The Ortographic Irregularities in the Manuscript M1 of the Library of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid *

M.ª J. de AZCÁRRAGA
CSIC, Madrid

INTRODUCTION

The manuscript M1 of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid contains a vast quantity of masoretic information in all its margins. This information is sometimes difficult to decipher, because in some pages the masorah is composed in twisted drawings with tiny and deformed letters. Although the scribe was very precise writing the masorah, sometimes he made mistakes that we have not yet been able to evaluate in their entirety; for these reasons, I have chosen a very specific and restricted subject. I will analyze the ortographic irregularities and their masoroth in the manuscript M1, and compare the texts and their masoroth with those of the oldest manuscripts, such as Aleppo (A), Cairo (C), and Leningrad (L).

For this analysis, I have divided the ortographic irregularities into three groups:

1) Irregularities which appear in all the manuscripts and are supported by masoroth which are uniform in their content, but not in their form: dotted words, suspended letters, and inverted nūn.

* This paper was presented in the XIVth Congress of International Organization of Masoretic Studies (IOMS) (Oslo, August 4, 1998).
2) Irregularities increasing over the passage of time, hardly attested to in the oldest manuscripts, whose masoroth are different in content and length: large and small letters.

3) There are other irregularities, such as broken letters, curved letters, joined qôfin, and others. But as these peculiarities do not appear in our manuscript, I will not study them in this paper.

I will begin with the first group. The dotted words, suspended letters, and inverted nûnîn are remains of very old textual corrections. These cases have been interpreted differently in the rabbinic literature, and it can be deduced that the rabbis explained these cases more from an exegetical point of view than from a textual perspective. The masorah mentions these cases, but as usual, only indicates the number of times and places where they appear: fifteen passages in the case of the dotted words, ten times in the Torah, four in the Prophets, and one in the Writings; four passages in the case of a suspended letter, that is, written above the line; and nine passages in which a nûn hafûkâ or an nûn menuzeret is used, that is, the letter nûn written inverted or isolated, a characteristic similar to our brackets.

1. DOTTED WORDS

As is well known, of the three manuscripts mentioned before, Aleppo, Cairo, and Leningrad, the L manuscript is the only one which contains the entire Bible. In the Aleppo manuscript we only have six of the fifteen cases; we do not

---

1 Yosef ALBO, Sefer ha-Ikkarim ..., ed. I. HUSIK, with a Translation and Notes, 4 vols. (Philadelphia 1946) vol. III pp. 200-201, explains the dotted words immediately after the Scribes' corrections and offers an intermediate solution: «... Similarly we must explain the dots which we find in the Torah over the word גֶּהָ נֶב in the verse, “Whom Moses and Aaron numbered” (unto us and to our children, Num. 3,39), and in other passages. The word in question remains in the text, and the dot indicates something intermediate between retaining the word and deleting it.

2 S. FRENSDORFF, Sefer Ochlah W’Ochlah (Hannover 1864) § 96.

3 FRENSDORFF Ochlah § 160.

4 FRENSDORFF Ochlah § 179.

have the five cases of *Genesis* and the four of *Numbers*. In the Cairo Codex, obviously, we only have the four cases of the Prophets. In the fifteen, six, and four passages which I have just mentioned, the three manuscripts coincide in marking all the passages listed in the masorah with points.

Concerning the text, the manuscript M1, which contains the entire Bible, coincides with the Masorah of the 'Oklalah in having the same dotted letters in thirteen passages. M1 differs from the 'Oklalah in two cases. In Deut 29:28, as in the A manuscript, only setzen are dotted, but not theם of טنز. In Ps 27:13, M1 differs from the 'Oklalah, L and A manuscripts in marking the dots in תנן only above.

Concerning the masoroth, the manuscripts have more differences. In A and L, there is no MM of the dotted words. In C there is a MM in 2 Sam 19:20 which says «ten cases in the Torah, four cases in the Prophets, and one in the Writings», and gives the fifteen words or groups of words without simanim. L has MP in fourteen of the fifteen cases. It only lacks in Deut 29:28. The information is very simple: «dotted» 6, «ten cases dotted in the Torah» 7, «fifteen cases dotted» 8, «one case dotted above and below» 9. A does not have MP in the case of Deut 29:28, but it has it in the four cases of the Prophets and in the case of Psalms. In 2 Sam 19:20 it is written «dotted», and in the other three cases it is written «four cases in the Prophets». In the case of Psalms, the masorah of A and L says «dotted above and below». In short, the masoretic information is more concise and laconic than usual.

M1 is also concise and laconic in some of the places containing information on the dotted words. In Appendix I, where some masoretic rubrics of each book are given, it is written that there are five dotted words in *Genesis*, four in *Numbers*, and one in *Deuteronomy* 10. The MPs give the number of cases in general and/or specifying the sections: fifteen, ten, four, and one. The MMs in 2 Sam 19:20 and *Isa* 44:9 give the number of cases and the simanim, as usual.

---

8 2 Sam 19:20; Isa 44:9; Ezek 46:22.
9 Ps 27:13.
10 Fol. 83v, 2r and 3v cols.
Concerning the information of the dotted words analyzed so far, I agree with Ginsburg’s opinion that «All the information which the puzzled student gets in the margin of the MSS, and the printed text against each of these enigmatic expressions is that the letter or word in question has an extraordinary point. And yet these points are of supreme importance inasmuch as they exhibit the earliest result of textual criticism on the part of the Scribes. The record on this point has been transmitted in several of the post-Biblical writings» 11.

In both Appendix IV and in the MMs of Gen 37:12 and Num 9:10, we find not only the fifteen passages of the dotted words, but also the reasons for these dots in the ten passages of the Pentateuch, according to the traditional explanations of the rabbinic scholars 12. The information given in the MM of Num 9:10 and in Appendix IV is practically identical, but the MM of Gen 37:12 has some differences. In order to analyze these differences, I will refer to the MM of Numbers and to the MM of Genesis.

The MM of Genesis follows the order of the passages of the Pentateuch. Each passage is introduced by the expression ka-yôše’bô, as we find in the 'Abôt dê-R. Natan (ARN) 13, Sîfrê 14, and Numbers Rabbâ 15. In the Prophets, the masorah changes the order, and places Ezek 41:20 before Isa 44:9.

The MM of Numbers follows the order of the passages of the Prophets, but changes the order of the verses of the Pentateuch, and Gen 19:33 is placed before Gen 18:9. There are no introductory words. After each lemma it is written «[the word] is dotted to teach [something]» or «because ...».

12 GINSBURG Introduction p. 331: «The Talmud and the Midrashim do not discuss the four passages which have the extraordinary points in the Prophets ...».
The MM of *Genesis* informs that the second ה of בָּרִי הָאָרוֹן (Gen 18:9) is dotted to indicate that Sarah spoke against Agar, not against Abraham. We find this explanation in the *ARN* and *NumR*. The MM of *Numbers* says that Sarah’s life was reduced by forty-eight years. This interpretation is mentioned in *Genesis Rabbâ* 16, but the midrash reaches this conclusion not from the fact that the ה is dotted, but from the fact that the ה is not written.

The MM of *Genesis* says that «the dots over וה in Gen 18:9 indicate that they visited her». The MM of *Numbers* informs that הוה is dotted, and adds «some interpreters say that the dots must be over וה, and this is because the angels knew where Sarah was, and there was no reason to ask for it». The traditional interpretation of the MM of *Genesis* is closer to the interpretation of the Talmud, «the Torah thereby taught etiquette, that a man must enquire of his hostess [of his host]» 17. The MM of *Numbers* suggests that the dots must be over וה ‘where?’, and this interpretation is closer to that of *Sifré* and *ARN*. The theories about the place of the dots and the reasons for them show that the text, and also the commentary, has been modified with the passage of time. The *Sifré* is the oldest document which gives information about these dots, and simply says that the sentence is dotted, without specifying which letters or words are pointed.

Both the MM of *Genesis* and the MM of *Numbers* coincide in saying that the ה of התאומים of the elder daughter (Gen 19:33) is dotted. The MM of *Genesis* says: «the middle ה is dotted». The MM of *Numbers* affirms: «the second ה is dotted», because Lot realized when she arose. Both masoroth are similar to the explanation of the *Sifré*, «he knew when she arose» 18. In

17 *TB-Baba Mêši’a* 87a.
18 *Sifré débé Rab*, ed. M. FRIEDMANN (Vienna 1864) § 69, p. 185. However, PÉREZ SIFRE translates «el punto está sobre תואומים», following the *Sifré d’Rab*, ed H. S. HOROVITZ (Leipzig 1917; Jerusalem 1966) the *Editio Princeps* (Venecia 1546, Jerusalem 1970), and the Ms Vat 32, the best manuscript according to him. Even though we see different interpretations in *TB-Nazîr* 23a, *Rasi*, *Pêrâd ’al ha-Torâ* (Gen 19:33); *GenR*. 51 § 8, and *Zohar*, *parâša כוּנֵי* p. 110a, all these texts agree that the dotted letter is the ה of התאומים, which refers to the eldest daughter.
Appendix IV, the MM says שבועה לא ידע המקדש ולא ידע therefore, the scribe appoints the word לא to indicate that he has repeated it by mistake.

Both the MM of Genesis and the MM of Numbers agree that öff (Gen 33:4) has a dot over each letter, «because it was not a kiss of peace». The MM of Numbers adds «but of cunning» 19.

Both masoroth agree that the word ו (Gen 37:12) is dotted to indicate that «they did not go to feed their flock (Gen), but to feed themselves (Num); they went to eat, drink, and enjoy themselves» 20.

There is a total coincidence in the information of both masoroth on Num 3:39, Num 9:10, and Num 21:30. On Num 3:39, they say that «Aaron was not of those who numbered». On Num 9:10, both masoroth mention the interpretation of ARN and R. Eliezer: «beyond the threshold of the Temple court» 21. On Num 21:30, both masoroth follow the ARN and coincide verbatim that «the ו is dotted to indicate that they destroyed the people, but did not destroy the cities» 22. Both masoroth agree that ו (Num 29:15) is dotted to indicate that there was only one-tenth; but the wording of MM of Genesis is similar to the ARN, and that of MM of Numbers is closer to the Talmud 23.

The differences between the MM of Genesis and the MM of Numbers on Deut 29:28 are notable. The MM of Genesis dots the ו of ו. As I mentioned before, this word is not dotted in M1 and א 24. The MM of Genesis explains the dots over ו according to the opinion of R. Yehudah that «Israel was not punished until they had crossed the Jordan» 25. It is absolutely necessary to consider that the dots are over the

19 Cf. also GenR., 78 § 9; L. F. GIRÓN BLANC, Midrás Cantar de los Cantares Rabbá (Estella 1991) 7,5, p. 173; Zohar, paraša ו, p. 171.
20 The MM of Genesis expresses them with the verb in active voice, as the ARN, and the MM of Numbers in reflexive voice, as GenR. 84 § 13.
21 TB-Péahim 93a.
22 According to TB-Baba ’ Batra ’79b: «... to Nofa ... until a fire comes ...» it can be deduced that in some texts the ו has been deleted.
23 TB-Ménahot 87b.
24 In ALBO Ikkarim the ו of ו is neither dotted.
25 TB-Sanhedrin 43b.
word י to give this explanation. The MM of Numbers only dots the words י and י and omits, perhaps inadvertently, the commentary on this passage. However, it gives the general explanation of the dotted letters of the Torah, which coincides with that of the ARN and NumR. These midrashim give this explanation after their commentary on Deuteronomy. This explanation says: «Some say: what do these points signify? Now Ezra declares: If Elias would come and say to me, why have you written them? I will answer I have already furnished them with points. But if he would say: you have written them correctly, then I will readily erase the points on them». The MM of Genesis gives this general information after the lemma of Psalms, but it gives no explanation on the case of Psalms. There is a curious variant. The text of the midrash mentions Elias as the person to whom Ezra should speak, whereas the MM of Genesis refers to Moses, and the MM of Numbers to Adam. If the MM of Genesis had referred to Adam and that of Numbers to Moses, we should think of a lapse of the scribe, since Moses and Adam play important roles in the corresponding books of Numbers and Genesis.

Both masoroth say «four in the Prophets», and add the four dotted words of 2 Sam 19:20, Isa 44:9, Ezek 41:20, and Ezek 46:22, but they are two different lists.

There are also differences between both masoroth on Ps 27:13. The MM of Numbers only refers to the dotted word and adds its siman. The MM of Genesis affirms that the word י have dots above and below, except the י. This masorah coincides with those of A, L, and the 'Oklah. The masorah does not give the reason for the dotted letters 26, but simply refers to the explanation of Ezra mentioned before.

2. SUSPENDED LETTERS

According to the masorah 27, there are four passages in which a suspended letter is written. This cases are the following: the י of לם ר emphas (Judg 18:30), and the י of לי of ר (Ps 80:14), (Job 38:13), and רמדא (Job 38:15). The texts of M1, Aleppo and

26 Cf. TB-Brakhot 4a.
27 FRENSDORFF Ochlah § 160.
Leningrad (Cairo also in *Judg* 18:30) have the suspended letter in these four cases, but their masoroth differ. The A manuscript has MP in the four passages and MM in *Job* 38. In this last case the MM says «four suspended letters», and gives the four words with the suspended letters. L has MP in the passages of *Psalms* and *Judges*, and an incorrect MM in *Job* 38. The *simanim* of *Psalms* and *Judges* are correct, but in the case of *Job* 38:13 says רְאוֹיִרְוָו join with both ב suspended. L omits the *siman* of *Job* 38:15, which is precisely the case with MP. C has MP and MM in *Judg* 18:30 and coincides with A in giving only the four words having the suspended letter. In every case, the masoretic information is very simple.

The MP of *Judg* 18:30 (ר אַתָּה יָתָנָה) is the same in M1, A, L, and C. The MP of *Job* 38:15 is the same in M1, A, and L. M1 coincides with L in lacking the masorah of *Job* 38:13, and differs from A and L in the masorah of *Ps* 80:14. In this last case, the masorah of M1 does not say that the ב is suspended, although it is in the text, but says that «ת ה of ^^םעִיר is the middle of the book in letters». This opinion is also in the Talmud. 28 M1 has no MM in the four passages, but it does have it in Appendix IV 29 of the manuscript after the exegetical explanation of the dotted words. As in the *ARN*, M1 says that the ב of *משה* (Judg 18:30) is written above the line and the ב of *משה* (Ps 80:14) is suspended. In both cases the explanation of M1 coincides with the traditional interpretation of these passages. In the case of *Judges*, the name of Moses is changed by Manasseh, so that Moses is not connected to the idolatrous worship. In the case of *Psalms*, the ב of *משה* is suspended to indicate that the beast will come from the forest (^^םעִיר) or from the river (^^סָּפָּר), that is, it will be a strong beast or a weak beast out of its natural environment, according to Israel behaviour. There is no reference to the cases of *Job*. Yeivin 30 affirms that there is no reason for the cases of *Job* 38:13 and *Job* 38:15, and they may have originated in a correction by

28 *TB-Qiddārim* 30a.
29 Fol. 336r, 1st col.
which the ו was added above the line. Several interpretations of the passages of Job can be found in the Talmud 31.

In Appendix IV of M1 32, a masoretic list starting «there are four suspended letters» gives the four passages with their simanim.

3. THE INVERTED NUN

In the number of cases that can be compared, M1 coincides with the masorah 33 and the old manuscripts in marking the number of times that the so-called inverted or separated nun appears. Concerning the place of the inverted nun in the text, M1 coincides with L in writing it in Num 10:35-36. In the cases of Ps 107 there are differences. A marks from verses 23 to 28 and 40 with the inverted nun, L marks from verses 21 to 26 and 40, and M1 from 22 to 27 and 40. There is no masorah in these cases. I have found no information about the inverted nun in the appendices of the Madrid manuscript.

4. LARGE AND SMALL LETTERS

The three groups analyzed so far appear in all manuscripts, and are registered by the masorah. However, there are differences among the manuscripts and the masoretic lists concerning the cases of large and small letters. The reason for these differences is that there is no rule indicating the cases where a letter should be written larger or smaller than the others. It is easy to demonstrate that the frequency of such cases has increased with the passage of time. In my opinion, the reason for this is that these letters have been mixed up with other peculiar letters. For example, the suspended ו of מים (Ps 80:14) is included in some masoretic list of large letters. In some cases, it is not clear which letter of the word should be written large or small. For example, some masoroth say that the ו of ותריסים (Neh 13:30) should be written smaller, and some others say that it is the final ש that should be written smaller. Textual rules of the letters and words that

31 TB-Sanhedrin 103b.
32 Fols. 341a, 1° col. § 3.
33 Frendorff Oehlah § 179.
should be written at the beginning of a line or a page have been interpreted ambiguously; in these word, they have written one letter larger than the rest. This is the case of the letters of the siman ש ע מ ה 34 Ginsburg has registered a list of 65 large letters 35 and a list of 62 small letters 36. Hardly one third of the cases have a justification.

In the Cairo Codex there is no case of large letters, and there are only three cases of the small final . In the Aleppo and Leningrad manuscripts, we find only a few cases of large and small letters, but in M1 the number of cases is larger.

In A, the ה of י—Iהו (Deut 32:6) is the only letter written large and separated. This letter is also written like this in M1. In L, this ה is written in the same size and joined to י—Iהו by maqqef: י—Iהו. In the Leningrad manuscript in the passage of the ש (Deut 6:4), the γ of the word ש ע מ ה is written large, and the δ of ש ע מ ה is written in the same size, but in thick, heavy lines, as in boldface. In M1 this γ is written the same, but its masorah indicates that it is «the only case of a large δ». We will see later that there are more differences between the masoretic lists and the text itself.

Concerning the small letters, A, C, L, and M1 coincide in writing the three final ניינ of Isa 44:14, Jer 39:13, and Prov 16:28 (obviously not in C) small. These cases are registered in the masorah in a list different 37 from the one listing the cases of small letters alphabetically. These passages are the only cases which inform of the existence of small letters in the three oldest manuscripts. Their masorah says: «ו נ ע י ד ר י ג נ».

According to the text of M1, there are thirteen large letters: The δ of ניינ (Lev 13:33); the ה of י—Iהו (Deut 32:6); the ה of ו (Esth 1:6); the ג of י—Iהו (Eccl 7:1); the נ of י—Iהו (Num...
14:17; the כ of הכים (Ps 80:16); the כ ofETH (Deut 29:27); the כ of בנה (Prov 1:1); the כ of טפתר (Num 27:5); the כ of סרו (Eccl 12:13); the כ of שפם (Deut 6:4); the כ of ט (Ps 84:4); and the כ of ESTHAM (Esth 9:29). There are eight small letters: the כ of רבד וה (Lev 1:1); the כ of בראס (Gen 2:4); the כ of אשת (Esth 9:9); the כ of שטח (Deut 32:18); the כ of לוחמה (Gen 23:2); and the כ of ארח (Isa 44:14), of גורם (Prov 16:28), and of גמשוב (Jer 39:13).

According to its MP, there are 22 large letters and 9 small letters. According to the MM at the beginning of Genesis, there are 23 large letters and 27 small letters. According to the MM of Deut 32:6 there are 24 large letters and 25 small letters. There are discrepancies among all the masoroth of M1, 'Oklah 38, and Ben Hayyim 39. However, all the letters written small and large in M1 are listed in their two MMs. They are also listed in almost all the other lists 40.

The manuscript M1 gives a significant example of the chaos of this point in the MM of Deuteronomy: in the alphabetic list of small letters, the word נっこ (Esth 9:9) is alphabetised in the כ and in the כ. In this last place, the masorah affirms that some interpreters say that the כ should be written larger. In some alphabetic list of large letters, the word נっこ is alphabetised in the place of the כ, which, according to the Talmud, «must be lengthened like a boat-pole of the river Libruth» 41. To analyze the coincidences and discrepancies among the masoroth would take a long time, and it would not clarify what letters should be written small or large.

After the analysis of the extraordinary letters in the manuscript M1, I have come to the following provisional conclusions: The text of M1 is similar to that of the oldest manuscripts. In the extraordinary dots of Deut 29:28 and in the large and separate כ of Deut 32:6, M1 coincides with A and

---

38 FRENSDORFF Ochlah §§ 82-83 (large letters); § 84 (small letters).
39 J. BEN HAYYIM, Biblia Rabbinica, A Reprint of the 1525 Venice Edition (Jerusalem 1972) at the beginning of Genesis and Chronicles (large letters); at the beginning of Leviticus, and in the MF, letter כ (small letters).
41 TB-Megil-lâ 16a; TB-Baba' Mesi' a 87a; TB-Söferîm, chapter XIII § 7.
differs from L. Regarding the masoroth, the differences are notable. All the masoretic information collected with the passage of time is gathered in M1 in their margins and in their appendices. Although the masoroth are not always identical, their information is truthful, as we see in the case of the MMs of the dotted words. Concerning the case of the small and large letters, I should say that the traditional sentence «maso-ret se'yag la-Torâ» is inverted. In spite of its masorah, the text of M1 has protected itself from the invasion of small and large letters.

RESUMEN

En este artículo he estudiado algunas de las grafías extraordinarias en el texto del manuscipto M1 de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Estas son: las letras o palabras punteadas, las letras suspendidas, los nûnîn invertidos y las letras de mayor y menor tamaño que las de su contexto. Así mismo he analizado las masorah de estos casos y he comparado el texto y las masorah de M1 con las de los más antiguos manuscritos bíblicos: Alepo, Cairo y Leningrad.

SUMMARY

In this paper, I study some orthographic irregularities of the text of the manuscript M1 of the Library of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. These are the cases of extraordinary points, suspended letters, inverted nuns, and large and small letters. I also analyze the masoroth of these cases, and compare them with those of the oldest manuscripts: Aleppo, Cairo, and Leningrad.