version* (Crossway, 2011) – ESV
> *New English Translation* (Bible Studies Press, 2011) – NET
> *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (Holman Bible Publishers, 2010) – HCSB
> *Tanach: Stone Edition* (Masorah Pub., 1996) – TNKS
> *The Tanakh* (Jewish Publication Society, 1985) – JPS
> *The Tree of Life Version* (Messianic Jewish Family Bible, 2014)

The Qere/Ketiv – What is this?

"*Qere*" (קְרֵי) is the passive form of the Aramaic verb meaning "read." Likewise, "*Ketiv*" (כְּתִיב) is Aramaic for "written." When the reader is to substitute a different word or pronunciation for a word in the written text, a *circule* is placed over the word in the text to alert the reader that the word written in the margin is to be substituted. Further, as an aid to the reader, the vocalization and (sometimes) the accentuation signs (טְעָמִים) placed on the word in the text are actually those which are to be used when reading the substitute word given in the margin marked by a dotted ק or sometimes קר or קרי (see Fig. 1).
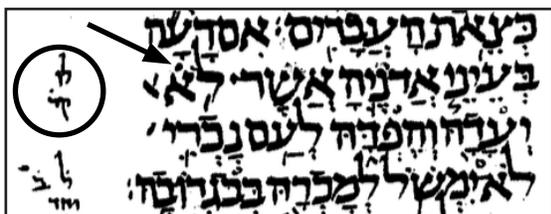

Fig. 1 – Ex 21:8, Leningradensis
לֹא = Ketiv; לוֹ = Qere

In *BHS* and *BHQ*, this same convention is followed. The *Ketiv* is written with the vowels of the *Qere*, with the consonants of the *Qere* in the margin marked by a קֹ (see Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 – Ex 21:8, *BHS*
לֹא = *ketiv*; לוֹ = *qere*

In some earlier manuscripts, only the part of the word or a single letter needing to be changed was written in the margin or in some cases, between the lines. This method is frequently found in the Palestinian system.[1] Likewise, in the development of the *Qere/Ketiv*, rather than using ק, קר, or קרי to mark the *Qere* in the margin, a symbol resembling a *nun sofit* (ן) was used (see Figs. 3 & 4ab)
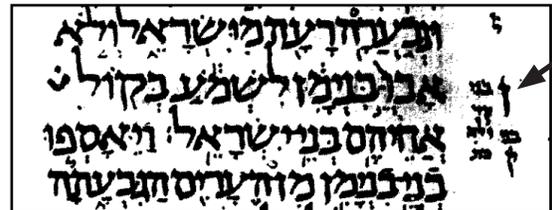

Fig. 3 – Judges 20:13, Leningrad Codex

Fig. 4a – Judges 20:13, *BHS*
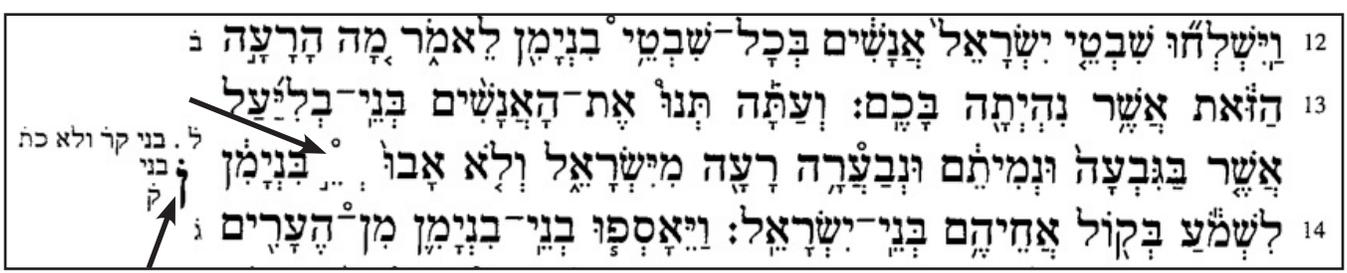
Fig. 4b – Judges 20:13, *BHQ*

According to Yeivin,

> This sign is found in MSS with Tiberian, Palestinian, or Babylonian pointing, and continues in use up to the twelfth century.[2]

Several explanations have been given for why a mark resembling the *nun sofit* would have been used to identify a marginal *Qere* by the Masoretes, but they have not proven satisfactory under scholarly scrutiny, and Yeivin as well as Dotan suggest that it is simply a mark that resembled a *nun sofit* but is not itself a letter nor an abbreviation for a word.[3] In current Masoretic studies, the Tiberian tradition of marking the *Qere* with ק is most often referred to in discussions on the *Qere/Ketiv*.

In addition to the *Qere/Ketiv* noted in the Masorah Parva, there are some "constant *Qere*" (*Qere perpetuum*) which are not indicated with an explicit Masoretic note, but the *Ketiv* is nonetheless vocalized with the vowels of the *Qere*. Examples are the *Ketiv* יהוה which is vocalized as יְהֹוָה, using the vowels of the *Qere*, אֲדֹנָי, unless יהוה appears next to אֲדֹנָי, in which case it is vocalized as יֱהֹוִה, utilizing the vowels of אֱלֹהִים. Other constant *Qere* include הוּא, pronounced היא though not noted as a *Qere/Ketiv*, יִשָּׂשכָר, perpetually pronounced as though written יִשָּׂכָר, and יְרוּשָׁלַם pronounced as though written יְרוּשָׁלַיִם.

The Origin, Purpose, and Classifications of the Qere/Ketiv: An Overview

What follows is a brief overview of the origin, purpose and classifications of the *Qere/Ketiv*, done by summarizing the conclusion of a number of recognized scholars in the field of Masoretic studies. The summary is arranged chronologically by the date of publication of the respective scholar's work in which his conclusion regarding the *Qere/Ketiv* is written.

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1   Aaron Dotan, "Masorah" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Keter, 1972), 16.1419. For examples, see William Morrow, "Kethib and Qere" in Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (Doubleday, 1992), 4.25.

2   Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, E. J. Revell, trans. (Scholars Press, 1980), p. 52, §93. See also C. D. Ginsburg, *The Masorah Compiled from Manuscripts*, 4 vols. (London, 1880–1905), 3.278.

3   Yeivin, Op. cit., p. 53, §93; Dotan, Op. cit., 1420.

Christian Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* **(London, 1897).**

Since the vowels of the *Ketiv* are not reproduced by the Masoretes, content to transmit only the vowels of the *Qere*, Ginsburg states:

> The Massorites, therefore, who have decided that the marginal *keri* is the correct one, have in all these instances deprived us of the vowel-signs which were originally affixed to the words exhibited in the text.[4]

Even though Ginsburg recognizes that according to the Masoretes the *Qere* was the "authoritative reading," he considered the *Ketiv* to be the preferable reading.

> Without entering into a discussion on the merits or demerits of these official various readings as a whole, it is now admitted by the best textual critics that in many instances the reading exhibited in the text (כתיב) is preferable to the marginal variant (קרי), inasmuch as it sometimes preserves the archaic orthography and sometimes gives the original reading. The *Kethiv* or textual reading moreover is in many instances not only supported by MSS. and early editions, but by the ancient Versions.[5]

Robert Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making: A Study of the Kethib-Qere* **(Philadelphia, 1937)**

After given a brief survey of extant proposals for the creation of the *Qere/Ketiv* system, proposals he dismisses for lack of supporting data, Gordis goes on to give his understanding of how the early *Qere/Ketiv* system developed. Taking the circumlocutions for the Tetragrammaton as the earliest case in point,[6] along with euphemisms when the biblical text was read in the synagogue, he writes:

> In the case of the Tetragrammaton and the euphemisms, it is easy to understand how the terms Kethib and Qere originated. Where one word was written (Kethib) in the text, the Reader was commanded: Read (Qere) so-and-so!" The Q was a direction to the Reader, to guard against blasphemy and obscenity, and the Reader who insisted on reading the K was therefore removed from his post. The meaning of the term is entirely natural and unforced.[7]

Gordis offers a further proposal regarding the existence and rise of the early *Qere/Ketiv* system. The basis for this proposal is that the *Qere/Ketiv* notations had their beginning before the invention of the *nikkudot,* in particular, the Masoretic vowel signs.

> It is our contention that the Kethib-Qere device was also utilized for the fixing of pronunciation before the invention of the vowel signs, and that a large percentage of the KQ are therefore not manuscript variations, but *guides to the correct reading in the absence of vowels.*[8]

While the early *Qere/Ketiv* were given as a guide to the reader, according to Gordis in time there came about "a radical and far-reaching extension of its original use."[9] He bases this upon the talmudic story, found in y.*Ta'anit* IV.2.[10]

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4   Christian Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1897), p. 183.
5   Ibid., p. 184.
6   Gordis contends that the "the earliest example where a word in the Biblical text was not read and another was pronounced in its place, is the *Tetragrammaton:* יהוה." (p. 29). He goes on to suggestion that the regular use of κύριος by the Lxx to translated the *Tetragrammaton* indicates that the translators were following the *Qere perpetuum.*
7   p. 31.
8   p. 35, emphasis his.
9   p. 40.
10   The report is also found in *Sifre Deut.* §356; *Avot de R. Natan*, version B, ch. 46; tractate *Sopherim*, VI, 4. For studies related to this report of שלשה ספרים מצאו בעזרה, see Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "The Three Books Found in the Temple

Three scrolls were found in the Temple courtyard, the *Me'oni* scroll (סֵפֶר מְעוֹנִי), the *Za'atutei* scroll (סֵפֶר זַעטוּטֵי), and the *Hee* scroll (סֵפֶר הִיא). In one they found written: It is a dwelling place (מְעוֹן) for the God of ages, whereas in two was written: It is a dwelling place (מְעֹנָה) for the God of ages. They maintained two and discounted one. In one they found written: And he sent the lads (זַעטוּטֵי) of the children of Israel, whereas in two was written: And he sent the youths (נַעֲרֵי) of the children of Israel. They maintained two and discounted one. In one they found written nine times היא whereas in two היא was written eleven times.

שלשה ספרים מצאו בעזרה ספר מעוני וספר זעטוטי וספר היא. באחד מצאו כתוב מעון אלהי קדם ובשנים כתוב מעונה אלהי קדם וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד. באחד מצאו כתוב וישלח את זעטוטי בני ישראל ובשנים כתוב וישלח את נערי בני ישראל וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד. באחד מצאו כתוב תשע היא ובשנים כתוב אחת עשרה היא וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד.[11]

From this account, Gordis concludes that while the sanctioned reading was entered into correct manuscripts, the suppressed reading may have continued to be the reading in ordinary copies that made no claim to accuracy.

> The earliest stage, then, in the treatment of variations was the rather crude procedure of accepting the reading vouched for by the larger number of manuscripts, and consigning the minority reading to oblivion.[12]

But such a procedure could not have been considered satisfactory for long. Depending merely upon majority of available copies to determine the authoritative reading undoubtedly would have raised suspicion of the possibility that the original readings might be lost. Thus Gordis proposes that the next step in the process was the method of conflation.

> Whenever two variants contested a given passage, an attempt was made by the Masoretes to embody them both in the text, if possible. This practice, it is true, often created an anomalous form or a difficult construction, but it had the merit of preserving readings that would otherwise have perished.[13]

After listing numbers of examples in which conflated readings seem to appear in the Tanach, he notes that, in practical measures, such a method of conflation could not have continued for long since it would have

> created difficult and impossible texts, in which the confusion was usually far more noticeable than the preservation of the variants. In addition, it had an even more serious drawback—its inadequacy. Very few divergences were susceptible to conflation; the vast majority could not be treated in this fashion at all. It is for this reason that conflation finds no recognition in Rabbinic or Masoretic tradition. Its period of activity must have been short-lived and its influence upon the history of the text relatively slight.[14]

Gordis suggests that in light of these inadequacies, other methods were employed to treat variants, such as the use of dots over words whose authenticity was doubtful. Yet any method utilized by which variants were retained in the text, even if marked as such, was destined to chaos. Scribes seeking to copy manuscripts as rapidly as possible would not only incorporate new variants but would very likely fail to distinguish variants previously noted. This leads Gordis to propose that the solution was "to adopt a standard codex by which others might be revised and which would serve as the archetype of all future

at Jerusalem," *JQR* 8 (1917–18), 385–423; Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Three Scrolls of the Law that were Found in the Temple Court," *Textus* 2 (1962), 14–27; Solomon Zeitlin, "Were there Three Torah-Scrolls in the Azarah?", *JQR* 56 (1966), 269–272. These three articles have been reprinted in Sid Z. Leiman, ed., *The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible* (KTAV, 1974), pp. 416–72.
11 Translation and text from the *The Jerusalem Talmud: Schottenstein Edition* (Mesorah Pub., 2014).
12 p. 41.
13 Ibid.
14 p. 43.

manuscripts."[15] He suggests that

> after the destruction of the Temple and the loss of political independence, Pharisaism became the only form of Judaism, and its archetype succeeded in becoming the textus receptus. The slightest peculiarities of this text, such as majuscules and minuscules, suspended letters and dotted words, were transmitted with reverential care and fidelity, exactly as they occurred in this standard codex.[16]

Further, Gordis suggests that an authoritative, archetype manuscript was adopted so that by the time of R. Akiva (c. 100 CE), a leading proponent of the new principles of interpretation, adherence to this archetype manuscript was given even further importance.

> Now, when every particle and prefix, plene and defectiva, was of potential importance as the source of new Halakah, a great impetus was given to a correct and fixed text, and the result was the adoption of a standard codex.[17]

When was this archetype manuscript adopted as the standard against which all other manuscripts would be judged? Gordis breaks with the scholarly consensus of his day and puts the existence of this archetype manuscript to at least a full generation before Akiva.

> …it is far more likely that the archetype had been chosen long before Akiba, and that he and his predecessors already found it installed as the textus receptus, and therefore available as the basis for their hermeneutics.[18]

Yet in spite of the fact that archetype, well in place before the destruction of the Temple and being regarded in accordance with its antiquity and trustworthiness, the early Masoretes must have been aware that even inferior manuscripts might contain superior or older readings at given passages. If, as it seems very likely, many other manuscripts existed during the late 2nd Temple period which were used in the Temple by scribes, and which were therefore also given due respect for their trustworthiness, Gordis believes that readings divergent from the archetype but still considered either preferable, or interesting, or at least satisfactory, were preserved in the margins of manuscripts.

> *Thus our written text, including the Kethib, is substantially the text of the archetype, while the Q is a selection of worth-while readings from the other non-archetypal manuscripts.* These variants, we believe, make up the bulk of the KQ variations as we know them today.… As a study of these will make plain, they are of all types, orthographical, morphologic, and rhetorical, but they all have one characteristic in common,—they are all *manuscript divergences, due to this earliest of collations.*[19]

The following are therefore the primary categories in which Gordis classes the *Qere/Ketiv*.
1. The earliest formulation of the *Qere/Ketiv*
   Guide against (1) blasphemy, (2) indecency (or obscenity), and (3) erroneous reading (i.e., guide to the reader).
2. The later formulation of the *Qere/Ketiv*
   Textual variants resulting from (1) orthographical variants, (2) phonetic variants, (3) morphological variants, and (5) interchange of particles.
3. A large number of the *Qere/Ketiv* are "unclassified."

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15 p. 45.
16 p. 47
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 p. 48, emphasis his.

Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Origin of the Kethib-Qere System: A New Approach" in Sid Z. Leiman, ed., *The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible* (KTAV, 1974) [Reprinted from *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1959).

In this and other published articles by Orlinsky, he calls into question the scholarly consensus of his day,[20] which was that

> …the Qere readings frequently represent corrections of the Kethib; that is to say, that the Jewish scholars responsible for the Kethib-Qere system…finding in their text readings that were, in their judgment, erroneous, corrected them, the corrected forms constituting the Qere.[21]

The primary basis of his critique of the view that the *Qere* is a correction of the *Ketiv* is the fact that a study of the *Qere/Ketiv* themselves shows the *Ketiv* is often superior to the *Qere*.

> Those scholars who have dealt directly with the Kethib-Qere recognize the significant fact that apart from those very many instances where the Kethib-Qere readings are equally acceptable to the textual critic, the Kethib reading is acceptable where the Qere is not, almost as often as the Qere is acceptable where its Ketib correspondent is not. In other words, if the Masoretes responsible for the Kethib-Qere system were correctors, why them is the Qere reading so frequently not acceptable where the Kethib is?[22]

Orlinsky gives an example of his critique of the prevailing view in his day, by noting the first *Qere/Ketiv* in the Tanach, i.e., Gen 8:17

כָּל־הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר־אִתְּךָ מִכָּל־בָּשָׂר בָּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הוֹצֵא [הַיְצֵא] אִתָּךְ וְשָׁרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּפָרוּ וְרָבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

> Clearly the Masoretes were neither correctors nor selectors; i.e., they did not deal with the Hebrew text of the Bible subjectively, *ad hoc*, deciding each reading within its context. That is why the very first Kethib-Qere in the Bible, Gen. 8:17, exhibits the anomalous, quite incorrect form הַיְצֵא, the alleged hiph'il imperative of the root יצא, as the Qere, and the patently correct and expected form, הוֹצֵא, as the Kethib. The verse reads: "God spoke to Noah, saying, 'Come out of the ark…and bring out (Qere הַיְצֵא, Kethib הוצא) with you every living thing….'"

He states his view of how the *Qere/Ketiv* came into existence:

> It is our hypothesis that the Masoretes first selected the three best manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible available to them. Where the three manuscripts had no variant readings, no difficulty was experienced in vocalizing the text. But where the manuscripts differed, the Masoretes accepted the reading of the majority and vocalized it; that reading became the Qere. The reading of the minority was left unvocalized , and became the Kethib. On this view, the Masoretes did not select or correct any reading; rather, automatically and objectively, regardless of personal opinion or predilection, the three selected manuscripts themselves, by a vote of two to one, determined the Kethib-Qere system. That is why in so many scores of instances, far more than one would expect and many more than is generally realized, the reading of the Kethib is clearly superior to that of the Qere, and yet it was the latter that became the accepted reading.[23]

Thus, in Orlinsky's view, the *Qere/Ketiv* system extant in the MT as found in codex L, represents the majority reading in the *Qere*, and the minority reading in the *Ketiv*, as determined by three manuscripts reported to have been found in the Temple (y.*Ta'anit* 23b).[24]

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20 Note Orlinsky's critique of Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making*, in "Problems of Kethib-Qere," *JAOS* 60.1 (March, 1940), 30–45.
21 *JAOS* 7 (1959), 185.
22 Ibid., p. 186.
23 Ibid., p. 187.
24 See p. 4 above.

Aron Dotan, "Masorah" in *The Encyclopedia Judaica* **(Keter, 1972), 16:1401–82.**[25]

In his *Encyclopedia Judaica* article on the Masorah, Dotan does not offer any theories as to how and why the *Qere/Ketiv* system developed, but he does note four main types of *Qere* notations in addition to *qere ve-la'ketiv* and *ketiv ve-la' qere.* These four are:

1. Euphemisms: Strong language is changed to euphemism.
   "Every derogatory written expression is replaced by one of refinement, e.g., 'Thou shalt betroth a wife and another man shall enjoy her (ישגלנה)' [Deut 28:30]: every place where ישגלנה is written, they read יִשְׁכָּבֶנָּה (shall lie with her)…." (t.*Megilla* 4:39–41)

2. Correction of Forms: Archaic forms or grammatically exceptional forms are substituted by a standard one, e.g., the suffix of the second person feminine—לכי – לָךְ (2Ki 4:2), קראתי – קָרֵאת (Jer 3:4), בניכי – וּבָנָיִךְ (2Ki 4:7), and the suffix of the verb in the perfect, plural third person feminine נצתה – נִצְּתוּ (Jer 2:15).

3. Correction of Errors: Errors, or what appeared to the masoretes to be errors, are corrected…such as metathesis, substitution of letters, the omission or addition of letters, changes in the divisions of the words, the substitution of whole words, etc. For example, ותראנה – וַתָּאֹרְנָה (1Sam 14:27); שלל – הַשָּׁלָל (1Sam 14:32); הזאתה – הַזֹּאת (Jer 26:6); ויעש – וַיַּעַט (1Sam 14:32); יך – יָד (1Sam 4:13); העיר – חָצֵר (2Ki 20:4), שם הפלשתים – שָׁמָּה פְּלִשְׁתִּים (2Sam 21:12); etc.

4. מלא וחסר (Plene and Defective): Changes in the writing occur because of *matres lectionis*. It is with regard to this group that variants in the different manuscripts are the most frequent.

5. Qere Perpetuum: These were handed down orally from generation to generation and are not noted by way of written symbol in the biblical text itself. These include the Tetragrammaton, the 3rd person fem. sg. pronoun, הוא (read as הִיא), ירושלם read as יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, etc.

Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah***, trans. E. J. Revell (Scholars Press, 1980)**

After briefly noting the various viewpoints of scholars as to the origin of the *Qere/Ketiv* system, Yeivin remarks that no single position is able to give a satisfactory explanation for all examples. He notes that in rare instances of the *Qere/Ketiv*, the *Qere* is more difficult to understand than the reading of the *Ketiv*, but this hardly helps move us toward a comprehensive explanation for how and why the system was created and evolved. Here is his conclusion on the matter:

> All that is clear, however, is that the wording of the reading tradition is not, at these points, represented by the letters in the received text. Suggestions on the origin of the phenomenon are all speculative.[26]

He notes that the *Qere/Ketiv* system as a written notation by the Masoretes came after the invention and establishment of the vowel signs, meaning no earlier than the eighth century.[27]

His list of categories for the *Qere/Ketiv* notes is essentially the same as Dotan's.

> 1. Euphemisms; 2. Unusual *plene* or defective writings; 3. "Correcting" archaic or dialectal forms; 4. Other Categories: (a) metathesis, (b) differences in word division, (c) omission of a letter, (d) addition of letters, and (e) replacement of a letter by another of similar form.

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25 Dotan's article "Masorah" in the 2nd edition of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2007) is the same as that found in the 1st edition, but with the correction of some typographical errors in the earlier edition.
26 p. 61, §107.
27 p. 59, §104.

Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd revised Edition (Fortress, 1992)

Tov lists four primary categories for the *Qere/Ketiv* which have been suggested by scholars.[28]

1. The *Qere* corrects the *Ketiv*, as indicated by the Masorah.
    He goes on to show a number factors which mitigate against this view:
    a. Exactly the same words—with identical meaning—sometimes form the *Qere* word in one verse, and the *Ketiv* word in another one. E.g., Gen 39:20 / Judg 16:21, 25.
    b. In addition to several instances of *Ketiv* presumably corrected by a *Qere* there are identical words which have not been corrected in other places. E.g., Gen 24:33 / 50:26.
    c. The *Qere* words include several forms that are less plausible than the *Ketiv* with regard to either context or grammar. E.g., Gen 8:17 (K = הוֹצֵא, Q = הַיְצֵא); 2Sam 3:25 (K = מְבוֹאֶךָ, Q = מוֹבָאֶךָ)
    d. The consonants of the *Qere* word are almost always similar to those of the *Ketiv* word, and it is unlikely that the presumed correctional activity would have been limited to similar consonants.
2. The *Qere* word was written alongside the *Ketiv* as a variant.
    Tov notes several variants on this suggested category, one by Orlinsky (see p. 6 above), that the variants were culled from one or more manuscripts, and another from Sperber,[29] who seeks to show from the "parallel historic narratives" of Samuel and Chronicles, that the *Qere/Ketiv* were noted variant readings between the two. Against this view, Tov notes that "one may claim that it is illogical that in each case there would have existed only one variant."[30]
3. Intermediate Positions: Three views
    a. According to Gordis (see pp. 3–5 above), the Qere/Ketiv originated as marginal corrections and later were used to denote optional variants, which in due course became obligatory.
    b. Another intermediate view is that all the *Qere* words were initially optional variants which were subsequently taken as corrections on the basis of their location in the margins of the manuscripts.
    c. A third intermediate view is that the *Qere* words were collected as corrections from an obligatory text such as an exemplary manuscript. Such a source could also have contained inferior readings, so that not all the corrections of this type were necessarily consistent or logical.
4. The *Qere* tradition did not originate in written sources but rather in the reading tradition of the synagogue.
    This view is based primarily on the fact that one never finds more than one *Qere* word in the manuscripts, and this points to a reading tradition, which is naturally limited to one word.

Tov gives this conclusion:

> Most scholars now adhere to the first intermediate view described in paragraph γ [#3a above]. If that view is correct, most of the *Ketib-Qere* interchanges should be understood as an ancient collection of variants. Indeed, for many categories of *Ketib-Qere* interchanges similar differences are known between ancient witnesses.[31]

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28 pp. 60–63.
29 Alexander Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Brill, 1966), pp. 493ff.
30 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 62.
31 Ibid., p. 63.

Summary: The Origin and Purpose of the **Qere/Ketiv**

It would seem that the origin of the *Qere/Ketiv* system was developed during the Masoretic era in primarily to (1) aid scribes in the accurate transmission of the text and (2) to establish the accepted reading of the text in the synagogue setting, a reading tradition that incorporated widely accepted *halalchah* which substituted euphemistic terms for what might be considered vulgar or degrading words when read in the context of men and women, adults and children. Such substitutions included circumlocutions for the Tetragrammaton.

In addition to these two categories which were deemed necessary for the establishment of a unified biblical text as employed in the synagogue, it also seems that (3) some of the *Qere/Ketiv* arose out of variants known to exist in manuscripts which were held in high regard, perhaps because of their physical location (such as having been housed in the Jerusalem Temple) or because of their association with a revered teacher or leader.

In the end, we cannot know for sure what factors played a major role in the development of the *Qere/Ketiv* system, but we do know the system was well established in the Masoretic era, and that the primary manuscripts and codices upon which we now depend in regard to the established text of the Tanach contain the *Qere/Ketiv,* and that therefore, we ought to pay attention to it as we engage in exegesis and teaching of the biblical text.

Some Rabbinic References to the **Qere/Ketiv**

The following are a sampling of rabbinic references to the *Qere/Ketiv.*

> And both [two authorities who differed], said R. Johanan, based their expositions on the same Scriptural text [2Ki 20:4], for it is said: "And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out of the inner court [חצר = *Q*]" since it was written 'the city' [העיר = *K*] and we read 'court' it may be inferred that royal rear-courts were as big as moderately sized cities. (b.*Eruvin* 26a)

Here we see both *Q* and *K* are valued as assisting in understanding divergent *halachic* opinions among recognized authorities.

> But was the fire present at the second Temple? Surely R. Samuel b. Inia said: What is the meaning of the scriptural verse [Hag 1:8] – "And I will take pleasure in it [וְאֶרְצֶה] and I will be glorified [וְאֶכָּבֵד = *K*]?" The traditional reading is [וְאֶכָּבְדָה = *Q*], then why is the ה omitted in the text? To indicate that in five things the first Sanctuary differed from the second: in the ark, the ark-cover, the Cherubim, the fire, the Shechinah, the Holy Spirit [of Prophecy], and the Urim-ve-Thummim [the Oracle Plate]? — I will tell you, They were present, but they were not as helpful [as before]. (b.*Yoma* 21b)

In this case, the *Ketiv* is used to develop a *midrashic* argument to explain why the "fire" on the altar was (supposedly) different in Solomon's temple than in the second Temple.

Another example is taken from Midrash Rabbah *Bereishit*:

> Bring forth (הוצא = *K*) with you every living thing that is with you…that they may swarm in the earth (Gen 8:17). R. Judan said: הוצא is written, but it is read היצא [= *Q*]; "that they may swarm in the earth" – but not in the Ark; "and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth" – but not in the Ark. (Mid. Rab. *Bereishit* §34.8)

There seems to be no basis in the *Qere/Ketiv* for the midrashic statement except perhaps that the rabbinic midrash is an attempt to give some meaning to the anomalous form הַיְצֵא. Rashi, apparently feeling the need to give both *Qere* and *Ketiv* their equal due, developed his own midrashic explanation for Gen 8:17.

> הוצא is the *Ketiv* but היצא is the *Qere*. היצא denotes "say unto them that they are to go out." הוצא denotes "if they do not desire to go out, bring them out yourself." (Rashi on בראשית ח'יז)

Utilizing the Masoretic notes, and particularly the *Qere/Ketiv, Qere veLo Ketiv, Ketiv veLo Qere,* and *Malei veChaseir,* became standard practice for midrashic teaching among some of the medieval rabbis, exemplified perhaps in the work of R. Yaakov ben Asher, known as the Baal HaTurim (c. 1269–c. 1327). It is perhaps no surprise that the *Qere/Ketiv* would be used by the Kabbalists to expound "hidden meanings" and explanations of the text which otherwise could never have been imagined.

The Qere/Ketiv לֹו/לֹא as an Investigative Sample for Modern English Translations of the Bible

The procedure for this investigation is (1) to list the occurrences in the Tanach, as represented by the Leningrad and Aleppo codices, of לֹא as the *Ketiv* and לֹו is the *Qere,* (2) to note the readings of other sources (Qumran, Lxx, Samaritan Pentateuch, Vulgate, Syriac OT) as to which reading is favored, and (3) to list the translations of this small sampling of texts from ten English Bibles (see p. 1) in order to see how they each deal with *Qere/Ketiv.*

Exodus 21:8

MT	SP	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
אִם־רָעָ֞ה בְּעֵינֵ֧י אֲדֹנֶ֛יהָ אֲשֶׁר־לֹא [ל֖וֹ] יְעָדָ֑הּ וְהֶפְדָּ֑הּ לְעַ֥ם נָכְרִ֛י לֹא־יִמְשֹׁ֥ל לְמָכְרָ֖הּ בְּבִגְדוֹ־בָֽהּ׃	אם רעה היא בעיני אדניה אשר לא העידה והפדה לעם נכרי לא ימשל למכרה בבגדו בה:		ἐὰν μὴ εὐαρεστήσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτῆς ἣν αὑτῷ καθωμολογήσατο, ἀπολυτρώσει αὐτήν· ἔθνει δὲ ἀλλοτρίῳ οὐ κύριός ἐστιν πωλεῖν αὐτήν, ὅτι ἠθέτησεν ἐν αὐτῇ.	ܐܢ ܒܝܫܐ ܗܝ ܒܥܝܢܝ ܡܪܗ. ܘܠܐ ܢܣܒܗ. ܢܦܪܩܝܗ. ܠܥܡ ܢܘܟܪܝ ܠܐ ܡܫܠܛ ܠܗ ܠܡܙܒܢܘܬܗ. ܡܛܠ ܕܕܓܠ ܒܗ.	si displicuerit oculis domini sui cui tradita fuerit dimittet eam populo autem alieno vendendi non habet potestatem si spreverit eam
If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master, who did not designate her [who designated her to himself], then he shall let her be redeemed. To a foreign people he will not have authority to sell her because of his treachery against her.	If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master, who did not embrace her, he shall let her be redeemed. To a foreign people he has no power to sell her because of his treachery against her.		If she is not pleasing to her master, after she has been betrothed to him, he shall let her be redeemed; but he may not sell her to a foreign nation, because he has acted unfaithfully with her.	If she is hated in the eyes of her master so that he does not take her to himself, he shall let her be redeemed. He will have no right to sell her to a foreign people, because he has dealt deceitfully with her.	If she displeases the eyes of her master to whom she was delivered, he shall let her go: but he shall have no power to sell her to a foreign nation, since he despised her.

Both the SP and the Syriac retain the *Ketiv*. The Lxx and Vulgate translate the *Qere*. The text is not found in Qumran.

NASB – If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master *who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her. [*Another reading is so that he did not designate her] Q

NRSV – If she does not please her master, who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt unfairly with her. Q

REB – If she proves unpleasing to her master who had designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he has treated her unfairly, and therefore he has no right to sell her to foreigners. Q

NIV – If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her. Q

ESV – If she does not please her master, who has designated her* for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her. [*Or so that he has not designated her] Q

NET – If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to a foreign nation, because he has dealt deceitfully with her. Q

HCSB – If she is displeasing to her master, who chose her for himself, then he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners because he has acted treacherously toward her. Q

TNKS – If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master, who should have designated her for himself, he shall assist in her redemption; he shall not have the power to see her to a strange man, for he had betrayed her. Q

JPS – If she proves to be displeasing to her master, who designated her for himself, he must let her be redeemed; he shall not have the right to sell her to outsiders, since he broke faith with her. Q

TLV – If she does not please her master who has selected her for himself, then he is to allow her to be redeemed. He will have no power to sell her to a foreign people, seeing as he has dealt deceitfully toward her. Q

MT	SP	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
אַךְ אֶת־זֶה תֹּאכְלוּ מִכֹּל שֶׁרֶץ הָעוֹף הַהֹלֵךְ עַל־אַרְבַּע אֲשֶׁר־לֹא [לוֹ] כְרָעַיִם מִמַּעַל לְרַגְלָיו לְנַתֵּר בָּהֵן עַל־הָאָרֶץ:	אך את זה תאכלו מכל שרץ העוף ההלך על ארבע אשר לא כרעים ממעל לרגליו לנתר בהם על הארץ		Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα φάγεσθε ἀπὸ τῶν ἑρπετῶν τῶν πετεινῶν, ἃ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τέσσαρα· ἃ ἔχει σκέλη ἀνώτερον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ πηδᾶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.	ܘܗܠܝܢ ܐܟܘܠܘ ܡܢ ܟܠܗ ܪܚܫܐ ܕܦܪܚܬܐ. ܘܡܗܠܟ ܥܠ ܐܪܒܥ. ܘܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܩܛܝܪܐ ܠܥܠ ܡܢ ܪܓܠܘܗܝ. ܘܒܗ ܗܘܐ ܕܐܦܙ.	quicquid autem ambulat quidem super quattuor pedes sed habet longiora retro crura per quae salit super terram comedere
Yet these you may eat among all the winged swarming things which walk on all fours: those which do not have [do have] above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth.	Yet these you may eat among all the winged swarming things which walk on all fours: those which do not have above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth.		But these you may eat of the creeping winged animals, which go upon four feet, which have legs above their feet, to leap with on the earth.	You may eat of the offspring of the bird-*like* animals which walk upon four *feet*, which have a claw (*joint*)above from its foot to leap with it upon the earth.	But whatsoever walks upon four feet, but has the legs behind longer, with which it hops upon the earth, you may eat.

All versions read the *Qere*, and the following verse (11:22) lists those "swarming things" (שֶׁרֶץ) described anatomically in v. 21. Not found in Qumran.

NASB – Yet these you may eat among all the winged insects which walk on all fours: <u>those which have</u> above their feet jointed legs with which to jump on the earth. *Q*

NRSV – But among the winged insects that walk on all fours you may eat <u>those that have</u> jointed legs above their feet, with which to leap on the ground. *Q*

REB – except <u>those which have</u> legs jointed above their feet for leaping on the ground. *Q*

NIV – There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: <u>those that have</u> jointed legs for hopping on the ground. *Q*

ESV – Yet among the winged insects that go on all fours you may eat <u>those that have</u> jointed legs above their feet, with which to hop on the ground. *Q*

NET – However, this you may eat from all the winged swarming things that walk on all fours, <u>which have</u> jointed legs* to hop with on the land. [*Heb "which to it are lower legs from above to its feet" (reading the Qere "to it" rather than the Kethib "not")]. *Q*

HCSB – But you may eat these kinds of all the winged insects that walk on all fours: <u>those that have</u> jointed legs above their feet for hopping on the ground. *Q*

TNKS – Only this may you eat from among all flying teeming creatures that walk on four legs: <u>one that has</u> jumping legs above its legs, with which to spring upon the earth. *Q*

JPS – But these you may eat among all the winged swarming things that walk on fours: <u>all that have</u>, above their feet, jointed legs to leap with on the ground. *Q*

TLV – Yet you may eat from all winged creeping things that go on all fours, <u>which have</u> legs above their feet, with which to hop on the earth. *Q*

MT	SP	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וְאִם לֹא־יִגָּאֵל עַד־מְלֹאת לוֹ שָׁנָה תְמִימָה וְקָם הַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר־בָּעִיר אֲשֶׁר־לֹא [לוֹ] חֹמָה לַצְּמִיתֻת לַקֹּנֶה אֹתוֹ לְדֹרֹתָיו לֹא יֵצֵא בַּיֹּבֵל׃	ואם לא יגאל עד מלאת לו שנה תמימה וקם הבית אשר בעיר אשר לו חומה לצמיתת לקנה אתו לדרתיו לא יצא ביובל׃	ואם לא יגאל עד מלאות לו שנה תמימה וקם הבית אשר בעיר לו חומה לצמיתות לקנה אתו לדרתיו לא יצא ביובל.	ἐὰν δὲ μὴ λυτρωθῇ, ἕως ἂν πληρωθῇ αὐτῆς ἐνιαυτὸς ὅλος, κυρωθήσεται ἡ οἰκία ἡ οὖσα ἐν πόλει τῇ ἐχούσῃ τεῖχος βεβαίως τῷ κτησαμένῳ αὐτὴν εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξελεύσεται ἐν τῇ ἀφέσει.	ܘܐܢ ܠܐ ܡܬܦܪܩ ܥܕܡܐ ܘܡܫܠܡ ܠܗ ܫܢܬܐ ܡܬܚܡܐ. ܢܩܘܡ ܒܝܬܐ ܕܒܩܪܝܬܐ ܘܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܫܘܪܐ ܚܡܝܡܐ ܠܡܢ ܕܙܒܢܗ. ܠܕܪ̈ܘܗܝ܂ ܘܠܐ ܢܦܘܩ ܡܢܗ ܒܝܘܒܠܐ.	si non redemerit et anni circulus fuerit evolutus emptor possidebit eam et posteri eius in perpetuum et redimi non poterit etiam in iobeleo
But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the [walled] un-walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee.	But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee.	But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee.	And if it is not ransomed until there is completed of its time a full year, the house which is in the walled city shall be surely confirmed to him that bought it, throughout his generations; and it shall not go out in the release.	If it is not redeemed with a complete year, then the house that is in the walled city shall be confirmed throughout his generations to the one who bought it. It shall not be released in the jubilee.	If he does not redeem it with the circle of a full year, the buyer, and his posterity shall own it forever, it cannot be redeemed, even in the jubilee.

All versions, except for the Vulgate, follow the *Qere*. The Vulgate leaves out the phrase regarding the "walled city," giving no evidence of the *Qere/Ketiv*

NASB – But if it is not bought back for him within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city passes permanently to its purchaser throughout his generations; it does not revert in the jubilee. *Q*

NRSV – If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, a house that is in a walled city shall pass in perpetuity to the purchaser, throughout the generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. *Q*

REB – If it is not redeemed before a full year is out, the house in the walled town will belong for ever to the buyer and his descendants; it does not revert to its former owner at the jubilee. *Q*

NIV – If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. *Q*

ESV – If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. *Q*

NET – If it is not redeemed within a full year, then the house in the walled city shall belong in perpetuity to the buyer, throughout his generations; it shall not be released in the jubilee. *Q*

HCSB – If it is not redeemed by the end of a full year, then the house in the walled city is permanently transferred to its purchaser throughout his generations. It is not to be released on the Jubilee. *Q*

TNKS – But if it is not redeemed until its full year has elapsed, then the home that is in a city that has a wall shall pass in perpetuity to the one who purchased it, for his generations; it shall not go out in the Jubilee Year. *Q*

JPS – If it is not redeemed before a full year has elapsed, the house in the walled city shall pass to the purchaser beyond reclaim throughout the ages; it shall not be released in the jubilee. *Q*

TLV – But if it is not redeemed within the space of a full year, then the house that is in the walled city will belong permanently to the one who bought it throughout his generations. It will not be released in the Jubilee. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
אַל־תַּרְבּוּ תְדַבְּרוּ גְּבֹהָה גְבֹהָה יֵצֵא עָתָק מִפִּיכֶם כִּי אֵל דֵּעוֹת יְהוָה וְלֹא [וְלֹ][לוֹ] נִתְכְּנוּ עֲלִלוֹת:	[אל תרבו תדברו גבהה אל יצא ע]תק מפיכם כי אל דעת [יהוה ואל תוכן עללותיו].	μὴ καυχᾶσθε καὶ μὴ λαλεῖτε ὑψηλά, μὴ ἐξελθάτω μεγαλορρημοσύνη ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ὑμῶν, ὅτι θεὸς γνώσεων κύριος καὶ θεὸς ἑτοιμάζων ἐπιτηδεύματα αὐτοῦ.	ܠܐ ܐܣܓܝ̈ܢ ܠܡܡܠܠܐ ܙܘܪܚ̈ܐ. ܘܠܐ ܢܦܘܩ ܠܫܘܩܪܐ ܡܢ ܦܘܡܟܘܢ. ܡܛܠ ܕܝܕܥܐ ܗܘ ܡܪܝܐ. ܘܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܙܢܟ̈ܐ ܩܝܡܝܢܗܝ.	nolite multiplicare loqui sublimia gloriantes recedant vetera de ore vestro quoniam Deus scientiarum Dominus est et ipsi praeparantur cogitationes
Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, [And with Him actions are weighed] and they (i.e., underhanded actions) have no place before Him.		Do not boast and do not speak proudly, do not go about speaking forth arrogance out of your mouth, because a God of knowledge is the Lord, and God prepares His purposes.	Do not multiply speaking of great things; and do not speak forth wrongful things from your mouth. Because the Lord is knowledgeable and no devices can stand before Him.	Do not multiply to speak lofty things, boasting: let old matters depart from your mouth: for the Lord is a God of all knowledge, and to him are thoughts prepared.

The Lxx may have read the verb as from כון rather than from תֵּכֵ [תקן] and either followed the sense of the *Qere* or followed a text which had neither the *Qere* or the *Ketiv*. The Syriac follows the *Ketiv*. The Vulgate follows the *Qere*. The text involving the Q/K is missing in the DSS.

NASB – Boast no more so very proudly, Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth; For the LORD is a God of knowledge, And <u>with Him</u> actions are weighed. *Q*

NRSV – Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and <u>by him</u> actions are weighed. *Q*

REB – Cease your proud boasting, let no word of arrogance pass your lips, for the Lord is a God who knows; he governs what mortals do. *Q*

NIV – Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and <u>by him</u> deeds are weighed. *Q*

ESV – Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and <u>by him</u> actions are weighed. *Q*

NET – Don't keep speaking so arrogantly, letting proud talk come out of your mouth! For the LORD is a God who knows; <u>he* evaluates</u> what people do. [* The MT (Qere) reads "and by him actions are weighed." The translation assumes that reading of the Qere וְלוֹ (*vélo*, "and by him"), which is supported by many medieval Hebrew MSS, is correct, rather than the reading of the Kethib וְלוֹא (*vélo'*, "and not").] *Q*

HCSB – Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed <u>by Him</u>. *Q*

TNKS – Do not abound in speaking with arrogance upon arrogance, let not haughtiness come from your mouth; for HaShem is the God of thoughts, and [men's] deeds are accounted <u>by Him</u>. *Q*

JPS – Talk no more with lofty pride, Let no arrogance cross your lips! For the LORD is an all-knowing God; <u>By Him</u> actions are measured. *Q*

TLV – Boast no more so proudly— insolence comes out of your mouth. For Adonai is the all-knowing God, and <u>by Him</u> deeds are weighed. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וַיֹּאמֶר חוּשַׁי אֶל־אַבְשָׁלֹם לֹא כִּי אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר יְהוָה וְהָעָם הַזֶּה וְכָל־אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא [לוֹ] אֶהְיֶה וְאִתּוֹ אֵשֵׁב:	[ויאמר חושי אל אבשלום לוא כי אחר אשר בחר יהו]ה והעם הזה.	καὶ εἶπεν Χουσι πρὸς Αβεσσαλωμ Οὐχί, ἀλλὰ κατόπισθεν οὗ ἐξελέξατο κύριος καὶ ὁ λαὸς οὗτος καὶ πᾶς ἀνὴρ Ισραηλ, αὐτῷ ἔσομαι καὶ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ καθήσομαι·	[Syriac text]	responditque Husai ad Absalom nequaquam quia illius ero quem elegit Dominus et omnis hic populus et universus Israhel et cum eo manebo
Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, [his I will be] will I not be, and with him I will remain[.]?		And Chousi said to Abessalom, "No! But after he whom the LORD and this people and every man of Israel has chosen, to him I will be and with him I will remain.	And Hushai said to Absalom, No, but whom the Lord and this people and all Israel have chosen, with him I will dwell and his I will be.	And Husai answered Absalom: No: for I will be his, whom the Lord has chosen, and all this people, and all Israel, and with him will I remain.

All versions follow the *Qere*. The text which includes the *Q/K* is missing in the DSS.

NASB – Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and <u>with him</u> I will remain. *Q*

NRSV – Then Hushai said to Absalom, "No! For whom the LORD, this people, and all the men of Israel have chosen, his I will be, and <u>with him</u> I will remain. *Q*

REB – Hushai answered, 'Because I mean to attach myself to the man chosen by the Lord and by this people and by all the men of Israel, and <u>with him</u> I shall stay. *Q*

NIV – Hushai said to Absalom, "No, the one chosen by the LORD, by these people, and by all the men of Israel—<u>his I will be</u>, and I will remain with him. *Q*

ESV – And Hushai said to Absalom, "No, for whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, <u>his I will be</u>, and with him I will remain. *Q*

NET – Hushai replied to Absalom, "No, I will be loyal <u>to the one</u> whom the LORD, these people, and all the men of Israel have chosen. *Q*

HCSB – Not at all," Hushai answered Absalom. "<u>I am on the side of the one</u> that the LORD, the people, and all the men of Israel have chosen. I will stay with him. *Q*

TNKS – Hushai said to Absalom, "No! Rather, he whom HaShem—as well as this people and every man of Israel—has chosen, <u>his shall I be</u> and with him I shall stay!" *Q*

JPS – "Not at all!" Hushai replied. "<u>I am for the one</u> whom the LORD and this people and all the men of Israel have chosen, and I will stay with him. *Q*

TLV – "No!" said Hushai to Absalom. "For the one whom Adonai has chosen—as well as these people, all the men of Israel—<u>his I will be</u> and with him I will stay. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֱלִישָׁע לֵךְ אֱמָר־לֹא [לוֹ] חָיֹה תִחְיֶה וְהִרְאַנִי יְהוָה כִּי־מוֹת יָמוּת׃		καὶ εἶπεν Ελισαιε Δεῦρο εἰπὸν αὐτῷ Ζωῇ ζήσῃ· καὶ ἔδειξέν μοι κύριος ὅτι θανάτῳ ἀποθανῇ.	ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܐܠܝܫܥ ܙܠ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܚܐ ܚܝܐ ܚܝܬ ܘܚܘܝܢܝ ܡܪܝܐ ܕܡܡܬ ܢܡܘܬ	dixitque ei Heliseus vade dic ei sanaberis porro ostendit mihi Dominus quia morte morietur
Then Elisha said to him, "Go, say [to him], 'You will surely not live,' [You will surely live] for [but] the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die."		And Elisha said, "Go, say, you will certainly live; yet the Lord has shown me that you will surely die.	And Elisha said, "Go, say to him, 'You will surely die,' but the Lord has shown me that you will surely die."	Elisha said to him, "Go, say 'You will be healed,' but God has shown to me that he will surely die."

All versions follow the *Qere*. The text is not found at Qumran.
The impetus for the *Ketiv* may have been to spare Elisha from ordering Hazael to deliver a false prophecy.
However, the *Ketiv* is possible if the following *vav* conjunction is taken as pleonastic.

NASB – Then Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You will surely recover,' but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die." *Q*

NRSV – Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover'; but the LORD has shown me that he shall certainly die." *Q*

REB – 'Go and tell him that he will recover,' he answered; 'but the Lord has revealed to me that in fact he will die.' *Q*

NIV – Elisha answered, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover'; but the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die." *Q*

ESV – Elisha answered, "Go and say to him, 'You will certainly recover'; but the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die." *Q*

NET – Elisha said to him, "Go and tell him, 'You will surely recover,' but the LORD has revealed to me that he will surely die." *Q*

HCSB – Elisha told him, "Go say to him, 'You are sure to recover.' But the LORD has shown me that he is sure to die." *Q*

TNKS – Elisha said to him, "Go say to him, 'You should indeed recover'; but in fact HaShem has shown me that he will indeed die [from another cause.] [Note: "Elisha meant that under normal circumstances Ben-hadad would recover from this illness. However, he will die of other causes before he recovers."] *Q*

JPS – Elisha said to him, "Go and say to him, 'You will recover.' However, the LORD has revealed to me that he will die." *Q*

TLV – Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him: 'You will surely recover.' However, Adonai has also shown me that he will surely die." *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
הִרְבִּיתָ הַגּוֹי לֹא [לוֹ] הִגְדַּלְתָּ הַשִּׂמְחָה שָׂמְחוּ לְפָנֶיךָ כְּשִׂמְחַת בַּקָּצִיר כַּאֲשֶׁר יָגִילוּ בְּחַלְּקָם שָׁלָל׃	הרביתה הגוי לוא הגדלתה השמחה שמחו לפניך כאשר כשמחת בקציר יגילו בחלקם שלל	τὸ πλεῖστον τοῦ λαοῦ, ὃ κατήγαγες ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ σου, καὶ εὐφρανθήσονται ἐνώπιόν σου ὡς οἱ εὐφραινόμενοι ἐν ἀμήτῳ καὶ ὃν τρόπον οἱ διαιρούμενοι σκῦλα.	ܐܣܓܝܬ ܥܡܐ ܘܐܠܐ ܐܘܪܒܬ ܚܕܘܬܗ܂ ܚܕܝܢ ܩܕܡܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܕܚܕܝܢ ܒܚܨܕܐ܂ ܘܐܝܟ ܗܘ ܕܕܝܨܝܢ ܟܕ ܡܦܠܓܝܢ ܒܙܬܐ܂	multiplicasti gentem non magnificasti laetitiam laetabuntur coram te sicut laetantur in messe sicut exultant quando dividunt spolia
You have multiplied the nation, You have not increase gladness; [You have increase their gladness;] They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.	You multiplied the nation, you did not increase joy. They rejoiced in Your presence as with the joy at harvest, as people cheer when they divide the spoil.	The multitude of the people which You have brought down in Your joy, they shall even rejoice before You as they that rejoice in harvest, and as they that divide the spoil.	You have increased the people and enlarged its joy; they are joyful before You as those who rejoice in harvest, and as those who leap for joy when they divide the spoil.	You have multiplied the nation, and have not increased the joy. They shall rejoice before You, as they that rejoice in the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoils.

Qumran 1QIsᵃ and the Vulgate translate the *Ketiv* while the Lxx and Syriac translate the *Qere*.

NASB – You shall multiply the nation, <u>You shall increase their gladness</u>; They will be glad in Your presence as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. *Q*

NRSV – You have multiplied the nation, <u>you have increased its joy</u>; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,   as people exult when dividing plunder. *Q*

REB – <u>You have increased their joy</u> and given them great gladness; they rejoice in your presence as those who rejoice at harvest, as warriors exult when dividing spoil. *Q*

NIV – You have enlarged the nation and <u>increased their joy</u>; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. *Q*

ESV – You have multiplied the nation; <u>you have increased its joy</u>; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. *Q*

NET – You have enlarged the nation; <u>you give them great joy</u>. They rejoice in your presence as harvesters rejoice; as warriors celebrate when they divide up the plunder. *Q*

HCSB – You have enlarged the nation and <u>increased its joy</u>. The people have rejoiced before You as they rejoice at harvest time and as they rejoice when dividing spoils. *Q*

TNKS – You exalted the nation; <u>You increased its joy</u>. They rejoiced before You like the joy of harvest time, as the would exult when they divide spoils. *Q*

JPS – You have magnified that nation, <u>have given it great joy</u>; They have rejoiced before You as they rejoice at reaping time, as they exult when dividing spoil. *Q*

TLV – You will multiply the nation. <u>You will increase the joy</u>. They will rejoice before You like the joy in the harvest, as they revel when they divide spoil. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וְעַתָּה אָמַר יְהוָה יֹצְרִי מִבֶּטֶן לְעֶבֶד לוֹ לְשׁוֹבֵב יַעֲקֹב אֵלָיו וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא [לוֹ] יֵאָסֵף וְאֶכָּבֵד בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וֵאלֹהַי הָיָה עֻזִּי׃	ועתה אמר יהוה יוצרך מבטן לעבד לו לשובב יעקוב אליו וישראל לו יאסף ואכבדה בעיני יהוה ואלוהי היה עזרי	καὶ νῦν οὕτως λέγει κύριος ὁ πλάσας με ἐκ κοιλίας δοῦλον ἑαυτῷ τοῦ συναγαγεῖν τὸν Ιακωβ καὶ Ισραηλ πρὸς αὐτόν συναχθήσομαι καὶ δοξασθήσομαι ἐναντίον κυρίου, καὶ ὁ θεός μου ἔσται μου ἰσχύς	ܘܗܐ ܘܗܫܐ ܐܡܪ ܡܪܝܐ. ܕܓܒܠܢܝ ܡܢܟܪܣܐ ܘܗܘܐ ܠܗ ܥܒܕܐ ܕܐܦܢܐ ܠܝܥܩܘܒ. ܘܠܐܝܣܪܐܝܠ ܐܟܢܫ ܥܡܗ ܘܗܘܐ. ܘܐܠܗܝ ܗܘܐ ܚܝܠܝ.	et nunc dicit Dominus for-mans me ex utero servum sibi ut reducam Iacob ad eum et Israhel non congre-gabitur et glorificatus sum in oculis Domini et Deus meus factus est fortitudo mea
And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might not be gath-ered [might be gathered to Him], for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and My God is My strength.	And now says the LORD Who formed you from the womb as his servant, to bring Jacob back to Him again, that Israel might be gathered to Him; I have gained honor in the sight of the LORD, and my God has been my help.	And now, thus says the Lord Who formed me from the womb to be his own servant, to gather Jacob and Israel to him. I will be gathered and glorified before the Lord, and my God will be my strength.	Now, thus says the LORD, who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel together; I am glorified before the LORD, and my God has become my strength.	And now says the Lord, that formed me from the womb to be His servant, that I may bring back Jacob unto Him, and Israel will not be gathered together: and I am glorified in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is made my strength.

Qumran 1QIs^a, the Lxx and Syriac all translate the *Qere*. Only the Vulgate translates the *Ketiv*

NASB – And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be <u>gathered to Him</u> (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength), *Q*

NRSV – And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be <u>gathered to him</u>, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— *Q*

REB – The Lord had formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him that Israel should be <u>gathered to him</u>, so that I might rise to honour in the Lord's sight and my God might be my strength. *Q*

NIV – And now the LORD says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and <u>gather Israel to himself</u>, for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength— *Q*

ESV – And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might <u>be gath-ered to him</u>— for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength— *Q*

NET – So now the LORD says, the one who formed me from birth to be his servant– he did this to restore Jacob to himself, so that Israel might be <u>gathered to him</u>; and I will be honored in the LORD's sight, for my God is my source of strength– *Q*

HCSB – And now, says the LORD, who formed me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him so that Israel might be <u>gathered to Him</u>; for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God is my strength— *Q*

TNKS – And now Hashem, Who formed me from the belly to be a servant to Him, said [I should] return Jacob to Him, so that Israel would <u>be gath-ered to Him</u>; so I was honored in God's eyes and my God was my strength. *Q*

JPS – And now the LORD has resolved — He who formed me in the womb to be His servant — to bring back Jacob to Himself, that Israel may <u>be restored to Him</u>. And I have been honored in the sight of the LORD, My God has been my strength. *Q*

TLV – So now says Adonai, who formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, to gather Israel <u>back to Him</u>. For I am honored in the eyes of Adonai and My God has become my strength. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
בְּכָל־צָֽרָתָם ׀ לֹא [לֹ֣ו] צָ֗ר וּמַלְאַ֤ךְ פָּנָיו֙ הֹושִׁיעָ֔ם בְּאַהֲבָתֹ֥ו וּבְחֶמְלָתֹ֖ו ה֣וּא גְאָלָ֑ם וַֽיְנַטְּלֵ֥ם וַֽיְנַשְּׂאֵ֖ם כָּל־יְמֵ֥י עֹולָֽם׃	בכול צרתמה לוא צר ומלאכ פניו הושיעמה באהבתי ובחומלתיו הואה גאלמה וינשאם וינטלמ כול ימי עולם.	ἐκ πάσης θλίψεως. οὐ πρέσβυς οὐδὲ ἄγγελος, ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτοὺς καὶ φείδεσθαι αὐτῶν· αὐτὸς ἐλυτρώσατο αὐτοὺς καὶ ἀνέλαβεν αὐτοὺς καὶ ὕψωσεν αὐτοὺς πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ αἰῶνος.	ܒܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܘܠܨܢܝܗܘܢ. ܠܐ ܐܠܨ ܐܢܘܢ. ܘܡܠܐܟܐ ܕܐܦܘܗܝ ܦܪܩ ܐܢܘܢ. ܒܚܘܒܗܡܪܚܡܢܘܬܗ ܘܒܚܢܢܗ ܦܪܩ ܐܢܘܢ. ܘܐܪܝܡ ܐܢܘܢ ܘܫܩܠ ܐܢܘܢ ܟܠܗܘܢ ܝܘܡܬܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ.	in omni tribulatione eorum non est tribulatus et angelus faciei eius salvavit eos in dilectione sua et in indulgentia sua ipse redemit eos et portavit eos et levavit eos cunctis diebus saeculi
In all their affliction He was not troubled [He was afflicted], but the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He Himself redeemed them and He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.	In all their affliction He was not troubled, but the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He Himself redeemed them and He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.	Out of all affliction, not an elder nor an angel, but the Lord Himself saved them in order *to show* He loved them and spared them. He redeemed them and took them up and carried them all the days of old.	In all their troubles He did not afflict them, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His compassion He saved them and He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.	In all their affliction He was not troubled, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love, and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He carried them and lifted them up all the days of old.

Qumran, as well as all of the versions, translate the *Ketiv*. As to the Lxx: while it includes the negative (οὐ) corresponding to the *Ketiv*, its translation of the line containing the *Qere/Ketiv* is clearly not what is found in the Hebrew text.

NASB – In all their affliction <u>He was afflicted</u>, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. *Q*

NRSV – 8 and he became their savior in all their distress. 9 <u>It was no</u> messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. *K (?)*

REB – 8 and he became their deliverer 9 in all their troubles. <u>No envoy</u>, no angel, but he himself delivered them, redeemed them in his love and pity; he lifted them up and carried them through all the days of old. *K (?)*

NIV – In all their distress <u>he too was distressed</u>, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. *Q*

ESV – In all their affliction <u>he was afflicted</u>, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. *Q*

NET – Through all that they suffered, <u>he suffered too</u>. The messenger sent from his very presence delivered them. In his love and mercy he protected them; he lifted them up and carried them throughout ancient times. *Q*

HCSB – In all their suffering, <u>He suffered</u>, and the Angel of His Presence saved them. He redeemed them because of His love and compassion; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of the past. *Q*

TNKS – In all their troubles <u>He was troubled</u>, so an angel from before Him saved them. With His love and with His compassion He redeemed them; He lifted them and bore the all the days of the world. *Q*

JPS – In all their troubles <u>He was troubled</u>, and the angel of His Presence delivered them. In His love and pity He Himself redeemed them, raised them, and exalted them all the days of old. *Q*

TLV – In all their affliction <u>He was afflicted</u>. So the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, then He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
דְּעוּ כִּי־יְהוָה הוּא אֱלֹהִים הוּא־עָשָׂנוּ וְלֹא [וְלוֹ] אֲנַחְנוּ עַמּוֹ וְצֹאן מַרְעִיתוֹ:		γνῶτε ὅτι κύριος, αὐτός ἐστιν ὁ θεός, αὐτὸς ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ οὐχ ἡμεῖς, λαὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ πρόβατα τῆς νομῆς αὐτοῦ.	ܘܕܥܘ ܕܗܘܝܘ ܡܪܝܐ ܐܠܗܢ. ܗܘܝܘ ܥܒܕܢ ܘܠܐ ܗܘܐ ܚܢܢ. ܥܡܗ ܚܢܢ ܘܥܢܐ ܕܡܪܥܝܬܗ.	scitote quoniam Dominus ipse est Deus ipse fecit nos et ipsius sumus populus eius et grex pascuae eius
Know that the LORD, He is God. He made us and not we ourselves [and we are His]. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.		Know that the Lord, He is God. He made us and not we ourselves—*we are* His people and the flock of His pasture.	Know that He is the Lord our God. He made us and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.	Know that the Lord he is God: he made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

All of the versions (Lxx, Syriac, Vulgate) follow the *Ketiv*. Psalm 100:3 is not found in the DSS.

NASB – Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. *K*
NRSV – Know that the LORD is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. *Q*
REB – Acknowledge that the Lord is God; he made us and we are his, his own people, the flock which he shepherds. *Q*
NIV – Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. *Q*
ESV – Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. *Q*
NET – Acknowledge that the LORD is God! He made us and we belong to him; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. *Q*
HCSB – Acknowledge that Yahweh is God. He made us, and we are His — His people, the sheep of His pasture. *Q*
TNKS – Know that HaShem, He is God; He made us and we are His, His people, and the sheep of His pasture. *Q*
JPS – Acknowledge that the LORD is God; He made us and we are His, His people, the flock He tends. *Q*
TLV – Know that Adonai, He is God. It is He who has made us, and we are His. We are His people, the sheep of His pasture. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
גׇּלְמִי רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וְעַל־סִפְרְךָ [וְ] כֻּלָּם יִכָּתֵבוּ יָמִים יֻצָּרוּ וְלֹא [וֹ] אֶחָד בָּהֶם:	גלמי ראו עיניכה ועל [] ספריכה כולם [] יכתבו ימים יצרו ולו באח מהמה.	τὸ ἀκατέργαστόν μου εἴδοσαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸ βιβλίον σου πάντες γραφήσονται· ἡμέρας πλασθήσονται, καὶ οὐθεὶς ἐν αὐτοῖς.	[Syriac text]	informem adhuc me viderunt oculi tui et in libro tuo omnes scriben-tur dies formatae sunt et non est una in eis
Your eyes saw my unformed substance and upon Your book all were written, the days to be formed and not one of them *was yet*. [and to Him *it is* one among them] {?}	Your eyes saw my unformed substance and upon Your scrolls all of them were writ-ten, days *yet* to be formed and for each part one of it (i.e., each part of the body) {?}	Your eyes saw my unfinished parts and upon Your scroll ev-erything was written, days to be formed and nothing in them.	Your eyes saw my reward, upon Your scrolls all of them were written. Behold, days shorten with no one in them.	Your eyes did see my im-perfect being, and in Your book all shall be written: days shall be formed, and no one in them.

Qumran (11Q5) has לו though this might represent [1]לא. Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translate the *Ketiv*.

NASB – Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was <u>not one of them</u>. *K*

NRSV – Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when <u>none of them</u> as yet existed. *K*

REB – Your eyes foresaw my deeds, and they were all recorded in your book; my life was fashioned <u>before it had come</u> into being. *K*

NIV – 8 When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, 9 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book <u>before one of them</u> came to be. *K*

ESV – Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was <u>none of them</u>. *K*

NET – Your eyes saw me when I was inside the womb. All the days ordained for me were recorded in your scroll <u>before one of them</u> came into existence. *K*

HCSB – Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned <u>before a single one</u> of them began. *K*

TNKS – Your eyes saw my unshaped form, and in Your book all were recorded; though they will be fashioned through many days, <u>to Him</u> they are one. *Q*

JPS – Your eyes saw my unformed limbs; they were all recorded in Your book; in due time they were formed, <u>to the very last one of them</u>. *Q (?)*

TLV – Your eyes saw me when I was unformed, and in Your book were written the days that were formed— when <u>not one of them</u> had come to be. *K*

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1   Elisha Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Scholars Press, 1986), p. 21, §100.51. For instances where לו = לא, cf. Deut 29:4 (4Q39 f4_5:3); Is 8:23 (1QIsaᵃ 8:16); Hosea 2:1 (4Q79 f1_2:6); Hosea 2:4 (4Q79 f1–2:10).

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
כִּי־עַתָּה הֱיִיתֶם לֹא [לוֹ] תִּרְאוּ חֲתַת וַתִּירָאוּ׃		ἀτὰρ δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐπέβητέ μοι ἀνελεημόνως, ὥστε ἰδόντες τὸ ἐμὸν τραῦμα φοβήθητε.	ܗܘ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܗܘܝܬܘܢ ܥܠܝ ܠܡܐܐ. ܡܛܠ ܕܩܕܡ ܚܙܝܬܘܢ ܪܘܬܐ ܕܝܠܝ.	nunc venistis et modo videntes plagam meam timetis
For now you have become nothing *to me* [to him/it]. You see terror and are afraid.		But you also have come to me without pity; so that seeing my wound you are afraid.	You also have become a burden upon me, because before you saw *my* shuddering, you feared.	Now you have come: and now, seeing my affliction, you are afraid.

Both the Lxx and the Syriac could be translating the *Ketiv*. The Vulgate gives evidence of neither the *Ketiv* or *Qere.*

NASB – Indeed, you have now <u>become such</u>, You see a terror and are afraid. *Q*

NRSV – Such you have now become <u>to me</u>; you see my calamity, and are afraid. *Q ? [לֹ]*

REB –   Just so unreliable have you now been <u>to me</u>: you felt dismay and took fright. *Q ? [לֹ]*

NIV –   Now you too have proved to be of <u>no help</u>;   you see something dreadful and are afraid. *K*

ESV –   For you have now <u>become nothing</u>;   you see my calamity and are afraid. *K*

NET –   For now you have become like these streams that are <u>no help</u>; you see a terror, and are afraid. *K*

HCSB – So this is what you have now <u>become to me</u>. When you see something dreadful, you are afraid. *Q ? [לֹ]*

TNKS – And now, that is how you have been — you saw disaster and became frightened. *Q ?*

JPS –   So you are <u>as nothing</u>: At the sight of misfortune, you take fright. *K*

TLV –   Indeed, now you have <u>become nothing</u>; you see a terror and are afraid. *K*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
הֵן יִקְטְלֵנִי לֹא [לוֹ] אֲיַחֵל אַךְ־דְּרָכַי אֶל־פָּנָיו אוֹכִיחַ׃		ἐάν με χειρώσηται ὁ δυνάστης, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἦρκται, ἦ μὴν λαλήσω καὶ ἐλέγξω ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ·	ܐܢ ܢܩܛܠܢܝ ܗܘ ܠܗ ܡܣܒܪܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܗܘܝ. ܡܛܠ ܕܐܘܪܚܬܐ ܩܕܡܘܗܝ ܐܢܝܢ.	etiam si occiderit me in ipso sperabo verumtamen vias meas in conspectu eius arguam
Though He may slay me, I will not despair [to Him I will hope]. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.		Even though the Almighty should overpower me, since He also has begun, most surely I will speak and plead my case before Him.	Even if He should slay me, I will wait for Him, because my ways are before Him.	Although he should kill me, I will trust in him: but yet I will reprove my ways in his sight.

It seems possible that the Lxx read אֵל rather than לֹא with inclusion of δυνάστης. Both the Syriac and Vulgate translate the *Qere*.

NASB – Though He slay me, I will hope <u>in Him</u>. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. *Q*
NRSV – See, he will kill me; I have <u>no hope</u>; but I will defend my ways to his face. *K*
REB – If he wishes to slay me, I <u>have nothing</u> to lose; I shall still defend my conduct to his face. *K*
NIV – Though he slay me, yet will I hope <u>in him</u>; I will surely defend my ways to his face. *Q*
ESV – Though he slay me, I will hope <u>in him</u>; yet I will argue my ways to his face. *Q*
NET – Even if he slays me, I will hope <u>in him</u>; I will surely defend my ways to his face! *Q*
HCSB – Even if He kills me, I will hope <u>in Him</u>. I will still defend my ways before Him. *Q*
TNKS – Were He to kill me, I would still yearn <u>for Him</u>, but I will justify my ways before Him. *Q*
JPS – He may well slay me; I may have <u>no hope</u>; Yet I will argue my case before Him. *K*
TLV – Though He slay me, yet will I trust <u>Him</u>; But I will argue my ways before Him. *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
לֹא־[לוֹ]־אַחֲרִישׁ בַּדָּיו וּדְבַר־גְּבוּרוֹת וְחִין עֶרְכּוֹ:		οὐ σιωπήσομαι δι᾽ αὐτόν, καὶ λόγον δυνάμεως ἐλεήσει τὸν ἴσον αὐτοῦ.	ܘܠܐ ܐܫܬܘܩ. ܚܣܝܢܘܬܗ ܥܫܝܢܐ ܕܫܪܝܢܗ.	non parcam ei et verbis potentibus et ad depre-candum conpositis
I will not keep silence [To him I will keep silence] concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his orderly frame.		I will not keep silence about him, and in the matter of his power, one will pity his equal.	I will not keep silence about his fortification [power?] and the might of his sinews.	I will not spare him, nor his mighty words, *even though framed to make supplica-tion.*

All of the versions appear to translate the *Ketiv*.

NASB – I will <u>not keep silence</u> concerning his limbs, Or his mighty strength, or his orderly frame. *K*
NRSV – I will <u>not keep silence</u> concerning its limbs, or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame. *K*
REB –   I will <u>not keep silence</u> concerning its limbs, or its mighty strength, or its splendid frame. *K*
NIV –   I will <u>not fail to speak</u> of his limbs, his strength and his graceful form. *K*
ESV –   I will <u>not keep silence</u> concerning his limbs, or his mighty strength, or his goodly frame. *K*
NET –   I will <u>not keep silent</u> about its limbs, and the extent of its might, and the grace of its arrangement. *K*
HCSB – I <u>cannot be silent</u> about his limbs, his power, and his graceful proportions. *K*
TNKS – I <u>would not</u> suppress <u>his boastings</u>, the story of his might, nor the stateliness of his standing! *K & Q (!)*
JPS –   I will <u>not be silent</u> concerning him Or the praise of his martial exploits. *K*
TLV –   I <u>will not keep silent</u> about his limbs, or his might or the grace of his arrangement. *K*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
כָּל אֲחֵי־רָשׁ שְׂנֵאֻהוּ אַף כִּי מְרֵעֵהוּ רָחֲקוּ מִמֶּנּוּ מְרַדֵּף אֲמָרִים לֹא[־לוֹ]הֵמָּה:		πᾶς, ὃς ἀδελφὸν πτωχὸν μισεῖ, καὶ φιλίας μακρὰν ἔσται. ἔννοια ἀγαθὴ τοῖς εἰδόσιν αὐτὴν ἐγγιεῖ, ἀνὴρ δὲ φρόνιμος εὑρήσει αὐτήν. ὁ πολλὰ κακοποιῶν τελεσιουργεῖ κακίαν· ὃς δὲ ἐρεθίζει λόγους, οὐ σωθήσεται.	ܟܠܗܘܢ ܐܚܘܗܝ ܕܡܣܟܢܐ ܣܢܝܢ ܠܗ. ܐܦ ܪ̈ܚܡܘܗܝ ܪܚܝܩܝܢ ܡܢܗ. ܐܝܢܐ ܕܠܗܢ ܚܟ̈ܡܬܐ ܠܐ ܗܘܐ.	fratres hominis pauperis oderunt eum insuper et amici procul recesserunt ab eo qui tantum verba sectatur nihil habebit
All the brothers of a poor man hate him; How much more do his friends abandon him! He pursues *them with* words, but they are not. [which are his (?)].		Every one who hates his poor brother shall also be far from friendship. Good understanding will draw near to them that know it, and a sensible man will find it. He that does much harm perfects mischief; and he that used provoking words shall not escape.	All the brothers of the poor hate him; even his friends are far from him. He who uses sly words in not truthful.	The brothers of the poor man hate him: moreover also his friends have departed far from him. He who follows words only will have nothing.

All of the versions appear to translate the *Ketiv*.

NASB – All the brothers of a poor man hate him; How much more do his friends abandon him! He pursues them with words, but <u>they are gone</u>. *K*

NRSV – If the poor are hated even by their kin, how much more are they shunned by their friends! When they call after them, <u>they are not</u> there. *K*

REB – A pauper's brothers all dislike him; how much more is he shunned by his friends! The man who picks <u>his words</u> keeps to the point. *Q (?)*

NIV – A poor man is shunned by all his relatives— how much more do his friends avoid him! ¶ Though he pursues them with pleading, <u>they are nowhere</u> to be found. *K*

ESV – All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He pursues them with words, but <u>does not have them.</u> *K*

NET – All the relatives of a poor person hate him; how much more do his friends avoid him– he pursues them with words, but <u>they do not respond</u>. *K*

HCSB – All the brothers of a poor man hate him; how much more do his friends keep their distance from him! He may pursue them with words, but <u>they are not there</u>. *K*

TNKS – All a pauper's brothers hate him, surely his friends withdraw from him. Though he pursues [them] with words, <u>[the words] remain his</u>. *Q*

JPS – All the brothers of a poor man despise him; How much more is he shunned by his friends! He who pursues words — <u>they are of no avail</u>. *K*

TLV – All a poor man's relatives despise him— how much more his friends avoid him. He pursues them with words, but <u>they are not there</u>. *K*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
כְּצִפּוֹר לָנוּד כַּדְּרוֹר לָעוּף כֵּן קִלְלַת חִנָּם לֹא [לוֹ] תָבֹא:		ὥσπερ ὄρνεα πέταται καὶ στρουθοί, οὕτως ἀρὰ ματαία οὐκ ἐπελεύσεται οὐδενί.	ܐܝܟ ܨܦܪܐ ܕܦܪܚܐ ܘܐܝܟ ܨܦܪܐ ܕܛܝܣܐ܂ ܗܟܢܐ ܠܘܛܬܐ ܡܓܢ ܬܐܙܠ ܠܗ܂	sicut avis ad alia transvolans et passer quolibet vadens sic maledictum frustra prolatum in quempiam superveniet
K - As a bird is to flitting, and a sparrow is to flying, so a curse is useless *unless* it arrives. Q - [As a bird is to flitting, and a sparrow is to flying, so an *unwarranted* curse comes *back* to him *who uttered it*.]		As birds and sparrows fly, so an empty curse shall not come upon any one.	As a bird and a winged creature fly in the air, so an empty curse wanders away.	As birds and sparrows fly, so a groundless curse will not come upon any one.

The Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translate the *Ketiv*.

NASB – Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, so a curse without cause <u>does not alight</u>. *K*

NRSV – Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, an undeserved curse <u>goes nowhere</u>. *K*

REB – Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, groundless abuse <u>gets nowhere</u>. *K*

NIV – Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse <u>does not come to rest</u>. *K*

ESV – Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless <u>does not alight</u>. *K*

NET – Like a fluttering bird or like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause <u>does not come to rest</u>. *K*

HCSB – Like a flitting sparrow or a fluttering swallow, an undeserved curse <u>goes nowhere</u>. *K*

TNKS – Like a bird that wanders off, like a swallow that flies off, so an unwarranted curse <u>comes [back] to he [who utters it]</u>. *Q*

JPS – As a sparrow must flit and a swallow fly, So a gratuitous curse must <u>backfire</u>. *Q*

TLV – Like a fluttering sparrow or a flying swallow, so an undeserved curse <u>does not land</u>. *K*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וַיִּגְּשׁוּ אֶל־זְרֻבָּבֶל וְאֶל־רָאשֵׁי הָאָבוֹת וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָהֶם נִבְנֶה עִמָּכֶם כִּי כָכֶם נִדְרוֹשׁ לֵאלֹהֵיכֶם וְלֹא [וְ][לֹו] אֲנַחְנוּ זֹבְחִים מִימֵי אֵסַר חַדֹּן מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר הַמַּעֲלֶה אֹתָנוּ פֹּה:		καὶ ἤγγισαν πρὸς Ζοροβαβελ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν πατριῶν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτοῖς Οἰκοδομήσομεν μεθ' ὑμῶν, ὅτι ὡς ὑμεῖς ἐκζητοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ὑμῶν, καὶ αὐτῷ ἡμεῖς θυσιάζομεν ἀπὸ ἡμερῶν Ασαραδδων βασιλέως Ασσουρ τοῦ ἐνέγκαντος ἡμᾶς ὧδε.	ܘܩܪܒܘ ܠܘܬ ܙܘܪܒܒܠ ܘܠܘܬ ܪܫܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܐ ܘܐܡܪܝܢ ܠܗܘܢ. ܢܒܢܐ ܐܦ ܚܢܢ ܥܡܟܘܢ. ܡܛܠ ܘܐܦܚܢܢ ܠܐܠܗܟܘܢ ܒܥܝܢ. ܘܠܗ ܗܘ ܕܒܚܝܢ ܡܢ ܝܘܡܝ ܐܣܪ ܚܕܘܢ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܐܬܘܪ. ܘܐܣܩ ܠܗܘܢ ܠܗܪܟܐ.	et accedentes ad Zorobabel et ad principes patrum dixerunt eis aedificemus vobiscum quia ita ut vos quaerimus Deum vestrum ecce nos immolamus victimas ex diebus Asoraddan regis Assur qui adduxit nos huc
And they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have not been sacrificing [have been sacrificing to Him] since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."	(4Q117 f1 does not contain the line in question)	And they approached Zorobabel, and the heads of families, and said to them, "We will build with you; for as you do, we seek to serve our God, and we sacrifice to Him from the days of Asaradan king of Assur, who brought us up here."	Then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chiefs of the fathers and said to them, "Let us also build with you, for we seek your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here."	And they came to Zorobabel, and the chief of the fathers, and said to them: "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do: behold we have sacrificed to Him, since the days of Asor Haddan king of Assyria, who brought us up here."

The Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translate the *Qere*.

NASB – they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' households, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we, like you, seek your God; and we have been sacrificing <u>to Him</u> since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us up here." *Q*

NRSV – they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing <u>to him</u> ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here." *Q*

REB – they approached Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the heads of families. 'Let us build with you,' they said, 'for like you we seek your God, and have sacrificed <u>to him</u> ever since the days of King Esarhaddon of Assyria who brought us here.' *Q*

NIV – they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing <u>to him</u> since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here." *Q*

ESV – they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of fathers' houses and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing <u>to him</u> ever since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria who brought us here." *Q*

NET – they came to Zerubbabel and the leaders and said to them, "Let us help you build, for like you we seek your God and we have been sacrificing <u>to him</u> from the time of King Esarhaddon of Assyria, who brought us here." *Q*

HCSB – they approached Zerubbabel and the leaders of the families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we also worship your God and have been sacrificing <u>to Him</u> since the time King Esar-haddon of Assyria brought us here." *Q*

TNKS – They approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, "Let us build with you, for, like you, we will seek your God; it is <u>to Him</u> that we have been sacrificing since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assyria, who brought us up here." *Q*

JPS – they approached Zerubbabel and the chiefs of the clans and said to them, "Let us build with you, since we too worship your God, having offered sacrifices <u>to Him</u> since the time of King Esarhaddon of Assyria, who brought us up here." *Q*

TLV – they approached Zerubbabel and the leading patriarchs and said to them, "Let us build with you, for like you we seek your God and have been sacrificing <u>to Him</u> since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us here." *Q*

MT	Qumran	Lxx	Syriac	Vulgate
וְאַבְשַׁי אֲחִי־יוֹאָב הוּא הָיָה רֹאשׁ הַשְּׁלוֹשָׁה וְהוּא עוֹרֵר אֶת־חֲנִיתוֹ עַל־שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת חָלָל וְלֹא־[וְ][לוֹ]־שֵׁם בַּשְּׁלוֹשָׁה:		Καὶ Αβεσσα ἀδελφὸς Ιωαβ, οὗτος ἦν ἄρχων τῶν τριῶν, οὗτος ἐσπάσατο τὴν ῥομφαίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τριακοσίους τραυματίας ἐν καιρῷ ἑνί, καὶ οὗτος ἦν ὀνομαστὸς ἐν τοῖς τρισίν,	ܘܐܒܫܝ ܐܚܘܗܝ ܕܝܘܐܒ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ. ܗܘ ܪܝܫܐ ܕܬܠܬܝܢ. ܗܘ ܐܪܝܡ ܢܝܙܟܗ ܥܠ ܬܠܬܡܐܐ ܩܛܝ̈ܠܐ. ܘܗܘ ܗܘܐ ܡܝܩܪ ܐܝܩܪ ܥܠ ܬܠܬܝܢ	et accedentes ad Zorobabel et ad principes patrum dixerunt eis aedificemus vobiscum quia ita ut vos quaerimus Deum vestrum ecce nos immolamus victimas ex diebus Asoraddan regis Assur qui adduxit nos huc
As for Abshai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three, and he swung his spear against three hundred and killed them; but *he had* no name among the three. [and *he had* a name among the three.]		And Abisa the brother of Joab, he was chief of three: he drew his sword against three hundred slain at one time, and he had a name among the three.	And Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of thirty; for he lifted up his spear against three hundred and slew them, and he was *given a position of* honor over thirty.	And Abisai the brother of Joab, he was chief of three, and he lifted up his spear against three hundred whom he slew, and he was re-nowned among the three

The Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translate the *Qere*.

NASB – As for Abshai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the thirty, and he swung his spear against three hundred and killed them; and <u>he had a name</u> as well as the thirty. *Q*

NRSV – Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty. With his spear he fought against three hundred and killed them, and <u>won a name</u> beside the Three. *Q*

REB – Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the thirty; he it was who brandished his spear over three hundred dead. <u>He was famous</u> among the thirty. *Q*

NIV – Abishai the brother of Joab was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so <u>he became as famous</u> as the Three. *Q*

ESV – Now Abishai, the brother of Joab, was chief of the thirty. And he wielded his spear against 300 men and killed them and <u>won a name</u> beside the three. *Q*

NET – Abishai the brother of Joab was head of the three elite warriors. He killed three hundred men with his spear and <u>gained fame</u> along with the three elite warriors. *Q*

HCSB – Abishai, Joab's brother, was the leader of the Three. He raised his spear against 300 men and killed them, <u>gaining a reputation</u> among the Three. *Q*

TNKS – Abishai, Joab's brother—he was the head of the three; he wielded his spear over three hundred slain men; <u>he was well known</u> among the three. *Q*

JPS – Abshai, the brother of Joab, was head of another three. He once wielded his spear against three hundred and slew them. <u>He won a name</u> among the three; *Q*

TLV – Abishai, Joab's brother, was chief of the Three. He once wielded his spear against 300 and slew them. Thus he <u>won a name</u> among the Three. *Q*

	Ex 21:8	Lev 11:21	Lev 25:30	1Sam 2:3	2Sam 16:18	2Ki 8:10	Is 9:2[3]	Is 49:5	Is 63:9	Ps 100:3	Ps 139:16	Job 6:21	Job 13:15	Job 41:4	Prov 19:7	Prov 26:2	Ezra 4:2	1Chr 11:20	Q	K
SP	K	Q	Q																	
DSS	na	na	Q	na	na	na	K	Q	K	na	Q?	na	na	na	na	na	na	na		
Lxx	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K?	K	K	K	אֶל ?	K	K	K	Q	Q	59%	41%
Syriac	K	Q	Q	K	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	K	K	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	50%	50%
Vulg	Q	Q	na	Q	Q	Q	K	K	K	K	K	na	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	50%	50%
Totals	50%	100%	100%	66%	100%	100%	50%	75%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	53%	47%
NASB	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	Q	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	72%	28%
NRSV	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Lxx	Q	K	Q?[לי]	K	K	K	K	Q	Q	69%	31%
REB	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Lxx	Q	K	Q?[לי]	K	K	Q?	K	Q	Q	73%	27%
NIV	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	72%	28%
ESV	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	72%	28%
NET	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	72%	28%
HCSB	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	Q?[לי]	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	76%	24%
TNKS	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	?	Q	K&Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	99%	1%
JPS	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q?	K	K	K	K	Q	Q	Q	76%	24%
TLV	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	K	K	Q	K	K	K	Q	Q	72%	28%
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%	80%	83%	70%	100%	90%	80%	100%	100%	75.3%	24.7%

Black percentages are for *Q*; Red percentages are for *K* • A *?* indicates the translation is ambiguous and thus it cannot be determined whether it translates *Q* or *K*. Adding a question mark (*Q?* or *K?*) indicates that the translation favors either *Q* or *K* but is somewhat ambiguous.

Remarks & Summary

Where the versions (SP, DSS, Lxx, Syriac, Vulgate) favor the *Q,* this is reflected in the English translations surveyed. In Job 41:4, Prov 19:7; 26:2, the Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translated the *K,* and the majority of English translations surveyed translate the *K* as well. This is not the case with Is 63:9, Ps 100:3, and 139:16. In Is 63:9, the DSS, Syriac, and Vulgate all have *K,* but the English translations surveyed either accept the Lxx (which is not a translation of the MT) or translate the *Q.* The same may be said about Ps 100:3, in which the Lxx, Syriac, and Vulgate all translate the *K,* but with the exception of the NASB, all the other English translations accept the *Q.*

In a number of the texts containing *K* לא and *Q* לו (Ex 21:8; 1Sam 2:3; 2Kings 8:10; Is 63:9; Ps 100:3), the *Ketiv* is as acceptable as is the *Qere,* yet nearly all of the English Bibles surveyed opt for the *Qere.* This might indicate that the translators are predisposed to give priority to the *Qere* unless some other factor makes it clearly unusable. But if the *Q/K* do in some cases signal the presence of variants in the ancient manuscripts, then in the enterprise of textual criticism, both the *Q* and the *K* ought to be considered equal possible candidates for the original reading, to be determined on the basis of internal and external evidence, including the text critical canon that the more difficult reading may well be original.