

Review of: "Elohim or Elohayim"

Charles Haberl¹

¹ Rutgers University

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The contribution invites considerable revisions. It is difficult to discern a research question within it, and it does not sufficiently engage with the existing literature on the Hebrew language and its scripts to justify a fresh new perspective on the subject. Additionally, it contains many misstatements, starting with the very first line of the abstract. "The Hebrew language consists of a series of pictograph letters that have no vowels, all the letters are consonants, but at that time people could still read and understand them." The author has conflated the Hebrew language (which logically could not consist of "pictographs") and its scripts (which do not consist of "pictographs"). Properly speaking, a pictograph is a symbol that conveys its meaning through a visual representation; if אֱלֹהִים were indeed a pictograph, we would be obliged to read it something like "ox goad jubilation arm water" and of course that is quite nonsensical. The technical term for the type of script in which Hebrew is normally written is an abjad, and it is also not true that it does not have vowels; some of the characters do double duty as consonants and vowels. "After the Israelites were colonized for more than 1000 years by other nations, the Jews could no longer read and interpret it, especially the Tanakh (Jewish holy book), so that debates arose among one another. Then to solve this problem, in the 10th century bc Jewish scholars (called masoretes) took notice, scrutinizing every utterance said by the rabbis, when they read the Torah in the Synagogue." This is obviously an attempt to summarize a very complicated topic, but it falls flat. It is not the case that "the Jews" could no longer read and interpret their own scriptures, nor is the term "colonize" apt in this context as it conjures up images of modern settler and extractive colonies. Furthermore, the date "10th century bc" is inaccurate as observed by another reviewer. "With the existence of niqud, everyone can read and understand what is written in God's Torah. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָרֶץ (Beresyit bara' 'elohim 'et hasysyamayim we'et ha'aret) all these words are given a niqud." It is not the case that *niqqud* are a necessary or even sufficient condition to read and understand the Torah; even small children can read today's Hebrew texts without them, but without further training in the archaic language of the Bible and some understanding of interpretative techniques the meaning of many passages will still escape those who have mastered the script with or without *niqqud*. The author's transcription system is extremely idiosyncratic and appears to be based upon Malay orthography (e.g. *syariah* instead of *sharī'ah* in other orthographies) "But there is one question about the word אֱלֹהִים should it be read 'elohim by adding niqud e, o, i (אֱלֹהִים) or read another." There are many questions about the word אֱלֹהִים, which have been addressed in the voluminous literature on Hebrew and the Hebrew Bible, and this contribution would have been immeasurably improved by consulting this literature. "Actually mayim, syamayim bdoesn't end in im, but ayim." This is because their final root consonant (or radical) is y, which is not the case for אֱלֹהִים. "So that 'elohim should not use the word 'im but elohayim, just like mayim, syamayim and so on." The author has inadvertently proposed reading אֱלֹהִים as if it were the dual form "Two Gods." This is *syirik* in other words. I would strongly encourage

the author to reconsider his proposal.