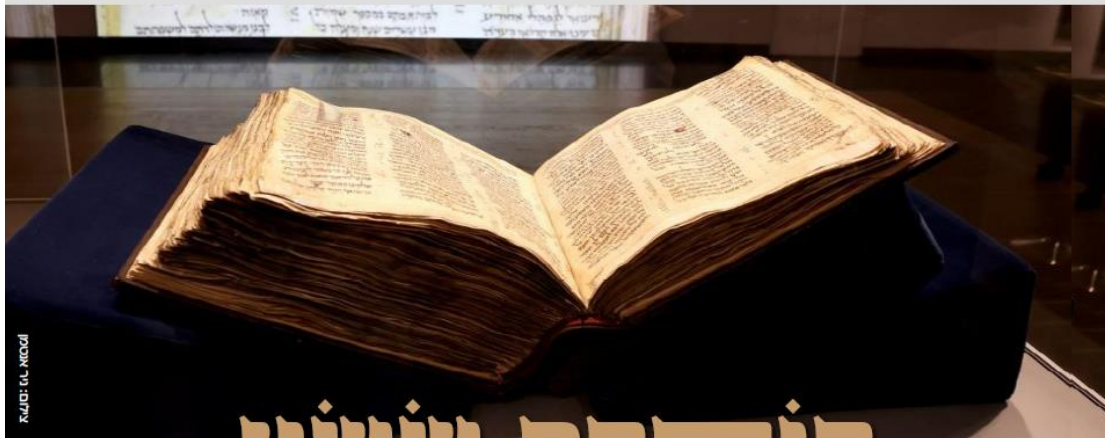


English Abstracts



סדנת מחקר של הקרן הלאומית למדע
Research Workshop of the Israel Science Foundation



צילום: ט. גולד

קודֶס סַסוּן • CODEX SASOON •

כתב-יד ששון של המקרא
Codex Sassoon of the Hebrew Bible

קודיקולוגיה, נוסח המקרא והמסורה, היסטוריה, תצוגה מוזיאלית
Codicology, Biblical version and Masora, History, Museal Display

ו'ח' בטבת תשפ"ה • January 6-8 2025
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן • מוזיאון העם היהודי
Bar Ilan University • ANU - Museum of the Jewish People

Monday, January 6, 2025 – Beck Hall, Bar Ilan University

First Session: The Reading of the Torah and the Biblical Text

Mordechai Weintraub, Institute for Hebrew Bible Manuscript Research

Reading the Torah in the Land of Israel: the testimony of the Sassoon manuscript and other Tiberian manuscripts (Hebrew Lecture)

The reading of the Torah is practiced today in all Jewish communities according to the Babylonian reading cycle, completing the entire Torah in one year. However, in the ancient system which was practiced in the Land of Israel during the Talmudic period until the end of the Geonic period, they used to finish the Torah in about three and a half years, in a cycle known as the "Triennial Cycle". The portion of the weekly reading according to this custom is called "Seder", unlike the Babylonian term "Parsha". Around the reading of the Torah, a rich and diverse literary enterprise was created and consolidated in the Land of Israel, which included a special Aramaic translation, unique Haftarah for each seder, liturgical poems in Shabbat and festival prayers, alongside the sermon held by the Rabbi in the synagogue.

The beginning of each Seder in the Triennial Cycle was marked in biblical manuscripts written in Israel and abroad. The Sedarim were also included in lists at the end of some of those manuscripts. In this lecture I would like to discuss the evidence that emerges from the markings of Sedarim in these manuscripts about the liturgical custom of reading the Torah in the Land of Israel. I would argue that this evidence shows the decline of the triennial cycle and the increasing adoption of the annual Babylonian cycle.

Jonathan Howard, Ben Gurion University

The Text of Codex Sassoon in Light of the Tiberian Masoretic School and its Surroundings (Hebrew Lecture)

Codex Sassoon (ANU 1) is one of the earliest and most important manuscripts of the Tiberian masoretic tradition, and Israel Yeivin judged it to be one of the closest to the Aleppo Codex. As an important artefact of the Tiberian tradition, its features complement and enrich our knowledge of this masoretic tradition. The lecture will examine some of the manuscript's features, its relation to other Tiberian sources, and some unique forms, while considering the different textual layers: orthography, vocalization, accentuation and Masora.

Second Session: The Methods of Codex Sassoon's Scribe

Yossi Peretz, Mikra'ot Gedolot Haketer, Bar Ilan University and Talpiot College

The Tradition of Open and Closed Sections in Ms. Sassoon 1053 (Hebrew Lecture)

The division of open and closed sections in the biblical text is very ancient and is already mentioned in halachic Midrashim: "And what purpose did the breaks serve? To give Moses time to reflect between a passage and a passage", i.e., to indicate separation between different topics. It is also stated: "If someone wrote a closed section as an open one, or an open section as a closed one [...] – such a scroll must be put in a genizah." Despite these details, the entire matter remains shrouded in mystery. Beyond the prohibition to interchange the types of sections, no guidance is given about the forms of these sections, the total number of open and closed sections, and their specific locations within the biblical text. Moreover, even the Tiberian Masoretes did not address these matters as they did with plene and defective spellings. Consequently, their Masoretic notes do not include specific comments about how to write these sections.

All these questions were clarified and established as halacha centuries later, when Maimonides (1138–1204) set out to write a Torah scroll for himself. Confronted with disputes regarding these issues, he deemed it necessary, as a halachic authority, to formulate a precise and uniform list of all the sections in the Torah to serve as a standard for scribes. As a basis for his list (which contains 669 sections in the Torah), he relied on the manuscript of Ben Asher, identified with the Aleppo Codex.

One manuscript in which the division of sections differs from that of the Aleppo Codex is Sassoon 1053. In this lecture, we will examine its division tradition compared to Maimonides' list and address the question of whether its differences are common in other early Eastern manuscripts from the same period or unique to this manuscript. To this end, we reviewed eight Eastern manuscripts and recorded all the differences among them in terms of section types, their quantity, and their locations in the biblical text.

From the comparative analysis, we can deduce the place of the Sassoon manuscript within the family of compared manuscripts. We will also propose explanations for the shifts between section types (from open to closed or vice versa) and for the differences in the presence or absence of sections across manuscripts. The lecture will include selected photographs from the manuscripts.

Leeor Gottlieb, Department of Bible, Bar-Ilan University

About the Lines and Between the Lines: Irregular Lines Rendered by the Scribe of Codex Sassoon 1053 (Hebrew Lecture)

When reading Codex Sassoon 1053 one notices at times irregular and atypical lines of text, or lines that were left empty in ways that render them uncharacteristic when compared with most of the manuscript. One finds lines that were written in poetic form in places where other biblical manuscripts tend to display as prose. Some empty lines indicate an open Parasha or a unit divider. Others were left empty intermittently with the final verses of a biblical book.

Because the manuscript's scribe use of these irregular lines does not appear to be systematic or consistent, one is frequently left with the question why the scribe chose to do so and did he do so based on a textual tradition or did he retain for himself a degree of freedom or scribal license. In my lecture I will survey various types of irregular lines in the manuscript, I will discuss the characteristics of the phenomenon, and I will consider if there is a way to determine why these lines are different from all other lines.

Third Session: The Masora and the Biblical Versions

Yosef Ofer, Bar Ilan University

A Comprehensive Presentation of Masora Comments – A Challenge for Scholars in the Twenty-First Century (Hebrew Lecture)

The Masora Magna Comments written in the margins of biblical manuscripts were not written in a fixed order or in a fixed wording. Each manuscript contains a different selection of Masora comments, and in a unique wording. Nevertheless, the Masora comments in all manuscripts join to form a large-scale corpus that is usually internally consistent. A broad comparative examination of parallels in manuscripts is essential for the correct understanding of a difficult Masora comment, for resolving difficulties, and for understanding the development of the comment. Databases and search tools are required to effectively locate many parallels.

The lecture will demonstrate a solution to a difficult comment in the Sassoon Codex using parallel comments, present the large but incomplete database created by C.D. Ginsburg in the late nineteenth century, and outline the path to a future database suitable for our era.

Noam Mizrahi, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Place of Codex Sassoon in the Textual History of the Jewish Bible (Hebrew Lecture)

The lecture sets Codex Sassoon and the Masoretic codices in general in the broader context of the textual history of the Jewish Bible. The written record of this textual history is not equally distributed all along—some periods are relatively well represented by remains of manuscripts of diverse types (so, for instance, is the case of the late Second Temple period, including the first generations following the Destruction, as well as the late Middle Ages), while other periods are hardly reflected in the available evidence (so the First and early Second Temple period, as well as Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages). For this reason, the historical description is incomplete and requires filling in some gaps with hypotheses. Nonetheless, some overarching trajectories of the internal logic of the textual history can be discerned, primarily the growing narrowing down of the interpretive and performative space surrounding the inherited text on the one hand and the shift in preserving the necessary information for accurate reading of this text from the internal human memory to external graphic aids—a couple of complementary moves that motivated, in turn, new challenges for the processes of textual transmission. It is this background that underscores the conceptual revolution entailed by the form of transmission that crystallized in the Masoretic codices in general, and Codex Sassoon (their earliest sample to date) in particular.

Tuesday, January 7, 2025 – Chronosphere Hall, Anu – Museum of the Jewish People, Tel Aviv

Fourth Session: The Book and the Ink

Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, University of Oxford

The making and the Script of Codex Sassoon

< *** Abstract Not Yet Submitted *** >

Ira Rabin, Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung (BAM)

& Nehemia Gordon, Institute for Hebrew Bible Manuscript Research

The Inks of Early Masoretic Bible Codices

In his *magnum opus* on Hebrew codicology, Professor Malachi Beit-Arié (1937–2023) demonstrated that early Oriental codices were primarily written in iron-gall inks rather than the carbon-based inks discussed in Talmudic and medieval halakhic literature. In this lecture we will expand on Beit-Arié's survey with data from the major early Masoretic Bible codices including Sassoon 1053 (א), the Aleppo Codex (א), Or. 4445 (ב), the Damascus Crown (ג), the Leningrad Codex (ד), and others.

Fifth Session: The work of the Scribe and the Masorete

Nehemia Gordon, Institute for Hebrew Bible Manuscript Research

Scribal Corrections in the Sassoon Codex

The Sassoon Codex contains corrections by multiple scribes. Some deal with common scribal errors such as homoiarkton and dittography. Others address issues specific to Bible manuscripts such as full and deficient orthography and open and closed sections. Some surprising corrections can contribute to an understanding of the scribal and reading culture that was a part of the life of the Sassoon Codex throughout the ages.

Vince Beiler, University of Cambridge

The place of MS Sassoon 1053 among Early Manuscripts: A Consideration of Its Masorah Parva Recension and Paratextual Features

In a Bible codex, Masorah parva notes are succinct, ubiquitous, and variable. If the Masorah parva notes from all early codices were collated into a single database and then compared

with one another, what sort of relationships could be established between codices? How might these relationships corroborate (or problematise) comparisons done on the basis of vocalisation, accents, orthography, palaeography, codicology, and the colophons?

The present lecture is an attempt to answer this question. From a database of ca. 45,000 Mp notes taken from 110 early Masoretic codices, a dendrogram (family tree) of manuscripts is created, showing that ANU Ms. 1 (formerly: Sassoon 1053 = **S1**) is neither at the center of the Masoretic Bibles that have been preserved, nor is it at the periphery. This “in-between status” of S1 is consistent with both its early date of composition (10th century) and probable place of composition (Syria).

In addition, some paratextual features of S1 help to pinpoint salient differences between codices produced in Eretz Israel (e.g., Tiberias and Jerusalem) with Oriental codices produced elsewhere (e.g., N. Africa, Syria, Babylonia).

In sum, the value of S1 can be found, in part, by appreciating its difference from codices such as Aleppo and Leningrad, thereby expanding our understanding of the Tiberian Masorah in all its forms.

Sixth Session: Biblical Manuscripts – Locating and Making Accessible to the Public

Orit Shaham-Gover, Chief curator of ANU – Museum of the Jewish People

Between Preservation and Presentation: Codex Sassoon at the ANU Museum (A gallery tour followed by discussion; Hebrew Lecture)

During the tour of the Codex gallery, I will share with participants the museum’s deliberations about how to display the Codex and the decisions that were made. Some of these relate to the item’s cultural and historical value, and making it accessible to audiences unfamiliar with its story and value; while others deal with the preservation, insurance, and security aspects of displaying an item valued at \$38 million that was entrusted to us for safekeeping on behalf of the Jewish People and humanity.

During the tour, participants will be able to watch two films in the gallery - one is a documentary telling the story of the Codex and explaining its significance. The second film, *The Ten Commandments*, is an artistic creation combining animation and original music by Yoni Rechter.

The second part of the meeting will take place in the conference hall, where we will discuss the tension between the need to display the Codex to the public and preserve it for future generations, versus the desire to provide access to researchers. The Codex curator at ‘ANU’ Museum, Irit Shapira-Meir, will participate in the tour and discussion.

Yitzchack Gila, Yael Okun, Ezra Chwat and Yaakov Fox, National Library of Israel

Can We Discover What Is Known? Manuscripts and Their Transformations Between Private and Public Domain (Hebrew Lecture)

The machine revolution in the mid-15th century marked a turning point for the world of manuscripts. The emergence of innovative technology changed the goals and methods of manuscript copying. Manuscripts became a tool for displaying wealth and as a last resort for disseminating works that had not been printed. With the appearance of the first bibliophiles, the phenomenon of collecting and saving manuscripts from destruction began. From the 17th century onwards, private collectors emerged among the Jewish people, gathering manuscripts and books from the dawn of printing. These collectors were not concerned with the provenance of the manuscripts, and therefore, the origins and the people from whom the manuscripts were acquired were not recorded. Some of these collectors invested time and effort into creating catalogs of the manuscripts and books in their possession, while others did not. In any case, most of these collections were dispersed and spread across the world.

In 1952, the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts was established under the leadership of Prof. Nehemia Aloni, fulfilling the vision of David Ben-Gurion. The institute represented a breakthrough in the documentation and study of Hebrew manuscripts. The institute's staff, led by Aloni, traveled to libraries and collections worldwide to photograph Hebrew manuscripts. These manuscripts were then cataloged and documented. By 2006, the institute (which in 1964 became part of the Jewish National and University Library) had documented around 76,000 manuscripts from national libraries, academic institutions, and private collectors.

In 2016, the "Ktiv" project was launched to bring the institute into the 21st century. Today, the institute holds over 110,000 Hebrew manuscripts. In this presentation, we want to present to the audience the journey of these manuscripts. The systematic documentation by the institute over 70 years allows librarians and researchers to discover manuscripts that were seemingly hidden from public view in private collections.

We will present various cases in which, thanks to the archive, manuscripts that were previously published, disappeared in private collections, and were rediscovered thanks to the work of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts. We will highlight the story of the manuscript Sassoon 1053, which, two years before its sale, was made accessible through a colorful digital photograph on the "Ktiv" website.

Wednesday, January 8, 2025 – Chronosphere Hall, Anu – Museum of the Jewish People, Tel Aviv

Seventh Session: The Masoretes of Codex Sassoon

Yosef Ofer, Bar Ilan University

Between Two Masoretes: The Style and Working Methods of Each Masorete of the Sassoon Codex (Hebrew Lecture)

The Masora in MS Sassoon 1053 is the work of two Masoretes. In the first ninety pages of the manuscript, the second Masorete added Masora comments to those written by his predecessor. Later in the manuscript, the second Masorete erased his predecessor's comments to write his own Masora comments.

The lecture will discuss the working methods of each Masorete: the first rarely deals with questions of plene and defective spellings, while the second deals with them extensively. The first uses to copy Masora comments from other sources, while the second creates new comments that have no parallel in other manuscripts. The second Masorete processes the Masora material in a unique, systematic style, discussing comprehensively the spelling of all forms of a particular word and describing the spelling in each of the books of the Bible. The second Masorete's use of the Aleppo Codex and the Babylonian Masora will also be demonstrated and described.

Neria Klein, Bible Project, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Connections of Codex Sassoon and the Aleppo Codex (Hebrew Lecture)

It is known today that the second Masorete of MS Sassoon 1053 saw the Aleppo Codex and even copied two Masora Magna notes from it. However, the extent of his use of the Aleppo Codex remains unclear. In this paper, I will review various pieces of evidence for the relationship between MS Sassoon 1053 and the Aleppo Codex. Particularly, data from the Book of Joshua—recently collected for the upcoming volume in the Hebrew University Bible Project—will be examined to clarify the proximity between the two manuscripts' texts when compared to other manuscripts.

Eighth Session: Codex Sassoon through the Ages

Miriam Frenkel, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Sassoon Codex against the backdrop of a Jewish Cultural Revolution (Hebrew Lecture)

The spread of Islam during the high Middle Ages brought about a dramatic turn for the ancient Jewish communities of the Mediterranean basin. The turn was manifested in almost all aspects of life, but was most evident in the fields of culture and religion.

The Sassoon Codex reflects these changes in many ways. Its *mashaf* format, the use of paper, the inclusion of all twenty-four biblical books in one codex, its elegance, its meticulousness and even the style of its letters, all testify to a deep cultural change. In my lecture I will try to show that the Sassoon Codex reflects new perceptions that spread among contemporary Jews: perceptions about the sacred book, about the written word, and about the transmission of tradition. I will also claim that it attests to a new level of literacy among the medieval Jews of Islam.

Shaul Seidler-Feller, Sotheby's Books and Manuscripts Department

"Nor Is It across the Ocean" (Deut. 30:13)? On the Journey of Codex Sassoon from Turkey to Tel Aviv

The trail of Codex Sassoon goes cold sometime at the end of the Middle Ages or the beginning of the modern era when it is rebound, probably by non-Jewish binders. After hundreds of years of silence, it suddenly reappears in Turkey, as revealed in correspondence between Prof. Aron Freimann of the Stadtbibliothek in Frankfurt am Main and the renowned collector David Solomon Sassoon in March-April 1929. Freimann could not afford to buy the manuscript from its owner due to the high asking price, so he brought it to the attention of his acquaintance-friend Sassoon, who proceeded to purchase it at a much lower price. After that, it entered the Sassoon collection as MS 1053, and this is how it became known in the scholarly world once Sassoon published his library catalog in 1932, and even more so after photographs of it arrived in Jerusalem in the late 1950s.

In 1978, the Sassoon family decided to sell the codex along with thirty-two other manuscripts from their collection at an auction held at Sotheby's in Zurich. The winner at that sale was the British Rail Pension Fund (BRPF), which at the time invested large sums of money in art and valuable objects, including several Hebrew manuscripts. After eleven years, the fund put the manuscript up for sale again at Sotheby's in London, and now it was bought by a Jewish antiquarian book dealer, who promptly sold it to Jacob (Jaqui) Eli Safra of Geneva, another well-known collector. The manuscript remained in Safra's possession until 2023, when he

offered it for sale through Sotheby's in New York. The new winner was ANU—Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, courtesy of American Jewish Amb. Alfred H. Moses, who donated the money required for its purchase.

In my lecture I will go into the details and layers of this fascinating story, which raises interesting questions (in my opinion) regarding private ownership of national treasures, especially after the establishment of the State of Israel.