

A PUZZLING MASORETIC NOTE IN JOSHUA 21:35

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I. Problem and Previous Solutions

The note in the *Masora parva* (*Mp*) of Josh 21:35 in Leningradensis B19^a (L) has presented a puzzle for scrutinizers of the Masoretic notes.¹ The note and words to which it refers as found in L as well as the proposed emendations in BHK and BHS are listed respectively below:

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| ואת־מגרשה ערים ארבע | ג | in Josh 21:35 |
| ואת־מגרשה ערים ארבע | ז | in Josh 21:35 |
| ואת־מגרשה ערים ארבע | ז | in Josh 21:18,22,24,29,31,35,37 |

In L the solitary ג in the margin of the page refers to the words ואת־מגרשה ערים "and with its common lands – (four) cities."² There is only one circle between מגרשה and ערים but effectively ואת־ is included as well since מגרשה always has ואת־ before it in the Hebrew Bible.³ The note would normally indicate that this

¹Without the assistance of Professor James Sanders and the staff at the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center (ABMC) as well as the use of the microfilms available at the Center this paper would not have been possible. A brief report of this study appeared in *The Folio: The Newsletter of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center for Preservation and Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1982, Claremont, California. I would like to thank Ray Harder for entering the material onto computer disk.

²While James Barr has convincingly argued that *Migraš* does not mean "pasture land," he admits that we have "no convenient English term" for "extramural strip" or "territory closely adjoining the walls." ("Migraš in the Old Testament," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29:1 [1984] 29).

³Solomon Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae* (Tel Aviv 1978) 275.

combination of words with these consonants, vowels, and perhaps also accents occurs only three times. There is no indication in the *Masorah magna* (*Mm*) of the other two occurrences of this combination of words in L.

This combination of words with both identical consonants and vocalization actually occurs in Josh 21:16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 31, 32, 35 – ten times.⁴ The accentuation is identical in all of these cases except for vs. 16 in which the word ערים has a different accent. The same group of words occurs in vs. 37; but since vss. 36-37 are not found in L or other ancient Hebrew MSS it is unlikely that the Masoretes would have included vs. 37 in their counting.⁵ Out of the ten cases listed above (eleven with vs. 37) this group of words occurs six times in vss. 18, 22, 24, 29, 31, 35 (seven with vs. 37) in the larger group of words ואת־מגרשה ערים ארבע. In the remaining four cases a different number replaces ארבע: vs. 16 תשע, vss. 25,27 שתים, vs. 32 שלש. The evidence of this chapter and the note in vs. 35 clearly conflict. Why is this note in vs. 35 and how can it be understood?

Paul Kahle and assistants generally made few corrections in the Masora of L for BHK, but they did change the note of Josh 25:35.⁶ They added an additional circle between ערים and ארבע and also changed the ל to ז. Thus the words ואת־מגרשה ערים ארבע occur seven times – presumably in Josh 21:18, 22, 24, 29, 31, 35, 37. Kahle apparently thought there were at least two errors in L: the wrong number was in the margin and ארבע was not included in the noted combination of words. In addition, the reference in vs. 37 is counted even though it is not found in L. A footnote in the upper apparatus of BHK reports that L has a ל, but there is no mention of an added circle in the text.

Gerald E. Weil follows the emendation suggested by Kahle but makes two additional changes in BHS. First, he adds a circle between ואת־מגרשה and ואת־. Secondly, he introduces the same *Mp* in the margin for each of the seven verses (Josh 21:18, 22, 24, 29, 31, 35, 37) according to his practice of producing a complete appa-

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵For an excellent discussion of this text critical problem see Dominique Barthélemy, et al., *Critique Textuelle de l'Ancien Testament 1: Josué, Juges, Ruth, Samuel, Rois, Chroniques, Esdras, Nehemie, Esther* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 50/1; Göttingen 1982) 64-68.

⁶Rudolf Kittel, Prolegomena I (1929) and Paul Kahle, Prolegomena III (1937) to *Biblia Hebraica*, 7th ed., (Stuttgart 1973) xxviii, xxxii; Gerald E. Weil, Prolegomena II (1967/77) to *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart 1977) xiii.

ratus. This practice is "that if a note is found in L at any one of a series of parallel passages, the reader will always find a corresponding note in the margin of BHS at each of the parallel passages where it would be expected."⁷ A footnote in BHS indicates that a correction in the *Mp* of L has been made which was to be discussed in a promised *Massorah Gedolah*, vol. III.⁸

II. New Proposal

Other ancient Hebrew MSS with Tiberian Masorot have been examined to see if they have a similar note in the *Mp* at Josh 21:35 as L and/or an explanation of its meaning.⁹ The following chart summarizes the results of this survey. The MSS are listed chronologically from oldest to youngest. The approximate date of origin of each MS is based on the secondary literature.¹⁰ No attempt is made to evaluate the importance of each MS or to establish a precise history of the Masoretic traditions:¹¹

⁷Weil, Prolegomena II to BHS (above, n. 6) xv.

⁸*Ibid.*, xvii.

⁹Facsimiles of the *Cairo Codex* (1971), L (1971), and the *Aleppo Codex* (1976), and a reprint of *Biblia Rabbinica* (1972) — all printed by Makor Publishing in Jerusalem — were consulted. Microfilms of the other MSS were examined at the ABMC, Claremont, CA. Photographs of MS Sassoon 1053 were examined at the Hebrew University Bible Project in Jerusalem. Thanks to Galen Marquis, secretary of the Bible Project, for informing me of their availability there.

¹⁰Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah* (Missoula 1980) 19, 20, 29, 31; M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Book of Isaiah, Sample Edition with Introduction* (Jerusalem, 1965) 45, n. 27; Ernst Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids 1979) 36; Christian D. Ginsberg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (New York 1966 [reprint of 1897]), Table of Manuscripts in back pocket; Card Catalogue of ABMC, Claremont, CA.

¹¹Yeivin states that MSS written after 1100 are not that valuable for studying masoretic traditions since they usually contain a mixture of earlier traditions (*Int. to Tib. Mas.* [above, n. 10] 13, 19, 31). Nevertheless, this study will also examine later MSS.

| | <i>Mp on</i> ואת־ מגרשה ערים ארבע in Josh 21:35 <i>et al.</i> | Treatment of vss. 36-37 | Notes on כל ערים in Josh 15:32;21:26, 39 | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| | | | <i>Mp</i> | <i>Mm</i> |
| Cairo Codex 896 | | lacking | | |
| Aleppo Codex 10th century | | lacking | ג 15:32;21:26,39 | |
| Ms. Sassoon 1053 10th century | | lacking | ג 15:32 | |
| Lenin. B19 ^a 1009 | ג ואת־מרגשה ערים | lacking | ג 15:32;21:26 | <i>Mm</i> on 21:26: כל ערים ג in 15:32;21:26,39 |
| Ms. 364 1000 | | | | |
| Ms. Reuchlin 3 1105 | | lacking | | |
| Harley 5720 12th century | | lacking | ג 21:39? | |
| Ar. Or. 16 12th century | | present but not vocalized with a note | ג 21:39 | |
| Ms. Or. fol. 1213 12 century | | lacking | | |
| Harley 5710 | | lacking | | |
| Hébreu 2 1286 | | lacking | ג דס 15:32;21:26,39 | <i>Mm</i> on 15:32: כל ערים ג דס וסי 15:32;21:26, 39 |
| Ebr. Urb. 1 1295 | | present but not vocalized | ג 21:26,39 | כל ערים ג וסימי 15:32;21:26, 39 |
| Harley 1528 1300 | | present | ג 15:32 | |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|------------------|--|
| Lutzki 1 14th century | | present with note | | |
| Lutzki 9 14th century | | pointed in the margin | ג 21:39 | כל ערים ג וסימוכהו 15:32;21:26, 39 |
| Lutzki 2 1433 | | lacking with note | ג 15:32 | |
| Ar. Or. 2210 1468 | | lacking | | |
| Lutzki 5 1479 | | present | | vs. 39 omits כל |
| Lutzki 6 15th century | | present with note | | |
| Lutzki 4 15th century | | present and clear | | |
| Lutzki 225 15th century | | unvocalized in margin | | |
| Biblia Rabbinica 1524-25 | | partially quoted in note | ג דסמי" 21:39 | |

The first column on the chart lists any *Mp* which relates to the words ואת־מגרשה ארבע ערים in vs. 35 or any of its parallels in Joshua 21. The second column refers to the presence or absence of Josh 21:36-37 in each MS. The third column lists separately any Masoretic notes from the *Mp* and/or the *Mm* on the phrase כל ערים in Josh 15:32; 21:26,29.

What is immediately striking is that there are no parallels to the note found in L for vs. 35. This raises serious doubts about the proposal that L put the wrong number in the margin for this combination of words.

The oldest Hebrew MSS surveyed do not have Josh 21:36-37. When the verses are present in later MSS they are usually qualified by being unvocalized, placed in the margin, or accompanied with notes. Only rarely are they present with no explanation or qualification. Not only does L not have these verses in its text, but

it is unlikely that they were in its Vorlage. There is no evidence for Kahle and Weil to have counted the words in Josh 21:37 for the note of vs. 35.

A Masoretic note on Josh 21:39 for \aleph referring to כל ערים might help solve the problem in vs. 35 for L. The phrase כל ערים occurs in vs. 39 within the words $\text{את־מגרשה ערים כל־ערים ארבע}$ which are very similar to the words in question in vs. 35 except for the additional כל . The note in vs. 39 would protect the longer group of words from being assimilated to the more common words $\text{את־מגרשה ערים ארבע}$. The highly repetitive nature of this chapter makes such an error very possible. In fact, this error in transmission did take place. BHK notes in the upper apparatus for vs. 39 that כל is lacking in the Syriac and Vulgate translations. One Hebrew MS, Lutzki 5, also does not have the כל in vs. 39. This Masoretic note was necessary to preserve the longer reading.

The phrase כל ערים occurs in Josh 15:32; 21:26, 39. Eleven MSS mark one, two, or three of these verses with a *Mp*. כל ערים is usually marked by \aleph (three times) but *Biblia Rabbinica* and Hébreu 2 have an additional דסמ' and דס respectively. Both expressions are probably abbreviations of ד (relative pronoun) + סמיכה (proximity, close neighborhood).¹² The meaning of the note is "These words occur three times together."¹³

Four MSS have a *Mm* on the phrase כל ערים listing the three references Josh 15:32; 21:26, 39. Yeivin calls this type of *Mm* an "Elaborative Masorah" which lists "the occurrences of a word or a combination of words."¹⁴ In each *Mm* the phrase in question plus the *Mp* are quoted and then one or more words from the verses which include this phrase is/are quoted. The "identifying quotes" are known as סימנים (marks, catchwords) and in Hébreu 2 and Lutzki 9 a form of this word is found before the quoted words.¹⁵

L has the *Mp* \aleph on Josh 15:32; 21:26 plus a *Mm* which includes 21:39 for the phrase כל ערים . L did not necessarily intend to place a *Mp* on 21:39 but probably did. The *Aleppo Codex* and Hébreu 2 have each verse marked. It seems likely that L misplaced the \aleph in the margin and the circle in the text of vs. 39 and put

¹²Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Vol. II (Brooklyn 1967) 1000.

¹³Yeivin (above, n. 10) 110.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁵*Ibid.*; Jastrow (above, n. 12) 981.

the note and circle into vs. 35. Since vss. 36-37 are not in L, vss. 35 and 39 are quite close together: כל ערים (vs. 39) is six lines below מגרשה ערים (vs. 35). Presumably this is also true of the *Vorlage* from which the Masorete copied the notes into L. Because vss. 35 and 39 end with nearly identical wording such a misplacement is understandable.

An error like this is not unprecedented for L. Kahle states that for L "it nevertheless occasionally happens that a Masoretic note is added in the margin for the wrong word."¹⁶ Weil says that in preparing the Masora for L he had to ascertain first of all "that every note was both correct and in its proper place."¹⁷ Such an error is more likely when one considers that masoretic notes were usually added later to the text by a different scribe than the one who printed the text. As Yeivin remarks: "In most cases the letters were written by a specialist scribe (*sofer*), and a specialist in pointing (*naqdan*) or a Masorete added the Masoretic notes and the vowel and accent signs."¹⁸

One must assume that the ל in the margin for Josh 21:35 in L is a mistake. Some emendation must therefore be proposed. The emendations of Kahle and Weil are highly questionable since they assume at least two mechanical errors and there is no evidence from other Hebrew Masoretic traditions for their reconstructed *Mp*. The emendation suggested above is a better solution since only one mechanical error is necessary and it is consistent with the other Masoretic traditions.

¹⁶Kahle (above, n. 6) xxxii.

¹⁷Weil (above, n. 6) xiv.

¹⁸Yeivin (above, n. 10) 11.