

**A TREATISE ON THE  
ACCENTUATION OF THE  
TWENTY-ONE SO-CALLED PROSE  
BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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A Treatise on the Accentuation of the Twenty-One So-Called Prose Books of the Old Testament  
by William Wickes

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**WILLIAM WICKES**

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טעמי כ"א ספרים

A

TREATISE ON THE ACCENTUATION

OF THE TWENTY-ONE SO-CALLED

PROSE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

WITH A FACSIMILE OF A PAGE OF THE CODEX ASSIGNED TO

BEN-ASHER IN ALEPPO

BY

WILLIAM WICKES, D.D.

Oxford

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1887

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## PREFACE.

THE present Treatise aims at explaining the accentuation of the so-called Prose Books—twenty-one in number, according to Jewish reckoning<sup>1</sup>—of the Hebrew Bible. The favourable reception given to my Work *לשון המשנה*, on the accentuation of the three Poetical Books (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), has encouraged me to proceed further, and complete the investigation which I then commenced.

I have been asked why, contrary to the usual practice, I began with the accentuation of the three Books. My answer is that the subject seemed to me to stand in special need of careful examination<sup>2</sup>. There was besides this advantage in taking the three Books first, that owing to their comparatively small compass, it was more easy to examine them exhaustively and so to arrive at the general principles underlying their accentuation. Those principles once established had then only to be applied, with the necessary modifications, to the twenty-one Books.

I have endeavoured to carry out with thoroughness the task I had undertaken, and have not intentionally allowed difficulties in the accentuation to pass unnoticed. My plan has been, either, by a process of induction, to bring such instances under a general rule; or to furnish a special explanation of them, partly in the course of the Work, and more particularly in the Notes collected in Appendix I. Of course, I have not been concerned to defend

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<sup>1</sup> The two Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles are counted respectively as one. The same is the case with Ezra and Nehemiah. The ten Minor Prophets are also taken together to make one book. In this calculation the beginning and the end of Job (l. 1-iii. 1 and xlii. 7-17) are not taken into account, which however are pointed according to the same system.—It is to be observed that Jewish writers know nothing of the distinction between Prose and Poetical Books; they speak simply of the twenty-one and three Books.

<sup>2</sup> I hope that it is no breach of confidence on my part, when I state that the late Prof. Ewald told me that, whilst he had no doubt that he had furnished the true explanation of the prose accentuation, he was not so satisfied in regard to the poetical.

the accentuation in all cases. It is enough if we can trace the principles on which the accentuators proceeded, or the interpretation which in particular instances led to the accentuation employed.

I have found it necessary often to propose a correction of the *textus receptus*; but have very rarely done so without manuscript authority. The labour of collating MSS. in our great English collections and the Libraries of the Continent, for a text of such extent as that of the Old Testament, has been very considerable, and one which no previous writer on the accents has thought of undertaking. Yet, without a correct text, what hope can there be of establishing any rules on a satisfactory basis?

One Codex, which is in the Synagogue at Aleppo, and which I have been able to consult, although only indirectly, has the reputation of having come from the hand of Ben-Asher himself, and of having been, on that account, always regarded as a model copy for fixing the readings of the Sacred Text. Its claim to the exceptional importance thus assigned to it I have considered in the pages immediately following.

I have once more to express my obligations to my friend Dr. Baer, for the valuable assistance he has willingly rendered me. His familiar acquaintance with the Massora—a department of study in which he ranks *facile princeps*<sup>1</sup>—has been of special service to me.

W. WICKES.

81, WOODSTOCK ROAD, OXFORD,  
May, 1887.

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<sup>1</sup> I have the pleasure of informing scholars, that there is at length a prospect of a complete and correct edition of the Massora. The firm Romm in Wilna (already favourably known through a splendid edition of the Babylonian Talmud lately brought out by them) have in hand a new edition of the so-called Great Rabbinical Bible (ספר אגרות), to which Dr. Baer has undertaken to furnish the Massora. The arrangement adopted will be the same as in Jacob ben-Chayyim's edition, with this exception, that wherever a word occurs *for the first time*, there all that is Massoretic in regard to it will be given; so that, by the help of a Concordance, any particular rubric will be readily traced. I may add that the first part of Dr. Baer's manuscript is already in the printers' hands.



## MSS. CONSULTED FOR THE PRESENT WORK.

### I. BIBLE MSS.

Codex in the Synagogue at Aleppo—containing the whole text, the punctuation of which is assigned in an epigraph<sup>1</sup> to the famous Aaron ben-Asher (beginning of the 10th century). M. Isidore Loeb, Secretary of L'Alliance Israélite, well known from his learned contributions to the *Revue des Études Juives*, was good enough to procure for me, through his correspondent at Aleppo, some of the accentual readings of this Codex.

As it is of no little importance for us to know whether such a model codex<sup>2</sup> really exists, to which we might refer for the correction of the *textus receptus*<sup>3</sup>, I think it necessary to say a few words on the subject of the epigraph above referred to.—Jacob Sappir, who (in his Work, *יבדק דמ*, vol. i. p. 12<sup>b</sup>) was the first to furnish a copy of this epigraph, which he obtained through a friend at Aleppo, accepted it as genuine, and was followed by Graetz (*Monatsch. für Gesch. und Wiss. des Judenthums*, 1871, p. 6, 1887, p. 30), and by Strack (*Profl. crit.*, pp. 44-46). My reasons for arriving at an opposite conclusion are briefly the following:—

1. *The character of writing of the Codex.* M. Loeb succeeded in obtaining for me a photograph of a page of the same (*Gen. xxvi. 34-xxvii. 30*),—a copy of which serves as Frontispiece to the present Work<sup>4</sup>. Although this copy has not been quite so successfully executed as I could have wished, it is sufficiently clear to enable adepts to form a judgment as to the approximate date of the writing. I venture to give my own opinion, which is that the MS. presents a specimen of

<sup>1</sup> Copied *Dikd. hat.*, p. xxii. inf.

<sup>2</sup> Ben-Asher was (as is well known) the normative authority for fixing the text as we now have it.

<sup>3</sup> For fixing the *accentuation* such a Codex would be invaluable. My remarks on it therefore will be seen not to be out of place.

<sup>4</sup> The photograph and the copy are both much reduced in size. The height of each column of writing (without the *Massora*) is in the original 23 cm., and average breadth 6 cm. The size of each page is therefore somewhat smaller than that of Codex *Babylonicus*. The MS. is of parchment equally smooth (*très poli*, I am told) on both sides.

*calligraphy*, not in keeping with the early period to which it is assigned. Really old MSS., provided with Massora—as Codex Babylonius (of the date of Ben-Asher, A. D. 916) and Erfurt 3 (a facsimile of which will appear in Stade's *Geschichte Israel's*, vol. i)—have a plainer and less finished appearance, and the characters are of a coarser type. I would draw attention, in particular, to the artificial arrangement by which a separate Massoretic rubric of two lines and no more is introduced above and below each column.—It is not, however, on the graphical peculiarities that I lay the main stress.

2. The conclusive proof is to be found in the fact that the punctuation is, in many instances, at variance with Ben-Asher's known practice and the rules laid down by the Palestinian Massoretes.

It will be observed that *Métheg* generally fails, e. g. אֶלֶב (often; only once, col. 3, l. 7, אֶלֶב<sup>1</sup>); אֶנְבִי (col. 2, l. 3, although אֶנְבִי, col. 2, l. 6 from below); קֶלֶתָּהּ (col. 2, l. 8); הַמִּתִּיר (col. 3, l. 3); וְאֶמְרָבֶּהֱיָהּ (col. 1, l. 21); &c. Now although this is constantly the case in Spanish and even Oriental MSS.<sup>2</sup>, we should not expect such an irregularity in a model text marked by the careful hand of the Master himself (הַמְלַכֵּד הַגִּזְרִיל, as he is termed), particularly when we bear in mind that it is just on the use of *Métheg* that his controversy with his rival, Ben-Naphtali, mainly turns. Still less should we be prepared for the *false introduction of Métheg*, as in קֶזֶלֶי (col. 1, l. 5 from below) and וְשִׁמְשִׁוֹן (col. 3, l. 6 from below),—the latter Ben-Naphtali's pointing<sup>3</sup>, and expressly condemned in Dikd. hat. § 30, אִם הִקִּיף הַמִּפְלֵג הַנִּגְזָא. Moreover, קֶלֶתָּהּ (col. 2, l. 8) is Ben-Naphtali's vocalization, whereas Ben-Asher would have pointed קֶלֶתָּהּ<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> It is the *light Métheg* that generally fails; *heavy Métheg* is as generally introduced, and so in this page, אֶת־יָגֵב, וְיִתְחַיֶּה, וְיִגְבַּחְהוּ. On the failure of *Métheg*, comp. Man. du Lect., p. 98, נִסְתַּעַת סָרִיס נִוְחָבִין הַנְּעִיף וְנִסְתַּעַת אִין, נִוְחָבִין אִם סוֹסְכִין עַל רֵעַה הַקִּירָא.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the examples brought together by Baer, *Gen.*, p. 82, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> See the list of Variations between Ben-Asher and Ben-Naphtali in Baer's *Gen.*, p. 84.

We may also be surprised at not finding the *Paraasha* (col. 1, l. 3) marked in the margin, for it was expressly to note these divisions that Maimonides (see *Be'er Hachai*, c. viii, § 4) consulted a text written and pointed by Ben-Asher.—N. B. The ס (col. 1, l. 3, margin) does not stand for סוֹרֵס, as the same sign (col. 3, l. 20) shows, but for סוֹר. Many punctators, who took no notice of the *Paraasha*, were in the habit of marking in this way the Palestinian Sidras, as may be seen in Ox. 10, 2326; Br. Mus. Or. 2201.

So much from the page before us. Other proofs are not wanting. Sappir informs us (*ibid.*, p. 12) that he sent from Jerusalem a list of words, which he had found variously written in texts (as to punctuation, *scriptio plena* and *def.*, &c.), to a distinguished Jewish scholar in Aleppo, with the request that he would examine the Codex and note for him how these words were written in it. This was done, and subsequently Sappir published in the Jewish periodical, *לבנון* (L pp. 31, 32), some of these various readings, from which I select the following:  $\text{וְיָמֵי אָדָם}$  (Gen. i. 3)<sup>8</sup>;  $\text{וְהָאָרְצָה}$  (iv. 23)<sup>9</sup>;  $\text{בְּיַמֵּי אֲבֹתָי}$  (xii. 8, two words)<sup>10</sup>;  $\text{בְּיַמֵּי}$  (Ex. xvii. 16, one word)<sup>11</sup>; all contrary to Ben-Asher's rules or the Palestinian Massora, and which therefore could not have been so written by Ben-Asher himself. I also sent a list of passages, which I wished compared on account of the accentuation, and M. Loeb's correspondent volunteered the information that  $\text{וְיָמֵי אָדָם}$  (Qoh. vi. 2) is so pointed with Gaya, and  $\text{וְהָאָרְצָה}$  (ix. 4) so vocalized, for  $\text{וְהָאָרְצָה}$ ; both mistakes which we may be sure would never have been made by Ben-Asher.

From these few test-passages we may conclude that the statement, assigning this Codex to Ben-Asher, is a *fabrication*,—merely introduced to enhance the value of the same,—and that the whole long epigraph, with its list of Qaraite names (shewing it to be of Qaraite origin), &c., is untrustworthy and undeserving of serious notice. How many other epigraphs to Jewish texts would, when carefully tested, have to be rejected, notably that of the Cambridge Codex 12, which makes a Spanish MS., unquestionably younger than the one we have been considering, written in the year 856<sup>12</sup>!

Attached to the Aleppo Codex is what the Jews call a קונטרס (a copy of which M. Loeb also procured for me). This farrago of grammatical and Massoretic rules has been sufficiently described in *Dikd. hat.*, Pref., pp. xxi-xxiii, from a copy obtained by the Qaraite,

<sup>8</sup> So Ben-Naphtali. Cf. Baer, *Gen.*, p. 74; Ginsb. *Mss.* v, § 589.

<sup>9</sup> So Ben-Naphtali. Cf. Baer, *Gen.*, p. 82, note 7; Pas. 1880, p. 138, note 6.

<sup>10</sup> So the Orientals. See *Cod. Bab. passim*. Comp. also Baer, *Gen.*, p. 76, where the Palestinian Massora is quoted.

<sup>11</sup> So the Orientals. See *Cod. Bab.*, Massora magna to Is. xxxvi. 12; and comp. the Palestinian Massora,—as given by Norzi, *ad loc.*, or Ginsb. *Mss.* v, § 238,—which requires  $\text{וְיָמֵי אָדָם}$  to be written as *two words*.

<sup>12</sup> I have myself no doubt, from personal inspection, that the Codex B. 19<sup>a</sup>, in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, dated 1009, is much younger, although the editors of the Catalogue accept the date.