

## Exploring Hebrew Carpet Pages through their Texts\*

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This essay examines the texts displayed in the form of micrography that are found in the carpet pages of two early Hebrew biblical codices, i.e. the Cairo Codex of the Prophets and the Leningrad Codex (B19a), in order to analyse their possible relevance with regard to evaluating and understanding the function of the Hebrew carpet pages. A reading of all those texts reveals a comprehensible content, which has not lost its functionality as a message transmitter. The reading also reveals that the kind of text most often used is that of the Masora. From these results, it is possible to conclude that the purpose of the carpet pages is both decorative and textual. The carpet pages play the same role as the manuscript margins: to hold the extratextual material concerning the sacred text.

KEYWORDS: Hebrew Bible; Masora; Micrography; Cairo Codex of the Prophets; Leningrad Codex (B19a).

LAS PÁGINAS TAPIZ HEBREAS A PARTIR DE SUS TEXTOS.— En este artículo se examinan los textos escritos en forma de decoraciones micrográficas que aparecen en las llamadas páginas tapiz de dos de los códices bíblicos hebreos más antiguos, el código de Profetas de El Cairo y el código de Leningrado (B19a), para analizar su posible relevancia en la evaluación y comprensión de las páginas tapiz hebreas. La lectura de estos textos revela un contenido comprensible, lleno de sentido, que no ha perdido su función como transmisor de un mensaje. También revela que el tipo de texto más usado es el de la Masora. Teniendo en cuenta los resultados, se puede concluir que la finalidad de las páginas tapiz es doble, decorativa y funcional. Estas páginas desempeñan la misma función que los márgenes de los manuscritos: recoger el material extra textual relativo al texto bíblico hebreo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Biblia hebrea; Masora; micrografía; código de Profetas de El Cairo; código de Leningrado (B19a).

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

The carpet pages found in some medieval Hebrew Bible codices are usually studied as part of the decoration programme of a codex. Therefore, they have been widely examined in the field of Jewish art, where scholars have described and interpreted their designs and motifs. The similarity between the carpet pages found at the beginnings and ends of both the Qurans and Hebrew Bibles of the medieval period have been highlighted and the parallels identified.<sup>1</sup> They have been considered essentially ornamental, meant to be seen, and the different purposes attributed to them include: testimony to religious piety, showpieces of conspicuous wealth and symbols of religious significance.<sup>2</sup> These studies, however, do not usually consider the texts displayed in the form of micrography<sup>3</sup> in some of these carpet pages.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, apart from some

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<sup>1</sup> Bezalel NARKISS, *Illuminations from Hebrew Bibles of Leningrad* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1990); Leila Rachel AVRIN, "The Illuminations in the Moshe Ben-Asher Codex of 895 C.E.," unpublished B. Litt. Thesis (University of Michigan 1975); Eva BAUER, "Early Bible and Quran Illuminations: Preliminary Remarks," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication, and Interaction*, eds. Benjamin H. HARRY, John L. HAYES, and Fred ASTREN (Leiden: Brill, 2000) pp. 139-156; David STERN, "The First Jewish Books and the Early History of Jewish Reading," *JQR* 2 (2008) pp. 163-202; Rachel MILSTEIN, "Hebrew Book Illustration in the Fatimid Period," in *L'Egypte fatimide: Son Art and son histoire*, ed. Marianne BARRUCAND (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1999) pp. 429-440; Katrin KOGMAN APPEL, *Jewish Book Art between Islam and Christianity. The Decoration of Hebrew Bible in Medieval Spain* (Leiden: Brill, 2004) pp. 34-50.

<sup>2</sup> David STERN, *The Jewish Bible: A Material History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017) pp. 85-86.

<sup>3</sup> "Minute writing arranged in geometric shapes or drawn as outlines of objects, animals, or humans. Hebrew micrography is one of the most characteristic of Jewish art forms. The earliest Hebrew micrographic texts date possibly from the late 9<sup>th</sup> century AD and the 10<sup>th</sup> and were written in Tiberias in Palestine and in Egypt, where the masorah, the concordance-like notes that appear in the margins of Bible codices, was at times written into figural shapes, a form known as internal micrography," cf. Gerald W. R. WARD, (ed.), *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 395.

<sup>4</sup> According to Leila Rachel AVRIN ("Micrography as Art," in *La lettre hebraique et sa signification/Micrography as Art*, eds. Colette SIRAT and Leila AVRIN [Paris: CNRS-Editions, 1981] pp. 43-47), the micrography seems to have no parallel in other traditions of ancient or medieval art.

exceptions,<sup>5</sup> they have been approached merely as an integral part of the design of the carpet pages. Nevertheless, several studies devoted to read the micrography have proven that it is possible to read the texts written in tiny script and in figurative shapes in spite of their difficult form.<sup>6</sup>

What would happen if the focus shifted to the texts contained in the carpet pages? Would the interpretation change? This paper explores these texts in order to analyse their possible relevance with regard to evaluating and understanding Hebrew carpet pages.

As carpet pages are a characteristic feature of the earliest extant Hebrew illuminated manuscripts,<sup>7</sup> I have chosen two of them for this study.

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<sup>5</sup> Leila AVRIN (“The Illuminations”) was the first to focus on both form and content and to read some of the micrographies in the carpet pages from the Cairo Codex of the Prophets. Later, David LYONS (*The Cumulative Masora. Text, Form and Transmission* [Beer Sheva: Ben-Gurion University, 1999, in Hebrew]) transliterated the masoretic lists found in the carpet pages from the Cairo Codex of the Prophets; Recently, Yosef OFER (“An Ancient Masoretic Comment in Carpet Leaves of a Torah Manuscript by Shmuel ben Yaakov” [in Hebrew], *Leshonenu* 80 [2018] pp. 29-52) has studied some of the lists included on two carpet pages in ms. Gottheil 14. Moreover, Dalia Ruth HALPERIN (*Illuminating in Micrography: The Catalan Micrography Mahzor-MS Heb 8.º6527 in the National Library of Israel [=Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World 51; Leiden: Brill, 2013]*) has devoted a monograph to the carpet pages in a non biblical codex, the Catalan Mahzor.

<sup>6</sup> Elodie ATTIÁ, “Editing Medieval Ashkenazi Masorah and *Masorah Figurata*: Observations on the Functions of the Micrography in Hebrew Manuscripts,” *Sefarad* 75:1 (2015) pp. 7-33, and *The Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan: An Edition of Ashkenazic Micrographical Notes (=Materiale Textkulturen 11 [Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2015])*; HALPERIN, *Illuminating in Micrography*, and Elvira MARTÍN-CONTRERAS, “The Image at the Service of the Text: Figured Masorah in the Biblical Hebrew Manuscript BH Mss1,” *Sefarad* 76:1 (2016) pp. 55-74.

<sup>7</sup> Dated between the late ninth and mid-eleventh centuries and produced in the Near East-Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Iraq. For a description of the dated codices, cf. Malachi BEIT-ARIE, Colette SIRAT, and Mordechai GLATZER, *Codices hebraicis litteris Extrati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes, Tome I: jusqu’à 1020* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997); Mordechai GLATZER, Colette SIRAT, and Malachi BEIT-ARIE, *Codices hebraicis litteris Extrati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes, Tome II: de 1021 à 1079* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), and Colette SIRAT, Malachi BEIT-ARIE and Mordechai GLATZER, *Codices hebraicis litteris Extrati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes, Tome III: 1085-1140* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001). The carpet pages are also found later in some of the manuscripts produced in the Iberian Peninsula, cf. Gabrielle SED-RAJNA, “Toledo or Burgos?,” *Journal of Jewish Art* 2 (1975) pp. 6-21, and “Hebrew illuminated manuscripts from the Iberian Peninsula”, in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval*

They are famous, and their text and codicological characteristics have been profusely studied. Both are biblical codices, have carpet pages with some similarities and are separated by more than 100 years. They are: (i) the Cairo Codex of the Prophets (C),<sup>8</sup> dating, according to its colophon, back to 894/5 and penned by Moshe ben Asher in Tiberias. It is the earliest dated partial Hebrew illuminated Bible;<sup>9</sup> and (ii) the Leningrad Codex (L),<sup>10</sup> the oldest, complete extant Masoretic Hebrew Bible (1008 CE). According to its colophons, it was penned in Fustat, Egypt, and written, masorated, vocalized and probably illuminated by Samuel ben Jacob on accurate manuscripts checked by Aron ben Moshe ben Asher.

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*Spain*, eds. Vivian B. MANN *et al.* (New York: G. Braziller in association with the Jewish Museum, 1992) pp. 133-155; HALPERIN, *Illuminating in Micrography*, pp. 81-82; KOGMAN APPEL, *Jewish Book Art*, pp. 64-68, 150-156 and 173-181; Katrin KOGMAN APPEL, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting in Late Medieval Spain: Signs of a Culture in Transition," *Art Bulletin* 84:2 (2002) pp. 247-272, and Dalia Ruth HALPERIN, "Clockwise-Counterclockwise: Calligraphic Frames in Sefardi Hebrew Bibles and Their Roots in Mediterranean Culture," *Manuscript Studies, the Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies* 4:2 (Fall 2019) pp. 231-269.

<sup>8</sup> For the edition of the biblical text and the Masora, *cf.* Federico PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo* (8 vols., Madrid: CSIC, 1979-1992). For the facsimile edition, *cf.* David Samuel LOEWINGER, (ed.), *Codex Cairensis of the Bible from the Karaite Synagogue at Abbasiya* (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing Ltd, 1971).

<sup>9</sup> The date of the codex is under discussion. The arguments against the ancient dating are not conclusive; for a summery, *cf.* Elvira MARTÍN-CONTRERAS, "Confirming what is Written: The Masoretic Term *Yafeh*," *Vetus Testamentum* 55 (2018) pp. 606-619, footnote 62.

<sup>10</sup> Critical editions: *BH* reproduced the text of M<sup>L</sup> and its Masora Parva for the first time; *BHS* replaced the previous edition. Its Masora, parva and magna, is based on the set of Masoretic annotations that appear in L, as explained in the preface to the edition. The MP is given in the margin of the biblical text and the MM in a separate volume (Weil 1971). *BHQ* is the current edition of L of which only some volumes have been published so far. Facsimile edition, *cf.* David N. FREEDMAN *et al.*, (eds.), *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

## 1. CARPET PAGES IN THE CAIRO CODEX OF THE PROPHETS<sup>11</sup>

The manuscript contains eleven carpet pages<sup>12</sup> executed in gold and colour.<sup>13</sup> The original order is uncertain. As the manuscript is not bound, it is difficult to know which part the carpet pages belong to and their exact order. Moreover, the manuscript is currently considered ‘lost’. The photos that I have and those displayed by Paul Kahle<sup>14</sup> show most of the pages placed at the beginning of the manuscript and just one at the end. However, Avrin, who made a profound study of the illuminations and codicological aspects of this manuscript, argues that it is very likely that all of the pages of decorated micrography originally came at the end of the book.<sup>15</sup> This paper follows the order Avrin proposes.

The carpet pages can be separated into two groups, based on their content:

- Pages with only pure decoration: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 578.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For a codicological description, cf. Richard J.H. GOTTHEIL, “Some Hebrew Manuscripts in Cairo,” *JQR* 17 (1905) pp. 609-655, n.º 34; Ralph H. PINDER WILSON and Richard ETTINGHAUSEN, “The Illuminations in the Cairo Mosche b. Asher Codex of the Prophets completed in Tiberias in 895 AD,” in *Der Hebräische Bibeltex seit Franz Delitzsch*, ed. Paul KALHE (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961) pp. 95-98, and AVRIN, “The Illuminations.”

<sup>12</sup> Avrin and Pinder Wilson and Ettinghausen put the number of carpet pages at 13, because they also included pages 581 and 585 in the count. These two pages have marginal decoration alongside the text, but are not proper carpet pages. Therefore, I have not included them in this study.

<sup>13</sup> The photos available in publications and those held by the Masora team at the CSIC are black and white. However, some of these carpet pages can be seen in color thanks to the photos taken by J. Zel Lurie and published in Nadine EPSTEIN, *The Mystery of the Cairo Codex on the Trial of an Ancient Manuscript* (Wisconsin, n.d.).

<sup>14</sup> Paul KAHLE, *Der Hebräische Bibeltex seit Franz Delitzsch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961).

<sup>15</sup> To arrive at this conclusion, she gave different arguments that sound plausible: she arranged the pages on the basis of aesthetic harmony with the opposing pages when the book is opened, matching the flesh side and the hair side to the hair side of the parchment, and the logical order of the decorated pages which include Masoretic text; AVRIN, “The Illuminations,” pp. 102 and 140-146.

<sup>16</sup> For a study of the designs, cf. PINDER WILSON and ETTINGHAUSEN, “The Illuminations”; Dalia LEVIT-TAWIL, “The Elusive, Inherited Symbolism in the Arcade Illumina-

– Pages that combine decoration and figured text or micrography:  
577, 579, 580, 581, 582 and 576 (585).<sup>17</sup>

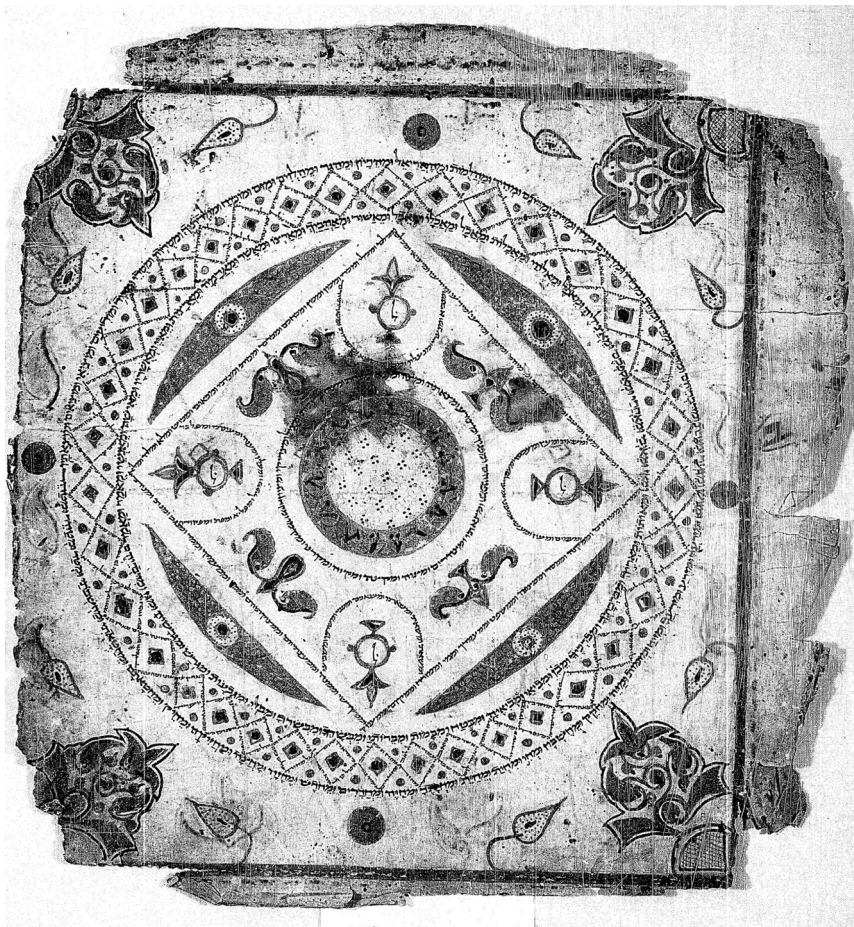


Figure 1. Cairo codex, p. 582

tions of the Moses Ben Asher Codex (A. D. 894-95),” *JNES* 53:3 (1994) pp. 157-193; AVRIN, “The Illuminations,” pp. 102-147, and KOGMAN APPEL, *Jewish Book Art*, pp. 39.

<sup>17</sup> David LYONS (*The Cumulative Masora*, p. 116) includes another carpet page that is not listed by Gottleib, Pinder Wilson and Ettinghausen or Avrin. It may be one of the leaves found with the manuscript about which AVRIN (“The Illuminations,” p. 114) said that it “obviously comes from another book.”

Apart from a small portion of text on page 576 which contains biblical verses praising the Lord, the text in figured shape found in these pages is Masora, i.e., the technical name to designate the set of annotations –mainly placed in the margins of the biblical codices– that accompanied the Hebrew Bible text.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from page 577, each page contains a long Masoretic list.<sup>19</sup> Page 577 contains two Masoretic lists: a first list of 23 pairs of words that occur twice in the Bible, one preceded by the particle *'et* and one without the prefix *waw*,<sup>20</sup> and a second list of eight words preceded by *we-'et* twice in the Bible.<sup>21</sup> Page 579 contains a Masoretic list of 26 pairs of words which appear twice in the Bible, once without the prefix *waw*

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<sup>18</sup> Aron DOTAN, “Masorah,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Fred SKOLNIK (2.<sup>a</sup> ed.; 22 vols., Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007) vol. 13, pp. 603-656; Israel YEIVIN, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*. Translated by Ernest J. REVELL, (*Masoretic Studies* 5; Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976), and Elvira MARTÍN-CONTRERAS and Guadalupe SEIJAS DE LOS RÍOS, *Masora. La transmisión de la tradición de la Biblia Hebrea* (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2010); Elvira MARTÍN-CONTRERAS, “Masora and Masoretic Interpretation,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. MCKENZIE (2 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) vol. 1, pp. 542-550.

<sup>19</sup> The texts included in the carpet pages have been transliterated and studied by LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*. He does not transcribe the catchwords, only giving the locations. Moreover, for the study, he only searches for Masoretic parallels in the *Sefer Okla we-Okla*, Paris manuscript. Therefore, I have searched for parallels in the major Masoretic lists and treatises: Christian D. GINSBURG, *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged*, With an Analytical Table of Contents and Lists of Identified Sources and Parallels by Aron DOTAN (4 vols., New York: Ktav, 1975); Saul FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah W'ochlah* (Hannover: Hahn, 1864); Fernando DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Sefer Oklah we Oklah. Colección de listas de palabras destinadas a conservar la integridad del texto hebreo de la Biblia entre los judíos de la Edad Media* (=Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 4, Madrid: CSIC, 1975); Aron DOTAN, *The Diqduqé hatteamim of Aharon ben Moshee ben Asher, with a Critical Edition of the Original Text from New Manuscripts* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1967), and Bruno OGNIBENI, *La seconda parte del Sefer Oklah weOklah. Edizione del ms. Halle, Universitätsbibliothek Y v 4.º, ff. 68-124* (Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 57, Madrid: CSIC, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> AVRIN (“The Illuminations,” pp. 255-256) was the first to transliterate the texts on this page; cf. also LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 118-119.

before the first word and once with the *waw* before both words.<sup>22</sup> Page 580 contains a Masoretic list of words which begin with *waw mem* and occur only once in the Bible.<sup>23</sup> Page 581 consists of a list of 38 words that occur twice in the Bible with two different meanings.<sup>24</sup> The figured text on page 582 (fig. 1) consists of a Masoretic list of words that begin with *waw lamed* that appear three times in that form in the Bible.<sup>25</sup> Page 576 (583) contains two types of texts: biblical verses praising the Lord and eight words –all variations of the word *baruk*, ‘blessed’– with a Hebrew letter indicating the number of times the word appears in the Bible.<sup>26</sup>

A quite regular schema is repeated in almost all of the lists: the lemmas in the list are written in large script and vocalized.<sup>27</sup> The catchwords –biblical quotations from which the words on the list were taken– are written in smaller script, without vowels and in different geometric shapes. The number of times that the words appear in the Bible is represented by the repetition of the letter with that numerical value closed or above the words in large script.

Some of these Masoretic lists are connected with Masoretic lists placed in the margins of the pages with the biblical text. The Masoretic list on page 579 is connected with a Masoretic list in the upper margin of page 132.<sup>28</sup> That list is attached to the words  $\text{רָקַב וּבְעֵנָה}$  in 2 Sam. 4:5 and

<sup>22</sup> Cf. LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 80-82, and GINSBURG, *Massorah*, list 85b, vol. I, p. 411.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. GINSBURG, *Massorah*, list 28, vol. I, pp. 371-375; FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 18, pp. 31-34, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 19, pp. 50-55.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 113-115. Some of the individual words in this list can be found in various lists in Ginsburg’s Masoretic compilation; cf. GINSBURG, *Massorah*, list 428, vol. I, p. 217; FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 59, pp. 62-65, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 60, pp. 103-106.

<sup>25</sup> This page is not included in Lyon’s book, *The Cumulative Masora*. I have made my own reading and study of this carpet page.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>27</sup> Apart from pages 577, 579 and 580, where some of the words in the lists are written in smaller script, without vowels and in a figurative shape.

<sup>28</sup> Federico PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo: Samuel (= Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 30* [Madrid: CSIC; 1983]) p. 189, and LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, p. 83.



contains 3 pairs of words that appear twice in the Bible, once with the *waw* before both words and once without the prefix *waw* before the first word. These three pairs of words are also included in the list on page 579. The Masoretic list on page 580 is connected with two Masoretic lists.<sup>29</sup> The first is placed in the upper margin of page 22; the list is attached to the word וּמְחַנְטִים in Josh. 13:26 and contains 12 words (although the last word cannot be read because the folio is torn), which begin with *waw mem* (followed by another letter *mem*) that occur only once in the Bible.<sup>30</sup> The second is placed in the lower margin of page 183; the list is attached to the word וּמְחַדָּר in 1 Kgs 7:9 and contains 14 words that begin with *waw mem* (followed by another letter *mem*) that occur only once in the Bible.<sup>31</sup> Both lists are quite similar in content, the word listed and the form. The Masoretic list on page 585 is connected with two lists. The first is placed in the upper margin of page 26; the list is attached to the word וּמְחַנְטִים in Josh. 17:14 and contains eight words from the root *b-r-k*.<sup>32</sup> The second is placed in the lower margin of page 341. The list is attached to the word וּמְחַנְטִים in Isa. 65:16 and it contains six words from the root *b-r-k* that appear only once.<sup>33</sup> All these lists in the margins repeat the formal schema of the lists found in the carpet pages: the words or lemma written in large script and with vowels, the verses written in smaller script.

<sup>29</sup> D. LYONS (*The Cumulative Masora*, pp. 65-66) believes that a third Masoretic list is connected to the information on page 580. That list is placed in the upper margin of page 164 and is attached to the word וּמְחַנְטִים in 2 Sam 22:4. It contains 24 words starting with -מא that appear once and change in the rest of the Bible; they are written without the initial *waw* -מא. The last part of the annotation is not present in the other lists. Therefore, this list is not similar to the other lists and I do not consider it to be connected to page 580.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Federico PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo: Josue-Jueces* (=Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 26 [Madrid: CSIC, 1980]) p. 76, and LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, p. 64.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Federico PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo: Reyes* (=Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 31 [Madrid: CSIC, 1984]) p. 56, and LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo: Josue-Jueces*, p. 90, and LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, p. 163.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Federico PÉREZ CASTRO *et al.*, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo: Isaias* (=Textos y estudios “Cardenal Cisneros” 36 [Madrid: CSIC, 1986]) p. 220, and LYONS, *The Cumulative Masora*, p. 164.

## 2. CARPET PAGES IN THE LENINGRAD CODEX (FIRKOVICH B19)<sup>34</sup>

The Leningrad codex has sixteen carpet pages at its end decorated in gold, blue and red.<sup>35</sup> They are located on the following folios: 473v, 474r, 474v, 475r, 475v, 476r, 476v, 477r, 477v, 478r, 478v, 479r, 488v, 489r, 489v, 490r. As the folio numbering indicates, the sixteen carpet pages do not appear one after another. An initial group of twelve carpet pages appears after 20 pages with Masoretic information displayed in three columns (ff. 463v-473r). This first group is followed by another 18 pages with Masoretic information also in three columns (ff. 479v-488r) and then another group of four carpet pages.

All the carpet pages combine decoration<sup>36</sup> and figured text or micrography.<sup>37</sup> They can be divided into five groups based on the kind of text they contain:<sup>38</sup>

- Pages with Masora annotations: 474v, 476r, 477v, 488v and 489r.

<sup>34</sup> For the physical characteristics of the manuscript and its history, cf. Victor V. LEBEDEV, “The Oldest Complete Codex of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition*, eds. David N. FREEDMAN *et al.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) pp. xxi-xxviii. For the codicological description, cf. BEIT-ARIE, SIRAT and GLATZER, *Codices hebraicis, Tome I*, pp. 114-131.

<sup>35</sup> They can be consulted online at [https://archive.org/details/Leningrad\\_Codex/page/n952/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/Leningrad_Codex/page/n952/mode/2up).

<sup>36</sup> The variety of shapes shown in them is discussed in AVRIN, “The Illuminations,” pp. 211-213; STERN, *The Jewish Bible*, 83-86, and KOGMAN APPEL, *Jewish Book Art*, p. 46.

<sup>37</sup> The information on the Masora from these pages in this paper is based on my own reading and study of these carpet pages. After I finished this study, I noticed that a Ph.D. dissertation on the carpet pages in the Leningrad Codex had been defended (cf. Susan SCHMIDT, ‘The Carpet Illuminations of Codex Leningrad, National Library of Russia Firk. Ms. EBP. I B 19a’, unpublished B. Litt. thesis (University of the Holy Land 2019). The dissertation was not available to the researchers when this article was accepted. It was published on ProQuest (<https://dissexpress.proquest.com/dxweb/doc/2354664005.html?FMT=AI&desc=The+Carpet+Illuminations+of+Codex+Leningrad+National+Library+of+Russia+Ms.+Evr.+I+B+19a>) when the article was in the phase of production. Its contributions have been added when it has been possible.

<sup>38</sup> Susan SCHMIDT (‘The Carpet Illuminations,’ p. 48) establishes nine types of carpet pages. She takes into the account the components of the colophon by separately and the  $\text{קִרְבַּן}$  blessings.

- Pages with Masora annotations and biblical verses: 473v,<sup>39</sup> 475r,<sup>40</sup> and 490r.
- Pages with Masora annotations, biblical verses and colophon: 474r,<sup>41</sup> 475v, 477r,<sup>42</sup> and 489v.
- Pages with biblical verses: 476v,<sup>43</sup> and 478r.
- Pages with biblical verses and colophon: 478v, and 479r.<sup>44</sup>

Only seven carpet pages have a single kind of text in figured shapes. The rest of the carpet pages contain hybrid compositions made up of different kinds of texts.

The text most commonly used is that of the Masora. Folio 473v contains four Masoretic notes related to words from the root *b-r-k*<sup>45</sup> forming the line of the circle, and a list of 37 words that occur twice and with two different meanings forming small diamonds.<sup>46</sup> Folio 474r contains (i) a list of 20 pairs of words that appear written once with *shin*

<sup>39</sup> According to SCHMIDT ('The Carpet Illuminations,' pp. 140-141) an acrostic of Samuel ben Jacob's name and a new dedication formula are found in this folio.

<sup>40</sup> According to SCHMIDT ('The Carpet Illuminations,' pp. 194-195) an acrostic of the name of the patron, Mevorakh ben Yosef ben N., is found in this folio.

<sup>41</sup> The colophon is translated into English and the biblical verses are identified and translated here: <<https://dornsife.usc.edu/wsrp/leningrad-carpet>>.

<sup>42</sup> According to SCHMIDT ('The Carpet Illuminations,' p. 246) a new dedication formula and קטח blessings are found in this folio.

<sup>43</sup> According to SCHMIDT ('The Carpet Illuminations,' p.233) קטח blessings are found in this folio.

<sup>44</sup> According to SCHMIDT ('The Carpet Illuminations,' pp. 295-296) a new dedication formula and קטח blessings are found in this folio.

<sup>45</sup> The notes are on: the expression בָּרַכְוּ הָהָה that appears five times in the Bible (Judg. 5:2.9; Ps. 103:20.21.22); the word בָּרַכְוִית that appears four times (Ps. 21:7; 84:7; Prov. 10:6; 28:20); the word מְבַרְךְ that appears three times (Num. 22:6; Job 1:21; Ps 113:2) and once וּמְבַרְךְ (1 Chron. 17:27); and the word בְּרַכְתֶּךָ that appears twice (Gen. 27:35; Ps 3:9). Cf. OGNIBENI, *La seconda*, lists 23C and 23H, pp. 150.152, and GINSBURG, *Massorah*, lists 507 and 514, vol. I, p. 195.

<sup>46</sup> Each diamond contains one word and its catchwords. For the edition and study of this list, cf. Elvira MARTÍN-CONTRERAS, "A New List of Words that Occur Twice with Two Different Meanings found in The Leningrad Codex B19a," *Textus* 29 (2020) pp. 44-52.



Figure 2. Leningrad codex, f. 474v

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dot (right) and once with *samek*<sup>47</sup> forming part of the Magen David; (ii) a list of 9 pairs of words that appear once written with *yod* at the end

<sup>47</sup> There is no heading and the list is only composed of the pairs of words, without catchwords. A similar list, but with the words in a different order, is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 52, pp. 56-57, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 53, pp. 93-94.

and once with *waw*,<sup>48</sup> completing the Magen David; and (iii) a list of 16 words that appear twice in the Bible forming small circles.<sup>49</sup> Folio 474v (fig. 2) contains: (i) three lists<sup>50</sup> forming the two rectangles, one on the 18 verses in which the combination 'el... 'al... 'al occurs,<sup>51</sup> one on the 9 verses in which the combination *lo'*... *we-lo'*... *we-lo'*... *we-lo'* occurs,<sup>52</sup> and one on the 8 verses with the combination *lo'*... *lo'*... *lo'*... *lo'*;<sup>53</sup> (ii) one list of pairs of words that appear once written with *lamed* at the beginning and once without it forming double quarter circles placed in the four corners and the bottom half of the central design;<sup>54</sup> (iii) notes on words that appear twice with patach in the Bible forming the upper half of the central design;<sup>55</sup> and (iv) notes on words that appear only once in the Bible forming the bottom half of the central design. Folio 475r contains a list of 5 pairs of words that appear once written with *lamed* at the beginning and once without it.<sup>56</sup> Folio 475v contains one list of words that are always spelled this way in one book with one exception, plus the way those words are spelled throughout the Bible.<sup>57</sup> Folio 476r contains a list of expressions that appear spelled this way

<sup>48</sup> There is no heading and the list is only composed of the pairs of words, without catchwords. A similar list, but with the words in a different order, is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 53, p. 57, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 54, p. 95.

<sup>49</sup> Each circle contains a note on one word and its catchwords. A similar list is found in one of the carpet pages from MS Lm, cf. OFER, "An Ancient Masoretic Comment," pp. 46-49.

<sup>50</sup> These three lists have a heading that explicitly states the number of words contained in the list and the textual characteristic they share.

<sup>51</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 351, p. 165, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 158A, pp. 205-206.

<sup>52</sup> Without giving the lemmas and the catchwords.

<sup>53</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 365, p. 168, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 168, p. 236.

<sup>54</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 10, p. 18, and DÍAZ ESTEBAN, *Oklah*, list 10, pp. 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 24, p. 41-42.

<sup>56</sup> The list is a continuation of one of the list found in f. 474v; cf. footnote 48.

<sup>57</sup> A similar list is found at the end of the manuscript but on one of the folios that displays the Masoretic lists in three columns (f. 472v). This folio contains another list on words that I was not able to identify but an explanation is offered by SCHMIDT, pp. 218-223.

only once, while in the other cases in the Bible the order is reversed.<sup>58</sup> Forming the design around the Magen David, folio 477r contains one list of 20 expressions –all from Genesis– with *we-’et* at the beginning that appear only once in the Bible.<sup>59</sup> The text forming the design on folio 477v is one list of expressions –from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy– that start with *we-’et* and appear only once in the Bible.<sup>60</sup> Folio 488v contains four lists: one on words that occur twice in the Bible –once preceded by *we-lo’* and once by *lo’*<sup>61</sup>– forming four triangles and two teardrops on the upper and lower borders of the design; a second list of pairs of two words that appear once with *waw* at the beginning and once without it in the first word, and each pair is unique; a third list of 16 pairs of two words without *waw* between them that appear only once in the Bible forming the right and bottom lines of the square;<sup>62</sup> and a fourth list of pairs of two words, both with *waw* at the beginning, that appear only once in the Bible.<sup>63</sup> Folio 489r contains one list of expressions that start with *we-’et* and appear only once in the Bible.<sup>64</sup> Folio 489v contains: (i) one list of pairs of unique words that appear once with *heh* and once without *heh*<sup>65</sup> forming the circle, the upper *hamsah* shape and the inner part of the eight-point star (surrounding the colophon); and (ii) notes on words that occur twice forming the rest of the eight-point star. Folio 490r contains one list of words that appear twice in the Bible with *waw-lamed* at the beginning.

Some of these Masoretic notes and lists are connected with Masoretic information placed in the margins of the folia with the biblical text. The four Masoretic notes related to words from the root *b-r-k* found on

<sup>58</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 273, pp. 147-148.

<sup>59</sup> This list has a heading that states that these words appear only once in the Bible. Similar lists are found in GINSBURG, *Massorah*, lists 1298 b-c, vol. I, p. 126.

<sup>60</sup> Similar lists are found in GINSBURG, *Massorah*, lists 1298a and 1298d, vol. I, pp. 125-126.

<sup>61</sup> A longer list is found in GINSBURG, *Massorah*, list 83d, vol. II, pp. 126-127.

<sup>62</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 252, pp. 138-139.

<sup>63</sup> A similar list is found in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 253, pp. 139-140.

<sup>64</sup> This list is different from the lists on the same phenomenon found on folios 477r and 477v, although some of the words included on both folios are also listed here.

<sup>65</sup> A similar list is found in GINSBURG, vol. I, list 17, p. 260.

f. 473v are connected with several notes placed in the MM.<sup>66</sup> The first list on f. 474v is connected with one list placed in the upper margins of f. 56v; the list is attached to the verse Exod. 40:20.<sup>67</sup> The heading and the words chosen for the catchwords in this list vary with respect to the list on f. 474v. The second list on this folio is connected to several MP notes attached to Josh 23:7 (f. 134v), 2 Kgs 17:35 (f. 214v), 2 Kgs 19:32 (f. 216r), Isa. 37:33 (f. 234v), and Jer. 16:6 (f. 254r). All these annotations give only the heading, without the catchwords. The third list on f. 474v is connected to a similar list placed in the lower margin of f. 318r; the list is attached to the verse Zeph. 3:2. Moreover, although similar compilations are not found in the margins for the rest of the lists, the individual words contained in them do have connections to the annotations placed in the MP and MM. Most of these annotations only give the numerical reference (unique, twice, etc.) but not the common textual characteristic that makes the compilation possible.

The other most commonly found type of text is biblical verses. They are the only text used in the design on two of these carpet pages (folios 476v, 478r), but they are present in almost all of them, except for four (folios 474v, 476r, 477v, 489r). The verses are mainly from Psalms, Deuteronomy and Isaiah. The biblical verses contained on one page may be from different books or all of them from the same book (as on f. 473v, where all the verses are from Isaiah).

The colophons are the third type of text found in the Leningrad carpet pages.<sup>68</sup> They are always at the centre of the design but only in two

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<sup>66</sup> Information on the expression *בְּרַכּוֹ יְהוָה* is connected with the MP and MM annotations attached to that expression in Judg. 5:2.9; the word *בְּרַכּוֹת* is connected with the MM annotation attached to the word in Prov. 10:6; the word *מְבַרְכֵךְ* is connected with the MM annotation attached to the word in Ps. 113:2; and the word *בְּרַכְתֶּךָ* is connected with the MP annotation attached to the word in Gen. 27:35.

<sup>67</sup> There is also an annotation in the MP containing only the heading of the list. The MP notes attached to three of the verses contained in the list – 2 Sam. 6:21, 1 Kgs 15:20, 21:4 – say: *לֵיט פְּסוּק אֵל עַל עַל*. The same number is given in FRENSDORFF, *Ochlah*, list 351, p. 165.

<sup>68</sup> On colophon components and scribal formulas in Hebrew medieval manuscripts, cf. Malachi BEIT-ARIE, *Hebrew codicology. Historical and Comparative Typology of Hebrew Medieval Codices based on the Documentation of the Extant Dated Manuscripts Using a Quantitative Approach*, pp. 121-148. <<http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/>

cases (folios 477r and 478v) are they written in figurative shapes. The information contained in these six colophons is quite similar, even if it differs in the exact content:<sup>69</sup> the name of the scribe and his work (twice), the name of the patron who commissioned the copy<sup>70</sup> (three times) and eulogies, blessings and good wishes for him. Only one new piece of information is added on f. 479r: a reference to the proofreading of the manuscript based on ‘corrected and clear texts made by the teacher Aaron b. Moshe ben Asher. It is corrected and made clear’.<sup>71</sup> All of this information repeats some of the information given in the other two colophons of this manuscript, those found on f. 1r and f. 491r without being part of a carpet page,<sup>72</sup> but it also complements it.

Finally, it seems that there is no correlation between the size and kind of text, although in some carpet pages with more than one kind of text, the size of the letters helps to distinguish each text.

### 3. CONCLUSION

The writing is a fundamental element in the composition of these carpet pages, as important as the ornamental elements, or even more so. Indeed, apart from the five pages that contain only ornaments, there is a greater presence of writing. A reading of all the texts in the carpet pages reveals a comprehensible content, which has not lost its function-

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collections/manuscripts/hebrewcodicology/Documents/Hebrew-Codicology-continuously-updated-online-version-ENG.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> The content of the six colophons has been transliterated and translated into French in BEIT-ARIE, SIRAT, and GLATZER, *Codices hebraicis litteris: Tome I*, p. 116.

<sup>70</sup> Mevoraḳ b. Joseph b. Netan’el. For more information on this person, cf. Ben OUTHWAITE, “The first owners of the Leningrad Codex: T-S 10J30.7”: available at <<https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.28071>>.

<sup>71</sup> Translated by Ernest J. REVELL, “The Leningrad Codex as Representative of the Masoretic Text,” in *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition*, eds. David N. FREEDMAN et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) pp. xxix-xlvi.

<sup>72</sup> These are transliterated and translated into French in BEIT ARIE, SIRAT, and GLATZER, *Codices hebraicis litteris: Tome I*, pp. 115 and 117. The first contains the location of the copying, the date that the copying was completed cited in five different eras, the name of the patron, and eulogies, blessings and good wishes for him.



ality as a message transmitter. These texts provide information about who wrote the manuscript, for whom, when, and above all, how the biblical text was written. That is to say, although the form in which the text is written may hinder reading, it does not affect its main function and does not make it an ornamental text. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of a subordination of what is written and its meaning to the pattern's ornamental function.<sup>73</sup>

The reading also reveals that the kind of text most often used is that of the Masora.<sup>74</sup> Most of the Masoretic information found on these carpet pages is about different words that are grouped together because they share a textual phenomenon. However, apart from four cases, there is no heading where the group is delimited and the phenomenon enunciated; rather, only the lemmas and the catchwords are given. Checking the Masoretic information contained in the carpet pages of both manuscripts reveals two things: (i) the information in the lists is accurate; and (ii) the information is connected with annotations in the margins of the pages together with the biblical text. However, this connection varies depending on the manuscript. In C, the lists in the carpet pages are at times continuations or repetitions of those found with the biblical text, but on other occasions, they complement the information given in the margins. Therefore, they share words and verses. However, the information given in the lists and notes in the carpet pages from L does not have an exact parallel in the margins. Even though the Masoretic information on the individual words is supported by annotations found in other parts of the manuscript, the form and exact content of the lists exhibited in the carpet pages are original. With the exception of the lists on f. 474v, which are a repetition of lists found in the margins, and the list on f. 475v, which is a repetition of a list also found at the end of the manuscript, the rest of the lists and notes are a new creation, the result of grouping the information found scattered throughout the manuscript. Moreover, the connection in C between the lists and the annotations in the margins is not only in the content but also in the form. The same

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<sup>73</sup> AS STERN affirms in *The Jewish Bible*, p. 85.

<sup>74</sup> If we take into account the fact that the Masora always appears in minute writing, very often in a geometric shape and in the margins of the pages with the biblical text, it seems logical that it would be the text most often used in the carpet pages.

pattern is reproduced in both locations: the words or lemmas are written in large script and with vowels, and the catchwords written in small script.

The existence of these connections explicitly binds these two parts of the manuscript, the margins and the end (the pages after the biblical text). It is, then, logical to find the same kind of text written in both places, the Masora, but with one exception: almost exclusively lists of a collative type<sup>75</sup> are found in the carpet pages. This link between the two parts probably results from the fact that the writing and the illumination in both manuscripts were the work of a single person.

The numerous differences found between the carpet pages in these two manuscripts show that there are no established patterns, either in the ornamental motifs or in the selected texts. In L, in contradistinction to C, there are no purely ornamental carpet pages; all the carpet pages combine decoration and figured text or micrography. In C, apart from page 576, which contains some biblical verses, the text in figurative shape is Masora. However, in L, three kinds of texts appear in a figurative shape: Masora, biblical verses and colophons. Their carpet pages also contain more written text than those in C. Moreover, the differences suggest that some changes took place in the function of the carpet pages. While the existence of fully ornamented pages in C and the presence of less written text seem to indicate some balance between the decorative and textual functions of the carpet pages, the presence of fewer ornaments and more written text in L's carpet pages suggests a more important textual function.

In summary, the analysis of these carpet pages shows that the texts contained in them are important in their own right and maintain their functionality in spite of their form. Therefore, they are not merely ornamental texts. The function of the carpet pages is both decorative and textual. They play the same role as the manuscript margins: to hold the extratextual material concerning the sacred text.

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<sup>75</sup> Lists of words which are different, but which share some common characteristic, cf. YEIVIN, *Introduction*, pp. 78-80.