

THE MESORAH EXAMINED

INSIDE THE SEFER TORAH

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The Sefer Torah is a fascinating object. Aside from the myriad Halachos regarding the parchment, quill, ink, formation of letters and margins there are whole areas of tradition that are poorly understood, even by most scholars. Upside down letters, crowns, dots above certain other letters, K'siv/Kri, P'suchos and Stumos, the number of letters, the script, large and small letters, variant readings, Pasook B'Emtza Pasook, the format of Shira, trop, vocalization, odd looking letters, a split letter, Parsha and chapter divisions are each deservant of discussion and understanding. Some of these are Halacha L'Moshe Mi'Sinai, others are the result of the work of the Sofrim or the Masronim, yet others have arisen at a comparatively late date for reasons known and unknown.

First a short history.

In the 38th year in the desert Moshe Rabbeinu wrote 13 Sifrei Torah. One was given to each of the twelve tribes and the 13th was placed in the Aron, some say outside the Aron on a shelf, in the Mishkan (Baba Basra 14a). This scroll was in our possession for the duration of the Mishkan through Gilgal, 14 years, Shiloh 369 years, Nov, 13 years, and Givon, 44 years, for a total period of some 440 years.

The Aron was then placed in the first Bais HaMikdash by Shlomo HaMelech where it remained until it was hidden by Yoshiahu Ben Amon, Melech Yehuda, upon the advice of Yermiya HaNavi, in the year 3285, some 50 years prior to the destruction of the first Bais HaMikdash (Seder HaDoros Year 3285). This Sefer Torah was used by the Cohain Gadol on Yom Kippur, as well as every Hakhail, when the King read from it (Mishnas Keilim 15;6 & Rashi, Baba Basra 14b). Up to that point every Sefer Torah could be corrected by simply comparing it to the original (Tosfos Baba Basra 14a).

From the time it was hidden through the end of the first Bais HaMikdash, the 70 year exile to Babylon, the return and rebuilding of the second Bais HaMikdash there were extant scrolls that had been checked against the original. Every King of Israel had a special Mitzva to write a Sefer Torah, as King, in addition to the one he had to write as every Jew. The Talmud Yerushalmi says that the Kingly Sefer Torah was checked against the Sefer in the Azara (Temple court) as per the authority of the Sanhedrin of 71 (Yerushalmi 13a). Rashi (Moed Katan 1b) mentions that there is an opinion that this reference was to Ezra HaSofer, not the Azara courtyard and that the Kingly Sefer Torah was checked against the one written by Ezra.

During the time of the second Bais HaMikdash the Siphre (Devorim 33) tells us of the

process they used for determining the proper text. Until the present day, the Mesorah, while clearly and demonstrably more accurate than that of any other ancient manuscript, has suffered a certain degree, albeit slight, of slippage.

From the time of Ezra for a period of about 400 years a group, collectively known as Sofrim worked to ensure the accuracy of the received text. The Gemora (Kesubos 106a) tells us that "Raba Bar Chana reported in the name of Rabbi Yochanan that the Sofrim in Yerushalayim were paid from the Trumas HaLishka [Chamber of Shekels in the Bais HaMikdash]". During this time final letter forms of ך,ף,ן,ם,ך were reinstated (Braishis Rabba Perek 1:11). The Gemora has given these letters an acronym; מנצפ"ך. The Medrash Rabba HaMivuar explains that these final letter forms were given to Moshe Rabbeinu but were lost when Yoshia HaMelech hid the original Sefer Torah and the Luchos. The Nevi'im later reintroduced them in order to follow the Halacha more exactly (See the sources there). Vocalization, Trop and Nikudos, was not written down, it had always been oral, until even later.

The Tannaim, followed by the Amoraim, continued the Mesora process. Several works written by those known as Masronim are extant today. Most notable are those done by two families, Ben Asher and Ben Naftoli, which represent the height of accuracy possible through the methodology accepted by Chazal. Although there are differences between these two schools, they represent to the greatest degree only minor grammatical nuances. The text itself is in almost total agreement.

The Rambam writes (Perek 8 Halacha 4 of Hilchos Sefer Torah) that he relied on a Sefer in Yerushalayim consisting of 24 Seforim which was known to have been checked by Ben Asher and had been checked carefully many times. There is an ancient manuscript called Kesser Aram Tsova, or the Aleppo Codex, presently in the collection of the National Library in Yerushalayim.

The colophon of the codex states that it had been written by the scribe Shlomo Ben Buya'a and had been vocalized and annotated with Mesora notes by Aaron Ben Asher. For generations this Codex belonged to the community of Aleppo, Syria where tradition has it, this was the manuscript used by the Rambam in writing his Halachos in Yad Hachazaka regarding the Mesorah.

Various scholars had attempted to photograph the manuscript to make it available for study but the community wouldn't allow this. In 1948 the Shul in which it was kept was burnt by rioting Arabs, destroying almost a third of the manuscript from Braishis through most of Devorim. It was, and is considered the only error free manuscript. Recently a notebook, hidden in an attic in Yerushalayim, was uncovered. It appears that the Rabbis of Yerushalayim had sent an emissary to check certain information from this manuscript. The person who was sent made notes of all the Psuchos and Stumos in the Kesser Aram Tsova so we are in possession today of this information.

The oldest texts available to us today are:

1- The portion of Torah found on Masada by Yigal Yadin in the mid-1960's. He was a secular Israeli who would have had no problem publicizing the fact that this ancient scroll was different from those we have today. In fact, he proudly proclaimed that it is the same letter for letter. Masada was destroyed 2,000 years ago. "Parts of the fragment had been eaten away, but those that were undamaged were very well preserved and we could immediately identify them as several chapters from the Book of Leviticus, chapters eight to twelve, and to note that this scroll too was **absolutely identical** [emphasis mine] with the traditional text of Leviticus. Moreover, there was the same division into sections, the traditional division into open and closed ones" In addition, in a Geniza under the Shul they found other scroll fragments containing the two final chapters of Deuteronomy and parts of Ezekiel." It need hardly be added, at this stage that these two scrolls, too, are virtually identical with the traditional biblical texts. There are only a few slight changes in the Ezekiel scroll." [Note: he makes no mention of any variations in the Deuteronomy text]. He adduces from their location that, " ..The date of the scrolls cannot possibly be later than 73 CE and not even the most skeptical of scholars can challenge this." (MASADA, Yigal Yadin, Random House, .1966)

2- **The Cairo codex:** A manuscript of the Neviim preserved in the Kairite Synagogue in Cairo written in Tiberius, revised and punctuated by Moshe Ben Asher in 895.

3- **The Aleppo Codex**, also known as Keser Aram Tsova, mentioned above, originally written, revised and vocalized by Aaron ben Asher, Moshe Ben Asher's grandson around 929. Copied by Shlomo Ben Buya'a. We have the portion from Devorim 28;17 through Shir HaShirim 3;11.

4- **The Leningrad Codex-** The only complete and dated manuscript and the oldest extant version of the entire Torah. It is preserved in the Leningrad Library. It was copied in Old Cairo in 1008 by Shmuel Ben Yosef from manuscripts corrected by Aaron Ben Asher.

5- **The British Manuscript**, OR4,445- Written around 850-970, contains a large part of Torah. It was written during Ben Asher's lifetime.

6- **The oldest printed Chumash** is the "Second Rabbinical Bible" published by Bomberg. It was edited in Venice in 1524-25 by Yakov Ben Chaim Ben Yitzchok Ibn Adoniyahu. The Mesora Parva and Mesora Magna were printed in the margins.

7- **Hilleli** and **Yerushalmi** (not in extant today) are both mentioned by the Minchas Shai. He writes (Braishis 1; 15) that he saw part of an ancient manuscript written by a scribe named Hillel, written in Toledo. It had been brought to Africa during the expulsion in 1492. Minchas Shai says he saw it when it was already 900 years old. The Minchas Shai relied on this Sefer for his comments on Malei and Chaser.

Although I don't know if the text exists, the colophon of Felix De Prato's 1517 edition of Tanach testifies to the accuracy of the Mesora. "*This Mesora was transmitted by Dosa the son of Eliezer, Son of Rav Afsi who received it from Shimon, his father. Shimon received it from Rav Adda who was, at that time, a great scholar in the matter of the text. He received his*

tradition from Rav Hamnuna who taught it at Nahardea. Both Rav Hamnuna and Rav Adda received from Nakkai who had come from Eretz Yisroel, exiled by Doses (Rufus) as the Torah could no longer be taught in the land of Israel."

THE POSKIM

In matters of Mesora we rely on a number of Seforim. These Poskim have culled the sources to determine the most accurate texts. They will be referred to often. By way of introduction they are:

- **Rambam** - Yad Hachazaka, Hilchos Sefer Torah. He began writing the Yad in 4530 and finished it in 4541 (1194-1270).
- **Yad Ramah** Rav Meir HaLevi Ben Todros Abulafia, 4930 -5004 (1180-1244) known as Ramah after his Sefer, Yad Ramah. He wrote an orthographical dictionary, Mesoras Siyag LaTorah, Ramah lists all the words in the Torah whose orthography is not obvious. The Ramban, a close contemporary, referred to him as Nesi Nesi'ei HaLevi. He is essentially the father of the accepted text particularly amongst the Ashkenazim.
- **Meiri**- HaRav Menachem Ben Shlomo, 5009 - 5075, wrote a commentary on virtually all of Shas. His work, Kiryas Sefer on the Mesora is seminal. During this time a Sefer Torah written by the Ramah, some 70 years before, came into his possession, and it was on this Sefer that he based much of his commentary on Mesora.
- **Ohr Torah**- HaRav Menachem Di Lanzano, written 5332
- **Minchas Shai**- HaRav Yedidya Shlomo Refoel Nortzi written 5386
- **Kesses HaSofer** by HaRav Shlomo Ganzfried, 5564- 5646, the author of the Kitzur ShulchanAruch. This work is generally considered authoritative for Ashkenaz Jewry.

PART ONE

The script - Ashuris, Ivris, Velish

The Gemora (סנהדרין כ"א:) reports a difference of opinion regarding the script originally used by Moshe Rabbeinu in writing the Torah. The opinions quarrel over the issue of the holiness of the script itself. Some hold that the original Torah was written in Ivris, the ancient Hebrew script and that Ezra adopted Ashuris later on. Others maintain that Ivris was the common alphabet for secular uses and that Ashuris was the accepted script for holy purposes. There is another dimension to this Machlokes in regard to the language, Ivris, and the language, Ashuris. The Mishna (ידים פרק ד' משנה ה') raises this issue as well in another context. The Rav and the Tiferes Yisroel comment on the script in which the original Luchos were written (see מס' שבת ק"ד). Both concur that the Luchos were written in Ashuris. See תורה שלמה חלק כ"ט for a discussion and examples of ancient Hebrew script.

Here are two examples of Ashuris compared with Ivris.

צורות אותיות העברית העתיקה

א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת

לוח מס' 1.

כתב אשורי ולשון הקודש.

לוח מס' 2.

כתב עברי-שומרוני ולה"ק.

ארת	השמים	וארת
ארת	א-אמת	ארת
הארץ	והארץ	היתה
ארת	ארת	ארת
תהו	ובדו	והשך
ארת	ארת:	ארת
על פני		תהום
סל	במל	ארת

Today, Ivris script is used only by the Samaritans whose Torah scrolls are written in this script. Otherwise it is known and used mostly by archaeologists and scholars interested in ancient tombs, engravings and papyrus manuscripts. Those involved in Dead Sea scroll research are reading in Ivris. There is something of an anachronism in that Ezra, 400 years prior to the time of the Dead Sea Scrolls, changed from Ivris to Ashuris. One would then expect this change to have been reflected so many years later in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is another indicator from the wrings found on Masada, clearly written after Ezra's time, yet while some are in Ashuris others are still in Ivris. Possibly, Shul scrolls were written in Ashuris while other documents and scrolls for home use were still written in the more common Ivris. Those found on Masada were recognizably in some form of Ashuris, albeit not as stylized as our script is today.

The script in use today is Ashuris. All Sifrei Torah are in some form of Ashuris. The Sephardim use a script known as Velish. They purposefully changed each Ashuris letter

Odd looking letters

Many letters in very old Sifrei Torah have strange curlicues, tails and crowns attached to them. Meiri, in Kiryas Sefer, writes in depth about each type. He calls the them : L'fufos, Akumos, Menuzaros, M'aglos, Dafsios, D'chuyos, T'luyos and Tzurasan Ra. In original editions he had examples of each type. For some reason these have not been included in the new editions of Meiri.

All of the Poskim (רמב"ם הל' ספר תורה פרק ז' הל' ח' : רמב"ן בהקדמתו לפירוש התורה : מחזור ויטרי סימן) mention these strange letters as being necessary to a Torah. Some older Sifrei Torah do, indeed, have examples of these letters. For some reason, the tradition of which letters are to be written in this manner has been lost. None of the new Sifrei Torah today are written with this tradition at all even though there are Poskim who maintain that one who writes a Sefer Torah should include them. A scroll with all of the various traditions put together would be very strange looking, indeed. In any event, the Torah is certainly kosher without these added curlicues.

Sefer Toras Shlomo (Vol .29) devotes half a volume to these letters including scores of pages of the various places they turn up.

Here are several examples

כתב ספר תורה עתיק, משו"ת חתם סופר חי"ד.

תשובה רסה

שלום רב לידירי הרצני המופלא ומופלג כמה"ו אליה נ"י יושב
בשנת תחכמוני צקגאליטץ:

ע"ד הק"ת ישן כושן שנכתב באותיו' ותגים משונים ומרובים ואותיו'
עקומו' ולפופו' הרצ' כזה
והנה אודות ריבוי התגים
אין לפוסלו וכבר כ' רמב"ם שנהגו איש מפי איש לתייג בכמה מקומו'
זולת שיעיטיניז ג"ץ וכן לעשות אותיות עקומות ולפופות ופיהן
כפולות וצקפר בן נוסק להגאון דמשק אלעזר הוצאו דצרו צקוף

A split letter

Normally any letter which is split or disconnected renders the Sefer Torah Pasool. There is one exception to this rule (Kiddushin 66b) In Bamidbar 25;12, Parshas Pinchas the word שלום is written with a purposefully split ו. Meiri writes that this ו is one of the small letters.

Vavay HaAmudim

Most Sifrei Torah written today utilize a Chumra in which every column starts with the letter ו. This Chumra, brought by the Rama in Hilchos Sefer Torah, (Yora Deah 273:6) is named after the hooks of the columns in the Mishkan. There are six columns that must begin with a specific letter. The mnemonic device for remembering these columns is **בי-ה שמו**. The columns in question are:

- **בראשית** -- בראשית א' א'
- **יודוך אחיך** -- בראשית מ"ט ח'
- **הבאים אחריכם** -- שמות י"ד כ"ח
- **שמר לך** -- שמות ל"ד י"א
- **מה טובו** -- במדבר כ"ד ה'
- **ואעידה במ** -- דברים ל"א כ"ח

The Taz (ibid. sif katan 4), in the name of the Hagaos Maimoni, complained about this Minhag claiming that Sofrim were forced to squeeze or stretch letters in an unseemly fashion to force fit the columns. He calls these Sofrim "Boorim". Today a very nice system has been achieved which accomplishes Vavay HaAmudim without forcing. Most of the Tikkun Sofrim printed today use this system as do almost all new Sifrei Torah.

Upside Down Nuns

הכותב צריך לעשות שיעור בפתיחתה של ויהי בנסע הארון מלמעלה ולמטה שהוא ספר בפני עצמו וי"א שמקומו בנסיעת דגלים (מסכת סופרים פרק ו' ה' א')

In Bamidbar (10:35-36) we find a unique instance where two letters are actually written upside down and backwards. The Gemora (Shabbos 115b) teaches us that, "Hashem made signs before and after this Parsha for what reason? Rebbe said, "Since it is an important book in and of itself". In effect these letters separate the beginning and end of Sefer Bamidbar and create another Sefer of **ויהי בנסע ארון**. This Parsha has been placed out of order to separate the derogatory events that occurred before it from those that occur after it (see Rashi). In the future, when all bad things have been done away with, this Parsha will be returned to its rightful place near the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar.

הכותב צריך לעשות שיעור בפתיחה של ויהי העם כמתעוננים מלמעלה ולמטה שהוא ספר בפני עצמו וי"א שמקומו בנסיעת דגלים (מסכת סופרים פרק ו' ה' ב')

Bamidbar is thus really three Seforim meaning that the Torah has a total of seven Seforim, not five. Maseches Sofrim mentions this and adds that there was a tradition to separate yet another portion creating yet another Sefer making a total of eight Seforim.

Rabbeinu Bechaya explains the import of these Two Nuns. He brings three opinions as to the true placement of this Parsha. Two opinions maintain that the Nuns are there to

tell us that the Parsha actually belongs elsewhere. According to the Tanna Kama, it belongs next to the Parsha of the Degalim. The Gematria of Nun is 50 to tell us it belongs 50 Parshios before. It is in place now to separate two negative Parshios until Moshiach comes when the negative import of those Parshios falls away.

Rebbe's opinion is that it is the proper place and the Nuns signify the importance of the Parsha and divide it as a separate Sefer.

Rabbeinu Bechaya then continues his explanation involving an understanding of the long cycles of Shmitta and the end of the world. Here, he says, the letters Nun refer to the Great Jubilee of 1,000 generations. Writing properly speaks to the lasting power of a thing. Thus the upside-down, backward position of the letters speaks to the destruction of a thing, in this case, the end of time. The letter Nun implies נפילה, downfall. He discusses this issue at length and then offers yet another explanation through Gematria.

Rashi, at the end of Parshas Noach tells us of a different Mesora. He says that the ך in the Pasook וימת תרח בחרן is to be written upside down. We have no such Mesora.

Dots above certain letters

עשר נקודות בתורה (מסכת סופרים פרק וי ה' ג' וגם באבות דרבי נתן פרק ל"ד משנה ד')

ועיין נחלת יעקב שכתב הטעותים ובאבות דרבי נתן פרק ל"ד ובמדרש רבא פרשת במדבר

Above certain letters, words and phrases there are a total of 33 dots. These may have been ordained by the Sofrim to designate some problem or doubtful reading. This seems to have been the accepted format to denote questionable readings by the copyists and scribes of the period. In the list below every underlined letter has a dot above it in the Torah. The places are:

- Braishis 16;5 ובינד
- Braishis, 18:9 אלינ (Baba Meetziah 86a)
- Braishis 19;33 ובקומה
- Braishis 33;4 וישקהו
- Braishis 37;12 את
- Bamidbar3;39 ואהרן
- Bamidbar 9;10 רחקה
- Bamidbar 21;30 אשב
- Bamidbar 29;15 ועשרון
- Devorim 29;28 לנו ולבנינו עד

Above are the letters given in the Koren edition of the Chumash. The same listing given in Meiri in Kiryas Sefer, (Maimar Sheni Chailek 1.)

Two other lists are given. Here is a comparison.

העשר נקודות מאבות דרבי נתן

- 1- ישפוט ה' ביני וביניך, על יי של ביניך נקוד
- 2- ויאמרו אליו, אייו נקוד
- 3- ולא ידע בשכבה ובקומה, וייו נקוד של שובקומה הראשון
- 4- ויפול על צוארו וישקהו, כולו נקוד
- 5- וילכו אחיו לרעות את צאן אביהם, נקוד על א"ת
- 6- אשר פקד משה ואהרן, נקוד על אהרן
- 7- או בדרך רחוקה, נקוד על ה' שברחוקה
- 8- ונשים עד נפח אשר עד מידבא, נקוד על ר' שבאשר
- 9- ועשרון עשרון של יו"ט ראשון, נקוד על עשרון בוי"ו
- 10 הנסתרות... ולבננו עד עולם, נקוד על לנו ולבננו ועל ע' שבעד

העשר נקודות ממסכת סופרים

- 1- ישפוט ה' ביני וביניך, יי של ביניך נקוד
- 2- ויאמרו אליו, אייו נקוד
- 3- ולא ידע בשכבה ובקומה, וייו נקוד של שובקומה הראשון
- 4- ויפול על צוארו וישקהו, כולו נקוד
- 5- וילכו אחיו לרעות את צאן אביהם, את נקוד
- 6- אשר פקד משה ואהרן, אהרן נקוד
- 7- או בדרך רחוקה, ה' נקוד
- 8- ונשים עד נפח אשר, ר' נקוד
- 9- ועשרון עשרון שבחג, ו' שבעשרון השני נקוד
- 10- הנסתרות... לנו ולבננו עד עולם, ע' שבעד נקוד

Note the difference in number 10. This is the only difference between these two accounts. Our Sifrei Torah follow the account of אבות דרבי נתן with no changes. The account in Sofrim merely lists the dotted letters. The account in Avos D'Rebbe Nosson gives a reason for each of the dotted letters.

Bamidbar Raba 3 asks, "Why the dots? Ezra said, "Were Eliyahu HaNavi to come and say "Why were they (*these words*) written thus?" I could say to him that I placed dots on them. Were he then to say, "You've written (*the words*) properly", I could then erase the dots" (This same thing is given in Avos D'Rebbe Nosson 34). This last, according to one reading of the Midrash, may only refer to the final set of dots, not all of them.

The reasons given by the Meforshim tend to be Drush and do not appear to express any of the doubts implied by the dots. To my knowledge, we don't know what the original doubts were.

LARGE AND SMALL LETTERS

למד דוישליכם צריך שיהא ארוך (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' ה' ה')

ה' דהלה' צריך להיות פשוט מכל ה"י שיהא תיבה בפני עצמה (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' ה' ו')

יוד של תשי צריך להיות קטן מכל יוד שבמקרא יוד של יגדל צריך להיות גדול שהוא אותיות שבמקרא ישראל שבסוף התורה צריך להיות פשוט ולמ"ד שלו צריך להיות זקוף מכל הלמ"ד (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' ה' ז')

There are 11 letters in the Torah which are written larger than others. Seven are written smaller.

LARGE LETTERS

Braishis 1;1 - בְּרֵאשִׁית

Shmos 34;6 - נֶצַח

Shmos 34;14 - אֲחֵר

Vayikra 11;42 - גִּחְוֹן

Vayikra 13;33 - וְהִתְגַּלַּח

Bamidbar 14;17 - יִגְדַל נֹא

Bamidbar 27;5 - אֵת מִשְׁפַּטְן

Devorim 6;4 - שִׁמְעֵ

Devorim 6;4 - אֲחֵר

Devorim 29;26 - וַיִּשְׁלַחְכֶם

Devorim 32;6 - הָ לִידֵי

SMALL LETTERS

Braishis 2;4 - בְּהֵרָאֵם

Braishis 23;2 - וּלְבַנְתָּהּ

Braishis 27;46 - קִצְתִּי

Vayikra 1;1 - וַיִּקְרָא

Vayikra 6;2 - מִוקְדָּה

Bamidbar 25;11 - פִּנְחָס

Devorim 32;18 - תִּשַׁע

We find a small א, a large א, ב, ג, ד, both a large and small ה, a large ו, no ח, ט, ז, one large and two small י, a small כ, no ך, a large ל, a small מ, no ם, a large נ as well as a large ן, no ס, a large ע, no ף, צ, ץ, a small ק, a large ך and no ש or ת.

The only letter used in its final form is the ן in the word משפטן. This argues for a late date for at least this one large letter as the final forms were not developed until the time of the Sofrim. Alternatively, had the large and small letters been ordained as Halacha L'Moshe Mi'Sinai, the original regular form of the נ could have been written larger and the large form was simply readopted when the final ן was reinstated by the Nevi'im.

The Meiri in Kiryas Sefer (Maimar Sheni Chailek 1) has a slightly different count. He mentions only 10 large letters leaving out את משפטן. He mentions that some scrolls add the פ of פן כימי השמים והארץ as well as the ל at the very end of the Torah. His count of the small letters enumerates only six leaving out the פ of פנחס. Once again he mentions an additional small letter found in some scrolls, the ו of את בריתי שלום. This is the split Vav in our Torah.

Sefer Mishnas Avraham, (Simen 27 sif 3) writes that there is a Minhag to include the entire Aleph Bais as large letters in the Torah. He mentions several important scrolls, including that of the Baal Shem Tov, which had this Minhag and he brings down which letters

constitute this list. The Machzor Vitri also writes a list of every letter being written large and small at the end of Hilchos Sefer Torah.

This list is printed in ספר מבין חידות and is given here:



Kesses HaSofer quotes Menoras Shlomo to the effect that the entire Aleph Bais is found in large letters in all of Tanach not, as scribes in our time are wont to do, all the letters of Aleph Bais written large in the Torah alone. This is not proper according to Halacha. He then lists all the large and small letters. His list is the same as ours above except he does not list פּינחס as one of the small letters. He notes, in Bamidbar, that some scribes write the Yud small and says that each may do as he learned.

Interestingly, Dr. Breuer notes in his book "The Aleppo Codex", that the ancient Mesora manuscripts he studied had almost no large or small letters at all other than a list in the Leningrad Codex.

Again, the explanations tend to be Drush. We are given no clue as to the meaning or source of these large and small letters.

Dots inside letters -Degusha

ויביאו - Braishis 43;26
 תביאו - Vayikra 23;17

Minchas Shai mentions both of these and tells us that the reason is given as a Sod in Sifrei Kabala but does not state the reason or the source in Kabala. He does tell us that the Sod was explained in the Sefer HaNikud HaGadol authored by Rav Ashi in Bavel.

Kesses HaSofer mentions neither.

PART TWO

Three Scrolls in the Bais HaMikdash

Chazal use Torah parameters in deciding questions of Halacha. One such parameter is the concept of Bitul B'Rov. D'Orysa, 51% of anything constitutes a majority. To decide proper text Chazal used a three scroll system. Where one differed they would look in three scrolls. The proper text is decided based on two scrolls agreeing against the one.

א"ר שמעון בן לקיש ג' ספרים נמצאו בעזרה.... (מסכת סופרים פרק ו' ה"ד)
ג' ספרים מצאו בעזרה באחד מצאו כתוב וישלח את זאטוטי בני ישראל ובשנים את נערי בני ישראל וקיימו שנים ובטלו האחד (ירושלמי תענית פ"ד ה"ב)

- in the second Bais HaMikdash there were three such scrolls each named according to the word which differed in its text.
- One was called **ספר מעון**, a variant of **מעונה** (D'vorim 33,27).
- The second was known as **ספר היא**.
- The third went by the name of **ספר זעטוטי** in place of the word **נערי** (Shmos 24,5).

Normally, a Sefer Torah writes the third person feminine as **הוא** which is read as **היא**. The sources disagree on whether this scroll replaced **היא** in every case, in only eleven instances or in only nine instances. (This report is found in Sifre, D'vorim#356: Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis 68a: Maseches Sofrim VI,4: Avot D'Rebbe Nosson Perek 46. These reports each differ in several ways). The Mandelkorn Concordance lists the word **היא** only 7 times, 3 occurrences of **ההיא** and 8 times **והיא**. It is unclear which of these are the words under discussion.

The Gemora (מגילה ט.) relates the story in which Ptolemy placed 72 Zekeinim in 72 rooms and had them translate the Torah. Each of them, independently translated **נערה** as **זעטוטי**. Torah Temima (שמות כ"ד ס"ק ב' & ג') questions whether the occurrence of three Seforim in the Azara happened before or after Ptolemy.

Several points should be noted. First of all, it is not likely that these three were simply scribal error. To assume that these were the only scribal errors ever found is not realistic yet no others are reported. They most likely represented three other traditions which required a decision as to which was the correct one. Secondly, Halacha requires that no Sefer Torah may be left uncorrected for more than 30 days.

K'siv and Kri

שלשה לא כותבים בלמד אלף וקוראים בלמד ויו ואלו הן.... (מסכת סופרים פרק ו' ה"ה)

אלו כותבין דבר אחד וקוראין שנים בא גד אש דת.... (מסכת סופרים פרק ז' ה"ג)

אלו דברים כתובים ולא נקראים כתיב (דברים כ"ה) בעפולים וקרינן בטחורים כתיב (ישעיה י"ג) תשגלנה וקרי תשכבנה... (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' ה"ח)

- There are 74 instances in the Torah where the reading differs from what is actually written. In only two instances is a totally different word read. For the most part the

reading is a grammatical difference changing, for example, a Vav and a Yud or changing singular to plural or feminine to masculine etc. In several cases a Binyon or Gizra is changed. There can only be several possible explanations for the K'siv/Kri system:

- 1- It was given this way to Moshe originally.

• אמר רבי יצחק מקרא סופרים ועיטור סופרים וקריין ולא כתיבן וכתבין ולא קריין הלכה למשה מסיני (נדרים ל"ז:)

- There are several difficulties in this Gemora. First, that מקרא סופרים and עיטור סופרים are given as Rabbinical devices by name but we are told they were given to Moshe on Sinai. It can't be both. If given to Moshe why call them סופרים? Secondly, several of the examples given in the Gemora are from Nach. Again, how can רבי יצחק call them הלכה למשה מסיני? Encyclopedia Talmudis, in the entry למשה מסיני, discusses the nature of the use of this phrase. It is not always taken literally.
- 2- It was a system devised later on when the development of a written vocalization of the text required decisions regarding variant readings or pronunciations. This would be related to the system of three Sifrei Torah in the Azara in which two represented the majority in case of a variant text. This is doubtful as being too late a development. It is also not mentioned in the Gemora. Other issues at the time could have been, but were not, resolved in this same fashion.

3- In some instances it may be the compromise utilized when no majority tradition could be found. This presents the same problems as number two.

In any event we are not given an explanation of the origin of the K'siv/Kri system.

Note that, of the 74 instances:

- 35 of the words contain the same number of letters,
- 38 of the instances add a letter
- only 1 has one letter less.
- 21 of the times the word is a form of נער.
- 4 times the word is a form of מצוה.
- 10 times a ן changes to a ן .
- 8 times a ן changes to a ן .
- 14 times a ן is added.
- 2 times a ן is added.
- 3 times an ן is changed to a ן .
- 8 times a ה is changed to ן .
- 2 times a ן and a ן are added.
- 21 times a ה is added.
- In only 2 instances is an entirely different word actually read.

P'suchos and Stumos

Every Torah is separated into units by spaces left in the text. Rashi (Vayikra 1;1) explains that the spaces were the points at which Hashem stopped dictating to give Moshe Rabbeinu time to comprehend. Again, there is a Machlokes among the Rishonim as to the exact nature of these spaces. There are several different permutations. Some spaces are open to the end of a line. Others contain a space between words at the beginning of a line and words at the end of a line. Some spaces are the equivalent of three letters, some are the equivalent of nine letter spaces. In most printed Chumashim these are shown by a פ or a ט. Each such letter shows 3 blank spaces so פפפ designates 9 spaces open to the end of the line. טטט designates 9 open spaces in the middle of a line. These breaks are Halacha L'Moshe MiSinai and must be done correctly. Additional, or missing. Psuchos or Stumos are Pasul. Amongst others, the Rambam lists all these breaks in Yad HaChazaka, Hilchos Sefer Torah (פרק ח) which he took from "the Sefer in Yerushalayim"..

The breaks are numbered as follows:

<u>total</u>	<u>סתומות</u>	<u>פתוחות</u>	
91	48	43	בראשית
157	95	62	שמות
98	46	52	ויקרא
158	66	92	במדבר
<u>158</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>דברים</u>
669	379	290	total Torah

There is a Machlokes as to the positioning of both P'suchos and Stumos. There is one place in the Torah where there is disagreement on one Stuma. Rambam writes that an error in Psucha and Stuma invalidates the entire scroll "and it has no sanctity of a Torah at all." (Hilchos Sefer Torah 7:11) Yet the Sifsei Cohain, (Yora Deah ???) decides that one should not invalidate the scroll in which the Psuchos and Stumos are contrary to the Rambam, "Since there are scholars who have different opinions, and so, even in a case where no

one disagrees with Rambam one may say that the Torah was written according to some sage who disagreed with Rambam."

There is a second Machlokes between the Rambam and the Rosh regarding the exact nature of a P'sucha or a Stuma. Generally we decide on a compromise, writing both in a manner which fulfills both opinions.

The format of Shira and Ha'azinu

Shira is one of the few places in the Torah where the P'sukim must follow a very specific pattern in which the lines are alternately spaced so that there is empty space above and below writing in the manner of laying bricks. Additionally, the beginning word of each line is standardized not only for the Shira itself but even for the lines preceding and following. There is a Machlokes in this pattern.

The Ramah [Simen 275 sif 6] mentions that "every column in the Torah must contain a minimum of 48 lines, although others say 42, and no more than 60 lines." He then goes on to tell us that there are 5 specific lines that must precede Shiras HaYam and 5 specific lines that follow. The first word of each line before is: במצרים, ה', מת, ביבשה, הבאים. The five following lines begin: ויצאו, ויבאו, ותקה, אחריה, סוס. The first word, הבאים also happens to be one of the 6 letters that must begin a column, בי"ה שמ"ו. Note that Shiras HaYam is only 30 lines long. With the 5 before and 5 after there are only a total of 40 lines. Two less than the minimum. These two lines are figured in since the line just preceding and just following the Shira are both left blank. Thus there are 42 lines in the column.

Shiras Ha'azinu is given a similar structure, The lines are written in two columns with a space between. It is a total of 70 lines long. 35 are written in one column and 35 in the next. It is preceded by 6 lines: ואעידה, אחרי, הדרך, באחרית, להכעיסו. There are five lines following: ויבא, וידבר, אשר, הזאת, אשר. That gives us only 41 lines in the first column and 40 in the second. Again the line preceding is left blank equaling 42 lines in the first column and the line after is left blank equaling 42 lines in the second column.

Pasook B'Emtza Pasook

There are several places in the Torah where either a Pasook appears to be unfinished or one Pasook appears within another.

ויהי בשכן ישראל בארץ ההיא וילך ראובן וישכב את בלהה פילגש אביו וישמע ישראל - ויהיו בני יעקב שנים עשר: (בראשית ל"ה - כ"ב)

ויהי אחרי המגפה - ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן לאמר: (במדבר כ"ו א')

ונעבר מאת אחינו בני עשו הישבים בשעיר מדרך הערבה מאילת ומעציון גבר - ונפן ונעבר דרך מדבר מואב: (דברים ב' ח')

PART THREE

Trop

The Trop serve multiple purposes. For one thing they are the musical notes by which the text is sung. More importantly they are also punctuation marks as well as indicating which syllable must be stressed. The actual system of Trop notation is a late development, the original method being memorization. There are several basic systems of Trop one used by Ashkenazim, the other by Sephardim, another by the Yemenites and yet another by Italians.

The written symbols for both Trop and Nikkud developed during the period of the Gaonim. There were at least two different systems. One, which is no longer extant, had the symbols above the words. The other, still in use today writes most of the symbols underneath the words.

טבלת שמות הטעמים

"מנחת שי"	גסח ספרדי	גסח אשכנז	גסח תימני
*מִרְכָּא (או מארדו)	מִאֲרִיד	מִרְכָּא	מִאֲרִיד
טַרְחָא (או טרָחא)	טַרְחָא	טַפְחָא	טַפְחָא
אַתְנַח	אַתְנַח	אַתְנַחְתָּא	אַתְנַחַה
**קִדְמָא	קִדְמָא	קִדְמָא	אִזְלָא
שׁוֹפְר־הַפּוּד	שׁוֹפְר־מְהַפֵּד	מְהַפֵּד	שׁוֹפְר־הַפּוּד
פְּשִׁט (או פשטא)	פְּשִׁטָּא (קדמא)	פְּשִׁטָּא	פְּשִׁטָּא
זְקַף־קָטָן	זְקַף־קָטָן	זְקַף־קָטָן	זְקַף־קָטָן
זְקַף־גְּדוֹל	זְקַף־גְּדוֹל	זְקַף־גְּדוֹל	זְקַף־גְּדוֹל
שְׁנֵי־פְּשִׁטִּין	תְּרֵי־קִדְמִין	פְּשִׁטָּא	תְּרֵי־פְּשִׁטִּין
שׁוֹפְר־יְתִיב	יְתִיב	יְתִיב	יְתִיב־מְקַדָּם
גְּלַגֵּל	שׁוֹפְר־הוֹלֵךְ	מְנַח	שׁוֹפְר־הוֹלֵךְ
זְרְקָא	זְרְקָא	זְרְקָא	זְרְקָא
שְׂרִי	סְנוּלְתָּא	סְנוּל	סְנוּלְתָּא
פְּזִיר־גְּדוֹל	פְּזִיר־גְּדוֹל	פְּזִיר	פְּזִיר
תְּרַסָּא	תְּרַסָּא	תְּלִישָׁא־קְטַנָּה	תְּלִישָׁא־שְׂמַאל
קִדְמָא וְאִזְלָא	אִזְלָא גְּרִישׁ	קִדְמָא וְאִזְלָא	אִזְלָא וְאִתִּי
גְּרִישׁ	גְּרִישׁ	אִזְלָא־גְּרִישׁ	אִתִּי
פְּסִיקָא	פְּסִיקָא	*מְנַח	פְּסִיקָא
רְבִיעַ	רְבִיעַ	רְבִיעַ (רביעי)	רְבִיעַ (רביעי)
תְּלִישָׁא	תְּלִישָׁא (גְּדוֹלָה)	תְּלִישָׁא־גְּדוֹלָה	תְּלִישָׁא־זְמִין
שְׁנֵי־גְּרִישִׁין	שְׁנֵי־גְּרִישִׁין	גְּרִישִׁים	תְּרֵי־טְרַסִּין
דְּרַגָּא	דְּרַגָּא	דְּרַגָּא	דְּרַגָּא
תְּבִיר	תְּבִיר	תְּבִיר	תְּבִיר
יְרַח־בְּנֵי־יֻמּוֹ	יְרַח־בְּנֵי־יֻמּוֹ	יְרַח־בְּנֵי־יֻמּוֹ	יְרַח־בְּנֵי־יֻמּוֹ
קַרְנֵי־פְּרָה	קַרְנֵי־פְּרָה	קַרְנֵי־פְּרָה	קַרְנֵי־פְּרָה
שְׁלִשְׁתָּא	שְׁלִשְׁתָּא	שְׁלִשְׁתָּא	שְׁלִשְׁתָּא
תְּרִיז־חוּטְרִין	תְּרִי־טַעֲמִי	מְרַכָּא־כְּפוּלָה	תְּרִי־טַעֲמִי
סוּף־פְּסוּקִי	סוּף־פְּסוּקִי	סוּף־פְּסוּקִי	סוּף־פְּסוּקִי
מִאֲרִיד	מְעַמִּיד (גְּעִיא)	מְתַג	גְּעִיא

ואלה לפי סדר האיטלקי (Italian)

זְרְקָא שְׂרִי פְּזִיר גְּדוֹל, קַרְנֵי פְּרָה, תְּלִישָׁא, תְּרַסָּא לְגַרְמִיָּה, רְבִיעַ פְּסִיק, שְׁלִשְׁתָּא, קִדְמָא אִזְלָא, זְקַף גְּדוֹל, זְקַף קָטָן, שְׁנֵי גְּרִישִׁין, תְּרִין חוּטְרִין, דְּרַגָּא תְּבִיר, טַרְחָא מִאֲרִיד שׁוֹפְר, עֲלוּי שׁוֹפְר, הַפּוּד שׁוֹפְר, יְתִיב, שְׁנֵי פְּשִׁטִּין, סְמוּךְ־אַתְנַח, יְרַח בְּנֵי יֻמּוֹ, גְּרִישׁ, סוּף פְּסוּקִי:

Different Niggun

The custom among Ba'alei Kriah is to use a somewhat different Niggun for various places in the Torah. These include:

- a- The Layning for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur.
- b- Both readings of the Tochacha are read faster and in a lower voice. (Some include a short Tochacha found in Parshas Eikev.)
- c- Both accounts of the wanderings in the desert.
- d- Az Yashir and several verses before it.
- e- The final verse of each of the creation days in the Simchas Torah Kriah.

Vocalization and pronunciation

Hebrew, as pronounced by various groups today, with the possible exception of the Yemenites, is a far cry from its original sound. In reality, no two Hebrew letters make the same sound. Thus ט - ש - ת all should be pronounced differently [Although the Yemenites actually maintain that there is no difference in pronunciation between Sin and Samech] as should כ-ח , ו-ב , א-ע , ט-ת כ-ק . The Yemenites pronounce some of the ג as a J sound, the ד can have a TH sound. [In Shema the ד of אחד should be lengthened. It is impossible to lengthen a 'D' sound but works easily when pronounced as a 'TH' sound.] ר is almost a guttural French R. The ש sounds almost like NG formed back in the throat. The Shulchan Aruch (source???) mentions that a person who does not differentiate between Aleph and Ayin may not Layn the Torah. Ostensibly, in a place where nobody differentiates, as in our communities, we do fulfill our obligation.

Accentuation - The Meseg or Ga'aya, Makaf & T'nuah

Meseg, or Ga'aya, is the accent mark. A Makaf is a hyphen and T'nuah is a vowel sound. These grammatical nuances are not taught in the Yeshivos (little grammar is). So, for the most part, other than those who make a point of studying grammar on their own, these points are poorly understood. However, mistakes in reading can change word meaning. For instance, in the word **יִירָאוּ** (שמות י"ד: ל"א) the accent, noted by the short vertical bar under the Yud tells us where to place the accent. Compare **יִירָאוּ** (בראשית מ"ב: ל"ה) where the accent is on the normal last syllable. The first means 'fear' the second 'see'. If this occurs during Layning it is possible that the congregation is not Yotzay in Krias HaTorah. This is only one example of many.

A great many of the differences mentioned in Minchas Shai are related to accentuation. Most of the points discussed in Dr. Breuer's study are also these fine grammatical differences as opposed to letter or word differences.

Parsha and chapter division

Unbeknownst to most people, the chapter division used today was actually a result of a Christian effort. The present chapter divisions were invented in 1205 by Stephen Langton, a professor in Paris, who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. These chapter divisions were apparently first used by Jews in a Hebrew manuscript written in 1330 and for a printed edition in 1516.

It was Robert Stephanus, a Parisian book printer, who utilized the Soph Pasuk and assigned numbers to them within the chapter divisions already assigned by Langton.

Arias Montanus broke up the Hebrew text itself into chapters and introduced the verse numbers into the body of the text in his Antwerp Bible of 1571.

Simply because of ease, the system has caught on. Whenever anyone cites chapter and verse by number they are using the Langton/Stephanus system. In early Seforim, verses are simply quoted in part and the reader was expected to know the source.

Sidros - The weekly Portion

There is an interesting historical footnote regarding the weekly Parsha that is read in Shul. That we read it is Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai (ר״ף בשם הירושלמי). What we read is Minhag. At one time there were two different Minhagim, one in Eretz Yisroel the other in Bavel. The Minhag in Bavel appears to have been the same as the one we follow today. In Eretz Yisroel the Sidros were read in three and one half year cycle.

We see in Maseches Sofrim

הלכך קבעו מאה ושבעים וחמשה סדרים בתורה בכל שבת ושבת עולת תמיד (פרק ט״ז הלכה י״)

There were 175 Sidorim, one read each week. Thus, rather than the 54 Sidorim we have now, completed in one year cycles, they had a cycle that stretched over three years and at least three months depending on leap years.

In fact, they had no Simchas Torah, this was a Yom Tov which began in Bavel. Upon finishing the cycle they would make a Siyum and a Seuda. The final Aliya was considered the very highest honor. One possible interpretation of the Gemora, that the Golel is the most honorific Aliya, is that the Golel refers to the final Aliya in the three year cycle.

This Minhag continued beyond the time of the Gemora and Geonim. Binyomin of Tudela, the Jewish world traveler, reported, in 1170, that there were two Shuls in Cairo. One for the people of Eretz Yisroel and the other for the people of Bavel and they did not have the same Minhag in Krias HaTorah. He records, "Those from Bavel read one Parsha every week as the Minhag in Spain and every year they completed the Torah. Those who followed the Eretz Yisroel custom broke each Sedra into three parts and would finish the Torah every three years. They had a custom and rule that all would Daven together on Simchas Torah and Shevuos."

The Rambam (Hilchos Tefila, Perek 13 Halacha 5) reports on this Minhag as well, noting that it was not a widespread Minhag (presumably in his time and locale). There are many other interesting questions which arise: Why is the final Parsha not read on Shabbos? Why were there other Minhagim to start the new cycle on Yom Kippur at Mincha? etc. These, and many other issues, are treated at length in תולדות חג שמחת תורה, אברהם יערי, מוסד הרב קוק, תשמ״ט

KRIAS HATORAH

After writing this paper, I came back to another interesting question. When did Krias HaTorah actually start and where did two different Minhagim come from? Who broke the Torah up into Parshiose? Although we say that reading on Shabbos is Halacha

L'Moshe Mi'Sinai, Layning the Parsha requires a place and a congregation. Shuls, as we know them, came about during the time of the second Bais HaMikdash. Prior to that, the only place of congregation was the Mishkan and later the Bais HaMidash. There, according to the Meiri, the Cohanim layned Hazinu daily, over and over. Each of our current Aliyos in Hazinu was layned on consecutive days. Meanwhile, the Mamados (the Israelites who were chosen to match the Cohanim) read Sheshes Yimei Breishis, again, each of our Aliyos on consecutive days. These are the only two Krios we are told about.

The Haftaros were instituted during the second Bais HaMikdash in a time of persecution. Some say this was done by Achashverush of the Purim story. Whoever, and whenever, they were instituted, it had to be at a point in time where the Kriah was an accomplished fact for a long time. The Haftara was set to replace the regular Kriah, which had been forbidden, in order not to forget the Kriah. The Purim saga occurred in the interval between the two Batei Mikdash. Yet, the later Neviim and the Mishna give no hint to a regular reading of the Torah. Ezra instituted readings on Mondays and Thursdays at the very beginning of Bayis Sheini, which leads us to conclude that Shabbos Layning was a fait d'compli by that time. Yet, the first we hear of it is from the Gemora, which spends a lot more space discussing the proper Haftara as opposed to the Krias HaTorah..

Were there Shuls during the Mishkan and first Bais Hamikdash? Did the Cohanim and Leviim, who were involved in the Avoda, have to go? Did a Yisroel visiting the Bais HaMikdash have to leave early to go to Shul?

So far, these are all open questions.

Non-Canonical books

Known as Sefarim Chitzonim, Seforim Genuzim, Kesuvim Achronim in the Gemora or Apocrypha in Greek, these Seforim were not included in Nach.

At the time the Seforim of Tanach were closed to further additions by the Anshei Knesses HaGedola at Yavneh there was some controversy over which books were to be included and which not. A Machlokes between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel (Idios 5:3) reported in the Mishna over the inclusion of Koheles continued past the original closure. This was extended later to Mishlei and Shir HaShirim and tells us that even several of the books which were ultimately included were the subject of debate. By the time of the destruction of the Second Temple it is clear that the Mesora had been fixed for quite some time. Josephus reports that "for long ages past, no one has been so bold as to either add, subtract or make any changes in the Canon".(Contra Apion I:42)

Of those that were not included, several are in Hebrew, others are in Aramaic or Greek.

הבעל בכבל	חשמונאים א'
התנין בכבל	חשמונאים ב'
שושנה	אגרת ירמיהו
יהודית	חכמת שלמה
תפלת מנשה מלך יהודה	יהושע בן סירא
תפלת עזריה בתוך הכבשן	ברוך
שיר שלשת האנשים בתוך הכבשן	טוביה
	חלום מרדכי , ספרי אחשורוש

PART FOUR

NUMBERS, MID-POINTS & VARIANT READINGS

FINDING THE MIDDLE IS A MUDDLE

The Gemora in Kiddushin 30 reports a fascinating dialogue regarding the Sofrim who counted the letters of the Torah. The Gemora tells us the middle letter, the middle word and the middle verse. Unfortunately, in all three instances our Mesora is very different. The Gemora says:

לפיכך נקראו ראשונים סופרים שהיו סופרים כל האותיות שבתורה שהיו אומרים וא"ו דגחון חציין של אותיות של ס"ת,

דרש דרש חציין של תיבות, והתגלח של פסוקים....בעי רב יוסף וא"ו דגחון מהאי גיסא או מהאי גיסא א"ל ניתי ס"ת ואימנינהו.

מי לא אמר רבה בר בר חנה לא זזו משם עד שהביהו ספר תורה ומנאום

א"ל אינהו בקיאי בחסירות ויתרות אנן לא בקיאינן

בעי רב יוסף והתגלח מהאי גיסא או מהאי גיסא א"ל אביי פסוקי מיהא ליתו למניוה בפסוקי נמי לא בקיאינן דכי

אתא רב אחא בר אדא אמר במערבא פסקי ליה להאי קרא לתלתא פסוקי "ויאמר ה' אל משה הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן.

There are a number of very interesting questions that this Gemora raises:

1 These Rishonim were called Sofrim. Ostensibly they counted, not once, but over and over again. Why not simply tell us the direct number instead of the round-about half way points?

2 Why is R' Yosef's question of any importance? He must have had a Mesora that the Torah had an even number of letters or his question makes no sense to begin with.

3 Why ask us to believe that they sat, without leaving, for the time it took to count to over 300,000 letters? [I counted at the rate of 175 letters per minute, [this rate would be difficult to maintain]], non-stop it would take 29 hours to complete the task. Why not split the job up over several days or farm it out to several sub-contractors?

4 Having counted, why not fill us in on the count or at least tell us which side the Vav of Gahon falls out?

5 Before all the counting, surely they were aware of the fact that they were no longer adept at חסירות ויתרות? Knowing this, why did they count anyway?

6 The same questions apply to the count of the verses.

7 Why wasn't the same issue raised concerning the middle word?

8 When all is said and done we are given a number of 5,888 verses. We are told that this is 8 less than Tehillim and 8 more than Divrei HaYomim. Not one of these numbers agrees with our present texts. Nor is the Vav of Gahon the middle letter. Nor are Darash Dorosh the middle words. Nor is והתגלה the middle verse.

According to Mikraos Gedolos:

- The middle verse in the Torah is וישם עליו את החשן (Vayikra 8:8)
- The middle words are אל יסוד (Vayikra 8:15).
- The middle letter is the א in the word הוא (Vayikra 8:28.)

By my count:

**our middle letter is before that of the Gemora by 4,841 letters,
our middle word is before that of the Gemora by 1,293 words
and our middle verse is before that of the Gemora by 159 Psukim.**

Challila V'chas we should even consider that the Gemora is giving us false information. Only one of two possibilities can satisfy the problems. Either our Mesora differs from theirs and it is apparent that our Mesora cannot possibly differ so radically from that of the Amoraim. We must, thus, conclude that the second possibility is that Pshat in the Gemora refers to something else and the Amoraim were attempting to tell us something other than what appears on the surface.

We recognize that there may be some differences between our version of the text and theirs. However, the result of the differences between our middle letter, word or verse,

and theirs is so far apart as to be absurd in the sense that we cannot accept the premise that the Torah now differs so radically from that of only 1,700 years ago let alone 3,300 years ago.

MIDDLE LETTERS

The Gemora states the ו of the word גחון is the middle letter of the Torah. This same idea is expressed in Maeches Sofrim.

ויו דגחון צריך להיות זקוף שהיא חצי אותיות של תורה (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' הלי ב')

One nice explanation of גחון being the middle letter of the Torah is that there are 8 large and small letters before it and 8 large and small letters after it making it the middle letter of the large and small letters. In fact there are 40 letters within those words before the ו of the word גחון and 40 letters after it leaving the ו as the middle letter and prompting the Gemora's question as to whether it belongs to the first half or the second. *See the chart of the large and small letters.[page 11]* According to current texts it would appear that the actual middle letter is the א in the word הוא (Vayikra 8:28.) 4,841 letters before the ו of the word גחון.

MIDDLE WORDS

דרש דרש חצי תיבות של תורה דרש בסוף שיטה דרש בראש שיטה (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' הלי ב')

Similarly, the words דרש דרש are simply not the middle words in our Sefer Torah. It is possible that they are the middle words of all the double words found in Chumash. As I was unable to locate such a list I did the search myself. Here is a list of all the words in Chumash which are found doubled..

According to current texts it would appear that the actual middle word are אל יסוד (Vayikra 8:15) 1293 words before דרש דרש.

MIDDLE VERSES

The middle verse in the Torah according to the Gemora Kiddushin is והתגלח ואת הנתק לא (Vayikra 13:33) יגלח וכו'

According to Maseches Sofrim:

וישחט צריך להיות פשוט שהוא חצי פסוקים בתורה (מסכת סופרים פרק ט' הל' ג')

According to current texts it would appear that the actual middle verse is וישם עליו את החשן (Vayikra 8:8). This is 159 verses before that of Kiddushin.

We thus have at least three possibilities for the middle verse. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is found in Nedorim.

Nedorim 38a says:

אמר רב אחא בר אדא, במערבא פסקין להדין פסוקא לתלתא פסוקים "ויאמר ה' אל משה הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן בעבור ישמע העם בדברי עמך וגם בד' יאמינו לעולם ויגד משה את דברי העם אל ד' " (שמות י"ט)
"In the West (ie Israel) they broke the following verse into three.... "

Elsewhere we are told that we are not adept in knowing the verses. If this is the case, it is highly likely that the count of verses will differ substantially based on the Mesora of how they are to be broken up..

The number of letters and verses in the Torah

This is a fascinating subject as a result of a well known idea which mentions that the Torah contains 600,000 letters (ספר נובלות חכמה and Zohar Chodosh at the End of Shir HaShirim). The Chavas Yair, (Simen 232), questions this number on logical grounds. He says that, since there are fewer than 6,000 verses, each verse would have to average over 100 letters and this is observably not so. The Pnei Yehoshua in Kiddushin also relates that there can maximally be only about one half that number. ספר מסרת המסרת gives a figure of 600,045 letters. Another count by Ben Asher gives a figure of 400,945 in ספר דיקדוקי הטעמים. Unfortunately, this is simply not so.

A somewhat more acceptable count of the letters in the Torah reveals that there are 304,805 (מנחת ש"י, מנחת ש"י, מנחת ש"י, מנחת ש"י in Pardes Mikraos Gedolos, the Koren Chumash as well as contemporary computer counts).

Other counts would indicate that:

- The Yemenite Torah contains an additional 3 letters, =304,808
- The Sasoon codex " " 11 " =304,816
- The Venice Mikraos Gedolos " 15 " =304,820
- The Leningrad Codex " 22 " =304,827

- The Yerushalmi Scroll " 35 " =304,840
- The Hilleli Scroll " " 43 ". =304,848

The Medrash Talpios (Pg.40) brings an interesting story regarding Rav Saadiah Gaon in which he writes a story that he found in a manuscript of the Gaon's. It seems that Rav Saadiah once asked a tailor how many stitches he had sewn that day. The tailor retorted by asking Rav Saadiah how many letters were in the Torah. The Gaon was troubled that he didn't know the answer and that nobody had figured out the number of letters. The Gaon davened for the answer and a Malach revealed the information to him. Rav Saadiah's count for all of Tanach is as follows:

16,950-צ	24,973-ם	23,447-ח	42,377-א
4,872-ק	32,977-ג	11,052-ט	38,218-ב
22,972-ך	8,917-י	66,420 -ו	29,537-ד
22,147-ה	13,580-ס	37,272-ז	32,530-ז
32,148-פ	20,175-ע	1,981-ת	47,554-ח
36,140-ת	20,750-פ	41,517-ב	76,922-ו
	1,975-ק	52,805-מ	22,867-י

This results in a total of 783,075 letters in Tanach.

However, 304,805 letters in the Torah represents 39% of the 783,075 letters in Tanach given in Medrash Talpios. Using the Koren edition of Tanach we find that Torah requires 327 pages, Neviim 589 pages and Kesuvim 374 pages for a total of 1,290 pages of text. Torah is only 25% of the number of pages, Neviim 46.5% and Kesuvim 29.5%. The difference between 39% of the letters and 25% of the pages is too large to justify. We are forced to the conclusion that Medrash Talpios' report is erroneous. The number of letters in Tanach, using the Koren as a model must exceed 1,200,000. However, the Kovetz Tshuvos Chasam Sofer, at the end of Simen 52, reports a number, 792,071 for all the letters in Tanach and 320,464 as the number of letters in Torah. One other possibility is that the Medrash Talpios and the Chasam Sofer may mean that their numbers reflect just Nevi'im and Kesuvim in which case the total for Tanach as a whole actually exceeds a million letters.

At the end of one edition of Mikraos Gedolos I found a count of each letter in the Torah.:

א =27,057	י = 31,530	ע =11,247
ב =15,540	כ = 8,610	פ = 3,976
ג = 2,109	ך = 3,350	ף = 834
ד = 7,032	ל = 21,570	צ = 2,925
ה =28,502	מ = 14,472	ץ = 1,067
ו = 30,513	ם = 2,623	ק = 4,694
ז = 2,198	נ = 9,854	ר =18,125
ח = 7,186	ן = 4,257	ש =15,596
ט = 1,802	ס = 1,833	ת =17,949

This count totals 304,451 letters which is yet another sum..

The following is a chart of all the relevant numbers in each Sefer of the Torah with the totals.

Total Torah	דברים	במדבר	ויקרא	שמות	בראשית	Number of
304,805 a	*54,892	**63,530	44,790d	63,529 d	*78,064	אותיות
79,976 b	14,293	16,408	*11,904g	*16,513f	*20,612	תיבות
5,845** c	955	1,288	*859	*1209	*1534	פסוקים
290	34	92	*52	*96	*43	פתוחות
379	124	66	*46	*95	*48	סתומות
187	34	36	*27	*40	*50	פרקים
154	27	32	*23	*29	*43	סדרים
54	11	10	*10	* 11	*12	פרשיות
			*8	*14	*29	פסקות
74	24	9	6	12	21	כתיב \ קרי
11	4	2	2	2	1	אותיות גדולות
7	1	1	2	0	3	אותיות קטנות
3	1	1	0	0	1	פסוק באמצע פסוק
613	200	52	231	127	3	מצות

*= Source is Torah Sheleima, Rabbi Menachem Kasher

**= Chumash HaEmek Davar, Rabbi Naftoli Berlin

a- This number is given by most Seforim

b- The מקראות גדולות gives the number of words as 79,976 as does HaEmek Davar

c- Gemora Kiddushin 30a gives a figure of 5,888 verses. Other sources mention 8,888 verses. Minchas Shai, Vayikra 8:8, questions this number.)The simplest explanation is a Ta'us Sofrim. Rav Hai Gaon reports 5,884 and Yalkut Shimoni, Parshas Ekev, 855 ???, counts 5,842.

d-Rabbi Kasher reports the number of letters in Shmos as 63,468 and the number of letters in Vayikra as 44,989. These figures do not add up to the sum he gives.

f- Other sources give Shmos 16,713 words

g- Other sources give Vayikra 11,950 words

It is patently clear that this area is fraught with disagreement. We have seen: 600,000 600,045 400,945 320,464 304,805 304,808 304.816 304,820 304,827 304,840 304,848 304,451 given as counts for the number of letters.

Based on the number of verses listed at the end of each Parsha in the Mikraos Gedolos, I have come to a total of 5,883 verses in the Torah.

דברים - 105	במדבר - 159	ויקרא - 111	שמות - 124	בראשית - 146
ואתחנן - 118	נשא - 176	צו - 96	וארא - 121	נח - 153
עקב - 111	בהעלתך 136	שמיני - 91	בא - 105	לך לך - 126
ראה - 126	שלח - 119	תזריע - 67	בשלח - 116	וירא - 147
שפטים - 97	קרח - 95	מצורע - 90	יתרו - 72	חיי שרה - 105
תצא - 110	חקת - 87	אחרי - 80	משפטים 118	תולדות - 106
תבוא - 122	בלק - 104	קדשים - 64	תרומה - 96	ויצא - 148
נצבים - 40	פינחס - 168	אמר - 124	תצוה - 101	וישלח - 154
וילך - 70	מטות - 112	בהר - 57	תשא - 139	וישב - 112
האזינו - 52	מסעי - 132	בחוקתי - 78	ויקהל - 112	מקץ - 146
ברכה - 41	<u>1288</u> total	858 total	פקודי - 92	ויגש - 106
<u>992</u> total			<u>1211</u> total	ויחי - 85
<u>total Torah= 5,883</u>				<u>1534</u> total

There are only two conclusions that may be drawn. The first is that prior generations didn't know how to count well and the second is that there are questions in the actual Mesora. The first conclusion is ridiculous. The second requires us to wait for Eliyahu HaNavi Zachur LaTov as the Minchas Shai points out after he unsuccessfully attempted to form a conclusion on this subject.

THE WEEKLY SIDRA

We, of course, are all aware that each week we read a particular Sidra in the Torah. One question that has long bothered me is that we really don't know who decided on the break points where each Sidra begins and ends, nor do we know when this was instituted. We do know that the weekly reading on Shabbos was instituted by Moshe Rabbeinu. Those on Monday, Thursday and Shabbos Mincha were instituted by Ezra HaSofer.

In Maseches Sofrim (Perek 16 Halacha 10), we are told that the word "Dibur" occurs as a command 175 times because that is how long Avraham Aveinu lived. One of the Miforshim points out that in Israel, as opposed to Baval, the Torah was read in a three

and a half year cycle instead of once a year. This amounted to twice every Shmitta, which comes to 175 weekly readings. Each community began and ended individual Sidros at different places every week.

We are still left with the question of who set up and when were the Bavel Sidros established and, more to the point, why does any given Sidra begin and end where they do. The Mishna does not refer to our Sidros by name since this was in Israel and ostensibly using the three and a half year cycle. However, The Gemora also doesn't refer to Sidros by our system either. In fact none of the Pirushim on Chumash offer any explanations on this question.

Variant readings יש אם למקרא אם למסורה

There is no apparent beginning to a very interesting Machlokes in the Gemora. We are not given an indication why there is a problem following the credence of the received text over the received oral tradition or vice versa. Yet, since we learn many Halachos from a specific reading, if there is a question on the reading it calls that Halacha into doubt. Thus, the very nature of this Machlokes has major ramifications in many areas of Yiddishkeit.

The nature of the Machlokes was clarified for me by the Chida commenting on Maseches Sofrim.

ספר שפסקו ושנוקד ראשי פסוקים שבה אל יקרא בו (מסכת סופרים פרק ג' ה"ז)

The Chida brings a Tshuvah HaRamban stating that the reason we may not Layn from a Sefer Torah in which the Nekudos have been written is because that is tantamount to deciding in favor of יש אם למקרא as opposed to the credence given the written text without any guide to pronunciation - יש אם למסורת.

Variant readings are a very misunderstood area. The average person assumes that our text is 100% that of what was received by Moshe Rabbeinu 3,300 years ago. In truth there are many places in the Torah where we have a question as to the actual text. In no place is there a question in regard to the accuracy of the information. In no place are entire verses, or even words, in doubt. The sum total of doubt centers around individual letters, which, for the most part are the individual letters Vav or Yud, ח ס ר ו ת ו י ת ר ו ת have been Halachically decided to be of no consequence to the Kashrus of a Torah as we have not been adept in this knowledge since prior to the time of the Gemara.

The Gilyon HaShas was written by Rav Akiva Eiger and is found in the margin of many printed Shas. As our paper concerns only the Chumash, we need to be concerned only with those citations, disregarding others from Nach.

גליון הש"ס שבת דף נ"ה עמוד ב'

- 1-תוספות ד"ה מעבירים כתיב וכו' ובכל הספרים שלנו.
- 2-וכן מצינו בנדה דף ל"ג עמוד א' תוספות ד"ה והנושא (ויקרא ט"ו) שכתבו דהמסורת שלנו מחולק עם הש"ס.
- 3- ובמגילה דף כ"ב עמוד א' כתבו תוס' דויחל ב' פסוקים סמוך לפרשה שלפניו.
- 4- וכן והקרבתם ובספר תורה שלנו ויחל הוא ד' פסוקים מהפרשה וכן והקרבתם ג' פסוקים וכמ"ש המרש"א שם.
- 5- ובפסחים דף קי"ז ע"א בתוס' ד"ה שעומדים כתבו שלא יתכן שיהיה מזמור ב' פסוקים ואלו בספרים שלנו מזמור קי"ז ב' פסוקים. עיין מהרש"א שם ע"א.
- 6- ובסנהדרין דף ד' עמוד א' פירש"י שם דבכבשה דיחיד כתיב קרנות מלא ובס"ת שלנו כתיב חסר.
- 7- ובדף ע"א כ' רש"י דבפרשה והיה כי יביאך כתיב לטטפת חסר ובפר' והיה אם שמע כתיב מלא ובס"ת שלנו גם בפרשה והיה כי יביאך כתיב מלא.
- 8- ובדף כ' ע"א כתיב להברית וקרי להברות ובספרים שלנו (שמואל ב') גם הכתיב להברות.
- 9- עוד שם דף ק"ג ע"א ויחתר לו ויעתר לו מבבעיא ליה. ובספרים שלנו (דברי הימים ב') כתיב ויעתר.
- 10- ובב"ב דף ט' ע"א הלא פרוש בשין ובספרים שלנו (ישעיה נ"ח) כתיב בסין. ועיין בח"א שם במהרש"א.
- 11- והתגלח חציין של פסוקים ובתיקונים בפרשת צו בפסוק ויאפוד לו בו ציין דשם חצי התורה בפסוקים.
- 12- ובירושלמי שהביא תוס' בכתובות דף ז' ע"ב דבמקהלת ברכו אלקים חסר ובספרים שלנו (תהלים ס"ח) כתיב מלא.
- 13- ובפרש"י בחומש פרשת תרומה ואת כל אשר אצוה הוא וי"ו יתירה ולפנינו כתיב את בלא וי"ו. עיין ברא"ש שם.
- 14- ובמדרש רבה שיר השירים בפסוק אחזו לנו שועלים שעלים א"ר רב רב"ה קדמאה מלא תניינא חסר. ובמסורה אינו כן אלא תרוייהו חסר.
- 15- ובברכות דף ז' עמוד ב' כתיב לכלותו ובספרים שלנו בדברי הימים א' י"ז כתיב לבלותו.
- 16- ובפסחים דף ג' עמוד א' ו' דטהור ובספרים שלנו [דברים כ"ג] כתיב טהר חסר ו'.
- 17- ובנדרים דף ל"ז עמוד ב' את דהוגד הוגד קרי ולא כתיב ובספרים שלנו (ירמיה) הוא קרי וכתב כמ"ש הר"ן שם.
- 18- ובפסוק אני ד' אלקיד אשר הוצאתיך איתא בירושלמי פ"ה דסוכה דחסר י' ובספרים שלפנינו הוא מלא יו"ד.
- 19- ובמדרש ויקרא רבה פ' ט' ושם דרך א"ר ינאי ושם כתיב ובספרים שלנו כתיב בסין.
- 20- ובפירוש רש"י בחומש בראשית כ"ד הפילגשים חסר כתיב ובכל הספרים איתא מלא.
- 21- ובמדרש בראשית רבה פרשה ע"ז ר"ל אמר הנתרת כתיב ובכל הספרים שלנו כתיב הנותרת.
- 22- ובעירובין דף ל"ב ע"א בתוספות ד"ה אשר דרש"י כ' דהכתיב ויקרא כ"ה אשר לוא חומה והם כתבו דהכתיב אשר לו והקרי לא ובספרים שלנו (ויקרא ז' ה') הכתיב לא באלף והקרי לו כמ"ש התי"ט שם:

- In total, Rabbi Eiger brings only 22 quotes where the Mesora differs from other sources.
- Of these 9 are from Nach (#s 1,5,8,9,10,12,14,15,17) leaving only 13.
- Two (#s 3,4) are places where there is a difference in the beginning of a Parsha, which doesn't concern us here. This leaves 11.
- One (#11) is the half-way mark of the Torah in verses, which we discuss elsewhere.
- Two (#s 13, 20) are citations from Rashi in Chumash.

- Two (#s 19, 21) from Medrash and 1 from Yerushalmi (#18).
- **Only 5 of his examples are places where the Babylonian Amoraim differed from the Mesora in the text of Torah.**

He questions the number of P'sukim (#11) but does not include the number of words or letters, all mentioned in the Gemora. Perhaps he had a reasonable explanation for the discrepancy and therefor disregards them. We advance several reasons elsewhere in this paper.

He mentions several places where Tosfos questions the Mesora compared to the Talmud yet leaves out several other similar mentions. The five he does mention (#s 2,6,7, 16 and 22) are all examples of חסר and מלא . Several, in fact, also have interesting explanations which we offer elsewhere in this paper.

Thus, any statement regarding the accuracy of the *textus receptus* on the basis of this commentary falls short. Our text is highly accurate!

What is perhaps more fascinating is what Rabbi Eiger leaves out. His list is by no means exhaustive.

In the early 1950's, as a result of the ingathering of the exiles to Israel, for the first time in history it was possible to easily compare scrolls from many different places to ascertain what differences arose over the course of two thousand years.

This had been done before, notably by Rav Meir HaLevi Ben Todros Abulafia,(1180-1245) known as Ramah after his Sefer, Yad Ramah. In an orthographical dictionary, Mesoras Siyag LaTorah, Ramah lists all the words in the Torah whose orthography is not obvious but his access to a wide variety of scrolls was limited by the difficulties of communication and travel in medieval Europe. Ramah's own introductory remarks to "Mesoras" are instructive.

"...If we have come to rely on the examined scrolls we possess, many discrepancies are found. Were it not for the Mesora, which has become a fence around the Torah, a man would hardly be able to find a way out of these discrepancies. Even the Mesora has not been spared discrepancies, variations are found in them as well in many places, although not as many as among the scrolls. If a man were to write a Torah he would be troubled by defective and plene and would be like a blind man groping in the darkness of the discrepancies, unable to find a solution. Even a sage would not be able to find his way. And when I, Meir HaLevi Ben R.Todros HaSefardi, saw what happened with the scrolls and the Mesora with defective and plene - that over time errors had been continually creeping in - I felt the need to come forward and study and investigate the exact scrolls and precise Mesora, to study the disputes and ignore the more recent scrolls, and to follow the older, more reliable ones, and to decide among them following the majority rule as it says "אחרי רבים להטות". Thus I may perhaps make a protective fence for the Torah in defective and plene so a man could write a Torah in accordance

with Halacha following the majority rule and not lose his way in the labyrinth of discrepancies in the more recent scrolls...".

The Ramah's text, then, was an eclectic version based on input from any number of sources utilizing the methodology espoused by Chazal.

THE BREUER STUDY

In the 1950's, Dr. Mordechai Breuer did a study, "The Aleppo Codex and the Accepted Text of the Bible", covering the entire Tanach using the oldest texts available (these were listed at the beginning of this paper) in order to ascertain whether the Mesora could be recovered. We are interested here only in his findings regarding the Torah itself. By matching the texts, he found over 200 orthographical differences between manuscripts. However, he noted that, except for about 20, the matches were uneven. That is, in most cases four of the texts agreed against one. This is of great significance. This unanimity leads Dr. Breuer to state,

"Therefor, it seems reasonable to say that whenever all five Mesirots are in agreement, one may assume that this is the text matching the Mesora, for if not, how did all of them come to a mutually agreed upon text. But a similar argument applies in a case where the definite majority of the Mesirots uphold one text and only one Mesora differs from the others. Even in this case it is hard to believe that the unanimity of opinion of almost all the scribes is accidental, all received - by coincidence - a text contradicting the Mesora and only one, single scribe was able to preserve the original text of the Mesora."

He continues, "Almost all the variances concerning the orthography of the Torah can thus be resolved. For almost all of them - except for twenty out of better than two hundred - are uneven matches. Rather, the text of one single manuscript differs on a particular point from all others as well as from Mikraos Gedolos...The very conflict testifies to the existence of Mesora, whose uniformity thus follows from the variances of transmission. Among the more than two hundred disputes among the manuscripts there are only twenty where the sides are even: two texts which differ from two or three others. In these cases one must find the answer through the Masoretic notes." ... "In fourteen of these cases there is clear evidence from the notes." ... "There are only six instances in which it is difficult to say which text best fits the Mesora." "The version used by the Ashkenazim is founded entirely on the decisions of the Ramah. There are just a few instances where he cites both versions without deciding between them. However, they were later decided upon by R' Menachem Di Lonzono in Or Torah. This text of the Ashkenazim is therefor worthy of being called the Ramah-Or Torah version. But this version was accepted by the Ashkenazim only, while the Yemenite community preserved a different version which differs from the Ramah-Or Torah text in nine places. Three of them are among the six doubtful places mentioned above. The other six instances being those same six places in which the Ramah-Or Torah text differs, apparently, from the orthographic text of the Mesora. **The Torah text of the Yemenite community, therefor, matches the Mesora everywhere, without a single exception!**"

{emphasis mine}

Additionally, Ashkenazim and Yemenites differ on two other points: The Psucha in Vayikra 7: 22-28 and on the arrangement of the verses and spaces in Shiras Ha'azinu.

(We will not be getting into the issues of accentuation and vocalization: of Makkef [conjunctive], ga'yah [furtive syllable], Chataf [simple shwa], or Meseg [hyphenation]. these being far beyond the scope of this paper or the interest of the average reader.)

Dr. Breuer finds the nine variable readings breaking down as follows:

Six are places where the Mesora is definitive. In each of these six the Mesora is heavily weighted in agreement with the Yemenite text. The Ramah-Or Torah version apparently, then, contradicts the Mesora.

<u>תימן</u>	<u>אשכנז</u>	<u>המקרא</u>
מנשא	מנשוא	בראשית ד' : י"ג
מעינת	מעינות	בראשית ז' : י"א
ויהיו	ויהי	בראשית ט' : כ"ב
תעשה	תיעשה	שמות כ"ה : ל"א
האפד	האפוד	שמות כ"ח : כ"ו
דכא	דכה	דברים כ"ג : ב'

In the remaining three places the Mesora remains in doubt as the oldest texts are divided equally and the Masoretic notes are not clear cut.

בשמת	בשמות	במדבר א' : י"ז
חדשיכם	חדשכם	במדבר י' : י'
בער	בעור	במדבר כ"ב : ה'

The Koren edition of Tanach, which coincides for the most part with the work of R. Wolf Heidenheim, gives only two of the above differences, *דכה\דכא* & *ויהיו\ויהי*, since only these two create a real problem, plus one difference in Psucha with the Ashkenaz P'sucha in *ויקרא ז-כ"ח* and given in other Seforim as *ז-כ"ב*.

Seven of the letter differences do not effect the Kashrus of the Torah being only a difference in defective (חסר) and plene (יתר). As long ago as the writing of the Talmud Chazal had decided that even they were not adept in deciding between defective and plene (Kidushin 30a). Thus, the Halacha remains that a Sefer Torah in which there is an extra, or a missing, Vuv or Yud remains Kosher and need not be corrected (The Rama in Shulchan Aruch Simen 143 Sif 4)

This leaves us with two words in which there is a single letter difference. One, *דכה \ דכא*, is pronounced the same way with either spelling so the only issue is the Kashrus of the Torah based on the spelling. Kesses HaSofer tells us that the proper spelling is with a Hey. However if we find a Sefer Torah spelling it with an Aleph we may leave it that way. He adds that it should be corrected only if other mistakes are found which need correcting. One should not remove the scroll from its status of being Kosher to fix this one problem. The other word, *ויהי \ ויהיו* creates additional problems in that the reading

and the meaning are changed. This case affects fulfilling one's obligation of:

- 1- hearing the Parsha read correctly from
- 2- a Kosher Sefer Torah.

We see from this how little our Rabbis have tampered with tradition. Had they made up the Ksiv/ Kri system by themselves, they could have simply added this one to the list which would have solved all the difficulties. The problem is solved in Megillas Esther where the rules are less strict. In several places the reader simply reads a word twice, once as it is written and again as it *should* be written. This suffices in the case of Megilla, not so in the Torah. There are only three places where this is done in Torah. One is in Parshas Zachor where one word, זָכַר, is read twice. The difference there is one of vocalization and does not affect the scroll itself, only the reading. The second is in Parshas Toldos (בראשית כ"ח ט) where the word מַתְּלֵךְ is variably given as מַתְּלֵךְ. The third is in Parshas Re'ah (דברים ט"ז : ט"ו) where מַבְּלֵל is also given as מַבְּלֵל. These last two are only matters of pronunciation. Both are located in Maftir and are read twice in any event so the Ba'al Koreh can use both pronunciations.

The practical difficulty that arises centers around the possibility of an Ashkenazi accepting an Aliya in a Yemeni Sefer Torah or vice versa. Obviously, we try to prevent issues which split the Jewish community. The Kesses Hasofer, Rav Shlomo Ganzfreid, author of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, is the final arbiter for Ashkenazi Sofrim the world over. He decides וִיְהִי is the proper text. He notes, in Lishkas HaSofer, that there is a disagreement amongst the Ba'alei HaMesora but that the Achronim agree on וִיְהִי. He then quotes a Tshuva from the Me'il Tzedaka that if one is laying on Shabbos and finds וִיְהִי the Ba'al Koreh should read וִיְהִי and the Torah should be fixed during the week. Rav Ganzfreid disagrees, quoting a Rambam, and Poskens that וִיְהִי is actually read but the Torah should be fixed after Shabbos in accordance with the Ohr Torah and Minchas Shai.

This ends our journey through the most fascinating document in the world..The reader may very well wish to continue his researches. I hope this paper will serve as a springboard to further study.