

A Chance Discovery: Christian David Ginsburg's Notes and Two Historic Codices

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ABSTRACT: The author purchased a copy of Christian David Ginsburg's *The Massorah* (1880-1905) and it contained thousands of mysterious handwritten numbers. It was determined by a handwriting analysis that these notes belonged to Ginsburg himself, and that he was analyzing the Masoretic material of two privately-owned codices. The first, MS Holkham 2, has been attributed to the scribe Yisrael Hasofer from Toledo, ca. 1200-1250. The second, the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, is of Sephardic origin from ca. 1300s. Both of these codices reference the now-lost Masoretic Bibles known as the Muggah and Hilleli codices.

KEYWORDS: Masorah; Toledo; Catalonia; Hilleli; Muggah; handwriting.

TÍTULO TRADUCIDO: Un descubrimiento fortuito: notas de Christian David Ginsburg y dos códices históricos.

RESUMEN: El autor adquirió una copia de *The Massorah* de Christian David Ginsburg (1880–1905) y esta tenía miles de números misteriosos escritos a mano. A través de un análisis de la letra se pudo determinar que estos apuntes eran del propio Ginsburg y que este había estado analizando el material masorético de dos códices en colecciones privadas. Primeramente, MS Holkham 2 ha sido atribuido al escribano Yisrael Hasofer de Toledo, ca. 1200–1250. El segundo, la Biblia Schottenstein española, es de origen sefardí de ca. 1300. Ambos códices hacen referencia a las Biblias masoréticas conocidas como los códices de Muggah y Hilleli (Translator: Luis A. Guzmán Valerio).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Masorah; Toledo; Cataluña; Hilleli; Muggah; notas a mano.

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1. DISCOVERY

In July 2024, I purchased a well-worn copy of Christian David Ginsburg's *The Massorah: Compiled from Manuscripts, Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged* (1880-1905; 4 vols.; London and Vienna: Carl Fromme). The opening pages contained the following statement: "Each volume has on it the name of a subscriber and a number, as well as the signature of the author. Copies without these marks will be considered pirated." This was puzzling because my copy had neither name, number, nor signature. What my copy did have, however, were pencil lines drawn alongside the margins of each page, approximately 5,000 markings in all. The second volume had shorthand notes written in the margins, and the pencil lines served as a dividing line of sorts. There were thousands of notes in the second volume but no explanation as to what they might mean.

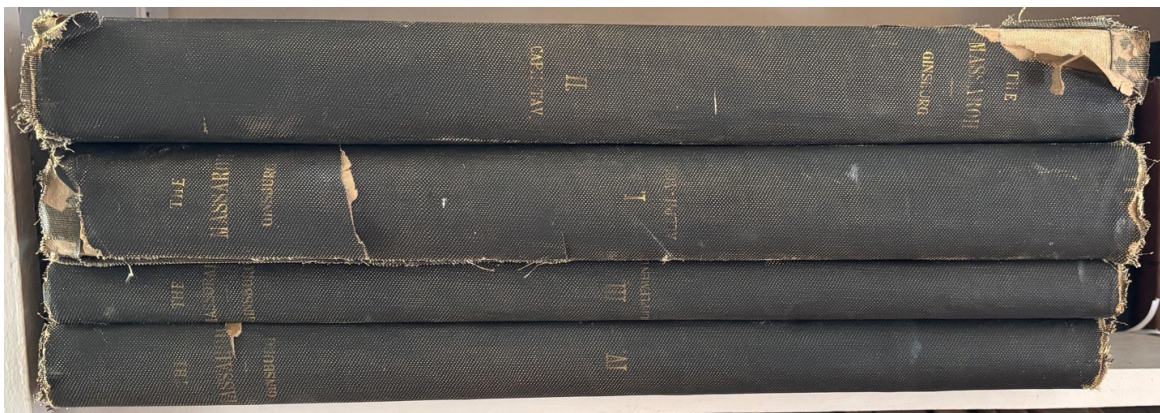


Figure 1. My well-worn copy of *The Massorah*.

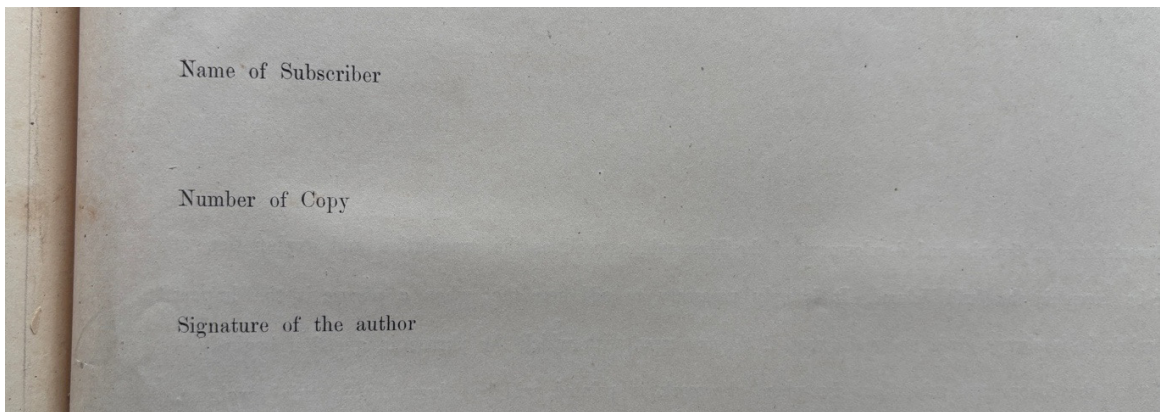


Figure 2. Blank front matter in volume 1 of *The Massorah*.

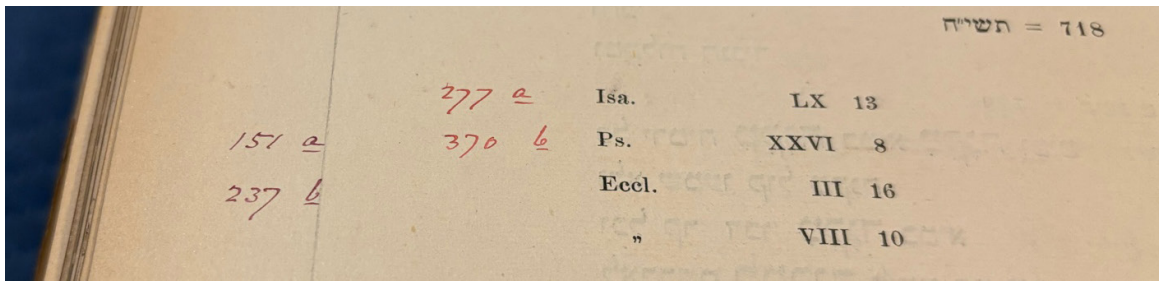


Figure 3. Four notes (vol. 2, p. 243, 718§ 11).

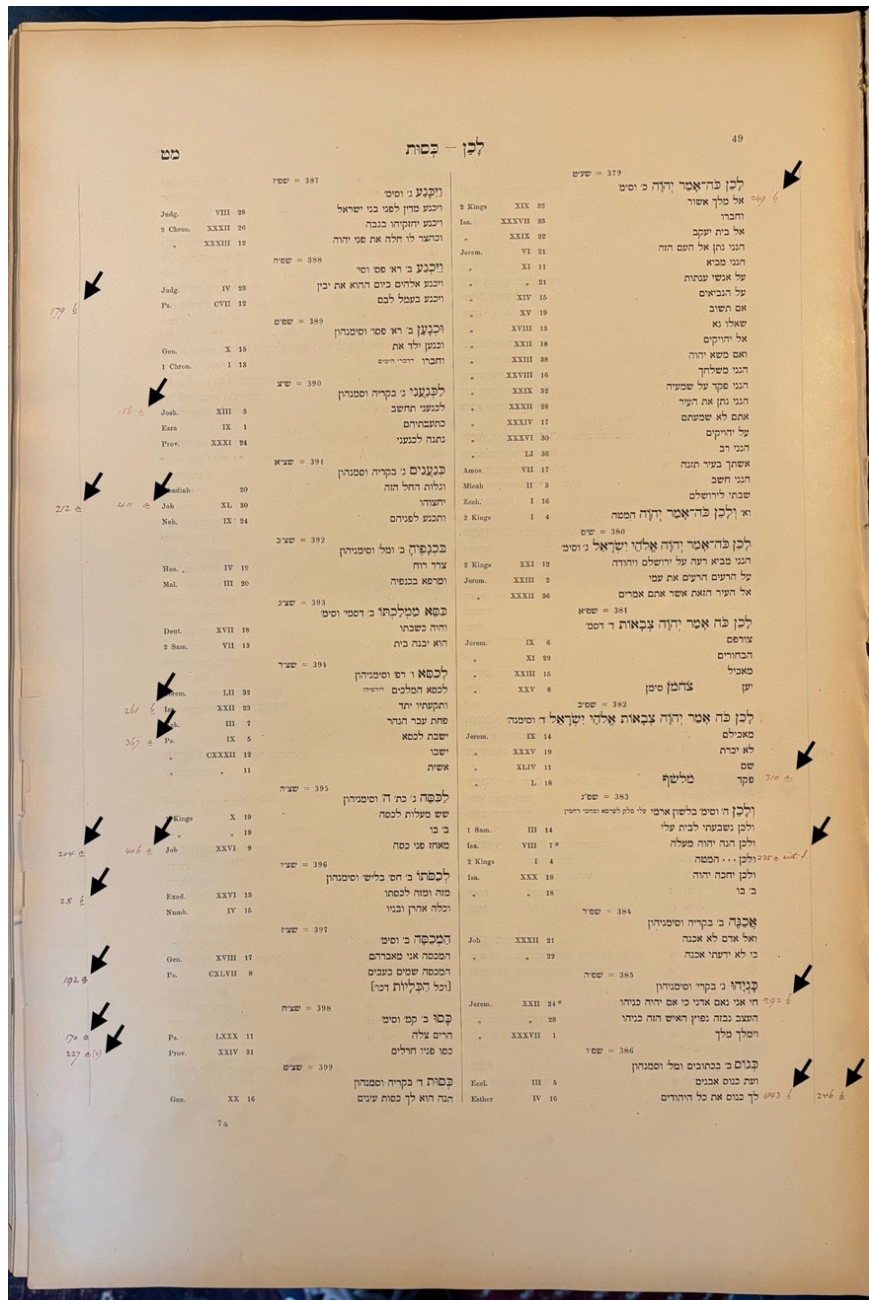


Figure 4. Eighteen notes on a single page (vol. 2, p. 49).

Who would have annotated *The Massorah* so meticulously? According to a bookplate at the front, the books once belonged to Rabbi Armond E. Cohen (1909-2007) of the Park Synagogue in Cleveland, Ohio. I had bought the books from an online bookseller based in Cleveland. Rabbi Cohen was not known for Masoretic research. Perhaps the books previously belonged to Ginsburg's *bête noire* Rabbi Seligman Baer (1825-1897), who Ginsburg criticized repeatedly in his writings. The notes may have been Baer's rebuttal to Ginsburg's criticisms. The problem is Baer died in 1897 and my copy includes pencil lines in volume 4, which was published eight years later in 1905. Out of options, I began to wonder if the notes were written by Ginsburg himself.

When I told this to David Marcus of the Jewish Theological Seminary, he pointed me to Ginsburg's unpublished "Manuscript Draft of the Letter Caph from the Massorah," which I will refer to as the *Caph Manuscript*. The *Caph Manuscript* was the first portion of the never-completed fifth volume of *The Massorah*. It can be viewed on the website of the Wren Library, Trinity College, University of Cambridge.¹ Folios 0v and 67r are particularly helpful because they include many book names, which appear sporadically in the notes in my copy. Upon examination, the handwriting was a match to Ginsburg's handwriting in the *Caph Manuscript*. I now understood why my copy had neither subscriber name, number, nor author's signature. The books belonged to Ginsburg himself.



Figure 5. Handwriting comparison: the *Caph Manuscript* and my copy of *The Massorah*.

2. MS HOLKHAM 2

Each of Ginsburg's notes consists of a number followed by a lowercase A or B. This is the pagination system of manuscripts, with A meaning recto and B meaning verso. Ginsburg differ-

¹ Additional Manuscripts a.605.8. Accessed 7 February 2025: <https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/manuscripts/uv/view.php?n=add.ms.a.605.8#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0>.

entiated each note by color. Purple ink was used outside the pencil lines while red and black ink were used inside the pencil lines. At first, I believed the three colors corresponded to three manuscripts but it will be demonstrated below that Ginsburg was only using two manuscripts.

			של"א = 331		
Exod.	I	10	וְנִלְחָם ה' פֶּתַח בְּקִרְיָ וּסִימָה	58 6	Black
1 Sam.	VIII	20	הִבֵּה נִתְחַכְמָה	183 a	Purple
"	XVII	32	וְהִינּוּ גַם אֲנַחְנוּ כְּכָל הַגּוֹיִם		
Zech.	XIV	3	וַיֹּאמֶר דּוֹד אֶל שְׂאוּל		Red
Dan.	XI	11	וַיֵּצֵא יְהוָה וּנְלַחֵם בְּגוֹיִם הָהֵם		
			וַיִּתְמַרְמֶר מֶלֶךְ הַנֶּגֶב	260 a	Purple

Figure 6. Three colors of notes (vol. 2, p. 143, ה' §331).

What were the notes for? In the first three volumes of *The Massorah*, Ginsburg did not cite any of his manuscript sources. No one knew where to find a particular “rubric,” that is, a particular Masoretic note. Ginsburg regretted this, as evidenced by the belated introduction of citations in the fourth volume, which is an English-language translation of volume 1. Each rubric in volume 4 refers to one or more manuscripts, usually including Ginsburg’s favorites from the British Library: Orient. 4445, Add. 21161, Add. 15250, Arund. Oriental 16, and Harley 5710-11.

Ginsburg died before publishing volume 5, which would have ostensibly cited the manuscripts used in volume 2. In a 2019 doctoral dissertation, Anat Hayut began the lengthy process of identifying Ginsburg’s citations by comparing his volume 2 to two manuscripts in the British Library, Harley 5710-11 and Arund. Oriental 16. Hayut was able to identify the sources for approximately 30% of the rubrics in Ginsburg’s volume 2 (Hayut 2019, vol. 1, i-iv). This means approximately 70% of the rubrics in volume 2 have yet to be identified. I wondered, were the notes in my copy referring to these manuscripts? Was my copy meant to become the fifth and final volume of *The Massorah*?

The *Caph Manuscript* provided the ability to test this hypothesis because the Hebrew letter כ (“caph”) appears in volume 2, which is the volume of my copy with the handwritten notes. Do the numbers in my copy align with those in the *Caph Manuscript*? As it turns out, they do not. For example, according to the *Caph Manuscript* 133r, the rubric for the word נֶכֶס “and grief” (415§ כ) is derived from manuscript Add. 15250 folio 320b. The note in my copy mentions a different number, folio 238a. I ran this experiment many times and the numbers never aligned.

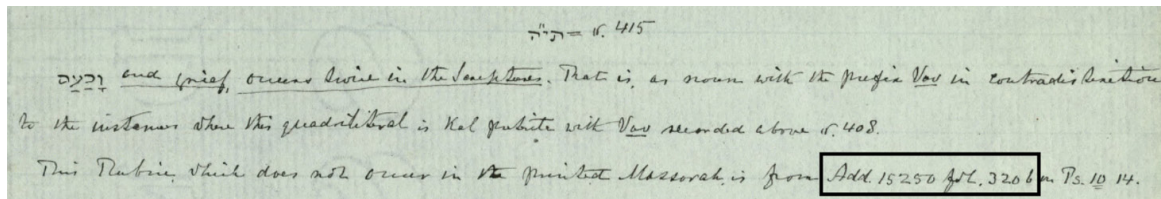


Figure 7. Rubric כ §415 in the *Caph Manuscript* (133r) with the number 320b.

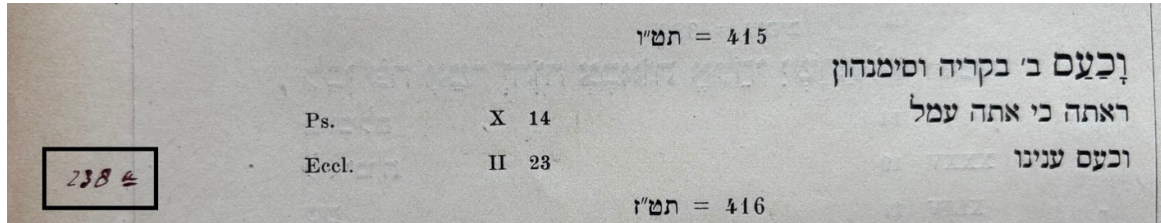


Figure 8. Rubric כ §415 in *The Massorah* (vol. 2, p. 50) with the number 238a.

Since Ginsburg's notes were not meant to reveal the source manuscripts of *The Massorah*, they must have served some other purpose. I began searching for a manuscript that matched the numbers of the purple notes. I checked all of the manuscripts in the British Library but nothing matched. I then examined hundreds of Tanakh manuscripts found on *Ktiv: The International Collection of Digitized Hebrew Manuscripts*, run by the National Library of Israel.² These came from university, state, and private collections all over Europe. Again, no match.

It was at this point I began looking for signs in the purple notes themselves. Two clues emerged in an Excel spreadsheet I prepared. First, the lowest purple number is 1a, and it appears on the word מִשְׁקָה in Genesis 40:1 (vol. 2, p. 251, מ §869). If Genesis 40:1 is on the very first folio, that means the manuscript must be missing the first 39 chapters of Genesis.

The second clue was more consequential. The Excel spreadsheet revealed there were no purple notes for the books of the Prophets (נביאים), that is, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. The purple notes were only for the books of the Torah (תורה) and the books of the Writings (כתובים), save for Nehemiah, which was in all likelihood missing from the back. Instead of referring to a תנ"ך (Tanakh, Torah-Prophets-Writings), the purple-notes technically referred to a תורה-כתובים (Torah-Writings), an unusual sort of book I had never heard of before. No matter the case, I now understood why I had not found the purple manuscript in the KTIV database. I had been searching for a Tanakh (תנ"ך) instead of a Torah and Writings alone (ת"ך).

² Accessed 7 February 2025: <https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts>.

תורה Torah	-	Genesis 1-39 (missing)
	1a	Genesis 40:1
	36s	Exodus 35:10
	59a	Leviticus 25:38
	71b	Numbers 9:2
	104b	Deuteronomy 34:12
נביאים Prophets	-	(missing)
כתובים Writings	105b	1 Chronicles 1:1
	131a	2 Chronicles 8:14
	154b	Psalms 37:7
	204a	Job 27:2
	213b	Proverbs 1:26
	232b	Ruth 3:7
	234b	Songs of Songs 4:14
	237b	Ecclesiastes 3:16
	143b	Lamentations 4:20
	245b	Esther 2:18
	250b	Daniel 1:16
	263a	Ezra 4:5
	-	Nehemiah (missing)

Table 1. A select catalogue of purples notes.

In his *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, Ginsburg catalogued the contents of sixty manuscripts he intended to use for his forthcoming Hebrew Bible (Ginsburg 1897, 1029). Only one manuscript there is listed as being a Torah and Writings, and it belonged to Thomas William Coke (1822-1909), the Second Earl of Leicester (Seventh Creation), who resided at Holkham Hall in Norfolk, England. The “Earl of Leicester’s Codex,” also known as MS Holkham 2, had previously been catalogued as manuscript 682 in Benjamin Kennicott’s *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum Variis Lectionibus* (Kennicott 1776, 109). Ginsburg described MS Holkham 2 in great detail in his *Introduction* (Ginsburg 1897, 728-734). This was an encouraging lead.



Figure 9. MS Holkham 2, fols. 84v-85r with no visible Masorah (Photo: KTIV).

The KTIV database has a scan of MS Holkham 2 but the Masorah is almost entirely illegible.³ Since 2002, the manuscript has been housed in The Schøyen Collection of Oslo, Norway, where it was named MS 5070. In a stroke of good fortune, the codex came up for auction at Christies on June 11th, 2024, the same summer that I purchased my copy of *The Massorah*. The codex was renamed “The Holkham Hebrew Bible” for the auction. Most important for my purposes, Christie’s provided fourteen high-resolution photographs on their website, which allowed me to examine the Masorah.⁴



Figure 10. MS Holkham 2, fols. 84v-85r with visible Masorah (Photo: Christie’s).

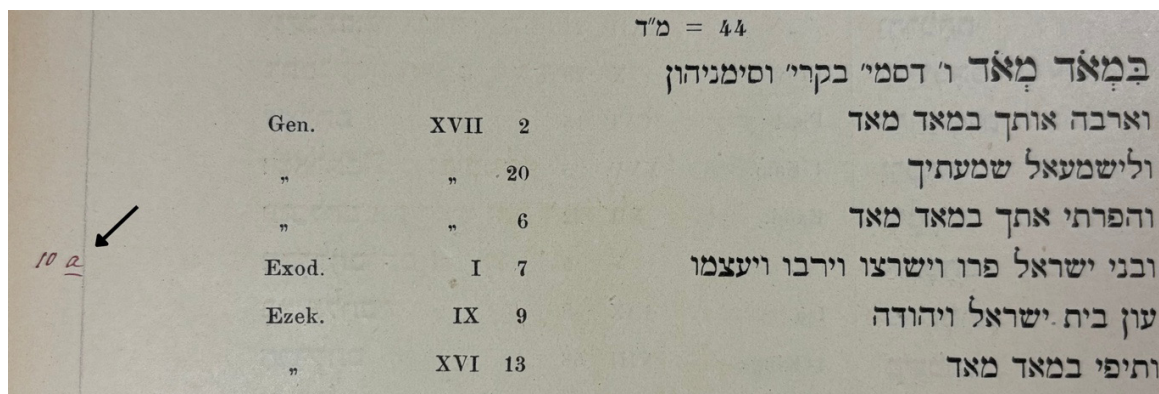


Figure 11. Purple note 10a next to Exodus 1:7 in the note *במאד מאד* (vol. 2, p. 196, מ §44).

From the KTIV scan, which is complete, and the Christie’s photographs, which are clear, I was able to confirm that Ginsburg’s purple notes refer to MS Holkham 2. For example, Ginsburg wrote the number 10a in purple next to Exodus 1:7 for the rubric *במאד מאד* (“very, very much”) in *The Massorah*, vol. 2, p. 196, מ §44. When one examines folio 10a in MS Holkham 2, one

³ Accessed 17 March 2025: https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/itempage?vid=KTIV&scope=KTIV&docId=PNX_MANUSCRIPTS990000535210205171&SearchTxt=leicester.

⁴ Christie’s. 11 June 2024. “Manuscript Masterpieces From The Schøyen Collection London.” Auction 23056, Lot 14. Accessed 7 February 2025: <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6483591>.

finds Exodus 1:7 with both Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna notes for the words **בְּמֵאֵד מֵאֵד**. MS Holkham 2 lines up with the other purple notes as well.

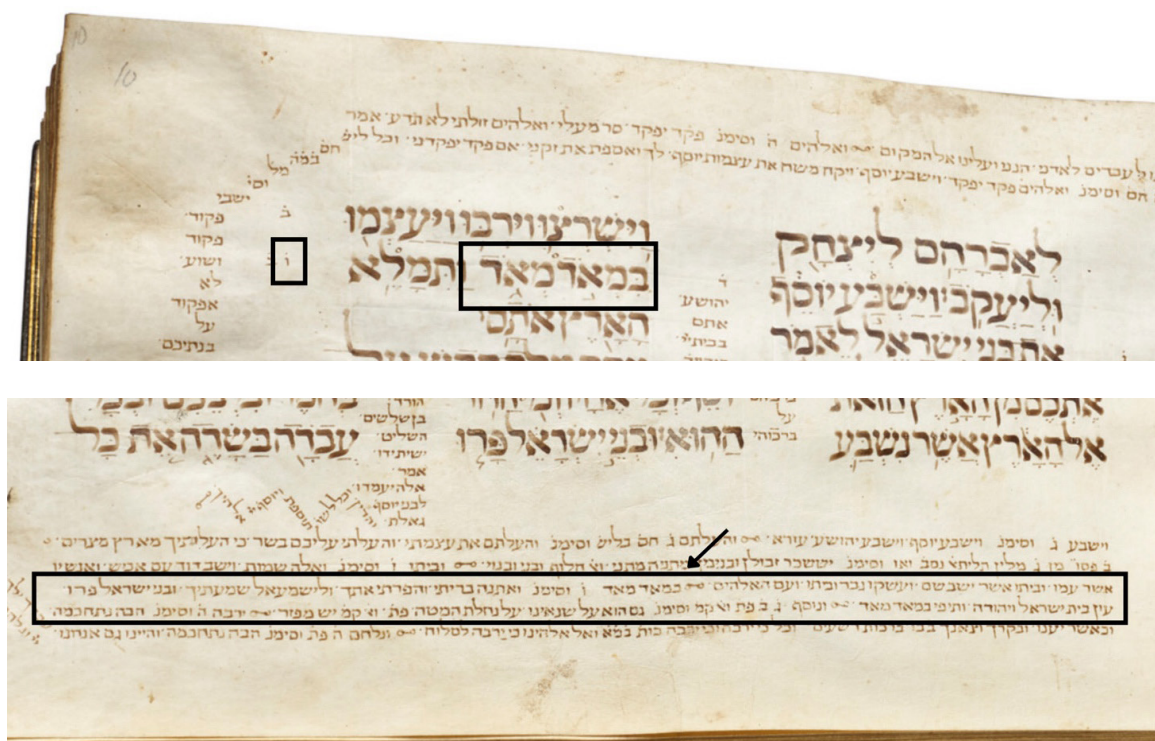


Figure 12. MS Holkham 2, fol. 10a, with Exodus 1:7 containing Masorah Parva and Masorah Magna notes for **בְּמֵאֵד מֵאֵד** (Photo: Christie's).

There are additional connections between Ginsburg and MS Holkham 2. Ginsburg wrote three purple notes that at first were unintelligible to me (vol. 2, p. 218, 428§ מ; p. 338, 177§ ס; p. 620, 384§ ש). It is now clear that they reference “Codex Leicester.” Ginsburg even wrote a five-page description of MS Holkham 2 on perfectly sized paper that is sewn into the codex itself. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he wrote the following in his *Introduction*:

I take this opportunity of tendering my most cordial thanks to the Right Hon. the Earl of Leicester for the loan of this beautiful Codex and for allowing me to keep it more than two years, thus enabling me to collate every word, both of the text and the Massorah (Ginsburg 1897, 734).

It appears that the purple notes in my copy of *The Massorah* are the fruits of Ginsburg's “more than two years” of labor.

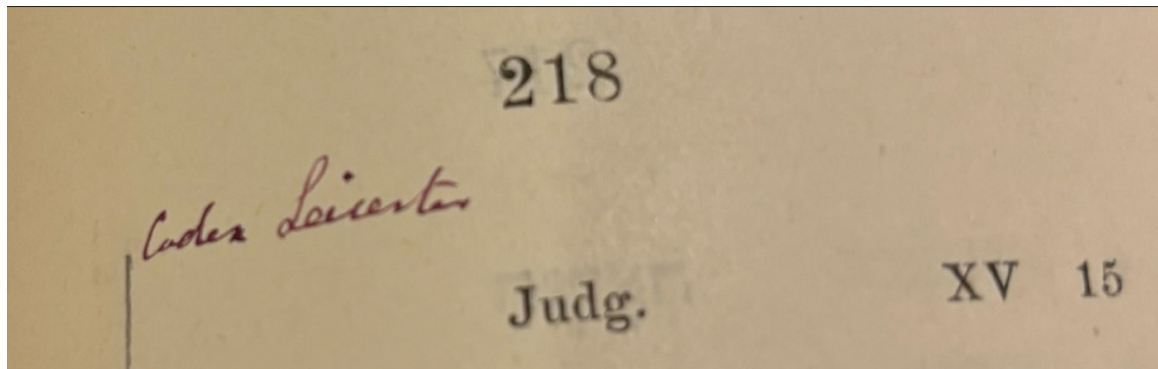


Figure 13. “Codex Leicester” (vol. 2, p. 218, מ §428)



Figure 14. MS Holkham 2, fol. 1r (Genesis 39:22-40:19) with p. 1 of Ginsburg’s notes sewn in (Photo: Christie’s).

In 2024, Judith Olszowy-Schlanger of Oxford University examined the script, symbols, decoration, and Masorah of MS Holkham 2 in preparation for its sale at Christie’s. She found it to be similar to seven manuscripts written in Toledo, Spain in the 1200s. She concluded,

After an in-depth palaeographical comparison with the above listed volumes of the thirteenth-century Toledo group, I have determined a close affinity between MS Holkham 2 and MS New York, Jewish Theological Seminary 401-403 (olim L 44a), a Pentateuch, dated by its colophon to 1241 and written in Toledo. The handwriting of the main text seems to be the work of the same person... The Masora of MS JTS is written by the Masorete 1 of the Holkham Pentateuch (who is probably identical to the main scribe) ... This close similarity of the scribe and Masorete 1 of MS Holkham and of MS JTS allows us to propose a date for MS Holkham in the second quarter of the thirteenth century and to situate its production in Toledo (Olszowy-Schlanger 2024, 4-5).

The scribe of MS JTS L44a and MS Holkham 2 was Yisrael Hasofer (“Israel the Scribe”), written out as “Israel the Scribe son of Isaac, whose soul is in Eden, son of Israel” (ישראל הסופר). We know of a third manuscript written by Yisrael Hasofer, namely, MS Ken-

nicott 7 Prophets, which was written in Toledo in 1222 and is now at the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.⁵



Figure 15. David Moster with MS Holkham 2 (left) and Marcus Mordecai Schwartz with MS JTS L44a (right) at JTS on 23 December 2024.



Figure 16. Ardon Bar-Hama (left) digitizing MS Holkham 2 with David Moster (right) at JTS on 16 January 2025.

Coincidentally, I direct the Biblical Hebrew program at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where MS JTS L44a currently resides. I reached out to the new owner of MS Holkham 2 and they were eager to visit JTS. They even suggested bringing MS Holkham 2 so that the two

⁵ Bodleian Libraries, Oxford. "MS. Kennicott 7." Accessed 7 February 2025: https://hebrew.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_9.

manuscripts could be united in New York. The owner brought the manuscript on December 23rd, 2024, and it is currently on loan to JTS for one year. The codex was digitized on January 16th, 2025 by Ardon Bar-Hama, who is best known for his photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Aleppo Codex, and the Codex Vaticanus.

One of the striking features of MS JTS L44a is that it refers to the Hilleli Codex, which served as an exemplar for scribes around the world. This “most famous of all Spanish Bibles” was most likely written in the 10th century and was kept in Toledo during the 1200s (Sarna 2000, 244-245). It is now lost. According to the colophon of MS JTS L44a (XIr), Yisrael Hasofer “carefully corrected [JTS L44a] according to the model called the Hilleli” (Sarna 2000, 248). MS Holkham 2, also written by Yisrael Hasofer, mentions the Hilleli in nine places (Gen 42:16; 47:30; Lev 13:57; Deut 12:11; Job 40:4; Song 4:5; 7:4; Dan 3:15; 10:6) (Penkower 2024, 3). When MS Holkham 2 was brought to JTS, we examined the Masorah Parva notes for the word תָּדָרוּ “you (pl) will vow” in Deuteronomy 12:11. The note in MS JTS L44a reads: “חזינא בהיללי תָּדָרוּ רפֿי” – I have seen in the Hilleli תָּדָרוּ with no dagesh.” The MS Holkham 2 has a nearly identical note: “חזינא בהיללי תָּדָרוּ” – I have seen in the Hilleli Codex תָּדָרוּ (with no dagesh).” It is incredibly rare for a Masorete to speak in the first person (Weiss 2024, 91). The extraordinary congruity between the notes in these two manuscripts lends further support to Olszowy-Schlanger’s identification of Israel Hasofer as the scribe of MS Holkham 2.

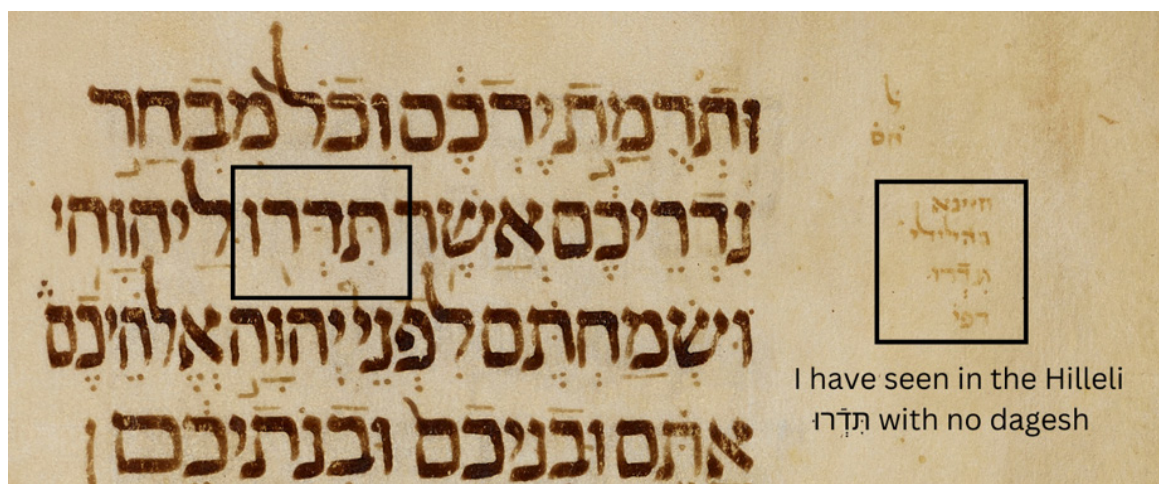


Figure 17. Nearly Identical Notes in MS JTS L44a, fol. 224v (above) and MS Holkham 2 fol. 95v (below).

In addition to quoting the Hilleli, MS Holkham 2 refers to another lost exemplar, the Codex Muggah. The word *muggah* (מגה) means “corrected.” The Muggah Codex is mentioned thirteen times: Exodus 17:10; 17:16; 25:31; 32:34; Leviticus 13:33; Numbers 1:18; 1:22; 4:23; 10:10; 18:20; 22:5; 1 Chronicles 29:6; 2 Chronicles 9:24 (Penkower 2024, 3). In his *Introduction*, Ginsburg describes the Muggah as “The earliest Codex quoted by the Massorites” and points out that the Muggah is quoted “as an authority in almost every MS. of importance” (Ginsburg 1897, 429, 431). Ginsburg points to two early and important codices that mention it by name: British Library Or. 4445 (10th century) and the Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus (NLR Ms. Evr. I B 3), which has the date 916 CE in its colophon.

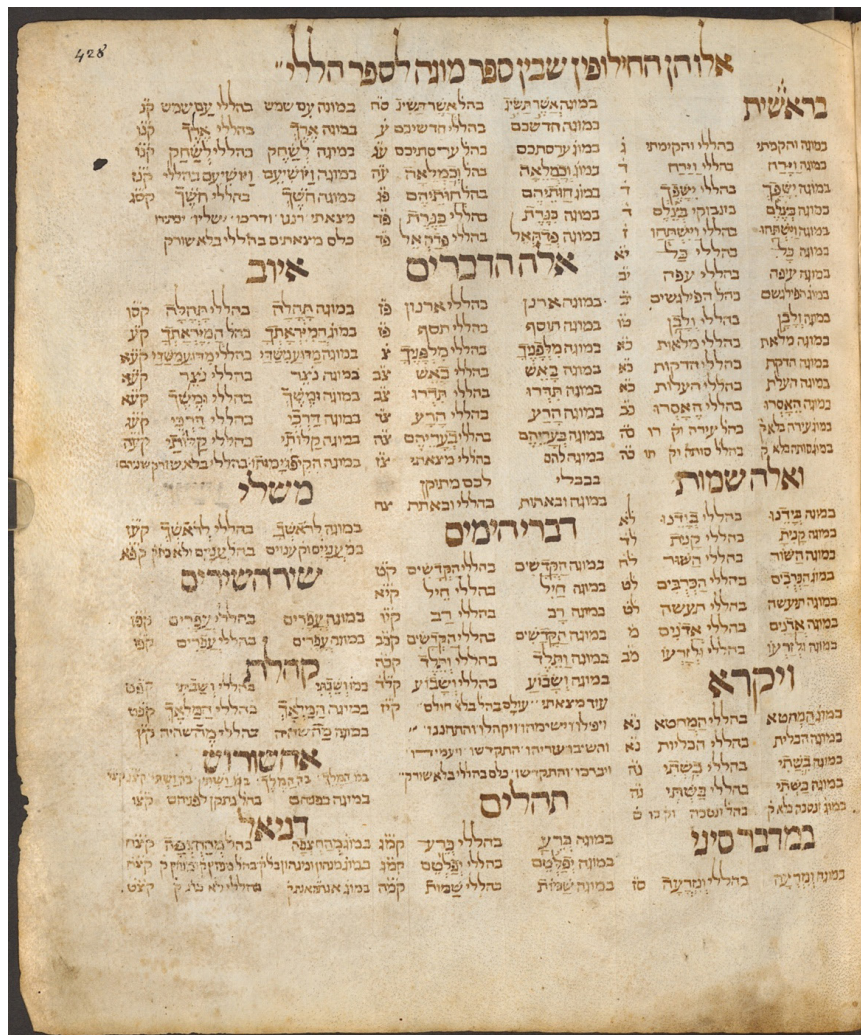


Figure 18. The Hilleli and Muggah List in BSB Cod.hebr. 392 (Photo: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek).

By quoting both the Muggah and the Hilleli, MS Holkham 2 bears witness to two of the most important Masoretic Tanakhs ever written. In fact, the anonymous scribe of Bavarian State Library Cod.hebr. 392 created a Masoretic list titled *אלו הן החילופין שבין ספר מוגה לספר הללי* “These are the different spellings between Codex Muggah and the Hilleli Codex” (428r-428v).⁶ This type of list,

⁶ Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. *Bibel mit Masora - BSB Cod.hebr. 392*.

which most likely dates to the 12th-13th centuries in Spain, is usually reserved for the most ancient and important traditions such as the differences between the Ben Asher and Ben Naftali schools, or the differences between Babylonia and Israel. By creating this list, the scribe of BSB Cod.hebr. 392 has effectively elevated the Muggah and Hilleli to the loftiest of statures, similar to how the Aleppo Codex and Leningrad Codex are compared today (e.g., Breuer 1976). Ginsburg, who in the Introduction refers to BSB Cod.hebr. 392 as the “Munich Codex” (Ginsburg 1897, 431), quotes this list in its entirety in *The Massorah*, vol. 3, pp. 130-134. It would seem that MS Holkham 2, which was written in the general time and place of BSB Cod.hebr. 392, should be considered an important source for the research of the Muggah and the Hilleli codices.

The last remaining issue for MS Holkham 2 is why the Prophets is missing. At the outset, it must be stated that the Prophets did not simply fall out of the codex. This is because the end of the Torah (fol. 104v) flows into a Masoretic list (fol. 104v-105r) that flows into the Writings (fol. 105v). These form a three-link chain that cannot be separated without breaking the Masoretic list in two. In other words, the Torah requires the Writings to complete the list, and the Writings requires the Torah to begin the list. Everyone who has ever written about MS Holkham 2 has been puzzled by this fact. I posed the question to Sharon Mintz (JTS, Sotheby’s), who suggested that the unknown patron of MS Holkham 2 may have already owned a Prophets codex and did not wish to pay for another given how expensive it was to produce a lengthy text on parchment.

3. THE SCHOTTENSTEIN SPANISH BIBLE

Having identified the purple notes in my copy of *The Massorah*, I next turned my attention to Ginsburg’s red and black notes. I was able to glean the following information about the second unidentified manuscript:

1. The red and black notes refer to one manuscript, not two. The black numbers end abruptly at 83b and the red ones begin at 84a. The two colors “meet” where Exodus ends and where Leviticus begins.
2. Genesis 1:1 begins on or near folio 27. We know this because 28a is the lowest number next to a verse, and it appears next to Genesis 2:5 (vol. 2, p. 37, 224§ כ). If it is still intact, Genesis 1 should begin one or two folios earlier.
3. Folios 15a–16a contain a list of Sedarim for each biblical book (vol. 2, pp. 329-334, ט 75-96§). This means the 26 folios that precede Genesis are most likely comprised of Masoretic lists.
4. The order of the Writings (כתובים) is Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 & 2 Chronicles. This is the prescribed order of the Babylonian Talmud (Bava Batra 14b), though it is often ignored in practice.
5. The very last folio number is 500b, which contains 2 Chronicles 36:22 (vol. 2, p. 372, ט 65§). This is the penultimate verse in the Hebrew Bible.

Connecting all of these dots, I began looking for a codex that was (1) complete; (2) had Masoretic lists on folios 1-26; (3) contained the biblical text from folios 27-500; and (4) had the Talmud’s order for the Writings.

I first turned to the sixty manuscripts catalogued in Ginsburg's *Introduction*, this time paying special attention to those not in the British Library, such as MS Holkham 2. None of the numbers matched up. I then sifted through hundreds of Tanakh manuscripts in the KTIV database, but again nothing fit. A couple of colleagues were aware of my search and independently referred me to Yosef Ofer of Bar-Ilan University. Ofer told me he had indeed seen a codex a few years prior that matched my criteria. Ginsburg referred to the manuscript as "Dr. Merzbacher's Codex" or "The Merzbacher Codex" several times in his *Introduction*, especially in chapter 9 about the Eastern and Western Recensions (Ginsburg 1897, 207-240). Ginsburg did not, however, catalogue it as one of his sixty manuscripts. This is why I missed it in the *Introduction*. KTIV did not have a scan available, so I missed it there too.

The first 27 folios are beautifully illuminated. I did not realize it at first, but I had actually seen the Temple and Tabernacle implements on folios 25v-26r once before in January 2017 at an exhibit titled "Jerusalem 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The codex, which the museum described as Catalanian from the first quarter of the 14th century, was on loan to The Met from the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Collection of Columbus, Ohio. The codex is now referred to as the Schottenstein Spanish Bible.



Figure 19. The Schottenstein Spanish Bible 25v-26r (Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama).

The Schottensteins graciously allowed me to examine photographs of the manuscript. I was able to confirm that the codex matched the red and black numbers in my copy of *The Massorah*. For example, Genesis 1:1 begins exactly where it should on folio 27v, and 2 Chronicles 36:22 appears exactly where it should on folio 500v. For one example from the Masorah, Ginsburg wrote 29a in black next to Genesis 4:14 for the rubric מִצָּא "one who finds me" (vol. 2, p. 241, 666§ מ). When one opens up to 29a in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, one finds Genesis 4:14 with a Masorah Parva note containing the two occurrences of מִצָּא.

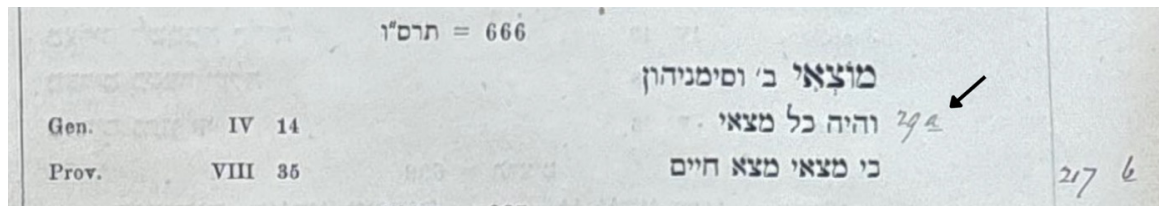


Figure 20. 29a in black ink next to Genesis 4:14 in *The Massorah*, vol. 2, p. 241, 666§ ג.

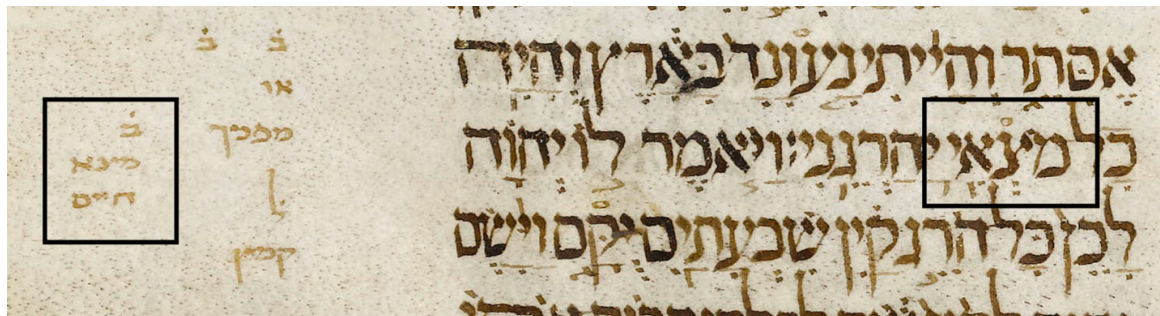


Figure 21. Schottenstein Spanish Bible, fol. 29r, with Genesis 4:14 and a Masorah Parva note for מִצָּא (Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama).

Interestingly, there is no discernible shift in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible between Exodus and Leviticus, where Ginsburg's ink changed from black to red. Why the change of color? I posed this question to Gary Rendsburg (Rutgers University), who suggested that the change of color simply may have been due to Ginsburg's having received a new bottle of ink.

One of the great coincidences of this study is that the Schottenstein Spanish Bible refers to both the Hilleli and Muggah codices, just as MS Holkham 2 does. The Schottenstein Spanish Bible quotes the Muggah more often than MS Holkham 2, for example, four times in Genesis alone (Genesis 31:39; 31:41; 36:12; 46:11). However, the Schottenstein Spanish Bible does not cite the Hilleli Codex in its Masorah Parva. Rather, it presents a magnificent list in the front matter titled *מספר הללי הסופר מלאים וחסרים בתורה* "From the Book of Hilleli the Scribe: Plene and Deficient Spellings in the Torah" (9v-14r). There are approximately 2,300 entries in this list, making it one of the most important sources – if not the most important source – for the study of the Hilleli Codex. This list is only known to exist in one other manuscript, a quire of Masoretic material appended to a Tanakh purchased by Rabbi Jacob Saphir (1822-1885) in Sana'a, Yemen. Saphir sold the quire to David Goratsiyevich Günzburg (1857-1910), and it is most likely in the Russian State Library today (Saphir 1874, 192-213). Ginsburg mentions the list of the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, which he calls "the Merzbacher Codex," in his *Introduction* (p. 432). He also printed it in its entirety in *The Massorah* (vol. 3, pp. 106-129).

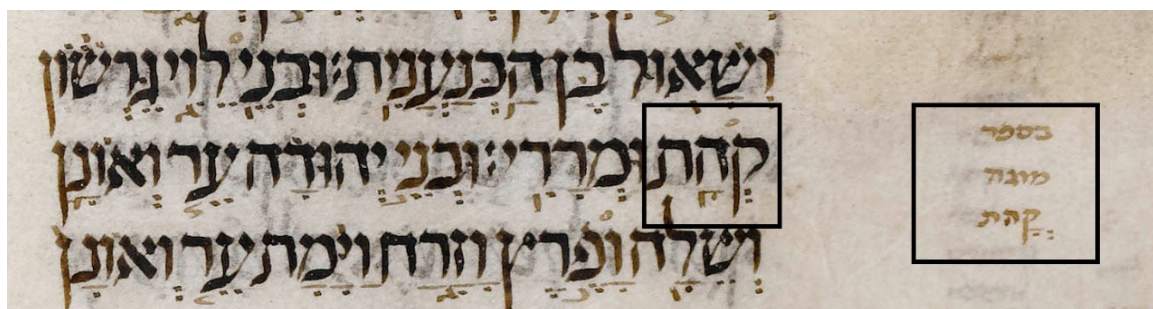


Figure 22. Schottenstein Spanish Bible, fol. 55v, Genesis 46:11, with a spelling variant from the Muggah Codex (Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama).

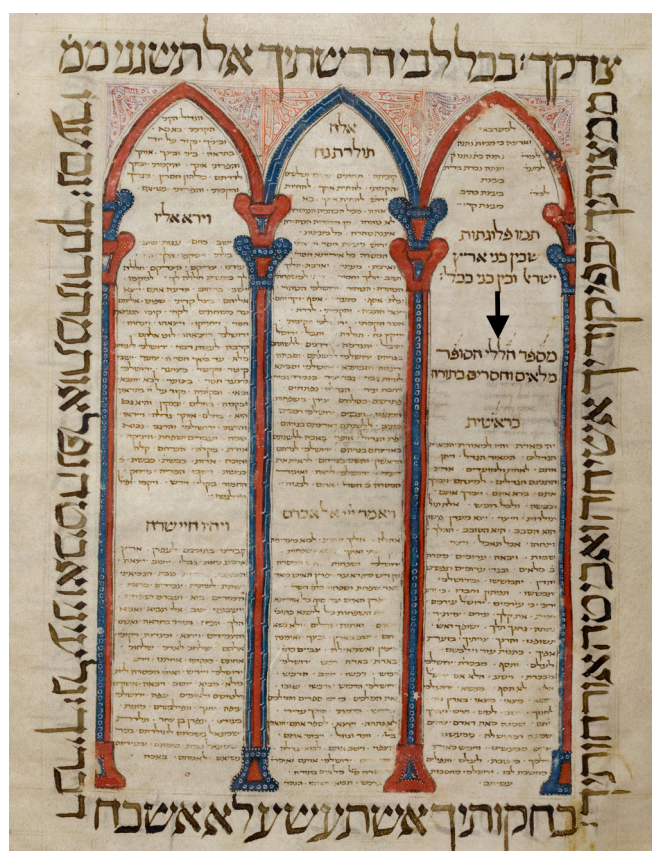


Figure 23. Beginning of the Hilleli list in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, fol. 9v (Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama).

4. PURPOSE OF THE NOTES

The third volume of *The Massorah*, published in 1885, begins with the following statement:

Since the publication of the second volume of the *Massorah* which completes the text, a number of important MSS. have come to light containing new Massoretic materials. These I have carefully worked out and printed in this supplementary volume (vol. 3, i).

Although Ginsburg does not specify any of these new manuscripts by name, it can be demonstrated that MS Holkham 2 and the Schottenstein Spanish Bible were two of the manuscripts Ginsburg examined. Ginsburg praised MS Holkham 2 in his Introduction: “The chief merit of this MS. consists in its copious Massorahs which contain Rubrics not to be found in other Codices.” (Ginsburg 1897, 732) He went on to identify 34 new rubrics in volume 3 that derive from MS Holkham 2:

Letter א, §§ 66, 128, 141, 145; ב §§ 8, 19; ג § 5; ד §§ 5, 11, 19;
ה § 13; ו §§ 3, 33, 38; ז §§ 4, 23, 24, 42; ח §§ 9, 14, 16; ט § 29; י §§ 10,
12, 38; יא § 4; יב § 8; יג § 17; יד §§ 13, 20; טו §§ 2, 34, 42, 49.

Figure 24. New rubrics from MS Holkham 2 (Ginsburg 1897, 732).

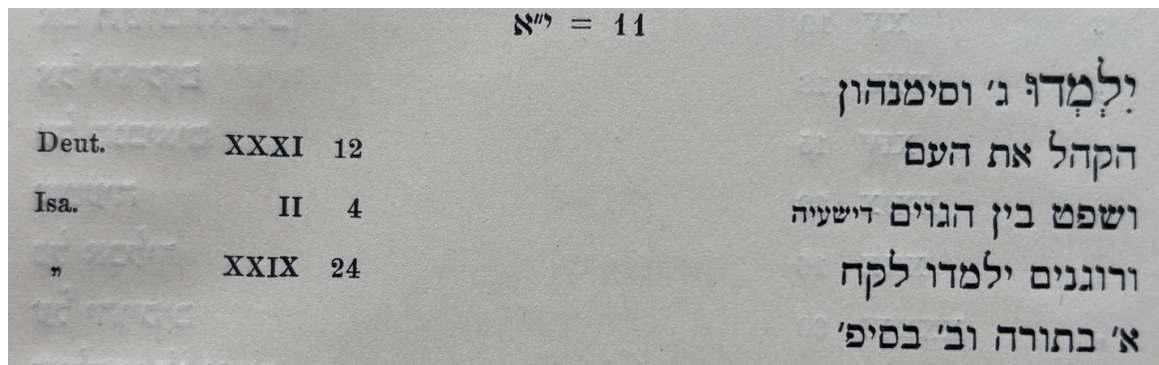


Figure 25. The rubric ילמדו (vol. 3, p. 358, ל §11).

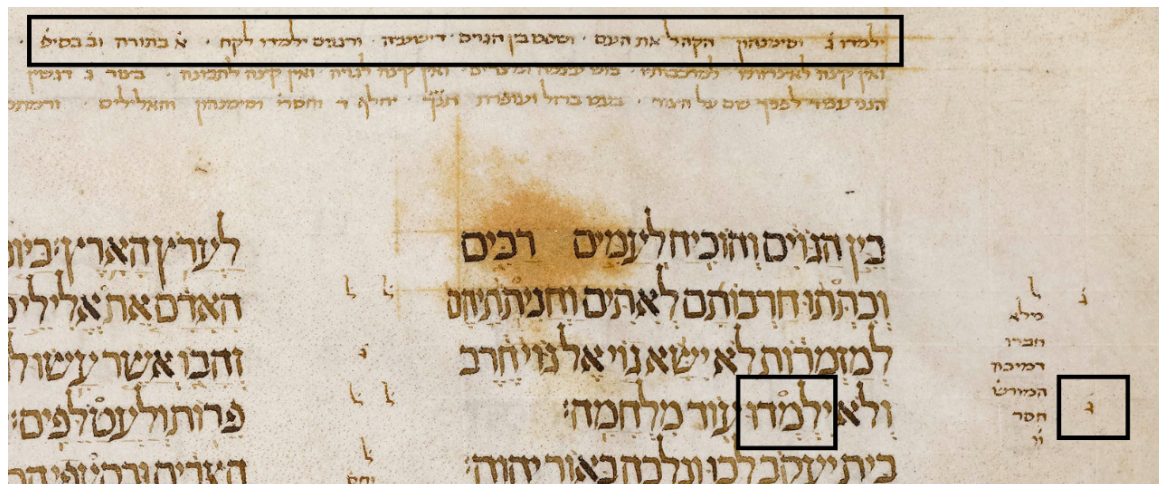


Figure 26. Masorah Parva and Magna notes on ילמדו in Isaiah 2:4 in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, fol. 254v (Photo: Ardon Bar-Hama).

Ginsburg only attributed one of the rubrics in volume 3 to the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, namely, the Hilleli list mentioned above (Ginsburg 1897, 432). Upon examination, a number of other rubrics appear to derive from this manuscript. For example, in *The Massorah*, vol. 3, p. 358, ל §11 one finds the rubric ילמדו ג' "they will learn – this occurs 3 times." One finds this rubric

in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible at Isaiah 2:4 in both the Masorah Parva and Magna. The catch-words in *The Massorah* are identical to those in the Schottenstein Spanish Bible, making it likely that this rubric was taken straight from it.

I imagine Ginsburg's process from studying a new manuscript to publishing it in volume 3 went as follows. He would begin with the first page of each manuscript and work his way through the rubrics one at a time. When a rubric harmonized with one found in *The Massorah*, he would write the folio number in the margins of volume 2 of my copy. He may have had a different copy of volume 1 that he used for the same purpose, though its location is unknown. When he came across new rubrics that were not found in *The Massorah*, he would write them down in a separate list. This hypothetical list would then be alphabetized like the *Caph Manuscript* found at Cambridge. This final product would then be sent off to Vienna for the publication of volume 3.

When did Ginsburg annotate my copy of *The Massorah*? We know he had MS Holkham 2 in his possession at least as early as 1883, when the second volume of *The Massorah* was published. This is because a purple note to vol. 2, p. 338 attributes rubric 177§ 5 to the manuscript: "Printed from Cod. Leicester." Ginsburg writes that he held on to MS Holkham 2 for "more than two years" (Ginsburg 1897, 734), which is another way of saying less than three years. MS Holkham 2 is quoted in the third volume of *The Massorah*, which was published in 1885. That year would serve as the *terminus ad quem* because Ginsburg did not have the manuscript for more than three years. All of these data point to 1883-1885 being Ginsburg's "more than two years" with the manuscript.

Unfortunately, Ginsburg does not write anything regarding his study of the Schottenstein Spanish Bible. According to a German handwritten note on the back page of the codex, the Merzbacher family purchased the Tanakh in 1883, which is the *terminus a quo*. Since the Schottenstein Spanish Bible's Masorah appears in volume 3 (1885), it is almost certain that Ginsburg examined it at the same exact time he examined MS Holkham 2, that is, from 1883-1885. It is entirely possible that the Merzbachers purchased the manuscript, took a quick look at it, and immediately handed it over to Ginsburg to be studied and perhaps appraised.

Why did Ginsburg examine these two manuscripts, and why during the years 1883-1885? I can think of three complementary reasons. First, by 1883 Ginsburg had completed volumes one and two of *The Massorah*, which were meant to represent nearly all of the Masorah notes in existence. If Ginsburg's scholarly contributions were to be worth anything, one would expect to find most, if not all of the rubrics of any "new" codex listed in the first two volumes of *The Massorah*. When two "new" manuscripts presented themselves, Ginsburg took the opportunity to test his entire system. MS Holkham 2 strongly supports Ginsburg's entire endeavor. According to Ginsburg's count in his Introduction, MS Holkham 2 contains just 34 rubrics not found in volumes 1 and 2 of *The Massorah* (Ginsburg 1897, 732). Even if one were to conservatively estimate there to be just 6 Masorah Magna notes per page in the codex, the 34 new rubrics would be just 1% of the approximately 3,168 total rubrics.⁷ In other words, 99% of the notes in MS Holkham 2 can be found in volumes 1 and 2 of *The Massorah*. I suspect the Schottenstein Spanish Bible would have similar numbers, but Ginsburg never disclosed exactly which of the new rubrics in volume 3 derive from it, making a quick calculation impossible.

The second reason Ginsburg catalogued these two manuscripts has to do with access. Ginsburg was given free rein in the library of the British Museum, including an office in the museum itself. By 1883, he had essentially run out of state-owned manuscripts, and, even if he would have been granted access to a state-owned library in Europe, it would have been an ordeal to move there

⁷ 264 folios × 2 sides × 6 Masorah Magna per side = 3,168 rubrics.

with his family. The only manuscripts left were privately owned, and his connections to the Earl of Leicester and Dr. Merzbacher provided him with two additional codices. Access to MS Holkham 2 and the Schottenstein Spanish Bible allowed Ginsburg to test his entire system from the comforts of home.

The third, and probably most important reason Ginsburg catalogued these two manuscripts has to do with the quality of their text and Masorah. Yisrael Hasofer was an elite scribe venerated for more than two centuries, as attested by Don Isaac Abarbanel's (1437-1509) commentary to Amos 3:12. There Abarbanel solves a text-critical difficulty by relying on the "meticulous Scriptures that are with us in Spain from Rabbi Yisrael [Hasofer] and Ibn Merwas."⁸ Ginsburg may not have known that Yisrael Hasofer was the scribe of MS Holkham 2 but he certainly would have recognized the accuracy of the text and its many references to the Hilleli and the Muggah. In addition to being visually stunning, the Schottenstein Spanish Bible opens with the world's most detailed list about the Hilleli Codex, and it continues with dozens of references to the Muggah in its interior. Perhaps more than anyone else, Ginsburg would have realized the importance of these features. That is why, during the years 1883-1885, he catalogued the Masoretic content of MS Holkham 2 and the Schottenstein Spanish Bible within the margins of volume 2 of his personal copy of *The Massorah*.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author of this article declares that he has no financial, professional or personal conflicts of interest that could have inappropriately influenced this work.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

David Moster: conceptualization, investigation, writing –original draft, writing –review & editing.

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⁸ Commentary on the Latter Prophets: וְיִשְׂרָאֵל מְרִבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֵבֶן מְרוֹאֵס כִּי הוּא נִקְוֶה. Accessed 7 February 2025: <https://mg.alhatorah.org/Full/Amos/3.12#e0n6>.

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