

A HISTORY OF THE DIACRITICAL MARKS SURROUNDING THE TEXT OF  
NUMBERS 10:35 - 36

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## ABSTRACT

In the Massoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, Numbers 10:35-36 are preceeded and followed by unusual diacritical marks. The design and precise location of these marks have been the subject of sustained discussion and debate. Though defined by Jewish law as part of its program to preserve the integrity and sanctity of the Torah text, various descriptions of the marks are known. This thesis presents an historical analysis of traditional rabbinic texts that discuss the graphic representation and location of these diacritical marks. The texts analyzed here are gleaned from classical rabbinic sources, published texts recovered from the Geniza of Cairo, Massoretic and mystical literature, rabbinic responsa and scribal compendia. Each text is translated and analyzed to reflect its own historical period and the development of rabbinic law and lore explaining the presence of the markings in the text.

## PRECIS

Dans le texte massorétique de la Bible hébraïque, les Nombres 10:35-36 sont précédés et suivis de marquages diacritiques rares. La forme et l'emplacement exacte de ces marques ont été le sujet de maintes discussions et de longs débats. Bien que ces marques soient définies par la loi judaïque comme faisant partie de son programme de préservation de l'intégrité et de la sainteté du texte de la Torah, plusieurs descriptions de leur usage sont connues.

Cette thèse présente une analyse historique des textes rabbiniques traditionnels qui discutent la représentation graphique et l'emplacement de ces marques diacritiques. Les textes analysés sont extraits de sources rabbiniques classiques, textes publiés, ayant été récupérés de la Geniza du Caire, de la littérature massorétique et mystique, des "réponses" rabbiniques et des concordances scripturales. Chaque texte est traduit et analysé pour refléter sa propre période historique ainsi que le développement de la loi et la tradition rabbinique que la présence de ces marquages dans le texte explique.

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## PREFACE

The text of Numbers 10:35-36, as it is written in contemporary, traditionally prepared Torah scrolls and printed Hebrew texts, is preceeded and followed by two graphic characters which are unique to the Torah scroll. These symbols resemble brackets surrounding words, as commonly found in modern books (see Appendix for facsimiles). In as ancient and carefully copied a text as the Torah scroll, the careful reader is likely to be left questioning the purpose and nature of these markings.

As with the rest of the Torah, its detailed lore, traditions, and law, this graphic anomaly is a witness to the tradition of change in the text of the Torah. As well, it is a product of the textual evolution of the Hebrew Bible. There is much that can be revealed about the origin, history and evolution of these two graphic symbols from the Masoretic and Halachic literature. The evidence found in these sources clearly shows that these graphic characters do have a non-Sinaitic origin in the text which is held by tradition to have come from God to the Israelite people on Mount Sinai.

Throughout the vast literature of Biblical

interpretation and legal literature, references to these symbols are recorded. Few years passed without some rabbinic interest in the interpretation, explanation or rationalization of this issue. Traditional sources reflect more than a little controversy and disagreement over the graphic symbols used to denote this special text. Even a casual glance at the Masoretic and legal literature or the manuscript evidence shows that not until our own day has there been general agreement regarding the design of the marks used to indicate the significance of this text. The necessity for the markings and their placement in the text are questioned throughout post-Mishnaic times.

The present work analyzes the abovementioned sources chronologically in order to describe the evolution which this text and its markings have undergone. The normative Jewish tradition has claimed that the text of the Torah remains as it was at Sinai. Many contemporary opinions reflect an approach to the tradition of transmission not much more sophisticated but less accurate than that. The following analysis of sources allows us to see that the evolution of the text proceeded, while, at the same time the Rabbinic authorities claimed that no change was taking place.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TEXT OF

#### NUMBERS 10:35 - 36

A popularly held tradition about the transmission of the Hebrew text of the Torah states that the text has been handed down throughout the generations in a perfect form as it was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. This claim is based on the evidence of the Torah itself (Ex: 20:19 et al.) and its accompanying traditional lore. The oral tradition which interprets and explains the Torah also states

Moses received Torah on Sinai and transmitted  
it to Joshua.....<sup>1</sup>

No less an authority than Maimonides, basing himself on Mishna Sanhedrin 10:1, proclaimed,

One who claims that the Torah is not from  
God, even one verse, even one letter, saying  
'Moses said this on his own', denies the  
Torah. <sup>2</sup>

Paralleling the belief in the transmission of the Torah is the belief that since the receiving of the Torah there has been no evolution of its text. In truth, however, the learned, 'Orthodox' tradition itself is not silent on this point, nor does it support it.

The abovementioned beliefs about the transmission of the Torah pertain not only to the wording of the Torah, the text which contains the instructions, teachings and lore of the Jews, but also to the spaces it contains, the crowns on the letters, and all other graphic markings which are in the written scroll.<sup>3</sup> However, the Jewish tradition itself presents significant evidence to show that the text of the Torah has some symbols of questionable authenticity and unknown origin which have themselves undergone an evolution which can be traced through the last two thousand years.

The traditional texts themselves contain convincing evidence of efforts on the part of Rabbinic leaders to 'fix' the text. This was done, when necessary, by means of additions, deletions, or changes of many kinds, to make the text agree with their notions of its perfect state. The changes made to the text referred to, in some texts,<sup>4</sup> as *Tikunei Sofrim* and the textual anomalies called *Qere* and *Ketiv*<sup>5</sup> are two of the known types of emendations which are part of the traditional lore and attributed to the *Sofrim*.<sup>6</sup>

Various reasons for the changes which were made to the text are posited. According to some authorities these changes represent the original Sinaitic text.<sup>7</sup> In some cases it is clear



that a profanation of the name of God was removed from the text.<sup>8</sup>

Various types of embellishments to the text of the Torah are visible in the graphic markings which appear in the basic consonantal text. Flourishes or crowns of various shapes and sizes (Hebrew tgyn) are found on the letters Y, C, t, n, z, g, s.<sup>9</sup> Some letters are written in a script larger or smaller than the normal letters (ṣtywt zcyw and ṣtywt rbty) e.g. Genesis 1:1, Leviticus 1:1, Deuteronomy 6:4.<sup>10</sup> In ten places in the Torah words are written with dots placed above some or all of the letters.<sup>11</sup> The latter, the lore of the text tells us, are diacritical marks introduced into the text by Ezra the Scribe to mark questionable readings. In theory these marks were to be in the text only until the arrival of Elijah the Prophet, whereupon either the dots or the textual error would be removed from the text returning it to its proper, original, perfect form.<sup>12</sup>

Another of the graphic symbols which have been part of the text of the Torah since antiquity are the symbols which appear both before and after the text of Numbers 10:35-36. These symbols known as the "inverted nuns" are unique in the Torah and are found elsewhere only in Psalm 107. Their name stems from their most popular graphic representation, which resembles the shape of the common nun. These symbols or diacritical marks are unique in that they are not incorporated into the text itself in any way but rather stand alone, segregated from all other letters of the text.

The text of Numbers 10:35-36 reads as follows:

35) When the Ark was to set out, Moses

would say:

Advance, O Lord!  
 May your enemies be scattered  
 And may Your foes flee  
 before You!

36) And when it halted, he would say:

Return, O Lord,  
 You who are Israel's myriads of  
 thousands!

The verses which precede verse 33 tell of Moses' request of Yitro, his father-in-law, to accompany the nation to the Land of Israel and his subsequent refusal. Verses 33-34 tell of the nation's marching for three days looking for a resting place with the Ark of the Covenant travelling in front of them while God's cloud prevailed above them. Following verse 36, chapter 11 begins with the tale of events at Tabera where the nation complained and was punished by a ravaging fire.

The Mishna in Tractate Yadaim contains evidence that the text of Numbers 10:35-36 was considered unique and notable in ancient days. This chapter of the Mishna deals with the holiness of scrolls,<sup>13</sup> detailing that a scroll would 'defile the hands' of one who touched it if it was a holy text. The applicable Mishna (3:5) states,

If the writing in a scroll was erased yet  
 there still remained eighty-five letters, as  
 many as are in the paragraph "When the Ark

was to set out..." (Numbers 10:35-36), it still renders the hands unclean. A [single] written sheet [in a scroll of the Scriptures] in which are written eighty-five letter, as many as are in the paragraph "When the Ark was to set out" renders the hands unclean.<sup>14</sup>

Thus we have here evidence that the eighty-five letter text of Numbers 10:35-36 had by this early date been established as the minimum length required for a Biblical text to be 'defiling of the hands' thus requiring its preservation from destruction.<sup>15</sup>

The detail of this Mishna is based on the work of the Sofrim. These were the scholars who were responsible for the scribal arts required in both religious and/or state affairs. In their schools we find the origin of classical Rabbinic Bible interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Most importantly, the preservation of the already existing texts was a major concern of theirs.

Kiddushin 30a contains an etymological legend explaining why the Sofrim were called by that name,

lpykk nqr>w r>šwnym swprym šhyw swprym kl  
h>wtwt šbtwrh,

The earliest scholars were called Sofrim because they counted all the letters of the Torah.

Regardless of the authenticity of the this midrash, there can be no question about the centrality of the text of the Torah scroll in the occupation of the Sofer. Clearly, one of the tasks of the Sofrim was the counting and recording of the words and letters of the traditional Torah text. This record more easily allowed the accurate preservation of the texts. They worked in schools of scribes on the redaction and canonization of the text. The Scribes were, as well, the bearers of the lore which accompanied the texts which they preserved and recorded.

Few details of the actual work of the Sofrim on the ancient texts have survived. Among the Massoretic activities attributed to them are the Migra Sofrim, Ittur Sofrim (Nedarim 37b), Tiqun Sofrim (Bereshit Rabbah 39:7), Diqduqei Sofrim (Sukah 28a), Divrei Sofrim (Sanhedrin 88b). These Rabbinic dicta refer to traditions about the interpretation of words and phrases in the text which were taught by the Sofrim. Just how many Tikkunei Sofrim etc. appear in the text is not apparent though a list of sixteen such occurrences appears in Midrash Tanhuma on Exodus 15:7.<sup>17</sup> An example of this kind of Soferic work is clearly visible in the Mekilta D'Rabbi Yishmael.<sup>18</sup> Referring to the verse "Surely he that touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:12) Rabbi Judah said,

"It does not say here: The apple of the eye,"  
but: "The apple of His eye," referring, as it  
were, to the One above. Scripture, however,  
modifies the expression."

Surely the type of 'modification' referred to here is a reaction to the anthropomorphism in the text. In some cases 'modifications' for similar anthropomorphisms were introduced into the text itself. Deuteronomy 28:27 and 30<sup>19</sup> are two instances of note which have become incorporated into the Ketiv-Qere type of emendation.<sup>20</sup> Surely not all types of what have become known as Ketiv-Qere are to be considered actual emendations of the original text. In most cases a change is substituted only in the public reading of the text.

The work of the Sofrim is also evident in their introduction of graphic symbols of various kinds into the text. Though no single text is proof, it must be understood that the introduction of graphic characters into the text would have likely occurred in this period. It is accepted that the larger and smaller letters, the division of text into parashot and various diacritical marks in the text, including those around Numbers 10:35-36, were introduced into the text in the schools of the Sofrim.<sup>21</sup>

The unique significance of the eighty five letter text of Numbers 10:35-36 was unquestionably part of the established tradition before Mishnaic times. The Tannaim preserved the Soferic lore about these verses in the Mishna. We will show that as time passed, as the tradition developed and was influenced by new sources and developments of the tradition itself, this significance led to the introduction of diacritical markings into the text whose original purpose was simply to offset these verses from the rest of the work.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SECOND TO SIXTH CENTURIES

In Bereshit Rabbah 64:8<sup>1</sup> we find a midrashic exposition of the names of the common, traditional books of the Torah. As part of the discussion we find the following:

ר"ב בר קפרא עבד מן רש"י דספר וידבר ועד גבי  
ויהי בנסח הורן ויזמר משה ספר בפרק עשרה ויהי  
בנסח הורן ודבריהם ספר בפרק עשרה מן תמן ועד  
שופטים דספר ספר בפרק עשרה

However, bar Kappara made (counted) from the beginning of the Book of Numbers until "When the Ark began to travel, Moses said", as a book unto itself; (from) "When the Ark began to travel" and its text, a book of itself; from there till the end of the book, a book unto itself.

Bar Kappara counted the text of Numbers as three distinct texts; the first ending with verse 10:34 and the third beginning with verse 11:1. Bar Kappara's opinion is reminiscent of the opinion of the Mishna, cited above, which delineates the paragraph of

Numbers 10:35-36 as the shortest single and distinct text in existence or possible.

The earliest evidence for the use of graphic symbols to denote this special text is found in Sifre on Numbers.<sup>2</sup> It is mentioned that Numbers 10:35-36 was denoted in a fashion described there as "dotted above and below",

wyhy bnswe hwrwn nqwd clyw mlmclh wlmclh.

"When the ark was to set out", is dotted above and below.

It is possible to understand the phrase nqwd clyw mlmclh wlmclh as meaning that the text was written with dots before it and after it. From this text it can be understood that Numbers 10:35-36 was once denoted, in some fashion, with dots. Not necessarily in a fashion similar to other dotted texts which still appear in contemporary texts and scrolls. The assumption that a dotted text must have dots over or above the words or letters in question is made because of the well known occurrences of this in modern scrolls and texts and ancient texts as well. This instruction is unclear and inadequate. It can also be understood to mean that the text of Numbers 10:35-36 should be denoted not as those other dotted texts are ie. nqwd clyw mlmclh wlmclh means that dots were to be placed before and after this text's words. This potentially confusing scribal instruction led to the various formats for these diacritical marks which appeared

soon after.<sup>3</sup>

Various opinions are offered in Siphre regarding the purpose of the dots in the text of Numbers 10:35-36. An anonymous opinion states, mpny sl hyh zh mqwmw, [its place in the text is improper]. Rabbi Shimon stated that the text beginning with Numbers 11:1 should appear in place of the present verse 10:35,

mpny šl hyh zh mqwmw. wmh hyh rwy lyktb  
tštyw? wyhy hcm kmtšwnnym

For this is not its place. What should rightfully be written following it? "The people were as murmurers".

The opinion of Rabbi agrees with the Mishna in Yadaim 3:5, mpny šhw spr bšmw, [because it is a book of itself]. His statement continues,

mykn šmrw spr šnmhq wnštyr bw šmwym wšmš  
štywš kprš wyhy bšwš hšrwš mšmš št hydym

from here it is deduced that a text which has been erased but in which remain eighty-five letters as in the section of "When the ark began to travel" (Numbers 10:35-36) defiles the hands.



Rabbi's opinion is that the Mishna inherited the tradition from the Sofrim who preserved this text with its special status. The symbols around Numbers 10:35-36 are to aid in the identification of this text which has a status different from other texts. The text in question is the example for the Mishna and for this reason needed diacritical markings.

The Siphre reflects the swift development of the tradition accompanying Numbers 10:35-36 after the appearance of the Mishna. The Mishna reflects a tradition whereby these two verses are considered a whole text of special status but not denoted with any symbols. This special status led to its becoming offset by 'dots' which were common markers of 'texts of special status' in the ancient world, as shown conclusively by Lieberman.<sup>4</sup> Further, the second tradition in the Siphre is merely a variant explanation for the known dots. If the text belonged in a different place, in some future edition of the Torah, it would certainly have a special status worthy of being denoted in such a fashion. This future edition of the Torah is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud Tractate Shabbat (16a) where Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel states,

ctydh prsh zw štycqr mkon wtktb bmqwmh

In the future this portion will be uprooted from here and written in its place.

Avot D'Rabbi Natan,<sup>5</sup> chapter 34, refers to šny smnywt, 'two

symbols' which are used in the Torah for a prsh qtnh, 'a short section of text'. In answer to the query, syzw hys prsh qtnh?, [Which is a short section?],<sup>5</sup> the text of Numbers 10:35-36 is referenced. Saul Lieberman has described some diacritical marks which were used in the ancient world in a similar fashion to the ones found in Avot d'Rabbi Natan. In Greek they are called semeia *σημεία* and were used to delineate short sections of text just as they do for Numbers 10:35-36 in the text of the Torah.<sup>7</sup> We have here an instance of the Rabbinic use of Greek text editing techniques. The Mishna had established the text as a 'short section' (Greek *μικρον τμήμα*) which was then marked as such in the fashion popular and accepted in that day.

Tractate Shabbat 16a-b gives some more insight into the various traditions which had developed to explain these symbols. One opinion claimed that the smnwt, 'the symbols' delineated the eighty-five letter text of a single book of the Torah. This follows the opinion of the Mishna in Yadaim and is relevant to the Talmudic discussion about texts which should be preserved from destruction because of their length or importance and status as texts of themselves.

A second opinion, that of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, takes the symbols to be markers of a text which should appear elsewhere but was placed here to separate two sections of the Torah which spoke of calamities, (pwrnywt), for Israel.<sup>8</sup> These are the stories ending with Numbers 10:34 and starting with Numbers 11:1. This conception of the diacritical marks around Numbers 10:35-36 is far removed from the essential ideas of the Mishna and, as will

be seen, is the beginning of one of the major midrashic explanations of the phenomenon of the diacritical marks surrounding Numbers 10:35-36.

Having seen the beginning of the midrashic tradition about these diacritical marks, we turn to the symbols themselves. The information found in extant versions of Tractate Sofrim<sup>9</sup> reflects the early confusion about the graphic symbol to be used in marking this text in question. The text of Sofrim reads,

hkwtb sryk lcswt šypwr bptyhh šl wyhy bns  
hcrwn mlmcln wmlmtn šhw spr bpny cšmw

The writer, [scribe] must make a šypwr at the beginning of "When the ark began to travel" (Numbers 10:35-36), above and below, for it is a text of itself.

The name of the graphic symbol to be used and thus its character and nature is not clear from the manuscripts available.<sup>10</sup> While some versions have only the word symn [symbol], others have either šcwr, (space) or what may be a scribal corruption of the word šwpr, (ram's horn). The latter would surely refer to a ram's horn shape, used here to describe the graphic symbol to be written before and after Numbers 10:35-36. It is possible that the reading šcwr reflects a tradition wherein the text was offset by spaces. This method of marking the text would be far more typical for a Biblical text in

that all divisions and deliniations of text in the Torah scroll, other than the one found at Numbers 10:35-36, are composed only of spaces in the text. As well, all separate books in the Torah scroll itself are separated by the space of four blank lines.<sup>11</sup> If, as the Mishna suggests, this is a separate text, then the four-line space would be appropriate and expected. Further analysis of the history of the symbols used to mark the text of Numbers 10:35-36 will show the Ywpr, [ram's horn] text version to be the tradition which gained authority. This Ywpr-shaped diacritical mark is the earliest reference to what later becomes well known as the 'inverted nun'. The visual resemblance between an 'inverted nun' and a shofar or ram's horn shape is clear.

In this early period of Rabbinic history major developments had taken place in the evolution of these graphic markings. In times as early as those of the Sofrim special status had been afforded the text of Numbers 10:35-36 for unknown reasons. This special status led to the introduction of dots into the text of the Torah whereby this text was clearly offset from the surrounding text. These dots were, in time, replaced by other popular symbols whose source was in the Greek culture predominant and influential to Judaism during the Rabbinic period.

Here we have evidence of the diacritical markings being dots. This statement is very similar to the above mentioned statement in Siphre<sup>2</sup>. More significantly, in the text from Midrash Mishle is a second, relevant statement of Rabbi Judah that the text was "a text of itself and was withdrawn". The exact meaning of this statement is not clear. It has been interpreted variously to mean that the verses comprising Numbers 10:35-36 were once part of a larger work, the whole of which was withdrawn from circulation or that these two verses were considered a work of themselves and withdrawn from circulation.<sup>3</sup> The latter concept, that these verses are themselves a separate book, is familiar from Mishna Yadaim 3:5 and Bar Kappara's enumeration of the number of texts in the Torah. The former interpretation of the statement leads us to wonder about the origin of these verses. The relevant text from Midrash Haserot V'Yiterot,<sup>4</sup> holds a clue to that source. It reads,

tryn pswqyn Šēlyhn nwnyn hpwkyn wntplw btwrh  
Šhm mnbwāt ʔldd wmydd...wyŠ ʔwmryn mlmd Šhyh  
Šm spr gnwz

There are two verses over which there are 'inverted nuns' which were included in the Torah for they are from the prophecies of Eldad and Medad...some say that they (the 'inverted nuns') teach that there was a

withdrawn book (spr gnwz) there.

Here, introduced as the source of these verses, is a previously unknown text which presumably contained the literary remains of the prophecies of Eldad and Medad.<sup>5</sup>

The accuracy of the claim made in these midrashic works has been the source of discussion for many scholars but is not of relevance in this inquiry. Of importance for us is the evidence contained in these works of a rabbinic concept that the 85 letters of Numbers 10:35-36 had been introduced into the Torah from a text which had been taken out of circulation, ngnz.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, the idea that some verses of the Torah, few though they may be in this case, had their origin in another ancient text rather than at Sinai, is of significance to the present discussion. This idea is closely akin to the previously mentioned rabbinic ideas namely that at all times this text was perceived as different from all others and thus worthy of special attention. If Numbers 10:35 and 36 did come from another text, surely preservation is required, as mentioned in the Mishna, for it is a text of itself, unique, as stated in Siphre in the name of Rabbi Judah.

The latter rabbinic idea that this text is from another source is radical for it ultimately calls into question a foundation stone of Jewish religious belief. An important pillar of the tradition has long been that the whole Torah, down to the smallest of the 'jots and tittles' is of divine origin. Maimonides stated in his thirteen principles of the tradition,

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE SIXTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

During the period of formal Masoretic activity the Masoretes concerned themselves with the accurate recording of details concerning all markings in the Torah, be they letters or diacritical markings of any sort. Their intent was to record for posterity all details about the text of the Torah which they had received via the tradition, thus preserving the theoretically original text received on Sinai. The evidence to be presented from this period shows that a whole new series of legends had become associated with or had developed to explain the diacritical marks surrounding Numbers 10:35-36.

Both Midrash Mishle and Midrash Haserot V'Yiterot contain significant information from this period about the verses in question. In Midrash Mishle<sup>1</sup> we find

wyhy bnswe h'arwn byn lmelh byn lmt' nqwd.  
rby xmr spr hyh b'pny cšmw wngnz

"When the ark set forth" is dotted both above and below. Rabbi Judah says it was a text of itself and was withdrawn from circulation (ngnz).

"The Torah has been revealed from heaven: This implies our belief that the whole Torah found in our hands this day is the Torah that was handed down by Moses and that is all of divine origin."<sup>7</sup> A solution to this problem is easily proposed if it is said that the text of Numbers 10:35-36 though not of Sinaitic origin is still of divine origin i.e. the prophecies of Eldad and Medad were real prophecies and thus worthy of preservation within the Torah.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Torah remains a text wholly divine.<sup>9</sup>

Notwithstanding the above compromise solution to the problem of the source of these verses, there still remains evidence for a rabbinic idea that various sources, be they all or partly divine, were used to compile the text of the Torah which exists today. This claim would not be surprising if its source were in the modern higher textual criticism of the Bible rather than mainstream rabbinic lore.

As we have seen, by the year 900 c.e. there evolved three distinct ideas about the diacritical marks which surround Numbers 10:35-36. First, we have the tradition that these marks were introduced to symbolize this text as a 'short text'. The second tradition states that the symbols offset a text which has its source in the Book of Eldad and Medad. Thirdly, one tradition held that the markings denoted the misplacement of this text in an edition of the Torah.

Lieberman, as stated above, has determined these markings to be diacritical marks used to symbolize a 'short section' of text. This, we remember, is how the Mishna referred to the text. Notwithstanding the theory of Lieberman about these markings, it



is certainly clear that this text had about it some very special status which was in need of a standard method of deliniation from the rest of the text. The method chosen by the scholars of the Hellenistic/Rabbinic era to single it out as that unique text with special status was found in the introduction into the text of standard, familiar, Greek, diacritical marks.

It is certain at this point that the theories of the Masoretic period, as presented above, had their source in the markings introduced into the text in the Hellenistic period. These diacritical marks were popular and understood in the ancient world and thus an obvious choice. An understanding of their primarily secular purpose was eventually lost to the Jewish tradition. What was preserved, however, was the notion that these markings delineated a text whose origin was different from the one which was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. This being the meaning of the markings, the text had to have a source which was claimed to be the book of Eldad and Medad.

The preservation of this text was necessitated by its being a 'short text'. This, in its Jewish context, was one fulfilling the minimum requirements of holiness. The best method determined to preserve it was to incorporate it into another text.<sup>10</sup> The location of its placement in that host text was still under some discussion in the Talmudic period as witnessed by Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel's statement that this text was misplaced in the Torah.

The graphic representation of the markings themselves has also undergone considerable evolution. The earliest markings

were to be dots. Under the influence of Hellenistic culture and its scribal traditions, these symbols evolved to resemble those used to mark texts of special significance. The text from Midrash Haserot V'Yiterot, mentioned above, is the earliest text in which we find the symbols around Numbers 10:35-36 described as 'inverted nuns', nwnyn hpwkyn. The evolution of a figure described as 'inverted nun' from the 'shofar-shaped' figure described in Maskehet Sofrim, is evident.

A Geniza text published by E. N. Adler is, chronologically, the next text which deals with this issue.<sup>11</sup> As part of the discussion on the following point

wmybey lyh lswpr lcšwt try nwnyn hpwkyn lpršt  
wyhy bnswe hōrwn

He must learn that the scribe is to fashion  
 two inverted nuns at the section 'When the  
 ark began to travel'?,

we find graphic representations of two diacritical marks followed by

kywšw bw ywrđy hym bōnywt cwsš mlōkh

Similarly "Others go down to the sea in  
 ships, to ply their trade in the mighty  
 waters....." (Psalm 107:23ff).

This reference to Psalms is to the only other Biblical passage in which diacritical marks of the sort found at Numbers 10:35-36 appear. Only the shortest stretch of the imagination is needed to picture the diacritical marks which are represented in this text as having the shape of fish hooks, that which fisherman, they who "go down to the sea in ships" use in their trade. A second midrashic connection is surely to be found in that the Aramaic word 'nun' means 'fish'.<sup>12</sup>

This text contains further evidence of the belief that the source of this text was the Book of Eldad and Medad. Clues to this period's representation of the diacritical markings around the text are also found here. It quotes a midrashic text as follows

mh rəw ḥkm(ym) lytn nwnyn hpwkyn ʿl wyhy hem  
kmtəwnnym ʔl ʔmrw ḥkmym kl htwrh kwlh mywḥdt  
lnbwət mšh hwš mnbwət ʔldd wmydd lpykk sygn  
bnwn kpwp wntpl btwrh

Why did the sages place inverted nuns on (before) 'The people were complaining'? For the sages said, 'The whole Torah is from the prophecy of Moses except for the prophecy of Eldad and Medad', therefore they were enclosed in a bent nun and included in the Torah.

We see from these texts that the technical term employed to refer to this diacritical mark had become 'inverted nun' (nwn hpwkh) and it looked like a curved or bent nun, (nwn kpwph). Oddly, the mark that appears in Adler's edition of this text is not as described in the text itself but does resemble the shofar-shaped mark of Maseket Sofrim.

Immediately following the text cited above is a forceful declaration about texts of the Torah. It outlaws scrolls in which dots appear in places other than the usual ten. This is a decree nullifying all texts of Numbers 10:35-36 in which dots appear and shows that as late as the end of the first millenium of the common era texts containing dots at this passage were still extant.

The major Masoretic work Diqduqe Ha'Teamim of Aaron ben Moshe ben Asher<sup>13</sup> mentions the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 as follows:

ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ: ᵑᵑ ᵑ [9] ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ ᵑᵑᵑ  
ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ ᵑ [2] ᵑᵑᵑᵑᵑ

Segregated letters: there are nine, their  
 symbols being reversed letters: two in the  
 Torah.....

The reference to the markings as 'segregated letters' shows that an attempt was being made in the Masoretic literature to

establish the symbols as letter-like but offset from the rest of the text. Exactly which letter was to be reversed to create the appropriate marking is not mentioned. This letter-like but segregated design stemmed from a need to prevent the nullification of a Torah scroll in which extraneous symbols appeared. The description of the symbols as בַּיָּד לְהִפְרֹשׁ (a reversed letter) shows that the intent was to ensure that it was not possible to mistake the letter-like markings for any two letters of the text. By segregating the symbol, whatever its design, from the rest of the eighty-five letters of Numbers 10:35-36, the text itself remained unchanged. More significantly, *Diqduqe HaTeamim* shows that a symbol, visibly different from all other markings of any kind in the Torah, had now been introduced into the scroll with little known basis and for no substantial, clear, and accepted reason.<sup>14</sup> The comment of Hai Gaon to Tractate Shabbat 103a<sup>15</sup> reflects the authority invested in *Diqduqe HaTeamim* and its tradition. In reference to symbols which could be drawn on the Sabbath without its violation, he stated

בַּיָּד לְהִפְרֹשׁ בְּכָל הַשָּׁנָה לְפָנֵינוּ  
בְּכָל הַיּוֹם לְפָנֵינוּ בְּכָל הַלַּיְלָה לְפָנֵינוּ  
בְּכָל הַשָּׁבָע לְפָנֵינוּ

They are symbols which are not recognized in the script in which they are found, rather symbols in the spaces<sup>16</sup> like the inverted nuns

(nwnyn hpwkyn) found at "When the ark began to travel".

In this comment, the Gaon decrees that two symbols which are not recognized letters of a common alphabetic script are not considered as actual letters, thus, they do not nullify a Torah scroll. These unrecognized symbols, "in the spaces" are the segregated symbols of Diqduqe HaTeamim.

The later Masoretic work Oklah Ve'Oklah<sup>17</sup> reflects the further entrenchment of these symbols in the tradition. In it we find a list titled

ט (9) pswqyn ʔyt bhwn khdyn symn hpwkh

nine verses which have symbols similar to this inverted one.

The text of Frensdorff includes a facsimile of a reversed 'nun-shaped' symbol which is best described as similar to a partially elongated left square bracket (See Appendix). Though the approach of this author is to deny any actual graphic representations of diacritical marks found in texts printed or otherwise, the reversed and inverted nun-like marking found in Oklah Ve'Oklah is a likely representation for its supposed period of history.

It is apparent that the word hpwkh or hpwkyn, as used to describe the graphic design of the markings, was interpreted in

various ways. It was understood both as inverted and as reversed. This variation in meaning proves later to be a major complication in any interpretation of the description of the diacritical marks.

Our next major sources of information about the development of the diacritical marks are the commentaries of Rashi on both the Bible and the Talmud.<sup>18</sup> Berliner's edition of the Biblical commentary reads

cśh lw symnywt mlpnyw wmlḥryw lwmr sḥyn zh  
mqwmw wlmh nktb kən kdy lhpsyq byn pwrenwt  
lpwrenwt

He made symbols before it (the text) and after it (the text) because this is not its place. Why was it written here? In order to interrupt between one calamity and another.

Rashi followed the tradition of earlier authorities placing the diacritical marks before and after the text of Numbers 10:35-36. The major deviation from the tradition of the Masoretic period is in Rashi's terminology. His descriptive use of mlpnyw wmlḥryw to locate the markings 'before and after' is far more explicit than any previously encountered, 'above and below', mlmślh wmlmḥ. Rashi's opinion as to the purpose of the markings was that they were to show that the present location of the text is not its proper or permanent location. It was placed

here as a buffer between two texts which told of calamities. This is an opinion previously spelled out in Tractate Shabbat 116b-17a by an anonymous rabbi.

Rashi's comment to the use of the word symnywt in Tractate Rosh Hashanah 17b reads byn pswq lpswq y<sup>5</sup> symnyn hpwkyn kzh... [between verses there are symbols such as these...] followed, in the printed editions, by an inverted and reversed nun character. The symbol represented in the printed edition of the Talmud is the symbol used by the printer/typesetter to represent the marking found in the manuscript and is not necessarily the symbol which Rashi would have chosen. The influence of the printer's ability or lack thereof, to produce an accurate or proper representation of symbols other than the standard letters is illustrated here.

The orientation of the markings in Rashi's view is to be hpwkyn inverted and their placement before Numbers 10:35 and after Numbers 10:36. However, it is not absolutely clear from the text of Rashi's comment whether this use of hpwkyn is to be understood as 'inverted' or as 'reversed'. The printer/typesetter understood hpwkyn as both inverted and reversed. It is possible that the printed text does reflect an authentic design for the diacritical mark since the notion of a reversed letter was documented earlier in Diqduqe HaTeamim. Nevertheless, Rashi's comment is silent on the point of reversal of the letter.

The followers of Rashi preserved their mentor's tradition regarding the position of the markings before and after Numbers



10:35-36. However, the Hilkot Sepher Torah<sup>19</sup> of Jacob ben Meir (Rabbenu Tam) preserves not the inverted or inverted and reversed nun-shaped mark but a kaf-shaped mark. This could, once again, be the printer/typesetter's liberty with a manuscript but it is impossible to determine which of the two orientations is correct. The kaf-shaped marking would be close to the understanding of hpwkyn as 'inverted', as found in Rashi's comment in Rosh Hashanah. As well, it is not too distant from the nun shape in that a kaf is basically an elongated nun. It is certainly possible that Rashi's descendants chose to use the 'kaf' rather than the nun letter since Rashi's comments are not specific about the symbol to be used. Most likely Rabbenu Tam intended to follow Rashi's teaching accurately but the tradition became confused.

One would certainly have expected Maimonides to have included the relevant information about these diacritical marks in his great codification of Jewish law, the Mishne Torah. We know of his desire for accurate texts and his supposed use of a ben Asher text in compiling his laws pertaining to the writing of Torah scrolls.<sup>20</sup> He wrote, "He [the scribe] should be careful regarding the large letters and the small letters, the dotted letters and the different letters like the 'curled' letter pay (p" cyn hlpwpt), and the bent letters which the scribes have copied one from another."<sup>21</sup> The absence of any mention of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 at this point is odd, especially because other instances of extra-textual diacritical marks are included, specifically, the dotted letters. Maimonides

does tell us that scribal traditions which were developed by scribes themselves do not invalidate a scroll. 22

Regarding the apparent omission of various laws not found in the code I. Twersky has written,

"While the role of human fallability, the impact of forgetfulness, and the possibility of inadvertent omission must be taken into account, an attempt should also be made to identify a few basic reasons for deliberate omission. One must be attuned to the silences as well as to the sounds of Maimonides writing.

It is known that Maimonides systematically omitted laws and practices which he considered to be rooted in accidental, transient, non-obligatory beliefs. As part of his quest for a sensitized and rationalized view of religion and morality, he wanted to jettison certain objectionable beliefs and improper customs." 23

A similar lack of information is found in the important Masoretic work of Meir Abulafia, Masoret Seyag LaTorah.<sup>24</sup>

The witness to the next generation of Masoretic activity is the major scribal work, Qiryat Sefer by Menahem Meiri.<sup>25</sup> In reference to the diacritical marks around Numbers 10:35-36 Meiri states

yš mpršym mcnyn nzwrw ʔhwr whn nwnyn hpwkw  
šyš mhn štym btrh ʔht lpy wyhy bnswe wʔht  
lʔhryh

Some explain that the meaning of mnwzrt is as in the verse "they turned their backs"

(Isaiah 1:4). They are the inverted nuns of which there are two in the Torah, one preceeding "When the ark began to travel..." (Numbers 10:35) and one following it.

Clearly Meiri was familiar with the name and description of the segregated diacritical marks (mnwzrw) which he tries to rationalize in a rather clever midrashic fashion. His midrashic explanation is based on a text of Numbers 10:35-36 in which the diacritical marks were nuns which were both segregated and reversed. His explanation connects the 'turning away' of Israel, from God, as described in Isaiah 1:4 with the 'turned away' or reversed orientation of the diacritical marks in the text. This is the first evidence to this date (13th century) of a rabbinic opinion in which hpwkw was to be interpreted as 'reversed' though, if we can accept the graphic representations of various earlier texts (eg. Rashi on Rosh HaShanah, Oklah Ve'Oklah), in practice this had been common for quite some time.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE THIRTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES: MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION

Throughout the history of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36, there have been many efforts to justify, rationalize, or explain each format using contemporary, traditional methods of interpretation. We have seen such efforts using midrashic techniques in texts such as *Ginzei Mitzrayim*<sup>1</sup> and in Me'iri's *Qiryat Sefer*<sup>2</sup>. The ability and tendency to re-interpret the purpose or message of the diacritical marks is nowhere clearer or more significant than in the mystical tradition which began to change the face of the Jewish tradition in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The Zohar interprets the symbols found around Numbers 10:35-36 as representing the presence of God, the Shechinah.<sup>3</sup> This, in itself, leads to some difference of opinion between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon regarding the design of the symbols. Rabbi Eliezer's opinion was that the Shechinah rested above the Ark while it travelled ahead of the body of the nation. Because of God's love for His people, the Shechinah was concerned with them, and thus, during the travels in the desert, while ahead of the mass of Israelites, she kept an eye out for the people,

khoy ayyl d'zlt kd ayhw azyl phdr apwy l'tr  
dnpyq

like a gazelle which when it leaves turns to  
 whence it came

i. e. the Shechinah's body faced forward but her eyes peered  
 backward looking at the people. The text continues,

w'cd kd arwn hwh ntyl amr msh kwmh h- l'  
tšbwk lwn phdr onpk lqbn kdyn n"wn athdr  
lgbyyhw .....kman dmhdr onpyh lman drhym,

thus when the ark travelled Moses said,  
 "Arise O God..." (Numbers 10:35) (he meant)  
 don't abandon us, turn your countenance  
 towards us. Then the nun turned its face  
 towards Israel.....as one turns towards his  
 beloved.

When the ark set down to rest,

kdyn phdra nw"n onpyh mysr'wl wathdra lgby  
arwn

then the nun, (the Shekinah), turned her face  
 from the people towards the Ark.

Rabbi Shimon, on the other hand, did not wholly agree with Rabbi Eliezer. He stated,

בלי חכּה לִּי אֶחָדָא אֶנְפִּי מִשְׁרָאֵל דִּי חֲכִי בִּעֵי  
נֹון לִּתְּהִיבָא מִגֻּוּנָא דִּתְּהִיבָא דִּלְעֵילָא חֲכִי נֹון מִנְּזִרָא  
לִּתְּהִיבָא חֲכִי נֹון בִּתְּהִיבָא מִשְׁרָאֵל לִּגְבֵי אֶרְוּנָא

but not thus did (the Shechinah) turn from Israel, when the ark rested, for if so the nun should be turned around in a manner opposite the previous one above, that is, a reversed nun (nwn mnwzrt lṯḥwr); one nun turned backward and a second normal nun facing the Ark.

His point was that the Shechinah would never have turned its face away from the people of Israel and the orientation of the diacritical marks should reflect that. Certainly the basis for the comment of Rabbi Shimon rests in the scrolls and texts of his day in which the diacritical mark before Numbers 10:35 was identical to the mark following Numbers 10:36.

The Zoharic motif text of the gazelle looking back to whence it came is borrowed from Song of Songs 2:9. This analogy used with the symbolic interpretation of the diacritical marks is based on the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs in which God is the lover and the nation of Israel is His beloved.

In the fifteenth century Tzemah ben Shlomo Duran of Algiers wrote a many faceted response to an inquiry regarding the purpose of the nuns at Numbers 10:35-36 and Rashi's statement that they should be located elsewhere in the Torah.<sup>4</sup> [See Appendix for text.] His response is a concise compendium of the mystical lore about the diacritical marks which had developed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

He begins with short reference to the statements from Mishna Yadaim 3:5 regarding eighty-five letter texts defiling the hands and the midrashic exposition showing that the Torah contains seven texts. This is followed by numerous symbolic and mystical explanations for the inclusion of nun-shaped symbols in the text. Duran, as he states clearly in the response, intended to include only minimal information on any of the topics he would mention,

htšw<sup>v</sup>bh bzh 2rwkh 2l<sup>2</sup> š<sup>v</sup>ny mzyr lk ršy prkym  
lbd

the answer to this is lengthy thus I mention  
only chapter headings.

He states that the markings symbolize the one hundred blessings which a Jew is to recite daily, each letter nun having a numeric value of fifty.<sup>5</sup> Another of his explanations claims that the marks separate various tales of calamities, a familiar Talmudic concept. A rather obscure explanation for the shape of the letter nun itself is also suggested. He states that the

shape of the letter nun is reminiscent of the letter 'kaf'. If the sound of the letter kaf is joined to the sound of the letter nun the word "kn" (nest) is formed. Following this twisted linguistic/midrashic path, he makes a veiled reference to the complaints of the Israelites, recorded in Numbers 11:1, for which the nation of Israel would afterwards lament. The root of the Hebrew for 'lament' is "knn", comprising the letters which make the word "kn", kaf and nun. Duran concludes this particular section of his response saying "wāyn lglwt ywtr mzh" [no more than this is to be revealed].

Duran begins his explanation of Rashi's remarks regarding the proper location of the text by, once again, using the numerical value of the letter nun. He explains the inversion or reversal of the diacritical marks saying that marks had to be oriented as such in order to not invalidate the text by their extraneous nature. This is the same concept as introduced in Diquke Ha'Teamim. In another place he says that this, the inversion of the letter nun, whose numerical value is fifty, points to the location, above the present location, where, according to Rashi, the text should be,

wlkn hy> hn- hpwkh klwmr šyš 'n [50] pršywt  
lmclh mmqwm zh

therefore the nun is inverted that is to say that there are fifty sections of text above this place.



Thus, he determined, the proper location for our text is following Numbers 2:17.

From the information which is included in Duran's responsum, between the lines of mysticism and kabbalistic symbolism, we have few details to learn about the design of the diacritical marks. It is not at all clear from his information whether the nun-shaped symbols were to be reversed or inverted or both. The symbolism whereby the diacritical marks are used to point to the proper place in the text makes sense with either orientation since this notion is based on the numerical value and not their orientation. If the nun is inverted then it symbolizes that what is at the bottom should be above. If the symbol is reversed it shows that what came after should be before. Once again, the meaning of the word hpk (inverted) is the problem.

It is apparent that the mystical meaning of the symbols was of far more importance during this period than the details of their design. In fact, it is apparent that the mystical interest in these diacritical marks and the effort expended to rationalize their existence within the tradition of mystical interpretation led to their further entrenchment in the tradition.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE PRINTING PRESS

The introduction of printing technology in the late fifteenth century and its popularization in the sixteenth century had a tremendous impact on all matters where texts of any kind were concerned. Until then all the issues of orientation and representation of the diacritical marks were decided by an individual scribe based on his learning or that of the scholars in his community. By the end of the fifteenth century, the printing press was able to spread one particular version of any text, accurate or not, in vast numbers to far reaching places.

The task of preparing and editing a text for printing at the famous Bomberg press in Venice fell to Felix Praetensis and later to Jacob ben Hayyim Ibn Adoniyah. In essence, they made the editorial and textual decisions as the abovementioned scribes had earlier done, but their method was different. They collected manuscripts and versions of the Torah and its accompanying Masoretic lists. Jacob ben Hayyim produced a new Masorah listing for the Second Rabbinic Bible printed in 1524.<sup>1</sup> The scope of this task itself perhaps enables us to understand the apparent mistake which Jacob ben Hayyim made in editing the text of Numbers 10:35-36. The confusing and convoluted history of the diacritical marks surely added to his difficult task.

For many centuries the strictest adherence to the tradition of segregating the diacritical marks from the rest of the text was observed, for obvious reasons. The weight of rabbinic opinion since the Masoretic period favoured this format. Jacob ben Hayyim rejected this tradition when he introduced two inverted and reversed nun-shaped diacritical marks into the text itself. [See Appendix for facsimile.] One of them appears in the word bns of Numbers 10:35 while the second, placed wholly outside the eighty-five letters of our text, is in the word kmtōnnym of Numbers 11:1.

The introduction of the symbols into the text was a radical move of which ben Hayyim must have been aware. It is far different from the inversion and/or reversal of a letter or symbol outside the meaningful text. The abovementioned evidence shows that our sages were less concerned about extraneous letters if they were outside of the actual text, but such symbols had to remain outside the text and measures had been taken to insure that they did. These measures, apparently, were unsuccessful. There is no evidence to support a claim that ben Hayyim was following an existing tradition in placing the markings in the verses themselves.

There are two sources in the traditional literature which do help explain ben Hayyim's radical departure from tradition. The comment of Rabbenu Bahya<sup>2</sup> to these verses reflects an early tradition where one of the nuns inside the text was differentiated from the others. He wrote,

w<sup>c</sup>wd y<sup>k</sup> t<sup>c</sup>m bnw"n hpwkh ky mlt bns<sup>c</sup> yrmwz  
lmspr y<sup>c</sup>qb

further, there is a meaning to the inverted nun and it is that the word bns<sup>c</sup> hints at the number y<sup>c</sup>qb.

The word y<sup>c</sup>qb has a numeric value of 182 as does the word bns<sup>c</sup>. It appears that this comment reflects the nun in bns<sup>c</sup> differentiated, albeit midrashically, from the rest of the text. If this is not the case, Bahya's comment is not understood.

The major source for ben Hayyim's mistaken initiative is the lists of Masoretic information which he used to compile his new editions of the Masorah and the Biblical text. The note in Frensdorff's edition of *Okhlah Ve'Okhlah*<sup>3</sup> which details the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 and the note in the printed Bible differ in their respective lists of verses where the nwn hpwkh should appear. *Okhlah Ve'Okhlah* states, "t- [9] pswqyn ʔyt bhwn khdyn symn ... hpwkh ...." [nine verses in which there are inverted symbols like this ...]. This is followed by the following list of verses: Numbers 10:34, 10:35, 10:36, 11:1, Psalms 107:23, 107:24, 107:25, 107:26, 107:27, 107:28, 107:40, 107:41. There are twelve verses listed but only nine are to be offset by the diacritical mark. The verses 10:34 and 11:1 must have been included in this list to show that the diacritical marks were to be placed in between the verses 10:34 and 10:35 and the verses 10:36 and 11:1. How a scribe was supposed to know or

determine this is not clear. In the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible the explanatory note is similar to that of Okhlah Ve'Okhlah but the list there does not contain references to Numbers 10:34 or 11:1. The note reads, "t- [9] pswqyn >yt bhwn hdyn symn ... nwn hpwkh ...." [nine verses in which there are inverted symbols like this ...], followed by references to Numbers 10:35, 11:1, and the various verses of Psalm 107. The note and references in the Bomberg edition would surely lead one to think that the symbols belonged inside the verses themselves. One would not so readily assume this to be the case when looking at Okhlah ve'Okhlah because more than nine verses are in that list. Just as the note in the Rabbinic Bible does not list Numbers 10:34 and 11:1, the verses which should surround the diacritical mark, so it does not list Psalm 107:41 which follows a similar diacritical mark.<sup>4</sup> Bomberg must have been trying to get the Biblical text to agree with the details of the newly compiled Masorah by making the number of occurrences of the diacritical mark in the whole Biblical text agree with the Masorah listing which he possessed or chose as accurate.

Another source which sheds light on the placement of the diacritical marks in the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible only explains the choice of letters to be offset once ben Hayyim decided to 'de-segregate' the diacritical marks. This source is the text seen earlier in which bar Kappara counted Numbers 10:35-36 as the fifth book in a Torah consisting of seven separate books. Ben Hayyim's placement of the symbols makes perfect sense in the light of this ancient opinion. He chose the initial nun in this

text, i.e. the nun of bnsc, of 10:35, to mark the start of a new text. The first nun of the next text, the sixth book of the Torah, starting at 11:1, was treated in a similar fashion. Of course, the choice of letter was not difficult for it was determined by the weighty tradition behind the nun symbol, be it inverted and/or reversed. In such a fashion Bomberg printed a text in which Numbers 10:35-36 was offset from the rest of the Torah. Diacritical marks to represent the special status of this text were placed, albeit with a new twist, 'above and below' it, as some of the early evidence dealing with this text suggests is appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the unique orientation and location of the diacritical marks in the 1524 Rabbinic Bible, those which appear in this first printed Bible are larger than the normal, common nun found throughout the rest of the text.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The editing and printing of Biblical texts was by no means the sole Jewish intellectual achievement of the sixteenth century. During the latter part of this century Lurianic Kabbalism developed in Israel and in Italy, while in Poland the halachists performed their pilpulistic casuistry. Moritz Steinschneider is most succinct in stating, "It was now necessary for the Orthodox Halachah to defend its authority amongst the masses." In particular, referring to matters most pertinent to this discussion, he continues, "The secret meaning ascribed to the letters of the Bible, to the signs (vowels, accents, even ornaments) and to their Masoretical rules.....reached their greatest pitch".<sup>1</sup>

It was in this turmoil of intellectual and deeply religious sentiment that the greatest authorities in each of these Jewish worlds voiced their opinions on the proper and accurate representation of the diacritical marks of Numbers 10:35-36. These authorities were Solomon Luria (Maharshal), Meir ben Gedalia of Lublin (Maharam of Lublin), Mordechai Jaffe (Levush), and the Italian masoretes Menahem de Lonzano and Yedidyah Solomon Norzi (Minhat Shai).

Solomon Luria, a prominent figure in Eastern Europe, had,

by 1567, held various rabbinic positions including one in Lublin. This very independent and outspoken figure was opposed to the pilpulistic methodology predominant around him, even in his own Yeshiva.<sup>2</sup> Never one to avoid a controversial statement, Luria wrote a comment to Tractate Shabbat wherein the discussion refers to the symbols in question.<sup>3</sup> There he says,

bmdwyqym l> r>yty wqrwb b>yny ŷpswlh lpy  
mh ŷpslynn bhsr wytr >pylw >wt >ht

in corrected texts (mdwyqym) I did not see them (the diacritical marks) and it seems to me that they are invalid according to what becomes invalidated by even one extraneous or lacking letter.

Luria continues his comment stating his opinion that the writing of these diacritical marks in a scroll was forbidden.

Luria proposed, in the abovementioned gloss, that the reference to symnywt (symbols) in Tractate Shabbat was to the usual nine spaces left between 'sections' of biblical text, (whsymnym ŷn>mrw k>n r"l ŷcśh prśh lpnyh wl>hryh). If this was the case, Luria continues, then the familiar nun-shaped diacritical mark commonly found in his day probably had their origin with a student who introduced the mark into a text for some unknown reason.



In a later responsum Luria provides the reader with a list of the many and variously designed symbols and formats for the diacritical marks used at Numbers 10:35-36.<sup>4</sup>

One of Luria's prominent pupils was Mordechai Jaffe. Jaffe left Luria's yeshiva after a few years of study, returning to Prague where he became the head of its local Yeshiva. Soon after this, in 1561, the Jews were expelled from Prague whereupon Jaffe took up residence in Italy.<sup>5</sup> Having already begun to delve into the mystical elements of the tradition, Jaffe continued his studies to the point where in his own estimation he considered Kabbalistic study to be a "crowning jewel of spirituality".

Jaffe allowed the mystical interpretation of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 to influence his halachic ruling regarding them. We see this clearly portrayed in the position he took regarding the diacritical marks and in the apparent influence he had on his teacher, Solomon Luria, on this specific point. Above, we saw how staunchly opposed Luria was to the inclusion of inverted nun symbols and the like in Biblical texts. However, after Jaffe left Italy and settled in Poland we find that Luria, who had not previously mentioned Zoharic traditions in his comments, not only mentions them but does so in the most glowing of terms. He states

וְהַ"ק צְיִנְתִּי בְּזִוְרֵי הַמִּנְחָה יבִּי הַמִּקְוֶה וְהַזֶּה  
עֲנִינִי וְהַרְלִמְרִי וְצִינְתִּי תִלְוִי כֻלָּל בְּסִמְנֵימִי וְבִלְ

qrwb ywtr ׀ hpšt wmmnw tšmč šp bymy  
htn>ym hyh qblh bydm hpykt hnwnyn ׀  
šspyq npl bnyhn byn hsprym

Afterwards, I studied the Zohar, which is the source, which is altogether different and not at all dependent on the symbols but is closer to the simple meaning of the text from which we understand that even in the days of the Tanaim the inversion of the nuns was an inherited tradition but a doubt arose amongst the texts.<sup>6</sup>

Further evidence of the major influence which the traditions of mystical interpretation had on the legalists of Poland is found in the Responsa of Meir ben Gedaliah, the Maharam of Lublin, who assumed the rabbinic position, in Lublin, formerly held by Solomon Luria.<sup>7</sup>

After an analysis of the available sources, the Maharam of Lublin's final opinion is based on his interpretation of the abovementioned Zohar text.<sup>8</sup>

mšmč šnw"n šl bnsc yhyh mhwpkt lgmry r>š  
hclyw- lmt̃h kzh (.....) ׀bl nw"n šl wbñh  
hy> mhwpkt mlpnym l>hwr kzh (.....) ky kn  
hw׀ šm msqnt ršb"y

thus the nun of bns should be totally inverted, its head below, like this (....) but the nun of wbnhh is inverted inside out for such is the deduction of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai.<sup>9</sup>

He categorically rejected all of Luria's opinions stating, in part,

Shry cynk hrwawt ShmdrSym whmprSym  
Shbty Skwln cynn mprSym kdbryb lkk cyn  
lpswl hs"t Snktbw bh plw hnwny"n hpwkyn  
Shry yS lhn cl mh Sysmkw

It is clear to see that none of the midrashim and the commentaries which I have brought interpret according to his statements. Therefore, a Torah scroll in which these nuns are written is not to be declared invalid for there is substantiation for this.

Having thus rejected Luria's thesis, he states his opinion that the weight of rabbinic literature throughout the ages was in favour of one or another set of symbols at Numbers 10:35-36. From the evidence available to him in the sources

Pesikta Rabati, Sifre, Zohar, Tractate Shabbat, the commentary of Levi ben Gershom, and the comments of Bahya ben Asher, Maharam admitted that the rabbinic sources were neither unanimous nor clear in their understanding of the text in Tractate Shabbat 115a. In particular, he points out that Sifre refers to a dotted text while most others refer to inverted nuns,

hmdr<sup>Y</sup>ym hlwgym mh hn hsmnywt <sup>Y</sup>hmdr<sup>Y</sup> spry  
swbr <sup>Y</sup>hn nqwdwt nqwd c1 wyhy bnsc wkn  
bswp >lpy ysr>l. wkn m<sup>Y</sup>smc bpy- hrlb"q  
[Levi ben Gershom] wmdr<sup>Y</sup> <sup>Y</sup>l psigt<sup>Y</sup> swbr  
<sup>Y</sup>hn nwny"n hpwkyn wkn nm<sup>Y</sup>q<sup>Y</sup> brbynw bhyy  
pr<sup>Y</sup>st bhcltk

the midrashim are divided as to what the symbols (hsmnywt) are; Midrash Sifre 'thinks' that they are dots on "When the ark began to travel" and after "the myriads of Israel", similarly we find in the commentary of Ralbag and the midrash Pesikta 'thinks' that they are inverted nuns and similarly we find in (the commentary of) Rabbenu Bahya in the portion of 'Baha'alotecha'".

Meir ben Gedalia of Lublin was also careful to note,

amongst the other texts and sources which he brings to bear on this problem, the lack of its mention in Maimonides' code,

וְאֵלֶּיךָ הִרְבֵּנוּ לִפְנֵי הַזְּקֵנִים כְּמִנְיָן לִפְנֵי הַזְּקֵנִים  
הַנֶּהוּ"נ הַפְּקֻחִים וְלִפְנֵי הַזְּקֵנִים הַנֶּהוּ"נ הַפְּקֻחִים  
בְּמִשְׁרָתָם וְהִנֵּה מִשְׁכַּנְתָּ לְךָ"ע

And even Maimonides did not mention them. Similarly he did not mention the inverted nun of wymt trḥ bḥrn [Terah died at Haran; Genesis 11:32] which is found in the Masorah and agreed upon by all.<sup>10</sup>

It seems that his opinion regarding Maimonides' apparent oversight is that in cases where the Masorah is clear on an issue or where authorities were in agreement on a particular point of textual detail, then Maimonides found no need to include the detail in his code.

It was now fifty years since Bomberg's edition of the Rabbinic Bible had appeared, and reaction to its mistake at Numbers 10:35-36 was due. This reaction came from, the heart of the Kabbalistic world, from Menahem de Lonzano in his work 'Or Torah'.<sup>11</sup> Born in Constantinople, de Lonzano spent many years in Safed, with Isaac Luria (The Ari) and his disciples, before travelling to the other Kabbalistic centre, Italy. De Lonzano's lengthy note on the text of Numbers 10:35-36 focusses on the design and placement of the diacritical marks

in the Bomberg/ben Hayyim Bible of 1524. His intent in commenting on the mistakes found in the printed Rabbinic Bible was to rectify what he saw as the sad state of the text resulting from the proliferation of various mistakes in Bomberg's Rabbinic Bible.

He opposed the absence of segregated symbols before and after the text of Numbers 10:35-36 saying,

לְכָל שְׁמֵי שְׁמֵי מִנְּחֵל כֻּלִּי בְּשֵׁי הַפְּסָקִים  
לְפָנֶיךָ וְאַחֲרֶיךָ פְּרָשׁ וְיֵחָל בְּנִסְכָּי וּבְכִלֵּי שֵׁשׁ  
וּבְשֵׁיכֶנֶז יֵשׁ שְׁמֵי שְׁנֵי מִנְּחֵל מִנְּחֵל כֻּלִּי - [1]  
בְּפָסֶקֶת וְיֵחָל בְּנִסְכָּי וְכֵן - [1] בְּפָסֶקֶת וְיֵחָל בְּנִסְכָּי

He didn't put any segregated nun whatsoever in the two spaces before and after the section of "When the ark began to travel" (Numbers 10:35) while in all the scrolls of Spain and Franco/Germany there are two segregated nuns, one in the space before "When the ark began to travel" and one (at) "And the nation was... (Numbers 10:36).

De Lonzano also points out that the second mistake made in the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible was the inversion of the nuns in bns<sup>c</sup> and in kmt<sup>a</sup>nnym. He says that this was a popular mistake in contemporary texts,

wṭcwt hšny wgm hw- bk"d hgdwl šhpk nwn šl  
bns wnw šl kmtanny- zwhy ṭcwt mpwrsm,

The second mistake, also found in the 'Great 24' [the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible] where the nun of bns and the nun of kmt nny are inverted. This is a well-known mistake.

even though the text of Sefer Kanah, popular in his day as a mystical interpretation of the Torah, interpreted this text according to the mistake in Bomberg's Bible. To prove that Bomberg's editors were incorrect, de Lonzano brings three items of proof. Firstly, the evidence found in Shabbat 115b,

lṭ amrw ṭlṭ ššryk symnywt lpnyh wlpḥryh  
šl pršt wyhy bns lhprydh msw- pr- šlpnyh  
wmṭhlyt pršh šḥryh ṭbl hṭwtywt šbpswqym  
lṭ šww wlp clh cl lbm lšnwtm wlpkm

They only said that 'symbols' (symnywt) should appear before and after the text of Numbers 10:35-36 in order to separate it from the end of the previous section and the beginning of the next section

whereas they commanded nothing nor did anything even occur to them regarding changing the letters of the verses or inverting them."

Secondly, singling out the particular verses which are delineated in the Rabbinic Bible, he says, has no authority,

w>ylw ldbry hmdpys- l> n>stnw >l> pswq  
wyhy bns< wpswq wyhy h<m >snm> bm nwn  
mnwzrt >k >ty hpysqwt hry hn k>r kl  
pysqwt >btwrh bly >wm >nwy wkl zh hpk  
h>mt

As for what the printers did in changing only the verses "When the ark began to travel" and "The nation was" in which we find segregated nuns, specifically, these two sentences (hpysqwt) are like all the other sentences of the Torah with no difference. All of this is the opposite of the truth.

Thirdly, he saw the lack of clarity in the Masoretic list of Okhlah ve'Okhla, which was pointed out above, as a source for this mistake.

De Lonzano also took exception to the published design of



the nun in their mistaken locations. This third mistake of the printers was in inverting the symbol as well as reversing it left to right. Very clearly de Lonzano declares, wzh l' clh q d'et d'm m'wl- wl' nkwn l'wt kk [this never occurred to anyone and it is incorrect to do so]. He bases his opinion on the explanation of the Zohar as to what the nun in one or another particular orientation was to symbolize, as explained earlier. He added that in addition to the clear lack of justification for the inversion of the letter, the concept of propriety regarding a Torah scroll would preclude such an inversion,

wd'y g'yn zh drk kbwd klpv m'lh lhpwk  
r'gh lmt- wrql- lm'cl-.

Certainly this, to invert the head downward and the foot upward, is not respectful of heaven.

In addition to the abovementioned reason given for the claimed improper inversion of the symbols in the Bomberg text, de Lonzano, in another vein, proposed a rationalization for that particular mistake. His explanation affords us an interesting insight into the then new technology of the printing press. Apparently unaware of the reversal of the nun in texts which pre-dated mechanical printing techniques, de Lonzano laid the blame for this orientation on the

wydc<sup>c</sup>ty gm ɔny ʃqʃ- hwɔ bmlɔkt hdpw- l<sup>c</sup>św-  
nwn mɔwzrt khlkth ɔm lɔ ʃy<sup>c</sup>śwh wytknw-  
lkthlh wyʃ bzh twrh ɔbl hnwnyn hmwʃqwt  
wmzwmnwt lhm ɔy ɔpʃr lhp<sup>k</sup> hpnym lɔ<sup>h</sup>wr ɔm  
lɔ yhpkw hrɔʃ lmth whrgl lm<sup>c</sup>l- myhw hrwɔ-  
ɔynw ywd<sup>c</sup> ʃmlɔkt hdpws hkryh zh dlɔw kwly  
clm- bdpw- bqyɔy ɔk hwɔ hwʃb ʃbkwnh n<sup>c</sup>śh  
kkh

I also know that in the printing craft it is difficult to make a segregated nun, as the law prescribes, if it is not specially made to start with. There is much work involved in this. However with the poured (a reference to the method of preparing typeface in his day) available nuns it is not possible to reverse the 'inside to out' [hpnym lɔ<sup>h</sup>wr] without inverting them top to bottom [hrɔʃ lmth whrgl lm<sup>c</sup>l-], nevertheless the person seeing this does not know that the craft of printing forced this, for not all are knowledgable in printing, rather he thinks that it was done intentionally as such.

Notwithstanding the above astute comment of de Lonzano, one wonders just what he is referring to when looking at the text of the Rabbinic Bible. In it the symbol used for the diacritical marks, where they do appear, does not appear to be the same as any other nun of the text would look if inverted and reversed as he suggests. It appears that de Lonzano was wrong on both counts. However, what is most significant here, is that technology had now become not only the means of producing a text but also an excuse for its integrity or lack of integrity.

Regarding the symbol which de Lonzano felt should appear in the text, we also have a significant turn of events. Resulting from all the discussion of locations and designs so far, de Lonzano concludes with a summary of existing formats and designs followed by his own opinion as to what the diacritical marks should look like. Firstly, he observes that the scrolls of Spain and Ashkenaz followed the design of Recanti, "like a man bowing on his knees, his face and body as usual but his feet reversed backwards", [k>dm hkwrc <l brkyw Špnyw wgwpm ksdrn wrglyw hpwkwt l>hwr]. But the Zohar's description and interpretation of this issue led him away from this design. He states,

lkn hskmt y l>m- Šhnzyrh hnkwnh hy> hnm>t  
bq>t spym gm bpsyqth Šl wynysy Šmhpkn  
kl hnwn l>hwr kzh

therefore I have agreed to say that the proper segregation is that which is found in a number of books also in the Pesikta of Venice [presumably an edition of Pesikta published by Bomberg] where the whole nun is inverted/reversed like this.....[The diagram/facsimile is lacking in this particular edition. Perhaps the publisher neglected to add it into to the finished printed text.].

De Lonzano states that his own opinion on the matter would have a nun shaped symbol with the 'head' reversed but the 'feet' remaining in place. This would be a backwards 'zed' shape,

wmh m3d hyty 6mh l3wt 3ylw m33ty 3wrh  
3ly3yt bh nwn hnzyr- 3yhpkw r33h wpyh  
l3hwr wynyhw rglh lpnym kzh)

I would be very happy to find a third shape in which the segregated nun is inverted and reversed but leaving its foot forward, like this.

(See Appendix for facsimile). However, though he found this

(See Appendix for facsimile). However, though he found this design to be the accurate interpretation of the Zohar, since he had never seen such a design in a text of the Torah, he deferred to the Zoharic design,

kywn šl mšty šwrh zw bšwm spr š'e<sup>p</sup>  
šsbr- nkwnh hy hny mbtl št dety whkl<sup>l</sup>  
hewlh šswrt hnwn hmnwzrt hšmytyt hy<sup>š</sup>  
lhpwk kl hnwn lšwrt kzh ky kn mwrh lšwn  
hzwrt.

Since I have not found this form in any text [perhaps 'scroll'], even though it is proper, I rescind my opinion. The general principle which arises is that the shape of the real segregated nun is to reverse the whole nun for this is what the text of the Zohar teaches.

The final decision of this great Masoretic scholar is that the diacritical mark should be separate from the text, in the space before Numbers 10:35 and after Numbers 10:36, in the shape of a normal, common, nun but wholly reversed. This would closely resemble a left square bracket.

A major traditional authority on matters of the text as detailed by the Masoretic tradition also stemmed from the sixteenth century in the person of Yedidya ben Solomon

Lonzano while the two of them were in Italy together. Jaffe had already returned to Poland but had surely left behind information about Poland and its traditions, particularly those of Luria.

Norzi heavily depended on de Lonzano's Or Torah and the information of that witness to the Safed scribal tradition. Though Norzi is considered a formidable authority in Masoretic and textual matters, he does not take a very firm stand on the orientation of the symbols save for his opposition to the Bomberg design, not mentioned by name but rather by description, and other diacritical marks which appeared in some scrolls.

It is apparent from the various descriptions which Norzi includes in his comment that a few major designs and formats for the diacritical marks had become most popular throughout the Jewish world. Firstly, the Bomberg anomaly, ṭcwt zh mpwrs [This mistake is well known.], is mentioned. This is followed by a tradition which denoted inverted, nun-shaped markings, larger than a normal letter, before and after the text of Numbers 10:35-36. In referring to the dots which are mentioned in the Siphre, Norzi claims, lḇ ydcty mh hmh ḡlw hngwdwt [I do not know what those dots are.].<sup>13</sup> He says that in a few texts,<sup>14</sup> an inverted and reversed nun-shaped symbol appears as denoted in the Zohar and the Pesikta. Norzi drew on his familiarity with the Sephardic tradition in referring to a tradition which denoted a 'zed'-shaped diacritical mark before and after Numbers 10:35-36, which, he says is based on

the design of the Recanti.

The sixteenth century had come to a close with no further rectification of the problem found at Numbers 10:35-36. In historical fact, the evolution of all the various traditions left the issue farther from conclusion.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

We follow the diacritical marks surrounding Numbers 10:35-36 and the traditions regarding their placement and orientation into the eighteenth century via the Responsa of Ezekial Landau (1713-1793).<sup>1</sup> As the leading Polish halachic authority of the generation which saw the rise of Hassidism, Landau responded to many inquiries. One of them concerned extraneous characters which, when found in a Torah scroll, might nullify it.

Landau's remarks regarding the whole topic of the inverted nuns reflects a frustration with the persistent problem of these diacritical marks. He says,

wel dbr hnwny"n hpwkyn šhoryk. l' ydety  
šwrk horykwł bzh wkbr horyk rš"l btšwbh  
s"q. whnh mymy dyn dety nwhh lhoryk  
bdb'r šdyn lw yswd bgm- wbpwsqym ky mh  
šl' ntb'r bgm- dyn l'w mqwm l'mwd bw šl  
h'mt

Regarding the lengthy issue of the inverted nuns. I don't understand the



need for such lengthy (discussion) on this; Rabbi Solomon Luria already dealt with this at length in his Responsa #73. I am not willing to deal with this at length for it (the issue) has no foundation in the Talmud or the arbiters of rabbinic decisions (pwsqym) for there is no foundation of truth for anything which is not explained in the Talmud.

However, with all due respect to Luria's opinions, and a request for his pardon, Landau proceeds with a full negation of Luria's already infamous opinion based on a thorough analysis of many of the relevant halachic texts which he provided in his responsum. After dealing with the primary problem of his questioner Landau turned to the issues which stem from the responsa of Solomon Luria. Landau questions Luria's basic understanding of the issues regarding the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36. Landau states,

whnh bmh šprš mhrš"l dbry hgmr- šl<sup>2</sup> q>y  
cl nwny"n kll rq cl hpsq pršywt >ny tmh

Regarding Rabbi Solomon Luria's explanation of the Talmudic argument,

that it didn't pertain to nuns at all  
but rather to spaces left between the  
chapters, I am surprised.

Thus, according to Landau, Luria missed the mark on  
the whole issue. Landau laid the blame for Luria's  
misunderstanding on his not having available Hai Gaon's  
comment on the issue of the diacritical marks. Landau  
quotes Hai from the previously mentioned reference to his  
remarks found in Joseph Caro's commentary to Maimonides'  
Mishne Torah, the Kesef Mishne. Landau's comment to this  
is as follows:

hry šrmz rbynw hdy cl hnwny"n hpwkym  
šhn mpwršyn bp- kl ktby w>"k kwwnt  
hgmr> bsymnyn hllw cl hnwny"n hpwkyn  
whn hsymnyn cšmn wl> kdbry mhrš"l špyrš  
šdyn lnwny"n hpwkyn šwrš bgmr>

For our Rabbi Hai mentioned the  
inverted nuns which are explained in  
[the Talmudic chapter] 'All Writings'  
where the intent of the gemarah was to  
refer to these symbols, the inverted  
nuns which are one and the same as the  
symbols themselves and not as Rabbi  
Solomon Luria would have it in his

explanation that the inverted nuns have  
no roots in the Talmud.

Landau added an interesting editorial note regarding his trust in Hai's interpretation of this issue. He states,

wrbynw h'ay b'ay b'ayrw' h'gm' t'py mynyh  
whzwhr 'dyyn l' ntqlh bymy rbynw h'ay

Rabbi Hai was expert in interpretation of the Talmud more than he (Luria) and the Zohar was not yet revealed in the days of our teacher Hai.

Landau's message is clear; the evidence of a scholar as great as Hai is far more important than any halachic derivation based on any later sources, even, or perhaps especially, a source as weighty as the Zohar. Landau defers to a source closer to the Talmudic origin of this issue, one not influenced by the mystical school of thought. Landau is saying, correctly, that when analyzed from its Talmudic source, without the layers of interpretation imposed by the mystical tradition, this problem is not nearly as complicated as it had been made out to be by Luria and others who were overly involved in or swayed by the mystical school of interpretation. Landau also shows how the placement and design of the diacritical

marks in the Bomberg Rabbinic Bible was incorrect.

Having mentioned the Talmudic source in Tractate Shabbat many times and having taken exception to one of the most popular explanations of this source, Landau gives an outline of the argument found there. He concludes,

wlkn hcyqr šnwny"n hmnwzrym hm symnyn  
cwmdym bp"e šht qwdm wyhy bnswe wšht  
qwdm wyhy hcm šhry klwt p- wyhy bnswe  
brywh hpršywt

Therefore, the essential idea is that the segregated nuns are symbols which stand alone, one before "When the ark began to travel" and one before "The nation were as murmurers" after the end of the section "When the ark began to travel" (placed) in the spaces (between the sections).

Using this format, Landau says, both the Talmudic opinions of Rabbi Judah and that of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, regarding the purpose of the diacritical marks, are satisfied.

Landau's final opinion, after all the discussion is said and done, is as follows.

n"l šyš lhnyh ʔhry klwt mn hmnhh šhyʔ  
lpny wyhy bnswe bʔmšc hšyth rywh kdy t-  
ʔwtywt wʔh"k hnw"n hmnwzrt wʔh"k rywh  
kmw b- ʔw g- ʔwtywt wʔh"k lhtyl wyhy  
bnswe bʔwth šyth kdyn stwmh wʔhr klwt  
ʔlpy yšrʔl ynyh rywh kmw b- ʔwtywt  
wʔh"k nw"n mnwzr wʔh"k rywh t- ʔwtywt  
bʔwth šyth wbrʔš hšyth hšnyh . ythyl p-  
wyhy hcm wgw- wbzh ywšh ydy kl hššwt  
wšwrt hwny"n hmnwzryn km"š hʔwr twrh.

It seems to me that one should place  
 after the end of "from the camp"  
 (Numbers 10:34) which is before "When  
 the ark began to travel" (Numbers  
 10:35), in the middle of the line a  
 space (the length of) nine letters  
 followed by a segregated nun followed  
 by a space (the length of) two or three  
 letters followed by the beginning of  
 "When the ark began to travel" on the  
 same line, as if it were a 'closed'  
 section of text. Following the end of  
 "the myriads of Israel" (Numbers 10:36)  
 one should leave a space (the length  
 of) two letters followed by a  
 segregated nun followed by a space (the

length of) nine letters on the same line. The next line should begin with the section "The nation were as murmurers" (Numbers 11:1). In this fashion one will have averted all doubts about the format of the segregated nuns. This is as stated by the Or Torah [Menahem de Lonzano].

Landau's opinion is, however, not the only major, eighteenth century, responsum on the issue. Rabbi Simha Hayim Rapoport was questioned regarding the discrepancies found between Torah scrolls of Poland and those of Prague at Numbers 10:35-36. His response compared to Landau's essay on the issue reflects, in no uncertain terms, the disparity of opinion on contemporary issues in distant lands.

Rapoport arrives at the conclusion that the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 should be written in the text itself ie., the nun of bnsw and that of kmtwnnym should be inverted and reversed. This is the opinion as presented by Rapoport's mentors Solomon Luria and the Maharam of Lublin. This halachic ruling is arrived at through yet another thorough analysis of the literature. A major foundation of Rapoport's thesis is his claim that decisions arrived at by using the opinion of Rashi, as found in Tractate Rosh HaShanah, are false because Rashi is

often went to interpret a text not according to the established halachah but rather in a fashion which keeps the understanding of the text on an uncomplicated level,

drk rš"y hy> tmyd lprš >p sl> >lyb<  
dhylkt> mpny šrsh lqrb hpy- hywtr pšwt  
kmbw>r bmpwršy rš"y kmh p<mym.

It is Rashi's method to interpret not in accordance with the halacha because it is his desire to bring the simplest interpretation as is stated in Rashi's commentary a number of times.

Rapoport also contradicts the opinion of de Lonzano.

Just how detailed and complicated the issue of the text of Numbers 10:35-36 and its accompanying diacritical marks had become by the eighteenth century is made even clearer in the encyclopaedic work of scribal halachah by Abraham ben Zvi Jaffe.<sup>2</sup>

Jaffe begins Chapter 24 of his work, which deals solely with the particulars of Numbers 10:35-36, as follows,

>c"p š>swr lšnwt šwm >wt mšwrtw km"š  
bsy- hqwdm >k hsm"q wh>wr hetyqw bšm  
hrmb"m wyzhr b>wtywt hpwkwt kw- kmw

שחטתקו חשקרימ דזש מפי דזש קו- וברט  
ננו"נ חקקין שמזקר ג"ק בזחזר וספרי  
קבלה לכן שריק לביר דזח מקומ קבדמ

Even though it is forbidden to change the form of any letter as mentioned in the previous chapter, the Semag and the Tur wrote in the name of the Rambam "one should be careful regarding the inverted letters" etc. which were copied by the scribes one from another especially the inverted nuns which are also mentioned in the Zohar and the books of the Kabbalah, therefore it is necessary to clarify what their honoured place is.

Jaffe is very clear in his expression of the basic complexity of this issue. He is well aware that the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 have changed over the years as scribes have learned their tradition one from another. It is even possible to hear a hint of blame in his words directed towards the scribes who were supposed to preserve the text of the Torah rather than complicate its transmission.

Jaffe points out that there are two powerful traditions regarding the placement of the marks. One



tradition would have them placed in the spaces between the sections of the text, before Numbers 10:35 and after Numbers 10:36, while the other places them in the text itself, at two or more of the possible locations. The tradition in Jaffe's own community seems to have been the former, "y" d>swr l<šwtñ brywwh hpršywt kmw s>nw nwhgyn" [Some say it is forbidden to make them in the space between the sections as our tradition has it.]

Jaffe brings numerous references to traditional sources which support one or another placement of the nuns in the text. He lists various opinions:

- a) Those who place them in the words bns< and wbnwph
- b) Those who place them in the words bns< and kmt>nnym
- c) Those who place them in the words bns< and wbnwph and kmt>nnym.

Each of the many opinions mentioned in Jaffe's work is quoted in the name of at least one authority who supported that opinion. Many of the opinions to which Jaffe refers, he says, are based on the Zohar which, as we know, is a confusing source and open to various, even contradictory, interpretations. Regarding the diacritical mark itself, Jaffe refers to a 'universally accepted' (lk"<) opinion, based on the Zohar, which would have the nun of bns< inverted (mhwpkt).

Other opinions listed:

- a) both nuns inverted

b) only the first nun inverted

c) various uncommon designs for marks for both nuns

d) the first nun written normally while the second nun is inverted (so that when placed side by side a common final 'mem' would be the result).

e) "the correct authentic form" (hšwrh hnkwnh hšmytyt): the whole nun reversed, based on the Zohar, as found in de Lonzano's Or Torah and Minhag Shai.

Jaffe mentions a design for the diacritical marks which he, like de Lonzano, would have liked to see. It would have the "head and face" of the nun reversed (šyhpkw ršh wpnyh lšhwr) and the "leg" of the nun left as is, wynyhw rqlh lpnym. This design is intended to be reminiscent of a person who faces backwards while walking. It is, as Jaffe says, the opposite image of the design which Recanti had mentioned which would resemble a man bowing at the knee in supplication. The latter, according to Jaffe, is the design found in many Sephardic scrolls.

After all of Jaffe's analysis is said and done, his final decision states clearly that the diacritical marks should be placed outside of the text of Numbers 10:35-36 in the spaces before and after the two verses. However, if in any scrolls the diacritical marks were found in the verses themselves, the deciding factor in correcting them or not was to be the age and value of the scroll, šm hm š"t ššnwt wyqrwt bwdšy šyn lšlwh yd wlhgyh. On the other hand, a scroll in which no markings whatsoever were found would not be invalidated.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions to be drawn from the above analysis of the relevant sources are important for an understanding of the history of the development of the Biblical text.

It has been shown that throughout the past two thousand years, since pre-Mishnaic times, there has been a dynamic evolution of the text of the Torah. As well, it has been shown that the existence of these markings was never unknown, ignored or considered irrelevant to the Rabbinic authorities.

The absolute origin of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 is shrouded in mystery. Lieberman has determined that the nun-shaped symbols are diacritical marks of Greek origin and that their introduction into the text by the Rabbinic authorities occurred during the Hellenistic period. Their introduction was later rationalized and justified using both Mishnaic and Talmudic proof texts. Once the tradition of their inclusion took hold, their removal from the sacred text was impossible though there was always discussion about their location and design.

The notion that these diacritical marks were mistakenly introduced into the text, as segregated characters or otherwise, was suggested at least once. If true, this reflects the tradition's inability to deal with such an

occurrence. Once a mistaken conclusion is given approval by an authority, that authoritative stamp is most difficult for the tradition to remove, if at all possible. Many cases to illustrate this point are described above. Proving the point, even the final halachic rulings dealing with the writing of Numbers 10:35-36 leave much room to validate the scroll which was written according to one or another of the 'incorrect' traditions. On the other hand, if the need for the diacritical marks is 'real', as described by whatever theory, we see how vast is the tradition's ability to interpret a misunderstood tradition in order to preserve it for all generations.

The evidence of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 shows just how difficult it is for scribal traditions to die; perhaps more importantly it shows how readily they adapt to life and initiate an evolutionary process of their own.

The issues behind the marks at Numbers 10:35-36 were unclear and were difficult to understand by generations of scholars. In each generation someone managed to incorporate a new justification or rationalization for their existence in order to preserve this particular tradition of textual interpretation. Most often the rationalization/justification of the inherited tradition was accomplished through the placing of a new generational layer of traditional interpretation onto the previous ones. The case of the diacritical marks at Numbers 10:35-36 is a

good example of the effects of tradition. While firmly believing that the text never changes, the tradition itself changed the text. While it proceeded to change the text the fashion in which it did, within the bounds of tradition and halachah, allowed the tradition to continue to claim that the text had never, would never, and was not changing. The changes made to the text in any generation were accompanied by that generation's prevailing style or method of interpretation.

## FOOTNOTES

Translations of text from the Torah are from The Torah The Five Books of Moses (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962).

Bab. = Babylonian Talmud

## INTRODUCTION

1) Exodus 24:4,7 and Deuteronomy 31:9. Mishna Avot 1:1.

2) Mishne Torah, Hilchot T'shuvah 3:8; Menahem Meiri, Qiryat Sefer, ed., M. Hershler (Jerusalem: Masorah Press, 1967), Essay 2, Part I; Sifri, Shelach 112.

3) David ben Solomon Ibn Abi Zimri, Responsa, (reprint ed., New York: Otzar Ha'Sefarim, 1966), 1:20.

4) For discussion of the authenticity of the reading tyqwn swprym as 'corrections of the Scribes' see Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), p. 29 ff.

5) Robert Gordis, The Biblical Text in the Making A Study of the Khetib-Qere (reprint ed., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971).

6) Varying lists of the Tikunnim are found in the following texts:

Jacob Lauterbach, ed. Mekhilta de-Rabi Ishmael, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1933; reprint ed., Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 2:43.

S.H. Horowitz, ed. Sifri d'be Rav, (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1966), Numbers 10:35.

Y. S. Norzi, Minhat Shai, (reprint ed., Jerusalem: Shoken Publishing House Ltd., 1958), Zechariah 2:12.

Lieberman, Hellenism, 20-21.

7) "Some...denied that the Soferim ever altered the text of Scripture. They explained the Midrashic passages to mean that the Bible itself employed euphemistic expressions. The Soferim only taught the original meaning of these euphemisms." Lieberman, Hellenism, p. 29. Evidence for textual anomalies of various types originating with the Sinaitic text is found at Bab. Menahot 29b and Bab. Nedarim 37b-38a.

8) As listed in Bereshit Rabbah on Gen. 18:22 and Mekilta on Exodus 15:7.

9) Menahot 29b.

10) Not all manuscripts or scrolls agree about the letters majoris and minoris as detailed in Yeivin, Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah, The Society of Biblical Literature Massoretic Studies, Number 5, ed. E.J. Revell (Missoula, Montana, 1980) #84 & #85.

11) A comprehensive list of these verses appears in Yeivin, Introduction, # 45.

12) As stated in Numbers Rabbah 3:39 and Avot D'Rabi Natan, Chapter 34.

13) For a discussion of the Rabbinic concept of 'books which defile the hands' see S. Leiman, The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence, Transactions of The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 47 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1976), pp. 102-120.

14) Herbert Danby, trans. and ed. The Mishna, (London; Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 781.

15) Another instance of the recording of an eighty-five letter text occurs in Targum Yerushalmi in reference to the eighty-five letters which appear in Deut 32:1-2 and the first two words of 32:3.

The Bible interpreter Hezekiyah ben Manoah explained the issue as follows. Moses, not wanting to be presumptuous used the example of the angels to determine when God's name could be said properly and reverently. The angels would say God's name only after saying the three words "qdwš qdwš qdwš" which comprise twelve letters. Moses, not wanting to appear haughty in the face of God or the angels, pronounced the name of God in Deuteronomy 32 only after pronouncing eighty-five letters, seven times as many letters as the angels would utter before saying God's name. Those are the 85 letters before the name of God in Deuteronomy 10:32. (H.D Chavell, ed., Hizkuni: Bible Commentary of Hizkiyah ben Manoah (Mosad HaRav Kook,

Jerusalem, 1981), Deut. 32.).

16) M. Segal, Mavoh Ha'Mikrah, vol. 1: General Introduction, The Torah, The Early Prophets, The Later Prophets; vol. 2: The Writings, The History of the Bible Text; 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1973), 4:847-8.; Robert Gordis, The Biblical text in the Making, p. xxi.; Salo Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, (New York: Columbia University Press), Volume 1, p. 397, note 20.

17) cf. Minhag Shai on Zehariah 2:12.

18) Jacob Lauterbach, ed. Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Vol. 2, p. 43.

19) Israel Frankel, Peshat in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature, (Toronto: La Salle Press, 1956), pp. 154-155.

20) Gordis places all similar instances where the guarding of, "the reader against blasphemy, obscenity, or error" is the intent of the modification into the category of Ketiv-Qere. (Robert Gordis, The Biblical Text in the Making, p. xxix.

21) It is difficult to determine whether recorded statements which reflect modification of a text are evidence of the author's interpretive casuistry or actual textual change or preservation of ancient traditions of textual interpretation. It is possible to claim that the Sofrim didn't change the existing text of the Torah but rather preserved lore which interpreted the written text so as to remove anthropomorphism and blasphemy etc. Thus, so this theory claims, the apparent textual changes really have their origin at Sinai in the original version of the Torah, i.e. the original scribe had made the changes to avoid writing blasphemy. (M. Rosenbaum, et al., trans. and ed. The Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary, 5 vols. (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co, 1939), vol. 1 (Genesis) p. 266, (note to p. 74 no. 3)). Bab. Megilah 19b states, "This teaches us that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Moses Dikdukei Torah and Dikduke Sofrim and the future innovations of the Sofrim". But this theory cannot hold true for all the occurrences of Tikune Sofrim and Iture Sofrim and what appear to be diacritical marks in the text of the Torah. The references to the three scrolls found in the Azarah (Jerusalem Talmud Megilah 4,2 and Masekhet Sofrim 6,4) are enough evidence to show that rabbinic authorities of the Mishnaic period were aware that their predecessors had emended the text of the Torah. Furthermore, the Iturei Sofrim (Bab. Talmud Nedarim 37b) where the conjunctive vav was dropped in certain instances are evidence of purely textual changes with no interpretive



overtones. (C.D. Ginsburg, Introduction to the Masoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (reprint ed., New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1966).p. 349 ff.) Midrash Rabbah on Numbers 3:39 shows Ezra himself as the source of the diacritical marks known as the 'dots', ym ybw? 2lyhw wy2mr lmh ktbth 2wt2? 2wmr lw: kbr nqdy clyhm. w2m y2mr ly yph ktbt kbr 2mhwq nqwdwtyhn mcllyhn.; M.Z. Segal, Mavoh HaMikrah, vol. 2 pp. 859-860.; Bleddyn J. Roberts, The Old Testament Text and Versions, (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1951), p. 1-39.; Lieberman, Hellenism, pp. 20ff.

#### CHAPTER ONE

- 1) J. Theodor, Ch. Albeck, Midrash Bereshit Rabba, (Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 1965), p. 708).
- 2) Horowitz, Siphre D'Be Rav, pp. 64 and 80.
- 3) Lieberman's own translations reflect this exact confusion in Lieberman, Hellenism, p. 38.
- 4) Ibid., Hellenism pp. 41-46.
- 5) Judah Goldin, ed. Abot De'Rabbi Natan The Fathers According to Rabbi Natan, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955).
- 6) Lieberman's translation as "Which is (the) small section?" is not the only way to read the text.
- 7) Saul Lieberman, Hellenism, p. 42.
- 8) Presumably these are the stories of Jethro's refusal to accompany Moses and the Israelites to Canaan and the story of the Israelite's complaints.
- 9) M. Higger, ed. Maseket Sofrim, (reprint ed., Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1970) 6:1.
- 10) Kasher, Torah Shelemah, v. 19, p. 367.; Lieberman, Hellenism, p. 39.
- 11) Bab. Baba Batra 13b; Palestinian Talmud Megilah 1.1, 71d; Maseket Sopherim, ed. Higger, 2.6.

## CHAPTER TWO

- 1) Solomon Buber, ed., Midrash Mishle, (Vilna: Widow and Brothers Romm, n.d.; reprint ed., n.p., 1965), 50b.
- 2) Horowitz, Siphre D'be Rav, p. 80.
- 3) S. Leiman, "The Inverted Nuns at Numbers 10:35-36 and the Book of Eldad and Medad," Journal of Biblical Literature 93 (1974): 348-355; B. Levine, "More on the Inverted Nuns of Num. 10:35-36," Journal of Biblical Literature 95 (1976): 122-124.
- 4) S.A. Wertheimer, ed., Batei Midrashot, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook), vol. 2: Midrash Haserot Ve'yeterot p. 274.
- 5) See Numbers 11. For a detailed picture of the status of these individuals in ancient Rabbinic literature see A. J. Heschel, Torah Min HaShamayim b'Israqlaryah Shel HaDorot [Ancient Jewish Theology], 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Soncino Press, 1962), pp. 2:17 ff; M. Kasher, Torah Shelemah, pp. 19:366-369.  
The basis for the notion that there was a text which contained the details of the prophetic adventure of Eldad and Medad is Numbers 11:26, whmh bktbym.
- 6) See Leiman, The Inverted Nuns at Numbers 10:35-36 and the Book of Eldad and Medad and Levine More on the Inverted Nuns of Num. 10:35-36 for a discussion of the meaning of this word.
- 7) J. Abelson, "Maimonides on the Jewish Creed," Jewish Quarterly Review - Original Series 19 (1907): 53-54.
- 8) See Heschel, Torah Min HaShamayim, p. 418-419.
- 9) A similar method of text preservation is apparent in the collection of texts, The Minor Prophets.
- 10) See essay on this issue in Kasher, Torah Shlemah, vol. 19.
- 11) E. N. Adler, ed., Ginzei Mitzrayim - An Eleventh Century Introduction to the Hebrew Bible, (Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1970), p. 37-38.
- 12) The fish hook shape closely resembles the letter nwn of the early Hebrew script. The representation of the symbols as they appear in Adler's edition is not to be trusted even though the midrashic connection to Psalm 107 would lend credence to it. Lieberman also reproduced the symbol (Hellenism p. 40). As well, the symbol found in Adler's

edition etc. is found with a dot above the hook-shaped symbol, a detail not found in the text itself. It is possible that this dot is a remnant from the earlier 'dot' version of these diacritical marks.

Use of the ancient letters in texts is not unknown especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls where they are often used to write the four letter name of God (YHWH) i.e. they were used in special places. There may be a parallel to their use here in this Geniza text. This particular 'fish hook' shaped symbol actually appears in a scroll found at Qumran; see Malachi Martin, The Scribal Character of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 vols. (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958) p. 150.

13) Aaron Dotan, ed., The Diqduqe HaTeamim of Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher with a Critical Edition of the Original Text from New Manuscripts (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1967), p. 53.

14) The Baer-Strack edition of Diqduqe HaTeamim (S. Baer and H. L. Strack, eds. Diqduqe HaTeamim (reprint ed., Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1970), p. 47) contains a supposed facsimile of the 'reversed' letter. It is remarkably similar to the ancient nwn and/or the fish hook symbol found in the abovementioned geniza text published by E.N. Adler.

15) Benjamin Menasseh Lewin, ed. Otzar HaGeonim, vol. 2 (Maskhet Shabbat); Otzar HaPerushim #232, pg. 66.

16) Perhaps "symnym bclm?" is to be understood as random symbols. Even so the intent of Hai's statement remains unchanged.

17) S. Frensdorff, ed., Okhlah ve-Okhlah (Hanover: n.p., 1864), list 169.

18) A. Berliner, ed., Rashi Al Ha'Torah (Jerusalem: Kiryah Ne'emana, 1962), p. 298; Manfred R. Lehmann, ed., The Commentary of Rashi on the Pentateuch (New York: Manfred and Anne Lehmann Foundation, 1981), p. 131.

19) S. Hurwitz, ed., Mahzor Vitry (Nurenburg: J. Bulka, 1923), p. 668.

20) Moses Maimonides, Mishne Torah, (Laws of Tefillin, Mezuzah, and Torah Scrolls) 8:4; Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, "The Authenticity of the Aleppo Codex," Textus 1: p. 17-58; J.S. Penkower "Maimonides and the Aleppo Codex," Textus 9.

21) Moses Maimonides, Mishne Torah, (Laws of Tefillin, Mezuzah, and Torah Scrolls) 7:8.

22) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:10-11.

23) I. Twersky, Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 234-235.

24) Meir Abulafia, Masoret Seyag LaTorah (Firenzia: n.p., 1750). Regarding the apparent omission of diacritical marks from Sefer Taghin (S. Sachs Liber Coronularum (Sefer Taghin), (reprint ed., Jerusalem 1975: Orient and Occident Publishing House for International Scientific Cooperation) it is claimed that the author of Sepher Taghin was concerned with 'crowns' on letters i.e. textual accoutrements whose purpose is beautification and decoration of the text. Specially designed letters were out of the scope of this text; M. Kasher Torah Shelemah, vol. 29 p. 86.

25) Menahem Me'iri, Qiryat Sefer, ed., M. Hershler (Jerusalem: Masorah Press, 1967), p. 37.

### CHAPTER THREE

1) E. N. Adler, Ginzei Mitzrayim.

2) M. Meiri, Qiryat Sefer.

3) Rueben Margoliot, ed., The Zohar, 3 vols. (Mosad HaRav Kook: Jerusalem, 1946), vol. 3-4, pp. 309-310.

4) Shimon ben Shlomo Duran: Responsa Yahin u-Boaz, (Livorno: Abraham Yitzhak Castillo, 1783).

5) Menahot 43b.

### CHAPTER FOUR

1) Jacob ben Hayyim Ibn Adoniyahu, ed., Introduction to Biblia Rabbinica (A reprint of the 1525 Venice Edition), by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein, (Venice: Bomberg Press, 1525; reprint ed., Jerusalem: Makor Publishing Ltd., 1972), pp. 6-7.

2) Bahya ben Asher, Midrash of Rabbenu Bahya on the Torah, (n.p.: Otzar HaSefarim, 1967), vol. 2, Numbers, p. 12.

3) S. Frensdorff, Ochlah Ve'Ochlah.

4) In fact, the Bomberg edition of Psalm 107 does not have any extraneous graphic characters inside the text at all. The characters which I assume are the inverted nwns are in the margin to the right of the text as in the case of other Masoretic notes and symbols.

5) Another example of the placement of the diacritical marks inside the text rather than segregated from the text was published by C.D. Ginsburg (C.D. Ginsburg, The Masorah Compiled from Manuscripts Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged, (Vienna: Carl Fromme, 1883), 2:259). The symbol reproduced there, though, is not the typical inverted and/or reversed nwn but is a 'zed' shaped symbol akin to the one found in Adler's text from the Geniza.

## CHAPTER FIVE

1) M. Steinschneider, Jewish Literature from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Century, trans. W. Spottiswoode (London: n.p., 1857; reprint ed., New York: Hermon Press, 1970), p. 228.

2) Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. "Luria, Solomon," by I. M. Ta-Shma.

3) S. Luria (Maharshah), Hochmat Shlomo HaShalem de'Rabenu Shlomo Luria, (Cracow: n.p., ca., 1580; reprint ed., Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1972), vol. 1, p. 120.

4) Responsa of Maharshah (Solomon Luria), (n.p.: 1574), Number 73.

5) Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. "Jaffe, Mordehai," by Ephraim Kupfer.

6) Responsa of Maharshah, p. 205.

7) Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. "Lublin, Meir ben Gedalia," by Shlomo Eidelberg.

8) Meir ben Gedalia, Responsa, (reprint ed., Brooklyn: n.p., 1961), #75.

9) It is of importance to contrast the decision taken by Meir ben Gedalia based upon the Zoharic material with a responsum of David ben Solomon Ibn Abi Zimra (Radbaz) (David ben Solomon Ibn Abi Zimra, Responsa, (reprint ed., New York: Otzar HaSefarim, 1966), 1:20.) on a parallel

issue. He was questioned regarding the emendation or correction of Torah scrolls based upon textual information found in the Zohar, כל מה שיש ביד המהמקמם שגיה כל הספרים וכל פי המדרש וכל רבי שמעון בן יוחאי, "Regarding what one of the 'intellectuals' did in emending all the texts according to the midrash of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai". In his response to this query Radbaz is very clear in his opposition to what seems to have been the popular practice of correcting plene and defective spellings according to variant readings in the midrashic literature. On this point Radbaz says, והשגחה הספרים הם נמשך חפז מהם שכתבו בגמרא וכל כל מה שיש בידם נקרא מנהג הנהגה דין וכל מדרש בכל מה שיש נהגה שמוסר וכל פי המדרש וכל פי הספרים וכל וזלזלנו בזה רב, "It is necessary to emend texts if the opposite of what is found in the Gemarah is found in them but rather a plene or defectiva spelling which is not the basis for a law but rather for a midrash should not be emended. We should not emend any text according to the derash nor according to the Massorah rather we follow the majority". Though Ibn Zimra was referring to existing textual emendations and Maharam was lending support to an established textual tradition, Maharam's final proof is based upon exactly that which Radbaz says is no proof at all. This is interesting in that Radbaz was a product of the mystical tradition though its influence over him did not sway him to prefer it over the halachic tradition in matters of textual integrity as it did Maharam.

10) cf. Rashi ad locum.

11) Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. "de Lonzano, Menahem ben Judah," by David Samuel Loewinger; Menahem de Lonzano, Shtei Yadot, vol. 1: Or Torah, (Amsterdam: n.s.; reprint ed., Berlin: n.p., 1745).

12) Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2nd ed., s.v. "Norzi, Jedidiah Solomon Raphael ben Abraham", by H. J. Zimmels.

13) The very scant mention of the dots mentioned in the Siphre text leads me to believe that Norzi was speaking of a source which reflected an opinion on this matter rather than any actual existing texts. It is safe to say that by his day texts which contained dots at Numbers 10:35-36 were not common. This in and of itself is evidence of the drastic textual changes which have occurred in this part of the text.

14) Since the invention and proliferation of the printing press it is not altogether clear in which sense the word 'spr' is used since both its meanings 'book' and 'scroll' are interchangeable. I have here translated 'spr' as 'text' to reduce the confusion. It is not clear whether Norzi is referring to scrolls or printed texts.

## CHAPTER SIX

1) Ezekial Landau, Responsa of the 'Noda B'Yehuda', 2 Vols, (New York: S. Goldman Otzar Hasefarim, 1973), Yoreh Deah #74.

2) Abraham ben Zvi Jaffe, Sefer Mishnat Avraham, (n.p.: n.p., 1867; reprint ed., Jerusalem: n.p., 164), Chap. 24.

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- 5) The Bible, Torah, Nevi'im, K'tuvim. Jerusalem: Koren Publishing, 1982.
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- 13) Higger, M., Ed. Masekhet Sophrim. Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1970.
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- 17) Jastrow, Marcus. A Dictionary of the Targumim, et al.. New York: Jastrow Publishers, 1967.
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- 19) Leiman, Sid. The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midradshic Evidence. Hamden: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1976.
- 20) \_\_\_\_\_, "The Inverted Nuns as Numbers 10:35-36 and the Book of Eldad and Medad." Journal of Biblical Literature 93 (1974): 348-355.
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- 26) \_\_\_\_\_, Responsa. n.p.: n.p., 1574.
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34) Twersky, Isadore. Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishne Torah). Yale Judaica Series, Vol. 22. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.

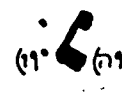




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## APPENDIX

- 1) Facsimile of Numbers 10-35-36 from contemporary published edition of the Hebrew Bible; (Koren Publishing, Jerusalem).
- 2) Various designs of the inverted nwns; Menahem Kasher, Torah Shelemah Vol. 19)
- 3) Facsimile of inverted nwn as found in Frensdorff's Okhlah Ve'Okhlah.
- 4) Facsimile of Numbers 10:35-36 from Bomberg's Second Rabbinic Bible.
- 5) Facsimile of Psalms 107 from Bomberg's Second Rabbinic Bible.
- 6) Responsa of Tzemah ben Shlomo Duran.

לַעֲבֹדָתָם וְעַל־צִבְאוֹ אֲלִישְׁמַע בֶּן־עֲמִיהוּד: וְעַל־צִבְא מִטָּה  
 בְּנֵי מְנַשֶּׁה גְּמַלְיָאֵל בֶּן־פְּדָהצִוּר: וְעַל־צִבְא מִטָּה בְּנֵי בְנִימִן  
 אֲבִידֹן בֶּן־גִּדְעוֹנִי: וְנָסַע דָּגַל מַחֲנֵה בְנֵי־דָן מֵאֶסָּף לְכָל־  
 הַמַּחֲנֵה לַעֲבֹדָתָם וְעַל־צִבְאוֹ אַחִיעֶזֶר בֶּן־עֲמִישַׁדִּי: וְעַל־  
 צִבְא מִטָּה בְּנֵי אֲשֵׁר פִּגְעִיאל בֶּן־עֶכְרֹן: וְעַל־צִבְא מִטָּה  
 בְּנֵי נַפְתָּלִי אַחִירַע בֶּן־עֵינָן: אֱלֹהִים מִסְעֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲבֹדָתָם  
 וַיֹּסֶעוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לַחֲבֹב בֶּן־רְעֻוָּאל הַמְּדִינִי  
 חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה נָסַעִים וְאַנְחֵנוּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה אֵתָּה  
 אֲתָּה לָכֶם לָכֶה אֲתָּנוּ וְהַטְּבַנּוּ לָךְ כִּי־יְהוָה דִּבְרָטוֹב עֲלֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו לֹא אֵלֶיךָ כִּי אִם־אֶל־אֶרֶצִּי וְאֶל־מִוְלָדְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ:  
 וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־נָא תַעֲזֹב אֲתָנוּ כִּי וְעַל־כֵּן יָדַעְתָּ חֲנֻתָנוּ כַּמִּדְבָּר  
 וְהִיטָּת לָנוּ לַעֲנִיִּים: וְהִיָּה כִּי־תֵלֶךְ עִמָּנוּ וְהִיָּה הַטּוֹב הַהוּא  
 אֲשֶׁר יִיטִיב יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ וְהַטְּבַנּוּ לָךְ: וַיֹּסֶעוּ מִהָרַם יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ  
 שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים וְאֲרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה נָסַע לִפְנֵיהֶם דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת  
 יָמִים לְתוֹר לָהֶם מְנוּחָה: וַעֲנָן יְהוָה עָלֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּנִסְעֵם מִן־  
 הַמַּחֲנֶה: וַיְהִי בְּנִסְעַת הָאָרֶץ וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה קוֹמְהוּ  
 יְהוָה וַיִּפְצֹוּ אִיבִיד וַיִּנָּסוּ מִשְׁנֹאִיד מִפְּנֵיךְ: וּכְנָחָה יֹאמֶר שׁוּבָה  
 יְהוָה רַבְבוֹת אֲלֶפֶי יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 וַיְהִי הָעָם כַּמֶּתְאַנְנִים רַע בְּאֲזֵי יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה וַיַּחַר אַפּוֹ  
 וַתִּבְעַר־בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה וַתֹּאכַל בִּקְצֵה הַמַּחֲנֶה: וַיִּצְעַק הָעָם  
 אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וַתִּשְׁקַע הָאֵשׁ: וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם־  
 הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא תִּבְעָרָה כִּי־בָעֲרָה בָּם אֵשׁ יְהוָה: וְהֶאֱסָפָם  
 אֲשֶׁר בִּקְרָבוֹ הִתְאוּ תַּאוּה וַיִּשְׁבוּ וַיִּבְכּוּ גַם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמְרוּ  
 מִי יֹאכְלֵנוּ בָּשָׂר: זָכְרָנוּ אֶת־הַדָּגָה אֲשֶׁר־נֹאכַל בַּמַּצֵּרִים חֲנָם  
 אֶת הַקִּשְׁאִים וְאֶת הָאֲבִטָּחִים וְאֶת־הַחֲצִיר וְאֶת־הַבְּצִלִּים  
 וְאֶת־הַשּׁוּמִים: וְעַתָּה נִפְשָׁנוּ יִבְשָׁה אֵין כָּל בְּלֹתִי אֶל־הָמָן  
 עֵינֵינוּ: וְהָמָן כֹּדֶע־גֹּד הוּא וַעֲנֵנוּ כַּעֲיֵן הַבְּדִלָּח: שְׁטוֹ הָעָם

 (11)
  (11)
  (11)
  (11)
  (11)

 (23)
  (22)
  (21)
  (20)
  (19)
  (18)
  (17)

- 2 Reg. 7, 12. ויקם המלך  
Jer. 2, 24. למד מדבר  
Jer. 49, 10. כי אני חשפתי  
Jer. 52, 33. את בגדי  
Ez. 14, 4. לכן דבר אותם ואמרת  
Ps. 81, 4. תקעו בחרש  
Job 26, 9. מאחו פני  
Dan. 2, 11. ומלחא די מלכה. קדמ' דפ'  
Dan. 10, 14. ובאחי להבינך את אשר

## ולבר ממסורהא

- Num. 23, 3. ויאמר בלעם לבלק  
Dan. 2, 5. ענה מלכא  
1 Chr. 4, 17. ובן. ד"ה  
Dan. 2, 44. וביומיהן די מלכיא אנן  
Dan. 5, 5. בה שעתא נפקו  
Jer. 3, 22. שובו בנים  
Jer. 8, 15. קוה לשלום. ד"פ  
Ez. 4, 7. ואל מצור ירושלם  
Esra 4, 16. מהודעין  
Esra 4, 16. אנחנה למלכא  
Esra 4, 16. די הן קריתא ג' בפסוקא

## 181.

ב' מלין חסרים ד' במצע' תיבות' וקרי' וסי'

2 Wörter werden mit Daleth in der Mitte gelesen, das in der Schrift fehlt.

- 1 Reg. 9, 18. ואח בעלת ואח חמר  
דמלכ'

Dan. 2, 9. די הן חלמא לא תהודענני

- להחכה  
פרה  
ונחכה  
ושנה  
כה  
בכפה  
כפה  
מלכה  
יקרה

1

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

## 178.

ג' נו"נן כתבין ועירין וסימניהן

In 3 Wörtern steht ein Nun fin., das kleiner ist, als die übrigen Buchstaben im Worte.

- Jer. 39, 13. ונבשזבן וישלח נבווראדן  
Jes. 44, 14. ארן לכת לו ארוים ויקח תרזה  
Prov. 16, 28. ונרנן איש תהפכות ישלח מרון

## 179.

ט' פסוקים אית בהון כהרין סימן ל הפוכה וסימניהן  
Bei 9 Versen ist ein Zeichen wie ein umgekehrtes Nun angebracht.

- Num. 10, 34. וענן ה' עליהם יומם  
Num. 10, 35. ויהי בנסע הארן  
Num. 10, 36. ובנחה יאמר  
Num. 11, 1. ויהי העם כמתאננים  
Ps. 107, 23. יורדי הים כאניות  
Ps. 107, 24. המה ראו מעשי ה'  
Ps. 107, 25. ויאמר ויעמד רוח סערה  
Ps. 107, 26. יעלו שמים ידרו תהומות  
Ps. 107, 27. יחנו וינעו כשכור  
Ps. 107, 28. ויצעקו אל ה' בצר. דבחר'  
Ps. 107, 40. שפך בוז על נדיבים  
Ps. 107, 41. וישנב אביון מעוני

## 180.

ג' מלין כתבין ד' בסוף תיבות' וכל דכו' כתי' א' וסי'

13 Wörter haben ein He am Ende, die sonst immer mit Alef schliessen.

- Ex. 3, 18. נקרה ואמרתם אליו ה' אלהי  
Deut. 3, 11. הלה כי רק עוג מלך הבשן  
1 Reg. 10, 19. לכפה שש מעלות  
1 Reg. 10, 19. לכפה וראש עגול



**דעם**

[illegible]

כִּי הָיָה אֲמִירַל וְחֶשֶׁת עֲלִיָּו  
נֶאֱמָר: וְהִכְנֵעַ בְּעֵמֶל לָבֶט בְּשִׁלּוֹאִין  
עוֹר: וְהָעֻקּוֹל יִהְיֶה בְּצֵר לָהֶם  
בְּמַצֻּקֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעִם: יוֹצִיאִם  
מִשְׁחָר רַצְלֹמֶת וּמוֹסִיֹתֵיהֶם יִנְתָּק:  
יִדּוּל יִהְיֶה חֲסָדוֹ וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו לִבִּי  
אֲדָם: כִּי שָׁבַר דְּלֹתוֹת נִחְשֶׁת  
וּבְרִיחֵי בְרִזָּל נִדְּעָ: אֲלִים כִּדְרָךְ  
פִּשְׁעָם וּמַעֲוֹתֵיהֶם יִתְּנוּ: כָּל־  
אֶבֶל תַּחֲתֵךְ בִּפְשָׁם וְדִיעוֹ עַד־שַׁעֲרֵי  
מֹתוֹ: וְהָעֻקּוֹל יִהְיֶה בְּצֵר לָהֶם  
בְּמַצֻּקֹתֵיהֶם יוֹשִׁיעִם: יִשְׁלַח־כִּבְרוֹ  
וְדִפְאֵם יִכְלֹט מִשְׁחִיתוֹתָם: יִדּוּ  
לִיהוֹהֲכִדּוֹ וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו לִבִּי אֲדָם:  
וְיִזְכּוּ וּבְחֵי תוֹרַת־וִיסְפּוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיו  
בְּרִנָּה: יוֹרֵדֵי הַיָּם כְּאִירָא עֲשֵׂי  
מֵלֶכֶה בְּמִסְרֵפִים: הֵמָּה רְאוּ  
מַעֲשֵׂי יִהוֹה וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו בְּמַעֲוֹלָה:  
וְהָיָה רֵעַמְד־רוּחַ סַעֲרָה וְתוֹכּוֹם  
גָּלִיו: עֲלוֹשְׁמִים יִדּוּ תוֹכּוֹת  
נֶפֶשׁ בְּרַעַה תִּתְמוּעַ: יִחוּגוּ וְיִנְעוּ  
כִּשְׁכּוֹד וְכֹל הִכְבֹּתָם תִּתְנַלֵּעַ:  
וְהָעֻקּוֹל יִהְיֶה בְּצֵר לָהֶם  
וּבְמַצֻּקֹתֵיהֶם יוֹצִיאִם: יִקֵּם סַעֲרָה  
לְרִכְבָּהּ וְהַשּׁוּלִיָּהִם: וְיִשְׁכְּחוּ  
כִּי־יִשְׁתַּקּוּ וְיִהְיֶה אֵל בְּחוֹ הַרְבֵּם:  
יִדּוּ לִיהוֹהֲכִדּוֹ וּנְפִלְאוֹתָיו לִבִּי  
אֲדָם: וְיִרְכְּמוּהוּ בְּקָהֶל עֹבְדֵימֹשֶׁב  
וְקָיִם יִהְלֹלוּ: יֵשֶׁם בְּהָרֹת  
לְמַדְבָּר וּכְאִי מִיֵּס לְעִמְאֹן: אֲרָץ  
בְּרִי לְכַלְהָה בְּרַעַת שִׁבְיָ בָּהֶ:  
יֵשֶׁם מְדָבָר לֵאנֹם מִיֵּס וְאֲרָץ צִירָה  
לְעִמְאִיִּים: וְיִוֹשֶׁבֶשְׁמֵרַעֲבִים  
וְיִכְתְּנוּ עִיר מוֹשֶׁב: וְיִרְעוּ שְׂדוֹת  
וְיִטְעוּ כִרְמִים וְיַעֲשׂוּ פְרִי תְבוּאָה:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 בְּיָמָיו  
 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל  
 וְיִשְׂרָאֵל

5



שנית ח"א

יבין ובעני

בר

כגון שאברין עליה פירות פלוני או שלא תשתה יין לפעול או דבר פלוני עליו אסור לעולם אם נפרעת מחתוכיתך כלום ופי' הרבה ו' והרבה א"ל שדכר א' ר' יו' שחביבין אותה חזן לב' ד' ו' סתמין אותה ככ"ד וכו' הרבה א"ל על פניה חלכות אונות ואחר השבועה או הער שחין לה הקרקע והנכסים ומכבין אותם לה בתוכותיה ובתבין לה שער איה הנויאה בתוכתה והיה כתוב בו כו"ך ואח"ך נכבש ואיך תבנו לה הכ"ך הקרקע והנכסים בתוכתה והו' ה"ל כזה וכל כל העם הזה על מקומם יבא בשלם ואם תמות האלמנה אחר זה יורשה ערשם כל עבודה ואין לנרש כעלה חכא כירושא דבר זה כדור אין צריך לפיכך

וכיה' שחביבין ופשת' שאם תמות האלמנה בלא שבעה הלא ירשו וירש' כלום מחתוכיה כיון שלא נכש' בחייה שלא נזקבלה מחתוכיה כלום אינו כן שחביבין שבעה מחתוכיה ג' אהמות שכן הנהיג שכתבו תהא לאחת עליו וכו' מן הדין אינה צריכה שבועה אבל נהנו לה לפיכך יורשוהו א"ל הרשב"א ו' בתשובתו הביא ראיות לחיוב שבועה זו אבל בעדוה בחייה ואם תהא בלא שבועה כתב הרשב"א ו' א"ל שדכר הכ"ל לא אהדו וירשהו בתוכתה דלא יעברו כה' תריקול' לה שבועה ואם תהא יסמיו היורשים בתוכתה וכו' הר"ד ו' א"ל שדכר ר' יוסף שירשם שבעה שבועת היסודות א"ל שבעה אולם שבעה בתוכה והפדו' נגלה שאם תהא האלמנה בלא שבועה יהיו היורשים הפסידין כלום

ע"י ובענין החצר שאמרתי שיש בו ג' בתים שיש ג' בתי' ו' קטן ואם מתו כבדן הבית אשר לצד השוק בשוה כיון שאין לא' בו השתמשו יתירה על הבית כי אם גדר בעלמא אין מתקין לפי גדר הבית וקטן בבת' כפי' השתקין כתבו שמי האמר כובין זה לה לבנות דלת ולעשות בית שער להצר ר"ל להצמצם א' ונבני האמר הליצית צמיונה או הבריו כובין אותו על כך לעשותו וכן כתב הרשב"א ו' כפ"ה ה' א"ל שכתב שמי' ודכר' עזר וכן כל דברים שהנהיג ר' יוסף א"ל לא נכת' אם בשוה א"ל כפי' מתקין כיון שהוא שמייה לבית הדכר קצת המפרשים שמתקין כפי' מתקין כיון שהוא שמייה לבית ואין א' הדין השתמש בו יותר מחבורו לכן טוב הוא שיבשר בשרה ואם יתאמר נראה שמתקין כפי' מתקין כיון שיש לא' מתקין יותר מחבורו צריך ליתן כשמתקין יותר מחבורו ואם תמנע שוה מתקין בשוה

פ' ובענין הצפורים שאלת א' שאלת א' שחביבין או חתומים ואחרת שיש לקצת ג' כמות טהרה בדין שצוף טהור באכל' כהסודת כך חפ' כבת' כפ' ואלו טריפות וכו' הרשב"א ו' א"ל אינו יודע בודאי שהוא שוף טהור בודק כפי' שנתנו חז"ל ולכס' שלם

טקורת אל איש מביול נקר רבי עמו יצ"י פ' שואל בהוגן וכשורה' מרכה העשרה מתבכר בתורה הנימוני שאלתיך הנכונים הנכונים בתורה שחתי בראיתי בהם אורה בלש דבש אכל חיערה וכדור ובכחת ארה הכבתי דברך הנכונים ופליג' ה' נקלה ולרוב אהבתך וחברתך אשר בלבי תשכנה ופליג' לתלמידי דודך ודעתך אשר בעיני קיר' אשכך תה שיראה לי כנפש נמויה ורומ נשכרה ואני כה' אכסח ויזר כל באמורה

תחילה שאלת ושאלת השוחר אמת לעולם היעני המון שפרש' ויהי בנבוע מה הוא כות' המון יורחם ומה שאמר רש"י שאלו חקומה אלא כפי' להפסיק בין פורענות לפורענות

תשובה התשובה בזה חרובה אלא שאני מוכיר לך ראשו בריקם לבד ומה שאמר לי לבאר תחילה פירשו ו' כהם' שבת הפני שה' כפי' כפי' הכאן לספר שחתי ונשתיוו כופ"ה כחתינות ש' ויהי בנבוע הדין הוא אמת את הדין כפ"ת פיר' דמש' על פסוק חכמה עמוה ו' א"ל ו' כפרים בראש'

ואלה שחתי ויקרא כמכרר כפי' ער ויהי צמחש אחר ויהי כמכרר ער כחתי אוננים כחתי אוננים עד סוף ספר כמכרר אלא שדכרם הכ' ו' שפרים כנגד ו' ימי בראשית כנגד ו' מעדות' שכתבם נתפאח ישראל וס' שבת ופסח ועד ד' ו' ויוס"ך וכן נזכרות ושמעיה ע"ה וכנגד ו' אורות היוצעים מהם ס' בל' ו' ושמעיה נעלמם ואין איה חלל תורה שאל' וקורה אור והמני' הפוכין כד' שלא יפסל ס' פ' ביתר וחסד וכוונת המנין כפד' שצדו בינה מכהם מתבס' תודם ו' שמי היובל כפי' שמי נזיל וכלל' לרמוז ח' כרכות כל' שבועות ק' כרכות שמכרכין ישראל העולם עומד והכנס' כד' שמי' לכה' כרכה א' מהמלה כי כאשר יכרך בניה מלא חמה לני צפרה ולכין א' ויהו מר' אלק' וכדור חקוד רמוז כאלן ויש דרשום מס' ג' פורעניות יודע כי' כיון חקוד לכך הפסיק בימים פורענות א' ויס' חסד ה' דרש' כתיבך הדבור חבית הספר כלומר שאלו נמצא כס' פחדו שאל' יוסף להם' נזות אחרים ואפס' שמי' צדשות ח' שחתי ופורענותם שלא יתוספו להם חסדות ופורענות שמי' ויהי בנבוע שדכרנו אחר' האחר' והענינים י' וק' מתלוננים ולכן עשה כ' כזרת כאל' ונ' ד' ח' ג' נזון הקדוש לכן נפדו וכן יקבנו ואין לבנות יותר מזה והאל' והענינים כפי' ו' לרקוד להשגחה הדרכה בהם ומכאן תבין סוד' שביב' בתקופתם ע"כ ויש מפרשים שיש קפ' ח' ח' ויהי בנבוע עד למעלה מחנה' פורעניות והיא כפד' כמכרר כפי' כפ' אלה כקדו בני ישראל כאשר חמו כן יסעו ויש' פה' לו להל' ויהי בנבוע ולכן כתב רש"י ו' שאין זה חקומו ויש' פ' פורעניות למעלה כשתחשוב פסוקים של ברכת כהנים כל פסוק מרשה כאשר הם כפ' ולכן הוא ה' השב' כלומר שיש' פ' פורעניות למעלה מחקום זה וכן התמונה כתב וסוד המון' הספוקים הם כנגד היסוד ולפי' שש' חזרין הנשמות ואין למקום זה עסק בחתו' לכך נכפדה ס' ו' והוא אחרם כמכרר חק' חל' תדרש ואני מוסיף כפ' פסוקים אלו כפ' ח' ו' תיבות כנגד פסוק ולכן הדין החוקה שיש בו ג' כ"ב תיבות וכפ' ונבנה יש בו ח' תיבות כנגד ח' תיבות שפ' בראשית ה' ה' לכתוב תחילה ונכחה שהיא כנגד בראשית ושמ' לו ויהי בנבוע שה' כנגד פ' האחרון של תורה וכל' הדין החוקה ולפי' כתב הני' הפוכה כל' כי התיבה הפוכה שלא כפד' לחסדן דיתקו אכל ליריעתו יתב' כסדר הם כתובים כי רמוז חסד' הדין החוקה' שהיא כנגד ויהי בנבוע שרמוז אל הכר' כסדר והמשל' על העולם ואח"כ כתב ונבנה שהיא כנגד בראשית' קס' ג' כ' כנגד' נזות הנשמה כפולס הנשמות והם הנדר' דרשום וכן נבול' חלכסון ו' פסיר' וכן צורפים ואני אין לנו לנסכול ולהבין דברים אלו ע"כ ראיתי כסוד פסוקים אלו ונבנ' ואלהים ואיך עיניו כפאור תורתו

פ' עוד שאלת א' הן מהלכין בתוכה או בקורה

תשובה ו' כ' מחלוקת בבת' בין ר' נחמיה ובין ר' זאסיה ר' נחמיה סבר כתיבה היו מהלכין ומפיק לב' כאשר יחנו כן יסעו וסדר חמית' יהודה כחורש שנילו ראו' בדרום וכנגד יהודה היה דגל יוסף כדערכ' חשום דשבינה כמכרר כנגד ראובן היה דגל רן כנמן והמשכן באמצע' ולדעת ר' זאסיה היו הולכין בקורה ומפיק לה' מאסף לכל המחנות כי דגל שמי' שילך כקורס תתאדרן מאסף והוא אחרון' והלכה כתיבה היו מהלכין והכריזונו לפסוק ככה על פד' מור חמית' ומסע' כ"א א"ל אלא על אופן זה כסדר מרכבה העליונה ודרשו ע"ה ככפוק ויקרא לו אל אלהי ישראל הקב"ה קראו ליועקב אל ו' א"ל אלהי אלהי בעליוני ואח"ה בתחתונים כשה' שהקב"ה רוכב על ר' חיות כך יעקב נשא ארבע חיות וכש' שש' לנעלה וכן נבול' חלכסון כך היו לו ליועקב וכן שכתים וכש' שחלן הקב"ה מתעלה העולם כד' ע' שמים כך היו ונזאו יד' יעקב ע' שש' לרעה האומר כי יוכרך מלדה בין החומות וכש' שהקב"ה למעלה חושל ושליש' על הכל כנדרה כפ' אשר חלק ה' אלהיך אותם לכל העמים כך היה יעקב למעלה העי' וכש' שש' מרכבה ד' צמס' שה' פני ארזה בני אדם בני שר כפי' נכר כנו' בקרבנות ויחולל ע"ה כך נז' יעקב לנבניו לשא' שאמר ויעשו לו