

CONFIRMING WHAT IT IS WRITTEN: THE MASORETIC TERM *YAFEH*¹

Abstract

The term *yafeh* ('correct') is used almost exclusively in the Masora Parva of the Cairo Codex of the Prophets. The analysis and study of the seventy five occurrences show that its main role is to confirm what it is written in the text in spite of its peculiarity, but not to explain that peculiarity. Therefore, it is not another Masoretic term to note a specific feature in the text. It seems that the term *yafeh* is directly related to the transmission process rather than to the description of the text. This use could be a reflection on an early stage of the Masoretic practices. Moreover, the scarce or even null use of the term in the other main Tiberian manuscripts and the different treatment they give to the same features all suggest the existence of a different layer among those manuscripts in the transmission of the biblical text.

Keywords

Masora, main Tiberian codices, Textual criticism

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In the Masora Parva (MP) of the Cairo Codex of the Prophets (C) the term *yafeh* (יפה) appears seventy-five times, always in its abbreviated form, 'יפ'. However, the use of this term in the other main Masoretic codices (those attributed or related to the Ben Asher family) is scarce or even null. It appears four times in manuscript Or 4445 (B)², twice in the Aleppo Codex (A)³ and not once in the Leningrad Codex (L).

This term has been translated as ‘correct’,⁴ but its exact role and the feature it notes are still unknown. Normally, the MP note only has the shortened *yafeh* term, without any explanation of the aspect of the text to which it refers. We can infer from the meaning of the term that something happens in the biblical text, but what? Why is it necessary to say that

² אֶל־הַחֲרָטָמִים (Gen 41:24); פִּרְעָה שָׁם (Gen 41:45); יֵלֵךְ (Gen 41:50); בְּיַחְקֶךָ (Lev 10:14). All of them concerns to the vocalization and accentuation signs. Cf. D. Lyons, *The Vocalization, Accentuation and Masora of Codex Or 4445 (Brit. Mus.) and Their Place in the Development of the Tiberian Masora* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation; London 1983), pp. 148, 170; A. Dotan, “Reflections Towards a Critical Edition of Pentateuch Codex Or. 4445”, in E. Fernández Tejero – M.^a T. Ortega Monasterio (eds.), *Estudios Masoréticos (X Congreso de la IOMS). En memoria de Harry M. Orlinsky* (Madrid: Editorial CSIC, 1993), pp. 44-45. The three notes in Genesis seem to be written by a different hand, cf. f. 30v and f. 31v: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_4445.

³ אֶל־הַדָּרָךְ (1 Kings 20:38) and לָכֵם (Jer 14:14). The text of 1 Kings 20:38 in C is: אֶל־הַדָּרָךְ. The MP and MM notes attached to it in C confirm the exceptionality of this case in comparison with the other occurrences of the expression in the manuscript.

⁴ Lyons, *The Vocalization*, p. 148. F. Pérez Castro et alia, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo* (8 vols.; colección Textos y Estudios "Cardenal Cisneros"; CSIC: Madrid, 1979-92).

what it is written in the biblical text is correct? To which feature is the term related? All the occurrences of this term in C are analysed in order to explain its use in the context of this codex. For this study I consulted some photographs of C held by the Masora team at the CSIC,⁵ which are of better quality than the D. S. Loewinger facsimile.⁶

Following the methodology employed to analyse a Masoretic note,⁷ I have consulted the principal Tiberian biblical manuscript masorot (B, A, and L), Sephardic manuscript BH Mss1 (M1), and the major Masoretic lists and treatises⁸ to confirm the information given in the Masoretic notes and to check whether they contain any information similar to the note.

1. ANALYSIS

⁵ The photos were used for the *editio princeps* of the codex (text and Masorahs) made by the first members of the team; cf. F. Pérez Castro et alii, *El Códice de Profetas de El Cairo*.

⁶ D. S. Loewinger (ed.), *Codex Cairensis of the Bible from the Karaite Synagogue at Abbasiya* (Jerusalem, 1971).

⁷ E. Martín-Contreras, “Masora and Masoretic Interpretation”, in Steven L. McKenzie (ed.), *The [Oxford] Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation* (2 vols.; Oxford University Press, 2013), I: pp. 542-550.

⁸ C. D. Ginsburg, *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged*, With an Analytical Table of Contents and Lists of Identified Sources and Parallels by A. Dotan, 4 vols. (New York, 1975); S. Frensdorff, *Ochlah W'ochlah* (Hannover, 1864); F. Díaz Esteban, *Sefer Oklah we Oklah* (Madrid, 1975); A. Dotan, *The Diquduqé hatteamim of Aharon ben Moshee ben Asher*, with a Critical Edition of the Original Text from New Manuscripts (Jerusalem, 1967); B. Ognibeni, *La seconda parte del Sefer Oklah we Oklah* (Madrid/Fribourg, 1995); G. Weil, *Massorah Gedolah iuxta codicem Leningradensem B19a* (Roma, 1971).

- 1 Sam 3:16

One circellus is placed between the words אֶת־שְׁמוֹאֵל. This combination of words has two MP notes attached –one on each side of the column– that read: 'אל. יפ' סביר, "אל" has been suggested; [et] is correct".¹¹

- 2 Sam 23:14

One circellus is placed between the words בֵּית לָחֶם. The MP note only says: 'יפ', "correct".

There is also one MM note that says: ומצב פלשתים אז בית לחם. דדב' בבית לחם. The MM gives the catchwords corresponding to 2 Sam 23:14 and 1 Chron 11:16; the first has בית לחם and the second בבית לחם.

- 2 Sam 23:24

One circellus is placed between the words דָּדוּ בֵּית but the information is referred to בית

אלחנן בן.¹² The MP note only says: 'יפ', "correct". There is also one MM note that says:

לחם. דדו בית לחם. דדב' מבית לחם. The MM gives the catchwords corresponding to 2 Sam 23:24 and

1 Chron 11:26; the first has בית לחם and the second מבית לחם.

The MP note in M1 says: 'למערבאי בין בית אל קרי וכתו. למדנחאי בין בית און כת' בית אל קר', 'in the Western tradition בין בית אל is *qere* and *ketib*; in the Eastern tradition בין בית און is written and בית אל is read'.

¹¹ The MP note on this expression in M1 says: 'ל', 'unique'.

¹² In the BHS' critical apparatus is written: pc Mss מבית cf G^{Mss-TV}.

- 1 Kgs 5:13

There is no circellus in the biblical text. The MP note is placed in the right margin at the level of the second על in the verse. The note says: 'על ועד על ועל ועל בפס' יפ', '[the sequence] על ועד על ועל ועל in the verse [is] correct'.

- 2 Kings 8:18

There is no circellus in the biblical text but, according to the content of the MM note, the lemma must be הִיִּתְהַלֵּוּ לְאִשָּׁה. The MP note says: 'יפ', "correct". The MM note reads: 'דמל' והייתי רוח שקר. היתה לו ולאשה. דדב' הימ' והייתי לרוח שקר. היתה לו אשה. וסימנ' ר'ל'ל'א' The note gives the catchwords corresponding to 1 Kings 22:22, 2 Kings 8:28, 2 Chron 18:21 and 21:6 and one mnemonic *siman* –make up of a key letter from each word- recalling the differences between these similar passages: 'ר = רוח (1 Kgs 22:22), 'ל = לרוח (2 Chron 18:21), 'ל = לאשה (2 Kgs 8:18), 'א = אשה (2 Chron 21:6).

- 2 Kings 21:6

The text is not clear enough to see the circellus. According to the content of the MM note, it is attached to the word לְהַכְעִיס¹³. The MP note says: 'יפ', "correct". The MM note reads: 'מלכ' להכעיסו (2 Chron 33:6), להכעיס דב' ימ' להכעיסו וסימ' חבירו Kings להכעיס (2 Kgs 21:6), Chronicles להכעיסו (2 Chron 33:6) and one similar passage serves as a mnemonic'.

- Jer 8:12

¹³ In the BHS' critical apparatus the following is written: l c mlt Mss GST^{fMss}V סו—.

There is no circellus in the biblical text. According to the position of the MP note and the content of the MM note, the lemma is the word **וְהִכָּלִים**.¹⁴ The MP note says: 'יפ', "correct". The MM note reads: 'הכלים פקדתי וירפא עמי קדמ' דס' והכלם פקדתם וירפו בת עמי תנ' דספ' (Jer 6:15)¹⁵, פקדתי (Jer 6:15), וירפא עמי (Jer 6:14) the first [case] of the book, והכלם (Jer 8:12), פקדתם (Jer 8:12), וירפו בת עמי (Jer 8:11) the second [case] of the book'.

- Jer 17:6

There is a circellus between the words **וְלֹא תִשָּׁב**.¹⁶ The MP note says: 'יפ', "correct". The MM note reads: 'four times' and gives the catchwords corresponding to Deut 28:30; Jer 50:39; Jer 17:6 and Ez 29:11. This note points out the less common form in contradistinction to the six times that the expression is **לֹא תִשָּׁב**, without *waw*.

- Jer 25:18

There are circelli among the words **וְאֶת־מַלְכִיָּה אֶת־שָׂרִיָּה**. The MP note says: 'יפ' ל' וחד ויקח את', 'correct; [this combination of words is] unique and [occurs] once ויקח את שריה מלכה ואת שריה (Ezek 17:12)'.

From these cases it is possible to infer three different features of the biblical text to which *yafeh* is linked:

¹⁴ The MP note to this word in L and M1: 'ל', 'unique'.

¹⁵ The BHS' critical apparatus says: **וְהִכָּלִים** 8,12.

¹⁶ The MP note to the expression in L and M1: 'ד', 'four [times]'.

- 1) There is a difficulty or oddity in the text. This may refer to a syntactic oddity, as in the cases of Jos 8:17 and 1 Sam 3:16, or to an “anomalous” sequence of particles (1 Kgs 5:13);
- 2) The less common form of one combination of words is used (Jer 17:6);
- 3) There is a word expression which, in similar or parallel passage, includes some type of variation; the differences between both passages are indicated in the MM note. The similar passages can be located in the same book (as in Jer 8:12) or in different books (2 Sam 23:14; 23:24; 2 Kgs 8:18; 21:6; Jer 25:18).

1.1.2. *Yafeh* without additional information

In sixty-five cases the term *yafeh* appears alone in the MP note without any additional information or any other Masoretic note. In addition, in twenty-two cases there are no *circelli* in the text, making it even more difficult to know what the note refers to. In those cases, I have used the position of the term *yafeh* to elucidate the lemma.

I have analyzed all the cases trying to identify the feature of the text to which the term *yafeh* is linked. Taking into account the three features identified in the ten cases with more information (see below), I searched for similar passages, exceptions and anomalies of the lemma in the biblical text. Moreover, I searched for complementary information in the Masoretic notes attached to the word or words of the lemma in other verses.¹⁷ All the information gathered have allowed me to give a probable explanation –from a Masoretic point of view- for most of the cases.

I present the cases grouped according to the feature of the text. Those cases which remain unclear are listed under the epigraph “unclassified”. The cases of each group are listed by passage and lemma. If the word or expression has a *circellus* but the information might

¹⁷ I provide all the complementary masoretic information in the footnotes.

also affect some other words in the text, I also give those words in brackets. For the cases with some variation in similar passages, I supply the location of the passage where the variation occurs and how the expression is written there in parentheses.¹⁸ For the cases with a difficulty or oddity in the text and those with the less common form, I supply an explanation what they are.

a) Word expressions which include some type of variation in one similar passage located in the same book

- Jos 8:22: השאיר לו שריד, without circellus (Jos 10:33, השאיר לו שריד).

- Judg 18:11: חגור כלי מלחמה (Judg 18:17, החגור כלי המלחמה).

- Judg 18:17: חגור כלי מלחמה (Judg 18:11, החגור כלי המלחמה).

- 1 Sam 10:19: ותאמרו לי לא²⁰ (1 Sam 12:12, ותאמרו [לו]¹⁹).

¹⁸ The search has shown that each case matches up with one verse only, i. e., there is no other verse in the whole Bible with which it can be connected attending to the number of elements in common and the existence of some variation. The cases of Judges 18:11 and 18:17 (cf. 1.1.2. a.) are an exceptional example of this unique reciprocity. The expression חגור כלי מלחמה in Judges 18:11 is slightly different in Judges 18:17 where החגור כלי המלחמה is written. The expression in both passages has a *yafeh* note that makes possible to establish the relationship between them.

¹⁹ The BHS' critical apparatus says: pc Mss + לא cf T, mlt Mss לא cf GL115SV, pc Mss לי לא, 2 Mss לי.

- 1 Kings 7:12: טורים גזית (1 Kgs 6:36, גזית²¹).
- 1 Kings 7:37: (השני מדה אחת וקצב, 1 Kgs 6:25) אֶלֶּד מְדָה אַחַת קָצָב.
- 1 Kings 14:11: (והמת לו²² בשדה, 1 Kgs 16:4) וְהַמַּת לֹוּ בַשָּׂדֶה.
- 2 Kings 17:5: [הארץ, 2 Kgs 15:19) אֲשׁוּר עַל הָאָרֶץ, אֲשׁוּר בְּכָל [הארץ].
- 2 Kings 17:6: אֲשׁוּרָה וַיֵּשֶׁב אוֹתָם²³ בַּחֲלָה, without circellus (2 Kgs 18:11, אשורה וינחם, בחלח).
- Jer 13:7: כַּאֲזוּר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִצְלַח, without circellus (Jer 13:10, האזור לא יצלח לכול).
- Jer 17:4: (איביד בארץ לא, Jer 15:14) אֵיבִיד בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא.
- Jer 26:19: (יהוה אלהיכם וינחם²⁴, Jer 26:13) וְהָוָה וַיִּנְחָם, without circellus.
- Jer 27:16: [כי שקר הם נביאים לכם, Jer 27:14) [כִּי שֶׁקֶר] הֵמָּה [נְבִיאִים לָכֶם].
- Jer 29:14: [הדחתי אתם שם, Jer 23:3) הַדְּחִיתִי אֶתְכֶם] שָׁם.

²⁰ There is a MP note on לא לי in C: 'unique'. The MP note in L is on לא לי: תאמרו לי לא לי.

'unique'.

²¹ The MP note in C says that טורי appears three times. The references are given in the MP note: Ex 39:10; 1 Kings 7:2 and 6:36.

²² There is a MP note on והמת לו in C: 'unique'.

²³ It is written defective in L.

²⁴ The MP note in C says: 'לי, unique'.

- Ezek 6:5: גְּלוּלֵיהֶם [לפְּנֵי] (Ezek 6:4, גְּלוּלֵיכֶם).
- Ezek 14:18: וְשִׁלְשֵׁת הָאֲנָשִׁים, without circellus (Ezek 14:16, שלשת האנשים).
- Ezek 18:15: [יִשְׂרָאֵל] אֶת [אֲשֶׁת] (Ezek 18:6, ואת אשת).
- Ezek 21:27: לְשֹׁפֵךְ סִלְלָה לְבָנוֹת, without circellus (Ezek 17:17, בשפך סללה ובבנות).
- Ezek 28:25: נִפְצוּ בָּם (Ezek 34:12, נפצו שם).
- Hos 1:3: [בֵּן] וְתַהֲרַר וְתִלְדֶּ-לוֹ (Hos 1:8, ותהר ותלד בן).
- Hos 13:10: מִלֶּךְ וְשָׂרִים, without circellus (Hos 8:10, ²⁵מלך שרים).

b) Word expressions which include some type of variation in similar passages located in other books

- 1 Kings 8:44: אֶל-יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ הָעִיר, without circellus (2 Chron 6:34, ²⁶אליך דרך העיר).
- 2 Kings 14:28: לַיהוּדָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל²⁷ (2 Chron 16:11, ²⁸ליהודה וישראל).
- 2 Kings 25:23: גְּדַלְיָהוּ הַמְצַפֵּה, without circellus (Jer 40:8, ²⁹גדליה המצפתה).

²⁵ There is a MP note on מִלֶּךְ שָׂרִים in C: 'unique'.

²⁶ There is a MP note on דֶּרֶךְ הָעִיר הַזֹּאת in L: 'unique'.

²⁷ The MP note in A and L says: 'unique'. The consonantal text in M1 is לַיהוּדָה וישראל.

²⁸ The MP note in A and L says: 'unique'.

- Jer 14:10: עֹנָם וַיִּפְקֹד (Os 9:9, עונם יפקוד).
- Jer 26:9: וַיִּקְהַל כָּל־הָעָם אֶל, without circellus (Ex 32:1, ויקהל³⁰ העם על).
- Jer 52:14: כַּשְׂדִּים אֲשֶׁר רַב, without circellus (2 Kgs 25:10, כשדים אשר רב).
- Ezek 26:7, בַּסּוּסִים וּבַרְכָב, (Is 66:20, ³¹בסוסים וברכב).

c) Difficulty or oddity in the text

- 1 Sam 12:13, ³²אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר [אֲשֶׁר]: repetition of אשר (cf. Judg 10:14, 1 Sam 8:18 and Is 1:29, אשר בחרתם).
- 1 Sam 14:44, [יְעֲשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים] וְיָכֵחַ: it lacks an indirect object³³ (cf. 1 Sam 25:22 and 2 Sam 3:9, יעשה אלהים ל... וכה).

²⁹ There is a MP note in C, A and L: 'ה' 'five'. The five occurrences are given in the MM note in A. The MM note in L states the differences between 2 Kings 25:23 and Jer 40:8: מלכים גדליהו המצפה [...] בן נתניהו ויוחנן בן קרח ושריה בן תנחמת הנטפתי ויאזניהו. דירמיה גדליה המצפתה [...] בן נתניה ויוחנן בני קרח ושריה בן תנחמת ובני עופי הנטופתי ויגניהו.

³⁰ The MP note in A and L on ויקהל says 'two times' and the other verse is given in L, Jer 26:9.

³¹ There is a MP note in C: ל' 'unique'.

³² The BHS' critical apparatus says: mlt Mss וא' cf G⁻OMssST^{MssV}.

- 2 Sam 2:20, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנֹכִי (without circellus): there are two possible explanations: it is the only time that אֲנֹכִי appears alone as a nominal phrase without modifiers; and, it is one of the eight instances in which the accent is on the *nun* of *anoki*.³⁴

- 2 Sam 3:14, אֶת־אֶתְשֵׁתִי אֶת (without circellus): on the sequence אֶת ... אֶת and one word between them.³⁵

- 2 Kings 17:12, וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ הַגִּלְלִים: without an accusative case mark between the verb and the direct object (cf. 2 Kings 21:21).

- Is 29:10, אֶת, the second in the verse: the “odd” sequence in the verse is ... אֶת ... אֶת וְאֶת.³⁶

³³ The BHS' critical apparatus says: “a lot of mss לִי”; and the translation in NAS is: “May God do this to me”.

³⁴ Cf. MM note to Jud 17:9 and 1 Sam 30:13 in C; according to the list compiled by Ginsburg, there are just seven cases; cf. Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. IV, list. 966, p. 116.

³⁵ The MP note to this passage in L says: “19 verses in the Prophets [have] אֶת ... אֶת and one word between them”.

³⁶ The MP note to Gen 11:26 in L says: “יב' פסוק אֶת אֶת וְאֶת, '[one of the] 12 verses in which the combination אֶת ... אֶת ... אֶת [occurs]”. The MM adds: “ומלה חדה ביניהון, ‘and one word among them’ and verse Is 29:10 is listed.

- Is 45:5, וַאֲיִן עוֹד זִוְלָתִי אֲיִן (without circellus): וַאֲיִן with the prefix *waw* occurs first and then אֲיִן without a prefix.³⁷

- Is 45:14: [וְאֶלֶּיךָ] יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ אֶלֶּיךָ: the sequence וְאֶלֶּיךָ ... אֶלֶּיךָ and one word between them.

- Is 49:21, אֵיפָה אֵלֶּה אֵיפָה: the spelling of the interrogative אֵיפָה.³⁸

- Is 64:3, שְׂמָעוּ לֹא: on the sequence לֹא ... לֹא and one word between them.³⁹

- Jer 9:22, אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל ... (the last in the verse): the sequence in the verse is אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל ...
וְאֵל יִתְהַלֵּל⁴⁰ ... אֵל יִתְהַלֵּל.

³⁷ The MP note to this verse in L and A say: 'ו' פסוק' אית בהון וַאֲיִן אֲיִן, '[one of the] 6 verses in which the combination אֲיִן ... וַאֲיִן [occurs]'. The references are given in the MM note to this verse in M1. Cf. Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. IV, list 390, p. 55.

³⁸ The MP note to אֵיפָה in 2 Sam 9:4 in L, A and M1 says: 'י' כתי' הי, 'ten [times] written with *heh*'. The MM note in L gives the following references: Gen 37:16; Judg 8:18; 1 Sam 19:22; 2 Sam 9:4; Jer 3:2; Is 49:21; Jer 36:19; Ruth 2:19; Job 4:7; 38:4. According to Ginsburg, to understand this information it is necessary to remark that later Masoretes grouped together אֵיפָה the interrogative and אַפּוּ the adverb with its defective spelling אַפּוּ; cf. Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. IV, list 417, p. 57.

³⁹ The MP note to Is 16:10 in L says: 'ד' פסוק' אית בהון לֹא לֹא ומלה חדה בניה: '[one of the] 4 verses which has the combination לֹא ... לֹא and one word among them'. All the references are given in the MM note and verse Is 64:3 is one of them.

- Jer 9:23, מְשַׁפֵּט מְקַדֵּם: two substantives together without the copulative *waw*.⁴¹
 - Jer 32:5, לֹא תִצְלַיְחוּ: the word תִצְלַיְחוּ is written with a *raphe* on the letter *taf* in the biblical text in C.⁴²
 - Nah 3:7 (twice), יָנוּד לָהּ and מְנַחֲמִים לָךְ⁴³: the change of the pronominal suffixes, 3rd person of singular and 2nd person of singular, when both refer to Nineveh.
 - Sof 2:15, יִשְׂרָק יִגִיעַ: two verbs together without a copulative *waw*.⁴⁴
 - Zac 14:8, יִהְיֶה: according to Ginsburg this is one of the two cases where יִהְיֶה is misleading.⁴⁵ A plural reading, יִהְיוּ, would be expected.
- d) Less common form of one word or combination of words
- Jos 7:4, אֲלֵפִים [בְּשִׁלְשֵׁת]: this expression appears three times⁴⁶ in contradistinction to the most common expression שִׁלְשֵׁת אֲלֵפִים.

⁴⁰ The MP note in C, A, L says: 'ל, 'unique'.

⁴¹ The MP note in A says: 'ל, '[this combination is] unique'.

⁴² This word is written without *raphe* in A and L. In M1, the word is written with *raphe* in the biblical text and there is a MP note that says: 'ל, 'unique'.

⁴³ The BHS' critical apparatus says: G αὐτῆ, | לָהּ.

⁴⁴ The MP note to this expression in M1 says: 'ל, 'unique'.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. I, list 159, p. 308.

- Jos 10:39, ⁴⁷ואת כל הנפש את-כל-נפש: instead of the more numerous **ואת כל הנפש**.

- 1 Sam 9:20, תשם: appears written this way only here out of the whole Bible. The rest of the times it is written **ותשם**.

- 1Kgs 7:8, במעשה הזה היה: the word **במעשה** appears twelve times in the Bible but this is the only case with *patah* under the *heh*.

- 1 Kgs 18:12, מנערי: The word is written defective of *waw* in contradistinction with the most common form written plene (cf. Job 31:18; Ps 71:5; 71:17; 129:1; 129:2; Ez 4:14; Zech 13:5).⁴⁸

- 2 Kings 21:19, ושתים שנים (without circellus): except for this case, the expression in 2 Kings is **ושתיים שנה**.

- Is 37:34, ואל-העיר: One of the cases of **אל העיר** or **ואל העיר** with **בוא**.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ The MP note to this expression in L says: 'ג, 'three [times]'

⁴⁷ The MP note to this expression in L and A says: 'ל, 'unique'.

⁴⁸ The MP note to 1 Kings 18:12 in L and A says: 'ג חס' "Three [times written] defective"; the references are given in the MM note in A: 1 Sam 12:2, 1 Kings 18:12 and Jer 3:4. The BHS' critical apparatus says: "pc Mss GSV יו—".

⁴⁹ There is a MP note to this expression in 2 Kings 19:33 (a similar passage) in C that says: 'ט 'nine [times]'

- Jer 16:15, הדיקם שמה: this combination, verb נדח and similar forms in *hiphil* plus שמה occur just three times in the Bible.⁵⁰ In the other cases שם is written instead of שמה.

- Jer 24:9, ולמשל לשנינה: this combination appears only once in the Bible, but in another three instances the combination is לשנינה.⁵¹

- Ezek 16:58, נאם יהוה: in Ezekiel the expression is always נאם אדני יהוה with four exceptions where it is written נאם יהוה and this is one of the cases.⁵²

- Ezek 21:14, כה אמר אדני (without circellus): this is the only case in Ezekiel where the word יהוה is missing in the expression.⁵³ In the other cases in Ezekiel the expression is כה אמר אדני יהוה and once כה אמר יהוה.

⁵⁰ The MP note to this combination in A and L says: 'ג, 'three [times]'. The references are given in the MM note in L and M1: Deut 30:1, the first case of Jer 16:15 and the second case of Jer 46:28'.

⁵¹ Cf. MP note to 1 Kings 9:7 in C and L.

⁵² Cf. MP and MM notes to Jer 2:22 in L.

⁵³ The BHS' critical apparatus says: mlt Mss Edd + יהוה cf ST^fV; ׀ יהוה cf G*. The word is written in the biblical text in M1 but it have some marks upon and down that could mean delete it.

- Ezek 22:16, וַיִּדְעַתָּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה (without circellus): this is one of the seven instances where the preterit second person singular with the prefix *waw* is pointed וַיִּדְעַתָּ, i.e. as feminine.⁵⁴ In thirteen other instances it is pointed as masculine.

- Ezek 28:26, אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם⁵⁵ (without circellus): this is one of the eight instances with אלהיהם in the expression instead of the more numerous אלהיכם.⁵⁶

- Hag 2:8, נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (without circellus): instead of the most common יהוה נאום.⁵⁷

e) Unclassified

- Is 8:8, וַחֲלֹף בִּיהוּדָה,

- Is 64:2, מִפְּנֵי הָרִים נָזְלוּ (without circellus).

- Jer 51:62, לַהֲכַרְיָתוֹ לְבִלְתִּי.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The MP note to this word in A says: 'ז', 'seven'. Cf. MP and MM to Isa 49:23 in L; Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. IV, list 116, p. 467.

⁵⁵ אלהיכם is written in the biblical text in M1.

⁵⁶ The MP note to this verse in A and L says: 'ח', 'eight'. Cf. Ginsburg, *The Massorah*, vol. IV, list 950, p. 114.

⁵⁷ The MP note to this expression in Hag 2:4 in L says: 'כ"ו', 'twenty-six [times]'.

⁵⁸ There is a MP note in A and L on להכריתו that says: 'ל', 'unique'.

- Hos 11:9, אֲפִי לִי.

- Joel 2:8, יִפְּלוּ לִי.

- Zech 9:10, מִיָּם עַד-יָם.

2. Conclusions

The *yafeh* note usually refers to combination of words and sequence of particles, rarely to one word alone.

The *yafeh* note is linked to the following features in the biblical text: 1) The existence of one similar passage, in the same book or a different one, with some variation in a combination of words (an extra word, a lacking word, with or without *waw*, changes of prepositions, pronominal suffixes, etc.); 2) the existence of a difficulty or oddity, usually a syntactic one (substantives and verbs together without sentence connectors; lack of accusative case between the verb and the direct object; lack of indirect object; anomalous sequence of particles in one enumeration, repetition of one particle, etc.); and 3) the use of the less common form of a combination of words.

The cases of variations in similar passages located in the same book represent a novelty among the phenomena recorded by the Masora.⁵⁹ This novelty is confirmed by the comparison with other manuscripts. Except for one case (2 Kings 14:28), none of the cases of this group are attested by the Masora of the other consulted manuscripts.

⁵⁹ The commonest is to find notes where parallels passages in different books occur, cf. Yeivin, *Introduction*, 73.

The features to which the *yafeh* note is linked might suggest that the texts are erroneous and therefore, that someone may have been tempted to change the text to the best or correct form. The high probability that the text could be changed is attested by the cases in which texts have been changed in other manuscripts such as, for example, the cases which in M1 present the biblical text according to the variation in the similar passage (2 Kings 14:28) or according to the most common form of one combination of words (Ezek 21:14; 28:26). This is also supported by the cases in which text is written in the “correct” form in the Versions (2 Kings 21:6; 1 Sam 12:13; 1 Sam 14:44) and those cases in which text is proposed to change in the BHS’ critical apparatus (Nah 3:7; Ezek 21:24). However, in all the cases in C the apparent erroneous text is considered correct by the *yafeh* note, which impedes any changes.

The main role of *yafeh* in C is to confirm what it is written in the text as correct in spite of its peculiarity, but not to explain that peculiarity. The other Masoretic notes appearing beside *yafeh* or the MM notes make the oddity of the text explicit. Therefore, *yafeh* is not another Masoretic term to note a specific feature in the text.⁶⁰ This affirmation is supported by the comparison between the cases of variation in similar passages with a *yafeh* note and other cases in C with the same feature in the text but a different kind of Masoretic note.⁶¹ While the *yafeh* note is confirming what is written in the text, the other Masoretic notes usually give the spelling of the combination with the number of occurrences of that particular spelling, or the mnemonic *siman* recalling the differences between similar

⁶⁰ The masoretic technical terms were developed by the Masoretes for recording the various features of the text; cf. Yeivin, *Introduction*, p. 68.

⁶¹ For instance, the MP and MM notes to וְאֶת־הַכֹּל in 1 Kings 14:26; MP and MM note וְגַם to 2 Kings 22:19; MP and MM notes to מִבְּחַר Is 37:24; MM note to וְלִכְבָּשִׁים Ezek 46:11.

passages. It is also supported by the comparison with the Masora of the other manuscripts. Masoretic notes on most of the cases that have a difficulty or oddity in the text and some of the cases with less common forms are found in those manuscripts but they contain quite different information: in most of the cases, the specific problem is mentioned and the other occurrences enumerated and sometimes listed; the rest has a *let* note.

In the light of the results of the analysis, it seems that the term *yafeh* is directly related to the transmission process rather than to the description of the text. This function is shared with other Masoretic symbol profusely found in this manuscript: the marginal *nun*.⁶² Both terms and their use in C could be a reflection on an early stage of the Masoretic practices, closer to the primary purpose of the Masora, i.e., the precise preservation of the holy text.

Moreover, the high number of *yafeh* notes in C in contradistinction to the scarce or even null use of *yafeh* in Or 4445, A and L together with the lack of Masoretic notes in A and L on the cases of variations in parallel passages, the differences found with the Masoretic information in A and L on the cases of syntactic difficulty or oddity, and the use of the less common form of a combination of words all suggest the existence of a different layer among those manuscripts in the transmission of the biblical text. What was problematic when the text and the Masora of C were written is no longer problematic.⁶³ At the time A and L were written it was not necessary to say anything about those words or to confirm them.

⁶² Cf. E. Martín-Contreras, “The Marginal *Nun* in the Masorah of the Cairo Codex of Prophets: Use and Function,” *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015) 81-90.

⁶³ The date of the codex is under discussion. The arguments against the ancient dating are not conclusive. Those based on the vocalization, accentuation and masorah of the manuscript (M. Cohen, “Has the Cairo Codex of the Prophets indeed been written by Moshe b. Asher?” (hb), *Alei Sefer* 10 [1982] 5-12; M. Glatzer, “The Aleppo Codex: Codicological and Paelographical

Aspects” (hb), *Sefunot N. S.* 4 [14] [1989] 250-259) have been refused by A. Dotan (cf. “The Cairo Codex of Prophets and its Spanish Edition,” *Sefarad* 46 [1986] 162-168; “Reflections Towards,” p. 41, n. 11]). Those on the authenticity of the colophon which attests to the antiquity of the codex (895 AD) follow the codicological description made by Beit Aire (M. Beit-Arié et al., *Codices Hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes* [Monumenta palaeographica medii aevi. Series Hebraica; Paris/Jerusalem: Brepols, 1997] 25-29), who doesn’t mentioned the existence of another notes that cannot be considered valid colophons. However, in a previous and more exhaustive codological description and study of the codex, L. Avrin defends the ancient date of the manuscript (cf. *The Illumination in the Moshe Ben-Asher codex of 895 C. E.* [unpublished dissertation, Michigan 1974], chapters II and IV). The only remaining argument is that of the radio carbon dating made on a fragment from the codex (without specifying to which folio belonged to) several years after its “disappearance”, cf. Beit-Arié et al., *Codices Hebraicis*, p. 28. However, due of the limitations of the method the result is not conclusive either; cf. I. U. Olsson, “Radiocarbon Dating History: Early Days, Questions and Problems Met,” *Radiocarbon* 51:1 (2009) 1-43: “one isolated sample or laboratory dating is of little value”.