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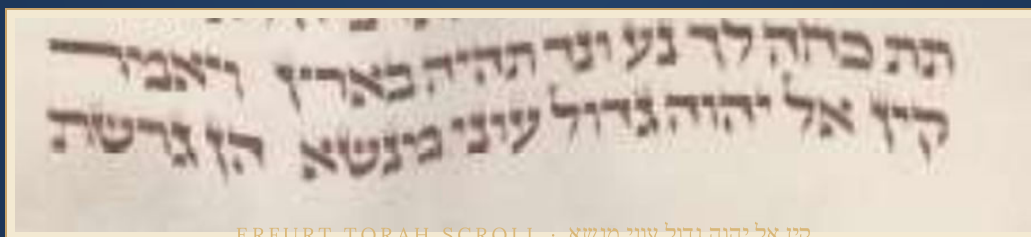
One Vav Between Kayin and Metushelach

The Disputed Letters of Parshat Bereishit

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Author of Clues in the Klaf and Where Is the Menorah?

מבשרא



ERFURT TORAH SCROLL · קין אל יהוה גדול עני מושא

בראשית ד:יג · VAV · ו

*Ashkenaz wrote it without the vav. So did the Keter and Teiman.
How the vav got into our scrolls.*

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Two words, one vav each

Two words in this week's leining are written differently depending on which scroll you open. This companion follows each one from the Keter to the printed tikkun, shows what the old Ashkenazi scrolls say, and ends with what a magiah does with the scroll in front of him. Three kinds of statement are marked:

WRITTEN SOURCE

the codices, the Masorah and the poskim;

PRACTITIONERS

what sofrim report;

AUTHOR'S TRADITION

what I have seen in the scrolls.

At a glance

- **מנשא / מנשוא, Bereishit 4:13.** The Keter, Teiman and old Ashkenaz wrote מנשא, no vav. Every one of the Erfurt scrolls has it that way. Sefarad and the Ramah wrote מנשוא. Ashkenaz writes the vav today because it took on the Ramah's text through Or Torah and Minchat Shai.
- **ושמונים, Bereishit 5:25.** Chaser in every mesorah. Only 5:26 ושמנים is malei. A vav at 5:25 comes from the Venice Mikraot Gedolot. Minchat Shai calls it an error.
- **Halacha.** Both readings of 4:13 rest on a mesorah. Never convert a scroll from one to the other. An old Ashkenazi scroll with מנשא is a witness, not a mistake.

♦The rule

WRITTEN SOURCE

אינהו, טעות גמור: a second scroll comes out only for a טעות גמור, קידושין ל' ע"א: the Soferim counted every letter of the Torah, and in the same breath, אם כתב: הלכות תפילין ומזוזה וספר תורה ז' י"א, The Rambam does not soften it, בקיאי בחסירות ויתירות, אנן לא בקיאין במלא חסר או החסר מלא... הרי זה פסול. In ח' ד' he names his authority, the codex Ben Asher checked in Egypt, from which he wrote his own scroll: the Keter Aram Tzova.

WRITTEN SOURCE

משום חסרות ויתרות אין להוציא אחרת שאין ספרי התורה שלנו מדויקים כל כך. Mishnah Berurah כ"ו ס"ק כ"ו: a vav or yud malei or chaser where neither meaning nor pronunciation changes. Both of this week's words sit inside that category. The standard is absolute; in practice a scroll is checked against the mesorah of its own kehillah. That is the whole story of these two words.



מנשא: Teveria, Teiman and the Meiri

Kayin hears his sentence and answers: גדול עוני מנשא. Rashi reads it as a question. The sofer has his own: vav or no vav. Minchat Shai (finished 1626, printed Mantua 1742 to 1744) lays out the camps:

מנשוא. רבו הדעות בזאת המלה בקרית ספר לגאון המאירי ובס' שמן ששון כתוב שהוא חסר. הם חמשה שכוונו לדעת אחד. וכן נמצא במקצת ספרים ישנים וגם בשם ס' עזרא ובשם ירושלמי. ועמהם הסופר ר' מאיר שדינו להיות חסר ושכנגדם הם ג' ועוד המכריע. אבל בהללי הוא מלא. ומסר עליו לית ומלא. וכן הוא בס' ספרד וכן כתב הרמ"ה ז"ל מלא וא"ו ואל"ף כתיב. וכתב אור תורה שזה עיקר.

מנחת שי, בראשית ד"ג

מנשא, Chaser	מנשוא, Malei
The Meiri, Kiryat Sefer	לית ומלא Masorah, The Hilleli codex
Sefer Shemen Sason	ספרי ספרד
מקצת ספרים ישנים	מלא וא"ו ואל"ף כתיב: The Ramah
Sefer Ezra; the codex called Yerushalmi	שזה עיקר: Or Torah
הסופר ר' מאיר	

Norzi names Sefarad for the vav. He never names Ashkenaz. The old Ashkenazi scrolls were on the other side of his table. Part Two shows them.

◆The Tiberian witnesses

WRITTEN SOURCE The Keter Aram Tzova is missing the Torah up to Devarim 28:17. Its reading here comes from R' Yaakov Sapir's questionnaire to the Aleppo community while the Keter was whole: מנשא. Breuer's reconstruction follows it. The Leningrad Codex (1008/1009) reads מנשא, Masorah parva ל', only here. Ben Asher wrote it chaser.

◆Teiman keeps the Rambam's scroll

WRITTEN SOURCE Yemenite scrolls follow the Rambam, and the Rambam followed the Keter. They write מנשא, the first of the known differences between Yemenite and Ashkenazi/Sephardi scrolls. Where old Ashkenaz is documented, it stands with Teiman:

Pasuk	Teiman	Sefarad today	Old Ashkenaz
Bereishit 4:13	מנשא	מנשוא	מנשא (Part Two)
Bereishit 7:11	מעינת	מעינות	
Bereishit 9:29	ויהיו	ויהי	ויהיו (Minchat Shai)
Devarim 23:2	דכא	דכה	דכא (Maharam's scroll)

Five more follow in Shemot and Bamidbar (תעשה, האפד, בשמת, חדשיכם, בער, וחדשיכם). Uri Dasberg (*Techumin* 1, 1980, p. 511) counts fourteen.

◆The Meiri: back to Ezra HaSofer

WRITTEN SOURCE The Meiri opens *Kiryat Sefer* by tracing every one of these variations, the kri and kshiv among them, to Ezra HaSofer. The Radak says the same in his introduction to Nach: the books were scattered in the first exile, the Anshei Knesses HaGedolah found them differing, and where they could not decide they wrote one reading in the text and the other in the margin. The Gemara agrees: עלה עזרא מבבל (סוכה כ"ע"א) ויסדה.

WRITTEN SOURCE So when the Meiri weighs witnesses at מנשא, he is weighing what remains of Ezra's work. In Toledo he had a model codex that carried the name, ספר נקרא ספר עזרא (Kiryat Sefer, Hirschler ed., p. מט), and it stands on his side: chaser. **PRACTITIONERS** R' Yitzchak Ratzaby identifies it with the Sefer Ezra that Teiman cites for מנשא. Norzi had that witness in hand and outvoted it with the Ramah. He never saw the Keter.

◆The witnesses side by side

Witness	4:13	5:25 / 5:26
Leningrad Codex; Keter Aram Tzova (Sapir, Breuer)	ל' מנשא, Mp	ושמונים / ושמונים
Teiman	מנשא	ושמונים / ושמונים
Old Ashkenazi scrolls; all the Erfurt scrolls	מנשא	
The Meiri; Sefer Ezra	Chaser	
Hilleli; Sifrei Sefarad; the Ramah	Malei	Only 5:26 malei
Or Torah; Minchat Shai	Malei, with the Ramah	5:25 chaser, 5:26 malei
Ashkenaz and Sefarad today	מנשוא	ושמונים / ושמונים



Old Ashkenaz Wrote מנשא

Ashkenaz wrote מנשא. No vav. That is not a theory reconstructed from lists. It is what the scrolls show.

AUTHOR'S TRADITION Every old Ashkenazi Torah scroll I have examined at Kayin's verse reads מנשא. So does every one of the Erfurt scrolls, the oldest surviving group of Ashkenazi Torah scrolls, now in Berlin (Staatsbibliothek, Ms. or. fol. 1215 to 1218). Figure 1 is the column in an old Ashkenazi scroll: second line, right margin, מנשא הן גרשת אתי, the shin running straight into the alef. Figure 2 is Erfurt: the column ends on גדול עוני מנשא הן גרשת.

The rest of the Figure 1 column tells you whose hand this is. The tagin stand three high on the letters *Sefer Tagin* lists. At ויצא קין מלפני (4:16) the pe is curled, the פ"א לפופה of the old Ashkenazi otivot meshunot. A sofer who followed the old Ashkenazi tradition this closely wrote מנשא because his tradition said so.

◆What Minchat Shai saw

WRITTEN SOURCE Norzi's malei side is ספרי ספרד. His chaser side is מקצת ספרים ישנים. Those old books are our scrolls. He knew them, did not follow them, and sided with the Ramah.

◆More than one word

WRITTEN SOURCE Old Ashkenaz stands with the Keter and Teiman wherever its readings are documented:

- **Bereishit 9:29, ויהיו**. Breuer cites Minchat Shai: ובספרי אשכנז ויהיו. Lishkat HaSofer (R' Shlomo Ganzfried, in *Keset HaSofer*) still had such scrolls in front of him: a beracha may be made, then הויו דיתירה את הגרוד את לתקן לגרוד את הויו דיתירה. לאחר השבת יש לתקן לגרוד את הויו דיתירה.
- **Devarim 23:2, דכא**. The Rebbe Rayatz saw the Worms scroll attributed to the Maharam of Rothenburg in 1907. It reads דכא with an alef (*Hayom Yom*, 7 Elul).
- **Vayikra 7:22 and 7:28**. The Frankfurt minhag and the "Eiger" scroll in Worms have כל חלב petuchah and no parashah at המקריב, the Rambam's layout (*Kovetz Pa'amei Yaakov* 31, p. 9).



FIGURE 1 Bereishit 4:12 to 4:18 in an old Ashkenazi Torah scroll (image supplied by the author). Second line, right margin: מנשא הן גרשת אתי, no vav. Note the tagin and the curled pe at מלפני (4:16), eighth line.

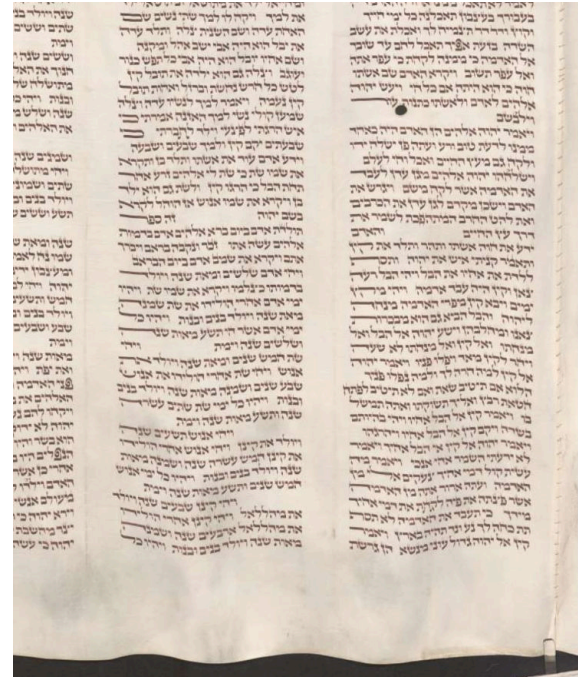


FIGURE 2 Bereishit 3 to 5 in an Erfurt Torah scroll, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (image supplied by the author). The right-hand column ends at Kayin's answer.



FIGURE 1a The word in Figure 1, enlarged.

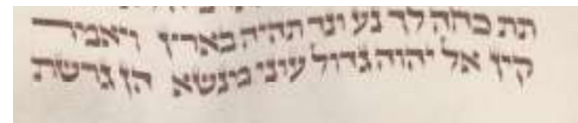


FIGURE 2a The last two lines of the Erfurt column: ויאמר קין אל יהוה גדול עוני מנשא הן גרשת. No vav. This is the reading of every Erfurt scroll.

◆How the vav came in

WRITTEN SOURCE Breuer, Keter Aram Tzova v'ha-Nusach ha-Mekubal shel ha-Mikra:

”נוסח זה שבידי האשכנזים מושתת כולו על הכרעות הרמ"ה. יש רק מקומות מועטים, שהרמ"ה הביא בהם את שתי הנוסחות ללא הכרעה; באלה הכריע אחר כך ר' מנחם די לונזאנו בספר אור תורה.

ר' מרדכי ברויאר, כתר ארם צובא והנוסח המקובל של המקרא

The Ashkenazi text we write today is the Ramah's, by adoption. It came in through print: Or Torah, Venice 1618; Minchat Shai, Mantua 1742 to 1744; then the printed tikkunim every sofer worked from. Where the old scrolls disagreed, the magihim corrected them. Lishkat HaSofer's ruling on ויהיו is the record of that process: scrape the vav after Shabbos. At מנשא the correction ran the other way. A vav was added.

◆What to look for

AUTHOR'S TRADITION An old Ashkenazi scroll that passed through a magiah's hands after Minchat Shai often shows it at 4:13: a vav squeezed between the shin and the alef, crowded, thinner, sometimes in a different ink. A scroll with מנשא untouched was written before the change or never corrected after it. Either way it is a witness.

WRITTEN SOURCE Ink can settle it. On Erfurt 7 (Berlin, Ms. or. fol. 1216), X-ray fluorescence separated the original iron ink from the zinc-rich ink used for corrections and re-inking (Gordon, Bonnerot and Rabin, 2020). An added vav at 4:13 in a later ink is the change in Ashkenazi practice caught on the klaf.

The bottom line on Ashkenaz

Old Ashkenaz wrote מנשא. Our מנשוא is the Ramah's reading, taken on through Or Torah and Minchat Shai. An old Ashkenazi scroll with מנשא is not in error. It is the Ashkenazi mesorah before print.



Metushelach's Eighty

A column later, in ספר תולדות אדם, the same number appears three times and is written two ways. No kehillah disputes it. A printer did.

Pasuk	Text in every mesorah	Spelling
5:25	ויחי מתושלח שבע ושמנים שנה	Chaser
5:26	שתים ושמנים שנה ושבע מאות שנה	Malei
5:28	ויחי למך שתים ושמנים שנה	Chaser

”שבע ושמנים. בדפוס קדמון ובספרים כתיבי יד חסר וא”ו וכ”נ א”ת וכ”כ מהעתק של הללי שכתב שתים ושמנים דמתושלח מלא ש”מ שהראשון חסר ובמסורה אחריתי נמי כ”י נמסר ו’ שמונים מלאים בכל המקרא וסימן תניינא דמתושלח והאחרים הם בנביאים וכתובים... והא לך גם לשון הרמ”ה ז”ל שמונים אחד לחוד באורייתא מלא וא”ו. תלתא פסוקים בשני מתושלח ולמך מציעא הוא מלא... ובמקרא גדולה ושמנים קדמא דמתושלח כתיב מלא וא”ו וגם נמסר עליו ו’ מלאים והם שתי טעיות.

מנחת שי, בראשית ה:כה

WRITTEN SOURCE The manuscripts, Or Torah and the Hilleli all have 5:25 chaser. The Masorah counts six malei in all of Tanach, siman דמתושלח, the only one in the Torah. The Ramah: once malei in the Torah, the middle of the three pesukim. The Venice Mikraot Gedolot printed the first Metushelach eighty malei and hung the six-malei note on it. Norzi: שתי טעיות.

AUTHOR'S TRADITION From the 1500s on, soferim and magihim had printed chumashim on the table. A scroll checked against the Venice print instead of a tikkun built on the Ramah can carry a vav at 5:25 that no mesorah supports. I check that spot on every older scroll. Same column, Minchat Shai flags three more: at 5:4 malei, ממעשנו at 5:29 chaser yud, ושבע מאות, at 5:31 malei.



At the Open Scroll

♦Halacha for the magiah

WRITTEN SOURCE A Yemenite scroll with מנשא, or a Sephardi or modern Ashkenazi scroll with מנשוא, is kosher. Leave it. The Komarna on דכא/דכא (Otzar HaChaim, Ki Teitzei): kosher lechatchila, forbidden to erase, ה.מוחק יתקצצו ידיו. Across kehillos: Maharitz (Peulat Tzaddik, chelek 1) and Kaf HaChaim (או"ח קמ"ג ס"ק ל"ד) are strict each in their own direction; Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daat 6:56) rules all these scrolls kosher for every kehillah, since each reading rests on a mesorah. That is the common practice.

AUTHOR'S TRADITION An old Ashkenazi scroll with מנשא is the old Ashkenazi text, not a mistake. It is not a טעות גמור under the Rema, so no second scroll on Shabbos. Before anyone adds a vav, call me. Once the vav is in, the witness is gone.

♦Checklist

- 1 4:13: vav or no vav? In an old Ashkenazi scroll, מנשא is the original reading. Leave it and call it in.
- 2 4:13: is the vav crowded between the shin and the alef, thinner, or in another ink? A later correction toward Minchat Shai.
- 3 9:29 ויהיו, Devarim 23:2 דכא, Vayikra 7:22 and 7:28: the other old Ashkenazi markers. Look for scraping.
- 4 5:25 chaser, 5:26 malei, 5:28 chaser. A vav at 5:25 means a printed chumash was on the sofer's table. Correct it.
- 5 Photograph the Kayin column and ספר תולדות אדם and send them to the Museum: WhatsApp +1 (551) 238-7791.

The open file

The Museum is building a register of 4:13 and 5:25 in early scrolls: the Erfurt scrolls and codices, Munich BSB Cod. hebr. 487 and 488, Vatican ebr. 2, the scroll and fragment in the National Library of Israel, the Maharam fragments, the Bologna scroll. If you hold an old scroll, or know where one sits in an aron kodesh, send us those two columns.

Ben Asher in Teveria. The Rambam in Fustat. The soferim of Erfurt and Worms. The Ramah in Toledo, Lonzano in Venice, Norzi in Mantua. Each of them said לא בקיאין and checked every letter anyway. Check your scroll before Shabbos.



Gemara, Rishonim and poskim

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- רמב"ם, הלכות תפילין ומוזוה וספר תורה ז':י"א; ח':ד'.
- כף החיים קמ"ג ס"ק ל"ד; משנה ברורה קמ"ג ס"ק כ"ו; with the Rema; שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים קמ"ג:ד'.
- introduction; ed. Moshe Hirschler (Jerusalem, 1956), p. מט: [HebrewBooks 41282](#).
- (Venice, 1618) ר' מנחם די לונזאנו, אור תורה; רמ"ה, מסורת סייג לתורה; רד"ק, הקדמה לנביאים.
- (Mantua, 1742 to 1744) ר' ידידיה שלמה נורצי, מנחת שי on Bereishit 4:13, 5:25, 9:29. Critical edition: ed. Zvi Betser, prepared by Yosef Ofer (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 2005). Online: [Bereishit 4 · Bereishit 5 · 9:29 · Mantua scan](#).
- [chabad.org](#): היום יום, ז' אלול; Ki Teitzei; אוצר החיים; (קסת הסופר (R' Shlomo Ganzfried, in לשכת הסופר.
- Kovetz Pa'amei Yaakov 31, p. 9. שו"ת יחווה דעת ו':נ"ו; שו"ת פעולת צדיק ח"א.

Manuscripts and scrolls

- Leningrad Codex B19a, color images: [archive.org/details/Leningrad_Codex_Color_Images](#).
- Keter Aram Tzova; R' Yaakov Sapir, *Even Sapir*, the Aleppo testimony.
- Erfurt Torah scrolls, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. or. fol. 1215 to 1218 (author's examination).
- Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter (Bar-Ilan): [4:13 · 5:25](#).

Scholarship

- Mordechai Breuer, *Keter Aram Tzova veha-Nusach ha-Mekubal shel ha-Mikra* (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1976).
- Yosef Ofer, "Hachra'at Nusach ha-Mikra al pi ha-Masorah": [daat.ac.il](#).
- Jordan S. Penkower, "The Ashkenazi Pentateuch Tradition as Reflected in the Erfurt Hebrew Bible Codices and Torah Scrolls," in *Zu Bild und Text im jüdisch-christlichen Kontext im Mittelalter*, Erfurter Schriften zur jüdischen Geschichte 3 (Erfurt, 2015), 118 to 141.
- Nehemia Gordon, Olivier Bonnerot and Ira Rabin, "Inks Used to Write the Divine Name in a Thirteenth-Century Ashkenazic Torah Scroll: Erfurt 7," *Manuscript cultures* 15 (2020): 163 to 184.
- Uri Dasberg, "Zihui Sefer Torah," *Techumin* 1 (1980), p. 511.
- R' Yitzchak Ratzaby, shiur on the Yemenite mesorah of Sefer Torah: [maharitz.co.il](#).



About the Author and the Museum

Rabbi Binyomin Terebelo is the founder and director of the Museum of the Scroll, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in Passaic, New Jersey, devoted to preserving Jewish community history through their Torah scrolls, and a Torah scroll repair conservationist.

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