



Title: Digital Edition of a *masora figurata* ("Tower") in Ms. Vat. ebr. 14, fol. 196r., <http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/196r>

HANNA LISS

## Teaching in Tiny Letters. Eliyyah ben Berekhyah ha-Naqdan's Way of Teaching as Displayed in MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14

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HANNA LISS

## Teaching in Tiny Letters.

# Eliyyah ben Berekhyah ha-Naqdan's Way of Teaching as Displayed in MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14

*Hanna Liss, Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies*

### Summary

This paper deals with the Masorah and *masora figurata* illustration displayed on fol. 196r in MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14. The scribe – Eliyyah ben Berekhyah ha-Naqdan – designed a tower that refers to the conquest of the territories and the cities that are recounted at the end of parashat *Matot*. The peculiarity of this figurative illustration lies in the fact that it does not only encompass masoretic material related to the biblical text, but also integrates the scribe's explanation on the exegetical and halakhic relevance of a *masora parva* note, in which he took up various Bible commentaries and related them to a source introduced as 'Midrash *Harninu*.' This article explains the *mise-en-texte* on this folio as well as the masoretic notes displayed in detail, and discusses the Midrash *Harninu* source reference with regard to the question as to which extant the *pesiqta*-literature was known in Northern France (especially in the Anglo-Norman region). In addition, it will be debated that Eliyyah's masora figurata illustrations did not simply serve as decorative elements but fulfilled educational purposes. The manuscript, Vat. ebr. 14, thus, could have been used as a 'class-book' for Bible teachers and students alike.

Hanna Liss, Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg/Universität Heidelberg, Landfriedstraße 12, 69117 Heidelberg, Email: [hanna.liss@hfjs.eu](mailto:hanna.liss@hfjs.eu). This publication originated in the Long Term Project "Corpus Masoreticum", funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Further Information: <https://corpusmasoreticum.de>.

# 1 Introduction

Opening pages that display *masora figurata* decoration and illustrations issue various invitations to the reader. Some draw the reader's attention to the illustration, i.e. shape and image of the *figurata*, and less to its philological content. This is in particular the case when a *masora figurata* consists of long masoretic lists and covers the entire opening page of a biblical book with no other *figuratae* in the remainder of the book,<sup>1</sup> as is the case in many Ashkenazi manuscripts from the second half of the 13th century.<sup>2</sup> These manuscripts often display masoretic list material safeguarded in a certain illustration, which shows no immediate reference, neither to the image nor to the main biblical text on the respective page. Other *masora figurata* drawings, as for instance in MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14 (BAV<sup>14</sup>), a well-known Ashkenazi manuscript, of which one folio is to be discussed in detail hereafter, refer to the biblical context at hand in both the image of the illustration and its philological content.<sup>3</sup>

Opening pages are like doors, but not necessarily in the sense one might expect it: Usually, a door hides the room and all its interior from the eyes of one who is outside. In the following, I will show that our masorete used a 'glass door,' and his contemporaries were surely able to look into the room and identify every single item very clearly. Only for modern readers who are not used to this way of teaching and learning does the door sometimes appear like a frosted glass door, difficult to look through.

BAV<sup>14</sup> was written in 1239,<sup>4</sup> possibly in Rouen, by Eliyyah ben Berekhyah ha-Naqdan,<sup>5</sup> son of a famous father: Berekhyah ha-Naqdan is (in particular) known for his Hebrew version of the Fox Fables, the *Mishle Shu'alim*. Both the father and the son were well educated, not only in rabbinic culture but also in contemporary sciences like natural history and medicine.<sup>6</sup>

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1 On the navigational function of decorative opening pages see esp. Malachi Beit-Arié, *Unveiled Faces of Medieval Hebrew Books. The Evolution of Manuscript Production – Progression or Regression?* Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003, 50.

2 See e.g. MS London or. 2091 (the manuscript can be viewed here: <https://goo.gl/LbRrTC>; accessed 04/2021). An online edition of the entire *masora figurata* illustrations of this manuscript is provided here: <http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscripts> (accessed 2/2022).

3 I thank Melissa Anwar-Uthman and Bettina Burghardt for emending and shaping my English, and Sara Offenberg (advisory board Corpus Masoreticum) as well as Dalia-Ruth Halperin, Katrin Kogman-Apel, Johannes Müller, and Ilona Steimann for their helpful comments.

4 As to the dating of this manuscript see the discussion in Norman Golb. *History and Culture of the Jews in Rouen in the Middle Ages*. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976 (in Hebrew), esp. 120–144; Norman Golb. *The Jews in Medieval Normandy. A Social and Intellectual History*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998, 130; 332; Élodie Attia. *The Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan, an Edition of Ashkenazi Micrographical Notes* (Ms. Vat. Ebr. 14, Book of Exodus). MTK 11. Berlin u.a.: De Gruyter, 2015, 127–130.

5 Cf. Benjamin Richler. *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library. Catalogue. Compiled by the Staff of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem*. Studi e Testi. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 438, 2008, 9–11; Attia 2015, 119–130.

6 See Gerrit Bos, Julia Zwink, eds. *Berakhyah Ben Natronai Ha-Nakdan: Sefer Koah Ha-Avanim (On the Virtue of the Stones). Hebrew Text and English Translation*. Leiden, Boston 2010; Tamás Visi. "Berechiah Ben Natronai Ha-Naqdan's Dodi ve-Neqdi and the Transfer of Scientific Knowledge from Latin to Hebrew in the Twelfth Century", in *Aleph. Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 14,2, 2014, 9–73; Bettina Burghardt.

The peculiarity of Eliyyah's drawings<sup>7</sup> is not only that they were mostly made entirely of tiny Hebrew letters, but also that they display a wide range of genres: masoretic notes and lists (*masora magna* as well as *masora figurata*), midrashic material, Bible commentaries of Rashi or Ibn Ezra,<sup>8</sup> and even contemporary literature like the Fox Fables (fol. 143v<sup>9</sup>). In addition, Eliyyah's drawings show that he looked closely at his environment (architecture, nature, ritual objects like the Menorah).

Eliyyah's patron for whom the manuscript was written was a certain R. Asher,<sup>10</sup> and the manuscript (320 folia) contains the Pentateuch (with Onqelos; mostly alternating verse-by-verse), the Haftarat, and the Five Scrolls (*megillot*): Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The order of the scrolls matches exactly the order displayed in the Ashkenazi Pentateuch manuscript Washington, Museum of the Bible, CG. MS. 00085 ('Valmadonna 1'; Sassoon 282)<sup>11</sup> and the Hebrew-French glossary MS Parma, Palatina, Cod. 2924 (de Rossi 60; Délemont 1279).<sup>12</sup>

The Aramaic verse-by-verse-translation proves in many places that Eliyyah wanted the Targum text to be read and studied, be it as a tool for acquiring Aramaic language skills (which would work well in view of this *mise-en-texte*), be it as an exegetical tool, i.e. as an

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*How Did the Vegetable Get into the Bible? Elija Ha-Nakdan's Duda'im as a Tracer for Cultural Transfer.* Unpublished Master Thesis Heidelberg, Hochschule für Jüdische Studien. Heidelberg, 2021.

7 Parts of the *figuratae* from the book of Exodus were edited in Attia 2015. A revised digital edition of the entire manuscript is currently being prepared and provided online open access by the Team Corpus Masoreticum: <http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscripts> (accessed 2/2022).

8 On this topic see esp. Kay Joe Petzold, "Rashi in the Masorah: The Figurative Masorah in Ashkenazi Manuscripts as Parshanut", in: *Philology and Aesthetics. Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts* (edited by Hanna Liss in cooperation with Jonas Leipziger; Judentum und Umwelt 85), Frankfurt am Main et al.: Peter Lang, 2021, 203–223.

9 See the text הוּלָהּ הִיּהוּ זֶקֶן אַרְיֵה in the tail of the lion (on the right); go there for image: [https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14\\_0286\\_fa\\_0143v.jp2/1389,1615,353,351/full/0/default.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0286_fa_0143v.jp2/1389,1615,353,351/full/0/default.jpg) (accessed 2/2022).

10 See also Attia 2015, 11–13.

11 On this manuscript see already Abraham Berliner. *Targum Onkelos. Herausgegeben und erläutert.* Frankfurt am Main; Berlin; London: J. Kauffmann; Gorcelanczyk & Co; D. Nutt, 1884, 247–248; David Solomon Sassoon. *Ohel Dawid. Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library*, London. Vol. 1. Oxford; London: University Press; Humphrey Milford, 1932, 16–18; Malachi Beit-Arié, "The Valmadonna Pentateuch and the Problem of Pre-Expulsion Anglo-Hebrew Manuscripts – MS London, Valmadonna Trust Library 1: England (?), 1189", in Malachi Beit-Arié (Ed.), *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book. Studies in Palaeography and Codicology*, Jerusalem 1993, 129–151; Judith Olszowy-Schlanger. *Les manuscrits hébreux dans l'Angleterre médiévale: Étude historique et paléographique.* Collection de la Revue des Études Juives 29. Paris and Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2003, 238–242; Élodie Attia. "Targum Layouts in Ashkenazi Manuscripts. Preliminary Methodological Observations", in *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, edited by Alberdina Houtman, E. van Staaldoune-Sulman, and Hans-Martin Kirn, 99–122. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014, 101; single pages of this manuscript can be accessed online: <https://collections.museumofthebible.org/artifacts/32220-codex-valmadonna-i?&tab=description> (accessed 10/2021).

12 See [https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX\\_MANU-SCRIPTS990001090360205171&SearchTxt=PARma%202924](https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/ManuScript/Pages/Item.aspx?ItemID=PNX_MANU-SCRIPTS990001090360205171&SearchTxt=PARma%202924) (accessed 2/2022)

accompanying commentary on the biblical text. He made an effort to display the layout of the Hebrew text and the Targum both reader-friendly and philologically clear.<sup>13</sup>

Based on the talmudic prescription (b. Ber 8a) that the weekly Torah portion should be read three times – twice in Hebrew and once in Aramaic: שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום – the Ashkenazi rabbis encouraged their community members to preserve this custom meticulously,<sup>14</sup> and Pentateuch editions with interlinear Targum provided the reader with an adequate book, be it for private reading at home or as an accompanying reading during recitation of the Torah in the synagogue. Sarit Shalev-Eyni pointed to the fact that in some Pentateuch editions that were produced in France the Targum was substituted by a Rashi commentary in the margins (the main biblical text written in a single column), whereas the German Pentateuchs usually tended to stick to the three-column layout with the Targum inserted verse-by-verse. She referred to R. Moshe ben Ya'aqov of Coucy who argued in his *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* that the study of the commentary should be given more weight than the study of the Targum.<sup>15</sup> However, in her study on Targum layouts in Ashkenazi manuscripts, Élodie Attia observed that mainly in manuscripts from the 14th century onward the Targum was copied separately in the margins, and she regarded the “alternating layout, in three columns (...) to be a standard feature in Ashkenazi manuscripts.”<sup>16</sup> BAV<sup>14</sup> displays this standard feature as well. Its size in the medium-sized codex format shows that it was probably used for private study and/or individual reading in the synagogue. Since the alternating Bible/Targum text calls for very careful reading so as not to miss a line, Hebrew-Aramaic Pentateuchs could also be used as a proofreading copy for the public reading from the Torah scroll. In any case, even if the manuscript was produced in Rouen, one could argue that R. Asher as its patron might have prescribed the ‘German’ *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-texte* (three-columned with the Targum text inserted interlinear). However, Eliyyah ben Berekhyah attached great value to Rashi’s commentary as well, and used in particular the *masora figurata* illustrations to integrate the most important Rashi explanations on the respective pages.

The manuscript contains more than 70 figurative micrographic illustrations,<sup>17</sup> all of them could be considered ‘door-openers’ for the respective *parasha*.<sup>18</sup> From the colophon it is

13 Go there for image: [https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14\\_0371\\_fa\\_0196r.jp2/422,1449,475,467/full/0/default.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0371_fa_0196r.jp2/422,1449,475,467/full/0/default.jpg).

14 See *Sefer Or Zarua'*, Part 1, *Hilkhot Qeri'at Shema'* #11; cf. Ta-Shma 1999, 171–185; Yossi Peretz, “*Shnayim Miqra we-echad Targum*.” *Tallele Orot* 14 (2008): 53–61.

15 Cf. Sarit Shalev-Eyni. *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance*. London [u.a.]: Miller, 2010, 9–10 incl. n. 50.

16 Attia 2014, 110. On this predominant way of presenting the Targum within a biblical book see Willem F. Smelik, “Orality, Manuscript Reproduction, and the Targums”, in August den Hollander et al. (eds), *Paratext and Megatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions: The Textual Markers of Contextualization*, 49–81. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003, 73; Eveline van Staaldouine-Sulman. “A Variety of Targum Texts”, in Alberdina Houtman, E. van Staaldouine-Sulman, and Hans-Martin Kirn (eds.), *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2014, 9–31, 11.

17 One can find a list in Attia 2015, 122–125; some of the labellings of the illustrations had to be reevaluated, though, in recent research, e.g. the altar (Attia 2015, 123 No. 27) turned out to be a city gate.

18 The manuscript is missing its original beginning (fol. 1–3 were added later), but it is very likely that there, too, was a *figurata* related to the beginning of the book of Genesis.

clear that Asher ordered this type of time-consuming (and, therefore, costly) decoration, and that it was not merely a whim of Eliyyah's mind.<sup>19</sup> This is supported by the fact that the 'twin manuscript' – MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz or. qu. 9 (SPK<sup>9</sup>) – written by Eliyyah in 1233, was not nearly as lavishly illustrated, and contains less *masora figurata*.

In BAV<sup>14</sup>, Eliyyah places his *masora figurata* illustrations always on the bottom of a page. Every *parasha* gets its own figurative opening.<sup>20</sup> At first glance, it might appear that Eliyyah was probably not the most skilful illustrator in Medieval France; however, his drawings and *mise-en-texte* reveal a clear didactic concept, and he took great efforts to present his material well-structured. In the colophon, Eliyyah provides direct evidence of his involvement in teaching young boys:

I, the scribe, the *Naqdan* and the *masran*, son of the man of lots of works, the Rav Berekhyah ha-Naqdan, [I] the *qara* [i.e. the Bible teacher], the *hadran* [i.e. the one who runs a *heder*], and the *pashtan* [i.e. the exegete].<sup>21</sup>

This educational intent was connected to his approach to the biblical text, and he implemented it also in the manuscript he produced. In the following, I will elucidate Eliyyah's teaching concept by presenting an in-depths analysis of fol. 196r, a page covering the end of *parashat Mat̄tot* and the beginning of *parashat Mas'e*. It provides an interesting insight into the masoretic and exegetical traditions that were considered as kind of 'must-haves' in Northern French Jewish Bible education at the beginning of the 13th century.

## 2 General Observations on fol. 196r

Fol. 196r is a meaningful example for the way Eliyyah collected and organized various material on the opening page of a *parasha*. As in most of the other pages that display *masora figurata*, Eliyyah placed the *figurata* – a tower – on the bottom of the page.<sup>22</sup> The biblical main text encompasses Num. 32:41–33:14, the end of *parashat Mat̄tot* and the beginning of *parashat Mas'e*, describing the wandering and the instruction for the conquest of Canaan. Due to the fact that the Targum was added interlinear to the Hebrew text, the folio displays only sixteen biblical verses. Like in many other cases in which the pictures were simply drawn and not shaped from letters, Eliyyah highlighted a phrase, here **וַיִּסְעוּ מֵאֲלוֹשׁ וַיִּחַנּוּ בְּרֵפְדִים** *They set out from Alush and encamped at Rephidim; it was*

19 "And be blessed R. Asher who dedicated his heart to make this beautiful book (...)" (edited Attia 2015, 127 incl. note 50).

20 See note 18.

21 אני כותב אני הסופר והנקדן והמסרן בן איש רב פעלים הרב ברכיה הנקדן אני אליהו הסופר והקרא והתנא וההדרן והפשתן; fol. 239r; see also Attia 2015, 127.

22 For the edition of the entire page see <http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/196r> (accessed 2/2022).

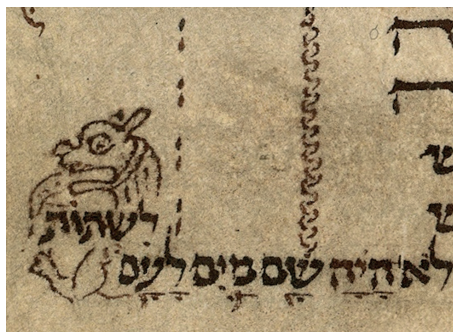


Fig. 1: Vat. ebr. 14, fol. 196r (detail)



Fig. 2: Saint Vitus Cathedral, Exterior, Eastern Side (detail)

there that the people had no water to drink (Num. 33:14) with a gargoyle (fig. 1) that resembles the gargoyles that can be found on contemporary churches (for an example see fig. 2).<sup>23</sup> The beginning of *parashat Mas'e* in Num. 33:1 is marked by its first word אלה drawn in colours. It is hardly smaller than the beginning of the book of Devarim on fol. 200v: From the comparison of the initial words one can see that Eliyyah regarded the beginning of a *parasha* as important as the beginning of an entire biblical book. This can be interpreted as a first indication that Eliyyah's Pentateuch was meant as a 'class-book' that a teacher might use and from which pupils should learn continuously week after week. One can, therefore, also expect the *figuratae* to serve not only as decorative elements but fulfill educational purposes.



Fig. 3: Vat. ebr. 14, fol. 196r (detail)



Fig. 4: Vat. ebr. 14, fol. 200v (detail)

<sup>23</sup> See: Gerhard Arnold, Ernst Friedrich-Zwirner. *Cologne Cathedral, Gargoyles. Images*, n.d. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.15292701> and Saint Vitus Cathedral, Exterior, Eastern Side, Gargoyles. Images, n.d. <https://jstor.org/stable/community.15316257> (fig. 2).





ly'), but Eliyyah had decided to not display the *simanim* within the tower illustration since the expression *בִּיד רִמָּה* belongs to Num. 33:3 (i.e. already in *parashat Mas'e*), whereas the illustration of the tower refers to the conquest of the cities that is recounted at the end of *parashat Mat̄tot*. He, therefore, took up the *masora magna* on *בִּיד רִמָּה* in the ornamental element next to the tower on the left hand side as well as other *masora magna* entries to be dealt with below.

The rest of the tower is dedicated to a *masora magna* entry linked to Num. 32:42 (edited in red) and an extensive commentary by Eliyyah that explains and comments on the exegetical connection of Hebrew *לָהּ* ('her/it') without *mappiq* and Aramaic *לָא* ('not'). The masoretic note (in red) refers to Num. 32:42: *וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת־קִנְיַת וְאֶת־בְּנֵיהֶּיָּהּ וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ נֹבַח בְּשֵׁמוֹ* *And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its dependencies, renaming it Nobah after himself*. The Masorah points to the fact that the preposition Lamed + suff. 3. pers. fem. *לָהּ* in *וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ נֹבַח* appears in Num. 32:42 without *mappiq* and, as common in Ashkenazi manuscripts, with a *rafe* on the letter He.<sup>25</sup> Eliyyah took up this observation in the *mp* note, indicating that this phenomenon is found in three places in Scripture.<sup>26</sup> The fact that the interlinear Targum version *וַיִּקְרָא לָהּ נֹבַח* is written with a *rafe*, too, indicates also the Aramaic *לָהּ* to be written without *mappiq*.

As text of the tower he displayed the respective *masora magna* (edited in red): *לָהּ גִּ' דְּלֹא מִפִּיק*, followed by the respective *simanim*: *לָהּ בֵּית לְבָנוֹת לָהּ בֵּית* 'to build a house for her' (Zech. 5:11) and *וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בֹּעַז* 'And Boaz said to her' (Ruth 2:14), and finally referring to the Targum vers(es) at hand:<sup>27</sup> *וּכְלֵ אַרְמִית דְּכוּוּתָהּ*. The book of Ruth (without Targum) is found in BAV<sup>14</sup> on fols. 244r–246r, and the respective verse in Ruth 2:14 (fol. 245r) is marked with the *mp* note *לָהּ גִּ' דְּלֹא מִפִּיק*, a *rafe* added to the He.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, SPK<sup>9</sup> in Num. 32:42 (fol. 104v) reads without *mappiq* (and with *merkha kefula*), but without a *rafe*.<sup>29</sup> This is a bit unusual, since Eliyyah in SPK<sup>9</sup> normally puts a *rafe* on the respective consonants. This is also the case in SPK<sup>9</sup> in Ruth 2:14 (fol. 137r), where the preposition occurs without *mappiq* and with a *rafe*

25 See also Gérard E. Weil. *Massorah Gedolah. Iuxta Codicem Leningradensem B 19a* (Volumen I). Rom: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971, #3154; Christian D. Ginsburg. *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged*. 4 vols. Fromme et al.: London et al. 1880–1885, vol. 2, ##45, 120 displays an Aramaic mnemonic for the three verses Num. 32:43, Zech. 5:11, and Ruth 2:14: *נבַח בבֵּיתָא דְּבֵעוּ*.

26 See the *mp* note [https://digi.vatlib.it/iiif/image/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14\\_0371\\_fa\\_0196r.jp2/1212,860,538,226/full/0/default.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/iiif/image/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0371_fa_0196r.jp2/1212,860,538,226/full/0/default.jpg) (accessed 2/2022).

27 The Targum version *לָהּ* without *mappiq* (see image in note 26) on Num. 32:42 is found also in Parma Palatina 3289, fol. 240v (go there for images <https://iip.corpusmasoreticum.de/iiif/Codex.Parma.3289/Fol240v.tif/450,3939,1218,700/full/0/default.jpg>; Ruth 2:14 fol. 305v, no Targum); Munich BSB 2, fol. 199v (go there for images [https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307\\_00404/1321,4342,1444,957/full/0/default.jpg](https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307_00404/1321,4342,1444,957/full/0/default.jpg); Ruth 2:14 on fol. 250v, no Targum); the Hebrew and Targum in MS Valmadonna 1, fol. 181r (cf. note 7; Numb 32:42 is missing in the manuscript) also displays *לָהּ* without *mappiq* (all links accessed 2/2022).

28 Firkovich, Evr. I B 19a, fol. 421v notes a He with *mappiq* and provides an *mp* note *רַפּ גִּ' דְּלֹא מִפִּיק*.

29 Go there for image: <https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/670595624-0216/99,391,341,158/full/0/default.jpg> (accessed 2/2022).

that is accompanied by the respective *mp* note referring to three occurrences of לה without *mappiq* and with a *rafe*.<sup>30</sup>

The third element (marked in green) consists neither of *masora magna* nor of any other masoretic list material but of a commentary by Eliyyah that reads as follows:

אני מצאתי טעם לה נבח כמו לא נתקיים שם זה לבנות לה בית כמו שלא היה בעין ששקר אין לו רגלים ולא יסוד לה בעז לפי שאמרה כאחת שפחותיך אמר לה כמו לא שאינך שפחה ואע"פ שאת מואבית כי אין פסול וכן בדברו עמונים מלמד שהתירה לבא לקהל במדרש הרנינו העתקתי.

And I found (that) the meaning of (the phrase) (*renaming*) it *Nobah* is like his name would 'not' last, (as in) *to build a house for it [her]* [Zech. 5:11], since it, likewise, did not exist, as lies have no legs and no basis. (And in the same sense, we find it as regards the verse) *Boaz (said) 'to her'* [Ruth 2:14], since when she said: ... (*though I am not so much*) *as one of your maidservants* [Ruth 2:13], (the text that says) *he said to her* (is to be understood as if he had said) ,no(t)', since you are not a maidservant, although you are a Moabite, since (a [female] Moabite) does not render (a marriage halakhically) invalid. And in the same way (we have to interpret) the word as regards (the prohibition for) the Ammonites (to enter the congregation of the Lord [cf. Deut. 23:4]) that he allowed her to join the congregation (by conversion). I copied this from the Midrash *Harninu*.

This commentary addresses various issues beyond the masoretic statement on the three occurrences of the preposition *Lamed* with suff. 3. pers. feminin, and the *He* written without a *mappiq*. Eliyyah takes up several exegetical discussions, but mentions only one source explicitly: Midrash *Harninu*. However, various sources that are behind this commentary can be made out.

To begin with the penultimate sentence: The Halakha according to which only female Ammonite and Moabite converts are immediately permitted to marry into the congregation is already documented in Mishna and Talmud (m. Yev 8:3<sup>31</sup>; b. Yev 76b). However, the rabbinic argument does not provide an exegetical operation for this halakhic decision; R. Shim'on simply refers to a halachic tradition.<sup>32</sup>

Rashi's commentary on Num. 32:42<sup>33</sup> does not mention the problem of Ruth's marriage at all (it would probably not have fit into his idea of *peshat* exegesis referring to the immediate context at hand):

30 Go there for image: <https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/670595624-0281/224,523,429,176/full/0/default.jpg> (accessed 2/2022).

31 עמוני ומואבי, אסורים, ואסורין אסור עולם, אבל נקבותיהם מתרות מיד.

32 עמוני ומואבי, אסורים, ואסורין אסור עולם, אבל נקבותיהם מתרות מיד. Rashi *ad loc.* explains that he received an oral tradition from his teachers.

33 Quoted according to MS Leipzig Leipzig, UB, B. H. fol. 1, 158v–159r; go there for images (the scribe must have struggled with Rashi's comments; the text contains many scribal errors and emendations): <https://iip.corpusmasoreticum.de/iiif/Leipzig.UBL.B.H.1/Fol.%20158v.tif/504,3367,422,344/full/0/default.jpg>; <https://iip.corpusmasoreticum.de/iiif/Leipzig.UBL.B.H.1/Fol.%20159r.tif/2884,1077,587,428/full/0/default.jpg>.

לא מפיקה יוראיתי ביסודו של ר' משה לפי שלא נתקיים לה שם זה לפיכך הוא רפה שמשמש מדרשו כמו לא ותמיהני מה ידרוש בשתי תיבות הדומין לה ויאמר לה בועז לבנות לה בית באר' שנער.

There is no *mappiq*-He [i.e. no *mappiq* in the *He*]. I have seen in the treatise of R. Moshe [ha-Darshan that this is so] because this name did not last for it. Therefore, it is weak [i.e. written with a *rafe*], for its midrashic (explanation) uses it as [the Aramaic] לא ,no'. But I am puzzled what (R. Moshe) expounds by means of the two similar words (in the phrases) *And Boaz said to her*' [Ruth 2:14] and *to build her a house*' [Zech. 5:11].

Rashi raises the question as regards the explanation of R. Moshe ha-Darshan, wondering about what R. Moshe had drawn from this comparison of Num. 32:42 with Zech. 5:11 and Ruth 2:14, and how this exegetical explanation helps understand the meaning of Num. 32:42. In Rashi's quotation, Moshe ha-Darshan's comment does not explicitly refer to the Masorah (three times He without *mappiq*), but only mentions the other two verses from this masoretic note. R. Moshe ha-Darshan could have relied on Ruth Rabbah 5:5:

ותאמר אמצא חן בעיניך אדוני וגו' ואנכי לא אהיה כאחת שפחותיך אמר לה: חס ושלוס אין את מן האמהות אלא מן האימהות. ודכוותה ונבח הלך וילכוד את קנת ואת בנותיה וגו'. מלמד שלא עמד לה אותו השם. ודכוותה ויאמר אלי לבנות לה בית בארץ שנער, מלמד שאין לשקר תשועה

And she said: *Let me find favor in your sight, my lord asf., though I be not as one of your handmaidens* [Ruth 2:13]. He said to her "Heaven forbid"! You are not from the handmaidens (*amahot*), but rather from the mothers (*imahot*). And similarly *And Nobah went and took Kenath, and the villages thereof, asf.* [Num. 32:42]. This teaches that her own name did not remain to her. And similarly: *And he said to me "To build her a house in the land of Shinar"* [Zech. 5:11]<sup>34</sup>. This teaches that there is not salvation for falsehood.

The Midrash explains why Ruth as a Moabite woman was allowed to enter the congregation and marry Boaz, thus entering a halakhically valid marriage. Although the shift from לה (without *mappiq*) to לא is not made explicit, the exceptional spelling of לה without *mappiq* is behind the exegetical argument in *Ruth Rabba* since the other two verses from Num. 32:42 and Zech. 5:11 are quoted and an exegetical argument is made plausible at least indirectly by reference to the two other Bible verses in Zech. 5 and Num. 32. Eliyyah presents the rabbinic argument that is based on the fact that Ruth was a women (כי ואע"פ שאת מואבית כי (אין פסול). But as his source, he mentions a certain Midrash *Harninu*.

34 In the sense of: 'to not build a house.'

### 3.2 Excursus: The Source Reference *Midrash Harninu*

Eliyah ben Berekhyah ha-Naqdan's reference to Midrash *Harninu* is exciting since – except as part of the header of *pisqa* 38 and 39 in *Pesiqta Rabbati* (Pes. Rab.)<sup>35</sup> – this text has come down to us only by quotations in other scholars' commentaries. R. El'azar ben Yehuda of Worms' *Perush Siddur ha-Tefilla*<sup>36</sup> and his *Sefer ha-Roqeah*<sup>37</sup> as well as *Sefer Shibbole ha-Leqet* written by Tzidiqiyah bar Avraham (ha-Rofe; 13th century)<sup>38</sup> have so far been regarded as the earliest explicit source that mentions Midrash *Harninu*.<sup>39</sup> Avraham Epstein held the view that R. Yosef Qara was the first to quote from it, but mistakenly labelled it Midrash *Lekhu Nerannena*. To Epstein, the Tosafists referred to the *pesiqta'ot* for Rosh ha-Shana, Shabbat Shuva, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot as Midrash *Harninu*. To him, Midrash *Harninu* belonged to this *pesiqta*-literature, and he argued that the terms 'midrash' and 'pesiqta' were used without distinction.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, according to Epstein, when R. El'azar ben Yehuda made reference to 'Midrash *Harninu*,'<sup>41</sup> he was actually referring to '*pesiqtot Harninu*' that were part of Pes. Rab.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Rivka Ulmer stated that Pes. Rab. can be named in Avraham ben Azri'el's *Sefer Arugat ha-Bosem* as 'Midrash.'<sup>43</sup>

35 See already M. Friedmann, ed. *Pesikta Rabbati, Midrasch für den Fest-Cyclus und die ausgezeichneten Sabbathe, Kritisch bearbeitet, commentiert, durch neue handschriftliche Haggadas vermehrt, mit Bibel- und Personen Indices versehen*. Wien: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1880, 165: מדרש הרנינו: ילמדנו רבינו אם; on the various manuscripts and recensions of *Pesiqta Rabbati* see Karl-Erich Grözinger. "Die Textzeugen der *Pesiqta Rabbati*." *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 1 (1973): 68–107 (on the header *harninu qeṭaṭa* and *harninu lelohim* in the MS Parma 3122 see *ibid.* 89).

36 See e.g. *Perush Siddur ha-Tefilla* #139 (ed. Moshe Hershler. *Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, Rokeach. Pirushey Siddur HaTefilah LaRokeach. A Commentary on the Jewish Prayerbook. Edited for the First Time from Manuscripts with Notes and Comments* Volume II. Jerusalem: Machom haRav Hershler 1992, 704): במדרש הרנינו במדרש שובו בנים ובפסיקתא משל לאדם ישיש לו מעות רעות הולך אצל חנוני ומחליפם ונותן לו טובות, כך אמר הקב"ה לפני מעשיך הרעים ותעווב אותם ואני אתן לך טוב.

37 See *Sefer ha-Roqeah* (ed. Baruch Shimon Schneurson. *Sefer Ha-Roqeah Ha-Gadol*, Jerusalem: Mekhon Otzar ha-Posqim, 1967), #18 (*hilkhot teshuva, widui*); #206 (*aseret yeme teshuva*); ##214, 215, 217, 218 (*yom ha-kippurim*); on the various sources that are referred to as Midrash *Harninu* in the *Roqeah* see also Friedmann 1880, 165; Buber 1886, 19 (hebr. Nummerierung ).

38 See *Sefer Shibbole ha-Leqet* (ed. Buber 1886), #174 (*inyan rosh ḥodesh*); #293 (*sefer rosh ha-Shana*).

39 Cf. Abraham Epstein, "Midrash Lekhu Nerannena u-Midrash Harninu", *Ha-Hoqer* 1, 1891, 65–70, 190–91; Judah David Eisenstein. *Ozar Midrashim: A Library of Two Hundred Minor Midrashim*. 2 vols., vol. 1 א-ל, New York: J.D. Eisenstein, 1915, 137–138; see also Elisabeth Hollender. *Piyyut Commentary in Medieval Ashkenaz*. *Studia Judaica* XLII. Berlin [u.a.]: De Gruyter, 2008, 102.

40 Cf. Epstein 1891, 68. His argument was also strengthened by Hollender 2008, 99 who stated that in manuscripts with *piyyuṭ*-commentaries one finds that in some of the Chanukkah *piyyuṭim* their sources are labelled 'Midrash Ḥanukka' whereas others refer to a '*pesiqta*' for Chanukkah.

41 See e.g. *Sefer ha-Roqeah*, #18 (*hilkhot teshuva, widui*); #206 (*aseret yeme teshuva*); ##214, 215, 217, 218 (*yom ha-kippurim*).

42 ולפי זה, בלתי נחוץ להגיה ברוקח ס' רי"ז במדרש הרנינו ובפסיקתא רבתי, במקום הכתוב שם במדרש הרנינו בפסיקתא רבתי כי כונת בעל הרוקח היא להפסיקות [כך במקור] הרנינו שבפסיקתא רבתי (Epstein 1891, 69).

43 Cf. Rivka Ulmer. "The Transmission of 'Pesiqta Rabbati' in 11th Century France in Narbonne and in Champagne: Borderlands Theories", in *Revue Des Études Juives* 179, no. 1–2 (2020), 83–113, 89; cf. Avraham ben Azriel. *Sefer Arugat Ha-Bosem*. Edited by Efraim Elimelek Urbach. Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1939–1963.

There is, yet, another reference to Midrash *Harninu* that is found in a collection of Torah commentaries of which parts are ascribed to R. Ḥayyim Palṭi'el.<sup>44</sup> R. Ḥayyim Palṭi'el was born and raised in Falaise (i.e. Calvados in the Normandy in France), and whether or not this comment can be ascribed to this specific author, it seems obvious that the French Bible masters had access to a text they labelled as Midrash *Harninu*.

With regards to Epstein's assumption that Midrash *Harninu* must in one way or another be related to the *pesiqta'ot* Pes. R. and *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* (Pes. Kah.), one would expect Eliyyah's commentary on Ruth's marriage also be found in these texts. Pes. Kah. (*pisqa* 16) puts an extensive argument in Boaz' mouth regarding the problem of Moabite and Ammonite proselytes, and displays the pun regarding Ruth's being counted among the matriarchs, but the text refers to neither the exceptional spelling of לה without *mappiq* nor to the verses from Num. 32:42 and Zech. 5:11 as does Ruth Rab. 5:5:

אמ' לה שאילו באת אצלינו מתמול שלשם לא היינו מקבלין אותך, שעדיין לא נתחדשה הלכה עמוני ולא עמונית מואבי ולא מואב ... ותאמר אמצא חן בעיניך אדני כי נחמתני, ויאמר לה בועז א' לה לא תאמרין כדן, חס ושלום, מן האמהות את נמנית, אין את נמנית אלא מן האימהות.

(Boaz) said: Had you come a short time ago, we could not have accepted you (as a proselyte) because the law (concerning proselytes) had not yet been renewed, i.e. an Ammonite man (may not marry an Israelite woman), but (this *halakha* does) not apply to an Ammonite woman [who has been converted and may, thus, marry an Israelite; H.L.]. A Moabite man (may not marry an Israelite woman), but (this *halakha* does) not apply to a Moabite woman [who has been converted and may, thus, marry an Israelite; H.L.] ... Then Ruth answered Boaz: *I have surely found favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me* [Ruth 2:13]. Boaz said to her: "speak not of yourself as if you were counted among the handmaidens – Heaven forbid! No! – You are counted among the matriarchs."<sup>45</sup>

There is only one text that meets all the criteria to serve as an immediate source for Eliyyah's explanations. It is the Midrash *Leqah Tov* (known also under the name *Pesiqta Zutrata*<sup>46</sup>),

44 There are several manuscripts of (anonymous) Tora commentary collections in which the name of R. Ḥayyim (Palṭi'el) is mentioned. They were edited as *Perushe ha-Tora le-R. Ḥayyim Palṭi'el*, edited by Yisḥaq Shimshon Lange: Y.S. Lange, 1981. The text at hand is an explanation of Num. 1:2 (*Take a census of the whole Israelite community ...*) that relies explicitly on Midrash *Harninu* for explaining why the biblical commandment for recording the tribe of Levi was different in its expression from the commandment of a census of the Israelites: אבל בני לוי. אכל מצאתי במדרש הרנינו א"ר פנחס א"ר אידי מפני מה לא נמנו שבט לוי במניין שנמנו בו ישראל שבישר' כתיב שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל, ובלויים כתיב נשא את בני לוי, ומפרש לטובתם של לויים ששאו משמע כאדם האומר לחבירו ולקושיניר שא רישא דפלו' כמו ישא את ראשך גבי שר האופים כך רמו הק' למשה שעתידין למות במדבר אמר הק' אם נמנה שבט לוי עמהם ומתערב עמהם הגזירא יצא על כולם לא יכנסו לארץ לכך נמנו בלשון אחר [ed. Lange 1981, 465–466]. However, the text is somewhat corrupt, since there is no biblical verse reading לוי בני לוי Num. 3:15 reads: פקד נשא את בני לוי; Num. 4:2 reads: קהת בני ראש בני קהת and Num. 4:22 describes the census of the Gershonites: נשא את בני גרשון. I could not find a parallel in neither Pes. Rab. nor Pes. Kah.

45 *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* [ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, ed. *Pesikta de Rav Kahana According to an Oxford Manuscript; with Variants from All Known Manuscripts ... with Commentary and Introduction*. New York, 1987], *pisqa* 16, *naḥamu*.

46 Cf. Seckel Bamberger. *Perush Lekach Tob (Pesikta Sutrata): ein agadischer Kommentar zu Megillot Ruth von Rabbi Tobia Ben Elieser*. Aschaffenburg 1887; Günter Stemberger. *Einleitung in Talmud und Mid-*

written by Ṭuvyah ben R. Eli'ezer who lived in Greece in the days of Rashi.<sup>47</sup> *Leqaḥ Ṭov* was known to the sages of Ashkenaz, Tsarfat, and Italy already at the beginning of the 12th century.<sup>48</sup> In the explanation of Ruth 2:14, *Leqaḥ Ṭov* not only offers the exegetical argument that Ruth no longer has the status of a maid, but links this argument to the Hebrew expression וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בְּעוֹ, thereby adding the grammatical (masoretic!) observation of the missing *mappiq* in the letter *He*. Furthermore, as already in Ruth Rab. 5:5, *Leqaḥ Ṭov* refers to Num. 32:42 and Zech. 5:11, and closes the explanation with the proverb that lies are short-lived:

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בְּעוֹ. לֹא לֹא מִפִּיק ה', אָמַר לָהּ חֶס וְשָׁלוֹם אֵין אֵת שִׁפְחָה אֵלָא גְבֵרַת אֵת, וְדַכּוּתִיָּה וִיקְרָא לָהּ נוֹבַח בְּשֵׁמוֹ, שְׁלֹא עֵמֵד לָהּ אוֹתוֹ הַשֵּׁם, כֵּן לְבָנוֹת לָהּ בֵּית בְּאַרְץ שְׁנַעַר, מִלְּמַד שֶׁאֵין לְשִׁקְרָן תְּשׁוּעָה.

*And Boaz said to her:* לֹא has no *mappiq* in (the letter) *He*. He said to her: “Heaven forbid!” You are no (longer) a maid but a madam. And of the same form is *‘And he called it Nobah, after his own name’* [Num. 32:42], since her own name did not remain to her. And similarly *‘To build her a house in the land of Shinar’* [Zech. 5:11]. This teaches that there is not salvation for their falsehood.<sup>49</sup>

On Num. 32:52, *Leqaḥ Ṭov* displays the following comment:

וִיקְרָא לָהּ. לֹא מִפִּיק ה"א מִלְּמַד שְׁלֹא עֵמֵד אוֹתוֹ הַשֵּׁם שִׁקְרָא לָהּ נֹבַח בְּשֵׁמוֹ

*And he called it ...* (The form) לֹא (without) *mappiq* in (the letter) *He* teaches that this name that he called *Nobah, after his own name* did not remain.<sup>50</sup>

Though Eliyyah does not display a literal quote of these texts, the parallels between his commentary and the texts from *Leqaḥ Ṭov* are obvious. Only *Leqaḥ Ṭov* combines the masoretic note of the missing *mappiq* in (the letter) *He* and Ruth's personal advancement from a maid to a madam. According to Elazar Touitou, *Leqaḥ Ṭov* was quoted in particular in the writings of Rashi's immediate successors like Rabbenu Tam (in his *Sefer ha-Yashar*) or Rashbam (in his Pentateuch commentary),<sup>51</sup> and parts of *Leqaḥ Ṭov* were even added later to Rashi's commentary and the commentaries of the Rashi school.<sup>52</sup> However, the French

rasch. 9th edition, München: C. H. Beck, 2011, 395 (English edition: Günter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Second printing. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996, 356).

47 Shelomo Buber, ed. *Midrash Zuṭa: 'al Shir Ha-Shirim, Rut, Ekḥah Ve-Kohelet*. Jerusalem: Zikhron Aharon, 2008, 3–12; Israel Ta-Shma, “Midrash *Leqaḥ Ṭov* – *Riq'o we-Ofyo*”, in: *Kneset Meḥqarim. Iyyunim be-Sifrut ha-Rabbanut bime ha-benayim*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2006), 259–94, esp. 259–60.

48 Cf. Elazar Touitou. “Traces of ‘Leqaḥ Ṭov’ in the Text of Rashi’s Commentary to the Torah”, in *Alei Sefer: Studies in Bibliography and in the History of the Printed and the Digital Hebrew Book* 16 (1988/89): 37–44, 38 (in Hebrew).

49 Ed. Bamberger 1887, 27.

50 *Pesiqta Zuṭarta* (ed. Buber, Par. *Matṭot, pisqa* 65, S. אקמא = S. 281).

51 Cf. Touitou, “Traces”, 38.

52 A close parallel to this text, probably also taken from a *Leqaḥ Ṭov* recension, is found in a commentary ascribed to Yosef Qara on Ruth 2:14 in MS Zürich, Zentralbibliothek Zürich or. 157 (edited in Ingeborg Lederer-Brüchner. *Kommentare zum Buch Rut von Josef Kara: Editionen, Übersetzungen, Interpretationen: Kontextualisierung mittelalterlicher Auslegungsliteratur*. Judentum und Umwelt/Realms of Judaism 82. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2017, XLIX): וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בְּעוֹ לֹא מִפִּיק ה' וְהָרִי לָהּ זֶה כְּמוֹ לֹא א' לֹא הֵס וְשָׁלוֹם אֵי אֵת מִן הַשִּׁפְחוֹת אֵלָא מִן הָאִמּוֹת

Bible masters did not label Midrash *Leqaḥ Tov* as Midrash *Harninu*.<sup>53</sup> We might, therefore, assume that in 13th century Northern France and Germany some kind of *pesiqta*-collection under the name *Midrash Harninu* must have circulated among the Bible teachers. It seems that this collection consisted primarily of those texts that combined exegetical and halakhic topics. Next to R. El'azar ben Yehuda and R. Tzidqiyah bar Avraham, the quotation in R. Ḥayyim Palṭi'el's commentary and Eliyyah's tower in BAV<sup>14</sup> would, thus, be the third and fourth contemporary sources that prove that Midrash *Harninu* must have been widely accepted and quoted. Moreover, since R. Tzidqiyah bar Avraham during his stay in Wuerzburg had access to R. El'azar's *Tosafot on massekhet Betsa*<sup>54</sup> and, thus, probably to the *Roqeaḥ* as well, both R. El'azar and R. Tzidqiyah belong to the 'German' testimonies of Midrash *Harninu*. Moreover, both the *Roqeaḥ* and *Sefer Shibbole ha-Leqet* are collections that display various laws, regulations, ceremonies, and local customs (*minhagim*), whereas Palṭi'el's and Eliyyah's explanation stem from exegetical and/or grammatical discourses. Thus, Palṭi'el's and Eliyyah's explanation are maybe our first French / Anglo-Norman witnesses for the assumption that a text labelled Midrash *Harninu* was quoted as an approved source for deciding halakhic matters on the basis of grammatical (masoretic) and exegetical proofs.<sup>55</sup>

The question remains why Midrash *Harninu* is the only rabbinic source that is explicitly referred to in Eliyyah's argument. It might have been that he used the eye-catching tower to either introduce or give authority to a hitherto unknown text (to my knowledge, Rashi is never mentioned explicitly as R. Shelomo). It might have also been motivated by the same reason that Rivka Ulmer has made out with regard to the transmission of *Pesiqta Rabbati* within the Jewish academy of Narbonne, stating that

the surrounding European Christian world would have been such a place where difference was experienced and where the possible obliteration of Jewish texts from the Middle East had to be prevented.<sup>56</sup>

However, all this remains speculation until Eliyyah's sources will have been fully identified in the course of the decipherment and edition of the figurative Masorah in this manuscript. To sum up: The text of the tower displays not only the masoretic annotations on the Biblical main text (Num. 32:42), but also various exegetical discussions by R. Moshe ha-Darshan,

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Whether or not this comment is really a Qara comment (the *mappiq*-explanation is found only in this manuscript), the manuscript is too late, though, since it is dated in 1322 (see Lederer-Brüchner 2017, 93; Barry Walfish. "An Annotated Bibliography of Medieval Jewish Commentaries on the Book of Ruth in Print and in Manuscript", in idem, *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, 2 vols., 1992–93, 251–71, esp. 256–57).

53 In his comments on Gen. 41:10, Rashbam refers explicitly to *Leqaḥ Tov* במותי פירש טוב לקוח; see Hanna Liss. *Creating Fictional Worlds: Peshat-Exegesis and Narrativity in Rashbam's Commentary on the Torah*. Studies in Jewish History and Culture 25. Leiden, Boston, MA: Brill, 2011, 185.

54 Cf. Efraim Elimelek Urbach. *The Tosaphists: Their History, Writings and Methods* (in Hebrew). 4. enl. ed. Jerusalem: Bialik Inst., 1986, vol. 1, 336.

55 On the issue of the fluidity of texts of various text collections in the 12th and 13th centuries see e.g. Israel Ta-Shma. "The 'Open Book' in Medieval Hebrew Literature: The Problems of Authorized Editions", in *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 75 (1993): 17–24.

56 Ulmer 2020, 84.

Rashi, and Midrash Rabbah while it simultaneously combines them with a halakhic topic belonging to the (exegesis of) the book of Ruth stemming from the Midrash *Harninu*.

### 3.3 Linear *Masora magna* and *Masora Parva*

In addition to the *masora figurata*, Eliyyah offers four *masora magna* (*mm*) notes in wave-like contour on the bottom of the page on Num. 33:3,<sup>57</sup> 33:2, 33:7, and 33:8. All of these *mm* notes are accompanied by a respective *masora parva* (*mp*). Note that the *mp* entry on the phrase *בִּיד רְמָה* that reads *גְּ דֵס*, thereby explaining that the term as a *status constructus* connection occurs three times, does not find a counterpart in the same place in SPK<sup>9</sup>. The linear *mm* on the top of the page displays three catchwords from Num. 33:4; 33:33/34, Num. 33:34/35, of which only to the first (*מַקְבְּרִים*) an *mp* note is attached.

Eliyyah writes ten *mp* notes altogether on the folio. Eyecatching is the second *mp* note on לָהֶּ (Num. 32:42) that refers to the accent *merkha kefula*.<sup>58</sup> This accent occurs only fourteen times in the Bible, and it is always placed after a *darga* and before a *pashta*. Avraham Malamat proposed that the combination *merkha kefula* following a *darga* in most cases replaces the combination of *darga* followed by a *tevir* (in particular in the case when the stress on the word is penultimate).<sup>59</sup> Eliyyah integrated this *mp* note in order to have students trained in the accent system as well.

Not all of the *mp* notes find a parallel entry in the Tiberian manuscripts. It is noteworthy that Eliyyah's *mm* and *mp* notes on צֶפֶן (Num. 33:7: *בְּ מִלֵּי*)<sup>60</sup> do not find a counterpart in Firkovich, Ebr. I B 19a (RNL<sup>B19a</sup>), whereas MS London, BL Or. 4445 (BL<sup>4445</sup> fol. 155r) presents an *mp* note that reads לֵ. This *mp* note is also found in MS Munich hebr. 2 (BSB<sup>2</sup>, fol. 200r<sup>61</sup>) and in SPK<sup>9</sup>, fol. 105r<sup>62</sup>. The *mp* note on Num. 33:8 on מִפְּנֵי refers explicitly to the *sevirin* (*גְּ סִבִּירִי מִפִּי*)<sup>63</sup>, as do SPK<sup>9</sup> and BSB<sup>2</sup> that not only mention *sevirin* but also insists on the *ketiv*,<sup>64</sup> whereas RNL<sup>B19a</sup> and BL<sup>4445</sup> read *גְּ מִטֵּעַ*. It is interesting that of the two catchwords *בִּיד רְמָה* (Num. 33:3) and *מַקְבְּרִים* (Num. 33:4) to which always an *mp* note *ad*

57 The *masora magna* (*mm*) note on Num. 33:3 (*בִּיד רְמָה*) is noted first since it was already integrated into the tower.

58 Cf. Weil #3948. Munich BSB 2, fol. 199v puts two circelli on לָהֶּ (go there for image: [https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307\\_00404/1321,4342,1444,957/full/0/default.jpg](https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307_00404/1321,4342,1444,957/full/0/default.jpg); accessed 2/2022).

59 Cf. Avraham Malamat, "Meqoma shel ha-Merkha ha-kefula", *Leshonenu* 13 (1944): 60; see also Jechiel G. Gumpertz, "Darga Tevir – Merkha Tevir". *Tarbiz* 20 (1950): 265–272.

60 Go there for images: [https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14\\_0371\\_fa\\_0196r.jp2/266,1023,963,222/full/0/default.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0371_fa_0196r.jp2/266,1023,963,222/full/0/default.jpg) and [https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14\\_0371\\_fa\\_0196r.jp2/691,2078,245,103/full/0/default.jpg](https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0371_fa_0196r.jp2/691,2078,245,103/full/0/default.jpg).

61 Go there for image: [https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307\\_00405/3081,2849,1298,423/full/0/default.jpg](https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307_00405/3081,2849,1298,423/full/0/default.jpg).

62 Go there for image: <https://content.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dc/670595624-0217/955,347,440,225/full/0/default.jpg>.

63 Go there for image: [https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307\\_00405/3014,3583,872,349/full/0/default.jpg](https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307_00405/3014,3583,872,349/full/0/default.jpg).

64 Go there for image: [https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307\\_00405/3014,3583,872,349/full/0/default.jpg](https://api.digitale-sammlungen.de/iiif/image/v2/bsb00036307_00405/3014,3583,872,349/full/0/default.jpg).



*loc.* and an *mm* note is attached in BAV<sup>14</sup>, we find no parallel entries (neither an *mp* nor an *mm* note) in the twin manuscript SPK<sup>9</sup>. From here it seems clear that Eliyyah had different template texts available when he wrote SPK<sup>9</sup> and BAV<sup>14</sup>.<sup>65</sup> Whether he attached masoretic notes (*mp*; *mm*) particularly to those verses on which the ‘classical’ commentaries (Rashi; Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; Bekhor Shor) do not offer comments<sup>66</sup> must remain speculation for the time being; in fact, this is a point that should be kept in mind when looking at his masoretic entries across the board.

## 4 Conclusion

Fol. 196r forms an excellent example for the study matters relevant for a 13th century Jewish classroom. Its *mise-en-texte* displays that Aramaic was a subject that students should learn and master. Masoretic notes were attached to unusual grammatical phenomena (*He* without *mappiq*), *sevirin*-variants<sup>67</sup> (מפני ← מפני), or significant exegetical and/or halakhic references (ויקרא לה נבח) referring to the negation of Ruth’s status as a maid). At the same time, these observations give rise to the assumption that the classification often ascribed to these Pentateuch editions with *megillot* and *haftarot* as ‘liturgical Pentateuch’ (vs. ‘study Bible’)<sup>68</sup> falls short, since it overlooks that in the Middle Ages one Bible/Pentateuch copy was to serve various needs and purposes. Books were a rare and costly commodity. We may assume that Asher commissioned his manuscript not just so he could read it by himself, but also to impart knowledge to his family. We do not know whether he tutored his children in Holy Scripture, whether he was a Bible teacher in his own right, or whether he made the codex available to a teacher so that this person could educate members of his Jewish community – children and adults alike. We can assume that Asher commissioned the *masora figurata* drawings, and was probably not requesting purely ornamental embellishments. Although Eliyyah did not record why Asher ordered his manuscript, the style of representation allows us to draw some conclusions. Despite the very small letters, the masoretic material was (and is) readable for people used to this sort of marginal notes. While it is highly unlikely that anyone would have wanted to peruse every single commentary alongside the Biblical text, it would have been convenient to have this kind of information at hand so one could make use of it should the need arise. On the other hand, although every figurative drawing embeds at least one (famous) Rashi comment on a biblical verse, a topic, or a halakhic issue, the manuscript does not contain the entire Rashi (verse-by-verse) in the margins, which can be interpreted as a hint to the fact that at least in

65 An exhaustive comparison of the various *mp* notes on this lemma will be made possible in the future by enabling the user to request a text graph for the term in the database BIMA 2.0.

66 Rashi offers a comment only on Num. 32:42, Ibn Ezra comments on Num. 33:2 and 33:8 (source: *Mikraot Gedolot ha-Keter* (<https://www.mgketer.org>); accessed 2/2022).

67 On *sevirin*-variants compare e.g. Aron Dotan. “Masorah”, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 13:603–656, here 618.

68 Cf. David Stern. “The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology”, *Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal* 11 (2012): 235–322, esp. 236–240 (online: <https://jewish-faculty.biu.ac.il/en/node/1069>; accessed 2/2022).

some intellectual Jewish circles in Northern France the biblical text including the *targum* as its immediate exegetical hypertext was still awarded a higher exegetical authority.<sup>69</sup> The details in Eliyyah's tower show that in addition to the Masorah, his depictions conveyed the knowledge of rabbinical and medieval commentators. To someone sufficiently well-acquainted with their writings, a glance at the drawings was enough to (re-)call the relevant information to mind. As such, with each new reading of the codex, the figurative elements functioned as mnemonic devices for the teacher, the head of the family, or all people who are being instructed. Since the Torah was read from beginning to end in a year, as is still the case today, everyone involved encountered the tower many times over the course of his/her life. Given that younger pupils' attention was quite likely focused on the figurative drawings, the weekly lecture of Torah would have naturally led to lessons on the incorporated additional elements of commentary. Asher's manuscript can, thus, be regarded as a carrier of basic Jewish learning that 'grew' alongside its readers, as kind of an 'all-in-one Bible.' The opening pages in BAV<sup>14</sup> with the figurative Masorah for each *parasha* are like open doors, and they were open from the very beginning, but the more educated their readers got the more they identified from the interior of the room. The tower related to the end of *parashat Mattot* is, thus, an outstanding example of the complex process of acculturation of the oriental Masorah into the Ashkenazi exegetical culture.

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69 Attia 2014, 108–109 displays the chronological development of the Bible / Pentateuch manuscripts from a *mise-en-texte* that displays the Targum alternating on Pentateuch (and only rarely on the *haftarot* and *megillot*) to Targum or Targum / Rashi in the margins.

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