THE HEBREW BIBLE OF THE ROYAL PALACE IN MADRID: A SEPHARDIC BIBLE FROM THE 15TH CENTURY*

ABSTRACT

The Royal Palace Library in Madrid keeps a single Hebrew manuscript. This is a Bible dated 1487. The fifteenth century Sephardic Bibles share some characteristics that differ from those of previous centuries. And this particular Bible has a number of features that give it a unique character. This article discusses some of these details, especially their micrographies and the masoretic information provided.

RÉSUMÉ

La librairie du Palais royal à Madrid conserve un seul manuscrit en hébreu. Il s’agit d’une bible datée de 1497. Les bibles séfardes écrites au xve siècle partagent des caractéristiques différentes de celles des bibles des siècles précédents et la bible dont nous allons parler présente certains éléments qui lui confèrent un caractère unique. Dans cet article, ces éléments sont analysés; on met l’accent spécialement sur les micrographies et sur l’information massorétique disponible.

The Library of the Royal Palace in Madrid holds only one Hebrew Bible, a manuscript with some singular features.1 To date, some authors have referred to this Bible,2 it has been catalogued,3 and it has even appeared in exhibit

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1. Real Biblioteca, Palacio Real de Madrid (Royal Library of the Royal Palace of Madrid), signature II/03231-03246.
catalogues, but it has yet to be subject to careful study, either from a textual point of view (focusing on the text and the Masorah) or from the point of view of the illuminations.

The Library of the Royal Palace does not have an exact record for the date the Bible entered its collection. However, there is a file signed by Francisco Antonio González that contains a description of the manuscript and some information about its provenance, thanks to which we know that it was in the library’s possession by September 1, 1832. In the same file there is a note signed by the Bible’s owner, Joseph Martínez, in Nice on August 17, 1831. This note is a reply indicating that the description of the Bible in this document is correct. Therefore, we can deduce that the manuscript entered the library between August 1831 and September 1832.

The Bible is bound in sixteen volumes, which is something in itself that is unusual. At most, Bibles are divided among two or three volumes, sometimes even held in different libraries, but not among sixteen. The codex has a very small format, 100 by 80 mm, and its text block measures only 50 by 45 mm. Even including the Masorah, it is only 70 by 53, which is still small. Bible manuscripts of such small size are usually used for personal or private liturgical purposes, as is the case with the fragmentary Italian Bible of manuscript Kennicott 8 in the Bodleian Library (dated 1404), which contains only Psalms, Proverbs and Job. Its text block is 76 by 60 mm, and the total size of the manuscript is 147 by 100 mm, not much bigger than the Bible we are concerned with here. The composition of the volumes is as follows:


The Royal Palace Bible is written in lines that run the full width of the page, not in columns, something that is also infrequent, except in “rabbinical”


5. Francisco Antonio González Oña was head librarian at the Real Biblioteca de Su Magestad from November 29, 1820, until his death on October 23, 1833. He was a priest, Hebrew scholar, and for two years a professor of Hebrew and Arabic at the University of Alcalá; he was appointed to the position of librarian by the king Fernando VII.

6. There were three in origin, two have been removed.
Bibles, whose text is surrounded by other texts, of biblical commentaries, Targum, etc. Some examples are the ms. G-I-5 in the Escorial or the above-mentioned Héb. 50 in the BnF.\(^7\) The ruling in drypoint is visible, which is the norm in Bibles from Sepharad to ensure a uniform copying. There are twelve lines of text per page and the Masorah magna occupies two lines in the upper margin and three in the lower, with the Masorah parva being written in the margins, as is customary, although it is always in the outer margins of the book, never the inner. The Sephardic square script is meticulous, with the Masorah being inscribed in a smaller font than the text, both in brown ink. However, if we look closely, the writing of the Masorah is not as meticulous and is simplified to the point of making it sometimes difficult to read. In general, each biblical book takes up a volume, and most quires comprise eight folios, as is very common in both Sephardic and Toledan manuscripts.\(^8\)

The order of the biblical books is as follows: Pentateuch, Joshua-Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ruth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. The order of the Megillot is the most frequent in Sephardic Bibles, which does not coincide with those prescribed in the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Batra 14b). But the variations in the order of the poetic books or נֵּבֶר is very common, also in Ashkenazi manuscripts. In our case, the order of the Megillot coincides with that of Ms. BL Or. 2626-28 (Lisbon, 1482) and with manuscript Add. 15282 of the British Library, one of the codices used as model by Ginsburg to establish the order of the biblical books. The two books of Chronicles appear at the end of the codex, as it corresponds to the more generalized use.\(^9\) Each volume includes the haftarot according to the Sephardic rite, and therefore the manuscript could

\(^7\) Other examples of Bibles written in lines the full width of the page are: the Portuguese Almanzi Pentateuch (Ms. BL, Add. 27167), from 1480-90, although its size (170 × 119 mm) is almost double that of the Royal Palace Bible. See B. NARKISS, A. COHEN-MUSHLIN and A. TCHERIKOVER, Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles, vol. I: Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts, Jerusalem-Oxford, 1982, p. 145-146; and the Pentateuch at the Bodleian Library, Or. 414, of a similar size as the Royal Palace Bible (118-78 mm), although its illuminations are different. See NARKISS, COHEN-MUSHLIN and TCHERIKOVER, op. cit., p. 147-148. Later on, we will see some similarities between these Bibles and the one in the Royal Palace, specifically the fact that they all include illuminations of a human face.

\(^8\) KOGMAN-APP, op. cit., p. 58.

be included among so-called liturgical Bibles, which are generally of small size. Nevertheless, its contents do not correspond exactly to those Bibles, which in most cases only contain the Pentateuch and the Megillot. In the case of our Bible, despite of its size and the inclusion of the haftarot, it seems more alike to be a luxury or gift codex.

The colophon appears twice, both with the same text, although it is incomplete the second time. The first appearance, in volume eight — which contains the book of Kings — fols. 199v-200v, states the name of the copyist, Abraham ibn Mošeh ibn Khalif, the recipient of the codex, and the date. The manuscript was written for R. Salomón ben Jacob ben Ga’ta and finished in Toledo on the 6th day of the month of second adar (February) of the year 5247 from the creation of the world (the year 1487). The second colophon is a copy of the first one, made probably by a second hand, and appears in volume sixteen, which contains the book of Chronicles, on f. 216v-217r, and is incomplete. The scribe repeats the name of the city of Toledo multiple times when he writes the verse count at the end of each biblical book, sometimes in a rhombus shape with the name of the city and the expression יִשְׂרָאֵל נְעָרִי (‘Redemption is near’) in the middle, formula quite frequent in Portuguese manuscripts.

We have located only one other manuscript by this copyist, Lutzki 6 in the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York, dated 1492 in Toledo, the same year as the expulsion. It is therefore not surprising that this date refers only to the text. The colophon states that the Masorah and illuminations were finished in Istanbul by a second copyist whose name is not mentioned. However, there are at least three manuscripts copied by another member of his family, probably his brother: codex Opp. Add. 4º 26 in the Bodleian Library in Oxford dated 1480 probably in Seville or Cordoba; codex Parma 2809 in the Palatine Library in Parma, dated 1473; and codex HC: 371/169 at the Hispanic Society of America dated 1472 in Seville. The first would be the latest of the three and would have been written almost contemporaneously with the work of or scribe in Toledo, only seven years earlier. We will return to this manuscript later. It seems plausible that the relative of the copyist of

10. These are known as “liturgical” Bibles, since their contents coincide with the sections of the Bible that would be read at synagogue on Saturdays and Jewish feast days. However, their use outside of the synagogue is unclear.

11. This folio has been added and is slightly longer than the rest.


13. This Bible, after leaving its owners, probably made the trip to Portugal. Also known as Abravanel Pentateuch because on f. 239v, before the colophon, there is a note in a later hand saying that the manuscript belonged to Don Samuel Abarvanel.
the Bible in the Royal Palace, Moše ibn Jacob ibn Moše ibn Khalif, may have been living in Andalusia prior to the expulsion of the Jews from this region (1483), and that the family moved to Toledo afterward, whence they departed likely for Portugal or left the Peninsula altogether.

With respect to the content, the composition of each of the volumes is very similar. Each volume begins and ends with six folios containing a series of masoretic lists, written before and after the biblical text. The lists are arranged in two columns on each page, inserted among decorations of lobed or horseshoe arches, in a design that is similar to that of many other illuminated Bibles produced in the Iberian Peninsula, especially those produced in Castile. The lists always take this form except on three occasions: the volume containing the books of Joshua and Judges has them in the middle of the volume and the volume containing Proverbs and Job and that of the Megillot does not have lists. The manuscript indicates in the margins the signs of the parašiyyot and sedarim (the latter in the book of Genesis), being this latter very frequent in Toledan Bibles.

The text

The usual sections have a special layout, such as the Song at the Sea and the Song of Deborah, generally with micrography decoration in the Masorah magna and around the perimeter of the page. The manuscript contains frequent corrections, which are easily identified since they are written over erasures in a darker ink. There is even a correction of the qere, as occurs on f. 123r of Genesis, regarding the word אסורי (Gen 39:20). The qere gives the reading אסירי, as it was written by the first hand. Elsewhere, the correction aligns the text with the Masorah, as in f. 124v: in Gen 40:8, the word הלוא is corrected by adding the waw in order to make the text coincide with the Masorah parva, which says: “eleven times plene in the Torah.”

As is customary in Sephardic manuscripts, the vocalization follows the tradition of Ben Asher: יִבְנֵן is written without dagesh in the nun (Josh 1:1 and Num 13:8), וַהֲלוֹא as two words (Gen 31:13 and Gen 35:3), and יִשְׁכַּר as a single word, as in the passages in Gen 14:1, 4, 5, 9 and 17. Also, ישכר is punctuated with dagesh in the sin, following the reading of Ben Asher, as in Exod 1:3 or Num 1:28. The extraordinary points, large sized letters, and the inverted nun (as in Num 10:38-39) are written in the customary way, although

14. Kogman-Appel, op. cit., p. 216 affirms that these designs are typical of Toledo but also appear in many other Bibles, especially Castilian ones, such as the Cervera Bible (1300) or the Kennicott Bible, copied in La Coruña in 1476.
not in every case, as for example the extraordinary points that are not written in Gen 18:9. The manuscript includes the two verses of Josh 21:36-37 (f. 66v), annotating in the Masorah parva שַׁנֵי מִסְפָּרִים אֶל מִשְׁתַּעְיָא הַלַּשּׁוֹן הָרֹדֶם הֵרֵד בִּן קְמֻחַ רָפָאִיס יְלֵיהוּ הָבցשָׁי, and offering as a reference both, the Codex Hilleli and the testimony of David Kimhi. Neh 7:68 is included without any indication. At the beginning of Neh 7:6 והלאה is written instead of הלאה, although the waw was added in a second hand. This variant is documented in other manuscripts. The passage in Num 7:18-83 referring to the offerings of the leaders of the tribes of Israel is not completely vocalized, as is customary in many Sephardic Bibles. In fact, none of the text between 7:13 and 7:84 is vocalized, although the accents are written, probably as an aid for the cantillation of the fragment.

To fill the lines, the manuscript uses both the technique of enlarging a letter in the last word and that of compressing the last word on the line. Elsewhere the scribe writes the first letter or letters of the next word or a yod. There do not appear to be any special signs that are peculiar to the scribe. In cases where a word is suppressed, something that occurs very infrequently, the word is crossed out with a line, as in Josh 21:36 (f. 66v), or the text to be suppressed is circled with a line, as in Num 7:25-26 (f. 36v).

The manuscript rarely uses the meteg, even before a hatef šewa, as can be seen in the following cases:

- Lev 13:37 וַיִּהְרָה יָדָו
- Deut 1:8 וַיַּלְעִיקוּ
- Dan 11:38 וַיָּאָלֵה יָמִינָם
- Dan 12:13 וַיַּלְעִיקוּ
- Dan 9:7 וַיָּאָלֵה יָמִינָם
- Dan 9:11 וַיָּאָלֵה יָמִינָם

Although occasionally it is written in, as in 1 Sam 1:9: סָחַר הָאָרֶץ אֶלֹהִים

And normally the dageš is not put in a consonant that follows a guttural with a šewa, as in

- Dan 6:3 וַיִּמַּחְשָׁב
- Esdr 8:18 וַיִּמַּחְשָׁב
- Neh 8:11 שָׁמַשְׂנֵיו

Nor in the first letter of a word preceded by the same letter:

- Dan 1:8 וַיִּמַּחְשָׁב
- Dan 2:11 וַיִּמַּחְשָׁב
- y 15 יָדְמָלַץ
- Dan 11:25 וַיִּמַּחְשָׁב

When a consonant with a simple šewa is followed by the same consonant, the šewa is not replaced by a hatef pataḥ:

- Dan 9:4 וַיִּמְאַפְּלָלָה
- Dan 9:18 וַיִּמְאַפְּלָלָה
- Dan 11:15 וַיִּמְאַפְּלָלָה

The Masorah

Given the small size of the codex, the Masorah is limited. It occupies all the margins set aside for it, but it does not include all annotations that appear in other manuscripts. Some pages completely lack the Masorah parva. Many times the Masorah magna does not coincide on the same page as the text where the word to which it refers appears. Often, there are Masorahs that should be on the previous or following page, and sometimes they are even two pages off, creating a ripple effect so that the defect continues to the end of the codex. The circellus is not always used and when it is, it almost always seems to have been added, in a blacker ink and by the second hand that makes corrections to the text and to the corresponding Masorah parva in the margin.

The language of the Masorah parva is very plain: it merely specifies the cases in question without explanation and without offering the simanim of other cases, except in some places where there is only one other case to identify (bet cases). However, in the micrographies of the Masorah magna, words are repeated and the cases are frequently out of order, making it very difficult to read in some places due to the deformation of the letters and their elongation, sometimes to the point of becoming mere threads, in order to fit into the design.

Model codices are not cited, as is the case in other Sephardic manuscripts, except in very few places, as has been mentioned in regard to the two verses of Josh 21. The manuscript also does not use expressions that frequently appear in other Sephardic manuscripts to indicate cases with different vocalizations (מתחלף).

Summing up, the text reflects the most reputed Tiberian tradition. From the preceding analysis we can affirm that the text of the manuscript follows the Ben Asher readings, quoting in some occasions the model codices, especially the Hilleli. The masoretic lists added at the beginning and at the end of the biblical books which reproduce sometimes those of the Okhlah we-Okhlah16, are also a characteristic of Sephardic best codices.

Decorative Program

The manuscript’s decorative program consists of various common elements. The first, which has already been mentioned, is the mostly lobed arch design that surrounds the columns of text on the folios containing the masoretic lists.

The titles of each list are at the beginning, generally in larger letters written or inscribed in red. The volume containing Proverbs and Job does not have these lists at the beginning, but rather between the two books and at the end. The same is true of the volume that contains the Megillot, Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah. Some books include these lists between the biblical text and the haftarot. The decorative motifs are repeated although with variations; they are always different though the styles are similar. The spandrels are frequently filled with tiny penworks, almost filigrees, with floral or vegetal motifs in the upper part, always in red, purple, and black. Generally, the red motifs are simpler and occur more frequently toward the end of the biblical books. These arches are in turn surrounded by calligraphic frames with letters that are larger than the central text.

There is an exception to these motifs on f. 1r of the book of Ezekiel: the arches that surround the text develop into multi-lobed frames, both in the upper part and in the lower, the predominant color is mauve and most noteworthy, there is a human face inscribed at the top of the arch. We see the same thing at the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy, on f. 1r (IMAGE 7: Deuteronomy, f. 1r). Similar faces, in a more naive style, appear in the volume containing the books of the Megillot, Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah, between the arches on f. 89v and 90r. This particular motif appears scarce in this type of Sephardic Bibles, which is generally aniconic. In some Sephardic Bibles, we do find human figures in the decoration, but they are generally painted Gothic-influenced illustrations and they present the typical characteristics of Gothic art, which are very different from this case. Here, it looks as if care was taken not to show the faces too much, and it is difficult sometimes to discern them: the illuminator was not trying to draw attention to them, but his intention to include them is clear.17 There is a Bible in the Bodleian Library, manuscript Bodl. Or. 414, also copied at the end of the fifteenth century, probably, according to Narkiss, in Lisbon, although Beit-Arié thinks it could have originated anywhere in Portugal.18 It is also of very small size, but bigger than the Royal Palace Bible (180 × 130 mm), and it lacks the Masorah magna, having only the Masorah parva.

17. In a scroll of Esther discovered a few years ago and held at the Almudena Cathedral in Madrid, there are also representations of human faces that are somewhat similar to the ones described here. However, the former are drawn in an explicit way in a panel at the top of the manuscript, as a decoration of the manuscript itself, and they have Renaissance-period features. See I. CARBAJOSA (ed.), El rollo de Ester de la Catedral de Madrid, Madrid, 2012.

The illuminations include frames with floral motifs, done with pen in a very delicate hand in sepia, green, blue, red, gold, and violet. Now, in the decorative frame on f. 1v, two human faces can be discerned, which Narkiss identified as belonging to a woman and a tonsured cleric. Similar representations appear in the mentioned Bible at the Hispanic Society of New York, ms. HSA HC 371/16, copied in Seville in 1472 by Moše ibn Jacob ibn Moše ibn Khalif, probably the scribe’s brother of the Madrid bible. Specifically, at the beginning of the first book of Samuel, there is a decorative panel where two of these faces can be seen. The representations of human faces in these manuscripts share many characteristics, not only with respect to the portrayal itself, but also the artist’s intention for them to go almost unnoticed. However, the drawings in the Royal Palace Bible are simpler and include fewer details in the decoration. In these features we can suggest the beginning of Renaissance influences, as well as in others that are still very rudimentary and that adorn some of the columns that separate the multi-lobed arches.

The second common decorative feature of the Royal Palace manuscript are the panels, which are always at the beginning of each biblical book or at the beginning of the haftarot, being always initial word panels, written in larger, golden letters. The panels themselves are rectangular and have a golden frame. They occupy a space of between four and eight lines of text and are placed either at the right of the page (Exodus) or in the center (Leviticus) (IMAGE 5: Leviticus, f. 4v) . Due to the small size of the Bible, this means that the panels take up almost half of the text block. The panels’ background is divided by a diagonal line into two triangular spaces, one red and the other blue. Surrounding the panels, there is a border that takes up the upper and one or both side margins of the page. This border has floral motifs that are very finely and delicately traced, usually in blue, sepia, green, black, and gold.

In the case of the book of Genesis, the panel is larger and takes up the right and lower margins. Moreover, this panel containing the letter bet is different from the others in that it lacks the diagonal dividing line and has a golden background, as well as a golden crown above, probably symbolizing the kingdom of Castile. By using this crown, the scribe signifies from the outset that the manuscript is being copied in the kingdom of Castile and under its jurisdiction. The unification of Castile and Aragon through the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella (which took place in 1468, only a few years before the Bible was copied) might also have been a reason for wanting to represent, by means of the crown, the power of the new monarchs and the importance of being part of their kingdom. Similar representations are to
be found in other Castilian manuscripts, like the first Kennicott Bible, where multiple crowns with similar shape are depicted. On the contrary, in manuscripts copied during the previous centuries, a castle (symbol of Castile kingdom) is very frequently represented, as in Ibn Gaon codices and many others. In Madrid bible, the first three lines of the text of Genesis are written in gold letters, and the predominant colors in the illumination are green and gold. In some cases, the decorated panel containing the first word of the book takes up the whole page, as in all the books of the Prophets (Joshua to the Minor Prophets) and the Ketubim except Psalms, the Megillot and Chronicles. In many of them the ruling can be seen around the decorative panel, as if the scribe intended to include more elements on the page. The solution to this puzzle can perhaps be found on the first page of the book of Ezekiel. Here, the decorative panel is surrounded by a micrography frame with complicated vegetal motifs that also appears on the following folio surrounding the text. It is possible that the scribe planned to include these micrography motifs for all panels that take up a whole page.

The third recurrent decorative element in the manuscript is the micrographic decoration. The Masorah magna is often written in the form of micrographic patterns, sometimes with complicated motifs. The majority of these use vegetation and floral elements in the design, interlaced in different ways, but geometric motifs are also common. Animal designs are less common. Special ruling for the decorative Masorah is not visible in the codex. In the books of the Prophets, the decoration is simpler, lacking complicated designs, except in a few cases, as the mentioned first folios of the book of Ezekiel (f. 4v-5r). (IMAGE 8: Ezekiel, f. 4v)

Micrographic decoration is found in the manuscript in three different contexts:

- In the space occupied by the Masorah magna, as mentioned. In these cases, the designs often take up the center of the lower margins of the page, as well as the ends of the lines of the Masorah magna. Often, the design is a repeating simplified fleur-de-lis, which was a Jewish symbol during the first and second centuries but later disappeared and was basically considered a French symbol in the middle ages. Its use is widespread in the Iberian Peninsula and other countries to allude to royalty, but it is

19. Cf. ms. Bodl. Kenn 1, f. 119r, 365r, 438v or 439r.
20. Cf. ms. Bodl. Kenn 2, f. 87v, 147r or 166r; Bodl. Opp. Add, 4º 75, f. 3r, 134v; the Cervera Bible, Ms. II 72, Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional, f. 207r or 448v; or Damascus Keter, JNUL, Ms. 4º 790, around the signs of seder.
sometimes used to reflect the complex ties between the Jewish community and its surroundings, as well as a symbol of Judaism.\textsuperscript{21} The micrographic decoration in the manuscript also includes zoomorphic motifs, though on rare occasions and always in facing pairs. Thus, we find two serpents (Gen, f. 156r) or two dragons (Gen, f. 116r and 155v). Also, there are geometric designs, as in Ex, f. 11v-12r or 19v-20r. These designs — whether floral, zoomorphic or geometric — generally appear on the verso of one page and the recto of the next in identical form, creating symmetry when the codex is lying open at that page. Moreover, it can be noted that they are intended to help the array of the quires, since the designs are found on the last page of one quire and the first page of the next.\textsuperscript{22} This same pattern can be found in other similar manuscripts, such as Opp. Add. 8º 10 at the Bodleian Library. These pages are not always symmetrical throughout the manuscript: sometimes the design on the verso of one page is different than that on the recto of the next page, especially in the later books of the Bible. Sometimes, the design of the micrography shows similarities with that of another manuscript in the Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4º 26, dating from about 1480 and whose text was copied by Mo\textsuperscript{s}eh ha-Sofer ibn Jacob ha-Sefardi, ibn R. Mo\textsuperscript{s}eh ibn Khalif (the relative of the scribe of the Royal Palace Bible, as we have already mentioned) and whose Masorah is by Samuel ha Sofer ibn R. Jo\textsuperscript{s}ua ha Sefardi ibn R. Yosef. Although the designs are not identical, they have the same arrangement and some motifs are repeated. In this case as well, the richest decorations are found on the first and last pages of the quires\textsuperscript{23}.

\textsuperscript{21} On the symbolism of the fleur-de-lis, see Y. Meshorer, “Fleur de Lis”, in De la Bible à nos jours. 3000 ans d’art, Paris, 1985, p. 163-166; V. Klagsbald, “Comme un lis entre les chardons. De la symbolique de la fleur de lis aux origines du magen Dawid”, Revue des études juives, 150 (1991), p. 133-150. This author claims that the origin of the Magen David as a symbol of Israel is to be found in the primitive symbol of the fleur-de-lis, citing a glass engraving from the Hasmonean period. In any case, the fleur-de-lis is frequently mentioned in the Bible and other Jewish writings and appears as a symbol in numerous medieval Jewish manuscripts. The first king of France to include the fleur-de-lis on his coat of arms was Louis VII (12\textsuperscript{th} century).

\textsuperscript{22} Nevertheless, those similar or identical decorations never substituted the catchwords or signatures, which remain as the main element to know the right order of the quires.

\textsuperscript{23} Other sephardic manuscripts can show similarities in the micrographic decoration, as it was quoted in Metzger, art. cit., p. 108-109, but not with identical patterns as in manuscript Opp. Add. 8º 10.
On the outside margins of the manuscript, occupying either the entire space or part of it. There is a vegetal chain in Genesis, f. 115v (with a design that is identical to one that is found in Bodleian Library manuscript Opp. Add. 8° 10, f. 2r); another in Lev, f. 36r (IMAGE 6: Lev f. 36r); another very similar one in Ezek, f. 36v; and a floral rosette on 43v. Another rosette of very complicated design appears in Leviticus, f. 138r. These complicated designs are rare, only two in the entire Pentateuch. The Masorah magna for the Song at the Sea in Exodus 15 (f. 51v-53r) is written in geometric micrography surrounding each of the two pages and has a shape similar to a drawing found on the first folio of Genesis in the Kennicott Bible, although the latter doesn’t have micrography in the drawing. The same design is repeated elsewhere in the Royal Palace manuscript, such as throughout the volume that contains the books of Joshua and Judges, although here it occupies only the lower margins.

On carpet pages. These are rare and they always have a very similar design: the micrography is surrounded by a calligraphic frame with larger letters and by framing lines in black and red. In the book of Leviticus, f. 3v, we find the same floral motif that is most frequently used throughout the manuscript intertwined with more of the same (IMAGE 4: Leviticus, f. 3v). And in the book of Numbers, f. 199 r and v, there is an interlaced geometric design in the mudéjar style. Two pages in Deuteronomy, f. 190v and 191r, are very similar.

**Pen drawings** are the last decorative feature of the manuscript. Most of these surround the parašah indications or the numbers of the Psalms and belong to the same style. Some are simple and done in black ink with interlaced mudéjar motifs, such as on fol. 33 recto in Exodus 10, in the parašah Noah. But more frequently they are complex designs done in red ink. (IMAGE 2: Exodus, f. 46v). Sometimes they form a drawing around the letter peh or the word parašah; in other passages the drawing has extensions that reach all around the margin of the page, ending in scroll forms. The Hebrew letters that are used for numbering the Psalms are decorated in a way similar to that of the parašiyot. We also find in the manuscript a very unique pen drawing. It occupies the right margin of f. 160bis v of the book of Exodus and is made up of two fluted and intertwined columns, crowned by two small conical domes and three intertwined floral decorations. This motif cannot be found anywhere in the manuscript and is dissimilar to its overall decorative style (IMAGE 3: Exodus, f. 160bis v).

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24. The folio is left unnumbered by mistake and is located between f. 160 and 161.
Decoration’s forming texts

With the only exception of the penworks, all other decorations in the manuscript reproduce or accompany some text, written in micrographic form or inscribed in the architectural drawings. The texts that are copied in columns, within lobed or rectangular arches and on pages with decorative elements, always include parašiyyot, sedarim and biblical verse counts and masoretic lists, in varying order. In many places, the lists show the differences between Ben Asher and Ben Naftali. An example is found in the first volume: in the book of Genesis, f. 1r contains list 60 of Okl\textsuperscript{25} and number 59 of Ochl\textsuperscript{26}: an alphabetic list of words that occur twice, the second time with a meaning different than in the first. Following this is a list of words with different spellings in \textit{Elleh Toledot}, each with a number (alef, bet, gimel, etc.). Or in the book of Exodus, on f. 2r, there is a list indicating the words that are vocalized with a \textit{pataḥ} even though they’re marked with an \textit{atn̄ah} and \textit{sof pashuq}. There are similar lists dating all the way back to the thirteenth century in many Sephardic manuscripts, copied both in Toledo as well as other cities, mostly in Castile. These lists also make reference to the differences between Eastern and Western codices, just like in f. 1v-2r of the book of Isaiah or in f.1v-3v of Jeremiah. Lists of words that have different dia-critics, such as \textit{mappiq} or \textit{rafeh} (Chronicles, f. 2r), or that have \textit{plene} or defective vocalization, large letters or small (Chronicles, 1r-1v) or \textit{qere we-lo ketib} (Chronicles, f. 2v) are also present in the manuscript. To find the origin of such lists, we have to go back to the first masoretic treatises, such as the \textit{Oklah we-Oklah} or the \textit{‘Adat Deborim}. Although the Sephardic manuscripts and these treatises do not agree in their entirety, they do coincide for the most part, especially in the headings of the lists, such that it is possible to assert that the Sephardic tradition derives directly from the Eastern tradition.

The same is true for the texts contained in the micrographic designs on the carpet pages. Its contents are very similar to what is described above. The texts that are copied in the frames surrounding these pages, written in letters of larger size, are usually the openings or headings of masoretic lists and the verses that correspond to these lists.

In addition to the decorative features already described, which are present in a similar or almost identical form in other Sephardic manuscripts from

25. F. DíAZ ESTEBA\n\\no, \textit{Sefer ‘Oklah We-Oklah: colección de listas de palabras destinadas a conservar la integridad del texto hebreo de la Biblia entre los judíos de la Edad Media}, Madrid, 1975, p. 103-105.
the fifteenth century, the Royal Palace Bible has a unique instance of micrography that is unlike anything found in other known codices in the same form in which it appears here. On fol. 123v of the volume containing Genesis, in the Masorah magna in the lower margin, there is a micrography in the shape of a human face. There are other faces in micrography in other manuscripts, especially Ashkenazi ones, but they are always in profile, and usually with a cap that identifies the person portrayed as a Jew, or with a helmet in the case of portrayals of knights. In many of these representations, the profile of the face is just a pen tracing and doesn’t make use of micrography. Sephardic manuscripts represent scanty human figures, being they more frequent in those produced in Ashkenaz.

On the other hand, here all the lines are done in micrography, even the loose hair recalling the head of Medusa. The face wears an expression of surprise, possibly even of horror: mouth half-open so that the teeth can be seen and eyes wide open. It is the only micrography in the manuscript that departs from the geometric, floral/vegetal or zoomorphic motifs used elsewhere (IMAGE 1: Genesis f. 123v).

The text appearing on this folio is Gen 39:20 to 22. This Masorah magna should not really be on this folio, since the word to which it refers is not found there. As often happens in this codex — undoubtedly due to its size and the consequent space limitations for the Masorah — the word to which the masoretic note contained in this micrography refers is two folios back, in Gen 39:6 (fol. 121v). Here, the text אל is corrected, since it was written defectively by the first hand. The Masorah parva, written by the second hand, says ד, and its Masorah magna (which begins on the previous page, fol. 121r, on the second line of the lower margin), includes the simanim of the four passages where this word appears: Gen 39:6, Isa 29:8. Nah. 3:12 and Ps 41:10:

אוכל ד וסימנהון כי אם הלחם אשר הוא אוכל ויהי יוסף יפה תואר ויפה מראה כאשר אוכל ד
יחלום בהרע והנה אוכל אם ינועו ונפלו על פי אוכל גם איש שלומי אשר בטחתי בו אוכל
לחמי חדש עלי עמק

In the micrography on the folio that concerns us here, 123v, these four cases are repeated out of order, with words mixed up and repeated. The reference codices of Leningrad27, Madrid 128 and British Library Pentateuch Or 4445 do not have Masorahs for this passage. MS Bodl. Opp. Add. 4º 26,
written by the father of our copyist, has the same Masorah *parva* for this passage: 4 times *plene* in the Bible (ד מל בקרי) but lacks the Masorah *magna*. The other passages cannot be consulted in this manuscript since it contains only the Pentateuch and the *Megillot*.

The word to which the Masorah refers is ‘food’ and the passage talks about Joseph and his influential role in Potiphar’s house, describing his appearance and stating that he was handsome. Rashi comments with respect to this passage that no sooner did Joseph find himself in the position of overseer than he began to eat and to drink and to curl his hair: “Said the Holy One, blessed be he: Your father is mourning and you curl your hair! I will incite the bear (meaning Potiphar’s wife) against you.” The Bible mentions that Joseph was handsome to indicate that, for that very reason, Potiphar’s wife tries to seduce him. According to the *Midraš*, when the Bible verse says “the bread that he ate” it means Potiphar’s wife, whom Joseph was not allowed to have (*Berešit Rabbah* 86.6). According to this, the passage necessarily alludes to the wife, given that Joseph says explicitly in 39:9 that his master did not refuse him anything, save his wife. From this it can be inferred that when bread is mentioned, she is being referred to. Radaq and Nahmanides also agree with the interpretation that the word ‘food’ alludes to Potiphar’s wife, foreshadowing for the reader the seduction that happens later on.29

Although the micrography is sometimes related to the biblical text to which it refers, we cannot deduce that the human figure in the manuscript is that of Joseph, since there is no basis for such an interpretation. The figure portrayed does not have the well-groomed and handsome appearance that the text of Genesis attributes to Joseph and about which all the commentators are in agreement. Perhaps our conception of beauty is very different from what the masorete of this manuscript had in mind.

**Final Considerations**

The study of the Bible at the Royal Palace in Madrid and its comparison to other Sephardic Bibles from the fifteenth century yields the following conclusions:

Firstly, with respect to its illuminations, there is a clear connection with the so-called “Portuguese school” of Hebrew manuscript decoration. Even though this manuscript is much less decorated than the well-known Lisbon Bibles (BL Or 2626-28, Bodl. Or 614, Bodl. Opp. Add. 4º 26 etc.), some of its recurring motifs are repeated in the Lisbon manuscripts and, especially, there are similar styles in the panels and borders. The Portuguese illuminated manuscripts date from between 1469 and 1496 and most of them were produced in Lisbon. Therefore, whatever influence one had over the other with respect to the illuminations must have flowed from Spain to Portugal and from Portugal to Spain, in both directions. The representation of faces in an almost veiled way in the illuminations is also shared with another Portuguese manuscript from the end of the fifteenth century, Bodl. Or 414.

Secondly, some of the micrography in our Bible shows a great deal of similarity with the Bodl. Opp. Add. 4º 26 and Bodl. Opp. Add. 8º 10 manuscripts. This leads us to conclude that they are the work, if not of the same masorete, then of masoretes belonging to the same school. This is not surprising, since the scribe of Bodl. Opp. Add. 4º 26 is Moše ha-Soffer ibn Jacob ha-Sefardi, ibn R. Moše ibn Khalif, the relative (brother?) of the scribe of the Royal Palace Bible, as we pointed out at the beginning. Even if this manuscript was copied, as Narkiss believes, in Seville or Cordoba, it is very close in date (1480), and therefore it is probable that the same people or others belonging to the same circle produced it, copying motifs and designs for the decorations and maintaining the Castilian tradition over a long period of time immediately before the expulsion. Although the Madrid Bible main characteristics respond to the Castilian School, it shares some illumination features with manuscripts produced in southern Spain or Portugal. All three codices can be classified as belonging to the same area of influence and show a noteworthy homogeneity in their decorations. What is clear is that there was interaction among the copyists and that they moved throughout the Peninsula.

Regarding the text of the manuscript and its punctuation we can affirm that it follows, in general terms, the Tiberian tradition of Ben Asher, as is customary in Sephardic codices. Nevertheless, the Masorah is not as exact as it is in other codices copied in the Iberian Peninsula and frequently the simanim quoted in the Masorah magna are mixed up.

Summing up, we can state that the Bible at the Royal Palace in Madrid has some unique features. Its size, micrographic decorations, and binding into 16 volumes make it a singular case among Sephardic Hebrew Bibles from the fifteenth century.

Appendix. Patterns of some micrographies in the manuscript

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1. Genesis, f. 123v

2. Exodus, f. 46v
3. Exodus, f. 160bis v

4. Leviticus, f. 3v
5. Leviticus, f. 4v

6. Leviticus, f. 36r
7. Deuteronomy, f. 1r

8. Ezekiel, f. 4v