Masorah, Masoretes
I. Judaism
B. Medieval Ashkenaz

[1274] The Masorah has come down to us through a variety of texts and in different recensions. Complete masoretic Bibles, as discussed above, as well as independent masoretic lists, have been in circulation since the 9th century. A very important list collection is *Sefer Okhlah we-Okhlah*, a treatise in which the masoretic notes are arranged systematically and according to a variety of different topics. For example, one list has pairs of words in alphabetical order, the only distinction between them being the addition of a *waw* in the second word. Thus *okhlah* appears in 1 Sam 1:9 ("had eaten") and *we-okhlah* appears in Gen 27:19 ("and eat"). *Sefer Okhlah we-Okhlah* has been preserved in two manuscript recensions: the Paris recension (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 148) edited by Frensdorff, and the Halle recension (Halle, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, MS Y b 4° 10) edited by Diaz-Estaban and Ognibeni. Another important masoretic treatise is *Sefer ha-Ḥillufim* (The Book of Variants), written in Judeo-Arabic in the 11th century by Mishael ben Uzziel, under the title *Kitāb al- Khilaf*, which lists points of contention concerning the biblical text between the great masoretes Aaron ben Moses ben Asher and Moses ben David ben Naphtali. It was first published by Lazar Lipschütz (Bonn 1935; repr. Jerusalem 1965).

1. Masoretic Discussions in Biblical Commentaries. Since the 11th century, the Masorah has been continuously taken into account in the Spanish-Provençal and the Northern French-Ashkenazic Bible commentaries, as well as in halakhic-liturgical works and Hebrew-French glossaries. For instance, the spelling of the word *teʿaśeh* in Exod 25:31 differs in Oriental and Sephardic/Ashkenazic MSS; in the former it is spelled defectively without a yod after the first letter (*taw*) – *tēʿāśeh* – in the latter plene, with the *yod* – *têʿāśeh*. Rashi, citing a midrash, comments that the spelling of *teʿaśeh* is *mālē* (plene), indicating the passive tense, implying that the menorah was built by itself (Heb. *mēʾēlehā*). The so-called MS Leipzig 1 (Delitzsch 1838; Penkower 2006) "corrects" Rashi's *mālē* (plene) to *mēʾēlehā* (by itself), thus inserting the midrashic view into the masoretic comment itself. This discussion is taken up by Abraham Ibn Ezra as well (Liss 2013) and also shows up in the later masoretic commentary on the Pentateuch *Minḥat shai* by Jedidiah Solomon Norzi (Mantua, 1742–44). Rashi refers several times to the Masorah to support his exegetical comments (cf. his commentary on Deut 33:23 in which he refers to the "Great [1275] Masorah" ("and we find this in the Great Masorah in the alphabetical list of the words that are stressed penultimate"), an early Okhla we-Okhla recension (cf. Petzold 2019).

2. Figurative/Decorative Masorah. From the 11th and 12th centuries onwards, and under thus far historically undetermined circumstances, there emerged in medieval Ashkenaz a distinct local version of the Tiberian Masorah which deserves to be recognized as an independent textual type of Masorah due to its variant readings, its masoretic idiosyncrasies, and especially its reception history. The masoretic notations quite often took a different form from what was customary in oriental codices. Starting in the 12th century, complete and partial Bibles appear in France and Germany in which the masoretic/*Okhlah* list material is not organized as isolated Masorah Magna or *masora finalis*, but appears as decorative ornaments on the pages. In these cases, the Masorah and the *Okhlah* material are presented in micrographic writing that has been given pictorial form, in keeping with the standard repertoire of Romanesque Bible illuminations. They appear as legendary creatures, chimeras, dragons, or drolleries, but also and especially as zoomorphic figures (dogs, horses, rabbits, gazelles, birds) and even as anthropomorphic beings, similar to façade decorations or frescoes on and in church buildings. In some instances, the Masorah makes use of diagrammatic representations, rendering scriptural

constructs in geometric form (texts with a special visual structure; cf. Gutmann 1983). Manuscripts from the 12th and 13th centuries demonstrate that this figurative Masorah (Masora Figurata), contrary to previous claims, did not lose any of its philological qualities along the way. Quite the opposite: many lists that were relegated to the last pages in oriental codices, often making them illegible and/or untraceable, are presented in toto on the folio pages of these works and are therefore easily accessible. Masora Figurata also occasionally contains additional quotations from commentary literature and midrashim that go far beyond the usual masoretic notes (see above the example of the plene spelling in Exod 25:31; see further below "II. Visual Arts").

3. Non-figurative Masoretic Okhlah we-Okhlah List Material. One of the most important Hebrew biblical manuscripts of Western Europe is the so-called Erfurt 3 (Berlin, SBB MS Or. fol. 1213; 10th/11th century; [incomplete] whole Bible), which was dated by Kahle and recently by Penkower (Penkower) to ca. 1100. What makes Erfurt 3 so special is the masoretic metatext that distinguishes it from other MSS: especially in the Torah section, an extensive Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna are presented, often extending over several columns. They contain substantial list material of the *Okhlah we-Okhlah* type. Analysis of a sample (Seemann) revealed that in the book of Exodus alone (fol. 33v–59r), more than twenty-five masoretic lists can be [1276] matched with lists that appear in the two known recensions of the book *Okhlah we-Okhlah* (Paris; Halle). For instance, on fol. 34v the manuscript includes Masorah Magna on all four margins that contains, inter alia, four different *Okhlah* lists. However, none of these is identical to any list in the recensions of Paris or Halle; there is no complete agreement on the amount or the arrangement of the material. An editorial evaluation and comparison of the *Okhlah* lists appearing in the masoretic annotations of various manuscripts, thus, offers the chance to reconstruct the formation process of the medieval Hebrew biblical text in a geophilological way.

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II. Visual Arts

Medieval Hebrew Bible manuscripts are often decorated with micrography, a scribal art that records text in tiny script, often in the form of images (see "Micrography"). The textual source recorded in micrography was frequently taken from contemporary, adapted masoretic traditions.

Early examples of micrography are to be found in the few extant Oriental Bible codices, like the Leningrad Codex (q.v.) on the illuminated "carpet pages" (see there, e.g., the sixteen decorated pages, fols. 473v–479r and 488v–490r). Those few micrographically decorated, illuminated, and gilded pages were usually placed at the end of the codex.

From the 13th century onwards micrographically and figuratively shaped masoretic annotations became an integral part of the *mise-en-page* in Ashkenazi manuscript culture. The most prominent micrographically decorated Ashkenazi Bible manuscripts – such as the Duke of Sussex Pentateuch (London, British Library [BL], Add. MS 15282); the Vienna Pentateuch (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 28); the Yonah Pentateuch (London, BL Add. MS 21160); and the two Erfurt Bibles, "Erfurt 1" (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin [SBB] MS Or. fol. 1210, 1211); and "Erfurt 2" (SBB MS Or. fol. 1212), to name only a few – contain an elaborate array of extensively decorated masora figurata, which depict not only the full range of gothic iconography of drolleries, chimeras, griffins, and dragons, but also motifs of medieval literary conception connected with courtly love, such as nobility, chivalry, hunting, and falconry.

Fig. 30 Masorah figurata in the Yonah Pentateuch (1250–99)

The masora figurata contains ordinary masora magna notes and masoretic list material. The ma-sora figurata of the Duke of Sussex Pentateuch (London, BL Add. MS 15282) functions mostly as Masorah, illustration, and visual marker. The masora figurata in the lower margin of fol. 28r is drawn in the shape

of the ram caught by its horns in a tree (Gen 22:13; see / plate 16). While the micrographic image of the ram consists solely of the masora magna note regarding the thirteen appearances of the word *yirʾeh*, beginning with its first occurrence in Gen 22:14, the image of the tree contains a lengthy list of fifty-seven occurrences of the word *mimenni* beginning with its first occurrence in verse Gen 22:12. Here the figurative Masorah is placed in situ, and works as illustration.

But this conception of the masora figurata does not always hold true. Other masora figurata compositions reflect a different and not always systematic approach. In those cases the masora figurata works as a repository of masoretic list material, which is known today due to the editions of Okhlah-Paris (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS héb. 148) by Frensdorff, and Okhlah-Halle (Halle, Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, MS Y b 4° 10) by Diaz-Estaban and Ognibeni. The [1278] masora figurata, which lent the Yonah Pentateuch its name, shows in the lower margin of fol. 292r, right at the beginning of the book of Jonah, the prophet standing in the fish's throat (see fig. 30). The Masorah of Jonah and the Fish consists almost solely of an obscure masoretic list, witnessed in list §90 of the Okhlah-Paris recension (cf. Frensdorff: 92), of pairs of words, which appear once at the beginning and once at the end of a biblical verse. The elaborate masora figurata has no connection to the textual content of the page, except for its illustrative character and a small – tokenistic – part of the skirt of Jonah, consisting of a masoretic note preserving the two appearances of the phrase: *hevlei shawʾ* in Jonah 2:9 and Ps 31:7.

Only a few masora figurata compositions show a strong and consistent relation to the textual body in terms of masoretic content and figurative shape. The masora figurata of Vatican, BAV MS Ebr. 14 draws on a wide range of biblical motifs, which illustrate not only the textual content of the page, but preserve masoretic list material (e.g. Okhlah-list §88 of the Halle recension), midrash, and allusions to the contemporary exegetical literature (e.g. Rashi's commentary) as in the masora figurata on fol. 85v of this MS, written in micrography in the shape of a city-gate, which is the subject of the manumission laws of Exod 21 (contra Attia 2015b: 61–67).

London BL MS Or. 2091 contains thirty masora figurata compositions, some extending over a whole page. This Masorah has so far been investigated only iconographically, never philologically. There is an elaborate masora figurata on fol. 203r (cf. Offenberg 2014; 2016), which makes use of the portrayal of Ezekiel's chariot vision for polemical (anti-Crusader) purposes. The figurative Masorah in the [1279] upper part of the folio consists of framed ornaments connected with 4 + 1 figures (eagle, man/knight [upper body], lion, ox + stork; analogous to the description of the animals in Ezek 1:10). Among other things, the Masorah contains (parts of) Okhlah lists (Halle §120.121), as well as masora magna to lemmata that appear on this folio (including to the lemma *Yeḥezqel*). The semantics of the (partial) lemmata of the lists here correspond exactly to the iconographic program.

The masora figurata on the lower part of the folio presents an iconographic program of four framed complete figures (lion, ox, man/knight, eagle). The text presents material from various lists, part of which is known to us (Weil §3911) and part of which is so far unknown. Here also, the quoted (partial) lemmata of the lists correspond to the iconographic program: for example, in the knight's staff, helmet, and crest, the lemmata from Ezek 47:18 are quoted, i.e., the borders of the land of Israel from the final vision of Ezekiel. The masora figurata thereby inscribes an anti-crusade manifesto in the figure of the knight (a philological/theological decryption of the whole vision is currently being prepared for publication by Hanna Liss). It is only when the philological content is scrutinized that the iconographic program is revealed as a carefully arranged composition which utilizes the masora figurata in an exceedingly meaningful way. Evidently, it was conceived as a theological artistic creation and executed accordingly, down to the last detail.

In sum, the research which has been done thus far on the figurative Masorah shows that its function and conceptual approach are non-systematic and varied. The scribes used the figurative Masorah (1) for exegetical illustration (Vat. ebr. 14); (2) for the visualization of the esoteric traditions and concepts of groups like the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz (Berlin, SBB MS Or. fol. 1212); (3) as a pictorial program of biblical and non-biblical iconography (BL Add. MS 15282; BL Ad d. MS 21160); and (4) to an increasing

degree, as a repository of expert knowledge about the masoretic material of the Okhlah we-Okhlah list compendiums.

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See also Manuscripts, Biblical; Textual Criticism