

Hanna Liss (ed.)

Philology and Aesthetics

Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts

In collaboration with Jonas Leipziger



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European Bible manuscripts and their Masorah traditions are still a neglected field of studies and have so far been almost completely disregarded within text-critical research. This volume collects research on the Western European Masorah and addresses the question of how Ashkenazic scholars integrated the Oriental Masoretic tradition into the Western European Rabbinic lore and law. The articles address philological and art-historical topics, and present new methodological tools from the field of digital humanities for the analysis of *masora figurata*. This volume is intended to initiate a new approach to Masorah research that will shed new light on the European history of the masoretic Bible and its interpretation.

The Editor

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Philology and Aesthetics

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Judentum und Umwelt Realms of Judaism

Herausgegeben von / Edited by
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Band / Volume 85



PETER LANG

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Bibliographic Information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available online at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book has been applied for at the Library of Congress.

Published with the generous support of the German Research Foundation

Cover illustration: © MS London British Library Or. 2091 fol. 203r

ISSN 0721-3131

ISBN 978-3-631-82953-0 (Print)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-85810-3 (E-PDF)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-85811-0 (EPUB)

E-ISBN 978-3-631-85812-7 (MOBI)

DOI 10.3726/b18566

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Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften

Berlin 2021

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Oxford · Warszawa · Wien

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This publication has been peer reviewed.

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Hanna Liss

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Introduction: Editorial State of the Art of the Masoretic Corpus and Research Desiderata¹

Abstract: This introduction deals with the history of research on the Biblical Masorah. It shows that at least from the 15th century onward, scholars have concentrated almost exclusively on the Masorah from the Oriental and – later – Sephardic manuscripts, and have completely neglected and even misjudged the philological, exegetical, and theological features of the Western European Masorah that often, though not always, appears as decorative ornaments in micrographic writing that has been given pictorial form, in keeping with the standard repertoire of Romanesque Bible illuminations, i.e. legendary creatures, chimeras, dragons or drolleries, or even anthropomorphic beings, similar to façade decorations or frescoes on and in church buildings.

Keywords: History of Masorah Research, Western European Bible Manuscripts, Art and Meaning of *masora figurata*

The term “Masorah,” as it is used in modern-day scientific research, refers to any kind of metatextual element apart from the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible. It first appeared in comprehensive form in the great Oriental Bible codices, like the Codex Cairensis, 895 CE; Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus (St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I. B 3); the

1 This present volume was started at the end of the project B04 at the Collaborative Research Center 933 “*Materiale Textkulturen*” (University of Heidelberg; Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies), and was continued during the first phase of the Heidelberg long-term project *Corpus Masoreticum*, funded by the German Research Foundation that was launched in 2018. Its aims are the digital edition and aggregation of the major parts of the Masorah from selected Ashkenazic manuscripts and the research on the inculturation of the Masorah in Western European Jewish learning culture from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. The philological work is integrated into a digital work environment (see *Corpus Masoreticum*: <https://t1p.de/8602> and <https://t1p.de/8yk8>).

Aleppo Codex; and the Codex Leningradensis (St. Petersburg, Russian National Library, Evr. I. B 19a). The Masorah comprises *mise-en-page* and *mise-en-texte*, graphemes, grammatical, syntactic and statistical notes, as well as references and links, all of which are characteristic of not just Bible codices but also the Torah scrolls (*sefer torah*) used up to the present day for liturgical services at the synagogue. We distinguish between perpendicular Masorah on the side margins (the so-called *masora parva* – hereafter Mp) and horizontal Masorah on the lower and upper margins (*masora magna* – hereafter Mm) or at the very end of a book (*masora finalis*).²

1 The Masorah from the Middle Ages until the Wissenschaft des Judentums

The Masorah has come down to us via various artifacts and in different recensions. Complete Masoretic Bibles as well as isolated Masoretic lists have been in circulation since the ninth century (e.g. *Okhla we-Okhla*; *Sefer ha-Hillufim*). Since the eleventh century, these were continuously taken into account in the Spanish-Provençal and the Northern French-Ashkenazic Bible commentaries, as well as in Halakhic-liturgical works and in Hebrew-French glossaries. During this time, and under thus far historically undetermined circumstances, there emerged in medieval Ashkenaz (roughly, Germany and Northern France) a distinct Masoretic subversion 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 differ from the Oriental Masorah not only with respect to the philological content, but also in its layout and *mise-en-texte* as *masora figurata*. Starting in the thirteenth century, complete and partial Bibles appear in France and Germany in which the Masoretic list material, *masora magna*, and other list material are not only organized as linear *masora magna* or *masora finalis*, but appear in the form of decorative ornaments. In these cases, the Masorah is presented in micrographic writing that has been given pictorial

2 See Ofer, Yosef: *The Masorah on Scriptures and Its Methods*. De Gruyter: Berlin/ Boston 2019; Yeivin, Israel: *The Biblical Masorah* (Hebr.). Academy of the Hebrew Language: Jerusalem 2011; Breuer, Mordechai: *Aleppo Codex and the Accepted Text of the Bible* (Hebr.). Mossad HaRav Kook: Jerusalem 1976.

form, in keeping with the standard repertoire of Romanesque Bible illuminations. It appears 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.³ In some instances, the Masorah was designed as diagrammatic representations, rendering scriptural constructs in geometric form (texts with a special visual structure). Manuscripts from the time leading up to the late thirteenth century demonstrate that this figurative Masorah (*masora figurata*), contrary to previous claims, did not necessarily lose any of its philological qualities by being presented in this form. 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 commentaries on the Biblical text, or even refer to different Bible commentaries, e.g. in MS Vat. ebr. 14.⁴

This parallel existence of conflicting Masoretic textual types continued for at least 200 years. However, starting in the middle or the end of the thirteenth century, after the blood libel accusation in Blois (1171) and the burning of a number of Talmud copies in Paris (1242) that dramatically diminished the corpora of Hebrew texts,⁵ the Jews of France were

3 See Fronda, Rahel: "Micrographic Illustrations in a Group of Thirteenth Century Hebrew Bibles from Germany." In: Stein, Peter (ed.): *Hebräische Schrift zwischen Juden- und Christentum in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*. (Kleine Untersuchungen zur Sprache des Alten Testaments und seiner Umwelt 21). Hartmut Spenner: Kamen 2016, pp. 37–73; Fronda, Rahel: "Attributing of Three Ashkenazi Bibles with Micrographic Images." *Ars Judaica* 9, 2013, pp. 45–56; Liss, Hanna: "Gelehrtenwissen, Drölerie oder Esoterik? Erste Überlegungen zur Masora der Hebräischen Bibel in ihren unterschiedlichen materialen Gestaltungen im Hochmittelalter." In: Riemer, Nathanael (ed.): *Jewish Lifeworlds and Jewish Thoughts. Festschrift presented to Karl E. Grözinger on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*. Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 2012, pp. 12–25.

4 See the article by Kay Joe Petzold in this volume, pp. 171–188.

5 Cf. Baumgarten, Elisheva/Galinsky, Yehuda D. (eds.): *Jews and Christians in Thirteenth-Century France*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York, NY, 2015, esp. pp. 55, 68, 94, 103, 170; Nirenberg, David: *Communities of Violence: Persecution*

no longer able to pass on Northern French-Ashkenazic textual or commentary traditions without Oriental-Sephardic influence. Especially King Philip IV's (1285–1315) order, in 1306, to expel the Jews from France led to the dissolution of substantial parts of Jewish communities and major waves of emigration.⁶ Likewise, the situation of the Ashkenazic communities in Germany deteriorated with great speed in the thirteenth century⁷ and reached a destructive climax with the so-called Rintfleisch massacres in 1298 and the Black Death-related Jewish persecutions of 1348/49. The Black Death persecutions, against which not even the voice of Pope Clemens VI could make itself heard, brought about the utter destruction of Ashkenazic culture on German soil: The great Jewish communities on the Rhine, among them Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Koblenz and Cologne, and thus the entire Rhenish-Ashkenazic scholarly tradition, were destroyed in August 1348/49.⁸ This catastrophe, at the very latest, led to a substantial and lasting decline of Ashkenazic scholarly culture.

The Ashkenazic Masoretic hypertexts lapsed into obscurity at the very latest when the first incunables were being printed. This can clearly be seen in the printed Biblical text and Masorah of Ya'aqov ben Hayyim Ibn Adoniyah, in the so-called second Bomberg Bible of Venice of 1525 (*Miqraot Gedolot*; Bomberg2). Bomberg's edition not only established the Biblical text as *textus receptus* for many years, but also reintegrated *masora parva* and *masora magna* in linear design, intended mainly for

of Minorities in the Middle Ages. Second Print., with Corr. Princeton Univ. Press: Princeton, NJ 1998, esp. 231–249; Maccoby, Haim: *Judaism on Trial. Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages*. (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization). Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press: Rutherford 1982.

- 6 Cf. Taitz, Emily: *The Jews of Medieval France. The Community of Champagne*. (Contributions to the Study of World History 45). Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 1994.
- 7 Cf. Emanuel, Simcha: "German Sages in the Thirteenth Century: Continuity or Crisis?" *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 39, 2014, pp. 1–19; Soloveitchik, Haym: "Catastrophe and Halakic Creativity: Ashkenaz – 1096, 1242, 1306 and 1298." *Jewish History* 12, 1998, pp. 71–85.
- 8 Cf. Beit-Arié, Malachi et al.: "The Erfurt Hebrew Giant Bible and the Experimental XRF Analysis of Ink and Plummet Composition." *Gazette Du Livre Médiéval* 51, 2007, pp. 16–29.

textual criticism.⁹ The fact that, after 1492, many printers stemmed from the Iberian peninsula and therefore brought with them a Sephardic manuscript tradition that was primarily linked to the Oriental tradition led to the successive displacement of Ashkenazic text and Masorah tradition. What's more, figurative Masorah, being artistic in nature, didn't easily lend itself to the copying process, whether in the manuscript tradition or in printing. The very uniqueness of this Masorah led to the difficulties that are apparent in the history of its reception. Even today, Masoretic lists written in straight lines are much more easy read than are intertwined circles whose beginning and end are not easy to find. The lack of reception of this philological-exegetical Masoretic tradition is especially unfortunate because the Jews of France and Germany, beginning no later than the twelfth century, set down many commentaries and annotations in the Bible codices in this way precisely in order to save their scholarly tradition from extinction. Unlike commentary literature, Hebrew Bibles were safe from willful destruction, even if they too had to withstand Christian censorship. However, as it turned out, by the time of the emergence of Christian Hebrew philology at the latest in the sixteenth century, only the oriental Masorah was still being passed on. It had found its way to Italy via Spain, was transmitted by way of the *textus receptus*, and was thereafter used as the definitive instrument for setting down the critical text. The artistic depictions of the Masorah faded out of focus, taking their exegetical and theological meaning with them.

With respect to the significance of the Oriental Bible codices and Masorah, one can already point to the critique of the European Masorah tradition by Eliyyahu ben Asher ha-Levi Ashkenazi (Elia Levita; 1469–1549), the author of the *Masoret ha-Masoret*, who criticized the figurative Masorah in these terms:

כי הסופרים היודו, ועל המסורת לא הקפידו, רק עיקר חשיבותם, ליפות את כתיבתם, ולכוון את השורות, שלא ישנו את הצורות, ותהינה שוות בכל הדפין, ועוד אותן מיפין, בתמונתן וציוורם, בססוכים ובקישורים, ובציצים ובפרחים, ועל כן הם מוכרחים, לפעמים לקצר, ולפעמים לבצר, חומות הציוורים, בדברים האמורים, במקומות אחרים, והם פה יתרים, ואין כאן מקומם, ולפעמים רשומם, במקום הראוי לא נכר, ולא זכרום כלל ועקר, כי המקום לא הספיק, והוצרכו להפסיק, באמצע הענין, ולא נשלם הבנין, והסורי מחסרים.

9 See also Penkower, Jordan: *Jacob ben Hayyim and the Rise of the Biblia Rabbinica*. PhD Thesis: Hebrew University of Jerusalem 1982.

For the Scribes have perverted them, as they did not care for the Massorah, but only thought to ornament their writing, and to make even lines so as not to alter the appearance, in order that all the pages should be alike. Moreover, they ornamented them with illuminations of divers kinds of buds, flowers, &c. Hence they were obliged sometimes to narrow and sometimes to widen the margins round the illustrations with words already stated, although they were superfluous and out of place, whilst the Massoretic signs were entirely omitted in their proper place because the space did not suffice; and hence they had to break off in the middle of a sentence, thus leaving the whole edifice incomplete and greatly defective.¹⁰

Finally, the fixation of the Masoretic tradition by Yedidyah Salomon Raphael ben Abraham Nortzi (1560–1626) in his Masoretic commentary *Minḥat Shay*,¹¹ relying on the Sephardic Bible manuscript Cod. Parm. 2668 (de Rossi 782; Toledo 1277), led to the fact that from the humanist period onward, Biblical scholars established the priority of the Tiberian text type and its Masorah as well as the mythical authority of the Ben Asher school.

Since Protestant Biblical studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth century dedicated itself mainly to so-called higher criticism,¹² only very few theologians (e.g. Hermann Hupfeld¹³) were interested in Masorah, and

10 Ginsburg, Christian David (ed.): *The Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita in Hebrew, with an English Translation and Critical and Explanatory Notes*. Longmans: London 1867 (reprint Ktav Publishing: New York 1968), p. 94.

11 See in particular Penkower, Jordan: *Masorah and Text Criticism in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Moses ibn Zabara and Menahem de Lonzano*. (The Jeselsohn Collection Books and Manuscripts). Magnes: Jerusalem 2014a, esp. pp. 41–61; Betzer, Zvi H. (ed.): *Jedidiah Solomon Raphael Norzi, Minḥat Shay on the Torah. Critical Edition, Introduction and Notes* (Hebr.) (Sources for the Study of Jewish Culture). Magnes: Jerusalem 2005, pp. 3–55; Betzer, Zvi H.: “Further Clarifications on the Work of Norzi.” *Hebrew Studies* 42, 2001, pp. 257–269.

12 Liss, Hanna: “‘Die niedere Kritik’: Das Studium der Masora zwischen Wissenschaft des Judentums und Bibelwissenschaft.” In: Kähler, Sophia/Tzoref, Shani/Vorpahl, Daniel (eds.): *Deutsch-Jüdische Bibelwissenschaft. Historische, exegetische und theologische Perspektiven*. (Europäisch-jüdische Studien 40). De Gruyter: Leiden/Boston 2018, pp. 141–161; HaCohen, Ran: *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible. German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism*. (Studia Judaica 56). De Gruyter: New York 2010.

13 Posthumously published in 1867: Hupfeld, Hermann/Vilmar, Eduard: “Ueber eine bisher unbekannt gebliebene Handschrift der Masorah. Von Dr. Hermann Hupfeld: Aus dem Nachlass des Verfassers.” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 21, 1867, pp. 201–220.

thus it was mainly Jewish scholars who devoted themselves to the task of editing the Masorah. In 1862, Adolf D. Neubauer¹⁴ published a short note on the discovery of an *Okhla*-recension in the Bibliothèque Impériale (today: Bibliothèque Nationale), that is today known as MS Paris BnF, hébr. 148, and was published by Salomon Frensdorff (1805–1880) in 1864 as *Das Buch Ochlah W'ochlah (Massora)*.¹⁵ Whereas Frensdorff assumed one “original” Masorah-recension, Abraham Geiger, as early as 1854, had already observed that Masoretic notes in printed publications were flawed and unreliable. He insisted that one ought to reconstruct the Masorah not only on the basis of the variety of Bible manuscripts, but should also take the exegetical literature into account.¹⁶ Unlike his colleagues, Geiger was well aware of the dissimilar versions of Masoretic hypertext, especially regarding the differences between the Masorah of Oriental and Ashkenazic manuscripts.

One of the consequences of the exclusion of Jewish scholars from German universities in the nineteenth century was that the Masorah as a metatext to the Hebrew consonantal text became something of an academic orphan, since Protestant Biblical studies, focusing on archeology and ancient religious history and culture, mostly ignored medieval Hebrew-Aramaic hypertexts to the Biblical consonantal text. Even taking the works

14 Neubauer, Adolf D.: “Pèle-mèle littéraire. Die Massorah אכלה ואכלה.” *Ben Chananja* 7, 1862, pp. 57–58; see already Neubauer, Adolf D.: “Notice sur la lexicographie hébraïque, avec des remarques sur quelques grammairiens postérieurs à Ibn-Djanâ’h.” *Journal Asiatique* 10, 1861, pp. 441–476.

15 Frensdorff, Salomon: *Die Massora Magna. Erster Teil: Massoretisches Wörterbuch, oder die Massora in alphabetischer Ordnung*. Cohen & Risch: Hannover/Leipzig 1876; Frensdorff, Salomon: *Das Buch Ochlah W'ochlah (Massora)*. Hahn’sche Hofbuchhandlung: Hannover 1864; a detailed research history is found in Seemann, Sebastian: *Das Buch Ochla we-Ochla und die Masora Magna in der Bibelhandschrift MS Berlin SBB-PK Ms. or. Fol 1213: Eine exemplarische Studie zum Buch Exodus*. Master’s thesis: Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies 2016. A new edition of the Paris recension is currently being prepared by Seemann as a dissertation project (Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies). See also the article by Sebastian Seemann in this volume, pp. 205–223.

16 Geiger, Abraham: “Zur Geschichte der Massorah.” *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben* 1/2, 1854, pp. 78–119.

of Lazar Lipschütz,¹⁷ a Jewish student of Paul Kahle, into account, one has to acknowledge the fact that towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, critical work on the Masoretic Biblical text and on Masorah as an additional source of exegetical literature was, at least in Germany, utterly divorced from Old Testament Studies, and, as a corollary, from the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Jewish scholars simply didn't have access to the universities and their resources, and academic biblical research took place almost exclusively within the framework of Protestant theology. This also explains why the early admonitions of Paul Kahle, the *spiritus rector* of Protestant Masorah research who, in 1913, presciently demanded an investigation of the European Masorah,¹⁸ were completely ignored.

2 Masorah Research in the Twentieth Century

For this reason, until today, only a small part of the Masorah has been critically edited and processed.¹⁹ Thus, the editions of the *Okhla we-Okhla* manuscript from Paris (BnF, hébr. 148)²⁰ and of the *masora magna* by Frensdorff²¹ from the nineteenth century, as well as the editions from

17 Cf. Lipschütz, Lazar: *Ben Ašer – Ben Naftali: Der Bibeltext der tiberischen Masoreten. Eine Abhandlung des Mischael ben 'Uzziel, veröffentlicht und untersucht (Inaugural-Dissertation)*. Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität: Bonn 1935; Lipschütz, Lazar: "Kitāb Al-Khilaf: The Book of Hillufim – Mishael ben Uzziel's Treatise on the Differences Between Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali." *Textus* 4, 1964, pp. 1–29.

18 Cf. Kahle, Paul: *Masoreten des Ostens. Die ältesten punktierten Handschriften des Alten Testaments und der Targume*. J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung: Leipzig 1913, pp. XVI–XVIII; see also Liss, Hanna/Petzold, Kay Joe: "Die Erforschung der westeuropäischen Bibeltexttradition als Aufgabe der Jüdischen Studien." In: Lehnardt, Andreas (ed.): *Judaistik im Wandel: Ein halbes Jahrhundert Forschung und Lehre über das Judentum in Deutschland*. De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2017, pp. 189–210, esp. 195–196.

19 Yeivin 2011; Breuer, Mordechai: *The Masora Magna to the Pentateuch by Shmuel ben Ya'aqov (Ms. 25)*. Keren ha-Masora/The Masora Foundation: Jerusalem 2002; Breuer 1976; Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe: "Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts – Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition." *Biblica* 48, 1967, pp. 243–290.

20 Cf. Frensdorff 1864.

21 Frensdorff 1876; see also note 14.

1975 and 1995 of the *Okhla we-Okhla* manuscript from Halle (MS Yb 4^o10) by Fernando Díaz Esteban and Bruno Ognibeni,²² are still the basis for any work on the list Masorah. There is also the work of the convert Christian David Ginsburg, who published his magnum opus *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts* and his extensive *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* between 1880 and 1885.²³ When it comes to the Masorah corpora of Masoretic Bible codices, the *masora parva* of Codex St. Petersburg, Firkovich Evr. I B 19a “Codex Leningradensis” (1008), was edited and incorporated into the third *Biblia Hebraica* (BHK3)²⁴ of Rudolph Kittel and Paul Kahle, and, in a second step, integrated in an enriched and normalized form into the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), together with the edited *masora magna* by Gérard E. Weil.²⁵ In addition to modern-day Bible editions (BHS, BHQ, MQG Haketer, HUBP),²⁶ the *masora magna* of Pentateuch MS Gottheil 14 (Breuer MS 57) has been published by Mordechai Breuer.²⁷ In Madrid (CSIC), the Masorah of MS Madrid 1 (Toledo 1280) is being

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- 22 Cf. Díaz Esteban, Fernando: *Sefer ‘Oklah Wē-’Oklah. Collection de listas de palabras destinadas a conservar la integridad del texto hebreo de la Biblia entre los Judios de la edad media*. CSIC: Madrid 1975; Ognibeni, Bruno: *La seconda parte del sefer ‘oklah we ‘oklah: Edizione del ms. Halle, Universitätsbibliothek Y v 4^o, ff. 68–124*. Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas: Salamanca 1995.
- 23 Ginsburg, Christian David: *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts: Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged*. 4 vols. Fromme et al.: London et al. 1880–1885.
- 24 Kittel, Rudolf et al. (eds.): *Biblia Hebraica*. Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt: Stuttgart 1929–1937.
- 25 BHS. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (eds. Karl Elliger/Wilhelm Rudolph). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart 1967/77; Weil, Gérard E.: *Masorah Gedolah: Iuxta Codicu, Leningradensem B 19a*. Pontificum Institutum Biblicum: Rome 1971.
- 26 Elliger/Rudolph 1967/77 (BHS); BHQ. *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (ed. Adrian Schenker). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft: Stuttgart 2004 – (BHQ Megilloth); Cohen, Menahem (ed.): *Miqra’ot Gedolot HaKeter*. 17 vols. Bar Ilan University: Ramat Gan 1982–2003 (MQG Haketer); Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe (ed.): *The Hebrew University Bible Project*. Magnes Press: Jerusalem 1965– (HUB Isaiah).
- 27 Breuer 2002.

edited, including the Masoretic appendices.²⁸ Aron Dotan and Nurit Reich compiled the Masorah of the Codex Leningradensis (Evr. I. B 19a).²⁹ In 2013, David Marcus published the Aramaic mnemonics that appear in the *masora magna* of Evr. I B 19a.³⁰ Recently, Yosef Ofer has started an edition project on the Masorah of MS S1 (formerly Sassoon 1053). Unfortunately, all of the listed editions of Masoretic material deal only with the Tiberian text tradition of the Ben Asher school,³¹ and only a few of the editions published so far are available in digital form.

3 Research on the Ashkenazic Masoretic Tradition

At present, only very few scholars – among them those presenting their research in this volume – are working on the edition of the European Masorah. The (Western) European Bible manuscripts and their Masorah traditions, which also include list material on a large scale, have so far been almost completely disregarded within the framework of text-critical research dealing with the Bible text and with the Masorah. This means that a very substantial text corpus has been philologically and editorially neglected. This corpus includes approximately 76 dated and undated Ashkenazic Bible manuscripts (complete or partial) from the time period

28 Fernández Tejero, Emilia: *Las masoras del libro de Génesis. Códice M1 de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid*. (Textos y Estudios Cardenal Cisneros de la Biblia Políglota Matritense 73). Instituto de Filología del CSIC: Madrid 2004.

29 Dotan, Aron: *Thesaurus of the Tiberian Massora. A Comprehensive Alphabetical Collection of Masoretic Notes of the Tiberian Bible Text of the Aaron Ben Asher School. Sample Volume: The Massora to the Book of Genesis in the Leningrad Codex*. Tel Aviv University: Tel Aviv 1977; Dotan, Aron: *Masora Thesaurus –Masora of Codex Leningrad (B19a) as arranged, deciphered, and annotated by Prof. Aron Dotan with the assistance of Nurit Reich, Tel Aviv University 2014, Accordance edition hypertexted and formatted by OakTree Software, Inc. Version 5, 2014.*

30 Marcus, David: *Scribal Wit: Aramaic Mnemonics in the Leningrad Codex* (Texts and Studies 10). Gorgias Press: Piscataway, NJ, 2013. Marcus, David: *The Masorah of the Former Prophets in the Leningrad Codex*. Vol. 1: Joshua (Texts and Studies 16). Gorgias Press: Piscataway, NJ, 2017.

31 The Masorete of S1 used the Aleppo Codex (cf. Ofer 2019, 8); on the history of the Biblia Hebraica, the Bible edition Mikraot Gedolot ha-Keter/MGK, and the Hebrew University Bible Project/HUBP, cf. recently Liss/Petzold 2017.

between 1189 (MS Valmadonna Trust 1; Washington, Museum of the Bible, CG. MS. 000858; former: Sassoon 282) and the end of the thirteenth century, containing, in addition to the Biblical text and to varying degrees, the Targum (separate or interlinear), the Masorah, commentaries, Masoretic micrographs, as well as other specific text elements (e.g. *tagin*). These European (Ashkenazic) Bible codices remain overlooked today. Until very recently, they have never been appreciated, neither as a constitutive element of the Biblical text nor as a source of the Jewish (and Christian) medieval European literary and exegetic history of their Masoretic hyper-text.³² Approaching the issue from a different angle, the Judaic art-historical works dealing with micrographs in Bible and Haggadah manuscripts have so far never included philological considerations of the micrographically shaped *masora figurata*, but have dealt almost exclusively with artistic and historical aspects, although Dalia-Ruth Halperin did already demand a “precise reading of the micrography,”³³ with regard to the Catalan Mahzor, in 2013.

32 See, for instance Penkower, Jordan: “The Ashkenazi Pentateuch Tradition as Reflected in the Erfurt Hebrew Bible Codices and Torah Scrolls.” In: Landeshauptstadt Erfurt/Universität Erfurt (eds.): *Zu Bild und Text im jüdisch-christlichen Kontext im Mittelalter*. (Erfurter Schriften zur jüdischen Geschichte 3). Bussert und Stadelers: Jena/Quedlinburg 2014b, pp. 118–141; Stern, David: “The Hebrew Bible in Europe in the Middle Ages: A Preliminary Typology.” *JSIJ* 11 2012, pp. 235–322.

33 Halperin, Dalia-Ruth: *Illuminating in Micrography: The Catalan Micrography Mahzor MS Heb 8°6527 in the National Library of Israel*. (The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 51). Brill: Leiden 2013, p. 2; see also Offenberg, Sara: *Up in Arms. Images of Knights and the Divine Chariot in Esoteric Ashkenazi Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*. (Sources and Studies in the Literature of Jewish Mysticism 56). Cherub Press: Los Angeles 2019; Halperin, Dalia-Ruth: “The Three Riders: The Apocalypse in the Figured Micrography of BL Add 21160.” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 69(2), 2018, pp. 340–373; Offenberg, Sara: “Jacob the Knight in Ezekiel’s Chariot: Imagined Identity in a Micrography Decoration of an Ashkenazic Bible.” *AJS Review* 40, 2016, pp. 1–16; Kogman-Appel, Katrin: “The Role of Hebrew Letters in Making the Divine Visible.” In: Bedos-Rezak, Brigitte Miriam/Hamburger, Jeffrey F. (eds.): *Sign and Design. Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective (300–1600 CE)*. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection: Washington, DC 2016, pp. 153–171; Fronda 2016; Fronda 2015; Kogman-Appel, Katrin: “Christianity, Idolatry, and the Question of Jewish Figural Painting in the Middle Ages.” *Speculum. A Journal*

Investigating this original Ashkenazic Masoretic tradition is of the utmost importance, since research on Occidental Biblical text traditions and Jewish commentary literature in Medieval Western Europe cannot properly be addressed by using Oriental manuscripts and Masorah tradition instead of the Bible manuscripts of Western Europe. We see nowadays that the variation-rich textualization of the Masorah most notably depended on, and was integrated into, its socio-cultural context. Precisely for this reason, the thus far ignored Ashkenazic Masorah tradition – as opposed to the Tiberian – constitutes a central component of the cultural inheritance of both the Jewish and the Christian Middle Ages and deserves to be illuminated in future studies. The Hebrew-Aramaic commentaries on the Bible and Talmud, as well as the Masoretic references in the Halakhic compilation literature by the Northern French school of exegetes and Tosafists (Rashi; Rabbeinu Tam; R. Menahem of Joigny; R. Yitzhak of Evreux), but also the Latin exegesis (dependent on, and characterized by conflict with, Jewish scholars)³⁴ deserve to be evaluated to a much greater degree than has previously been the case against the backdrop of the Western European text and Masorah tradition. Furthermore, the acquisition of the Ashkenazic Masorah will offer significant starting points for future research in the field of medieval Hebrew-Aramaic linguistics, since both the Aramaisms in the Hebrew language and the purely Aramaic

of *Medieval Studies* 84, 2009, pp. 73–107; Gutmann, Joseph: “Masorah Figurata. The Origins and Development of a Jewish Art Form.” In: Gutmann, Joseph: *Sacred Images. Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. Variorum Reprints: Northampton 1989, pp. 49–62; Narkiss, Bezalel: “On the Zoocephalic Phenomenon in Medieval Ashkenazi Manuscripts.” In: Besserman, Lawrence L. (ed.): *Norms and Variations in Art. Essays in Honour of Moshe Barasch*. (Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts. Special Issue). Magnes Press: Jerusalem 1983, pp. 49–62; Avrin, Leila: “Micrography as Art.” *Bibliotheca orientalis. Uitgegeven Vanwege het Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten* 43, 1981, pp. 377–388; Metzger, Thérèse: *La masora ornamentale et le décor calligraphique dans les manuscrits hébreux espagnols au moyen âge*. (Colloques internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 547). CNRS: Paris 1972.

34 See e.g. von Mutius, Hans-Georg: *Die hebräischen Bibelzitate beim englischen Scholastiker Odo: Versuch einer Reevaluation*. Peter Lang: Frankfurt/Main et al. 2006.

hypertexts in the *masora magna* and *figurata* in these manuscripts have not been investigated so far. Researchers of the history of the Biblical text will also want to include a viewpoint of the so-called (Masoretic) “reception history” of the Biblical text as a “text history” (a position shared in recent research on the Quran³⁵). These aspects constitute important connection points with Jewish and Christian theology and medieval art history and have implications far beyond Judaic medieval studies.

Initial philological investigations on the European Masorah have been undertaken by Élodie Attia,³⁶ Hanna Liss,³⁷ and Kay Joe Petzold³⁸ within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center 933 (Material Text Cultures) of the University of Heidelberg and the Heidelberg Center for

35 Neuwirth, Angelika: *Koranforschung – eine politische Philologie? Bibel, Koran und Islamentstehung im Spiegel spätantiker Textpolitik und moderner Philologie*. (Litterae et Theologia 4). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2014.

36 Attia, Élodie: “Editing Medieval Ashkenazi Masorah and ‘Masora Figurata’: Observations on the Functions of the Micrography in Hebrew Manuscripts.” *Sefarad* 75, 2015a, pp. 7–33; Attia, Élodie: *The Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan. An Edition of Ashkenazic Micrographical Notes*. (Materiale Textkulturen 11). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2015b (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020).

37 Liss 2019; Liss, Hanna: “Aschkenasische Bibelcodices als Träger exegetischer und theologischer Geheimnisse.” In: Schattner-Rieser, Ursula/Oesch, Josef M. (eds.): *700 Jahre jüdische Präsenz in Tirol. Geschichte der Fragmente, Fragmente der Geschichte*. Innsbruck Univ. Press: Innsbruck 2018, pp. 203–223; Liss, Hanna: “A Pentateuch to Read in? The Secrets of the Regensburg Pentateuch.” In: Wandrey, Irina (ed.): *Jewish Manuscript Cultures. New Perspectives*. (Studies in Manuscript Cultures 13). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2017, pp. 89–128 (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020); Liss/Petzold 2017; Liss, Hanna: “‘Like a Camel Carrying Silk’: Initial Considerations on the Use of the Masorah in Medieval Hebrew Commentaries.” In: Boustan, Ra’anan et al. (eds.): *Envisioning Judaism. Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*. Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2013, pp. 1121–1137; Liss 2012.

38 Petzold, Kay Joe: *Masora und Exegese. Untersuchungen zur Masora und Bibeltextüberlieferung im Kommentar des R. Schlomo ben Yitzchaq (Raschi)* (Materiale Textkulturen 24). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2019 (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020); Petzold, Kay Joe: “Die Kanaan-Karten des R. Salomo Ben Isaak (Raschi) – Bedeutung und Gebrauch mittelalterlicher hebräischer Karten-Diagramme.” *Das Mittelalter* 22(2), 2017, pp. 332–350.

Jewish Studies, starting in 2011.³⁹ Attia's results, compiled into a partial edition of *masora figurata* compositions in MS Vatican ebr. 14,⁴⁰ showed that, beyond the strong influences from Tiberian sources, an additional strand of substantial non-conventional Ashkenazic Masoretic tradition was utilized by the *masran* Eliyya ben Berekhya ha-Naqdan.

Complementary to Attia's work, Liss and Petzold set out to investigate the Masoretic transmissions and meta-commentaries to the Masorah in Hebrew Bible commentaries of the High Middle Ages from the area of Northern France and Ashkenaz, especially those of R. Shlomo Yitzhaki (Rashi; ca. 1040–1105), R. Abraham Ibn Ezra (ca. 1090–ca. 1165), R. Yehudah he-Hasid (ca. 1150–1217), R. El'azar ben Yehudah of Worms (1165–1230), R. Yosef Kimḥi (ca. 1105–ca. 70), R. Moshe Kimḥi (d. ca. 1190), R. David Kimḥi (1160–1235), R. Meir ben Barukh of Rothenburg (MaHaRaM; ca. 1220–93) or R. Ya'akov ben Asher (Ba'al ha-Turim; ca. 1269–ca. 1343).⁴¹ The commentators refer either to independent Masoretic compilations like the *Sefer ha-Masoret* ("the book of the Masorah") or to the *Masoret ha-Gedolah* ("the great Masorah"), respectively; sometimes reference is made simply to "the Masorah" (*ha-Masoret*; probably notations within the Bible codices) or to works of the so-called *ba'alalanshe ha-masoret* ("men of the Masorah"). This extensive material has so far been dealt with only rather sparsely and eclectically,⁴² and was investigated systematically for the first time in Petzold's dissertation dealing with the Masoretic material in the various manuscripts of Rashi's commentaries.⁴³ Petzold primarily set out to establish which recension(s)

39 See <https://t1p.de/lt2q>.

40 Attia 2015b.

41 A dissertation on the Masoretic commentary of the Ba'al ha-Turim is currently prepared by Maria Seidel (Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies).

42 Liss 2017; 2013; 2012; Himmelfarb, Leah: "The Masoretic Notes in Rashi's Commentary on the Bible and Their Relation to His Commentary (Hebr.)." In: Vargon, Shmuel/Penkower, Jordan S. (eds.): *Studies in Bible and Exegesis VII. Presented to Menahem Cohen*. Bar Ilan Univ. Press: Ramat Gan 2005a, pp. 41–60; Himmelfarb, Leah: "On Rashi's Use of the Masorah Notes in His Commentary on the Bible (Hebr.)." *Shnaton. An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 15, 2005b, pp. 167–184; Himmelfarb, Leah: "On One Masorah in Rashi's Commentary." *Sefarad* 64, 2004, pp. 75–94.

43 Petzold 2019.

of the Hebrew Bible and which outside material, i.e. Masoretic material compiled in other works besides Biblical codices, Rashi used, as well as how this material relates to that of the Tiberian ben Asher tradition. He succeeded in showing that a lot of this outside material, among them an *Okhla we-Okhla* recension that Rashi used, came into existence only in the eleventh century. Petzold was able to demonstrate that a successive “contamination” of Ashkenazic texts with the Ben Asherian Masorah took place in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (MSS BM Harley 5710; München 2; BM Add. 15451; Wrocław 1106; München 392; and Jerusalem IM 180_52, “Regensburg Pentateuch”).⁴⁴ This led to numerous complications, since the intrusion of Tiberian Masorah derived from the Oriental codices caused problems not only with plene and defective writing, but with accentuation and numerous variant readings of the consonantal text. This was relevant not only to Halakhic interpretations of the Biblical text, but also for the writing of Torah scrolls for liturgical use, and led to various disputes and a wide range of contemporary responsa literature (Shlomo ben Adret).⁴⁵

4 Art and Meaning of the *masora figurata*

From 2016 onwards, Clemens Liedtke, Hanna Liss, and Kay Joe Petzold started working on a digital edition of the complete *masora figurata* in Vat. ebr. 14 (written in 1239 in Rouen).⁴⁶ Within that framework, Attia’s findings for Exodus are being supplemented and revised, and the editorial work has been extended to the entire Pentateuch. Now, and within the framework of a detailed analysis of the iconographic program of the manuscript’s *masora figurata*, substantial results have been achieved with regard to the text-image relationship of the *masora figurata* in this manuscript. It can be shown that the copyist (*sofer/naqdan/masran*), Eliyya ben Berekhya ha-Naqdan, who lived in Rouen in Normandy, integrated iconic

44 On the Regensburg Pentateuch see also Liss 2017; Sternthal, Michal: *The Regensburg Pentateuch: An Illuminated Ashkenazi Pentateuch* (Hebr.). Master’s thesis: Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2008.

45 See Petzold 2019, pp. 141–144.

46 Cf. Liss, Hanna/Petzold, Kay Joe/Liedtke, Clemens: *Digitale Edition der Masora Figurata in MS Vat. ebr. 14* (open access: <https://t1p.de/mk1j>), 2016–2020.

hints on exegetical commentaries and halakhic discourses into each and every figurative Masorah. Whether the decorative and attractive creation of such a book was made to appeal to a broader audience, like uneducated men, children, or women, or whether the figurative images were designed to transfer philological discourses from a purely scholarly culture into the broader realms of Jewish culture, is the central issue to be discussed. To arrive at a clearer result, Liss and Petzold integrated praxeological methods and praxeologically oriented analyses of the artifacts, techniques that were developed at the CRC 933 at Heidelberg.⁴⁷

In her work *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, Erika Fischer-Lichte discusses the question of how the material and the symbolic stand in relation to one another.⁴⁸ She insists on the fact that every deliberate act of awareness generates meanings which are not to be equated with a purely linguistic meaning. With regard to the Masoretic images, one might say that every micrographic figure of a dragon, an eagle, or an ox in its own way presents something eye-catching, which is likely to trigger one (or more) attribution(s) of meaning, both in that which is created by the *masora figurata* and in those who observe it. However, this meaning arises either on the micrographically processed basis of the Hebrew text (Masorah) or from its external form (design); in other words, is there a reason why mythical animals (dragons) or clearly unclean animals (dogs, rabbits/hares) are often depicted in decorative micrography, or is the decoration purely arbitrary? At the same time, it should be kept in mind that the contexts of meaning of materiality are also obtained on a “meta” level, that is to say above and beyond the pure relationship between the text and the image.

Applying Fischer-Lichte’s approach to the *masora figurata* images, the following questions should be posed:

- Of what kind is the “Masorah” on a given folio?
- Is the Masoretic material complete or incomplete? Is there a beginning and an end?

⁴⁷ See note 1.

⁴⁸ See Fischer-Lichte, Erika: *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. Routledge: London 2008, 138–160.

- What is the relationship between this material and Masoretic list material as we find it in independent Masoretic treatises (like *Okhla we-Okhla*)?
- Is the Masoretic material placed *in situ*, i.e. do we find corresponding *masora parva* and *masora magna* material on the same folio?
- What is the relationship between the iconographic program and the philological material? Is there any relationship between the text and the image?
- What can we say about the order of the formation of the *figuratae*? Did the scribe sketch the image first and then choose Masoretic material matching the size of the image, or did he design the *masora figurata* according to the material to be arranged, i.e. the quantity of words or letters needed?
- What and how can we find out about the scribe’s reason for arranging Masoretic material in this way?

In addressing these issues, research on *masora figurata* will reach a new stage of development, combining art-historical and philological questions.

5 The Present Volume

This volume collects research on the Western European Masorah, in particular on *masora figurata*, and addresses the question of why Ashkenazic scholars tried to integrate the Oriental Masoretic tradition that was originally developed as linguistic-grammatical knowledge vis-à-vis Islamic punditry into Western European Rabbinic lore and law. This inculturation took place in and was conceivably influenced by the Christian environment (theology; iconography; book illumination; architecture). The articles will not merely address hitherto well-known philological and art-historical questions, but will *develop a tableau of methodological tools for the analysis of masora figurata* within the larger theoretical framework of material text cultures.⁴⁹ The research presented here is based on papers

49 See in particular some of the publications from the Collaborative Research Center 933 Material Text Cultures, e.g. Hilgert, Markus (ed.): *Understanding Material Text Cultures. A Multidisciplinary View.* (Materiale Textkulturen 9). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2016 (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020); Hilgert, Markus: “Text-Anthropologie”. *Die Erforschung*

that were given at the *Seventeenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem 2017), as well as at the workshop *Philology and Aesthetics* (Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies) in May 2018. This workshop, in which Bible philologists and art historians were brought together, initiated a most fruitful conversation, in which one side learned a lot as regards the variety of turreted tower gates, head coverings, hunt scenes, etc., whereas the other side was introduced to Masoretic studies as well as to editorial techniques for dealing with the micrographic images. Thus, all papers in one way or another deal with Masoretic material derived from Ashkenazic Bible manuscripts.

Rainer Barzen presents a study on a micrographic inscription in MS Vienna, Austrian National Library, Cod. 16 (Schwarz 1925, no. 5) in which the scribe mourns the death of individual members of his family, thereby possibly referring to the Rintfleisch persecution. Barzen discusses not only the inscription as part of a special memorial space, but also its relationship to the book of Psalms to which the inscription is attached.

Dalia-Ruth Halperin deals with the well-known figured-micrography mounted falconer in Vatican Urb. Ebr. 1, dated to 1294 in the German lands. On the basis of the interpretation of both the mounted falconer in the Catalan Micrography Maḥzor and the three riders in the Yonah Pentateuch, ca. 1300 (London, British Library, Add. 21160), as messianic images, she discusses the question of whether the image of the falconer in Vatican Urb. Ebr. 1, fol 817r, too, represents the long-awaited Messianic scion of David.

Clemens Liedtke discusses the effects of the “digital turn” in the humanities with respect to the design of digital Hebrew manuscript

von Materialität und Präsenz des Geschriebenen als hermeneutische Strenge.” In: Hilgert, Markus (ed.): *Altorientalistik im 21. Jahrhundert. Selbstverständnis, Herausforderungen, Ziele*. (Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 142). Berlin 2010, pp. 87–126; Meier, Thomas/Ott, Michael R./Sauer, Rebecca (eds.): *Materiale Textkulturen. Konzepte – Materialien – Praktiken*. (Materiale Textkulturen 1). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston 2015 (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020); Elias, Friederike et al. (eds.): *Praxeologie. Beiträge zur interdisziplinären Reichweite praxistheoretischer Ansätze in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften*. (Materiale Textkulturen 3). De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston: 2014 (open access: <https://www.degruyter.com>; accessed July 2020).

editions and describes the concept of reading textual and metatextual phenomena as “data models.” This is exemplified by Masoretic material in general and *masora figurata* in particular, allowing for methodological insights on how to create a project framework towards a sustainable digital scholarly edition.

Hanna Liss presents an edition of the three *masora figurata* images linked to the opening of the book of Ezekiel in MS London, British Library, Or. 2091 (fol. 203r) that show the four “living creatures” from the Ezekielian vision, among them a human figure depicted as an armored knight. She discusses the philological question of what Masoretic material was used for these images, and in which way it was transformed, as well as the geo-cultural background of these specific micrographic images.

Sara Offenberg’s study offers an interpretation of two micrographic images in MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Fol. 1212, Erfurt 2, that accompany the opening of the Book of Ezekiel and the Book of Proverbs. She suggests that these images show a connection to the esoteric writings of Rabbi Neḥemiah ben Shlomo Troestlin, the Prophet from Erfurt, and other sages from the *Ḥaside Ashkenaz* in that they reflect, in particular, the Divine transformation from harsh judgment to mercy.

Kay Joe Petzold deals with three different figurative Masorah compositions of MSS Vatican ebr. 14 and Parma Cod. 3289, presents an annotated edition of the *masora figurata* images, and discusses the question of how the scribes (Eliyya ben Berekhya ha-Naqdan for ebr. 14) introduced Rabbinic exegetical commentaries as well as contemporary halakhic issues linked to the respective Parasha and iconographic agenda of the Masorah.

Hanna-Barbara Rost analyzes the close interconnection between text and *masora figurata* in three illustrations of MS Vatican ebr. 14. She shows how the multiple interpretative layers of an illustration can only be understood fully by reading the Masoretic annotation not only as commentary to the Biblical text, but also as an opener to the interpretation of the motifs.

Sebastian Seemann elucidates the Masoretic material found in MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Or. Fol. 1213 Erfurt 3 and relates it to the hitherto known recensions of *Okhla we-Okhla* (MS Halle, Yb 4°10; MS Paris, BnF, hébr. 148). As an example of how the scribe organized list material

within a Bible codex, he presents an edition of the *masora magna* of folio 34v in which the Masorah is arranged on all four margins.

With this volume, we hope to initiate a new approach to Masorah research that will shed new light on the European history of the Masoretic Bible and its interpretation, and yield important scientific impulses not only for the field of Jewish studies, but also for Jewish and Christian theology as well as the medieval art history.⁵⁰

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50 I thank Dr. Jonas Leipziger and Timotheus Schweizer for editing and compiling the index.

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