

Masoretic Notations of Personal Names

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Of the approximately fifteen-hundred personal names in the Hebrew Bible the Masorah designates only ninety or so with a notation that they are personal names. The reason why the Masorah selects these ninety names for special mention is because they are all homonyms. They have the same form, same consonants and vowels as other words, and thus are liable to be confused with those words. This article will survey the usages of Masoretic personal name notations, examine the type of names covered by these notations, and explore names that are selected because of specific accents or spelling. One of the surprising results of our analysis of the Masoretic personal naming notes is the discovery that the Masoretes had identified a name that has been ignored by modern scholarship.

KEYWORDS: Masorah; Hebrew Bible; Homonyms; Book of Chronicles; Leningrad Codex; Genealogies.

NOTAS MASORÉTICAS DE ANTROPÓNIMOS.— De los aproximadamente quinientos nombres propios que aparecen en la Biblia hebrea, sólo en noventa casos hay una anotación masorética que indica que lo son. La razón por la que la Masora selecciona estos noventa nombres es porque todos son homónimos, es decir, tienen la misma forma, las mismas consonantes y vocales que otras palabras y, por lo tanto, pueden ser confundidos con ellas. Este artículo examina los usos de las anotaciones masoréticas sobre los nombres propios, el tipo de nombres que tienen anotaciones de este tipo, y estudia los nombres que se seleccionan debido a su ortografía o a sus acentos específicos. Uno de los resultados más importantes del análisis de las anotaciones masoréticas sobre nombres propios es el descubrimiento de que los masoretas ya habían identificado como tal un nombre que ha pasado desapercibido a los investigadores modernos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Masora; Biblia hebrea; homónimos; Libro de Crónicas; Códice de Leningrado; genealogías.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Of the approximately fifteen-hundred personal names in the Hebrew Bible the Masorah designates only ninety or so with a notation that they are personal names.¹ The reason why the Masorah selects these ninety names for special mention is because they are all homonyms.² They have the same form, same consonants and vowels as other words, and thus are liable to be confused with those words. For example, the personal name **Mispar**, one of the returning Judean exiles (Ezra 2:2), might be confused with the common word מִסְפָּר ‘number.’ **Anan**, one of the signatories of Nehemiah’s covenant (Neh 10:27), might be confused with the common word עָנָן ‘cloud.’ And **Ephod**, one of those chosen by Moses to allot the division of the land (Num 34:23), might be confused with the term אֶפֶד, the priestly ephod garment.

This article will survey the usages of Masoretic personal name notations in both the Masorah parva and Masorah magna,³ examine the type of names covered by these notations, explore names that are selected because of specific accents or spelling, and will show that the Masoretes had identified a name that has been ignored by modern scholarship.

The Masorah has two ways of noting personal names. The first is by commenting on the actual name by stating how many times it occurs as the name of a person. The standard formula is: ל שם אנוש ‘unique as the name of a person,’⁴ or ב שם אנוש ‘twice as the name of a person.’ Thus **Sheber**, a Judean listed in the genealogies of the book of Chronicles (1 Chr 2:48), has a note ל שם אנוש ‘unique as the name of a person,’ thereby

¹ Many other names have masoretic notations, but these are primarily notations regarding number of occurrences or spelling. Most of these types of notations may be found in Solomon FRENSDORFF, *The Massorah Magna* (Hannover, 1876; repr., New York: Ktav, 1968) pp. 261-326.

² However, not all personal names that have homonyms are given naming notes. For example, there are no naming for the following personal names found in Chronicles genealogies although they are homonyms of common words: **Allon** (1 Chr 4:37 = אֵלוֹן ‘an oak tree’), **Ur** (1 Chr 11:35 = אֹר ‘fire’), **Ahi** (1 Chr 5:15 = אָחִי ‘brother of’), **Naarah** (1 Chr 4:5 = נַעֲרָה ‘girl’), and many more.

³ Except where noted all references are to the Masoretic notes in the Leningrad Codex.

⁴ There are also variants נש ברנש, or גבר for a man, and אתה, אנת, or נקבה for a woman.

contrasting his name with its homonym, the more common word שָׁבֵר 'breach' or 'grain.' Or **Mehir**, another Judean listed in these Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 4:11), has the same note ל שם אִנְשׁ 'unique as the name of a person,' contrasting his name with its homonym the common noun מְחִיר 'price.' Similarly, **Rehob**, one of the signatories of Nehemiah's covenant (Neh 10:12), has the identical note ל שם אִנְשׁ 'unique as the name of a person,' contrasting his name with its homonym the common noun רְחוֹב 'a street.' This formulation with slight variation is by far the most common, and is attached to over half of the personal names.

The second way that the Masorah notes personal names is by doing the reverse. It lists the number of occurrences of the more common word, then states that a personal name also has this form. The standard formula for this type of naming is: וְכֹל שֵׁם בְּרִנְשׁ דְּכֹוֹת 'twice, and similarly all occurrences of personal names.' For example, there is a note at 1 Sam 26:20 on the word פְּרָעֵשׁ 'a flea' that it occurs twice, in addition to times when it is the personal name **Parosh**. This personal name **Parosh** occurs six times in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. There is a **Parosh** who was one of the returnees from exile (Ezra 2:3; 8:3; 10:25), and another **Parosh**, who was one of the signatories of Nehemiah's covenant (Neh 10:15). Thus, this personal name **Parosh** is a homonym of the word פְּרָעֵשׁ meaning 'a flea.'

Another example is at Ruth 3:13 where there is a note on the verbal form יִגְאֵל 'he will redeem' that it occurs once, in addition to times when it is the personal name **Igal**. The note reads ל וְכֹל שׁוֹם בְּרִנְשׁ 'unique and similarly every personal name.' This personal name **Igal** occurs three times. There is an **Igal**, who was one of the spies from the tribe of Issachar (Num 13:7), there was an **Igal** who was one of David's heroes (2 Sam 23:36), and an **Igal** listed in the Chronicles genealogies as a distant descendant of David (1 Chr 3:22). The personal name **Igal** is thus the homonym of the verbal form יִגְאֵל 'he will redeem.'

The vast majority of these personal name notations occur in the Masorah parva (Mp) notes, but a few of them are included in the notes of the Masorah magna (Mm). For example, at Joel 2:2 there is a Mm note on the verbal form יִזְסֵף 'he will or may he increase' that reads:⁵

⁵ See Gérard E. WEIL, *Massorah Gedolah* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971) §3038A.

יִסַּף <i>three times plene</i>	יוסף ג' מל
For that which he was remiss (... he shall add, יִסַּף, Lev 5:16)	1 ואת אשר חטא
And it shall never happen again (יִסַּף, Joel 2:2)	2 ואחריו לא יוסף [יוסף]
May the Lord increase his people (יִסַּף, 1 Chr 21:3)	3 יוסף יהוה על עמו
And similarly every personal name (יִסַּף, Joseph)	וכל שם דכותהון

The note observes that the verbal form יִסַּף occurs three times plene, that is, with a *waw*, and these three forms are listed in the Mm note. At the end of the list there is an additional notation to the effect that this form יִסַּף (with a *waw*) is also the normal spelling for the personal name **Joseph**. So, the personal name **Joseph**, that occurs almost two-hundred times in the Bible, is a homonym of the verbal form יִסַּף meaning ‘he shall increase’ or ‘may he increase.’

Another example is in a Mm note at 2 Kgs 6:5 on the verbal form פֶּשַׁל a passive participle meaning ‘borrowed’ or ‘lent.’⁶

פֶּשַׁל <i>twice, and their references are:</i>	פֶּשַׁל ב' וסימנהון
All (his) days ... he is lent (פֶּשַׁל) to the Lord (1 Sam 1:28)	1 כל הימים ... פֶּשַׁל ליהוה
(As one of them was) felling a trunk, the iron (ax head fell into the water. He cried aloud, ‘Alas, master, it was borrowed, פֶּשַׁל, 2 Kgs 6:5)	2 מפיל הקורה ואת הברזל
And similarly every personal name (פֶּשַׁל, Saul)	וכל שם ברנש דכותהון

The Mm note states that the verbal form פֶּשַׁל occurs twice in the meaning of ‘borrowed’ or ‘lent’ but that every personal name also has the same form פֶּשַׁל. This personal name is, of course, **Saul** whose name occurs more than three-hundred times in the Bible. The homonym of **Saul** is thus the *qal* passive participle form פֶּשַׁל meaning ‘borrowed’ or ‘lent.’

Sometimes in a Mm note the reference where the personal name occurs in a list is specified by a phrase such as ‘one is a personal name’ or ‘the last one is a personal name. An example of such a naming note stating that

⁶ See WEIL, *Massorah Gedolah*, §2075.

one name in the list is a personal name is in the Mm notation at Gen 4:4 on the form וְהֶבֶל. The note reads that the form וְהֶבֶל occurs three times:⁷

וְהֶבֶל <i>three times</i>	והבל ג
and Abel (וְהֶבֶל) likewise brought (Gen 4:4)	1 והבל הביא גם הוא
I have spent my strength for naught and vanity (וְהֶבֶל) (Isa 49:4)	2 לתהו והבל כחי כליתי
Grace is deceptive, And illusory (וְהֶבֶל) is beauty (Prov 31:30)	3 שקר החן והבל היפי
One (וְהֶבֶל Abel) is a personal name	חד שם אנש

In the second and third references of this note from Isa 49:4 and Prov 31:30 the form וְהֶבֶל means ‘and vanity’ ‘and illusory,’ but the first reference וְהֶבֶל refers to the personal name **Abel**. The last line of the note חד שם אנש lit. ‘one is a personal name,’ is where the Masorah confirms that the personal name וְהֶבֶל **Abel** is in one of the above three references. That is, in the verse cited as first in the list from Gen 4:4, וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא גַם הוּא, ‘and **Abel** (וְהֶבֶל) likewise brought,’ the form וְהֶבֶל refers to the personal name **Abel**.⁸

An example of a naming note stating that the last name in the list is a personal name is in the Mm on the form פְּרֵשׁ at 1 Chr 7:16.⁹

פְּרֵשׁ <i>three times</i>	פרש ג
I will strew dung (פְּרֵשׁ) on your faces (Mal 2:3 ^a)	1 וזריתי פרש על פניכם
Twice in it (the dung פְּרֵשׁ of your festal sacrifices, Mal 2:3 ^b)	2 בָּבוּ
She called his name (Peresh , פְּרֵשׁ, 1 Chr 7:16)	3 ותקרא שמו
The last is a personal name (פְּרֵשׁ, Peresh)	בתרי שום גבר

⁷ See WEIL, *Massorah Gedolah*, §26.

⁸ The form consists of the personal name **Abel** plus the *waw* cj. (וְהֶבֶל). Some other names that are included in the notes with a *waw* cj. are: va-**Ahuzzath** (וְאַחֲזָת), an ally of Abimelech, King of Gerar (Gen 26:26) [in the Rabbinic Bible]; ve-**Amal** (וְעַמְלָל), an Ashurite (1 Chr 7:35); u-**Barak** (וּבְרַק), Deborah’s army general (Judg 4:16, etc. [see the Mm in M^A at Job 20:25 גַּם שְׁמֵי אֲנָשׁ ‘three times, twice as the name of a person’]); u-**Beracah** (וּבְרַכְיָה), one of David’s warriors (1 Chr 12:3); va-**Hod** (וְהוֹד) an Asherite (1 Chr 7:37 [in the Rabbinic Bible]); ve-**Jiphthah** (וְיִפְתָּח) one of the major judges (Judg 11:1); and many more.

⁹ See WEIL, *Massorah Gedolah*, §3186.

In this note the form פֶּרֶשׁ in the first two references in the list from Mal 2:3 signifies the noun פֶּרֶשׁ ‘dung,’ whereas the third reference in the list from 1 Chr 7:16 represents the personal name **Peresh**, a person from the tribe of Manasseh listed in the Chronicles genealogies. The end of the Masoretic note accordingly states: בתרי שום גבר ‘the last is a personal name.’

2. TYPE OF NAMES

The personal names that the Masorah observes in its naming notes range from the royal to the ordinary. Some of the royal names noted are: **Amon** (אַמּוֹן), King of Judah, **Hadar** (הַדָּר ‘splendor of’), King of Edom (Gen 36:39), **Reba** (רֵבֵעַ), King of Midian (Num 31:8; Josh 13:21 [the note is at 1 Sam 9:8]), and **Rehob** (רְחוֹב), King of Zobah (2 Sam 8:3; 8:12 [in the Aleppo Codex]).

Many obscure names are homonyms of very common Hebrew words. These include **Hod** (הוֹד) ‘glory,’ an Asherite (1 Chr 7:37 [in the Rabbinic Bible]), **Ir** (עִיר) ‘a city,’ a Benjaminite (1 Chr 7:12 [in the Rabbinic Bible]), **Heleb** (חֶלֶב) ‘fat,’ one of King David’s thirty select warriors (2 Sam 23:29), and **Tikvah** (תִּקְוָה) ‘hope,’ father-in-law of the prophetess Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14 [in the Aleppo Codex]), and ancestor of one of Ezra’s aides (Ezra 10:15).¹⁰

However, some personal names noted are homonyms of rarer words. For example, the homonym of **Shua**, father-in-law of Judah (Gen 38:2; 38:12), is the rare form שׁוּעַ ‘cry for help’ (Job 30:24); that of Adam’s son **Seth** (Gen 4:25, etc.) is שֵׁת, either Hebrew ‘buttocks’ (Isa 20:4) or Aramaic ‘six’ (Ezra 6:15); and that of **Tahash**, son of the concubine of Nahor (Gen 22:24), is תַּחַשׁ ‘a dolphin skin’ (Num 4:6; 4:14).

¹⁰ And many more such as **Chelub** (כְּלוּב ‘basket,’ ‘bird cage’), father of the person appointed by David to be in charge of the royal vineyards (1 Chr 27:26); **Mahol** (מַחּוּל ‘dance’), one of the legendary wise men in Solomon’s day (1 Kgs 5:11); **Mirmah** (מִרְמָה ‘deceit’), a Benjaminite (1 Chr 8:10 [in the Aleppo Codex]); and **Zeror** (צְרוֹר ‘bag or pebble’), great-grandfather of King Saul (1 Sam 9:1).

3. WOMEN'S NAMES

A number of women's names are included in the naming notes. They include the well-known names of **Michal** (מִיכַל 'a container or collection of water'), **Rahab** (רַחַב 'wide'), **Ritzpah** (רִצְפָּה 'a glowing coal'), **Sarah** (שָׂרָה 'he strove') and **Shiphrah** (שִׁפְרָה '[winds] became fair [were calmed], Job 26:13), as well as lesser known names such as **Abi** (אֲבִי 'father of'), mother of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 18:2), **Abijah** (אֲבִיָּה), another name for the mother of Hezekiah (2 Chr 29:1) and wife of a Judean in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 2:24), and **Chodesh** (חֹדֶשׁ 'a month'), a Benjaminite wife in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 8:9). It is noteworthy that the name **Abijah** is also a man's name, such as **Abijah**, King of Judah. Paralleling this phenomenon is the fact that the common woman's name **Miriam** (מִרְיָם) is designated as a man's name for a Judean in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 4:17), a fact not always recognized in many modern commentaries.¹¹

4. HOMONYMOUS DOUBLETS

Some personal names and their homonyms only occur twice, once as a personal name and once as a homonym in a noun or verbal form. These types of names are called homonymous doublets, and are described in Masoretic notes with the notation בְּוִבְתָּרִי לִישׁוֹן 'twice and in two meanings.'¹² Here are some examples of these homonymous name doublets:

¹¹ See Aaron DEMSKY, "Bitiah Daughter of Pharaoh and her Relatives in the Territory of Judah (1 Chronicles 4:15-20)," in *Tyune Mikra u-Farshanut 9: menahot yedidut ve-hoqrah le Moshe Garsi'el*, eds. Shmuel VARGON *et alii* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 2009) pp. 427-437: 434.

¹² This notation is common in various Masoretic lists designating homonymous doublets. See, for example, Solomon FRENSDORFF, *Das Buch Ochlāh W'Ochlāh (Masora)* (Hannover, 1864; repr., New York: Ktav, 1972) §59, and Aron DOTAN, "Homonymous Hapax Doublets in the Masora," *Textus* 14 (1988) pp. 131-45, and *The Awakening of Word Lore: From the Masora to the Beginnings of Hebrew Lexicography* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2005 [in Hebrew]) p. 73 and *passim*. See also Fernando DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Sefer 'Oklah wē-'Oklah – Colección de Listas de Palabras Destinadas a Conservar la Integridad del Texto Hebreo de la Biblia entre los Judíos de la Edad Media* (Madrid: CSIC, 1975) §60; Aron DOTAN, "Masora's

Beracah (וּבְרָכָה), one of David's warriors, occurs only once (1 Chr 12:3) and likewise its homonym וּבְרָכָה 'and a blessing' occurs only once (Prov 11:26). Both these forms are noted as homonymous doublets in their respective Mp notes at Prov 11:26 and 1 Chr 12:3 with the notation ב' ובתרי לישנ' 'twice and in two meanings.'

Agur (אָגוּר), an ancient wise man in the book of Proverbs (Prov 30:1) has the note ב' ובתרי לישנ' 'twice and in two meanings' (in the Rabbinic Bible), and its homonym occurs in Deut 32:27 with the meaning 'I fear.'¹³

The same formulation is to be found in a naming notation in the Mm on the name **Shiphrah**. For example, the Mm note on the word שִׁפְרָה at Job 26:13 reads as follows:¹⁴

<i>Twice, and in two meanings</i>	ב' ובתרי לישנ'
One as a personal name, and one in a meaning of pleasantness, and (their) references are:	חד שום ברנש וחד לשון נאה וסימ'
The name of one was (שִׁפְרָה) Shiphrah , Exod 1:15)	אשר שם האחת
By his wind the heavens were calmed (שִׁפְרָה, Job 26:13)	ברוחו שמים שפרה

5. NAMES THAT ARE VERBAL FORMS

Some names are homonyms of verbal forms. In addition to names already mentioned above such as **Igal** (יְגַאֵל 'he will redeem'), **Joseph**

Contribution to Biblical Studies – Revival of an Ancient Tool,” in *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007*, ed. André LEMAIER (=Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 133 [Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2010]) pp. 57-69; and Yosef OFER, *The Masora on Scriptures and Its Methods* (=Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes 7 [Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2019]) pp. 248-249.

¹³ Other examples of names with the notation ב' ובתרי לישנ' 'twice and in two meanings' are חֲרֵשׁ 'Heresh,' a Levite in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 9:15 [in the Rabbinic Bible]), whose homonym is חֲרֵשׁ 'in secret' (Josh 2:1); חֲשִׁים 'Hushim,' son of Dan (Gen 46:23 [in the Rabbinic Bible]), whose homonym is חָשִׁים 'hastening' (Num 32:17); וְטֶלֶם 'and Telem,' a gatekeeper (Ezra 10:24), whose homonym is וְטֶלֶם 'and Telem' a Judean town (Josh 15:24).

¹⁴ See WEIL, *Massorah Gedolah*, §375.

(יֹסֵף ‘he adds or will add’), **Saul** (שָׂאוּל ‘borrowed’), **Sarah** (שָׂרָה ‘he strove’), and **Shiphrah** (שִׁפְרָה ‘[winds] were calmed,’ Job 26:13), there is **Hillel**, the father of Abdon, one of the minor judges (Judg 12:13; 12:15), whose homonym is הִלֵּל ‘he praised,’ **Hushah**, a Judean in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 4:4), whose homonym is חוּשָׁה ‘hasten!’, **Shaphat**, most notably the father of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:16, etc.), whose homonym is שָׁפַט ‘he judged,’ and others of this type.

6. NAMES THAT ARE HOMONYMS OF PLACE NAMES

Some names are homonyms of place names. Thus, the homonym of **Addar** (אֲדָר), a Benjaminite listed in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 8:3), is part of the place name **Hazar-addar** (חֲזָר-אֲדָר, Num 34:4) and of the place name **Atroth-addar** (עֲטְרוֹת אֲדָר, Josh 16:5; 18:13). The homonym of **Jaakan**, an Edomite listed in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 1:42 [in the Aleppo Codex]) is part of the place name **Bene-jaakan** (Num 33:31). The homonym of **Keilah**, a Judean in the genealogies (1 Chr 4:19), is the place name קַעֲיִלָּה ‘Keilah’ (1 Sam 23:2, etc.). And the homonym of **Telem**, a gatekeeper (Ezra 10:24) is the Judean town **Telem** (תֵּלֶם, Josh 15:24).

7. HOMONYMS THAT DEPEND ON CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS

Some name notations specify that a particular form is a personal name if it has a certain accent. In that way it is distinguished from other forms that do not have this accent. An example of a personal name being distinguished from its homonym by means of accents is the name **Nathan** (נָתַן). The form נָתַן is a pausal form of the 3rd pers. masc. perfect of the verb ‘to give,’ and it occurs once with a *zaqep̄* accent at Ezek 18:16. At this Ezekiel 18 reference there is a Masoretic note that reads *אֵל זָקֵף קָמַ וְכָל שֵׁם אִנְשׁ דְּכֹרֵת* ‘unique with a *zaqep̄* accent, and similarly with every personal name.’ That is, there is only one occurrence of the form נָתַן in the meaning ‘he gave’ with a *zaqep̄* accent, but this form with a *zaqep̄* is the one elsewhere employed as a personal name נָתַן. And indeed the form נָתַן with a *zaqep̄* occurs four times as a personal name, twice with the prophet **Nathan**

(2 Sam 12:5; 12:13), once with a certain **Nathan** mentioned in the Chronicles genealogies (1 Chr 2:36), and once as the name of a brother of one of David's warriors (1 Chr 11:38). There is another occurrence of the verbal form נָתַן with an *'atnah* accent (Num 7:9) but there are no occurrences of the personal name נָתַן **Nathan** with an *'atnah* accent. It is only when the personal name has a *zaqep̄* accent that it becomes a homonym with the verbal form נָתַן with a *zaqep̄*.

Another example of a name having a different accent than its homonym is **Beerah**, a descendant of Reuben in the Chronicles genealogies, which in a naming note at 1 Chr 5:6 is distinguished from its homonym a town named 'Beer' by the placement of the accent. With the personal name the accent is on the ultimate syllable (בְּאֶרֶה), with the town name the accent is on the penultimate syllable (בְּאֶרְהַ and בְּאֶרְהָ 'to Beer').¹⁵

8. DIFFERENCES IN SPELLING WITH ITS HOMONYM

The Masoretic naming notes sometimes often a helpful explanation of the difference in spelling between a name and its homonym. At 1 Chr 1:4 on the name **Noah** (נֹחַ) there is a note which reads: כּוּל שֵׁם בֵּר נֶשׁ חֶס וְכֹל נִיחַ מִלְּכָּל 'every occurrence of the name (**Noah**) is spelled defective (that is, without a ו), whereas every form of the verb 'to be at ease' is spelled plene (that is, with a ו).' This means that every occurrence of the name **Noah** נֹחַ does not have a ו, whereas every form of its homonym from the verb נוּחַ, that is, נוּחַ does have a ו. The name **Noah** is always written without a ו (נֹחַ), whereas parallel forms of the verb נוּחַ 'to be at ease' such as כְּנוּחַ (Num 11:25; Josh 3:13), וְנוּחַ (Esth 9:16; 9:17; 9:18), or וּכְנוּחַ (Neh 9:28) are written with a ו.

In the Cairo Codex at 1 Kgs 16:21 there is a note on the name **Ginath**, who was the father of Tibni, a rival of King Omri. The note reads:

¹⁵ An apparent exception to the note stating that the homonym has the same accent as the personal name is with the 3rd pers. masc. verbal form יָדָע 'he knew.' The note on יָדָע at Isa 42:5 reads: לֹא יִקְרָא קָמַ וְכֹל שֵׁם אֲנִישׁ דְּכוּתָא 'unique with *qames* (vowel) and *zaqep̄* (accent), and similarly every personal name.' According to the note, when יָדָע has a *zaqep̄* accent it is the homonym of the personal name **Jada**, a Judean. The problem is that on the two occasions that **Jada** occurs, it does not have a *zaqep̄* accent, rather it has a *pashṭā* (יָדָע) at 1 Chr 2:32, and an *'atnah* (יָדָע) at 1 Chr 2:28.

every occurrence of the name **Ginath** is written plene (י).’ This note implies that every occurrence of **Ginath**’s homonym is written defective י. The name **Ginath** occurs twice at 1 Kgs 16:21 and 16:22 written with a י (גינת), whereas its homonym גַּנַּת ‘garden of’ occurs three times written without a י (Cant 6:11; Esth 1:5; 7:7).

9. NEW NAME

One of the surprising results of our analysis of the Masoretic personal naming notes is the discovery that the Masoretes had identified a name that has been ignored by modern scholarship. It is not to be found in any of the modern published lists of biblical names, nor is it to be found in the vast majority of translations or biblical commentaries. The name is **Aboth**, and it occurs in 1 Chr 24:31.¹⁶ The text of that verse reads:

1 Chr 24:31

<p>These too cast lots exactly as their kinsmen, the sons of Aaron, under the eye of King David and Zadok and Ahimelech and the chiefs of the clans of the priests and Levites.</p> <p>Aboth the chief exactly as his younger brother</p>	<p>וַיִּפְּלוּ גַם־הֵם גּוֹרְלוֹת לְעֹמֶת אֲחֵיהֶם בְּיַד־אֶהְרֹן לְפָנֵי דָוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ וְצָדוֹק וְאַחִימֶלֶךְ וְרֵאשֵׁי הָאֲבוֹת לַכֹּהֲנִים וְלַלְוִיִּם אֲבוֹת הָרֵאשׁ לְעֹמֶת אֲחִיו הַקָּטָן:</p>
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¹⁶ **Aboth** is not listed in the register of names in the classic book on biblical names by Martin NOTH, *Die israelitischen Personnamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemittischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart, 1928; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966). The name was recognized by FRENSDORFF in his *Masora Magna*, p. 261, and by Christian David GINSBURG in volume 4 of his monumental *Massorah* (Christian D. GINSBURG, *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts. Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged* [London, 1905; repr., New York: Ktav, 1975], Vol 4, א, §37). The only medieval commentary to take אָבוֹת as a personal name was David KIMHI [*Radak*], see Yitzhaq BERGER, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi to Chronicles* (=Brown Judaic Studies 345 [Providence, RI: Brown University, 2007]) p. 165, and the only two modern commentators that interpret אָבוֹת as a proper name in the Chronicles verse are Yehiel Hillel ALTSCHULER (18th century) in his commentary *Mešudat David*, and A. J. ROSENBERG (citing *Radak*) in his commentary on Chronicles (*Chronicles. A New English Translation* [New York: Judaica, 1992] p. 152).

This verse deals with assigning duties to a list of Levites by casting lots. All the Levites were subject to the lot, both young and old: heads of clans and younger members of clans. The point of the lots is to avoid favoritism or giving special privileges to any one party neither the head of a clan nor anyone in family, exemplified by his younger brother. The text personifies the head of a clan with a name: the name **Aboth**.

The last phrase of this verse is translated differently in many modern translations. Here are three representative English translations and commentaries.

Three modern translations of 1 Chr 24:31

JPS (1917)	‘the fathers’ houses of the chief even as those of his younger brother’ ¹⁷
Tanakh (1985)	‘on the principle of ‘chief and youngest brother alike’.’ ¹⁸
NRSV (1989)	‘the chief as well as the youngest brother’ ¹⁹

Three modern commentary translations of 1 Chr 24:31

BRAUN (1986)	‘The chief of the fathers alongside of his youngest brother’ ²⁰
JAPHET (1993)	‘These also, the head of each fathers’ house and his younger brother alike, cast lots’ ²¹
KNOPPERS (2004)	‘The ancestral head exactly as his youngest kinsman’ ²²

¹⁷ *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1917).

¹⁸ *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

¹⁹ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

²⁰ Roddy BRAUN, *I Chronicles* (= *Word Biblical Commentary* 14 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986]) p. 237.

²¹ Sara JAPHET, *I and II Chronicles* (= *Old Testament Library* [Louisville, KY: Westminster–John Knox, 1993]) p. 422.

²² Gary N. KNOPPERS, *I Chronicles 10-29* (= *Anchor Bible* 12A [New York: Doubleday, 2004]) p. 828.

None of these translations takes the phrase *ראש אבות* literally. The *Tanach* and the *NRSV* translating ‘chief’ omit *אבות* completely, whereas the *JPS* version interprets *אבות* as ‘the fathers’ houses’. The three commentators invert the phrase *ראש אבות* to *ראש האבות* ‘chief of the fathers’ (BRAUN), ‘head of each fathers house’ (JAPHET), ‘the ancestral head’ (KNOPPERS). Furthermore, JAPHET places the entire phrase at the beginning of the verse. She translates: ‘these also, the head of each fathers’ house and his younger brother alike, cast lots....’

In contradistinction to these modern scholars, the Masorah takes the word *אבות* as a personal name, and provides a standard naming note that reads *ל שום בר נש* ‘unique as a personal name.’ The homonym of **Aboth** is the plural form *אבות* ‘fathers’ that occurs twenty-eight times in the Bible. In favor of the Masoretic interpretation contextually is the fact that the modifying noun *ראש* ‘the head’ ‘the chief’ occurs numerous times in the book of Chronicles with other proper names, for example, *יואל ראש* ‘Joel the chief’ (1 Chr 5:12); *שלום ראש* ‘Shallum the chief’ (1 Chr 9:17); *עזר ראש* ‘Ezer the chief’ (1 Chr 12:10); *אסף ראש* **Asaph** the chief (1 Chr 16:5); *שבואל ראש* **Shebuel** the chief (1 Chr 23:16), etc. Also taking the modifying noun as ‘the chief’ provides a neat antithetic parallelism with *הקטן* ‘the younger’ in the second part of the verse: **Aboth**, the chief, exactly as his younger brother. The phrase represents a summing up of those who cast lots. Everyone did, including **Aboth** and his younger brother.

To sum up, the Masoretic notations of personal names in the Bible are restricted to names that are homonyms. The name notations have standard formulas and can be found in both Masorah parva and Masorah magna notes. The names selected by the Masoretes for notation ranged from royal names to ordinary ones, and included both male and female names. Some of the names were selected because of specific accents or spelling, and finally it can be seen that the Masoretes had identified the name **Aboth**, a name hitherto unrecognized by most modern scholars.

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