

## Book Review

*Jerusalem Crown, The Bible of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.* Jerusalem: N. Ben-Zvi Printing Enterprises, 2000. 904 pp.

*Companion Volume to the Jerusalem Crown.* By Mordechai Glatzer, Jerusalem: N. Ben-Zvi Printing Enterprises, 2002. 204 pp.

**Reviewed by: MALKY MENDEL**

### Introduction

We will discuss the *Masorah* (the vocalization and layout of the Tanakh) and the pinnacle achievement of the *Masoretic* scholars - the *Aleppo Codex* which is also known as the *כתר ארם צובה*. We will review the recently published *Jerusalem Crown* which is a recreation of the text, vocalization and layout of the *Aleppo Codex*, and by extension we will also review the *Companion Volume to the Jerusalem Crown*.

### The Masorah

Ancient Scrolls of the Tanakh (as well as modern Torah scrolls) contain the consonants of the Jewish Bible but not the vowels. Originally the proper pronunciation of the Tanakh was transmitted orally from one generation to the next.<sup>1</sup> This continued until the seventh or eighth century when a group of scholars known as the Masoretes decided to create a written *Masorah*<sup>2</sup> (literally “tradition”)

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<sup>1</sup> Editor’s Note: For a detailed discussion on the origin of *nekkudot* see, in this volume, the article by Dan Rabinowitz, *Nekkdut: The Dots that Connect Us*.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew Bible Texts follow the Masorah as do most Jewish translations. This includes, for example, the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* Philadelphia:

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Malky Mendel, works as a computer consultant for the health care industry.

containing a detailed notation system that specifies how the text of the Tanakh should be copied and read. These instructions exist independently of *halakha*.

The oldest complete surviving *Masoretic* bible, the Leningrad Codex<sup>3</sup> dates from 1008 and was written in Egypt by Shmuel ben Ya'akov. The most authoritative one, however, the Aleppo Codex, was proofread and vocalized by Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher in Tiberias in the tenth century (see fig. 1.)<sup>4</sup>

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1999, and the ArtScroll Series/Stone Edition, *The Tanach* New York: 1996. A notable exception to this is the translation, *The Five Books of Moses* by Robert Alter, Norton, New York: 2004. An example of his departure from the Masorah can be found on page 114 where Alter's translation of verses 23:5-6 is based on changing the word *lo* ("to him") to *lu* ("pray") and moving the word from the end of verse 5 to the beginning of verse 6.

<sup>3</sup> Codex. (plural, codices; Hebrew, *mizḥaf*, from the Arabic; at an earlier stage, the codex was called a *mabḥar*) is defined as, "A manuscript in book form that replaced the scroll... The two sides of a folio (leaf) are called "recto" and "verso" respectively... The codex allows the reader to leaf through the text, which is its essential advantage over a scroll. As early as the fourth century the Romans used the codex form; however, the first mention of its use in Jewish literature appears in the eighth century." (*Companion Volume*, p. 109)

<sup>4</sup> There are, however, other opinions as to the authorship and dating of the Aleppo Codex. For example, E. N. Adler in *Gedenkbuch zur Erinnerung an David Kaufmann* (Herausgegeben von Dr. M. Brann und Dr. F. Rosenthal. Breslau: Schles, Verlags-Anstalt v. S. Schottlaender, 1900) writes about his visit to the Aleppo Synagogue:

"Of chief literary interest is a chapel to the extreme west behind the ארון הקודש with a stone sarcophagus and a vaulted roof. Local tradition has it that here the apparition of Elijah the Prophet had been seen and saved the קהלה during one of its numerous persecutions. In this damp shrine the famous Massoretic Codex, the pride of the Aleppo Jews, is reverently preserved. This is the so called Codex of Aaron (Abu Said) ben Asher, supp[os]ed to have been written about 980. Dr. Wickes in his *Treatise on the accentuation* (Oxford 1887) gives a facsimile of one of its pages and proves that it was written before the Eleventh century. Dr. Ginsburg however in his *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (London 1897) ignores this skepticism, and quotes the colophons given in the אבן ספיר and in הצופה (numbers 47 and 48, Lyck 1857)" (pp. 130 – 131).

There were different traditions regarding the writing of certain words, and whether a word should be written *plene* (full, with the letter *vov* or *yod*), or defective (without the letter *vov* or *yod*.) In each case the *Masoretic* scholars ruled as to which opinion should be followed. The *Masorettes* also introduced vocalization and accentuation marks underneath, inside and above the letters, helping the reader pronounce the words correctly.

The Masorah notations used in Tiberias were recorded in two different ways: Short comments (“small *Masorah*” or “*Masorah Parva*”) were written between the manuscript columns, in close physical proximity to the words to which they referred. Longer comments (“Large *Masorah*” or “*Masorah Magna*”) were written in the upper and lower page margins.

The most frequently used comment in the *Masorah Parva* is the letter *lamed* which stands for the Aramaic expression *let dikhvateh* (there are no others like it) indicating a unique word or form of word. Other examples of *Masorah Parva* are single letters that indicate how many times the word appears in the Bible – two (ב'), three (ג'), or more.

The following is an example of the *Masorah Magna* to Joshua 10:11 (which begins, ויהי בנוסם):

בנוסם ב' חד מל וחד חס ויהי בנוסם בנוסם במלחמה. בתר' מל'

This comment tells us that the word **בנוסם** appears twice in the Bible, once full (**מלא**) and once defective (**חסר**). The first instance is **ויהי בנוסם** (which appears in Joshua 10:11) and the second instance is **בנוסם במלחמה** (which appears in 2 Samuel 19:4). In the second instance (**בתרייתא**) it is *plene* (**מלא**) thus indicating by inference that the first instance is defective.

## The Aleppo Codex - כתר ארם צובה

For many centuries Tiberias was known as a center for Jewish studies and scholars. R. Sa'adyah Gaon spent time in Tiberias and is regarded as the first Hebrew Grammarian, learning the reading tradition and other aspects of the language from a scholar named Abu Kathir Yehia ben Zekharia. The names of some of the grammarians and

*Masoretes* who lived and worked in Tiberias are known to us, among them R. Pinḥas the head of the yeshivah, and Ahiyyahu ha-Cohen he-Ḥaver. In the tenth century a Hebrew grammarian relates that he studied the accent of the people of Tiberias, especially their way of pronouncing the letter *resh* when reading the Bible and when speaking Hebrew. To that end he would spend long hours in the city streets and squares, listening to the speech of ordinary people, in Hebrew and Aramaic. Within Tiberias lived a renowned family of six generations of *Masoretes* of which Aaron ben Moshe ben Asher, the author of *ספר דקדוקי הטעמים* - *Grammar of the Accents*, was its most illustrious member. A note at the beginning of the book states that R. Aharon ben Asher was “from the place of Ma’azyah, which is called Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.”

In 895 Moshe ben Asher vocalized the *Mahzor of the Bible*, a codex which contains the Books of the Prophets and which was discovered in the Karaite synagogue of Cairo.

In 929 Solomon b. Buya’a wrote a codex of the entire Tanakh. After its completion it was proofread by Aaron ben Moshe who also added the vocalization symbols. It is this text that became known as the *כתר ארם צובה*<sup>5</sup> or the Aleppo Codex.

**Transferred to Jerusalem.** After Aaron ben Moshe passed away, Israel ben Simhah of Basrah bought the codex from the ben Asher family and delivered it for safekeeping to the heads of the Karaite sect in Jerusalem, Yehizkiyyahu and Yoshiyahu. However, he wanted to make certain that the codex would remain intact, and so he imposed numerous rules for its preservation. Both Karaites and Rabbanites were only permitted to consult the codex to satisfy doubts regarding the wording of the Bible, not to read or study from it.

**Stolen and brought to Egypt.** In the mid 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was stolen and brought to Egypt. There are two theories as to who stole it. The more well known opinion is that it was stolen by the Crusaders in

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<sup>5</sup> The word *כתר*, crown that was appended to the name of the Codex indicates the importance with which people associated it. Professor Elazar Hurvitz points out that the Cincinnati manuscript of the Shi’iltot d-R. Aḥai Gaon is similarly referred to as *כתר* and that this manuscript too is the most authoritative manuscript of the Shi’iltot.

1099. Another opinion is that it was stolen in 1071 by the Seljuks. In any case, the intention of those who stole it was to sell it back to the Jews for a large sum of money, and so they ensured that absolutely no damage was done to it. Eventually, it was redeemed by the Rabbanite Synagogue in Fustat (Old Cairo). While the Codex remained in Egypt, Rambam had the chance to study it. (More on this later.)

**Transferred to Aleppo.** During the 14<sup>th</sup> century a descendant of Rambam transferred the codex to Aleppo (known in Hebrew as אַרַם צוֹבָה)<sup>6</sup> a city in Syria, where it remained intact for about five centuries.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, a fungus developed that ate away at the edges of most of the pages. Unfortunately some of the *Masoretic* notes that were written in the margins became rubbed out or blurred. Nevertheless, all 480 pages remained intact, and it was possible to read the entire text from beginning to end.

In 1943, Professor Umberto (Moshe David) Cassuto of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem traveled to Aleppo and examined the Codex. He wanted to photograph it, but he knew that it would be very difficult to obtain film in Aleppo, and that the quality would not be very good. So instead he copied parts of it by hand and took notes on what he saw. He checked for differences between the Aleppo Codex and other manuscript that were available to him. As we shall soon see these notes were quite useful. Cassuto also mentioned in his notes that the codex, for its protection, was kept in a wooden case that was covered with red leather. The case could be opened, and the two covers of the book were attached to either end of the case. He was one of the last people to see the Codex in its entirety.

**Rioting in Aleppo.** On December 1st, 1947, two days after the United Nations voted in favor of partitioning Palestine, and with the encouragement of the Syrian Government, anti-Jewish riots broke out in Aleppo. The rioters removed forty torah scrolls from the synagogues and brought them out to the street to be burned. After the fire died down and the mob had dispersed the Jews went out to sift through the ruins. The codex itself was found among the ashes but almost the entire Pentateuch was missing. Only 294 out of the

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<sup>6</sup> The name אַרַם צוֹבָה is already mentioned in Prophets (2 Samuel 10:6, 8) and in Writings (Psalms 60:2).

approximately 487 original pages were found. The fate of the Aleppo Codex is described in the accounts of the city's rabbi, Moshe Tawil:

They removed forty Torah scrolls and burned them outside with kerosene and oil. The Jews were afraid to leave their homes because they were certain to be killed. The government warned the people not to kill, although they were permitted to rob and destroy... At that time they burned all the synagogues, notably the Great Synagogue... After four days we entered the Great Synagogue and saw the ashes of books and small fragments...The Keter was discovered lying in ashes, its case broken into many pieces.

Concerned for its safety, the Jews of Aleppo hid the Codex for about ten years waiting for the opportunity to smuggle it out of Syria.

**Smuggled to Israel.** In 1958 the Aleppo Codex was smuggled out to Israel. It was then brought to the Ben-Zvi Institute in Israel, where a committee of trustees was put in charge of its care. The story of the events that happened that night, and the secret transport to Israel were recorded and attached to the end of the Aleppo Codex:

This *Keter Torah* was delivered by the Chief Rabbi of Aleppo, Tavvi Moshe Tawil, and the Dayan (Judge), Rabbi Shlomom Za'afani, to Mr. Mordecai ben Ezra ha-Cohen Faham in the year 1957 in order to bring it up to the holy city of Jerusalem. This privilege devolved upon Mr. Faham, who agreed to risk his life to save (the Keter) and bring it to Jerusalem, and deliver it to His Excellency the President of the State, Mr. Itzhak Ben-Zvi.

The Aleppo Codex now resides in The Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where an entire floor is devoted to its legacy.

**The missing pages.** The whereabouts of the remaining pages remains a controversy to this day. Are they hidden somewhere? Were

they actually burnt in the fire in Syria? It is impossible to know for sure as there are pages of the Pentateuch that have turned up. One leaf has since been returned to Jerusalem. It came from a family in Brooklyn, New York, who were originally from Aleppo and found the page among the ruins of the fire in the Great Synagogue. Another Jew from the United States has a fragment of a page which he keeps in his wallet as an amulet. This piece of the Aleppo Codex has not yet been returned, but there are published photographs of it.

**Preserving and reconstructing.** In 1986, the Aleppo Codex was brought to the laboratory of the Israel Museum for preservation. This process took ten years. The dirt was removed and the ink was reinforced where it had begun to fade. The fungus that had developed on some of the pages was proven to be no longer active.

**Authoritative.** The Aleppo Codex has since proven to be the most authoritative *masoretic* manuscript. In 1986 Professor Israel Yeivin stated:

This manuscript is vocalized and accentuated in the most exact fashion, preserving intact the early tradition of accentuation, which was lost in later manuscripts. In sum, with regard to these features, it is the most exact of all the Tiberian Bible manuscripts of which I have examined the photographs.

R. Mordechai Breuer wrote in 1977:

A few statistics will illustrate this point. In the manuscript known as the Leningrad Codex there are more than 250 places in the Prophets where the scribe erred with respect to *plene* and defective spellings. In the Cairo manuscript of the Prophets there are about 130 error in *plene* and defective spelling. However, in the Aleppo Codex there are two places in the Prophets where it is clear that the scribe erred with respect to *plene* and defective spelling.

In 1996 R. Mordechai Breuer wrote:

Anyone who examined the Aleppo Codex carefully, both along general lines and in detail, cannot help but be

amazed by the almost superhuman ability of the *Masorete* who produced such perfect work. He was expert in defective and *plene* spellings, in vocalization and in accentuation, and no secret of the *Masorah* escaped him. He is the only one of the scribes, vocalizers, *Masorettes*, and proofreaders who managed to produce a full manuscript of the Bible without deviating from the *Masoretic* rules and precepts.

In 1976 the Hebrew University and the Aleppo Jewish Community Council published a lavish facsimile edition of the Aleppo Codex. As a facsimile edition, however, it lacked almost the entire Pentateuch which had been lost when the Great Synagogue of Aleppo was burned in 1947. It was therefore decided to set and print anew the entire Hebrew Bible based on the Aleppo Codex. This would eventually lead to the printing of the *Jerusalem Crown* in 2000 and the *Companion Volume to the Jerusalem Crown* in 2002.

## The Jerusalem Crown

Nahum Ben-Zvi formed a team to work on producing a printed version of the Hebrew Bible based on the Aleppo Codex. The project followed the methods of R. Mordechai Breuer and it was funded by Dr. Thomas and Yvette Karger the owners of a prestigious publishing house in Basel, Switzerland. The aim was to create a Tanakh that would be both scholarly and acceptable to the religiously observant.

**Creating a new font.** Since there was no font in existence that resembled the letters of the Aleppo Codex it was decided to create a new font that would be similar to that used by the *Masorettes*. This was accomplished by Zvi Narkiss with the help of Jakob Gonczaronsky who fed the fonts into the computer. This new font contains a total of 138 characters including letters, numerals, vowels and accentuation marks. In addition, more than two-thousand pairs of kerning<sup>7</sup> were inserted manually into the font.

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<sup>7</sup> Kerning is used by typesetters when the usual spacing of a letter or symbol causes uneven effects in the text. For example, if a Hebrew letter requires both a vowel and an accent mark beneath it, then without kerning the accent mark would appear after the letter instead of



**Layout of the text.** The Aleppo Codex uses a three column layout and it was therefore decided that the layout of the *Jerusalem Crown* should follow this same convention (see fig. 2). However, the poems are set in two columns: a narrow column and a wider one (see fig. 3.) Three books of the Writings: Psalms, Proverbs and Job are written in two columns since they are written in poetic meter and thus each line is divided into two half-lines (see fig. 4.)

**Establishing the proper text.** Establishing the complete text of the Jerusalem Crown proved to be a major effort. Where the actual pages of the Aleppo Codex existed they, of course, had no problem. But what about all the missing pages? A variety of approaches were used:

1. They used the *Masorah Magna* on existent pages that also refer to text on non-existent pages.
2. They made use of other manuscripts from the tenth and eleventh centuries that take an approach similar to that of the Aleppo Codex. These are manuscripts that were examined and found to be similar in spelling, vocalization and accentuation.
3. At the end of the sixteenth century R. Yishai ben Amram ha-Cohen, from the town of Amadiya in Kurdistan, corrected the text of the Torah according to the Aleppo Codex. His corrections were found written in the margins of a Pentateuch printed in 1490.
4. When Umberto Cassuto examined the Aleppo Codex in 1943, he found a slip of paper containing a list of eleven differences between the text of the Torah scrolls written in Aleppo and the text of the Aleppo Codex.
5. In the 1850's R. Ya'akov Sapir, an Ashkenazi rabbi of Jerusalem, composed a long list of more than 500 remarks on the spelling, vocalization, and accentuation in various places in the Torah, the *haftarot* and the Five Scrolls. This list was sent to R. Menashe Sithon, a *nasi* in Aleppo, who was asked to examine the codex and write "thus" or "not thus" next to every item on the list.

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beneath it. With kerning, the vowel and the accent mark are combined to take up the space of only a single character and thus both fit beneath the letter.

6. R. Shalom Shakhna Yellin (1790-1874) sent his son-in-law R. Moshe Yehoshua Kimḥi with a Bible in the margins of which he had noted questions and disputed readings. When R. Kimḥi got to Aleppo he recorded the reading of the Aleppo Codex in every instance. This Bible was discovered in 1987 in a building in the Kiryat Moshe neighborhood in Jerusalem that was about to be demolished.

As the project progressed the text and the vocalization symbols were proofread five times and finally it was checked by computer comparing its text to that of the *JPS Hebrew English Tanakh*.

Articles by Nahum Ben-Zvi and Thomas J. Karger appear in the companion volume to the *Jerusalem Crown*, as well as contributions by Menahem Ben-Sasson, Mordechai Glatzer, and Yosef Ofer. Each of these authors wrote in depth about either the history of the Aleppo Codex, or about the publication of the *Jerusalem Crown*.

The *Jerusalem Crown* and its companion volume are available in five different editions,<sup>8</sup> most of them in a red case (reminiscent of the red case of the Aleppo Codex). The companion volume is written in both Hebrew and English.

## **Halakhic authority of the Aleppo Codex**

What is the halakhic authority of the Aleppo Codex? Rambam used the codex in the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Egypt, and it was his descendants who brought it to Aleppo at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Rambam, in *Hilbot Sefer Torah* 8:4, writes that he relied on the Aleppo Codex to establish which sections of the Torah Scroll should be “open” and

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<sup>8</sup> The Jerusalem Crown was published in five different editions: i. Numbered edition, leather-bound, 30x35.8 cm, with companion volume and slipcase. ii. Standard edition, linen-bound, 30x35.8 cm, with companion volume and slipcase. iii. Medium prestige edition, silk-bound, 18x23.5 cm, with companion volume and slipcase. iv. Medium edition, linen-bound, 18x23.5 cm, with companion volume and slipcase. v. Small edition, linen-bound, 14x18cm.

which should be “closed”<sup>9</sup> and that he himself wrote a Torah Scroll based on the codex of ben Asher:

ולפי שראיתי שיבוש גדול בכל הספרים שראיתי בדברים אלו, וכן בעלי המסורת שכותבין ומחברין להודיע הפתוחות והסתומות נחלקים בדברים אלו במחלוקת הספרים שסומכין עליהם, ראיתי לכתוב הנה כל פרשיות התורה הסתומות והפתוחות וצורת השירות כדי לתקן עליהם כל הספרים ולהגיה מהם, 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 התורה שכתבתי כהלכתו.

There is extreme uniformity across all Torah Scrolls in use today. There are only nine slight variations between the text as used by the Sephardi and Ashkenazi community, and that of the Yemenite community.<sup>10</sup> In at least eight of the nine instances the Yemenite version conforms to the Aleppo Codex.

<sup>9</sup> Sections in the Torah are referred to as being either “open” פתוחה or “closed” סתומה. Rambam in *Hilkehot Sefer Torah*, rulings 1 and 2, defines these terms as follows:

א. פרשה פתוחה יש לה שתי צורות, אם גמר באמצע השיטה מניח שאר השיטה פנוי ומתחיל הפרשה שהיא פתוחה מתחלת השיטה השנייה, במה דברים אמורים שנשאר מן השיטה ריוח כשעור תשע אותיות, אבל אם לא נשאר אלא מעט או אם גמר בסוף השיטה מניח שיטה שנייה בלא כתב ומתחיל הפרשה הפתוחה מתחלת שיטה השלישית.  
ב. פרשה סתומה יש לה שלש צורות, אם גמר באמצע השיטה מניח ריוח כשיעור ומתחיל לכתוב בסוף השיטה תיבה אחת מתחלת הפרשה שהיא סתומה עד שימצא הריוח באמצע, ואם לא נשאר מן השיטה כדי להניח הריוח כשיעור ולכתוב בסוף השיטה תיבה אחת יניח הכל פנוי ויניח מעט ריוח מראש שיטה שנייה ויתחיל לכתוב הפרשה הסתומה מאמצע שיטה שנייה, ואם גמר בסוף השיטה מניח מתחלת שיטה שנייה כשיעור הריוח ומתחיל לכתוב הסתומה מאמצע השיטה, נמצאת אומר שפרשה פתוחה תחלתה בתחלת השיטה לעולם ופרשה סתומה תחלתה מאמצע השיטה לעולם.

<sup>10</sup> The last page of the final volume of the *Torat Hayim Humash*, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem: 1993 lists the following nine differences between the accepted version of the Torah and that of the Yemenite version:

הנוסח התימני	הנוסח המקובל		
מנשא	גדול עוני מנשוא	בראשית ד: יד	1
מעינת	נבקעו כל מעינות	בראשית ז: יא	2
ויהיו	ויהי כל ימי נח	בראשית ט: כט	3
תעשה	מקשה תיעשה המנורה	שמות כה: לא	4
האפד	אל עבר האפוד ביתה	שמות כח: כו	5
בשמת	אשר נקבו בשמות	במדבר א: יח	6
חדשיכם	ובראשי חדשכם	במדבר י: י	7

Certain synagogues follow the custom reinstated by the Gaon of Vilna not to recite the Haftorah from a printed text. In 1995 a dispute broke out within the *haredi* community in Israel as to whether the “open” and “closed” sections of the Scrolls used for the Haftorah readings in those synagogues should be revised to conform to the Aleppo Codex. Rabbis who were opposed to using the Aleppo Codex plastered posters decrying this modern innovation. One poster read:

לא כהמשנים לכתוב על פי כתב יד חדש הנקרא "כתר ארם צובא"  
והמכונה "בן אשר" ו"כתב יד האלב". שלא נהגו כן מעולם בשום  
מקום...פועיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א חדש הרחמים אלול שנת תשנ"ה.

When in 1995 this controversy was brought to the attention of R. Haim Kanyevisky and R. Nissim Karelitz they found it necessary to publish a statement titled *Kinat Sofrim* indicating their approval of the text of the Aleppo Codex:

המסורת היחידה מדור ודור [על כתיבת נביאים וארבע מגילות] היא  
מסורת קהלת חלב [ארם צובה] שהכתר המפורסם שלהם הוא הספר  
שהגיהו בן-אשר שעליו סמך הרמב"ם.

Another important factor that caused some opponents of the Aleppo Codex to retract their opinion was the clear position taken by R. Shmuel Salant, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem in the nineteenth century who signed the letter authorizing R. Shalom Shakhna Yellin's expedition to Aleppo. It was a result of this mission that Scrolls for Haftorah readings were written in Jerusalem according to the tradition of the Aleppo Codex.

While these factors did quell the controversy somewhat it did not bring it to a complete end either. For example, in a letter dated 1 Elul 5762 R. Reuven Feinstein writes:

I have seen the pamphlet written by Rabbi Goldberg clarifying the *Masorah* of the Tanakh. He brings solid proof against changing from the text of the Tanakh that has been passed down over the generations...It is well known that my master, my father (Rav Moshe), was very strict about

any sort of change even in cases of strong proof and logic if it contradicts our tradition...(*Aleppo, City of Scholars*, p. 387)

The supporters of revising the Scrolls in accord with the Aleppo Codex maintain, however, that no other true Masorah existed. See the letter cited above by R. Kanyevsky and R. Karelitz.

## **Conclusion**

The Aleppo Codex is the most authoritative manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, and the *Jerusalem Crown* is its most accurate reconstruction. The *Jerusalem Crown* is esthetically appealing and easy to read and use – whether in a synagogue setting or in one’s home. It is also an invaluable and affordable reference work that can help researchers look up or verify the precise text or vocalization of any word in the Aleppo Codex. The reader should be careful, however, to differentiate between those portions that are an exact copy of the *Aleppo Codex* and almost the entire Pentateuch and other sections which are only a best-effort to recreate it. Also, while the page layout of the Jerusalem Crown and the Aleppo Codex is similar, the Jerusalem Crown is not an exact copy. You will not find corresponding pages each starting and ending with the same word.

The only shortcoming of the *Jerusalem Crown* is that it contains neither the *magna* nor the *parva masoretic* notes that are recorded within the *Aleppo Codex*. The inclusion of these notes would have made it an even more valuable tool for research into the *mesorah*. It is the hope of this author that a future volume will be forthcoming that will contain these *masoretic* notes and perhaps also a commentary to help elucidate them.

The *Companion Volume*, written in both Hebrew and English, contains a collection of articles dealing with: the creation of the Jerusalem Crown, the history and authority of the Aleppo Codex, and the transformation of the bible medium from scroll to codex. The articles are all well written, interesting and informative. Collectively

they provide an excellent introduction to the *mesorah* and the Aleppo Codex.<sup>11</sup> ❧

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<sup>11</sup> For additional information regarding the Masorah see, *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 16, pp. 1401-1482. For additional information regarding the city of Aleppo see the recently published, *Aleppo, City of Scholars*, by R. David Sutton, ArtScroll, Brooklyn: 2005.

Extensive photographs of the remaining pages of the Aleppo Codex can be viewed at [www.aleppocodex.org](http://www.aleppocodex.org). The website allows the viewer to zoom in anywhere on the page for a closer look. It also contains history and information pertaining to the Aleppo Codex.

For further research regarding the controversy over the propriety of utilizing the Aleppo Codex in preparing Scrolls for Haftorah reading see R. David Yitzchaki's "Ashreinu" and "Nev'ei ha-Emes vaha-Tzedek" in favor of utilizing the data, whose position is strongly opposed by R. Tzvi Goldberg's "Mesorateinu."

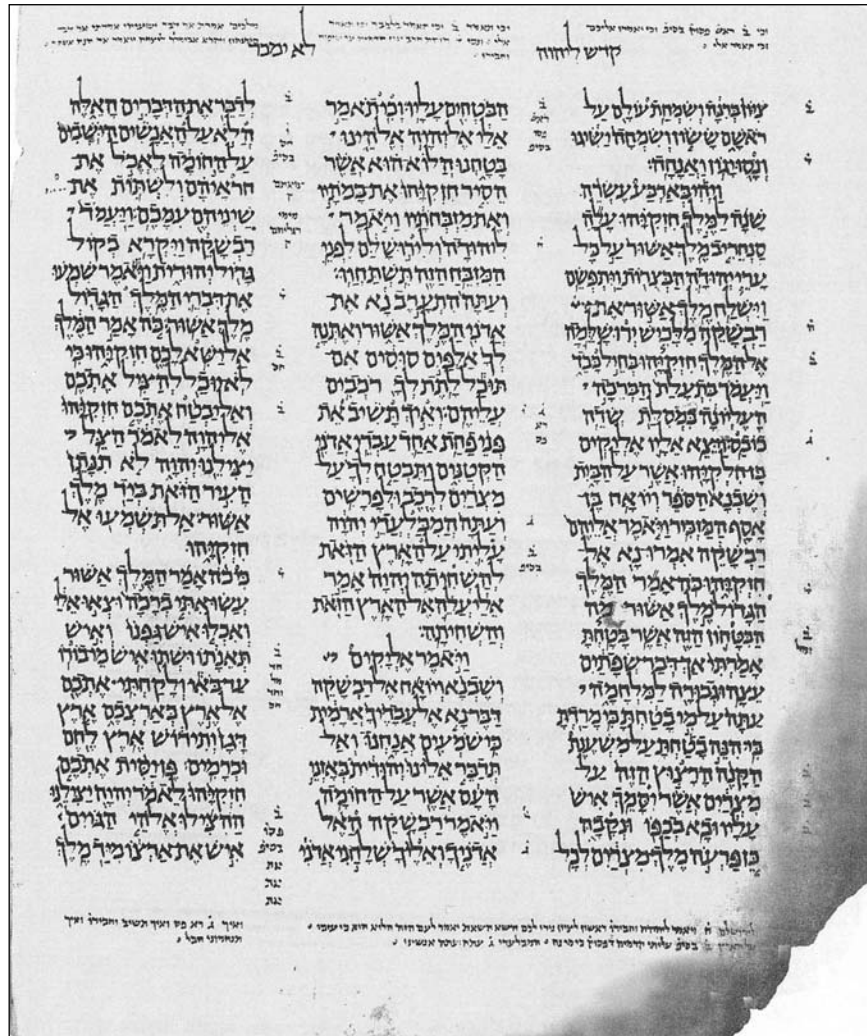


Fig. 1, Aleppo Codex, Isaiah 35:10 – 36:18

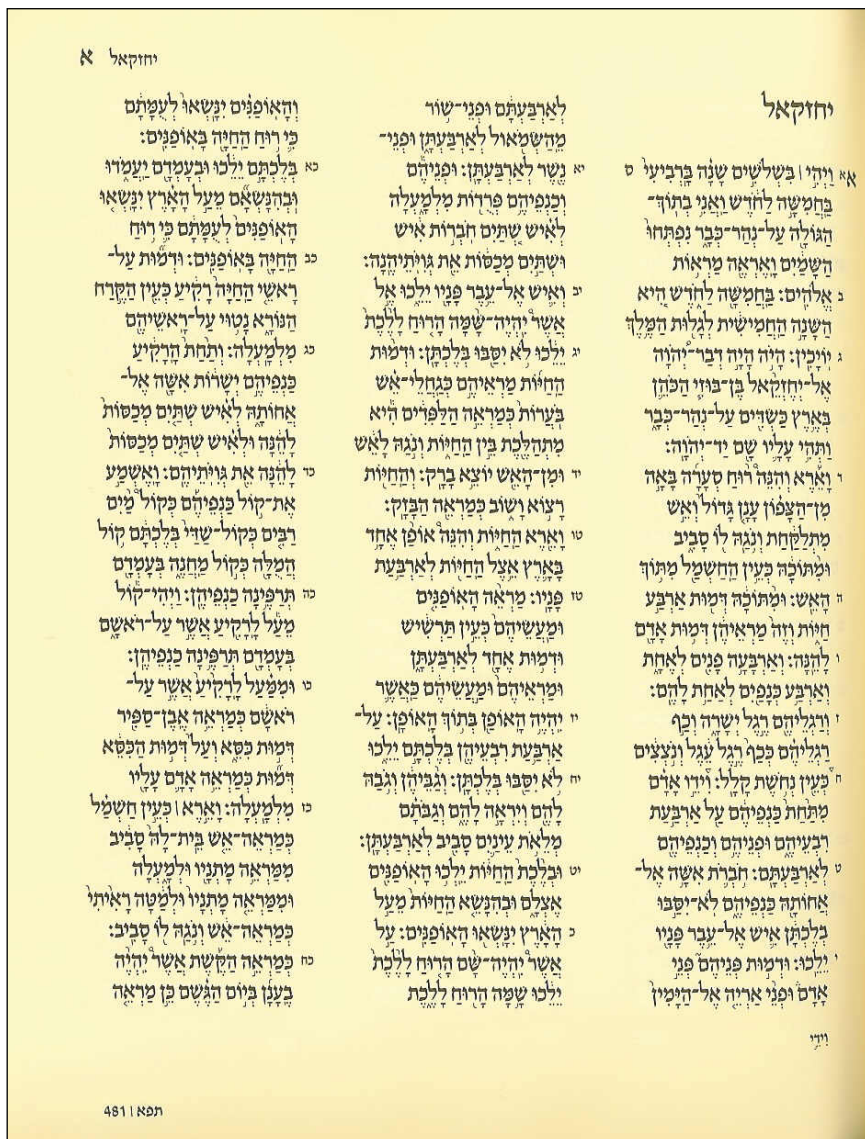


Fig. 2, Jerusalem Crown, Ezekiel 1:1 – 1:28



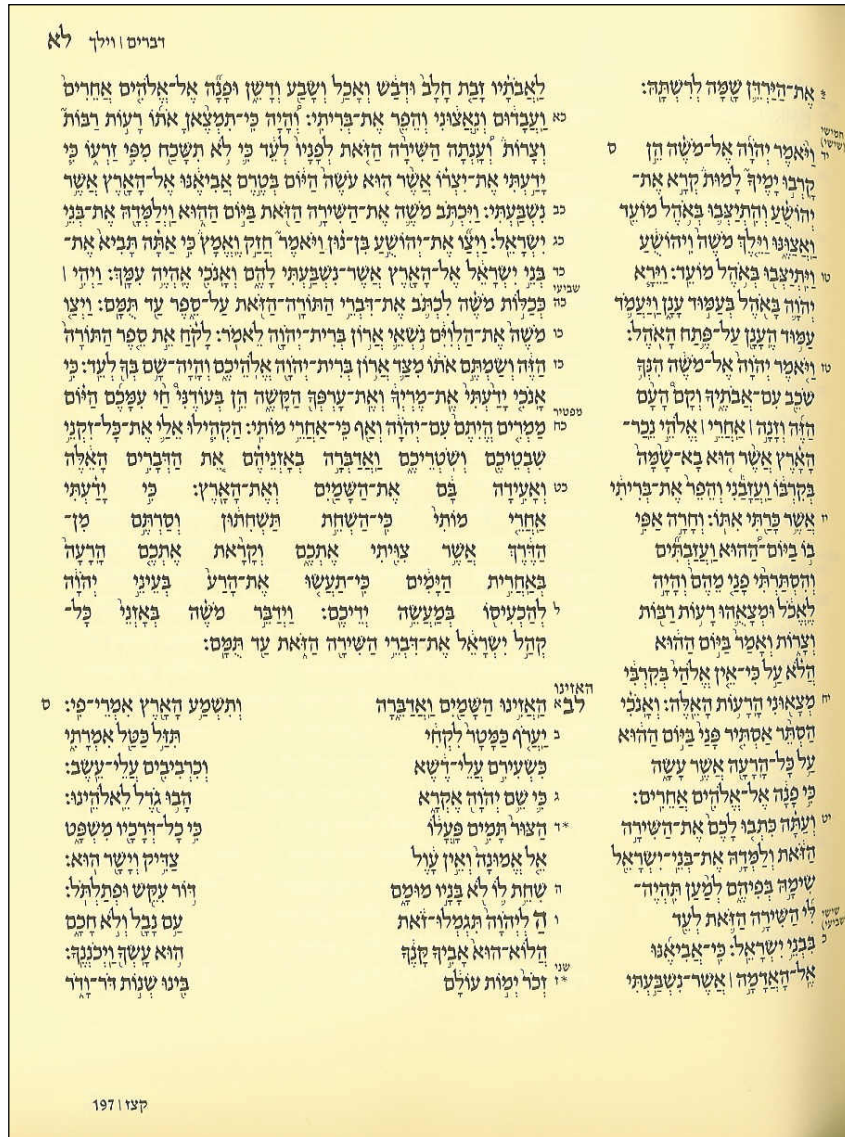


Fig. 3, Jerusalem Crown, Deuteronomy 31:14 – 32:7

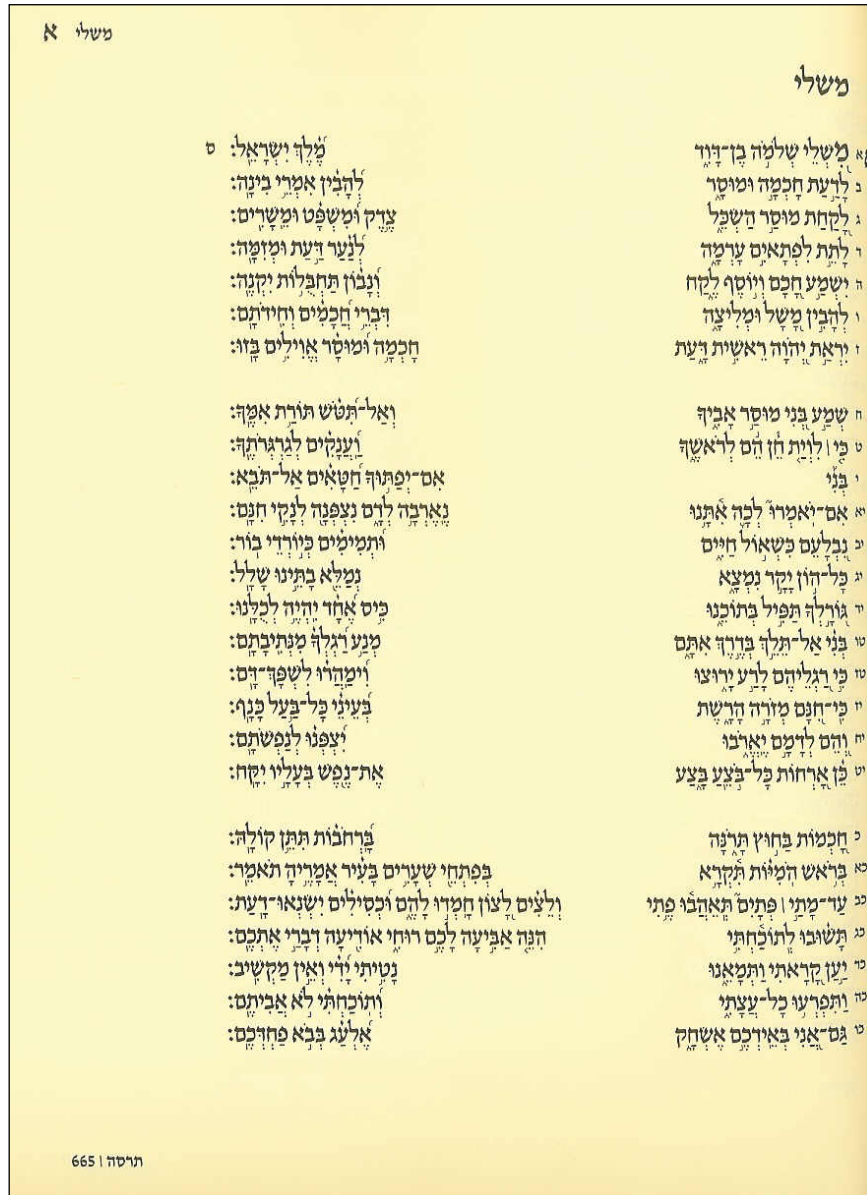


Fig. 4, Jerusalem Crown, Proverbs 1:1 – 1:26