

The Matres Lectionis

These are the usages of the Waw, He, Aleph, and Yodh to denote vocalic sounds as well as give their own consonantal form. Apparently the idea was in vogue well before 300 BC but was not uniformly established until somewhat later. This problem grew from the fact that Hebrew had no orthographic showing of vowels.

The Word Divisions

Hebrew, in the earliest fragments known to us, shows word divisions by the use of a "dot" placed between words. It is commonly assumed that it was originally written like Greek, with no word divisions, but I do not know that any ancient Hebrew mss have been demonstrated to be in this form. If the "dot" is not original, it represents a dividing device and could be subject to moving around the page a bit. This device is clearly seen on the Siloam inscription.

Phrasing

It is obvious from consulting the Qumran materials that phrasing was accomplished by that time, although not in such final form as to admit of no changes. There was also some paragraphing (longer phrasing) but we are not sure of the formal nature it sustained. The later masoretic paragraphing may have followed a synagogical system of the earlier age and time.

(2) Scribal Notations

These are textual aids by very early scribes (sopherim) and the following are the ones noted in BHS and general lower textual studies:

Sebirrim

When on occasion a word in the text seemed not to be used in proper form, the earlier scribes would write the supposedly correct form in the margin with the term meaning suppose:

-sebir. You will see an example of it in Genesis 19:8 where the text reads "God" but the sebir reads "these". See which you think is better.