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MASORETES AND RABBIS:
A COMPARISON OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATIONS

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Master
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For my parents

and rabbi

who have led me to this point

DIGEST

This thesis is an investigation into the identity of the ninth and tenth century Ben Asher family of Tiberian masoretes, centering particularly on whether or not they were Karaites. I have attempted to approach the subject in a new way, at least providing groundwork for future investigations.

The first chapter defines terms and delineates the scope of our current knowledge about the Tiberian masoretes and their work. I have attempted to be critical in my examination of what we know about these men and the Bible manuscripts attributed to them. The second chapter presents in chart form a brief survey of the scholarly literature on the purported karaite identity of the Ben Asher family of masoretes. Rather than investigating all the arguments in detail, as has been done in the more recent articles, I have attempted to present a fairly comprehensive annotated list of sources. The third chapter includes a fairly complete list of rabbinic passages dealing with masoretic issues. In order to demonstrate the deep concern of the rabbis for masoretic issues, I have collected, organized, and presented as many rabbinic citations as I could find and have interpreted a number of them in some detail. The rabbinic material for some of the masoretic topics itself could be (and has been) sufficient for dissertations, longer articles, or books. At the least this chapter provides a groundwork for further study in the field. The fourth chapter is perhaps the most original, for it offers comparative masoretic, rabbinic, and karaite "commentary" on a number of Bible verses. By considering and comparing these interpretations, we may conclude that the masoretes were

familiar with or drew upon rabbinic writing of their day in commenting upon the Bible. Furthermore, some of the Bible interpretations which they offer through spelling or accentuation are contrary to Karaite writings or doctrine, or would seem at least more likely to spring from Rabbanite than from Karaite Bible scholars and scribes. This collection of verses is but a start. Future studies may well (and hopefully) uncover more examples. But they demonstrate how primary sources can be used for evidence in these arguments. The conclusion of the thesis is the likelihood that the Ben Asher family of masoretes were not Karaites, or at least drew upon rabbinic material in their work.

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PREFACE

The scope of this thesis covers several disciplines. It deals with Bible and the biblical text, centering on textual phenomena and manuscripts. It attempts to discover how the tannaitic and amoraic rabbis felt about the transmission of the Bible. It concerns itself with Karaism and the beliefs of the followers of this splinter sect. It focuses on the ninth and tenth century Tiberian masoretes and searches for their identity. It touches on some elements of rabbinic and karaitic thought and belief. It involves a segment of medieval Jewish history and the methodology advanced by scholars to discover its roots.

Such a wide and diversified topic carries with it the excitement of interdisciplinary creativity and the pitfall of dilettantism. It has permitted me to draw upon a wide range of academic skills and disciplines and synthesize a variety of scholarly areas. Since I did not come to this undertaking with expertise in some of the areas, I have been privileged to work with and learn from experts, sharpening my own ideas and expanding my base of knowledge.

From the outset of the research for this thesis, Dr. David B. Weisberg has been both an inspiration and a guide. His keen mind and editorial acumen have served well to challenge and develop ideas and present them more clearly than I imagined possible. More than a thesis advisor, his devotion as pedagogue and scholar has provided me with an example to follow. His enthusiasm and love for the biblical text are contagious and have provided me with the encouragement to continue and produce more than I thought I was capable of. Dr. I. O. Lehman has graciously

shared with me some of his vast knowledge of Jewish manuscripts. His background in masoretic studies and Bible manuscripts has greatly enriched my learning and constantly provided me with new insights. Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman has been of enormous help in dealing with the Karaite material. He has led me to sources, aided me in their use, and been available for discussion about many of the ideas in the thesis. Dr. Werner Weinberg has instructed me in the principles of Hebrew orthography and helped me with some of the difficult German sources. While they may justifiably take credit for some of the good in the thesis, I alone must bear responsibility for the bad. To my own Ms. L. I owe a debt of thanks. More than helping with style and patiently listening and waiting as the ideas and thesis developed, she has been a source of encouragement, inspiration, and strength. To my parents and Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman, who have helped me choose the rabbinate and encouraged me to persist and achieve, this thesis is dedicated.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout the thesis for tracts of the Talmud, other rabbinic writings, and published books or journals. Unless otherwise indicated, the Babylonian Talmud is referred to. I have adopted the abbreviations employed by the Soncino translation:

Ab. = Aboth

ARN = Avot deRabbi Natan

B.B. = Baba Bathra

BM = Baba Mezia

Ber. = Berakoth

BH³ = Biblia Hebraica, 3rd edition

BT = Babylonian Talmud

EJ = Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971)

Erub. = 'Erubin

Hag. = Hagigah

Hor. = Horayoth

HUCA = Hebrew Union College Annual

JE = Jewish Encyclopedia

JJS = Journal of Jewish Studies

JQR = Jewish Quarterly Review

JT = Jerusalem Talmud

Ket = Kethuboth

Meg. = Megillah

Man. = Menahoth

MGWJ = Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums

Naz. = Nazir

Ned. = Nedarim

Pes. = Pesachim

R.H. = Rosh Hashanah

Rab. = Rabbah (e.g. Gen. Rab. = Genesis Rabbah)

Sanh. = Sanhedrin

Shab. = Shabbath

Sof. = Soferim

S.o.S. Rab. = Song of Songs Rabbah

Sot. = Sotah

VT = Vetus Testamentum

Yeb. = Yebamoth

CHAPTER I

Few issues of Jewish scholarship have been debated with such intense obduracy as has the identity of the Ben Asher family of Tiberian masoretes. The question of whether these scholars of Bible tradition were Karaites or Rabbinites has been hotly debated by some of the best scholars engaged in the scientific study of Judaism over the past hundred years. The quest for the true identity of Ben Asher has involved scholars of varied interests and fields: historians, such as Heinrich Graetz; grammarians, such as Wilhelm Bacher; authorities on Karaism, such as Jacob Mann and Samuel Poznanski; and scholars dealing with the masorah, such as Paul Kahle and Aron Dotan. Through the century of scholarship many arguments and proofs have been offered, refuted, and forgotten on both sides of the issue. Many highly reputable scholars have simply ignored past research in this field, stating that masoretic "writings were of Karaite origin . . . Now there can be no doubt about it."¹ Scholarly prudence and scientific caution have often been discarded in considering this question, and others have noted that "the point need now no longer be laboured that these Masorites were not Karaites."² But before reviewing the scholarly literature on this point, a general summary of our knowledge about Ben Asher is in order.

Most of what we know about Moses and Aaron Ben Asher is clouded in obscurity and scholarly disagreement. The few documents which form our sole sources of information about them have been disputed by experts not only regarding their interpretation, but also their authenticity. Scholarly interest in the Ben Asher family stems from Maimonides's acceptance

of their methodology and scribal practices. In a discussion of open and closed sections of the Torah, Maimonides writes:

וספר שסמכנו עליו בדברים אלו הוא הספר הידוע
במצרים שהוא כולל ארבעה ועשרים ספרים שהיה
בירושלים מכמה שנים להגיה ממנו הספרים ועליו
היו הכל סומכין לפי שהגיהו בן אשר ודקדק בו
שנים הרבה והגיהו פעמים רבות כמו שהעתיקו
ועליו סמכתי בספר החזק שכתבתי כהלכתו:

The copy on which we based ourselves in these matters is the one known in Egypt, which contains the twenty-four books and which was in Jerusalem several years ago, serving to correct copies according to it. Everybody relied on it, for it was corrected by Ben Asher, who worked on it for many years and corrected it as many times as he copied it. I have relied upon it for the copy of the Torah which I wrote according to the law.³

Some scholars have attempted to limit Maimonides's endorsement of the Ben Asher manuscript, pointing out that it refers only to the open and closed sections.⁴ But certainly the scope of the statement in the Mishneh Torah goes beyond that. Since the publication of the Mishneh Torah in 1180,⁵ the Ben Asher codex has been deemed authoritative and been sought after by scholar and publisher alike. It is noteworthy that Maimonides does not mention any other masorete by name. He refers only to the great confusion which he encountered in viewing several different copies of the Bible.

We would expect Maimonides to particularly mention Ben Naftali, the other leading masorete of the period. Less than a century earlier, Ben Naftali (BN) was significant enough to be given equal treatment with Ben Asher (BA) in Misha'el ben Uzziel's Sefer HaHilufim. This list of differences between these two masoretic schools is one of our only sources of information about BN. We have no extant manuscripts at-

tributed to BN. In particular, we have no Bible codices definitely written by him.⁶ We know nothing about his life. His first name is unsure, disputed to be either Moses or Jacob ben David.⁷ Even his last name has been doubted by some: since Naftali is the son of Jacob born after Asher, the sequence Ben Asher, Ben Naftali resembles a standard series of names. Chaim Rabin has pointed out that such a coincidence in the names of these two masoretic schools (or individual masoretes) could indicate that Ben Naftali was merely an invention to systematize variant readings by attributing them to a common source. Indeed a parallel can even be cited in the Kufan school of Arabic grammar.⁸

If BN existed, he is assumed by most scholars to be a contemporary of Aaron ben Asher, living in Tiberias in the ninth or tenth century. We may further assume that, like BA, there were probably several Ben Naftalis comprising a school of masoretes. We may consider that they wrote, pointed, and accentuated a Bible manuscript which is lost to us today, but which was known to Mishael b. Uzziel in the mid-eleventh century. Ben Naftali's text is specifically mentioned in Elias Levita's Massoret HaMassoret (1538) as the accepted Bible text in the Oriental countries,⁹ from which Levita excludes himself. Levita, in quoting Maimonides, accepts the Ben Asher tradition:

And we, also, throughout all these countries, follow its [BA] readings, whilst the Orientals adopt the text of Ben-Naphtali.¹⁰

Caspar Levia points out that the BA-BN division does not always correspond to that between Western and Eastern texts.¹¹ Rabin goes one step further in stating that the lists of differences between BA and BN "reveal no systematic features, and may be nothing but a gathering of traditional variants."¹² It is noteworthy that in presenting the Maimonides quotation

which accepts the BA text, Levita felt obliged to mention the rival BN tradition and simultaneously label it as foreign.¹³ Such an Eastern-Western set of differences is alluded to in Abraham Ibn Ezra's (12th century) comment on Ex. 25:31, though neither BA nor BN is mentioned.¹⁴ Despite the attempt of Paul Kahle and others to uncover "pure" Ben Naftali manuscripts, we must conclude that no extant Bible codices may be attributed to BN with certainty.¹⁵

If Maimonides and Ibn Ezra knew of Ben Naftali, they dismiss him and his work with virtually no mention.¹⁶ Indeed, BN seems to have dropped into obscurity once Maimonides favored BA, except for the late sixteenth and seventeenth century works of Menahem di Lonzano and Jedidah Solomon Norzi. From the work of these two scholars, we know that the BN tradition--or some remnant of it--was still extant as late as the 17th century. For in his masoretic commentary on the Bible, Minhat Shai (1626), Norzi demonstrates a familiarity with both the BA and BN traditions.¹⁷ Just as Tiberias had emerged as the center of masoretic activity by the end of the ninth century, just as BA and BN had emerged dominant among the Tiberian masoretes by the beginning of the eleventh century, so BA emerged as the leading masorete by the end of the twelfth century.¹⁸ His was the authoritative text, the text to be copied. Despite the work of Misha'el ben Uzziel and Norzi, BN, like many of the other early masoretes, faded into obscurity. As Ben Naftali lost prominence the differences between him and the other earlier masoretes blurred. Soon the earlier masoretes were forgotten and all textual variants were ascribed to BN. At a later stage, the composite rival traditions attributed to BN were suppressed and lost, only to be reconstructed from Cairo Geniza fragments.¹⁹

Still we may well wonder why Maimonides (and the other medieval com-

mentators) seem to support BA and to neglect BN. Perhaps we could conclude that Maimonides did not know of the BN tradition. But Maimonides's thoroughness and its mention in the work of Mishael ben Uzziel would mitigate against the possibility that the BN tradition was unknown to Maimonides.²⁰ Rather we must conclude that Maimonides probably knew of BN and included him among the "other masoretes" he mentions. He did not mention BN by name because he wished to establish as authoritative the work of his rival, BA. To include another name would have been confusing to the reader. Such an explanation is fully consistent with the nature of the Mishneh Torah. It is a code, not a survey of opinions. Maimonides sought to establish law through the work, and he did so by presenting a simple point of view, often without citation or indication of opposing views.²¹ Perhaps Maimonides mentioned BA by name to defend him from the attack by Saadiah Gaon in the latter's piyyut, Esa M'shali. But such an opinion is conjecture, and the evidence is too scant to prove or adequately support it.

While we may surmise about Maimonides's motives and attempt to reconstruct the history of the BN tradition, one fact remains: after the publication of the Mishneh Torah in 1180, Ben Asher was the leading masorete.²² The prestige of the family and school bearing the name Ben Asher was raised by Maimonides's preferential mention of the BA codex. Their work has remained desired, and the details of their lives continue to be the subject of scholarly interest. The primogenitor of the family was Asher the Elder (died about 805), followed by: Nehemiah (died about 830), Moses b. Nehemiah (died about 855), Asher b. Moses (died about 880), Moses Ben Asher, and Aaron Ben Moses Ben Asher.²³ We know virtually nothing about any but the last two members of the family chain, Moses and

Aaron Ben Asher. Furthermore, what we know about this father and son is at best sketchy and unreliable.

Moses Ben Asher, the father, lived in the second half of the ninth century. He is known as a scribe and masorete because of an extant Bible manuscript attributed to him. This manuscript (ms.) is followed by a colophon which testifies that this codex was written in Tiberias in 895. The ms. is of the former and latter prophets, pointed, accentuated, and with masoretic notes. But these features of the ms. create many problems, for they deviate greatly from the methodology attributed to the BA school. Comparison of the ms. with the variant lists in Mishael b. Uzziel's Sefer HaHilufim demonstrates the following: in almost two thirds of the cases the ms. follows the reading assigned to BN, one third the BA reading, and occasionally its own independent reading. In nearly one fourth of the readings where BA and BN agree, the ms. differs from both of them. Were we not to know the scribe, we would assume it to be either BN or some other masorete, but certainly not BA.

Therefore we may well suspect, along with some scholars who have doubted the authenticity of the colophon, that this manuscript is incorrectly attributed to Moses Ben Asher.²⁴ Otherwise we must assume that the tradition of pointing or scribal methodology differed between father and son, Moses and Aaron Ben Asher. A third solution to the problem has been offered by Aron Dotan. He suggests that Moses Ben Asher wrote only the consonantal text, the pointing and accents being added by another scribe.²⁵ Yet it does not seem reasonable that a masorete--whose chief concern would be with vocalization and accentuation--would leave those important and central aspects of his work to another scribe. How much less does it seem likely that he would seek assistance from a scribe be-

longing to a rival school. Perhaps the codex was attributed to Moses Ben Asher later in an attempt to indicate authenticity and assure survival. But it would be presumptuous to affirm or deny authorship without having viewed the document and relying on logic as the sole deciding factor.

Other than this doubted Bible manuscript, we have no other works by Moses Ben Asher. His name is mentioned in an Arabic genizah fragment,²⁶ and he is presumed to be the author of the famous "Song of the Vine." The presumption is based on the acrostic of his name formed by the first letters of the seven remnant verses. Since the poem is central to the alleged Karaism of the Ben Asher family, it will be discussed fully below. Dotan states that "it would appear that he [Moses Ben Asher] also wrote piyyutim . . .,"²⁷ but the comprehensive Davidson index of Hebrew poetry and piyyutim²⁸ does not list him.

Regarding Aaron Ben Asher (or: Aaron Ben Moses Ben Asher, Moses Ben Asher's son) we have more material and information. Most authorities agree that Aaron Ben Asher lived in Tiberias in the first half of the tenth century.²⁹ He is credited with having fixed the masorah: he finalized punctuation, accentuation, and marginalia. He is the last of the Ben Asher family and is therefore the final redactor of the authoritative Bible texts which we now have. Certainly the masoretic endeavor continues to this day, with the careful comparison of Bible manuscripts and painstaking preparation of new Bible editions.³⁰ But with Aaron Ben Asher closes one chapter in masoretic history; because of Maimonides's endorsement of BA, it is a crucial chapter, one that has been read and studied laboriously in the intervening millenium.

Aaron Ben Asher wrote several treatises on masoretic and grammatical

subjects, such as vowels, accents, and other diacritical marks. These treatises have been collected in Diqduqe HaTeamim, which has appeared in three editions: in the first edition of the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible (Venice, 1516-18); by Seligman Baer and Hermann Strack in 1879; and by Aron Dotan in 1967, reorganized and based on new materials. Aaron Ben Asher likewise compiled a list of eighty homonyms, which was incorporated into the end masorah and the anonymous masoretic work Oklah V'Oklah. With the aid of these treatises and the list of Mishael b. Uzziel, scholars have been able to evaluate the three Bible manuscripts attributed to Aaron Ben Asher.

These three codices have all been claimed--and doubted--to be the authentic work of Aaron Ben Asher. Together with the 895 Cairo manuscript of the prophets (=C), they form a locus of extant Ben Asher Bible codices:

1. Leningrad B19a (=L), which is a complete Bible, copied by Jacob ben Samuel in 1008.
2. British Museum Or 4445 (=B), which comprises the major portion of the Pentateuch (Gen. 39:4 - Deut. 1:33) and is undated.
3. The Aleppo Codex (=A), which is a complete Bible,³¹ pointed and provided with masorah.³²

The Leningrad B19a Codex forms the basis of the Biblia Hebraica³ (=BH³), edited by Rudolf Kittel, Paul Kahle, A. Alt, and O. Eissfeldt. As Kittel stated in his 1929 Foreword to the Biblia Hebraica³:

in this edition, in place of the text of ben Chayyim or any other Masoretic text resting on manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth century A.D., there is offered for the first time the text of ben Asher, several hundred years older, in the form in which MS. L gives it. At the same time arrangements are being made for utilizing for this edition the two other standard MSS. known to belong

to the family of ben Asher: that in Aleppo, and the MS. of the Prophets in the synagogue of the Karaites in Cairo.³³

In his 1937 introduction to BH³, Paul Kahle states that the Aleppo Codex was unavailable for use in preparation of the volume. He adds, however, that the Mishael b. Uzziel list in Sefer HaHilufim substantiated L as an authentic Ben Asher codex. Careful examination of the work of Mishael b. Uzziel proved for Kahle that:

1. The Moses Ben Asher codex of the Prophets (C) cannot be called a characteristic BA ms.; Kahle resolved the conflict by concluding that father Moses and son Aaron operated under different principles.
2. The British Museum Or 4445 (B) codex is a Ben Asher manuscript. Kahle concluded that B represents an early BA ms., while L was a recension later in Ben Asher's life.

Based on this information, Kahle felt justified in using L as the basis of BH³. It was the oldest dated ms. of the complete Hebrew Bible, "the best available representative of the ben Asher text."³⁴ The new fourth edition of the Biblia Hebraica, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, is similarly based on L. The new editors, Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, state that

the argument that it is still reasonable to use . . . L as the basis of an edition of the Hebrew Bible requires no substantiation whatever one thinks about its relation to the text of Ben-Asher.³⁵

L is still "the oldest dated MS of the complete Hebrew Bible."³⁶

Perhaps this more cautious and defensive statement reflects an attack on L and Biblia Hebraica³ made by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, in which he calls into question the authenticity of L as the BA-Maimonides codex, as well as the reliability of BH³. He further states that not only is A

a superior ms. to L, but also that A is more authentically attributable to BA.³⁷ The authenticity of L as a BA ms. was also brought into question by J. L. Teicher, who states that the codex represents an eclectic, not a genuine BA text.³⁸ Teicher further claims, on the authority of Strack, that "the text of this codex diverges from the Massoretic rules established by Aaron b. Asher."³⁹

Between 1937, when Kahle called L "the oldest dated MS. of the complete Hebrew Bible," and 1968, when Elliger and Rudolph quoted him, the long-sought-after Aleppo Codex emerged. Subsequent to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the Codex was removed from its repository in Aleppo, Syria, and transferred to Israel, where it is now kept.⁴⁰ For many years the keepers of the ms. in the Old Synagogue had refused Bible scholars permission to photograph or even study it for long periods of time.⁴¹ Only after the Old Synagogue in Aleppo was severely damaged and the ms. partially destroyed did the guardians agree to release the codex. In 1960, Izhak Ben-Zvi, then President of Israel, announced to "the Jewish public and the world of Biblical scholarship that the precious MS. has been found and is now in safe keeping."⁴² The announcement was made in the first volume of Textus, the organ of the Hebrew University Bible Project. This Project took as its principal task

the publication of a reliable critical edition of the Hebrew Bible, based upon the venerable codex of the Ben Asher school until recently preserved at the Old Synagogue of Aleppo . . .⁴³

The Hebrew University Bible Project has been working with the Aleppo Codex for at least fifteen years,⁴⁴ and still has not published any portion of the "critical edition of the Hebrew Bible," except in the pages of Textus and other periodicals. While the scholars of the Hebrew Uni-

versity Bible Project continue to prepare their critical edition in Jerusalem, the scholars in Stuttgart continue to work--independently--on their critical edition, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Currently, then, there are two new critical editions of the Hebrew Bible being prepared independent of one another, both presumably utilizing Dead Sea Scroll and ancient version materials: the Hebrew University Bible Project, based on the Aleppo Codex, A; and the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, based upon the Leningrad B19a codex, L.

The participants of the Project claim that the Aleppo Codex is the same codex which Maimonides saw and wrote about in the Mishneh Torah.⁴⁵ Their claim is based in large part on a fifteenth century commentator to the Mishneh Torah, Saadya b. David al-'Adeni, who states the association.⁴⁶ But this identification of A as the BA codex which Maimonides used has not met with universal scholarly accord. Most notably, Prof. M. D. Cassuto, who was the last to see the Aleppo Codex before it was partially destroyed in 1948, and the only modern scholar to study it while it was still complete, denied the association of A with Maimonides.⁴⁷

William Wickes, who viewed portions of A, concluded that

the statement assigning this Codex to Ben-Asher is a fabrication--merely introduced to enhance the value of the same,--and that the whole long epigraph . . . is untrustworthy and undeserving of serious notice.⁴⁸

Kahle attacks Wickes as being unable to make a critical judgement about the validity of the text;⁴⁹ but his attack is less about Wickes than it is about his colleague Seligman Baer, and his predecessor Wolf Heidenheim. But Isidore Harris, on the other hand, accepts Wickes's statement, without the slightest mention of influence of Baer or Heidenheim, and happily refers to Wickes as "this splendid scholar."⁵⁰ The scholarly doubt concerning the authenticity of A was reinforced by M. Zobel who noted in the 1928

Encyclopaedia Judaica: "Hingegen stammt eine dem A. [arons] zugeschriebene Bibelhandschrift in Aleppo nicht von ihm."⁵¹

More recently Aron [or Aharon] Dotan has raised serious doubt as to whether Aaron Ben Asher vocalized the Aleppo Codex. Working from published photographic reproductions, Dotan checked A for consistency. He compared the masorah to the vocalization of the manuscript and compared both of them to the other works of BA, particularly Diqduge HaTeamim. He has detected inconsistencies and has concluded that the vocalization of A is not by Aaron Ben Asher.⁵² At the very least, Dotan has demonstrated that the authenticity of A can be subject to doubt and shown that A cannot be used as the sole authority and representative of the BA tradition.⁵³ So challenging to the Aleppo Codex is Dotan's new edition of Diqduge HaTeamim⁵⁴ that the 1879 Baer-Strack edition of Diqduge HaTeamim has been reissued,⁵⁵ complete with an introductory essay by D. S. Loewinger entitled "The Aleppo Codex or Diqduge Hatte'amim?" The article is an attack on Dotan's methodology in his edition of Diqduge HaTeamim, for the "clash" between it and the Aleppo codex "is of such severity that they cannot exist side-by-side."⁵⁶ It seems hardly coincidental that Loewinger is "responsible for Massorah studies"⁵⁷ on the new Hebrew University Bible Project, which is based, of course, on the Aleppo Codex.

J. L. Teicher also dismissed the Aleppo Codex, saying that it was neither

written by Solomon b. Buya'a, nor pointed by Aaron b. Asher. The text of the Bible was written not earlier than the eleventh or twelfth century, and the colophon at the end of it refers probably to another manuscript. The Aleppo codex has no connection whatever with Ben Asher's model codex consulted by Maimonides in Cairo. It does not represent the genuine Ben Asher text.⁵⁸

In response to Teicher's attack, Kahle ironically defers to Cassuto's

opinion. Noting that "Cassuto has not any doubt that the Aleppo codex is a real Ben Asher codex . . .," Kahle puts off further discussion "to await the information Cassuto is able to give us."⁵⁹

Another thorough account of the scholarly history on this point is by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein.⁶⁰ He supports Kahle's attack on Wickes, calling it a refutation and attempts to explain Cassuto's "rashly" adopted --but often repeated--position of denial of authenticity to A. While Goshen-Gottstein's explanation is both ingenious and thorough, it is nevertheless open to question. The major problem confronting Goshen-Gottstein is that Cassuto never explained why he felt that A is not the codex used by Maimonides. Cassuto seemed to avoid giving proof for his verdict, saying at one point only that it was based on "technical reasons."⁶² In trying to reconstruct what those "technical reasons" might have been, Goshen-Gottstein notes that Maimonides states that the number of lines in the Song of Moses (Deut.32) must be seventy lines, while A sets out the Song in sixty-seven lines. He surmises that when Cassuto "saw the MS at Aleppo, he was struck by this discrepancy and considered it such definite proof against the identification that he entertained no further doubts."⁶³ Goshen-Gottstein goes on to show from manuscripts of the Mishneh Torah that Maimonides actually required 67 lines, the number 70 being spuriously introduced by later copyists (and perpetuated in the printed editions) who sought to reconcile the text of the Mishneh Torah with tractate Soferim.⁶⁴ Cassuto's supposed objection is therefore unfounded, and A stands as the ms. which Maimonides used.

But in dismissing what he felt must have been Cassuto's "technical reasons," Goshen-Gottstein builds an argument from silence. He admits that "Cassuto did not intimate his reasons for disqualifying A from being

the MS which Maimonides used."⁶⁵ The halachic consideration attributed to Cassuto by Goshen-Gottstein is a reason, which in his words, "we must assume."⁶⁶ Goshen-Gottstein's attempt to confirm this assumption with remembrances from Cassuto's traveling companion--"to the best of his recollection"--⁶⁷ only underscores the flimsiness of the argument from silence. The simple truth is that we do not know why Cassuto denied the association between A and Maimonides's manuscript. As inventive as we might be in attributing to Cassuto (and subsequently disproving) likely objections, we can never be sure what his real reasons were. Goshen-Gottstein manages to rule out other possible objections because there would be "nothing easier for Cassuto . . . to state."⁶⁸ But the halachic reason attributed by Goshen-Gottstein seems to be just as easily stated as the other possible reasons which he rejects.

One point, however, is clear: Cassuto's objection to A is most likely based on the Pentateuchal section of A, for this is the only portion of the Bible with which Maimonides concerned himself.⁶⁹ Cassuto seems to have been so dissatisfied with the Torah part of A that he chose instead Codex C, which does not contain the Pentateuch at all. Since most of the Torah section of A was destroyed since Cassuto examined it, we can never check his possible objections. We simply cannot compare A with Maimonides's specifications listed in the Mishneh Torah, except for the last seven chapters of Deuteronomy. It seems far too coincidental to me that Cassuto's only objection with A is to be found in those last seven chapters of the Torah--the only remaining section of the Pentateuch which we may check for accuracy. Cassuto's verdict against A as the Codex which Maimonides used must still stand, despite Goshen-Gottstein's ingenious attempt to neutralize it.

In their attempts to explain away Cassuto's verdict against A, both Ben-Zvi and Goshen-Gottstein hint that Cassuto's visit to Aleppo was brief and his opinion hasty. Ben-Zvi states that "unfortunately, the Aleppo congregation did not permit him [Cassuto] to spend there more than a few days."⁷⁰ But Kahle, who corresponded with Cassuto after his visit writes:

Cassuto was able to study the codex thoroughly for a long time . . . We are therefore dependent for this codex on the information Cassuto has to give . . . By studying the codex thoroughly he came to the conclusion that it is not very likely that it is this codex to which Maimonides refers.⁷¹

Goshen-Gottstein calls Cassuto's "hypothesis" an opinion "which he apparently adopted rather rashly, 'on the rebound.'"⁷² Yet at least two years passed between Cassuto's visit to Aleppo in 1944 and the first statement in 1946, and at least another year passed before Cassuto announced the opinion himself in January, 1948.⁷³ Ben-Zvi and Goshen-Gottstein notwithstanding, it would appear that Cassuto's verdict was based on a thorough examination of A and was carefully considered before it was announced. Even more than Wickes's, Teicher's, and Dotan's objections, Cassuto's opinion must be regarded most seriously because of his scholarly reputation and singular opportunity to examine the entire Aleppo codex.

The third manuscript attributed to Aaron Ben Asher is the British Museum Or 4445 Codex (B). Christian David Ginsburg thought the text was written about 820-850,⁷⁴ and the Masorah added about a century later, "probably . . . in the life-time of the Ben-Ashers, circa A.D. 900-940."⁷⁵ Ginsburg concluded that B was the "oldest Hebrew MS. yet known,"⁷⁶ and used it as the primary ms. for the Pentateuch portion of his Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible. In the marginal masorah Ben Asher's

name is listed without the benedictory phrase indicating that he would be dead. Ginsburg concluded, therefore, that Aaron Ben Asher was still alive when the masorah was added. Ginsburg noticed differences between this ms. and the text of Ben Chayim. But he erroneously assumed the Ben Chayim text to be that of BA, and assigned B to a period prior to Aaron Ben Asher. Ginsburg concluded the marginal signature of "the great master Ben Asher" was associated with the masorah only, added a century later.⁷⁷ Kahle's judgment, however, is that "der Kodex ungefähr in derselben Zeit geschrieben ist wie die Masora."⁷⁸ By comparing the text with the readings listed by Misha'el b. Uzziel, Kahle concluded that the codex was by Aaron Ben Asher "in his earlier period."⁷⁹ Kahle, then, would date the manuscript later than Ginsburg; but by attributing the codex to Ben Asher (which Ginsburg does not do), Kahle would seem to increase its value. According to Kahle, B is still older than L:

the London MS. [B] represents substantially a recension from the earlier period of ben Asher, while the Lenin-grad MS. [L] may be regarded as a recension from a later period of his life.⁸⁰

The authenticity of B has been doubted also by Teicher, who noted that it "does not follow the genuine Ben Asher tradition."⁸¹

In summary, none of the manuscripts attributed to Ben Asher is agreed upon by scholars as authentic and authoritative. None represents an unchallenged or even "pure" Ben Asher text. There is no scholarly consensus regarding any of the codices attributed to Ben Asher.⁸² Indeed, Teicher has denied the authenticity of each of the manuscripts.⁸³ The attempts of scholars to establish these codices as authoritative and final has led only to frustration and confusion. Harry Orlinsky has described this scholarly process as

working with manuscripts that are late and inadequate and self-contradictory; and it is improper and misleading, at this late date, to attribute to such manuscripts . . . authority that they simply do not merit.⁸⁴

Orlinsky even doubts the rationale behind seeking a Ben Asher text:

It should not be claimed that the text published [based on a given ms.] is that of Ben Asher, or of Ben Naftali . . . or the like, not only because none of these is a priori any more authentic or "masoretic" than any other but also because no such text is in existence; the Aleppo Codex, Leningrad B19a . . . are full of Ben Naftali readings. Indeed, it may well be that all these manuscripts exhibit a "mixed" text not because any of them were "pure" to begin with, until "contaminated" by foreign readings, but because they were "mixed" (from our point of view) already at the outset.⁸⁵

These two points of Orlinsky would do well to direct the work of scholars, critics, and Bible readers alike: that we have no authoritative manuscripts, and that we have no "pure" manuscripts. Orlinsky goes one step further to even doubt the unquestioned assumption behind the quest for a "pure" Ben Asher codex:

What is there inherently in the masoretic work of the Ben Asher school that gives it greater authority than that of the Ben Naftali school? Why should the vowels, the dagesh, the maqef . . . and the like, as used by Ben Asher's school be more acceptable to an editor of "the" masoretic text than their use by Ben Naftali's school? (Had the matter been left to Saadia Gaon to decide, this tenth century scholar would have ruled vigorously in favor of Ben Naftali as against Ben Asher . . .) Surely Maimonides, authority that he was in matters of halacha and philosophy, was in no position to deal adequately with the problems of the rise of the Masorah and the achievement of a masoretic text; so that if this notable halachist and philosopher is said to have derived from the school of Ben Asher, as one upon which everyone could depend, even if that manuscript could be identified with full confidence, it would still have to be treated the same as every other manuscript of the Hebrew Bible.⁸⁶

If we can doubt Maimonides's ability to judge Bible codices, then surely we must doubt the a priori superiority and authenticity of a Ben Asher codex, even if one existed.

But the history of Hebrew Bible editions has focused not only on the

quest for the Ben Asher text. Many scholars and editors have sought to publish "the" masoretic text. Not only have there been scores of ancient Hebrew Bible manuscripts, but dozens of printed Hebrew Bible editions.

In Ginsburg's words,

the Jews should have hailed with delight this invention [of printing] as a Divine gift and sung its praises because it enabled them to multiply and circulate the word of God.⁸⁷

And multiply and circulate they did, creating edition after edition, with many of them claiming unique authenticity, singular reliability as the Ben Asher text, or unquestionable validity as "the" masoretic text. The proliferation of printed editions of the Hebrew Bible has resulted in a confusion of conflicting claims. Ginsburg lists and describes 24 such editions, up to the Bomberg Bible of 1525-28.⁸⁸ In his Prolegomenon to Ginsburg's Introduction, Harry Orlinsky lists more than three dozen additional editions, many of which claim to be "the" masoretic text. But with all these editions, Orlinsky points out that "there never was any such thing as 'the masoretic text' in existence."⁸⁹ Nor is it possible to produce "the masoretic text" of the Bible in the future:

While it is impossible a priori to achieve "the masoretic text" when none ever obtained, it would seem possible in theory to produce a Hebrew text of the Bible with the claim that it is derived from "a masoretic text" . . . ⁹⁰

Nor is any one masoretic list

a priori more authoritative or "masoretic" than another . . . From the very outset there were different lists compiled by different scholars on the basis of different manuscripts; it is no longer possible to reconstruct the time and place and circumstances of this process.⁹¹

"Masorah," after all, means basically tradition and transmission.

It refers to the ways in which the Hebrew Bible was handed down through

the generations. While the etymology of the word is in doubt, the idea behind it is clear. It is the concept of textual transmission reflected in Avot 1:1, where it is stated that "Moses received the Torah from Sinai and handed it on to Joshua and Joshua to the elders and the elders to the prophets . . ." The tradition was kept intact by the exercising of extreme care. Vowels and punctuation signs were fixed; sections were set and counted; verses were established; books were set in order; and even the letters were counted. Rules for scribes were articulated, and formulas for accurate and consistent copying were listed. Today we have many of these rules, formulas, and lists. We know something about some of the men who had a hand in formulating them and in carrying on the work of the masorah. But most of the work is anonymous, and much of what we know about the masoretes is sketchy and suspect.⁹² Undoubtedly the greatest source of information about their work is the product of their labors, the Hebrew Bible itself.

The word **מסורה** is not originally Hebrew, but comes from Aramaic. It appears in many forms in Hebrew and cognate literature, but it is a rare word in the Hebrew Bible. Its meaning there is taken from Ezek. 20:37 (**במסרה**), the word being translated as "fetter"⁹³ or "bring into the bond of."⁹⁴ Caspar Levis points out that the vowels and accentuation actually fetter the text, for the fixing of pronunciation limits exposition.⁹⁵ Until modern times, the biblical word **מסורה** was used by the masoretes to describe their activity, and was gradually replaced by the current word **מסורה**,⁹⁶ which appeared for the first time in the sixteenth century.⁹⁷ The final meaning, however, seems clear enough: the verb form means to transmit or deliver; the noun means tradition or transmission.⁹⁸

It is best to understand the masoretic process as a continuing process, a growing and accretion which constantly incorporates into itself new insights with each new generation. Those who study Bible manuscripts and concern themselves with masorah are themselves masoretes, engaged in the same process as Aaron and Moses Ben Asher. Of course there are good, reliable pieces of work and there are shams, with wide ranges of variance between them. But the basic process of studying and transmitting the text of the Hebrew Bible continues to this day. In our age we are confronted with the work of many masoretes, and the number continues to grow. When we seek a universal masoretic text--"the" masoretic text--confusion inevitably results.

To help us make sense out of this confusion, perhaps we would be wise to abandon our search for "the" masoretic text and adopt a more moderate approach. Manuscripts, like games, relate to one another in a complicated manner. Some are dependent on others and must be discounted as independent sources. The failure to realize this was Ginsburg's shortcoming in his Bible edition, as Kahle points out.⁹⁹ But to presume that all masoretic or BA manuscripts must stem from a single discoverable Urtext is to be guilty of another shortcoming.¹⁰⁰ We should content ourselves to work with the manuscripts we possess and try to discern the family resemblances¹⁰¹ among them. They are complicated relationships, as can be seen by a comparison of the four BA manuscripts. Among these codices, "we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing."¹⁰² Rather than trying to discover which ms. is the father, we should attempt to group the family and uncover the similarities and relationships between them. This is Orlinsky's point,

CHAPTER II

The scholarly opinion on the identity of the masoretes has fluctuated greatly in the past hundred years. Extreme stands were taken, evidence reevaluated, positions modified. The controversy has involved many of the best scholars of the scientific study of Judaism and captivated the attention of students of history, Bible, Hebrew grammar, masorah, Karaism, and Rabbinics. The century of scholarship divides into three periods, each ending with the publication of a major Jewish encyclopedia, which attempted to summarize the opinion of the day.

The first period begins with 1860, when the masoretes were first believed to be Karaites. This period continues until 1910, with the publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia. It is characterized by a nearly even division in the scholarly world regarding the identity of the masoretes. The second period begins after the publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia and continues until the publication of the 1928 Encyclopaedia Judaica. During this period almost every scholar argued that the masoretes were Rabbanites. In the history of the scholarship it is a period of reflection and unification. The third period actually begins with the resumption of Jewish scholarship after World War II and continues through the publication of the 1971 Encyclopaedia Judaica. The question remains unresolved and debated today, as the recent publication of the EJ demonstrates.

In the following charts, I have attempted to arrange the sources chronologically, placing them in the appropriate column depending upon their conclusion. Sources listed between the two columns appear to be undecided.

1st Period: 1860-1910

| <u>Karaite</u> | <u>Rabbinite</u> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1860 - Pinsker ¹ | |
| 1861 - Pineles ² | 1861 - Schorr ³ |
| 1862 - Fürst ⁴ | |
| | 1865 - Gottlober ⁵ |
| 1871 - Graetz ⁶ | |
| | 1871 - Oppenheim ⁷ |
| 1889 - Harris ⁸ | |
| | 1892-94 - Harkavy ⁹ |
| 1895 - Graetz ¹⁰ | 1895 - Bacher ¹¹ |
| | 1901 - Levias ¹² |

Graetz was the chief spokesman in this period for the Karaism of Ben Asher. The main arguments he presents are as follows:

1. Judah Hadassi, a Karaite, speaks of Ben Asher as a fellow Karaite.
2. Ben Asher is referred to as המלמד, a Karaite title.
3. The introduction to Digduge HaTeamim refers to BA as מסכיל, another Karaite term.
4. Ben Asher seems to have valued the Prophets and Hagio-graphs as equivalent in sanctity to the Torah.
5. Moses Ben Asher's codex contains an epigraph claiming that he wrote the whole Bible for use in the synagogue.

6. Saadiah Gaon attacks Ben Asher.

On the other hand, Harkavy, Bacher, and others point out that Ben Asher writes from a Talmudic point of view, makes use of rabbinic language, and draws upon Sefer Yezirah. The term מסכת is not an exclusively karaitic title. Rabbinic doctrine is not uniformly against considering the Prophets and the Hagiographa as part of the Torah. Maimonides's endorsement of BA mitigates against Ben Asher's possible Karaite affiliation.¹³

* * *

2nd Period: 1910-1930

KaraiteRabbinite

1913 - Eppenstein¹⁴

1920 - Poznanski¹⁵

1920-22 Mann¹⁶

1926 - Mann¹⁷

1927 - Kahle¹⁸

1928 - Zobel¹⁹

In this period the arguments and evidence of the preceding generation are reexamined and evaluated. Some note that the Karaite documents which were edited by Firkowitz are suspect and must be doubted. Others attacked the generalization that all earlier Jewish grammarians and masoretes were Karaites. Kahle, at this stage, seems ambivalent on the issue and doubts whether it can be proven conclusively that the masoretes were either Karaites or Rabbinites.

Third Period: 1930-1972

| <u>Karaite</u> | <u>Rabbinite</u> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1954 - Klar ²⁰ | |
| 1956 - Wieder ²¹ | |
| 1957 - Allony ²² | |
| | 1957 - Zucker ²³ |
| | 1957 - Dotan ²⁴ |
| 1959 - Kahle ²⁵ | |
| | 1960 - Loewinger ²⁶ |
| | 1960 - Ben-Zvi ²⁷ |
| 1971 - Ben Hayyim ²⁸ | 1971 Dotan ²⁹ |

This period begins with the publication by Benjamin Klar of new manuscript evidence that Saadiah Gaon in his piyyut Essa M'shali, was attacking Ben Asher. Klar and Wieder observed that in the Song of the Vine, Moses Ben Asher traces the history of the masoretes through the Elders of Bathyra. Klar and Wieder maintain, and Kahle accepts, that the Elders of Bathyra are "the spiritual ancestors of Karaism who had inherited the prophetic traditions and transmitted them to the Karaites."³⁰ Zucker, on the other hand, questions the assertion that Saadiah Gaon directed his polemic at Ben Asher. Dotan summarizes all the arguments and scholarly literature to date and argues convincingly not only that Ben Asher was not a Karaite, but also that he was a Rabbinite. Using new manuscript materials, he has reedited Diquq HaTeamim and has discovered evidence of Ben Asher's knowledge of and dependence upon rabbinic litera-

ture. Dotan's argument is acknowledged by Loewinger and Ben Hayyim and accepted by Ben-Zvi, although Kahle either overlooked or ignored it, or perhaps completed The Cairo Geniza² before Dotan's article was available to him.

That the issue is still unresolved can be demonstrated by reading the two articles on Moses and Aaron Ben Asher in the 1971 Encyclopaedia Judaica. Ben Hayyim writes there that Aaron Ben Asher was a Karaite and that Karaism was a family tradition.³¹ In the very next article in the encyclopedia, Dotan notes that the Song of the Vine "contains one of the decisive proofs that M. Ben-Asher was not a Karaite."³² These two articles bring testimony that scholarly opinion is still divided on the issue of the Karaism of the Ben Asher family. Throughout the past hundred years of investigation into the question, evidence has been deemed by some scholars as clear and decisive, while others considered it unreliable. No doubt the prospect that the Hebrew Bible was finalized in its current form by a member of a splinter sect was jarring to many investigators into this question. It is possible that some of the scholars who dealt with this issue have sought to "rescue" the masoretes from the accusation of Karaism.

Even with a massive array of evidence on both sides of the question, a single scholarly consensus has not been attainable. Despite attempts to "prove" that Ben Asher was (or was not) a Karaite through manuscripts of his writings, of writings about him, of his titles and beliefs, no agreement has been found. Perhaps the time has come to seek other types of evidence: the rabbinic attitude towards masoretic activity and "commentary" contained within the Hebrew Bible itself.

CHAPTER III

The central question of whether or not the Tiberian masoretes were Karaites must depend on the association of their work with the rabbinic tradition. We have attempted to show that it is difficult to prove their affiliation conclusively, and the arguments and "proofs" that have been offered based on outside sources have met with some reservations all around. The paucity of applicable Karaitic material and our ignorance of the lives of Moses and Aaron Ben Asher make it virtually impossible for us to prove from external criteria whether or not they were Karaites. We cannot even establish generally-accepted criteria for proving their association with the Karaite or Rabbanite movements, for often the two groups stood close together. Despite the attempts of many scholars to label the Ben Asher family, their identification based on external grounds remains doubtful.

But we do know what they did, just as we have some likely samples of their work. Even if each of the purported BA codices has been doubted at some point, we at least have a few likely examples of masoretic texts. Furthermore we can be fairly certain about the nature of the masoretic endeavor: spelling was fixed, letters and words were counted, vocalization and accentuation were added or finalized, variants were preserved, certain orthographic phenomena were noted and listed. Work towards a systematic grammar and concordance was begun in order to insure the consistency of the vocalization and accentuation. All these efforts were made to prepare accurate Bible texts, to preserve the words of scripture exactly and guard them from change. Such endeavors were unquestionably

based on the sanctity of each letter and diacritical mark. The undertaking was in divine service because every word, letter, and dot was ordained by God.

We may well ask whether these masoretic values and concern with the Bible would indicate Karaism, or whether the rabbinic tradition similarly involved itself with careful scriptural transmission. Was the masoretic enterprise alien to the interests and inclinations of the tannaitic and amoraic rabbis, or was this a concern shared by them as well? Were the masoretic endeavors following in "legitimate" rabbinic paths, or were they reflective of an interest with the Bible which we might categorize as anti-rabbinic? These questions may lead us to a larger question, posed by Isidore Harris more than eighty years ago:

Were the vocalisation and accentuation of the Scriptures constructed independently of tradition . . . ? No question can have a profounder interest for Jews than this . . .¹

The answer must grow out of an investigation of what the tradition is, how the rabbis viewed masoretic activity (albeit centuries before the Ben Asher family). Harris admits that "the Massorites came to follow in the wake of Rabbinical tradition, and their system found . . . acceptance with the Rabbanites."² Yet he maintains that

men who devoted themselves to Biblical studies were often . . . set down as Karaites; the name קרא being often applied in Talmudic literature to one who had made a special study of Scripture, like R. Chanina קרא (Ketuboth 56a, Taanith 27b), and Levi bar Sisi (Jalkut on Hosea, no. 533).³

Certainly Harris could not have meant to imply the anachronism that these two early Amoraim were Karaites, since the Karaitic movement was not begun by Anan ben David until one hundred years after the completion of the Talmud and five hundred years after these rabbis lived. The Jastrow dictionary⁴ and Soncino translation⁵ render this word קרא as "Bible

teacher," considering it a simple noun of vocation, not a denigrating or ostracizing appellation. Yet Harris indicates that "one who had made a special study of Scripture" would be so unusual as to merit a special title. But a thorough investigation of the rabbinic literature will reveal, I believe, that biblical study was not extraordinary, but commonplace, and that the Masoretic endeavor was generally of concern to the rabbis.

A methodological note is in order here. What I have done in this chapter is to collect rabbinic citations mentioned in a number of sources. I have organized, classified, and presented them in an attempt to arrive at a rabbinic understanding of the biblical text. While I have made a great effort to be complete, there are undoubtedly many citations which have escaped my attention. Furthermore, generalizations from such a compilation are frequently doubtful. With a corpus of material as vast and diversified as the rabbinic literature, generalizations must be made cautiously. Often opposite conclusions can be reached by two reputable scholars dealing with essentially the same literature, since it is so vast and varied. On the relative sanctity of the three sections of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, and Writings), we find two acknowledged authorities articulating opposite statements on what the rabbis believed.

Kaufmann Kohler writes:

the prophets and other sacred books were looked upon only as means of "opening up" or illustrating the contents of the Torah. These other parts of the Mikra were declared to be inferior in holiness, so that, according to the Rabbinical rule, they were not even allowed to be put into the same scroll as the Pentateuch.⁶

Compare the words of Solomon Schechter:

. . . the term Torah is not always confined to the Pentateuch. It also extends, as already indicated, to the

whole of the Scriptures on which the Rabbis 'laboured' with the same spirit and devotion as on the Pentateuch. For indeed 'the Torah is a triad, composed of Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa.' 'Have I not written to these three things in counsels and in knowledge?'⁷

Therefore I am not presuming here to present a comprehensive and authoritative statement on the rabbinic understanding of the biblical text. Rather I am attempting to demonstrate that the masoretic endeavor is consonant with that rabbinic understanding. I am trying to show that the activity of the masoretes was in keeping with the rabbinic tradition. While I have assembled over two hundred citations to attempt to prove this point, I realize that it may not represent the dominant view of the rabbis, though it cannot be disputed that it represents a viewpoint that is authentically rabbinic and widespread. The search for "the rabbinic opinion" may be as quixotic an endeavor as the search for "the masoretic text" (see Chapter 1, pp. 16-18 and 20.).

We may begin by noting that, in addition to R. Chanina and Levi bar Sisi, there were a number of other rabbis who were concerned with Bible study and transmission. R. Hananel was declared to be "quite qualified to write the whole Torah by heart" (Meg. 18b).⁸ R. Samuel b. Shilath was known for teaching Bible to young children (B.B. 8b, 21a; Ket. 50a).⁹ Most noteworthy of all was R. Meir, a scholar and scribe of great repute ('Erub. 13a, Sot. 20a),¹⁰ "a good copyist of the very best."¹¹

Moreover, the work in which they were engaged was viewed as very important by the rabbis. The scribe is cautioned to be careful, for his occupation is sacred. Should he omit or add a single letter, he would destroy the entire universe (Sot. 20a, 'Erub. 13a). One example which the rabbis used in discussing this point was the dalet in the word "ehad" in Deut. 6:4, the Shema. The rabbis deemed it praiseworthy to extend the

recitation of the individual word "ehad," one. But this must be done with special care not to mix up the dalet and the het, lest the word ehad be misunderstood for the word aher, which means other (Ber. 13b). Were you in error to change dalet to resh, causing ehad to become aher, you would destroy the world (Midrash Song of Songs 5:11). Indeed Deut. 6:4 is viewed as a paradigm that changing even one letter of the Torah can bring about destruction of the world, for such a simple change would bring about a blasphemous reading (Lev. Rabbah 19:2; Gen. Rabbah 1:1). Consequently the rabbis expound upon the importance of the scribe's work. He must take precautions against a fly's perching on top of a dalet and blotting out part of it, thereby creating a resh (and bringing about the destruction of the world). Therefore, a special ingredient, called vitriol, is put into the ink, to preserve the proper lettering and the world. It is noteworthy that the masoretic texts have this word with a majuscule dalet, as if to guard against the possible error which the rabbis warned against on this particular word. It is hardly coincidental that the very letter about which the rabbis expressed concern was written oversized by the masoretes, as if to guard against the destruction of the world by such a hypothetical fly.

Just as the rabbis dwelt on words and letters, they called attention to the great care which must be taken in writing books (Pes. 12a).¹² A book of the Bible which is not corrected is referred to as "unrighteousness," and may not be kept longer than thirty days (Ket. 19b). Rabbi Akiba himself emphasized the importance of a corrected Torah scroll¹³ and urged R. Simeon to teach his son from a revised Bible copy (Pes. 112a).¹⁴ How close this correction process corresponds to Maimonides's description of the Ben Asher codex:

it was corrected by Ben Asher, who worked on it for many years and corrected it as many times as he copied it.¹⁵

It was Rabbi Akiba who also said "Masorah [or tradition] is a fence around the Torah" (Ab. 3:13).¹⁶ Robert Gordis has pointed out¹⁷ that Akiba uses the word masoret as a generally familiar term, indicating that the masoretic process was known in his time (first half of the second century, C.E.). The rabbis were familiar not only with the term but also with the term scribe. It is the scribe who maintains the fence around the Torah, protecting it from change. In seeking to discover the nature of scribal work, the rabbis set out to find the etymology of the Hebrew word סופר, (scribe). They interpreted the root meaning to be from the verb ספר, to count. The rabbis understood the scribes (סופרים) to be counters of letters (Hag. 15b, Kid. 30a).¹⁸ How well the rabbis understood the masoretic process, in which time was spent counting not only letters, but also words and verses. The Amoraim further enumerated the functions of the scribe. Their responsibilities would include fixing pronunciation, cancelling the vav conjunctive, indicating which words are read but not written, and which are written and not read (Ned. 37b-38a; Sofrim 6:8-9).¹⁹ Apart from indicating the duties that a scribe would have, the rabbis themselves engaged in the activity of word counting and concordance formation. The rabbis enjoyed pointing out additional scriptural occurrences of words in the verse they were expounding, and based some of their hermeneutic principles on this analytic technique. Furthermore, they counted occurrences of given words in the Bible, much as the masoretes did. In 'Erubin 17a, they build a midrashic explanation on the fact that the word בראשית occurs three times in the Bible. In Pes. 103-104a, the rabbis explain that the Havdalah service mentions separation

three times because that is the number of occurrences of the word **ויבדל** in the biblical text.²⁰ Nahum of Gimzo, Akiba's teacher, used the principles of "amplifications and restriction" in his exposition (Shebu 26a; Hag. 12a.)²¹ Another of the generation preceding Akiba, Simon the Amsonite, expounded the occurrences of the particle **נא** in the Bible (Kid. 57a; Pes. 22b).²² Inasmuch as the rabbis were cognizant of the need to count letters and words, and engaged in this practice themselves, we may safely infer their deep interest with the details of the biblical text. More than just piously stating that Torah speaks in the language of men (Sifre on Num. 6:3)²³ or setting down the rule that the literal meaning of the biblical text is primary (Shab. 63a),²⁴ the rabbis became involved with the language of the text itself, its details and elements.

They counted letters. In the name of R. Jochanan, the rabbis noted the number of large and small letters (Meg. 16b; Sof. 9:1-7).²⁵ In the name of R. Nachman, they mentioned odd letters, such as the split or miniscule vav in Num. 25:12 (Kid. 66b).²⁶ They discussed the taggin, or tittles on certain letters (Menachot 29b),²⁷ special signs (Sifre 84),²⁸ and isolated letters, or inverted nuns, in Num. 10:35-36 and in Psalms 107 (Shab. 115b, R.H. 17b, Avot Rabbi Natan 34:4, Sifre Num., ch. 84, Sofrim 6:1).²⁹ Each of the suspended letters in the Hebrew Bible is mentioned by the rabbis: the suspended nun in Judges 18:30 (B.B. 109b; ARN 34:4 and 37; Mechilta, Yitro, I; JT Ber. 9:2-3, 13d; JT Sanh. 11:7; S.o.S. Rabbah 2:5),³⁰ the suspended 'ayins in Ps. 80:14, and Job 38:13 and 15 (Pes. 118b, JT Sanh. 10, 3b).³¹ On the dotted letters over fifteen words in the Hebrew Bible, the rabbis expounded and listed. Rabbi Yose said there is a point over the he in **אָהָרָה** (Num. 9:10) to indicate that the word means not really distant, but only as far as beyond the threshold

of the Temple Court (Mishnah Pes. 9:2).³² The rabbis prepared a comprehensive list of all the dotted words in the Torah (Sifre Num. 69)³³ and used the dots as evidence for their interpretations. They were not only aware of the orthographic phenomenon, went through the masoretic process of listing and counting them (ARN 34), but also considered them divinely ordained and an integral part of the text of the Hebrew Bible. The extensive rabbinic commentaries on these dots and the verses in which they appear, their source and dating, are dealt with extensively by Romain Butin, Lieberman, and Ginsburg.³⁴ Lieberman points out that the rabbis noted and used the dots, viewing them as "sign[s] calling for special interpretation," just as "everything unusual in the script of the sacred text."³⁵

Often, though, it was not the unusual but the commonplace which caused the rabbis to comment about the orthography of the biblical text. The rabbis traced the history of the rise of the square Hebrew letters (Sanh. 22b) and created stories explaining why some letters have final forms (JT Meg. I:9).³⁶ Some concluded that the final (or double) forms were originally given to Moses on Sinai, forgotten, and subsequently revived (Shabbat 104; Meg. 2b-3a).³⁷ The rabbis similarly concerned themselves with the matres lectiones, and the differences between plene and defective writing. They sought methods of remembering which words were written in each way (Sof. 7),³⁸ and built many Midrashim around the orthography of certain words. They pondered inconsistencies in spelling, such as in the word ספספ (Sanh. 4b)³⁹ and attempted to clarify ambiguities which resulted from an unpointed text, as in the possible singular or plural reading of the word סוף (Men. 34a-b).⁴⁰ They recognized words where the orthography or pointing was difficult or doubtful (Ned. 10a on I Ki. 21:33; Pes. 16b on Ex. 12:46),⁴¹ and compound words, such as הללויה,

which may be written as one word or two (Pes. 117a; JT Meg. 1:9).⁴² As Gordis has pointed out, they even understood dialectic variations well enough to build a midrashic interpretation on the interchangeability of guttural letters (Gen. Rab. 15:12 and Deut. Rab. sec. 2).⁴³ So keen was the rabbinic interest in Hebrew orthography that we have a midrashic collection based on homiletical interpretations of plene and defective spellings, as well as other spelling changes. Dotan dates this מדרש חסידות ויתירות as a ninth or tenth century collection, corresponding with the time of the Ben Asher family of masoretes, but offers no proof or discussion of the dating.⁴⁴ J. D. Eisenstein mentions the midrashic collection, but offers no date or place of compilation.⁴⁵ Letters and spelling were of interest to the rabbis. They noted the common variations and the unusual phenomena, offered explanations for some and interpretive midrashim for others. Acting as masoretes, they counted and compared, pointing up inconsistencies and dealing with them as best they could.

Paul Kahle points out that the pronunciation of the aspirated BGDKPT letters was different in the Tannaitic period than in the post-Masoretic period. Raba enumerates in the Talmud (Ber. 16b)⁴⁶ eight places where a special effort must be made at accurate pronunciation, since the last letter of the first word and the first letter of the second word are identical. But since two of the examples he mentions involve BGDKPT letters which take a dagesh (bet and peh), there would not be any problem in pronunciation in the post-Masoretic period (or perhaps even earlier).⁴⁷ Since the introduction of the dagesh lene, the final feh and bet would be pronounced differently from the initial peh and bet, and no confusion could result. But rather than dwell on the differences in pronunciation between early and late Hebrew, we should note that the masoretes, in estab-

lishing and fixing the dagesh and raphe, were able to differentiate more clearly in reading. Raba would surely have been delighted at the introduction of a mark which would ensure clear pronunciation of at least some of the problem verses he mentions. Again, the Amora and the masorete seem to have the same goal in mind.

Just as letters were of concern to the rabbis, so they concentrated on vowels. The rabbis raised the question and debated whether the traditional text of the Bible should be with or without vowel points (Sifra on Lev. 12:7) and concluded that the vocalized text is authoritative (Sanh. 11a).⁴⁸ Yet elsewhere in the Talmud (B.B. 21a-b), we read an anecdote which speaks of a confusion between two possible readings זָכַר (remember) or זָכָר (male). Such an event can only make sense if we assume that there were no vowels in the Bible at the time of the rabbis.⁴⁹ Furthermore, in the post-Talmudic tractate Sofrim, the rabbis find it necessary to offer an explanation why there are no vowel points in the biblical text (Sof. 4:8-9). The rabbis further interpreted the word

נקודות, the word meaning vowel points, as stylus lines on parchment, thereby evidencing that there were no vowels in use at the time (S.o.S. Rab. 1:11). Yet in commenting on Neh. 8:8, the rabbis in four parallel passages indicate that vowels might have been in use at the time. The rabbis asked the meaning of the verse in Nehemiah: "And they read from the book, from the Law of God clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading." (Neh. 8:8) The Rabbis saw four elements in the verse: reading in the book, distinctly, giving the sense, and causing the people to understand. Reading in the book was understood as migra, or scripture. Clearly or distinctly was understood as translation. Giving the sense referred to verse divisions or accents. Causing

the people to understand the reading refers to accentuation⁵⁰ or masorah, the decisions (ההכרעים) or the beginning of the verses⁵¹ or verse beginnings, reasons, and masorah.⁵² It would seem that the vowel signs would be fixed before accentuation and certainly before the masorah that is mentioned. We may, however, infer that the masorah referred to is the vowel signs, or we may conclude that the vowel signs were understood to exist at the time. In any case, we must note their exclusion in these four rabbinic passages, where we might expect them to be mentioned. Either they were too trivial to be mentioned, or they did not exist at that time. By the mid-ninth century we know from Natronai Gaon that vowel signs were established. In mentioning the vowels, Natronai interestingly notes that they were marked by the Sages, not given at Sinai. A cautious conclusion for us would be that the vowel signs were a concern of the rabbis, even if they did not consistently acknowledge their existence. Even if we cannot be sure if they had a vowel system, we can sense the rabbis' interest in such a system and the problems it would solve.

The rabbis' concern for proper reading extended into the area of accentuation. We have further evidence of the existence of some kind of accentuation system at the time of the rabbis. As mentioned above, the rabbis interpreted the words in Neh. 8:8 "causing the people to understand the reading" as accentuation and masorah (or, perhaps, masoretic notes) (Meg. 3a, Ned. 37b).⁵³ The rabbis further stated that one should read Bible and Misnah with a melody (Meg. 32a), indicating that such a melody was known to them.⁵⁴ In interpreting Eccl. 12:9, the rabbis understood that in teaching the people knowledge, Kohelet was actually teaching them the accentuation signs ('Erub. 21b).⁵⁵ The teaching of accentuation signs is further mentioned in Ned. 37a. A rabbi or teacher of children cannot

receive pay for teaching the Torah, which would be using the Torah for his own support. But the rabbi can be paid for teaching the accentuation signs, a statement which implies that the notes existed.⁵⁶ Even the hand which pointed to the accentuation signs took on special importance. The right hand is more important than the left and should not be used for cleaning oneself, for it is used to point to the accents in the scroll (Ber. 62a).⁵⁷ This comment not only indicated the existence of accentuation signs at the time, but also implies that they were acceptably written in the Torah scroll.

A system of verse division was also in existence at the time of the rabbis, and they commented on it. Clearly the Mishnah which sets the minimum requirement of three verses for a Torah reading implies the existence of verses at the time (Meg. 4:4).⁵⁸ In Exodus Rabbah (2:6, to Ex. 3:4) the verse divider (*pos*) is mentioned explicitly. The Talmud mentions marks called serugin, or intermittances, and Rashi comments that at the beginning of the verse the full text was written, but only initials were written at the end (Git. 60a).⁵⁹ Such a system of shorthand was based on a division of the text into verses at the time. Sofrim 3:7 indicates that the sign separating verses may occur at the end of a verse or at the beginning. But books which are punctuated with the verse markers at the beginnings of the verse should not be read. In several places, the rabbis mentioned five places in the Bible where verse divisions are unsure, thereby indicating that not only were they accustomed to such verse divisions, but also that they used them to understand the meaning of the text.

From an examination of these rabbinic passages, we may be able to sense that the rabbis were deeply interested in what we may call the "masoretic endeavor." Additionally, the rabbis commented extensively on textual

variants, such as Qere-Ketiv doublets. They wove legends about the age and composition of the Bible and attributed the most ancient status to the various textual phenomena. We may conclude from this investigation that it is likely that the rabbis were deeply concerned with the accurate transmission of the text of the Bible. Their interests and the interests of the masoretes form a common locus. From this we may understand that the masoretic endeavor was far from a revolutionary anti-rabbinic undertaking. Rather it was in the mainstream of rabbinic thought and concern. It was traditional.

CHAPTER IV

We have seen that the best sources of information about the masoretes are their works, primarily the masoretic texts. While we may be unable to find a single certain candidate for "the" masoretic text, we are nevertheless able to use our better Hebrew Bibles as primary sources of information about the men who pointed and preserved them. While most of the masoretic work centered around preserving a received text of the Bible, occasionally we encounter verses where the masoretes seem to be commenting. Perhaps the verse was already widely-known, having been the center of a rabbinic controversy. Perhaps we would expect the plain meaning of the verse to dictate one method of accentuation, and yet we find another in the Bible. Perhaps, as we have noted above, we find variances from the verse as it is cited in the rabbinic tradition. Perhaps certain masoretic phenomena indicate that the verse received and should be read with special attention.

I have here isolated a number of such verses, where the masoretes seem to be commenting, and have compared their commentary to rabbinic and karaitic interpretations of the same verses. I have attempted to be cautious in ascribing commentary to the masoretes, using several editions of the Hebrew Bible, secondary commentators, and logic to check for accuracy. After noting the verses, I have attempted to trace them through rabbinic and karaitic literature to determine if the verse comment tends to fit in with either interpretation and understanding of the verse. Accordingly, I have tried to conclude whether we can classify the masoretic comment as either possibly rabbinic or possibly karaitic.

Clearly the list is far from exhaustive. The search for such verses which incorporate not only masoretic "commentary," but also rabbinic and karaitic interpretations, is difficult detective work. Simply finding specific issues where Karaites and Rabbanites differed is no mean task. It is consequently quite rare where such differences relate to the specific reading of a Bible verse, especially a verse which carries a masoretic comment. But apart from their rarity, such verses are extremely valuable for our study. They indicate concrete examples where the masoretes took a stand on an issue and incorporated their position into the very text of the Hebrew Bible.

Our first case in point is I Sam. 3:3. Here the accent division of the verse seems contrary to the meaning of the words:

וְנֵר אֱלֹהִים טָרָם יִכְבֶּה וְשִׁמּוֹאֵל שָׁכַב
 בְּהֵיכַל ה' אֲשֶׁר שָׁם אֲרוֹן אֱלֹהִים:

The lamp of God was not yet gone out
 and Samuel lay down; in the Temple
 of the Lord, where the ark of God was.¹

The "natural" accentuation would produce this translation:

The lamp of God had not yet gone out,
 and Samuel lay down in the Temple of
 the Lord, where the ark of God was,

thereby shifting the major accent of the verse, or atnach, back two words. What explanation can we offer for a masoretic accentuation of the verse which seems contrary to the plain sense? The answer can be found in the Babylonian Talmud, (Kid. 78b) where the rabbis note that Samuel should not have been sitting in the Temple. The privilege to sit in the Temple was reserved for kings of the house of David, and no one had the privilege to sleep there. Accordingly, the rabbis understood the verse contrary to the simple meaning of the words so as not to perpetuate in Scripture a descrip-

tion of a clearly scandalous situation. They understood the verse to read:

The lamp of God had not yet gone out,
in the Temple of the Lord, and Samuel
lay down in his place.

Rashi points out that we are forced to understand this verse according to the Gemara because the Temple was the sole province of the Levites who guarded it and that Samuel would not have been permitted to sleep in the Temple court.

The Talmud clearly offers a theologically conditioned reading of the verse in question, and this was accepted by the masoretes and has been transmitted to us in our Hebrew Bibles.² In so accentuating the verse, the masoretes introduced a comment, perhaps even altered the meaning, and corroborated the rabbinic understanding of the verse.

Our second example, Gen. 49:6-7, is one of the five verses which the rabbis listed as being of unsure division (Yoma 52ab). The word in question is אָרוּר , or cursed; the question is whether it should be read as the last word in verse six or as the first word in verse seven:

כִּי בִאֵפֶס הָרָגוּ אִישׁ וּבְרָצוֹנָם עָקְרוּ שׂוֹר:
אָרוּר אֵפֶס כִּי עָז וְעִבְרָתָם כִּי קִשְׁתָּהּ. . .

The former reading, contrary to the masoretic text, would indicate: In their anger they slay men; at their will they maim cursed oxen. The second reading, followed by the masoretic text is: When angry they slay men; at their will they maim oxen; cursed be their anger so fierce.

The difficulty of the verse is attested in several places: in Yoma 52ab; in Mechilta,³ where the five enumerated verses appear again and are explained; in Meg. 9a, where it is listed as one of the verses changed by the translation of the seventy-two elders. The translation there lessens the charge against Simeon and Levi: For in their anger they slew an ox

and in their wrath they digged up a stall.⁴ The word "ox" is substituted for "men" so as to make the sin of these two brothers less severe. The alternate reading given in the Mechilta and Yoma similarly tones down the offense. Slaughtering cursed oxen would certainly be less culpable than simply killing them at will.

Perhaps the resultant reading "cursed oxen" would refer to an animal ritually unclean for slaughter but killed or sacrificed nevertheless. Such issues of ritual purity and impurity were among the most hotly debated by Karaites and Rabbanites. The Karaites rejected the oral tradition regarding ritual slaughter, though the Rabbanites, in response, traced it back to Sinai, calling it a primary revelation.⁵ In later times the Karaites would neither buy from rabbanite butchers, nor eat food from rabbanite tables.⁶ The different standards of ritual purity of meat drove Karaites and Rabbanites apart, greatly fragmenting the Jewish community. If a Karaite were commenting in punctuating this verse, he might delight in the opportunity to create the sin of slaughtering cursed oxen in the text of the Bible.

But the verse is punctuated to the contrary interpretation. The masoretes chose to place "cursed" in the following verse, rejecting the opportunity of either lessening the sin of Simeon and Levi or specifying it further as improper ritual slaughter. Rashi (Yoma 52b) interprets the rejected phrase "cursed oxen" to refer to Canaan, who is cursed in Gen. 9:25. Perhaps, if such a traditional interpretation was known at the time of the masoretes (two centuries earlier), their punctuation may be seen as non-polemical. They avoided the opportunity not only to lessen the sin, but also to create verses which would exacerbate Karaite-Rabbanite or Jewish-Gentile relations.

A third example centers around the word **טֹטֶפֶת**, which may be spelled either plene or defective. **טֹטֶפֶת** occurs three times in the Torah: Deut. 6:8, as defective; Ex. 13:16, as plene; Deut. 11:18, as questionable. R. Ishmael uses these three occurrences of the word to prove that the phylacteries should have four sections. He cites the two Deut. occurrences as defective; the plene reading counts double, and the four sections are proven. Rabbi Akiba rejects this interpretation, proving the four sections from a derivation of the word **טֹטֶפֶת** itself. But R. Ishmael's Bible was not the same as Rashi's. In checking the three citations mentioned by Rabbi Ishmael, the eleventh century commentator noticed that there was only one defective spelling, Deut. 6:8. The second example cited by Ishmael, Deut. 11:18, was in error, and the Talmud text and even the argument were called into question. (Rashi and Tosafot on Zeb. 25a; Men. 34b). The discrepancy has been dealt with by D. S. Loewinger, who has demonstrated that Rashi's Bible, the Tosafists' Bible, and our Hebrew Bible, are at variance with the readings specifically set out in the Talmud.

The word is of particular interest to us, since the Karaites rejected the use of phylacteries.⁷ Loewinger points out that "Karaites exegetes and philologists tried to give the word Totepheth a meaning contrary to the Rabbanite conception, which expressly connects this word with the phylacteries."⁸ The example he cites is from Finsker's **לְקוֹטֵי קְרִמּוֹנוֹת**, in which the word **טֹטֶפֶת** is interpreted to mean lucid and pure things before one's eyes.⁹ Loewinger uses this evidence to try to demonstrate that karaitic masoretes changed the Talmud's spelling of the word to detract from R. Ishmael's argument.

But before we jump to conclusions, we should examine our own masoretic works. The Marginal Masorah correctly lists **טֹטֶפֶת** in Deut. 6:8 as

a singular occurrence and Ex. 13:16 as a double occurrence. But on Deut. 11:18, the very verse in question, it lists לְסוֹסְפָה as a singular occurrence, with the note, "so it is written." It would appear that the masoretes copied and fixed the tradition here as they received it, adding a marginal "sic!" to demonstrate their knowledge of what the text should be. They list a total of four occurrences of the word סוֹסְפָה in the Bible, the fourth being the correspondent to the Ex. 13:16 spelling. Had they been Karaites, they certainly would not have added such a marginal note, nor accounted for four occurrences of the word. Rather than adopting a Karaite spelling, the masoretes passed along the spelling they received with comment, agreeing with the observation that Rashi and the Tosafists would make, perhaps agreeing with R. Akiba's position as well.

Our fourth example, Deut. 31:16, is mentioned in the Yoma 52ab list of unsure verses. It is perhaps the most enlightening for our study, since it has a relationship with both rabbinic and karaitic material. The difficulty for the rabbis stems from the placement of the major pause in the verse, or atnach. Our masoretic texts read as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הֲנִי שֹׁכֵב עִם אֲבֹתֶיךָ וְקָם הָעָם הַזֶּה וְזָנָה אַחֲרַי אֱלֹהֵי נֹכַר הָאָרֶץ. . .10</p> | <p>And the Lord said unto Moses: "Behold thou are about to sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go astray after the foreign gods of the land . . .10</p> |
|---|---|

If the atnach is placed under the word וְקָם--so that the word is grouped with the first half of the sentence--the verse would imply the resurrection of Moses: "The Lord said to Moses: 'You are about to sleep with your fathers and rise.'

This second reading had obviously found favor with some rabbis, who sought to deduce from it the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Rabban Ga-

maliel gave this verse as the Torah verse in this three-fold proof of resurrection, "but they did not accept it [as conclusive proof]."¹¹ R. Joshua b. Hananiah used this verse to demonstrate that God both resurrects the dead and knows the future. When confronted with the possible division of the verse that we currently have in our Hebrew Bible, he replied that only future knowledge would be derived from the verse. Rabbi Johanan also used this same verse to prove the same two theological doctrines (Sanh. 90b). The Gemara is not totally satisfied with the proofs offered and attempts to seek others. Verse after verse is offered as the rabbis attempt to demonstrate that bodily resurrection is derivable from the Torah. So important and vexing was this problem that they modified their normal methodology for proof texts in order to establish the doctrine:

. . . in the well-known controversy about the scriptural authority for the belief in resurrection, both the Prophets and the Hagiographa are quoted under the name of Torah, and the evidence brought forward by them seems to be of as much weight as that derived from the Pentateuch.¹²

The search for a Torah proof text was the center of a rabbinic controversy, as we can further see by looking at Mishnah Sanh. 10:1. Among those Israelites who have no share in the world to come are those who say "that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in Law [Torah]."¹³ The text of this mishnah, however, offers us a variant; for some manuscripts omit the words "prescribed in the Law."¹⁴ So deep-seated was the controversy over the derivability of resurrection from the Torah that it gave rise to both a variant mishnah reading and a modification of the usual methods of offering proof. We may safely conclude that there was a split on this issue in the rabbinic tradition: some rabbis felt that resurrection was deducible from the Torah, while others did not.

The Karaites were virtually unanimous on the subject of resurrection. We must admit that our material on Karaite theology is scant. With the exception of the rejection of the authority of the Talmud, there is "no essential difference between Karaite and Rabbanite theology."¹⁵ We do know of two Karaite schismatic groups, which denied bodily resurrection. One was founded by a man known variously as Abu-Amran Moses, Abū-'Imrān (Mūsā) Az-Za'afarāni, at-Tiflīsī, and Moses the Persian. In the ninth century he moved from Babylonia to the Armenian city of Tiflis.¹⁶ His followers, the Tiflisites, probably were concentrated mainly in Armenia¹⁷ and constituted what we may call a non-Karaitic splinter sect.¹⁸ None of their writing has survived, so everything we can say about them must be reconstructed from Karaite polemic attacks on them. One such attack, by Yefet ben Ali, accuses Abu-Amran Moses of having forsaken the belief in resurrection from the dead.¹⁹ Graetz mentions Abu-Amran's denial of resurrection, adding that he "führte noch andere Abnormalitäten ein, die nicht weiter bekannt sind."²⁰ The English translation renders this phrase as "introduced other innovations,"²¹ losing some of the color of Graetz's pejorative judgement. In his Hebrew translation of Graetz, Rabinowitz adds the implication that the Karaites and Rabbanites agreed on this point of theology:

This Tiflisite also denied resurrection of the dead and some other principles of the Jewish faith which are according to the Rabbanites and the Karaites.²²

We must keep in mind, however, that the only knowledge we have of this position is from Karaite polemicists who accepted the doctrine of bodily resurrection and attacked Abu-Amran for his denial of it.

A second Karaite schismatic group which denied resurrection is mentioned by Daniel al-Kumisi, who lived at the end of the ninth and beginning

of the tenth centuries (contemporary with Moses and Aaron Ben Asher). Al-Kumisi mentions that some Babylonian Karaites denied bodily resurrection and maintained that the spirit, not the body, is the subject of God's rewards or punishment.²³ We must interpret both these statements by central Karaite figures as referring to fringe schismatics in the sect. By noting how they differed from basic Karaite teaching we can determine that Karaite doctrine agreed with rabbinic doctrine in its acceptance of resurrection of the dead. There are no extant karaitic sources which maintain another position. We know nothing of how the Karaite doctrine was proven or deduced. We do not even have any statements positing or explaining the position--only negative statements attacking those who denied it. The rabbinic tradition, on the other hand, is rich with discussion. While it accepts the doctrine of resurrection, there is clear disagreement among the rabbis as to how the belief is derived.

When we examine Deut. 31:16 in the Hebrew Bible, we can see that the masoretes commented in punctuating the verse. By making וְקָם begin the second half of the verse, they took a stand in the rabbinic controversy. Rather than saying that the masoretes were opposed to the doctrine of resurrection of the dead--which both Rabbanites and Karaites accepted--we can interpret the masoretic punctuation as being opposed to deriving that doctrine from the Torah. Such a position is a legitimate rabbinical stand, being found in both the Talmud and the Mishnah. While it is a minority opinion among the rabbis it is unquestionably a rabbinic opinion; it may not be karaitic. The Marginal Masorah only underscores this fact. The note on the word וְקָם is:

ה' פסוקים שאין להם הכרע.

[This is among the] five verses whose grammatical construction is undecided,²⁴

a near-direct quotation from Yoma 52a! While the other four verses²⁵ do not carry such a masoretic note, its presence on this particular verse is especially enlightening. Not only would the masoretes seem to be aware of the rabbinic dispute regarding the derivability of the doctrine of resurrection from this verse, but they were also aware of the fact that this verse division was questioned by the rabbis. Of this we can have no doubt.

In the preceding verses we can see masoretic interpretation which tends to substantiate a rabbinic understanding of the verse. Whether the tannaitic or amoraic rabbis noted the verse particularly, or whether it only formed a portion of their theological perspective, we can see that the masoretic interpretation is consonant with rabbinic interpretation of the verse. Wherever possible, I have tried to include karaitic matter as well as rabbinic matter for the purposes of comparison. In most cases, it is difficult to distinguish clear differences between karaitic and rabbinic interpretations, and even more difficult to fit a masoretic interpretation neatly into a framework.

But patterns emerge. We can see that some consonance between masoretic and rabbinic interpretations is present, and corresponding similarities to karaitic interpretations are generally not. Moreover, we may be able to discern that the masoretes were involved in the interpretation of the Bible, as well as its transmission and perpetuation. Just as some rabbis were involved in a masoretic enterprise, so some masoretes were seemingly involved in a rabbinic enterprise of interpretation. We may take as the modest goal of this thesis to clarify a few of these interpretations and to point out some of the similarities in the rabbinic and masoretic endeavors. The most we may conclude with is a likelihood that the masoretes knew of and accepted parts of the rabbinic tradition, that

they were not likely to have been Karaites. Conclusive proof is not available; only the gathering of more primary evidence can make our conclusion more likely to be accepted.

Notes to Chapter I

¹Paul E. Kahle, The Cairo Geniza (2nd ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), p. 77. The following abbreviations will be used in Chapter I and are listed here for the convenience of the reader:

BA = Ben Asher
BN = Ben Naftali
ms. = manuscript
mss. = manuscripts
b. = ben (Hebrew for "son of")
A = Aleppo Codex
B = British Museum Or 4445 codex
C = Cairo manuscript of the Prophets (895)
L = Leningrad B19a codex
BH³ = Biblia Hebraica, 3rd edition
EJ = Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971)
JE = Jewish Encyclopedia
JJS = Journal of Jewish Studies
VT = Vetus Testamentum

²Jacob Mann, The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine Under the Fātimid Caliphs (Combined edition; New York: Ktav, 1970), Vol. II., p. 48.

³Mishneh Torah, Hilkot Sefer Torah 8:4; translation is mine; for other translations, see: Zeev Ben-Hayyim, "Ben-Asher, Aaron Ben Moses," Encyclopaedia Judaica [EJ] (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), Vol. IV., p. 466; Izhak Ben-Zvi, "The Codex of Ben Asher," Textus I (1960), p. 7; Christian D. Ginsburg, ed. and trans., in The Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita, reprinted in Jacob Ben Chajim Ibn Adonijah's Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible and the Massoreth Ha-Massoreth of Elias Levita, ed. by Christian D. Ginsburg (Combined edition; New York: Ktav, 1968), II., pp. 113-114; Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Authenticity of the Aleppo Codex," Textus I (1960), p. 18, n. 1; Paul E. Kahle, Cairo Geniza², p. 107; Lazar Lipschütz, "Kitāb as-Khilaf," Textus IV (1964), p. 4.

⁴Aron Dotan, "Masorah," EJ, Vol. 16, Supplementary Entries, p. 1473; Zeev Ben-Hayyim, "Ben-Asher, Aaron Ben Moses," EJ, Vol. IV, p. 466.

⁵A Page From . . . (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, n.d.), p. 8.

⁶Christian D. Ginsburg, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (New York: Ktav, 1966), p. 245; Isidore Harris, "The Rise and Development of the Massorah," Jewish Quarterly Review, I (Old Series, 1889), 250; but see also I. O. Lehman, "The Oldest Preserved Codex of the Babylonian Tradition," Semi-Centennial Volume of Middle West Branch of American Oriental Society (Asian Studies Research Institute, Oriental Series, no. 3), 1969, pp. 158ff., and Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 640.

⁷Caspar Levias, "Ben Naphtali," Jewish Encyclopedia [JE] (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), II, 677.

⁸Chaim Rabin, "Ben-Naphtali, Moses Ben David," EJ, IV, 540.

⁹Section II., p. 114. (See note 3 above for full information).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 114.

¹¹JE, II, 678; see also Harris, pp. 248-250, especially p. 248, n. 2.

¹²EJ, IV, 540; but see also Lipschütz, Textus, IV, p. 13, who states that "the readings of BN showed more system, in both vocalization and the rules of accentuation."

¹³Levita does not state, however, as Paul Kahle maintains he does, that BN was a Babylonian Masorete (Cairo Geniza², p. 118, n. 3.) Kahle's reference to Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 267, is a similar misrepresentation.

¹⁴On this point, see Lazar Lipschütz, p. 10.

¹⁵See Rabin, EJ, IV, 540; Kahle, Cairo Geniza², pp. 115-118; Kahle, Masoreten des Westens, Bd. II, Vol. IV of Texte Und Untersuchungen Zur Vormasoretischen Grammatik des Hebräischen (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1930), pp. 45-68; I. O. Lehman, "Oldest Preserved Codex," especially pp. 184-188; and Lipschütz, pp. 5-8.

¹⁶Lipschütz, Textus, IV, 10. I am unable to locate Lipschütz's reference to Ibn Ezra's comment. BN is mentioned neither in Ibn Ezra's comments on Lev. 19:12 nor Dan. 12:2, nor even on Ps. 45:10, where the word בִּיקְרוּחִיךָ actually appears. The word בִּיקְרוּחִיךָ does not occur in Lev. 19:12, as Lipschütz indicates.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 12-13.

¹⁹Harris, pp. 250-251; Lipschütz, p. 4; and Kahle, Cairo Geniza², pp. 116-118, where a different dating of Sefer Ha'ilufim is also offered.

²⁰But see Harry Orlinsky's comments on Maimonides, p. 17 below.

²¹A Page From . . . , p. 8; see also Louis Ginzberg, "Law, Codification of," JE, VII, 641-642.

²²For more halachic background on Maimonides's statement, particularly as it refers to the writing of the Song of Moses, see Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Authenticity of the Aleppo Codex," Textus I, pp. 37-58.

²³Harris, p. 247, n. 1; but see also Kahle, Cairo Geniza², p. 78, where (in a translation from the Treatise on the Sh'wa) Moses b. Nehemia does not appear in the family list.

²⁴Some further reasons for rejecting the ms. as inauthentic are given by J. L. Teicher in "The Ben Asher Bible Manuscripts," Journal of Jewish Studies [JJS] II (1950-51), pp. 18-20. Paul Kahle responds defending the fact that the ms. was written by Moses Ben Asher in "The Hebrew Ben Asher Bible Manuscripts," Vetus Testamentum [VT] I (1951), pp. 161-63. For a further discussion of the colophon, see Paul Kahle, Der Hebräische Bibeltext seit Franz Delitzsch (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1961), pp. 62-67; and Kahle, Cairo Geniza², pp. 91-97; see also Harris, p. 246 and note 2 there. M. D. Cassuto, like Kahle, felt that this codex authentically represented the BA tradition and accordingly urged its inclusion in the new scientific Bible edition being prepared at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For a representation and criticism of his view, see Moshe Goshen-Gottstein "Authenticity of A.," Textus I, pp. 30-35, especially section 19, pp. 31-32 and p. 32, nn. 43 and 44.

²⁵Aron Dotan, "Ben-Asher, Moses," EJ, IV, 468.

²⁶Ibid., p. 469.

²⁷Ibid., p. 469.

²⁸Israel Davidson, אוצר השירה והפיוט Thesaurus of Medieval Poetry (Second Edition; New York: Ktav, 1970), vol. I, p. 208, entry 4545 refers to a later paytan with a similar name.

²⁹Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 241; Harris p. 247; Caspar Ievias, "Aaron Ben Moses Ben Asher," JE, I, p. 18; Kahle, Cairo Geniza², pp. 6, 80; M. Zobel, "Aaron Ben Mose Ben Ascher," Encyclopaedia Judaica (Berlin: Verlag Eschkol, 1928), vol. I, pp. 70-71.

³⁰See p. 20 below.

³¹In its recovered state it is missing: Gen. 1:1-Deut. 28:16; sections of Kings, Jer., the minor prophets, Psalms, Song of Songs, and Chronicles; all of Eccl., Lament., Esther, Daniel, and Ezra are also missing. See Izhak Ben-Zvi, "The Codex of BA," Textus I, pp. 2-3.

³²This list is from D. S. Loewinger, "The Aleppo Codex and the Ben Asher Tradition," Textus I, p. 59. These four mss. are also thoroughly discussed by Paul Kahle in "The Oldest Manuscripts of the Bible," in Lazarus Goldschmidt, The Earliest Editions of the Hebrew Bible (New York: Aldus, 1950), pp. 47-56.

³³Kittel, Foreword (1929) in Biblia Hebraica (Third Edition; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1966), p. xxvii.

³⁴Kahle's Foreword, BH³, pp. XXX-XXXI.

³⁵Foreword to Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1968), Fascicle 7, "Liber Jesaiae," p. IX.

³⁶Ibid., p. IX.

³⁷"Authenticity of A.," Textus I, pp. 26-28 and the sources cited there.

- ³⁸"The BA Bible Mss.," JJS II, pp. 23-25.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 24 and especially n. 2. But see also Kahle's defense of L in "The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," VT I, pp. 164-167.
- ⁴⁰Izhak Ben-Zvi, "The Codex of BA," Textus I, p. 1, and Zeev Ben-Hayyim, "Ben-Asher, Aaron Ben Moses," EJ IV, 465.
- ⁴¹Izhak Ben-Zvi, Textus I, pp. 1-16, where a good history of the Codex is presented.
- ⁴²Ben-Zvi, p. 1.
- ⁴³Benjamin Mazar, "From the President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," Preface to Textus I.
- ⁴⁴The article by Ben-Zvi in Textus I originally appeared in Sinai XLIII (1957-58).
- ⁴⁵Izhak Ben-Zvi, Textus I, 6-9.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., p. 8 and note 18 there. Kahle, Cairo Geniza², p. 107 and note 2 there.
- ⁴⁷Ben-Zvi, pp. 7, 16. Cf. especially Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "Authenticity of A.," Textus I, pp. 29-37, and Kahle, "The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," VT I, 163-164. Cassuto's opinion is discussed in greater detail below, pp. 13-15.
- ⁴⁸A Treatise on the Accentuation of the Twenty-One So-Called Prose Books of the Old Testament, (1887), republished in: William Wickes, Two Treatises on the Accentuation of the Old Testament (New York: Ktav, 1970), section II, p. ix (page is unnumbered in 1970 edition).
- ⁴⁹Cairo Geniza², pp. 111-116.
- ⁵⁰Harris, pp. 248-249.
- ⁵¹"Aaron Ben Mose Ben Ascher," Vol. I, p. 72.
- ⁵²"Was the Aleppo Codex Actually Vocalized by Aharon Ben Asher?" Tarbiz XXXIV (1964-65), pp. 136-155, and the Summary, pp. II-III.
- ⁵³See Harry Orlinsky's comments on this article in "The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation," Prolegomenon to C. D. Ginsburg, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (New York: Ktav, 1966), pp. XVI-XVII and XXX-XXXI.
- ⁵⁴Jerusalem: Academy for the Hebrew Language, 1967.
- ⁵⁵Jerusalem: Mkor, 1970.
- ⁵⁶Ibid., Summaries, p. VII.

- ⁵⁷Textus I, p. 211, bottom.
- ⁵⁸Teicher, "BA Bible Mss.," p. 25; see also pp. 20-23.
- ⁵⁹Kahle, "The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," p. 164; see also p. 163.
- ⁶⁰"The Authenticity of A.," Textus I, pp. 17-58.
- ⁶¹Ibid., pp. 21-22 and 33.
- ⁶²Ibid., p. 31, quoted from Ha'arets, January 2, 1948.
- ⁶³Ibid., p. 34.
- ⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 36-58, especially sections 24, 31, 32.
- ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 34.
- ⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 34-35.
- ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 35, n. 51.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 35.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 32.
- ⁷⁰"The Codex of BA," p. 16.
- ⁷¹"The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," pp. 163-164.
- ⁷²"Authenticity of A.," p. 33.
- ⁷³Goshen-Gottstein, p. 30 and note 39 there.
- ⁷⁴Introduction, p. 469.
- ⁷⁵Ibid., p. 470.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., p. 74.
- ⁷⁷Kahle, Cairo Geniza², p. 117.
- ⁷⁸Masoreten des Westens, Bd. I, Vol. I of Texte und Untersuchungen zur Vormasoretischen Grammatik des Hebräischen (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927), pp. 17-18.
- ⁷⁹Cairo Geniza², p. 118.
- ⁸⁰Foreword to BH³, p. XXXI.
- ⁸¹Teicher, pp. 24-25; but see Kahle's response in "The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," p. 167.

⁸²See D. S. Loewinger, "A. and the BA Tradition," Textus I, pp. 59ff. and the sources cited there.

⁸³"The BA Bible Mss.," pp. 17-25. Cf. Kahle's response, "The Hebrew BA Bible Mss.," pp. 161-167.

⁸⁴"The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation," Prolegomenon to C. D. Ginsburg, Introduction, pp. XVII-XVIII.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. XXXV-XXXVI.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. XXX. The same point is made by I. O. Lehman, in "The Oldest Preserved Codex," pp. 159-160.

⁸⁷Introduction, p. 779.

⁸⁸Ibid., Chapter 13, pp. 779-976.

⁸⁹"The Masoretic Text," p. XXXII.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. XXXV.

⁹¹Ibid., p. XXXVI.

⁹²Aron Dotan, "Masorah," EJ, Vol. XVI, Supplementary Entries, p. 1471.

⁹³Caspar Levias, "Masorah," JE, Vol. VIII, p. 365.

⁹⁴So the Jewish Publication Society translation of 1917.

⁹⁵Levias, "Masorah," p. 365.

⁹⁶Wilhelm Bacher, "A Contribution to the History of the Term 'Masorah,'" Jewish Quarterly Review III (Old Series, 1891), p. 790. The article (pp. 785-790) presents a full discussion of the history and meaning of the term "masorah." For additional material on this topic, see the sources cited in notes 97 and 98 below.

⁹⁷Paul Kahle, "Die masoretische Überlieferung des hebräischen Bibeltextes," in Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, Historische Grammatik der Hebräischen Sprache des alten Testaments (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1922), p. 72; section 6a-c (pp. 71-73), and especially section 6b, give a general overview of the term "masorah."

⁹⁸Kahle translates these as "überliefern" (p. 72) and "Überlieferung" (p. 71). For additional studies of the meaning, etymology, and history of the word, see: C. [aspar] Levias, "Word Studies: 1. מסורה," Hebrew Union College Annual, 1904, pp. 147-149; Paul Haupt, "Masora," Journal of Biblical Literature XXXVII (1918), pp. 219-228; E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, eds., Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, (Second English Edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 18ff., and especially p. 18, n. 1; the additional sources cited in all these.

⁹⁹Cairo Geniza², pp. 136-137.

¹⁰⁰This point of view, which has been adopted by many scholars, is traced historically, developed, and defended by Robert Gordis in "The Origin of the Masoretic Text in the Light of Rabbinic Literature and the Qumran Scrolls," Prolegomenon to The Biblical Text in the Making (Augmented Edition; New York: Ktav, 1971), pp. XI-LIII, especially pp. XI-XIII and XXXI-XLII and the sources cited there. See also The Biblical Text in the Making, pp. 43-49 for a treatment of the archetype theory. Gordis, in reconstructing the history of the biblical text, postulates the existence of an archetype ms. which was extant at one time.

¹⁰¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (Third Edition; New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 31e-32e. Wittgenstein deals with the philosophical problem of universals by presenting a theory of family resemblances and developing his major example of games in sections 66 and 67, pp. 31e-32e. An enlightening psychological perspective is presented by Wittgenstein in his exposition on our "craving for generality": Wittgenstein, The Blue Book, in The Blue and Brown Books (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 17-19. In his model of family resemblances, Wittgenstein presents a practical methodology which may be extended to deal with our masoretic texts and also provides philosophical underpinning for the argument which Orlinsky offers.

¹⁰²Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p. 32e.

Notes to Chapter II

¹Simcha Pinsker, Likkute Kadmoniot, Zur Geschichte des Karäismus und der karäischen Literatur, 2 vols., (Wien, Adalbert della Torre, 1860), p. 32.

²Hirsch Mendel Pineles, דרכה של חורה (Wien, Friedrich Förster und Brüder, 1861), pp. 271, 276.

³Y. H. Schorr, " בקורה ס' לקוטי קדמוניות ", החלוץ VI (1861), p. 67.

⁴Julius Fürst, Geschichte des Karäerthums bis 900 der gewöhnlichen Zeitrechnung (Leipzig, Nies'sche Buchdruckerei, 1862), vol. 1, pp. 112ff.

⁵A. B. Gottlober, Bikkoreth Letoldoth Hakkaraim (Vilna, Funn et Roszenkrancz, 1865), pp. 124-128, 143, 152.

⁶Heinrich Graetz, "Die Beiden Ben-Ascher und die Masora," MGWJ XX (1871), pp. 1ff. and 49ff.

⁷D. Oppenheim, "Ben-Ascher und der angebliche Differenzpunkt in Betreff der Heiligkeit der Bibel zwischen Rabbinismus und Karäismus," Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben XX (1878), pp. 79ff.

⁸Isidore Harris, "The Rise and Development of the Masorah" JQR, Old Series, I, pp. 128-142 and 223-257, especially pp. 246-248.

⁹Abraham Harkavy, "Erwiderung," Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums XX (1893), pp. 149-150. See also the comment by Moritz Steinschneider, "Die Karäiten und die Grammatik; zur Richtigstellung der Frage. Ein letztes Wort," *idem.*, pp. 236-237. Harkavy also wrote on the identity of Ben Asher in his commentary to the Rabinowitsch translation of Graetz's Geschichte der Juden, published דברי ימי ישראל (Warsaw, Israel Alapin, 1894) vol. III, pp. 315, 487ff.

¹⁰Heinrich Graetz, Geschichte der Juden (Dritte verbesserte Auflage; Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1895), vol. V, pp. 262, 285, 479.

¹¹Wilhelm Bacher, "Rabbinisches Sprachgut bei Ben Asher," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft XV (1895), pp. 293-304.

¹²Caspar Levias, "Aaron Ben Moses Ben Asher," JE, vol. I, p. 18.

¹³A convenient summary of the arguments is given in Harris, p. 247, and Dotan, Sinai 41 (1957), pp. 280ff.

¹⁴Simon Eppenstein, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur im genoäischen Zeitalter (Berlin: Louis Lamm, 1913), pp. 53ff.

¹⁵Samuel Poznanski, "Karaites," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, James Hastings, ed. vol. VII, p. 664.

¹⁶Jacob Mann, The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine Under the Fātimid Caliphs (New York: Ktav, 1970), vol. II, p. 48.

¹⁷Mann, "On the Terminology of the early Massorites and Grammarians," Paul Haupt Festschrift (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1926), pp. 438-439.

¹⁸Paul Kahle, Masoreten des Westens (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1927), vol. I, pp. 38-45.

¹⁹M. Zobel, "Aaron Ben Mose Ben Ascher," Encyclopaedia Judaica (1928), vol. I, pp. 70-72.

²⁰Benjamin Klar, "Ben-Asher," מחקרים ועיונים בלשון קשרה ובמפרנה (Tel Aviv: Mosad HaRav Kuk, 1954), pp. 276-319.

²¹Naftali Wieder, "The Qumran Sectaries and the Karaites," JQR, New Series, XLVII (1956), pp. 108-110.

²²N. Allony הארץ, 25 October 1957.

²³Moshe Zucker "נגד מי כתב רב סעדיה גאון את הפיוט אשא משלי?" Tarbiz XXVII (1957-58), pp. 61-82.

²⁴Aron Dotan, "האמנם היה בן-אשר קראי?" Sinai XLI (1957), pp. 280-312 and 350-362.

²⁵Paul Kahle, The Cairo Geniza², pp. 75-110.

²⁶D. S. Loewinger, "The Aleppo Codex and the BA Tradition," Textus I (1960), pp. 88-92.

²⁷Izhak Ben-Zvi, "The Codex of Ben Asher," Textus I (1960), pp. 5-6.

²⁸Zeev Ben-Hayyim, "Ben-Asher, Aaron Ben Moses," EJ, IV, 465-467.

²⁹Aron Dotan, "Ben-Asher, Moses," EJ, IV, 467-469.

³⁰Quoted in Kahle, Cairo Geniza², p. 86.

³¹Ben-Hayyim, EJ IV, pp. 465-466.

³²Dotan, EJ IV, p. 469.

Notes to Chapter III

- ¹Jewish Quarterly Review, I, p. 239.
- ²Ibid., p. 245.
- ³Ibid., pp. 244-245. The citation Ber. 30b could also be added for R. Hanina.
- ⁴Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1967), p. 1409. The translation is given as "a Biblical scholar, Bible teacher," with several citations listed.
- ⁵The Babylonian Talmud, I. Epstein, general trans. and ed., (London: Soncino, 1936 and 1938); Kethuboth (Israel W. Slotki, trans.) I, p. 328 and n. 6 there; Ta'anith (J. Rabbinowitz, trans.), p. 146.
- ⁶Kaufmann Kohler, Jewish Theology (New York: Ktav, 1968), pp. 42-43.
- ⁷Solomon Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 121-122 and the sources cited there.
- ⁸Soncino edition, p. 114. See also JT Meg. 1:1 (71c,d), cited in Dotan, "Masorah," EJ (hereafter referred to as Dotan), p. 1405.
- ⁹See also: JT Meg. 1:1 (71c,d); Dotan, p. 1405.
- ¹⁰See also JT Ta'anith 1:1 (64a) and JT Meg. 4:1 (74d), cited in Dotan, p. 1405.
- ¹¹Kohélet Rabbah 2:17, cited in Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, (Second improved edition; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962) (hereafter referred to as Lieberman), p. 25, nn. 43, 44.
- ¹²Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 305.
- ¹³Gordis, Prolegomenon to The Biblical Text in the Making, p. xxxi.
- ¹⁴Lieberman, p. 26, n. 49.
- ¹⁵Hilchot Sefer Torah, 8:4. See Chapter I, p. and n. 3 above.
- ¹⁶See Gordis, p. 33 and xxxvii; Dotan, p. 1413.
- ¹⁷Gordis, p. xxxvii.
- ¹⁸Lieberman, p. 47, n. 2; Gordis, p. xx; Ginsburg, p. 69. Jacob ben Chajim, Introduction to the Rabbinic Bible (hereafter referred to as Jacob ben Chajim), p. 15, n. 12; Dotan, pp. 1405, 1411, 1413.

- ¹⁹Ginsburg, pp. 307-308.
- ²⁰Jacob ben Chajim, pp. 74-76.
- ²¹Gordis, pp. 46 and xxxiv, and n. 65 to the Prolegomenon.
- ²²Ibid., pp. 46, xii, and xxxiv, and nn. 3, 65, 66 to the Prolegomenon.
- ²³Ibid., p. xxxiv, n. 67.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 28.
- ²⁵Dotan, "Masorah," p. 1408.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 1409.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 1409.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 1406.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 1408; Ginsburg, Introduction, pp. 319, 342ff.; Gordis, pp. xxii-xxiii; Lieberman, p. 20 and nn. 5 and 6 there, and pp. 38-43 and the sources cited there.
- ³⁰Dotan, p. 1408; Ginsburg, p. 337, and nn. 1 and 2 there.
- ³¹Ginsburg, pp. 339-341.
- ³²Dotan, p. 1407.
- ³³Ibid., p. 1407.
- ³⁴The Talmudic sources cited are: Ber. 4a, Naz. 23a, Hor. 10b (in Dotan, p. 1407); Midrash Rabbah on Numbers 9:10, Prov. 26:24, ARN ch. 34, B.B. 79a, Sanh. 13b, B.M. 87a, JT Meg. 1:9, 4:10, Sofrim 6:4 (in Ginsburg, Introduction, pp. 318-334). Saul Lieberman deals with the rabbinic treatment of the dots on pp. 43-46; see also the sources cited there. The most complete treatment is in Romain Butin, The Ten Nequdoth of the Torah, (Second ed.; New York: Ktav, 1969). The rabbinic material in Butin is on pp. 46-130, with a bibliography following.
- ³⁵Lieberman, p. 46, n. 58.
- ³⁶See also JT Yadaim 4:5 and BT Sanh. 21b-22a; cited in Ginsburg, Introduction, pp. 288-290 and 298.
- ³⁷Ginsburg, p. 298. For more material on ancient attribution of masoretic phenomena, see p. below.
- ³⁸Dotan, "Masorah," p. 1414.
- ³⁹Gordis, p. 45, n. 17, and xxxiv, n. 68; Jacob ben Chajim, p. 60.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹Revised Standard Translation.

²An interesting parallel karaitic prohibition not only forbade the "kindling of fire on the Sabbath, but even the continued burning of anything . . ." (Poznanski, "Karaitic Literary Opponents of Saadiah Gaon," Karaite Studies (New York: Hermon Press, 1971), p. 151. A karaitic interpretation of this verse might be expected to tone down the circumstance that the lamp of God was still burning.

³Masechta B'shalach D'amalek, Theodor edition, p. 179.

⁴Sanh. 90b (Soncino translation, p. 605).

⁵Zvi Ankori, Karaites in Byzantium, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 287 and n. 102.

⁶Ankori, p. 286-287.

⁷Leon Nemoy, Karaite Anthology, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p. xxv.)

⁸Ibid., p. 90.

⁹Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰The Torah translation.

¹¹Sanh. 90b (Soncino Trans., p. 605).

¹²Solomon Schechter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, pp. 124-25.

¹³Mishnah Sanh. 101; Danby Translation, p. 397.

¹⁴Ibid., n. 397. Albeck, p. 202.

¹⁵Leon Nemoy, Karaite Anthology, p. xxiii.

¹⁶Ankori, pp. 369-370. Graetz, History of the Jews, III, pp. 157-158.

¹⁷Ankori, p. 370.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 366.

¹⁹Pinsker, לקוטי קדמוניות (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1967), vol I, p. 26; Ankori, pp. 368-69, n. 33.

²⁰Graetz, Geschichte der Juden, V, p. 202.

²¹ Graetz, History of the Jews, III, p. 158.

²² "התפליסי הזה כפר גם בתחית המתים ועוד כמה עקרים בהדח
הישראלית לפי דעת הרבנים והקראים, " דברי ימי ישראל,
כרך 1, ע' 231.

²³ Ankori, p. 369, n. 33; p. 220, n. 29 and the sources cited there.

²⁴ Translation is mine. The other four verses are Gen. 4:7, Ex. 25:34,
Ex. 17:9, and Gen. 49:7.

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