

How to Deal with Annotations by Different Scribes When Studying and Editing the Masorah

Elvira Martín-Contreras, ILC-CSIC

Abstract: This article tackles the problem posed by presence of annotations written by different scribal hands when studying and editing the masorah. What should we do? Should we ignore the differences between the annotations and merely focus on their content? Starting with a review of how second hands and other paleographic features have been treated in the most recent editions of the masorah from the Leningrad B19a codex, a step-by-step guide on how to include paleographic and other material aspects in the study of the masorah in critical editions (in particular in the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*) is presented.

The existence of numerous indications that multiple scribes participated in the collation of the masoretic annotations was already noted by Gerard Weil when preparing the edition of the masorah of the Leningrad Codex B19 (henceforth: L) for the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*,¹ but they were not referred to in that edition. They have also been mentioned by various other scholars, and the corrections made in many parts of the manuscript can be appreciated in the facsimile edition.² There are still no paleographic studies on these annotations.

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¹ Cf. Gérard Weil, “La nouvelle édition de la Massorah (BHK IV) e l’histoire de la Massorah” in *Congress Volume: Bonn, 1962*, ed. G. W. Anderson, VTSup 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 270. For the physical characteristics of the Leningrad Codex B19 and its history, see Victor V. Ledevev, “The Oldest Complete Codex of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), xxi–xxviii. For a codicological description, see Mordechai Glatzer, Colette Sirat, and Malachi Beit-Arie, *De 1021 à 1079*, vol. 2 of *Codices hebraicis litteris Extrati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 114–31.

² Cf. Federico Pérez-Castro, “Corregido y correcto: El Ms. B19a (Leningrado) frente al Ms Or. 4445 (Londres) y al Códice de los Profetas de El Cairo,” *Sefarad* 15 (1955): 3–30; Federico Pérez-Castro, “Una copia del Codex Hilleli colacionada con la primera mano del MS. B19a de Leningrado,” *Sefarad* 38 (1978): 13–24; Aron Dotan, “Studies in the Masorah of the Leningrad Codex” [Hebrew], in *Studies in the Hebrew Language and the Talmudic Literature Dedicated to the Memory of Dr. Menahem Morshet*, ed. Menahem Zevi Kadari and Shimo’ón Sharvit (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1989), 80–81; David Marcus, Joshua, vol. 1 of *The Masorah of the Former Prophets in the Leningrad Codex* Texts and Studies 14 (Piscataway, NJ: Georgias, 2017), xx, xxix; John Revell, “The Leningrad Codex as a Representative of the Masoretic Text,” in Freedman et al., *Leningrad Codex*, xxix–xlvi; Haarold P. Scanlin, “Erased Ga’yot in Codex Leningradensis,” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress of the International Organization for Masoretic Studies*, ed.

Since the masorah has traditionally been studied in terms of its textual content, other elements have been neglected. However, paleographic analysis has revealed itself to be an important tool for the study of the masorah.³ The characterization of handwriting and the identification of the scribal hands in the masorah can help us to explain the extant differences among the annotations from different parts of a single manuscript, the apparent contradictions between the biblical text and the masorah, and even the existence of different traditions of the same phenomenon in a single manuscript.

What should we do when editing the masorah of a single manuscript? Should we ignore the fact that some annotations were written by different hands other than that of the principal scribe and merely focus on their content? Should we simply integrate them into the rest of the annotations and treat and study them in the same way? Or should we write down when one annotation has been added by a second hand, as well as other palaeographic characteristics?

Before answering these questions, let us see how second hands or other palaeographic characteristics have been dealt with in the most recent editions of the masorah of L—the Biblia Hebraica Quinta (henceforth: BHQ) and the Accordance Masora Thesaurus Module (henceforth: Thesaurus).⁴ Surprisingly enough, they have not been completely ignored, and I have found various notes dealing with some of these aspects.

In the masorah commentary section of BHQ's volumes, when there is no circellus over a lemma, it is generally recorded in the "notes on the Masorah Parva." A review of all the published volumes shows that this is not systematic, and many other instances are not reported. For example, although the word רגליך in Qoh 4:17 has a masoretic annotation without a circellus over it (fig. 1), this is not recorded in the BHQ commentary section.⁵ In the Thesaurus, the lack of a circellus is never mentioned.



Fig. 1. Leningrad codex, fol. 427r

I have found two references to graphic markers. The first has to do with the masorah parva (henceforth: Mp) annotation to the word ולבן in Deut 1:1 (fig. 2), where it is said: "There are three dots over a single ל in the form of a *sāḡôltâ* in this Mp."⁶ The note also comments on other occurrences of this marker in the book of Deuteronomy, as opposed to the more common one-dot marker. However, the three-dot marker is not reproduced in the edition.⁷ The sec-

Jonh Revell, *Masoretic Studies 8* (Cambridge University, 1995), 105–25; Innocent Himbaza, "La diversité des sources du manuscrit de Leningrad B19a," *Sem* 59 (2017): 355–68.

³ Elvira Martín-Contreras, "Multiple Hands in the Marginal Annotations of the Hebrew Bible Codex Madrid M1 (Biblioteca Historica Marques de Valdecilla, BH MSS1)," *Manuscript Studies* 7 (2022): 36–75; Martín-Contreras, "Was Samuel ben Jacob the Masorator of the Codex Leningrad B19a?" (forthcoming).

⁴ Aron Dotan and Nurit Reich, *Masora Thesaurus: A Complete Alphabetic Collection of the Masora Notes in the Leningrad Codex*, Accordance 4.0.

⁵ Jan de Waard and Yohanan Goldman, *General Introduction and Megilloth: Ruth, Canticles, Qoheleth, Lamentations, Esther*, BHQ 18 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), 29*.

⁶ Carmel McCarthy, ed., *Deuteronomy*, BHQ 5 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 17*.

⁷ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, 3.

ond reference is, according to David Marcus, to “an unidentified mark written over the word מפק” in the Mp annotation to the words כִּי־אֵם in Neh 2:2 (fig. 3).⁸ This mark is considered as a suspended letter *samek* in the Thesaurus, which, moreover, makes no mention of graphic markers.⁹

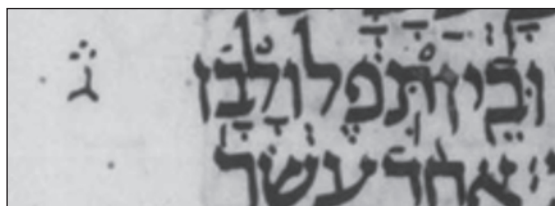


Fig. 2. Leningrad codex, fol. 98v

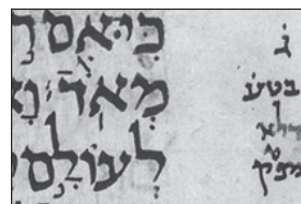


Fig. 3. Leningrad codex, fol. 455r

I have found one reference to the script in the comment to the Mp annotation to אכל in Deut 12:23 (fig. 4) that mentions the long stroke under the letter *lamed*, which is longer than the usual vowel sign for *patakh*.¹⁰ However, due to the script Carmel McCarthy does not interpret it as a vowel sign. Supposedly, this is the reason why the stroke under the *lamed* is not reproduced in BHQ.¹¹ In the Thesaurus, the stroke is reproduced and interpreted as a vowel sign for *patakh*, but its script is not commented on.

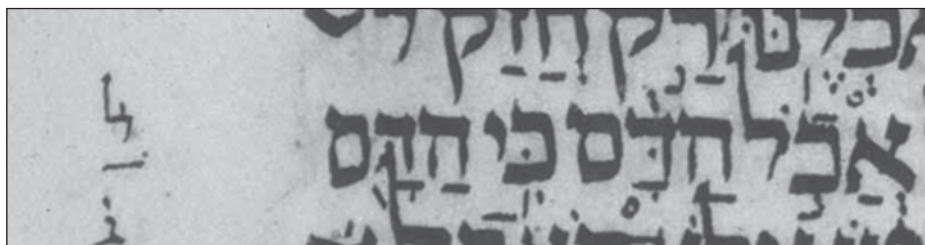


Fig. 4. Leningrad codex, fol. 107r

I have found two references to the existence of different hands in the masoretic annotations. The first is in Deut 9:28, where the word אֹתָם has been corrected by adding a *vav* (fig. 5). The correction is commented on in the explanatory note, which states that “the *waw* has been introduced by a second hand.”¹² The correction is also mentioned in the Thesaurus but without alluding to a second hand. The second reference is found in Ezra 7:19 (fig. 6). The comment to the Mp annotation on the word לפלחון states, “It is written by a second hand.” In the Thesaurus there are no references to second hands.

There are also two references to the placement of the annotations in Gen 38:8 and Hab 2:7.¹³ Lastly, there are references to corrections: four times in the Mp annotations (Deut 9:4; Mic 7:3; Hag 2:12; Neh 3:29), and twice in the biblical text (Lam 3:11; Esth 3:12).¹⁴ Despite this, most of the corrections are not pointed out. By contrast, this is the only aspect recorded with some assiduity (especially for the book of Genesis) in the Thesaurus. In fact, it is quite common for the

⁸ David Marcus, ed., *Ezra and Nehemiah*, BHQ 20 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 21*.

⁹ תלה את הסמ"ך.

¹⁰ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, 23*–24*.

¹¹ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, 42.

¹² McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, p. 22*.

¹³ Abraham Tal, ed., *Genesis*, BHQ 1 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2017), 43*; A. Gelston, ed., *Twelve Minor Prophets*, BHQ 13 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 27*.

¹⁴ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, p. 22*; Gelston, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, 25*, 29*; Marcus, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 21*, De Waard and Goldman, *General Introduction*, 32*, 34*.

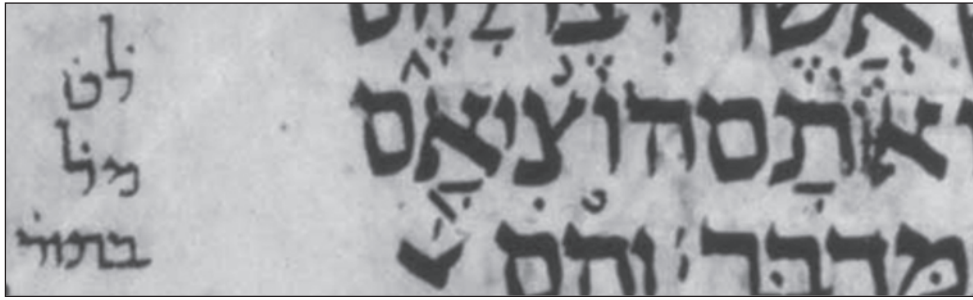


Fig. 5. Leningrad codex, fol. 105r

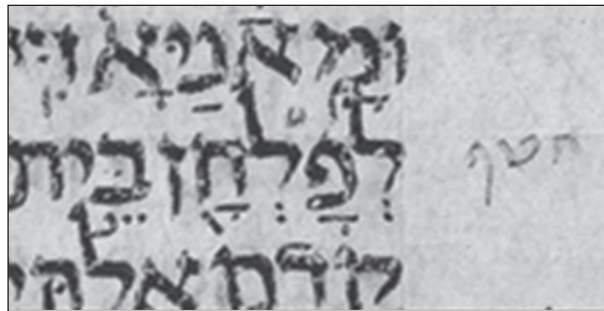


Fig. 6. Leningrad codex, fol. 451v

correction to be pointed out in the Thesaurus but not in the BHQ. For instance, in the Thesaurus there is an explanatory note to the word *וַיִּמְתֵּהוּ* in Gen 38:8, explaining that the word was initially written in plene with the letter *yod*, which was later erased to make the word defective (fig. 7). There is also another explanatory note informing that the annotation is written lower than the line of the lemma due to another annotation above it. The location of the annotation is also commented in BHQ, but there is no mention of the correction of the word in the biblical text, nor of the lack of a circellus.¹⁵

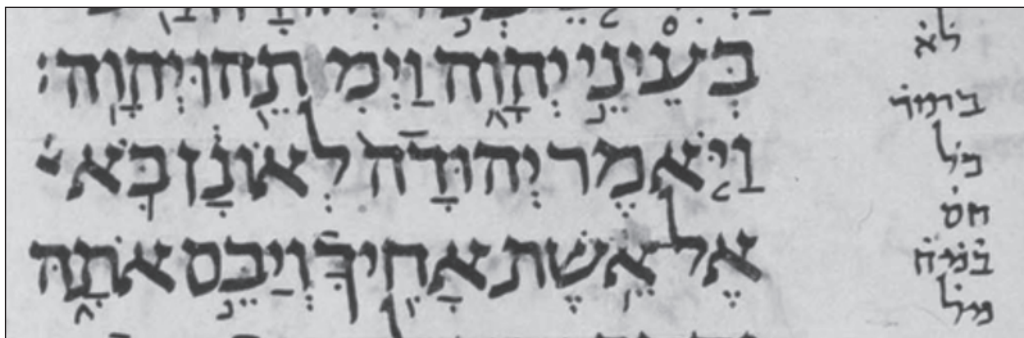


Fig. 7. Leningrad codex, fol. 23v

To sum up, these aspects are not completely ignored in the BHQ, but they are not systematically addressed, nor are there clear guidelines on how to deal with them, apart from recording the lack of a circellus. Therefore, the scant references that do exist are a product of the personal interest and intuition of the editor of each volume. It seems to be much of the same for the Thesaurus, which lacks a systematic approach and where we find internal differences between

¹⁵ Tal, *Genesis*, 43*.

the book of Genesis and the rest of the books. The differences found between the Thesaurus and the masorah commentary section of BHQ make it necessary to rely on both in order to have more information on each annotation. And still we do not have the full picture!

Numerous other aspects and details go completely unnoticed, some of which are crucial for understanding the transmission and reception of the biblical text and the masorah. A few examples suffice to demonstrate their relevance.

L contains many examples of annotations added by hands other than the principal scribe and that stand out even to the naked eye, without the necessity of paleographical analysis. For instance, the annotation to the word **וּצְבִים** in Gen 10:19 is written with a lighter ink and a different script. It is also out of alignment (fig. 8). Moreover, the word in the biblical text has been erased and rewritten to make it conform to the annotation. The problems with the term's spelling also show up in Gen 14:2 and Gen 14:8, where the annotations to this word are also written by a different hand (fol. 7v). Other examples are the parashah marker in Gen 44:8 (fol. 27v) or the *qere* annotation in Zeph 2:9 (fol. 318r), to name just two.

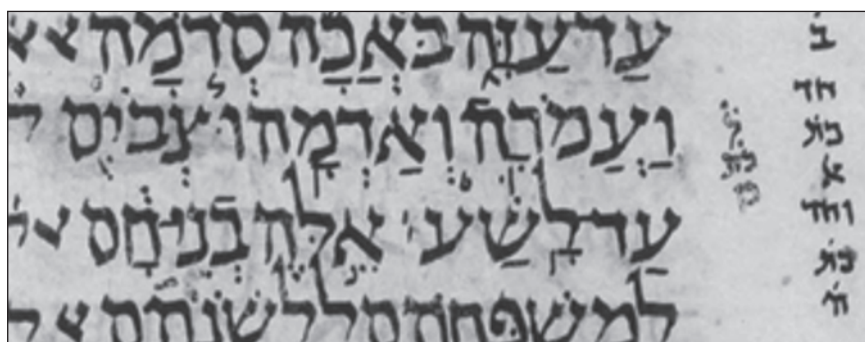


Fig. 8. Leningrad codex, fol. 6r

There are also numerous examples of corrections to words in the biblical text made in response to annotations by a second hand. This is the case with the word **הַדִּקָּת** in Gen 41:24 (fig. 9) and the word **פָּרַת** in Gen 41:26 (fig. 10). Both words were initially written plene with the letter *vav*, but the *vav* was later erased. There are traces of the deleted right downstroke of the letter *tav*, and one can make out the point where the horizontal stroke added to the original letter *vav* met the horizontal stroke of the *tav*. With the corrections, the words match the information recorded in the annotations attached to them: “unique written defective.” Both annotations were added by a second hand, as can be appreciated in the different shapes of the letter *samek* when comparing these annotations with the other annotations containing the term *haser* on the folio. Thus, the corrections were made by the same person or persons who added the annotations. Both corrections are mentioned in the Thesaurus but without mentioning the second hand or the correlation between the corrections and the content of the annotations added by these hands.

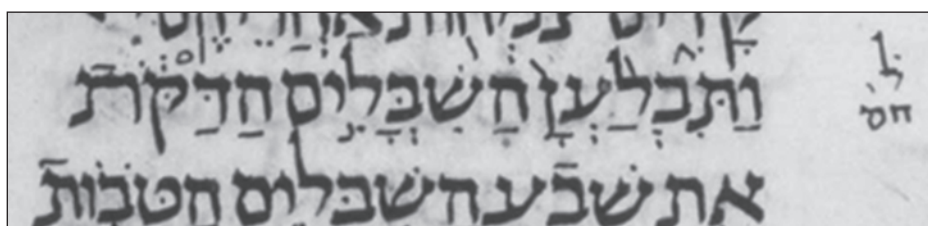


Fig. 9. Leningrad codex, fol. 25r

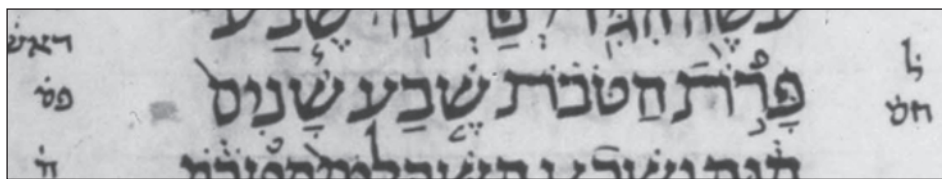


Fig. 10. Leningrad codex, fol. 25r

There are also many examples of *qere-ketiv* annotations added by second hands that lead to a correction of the biblical text. In all such cases, the word in the biblical text was written according to the *qere* form by the principal scribe. The additions and erasures in the biblical text were made by later hands to make the words conform to the *ketiv* form. An example for this is the word שְׂרִידוֹ in Job 27:15 (fig. 11). The word was originally written with a letter *yod* between the letters *dalet* and *vav*—in other words, according to the *qere* reading. The person who added the *qere* annotation also corrected the word itself by erasing the second *yod* in the word, as can be seen in the prolonged vertical stroke of the *dalet*. Thereby the word was adapted to the *ketiv* form. As in the previous example, the correction is mentioned in the Thesaurus, but it is not mentioned that the correlation between the correction and the content of the annotation was added by a second hand.

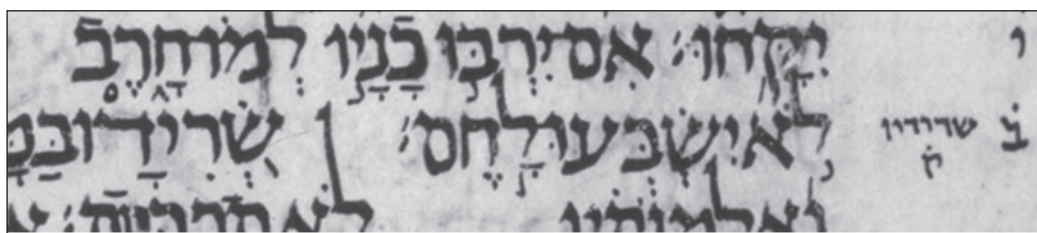


Fig. 11. Leningrad codex, f. 404v

Based on these few examples, we can now answer the questions I posed at the beginning of this article. First of all, the existence of different hands in the masorah of a single manuscript should not be ignored. We cannot transcribe the content of the annotations and leave aside all other elements. On the contrary, it is necessary to gain all information for each annotation and lemma, and this information should be integrated into our analysis and conclusions.

If we are convinced of the necessity of incorporating such information into the BHQ edition, the next question is how to go about doing so. The existing references in the Mp commentary section of BHQ would be a good starting point to develop specific guidelines. Firstly, all the editors should study the same elements and record them in a systematic manner. If we look at the Mp commentary section in the published volumes, we realize that they are very inconsistent. While in some volumes, such as Deuteronomy, we encounter detailed comments with a wealth of information (e.g., cross-references, other manuscripts, masoretic parallels, bibliography), in others the comments are less profuse. It is necessary to identify which elements are relevant and then create a common study card for recording them. To be included are all elements that are analyzed in order to characterize and distinguish the hands in the marginal annotations,¹⁶ namely:

1. the placement of the annotations on the folio;
2. the script, with a mind to all relevant aspects: ink color, letter size, and letter shape;

¹⁶ Cf. Martín-Contreras, “Multiple Hands.”

3. the way the information is recorded: abbreviations, graphic markers, introductory formulae, technical terms, et cetera;
4. the presence or absence of a circellus over the lemma, and, when present, how it is written;
5. corrections and emendations in the biblical text and the masoretic annotations.

Needless to say, this is not restricted to the Mp annotations but is also applicable to the masorah magna annotations.

This is an example of how such a paleographic study card might look (fig. 12). It is based on one of the foregoing examples and contains all the information relative to the five elements proposed above.

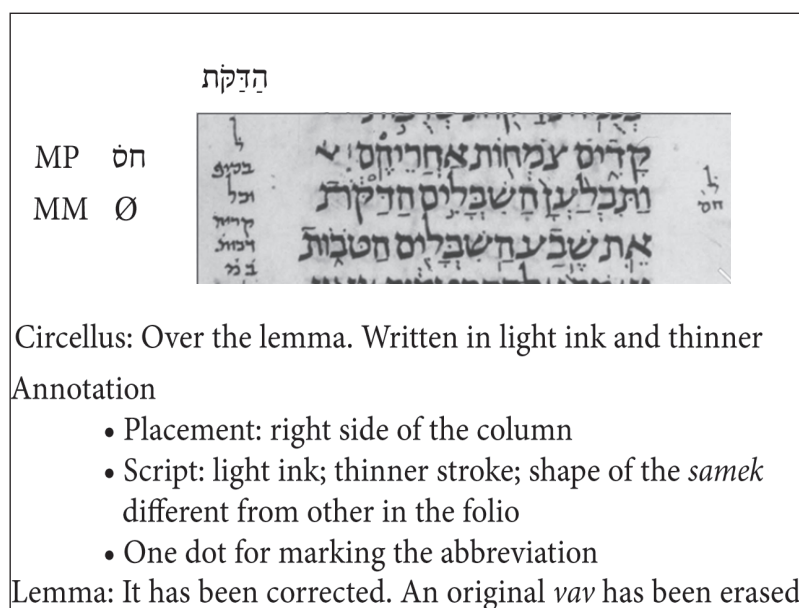


Fig. 12. Gen 41:24

To make the format as homogeneous as possible, it is necessary to establish the criteria that determine the information included in the commentary section of the edition. As a general rule, whenever any element differs in one annotation from the common appearance or behavior in others, it must be recorded. So, if most of the lemmas have a circellus, if there is not one, it must be recorded; if the usual graphic marker for the abbreviation changes, it must be recorded; if one term is Babylonian, but the majority are Tiberian, it must be recorded; if the annotation is out of alignment, it must be recorded; and so on. The recording must be consistent throughout all the volumes of the edition and not just in one book. As a necessary complement to all this information, a summary of the masorah of each book, with the usual procedure and the oddities, should be included in the introduction section. The extant introduction to the masorah of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah could be the model to follow.¹⁷

Lastly, to draw conclusions about what all these paleographic details mean for the history of the codex (copy, persons involved, uses), and the transmission of the biblical text, it will be necessary to make a joint study of the masorah of the whole manuscript. This would avoid erroneous or partial conclusions from being drawn. The importance of this last step can be observed in two of the examples already provided. The first one is the long stroke under the

¹⁷ Marcus, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 5*–8*.

abbreviation of the term *leit* in the Mp annotation to אָכַל in Deut 12:23 (cf. fig. 4), about which McCarthy concludes, “it seems unlikely that this was intended as a vowel sign by the scribe of Leningrad.”¹⁸ However, if she had looked at the other cases outside the book of Deuteronomy where there is a long stroke under the numeral sign to indicate that the lemma has that particular vowel (e.g., Genesis, fol. 25r), her conclusion would have been different. In fact, Abraham Tal, the editor of the book of Genesis, has no problem interpreting those long strokes as the vowel sign for *patakh*.¹⁹ The other example is also from the book of Deuteronomy. The three-dot graphic marker found on the numeral sign *gimel* in the Mp annotation to the word וּלְבָן in Deut 1:1 (cf. fig. 2), as well as in various other occurrences throughout the book, are interpreted by McCarthy as “interchangeable freely with one dot in Leningrad, and would appear to have no special significance, both forms indicating a threefold occurrence of the particular feature being noted.”²⁰ This conclusion is partially correct. Both markers are indeed used for the same purpose—to indicate that the letter is a numeral sign—but it is incorrect that would not have special significance. The three-dot graphic marker is not exclusive to the masorah of the book of Deuteronomy. It also appears in other books, as in the book of Genesis (fols. 25r, 29v, 43v, and 46v) or in Numbers (fol. 86v). Taking this into account, according to Malachi Bet Arie,²¹ the graphic marker is one of the specific components that may be the expression of an individual scribe. Can we keep saying that the three-dot graphic marker has no significance? Could this marker not be an indication of a second hand? These and other questions can only be answered by bringing together all the information gathered during the edition of the masorah of each book.

This proposal does not intend to be definitive, but rather a first step toward including paleographic and material aspects in the study of the masorah and recording them in the critical editions.

¹⁸ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, 24*.

¹⁹ Cf. note to the word פֶּתַח in Gen 41:13 and רָעַע in Gen 41:21, Tal, *Genesis*, 45*.

²⁰ McCarthy, *Deuteronomy*, 17*.

²¹ Malachi Beit-Arié, “Stereotype and Individuality in the Handwriting of Medieval Scribes,” in *The Makings of the Medieval Hebrew Book: Studies on Palaeography and Codicology* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 77–92.