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ON SOME VARIANTS IN ASHKENAZIC BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS FROM THE 12TH AND 13TH CENTURIES

Élodie Attia

Aix Marseille Univ, CNRS, TDMAM, Aix-en-Provence, France¹

1.0. COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN ORIENTAL, SEPHARDIC AND ASHKENAZIC MANUSCRIPTS

In 1977, Frederico Pérez Castro published a detailed article entitled “Códices bíblicos hebreos. Evaluación comparativa de varios manuscritos toledanos, askenazíes y orientales” which focused on variants in medieval biblical manuscripts. The article aimed to “determine in a systematic way the quality of Sephardic manuscripts produced in the scriptoria of Toledo” (Pérez-Castro 1977, 107). It sought to determine how close the late medieval Sephardic tradition was to the so-called “Ben Asher tradition” or “Tiberian Masoretic tradition”.²

Pérez-Castro’s study compared Sephardic manuscripts with early Tiberian manuscripts following the Ben Asher tradition and Ashkenazic manuscripts in order to identify differences between them. For that purpose, seven manuscripts were collated. First of all, a group of oriental Ben Asher (standard Tiberian Masoretic tradition) manuscripts including:

- a) the Leningrad codex (MS St. Petersburg, National Library, Evr I B19a, henceforth L) as the central comparative source,³ dated

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² See Golinets (2012, 589).

³ On the manuscript, see Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer (1997, 114-131). Some edition such as the Hebrew University Bible Project, takes the Aleppo Codex

1008/9, the most complete early Masoretic manuscript of the Hebrew Bible (henceforth L);⁴

- b) the manuscript London, British Library, Or. 4445 (henceforth O), a Pentateuch the dating of which is still debated – the script has been attributed to 9th-10th century Persia;⁵ some scholars agree with C. D. Ginsburg that the consonantal text could predate the 10th century, while its Masorah could have been made at the time of Aharon ben Asher (who is mentioned as being alive in some Masoretic annotations);
- c) the Cairo Prophets codex, dated to 894/895 (henceforth C).⁶

As far as the non-oriental manuscripts analysed are concerned, the Sephardic manuscripts included in the case study are: a) the M1 Complutensian of Madrid, with the estimated date 1280, from the Toledo school,⁷ the basis of the Complutensian Bible of 1520;⁸ and b) the JTS 44a Hilleli Codex (a Spanish codex supposed to have been copied from a lost codex of the 7th century called Codex Hilleli), dated 1241.⁹ The Ashkenazic area is represented by: a) MSS Paris, BnF, hébreu 1-3, dated 1289 – end of the 13th century, Germano-Ashkenazic script;¹⁰ and b) G-I-1 from the Escorial, dated 1306, probably not copied in Chersin according to Pérez Castro, but in Flavignac, which, in our opinion, is located in the *paroisse* of Les Cars, in Western France. This is corroborated by the Franco-Ashkenazic type of square script used by the scribe.¹¹

as referent for the Standard Tiberian tradition. On the HUBP, see Segal 2013 and on Editions of the Hebrew Bibles, see Lange and Tov (2016, 113, note 4).

⁴ Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer (1997, I).

⁵ Dotan (1993).

⁶ Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer (1997, MS 1, 25-39).

⁷ See Del Barco (2003, MS 1). Its origin from Castilla may be doubtful according to Javier del Barco (private correspondence, January, 15th, 2014).

⁸ Fernández Tejero (1976).

⁹ See Ortega Monasterio and Fernández Tejero (2005).

¹⁰ Del Barco (2011, 20-27).

¹¹ An alphabetical Masorah written in the folios f. 380v-387r reads the Colophon of the MS G-I-1 and mentions the name of a place. The Sfaradata Database (Description Key 0S014) mentions « פילאויניק >ת-קיארצין » [היושבת במדינת Flavignac ? ». Flavignac is indeed in Haute-Vienne (Aquitaine, France). I personally read ת-קיארצין במדינת as “[qui se trouve] dans le pays des

Although the reasons for Pérez Castro's choice of Oriental and Sephardic manuscripts are clear (famous standard Tiberian codices or codices used for 16th-century editions), in the case of the Ashkenazic sources chosen there are regrettably no easy explanations: dating from the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th century, the two items were not the earliest but may have simply been available for research as microfilms.

Perez-Castro's article gathered 826 lemmas by comparing 10 verses from each biblical book of L with the other manuscripts. The results of this investigation showed, in the case of the Sephardic items, "a greater closeness to the Ben Asher tradition, [whilst] the Ashkenazic manuscripts *are far removed* ('se alejan muchissimo') from the Ben Asher model (here represented by L, O and C)" (Perez Castro 1977, 160).

The conclusion of the article leads to the idea that Sephardic manuscripts are very close to the Ben Asher standard tradition, a point commonly shared nowadays as it was already claimed in the 13th century by some Ashkenazic grammarians such as Yequti'el ha-Naqdan in his *'En ha-Qore*.¹² Although the method employed in the article (comparing variants) is above criticism, the question of the treatment of the Ashkenazic manuscripts must be reassessed taking into account the following facts: a) The Tiberian codices already vary among themselves—the best example is that, according to Pérez Castro's data, the Cairo Codex of the Prophets itself varies to the same extent as the selected Ashkenazic manuscripts when both sets are compared to L (Perez Castro, *tabula...*); b) The unexplained choice of Ashkenazic manuscripts implies (without explicitly saying so) that the MSS Paris 1-3 reflects the Palestino-Tiberian vocalization system or the so-called

Carsins [les habitants du lieu-dit Les Cars]" ([who lives] in the area of Carsins [the inhabitants of the place called Les Cars]). Javier del Barco, in his catalogue (Del Barco del Barco 2003, 140), suggests a reading which fails to persuade us (בילאוינק קיארצין). Perez Castro suggested "escrito en Pilawoinaq, de la provincia de Chersin" (see Perez Castro 1975, 109), which would lead us to think of a Ukrainian region (Cherson) proposed by our colleague Viktor Golinetz. But the French type of script visible from the samples available in Sfaradata does not confirm Perez-Castro's hypothesis.

¹² See the Ph.D. thesis of Yarkoni (1965); also Yarkoni (1993).

‘Extended Tiberian’ vocalization system.¹³ This system, called by Dotan a nonconventional Tiberian system, requires further study as it seems to exist in many variations across the Ashkenazic Bible manuscripts. The MSS Paris 1-3 and G-I-I should not be taken as standard models for this cultural area and for general conclusions, but only as samples for preliminary conclusions;¹⁴ c) Other systematically analysed Ashkenazic manuscripts may help us to consider the non-Sephardic manuscripts not only as being philologically deviant from the standard tradition or as resulting from ignorance claimed by certain grammarians,¹⁵ but rather as being what they were: historical artefacts that reflect a different chain of the post-Masoretic transmission of the Hebrew biblical text in Europe. Historically, these manuscripts have been used by Jews in European communities, copied with care from the exemplar they had at hand.¹⁶

2.0. COMPARING TIBERIAN STANDARD MANUSCRIPTS WITH ASHKENAZIC MANUSCRIPTS

Between 2011 and 2014, within the framework of a project at Heidelberg University,¹⁷ I prepared an edition of micrographic Masoretic notes appearing in MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Ebr. 14. This manuscript is a Norman-Ashkenazic Bible which contains only the Pentateuch, the Five Megillot and the Haftarot (extracts of the Prophets). This codex was produced in Normandy in 1239 by a scribe named Elijah ha-Naqdan.¹⁸ I will not discuss here the

¹³ Golinets (2012, 596). For the background, see Khan (2017).

¹⁴ As there were no systematic studies of the Ashkenazic Bibles, the study of Perez Castro had of course no other choice than to take samples. The project ANR MBH (2016-2020) will provide new data on this corpus of Ashkenazic biblical manuscripts. See the MBH Project in the website <https://mbhproject.org>.

¹⁵ Yequti’el ha-Naqdan refers to this according to Yarkoni (1965, vol. 2, p. x).

¹⁶ See for instance the f. 256r in Vat14 where Elijah ha-Naqdan mentions the reading found in a *massoret*, old corrected exemplar?, cf. Attia (2015, 109-111,125).

¹⁷ SFB 933 Materialien Text-Kulturen, Subproject B4, with Prof. H. Liss (HFJS), Kay Petzold, Sebastian Seeman.

¹⁸ Attia (2015, Appendix 2, Codicological and Palaeographical Description, 119-130).

point of editing figurative Masorah—an object considered non-philological *per se* by many scholars—but rather focus on a new question: *How do the earliest Ashkenazic manuscripts correspond to the Tiberian Masoretic text?*

The present analysis is not structured in exactly the same way as that of Pérez Castro but some parallels can be drawn. The basis of this new analysis is the Ashkenazic Bible MS Vat. Ebr. 14 mentioned above. This manuscript preserves 63 folios of figurative Masorah, namely, drawings and figurative forms made up of text (see illustration below). In this case study I have chosen to focus on 13 folios coming from Exodus. In each folio (which do not always form a consecutive text), the lemmas of words that are the subject of a Masora Parva (MP) or a Masora Magna (MM) are edited. For each lemma, MP variants and MM variants are recorded.

The lemmas of MS Vat. Ebr. 14 have been compared with seven other manuscripts divided into two groups: a group of four standard Tiberian manuscripts and a group of four of the earliest Ashkenazic manuscripts. The standard Tiberian group of Hebrew biblical manuscripts include here:

- (i) The so called ‘Leningrad Codex’, i. e. the MS Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, I Firkovitch, B19a (henceforth L)
- (ii) The MS London, British Library, Or. 4445 (henceforth O)
- (iii) The so called ‘M1’, i.e. the MS Madrid, Complutense University Library 118-Z-42 [M1], (henceforth M). It is a 13th century Sefardic Bible.
- (iv) The so called ‘Damascus Pentateuch’, i.e. the MS Jerusalem, National Library of Israel, 24°5702, (henceforth D). This is a the Pentateuch that has been dated to the 10th century. Some notes were vocalized and accentuated according to the Babylonian system.

The ‘Aleppo Codex’ has not been chosen because it does not include Exodus.¹⁹

The corpus of Ashkenazic manuscripts is composed of some of the earliest dated Ashkenazic Bibles (unlike the corpus of Pérez Castro), namely:

¹⁹ <http://www.aleppocodex.org/newsite/index.html>

- (i) MS London, Valmadonna Trust 1 (henceforth V). This is the earliest dated Ashkenazic Bible, 1189, only 180 years older than L.
- (ii) MS Berlin, Statsbibliothek zu Berlin, Or. Qu. 9, 1233 (henceforth B). This was written by Elijah ha-Naqdan in a very small format, with Masoretic notes in a Masorah Magna presented in an abbreviated manner. It appears to be a miniaturization of Vat14;²⁰
- (iii) MS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. ebr. 482 (henceforth R). This is one of the famous 'La Rochelle Bibles', copied in La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast, probably in 1216, by the same scribe as the one who wrote the MS Vatican, Vat. ebr. 468 (La Rochelle, 1215). It is a complete Bible with Targum in the margins.

Due to the large number of variations in the use of the *rafe* between the manuscripts considered here, as well as some practical and technical editorial problems, it has been decided to mark *rafe* in the lemma when it appears in the lemma but not to record variant uses of the *rafe*.

Following this procedure, in the 13 Case-folios studied in my monograph *The Masorah of Elijah ha Naqdan* published in 2015, 162 lemmas were found having a Masora Parva and/or Masora Magna. In these there are 70 variants. In the table below, I have applied the classification devised by Pérez Castro to my own list of variants.

Study-case folio edited in Attia 2015	No. of lemmas concerned by an MP and/or MM	Variants recorded between the MSS on the lemma or in the MP and/or MM	Variants in <i>plene</i> and defective spellings, <i>qere</i> and <i>ketiv</i>
1	14	8	1
2	17	10	1
3	7	2	0

²⁰ See Attia (2015, Appendix 3, Codicological and Palaeographical Description, 131-137).

4	12	6	3
5	14	8	2
6	17	4	1
7	11	6	0
8	5	2	0
9	13	5	0
10	17	5	0
11	17	6	0
12	10	6	0
13	8	2	0
TOTAL	162	70	8

Study-case folio edited in Attia 2015	Variants in vowels	Variants in accents, <i>dagesh, rafe</i>	Variants in <i>ga'ya</i>
1	2	4	2
2	2	6	2
3	0	2	0
4	2	3	0
5	2	3	1
6	0	3	0
7	0	4	2
8	1	0	2
9	0	3	2
10	0	5	0
11	1	4	1
12	1	4	1
13	2	0	0
TOTAL (67*)	13	41	13

* 3 cases only remain out of this classification.

Based on this procedure, the distribution of variants is similar to the one in Pérez Castro's study. These include:

- (i) A few consonantal variants, *plene* defective spellings, *qere ketiv*
- (ii) Some vowel interchanges, including, as in Perez Castro's study, the replacement of *shureq* with *qibbuš*, and *pataḥ* with *qameš*)
- (iii) Many variants in the accents
- (iv) Variations in the marking of *ga'ya*. Some selected examples are presented here thematically.

3.0. SELECTED EXAMPLES

Key to table

	Separator between variants
=	This case in Vat14 is the same in X
~	This case in Vat14 appears as variant in X
<	This case in Vat14 is not found in X
//	'corresponding to'

3.1. A few consonantal variants, plene or defective spellings, qere-ketiv

	MS Vat. Ebr. 14	Apparatus reproduced from Attia (2015)
1	<p>דִּשְׁיָיִ Gen 50:26 Different spelling and a <i>qere-ketiv</i> MP קִ דִּשְׁיָיִ shared only by Vat14, V and B,²¹ matching Tiberian codices דִּשְׁיָיִ.</p>	<p>דִּשְׁיָיִ] = V (but without dagesh) B ~ O D L R M דִּשְׁיָיִ MP דִּשְׁיָיִ] = V B ~ L מְל ל D M R ל < O</p>
2	<p>דִּלְלָיִ Exod 5:14 Defective spelling only in V14; <i>plene</i> spelling in Ashk. mss V &</p>	<p>דִּלְלָיִ] = O D L M R ~ V B (without <i>zaqef qatan</i>) דִּלְלָיִ</p>

²¹ Additional research on this term in other manuscripts shows that in the MS St John's College, Cambridge, MS A1, the reading in this precise passage follows Vat14, B and V.

	B but B does not have a disjunctive accent.	
3	וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁקָנָי Exod 12:7 Defective spelling in B (singularity)	וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁקָנָי = O D L V R ~ B וְעַל-הַמִּשְׁקָנָי
4	הַשְּׂבִיעִי Exod 12:15 <i>Plene</i> spelling in B (singularity)	הַשְּׂבִיעִי = O D L R V (with graphic sign in the waw) ~ B הַשְּׂבִיעִי
5	וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן Exod 12:16 Specific accents in V14; V displays a defective spelling.	וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן ~ O D L R וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן ~ V וּבַיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן
6	הַוָּצִיאָהּ Exod 13:09 <i>Plene</i> spelling singular to V14, not relevant to Ashk. MSS.	הַוָּצִיאָהּ ~ B הַוָּצִיאָהּ O D L V R הַוָּצִיאָהּ
7	וַיִּבְרָאָהּ Exod 13:11 Different spelling and a <i>qereketiv</i> , quoting <i>waw</i> instead of <i>yod</i> (shared by V/B both lemma and Masoretic notes).	וַיִּבְרָאָהּ = V B ~ O D L R וַיִּבְרָאָהּ
8	וַתְּחַלְּלֶיהָ Exod 20:25 Plene spelling with <i>yod</i> with <i>dagesh</i> in V14/B. The MP note וח' in V14 contradicts the <i>plene</i> lemma but follows the Tiberian Codices.	וַתְּחַלְּלֶיהָ = B ~ O D L V R וַתְּחַלְּלֶיהָ

3.2. Vowels

3.2.1. *Shureq/qibbuṣ* interchange

9	חֲגֹרִים Exod 12:11 In B <i>qibbuṣ</i> (short) replaced by a <i>shureq</i> (long).	חֲגֹרִים = V ~ O D L R חֲגֹרִים ~ B חֲגֹרִים
10	עֲמֻדֵיהֶם Exod 38:12 In B, from the same scribe, <i>qibbuṣ</i> in B instead of <i>shureq</i> in V14.	עֲמֻדֵיהֶם = O L M D ~ V עֲמֻדֵיהֶם ~ B עֲמֻדֵיהֶם
11	וַיִּשְׂבּוּ Exod 32:27 <i>Qibbuṣ</i> only in V14, otherwise <i>shuruq</i>	וַיִּשְׂבּוּ ~ O D L M V R B וַיִּשְׂבּוּ

	cases ²³ while there is a lack of agreement with the Masorah of Tiberian codices, which mentions three cases, two <i>plene</i> and one defective.	
19	קָרָן Lev 1:2 <i>Qameš qatan</i> instead of <i>ḥatef qameš</i> (both are short vowel <i>qameš</i>), followed only by V. The Masorah in only V refers to <i>qameš qatan</i> .	קָרָן = V ~ O D L M R B קָרָן

3.3. Accents and Diacritical Signs

In this category B is the manuscript that generally exhibits differences.

3.3.1. Erroneously Omitted or Differently-placed *Dagesh*

20	בְּרִי Genesis 50:23 Absence of <i>dagesh</i> in B	בְּרִי = O D L M V R ~ B בְּרִי
21	וְתַמְלָא Exod 1:7 <i>Dagesh</i> different in B (in the <i>lamed</i>) (mistake?)	וְתַמְלָא = O D L M V R ~ B וְתַמְלָא
22	כָּלוּ Exod 5:13 <i>Dagesh</i> omitted in B (same scribe)	כָּלוּ = O D L M V R ~ B כָּלוּ
23	יְנַחֵם Exod 13:17 Absence of <i>dagesh</i> in B	יְנַחֵם = O D L V ~ B יְנַחֵם
24	קָטַרְתְּ סִמִּים Exod 30:7 Absence of <i>dagesh</i> in B	קָטַרְתְּ סִמִּים = O L D M V ~ B קָטַרְתְּ סִמִּים

3.3.2. Isolated Variants in the Accents

25	וְאֶל־הַזְקֵנִים Exod 24:14 Accent changed in B	וְאֶל־הַזְקֵנִים = O D L M V ~ B וְאֶל־הַזְקֵנִים
26	וַיִּשְׁכֵּן Exod 24:16 Accent changed in B	וַיִּשְׁכֵּן ~ O D L M B וַיִּשְׁכֵּן [[V?]]
27	וּמְרָאָה Exod 24:17 Absence of accent in B	וּמְרָאָה = O D L M V ~ B וּמְרָאָה
28	וַיִּקְחוּ Exod 25:2	וַיִּקְחוּ = O D L M [[V]] ~ B וַיִּקְחוּ

²³ In Exod 35:9, Exod 35:27, and Exod 25:7, see Attia (2015, p. on לְאֶפֶד Exod 35:9).

	Accent changed in B	
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3.3.3.

Valmadonna 1 includes the isolated feature of *shewa* on word-final *yod* and *waw*.

29	וּבְאַחֲיוּ Exod 32:29 V with <i>shewa</i> on final <i>waw</i>	וּבְאַחֲיוּ = O D L M R B ~ V
30	וְאֶת־קִרְשֵׁיוֹ Exod 35:11 V with <i>shewa</i> on final <i>waw</i>	וְאֶת־קִרְשֵׁיוֹ = O D L M R B ~ V וְאֶת־קִרְשֵׁיוֹ
31	בְּרִיחֹוֹ Exod 35:11 V with <i>shewa</i> on final <i>waw</i>	בְּרִיחֹוֹ = O D L M R ~ V בְּרִיחֹוֹן ~ B בְּרִיחֹוֹ
32	וְאֶת־בְּדִיוֹ Exod 35:12 V with <i>shewa</i> on final <i>waw</i>	וְאֶת־בְּדִיוֹ = O D L M R B ~ V בְּדִיוֹ

3.3.4.

Four variants are shared by at least two manuscripts of the Ashkenazic Group Vat14/B/V (R generally follows L, O and D).

3.4. *Ga'ya*

Many	33	וְנִכְכֶּהָ Exod 12:11 Accent variants (<i>darga</i>) only in Vat14 and V	וְנִכְכֶּהָ = V O D L B R וְנִכְכֶּהָ
	34	וְהִגְרִימִם Exod 12:11 <i>Revia'</i> in Ashkenazic MSS corresponds to <i>zaqef qatan</i> in Tiberian MSS and B.	וְהִגְרִימִם = V ~ O D L R וְהִגְרִימִם ~ B וְהִגְרִימִם
	35	לְמוֹעֲדָהּ Exod 13:10 Ashkenazic MSS have <i>mappiq</i> under the <i>he</i> and not inside.	לְמוֹעֲדָהּ = V B ~ O? D L R לְמוֹעֲדָהּ
	36	Exod 21:10 וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ The <i>mappiqs</i> are placed under the letter <i>he</i> in Vat14, V and B	וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ = O L ~ D וְעִנְתָּהּ ~ V B וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ וְעִנְתָּהּ

variants are due to absence of *ga'ya* in B

37	נִתְחַכְמָהּ Exod 1:10	נִתְחַכְמָהּ = O D L M V R ~ B נִתְחַכְמָהּ
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	<i>Ga'ya</i> is absent in B; this example is also in Pérez Castro's study. Paris 1-3 does not have <i>ga'ya</i> here.	
38	ד'ק'י'צ Exod 5:8 Absence of <i>ga'ya</i> , only present in D L V.	ד'ק'י'צ] = O L M R B ~ D L V ד'ק'י'צ

4.0. CONCLUDING REMARKS

These new data show that when Tiberian sources such as the Damascus Pentateuch and earlier Ashkenazic Bible manuscripts are added to the comparative corpus, the question of the relationship of the Ashkenazic manuscripts to the Ben Asher tradition becomes more complicated than previously believed by scholars. The Tiberian Ben Asher vocalization tradition cannot be reduced to L. Irregularity in the variants shows that more than one model was followed and that even in the oriental Tiberian codices some variants already existed, for instance with regard to the feature of *ga'ya*, the *ga'ya* is absent from O but present in V. Hence, it may be concluded that the principles of the Tiberian Masoretic tradition were followed with a varying degree of faithfulness, as it can only be expected in a manuscript culture.

The adjustments or disagreements between the Masoretic notes and the consonantal text remind us that a post-Masoretic medieval biblical manuscript is the result of a complex process involving sources and different people. The *sofer* was responsible for the consonants and may have used a different exemplar from that used by the *naqdan* or the *masran*. This is the case in Valmadonna 1, where many Masoretic annotations contradict the consonantal text.²⁴ Moreover, some grammatical explanations offered by the grammarian Yequti'el ha-Naqdan in his *En ha-Qore* correspond to the variants I have described.²⁵ It is highly likely, however, that, despite Yequti'el ha-Naqdan's opinion, the Ashkenazic Bibles remain fundamentally Tiberian and should be considered a medieval development of that

²⁴ See also Beit-Arié, Sirat, and Glatzer (2006, 82-87, especially 83).

²⁵ The second part of the work (Grammatical treatise) displays the rules for word-stress, *methigot* (i.e. *ga'yas*), *maqqefs* and warnings against error in the reading of a *Sefer Torah* (Yarkoni 1965, vol. II, I-II). Further research is required.

tradition. This requires us to abandon the idea of a ‘standard’ Tiberian tradition (or a family of manuscripts made up of L, O and D) as opposed to a ‘non-standard’ or ‘non-conventional’ one. We should rather conceive of post-medieval Tiberian texts, including some groups of variants inspired by pronunciations and local customs and scribal practices.

In addition, the study of the variants shows both specificities of each manuscript and also families of manuscripts or scribal traditions. For instance, compared to Vat14, La Rochelle shares fewer variants with Ashkenazic manuscripts (for instance, in the case of תִּשְׁאֵל , it does not correspond to the group). It is possible that this manuscript was copied from a Spanish exemplar in La Rochelle and not from an Ashkenazic one.²⁶ Also, the manuscript B is an odd case. This is a manuscript that appears to have been produced by the same scribe as wrote Vat14. The codicological and palaeographical features reflect the same hand. Manuscript B, however, follows different rules of vocalization from what is found in Vat14, viz. interchange of *qames/pataḥ* and of *shureq/qibbus*; omission of *dagesh*; *ga’ya* generally different from Vat14. Why is this? The local pronunciation of Hebrew may have had an influence on early medieval Ashkenazic Bibles and prayerbooks.²⁷ It is possible that manuscript B was copied from a different exemplar. Moreover, its very small format suggests that it may have been intended to be used as a prayerbook.

One interesting hypothesis, supported by case 12/3 (תִּשְׁאֵל Exod 35:9, see footnote 9) is that manuscripts that exhibit the strongest Anglo-Norman variants, i.e. cases where V14, V and B share similar variants, furnish evidence for the existence of a uniform scribal tradition as a subgroup inside the Ashkenazic area. A group of Anglo-Norman variants emerges from this corpus, specifically in these cases: 1, 2, 4, 7, 17, 18, 19, 33, 35 and 36. In our opinion, this group could constitute a basis for further studies in Ashkenazic Bibles from England.

The *Manuscripta Bibliae Hebraicae* project (MBH Project) seeks to study Ashkenazic biblical manuscripts in depth, linking textual features such as specific variants noted in the above group of

²⁶ This manuscript seems to have been transported to Spain after 1294 (the Jews were expelled from town). See Richler and Beit-Arié 2008, 406-407.

²⁷ See Eldar 1978, 16 on *qames/pataḥ* interchanges ; Olszowy-Schlanger 2003, 129 and ss.

Ashkenazic manuscripts to extensive material features such as codicological and palaeographical parameters. This should help us to locate and reconstruct families of manuscripts and scribal traditions within western Medieval Europe, as well as construct a typology of medieval Hebrew biblical manuscripts in this geocultural area.

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