

Summary

This work tries to take a new look at the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible. Based on the assumption that the masoretic vocalization has its roots in the oral tradition it asks what is the character of this text, why it was transmitted orally, and in which context it was written down only at such a late date. It asks further what was the function and mutual relationship of the other masoretic elements: the Hebrew vocalization, the accentuation and the Masoretic notes, and whether they all can be traced back to a common denominator.

Lastly, this work tries to answer a question whether the masoretic tradition presented a reinterpretation of the consonantal text to some degree. To answer these questions this thesis analyses phenomena connected to the masoretic vocalization, accentuation and masoretic notes. Further, it observes some grammatically unusual masoretic forms. It comes to the conclusion that all of the masoretic elements of the Hebrew biblical text are to be traced back to an institutionalized oral study of Bible, which was the prevalent way of learning before the literacy became common. The present work could not testify any interpretative tendency in the Hebrew vocalization.

Keywords

Hebrew Bible, Old Testament, textual criticism, Masoretic text, punctuation, vocalization, Hebrew accents, liturgical chant, targum, masoretic notes, oral study.