A Masoretic Note in the Aleppo Codex  
Concerning the Composite Words  
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The Masoretic Annotations of the Aleppo Codex  
The Aleppo Codex, the Bible Ms vocalized and accentuated by the Masorete Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher, is the most important manuscript dating from the masoretic period. For this reason, any evidence relating to the lost parts of the Codex is extremely significant. According to various descriptions of the Codex, and especially according to the detailed description compiled by U. Cassuto, we know that both at the beginning and at the end of the Codex there were pages of material resembling the "Grammar of the Masorah" as well as various masoretic lists.  

* Most of the issues dealt with in this paper were presented at the International Organization for Masoretic Studies (IOMS), that took place in Basel on August 6th, 2001, as a part of IOSOT XVIIIth Congress.  
The following is a list of abbreviations for biblical manuscripts cited:  
8 = the Aleppo Codex, photo-printed, Jerusalem 1976.  
5 = Ms St. Petersburg, the National Library of Russia, Evr I B 19a, the entire Bible.  
37 = Ms St. Petersburg, the National Library of Russia, Evr II B 10, the Pentateuch (Institute for Hebrew Manuscript Photocopies in Jerusalem: F 62964).  
147 = Ms St. Petersburg, the National Library of Russia, Evr II C 144 (termed in Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tannim: T pap. 1; F 70095, F 46096), Prophets.  
P = Ms Cairo, Gottheil 34, Prophets.  
Ψ = Ms Jerusalem Heb 24a 5702 (in the past: Sasoon 507), the Pentateuch.  
IΨ = Ms Sasoon 1053, the entire Bible.  
7 = Misra'ot Gedolot (printed), Venice 1524–1525.  
1 See Y. Ofer, "M. D. Cassuto's Notes on the Aleppo Codex," Sefirot: Studies and Sources on the History of the Jewish Communities in the East n.s. 4 (19) (Jerusalem, 1989) 277–344 (Heb.). Cassuto's description of the annotations to the Codex and the passages he copied from these annotations appear on pp. 291–308.  
2 There were seven pages at the beginning of the Codex, i.e., before the pages carrying the Torah text, and twenty additional pages at its end, i.e., after the end of
There is also evidence of copies having been made of this masoretic material: one copy was made for W. Wickes, who wrote a book about the accentuation rules. A second copy was made for A. Firkovich, and found its way to S. Baer and H. L. Strack, who made use of it in their edition of Die Dikduke Ha-Tamim. The whereabouts of both of these copies are unknown today.

I have recently been successful in locating the archive of Yitzhak Seligman, amongst the manuscripts of the Ginsburg collection in Moscow. This archive contains a complete copy of the masoretic material included in the Aleppo Codex before the Bible text and after it. In this paper I propose to consider an important masoretic note from this material, concerning the last of the biblical books. Cassuto, who succeeded in viewing the Codex in its entirety in 1943, wrote up a full, detailed description of these pages, but copied over full only a small portion of the material.


The archives are known as Ms Moscow, Ginsburg 1500. The identifying mark of film in the Institute for Photocopies of Hebrew Manuscripts is F 48538. In the titule's card-file the contents of the Ms are defined as follows: "Copies of Yitzhak Baer." Yitzhak Baer's handwriting can be identified, for example, by a handwritten note he wrote in 1853 to Rabbi Elyakim Carmoly (Ms Moscow, Ginsburg 1370 – F 47). The contents of the archive, too, confirm clearly the correctness of this notification, for it contains many letters written to Baer by H. Strack, his co-worker preparing the edition of Dikduke Ha-Tamim, as well as copies of various MSS serving as the basis of this edition (See infra, n. 49). In the Baer archive there are hundreds of pages written in his handwriting, most of which deal with topics mected with the Masorah, and the rest, on topics concerning Hebrew poetry. The terial of the archive has been classified into 27 sections, the contents of each being lined in French at the head of each section.

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composite words of the Bible. The history of this copy of the Aleppo Codex will be reviewed in an appendix at the end of this paper.

The Masoretic Note Concerning the Composite Names

At the beginning of the Aleppo Codex, before the pages on which the Bible itself was inscribed, there were seven pages on which sections of the "Grammar of the Masorah" were written. These pages were lost when the Codex was damaged in 1947, but U. Cassuto, who had visited Aleppo four years earlier, wrote down in his notebook a detailed description of the Codex and of the masoretic material before it and after it. From Cassuto's description we know that on page 7b there was a masoretic note dealing with the composite names. Cassuto copied over only nine names from the beginning of the note, thus enabling us to see that in the Codex the names were written in three columns. I reconstructed a larger portion of this masoretic note on the basis of its being cited in a masoretic note in Ms 127.

In the copy found in the Baer archive, this masoretic note was copied over in full, in Baer's handwriting. The following is the content of this note.

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6 For M. D. Cassuto's notes see Ofer, "Cassuto." For the masoretic note pertaining to the composite names, see ibid., pp. 302-394.

7 The vocalization and the references adduced here do not appear in the original. At the top of the page Baer wrote in German that this list appears in the Aleppo Codex, after the pages containing "the Ben Asher fragments" ("Ben-Asher Stücke"; cf. the German name of Baer and Strack's edition of Sefer Dikduke Ha-Tamim: Die Dikduke Ha-Tamim des Ahron ben Moscheh ben Ascher und andere alte grammatisch-masorethische Lehrstücke). This description corresponds precisely to the description of the position of the list according to Cassuto.
The Heading Preceding the Masoretic Note

The heading preceding the masoretic note contains two sentences: the first is written in Aramaic, the second in Hebrew. The first sentence explains the content of the list that follows: words written as a single word and read as a single word. The word "מלש (=word)" is used here in two ways: as a term referring to the item under consideration and as a term referring to the units composing this item. Such a lack of consistency in terminology is not unusual in the period of the early Masoretes and grammarians, and so is not surprising.12

The sentence in Hebrew conveys a general statement: "all names of tribal princes and leaders." There are some difficulties here. The statement in itself is unclear: does the term "tribal princes" (נשים (=Shekhem, son of Hamor, the Hiwite, prince of the country; Gen 34:2)), or "leaders of the children of Merari, Suri'el son of Avihayil [Num 3:35]); and also the twelve spies of whom it is written " נשים בהשומש [Num 13:2]), or perhaps it is limited to the names of the princes of Israel listed in the Book of Numbers? The second term is more precisely defined: ק載י תרעה (leaders) are קרא איש (leaders) in (Num 1:16), i.e., the princes of the tribes listed in the first chapter of Numbers. However, these men were also termed יושב (inhabitants), and the term קרא איש does not seem to add anything.

From the general statement itself it is impossible to deduce with any certainty whether it applies only to the personal names of the princes or if the names of their progenitors are considered part of their names. Masoretes who copied over the masoretic note from the Codex (see infra) sensed

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12 Cassuto quotes the sentence with minor changes: "These are words that are written זהות הלשון מילים and are read זהות הלשון מילים. Over the first זהות Cassuto wrotesic, apparently meaning to say that the word ends with a נ. It is not likely that an ungrammatical phrase like מילים זהות הלשון was actually written in the Codex; perhaps it was Cassuto who erred in copying (under the influence of וקריק)."
The Principles of the List of Composite Names

A perusal of the complete list of names enables one to understand the principles upon which it is built:

1. The masoretic note contains 73 items written down in three columns of 24–25 lines each. According to the heading of the list, each of these items is to be written in the Bible as a single word and read as a single word.

2. As already noted, the statement in the heading of the list—כָּל שְׁמוֹת—lists the names of the princes mentioned in the first chapter of Numbers (and called there קָרָא תְּמוּנָה [leaders of the assembly]). Eighteen names in this column are the names of the princes and their progenitors. All the names mentioned there in Numbers which can possibly be written in two words (excluding such names as אָרֹן נֵחַשְׁנָן and אָבָרֶן נֵחַשְׁנָן) appear here. The middle column contains the names of the princes in charge of distributing the land, listed in Num 34:16–29. Seven names appear here, and here, too, the list is complete.

3. The rest of the first two columns and the entire third column include names of people and of places, as well as biblical words which are not names. One can discern here different groups with a common denominator, such a group almost always appearing in a single column. In other words, the words are connected with one another vertically, not horizontally.

We adduce here as examples a number of these groups:16 in the right-hand column there appears a group of two names of spies sent out by Moses (Num 13: רְאֵי אֲמֻסֵי, אֲמֻסְיָא), a group of place names from Genesis (אַבְרָאָם, אַבָּאָם), and a group of names from Joshua (יהוֹשֻׁעַ, יהוֹשֻׁעַ)16, a group of names from

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13 Two independent witnesses—Cassuto and the Baer copy—testify that the word was not written in the Codex, and so it may be assumed that this word appearing in ms 17 is an explanatory addition made by the Masoretes.

14 C. D. Ginsburg, The Massorah: Compiled from Manuscripts, alphabetically and systematically (4 vols.; London, 1885–1905) section 6346, adduced a masoretic note of this type, except that its wording was incorrect: כָּל שְׁמוֹת בְּגֵם מָלֵם כָּל שְׁמוֹת אֵין שְׁמוֹת בְּגֵם מָלֵם כָּל שְׁמוֹת. The learned editor of ms א' (A') and ms 17 is the only word in the list whose first half ends neither with a shva quiescens nor with a silent letter. Splitting it into two parts would thus necessitate eliminating the dagesh forte in the letter ש. This word is not included in the lists corresponding to this one which will be discussed infra. The word, however, is included in the Babylonian masoretic note (in ms 705), where it is described as being
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written and read as a single word. See Y. Ofer, The Babylonian Masora of the Pentateuch, its Principles and Methods (Jerusalem, 2001) 393 (Heb.).

Furthermore, it should be noted that under the word רבי נבון there appears the word רבנאי (Ps 102:4) which itself appears near the word רבי נבון (Ps 90:15) in Psalms. In many places in this masoretic note similar words or words appearing near one another in the biblical text are written under one another.

From the Psalms commentary of the Karaite Solomon ben Yeruham (10th century), it can be seen that his version was רבי נבון (Ps 90:15) and ימי נבון (Ps 102:4), each in two words. See S. Pinsker, Litquate Qadmoniyot (Vienna, 1860) 2:131 (Heb.); A. A. Avrunin, “The Midrash of Words,” Let I (1972) 92–93 (Heb.).

The form: רבי נבון is somewhat similar to the form כנני נבון (Lam 4:3). There is no evidence as to the way this word was written in the Codex, but the Massoretes (such as ב ו א) show that this word was written as two words כנני נבון and was read as a single word, and the word is also included in the masoretic list containing words of this type (Okhla ve-Okhla [ed. Fransdorff; Hanover, 1864] sect. 100; and parallels). It is similarly impossible that the Masorah intended the Aramaic word רבי נבון appearing 3 times in Ezra (4:10–11; 7:12), for there is no way this word can be split into two words.

4. It is also possible to point out pairs of similar names which appear together (in the same column): רבי נבון (the former appears because of the appearance of the latter), ימי נבון, וימי נבון (words from Psalms which are not names and begin with the letter נ), ימי נבון, and perhaps also ימי נבון (words in which two root-letters are doubled).

5. Two of the items were repeated in the list: ימי נבון (appears twice in col. 1), ימי נבון (appears twice in col. 3). This may result from an error in the process of the copying from the Codex.

The Masoretic Note as compared with its Parallels

Parallels have been found to this masoretic note in three other manuscripts, but in each of these parallels there appear only about half the number of items appearing in the note in the Codex (which, as already noted, is 73).

a. Ms 16 Num 1 (Yelin, Codex, sect. 9.1; Yelin states that the MS was written in the tenth century); ימי נבון מיהו

b. Ms 147 (St. Petersburg, The National Library of Russia Evr II C 144; was designated T pap. 1 in Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamini). The MS was reconstructed by Yelin and idem, An Introduction to the Tiberian Masora (Jerusalem, 1976) 18 (Heb.).
written in Alexandria in the year 1122. The note is written in large letters on full pages, and fills three whole pages. In each line there appear two names only (the ends of the lines are marked here with oblique lines):

[First page]

[Second page]

[Third page]

This masoretic note lacks the following:

The note of אונאא was copied from the Codex, and explicitly ascribes the note in the Codex to “the great teacher, Aharon ben Asher.” However, it contains

Masorah “is based on the Eastern school” seems to be based on a similar masoretic list printed by Ginsburg (Ginsburg, Masora, 2:713, addenda to section 63א,b), according to which the names and words are each a single word according to the Eastern school, but two words each according to the Western school (see Yeivin, Codex, 85). Baer could also have compared the 147 note to the masoretic note he found in the MS (here adduced in section c), and had he done so he would have found three names based on the Eastern school (‘.setCode), and three others based on the Western school (‘bdkh, ומכה) and on (and others based on the Western school (‘drlm, סלוהובש רוחב). 24 C. D. Ginsburg, Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible, with Prolegomenon by Harry M. Orlinsky (2nd ed.; New York, 1966) 204, cited this masoretic note on behalf of Baer (who refrains from stating in which MS he found it), and expressed doubts as to Baer’s reliability and the accuracy of the masoretic note (and see Yeivin, Codex, 83).

25 2 Sam 5:15 etc. Perhaps this name derives from the name אונאא which appears in the Codex list.

26 1 Chr 7:28. In the Codex list the name אונאא (Jos 15:22) appears, written as a single word.
only about half the number of items that were in the Codex: the first nine lines are copied over in full (26 items)
), the next five lines are copied over only in part (8 items), while the last 11 lines are not copied over at all.

In the note appearing in MS 147, no indication is given of the source from which it was copied. However, its similarity to the Codex is very great, and there is no doubt that the list of names is derived from a note arranged in three columns (in the right-hand column—names from ch. 1, and in the middle column—names from ch. 34), rather than two, for the arrangement in two columns leads to complete chaos. It is thus very likely that this note, too, was copied over from the Codex. Here, too, the first nine lines were copied over in full (26 items), the next five lines in part (9 items), one additional item from the end of the list (שמונתיה), and one which did not appear in the list at all (יוהל).28

The masoretic note adduced by Baer from an unknown source is substantively different from the note of the Codex; nevertheless, it is clearly derived from it. In its first part there appear 29 items: 24 of these appear in the Codex list, and the order in which they appear generally matches that of the Codex note, line by line. Five items are not included in the Codex note (אבריאס, מלאולא בטאל, אילופלט, אאוריא). In the second part of the masoretic note there appear eight items whose lettering is in dispute between the Eastern (Medinah's) and Western (Ma'arba's) schools. Six of these appear in the note of the Codex, while two do not appear there (רשע, שמאל). The compiler of this masoretic note may have made use of both the Codex and of additional masoretic sources that transmitted the disputes, and on the basis of all these he formulated his own masoretic note.29

In all the lists paralleling the Codex there are signs of the material having been revised in the list heading: The Masorete of 147 wrote שופט קדמיו, adding the last word for the sake of precision. In addition, he mentioned the source from which he copied over the masoretic note: "And we found them to be the same as the work of the great teacher, Aharon ben Moshe Asher, in the book called El-Tag." A note such as this is extraordinary in the Masorah, and it apparently indicates that the Masorete had encountered a large number of disputes regarding the subject of composite words, and so decided to rely on a prestigious authority, and resolved the problems accordingly.

Yosef "Ha-Pisg" (the Masorete of 147) inserted after the words אליעם מלך the expression שופט קדמיו, which originates in the y. Meg. (1, 11; 72a). Similarly, he inserted the masoretic term כל שמה אחרי שם הקדמיו and the name list. However, the use of this term here is not clear, for in the list there appear items which have no connection whatever with the princes and the leaders (such as the third word in the list, אלימלך), which is the name of a place in the tribal inheritance of Judah).30

The Contradictions between the Masoretic Note and the Text of the Codex

An examination of the masoretic note quoted from the Codex in Baer's copy gives rise to a serious difficulty: three unique names appearing in the list were written in the Codex itself as two words and were read as two words, contrary to the rule of the Masorah: שאצטתא (2 Sam 23:31); וראנרא (Jer 39:3 – written in the Codex on two lines!); ו万亩שע (Jer 39:3). The name

27 The names יוחנן and יוחנן appeared in MS 147, but were damaged. The names מטלח and מטלח, appearing in the Codex list at the end of line 2 and at the end of line 3, was copied over only once in 147. In the original, the intention was to include two different names (משלבת - Isa 7:6; מטלח - Ezra 4:7), but the Masorete of 147 was apparently unaware of the significance of the two names.

28 Perhaps the word מ.dateTimePicker did appear in the Codex list, and was copied from there into MS 147, but then the list was altered, and in its place the word דל Ли was written, though it already appears in the Codex two lines above. There is no evidence as to the way the word מ.dateTimePicker was written in the Codex (in Gen 4:22). See Yeivin, Codex, 84-85.

29 Theoretically, the opposite may also be the case: that the Masorete of the Codex made use of a list which adduced the disputes, and resolved them.

30 The opening of the masoretic note adduced by Baer is very similar to that of 147.
too, appears twice in the Codex as two words.31 Regarding the writing of another phrase in the Codex, מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ (Num 24:23), there are mutually contradictory testimonies.32

The question thus arises: how could the Masorete of the Codex open his book with a masoretic list that contradicts explicitly the text of the book itself? In this context, the prominent position occupied by the masoretic note must be stressed: in the seven-page prologue to the Codex there appeared chapters of D mid Ha-Masorah (“Grammar of the Masorah”), and this masoretic note is the only one adduced there.33 From the fact that the

31 The name מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ appears in the Bible five times. Twice it is written in the Codex as two words (1 Sam 14:49; 1 Chr 9:39). It is written as a single word once (1 Chr 833), and twice it seems that spelling of this name in the Codex was corrected from two words to a single word (1 Sam 31:2; 1 Chr 10:2).

32 Ya'aqov Sappir asked R. Menashe Sithon of Aleppo regarding this word: מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ, and received the reply: “Yes” (See R. Zer, “R. Ya'aqov Sappir's Meoroeth Nathan (MS JTS L 729),” Les 50 (1986) 151-213 (Heb.), at p. 171, question 295). In contrast, R. Moshe Yehoshua Qimhi, an emissary sent by R. Shalom Shachna Yelin to Aleppo, examined the Codex and wrote: “and in the Codex— one word” (See Y. Ofer, “The Aleppo Codex and the Bible of R. Shalom Shachna Yelin,” in Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift: Collected Papers in Jewish Studies [ed. M. Bar-Asher; Jerusalem, 1992] 295-354 (IHeb), at p. 338 to Num 24:23). Qimhi did not note explicitly if the accent מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ written under the letter ב (like the ב version) or not (like the version of א). According to Yeivin (Codex, 80), the Codex has ב מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ (Job 18:15) written as two words, and if so, here, too, the text of the Codex contradicts the masoretic note. However, in the photocopy of the Codex, the letter ג is seen to be touching the נ, and the spelling is thus a single word.

As for the word מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ (Exod 17:16), it does indeed appear in the Codex as a single word, as can be seen from the testimony of Ya'aqov Sappir (see Zer, “Meoroeth Nathan,” 165, question 137).

For the unintelligible word מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ appearing in the masoretic list, see supra, n. 17.

33 Two short dedications to the Karaite Synagogue in Jerusalem were inscribed in the eighth page of the Codex in the second half of the eleventh century. The date of these dedications can be learned from the fact that the Codex was dedicated “provided it does not leave the possession of the two great princes... Prince Yoshiyahu and Prince Yehizqiyahu,” and from a document found in the Geniza we learn that Yehizqiyahu was alive in the year 1064. The Codex was removed forcibly from Jerusalem and brought to Cairo by the Seljuks (in 1071) or by the Crusaders (in 1099). For this see I. Ben-Zvi, “The Codex of Ben Asher,” Textus 1 (1960) 6 and n. 11. Incidentally, it should be noted that Kahle’s remark that the Codex was returned from Egypt to Jerusalem (P. Kahle, Masoreten des Westens [2 vols.; Stuttgart, 1927] 19-11) is based on the short inscriptions in the Codex, which state that the Codex was dedicated to the rabbincal community in Jerusalem. Kahle, however, did not know that the words מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ and מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ in these inscriptions are actually a later correction, and that the original inscriptions told of the dedication to the Karaite community in Jerusalem, which took place before it was taken to Egypt.


35 The list cited in MS 17 is shorter than that of Baer copy. But this is apparently because the space available on the page to the Masorete of 17 did not suffice for him to copy over the entire list. The name מִשְׁמַא רָאוּ, which appears twice in the Codex as two words, is included in the masoretic note of 17. The disparity between the Codex and the masoretic note of the complicated words is thus revealed also from the testimony of 17.
We can try to resolve the difficulty by questioning the authenticity of the Baer copy. There seems to be some grounds for such questioning: a number of sections of the Diqduq Ha-Masorah appearing in the Baer copy do not match Cassuto’s notes, and it is possible that they do not accurately reflect what was originally written in the Codex. It may thus be claimed, that this masoretic note, too, was emended, especially in its last section, and foreign elements were incorporated into it. However, this idea is contradicted by the fact that the beginning of the list is indeed documented by Cassuto, and its first half—by MS 119, sources which were unfamiliar to Firkovich and Baer! Nor did Baer deal with this list in his own publications. For this reason it seems reasonable to assume, despite the difficulty, that the list in the Baer archive is extremely similar to what the Codex contained.

This difficulty—together with additional difficulties arising from an examination of the Codex annotations in the Baer copy—leads me to the hypothesis that another Masorete—not Aharon ben Asher, the Masorete of the Codex—wrote the pages of the Masorah at the beginning and at the end of the Codex and added them to it. It would seem that this was done not long after the writing of the Codex, before it was dedicated to the Karaites in Jerusalem. The Masorete of 119 saw the masoretic notes at the beginning of the Codex and attributed them to Aharon ben Asher, the Masorete of the Codex.

This hypothesis may shed light on yet another problem, connected with the chapters of Diqduq Ha-Masorah which made up part of the pages at the beginning of the Codex: A. Dotan, who published the Sefer Diqduq Ha-Te’amim, claimed that Aharon ben Asher composed the Sefer Diqduq Ha-Te’amim on the basis of ancient masoretic material which lay before him. Here arises a major problem: why didn’t Aharon ben Asher copy

For the disparity between the Baer copy and other testimonies regarding the Codex chapters of Diqduq Ha-Masorah and the lists of the sectional divisions, see my article “חומרי המפורדים לש חומרי אים ו-مراיצים במורכבות של חומרי אימים ר.” in Studies in the Bible and Its Commentaries 7 (Bar-Ilan University: in press).

A. Dotan, ed., The Diqduq Ha-Te’amim of Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher (Jerusalem, 1967) 1-14 (Heb) (see in particular the bottom of p. 11).

over the book he had compiled into his special Bible copy, i.e., the Aleppo Codex, instead of copying over some other collection of paragraphs in an order and in a wording completely different from those of his book?

Dotan resolved this difficulty by expressing doubts as to the correctness of ascribing the Codex to Aharon ben Asher. D. S. Loewinger accepted the ascription of the Codex to Ben Asher, but felt that the attribution of Sefer Diqduq Ha-Te’amim to Aharon ben Asher is both late and not valid. There may be a third way to resolve the difficulty, and this possibility too was suggested by Dotan: the Codex itself was vocalized and transmitted by Aharon ben Asher, but the masoretic annotations at its beginning were written by someone else and added to the Codex some time after Aharon ben Asher had completed his work on it.

A. Dotan, “Was the Aleppo Codex really Vocalized by Aharon ben Asher?” Tarbiz 34 (1965) 136-155 (Heb); Dotan, Diqduq Ha-Te’amim, 23: “One must also take into account the possibility, which is not popular at the present time, but—in my opinion—has not been denied absolutely and with certainty, that attributing the Aleppo Codex to Aharon ben Asher is late, like the colophon itself, and does not reflect the truth.”

D. S. Loewinger, “The Aleppo Codex or Diqduq Ha-Te’amim?” Tarbiz 38 (1969) 186-204 (Heb).

In order to complete the discussion one must also consider the possibility that there is no connection between the biblical text of the Aleppo Codex and the masoretic pages opening it” (Dotan, Diqduq Ha-Te’amim, 23).

I will add that there is still another way (a fourth way) to solve the question raised: Aharon ben Asher may have first written the Codex and the masoretic material appended to it, including ancient material of Diqduq Ha-Masorah. Only later, in this case, did Ben Asher compile the Sefer Diqduq Ha-Te’amim, i.e., he arranged some of this early grammatical material in a way and in words that seemed proper.
The Masorete of אוש and the Composite Words

An examination of MS אוש reveals that, in contrast to the situation in the Codex, the Masorete of אוש implemented faithfully the masoretic note concerning the composite words. All the names appearing in the Codex as two words were written in MS אוש as single words. The Masorete of אוש did so not only with the names he himself copied at the beginning of Numbers, but also with the names he did not copy over there.

The following are the data referring to the writing of אוש:

a. Phrases written in the Codex as two words and in MS אוש as a single word:
   מַלְשָׁעַת (Num 24:23), מַלְשָׁעַת (in all five occurrences of the name), בִּנְיָמִן (2 Sam 23:31), בּוֹרָפֶס (Jer 39:3) and כֵּמְנוּרָה (Jer 39:3).

b. Names written as one word both in the Codex and in MS אוש:
   בָּטֵי (Exod 17:16), בָּטֵי (Jer 15:22), בָּטֵי (Jos 15:28), בָּטֵי (Jos 15:30; 19:4), בָּטֵי (Ios 19:26), בָּתֵי (many occurrences), בָּתֵי (2 Sam 12:25), בָּתֵי (2 Sam 12:25) and בָּתֵי (Job 44:6) etc.

c. The puzzling word בָּתֵי in the Baer copy. I suggested above that the word written here in the Codex was בָּתֵי (Ps 90:15). In the text of אוש ibid., it is written as a single word, the short masoretic note there ('ל) reinforces this spelling, and this matches the note in the Codex.

41 I do not know whether the text, the vocalization and the masoretic notes of אוש were written by a single person or by more than one person.

42 The data are based upon Yeivin, Codex, 78-85; Breuer, “The Text and its Sources” at the beginning of the books of the Da’at Miqra Bible series; and also upon my own examinations.

43 For the way the word was written in the Codex, see supra, n. 32.

44 See supra, n. 17.

45 If this refers to the word כָּתָן, the אוש text reads ibid.: כָּתָן, and in the margin there appears the following masoretic note: מַלְשָׁעַת. The very appearance of this note referring to the correct reading teaches us that the word should be written as two words, as it is in most MSS, contrary to the masoretic note in the Codex. However, if this is so the maqaf is unnecessary. Perhaps its purpose was to indicate that these two words are read as one word (See M. Breuer, “Towards the Clarification of Issues in Biblical Accentuation and Punctuation,” Leb 45 [1981] 260–269 [Heb.], at p. 267).

The list in MS אוש also includes the word פִּלְפָלִים that does not appear in the Baer copy. It is difficult to decide with any certainty if the word was included in the Codex list and how it was written in the Codex text. We also have no idea how it was written in MS אוש, for this word appears twice in Gen 4:22, whereas this MS survived only from Gen 10 on.

The system reflected by אוש is especially noticeable in light of the tendency of other MSS to spell some of the items in the list as two words. For example: פִּלְפָלִים (Gen 14, in all five occurrences; ד pessoal_num 2:1; Num 7:54; ל pessoal_num 10:23; Num 2:12; ל pessoal_num 7:36; ל pessoal_num 2:25; ל pessoal_num 14:49; ל pessoal_num 1 Sam 31:2; ל pessoal_num 1 Chr 8:33; 9:39; 10:2), מָכָר (p, r, a, r Jer 39:3), מָכָר (p, r, a, r ibid.), מָכָר (Jer 39:13; Zech 7:2). It should be noted that אוש writes as single words the names מָכָר (Jer 39:3), מָכָר (1 Kgs 18:17), contrary to MSS p, r, a. These names are not included in the list of the Codex, and it can accordingly be stated that the Masorete of אוש had a general tendency to write names as single words, independently of the masoretic list in the Codex. However, this claim is easily disproved: first of all, אוש writes as two words a number of phrases which are not included in the masoretic note of the Codex, such as all four occurrences of מָכָר מַלְשָׁע (Ps 44:15 etc.). Secondly, he writes the two aforementioned names as two words in other occurrences of these names: מָכָר מַלְשָׁע (Jer 39:13), מָכָר מַלְשָׁע (Jer 39:3, 13). On the other hand, he made sure to write the words appearing in the Codex note as single words in all their occurrences.

Summary

The list of composite words that was part of the masoretic note at the opening of the Aleppo Codex is the broadest list we know of in this regard, and it has a number of parallels in other MSS. The way the list appeared in
the Codex, in three columns, is the original way it was written, serving as the basis for all parallel notes. Of these notes, the masoretic note of ו undoubtably quotes from the Codex, and states this explicitly. The Masorete of ו ascribes the masoretic note of the Codex to Aharon ben Asher, and was careful to apply it in practice to all the biblical occurrences of the words appearing in the masoretic note.

This, however, is not the case in the text of the Codex itself. Though in most cases there is a correspondence between the list and the text of the Codex, there are at least four words written in the Codex in a way that does not correspond to what appears in the masoretic note. This is extremely surprising, and there may be no way to escape the conclusion that the masoretic note was not written by the Masorete of the Codex (Aharon ben Asher), who was not familiar with it or did not consider himself bound by it absolutely.

It may be assumed, that the masoretic pages were appended to the Codex some time after the Codex itself was written, probably after the death of Aharon ben Asher, by another Masorete who did not find it necessary to adjust the text of the Codex to what was said in the masoretic additions to it. When the Masorete of MS 19 saw the Codex, perhaps a few decades later, he made no distinction between the text of the Codex and the pages at its head, and attributed both to Aharon ben Asher. He copied over the masoretic note at the beginning of the Codex, and was careful to write accordingly all the composite names, without realizing that the Codex itself did not correspond in every detail to this masoretic list.

Appendix: The History of the Copy of the Codex Masoretic Notes

Yitzhak (Seligman) Baer (1825–1897) was a scholar whose expertise was in the Masorah and in Jewish liturgy. In 1879 Baer published, together with the German scholar Hermann Strack, an edition of chapters of the Grammar of the Masora, which they called Sefer Dikduke Ha-Tamim and attributed (partly) to the well-known Masorete, Aharon ben Moshe ben Asher. This edition was based on twenty ancient biblical MSS including chapters of the Grammar of the Masorah, one of the most important of these being the Aleppo Codex.

In Baer’s recently discovered archive there appear copies of chapters of the Grammar of the Masorah from some of these MSS. The most important written by the Masorete of the Codex. The errors and omissions in the list of pasq signs in the Baer copy strengthen this hypothesis.


See Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamim. In 1967 A. Dotan published another edition of the book (Dotan, Dikduke Ha-Te’anim). For the substantial differences between the two editions and the question of its ascription to Aaron ben Asher, see the introduction to Dotan’s edition, pp. 1–6, 15–25, and, in contrast, Loewinger (supra, note 39).

These MSS include: MS Rome from the Sicilian synagogue—a copy prepared by Abraham Berliner and marked with an S in the Baer and Strack edition; MS Copenhagen “copied by Rabbi R. Wolf” and marked with a K; two MSS from Chafut-Kale, A. Firkovich’s home town: MS T17 (=35), and MS T pap. 1 (=145) which was copied by David Oppenheim, as is written at the top of the copy; and also a Yemenite MS of Ya’aqov Sappir which is not included in the Baer and Strack edition. MS S is the MS of the Jewish community of Rome no. 16 (in the past its number was 2) from the year 1496 (F 46305); see Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamim, xxvi–xxvii; Dotan, Dikduke Ha-Te’anim, 95ff. MS K is the MS of the Royal Library of Copenhagen no. 15 (in the catalog its mark is: Cod. Hebr. 34; P 430); see Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamim, xxvi–xxvii; Dotan, Dikduke Ha-Te’anim, 88. For MS 35 see Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamim, xxvi–xxvii; Dotan, Dikduke Ha-Te’anim, 73–74. MS 145 contains the books of the Prophets, and was written in Alexandria in 1122 by the scribe Yosef, son of R. Ya’aqov “Ha-Paisgi”. See Baer and Strack, Dikduke Ha-Tamim, xxxi; Dotan, Dikduke Ha-Te’anim, 101.

46 The evidence for the age of the pages closing the Codex is not as strong as it is for that of the pages at its beginning. However, this section includes the masoretic list referring to the spelling of biblical Aramaic, and was most likely copied over from the Codex by the Masorete of MS 19 (see my aforementioned article, supra, n. 36), and so the final pages were already part of the Codex in the tenth century. On the other hand, it should be noted that the list of words in dispute between the Eastern and Western schools, which was part of the Codex, was not suited to the method of the Codex Masorete—to ignore all variant methods and to adduce his own decisions only. This may be evidence of the final pages, too, not having been
community first let him see the Codex and even suggested that he serve as
rabbi in their community. But later their attitude towards him changed and
became more suspicious:

And the rabbis of the Aleppo community, when they heard that Michael, the
caretaker of the synagogue, had secretly shown me the Codex and also the list at
its end, and that I had recognized from its language and from the names
appearing in it, that it, too, was a Karaite list resembling the list in the Bible in
the town of Krakow—they decided amongst themselves not to show it to me any
more, lest I find additional indications and signs that the book was of Karaite
origin, and that I take it from them with the backing of the authorities. For this
reason I could not view it any more with my own eyes. They only acceded to my
request to have their scribe copy over for me the lists at the head of the Bible and
at its end together with the invaluable masoretic notes, and the disputes of ben
Asher and ben Naftali and so on also at the head of the Bible and at its end.
I paid the scribe’s wages generously twelve and a half ducatim. I also paid
R. Moshe Sethon three polimperial golden coins—a gift for his efforts in obtaining
a permit from the leaders of the community, the sixty elders of the community
headed by the chief rabbi, when it was almost impossible to get a permit to copy
the lists from the Codex because a vow had been taken not to bring it out of the
cave of Elijah the Prophet even into the synagogue, as they put it. In my opinion,
this was all for the same secret reason, that the Codex was written by a Karaite,
i.e., so as not to reveal the secret of the vow that I have already mentioned
above.

Firkovich’s testimony confirms that of Sappir: a scribe of Aleppo copied for
him all the material preceding the biblical text and following it. It would

trip to Aleppo, and enabled me to publish the excerpt adduced here. For Firkovich’s
letters see also: Tapani Harvaisinen, “The Cairo Genizot and Other Sources of the
Second Firkovich Collection in St. Petersburg,” in Proceedings of the Twelfth
International Congress of the International Organisation for Masoretic Studies (ed. E. J.
Revell; Masoretic Studies 8; Atlanta, Ga., 1996) 25-36; idem, “Abraham Firkovich,
the Aleppo Codex and its Dedication,” Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth
1:131-136.
The copy now found in Baer’s legacy is a copy of Firkovich’s copy, for it is not written in an easthand, but rather in Baer’s own handwriting. Baer seems to have prepared this copy for his own use, maybe because he handed over the copy of the Codex itself to his partner, Strack, or because he had to return it to its original place in the Firkovich collection. The copy found in Baer’s archives includes the larger part of the masoretic material which was found in the Codex annotations.

54 For the identification of Baer’s handwriting, see supra, n. 5.

At the top of section 26 (XXVI) of Baer’s archives, where the copy of the Codex annotations is to be found, the following is written in French: Notes du ms. d’Alep—certaines copiees par J. Sapir (The notes of MS Aleppo—some of which were copied by J. Sapir). I do not know who wrote these words, and who classified the material in the archives after it reached the Ginsburg collection. At any rate, in light of the testimony I have presented here, his statement is to be rejected.

55 It is possible that the original copy (that was made in Aleppo) will yet be found in the Firkovich collection and will answer a number of the questions I ask here. However, locating the MS in Firkovich’s collections—or stating with certainty that it is not to be found there—are not simple tasks.

56 From the pages which appeared at the beginning of the Codex, Baer’s copy includes twenty chapters of the Grammar of the Masorah and the list of words written as one and read as one, which was considered infra. From the pages which appeared at the end of the Codex, the copy includes a list of the writers of the books of the Bible, the midpoints of biblical sections and the number of verses they contain; most of the long lists of biblical variant readings; a list of the paseq signs in the biblical text; and the masoretic note concerning words ending in leth and in alef in the sections of the Bible written in Aramaic (I discussed this masoretic note in my article mentioned supra, note 36).

The Baer copy does not include the three short dedication inscriptions which headed the Codex or the long colophon that ended it; nor does it include the section הלו ינאיינא at the end of the Codex, nor the list of variant readings disputed by Eastern and Western authorities in Prophets and Hagiographa which appeared at the end of the Codex.

53 From the writings of M. D. Cassuto and from the description of the copy of the codex in Baer and Strack’s book (pp. xxxi–xxiii), it may be concluded that in the ages added before and after the Codex, there appeared no list of differences between Asher and ben Naftali.

53 Ms A served as an only source in sections 6, 11, 12, 13, 32 and 35 of the Baer and track edition and as one of a number of sources in sections 33, 35. See Dotan, Ḥiqduqe Ha-Tiqqōn, 100–101.