

The Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript: Remnant of a Proto-Masoretic Model Scroll of the Torah

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THE ASHKAR-GILSON MANUSCRIPT: REMNANT OF A PROTO-MASORETIC MODEL SCROLL OF THE TORAH^{*}

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Over three decades ago, a fragment of an early mediaeval Torah scroll came to light, the so-called Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript.¹ The sheet shows excerpts from the book of Exodus. Its fragmentary state is the likely reason why it has received less attention than it deserves and, until now, only basic information about it has been available. However, the few scholars who have known of its existence have described it as valuable and remarked that it is one of the rare surviving Hebrew Bible manuscripts from the “silent era,” the centuries between the writing of the latest Dead Sea Scrolls and the production of the oldest extant codices of the Hebrew Bible.²

The present article shows that the significance of the manuscript is even greater than previously suggested. There are indications that the Tiberian Masoretes consulted the scroll to which this sheet belonged. Significant details appearing in Tiberian Bible codices, such as the well-known Aleppo Codex and Leningrad Codex, indicate that the copyists were influenced by this very scroll.

In this article I will use the designation “AS” for both the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript and the so-called London Manuscript, another surviving sheet of the scroll that was known before the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript turned up.

^{*} I thank Wilfred Watson (Morpeth), Raymond de Hoop (Oudewater) and the anonymous reviewers of *JHS* for their valuable suggestions.

¹ Complete designation: Ashkar-Gilson Hebrew Manuscript #2, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

² Brief references to the sheet are found in P.W. Flint, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2013), 38; J. Olszowy-Schlanger, “The Hebrew Bible,” in R. Marsden and E.A. Matter (eds.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*. Vol. 2. *From 600 to 1450* (Cambridge: University Press, 2013), 19–40 (20). More information is available on various websites, see esp., A. Rabinovich, “A Sound in Silence,” *The Jerusalem Post* (3/26/10). Cited 9/3/14. Online: <http://www.jpost.com/Magazine/Features/A-sound-in-silence>; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Cited 9/12/14. Online: <http://www.imj.org.il/news/eng/2010/june.html>.

TWO SHEETS OF THE SAME SCROLL³

The Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript and the London Manuscript are sheets made of gevil parchment. The severely damaged and blackened Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript displays excerpts from Exod 13:19–16:1, while the better preserved London Manuscript, lacking only the original outer edges and a tiny piece in the last column, displays the text of Exod 9:18–13:2. One complete column was lost between the two preserved sheets. From the size of the extant sheets we may infer that the Torah scroll was originally over 50 centimeters high.⁴

The Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript shows parts of four columns. The second and the third columns are only slightly damaged and are forty-two lines high. Only minute parts of the first and fourth columns have survived. The third column, which is almost twice as wide as the other columns, contains the text of the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:1–19), laid out in a special pattern resembling brickwork. The column contains five written lines and a blank line above the text of the song and another blank line and a further set of five written lines below the song.

In 1972 F. Ashkar and A. Gilson bought the sheet, together with other ancient Hebrew fragments, in Beirut. Some years later, however, they donated it to Duke University, North Carolina. J. Charlesworth, then professor at Duke University, dated the sheet to between the sixth and eighth centuries C.E. on the basis of palaeography. His dating was soon narrowed down by Carbon-14 analyses that proved that the sheet dates from the seventh or eighth century C.E. The Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript is currently on extended loan in the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

The London Manuscript exhibits seven, forty-two line columns. Its name refers to the period when it was kept in Jews' College in London. It is now part of the private collection of S. Loewenthal, New York. Both the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript and the London Manuscript may have come from the Cairo Genizah.⁵

³ Most data in this section come from the sources mentioned in note 2 and from the discussion of the London Manuscript in S.A. Birnbaum, "A Sheet of an Eighth Century Synagogue Scroll," *V/T* 9 (1959), 122–29. Birnbaum dated the London Manuscript to the (seventh or) eighth century C.E. on the basis of palaeography. To some extent, his argumentation was based on the traditional yet incorrect dating of the Cairo Codex around 895 C.E. See note 22 below.

⁴ The present height of the London Manuscript ranges from 48.1 to 53.2 centimeters; cf. Birnbaum, "Sheet," 122. The maximum height of the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript is 49 centimeters. The second column is 7 centimeters wide and the third column, which contains the text of the Song of the Sea, is 13.2 centimeters wide. I thank Irene Lewitt (Israel Museum) for communicating these measurements to me.

⁵ For the Cairo Genizah, see E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3d ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2012), 32–33.

Around 2007, M. Mishor and E. Engel established that the sheets were part of the same scroll.

The sheets are still awaiting a comprehensive scholarly discussion. An illustration of the right side of the London Manuscript (first four columns with Exod 9:18–12:6) was published as early as 1968.⁶ My discussion of the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript is based on the excellent infrared photo that the Israel Museum graciously placed at my disposal, and which is included in Appendix 2 of this article (Plate 2).⁷

MODEL SCROLL

The scribal features of the sections of AS that are visible on the photos conform to the highest standards of the early Middle Ages, including the rules for the production of Torah scrolls in the Talmudim and the tractate *Soferim*.⁸ The sheets were dry-ruled before being inscribed. They were ruled vertically, to demarcate the margins of the columns, and horizontally for the individual lines.⁹ The height of the columns conforms to the early mediaeval rule that a column of a Torah scroll must be forty-two lines high.¹⁰

The consonantal text was copied with care and with a firm hand. I have not noticed any traces of correction. The letters hang from slightly below the ruled horizontal lines, with some space left between the tops of the letters and the line. Only the vertical stroke of the *lamed* projects above that line.¹¹ The copyist observed the

⁶ אנציקלופדיה מקראית *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1968), Plate 14 after pp. 847–48.

⁷ Thanks are due to David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, for the permission to reproduce the photo in this article.

⁸ The tractate *Soferim* is made up of several parts, some of which may be relatively late. In its present form it was compiled some time after the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud, in the eighth or ninth century; cf. E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ, 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 10, 195.

⁹ Cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 57–61.

¹⁰ Cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 93; D. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (Textual Criticism and the Translator, 2; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 319–20, 583–90. Although this rule predominated, it did not remain unchallenged. *Sop.* 2:6 states that the columns may be forty-two lines high, but that they may also have a height of sixty, seventy-two or even ninety-eight lines. Maimonides mentions forty-eight lines as the minimum height and sixty lines as the maximum height of a column of a Torah scroll (*Mishneh Torah*, Book 2, *Abavah*, *Hilkebot Sefer Torah* 7.10). Before the second millennium C.E., Torah scrolls with sixty to 100 lines per column were not uncommon; cf. C. Sirat, M. Dukan and A. Yardeni, “Rouleaux de la Tora antérieurs à l’an mille,” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 138/4 (1994), 861–87 (884). See also the description of scrolls ES and BS below.

¹¹ Cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 104.

ruled margins strictly and avoided protrusion of more than one letter beyond the left margin line.¹² He preferred to position words that would otherwise protrude into the left margin at the beginning of the following line. Also, he avoided conspicuous blank spaces between the last word of a line and the left margin by inserting a blank space before the last word, or in fewer cases by lengthening the horizontal stroke of a letter of the last word (e.g. the *dalet* of דג, Exod 15:8). Blank spaces that were due to the spacing out of the lines were filled with one or more dots to indicate that they were meaningless.¹³ On average, the spaces between the last word of a verse and the first word of the following verse are not wider than the usual space between two consecutive words in the same verse. This is also in line with traditional practices.¹⁴

THE LAYOUT OF THE SONG OF THE SEA

One of the high-quality scribal features of the scroll AS is the carefully planned layout of the Song of the Sea, the earliest of its kind discovered so far. Although the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript is only a fragmentary piece of a Torah scroll, the text of the song is hardly damaged. As the text of AS is a representative of the textual tradition that the Masoretes regarded as authoritative and the one that they copied in their codices (see below), it is not difficult to reconstruct the textual arrangement of the insignificant missing portions of the column on the basis of the text in the Masoretic codices. Also, many later scrolls and codices exhibit an arrangement of the text of the song that is identical with or very similar to the layout in AS.

The layout follows a pattern that the Talmud designates as אריח על גבי לבינה ולבינה על גבי אריח “a half-brick over a whole brick, and a whole brick over a half-brick.”¹⁵ This refers to “an inscribed part placed over an uninscribed section in the following line and vice versa”.¹⁶ The tractate *Soferim* specifies that such a layout is required only for the Song of the Sea and the Song of Deborah (Judg 5).¹⁷

¹² Cf. *Sop.* 2:3; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 106, 251.

¹³ Cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 106–8, 209–10.

¹⁴ Cf. *Sop.* 3:7; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 135–38, 251.

¹⁵ *b. Meg.* 16b: “All the songs [in Scripture] are written in the form of a half-brick over a whole brick, and a whole brick over a half-brick, with the exception of this one [Esth 9:7–9] and the list of the kings of Canaan [Josh 12:9–24], which are written in the form of a half-brick over a half-brick and a whole brick over a whole brick.” M. Simon and I. Epstein (“מסכת מגילה—Megillah,” in תלמוד בבלי—*Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, Seder Mo‘ed: Ta’anit, Megillah, Hagigah* [London: Soncino, 1984], 16b n.11) suggest that the translation “blank space” instead of “whole brick” is equally possible for לבינה.

¹⁶ Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 174.

¹⁷ *Sop.* 12:10. According to *Sop.* 1:10, a Torah scroll may not be used for reading out loud (אל יקרא בו) if the copyist confused the textual layout

The copyist of AS distributed the text of the song over thirty lines and treated the beginning of 15:1 and the whole of verse 15:19 (both commonly regarded as non-poetic) as part of the song. In line 1, there are no significant blank spaces between words. The other odd lines exhibit two members separated by a wide blank space. The even lines, except for line 30, contain three members and wide blank spaces after the first and the second member. In these even lines, the first and the last member each consists of only one word. Thus, the pattern is highly symmetrical. Lines with two members and lines with three members—a wide one in the middle and narrow ones next to the margins—alternate between lines 2 and 29.

However, it is clear that this pattern was not chosen only for aesthetic reasons. If we compare the width of the members, we see that they differ considerably. If we compare the even lines with each other, we see that the second member of line 2 and the second member of line 6 each comprises five words (eighteen and twenty letters, respectively) and that the second member of line 4 is much shorter (three words, eleven letters). In the odd lines, the left member of line 7 (five words, twenty-three letters) appears to be much longer than the left member of line 11 (three words, nine letters). In order to maintain a more or less regular pattern, the copyist inserted blank spaces between words of the short members (e.g. the second member in lines 4, 11 and 21), filling them with dots to indicate that the spaces are meaningless.

Of course, the copyist could have added some of the following words to such short members. However, he did not do this, clearly because he wanted each word occurring immediately before a blank space to be the last word of a colon, a part of a poetic verse that is recited in one breath and followed by a break in the recitation. Each of the words that occurs immediately before a blank space in the lines can indeed be seen as the last word of such a colon.¹⁸ However, the line breaks do not indicate the end of a co-

of Exod 15:1–19 and the layout of Deut 32:1–43. For the latter song and other poems with mostly bicola, *Sop.* 12:9 (cf. 13:1) describes a “hemistichal” layout with two members per line separated by one blank space. Cf. J.M. Oesch, *Petucha und Setuma: Untersuchungen zu einer überlieferten Gliederung im hebräischen Text des Alten Testaments* (OBO, 27; Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 132–33; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 171–73. The “half-brick over a whole brick” layout may have been seen as appropriate for Exod 15:1–19 and Judg 5, because these poems include a relatively large number of tricola. Cf. J.L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1981), 123.

¹⁸ The impression that the poetic layout is largely colometric is confirmed by the accentuation added to the text later by the Tiberian Masoretes. The words that they provided with the *silluq* accent are all followed by a blank space in AS. Fourteen of the seventeen words with the accent *atnah* are followed by a blank space in AS. Ten words with a *zaqef*

lon, because the words at the beginning of the lines cannot be regarded as the first words of cola. All in all, this means that the arrangement of the successive cola (“o,” “p,” “q,” etc.) is as follows:

pppppppppppp		oooooooooooo
rrrr	qqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqqq	pppp
ssssssssssssss		rrrrrrrrrrrrrr
uuuu	tttttttttttttttttt	ssss

The blank spaces in AS suggest the following colometric division of the verses:

1 colon:	vv. 3, 5, 12, 18.
2 cola:	vv. 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14.
3 cola:	vv. 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17, 19.
4 cola:	v. 16.

For most of the verses, the delimitation of cola suggested by the blank spaces is convincing. For instance, v. 4 and v. 6 each comprises two parallel cola that constitute a “bicolon” and v. 15 consists of three parallel cola forming a “tricolon”. In the case of vv. 3 and 5, however, it seems preferable to interpret the single unit preceded and followed by a blank space as a pair of two cola.¹⁹ In such cases, two short cola may have been joined for aesthetic reasons, with the aim of achieving a well-balanced layout without members that are much shorter than the parallel members in the corresponding lines (whether odd or even).

Exactly the same arrangement of the text of the song is found in other mediaeval Torah scrolls and in most early biblical codices. Apparently, the later copyists regarded the division of which AS is the first known representative as adequate. They had to make a

qaṭon are followed by a blank space and nine are not, which confirms the idea that the weight of the accent *zaqef qaṭon* differs, depending on the position it occupies among the accents of the same verse; cf. I. Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (SBLMasS, 5; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1980), 168–70, R. de Hoop, “The Colometry of Hebrew Verse and the Masoretic Accents: Evaluation of a Recent Approach, Part II,” *JNSL* 26/2 (2000), 65–100. For the few deviations, see the following note.

¹⁹ Only in 15:3, 15:5 and 15:9 is there no blank space after a word that the Tiberian Masoretes provided with an *atnah*. In the case of 15:3 and 15:5, the absence of a blank space may be due to the brevity of at least one of the two cola in these verses. An interesting deviation is found in 15:9, where AS and the younger manuscripts show a blank space after **אָשִׁי** (codices: *tifḥa*) and **נִפְשִׁי** (codices: *zaqef qaṭon*), but not after **שָׁלֵל** (codices: *atnah*) and **חֲרָבִי** (codices: *zaqef qaṭon*). The textual layout suggests a well-balanced division of 15:9 into three cola, each comprising four words. The accentuation suggests a different delimitation of cola. See further P. Sanders, “Poetic Layouts in the Oldest Codices of the Hebrew Bible,” in R. de Hoop and P. Sanders (eds.), *Have a Break* (forthcoming, 2015).

special effort to reproduce the traditional layout of the Song of the Sea as faithfully as possible. For the “half-brick over a whole brick” pattern, the column must be relatively wide. Not only AS, but also most other manuscripts display the song in one or two columns that are wider than the usual columns of these manuscripts.²⁰

Of course, it is possible that the song was written colometrically before the early Middle Ages,²¹ but the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript is the earliest known manuscript with the “half-brick over a whole brick” layout.²²

OTHER MEDIAEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

Hereafter, I will compare the prose text surrounding the Song of the Sea to the extent that it is found on the AS scroll with the corresponding sections in other mediaeval biblical manuscripts. I will concentrate on some aspects of the arrangement of the text, exploring to what degree the layouts correspond and to what extent

²⁰ Only in the Torah scroll that I designate as BS is the column with the text of the song not considerably wider than the other columns, because all the columns of the scroll are already quite wide. However, in the scroll ES and the codices BP, GP, LC, SC, and DP, the columns with the text of the song are wider than usual.

²¹ There are no layouts of the “half-brick over a whole brick” pattern in the Dead Sea Scrolls; cf. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 174. Unfortunately, the column with Exod 15 in the high-quality manuscript 4QpaleoExod^m (*DJD* 9 [1992]) is lost completely. A tiny fragment of 4QExod^d (4Q15) does not show any blank spaces in the text of the song; see *DJD* 12 (1994), 127–28, plate xxi. However, 4QExod^c (4Q14, first century B.C.E.) has blank spaces after some cola, but not after all of them, even when the colon is final; see *DJD* 12, 100, 117–19, plates xviii–xix. A fragment of the “Rewritten Pentateuch” scroll 4QRP^c (4Q365, fragment 6b, with a tiny part of 15:17–19, first century B.C.E.) shows blank spaces in all the positions where the mediaeval “half-brick over a whole brick” arrangement also inserts blank spaces; see *DJD* 13 (1994), 268–69, plate xxiii. A blank space is visible after *נחלתכה* (15:17), *ועד* (15:18), and *את מימי הים* (15:19), but also after the preceding word *עליהמה* (15:19). Unfortunately, the fragment is too small to establish with certainty whether the division of the song was colometric. However, it is clear that the arrangement is not of the “half-brick over a whole brick” type.

²² The Aleppo Codex is the earliest known manuscript with the “half-brick over a whole brick” layout for Judg 5. According to the first of the two colophons, the Cairo Codex (Prophets) was written around 895 C.E. by Moshé ben Asher. However, there are good reasons to date the codex to the eleventh century; cf. M. Beit-Arié, C. Sirat and M. Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis litteris excarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes*. Tome 1: *Jusqu'à 1020* (Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi—Series Hebraica; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 25–29. Also, the layout of Judg 5 in the Cairo Codex is not of the usual “half-brick over a whole brick” type; see Sanders, “Poetic Layouts in the Oldest Codices of the Hebrew Bible” (forthcoming, 2015).

they diverge. I will also discuss the minute orthographic differences between the manuscripts.

The manuscripts that I consulted were selected on the basis of their antiquity. They are all early representatives of the Masoretic textual tradition and date from the late ninth to the eleventh centuries. However, I have also included the younger Bologna Scroll in order to have more than one scroll as reference material. It was a prerequisite that clear photos or reliable descriptions of at least part of the relevant sections be available for consultation.

As mentioned above, the arrangement of the Song of the Sea in AS corresponds to its arrangement in other mediaeval biblical manuscripts. The manuscripts that I have consulted exhibit the text of the song in thirty lines, each beginning with the same words as the thirty lines in AS. Also, the division of the lines into members by blank spaces is identical in these manuscripts. Only in the Damascus Pentateuch does the division of the song differ slightly from the division in the other early manuscripts, but the division is still of the “half-brick over a whole brick” type. This deviation, as well as even less important details concerning the layout of the song, will be mentioned immediately in the following descriptions of the manuscripts.

SHEET OF A TENTH/ELEVENTH-CENTURY SCROLL (ES)

This slightly damaged sheet of a Torah scroll exhibits five columns with the text of Exod 10:10–16:15. The Song of the Sea is written in the fifth column, which is wider than the four preceding columns.²³ The columns comprise seventy-one lines, except for the fourth column, which shows seventy-two lines.

A minor difference from the song’s arrangement in AS is that the copyist avoided meaningless spaces intended to extend short cola. However, the horizontal stroke of the *dalet* of דַּ (end of line 11) was expanded.

BOLOGNA SCROLL (BS)

This is the oldest complete Torah scroll known to exist. In May 2013, M. Perani announced the rediscovery of the scroll in the Bologna University Library. Carbon-14 analyses confirmed Perani’s

²³ For this manuscript, see J.S. Penkower, “A Sheet of Parchment from a 10th or 11th Century Torah Scroll: Determining its Type among Four Traditions (Oriental, Sefardi, Ashkenazi, Yemenite),” *Textus* 21 (2002), 235–64, with a photo of the Song of the Sea and the five preceding and the first eleven of the twenty-nine following lines opposite p. 251. For a blurred picture of the whole sheet, see the Israel Museum, Jerusalem website. Cited 9/3/14. Online: <http://www.imj.org.il/images/news/all/10/SongOfTheSea-large.jpg>. The sheet came to light in nineteenth-century Russia, possibly after the famous collector Abraham Firkovitch had acquired it, but it is now part of the private collection of Stephan Loewentheil, New York.

impression that the scroll is mediaeval and also showed that it should be dated between 1155 and 1225 C.E. The scroll (36 meters long, 64 centimeters high) is in an excellent state of preservation. In this scroll, most columns consist of forty-eight lines.²⁴ Perani graciously placed a clear photo of the column with the Song of the Sea and the following column at my disposal. Part of the photo is shown in Appendix 3 of this article (Plate 3).

Instead of inserting meaningless spaces in the text of the song, the copyist preferred to expand the horizontal strokes of letters in short members. The second member of line 7 was allowed to protrude into the left margin. In contrast with the other scrolls and codices discussed here, part of the letters of BS have been decorated with *taggin* (tittles or crowns). Also, BS exhibits some orthographic variants that are not found in AS, ES or the codices that I will refer to below.²⁵ Despite these differences, the division of the text of the song equals the division in AS and ES.

In the scrolls, the text was only written on the flesh side of the sheets, but in the codices it was inscribed both on the hair and on the flesh side. In the codices that I have consulted, virtually all the pages show three columns of text in prose format (twenty to twenty-eight lines), but the Song of the Sea was written in wider columns, on two consecutive pages. Unlike the scrolls, the codices mentioned below do not only contain the consonantal text but also the accentuation and vocalization of the Tiberian type. The following are the most relevant codices:²⁶

CODEX BRITISH MUSEUM OR. 4445 (BP)

This codex is dated to the end of the ninth or the first half of the tenth century C.E. The original part comprises most of the Pentateuch (Gen 39:20–Deut 1:33).²⁷ There are three columns of twenty-

²⁴ See M. Perani, “Il più antico rotolo del Pentateuco ebraico integro: una scoperta alla Biblioteca Universitaria di Bologna,” *Testimonia, Editoria, Cultura, Arte* 4 (2013), 87–97.

²⁵ BS has the following deviant spellings: *וארוממנהו* (for *וארממנהו*, 15:2), *גאנד* (for *גאונד*, 15:7), *בעפרת* (for *בעופרת*, 15:10), *עליהם* (for *עלהם*, 15:19). The spellings *גאנד* and *בעפרת* were corrected by positioning a *waw* above each of these words.

²⁶ Another early codex with the same division for the Song of the Sea is EBP. II B 59, also known as “L9” (Pentateuch, 1021/1022 C.E.); see Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 255, and the facsimile of the page with Exod 15:9–20 in M. Beit-Arié, C. Sirat and M. Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibente*. Tome II. *De 1021 à 1079* (Monumenta Palaeographica Medii Aevi—Series Hebraica; Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 48–49.

²⁷ For this codex, see Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 240; *Biblia Hebraica Quinta Editio*, Fasc. 18: *General Introduction and Megilloth* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), xxi–xxii; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 45. The text can be consulted via the British Library Digitised Manuscripts. Cited 9/3/14. Online: www.bl.uk/manuscripts. The beginning and end of the

one lines each on every page, except for the two pages with the Song of the Sea which each comprise one wide column of twenty-one lines.

In the Song of the Sea, the text is rarely spaced out, only in the last member of some lines where a blank space was inserted before the last word to prevent a space between this word and the left margin (lines 7, 17 and 30). If such a space is relatively wide, it is filled with dots to show that it is meaningless. Graphic fillers or dots occur between the left member of an odd line and the left margin if the member does not reach the margin line (line 1, line 21 after אֶלְלוּ־פִי, etc.). However, expanding the horizontal strokes of letters was not used as a method to widen members.

FIRKOVITCH II.17 (GP)

Shelomoh ben Buya'a, who wrote the consonantal text of the famous Aleppo Codex (see below), also wrote the consonantal text of this Pentateuch codex, in 929 or 930 C.E.²⁸ Several parts of the codex are lost. There are three columns of twenty lines each to most pages, but on the pages with Exod 15:1–19 and Deut 32:1–43 there is a single column of twenty-one lines.

The tops of the two pages with the Song of the Sea, including the first two lines of the columns (lines 16–17 of the song, top of the second page) are severely damaged. Minute spaces were inserted between words in the second members of some odd lines. At the end of some lines there remains a minor space between the last word and the lefthand margin (e.g. line 21 after אֶלְלוּ־פִי, with graphic filler). In most lines, however, the skilful copyist avoided the need to space out the left member or to make it protrude into the margin, because he made it begin at exactly the appropriate position in the line. Expanding the horizontal strokes of letters was not used as a method to widen members.

LENINGRAD CODEX (LC)

In 1008 or 1009 C.E., Shemu'el ben Ya'aqov wrote the consonantal text of this codex and also provided it with its vocalization, accentuation and Masorah. The codex is the oldest intact manuscript comprising the complete Tenakh.²⁹ Virtually every page displays

extant codex are secondary.

²⁸ For this codex, see Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 327–28; Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraici*, 1:53–64; *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* 18 (2004), xxii. I thank Innocent Himbaza and Adrian Schenker for their permission to consult microfilms of the codex in the Institut Barthélemy (Fribourg). The consonantal text of GP and the consonantal text of the Aleppo Codex were written by the same hand; cf. Y. Ofer, “The History and Authority of the Aleppo Codex,” in M. Glatzer (ed.), *The Jerusalem Crown: Companion Volume* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 2002), 17–32 (24–25).

²⁹ The codex has been published in facsimile form in D.S. Loewinger

three columns of twenty-seven lines each. Wider columns occur only on the pages with segments of the text laid out as poetry (Exod 15:1–19; Deut 32:1–43; Judg 5 etc.).

In the text of the Song of the Sea, the copyist inserted meaningless blank spaces with dots before the last word of several lines to prevent a blank space between this word and the left margin, but a blank space remained at the end of line 21, after אֶלֹפִי (with graphic filler). At the end of some lines, the copyist slightly expanded the horizontal stroke of a letter of the last word to make the word touch the left margin (e.g. the *dalet* of נָדַ, line 11).

SASSOON 1053 (SC)

This tenth-century codex comprised the whole Tenakh, but some sheets are damaged or completely missing. There are virtually always three columns to a page, but wider columns occur on pages with segments of the text laid out as poetry (Exod 15:1–19; Deut 32:1–43; Judg. 5 etc.). The number of lines per column is twenty-eight or sometimes twenty-seven or twenty-nine.³⁰

The arrangement of the text of the Song of the Sea corresponds to the layout in the three scrolls and in BP, GP, and LC. Blank spaces, apparently without dots or graphic fillers, were inserted into some lefthand members to make them end at the left margin line.³¹

ALEPPO CODEX (AC)

The consonantal text of this codex (*ca.* 925–935 C.E.) was written by Shelomoh ben Buya‘a and the vocalization, accentuation and Masorah were added by the famous Masorete Aharon ben Asher. The codex is probably the oldest manuscript that originally contained the complete Tenakh. Unfortunately, the beginning and the end of the codex, including the whole book of Exodus, were lost in or after 1947, but most of the pages between Deut 28:17 and Cant 3:11 have been preserved.³² There are three columns of twenty-

(ed.), *Codex Leningradensis B19a: The Earliest Complete Bible Manuscript* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1971); D.N. Freedman *et al.* (eds.), *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition* (Grand Rapids, Mich./Leiden: Eerdmans/Brill, 1998). For more information about this manuscript, which is also known as Firkovitch B19a, see the introductory articles in Freedman, *The Leningrad Codex*, as well as Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 239; Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, 1:114–31; *Biblica Hebraica Quinta* 18: xviii–xx; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 45.

³⁰ For this codex, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 46.

³¹ Photos can be consulted via Wikipedia Commons. Cited 9/3/14. Online: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Tanakh-MS-Sassoon-1053>. Unfortunately, the left side of the page with the first part of the song is not clearly visible.

³² The extant part of the codex has been published in facsimile form: M.H. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *The Aleppo Codex, Part 1: Plates* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976). The text can also be consulted via the Ben Zvi In-

eight lines each to a page, but wider columns occur on the pages with segments of the text laid out as poetry (Deut 32:1–43; Judg 5 etc.). Thanks to faithful Yemenite copies, the Masorah, and the notes of mediaeval and later scholars who consulted the famous codex, it is possible to reconstruct the text as well as part of the textual layout.³³

The layout of the Song of the Sea was probably identical with the layout in GP (also written by Shelomoh ben Buya'a). In his renowned halakhic code *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides (1135–1204 C.E.) copied the whole Song of the Sea in the layout that he required. This layout corresponds completely to the layout of GP.³⁴ As Maimonides' instructions for the writing of the song of Deut 32 are clearly based on that song's extraordinary layout in AC, it is quite probable that the layout of the Song of the Sea in AC was also the same as the layout of the song that Maimonides used in his *Mishneh Torah*.³⁵ This means that there is ample reason to assume that the layout of the consonantal text of the Song of the Sea in AC was exactly the same as the layout in the older Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript.

DAMASCUS PENTATEUCH (DP)

This Torah codex, with only the beginning of Genesis missing, is commonly dated to the end of the tenth century. Virtually all its pages have been divided into three columns of twenty lines each, but there is one wide twenty-line column on the pages with Exod 15:1–19 and Deut 32:1–43.³⁶

stitute. Cited 9/3/14. Online: <http://www.aleppocodex.org>. For short descriptions of the codex, see Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 239–40; Beit-Arié, Sirat and Glatzer, *Codices Hebraici*, 1:65–72; *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* 18 (2004), xx–xxi; Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 44–45.

³³ See Ofer, "History and Authority," 27–30. Cf. J.S. Penkower, *New Evidence for the Pentateuch Text in the Aleppo Codex* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1992).

³⁴ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 2.8.4. In several editions of *Mishneh Torah* the twenty-ninth line ends with **מִי אֵת הַיָּם** and the last line starts with **הַיָּם**. However, in MS Huntington 80 (Bodleian Libraries, Oxford), the early copy that was authenticated by Maimonides himself, the twenty-ninth line ends with **עַל־הַיָּם** and the last line starts with **אֵת מִי הַיָּם**. See Maimonides Code of Jewish Law. Cited 9/3/14. Online: maimonides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk, see fol. 136a–37a.

³⁵ See J.S. Penkower, "Maimonides and the Aleppo Codex," *Textus* 9 (1981), 39–128; Penkower, *New Evidence*, 32–50; Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 242–54.

³⁶ The codex has been published in facsimile form: D.S. Loewinger (ed.), *Early Hebrew Manuscripts in Facsimile*. Vol. 1. *The Damascus Pentateuch*, (Copenhagen/Baltimore: Rosenkilde and Bagger/John Hopkins University, 1978). For this codex, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 46; Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 240–41; *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* 18:xxii–xxiii. The codex can be consulted via World Digital Library. Cited 9/3/14. Online: www.wdl.org/en/item/11364.

Only the division of lines 29 and 30 of the text of the Song of the Sea differs from the arrangement in the other early mediaeval scrolls and codices. In AS and the other manuscripts mentioned, the lines start with the words **בא סוס** (l. 29) and **את מי הים** (l. 30) and there is a blank space after **בים** (l. 29) and after the first **הים** (l. 30). In DP, however, the layout of the last lines of the song no longer agrees with the usual “half-brick over a whole brick” type. Whereas in the other ancient manuscripts the third member of line 28 comprises only one word, just like the third member of the preceding even lines, in DP the third member of line 28 comprises two words: **כי בא**. Lines 29 and 30 have not been divided into members by blank spaces and line 30 has been left blank to the left. The decision not to insert blank spaces in these lines was undoubtedly due to the fact that 15:19 was not regarded as part of the poem proper.³⁷ The different arrangement of the end of the song in DP is partially confirmed by the tractate *Soferim* (12:11). The passage lists the thirty words that must occur at the beginning of lines. The list agrees with the predominant layout for the first 29 lines, but the manuscripts of *Soferim* mention either **מי** or **הים** as the first word of line 30.³⁸

FIVE LINES ABOVE THE SONG

In AS, the thirty lines with the text of the Song of the Sea are preceded by five written lines and a blank line, and followed by another blank line and a further set of five written lines.³⁹ This means that a large part of the layout pattern of the song itself is symmetrical horizontally, but that the top and the bottom of the column

³⁷ See the absence of a blank space in line 1. Like DP, Ashkenazic codices and other later manuscripts display 15:19 in prose format, without any subdivision; see Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 257, 260.

³⁸ See J. Müller, *Masechet Soferim: Der talmudische Tractat der Schreiber, eine Einleitung in das Studium der althebräischen Graphik, der Masora und der altjüdischen Liturgie* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1878), 171; M. Higger, **ב מסכת סופרים ונלוז עליה מדרש מסכת סופרים** (New York: Devei-Rabbanan, 1937), 235. In agreement with part of the manuscripts of *Soferim*, the younger Sephardic manuscripts position **הים** at the beginning of line 30, where the word is followed by a blank space. At the end of line 30, Sephardic copyists inserted an additional blank space between **בתוך** and the following word **הים**, undoubtedly so that line 30 also follows the “half-brick over a whole brick” pattern, with a one-word member to the right and another such member to the left. Cf. Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 256, 261. Codex EBP. II B 8 (Pentateuch, 1020/1021 C.E., twenty-one lines per page) has the usual arrangement of the text (cf. AS, BP, GP, etc.) on the page with Exod 15:10–23, with the exception of the last line of the song (15:19), where there is a gap only after **ובני ישראל**, not after **הים**; see the facsimile in Beit-Arié, C. Sirat and M. Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis*, 2:38–39. This inadequate division may be due to a mistake.

³⁹ Like the other manuscripts, AS inserts a blank space (*setumah*) in the third written line after the song, after the word **בים** (end of 15:21).

are vertically symmetrical. Unlike the symmetry in the text of the song, however, the symmetry between the top and the bottom of the column seems to be coincidental.

The five written lines above the text of the song start with the words **הבאים** (14:28), **ביבשה** (14:29), **יהוה**, **מת** (14:30) and **במצרים** (14:31), respectively. In many younger manuscripts, there are also five lines above the text of the song that start with exactly the same words. However, the copyists of most of these manuscripts had to make a special effort to enable the lines to begin with these words (see below). This is different in AS. There is neither exceptional spacing out nor compression of words in the preceding column so that the new column would start with the word **הבאים**. At the end of the penultimate line of the preceding column, there is a meaningless blank space with two dots before the last word **את** (Plate 1), but this space was inserted to prevent a blank space next to the left margin, after the word **את**.⁴⁰ The copyist positioned the following word **הרכב** at the beginning of the next line because he was keen to prevent protrusion into the left margin. There is no indication, not even the blank space in the penultimate line, to suggest that the copyist wanted the next column to begin with the word **הבאים**.

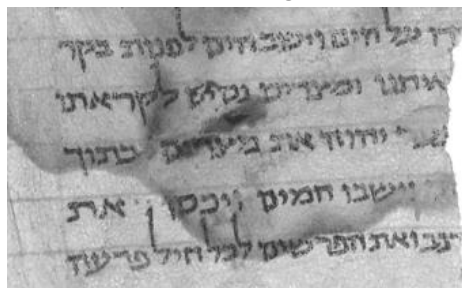


Plate 1: Ashkar-Gilson Hebrew Manuscript #2, bottom of col. 2, photography by M. Maggen (Israel Museum, Jerusalem).

In the scrolls ES and BS we find the same pattern above the text of the song as in AS: five lines in prose format beginning with the five words mentioned. However, there is an important difference. The copyist of ES added a seventy-second line to the preceding column (the other four columns comprise seventy-one lines), apparently so that the column with the text of the song would start with the word **הבאים**.⁴¹ In BS, there is also an additional (forty-ninth) line at the bottom of the preceding column, with conspicuous expansion of the horizontal stroke of the final letter (the **ה** of **פרעה**), clearly also in order to make the new column start with the word **הבאים**.

In the codices, with their more limited heights, the text of the song needed to be written on two consecutive pages. In BP and GP the columns of these pages are twenty-one lines high, which

⁴⁰ See the similar spacing out in line 17 of the same column and in London Manuscript col. 1 l. 3; col. 3 l. 3.

⁴¹ Cf. Penkower, "Sheet of Parchment," 256.

made it possible to reproduce the layout of the forty-two line columns in scrolls quite faithfully. In both manuscripts, the first page starts with the same lines as the lines above the song in AS. The lines begin with the same words as the lines in AS and there was no need either to compress them or to space them out.⁴² However, in BP the preceding page contains several lines that have been compressed or protrude into the left margin⁴³ and the end of the last column of the page shows some lines with blank space—filled with dots—between the last word and the left margin. This suggests that the copyist made an effort to obtain a page break before **הבאים**. First he was afraid of not being able to write all the text preceding this word on the actual page, which made him compress several lines, but at the end of the last column he saw that it was no longer necessary to compress the text.

In GP, the text on the page preceding the two pages with the text of the song cannot be read easily on the microfilm that I could consult, but there may not have been significant compression or spacing out of the text. If the copyist really did not have to force a page break before the word **הבאים**, this would have been a coincidence.⁴⁴

Codex LC, however, shows conspicuous spacing out in order to make the page with the beginning of the text of the song start with five written lines. As in the scrolls and the codices BP and GP, the five lines start with the words **הבאים**, **ביבשה**, **יהוה**, **מת** and **במצרים**, respectively. The lines are slightly elongated and in three of them there are gaps with graphic fillers. On the preceding page there are several lines with a wide blank space—including graphic fillers—between the last word and the left margin. This occurs in all the three columns. The copyist deliberately made the next page begin with the word **הבאים**.⁴⁵

LC exhibits similar elongation in the six lines above the beginning of the song of Deut 32 and also on the preceding page. There is also this type of elongation before the song in AC, where the six elongated lines above the song begin with the same words as in LC and where the spacing out of the text on the preceding page is even more conspicuous.⁴⁶ Some of the lines on the preced-

⁴² In GP the left part of the first line is damaged.

⁴³ Cf. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 320. The amount of text on the page is larger than the average amount on the other pages of BP.

⁴⁴ In GP, conspicuous spacing out does occur on the page preceding the page with the first part of Deut 32:1–43. See M. Glatzer, “The Aleppo Codex: Codicological and Paleographical Aspects,” *Sefunot* 19 (1989), 167–276 (Hebrew), with a photo of the page with Deut 31:20–28 on p. 229. The intention was to make the new page start with the word **ואעידה** (31:28).

⁴⁵ Cf. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 315.

⁴⁶ In GP (cf. note 44 above), there are also six written lines above the first part of Deut 32:1–43, with the same initial words as the six lines in LC and AC. The first two lines are partially damaged, but can be recon-

ing page do not even contain any words, but only graphic fillers. It is conceivable that in AC the lines above the Song of the Sea were also elongated and that there was also conspicuous elongation of the text on the preceding page. In any case, there seem to have been five lines above the song also in AC and these lines probably began with the words **הבאים**, **ביבשה**, **יהוה**, **מת** and **במצרים**.⁴⁷

Apparently, many copyists felt obliged to start the page or column at the beginning of the Song of the Sea with five lines in prose format, each of them beginning with a specific word.⁴⁸ There are, however, some exceptions. SC shows six written lines above the text of the song. The first line was spaced out, so that **הבאים** would be the first word of the second line. Lines 2–6, written normally, start with the words mentioned: **הבאים**, **ביבשה**, **יהוה**, **מת** and **במצרים**, respectively. This suggests that the copyist did know the tradition of ensuring that the five lines above the song began with these words.

In DP only two written lines occur above the text of the song. These lines, which have been written normally, correspond completely with the fourth and fifth lines of the column in AS. Of course, the copyist of DP could have elongated the text on the preceding page, as the copyist of LC did, but apparently he did not share the wish to force a page break before **הבאים**.⁴⁹

This means that only in AS—and possibly in GP—the page break before **הבאים** seems to be coincidental. The copyist of AS seems to have arrived at the textual layout quite naturally, without intending to make the column with the Song of the Sea start with a specific word. It is even possible that AS is the earliest manuscript with this specific arrangement at the top of the column. The reason why later copyists were committed to maintain such a layout of the text is obvious. The symmetry in the forty-two line column that they found in a scroll—AS or a scroll with a similar column—was so beautiful that the exact reproduction of the five lines became a shared goal. The copyist of SC knew the tradition, but implemented it in a non-standard way. Only the copyist of DP might not have known the tradition, or did not feel bound by it.

structured easily. See S. Lind, “The Layout of the Song of Moses (Deut 32) in Masoretic Manuscripts and Biblia Hebraica Quinta,” *The Bible Translator* 64/2 (2013), 159–72, with a photo of the page with Deut 31:28–32:9 on p. 164.

⁴⁷ Maimonides refers to the tradition of intentionally making the five lines above the Song of the Sea start with the words mentioned: *Mishneh Torah*, 2.7.10. As he based his instructions for the writing of Torah scrolls on AC, this suggests that in AC the same five lines occurred above the Song of the Sea.

⁴⁸ Cf. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 317–18.

⁴⁹ There is no special layout for the lines before and after the song in the relatively young Ashkenazic codices either; cf. Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 260.

FIVE LINES BELOW THE SONG

In AS part of the left side of the lower half of the column with the Song of the Sea is missing. Further to the right there is a hole in the sheet extending from lines 34–40. Fortunately, however, the five initial words of the lines under the song are still clearly visible: ותקח (15:20), אחריה (15:20), סוס (15:21), מדבר (15:22), ולא (15:23). Most of the remainder of the lines has also been preserved.

In ES and BS there are more lines written under the text of the song, eleven and thirty-four respectively. The first three lines begin with the same words as the parallel lines in AS, but in both scrolls the fourth line begins with ויצאו and the fifth line with ויבאו. In the case of ES it is clear that these five lines had a special status. Unlike the following lines, the first five lines were justified to the left.⁵⁰

In the codices BP and GP, the second page with the text of the song ends with five lines, written in prose format and without meaningless spaces, just like the column in AS. However, the five lines do not start with the same words as the lines in AS, but with the words that occur at the beginning of the lines in ES and BS. Apparently, this distribution of the text reflects a tradition that was quite common.⁵¹ Also in AC the first five written lines under the song must have started with these same five words.⁵² In SC there are eighteen lines in prose format under the text of the song. The copyist made the first five written lines following the song start with the words that are also found at the beginning of the lines in ES, BS, BP, and GP. In contrast with the following text, which he laid out over two columns of thirteen lines each, the five lines are written in a single wide column. This means that the copyist distinguished the first five written lines from the following text.⁵³

The layout deviates from the layout of the five lines in ES, BS, BP, GP, and SC not only in the early scroll AS but also in the codices LC and DP. The copyists of LC and DP did not attempt to make the first five prose lines after the song begin with specific words. In both codices, line 2 begins with the word אחריה, which

⁵⁰ See Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 236, 256.

⁵¹ Cf. Barthélemy, *Studies in the Text*, 319. In codex EBP. II B 8 (see note 38 above), there are also a blank line and five written lines after the song. The lines start with the same words as the lines in BP and GP.

⁵² Maimonides’ rules for writing Torah scrolls were based on the textual layout in AC. Maimonides refers to the tradition of making the five lines under the Song of the Sea start with the words ותקח, אחריה, סוס, ויצאו and ויבאו. See *Mishneh Torah*, 2.7.10. Maimonides refers also to the tradition of writing five lines under the song of Deut 32:1–43 and mentions the initial words of the lines. Only in AC does the textual distribution correspond to this description.

⁵³ The fifth line ends with קרא in ES, GP, and SC. In BS and BP, however, the line ends with על כן. In the case of BS this deviation may be due to a mistake earlier in the line. See also Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 256 n. 40. In EBP. II B 8 the line ends with מרה.

may be a coincidental agreement with the predominant division. However, in the following lines they each go their own way.⁵⁴ Also, the copyists do not physically distinguish the first five lines from the lines that follow. This is particularly remarkable in the case of the relatively late codex LC. It is probable that the copyist knew the practice of writing five specific lines after the song, but apparently he did not feel bound by it. In the case of the five lines preceding the song he did make an effort to produce the traditional layout.

The textual layout of AS for the five lines written above the song is part of a wide and quite uniform tradition that copyists sought to maintain with precision. Conversely, the way the lines under the Song of the Sea were laid out in AS is not found in the other manuscripts mentioned. The distribution of the text over the five lines is similar for ES, BS, BP, GP, and SC, so there appears to have been a shared tradition, but AS is not a representative of that tradition.

It is doubtful whether the corresponding arrangements of the five lines in ES, BS, BP, GP, and SC point to the existence of a fixed rule for the writing of these lines. It is also possible that the copyists of these manuscripts wanted the song to be followed by five special lines, with the five lines before the song as their counterpart, but that it was less important to them between which words the line breaks occur. They may simply have taken over the lines as they found them in the older manuscript available to them. It is significant that there are no cases of spacing out, compression, or protrusion into the margin in any of these manuscripts. The layout of each of the five lines appears to have been arrived at quite naturally. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to assume that the copyists made an effort to begin the lines with specific words.

It is entirely conceivable that copyists were committed to reproducing a beautiful symmetrical layout, in this case a forty-two line column with the text of the Song of the Sea preceded as well as followed by five written lines. In order to make the text of the song precede by five written lines, they had to make a special effort. In the case of the five written lines after the text of the song, it was less relevant to reproduce the layout as faithfully as possible, because the symmetry would remain, irrespective of the initial words of these lines. This means that the layout of the two pages with the text of the song in the early codices GP and BP may be based on the layout of the column in AS. The copyists may have felt obliged to reproduce faithfully the arrangement of the first five lines and the text of the song, but probably did not feel the same urge when they copied the five lines after the song. Later, their coincidental arrangement of the five lines was taken over by other copyists.

⁵⁴ Also in Ashkenazic and other younger manuscripts, the text of the five lines is laid out differently; see Penkower, "Sheet of Parchment," 258, 260.

PETUḤOT AND SETUMOT

In yet another respect, AS is part of the textual tradition that the Tiberian Masoretes regarded as authoritative. In all the manuscripts discussed here, the text in prose format is divided into sections by blank spaces. If the writing starts at the beginning of a line and the preceding line ends with a blank space (or was left completely blank), we are dealing with a *petuḥah* (an “open” section). However, if the writing does not start at the beginning of a line but later in the line, we are dealing with a *setumah* (a “closed” section). The section that precedes the *setumah* may end in the line where the new section begins, before the blank space, or in the preceding line, where the last word may touch the left margin or where the end of the line may have been left blank. The *petuḥot* and *setumot* are meaningful blank spaces and mark the transition from one prose section to the next. Several passages in the Talmud warn that a Torah scroll may not be used if the copyist had confused a *petuḥah* with a *setumah*.⁵⁵

In AS there are *petuḥot* before Exod 9:22; 10:1, 21; 11:1; 12:1; 14:1, 15, 26; 15:1 and 20. The photos show *setumot* before Exod 10:12; 11:4, 9; 15:22 and 27. The corresponding text is missing from AC, but Maimonides had listed where the *petuḥot* and *setumot* occurred in this codex.⁵⁶ There is only one significant difference in the sectional division: before 12:1 there is a *petuḥah* in AS, but in AC there was a *setumah*. Also the division in LC differs only once: before 10:12 there is a *setumah* in AS, but in LC there is a *petuḥah*.

DP and BP present more differences in the delimitation of the sections. In DP the spaces before 9:22 and 12:1 are *setumot* (*petuḥot* in AS) and there is no blank space before 10:12 (*setumah* in AS). In BP there are *setumot* before 12:1 and 14:15 (*petuḥot* in AS) and before 11:4 there is a *petuḥah* (*setumah* in AS). The line before 11:9 ends with a blank space that is so narrow that it is unclear whether it marks the end of a section (*petuḥah*) or whether BP’s copyist assumed that the section ends only later, before 12:1.⁵⁷ AS shows a *setumah* before 11:9.

The sectional division in scroll sheet ES (missing before 10:10) differs on two occasions: Before 10:12 there is a *setumah* in

⁵⁵ Cf. *b. Shabb.* 103b; J.M. Oesch, “Skizze einer formalen Gliederungshermeneutik der Sifre Tora,” in M.C.A. Korpel and J.M. Oesch (eds.), *Unit Delimitation in Biblical Hebrew and Northwest Semitic Literature* (Pericope, 4; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003), 162–203. In my discussion of the sectional division, there are no references to the codices GP and SC, since the microfilm and photos are not clear enough.

⁵⁶ Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 2.8.4. Cf. Penkower, “Maimonides and the Aleppo Codex”; Penkower, *New Evidence*, 50–53.

⁵⁷ Cf. Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 249.

AS, but probably a *petuḥah* in ES (cf. LC).⁵⁸ Before 12:1 there is a *petuḥah* in AS (cf. LC), but a *setumah* in ES (cf. AC, DP, BP).

The sectional division in AS appears to be close to the division of the text in AC and LC, although there is also a single difference with each codex. The difference with the divisions in the other manuscripts is greater. As soon as a photo of the last three columns of the London Manuscript becomes available, more definitive conclusions can be drawn. An exhaustive comparison of the sectional divisions in AS and GP—the other codex written by Shelomoh ben Buya‘a—might yield significant results.

ORTHOGRAPHY

As far as the photos show, the text of the scroll AS is very close to the text of the Tiberian codices. I have compared the visible parts of the text with the reconstructed text of the Aleppo Codex (AC),⁵⁹ and the available text of the Damascus Pentateuch (DP), Codex British Museum Or. 4445 (BP), the Leningrad Codex (LC) and the scroll sheet from the Loewentheil collection (ES).⁶⁰ The consonantal text of AS appears to conform to the Tiberian textual tradition. There are only some minute orthographic differences and they concern only the use or non-use of *matres lectionis*.⁶¹ These are the only words that are spelled differently in the manuscripts mentioned:

10:9	ובבנותנו	(AS, AC, DP, LC)	ובבנותינו	(BP)
10:25	ועלת	(AS, AC, DP, BP)	ועלות	(LC)
12:3	אבת	(AS, AC, DP, BP, LC)	אבות	(ES)
12:4	מהיות	(AS, AC, DP, BP)	מהית	(LC)
14:13	תספו	(AS, AC, DP, BP)	תסיפו	(LC)
14:14	תחרשון	(AS, AC, DP, BP)	תחרישון	(LC)
14:22	חומה	(AS, AC, DP)	חמה	(BP, LC, ES ⁶²)
14:22	מימינם	(AS, AC, DP, LC)	מימנם	(BP)

⁵⁸ Ibid., 248.

⁵⁹ For the reconstructed text, see *Jerusalem Crown: The Bible of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: N. Ben-Zvi, 2000) (Hebrew).

⁶⁰ ES contains only Exod 10:10–16:15. The orthographic differences from other manuscripts are mentioned by Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 238–39. The text of GP on the microfilm and the online photos of SC are unclear. However, in 14:22 GP shares the spellings found in AS, AC, and DP. SC shares all the spellings in AS, AC, and DP mentioned in the main text, but the spelling of certain words that are not clearly visible might deviate from the spelling in other manuscripts.

⁶¹ It is highly unusual to find more textual differences than orthographic variants in mediaeval Jewish Bible manuscripts; cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 32–35.

⁶² In ES, a *nav* was possibly added above the word חמה; cf. Penkower, “Sheet of Parchment,” 239.

Comparison of AS with AC and DP reveals no textual variants. The visible parts of the text of AS appear to be identical to the parallel consonantal text in AC and DP. In view of the possible orthographic differences (see the other manuscripts), the correspondence between AS on the one hand and AC and DP on the other cannot be a coincidence. AS must be part of a textual tradition that the copyists of AC and DP regarded as authoritative. Of course, the last three columns of the London Manuscript, which are not visible on the published photo, may show that there were textual differences, but such differences were probably limited to the use or non-use of *matres lectionis*.⁶³

CONCLUSIONS

The seventh or eighth-century AS scroll, of which the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript and the London Manuscript seem to be the only remnants to survive, must have been a first-class manuscript that deserved to be copied. This is indicated not only by the scribal features in general but also by the carefully planned arrangement of the text of the Song of the Sea. It stands to reason that the Tiberian Masoretes selected the best available biblical manuscripts when they embarked on their project of producing model biblical codices. There are strong reasons to suppose that the AS scroll was indeed among the manuscripts that the Masoretes consulted.

Four factors indicate the correspondence between the scroll and most of the earliest codices:

1. The layout of the Song of the Sea;
2. The presence of five special lines written above and below the text of the song;
3. The division of the prose sections by *petuhot* and *setumot*; and,
4. The use or non-use of *matres lectionis*.

It seems to be a mere coincidence that in AS the column containing the Song of the Sea starts with the word **הבאים**, but if the Masoretic copyists had felt obliged to follow suit, they must have been influenced by the AS scroll, either directly or from using a faithful copy.

The above conclusions could not have been drawn on the basis of the London Manuscript. By a fortunate coincidence, the Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript displays the text of the Song of the Sea and its context, thereby providing crucial evidence. The minor differences between AS and the early codices are explicable, in-

⁶³ In many biblical texts found in Qumran, there are more radical orthographic, morphological and/or grammatical discrepancies from the Masoretic text. 4QExod^c reads **באלים** for **באלם** (15:11), **ירגונו** for **וירגונו** (15:14), **אימה** for **אימתה** (15:16), **תביאם ותטעם** for **תבאמו ותטעמו** (15:17) etc. Cf. *DJD* 7, 100–2, 117–19. In the Masoretic tradition, including AS, the forms and spellings are more conservative.

cluding the deviating arrangement of the five written lines under the text of the Song of the Sea. Finally, the two surviving sheets of AS prove beyond doubt that the goal of the Tiberian Masoretes was not to innovate, but to preserve the finest textual traditions that they knew.

**APPENDIX 1: THE MANUSCRIPTS AND
THEIR ABBREVIATIONS**

- AS Ashkar-Gilson Manuscript & London Manuscript, Exodus, seventh or eighth-century C.E.
- BS Scroll Bologna University Library, complete Torah, *ca.* 1155–1225 C.E.
- ES Sheet of Torah Scroll, Loewentheil collection, Exodus, tenth or eleventh-century C.E.
- BP Codex British Museum Or. 4445, Pentateuch, late ninth or early tenth-century C.E.
- DP Damascus Pentateuch, late tenth-century C.E.
- GP Firkovitch II.17, Pentateuch, 929–930 C.E.
- AC Aleppo Codex, Tenakh, *ca.* 925–935 C.E.
- LC Leningrad Codex, Tenakh, 1008–1009 C.E.
- SC Sassoon 1053, Tenakh, tenth-century C.E.

APPENDIX 2: ASHKAR-GILSON MANUSCRIPT
INFRARED PHOTO

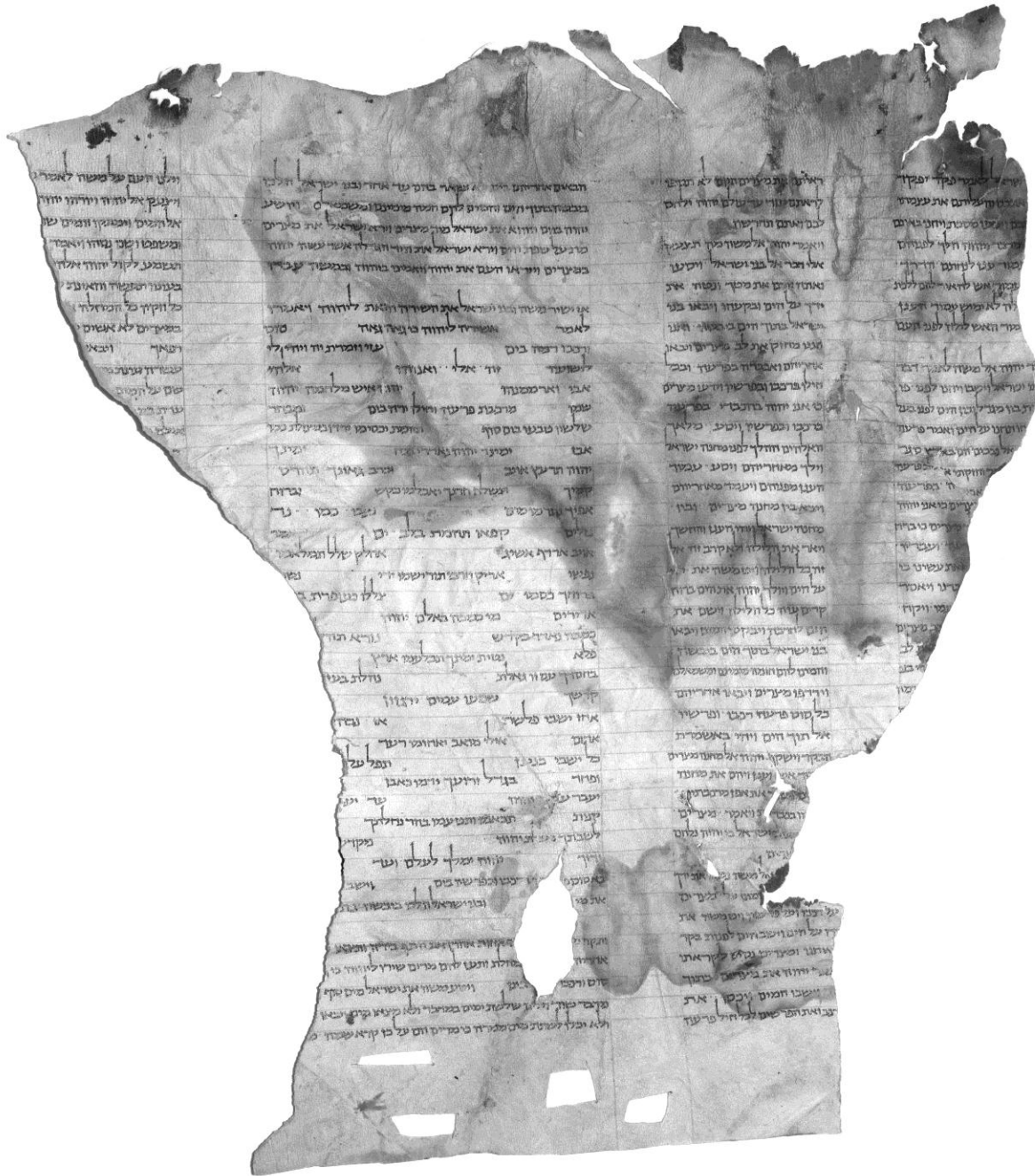


Plate 2: Ashkar-Gilson Hebrew Manuscript #2, photography by M. Maggen (Israel Museum, Jerusalem), reduced size.

APPENDIX 3: THE BOLOGNA SCROLL



Plate 3: The Song of the Sea in the Bologna Scroll.
 Courtesy of Mauro Perani, Bologna University Library