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Title: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Kennicott 3, fol. 239v

ILONA STEIMANN

Masoretic Manuscripts from France: The Jonah Pentateuch (BL, Add. MS 21160) Revisited

CORPUS MASORETICUM WORKING PAPERS 5 (2023)^o

ISSN 2751-2894

^o The Long Term Project *Corpus Masoreticum* is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

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Summary

This essay focuses on the Jonah Pentateuch (BL, Add. MS 21160) and the way it was produced. It identifies the masorete as Isaac of Bressuire, who also wrote the Masorah in another Pentateuch, preserved in Parma (Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2338-2339). The study then explores a group of related French manuscripts from the early fourteenth century that display similar codicological and palaeographical features and traces their subsequent history in Piedmont in the second half of the fifteenth century. Further, based on palaeographical and textual evidence, it looks at the unique aspects of the local Masoretic tradition of west-central France and the way it was spread.

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Corpus Masoreticum Working Paper 5 (2023) | doi 10.48628/cmwp.2023.2.93378 | ISSN 2751-2894
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1 Introduction

Owing to its lavish micrographic decoration, the Jonah Pentateuch has long been the subject of scholarly interest.¹ However, as it lacks a colophon, the manuscript's dating and origin cannot be established precisely. From the earliest relevant publications to the more recent ones, the suggested dating ranges from the second half of the thirteenth to the fourteenth century and its place of origin is presumed to be either Germany or France.² New findings, described below, allow for attributing it to west-central France of around 1300. Nevertheless, dating and localizing the production of the Jonah Pentateuch is not the primary goal of the following discussion. Rather this essay deals with a group of related Masoretic manuscripts (some of which were copied by the masorete of the Jonah Pentateuch and others in his environs) that display similar codicological, palaeographical, and artistic traits and reflect the same Masoretic tradition. The building blocks of this French tradition, as I argue in what follows, were not only the verbal rendering of the biblical texts and the Masorah, but also their visual attributes, which were carefully preserved and transmitted by immigrant French masorettes.

2 The Jonah Pentateuch in the Making

The Jonah Pentateuch is one among the most common type of Ashkenazi codex — a liturgical Pentateuch.³ Its vocalized and accentuated text is traditionally divided into fifty-four

1 *I am deeply indebted to Sarit Shalev-Eyni and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger for their corrections and suggestions on earlier drafts, to Hanna Liss for encouraging this study, and Evelyn Grossberg for proof-reading the essay.

London, British Library (BL), Add. MS 21160 (George Margoliouth. *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*. Vol. 1. London: British Museum, 1899, 49–50, no. 75). The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_21160 [accessed in April 2022]

2 According to Margoliouth, the manuscript was copied in a thirteenth- to fourteenth-century Franco-German hand (Margoliouth 1899, 49). Ginsburg and Narkiss suggested the date of ca. 1300: Christian D. Ginsburg. *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*. London: Ketav, 1897, 625, no. 27; Bezalel Narkiss. *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1969, 31. Similarly, the Hebrew Palaeography Project in Jerusalem (SfarData) attributed the manuscript to 1276–1325: https://sfardata.nli.org.il/#/startSearch_He:ZY646q. For other suggestions for dating, see Stanley Ferber. “Micrography: A Jewish Art Form,” in: *Journal of Jewish Art*, 3,4 (1977), 18 n. 17; Dalia-Ruth Halperin. “The Three Riders: The Apocalypse in the Figured Micrography of BL Add 21160,” in: *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 69,2 (2018), 341–342; Leslie Ross. *Language in the Visual Arts: The Interplay of Text and Imagery*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2014, 140.

3 On the division of biblical codices into three generic categories (types), the Masoretic Bible, the liturgical Pentateuch, and the study Bible, see David Stern. *The Jewish Bible: A Material History*. Washington, DC: University of Washington Press, 2017, 88–90. However, as Hanna Liss has remarked, actual biblical manuscripts do not necessarily fall into any of these categories but can include components of different types and fulfil several roles at the same time: Hanna Liss. “A Pentateuch to Read in? The Secrets of the Regensburg Pentateuch,” in: *Jewish Manuscript Cultures: New Perspectives*, ed. by Irina Wandrey. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017, 89–128, esp. 94–95.

weekly Torah portions in accordance with their annual public readings in the synagogue. Similar to other liturgical Pentateuchs, the Jonah Pentateuch includes *haftarot* (selections from the Prophets which are read after the recitation of the Torah portions), the five scrolls that are recited on festivals and fast days,⁴ and the Book of Job, which is read on the Ninth of Av.⁵ The manuscript is copied in three columns, with the Hebrew verses in the Pentateuch alternating verse by verse with the Targum Onqelos.⁶ All the sections feature the *masorah parva* between the text columns and the *masorah magna* in the three top and four bottom lines. On many folios, the lines of the upper and lower *masorah magna* are extended into the margins, where they form micrographic decorations of geometrical patterns, floral and zoomorphic motifs, and human figures. Some of the micrographic images were clearly meant to illustrate the text, for example, the images to which a contemporary hand, possibly of the masorete himself, added identifying titles: *Shor ha-Bar* (fol. 183v), Joseph (fol. 192v), Jonah (fol. 292r), and the four creatures from Ezekiel's vision: *Adam*, *Nesher*, *Arie*, and *Shor* (fol. 285r; fig. 1).⁷



Fig. 1. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 285r, detail.

The function of such Pentateuch codices in the Ashkenazi milieu was private rather than communal, as they could not be used for liturgical reading of the Torah portions in the synagogue. According to the ancient tradition, the liturgical reading could only be taken from the consonantal text in the Torah scroll, which was copied following very precise rules.

4 Itzhak M. Elbogen. *The Jewish Prayer in its Historical Development* [Hebrew]. Tel Aviv: Devir, 1988, 123–125; Hayyim Simons. “Reading the Scrolls of Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes” [Hebrew], in: *Sinai*, 118 (1996), 27–42.

5 The manuscript is mutilated: it starts with Gen. 14:10, that is, it is missing around a quire at the beginning, and ends with Job 31:2. Some quires in Deuteronomy and Canticles are also missing.

6 On the uses of Targum in medieval Ashkenaz, where Aramaic was no longer spoken, see Hayyim Talbi. “History of the Reading of Twice Miqra and Once Targum” [Hebrew], in: *Knishta*, 4 (2010), 155–190, esp. 167; Yossi Peretz. “Twice Miqra and Once Targum: In Light of the Findings in the Ashkenazi Manuscripts of the Torah in the Middle Ages” [Hebrew], in: *Tallelei Orot*, 14 (2008), 53–61, esp. 57.

7 For the interpretation of the imagery and its relation to the content of the biblical text, the Masorah, and rabbinic sources, see Halperin 2018, 340–373; Sarah Offenber. “Jacob the Knight in Ezekiel’s Chariot. Imagined Identity in a Micrography Decoration of an Ashkenazic Bible,” *AJS Review*, 40,1 (2016), 3–5.

German Jewish communities have always strictly preserved this tradition, and from the beginning of the thirteenth century, liturgical reading from Pentateuch codices was proscribed in France as well.⁸ Thus the Jonah Pentateuch might have served the members of the Jewish community for following the public reading in the synagogue, private recitation of the Torah portions, Torah studies, and teaching children to read.⁹

Although there is no extant colophon, the principal scribe of the Jonah Pentateuch marked the word “*barukh*” with dots forming a fleur-de-lis and a rosette (fols. 1r and 268v), which may indicate his name.¹⁰ Barukh also vocalized and accentuated only one page of the text he copied (fol. 59v),¹¹ sharing the work with a second scribe who copied, vocalized, and accentuated seven of the folios: the Book of Ruth (fols. 298r–300v) and the first folio of Job (fol. 318v).

Otherwise, the manuscript was vocalized and accentuated by another hand. Although this principal vocalizer remained anonymous, he did not want to take responsibility for the parts that had already been vocalized and commented in the margins of those sections, writing: אין עמוד זה מנקודי (“This column is not of my vocalization”; fol. 295v) and מכה עד סופה לא נקדתי מלבד פסוק אחרון אך לא ראשו (“From here until the end [of the *haftarah*], I did not vocalize it, except for its last verse, but not its [the verse’s] beginning”; fol. 293r). Especially interesting is his note on the folio that was vocalized by the principal scribe as it uses the French word to indicate the columns: ג' קלונבייש אלה לא נקדתי (“I did not vocalize these three *colombes* [columns]”).

The vocalizer was also responsible for the proofreading, at which time he not only commented on the vocalization (e.g., fols. 76v, 215v, 226v) but also referred to other textual sources. In addition to referring to the biblical books and the works of Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi; e.g., fols. 197r and 254r),¹² he twice mentioned an otherwise unknown French(?) grammarian named Isaac Talmondi or ha-Talmond (fols. 155v and 303r): בנקוד טלמונדי עמק המם דג’ (“According to vocalization of Talmondi, the *mem* [מ] is with a *dagesh* [sign of doubling]”) and ור' יצחק הטלמונד מדגיש הטיט ולא נהי' (“R. Isaac ha-Talmond uses a *dagesh* on the *tet* [ט] and not [...?]”). The references to Talmondi that can be found in other sources are associated with the listing of the signs for *kaporet*, *shulhan*, *menorah*, etc., attributed to him (וסימן אחר א'ד' ש'מ'ם' ע'ק'ף' ז'ח' טלמונדי) by Christian Ginsburg on

8 Israel M. Ta-Shma. *Early Franco-German Ritual and Custom* [Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992, 171–172 and 177–181.

9 For these and other private uses of Bible codices, see, e.g., Ephraim Kanarfogel. “On the Role of Bible Study in Medieval Ashkenaz,” in: *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, ed. by Barry Walfish. Vol. 1. Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1993, 151–166; Sarit Shalev-Eyni. *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance*. London: Miller, 2010, 10; Yaakov S. Spiegel. “Participation of the Congregation in the Torah Reading and in the Reading of the Scrolls,” [Hebrew], in: *Or Israel*, 6,3 (2001), 169–197; Ta-Shma 1992, 178.

10 In other manuscripts, the marking of the word “*barukh*” was sometimes meant to indicate blessing. See Malachi Beit-Arié. *Historical and Comparative Typology of Medieval Hebrew Codices based on the Documentation of the Extant Dated Manuscripts until 1540 Using a Quantitative Approach*. Jerusalem-Hamburg: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2022 (English version), 159 n. 106: accessible online at <https://www.fdr.uni-hamburg.de/record/9349#YdV841kxnb0#YdV841kxnb0> [accessed in April 2022]. However, since no other names were marked by the scribe, Barukh was most probably his name.

11 The last line on fol. 63v, opening Exodus, was also apparently vocalized by Barukh.

12 See also Ginsburg 1897, 629.

the basis of an unidentified manuscript¹³ and a thirteenth-century Maḥzor according to the French rite now in Oxford.¹⁴ The latter discusses the grammatical form of the word נתיבך. The Jonah Pentateuch masorete also referred to Talmondi in his listing of the same signs (fol. 106r) that were noted by Ginsburg. Talmondi may have been a grammarian from Talmont-sur-Gironde who was known in the nearby Jewish communities.

The masorete of the Jonah Pentateuch, who was the last person to take part in its production, indicated that his name was Isaac by decorating that word with dots and scrolls in the *masorah magna* on several folios (fols. 16r, 25v, 274v). He carefully placed the *masorah parva* before or next to the lines that contain the lemmata, which he consistently marked with a circellus. As a rule, the *masorah magna* corresponds to the lemmata found on the same folio. In some cases when the *masorah magna* in the lower margins continues onto the following page, Isaac instructed the reader: הפוך הדף ותמצא השאר (“Turn the leaf and find the rest”; fol. 123r) and שא עיניך אל העמוד הבא לפניך ותמצא השאר (“Move your eyes to the next page that is in front of you and find the rest”; fol. 123v). As the last participant in the production, Isaac also sometimes added a comment in the margin about the text and vocalization, pointing out that the scribe and/or the vocalizer had made a mistake (e.g., fols. 280v, 286v, 292r).

Although Isaac was undoubtedly the mastermind behind the Masorah and the decoration it created, he was assisted by three other masorettes, each of whom copied only one or two pages, all in small square script. The script of Masorete 1 is irregular with letters of various sizes and heights, with an especially wide *shin*. The feet and hooks of the letters (e.g., of *alef*, *vav*, *tav*) are subtle (Masorete 1: fol. 13v; fig. 2). In contrast, the letters of Masorete 2 have more balanced proportions and emphasized feet and hooks (Masorete 2: fols. 14r and 15v; fig. 3). The script of Masorete 3 is larger and denser than that of the others and owing to its long diagonal, his *alef* is larger than his other letters and looks as though it is leaning to the right (Masorete 3: fol. 17v; fig. 4).

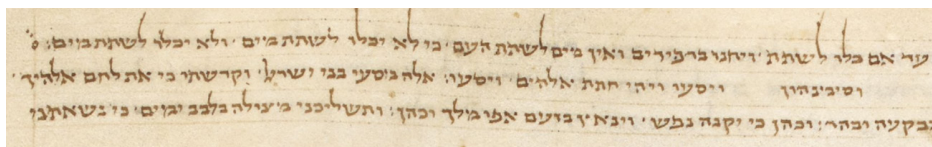


Fig. 2. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 13v: Masorete 1, detail.

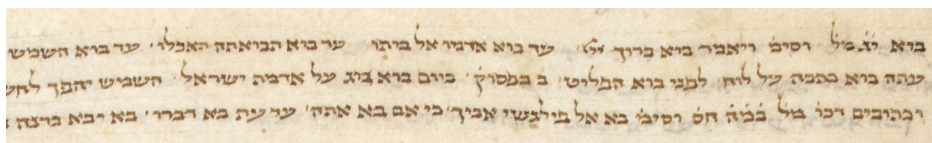


Fig. 3. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 14r: Masorete 2, detail.

13 Christian D. Ginsburg. *Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts: Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged*. Vol. 1. London: n.n., 1880, 505 \$466. Ginsburg based this list on BL, Or. MS 4227, which he supplemented with additions from other manuscripts that are not identifiable.

14 Oxford, Bodleian Library (Bod.), Opp. Add. fol. 68, fol. 148r: See Adolf Neubauer. *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886, 896.

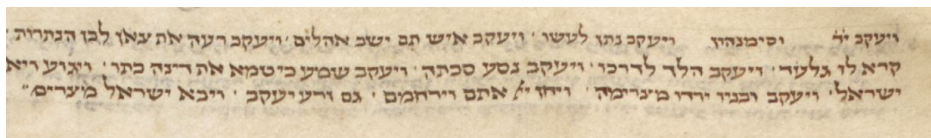


Fig. 4. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 17v: Masorete 3, detail.

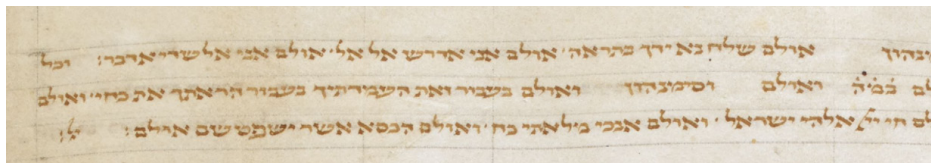


Fig. 5. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 319v: Masorete 4, detail.

The fact that the work of these three masorettes only appears on a few folios suggests that they might have been trainees who were given the opportunity to try their hands and to harmonize their writing with other scripts and stylistic features found on those folios. The matter of harmonization was apparently important, as manuscripts copied by multiple hands were considered of lesser value in certain Ashkenazi circles.¹⁵

The hand of still another masorete can be seen in the last three quires of the manuscript (the Book of Job: fols. 319r–329v; fig. 5). Written in a lighter ink than that of the others, his script is relatively wide so that the height of the letters is often less than their widths. The first page of Job (fol. 318v), which appears on the last folio of the previous quire, has no Masorah. Thus, it is conceivable that the last masorete did not belong to the group of trainees but added the Masorah to the last quires of the codex, which Isaac left incomplete, shortly after.

It is clear that the production of the Jonah Pentateuch was a well-organized enterprise, involving a number of people, each individual responsible for a different task. The division of labour among the scribes, the vocalizers, and the masorettes, each having a different expertise, suggests that there may have been a kind of a professional setting for copying manuscripts. This would imply that the Jonah Pentateuch was apparently a commissioned manuscript rather than one produced for one of the scribes' own use. In particular, the notes by the vocalizer, who pointed out the parts he himself did not vocalize support this assumption.

It might have been the patron of the manuscript who referred to the masorete as “Isaac ha-Naqdan” in a marginal comment on fol. 145r: [דלג יצחק הנקדן זה המסור[ת] (“Isaac the vocalizer skipped this Masorah”), in which case it is possible that he knew Isaac personally. Other marginal notes made by this fourteenth-century patron/early owner relate exclusively to the Masorah, pointing out the missing *masorah parva* or its variations (fols. 152r and 187r). This individual was clearly interested not only in the biblical text proper but also read the Masorah carefully and commented on it.

15 See, e.g., *Teshuvot Maharam*. Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1558 §247.

3 France vs. Germany: The Challenges of Attribution

The standard textual structure and layout of Ashkenazi Pentateuchs often make it difficult to date them and to ascribe their production geographically. Traditional three-columned disposition of the text together with alternating Hebrew and Aramaic biblical verses were among the most common attributes of the Ashkenazi Bible codices. As the *haftarot* could either precede or follow the five scrolls, the sequence of the textual units in liturgical Pentateuchs does not provide any clue as to when and where they were produced.¹⁶

The choice of the *haftarot* to be recited on different liturgical occasions is a little more informative for identifying the various rites. Although scholars have observed obvious differences in the *haftarah* in Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Italian, and other Jewish communities, it can still be hard to distinguish among local rites in medieval Ashkenaz. Especially problematic are the codices that, like the Jonah Pentateuch, have been mutilated and so do not include the full set of the *haftarah*. Yet, in one case, the *haftarah* in the Jonah Pentateuch deviates from the German-Ashkenazi tradition. The *haftarah* for *Parashat ha-Ḥodesh* (fols. 277r–277v) includes Ezekiel 45:18–46:15, verses that are more likely to appear in the French rite;¹⁷ a later Ashkenazi hand added Ezekiel 45:16–17 in the margin to adapt the *haftarah* to the German rite.

Additional hints for localizing the production of the Jonah Pentateuch are provided by the codicological and palaeographical characteristics of the manuscript, such as the treatment of the parchment, the pricking and ruling methods, and the style of the script. According to Malachi Beit-Arié, the thirteenth century saw a new technique for preparing parchment in the German milieu and neighbouring territories (Austria and the eastern parts of the empire) which gradually minimized the difference between the flesh and hair sides of the parchment, so that both sides began to look alike. If previously the hair side showed hair follicles and the flesh side was smooth, the new method, which by the mid-thirteenth century was commonly employed for Hebrew manuscripts in the German lands equalized the sides of the parchment. However, Jewish scribes in France continued to use the old technique, wherein the two sides of the parchment remained distinguishable. It was only during the fourteenth century that French scribes started to partly adopt the new technique so that the difference between the parchment sides became less visible, but even so there were occasional traces of hair follicles on the hair side.¹⁸

The new technology for processing German parchment went hand in hand with a shift in the ruling and pricking practices. Relief ruling by hard point, bifolium by bifolium on the hair side, which had been the case on the parchment with distinguishable sides, was replaced by metal plummet ruling, page by page. The use of the plummet allowed the scribes to interpolate additional lines in a flexible, dynamic way and they could thus fit the ruling to

16 For the order of the scrolls, see Ginsburg 1897, 3–4.

17 Since *Encyclopedia Talmudica* ([Hebrew], ed. by Meir Berlin. Vol. 10. Jerusalem: Hotza'at Entziqlopedya Talmudit, 1976, 702–723 [“Haftarah”]) does not distinguish between French and German-Ashkenazi rites, the manuscript used here was Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica (BAV), ebr. 14. The *haftarot* in BAV 14 were initially written according to the German-Ashkenazi rite, which in most cases accord with the French rite. When the French rite deviated from the Ashkenazi one, the notes in their margins indicated which verses are to be recited according the French rite.

18 Beit-Arié 2022, 415–419.

the specific layout of each text section.¹⁹ The plummet ruling was usually guided by pricking that appeared in both outer and inner margins instead of only in the outer margins that had previously been the case. Although French copyists still worked on parchment with distinguishable sides, they adopted the new methods of ruling and pricking.²⁰

It is rather this French codicological practice that is reflected in the Jonah Pentateuch. The manuscript is pricked in all its margins and ruled by plummet but the sides of the parchment remained slightly distinguishable, with the hair side sometimes showing traces of follicles (e.g., fol. 31r). These features, together with the use of the French word *colombes* by the vocalizer and references to Isaac Talmondi, an apparently local grammarian, suggest that the Jonah Pentateuch is of French origin.

The same holds true for the codex's palaeographical characteristics. Although modern palaeographers still struggle to delineate the regional differences among square Ashkenazi scripts, its two sub-groups, German and French, are often distinguishable. Unlike the German style of writing with its more angular letters, each shaped to fit into an imaginative rectangle, French scribes tended to slope the horizontal and vertical lines of the letters, so that they created a somewhat wavy impression. The individual strokes of the letters with variable thickness, split edges, and elongated serifs strengthened the undulating appearance of the French script (figs. 6, 7).²¹ From a stylistic point of view, the script in the Jonah Pentateuch, especially that of its second scribe, is closer to the script of French rather than German scribes.²²



Fig. 6. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 174r: the scribe Barukh, detail.



Fig. 7. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 300r: the second scribe, detail.

19 Malachi Beit-Arié. *Unveiled Faces of Medieval Hebrew Books. The Evolution of Manuscript Production — Progression or Regression?* Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003, 18–31.

20 Beit-Arié 2022, 232–239.

21 Edna Engel. “Remarks on the Ashkenazic Script,” in: *Specimens of Mediaeval Hebrew Scripts*, ed. by Malachi Beit-Arié and Edna Engel. Vol. 3: *Ashkenazic Script*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2017, xxiv. See also Judith Olszowy-Schlanger. “The Early Developments of Hebrew Scripts in North-Western Europe,” in *Gazette du livre médiéval*, 63 (2017), 14–16.

22 For comparison of German script styles, see BL, MS Add. 10455 (produced in 1310), accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=add_ms_10455 and Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz (SPK), Cod. or. fol. 1210 (produced in 1343), accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001752620205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=MS%20Or.%20fol.%201210 [accessed in April 2022].

If the scripts of the two scribes and the assisting masoretetes generally accord with French script of the late thirteenth to the early-fourteenth century, the script of the masorete Isaac appears to be somewhat different (fig. 8). As a rule, to write the Masorah, Ashkenazi scribes used the usual square script significantly reduced in size. As a result of making the letters smaller and writing them with a quill cut differently than the one used for the normal square script, the letters lost much of their shading, their serifs, and often their angularity; this kind of writing is often defined either as small square or semi-square script. Owing to the more complicated structure of some letters, those in the Masoretic script are often written in different sizes (e.g., a too large *alef* and *shin* in comparison with the other letters) and they meet the head- and the baseline at different points, thereby giving the written line an uneven appearance (see above, figs. 2–5). In contrast to the small square Masoretic script employed by the other masoretetes of the Jonah Pentateuch, Isaac equalized the letters' sizes, straightened their tops and bases to make them parallel to each other and to the line, and rounded the meeting points between the horizontal and vertical strokes, so that the written lines of the Masorah became visually homogeneous and somewhat stylized. Morphologically, this script falls between the small square and the semi-cursive script, borrowing from both and at the same time adding elements that are found in neither. For example, Isaac built the letter *alef* on the basis of the square *alef* but bent its strokes to the point that the letter lost its "Ashkenazi" appearance. Instead of the straight diagonal line of the *alef*, he bent it in the middle creating a kind of folded knee. The arm of the *alef* on the right is shaped like a comma and is almost detached from the letter's diagonal, and the leg on the left is a short serif attached to the diagonal at the point of its bend. The letter *shin*, in contrast, was built on the basis of the semi-cursive *shin* but was significantly widened so that the letter has a stable base. Other of Isaac's letters that represent a middle variant between square and semi-cursive form are the *nun*, the head of which is much more delicate than the *nun* of other masoretetes in this manuscript, and the *pei* with its rounded top (Table 1).

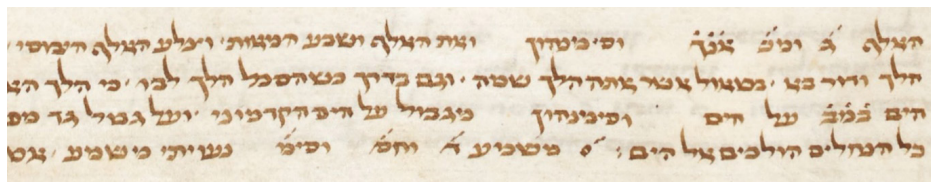


Fig. 8. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 301v: the masorete Isaac, detail.

	Masorete Isaac, BL, Add. 21160	Masoretetes 2 and 3, BL, Add. 21160
alef		
nun		
pei		
shin		

Table 1.

Given these morphological and stylistic features of Isaac's Masoretic script, which make it different from the more common Ashkenazi scripts used for writing the Masorah, the question arises as to whether his script was his own or a local variation of an Ashkenazi Masoretic script in a particular geographic area. This is one of the questions I attempt to answer in what follows.

4 Who Was the Masorete Isaac of the Jonah Pentateuch?

It is quite rare that we find the hand of the same masorete in several extant manuscripts but there are some known examples from the French-Ashkenazi milieu, among them two French liturgical Pentateuchs copied by Elijah ben Berakhyah ha-Naqdan in 1233 and 1239.²³ In these cases, however, the identification of Elijah's hand was largely based on the information provided in the colophons of the two manuscripts.²⁴ When there is no colophon, attributing several manuscripts to the same masorete on solely palaeographical bases poses a more serious challenge, especially when some years had passed between their production.

Nonetheless, examination of dozens of manuscripts that are tentatively attributed to France made it possible to identify Isaac's hand in another early fourteenth-century manuscript. These are two volumes in Biblioteca Palatina in Parma that contain a vocalized and accentuated Pentateuch in the first volume (Parm. 2338) and five scrolls, *haftarot*, Job, and Proverbs in the second one (Parm. 2339).²⁵ The Targum Onqelos written in a separate column flanks the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch, while Rashi's commentary appears in the upper, lower, and outer margins of all the sections, apart from Job, which is accompanied by the commentary of Joseph Qara. Further, the manuscript contains *masorah parva* and *masorah magna* written in the two/three top and the three bottom lines. The codicological practices employed in this codex are similar to those in the Jonah Pentateuch; Parm. 2338-2339 displays pricking in all the margins, dynamic ruling in plummet, and slightly distinguishable flesh and the hair sides of the parchment.

Although the masorete, who also vocalized this codex, did not sign or mark his name, his identification as Isaac of the Jonah Pentateuch follows from the palaeographical features of his script. The Masorah in Parm. 2338-2339 exhibits the same stylistic markers discussed

23 BAV, ebr. 14 and SPK, Cod. or. qu. 9. See, respectively, Malachi Beit-Arié and Benjamin Richler. *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue*. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008, 9–11 and Hanna Liss. "Teaching in Tiny Letters: Eliyyah ben Berekhyyah ha-Naqdan's Way of Teaching as Displayed in MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14," in: *Corpus Masoreticum Working Papers*, 1 (2022), esp. 3–4 as well as the bibliography there.

24 For the discussion on his colophons, see Bettina Burghardt. "Did the Scribe Really Mess up the Date?: The Dating of MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14 according to Its Colophon," in: *Corpus Masoreticum Working Papers*, 4 (2022), 112–130.

25 SfarData ZE144q dates the manuscript to 1351–1375, however. See also Malachi Beit-Arié and Benjamin Richler. *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue*. Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 2001, 23. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000827000205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS [accessed in April 2022].

above in the context of the Jonah Pentateuch (for comparison, see figs. 8, 9). Not only do the same peculiar shapes of the *alef* and the *shin* appear in both manuscripts but all the other letters are very similar in their individual shapes and proportions and their relationships to one another and to the head- and baselines, which are straightened owing to the tops and bases of the letters running parallel. As in the Jonah Pentateuch, the meeting points of the vertical and horizontal strokes of some of the letters (e.g., *he* and *tav*) are often rounded, imparting a somewhat “non-square” impression to the script.

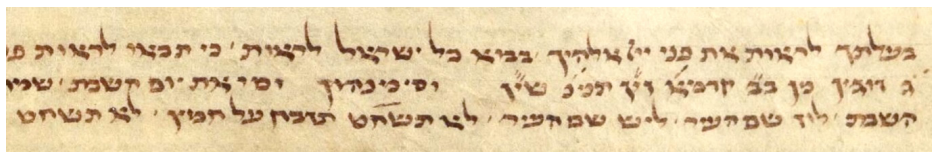


Fig. 9. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2338, fol. 112v: the masorete Isaac, detail.

Furthermore, the paratextual signs in Parm. 2338-2339, such as the graphic marks that separate the Masoretic lists and the abbreviation of the Tetragrammaton, as well as the decorative cartouches that enclose the Masoretic notes, are very similar to those in the Jonah Pentateuch (see figs. 10, 11 and Table 2 below).



Fig. 10. BL, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 58v: the masorete Isaac, detail.



Fig. 11. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2338, fol. 64v: the masorete Isaac, detail.

Unlike the Jonah Pentateuch, Parm. 2338-2339 features minimal micrographic decoration. On only one occasion, Isaac extended the lines of the lower *masorah magna* to outline a head of a lioness (fol. 9v), which is stylistically close to the heads found on fols. 20v, 146r, and 192r of the Jonah Pentateuch.²⁶ The lack of decoration in Parm. 2338-2339 does not necessarily imply that Isaac had not yet developed his artistic skills; rather it was most likely a matter of the price the patron was ready to pay for the manuscript. That Parm. 2338-2339 was a less expensive codex than the Jonah Pentateuch is also apparent from the

26 Not only the way of creating the head of the animal by extending the upper and lower Masoretic lines, but also their proportions and details, such as the treatment of the eyes, ears, and nose, are extremely similar in both codices.

quality of its parchment, as several of the sheets were initially pricked for another text and then reused,²⁷ as well as from its significantly smaller size.²⁸

The two manuscripts, the Jonah Pentateuch and Parm. 2338-2339, are also different in their textual content and layout. Unlike the traditional three-columned disposition of the biblical text with alternating Hebrew and Aramaic verses in the Jonah Pentateuch, in Parm. 2338-2339 the Targum Onqelos is arranged in a separate column in the outer margins and Rashi's commentary is in another column. This layout echoes a development that started in the thirteenth century wherein the Targum in French Pentateuchs was moved out of the text column, where it had alternated with the Hebrew verses, to the margins.²⁹ This change gradually led to the predominance of a new format in fourteenth-century French Pentateuchs. The displacement of the Targum to the margins, as well as the frequent addition of Rashi's commentary or substitution of the Targum by the commentary, seems to mark the first phase in the gradual discarding of the Targum from Ashkenazi Bible codices.³⁰

A closer look at Parm. 2338-2339 reveals this development as it unfolded. Apparently at the time it was produced, the manuscript did not include Rashi's commentary, an assumption that follows from the fact that the Masorah, which is usually the last text to be written, was copied before Rashi's commentary. When the scribe, who identified himself as Levi Ḥalfan (Parm. 2338, fol. 221r and Parm. 2339, fols. 24v, 93r, 164r), started to write the commentary, he found that the outer margins were already occupied by the Targum,³¹ which had been copied by the principal scribe, and that the greater parts of the upper and lower margins were filled with the Masorah written by Isaac. Levi squeezed Rashi's commentary into the outer margins next to the Targum and erased many of the Masoretic notes in the upper and lower margins replacing them with the commentary written over the erasures. Before erasing the Masorah, he selectively recopied some of its notes in the inner margins and between the columns, shaping its lines into scrolls. As a result of Levi's manipulations, much of the Masoretic material in this manuscript has been lost. Still short of space for the commentary, Levi also inserted leaves of a different size and parchment, mainly at the end of books, to include the parts of the commentary for which he had not found place in the original quires (e.g., Parm. 2338, fols. 272r–286r).

27 See, e.g., a row of horizontal pricks in the upper margins of some quires (e.g., fols. 59–79) that may indicate that these leaves were initially intended for a larger codex, in which case they would have appeared in the outer margins and would have served to guide the horizontal lines of ruling.

28 The Jonah Pentateuch: ca. 387 × 286 mm; Parm. 2338-2339: ca. 205 × 156 mm.

29 One of the earliest examples of this layout is found in BAV, ebr. 482 from ca. 1216 (Beit-Arié and Richler 2008, 417–418).

30 Elodie Attia. "Targum Layouts in Ashkenazi Manuscripts: Preliminary Methodological Observations," in: *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, ed. by Alberdina Houtman, Hans-Martin Kirn, and Eveline van Staaldune-Sulman. Leiden: Brill, 2014, 99–122, esp. 120; Shalev-Eyni 2010, 9–10. For the halakhic basis for such substitution, see Peretz 2008, 59.

31 As a rule, when the manuscript is designed to include both the columns of the Targum and Rashi's commentary, the Targum appears in the inner margins, leaving the outer margins for the commentary. See, e.g., the layout in Parm. 3095 and Parm. 3569, to be discussed below; Bod., MS. Opp. 14; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), Cod. hebr. 28; Arthur Z. Schwarz. *Die hebräischen Handschriften in Österreich ausserhalb der Nationalbibliothek in Wien*. Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1931, 17–19.

Erasing the Masorah in favour of Rashi's commentary may have been part of the process of integrating the commentary into French liturgical Pentateuchs. Given that the Jonah Pentateuch features the "old-fashioned" format of three columns with the Targum included within them, it would be reasonable to assume that it was produced earlier than Parm. 2338-2339. However, it is possible that it was simply that the patron of the Jonah Pentateuch preferred this format. The reliability of the format and layout as criteria for dating is thus problematic. In the absence of any additional evidence, the relative chronology of the Jonah Pentateuch and Parm. 2338-2339, both of which reflect Isaac's hand, remains a conjecture.

Further information concerning the identity of the masorete Isaac is to be found in a fourteenth-century owner's note that appears at the end of the Parm. 2338 (fol. 271r; fig. 12) and is repeated at the end of Parm. 2339 (fol. 189v):

אמת וברור כי הר' מאיר בן מו' הר"ר שניאור ספר אלי כי חומש זה נכתב בבית חמותו מר' בלנקה
מכרך ראונש ונגקד ונמסר בבית הנכבדת הנ' מיד הר' יצחק מברצוירא³² וגם דק בו לעיינו אחר
[...] גמרו לנקדו ומה ששמעתי מפיו כתבתי וחתמתי נאם הצעיר

(True and clear that R. Meir son of R. Senior told me that this Pentateuch was copied in the house of his mother-in-law Mrs. Blanca from the city of Reims and was vocalized and Masorah added in the house of the same respectable woman by R. Isaac of Bresseuire [Berceorium]. He [Isaac] also proofread it [the Pentateuch] after he finished the vocalization; and what I heard from him [from Meir son of Senior], I wrote down and signed, spoken by the young [...]).³³

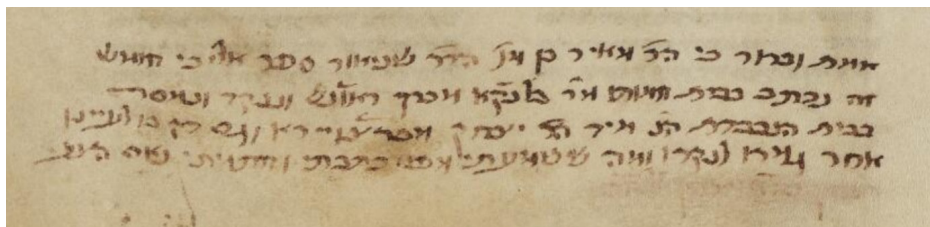


Fig. 12. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2338, fol. 271r: the owner's note.

This note, in which the former owner of the Pentateuch, Meir ben Senior, informed the new owner about the circumstances of the manuscript's production, apparently documents the transfer of ownership from Meir to a new purchaser (whose name was later erased). According to the note, Parm. 2338-2339 was copied for Meir in the house of his mother-in-law Blanca of Reims. Copying a manuscript in the home of the scribe or of the person who

32 The second inscription, which is otherwise similar to the first one, spells the name of the town as ברצוירש.

33 The name of the author of this entry was erased by later owners of the manuscript. I am grateful to Stephen Dörr (former member of the research team *Dictionnaire Étymologique de l'Ancien Français*, now working at *Bible Glossaries as Hidden Cultural Carriers. Judeo-French Cultural Exchange in the High Middle Ages*, Heidelberg Academy of Science and Humanities) for helping to decipher the names of the two towns mentioned. For other variations of the Hebrew spelling of Reims, see Heinrich Gross. *Gallia Judaica, dictionnaire géographique de la France*. Paris: Cerf, 1897, 633.

commissioned it (in this case, in the house of his relative) was a usual practice among Jewish scribes, who generally worked on their own rather than in organized workshops.³⁴

Thus, according to Meir ben Senior, from whose words the new owner of the manuscript recorded the information, Isaac of Bressuire was the vocalizer, masorete, and proofreader of Parm. 2338-2339. (Bressuire is a town in the province of Poitou; see the map in Appendix I.) Levi Ḥalfan (the scribe of Rashi's commentary) might not have been mentioned because at the time this note was written, the commentary had not yet been added to the codex, but the omission of the name(s) of the scribe(s) who copied it is puzzling. It is possible that Meir placed more importance on Isaac's work and thus referred to him by name. By the time the manuscript was produced, Isaac's reputation as a highly competent masorete may have been firmly established. He was possibly already well known in local circles and his work may have been especially appreciated, which would have imparted extra value to the manuscript.

Examination of the scripts found in Parm. 2338-2339 shows that the greater part of the main text and the Targum Onqelos were copied by the same hand.³⁵ Although the principal scribe remained anonymous, he finished the copying of the *haftarot* with the following words written partly in French (fol. 129r): חזק וְגַתְחִזֵּק הַסֵּפֶר בְּיָדוֹ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל מִיְשָׁטִייר (*byyēn lī'arōyyt mēšṭiyyēr*; "Be strong the scribe and may we be strengthened; he would have needed it very much"), which supports the French provenance of this manuscript.³⁶

The hand of this French scribe can be identified in two other early fourteenth-century manuscripts from Parma: Parm. 3187-3189 includes incomplete Prophets and Writings in three volumes, with the Targum Onqelos (in separate columns flanking the main text) and *masorah magna* and *masorah parva*.³⁷ The scribe marked his name, Nathan, by decorating that word (fol. 79v). The vocalizer-masorete, Joseph ben Isaac of Archiac (in the province of Saintonge, bordering with Poitou; see the map in Appendix I), added a short colophon at the end of the manuscript (Parm. 3189, fol. 139r).³⁸ The second manuscript, bound today in two volumes (Parm. 3095 and 3569), includes incomplete Psalms and parts of Job, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and incomplete Chronicles.³⁹ As the other manuscripts in this group,

34 Malachi Beit-Arié, "Were There Any Jewish 'Public' Libraries in the Middle Ages?: The Individualistic Nature of the Hebrew Medieval Book Production and Consumption" [Hebrew], in: *Tzion*, 65 (2000), 441-451.

35 Two additional hands could be detected in the second volume: one copied the first quire of the scrolls (fols. 1r-8v) and the other the *haftarah* for *Shabbat Shuvah* (fols. 129v-133v) at the end of the last quire of the *haftarot*. The folios he copied were only partly vocalized, apparently by the scribe himself, who was not the vocalizer of the manuscript; these folios do not include the Masorah.

36 My thanks to Stephen Dörr, who read and translated this inscription.

37 SfarData ZE203q dates the manuscript to 1301-1400. See also Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 45-46. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000787820205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parma%203189 [accessed in April 2022]. It is unclear why the authors of the Parma catalogue attributed the small square script of the Targum in this manuscript to the principal scribe Nathan. The Targum was clearly written by another hand, possibly by the second scribe, who shared the work with Nathan (Parm. 3189, fols. 1-59 and 95-139). For Nathan's small square script, see the Targum in Parm. 2338 and in Parm. 3095 and 3569, discussed below.

38 He also sometimes marked his name Joseph in the *masorah magna* (e.g., fol. 26r).

39 See Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 78 and 68, respectively; the manuscripts are accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS

the main text is surrounded by the Targum Onqelos, Rashi's commentary, and the Masorah, all of which were copied during the original stage of the manuscript's production. Compared to the Jonah Pentateuch, the writing in these codices is in a smaller square script in which decorative elements such as serifs and shading are reduced to a minimum (figs. 13–16). Among its main attributes, present in all the aforementioned Parma codices, are relatively wide letters leaning to the left, a short diagonal of the *alef* with a long serif at its top, short verticals of the *vav*, the *resh*, and similar letters, and descending (from right to left) bases of the letters *beth*, *mem*, and *pei*, which are longer than their top bars. These and other characteristics of the script, as well as the shape of the graphic fillers at the ends of lines, allow us to assume that all these codices were copied by the scribe known as Nathan.

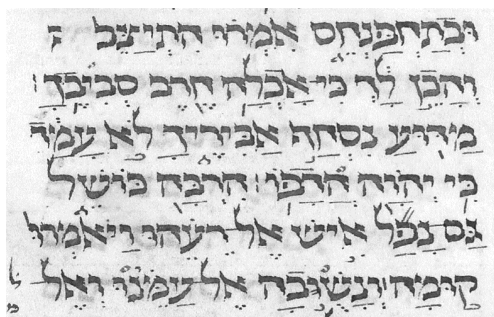


Fig. 13. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2339, fol. 43v: the scribe Nathan, detail.

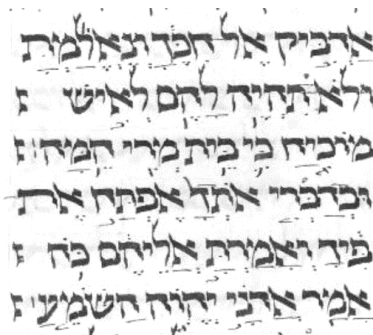


Fig. 14. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3188, fol. 51v: the scribe Nathan, detail.



Fig. 15. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3095, fol. 28v: the scribe Nathan, detail.

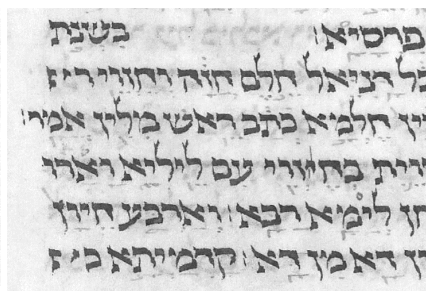


Fig. 16. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3569, fol. 8v: the scribe Nathan, detail.

Although copied by the same scribe in the same place, possibly around the same time, these manuscripts feature different script modes in the Masorah. The Masorah in Parm. 3095 and

990000849480205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%203095 and https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000858360205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%203569 [accessed in April 2022]. The authors of the Parma catalogue failed to identify these two volumes as parts of the same manuscript and dated them differently: <Ashkenaz>, early fourteenth century (Parm. 3095) and <France?>, mid-fourteenth century (Parm. 3569). However, not only were these fragments copied by the same hand but their sizes, layouts and the number of written lines per page, as well as the scripts of the commentary and of the Masorah and its decoration are identical in both volumes.

Parm. 3569 was copied in the usual small square script. The same holds true for Parm. 3187–3189, but with some exceptions. Although Joseph of Archiac, the scribe of the Masorah in this codex, usually wrote in a small square script, he sometimes switched his style to a slightly more cursive one. This variation in his script is found in the Masoretic notes that were extended into the outer margins when their length exceeded the four lines ruled for the *masorah magna* in the lower margins (fig. 17). The particular shape of the *alef* there resembles that of Isaac’s *alef*, suggesting that this style of Masoretic script was known to Isaac’s contemporaries.

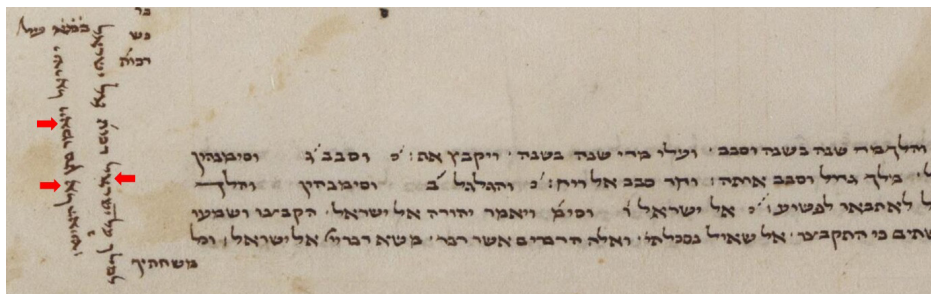


Fig. 17. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3187, fol. 35r: the masorete Joseph of Archiac, detail.

That Isaac of Bressuire’s Masoretic script was neither individual nor unique is supported by the fact that there are manuscripts copied by other scribes that feature a similar script, for example, a Bible codex found in Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence (Ricc. 1).⁴⁰ Copied in two columns, that manuscript includes the Pentateuch, *haftarot*, and Writings, all accompanied by *masorah magna* and *masorah parva*. According to the colophon of the scribe, Jehiel ben Isaac, at the end of the manuscript (p. 835), the copying was completed on 21 Marḥeshvan 5056 (1 November 1295). The masorete and vocalizer, Naḥman ben Senior, also wrote a colophon in large letters outlined by the Masorah along the lower margins of several pages at the end of the *haftarot* (pp. 457–461) and signed his name in a similar manner at the end of the manuscript (p. 835). Naḥman did not refer to the date but noted the name of the patron, Samuel ben Meir, who was apparently the same individual for whom two volumes of *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (*SeMaG*; today bound as one) were copied by two scribes Moses ben Elijah (Ha-lablar) (fols. 2r–167v [colophon]) in 1293⁴¹ and Ḥayyim ben Meir Halevi (169r–504r [colophon: fol. 485r]) in 1290 in Serres (שייראה),⁴² in southeastern France.⁴³ Even if the patron had moved to another locale between 1293 and 1295, based on the codicological features of Ricc. 1,⁴⁴ which he commissioned in 1295, he apparently remained in France.

40 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1. I am grateful to Sebastian Seemann, who brought this manuscript to my attention. The manuscript is accessible online at http://teca.riccardiana.firenze.sbn.it/index.php/it/?option=com_tecaviewer&view=showimg&myId=fabfd3ef-e996-4ea8-8c40-65d965288a78&search= [accessed in April 2022].

41 In 1288, the same scribe, Ḥayyim ben Meir Halevi, produced another copy of *SeMaG* (Zurich, Braginsky Collection, MS 274).

42 See Gross 1897, 650.

43 Paris, BnF, MS héb. 370 (SfarData 0B090 and 0B091).

44 SfarData 0E031q.

Apart from the pricking in both the inner and outer margins and the plummet ruling employed on the parchment with distinguishable sides, the Masoretic script of Naḥman ben Senior also indicates a French provenance for Ricc. 1. Although in the greater part of the manuscript the Masorah was written in tiny square script,⁴⁵ starting with his colophon (p. 457), Naḥman changed to a script that resembles that of Isaac of Bressuire and also used it occasionally on the folios that followed (see, e.g., the *alef* and the *shin* in fig. 18).⁴⁶

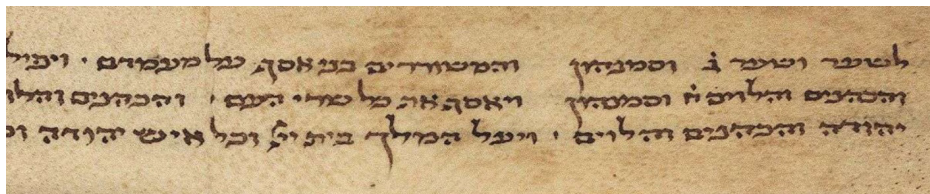


Fig. 18. Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1, p. 833: the masorete Naḥman ben Senior, detail.

These features of the Masoretic script can also be seen in a volume from Parma that includes the Pentateuch, *haftarot*, and the five scrolls, all laid out in two columns, with the *masorah magna* and the *masorah parva* (Parm. 3194).⁴⁷ This early(?) fourteenth-century manuscript is undated and has no colophon; the name Joseph, apparently that of the scribe, was decorated within the main text with a scroll, possibly by the vocalizer-masorete (fols. 33v and 102r). While the square script of the main text in this manuscript is generally similar to the scripts found in the group of the French codices discussed above, the Masorah, copied by two different hands,⁴⁸ displays even greater affinity to that of Isaac of Bressuire (fig. 19). As Isaac did, especially the first masorete used wide letters of equal sizes with their top bars and bases parallel to the head- and baselines and the special shape of the *alef* and the *shin*. However, there are obvious differences between this hand and the hand of Isaac. Not only are some letters shaped differently (e.g., the longer diagonal of the *alef* descending under the line and its very short leg on the left and the more open base of the *mem*), but also the graphic marks and abbreviations are not the ones Isaac used to employ (see Table 2).⁴⁹

45 The script is somewhat stylistically similar to that of Joseph of Archiac in Parm. 3187.

46 Very similar stylistic characteristics of the Masoretic script to those of Naḥman ben Senior are also found in Parm. 3200, fols. 124v–126r, which are first folios of Isaiah in a manuscript of Prophets, copied around the time of Ricc. 1 in France. While the main masorete of this codex marked his name Ḥayyim several times, the second masorete, who wrote the Masorah on only a few folios, remained anonymous (Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 49). The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/viewerpage?vid=MANUSCRIPTS&docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000766860205171-1#FL25832013 [accessed in April 2022].

47 See Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 15–16, who attributed the manuscript to <France?>, late thirteenth century. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000821840205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS [accessed in April 2022].

48 The second hand copied fols. 186r–228v.

49 For another variation of this script that repeats many features of the first scribe's, consider the folios copied by the second scribe in this codex and the fragments of a biblical codex in Parm. 2362, 2482 (Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 62); accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000785320205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&

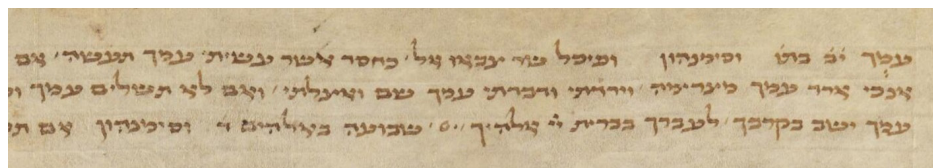


Fig. 19. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3194, fol. 15v: the first masorete, detail.

BL, Add. 21160 (The Jonah Pentateuch)	Parm. 2338-2339	Parm. 3194

Table 2.

It appears then that there were several concurrent trends of writing the Masorah in Isaac's environs. The masorettes of Ricc. 1 and the Parma codices used both the regular small square Masoretic script and its other neither square nor semi-cursive form, sometimes combining them in the same manuscript.⁵⁰ This second mode seems to have been designed for use exclusively for writing the Masorah and was rarely employed for other kinds of text. The principal characteristics of this type of script in its crystallized form, as it appears in Isaac's manuscripts and Parm. 3194, are wide rounded letters of equal size that combine elements of square and semi-cursive scripts, the letters' nearly parallel tops and bases, which create a visual homogeneity and uniform rhythm of the written line, and the special shape of the *alef* as its hallmark.

SearchTxt=parm.%202362 and https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000813940205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%202482 [accessed in April 2022].

50 The (regular) small square Masoretic script can be also found in the Jonah Pentateuch on fol. 89v.

The impetus for developing a distinctive mode for writing the Masorah may have come about as a result of a process that started in the thirteenth century. To enhance structural clarity and thereby the legibility of the copied text, Ashkenazi scribes began to use different modes of scripts for different textual sections. In Bible codices, the main (core) text was commonly rendered in a large square script with even larger initial words, which helped the reader to navigate through it. The Aramaic Targum, whose lines run in a parallel column, was assigned a smaller square script, thus making it easy to differentiate it from the main text. The commentary also became easily recognizable owing to its semi-cursive script. It was then not only the position of the textual sections on the page, but also their visual appearance, that is, differently scaled texts written in different modes of script, that made the various textual units easily distinguishable from one another and established their hierarchy. Apparently a response to new scholarly demands, this development went hand in hand with the introduction of more complex, variable layouts, which were facilitated by dynamic plummet ruling and led to more sophisticated presentations of copied texts.⁵¹

With regard to the Masorah, the mode of script that was commonly used was the same square mode as for the Targum, which in its extremely reduced size often appears aesthetically unappealing. Realizing the significant impact of the script and layout on the reception of texts, it was possibly in the context of these developments, albeit somewhat dilatorily, that French masorettes started to employ a different script for the Masorah. These are, however, only preliminary observations. Masoretic scripts in Ashkenaz remain a largely unexplored field of study and future findings may confirm or contradict this assumption.⁵²

5 Displaced French Masorettes

Except for Ricc. 1 (1295), none of the manuscripts under discussion is dated and the place of their production is unknown. The only locales mentioned are Bressuire and Archiac in the neighbouring French provinces of Poitou and Saintonge in the Duchy of Aquitaine. The noted “Isaac from Bressuire” (מברצוירא) and “Joseph from Archiac” (מארקיאק) suggest the origins of the masorettes but not where they were residing when they wrote the Masorah. As Malachi Beit-Arié phrased it, “Denoting one’s provenance from a town in France or Germany conveyed information about moving out of or emigrating from those locations.”⁵³ As they worked with the same scribe, Nathan, in the new city of residence, Isaac and Joseph might even have known one another.

Joseph from Archiac was involved in the production of another manuscript that might provide a hint regarding the name of this new city of their residence: a Pentateuch written in two columns with the Hebrew verses alternating with the Onqelos Targum, the five scrolls, and *haftarot*, today in the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Kenn. 3).⁵⁴ Although the scribe remained

51 Beit-Arié 2003, 57–59.

52 See Olszowy-Schlanger 2017, 16.

53 Beit-Arié 2022, 140.

54 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Kennicott 3. The manuscript is richly illuminated but not in micrography; accessible online at <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/28cb1120-e016-465b-a1c8-95cc6e1b3812/>

anonymous, the vocalizer-masorete wrote a detailed colophon at the end of the five scrolls (fol. 239v) in which he declared that he, Joseph bar Isaac of Archiac,⁵⁵ vocalized this codex and wrote the Masorah for Samuel ben Moses Halevi, except for the vocalization of the Book of Genesis (fig. 20).⁵⁶ He noted that he completed the work on 4 February 1299 in the town of קרוניא. He used a small square script, as in Parm. 3187-3189, for the Masorah and the first part of the colophon and a more cursive mode, similar to that of the Masoretic script of Isaac

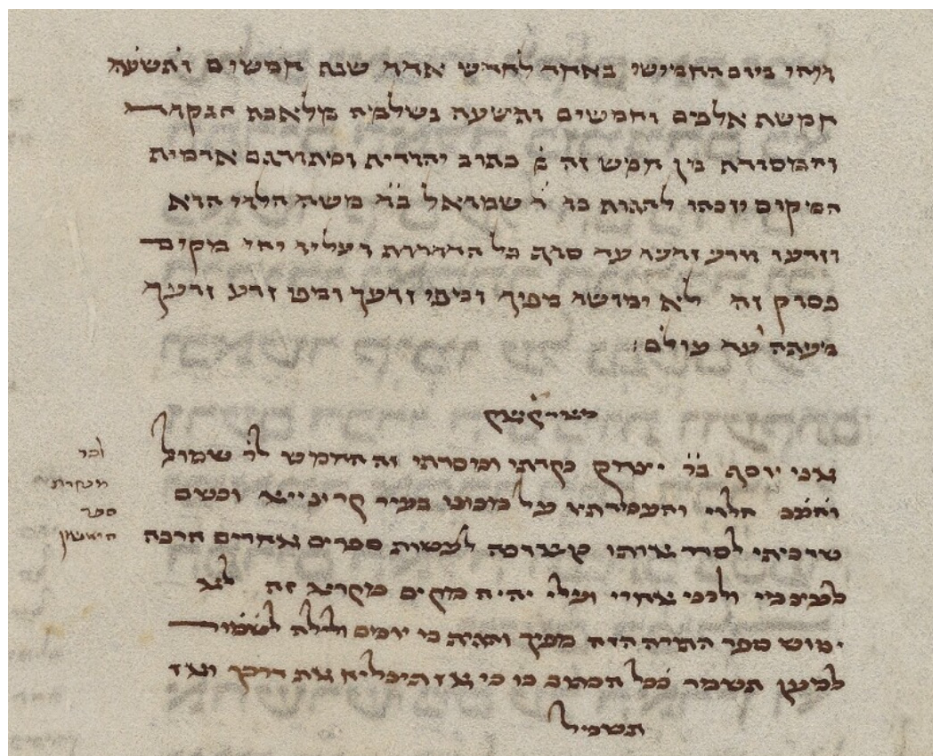


Fig. 20. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Kennicott 3, fol. 239v: the colophon of the masorete Joseph of Archiac.

of Bressuire (including the special shape of *alef*) for the second part of the colophon. The documentation of this manuscript in SfarData suggests reading the town's name as קרצייא.⁵⁷ However, the third letter is actually two letters, *yod* and *nun*, rather than *tzadi* (see, e.g., the letter *tzadi* in יצחק and לעצמי in the colophon, the right arm of which is shaped as a hook and attaches to the body of the letter). Thus, as Adolf Neubauer suggested, it should

[surfaces/d10071c6-f4f6-4fa6-9278-32a025568273/](https://www.sfar.org/surfaces/d10071c6-f4f6-4fa6-9278-32a025568273/) [accessed in April 2022].

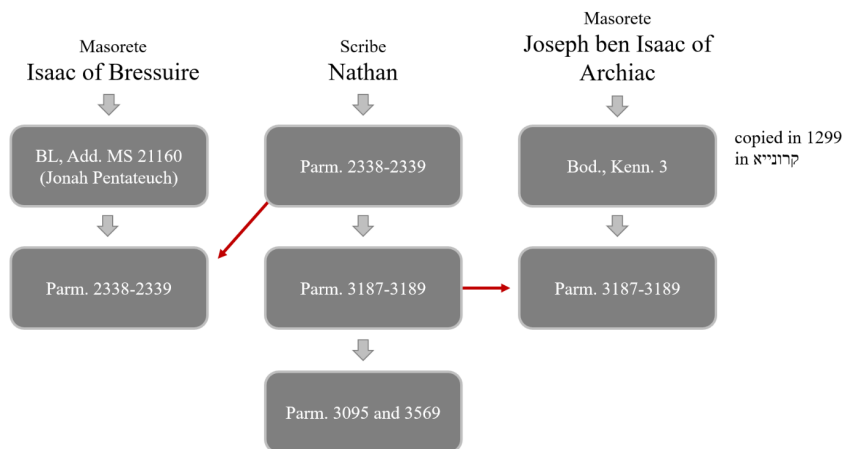
55 "From Archiac" (מארקיאק) was written above his name in between the two parts of the colophon.

56 "לבד מנקדת ספר הראשון – a note written in tiny semi-cursive script to the right of the colophon. Indeed, the stylistic features of the vocalization in Genesis are different from those in the following books, compare, e.g., the shape of the *etnachta*. However, Joseph wrote the Masorah for the entire manuscript. Like the vocalizer of the Jonah Pentateuch, Joseph took credit for the parts of the manuscript for which he was responsible and for the tasks that he performed.

57 SfarData 0C285q; see also Malachi Beit-Arié. Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Addenda and Corrigenda to Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 452.

be read קרונייא.⁵⁸ In Hebrew sources, the city קרונייא (*Crunia*) is La Coruña in Galicia.⁵⁹ However, its codicological characteristics indicate that Kenn. 3 could not have been produced in Spain; rather it had its origins in a French town whose name was similar to Crunia. The source of the name La Coruña is unknown. Among the explanations suggested by some scholars is that La Coruña derived from the French Cluny, owing to the spread of the Cluniac religious movement there. Others have proposed that La Coruña means simply “the crown.”⁶⁰ In that case, קרונייא could be a French city with the same name — La Couronne in Aquitaine, which is near Archiac. However, as there is no evidence of a Jewish presence in medieval La Couronne, although Jews are known to have lived in Angoulême, which is near La Couronne,⁶¹ nor was there a Jewish presence in medieval Cluny,⁶² the identification of קרונייא as either Cluny or La Couronne is uncertain.

The other manuscript that Joseph signed — Parm. 3187-3189 — was apparently produced in the early fourteenth century, shortly after Kenn. 3. Whether it was copied in the same town of קרונייא is unknown, but if that was the case, it is possible that the scribe Nathan and the masorete Isaac of Bressuire were active in the same place (Scheme 1).



Scheme 1: The manuscripts produced by the scribe Nathan and the masoretas Isaac of Bressuire and Joseph ben Isaac of Archiac (red arrows indicate the codices that Nathan worked with each of them)

The period in which these manuscripts were produced was marked by the constant movement and displacement of French Jews. From the end of the twelfth century to the final expulsion in 1394, French Jews experienced several expulsions but kept coming back. In the summer of 1306, owing mainly to economic reasons, they were officially expelled *en masse*

58 Neubauer 1886, 809.

59 Simon R. Schwarzfuchs. “La Hispania Judaica d’Adolphe Neubauer,” in: גלות אחר גולה: מחקרים בתולדות עם ישראל מוגשים לפרופסור חיים בינאר *Beinart*. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991, 260.

60 For these and other etymological explanations, see Theo Vennemann. “An Etymology for the Name of A Coruña,” in: *Beiträge zur Namenforschung*, 52 (2017), 1–41.

61 Gross 1897, 62–63.

62 Gross 1897, 594. Reading קרונייא as Cluny was also suggested by Stephen Dörr.

by Philip IV the Fair, who declared himself the creditor of their debts and seized their property.⁶³ In 1321–1322, the Jews who eventually returned to France faced another wave of persecutions, accused of having plotted with lepers to spread that disease by contaminating the drinking water.⁶⁴ Many Jews were arrested and burned and numerous Jewish communities in the kingdom were destroyed, among them those of Aquitaine.⁶⁵

It is impossible to ascertain where individual French Jews moved during the fourteenth century. Some went to more distant places in Ashkenaz, Spain, and Italy, whereas others settled in nearby communities, for example, in Alsace, and the scribes among them continued to produce manuscripts there.⁶⁶ As a rule, the manuscripts copied by immigrant scribes exhibit the type of script and scribal practices of the scribes' places of origin, whereas the codicological characteristics of the manuscripts executed in the new environs partly or entirely reflect local methods of production.⁶⁷

However, the codicological profile of the Jonah Pentateuch and the Parma codices correlate with the type of script in which these manuscripts were copied. This fact, together with the use of French by the vocalizer of the Jonah Pentateuch and the scribe Nathan, suggests that although the masorettes Isaac and Joseph left their native towns, they most probably stayed in France. It is also hardly conceivable that there could have been a large enough community of French Jewish refugees outside of France — with its scribes, masorettes, and clientele — that would have preserved its native codicological and palaeographical practices, liturgical rites, and Masoretic traditions.

Another French manuscript can shed further light on the issue of the Masoretic traditions. Now in the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence (Plut. 3.10), this codex features a format similar to that of the Parma manuscripts.⁶⁸ It includes the Pentateuch, the five scrolls, and *haftarot*, the Onqelos Targum and Rashi's commentary in separate columns, and Masorah. The main text and Rashi's commentary were copied by the same scribe who often decorated his name, Isaac, with scrolls within the commentary.⁶⁹ The *haftarot* end with his colophon in which he identifies himself as Isaac Kohen, integrating a French expression in his final note (fol. 294v): חזק ונתחזק יצחק בהן הסופר לא יזק לא היום ולא לעולם עד שיעלה קאפון רוטי בסולם: ("Be strong and may we be strengthened; the scribe Isaac Kohen should not be subjected to

63 William Chester. "Administering Expulsion in 1306," in: *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, 15,3 (2008), 247. For other related publications, see, e.g., Stéphane Mechoulan. "The Expulsion of the Jews from France in 1306: A Modern Fiscal Analysis," in: *The Journal of European Economic History*, 33 (2004), 555–584; Simon R. Schwarzfuchs. "The Expulsion of the Jews from France (1306)," in: *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 57 (1967), 482–489.

64 M. le Dr Vincent. "Le complot de 1320 (v.s.) contre les lépreux et ses répercussions en Poitou," in: *Bulletin de la Société des antiquaires de l'Ouest*, Ser. 3, 7,4 (1927), 825–844; see also Malcolm Barber. "Lepers, Jews and Moslems: The Plot to Overthrow Christendom in 1321," in: *History*, 66,216 (1981), 1–17.

65 Elizabeth A. R. Brown. "Philip V, Charles IV, and the Jews of France: The Alleged Expulsion of 1322," *Speculum*, 66,2 (1991), 304. For the persecutions of the Jews of Poitou, see Gross 1897, 451–452. See also Brown 1991, 294–329.

66 See, e.g., SPK, Cod. or. qu. 1 and BAV, ebr. 94: Beit-Arié and Richler 2008, 64.

67 Beit-Arié 2022, 58.

68 The manuscript is accessible online at <http://mss.bmnonline.it/s.aspx?id=AWODkAa31A4r7GxL9kX#/book> [accessed in April 2022].

69 The name Isaac is decorated on fols. 13v, 14v, 23v, 58r. On fol. 96v, the scribe signed the commentary with the abbreviation יבמ"ס which possibly stands for סופר בר מ... יצחק בר מ...

any damage, not today nor forever until a *roast capon* [castrated rooster] climbs on a ladder”) (emphasis mine).⁷⁰

The manuscript is lavishly decorated with pen-work and colourful word panels but most of the decoration was added during the fifteenth century in at least two different stages.⁷¹ The original adornments were limited to a large panel enclosing the initial word for Genesis at the beginning of the codex (fol. 1r), the initial word for *Parashat Toledot* (fol. 8r), and delicate scrolls and frames surrounding initial words and text portions (e.g., fols. 28v, 94r, 260v). The decoration scheme, especially the opening panel for Genesis, suggests that Plut. 3.10 was produced in the middle of the fourteenth century in central France.⁷²

The anonymous masorete of Plut. 3.10 used the same special Masoretic script that appears in Isaac of Bressuire’s manuscripts, including the distinctive shape of the *alef* and the *shin* (fig. 21). However, he often combined this style with a small square script, sometimes even in the same line (e.g., fol. 1r).

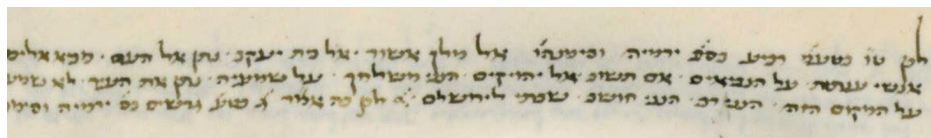


Fig. 21. Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Plut. 3.10, fol. 296r: Masoretic script, detail.

Like the masorete Isaac and the vocalizer of the Jonah Pentateuch, the masorete of Plut. 3.10 mentioned Isaac “Talmondi,” this time in relation to the spelling of the word ויגה (Lam. 3:33; fol. 229v): הא וכתבּוּ ויגאָ ל וכתבּוּ אלף ובקינן מוגה האָ ל וכתבּוּ האָ (‘‘Talmondi: ויגאָ is unique and is written with an *alef*, and in Chinon is proofread *he*, unique, and is written *he* [ויגה]). Remarkably, Talmont-sur-Gironde, which is most likely the place where Isaac Talmondi was active, presumably in the thirteenth century, is in the area of Aquitaine near Archiac (see the map in Appendix I), which adds support to the assumption, suggested above, that he was a well-known local authority on biblical grammar. However, the scribe of Plut. 3.10, Isaac Kohen, followed the Chinon tradition and spelled the word with a *he* (ויגה).

70 For the origins, spread, and variants of this scribal formula, see Michael Riegler. ‘‘Die Schlussformel ‘bis der Esel auf die Leiter klettert’ im Kolophon der mittelalterlichen hebraischen Handschriften in Aschkenas,’’ in: *Aschkenas; Zeitschrift fur Geschichte und Kultur der Juden*, 27,2 (2017), 371–397, esp. 388.

71 The second stage of the decoration that contains, *inter alia*, the depiction of the Sanctuary implements in the lower margins of fols. 91v–95r is associated with the work of the Ashkenazi scribe and artist Joel ben Simeon during his time in Italy in the mid-fifteenth century. As was noted by Joseph Gutmann, these images reveal striking similarities to the implements depicted by Joel on six leaves that were formerly preserved in New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Acc. 822 (now lost): see Joseph Gutmann. ‘‘Thirteen Manuscripts in Search of an Author: Joel ben Simeon, 15th-Century Scribe-Artist,’’ in: *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, 9,2/3 (1970), 91 n. 27.

72 The opening panel of Genesis features blue display letters of the initial word *Bereshit* on a red background decorated with delicate golden scrolls. Branches with maple leaves emerge from the four corners of the panel and scroll along its sides. This decoration and its stylistic execution are very similar to the illumination of the mid-fourteenth-century Parisian school: see, for comparison, St. Denis Missal, produced in Paris, ca. 1350 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, no. MSL-1891-1346): <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1385500/missal-known-as-the-st-illuminated-manuscript-catholic-church/?carousel-image=2010EC6560> [accessed in April 2022]; see also Rowan Watson. *Les manuscrits enlumines et leurs crateurs*. Paris: Gregoriennes, 2004, 40. On the basis of its codicology, SfarData ZE324q dates Plut. 3.10 to 1326–1374.

The local character of the Masoretic annotations also follows from other references to a version from Chinon (a town in the County of Anjou, just 70 km from Bressuire; see the map in Appendix I), which appear only in the margins of the scrolls.⁷³ These kinds of annotations address the spelling and/or vocalization of certain words, which in the main text either follow or contradict the Chinon version. Although we do not know what manuscript(s) represented the Chinon version that the masorete used for comparison, we learn from one of the references that it was a manuscript that was proofread by Isaac ha-Naqdan (fol. 227r): יצחק הנקדן ר' והגיה אותה מל' בקינון והגיה אותה ("הגאולה [Ruth 4:7] is plene in Chinon and it was proofread by R. Isaac, the vocalizer/masorete").

According to this reference, הגאולה in Chinon was written plene and was proofread by Isaac ha-Naqdan. In Plut. 3.10, the Jonah Pentateuch, and the Parma codices, הגאולה is defective, with one exception. In Parm. 3189 (fol. 7v), הגאולה was initially written plene, but corrected to defective (the *vav* was deleted by two short strokes) most probably by its vocalizer-masorete, Joseph of Archiac. According to other references in Plut. 3.10, the Chinon version indeed often matches the version that appears in Parm. 3189, suggesting a close connection between them. However, it was not Parm. 3189 itself that the masorete of Plut. 3.10 used for comparison, since the Chinon manuscript he had at his disposal apparently had only the five scrolls. It is also worth noting that the manuscripts associated with Isaac of Bressuire do not usually match the Chinon version, so Isaac ha-Naqdan referred to in Plut. 3.10 and Isaac of Bressuire cannot be one and the same person.

Although Plut. 3.10 was probably not produced in Chinon, its masorete favoured that tradition. Other elements of that local French tradition found expression in the references to Isaac Talmondi; the selection of the *haftarot*, which in all aforementioned codices follow the French rite;⁷⁴ the format and layout of these codices; the codicological and palaeographical traits they display, especially in the style of their Masoretic script; and even their approach to the compositional arrangement of the decoration, which is made up almost exclusively of micrographic images in the margins.⁷⁵ Thus these manuscripts must have been produced in the same area of France, possibly somewhere in Aquitaine.

Although all of these codices can apparently be dated to the first half of the fourteenth century, the Jonah Pentateuch is unique owing to its layout and sumptuous decoration. It may, as noted above, actually be the earliest manuscript in this group, possibly having been produced even shortly before the expulsion of 1306 (when Isaac might have still lived in Bressuire). The latest of those codices is probably Plut. 3.10, which shows further development of the Masoretic script, as well as extended Masoretic annotations that include references to local and foreign biblical authorities.⁷⁶

73 Fols. 222r, 224r, 226r, 227r, 230v, 231v, 238r, 244r.

74 As the comparison showed, the *haftarot* in Parm. 2339, Parm. 3194, and Plut. 3.10 are nearly identical to those to be recited according to the French rite, as they were indicated in the margins of BAV, ebr. 14. The extant *haftarot* in the Jonah Pentateuch, as mentioned above, also reflect the same selection.

75 From this point of view, they resemble other Pentateuchs produced in France, e.g., ÖNB, Cod. hebr. 28: Shalev-Eyni 2010, 130–137. The stylistic comparison of the decoration and its motifs is, however, a subject for further research.

76 In addition to the Chinon version, the masorete used Sephardi Bibles/commentaries (e.g., fols. 96r, 195v, 238r, 238v), works of Joseph Tov Elem (e.g., fols. 238v and 239r), and other Ashkenazi sources, which he cited in the margins.

6 The Trajectory of the French Masoretic Manuscripts

Owing to the turbulent history of French Jewry, and especially the final expulsion of 1394, the manuscripts that French Jews possessed were moved from place to place. Except for the Jonah Pentateuch, which changed hands among several subsequent German-Ashkenazi owners,⁷⁷ Plut. 3.10, Ricc. 1, and most of the Parma manuscripts discussed herein ended up in the Italian milieu.

Included with Plut. 3.10, for example, is a lengthy bill of sale dated 1475 in Alessandria, which was then in the Duchy of Milan and is now in Piedmont (fol. 296v). The names of the seller, buyer, and witnesses were erased by a later owner of the manuscript. However, the seller mentioned another codex, sold on the same occasion to the same buyer: the Book of Psalms with David Qimḥi's commentary, which is probably the very same codex that is now housed in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (BnF 114).⁷⁸ Not only does its content match the description in Plut. 3.10, but the semi-cursive Ashkenazi script of its owner (BnF 114, fol. 4r), Abraham ben Joseph ha-Kohen of Alessandria, is very like the script of the deed of sale in Plut. 3.10, even though in BnF 114 the ownership note is somewhat stylized.

According to its colophon, BnF 114 was copied for Abraham ben Joseph ha-Kohen of Alessandria by the scribe Levi (ben Aharon) Ḥalfan, with vocalization and Masorah by Nethanel (ben Levi) Trabot (fols. 72r, 146v–147v, 148r). Both the scribe and the vocalizer are well known from other manuscripts. Sometime after 1475, Levi ben Aharon Ḥalfan copied a codex of Writings in square Ashkenazi script for someone named Abraham, possibly the same Abraham ha-Kohen of Alessandria (Parm. 2835, fol. 11r).⁷⁹ From the second colophon on fol. 92v, we learn that Abraham passed away and that the manuscript was then readdressed to his son Solomon.

Nethanel ben Levi Trabot, whose family originated from Trévoux, was a scribe, a vocalizer, and a masorete as well as a halakhic authority, a liturgical poet, and a moneylender, who was active in the area of Cuneo in Piedmont from the mid-fifteenth century.⁸⁰ In addition to BnF

77 For example, a fifteenth-century Ashkenazi hand added many references to the Targum Yerushalmi (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Pentateuch), e.g., fols. 3v, 10r, 48r, 263v.

78 Hermann Zotenberg. *Catalogues des manuscrits hébreux et samaritains de la Bibliothèque impériale*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1866, 12. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001288760205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%90%D7%9C%20%D7%91%D7%9F%20%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%99%20%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%95%D7%98 [accessed in April 2022].

79 Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 73. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000841150205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%202835 [accessed in April 2022].

80 For his activities in these fields, see Roni Weinstein. *Marriage Rituals Italian Style: A Historical Anthropological Perspective on Early Modern Italian Jews*. Leiden: Brill 2004, 312 n. 3; Edward Fram. *The Codification of Jewish Law on the Cusp of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022, 99 n. 46 and 47; Renata Segre. *The Jews in Piedmont*. Vol. 1: 1297–1582. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986, e.g., 182, 287, 293. He owned carved Torah staves, made upon his request, which are currently preserved in the Gross Family Collection in Ramat Aviv: see Dora L. Bemporad. “A Late Gothic

114, we know of at least three manuscripts from his hand.⁸¹ One is a halakhic compendium now in Vercelli that includes *Sefer Mordekhai* and other works, which he copied for his own use in 1457 (colophon: fol. 393v).⁸² In the template for a marriage document (*Ketuvah*), this manuscript includes a mention of the town of Saluzzo or Savigliano (שאלושייט) in Piedmont (fol. 369r), which might have been the place where the manuscript was produced.⁸³ The second one is a fourteenth-century liturgical Pentateuch in three columns with *haftarot* and Masorah, today in Milan, to which Nethanel Trabot added Rashi's commentary in the margins and the five scrolls in semi-cursive and square Ashkenazi script.⁸⁴

The third manuscript, which is particularly important for our discussion, is in two volumes in Parma with the liturgical Pentateuch, copied in a format similar to that of the earlier French codices. It includes the Pentateuch, *haftarot*, and the five scrolls, with the Onqelos Targum, commentaries by Rashi and Moses ben Naḥman, and Masorah (Parm. 3218).⁸⁵ The second volume, which was formerly part of the same codex, features *Sefer Patshegen* on the Targum (Parm. 3509).⁸⁶ The biblical texts and the Targum were copied by Jacob Diena (colophon: fol. 909r) for Samson ben Ḥayyim Diena, and Nethanel Trabot added the commentary and the Masorah and vocalized the codex (colophons: fols. 909r and 796v). He also copied the whole of *Sefer Patshegen* in 1475 (colophon: fol. 22v), "in his old age" (fol. 23r).

Thus, the manuscripts associated with Nethanel Trabot and Levi Ḥalfan were produced in the second half of the fifteenth century in the environs of Cuneo, a city in southwestern Piedmont, which was under the House of Savoy. Nethanel and Levi copied manuscripts for patrons living in Cuneo and in such nearby cities as Alessandria. Another town associated with the Trabot and Diena families is called רבייל in a halakhic compilation copied in 1476 by one Levi ben Nethanel Trabot (possibly the son of Nethanel ben Levi Trabot).⁸⁷ רבייל

Carved Pair of Torah Staves from Italy" in: *Windows on Jewish Worlds: Essays in Honor of William Gross, Collector of Judaica*, ed. by Shalom Sabar, Emile Schrijver, and Falk Wiesemann. Amsterdam: Walburg Pers B.V., Uitgeverij, 2019, 23–34; Luisa M. Ottolenghi. "Scribes, Patrons and Artists of Italian Illuminated Manuscripts in Hebrew," in: *Journal of Jewish Art*, 19 (1993/1994), 95.

81 Aaron Freimann. "Jewish Scribes in Medieval Italy," in: *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, ed. by Guido Kisch, Elias J. Bickerman, et al. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950, no. 393.

82 Vercelli, Seminario Vescovile, C 235 (SfarData 0Y615q).

83 Luisa M. Ottolenghi. "Il manoscritto ebraico del Seminario Vescovile di Vercelli," in: *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Dario Disegni*, ed. by Emanuele M. Artom, L. Caro, and Sergio J. Sierra. Turin: Istituto di Studi Ebraici, 1969, 153–165, esp. 157.

84 Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B 35 Sup. (SfarData ZY269q-ZY270q): see Carlo Bernheimer. *Codices hebraici Bybliothecae Ambrosianae*. Florence: Leon S. Olschki, 1933, 6–8.

85 Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 35. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000822190205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%90%D7%9C%20%D7%91%D7%9F%20%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%99%20%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%95%D7%98 [accessed in April 2022].

86 Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 140. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000687040205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%90%D7%9C%20%D7%91%D7%9F%20%D7%9C%D7%95%D7%99%20%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%95%D7%98 [accessed in April 2022].

87 Paris, BnF, Ms. héb. 390, fols. 249–250r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990001293040205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%AA%D7%A0%D7%90%D7%9C%20

also figures in the bill of sale for a French manuscript of a liturgical Pentateuch in three volumes (Parm. 2003, 2004, 2046), produced in 1311 in a format and layout similar to those of the Parma group.⁸⁸ According to a lengthy bill of sale (Parm. 2046, fol. 201v), Jedidiah ben Neḥemiah Foa sold the manuscript in רבייל to Jacob ben Samson Diena in 1469.⁸⁹

The identification of the town רבייל is uncertain. In the catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts in Parma and other secondary sources, it is tentatively identified as Revel in southern France (see the map in Appendix I).⁹⁰ Other suggestions include Reville and Roubaix — both in northern France⁹¹ — as well as Ravello in the area of Cuneo (see the map in Appendix I).⁹² Given that the activities of the Trabot and Diena families in those years took place in the last-named region, Ravello seems to be the most likely locale.

The strong interest that these scribes and manuscript owners had in old French manuscripts brought to Piedmont after the expulsions of French Jews is also apparent from the thirteenth-century Maḥzor according to the French rite in Oxford (Bod., Opp. Add. fol. 68), the one that referred to Isaac Talmondi, as I mentioned above. That codex was sold in 1471 by another member of the Trabot family, one Menaḥem ben David Trabot, also in רבייל, as recorded in a lengthy bill of sale at the end of the manuscript (fol. 265v). Although the name of the buyer was partly erased by later owners, his personal name, Nethanel, remains intact, which suggests that it was possibly Nethanel ben Levi Trabot who acquired the Maḥzor from a relative. Moreover, Menaḥem ben David Trabot signed the bill using a semi-cursive script different from that in which the bill was written, whereas if compared to Parm. 3218 and other manuscripts that Nethanel Trabot is known to have copied, the script of the bill is nearly identical with that of Nethanel himself. It thus seems likely that as a more experienced scribe, Nethanel Trabot wrote the bill of sale on behalf of the seller, who then simply added his signature. The bill in the Maḥzor also details a small Pentateuch with no vocalization, some sections of which were surrounded by Targum; Gersonides's commentary on Job; and three of the scrolls on paper, which Nethanel acquired on the same occasion.

https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000827010205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%202003 and https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000852250205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%94%20%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%90%D7%94 [accessed in April 2022].

88 Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 18–19 (SfarData 0E404q). The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000827010205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=parm.%202003 and https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000852250205171&vid=MANUSCRIPTS&SearchTxt=%D7%A0%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%99%D7%94%20%D7%A4%D7%95%D7%90%D7%94 [accessed in April 2022].

89 At the beginning of the manuscript (Parm. 2003, fol. 1r) there is the name of a later owner, Azriel ben Solomon Diena, who was possibly a descendant or relative of Jacob Diena.

90 Gross 1897, 621–622. See also *Manuscrits médiévaux en caractères hébraïques portant des indications de date jusqu'à 1540*, ed. by Malachi Beit-Arié, Mordechai Glatzer, and Colette Sirat. Vol. 3. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1986, 13. For Revel spelled as רבייל, see C. Philipp E. Nothaft and Justine Isserles. “Calendars beyond Borders: Exchange of Calendrical Knowledge between Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe (12th–15th Century),” in: *Medieval Encounters*, 20 (2014), 23.

91 See Gross 1897, 621; Stephen Dörr suggested to read רבייל as Roubaix.

92 Freimann 1950, 289, no. 279a.

Clearly, then, the French Jews living in Piedmont in the second half of the fifteenth century not only collected manuscripts as did their contemporaries in Italy and elsewhere, but they were particularly interested in older French codices that preserved the authentic liturgical traditions of French Jewry. This tendency found expression in what is known as the APaM (Asti, Fossano, and Moncalvo) liturgical rite, which was followed by French descendants who settled mainly in these cities in Piedmont. Similarly to French refugees in Ashkenaz, the APaM communities largely adopted Ashkenazi rites common in those areas but for some occasions preserved the original French liturgy which was recorded in *Maḥzor APaM*.⁹³

The same apparently held true for Bible codices. The *haftarot* in Trabot's manuscripts follow the French rite, as does his rendering of the Masorah, both of which were inspired by older French manuscripts. While investigating the sources of Trabot's Masoretic annotations is beyond the scope of this essay, some remarks on specific manuscripts are in order. Especially indicative is Parm. 3218, in which along with other sources Trabot referred to the Chinon version. For instance, he commented on the spelling of *מְלֻמְדֵי* (Cant. 3:8) in the margin (fol. 805r): *ובקיגון דגש וחטף מְלֻמְדֵי* ("and in Chinon [it is] with *dagesh* and *hataf* מְלֻמְדֵי"). A very similar Masoretic note regarding this word that appears in Plut. 3.10 (fol. 222r) states that the *mem* should have a *dagesh* according to the Chinon version.⁹⁴ Thus it is possible that Nethanel either used Plut. 3.10 (which was sold in nearby Alessandria around the same time) in compiling his Masoretic material or that he had access to another manuscript that contained references to an older Chinon version.

Moreover, it seems that one of Isaac's of Bressuire codices was also found in Nethanel Trabot's environs. Parm. 2338-2339 includes several hints as to its presence in that area. First, the name of the scribe who added Rashi's commentary, Levi Ḥalfan, is the same as the name of the scribe who worked with Nethanel, Levi (ben Aharon) Ḥalfan. However, the script of the commentary in Parm. 2338-2339 is of an earlier style and is different from that of BnF 114 and Parm. 2835.⁹⁵ Without ruling out the possibility that both scribes having had the same name could be a simple coincidence, it is certainly conceivable that some of Levi ben Aharon Ḥalfan's ancestors bore that name and that the manuscript was in the same family in the fifteenth century. Additional evidence for the presence of Parm. 2338-2339 in Piedmont is found on fol. 271r of Parm. 2338: a note of ownership by Mattetiah ben Nethanel written in a script that is very similar to Nethanel Trabot's Masoretic script. It is in this context that we can understand the surprising affinity of the Masoretic script of Trabot and other scribes in his close environs with that of Isaac of Bressuire and his French contemporaries. First observed by Sebastian Seemann (Heidelberg) and further elaborated by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (Paris/Oxford),⁹⁶ both of whom opened the discussion on

93 See, e.g., Daniel Goldschmidt. "Maḥzor APaM" [Hebrew], in: *Qiryat Sefer*, 30 (1954/1955), 118–136.

94 Indeed, in Parm. 3189 (fol. 2r), which often matches the Chinon version, the word is written exactly as was suggested in the Chinon version: *מְלֻמְדֵי*.

95 According to Beit-Arié and Richler 2001, 73 and my own examination.

96 Sebastian Seemann's and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger's observations were presented in two workshops on the Jonah Pentateuch that took place in the framework of the project "Corpus Masoreticum," on November 2, 2021, and March 7, 2022.

this kind of Masoretic writing, this similarity of individual scripts separated by more than a hundred years is difficult to explain. Although the stylistic imprint of Trabot's time and milieu is recognizable in the roundness of his letters, which he owed to the contemporary Italian semi-cursive writing, the shape of the letters (*alef* and *shin* in particular) greatly resemble those of Isaac of Bressuire (figs. 22, 23).

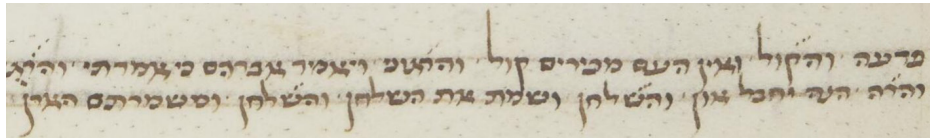


Fig. 22. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS heb. 114, fol. 12r: Nethanel Trabot's Masoretic script, detail.

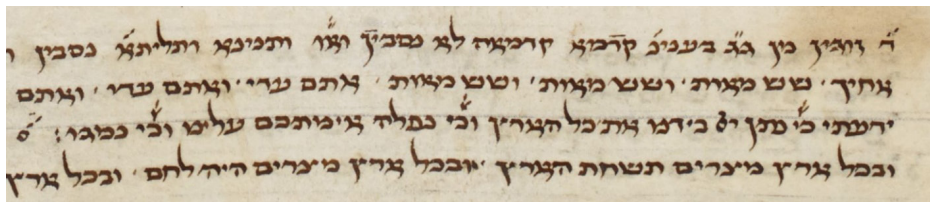


Fig. 23. London, British Library, Add. MS 21160 (*The Jonah Pentateuch*), fol. 178r: the masorete Isaac of Bressuire, detail.

As they owned older French manuscripts, Trabot and his colleagues must have been well acquainted with this mode of Masoretic script and understood it as a representative of their native French Bible tradition. As with authentic French liturgical rites, biblical texts, and Masoretic annotations that they wanted to preserve in the new manuscripts they produced, these descendants of displaced French Jewish communities must have attributed a similar importance to the visual aspects of that tradition. They therefore selectively replicated its markers, including the format, the layout, and the Masoretic script of more than one-hundred-year-old French Bibles. The similarity between Trabot's and Isaac of Bressuire's Masoretic script is, thus, not superficial but was apparently deeply rooted in the perceived need to preserve and transmit original French Bible tradition in the contemporary scribes' environs. It is of course conceivable that it was not necessarily a return to an old form of Masoretic script in Trabot's surroundings but that French scribes preserved their native script through centuries. However, the facts that no manuscripts copied in this kind of the Masoretic script between the mid-fourteenth and later fifteenth centuries have been found and that Trabot's late fifteenth-century Masoretic script is much more stylistically similar to that of Isaac of Bressuire than the mid-fourteenth-century script in Plut. 3.10 suggests a kind of revival of this tradition rather than its uninterrupted existence.

7 Conclusions

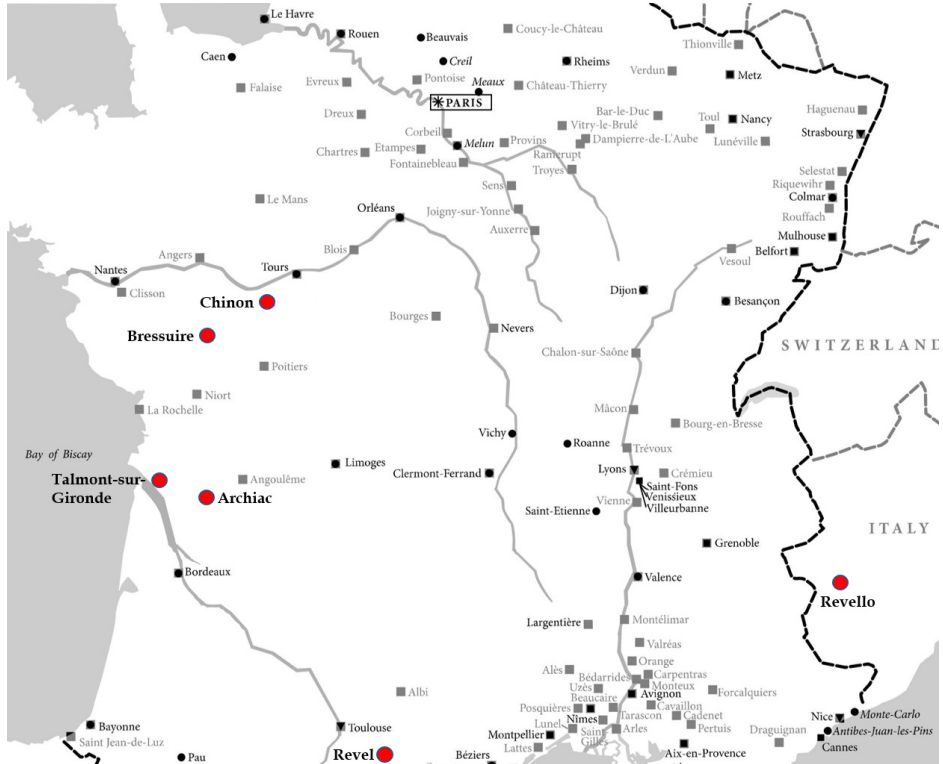
Medieval French Bible manuscripts shared the fate of many Ashkenazi codices that travelled to Italy with their owners during and after the fifteenth century. Their concentration in Piedmont is not surprising, as a number of French communities in that area continued to follow their native French rites. More surprising perhaps is that apart from the textual content of the older books, their visual attributes, especially those that were considered integral to the French authentic tradition, were also transmitted. In terms of the content, the present discussion was limited to just few examples, but it is important to emphasize that work on the subject should be a prime choice for future research. There is also still much to explore regarding the ways in which later manuscripts produced in Piedmont are similar to their older French prototypes.

The same holds true for the origins of the French Masoretic tradition reflected in the *Jonah Pentateuch* and related manuscripts. While it generally seems to have flourished in the area of Aquitaine, its sources, development, inner dynamics, and spread remain largely unknown. There should definitely be more work done on comparing the Masoretic annotations in the relevant manuscripts. Such studies will shed further light on how the masoretes compiled the Masoretic material (the selection and disposition of which is often different even in manuscripts copied by the same masorete), the model-manuscripts that they used, and the role of the manuscripts' patrons in the decisions taken.

Moreover, the recognition accorded to Isaac of Bressuire suggests that the status of the masorete might have been more important than that of the scribe(s) who copied the main text. Apparently, not every scribe could write the Masorah, as it required special skills and knowledge. Masoretes, such as Isaac, also often served as the vocalizers and proofreaders of the copied text and were responsible for the final touch, thereby giving shape to the local Masoretic tradition, with which later masoretes originating from France were in dialogue.

APPENDIX I

Map of France and Northern Italy*



* The map is based on the map of the main Jewish communities in France from the Middle Ages to the Modern Period in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Vol. 7, 148. The towns mentioned in the present paper are marked in red.

8 List of Manuscripts

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. or. qu. 1
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. or. qu. 9
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Cod. or. fol. 1210
Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS Plut. 3.10
Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS 1
London, British Library, Add. MS 10455
London, British Library, Add. MS 21160
Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, B 35 Sup.
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Kennicott 3
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. 14
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Opp. Add. fol. 68
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS héb. 114
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS héb. 370
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS héb. 390
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2003-2004, 2046
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MSS Parm. 2338-2339
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2835
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MSS Parm. 3095, 3569
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MSS Parm. 3187-3189
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 3194
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MSS Parm. 3200
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MSS Parm. 3218, 3509
Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, MS Parm. 2003-2004, 2046
Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS ebr. 14
Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS ebr. 94
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Zurich, Braginsky Collection, MS 274

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