

Introduction

There can be no doubt that the great scholar Elijah Levita had access to a great number of medieval manuscripts. Regarding his methodical preparations to gather Masoretic information for the *Sefer ha-Zikhronot*, the biblical and Masoretic concordance he compiled before publishing his *Massoret ha-Massoret* in 1538, he explained:

How I labored therein, neither resting nor being satisfied, and searched the correct and excellent book, giving my mind hereunto! Now I swear, [...], that more than once or twice I performed a day or two day's journey to a place, which I either knew myself or of which I had been informed, that there is to be found therein a reliable index of the Masorah. When I examined [the Masorah], and found it and corrected it, I selected from it the choice and correct articles, as roses from among thorns. Indeed, *most of the correct Codices I found to be Spanish*, and it is upon these that I relied, and it is their method that I followed. [...] I found the *Book Ochla Ve-Ochla* [...] There is no other book which so thoroughly treats on the Masoretic rules, excepting the scattered glosses around the margin in the Codices which, however, contain numberless errors. For the scribes have perverted them, as they did not care for the Masorah, but only thought to ornament their writing, and to make even lines so as not to alter the appearance [of the codex].¹

Levita claims in these lines that Sephardic sources are the most accurate, by which he means that they are more closely related to the standard version of the biblical text (i.e., the so-called Ben Asher Tiberian tradition).² This assertion implies that Levita rejects other Western-European (Ashkenazic or Italian) manuscripts as sources of valid biblical or Masoretic knowledge. Secondly, he claims that the Masorah that is found within the annotated and ornamented manuscripts is greatly defective. This is not so far from what Jacob ben Hayim Adonyah announced in his introduction to the *Biblia Rabbinica* (Venice: Bomberg, 1524–1525):

Moreover, most of these [Masoretic remarks] are written in a contracted form and with ornaments, so much so that they cannot at all be deciphered, as the desire of the writer was only to embellish his writing and not to examine or to understand the sense [of the Masorah].³

Adonyah and Levita considered the Masorah to be the primary principle of biblical exegesis and wanted to understand it in order to restore the keys to the Torah.⁴ They believed, in line with the Renaissance mentality,⁵ that this knowledge had been utterly neglected, and could only be rediscovered through an edition of the 'original' Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, accompanied by a sort of *Urmassorah*.

1 Levita, *Massoret ha-Massoret*, 1538, Venice, Introduction II, see Ginsburg 1867b, 93–94.

2 Ginsburg 1897, 906; Pérez Castro 1977; Fernández Tejero 2000.

3 Ginsburg 1867a, 78–79.

4 Ginsburg 1867b, 103 and ff.; Ginsburg 1867a, 44–78, esp. Rashi's commentary, 59–65.

5 See Attia 2012, Chapter VII.

Masoretic Contents versus Masoretic Layout?

Modern scholarship does not consider an original biblical text to have ever existed.⁶ The transmission of the biblical and Masoretic knowledge of the East to other areas of the Jewish World⁷ is difficult to trace, as dated Hebrew sources are scarce or fragmentary prior to the 12th century.⁸ The oldest Hebrew biblical codices known today are dated or estimated to be dated no earlier than between the 9th and 10th centuries. Among them, six eastern manuscripts are generally held as the most prominent ones: the Aleppo Codex (910–930 by Aron ben Moshe Ben Asher)—which may have been the codex referred to in the above mentioned quotation as the one which Maimonides described and used—, the Cairo Codex (dated 894/5), MS BL Or. 4445 (10th century?), the Leningrad Codex (dated 1008/9), the Damascus Pentateuch (JNUL 24°5702 or Sassoon 507) and MS Sassoon 1053.⁹ There is a second gap of c. 200 years between these eastern sources and the oldest remaining European Hebrew sources. The first Hebrew manuscripts produced in Europe most likely originated in Italy in the 11th century.¹⁰ Although the first Bible of its kind surfaced in 1105/6 (Codex Reuchlinianus),¹¹ the oldest Ashkenazic manuscripts are dated later, from the end of the 12th century. This leaves us without material sources on the versions that were in circulation in the second half of the 11th century, at the lifetime of the main Jewish exegete Rashi (R. Shlomo Bar Isaac of Troyes).¹²

6 Tov 1992, 8–9, 11.

7 In terms of their geographical origins, Hebrew manuscripts usually come from the East (Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and Persia), Sephardic areas (the Iberian Peninsula, the Maghreb, Sicilia, southern France, the Ottoman Empire after 1492), Ashkenazic areas (France, Germany, England, northern Italy and Eastern Europe), and the Byzantine region (Crimea, Greece, southern Italy), Olszowy-Schlanger 2012b, 32–33.

8 The Database of Hebrew dated or documented manuscripts (Sfardata) which was started in 1965 only has records for 3139 dated and documented items (i.e., 47% of the items of the Database), and among them only 12 codicological units are dated from before 1000—all of them are from Yemen, the Orient or Sephardic areas. See Beit-Arié 1991 and 1992. <http://sfardata.nli.org.il/sfardatanew/home.aspx> (seen 01.07.2014).

9 According to Yeivin 1980, 15–22; Yeivin 2011 [2003], 6–27. See also Beit-Arié 1993a on the sixteen dated manuscripts which predate 1028.

10 Ancient Italian Hebrew manuscripts are still systematically studied. See MS. Vat. Ebr. 31, dated 1072/3 (MPMA II, Ms. 38) and the Ms. London, BL, Add. 27214 (which contains seven codicological units, dated 1090/1, MPMA III, 43).

11 The first European Bible is probably the Ms. Karlsruhe, BL, Cod. Reuchlin 3 (dated 1106, Prophets Hagiographa, cf. MPMA III, Ms. 48). It was initially described as a ‘pre-Masoretic’ Bible. However, Morag argues that the phonetic system reflected by its vocalization system is fuller than in the standard Tiberian traditions, which is Palestinian and post-Masoretic, see Morag 1959, 229.

12 Only four dated Ashkenazic manuscripts predate 1200, among them two Bibles: 1177, Bologna, Bib Naz. II-1-7 (Talmud Bavli, see MPMA IV, Ms. 71); 1188/9, London, BL, Ar. Or. 51 (Grammatical Dictionary of Saruq, see MPMA IV, Ms. 84); 1189, London, Valmadonna Trust Library 1 (PMH, see afterwards);

In addition to this lack of information, Ashkenazic Bibles are still described in the same terms as those used by Levita. Whereas Sephardic manuscripts are considered to transmit a standard Tiberian consonantal text (and, by extension, an accurate Masorah), the vocalized and accentuated biblical text transmitted within Ashkenazic manuscripts is thought to have an “infinitely” greater number of discrepancies from the Ben Asher Tiberian text.¹³ Furthermore, despite the fact that there are no philological studies or editions of late medieval Ashkenazic Masoretic notes, it is commonly asserted that medieval Ashkenazic communities were unfamiliar with Masorah. Indeed, the mere presence of ornamental and figurative Masorah in their manuscripts is often presented as evidence of this lack of understanding.¹⁴ Nevertheless, to neglect Ashkenazic manuscripts solely on the basis of their existing ornamental or figurative micrographical elements is to preemptively eliminate the possibility that these manuscripts may have been produced in the context of specific reception practices associated with the Bible in the Middle Ages.

What is a Figurative Masorah (Masora Figurata)?

Thus far, the only scholars to have studied the phenomenon of using diminutive letters to draw decorative patterns are art historians. They consider it to be a specifically Jewish art of illumination.¹⁵ Its origin remains unclear, but it appears for the first time in the earliest eastern biblical codices.¹⁶ Scholars are yet to agree on a common terminology to describe this phenomenon.¹⁷ The term *Micrography* designates the art

1193, Bologna, Bib Univ 2208–9 (Prophets, Hagiographa, see MPMA IV, Ms. 91). Nine dated Bibles predate 1240: 1215, Vatican City, Vat. Ebr. 468, La Rochelle (complete Bible); 1215–6, Vatican City, Vat Ebr. 482, from La Rochelle (complete Bible); 1215–1216, London, BL, Ar. Or. 2 (PMH); 1233, Berlin, SB, Or. Quart. 9 (PMH); 1236, Milan, Ambrosiana, Ms 30inf–32inf (complete Bible); 1237–38, Breslau, Univ. Lib. M 1106 (PMH); 1239, Vatican City, Vat. Ebr. 14 (PMH); 1240, Parma, BP, 2345 (Hagiographa).

13 See Pérez Castro 1977, 161. This conclusion is based on variants of the consonantal text found in the Leningrad Codex, Or. 4445 and Cairo Codex, with two Sephardic manuscripts, M1 of the Complutense University Library of Madrid, JTS Ms. 44a (Hilleli), and two Ashkenazic manuscripts Paris BnF Hébr. 1–3, G-I-1 of the Escorial (Chersin? 1306).

14 See Dotan 2007, § 3.3.5.4., Ornamentation of the text. Olszowy-Schlanger 2012b, 39–40 writes: “The micrographic Masorah took on an aesthetic function rather than that of an aid to the study of the biblical text: the small size of the characters, their varying alignments, and the increasing disregard for the correspondence between the biblical text and the masoretic notes show that the Masorah was scarcely even understood”. Sirat 2002, 50–51 estimates that the Masorah written in micrography was never meant to be read.

15 Metzger 1974; Ferber 1976–77; Sirat/Avrin 1981; Gutmann 1983; Metzger 1986; Kogman-Appel 2004; Shalev-Eyni 2010; Halperin 2013.

16 On the origins of micrography, see Halperin 2013, esp. 5–21.

17 For instance, Ferber 1976–77 establishes a distinction between the device (micrography) and its form, which is decorative when it is either abstract or illustrative (when figurative). Gutmann 1983, 52

of writing in minute letters as well as the drawing itself, which can sometimes create confusion. Moreover, these types of micrographical forms and their contents have generally not been inventoried, whether in Hebrew manuscripts or more specifically in Ashkenazic biblical manuscripts.¹⁸

Hebrew paleography considers that there are no minuscules or majuscules in Hebrew. Instead, several styles of script (square, semi-cursive, cursive) are found within each type of script (Oriental/Eastern, Italian, Byzantine, Sephardic, Ashkenazic).¹⁹ The size of the letters can be very small. Ornamental (non-representational, abstract) forms created with letters written in a small size are called ‘*ornamental micrographic forms*’ (see Appendice, Scheme 1). I shall call figurative (i.e. somehow recognizable) forms made of very small-sized minuscule letters ‘*figurative micrographic forms*’. The ‘alphabetical’ (i.e. scriptural) Masorah uses Masoretic notes to write another text in the shape of a word.²⁰ With regard to its layout, a micrographical form can be confined to a margin, cover an entire carpet page, or be located in an initial-word panel (often at the beginning of a book), or colophons.²¹

When a biblical Hebrew manuscript contains micrographic elements, the layout of the Masorah is altered.²² If the textual content of the micrographic element does correspond to Masoretic notes, we talk about an ornamental (micrographic) Masorah or figurative (micrographic) Masorah. In other words, a figurative Masorah (also translated as *Masora Figurata*) combines the art of writing with figurative patterns and a Masoretic content.

Ornamental and figurative Masorah became a special attribute of Ashkenazic and Sephardic manuscripts in the beginning of the 13th century.²³ This scribal practice was widespread enough during Juda he-Hassid’s (1150–1217) lifetime to incur his condemnation.²⁴ Yet, the figurative or ornamental Masorah found in Sephardic manuscripts

defines the term *Masora Figurata* as “the practice of having the minute letters form the shape of subjects (which are not necessarily related to text)”. Metzger 1986 designates *micrography* as nothing more than a very small minuscule script (i.e. a technique). Halperin 2013, 5 speaks of micrography when the contours of a text written in minuscule script evokes various visual designs.

18 Fronda 2013, 46.

19 Beit-Arié 2003, 68–69.

20 See Case 1 and 13 of my edition. I thank the participants of the Conference held in Heidelberg on “Text-Image Relationship and Visual Elements in Written Hebrew Sources” for having shared their thoughts with me about how to address this phenomenon. The reader will note that Ginsburg uses the expression “alphabetical Masorah” to designate the “alphabetical *Masora Finalis*” that Adonyah compiled in alphabetical order at the end of his edition, see Ginsburg 1897, 194 and 969.

21 See for instance the colophon of MS Vat. Ebr. 14 (Appendix 2).

22 See Prologue.

23 Garel 1978; Metzger 1986.

24 Gutmann 1983, 49.

did not obscure their philological Masoretic content.²⁵ In the case of Ashkenazic manuscripts, however, the matter seems more complex.²⁶

Why Edit Figurative Masorah?

This book aims to answer the two following questions: a) what is the philological link between Masorah produced in Ashkenaz and the Masorah (understood as an apparatus) of the eastern standard Tiberian codices, which was written according to the oldest available sources, and b), do the ornamental and figurative micrographic elements produced in the Ashkenazic context point to a loss of Masoretic knowledge, or can they be seen to constitute accurate and comprehensive Masoretic notes? Did their form distort their semantic content?

Not only has Hebrew micrography not been inventoried,²⁷ but there are no typologies of medieval biblical manuscripts.²⁸ This means that it is not possible to assess whether micrographic forms really constituted an impediment to the transmission of the biblical Masorah in Ashkenazic communities. This critical edition is the first significant step taken to address this issue. This book provides an edition of figurative micrographic Masorah from one of the oldest Ashkenazic manuscripts, i.e., the MS Vat. Ebr. 14 copied by Elijah ben Berechiah ha-Naqdan in 1239. This edition should be considered as an experimental case study, a trial in itself. To this day, no one has edited figurative Masorah. Even C. Ginsburg in his monumental Masorah has never elaborated on the lists coming from Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Yemenite and eastern manuscripts.²⁹ It is only very recently, that D. Halperin edited micrographical carpet pages from the Catalan Mahzor and called for further research in this field.³⁰ The biblical manuscript I have chosen to work on is the MS Vat. Ebr. 14 (hereafter Vat14).

Elijah ha-Naqdan copied this Pentateuch with Five Scrolls and Haftarat in 1239, in an unknown region of northern France.³¹ The manuscript is dedicated to a patron, R. Asher, unlike the MS Or. Quart. 9 (hereafter B), which was also copied by Elijah. Vat14 is a medium-sized codex. It is one of the oldest preserved Ashkenazic manuscripts to

²⁵ See for instance the edition of the MS M1 at the Complutense University Library of Madrid, which contains several instances of ornamental and figurative Masorah.

²⁶ An Ashkenazic codex of the 14th century (MS Erfurt 1) prompted one scholar to speak of ‘semantische Verfremdung’, Liss 2012, 22.

²⁷ See above.

²⁸ Goshen-Gottstein 1963; Stern 2012; Khan 2012, 7–8; Kogel 2014.

²⁹ See his lists of manuscripts, Ginsburg 1897, 1029. C. Ginsburg’s monumental work does not mention the exact provenance of each list he edits and if some of them were edited from micrographical forms.

³⁰ Halperin 2013. The contents of the micrographical carpets in this Mahzor are not Masoretic.

³¹ For the practical use of Vat14, see Attia 2015.

be explicitly dated,³² and the oldest to present an extensive series of sixty-four figurative Masorah, including the representation of human beings.³³ My recent codicological and paleographical analysis of these two manuscripts³⁴ confirmed that both of these codices show evidence of professional thirteenth-century handwork in a northern French ‘Gothic’ script, which was possibly related to the Anglo-Norman type.³⁵ Although both codices only include the Pentateuch, Five Scrolls and Haftarat,³⁶ their philological features are not exactly the same, which is a sign that they may have been copied from different sources and for different purposes.³⁷

The scribe’s cultural context can therefore then be identified as either Anglo-Norman or northern French with lingering Anglo-Norman influences.³⁸ Little is known of Elijah himself other than the fact that he copied, vocalized, and added the Masorah to two manuscripts (B and Vat14), producing B in 1233 in RDWM³⁹ (possibly Rouen)⁴⁰ and Vat14 in 1239.⁴¹ His father, Berechiah ben Netronai ha-Naqdan, was identified as a prolific scholar who travelled between Normandy and England during the second half of the 12th century and had knowledge of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s works.⁴² There is

32 See above.

33 See the list of figurative forms, Appendix 2.

34 See Appendices 2 and 3, Hebrew script.

35 There is a definition of the Ashkenazic type of script in Sirat 1976. However, work still needs to be done on the specific local paleographical features of Ashkenazic manuscripts produced in France, England and Germany. Most of the oldest dated sources we have are from northern France, see Sirat 1973–1974, Sirat 1991; Sed-Rajna 1997. The English type of script persisted until the expulsion of the Jews from England (1290), and looks rather similar to the thirteenth-century Norman type (esp. MS Vat. Ebr. 468 and MS Vat. Ebr. 14), see Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, esp. 117–118, 126–128. See also Engel 2010 and 2014.

36 Although these Bibles seem liturgical because of their contents, it is worth remembering that no typology of biblical manuscripts has been established (see above n. 28). The Haftarat are additional parts of the Prophets and the Five Scrolls that were read on various festive occasions: the Song of Songs was read in Public on Pesach, the Book of Ruth on Shavuot, the Book of Ecclesiastes on Sukkot, the Book of Esther on Purim and Lamentations on the ninth of Av.

37 See Attia (forthcoming).

38 The two cultures cannot really be differentiated before 1066, when Normandy Jews went to England, following in the footsteps of William the Conqueror. Normandy and England were part of the same kingdom until 1204. Roth 1941, 1–5; Nahon 1975; Nahon 2011, 31.

39 See Appendix 3.

40 The identification of RDWM has long been a matter for debate, most recently between Golb 1998, 326–327 and Werner 2002, 22–23. N. Golb argues that Rouen stands for RDWM. G. Nahon reassessed this interpretation and formulated the hypothesis that it stood for Dormans (in the Marne), see Nahon 2011, 36. Nevertheless, not everyone agrees that the Jewish scribe never called a town by its Latin name. See Jacobs 1893, 263; Olszowy-Schlanger 2014a, 118, on the name of Moses of Lyon (משה דלאבדנה).

41 See Appendix 2.

42 Jacobs 1893, 263. Ibn Ezra (1089–1164) is considered to have been in England circa 1158, and to have met R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) and the Tossafist, R. J. Tam during an earlier journey to northern France.

also a scholarly reference to Berechiah ha-Naqdan in the *Sefer Ha-Shoham*, by Moshe ben Isaac ha-Nessiyah, a thirteenth-century English grammarian.⁴³ In several of his colophons, Elijah evokes the contributions his father made to the fields of grammar, biblical exegesis,⁴⁴ Hebrew translation (Fox Fables called *Mishlei Shu'alim*), ethics and science (he paraphrased Adelard of Bath's *Questiones Naturales*, wrote a book on Physics and Philosophy, and translated a lapidarium into Hebrew).⁴⁵ Born to an aged Berechiah,⁴⁶ Elijah was arguably a talented professional scribe and a learned scholar in his own right.

Critical Editions of Masoretic Notes

It has been demonstrated elsewhere that there are many factors preventing the production of a critical edition of the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁷ As such editions concentrate on the consonantal biblical text, the notes compiled in the Masorah are generally not in the focus of critical editions.⁴⁸

Six major biblical editions include an edited Masorah. Adonyah's edition of the *Biblia Rabbinica* (Venice: Bomberg, 1524–1525) was the first of its kind to provide a consonantal text and a Masoretic apparatus (MP, MM and MF), which became a *textus receptus*.⁴⁹ The second edition was the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), where the consonantal text of the Leningrad Codex (hereafter L) is edited and where G. Weil provides a “fully corrected and normalized realization of the Masorah”, which means a clear reconstruction.⁵⁰ The third one was the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ): contrary to the BHS, it reproduces the *Masora Parva* and *Magna* of L, but without providing any critical apparatus.⁵¹ This diplomatic edition recognizes that L's Masoretic notes have their “deficiencies” while nevertheless refusing to correct them.⁵² The fourth one was the *Hebrew University Bible*, which provides a descriptive edition. It includes the biblical text of the Aleppo Codex (or what remains of it) with four apparatuses, bearing

⁴³ Roth 1949, 45, 48–50; Golb 1998, 334.

⁴⁴ Preserved in fragments and for instance in Ms. Cambridge, CUL, Dd. 8.53 (see Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, 300).

⁴⁵ See Steinschneider 1873; Jacobs 1890a, 1890b, 1893, 1890c; Neubauer 1890a, 1890b; Golb 1998, 324–347; Serfaty 1997, 48; Freudenthal 2009, 106 and ff. The Fox Fables have been edited by Haberman 1946. On his two ethical treatises, see Gollancz 1902.

⁴⁶ See the mention “son of his old age” in the colophons, Appendix 2.

⁴⁷ Schenker/Hugo 2005, 22–27.

⁴⁸ See the monumental work of Ginsburg 1880.

⁴⁹ Penkower 1983.

⁵⁰ BHQ, Introduction, vol. 18, XI. Only the MP is published in the BHS, whereas the MM has been compiled in Weil 1961.

⁵¹ A critical apparatus for the Masorah would have required more than one volume.

⁵² BHQ, Introduction, vol. 18, XI.

witness to the diversity of the biblical text, and a Masorah without an apparatus which is comprised of the MP and MM of the Aleppo Codex.⁵³ The fifth, and probably the finest, is the Cairo Prophets' Codex edition.⁵⁴ This edition presents the MP alongside the biblical text (*rafim* included), and includes separate volumes with the MM, the *hapax legomena* and an analytical index on the MP.⁵⁵ In addition, D. Lyons has published a facsimile critical edition of the cumulative Masorah in the same codex.⁵⁶ Lastly, the sixth one is the M1's edition, which only includes the *lemmas* (unvocalized and unaccented) and their Masoretic notes (MP/MM).⁵⁷ The critical notes to this edition only call attention to the text's most significant deviations from the eastern Tiberian manuscripts. However, there are very few such differences, as M1 is considered to be a good representative of the standard Tiberian Masorah.

Within a field of research where many late medieval manuscripts still remain unedited, the construction of critical apparatuses may contribute "to bear out our conclusions pertaining to the study of the Bible text".⁵⁸ That is why a complete edition of the vocalized consonantal biblical text of Vat. Ebr. 14 (Pentateuch, Five Scrolls, Haftarat, i.e. 292 folios), together with its vocalized Targum⁵⁹ and all its Masoretic notes, as well as a critical apparatus, was originally planned. Unfortunately, however, it was not possible to undertake the vast amount of work this would have required in the time allotted to this project. As a result, this book only provides an edition of the micrographical Masorah found in thirteen folios from the Book of Exodus. I shall publish the rest of the manuscript in the future.

Structure of the Edition

I have chosen to focus this edition on all the folios from the Book of Exodus that include at least one figurative Masorah (13 folios). My main reason for focusing my philological analysis on the Masoretic notes to Exodus which are found in Vat14,

⁵³ Schenker/Hugo 2005, 17.

⁵⁴ Dotan 1986. One of the best solutions for editing Masoretic texts is to "reproduce one single manuscript with complete fidelity to the original including vocalization and punctuation", see Ortega Monasterio/Gomez Aranda 2002, 231–232.

⁵⁵ Pérez Castro 1980; Dotan 1986; Ortega Monasterio 1995; Fernández Tejero 1995; Azcárraga Servert 1997.

⁵⁶ Lyons 1999.

⁵⁷ See Azcárraga Servert 2001; Ortega Monasterio 2002; Seijas de los Ríos-Zarzosa 2002; Martín-Contreras 2004; Fernández Tejero 2004; Azcárraga Servert 2004.

⁵⁸ See Goshen-Gottstein 1995, xii. What is true for editions of early Oriental codices is also true for editions of late medieval codices.

⁵⁹ I thank my colleague Johanna Tanja for letting me know that no extensive work has been done on the Targum Onqelos provided by Ashkenazic manuscripts.

rather than on the Book of Genesis, where there are more cases of figurative Masorah, is that this offers the possibility of comparing Vat14 with three major eastern Tiberian codices (O, D, L), whereas Genesis would only allow a comparison with L. The selected folios always include a regular Masorah in the upper margin and a figurative Masorah in the lower margin. Instead of only editing the figurative parts of the Masorah, I chose to work on the folio as a whole, in order to understand the behavior of the scribe.⁶⁰ Another reason for this choice is that some regular Masoretic notes begin in the upper margin and continue in the lower margin, where the figurative section of the Masorah is located.

The fact that the Ashkenazic Masorah has not yet been fully studied and is not well understood makes it difficult to trace a potential Ashkenazic Masoretic tradition. Although Ashkenazic Masoretic notes may have been copied from different sources than the consonantal texts, I consider them to belong to the same Ashkenazic Masoretic tradition and deal with both. This edition reduces the biblical text to a word (the *lemma*) and to the notes that accompany it. In other words, my critical apparatus focuses on both biblical lemmas and Masoretic notes, in order to see if they tally with each other. However, the eastern standard Tiberian sources remaining rather incomplete (L is the only very old complete Bible preserved with all its components), and it was only possible to compare the Masoretic notes from identical biblical passages.⁶¹ Although I am in the process of testing and comparing the entirety of the notes in each manuscript, in this edition, I only focus on selected passages.

Finally, I chose to present the lemmas and their notes according to the order of the Hebrew verses rather than according to the order in which they appeared on the page.

Editorial Steps for Masoretic Micrographical Notes

Micrographical figurative Masorah have never been edited before, I devised a specific methodology inspired by the work of D. Halperin.⁶²

Here is the methodology I followed:

1. Identify the figurative Masorah located inside Vat14, which contains vast ornamental micrographic elements.

⁶⁰ For example, I wanted to know if Elijah's additions of figurative Masorah modified the content of the Masorah.

⁶¹ In other words, I checked the 13 folios of Vat14 against the corresponding folios in O, D, L, M, V, R and B (i.e. in 91 folios).

⁶² Halperin 2013, esp. 5–21.

The resulting inventory shows that Vat14 includes 64 figurative micrographical elements and 11 simple drawings. The figurative Masorah are distributed as follows: 21 in Genesis, 12 in Exodus, 4 in Leviticus, 8 in Numbers, and 19 in Deuteronomy.⁶³

2. Localize the lemma through the *circellus* (if available) and its relevant MP, or attribute each MP note to one lemma.

While manuscripts O, D, L, M, V and R are consistent on this matter, the manuscripts of ha-Naqdan are less consistent, which can make it difficult to attribute the Masoretic notes to a lemma.

3. Transcribe the lemma and its MP.

Because a MP note always originally refers to a lemma, I have decided to reproduce each lemma as it appears in Vat14—i.e., fully vocalized and fully accented (including the *circellus* and the *rafim*, even if these elements are rather inconsistent).⁶⁴

4. Localize the relevant MM while deciphering and transcribing the textual elements of each figurative form.⁶⁵

As is generally the case, the MM is connected to a MP or a lemma from the central text. B contains some figurative forms; however, their location and text do not match those of Vat14 (see Appendix 3). There are a few small-scale instances of legible ornamental Masorah to be found in V. R offers some isolated figurative forms and an alphabetical Masorah (which forms the colophon) at the end.⁶⁶ L, O, and D do not contain ornamental or figurative forms in Exodus.⁶⁷ O (and to a lesser degree D) presents a regular cumulative Masorah in its margins, and the MM is confined to the lower margins.⁶⁸ M1 does have some ornamental and figurative Masorah, which according to E. Contreras-Martín, were used to elaborate the abundant Masoretic material.⁶⁹

5. Mark each segment of a Masoretic list located inside a visual figurative form with arrows and captions (1, 2, 3, etc.) according to the biblical verse order.⁷⁰ The captions (I, II, III, etc.) refer to illegible or unidentified material.

⁶³ See Appendix, Description 1.

⁶⁴ Only the Cairo Prophets edition proposes to edit the *rafim*. Rather than editing this diacritical mark, the other current editions simply omit it, which requires further research. On the inconsistency of the *rafim*, see Yeivin 1980, 286–287. For example, in Vat14, on הָהֵן (Ex. 13 :16), this apparatus would be = D V ~ O הָהֵןִּ׃ L הָהֵןִּ׃ B הָהֵןִּ׃ where the *rafe* on the *heh* is a *contra-mappiq* and the *rafe* on the *dalet* or *khaf* is a *contra-dagesh*. In view of this, our apparatus on the lemmas does not include variants of the *rafim* and *circellus*.

⁶⁵ The software I used to perform these tasks was *Adobe Pro*. I thank Sebastian Seemann for his help.

⁶⁶ See f. 555r, and Sirat 1994, 30–31 (fig. 12). For ‘alphabetical Masorah’ expression, see above n. 20.

⁶⁷ For ornamental Masorah in L, see MPMA I, Ms. 17.

⁶⁸ The cumulative Masorah is composed of lists of *hapax* and pairs of words. See for example D. Lyons 1999.

⁶⁹ See M1, ff. 22r, 24r, 33v; Ortega-Monasterio 2002, 229–231; Elvira Contreras-Martín’s lecture on “The Image to the Service of the Text: Ornamental Masorah in the Manuscript 118-Z-42 (M1) from the Complutense University Library” at the Xth EAJS Congress, Paris, 22d July 2014.

⁷⁰ The software I used for this was *Adobe Illustrator*.

Some figurative forms contain several notes on different lemmas, without following the order of the lemmas and the biblical text. In order to indicate this material construction, I have used arrows to highlight decipherable lists⁷¹ and to show how to read the notes located inside the ornamental or figurative Masorah.⁷²

6. Edit the lemma, the MP and the MM or textual elements using editorial software.⁷³ Each note in the MP or MM has been transcribed as it appears in the manuscript Vat14 and connected with the biblical term to which it belongs (the lemma). The MP or MM note generally begins with a short codified explanation of the Masoretic problem.⁷⁴ These parts are sometimes translated into English at the end of the section when they are complex. In the MM, the *simanim* have been systematically identified.

7. Compare the notes with those of other manuscripts or with other sources if the note is unknown.

Each lemma, MP or MM note was systematically compared with:

- a) available Ben Asher eastern Tiberian sources on Exodus. G. Weil's edition of the *Masora Magna* was used to perform this task, as it was a guiding tool for identifying some of the Masoretic notes.
- b) those found in other Ashkenazic manuscripts on Exodus.

When there was no record in any of the manuscripts included in my apparatus of a note found in Vat14, I tried to identify it in the lists found in *Sefer Okhlah*,⁷⁵ Frensdorff's *Die Massora Magna*,⁷⁶ and Ginsburg's edition of the Masorah.⁷⁷

8. Edit the above-mentioned comparisons in the critical apparatus located in footnotes.

Circellus and *rafim* variants are not reported in the critical apparatus. Neither are slight changes in the order or wording of the *simanim*. Each entry has three notes corresponding to the lemma in the central text of Vat14, its MP, and its MM. Some comments and translations are provided in the footnotes to each section.

9. Review and proofread the edition.

⁷¹ In this edition, see Other Texts, Illegible Text. These sections may also constitute unidentified material.

⁷² See Remarks to the Reader.

⁷³ On account of technical difficulties, *Classical Text Editor* was not used.

⁷⁴ Hyvernat 1902; Elliger/Rudolph 1977; Martín-Contreras/Seijas de los Ríos-Zarzosa 2010, 243 and ff.

⁷⁵ Frensdorff 1864; Díaz Esteban 1975; Ognibeni 1992 and 1995.

⁷⁶ Frensdorff 1876.

⁷⁷ Ginsburg 1880.

The Manuscripts of the Critical Apparatus

The philological perspective adopted in this edition explores the function of textualization in the figurative forms of Ashkenazic Masorah. The apparatus was built from a comparison between a few important eastern Tiberian Codices (MS Or. 4445, the Leningrad Codex, the Damascus Pentateuch, MS M1)⁷⁸ and the later Ashkenazic tradition, as represented by Vat14⁷⁹ especially, but also MS Or. Quart. 9⁸⁰ (the other manuscript copied by Elijah ha-Naqdan), MS Valmadonna 1⁸¹ (the oldest Ashkenazic Bible with links to the same cultural area than the two I have just mentioned) and the MS Vat. Ebr. 482 (the second La Rochelle Bible). The Hebrew text of O, D and L was used in recent editions.⁸² The Hebrew text of Vat. Ebr. 482 has only been used in G. B. Kennicott's purely consonantal edition at the end of the 18th century, while the Targum of Vat. Ebr. 14 was used by A. Berliner in 1884.⁸³ Although we are aware that these philological comparisons are based on remnant manuscripts which are most likely of a different nature (model codex, popular Bible, or liturgical Bible),⁸⁴ the variants that could emerge from these comparisons may help to differentiate them and build a typology of Bibles in a second phase of research.

A/ Standard Tiberian Sources: O, D, L and M

In terms of the eastern sources, I examined the four eastern codices that define the standard Tiberian tradition:⁸⁵ the Leningrad Codex, Cairo Codex,⁸⁶ Aleppo Codex,⁸⁷ and MS BL Or. 4445. Only two of these manuscripts display available folios on the Book of Exodus: the Leningrad Codex and Or. 4445. I had access to digitized images and facsimile editions of these manuscripts.⁸⁸ In addition to this corpus, I examined

78 For practical reasons, we were unable to include the other biblical manuscripts kept at the Russian National Library. See Beit-Arié 1993a, 111–128, esp. 111–112 and BHQ, vol. 18, lxxviii.

79 High definition (300 dpi) images provided by the Vatican Library.

80 High definition (600 dpi) images provided by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

81 Images provided by the IHMH Jerusalem, courtesy of the Valmadonna Trust.

82 See above. MS Or. 4445 was also used in Ginsburg's edition, see Ginsburg 1897, 1029.

83 See Cod. 242, 486 and 611 in Kennicott 2003 [1776–1780], 90, 102, 107. De Rossi's edition focuses on most of the Kennicott manuscripts that present variants, see De Rossi 1784–1788 (–1798); Richler 2014 [1992], Appendix I, No. 22, 265–282. For the Targum of Vat14, see Berliner 1884, 250.

84 Further codicological and paleographical studies are needed, as well as a typology of Hebrew codices in the Middle Ages.

85 Martín-Contreras/Seijas de los Ríos-Zarzosa 2010, 23–24, 32–33; Dotan 1993, 39.

86 On the Cairo Codex: MPMA I, MS No. 1. Dotan 1986.

87 On the Aleppo Codex: MPMA I, MS No. 6.

88 Beck et al. 1998. Images of Or. 4445 were provided by the British Library.

the Damascus Pentateuch (hereafter D)⁸⁹ as well as M1 of the Complutense University Library,⁹⁰ a Sephardic manuscript which is considered to be a good representative of the Ben Asher Tiberian tradition and was contemporary to Vat14.⁹¹ Here is a brief description of each one of these eastern sources:

- *MS St. Petersburg, National Library, Evr I B19^a, from the first collection of Firkovitch [Leningrad Codex], (L)*

This is the most well-known and complete ancient manuscript of the Hebrew Bible.⁹² It was copied in the East/Orient and its colophon is dated 1008/9. Contemporary biblical editions of the Bible (the BHS and BHQ, for example) are based on this manuscript. Recently, a complete description of this document was made available.⁹³ It is one of the most popular and widely-used biblical codices today, along with the Aleppo Codex.⁹⁴

- *MS London, British Library, Or. 4445, (O)*

The manuscript is missing its original beginning and ending, as well as a few isolated folios.⁹⁵ Only the text from Gen 39:20 to Deut 1:33 has been preserved. Its Oriental script suggests it may have been written in Persia in the 9th or 10th century. According to Aron Dotan, the scribe was Nissi ben Daniel ha-Cohen.⁹⁶ The codex contains well-known annotations quoting a living R. Ben Asher (“*melamed ha-gadol Ben Asher*”) who has been identified as Aaron Ben Asher.⁹⁷ The dates of the consonantal text and one of the Masoretic apparatuses are currently being debated. Some scholars agree with D. Ginsburg that the consonantal text could predate the 10th century⁹⁸ while its Masorah could have been written a century later, at the time of Aaron ben Asher.⁹⁹ However, following in the footsteps of P. Kahle and I. Yeivin, Dotan argues that the annotations mentioning Ben Asher’s name postdate the Masorah. This unedited codex allows us to “peep into the early stages of Masoretic practice”¹⁰⁰ and 20% of its

89 Löwinger 1978. One of the earliest Masoretic codices, see below.

90 Ortega Monasterio 2002. A few chapters from the Book of Exodus are nevertheless missing from M (9:34 to 24:7).

91 Ginsburg 1897, 906; Fernández Tejero 2000 and 2004, XVIII–XIX.

92 Beck et al. 1998.

93 Beit-Arié et al. 1997, Ms No. 17, 114–131.

94 Goshen-Gottstein 1963, esp. 101–102. According to Israeli researchers, the Aleppo Codex was considered to be the original ‘model’ codex to which Maimonides refers in *Mishne Torah*. See Goshen-Gottstein 1960.

95 Dukan 2006, 296. The lost folios were replaced by a Yemenite scribe in the 16th century.

96 Dotan 1993, esp. 48–50. Ofer 2015.

97 Dotan 1993, esp. 41, 43–44. Dotan argues that the mentions of Ben Asher’s name constitute later additions.

98 Some of its codicological features are very ancient: there is no double dot at the end of the verses, for example.

99 Dukan 2006, 296–297.

100 Dotan 1993, 41.

Masoretic notes are from the school of Ben Naftali.¹⁰¹ There are a few sample studies of this manuscript¹⁰² and an edition is being planned.¹⁰³ It is used in the BHQ (as M^B) for variants of the consonantal text.

- *MS Jerusalem, JNUL 24°5702 [or MS Sassoon 507, called the Damascus Pentateuch], (D)*

According to M. Beit-Arié,¹⁰⁴ it dates from the 10th century. I. Yeivin established a comparison between the Masorahs found in D and the Aleppo Codex, and this led him to suggest that some of D's Masoretic notes were vocalized and accentuated according to the Babylonian system.¹⁰⁵ This unedited manuscript is quoted in the BHQ's apparatus (as M^{S5}) and remains of great interest.¹⁰⁶ Although O and D have not been edited as such, they were used along with L to prepare the edition of the BHS (especially its Masorah), even if there is no clear mention of these manuscripts in this edition.¹⁰⁷

- *MS Madrid, Complutense University Library, 118-Z-42 [M1], (M)*

M is kept at the Library of the Complutense University of Madrid. This Sephardic Hebrew manuscript from the second half of the 13th century is generally attributed to the Toledo School. Several codicological descriptions are available, but its origins remain unclear.¹⁰⁸ The codex was the property of Cardinal Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros and was used to prepare the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* printed in 1520. The BHQ refers to it as M^M in its apparatus. Spanish scholars are currently editing its entire Masorah.¹⁰⁹

B/ Ashkenazic Sources Compared with Vat14: V, R and B

The three Ashkenazic manuscripts to be compared with Vat14 in the critical apparatus are the MSS Or. Quart. 9 (B), Valmadonna 1 (V) and the Vat. Ebr. 482 (R). The reader will find a detailed description of Vat14 in the Appendix.¹¹⁰ Here is a brief description of all the manuscripts used in the critical apparatus:

101 Wurthwein/Fischer 2014, 42.

102 Ramirez 1929, 1930 and 1933; Goshen-Gottstein 1963, 689.

103 See Dotan 1993.

104 Beit-Arié 1993a; Sassoon 1932, 22–23, n. 507; see also the Introduction to the facsimile by Löwinger 1978, 9.

105 Yeivin 1968, esp. 321–322.

106 I thank A. Dotan for having approved the use of D in the present work.

107 Some of the notes which Weil records in the BHS are only recorded in O and D. See also Kelley et al. 1998.

108 Ginsburg 1897, 771–776. del Barco 2003, Ms. 1, 109–112. I thank Javier del Barco for suggesting that the codex may possibly have originated in Aragon and Catalonia instead of Toledo, in Castile.

109 See *infra*, footnote 57. The manuscript is available on-line.

110 See Appendix 2.

- *MS London, Valmadonna Trust 1, (V)*

The oldest Ashkenazic manuscript included in the critical apparatus is the MS London, Valmadonna Trust 1. This important manuscript is the oldest Bible identified as coming from northern Europe and Ashkenaz.¹¹¹ It was produced in 1189, either in England or in Normandy.¹¹² Like Vat14, this very large parchment manuscript¹¹³ is comprised of a Pentateuch with the Aramaic translation following the Hebrew verse by verse and Masoretic notes (MP and MM). It has sustained severe damage, and the text has been only partially preserved and is sometimes illegible.¹¹⁴ The upper margin of the manuscript was trimmed, and some lines of the *Masora Magna* have been lost as a result: however, it seems that these Masoretic notes were reduced to one or two lines of text, instead of spreading over two or three lines as in other manuscripts.¹¹⁵ Despite the paleographical and codicological importance of this manuscript, which contains the first traces of the biblical tradition in northern Europe, its Masorah has not yet been edited or studied.

- *MS Vatican, BAV, Vat. Ebr. 482, (R)*

This manuscript is a very large parchment codex, which contains the Pentateuch with the Targum in its external margins, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, including in each case their vocalization, accentuation and Masorah.¹¹⁶ Hayim ben Isaac copied it in La Rochelle in 1216,¹¹⁷ according to a later Latin annotation which mentions the Jewish year 975.¹¹⁸ The same scribe had already completed another manuscript—the MS Vatican, BAV, Vat. Ebr. 468—for his master Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen on the 6th of Tishri 4976 [1215] in La Rochelle.¹¹⁹ Unlike Vat. Ebr. 468, Vat. Ebr. 482 was not lavishly decorated by a later hand, and its Masorah remains legible.

- *MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Quart. 9, (B)*

B is very closely related to Vat14 from a codicological and paleographical point of view,¹²⁰ as both were written by the scribe. B is a very small parchment Bible,¹²¹ copied by Elijah ha-Naqdan in Rouen (RDWM) in 1233. It contains the Pentateuch, Five Scrolls and Haftarat, accompanied by the Targum.¹²² Some of the figurative forms

111 MPMA IV, MS No. 85; Beit-Arié 1993b, 238–242; Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, 238–242; Schrijver 1989.

112 Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, 238.

113 Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, 71.

114 Available text: Gen 45:13–47:5 and Gen 50:6 to Num 31:3; see MPMA IV, MS No. 82.

115 This idea of a ‘reduced’ *Masora Magna* seems to be attested by the presence of graphic signs used to fill the blank space left in some lines.

116 Sirat 1994, Ill. 12, 30; Richler 2008, 417–418; Attia 2014.

117 See f. 555r, the name of the town La Rochelle is written in the alphabetical Masorah (בלרוקליא).

118 See f. 555v.

119 Mortara Ottolenghi 1985; Richler 2008, 406.

120 See Introduction; Steinschneider 1878, 22–23; Werner 2002; Also Appendices 2 and 3.

121 See Appendix 3. The letter size is 2 mm in the (square) main text, and less than 2 mm in the micrographical elements.

122 See Appendix 3; Attia 2014.

in the manuscript are very small. There are 12 such minute designs in Genesis and 16 in Deuteronomy. According to Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, their small size demonstrated the copyist's great level of skill, since small penmanship was prized as elegant and refined.¹²³ The paleographical features match Vat14, but not the philological contents, which seem to have been copied from other sources.¹²⁴

Expected Results

The comparison of Vat14 with L, O, D, M and with V, R and B will provide evidence for the following assumptions: a) standard or Ben Asher Tiberian sources had a great influence on the Ashkenazic Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan. Even if they had been transcribed in micrographic forms, most of the notes from Vat14 can be found in the oldest eastern Tiberian sources and b), the figurative Ashkhenazic Masorah does not systematically create an impediment to the transmission of philological knowledge.

This edition does not attempt to provide final conclusions on Ashkhenazic Masoretic traditions. What it does, however, is to lay the foundations for examining the role that a previously overlooked body of evidence played in the philological transmission of the Masorah in northern Europe, while also providing new interpretations for the material presence of figurative Masorah in Ashkenazic codices.

123 *Sefer Or Zarua of Isaac ben Moses of Vienna* 1862, § 555, 152. "Fine script is not a good thing, because it is easily erased. [The scribe] wrote in small letters in a bid for glory. It would be better if he aimed lower and made his letters slightly bigger."

124 See Attia (forthcoming).