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# A historical analysis of the differences between Ashkenazic scribal styles, namely, the Arizal and the Beth Yosef

Mark Farnadi-Jerusálmí

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**THÈSE DE DOCTORAT**  
**DE L'UNIVERSITÉ PSL**

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Dans le cadre d'une cotutelle avec Országos Rabbiképző – Zsidó Egyetem

**Une analyse historique des différences entre les styles  
scribaux ashkénazes, à savoir l'Arizal et le Beth Yosef**

A historical analysis of the differences between Ashkenazic  
scribal styles, namely, the Arizal and the Beth Yosef

Soutenue par

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## La question scientifique

Dans la période récente, les objets religieux juifs tels que les rouleaux de la Torah, les Tefillin et les mezuzot sont écrits par des scribes qualifiés dans trois versions principales de l'écriture hébraïque carrée : l'écriture sépharade (figure 1), utilisée par les communautés sépharades et juives orientales, les écritures Beth Yosef (figure 2), et les écritures Arizal (figure 3,) utilisées par les communautés ashkénazes.

Le but principal de cette thèse sera une étude détaillée des deux écritures ashkénazes, avec seulement une mention tangentielle de l'écriture sépharade. J'étudierai les lettres de l'alphabet hébreu qui distinguent l'écriture de Beth Yosef de celle de l'Arizal. Je me concentrerai sur le développement de certaines caractéristiques paléographiques, sur des formes de lettres spécifiques et leurs composants, et je suivrai leur évolution à travers différentes périodes historiques.

Ces développements des éléments pertinents seront étudiés à la fois par l'analyse paléographique des manuscrits et par l'étude des discussions des lettres dans la littérature rabbinique. Les développements des manuscrits seront considérés dans un contexte plus large, celui de la diffusion des livres, ainsi que celui qui a à la base des changements géographiques et démographiques dans les communautés ashkénazes. En effet, les événements historiques ont certainement facilité l'évolution de l'écriture et l'utilisation uniforme et généralisée de certaines caractéristiques graphiques particulières. L'un des aspects de mon travail consistera à essayer de démontrer que certaines caractéristiques des écritures de Beth Yosef et d'Arizal ont leurs origines bien avant l'époque de ces autorités du XVIe siècle, et remontent même à la période médiévale.



FIGURE1 : L'ÉCRITURE SÉPHARADE

FIGURE2 BETH YOSEPH

FIGURE3 : L'ÉCRITURE ARIZAL

Les deux styles d'écriture ashkénazes sont nommés respectivement en l'honneur de deux savants qui ont vécu à la même époque dans la ville de Safed en Galilée, à l'époque une province ottomane de Syrie.

L'écriture Beth Yosef est nommée d'après l'œuvre monumentale de Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488 -1575), le Beth Yosef, dans laquelle il consacre une attention particulière aux formes des lettres de l'alphabet hébreu. L'écriture du Arizal, qui diffère de la précédente par la forme de plusieurs lettres, est basée sur les enseignements du rabbin Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534 -1572), communément appelé le "Ari" (signifiant "lion"), ou le "Arizal," ("le Ari de la mémoire bénie"). Le Ari a dirigé un groupe d'érudits dans l'étude mystique de la Kabbale.

Alors que l'écriture Beth Yosef est généralement utilisée aujourd'hui dans les rouleaux de la Torah dans les communautés juives ashkénazes, l'écriture Arizal est particulièrement caractéristique des communautés hassidiques et des communautés composées des descendants des générations précédentes de groupes hassidiques.

Alors que Yosef Caro et Isaac Luria étaient tous deux des sages sépharades, il est intéressant de noter qu'ils ont donné leur nom à ces deux types d'écriture ashkénaze. Cela peut s'expliquer par les éléments suivants : Le rabbin Yosef Caro, auteur de Beth Yosef et du site Shulḥan Aruch; a été le plus important codificateur de la loi juive dans la dernière moitié du millénaire. Dans son ouvrage, le Beth Yosef cite un ouvrage ashkénaze connu sous le nom de Baruch She'amar, qui décrit en ces termes les formes de toutes les lettres de l'alphabet hébreu:



ודע, שמצאתי קונדרים לחכם אחרון שמו ה"ר יצחק ברוך שאמר, מדבר בדרך ארוכה בצורת האותיות, וייטבו דבריו בעיני ולכן ראיתי להעתיקו פה.<sup>1</sup>

Et sachez que j'ai trouvé un pamphlet d'un sage *aḥaron*,<sup>2</sup> nommé notre maître Rabbin Yitzḥak Baruch che-Amar, (qui) parle longuement de la forme des lettres, et ses mots ont trouvé grâce à mes yeux et j'ai donc décidé de le copier ici.

Apparemment, il l'a copié dans son travail parce qu'il n'y avait pas de meilleur résumé de ce genre dans la littérature ashkénaze ou séfarade. On peut également comprendre qu'il n'ait pas considéré les différences relativement mineures entre les écritures ashkénazes et séfarades comme suffisamment importantes, sinon il aurait très probablement décrit l'écriture séfarade avec ses propres mots au lieu de citer une source ashkénaze. Bien que dérivé d'Ashkénaze et décrit pour la première fois par un auteur ashkénaze, cette écriture a néanmoins été étiquetée "Beth Yosef" d'après l'oeuvre la plus connue de Rabbi Caro et non d'après la source ashkénaze originale, le "Baruch She'amar".

Le deuxième grand style d'écriture ashkénaze est nommé Arizal en l'honneur du rabbin Isaac Luria Ashkenazi. Selon les enseignements de Rabbi Luria, transmis dans les œuvres de ses étudiants, toutes les lettres peuvent (et doivent) être écrites selon les coutumes locales acceptées, à l'exception d'un petit nombre de lettres, qui doivent être formées ("dessinées") sur la base des enseignements kabbalistiques d'Arizal :

ולא ישנה ממנהגו אם אפשר לו כי שרש יש לכל המנהגים האלה למעלה: כי ולכל המנהגים אותיות אלה אשר נצייר עתה כך ציורם בתפילין לכלם ואין לשנות כיצד האלפין יהיו ...

Une personne ne doit pas s'écarter de sa coutume si possible, car il y a une source pour toutes ces coutumes dans le ciel. Les lettres que nous allons maintenant dessiner,

---

<sup>1</sup> Beth Yosef commentaire sur Tur Orach Ḥayim, Chapitre 36

<sup>2</sup> Littéralement le "dernier," c'est-à-dire celui de la ou des dernières générations. Dans une terminologie plus récente (et surtout moderne), un Aḥaron signifie un sage juif vivant à peu près du XVIe siècle à nos jours, de sorte que le ou les auteurs du Baruch She'amar seraient considérés comme des Rishon, ce qui signifie littéralement le premier.

telles seront leur forme dans le Tefillin, et elles ne doivent pas être modifiées : l'Aleph ...<sup>3</sup>

En conséquence, l'écriture ashkénaze, dans laquelle ces lettres spécifiques sont écrites sur la base de ces enseignements du Arizal, porte son nom bien que la majorité des lettres restantes aient la même forme que dans le style de Beth Yosef. Les formes des lettres autorisées par le Arizal, basées sur les enseignements kabbalistiques, étaient également conformes à la pratique acceptée dans la communauté séfearde dans l'ensemble de l'alphabet. Ainsi, les trois styles d'écriture hébraïque ont été divisés.

Le sujet principal de cette thèse est d'étudier les origines et le développement de ces deux types d'écriture. Aucune recherche antérieure n'a été effectuée afin d'examiner le développement historique des lettres hébraïques dans les rouleaux juifs post-médiévaux, et en particulier leur division en deux branches principales en Ashkénaze, y compris, les décisions religieuses qui ont eu un impact sur leur développement ainsi qu'une analyse historique. À ce jour, le sujet n'a pas encore été abordé en détail, compte tenu des aspects paléographiques et halakhiques importants de l'écriture hébraïque. Afin de comprendre l'origine et l'histoire de ces deux écritures contemporaines, le champ de recherche proposé s'étendra jusqu'au XIIIe siècle.

## L'hypothèse

L'hypothèse de travail de ma thèse est que ces deux premiers scénarios modernes dérivent de modèles et de règles ashkénazes antérieurs concernant les pratiques sribales. Afin de plaider en faveur de l'origine médiévale des écritures de Beth Yosef et d'Arizal, je me concentrerai sur certains éléments graphiques spécifiques et suivrai leur évolution. J'utilise la notion de "composants" en suivant l'approche de la littérature halakhique sur l'écriture et les scribes, qui décrivent la forme de nombreuses lettres hébraïques composées d'autres lettres plus simples. A l'époque post-médiévale, cette distinction des composantes des lettres correspond à la façon dont les lettres sont tracées



FIGURE 4. ERFURT  
6 (MS. OR. FOL. 1215)

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<sup>3</sup> Ricchi, *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, 67

(rejoignant ainsi la notion paléographique de ductus). Pour donner un exemple, la lettre tav est tracée comme une combinaison ressemblant à un resh suivi d'une nonne. Les éléments de la lettre sur lesquels je me concentrerai dans mon travail sont les suivants :

1. La lettre *zayin* (ou *vav*, dans l'écriture de Beth Yosef) telle qu'elle apparaît à gauche des lettres *hète*, *tète*, *ayin*, *tsadé*, *tsadé* final et *chine*.

2. La partie de base gauche de la lettre Aleph

3. Le *yod* incorporé dans la lettre *tsadé*

J'accorderai une attention particulière à l'analyse approfondie de la forme des lettres *zayin* et *tsadé*.

Du point de vue de ses composants plus petits, la lettre *tsadé* (figure 4) a une forme similaire à la combinaison des lettres *noun* et *yod* (figure 5).



FIG 5, LES LETTRES YOD ET NOUN<sup>4</sup>

la Dans la description de cette lettre, l'élément graphique désigné dans la littérature religieuse comme le *yod* "inversé" (figure 6) des *tsadé* sera particulièrement important dans ma thèse. Ce terme "*yod* de *tsadé*" ne signifie pas que ces éléments



FIG.6 YOD "INVERSÉE"

graphiques ressemblent entièrement aux lettres qui leur ont donné leur nom. Dans la figure 7, j'ai reproduit les paires de lettres aleph, *vav*, *hète*, *tète*, *ayin*, *tsadé*, *tsadé* final et *chine*. Dans chaque paire, la lettre de gauche représente l'écriture de Beth Yosef, et la lettre de droite celle d'Arizal. Dans le cas de *tsadé*, la *tsadé* de Beit Yosef

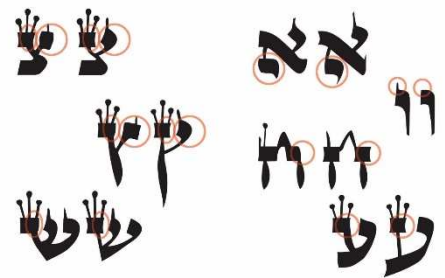


FIG. 7

<sup>4</sup>Tel que connu dans l'art moderne ashkénaze, basé sur les lettres du scribe Shel Bassel, et sur un Tephillin du 19e siècle.

contient une "yod standardisée," où la connexion à la section des "noun du tsadé" se fait par le côté gauche de l' yod. Dans l'écriture Arizal, on trouve une tsadé avec une yod "inversée," c'est-à-dire qu'elle est connectée à la " noun de tsadé " par son côté droit... On pense souvent que la yod "inversée" de tsadé est exclusivement caractéristique de l'écriture séfarade. Dans mes recherches, en reexaminant les anciens manuscrits ashkénazes, il peut être prouvé que de telles formes de la tsadé avec son yod attachée à droite se trouvaient également dans l'ancienne tradition ashkénaze. En conséquence de ces découvertes, je suggérerai que cette yod inversée ne soit pas issue, comme beaucoup le croient, de la tradition kabbalistique identifiée au Arizal, ou du mouvement H̄assidique qui s'est répandu au 18e siècle, mais bien plus tôt. D'autres exemples, comme le montre la figure 7, qui distinguent le script du Arizal de celui du Beth Yosef, sont la partie gauche de *chine*, de *tète* et de *l'ayin* en forme de *vav*, le côté gauche saillant du pied gauche de l'Aleph ainsi que la partie droite en forme de *vav* de la lettre *het*.

### **La méthode utilisée pour cette recherche**

Afin d'étudier en profondeur l'évolution de ces caractéristiques spécifiques des lettres et le contexte de leur développement, je vais d'abord examiner l'écriture carrée historique telle qu'elle est écrite dans un certain nombre de manuscrits ashkénazes du début du Moyen Âge. Cependant, toutes les écritures carrées ne répondent pas à cet objectif, car les règles halakhiques n'ont pas été suivies à la lettre dans tous les manuscrits. En effet, il existe une attitude différente en ce qui concerne le respect des règles sribales strictes dans les rouleaux sacrés de la Torah utilisés dans la liturgie et l'écriture carrée des codices tels que maḥzorim (livres de prières des festivals). Je me concentrerai sur les premiers rouleaux de la Torah en tant que représentants d'un sous-groupe spécifique de l'écriture carrée. En effet, l'écriture utilisée dans les rouleaux de la Torah est, par contraste, idéale, car, en raison du rôle rituel des rouleaux, les règles pertinentes étaient plus strictement respectées. Du point de vue de la méthodologie de recherche, cependant, un tel examen est également problématique, car les rouleaux de la Torah ne sont généralement pas datés explicitement, sauf dans des cas individuels où l'on trouve une inscription sur le site *atsei hayim* (les poteaux en bois auxquels le parchemin du rouleau de la Torah est attaché) et sont souvent difficiles à placer dans un contexte chronologique et historique spécifique.

Pour contourner ce problème, j'ai décidé de me concentrer sur quatre rouleaux médiévaux de la Torah provenant d'Erfurt,<sup>5</sup> en Allemagne, car leur histoire ultérieure fournit au moins un terminus ad quem fiable. La communauté juive d'Erfurt a été pillée en 1349 à la suite de la peste connue sous le nom de "peste noire". En mars 1349, plus de 100 juifs ont été assassinés par la population, les juifs qui ont survécu ont été expulsés<sup>6</sup> et les parchemins ont été confisqués par les autorités chrétiennes à l'époque et donc aucun changement n'a été fait par la suite.

En 1362, le Conseil [d'Erfurt] vendit un certain nombre de livres hébraïques pour 34 marks. Ces livres se trouvaient dans un coin du bâtiment du Conseil.<sup>7</sup>

Ces parchemins sont maintenant conservés à la Bibliothèque d'État de Berlin.<sup>8</sup>

Les parchemins d'Erfurt sont d'une grande importance pour la recherche car aucune mise à jour, correction ou modification n'a été apportée aux espaces entre les sections ou aux formes et tailles des lettres depuis que les parchemins sont passés entre des mains non juives en 1349. Cela permet une rare fenêtre sur les traditions de cette période.

Pour l'analyse paléographique, j'utiliserai une méthodologie développée par le Dr Edna Engel, qui est décrite dans son article "The Analysis of the Letter."<sup>9</sup>

“La méthode met l'accent sur la valeur des plus petits éléments de la lettre unique, visant à prouver que ces changements morphologiques peuvent être exprimés au mieux en termes de modification des parties individuelles de la lettre plutôt que de la lettre dans son ensemble.

L'analyse des différentes parties de la lettre, leur représentation graphique et leur

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<sup>5</sup> Erfurt Collection: [https://juedisches-leben.erfurt.de/jl/en/middle-ages/hebrew\\_manuscripts/research/index.html](https://juedisches-leben.erfurt.de/jl/en/middle-ages/hebrew_manuscripts/research/index.html) (accessed 14th March 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Avneri, Zvi and Rohrbacher, Stefan: Erfurt. In: Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica VI*. Detroit: Gale, 2007, 478

<sup>7</sup> Hartung, Bernhard: *Die Häuser-Chronik der Stadt Erfurt: geschöpft aus den Archiven und der Magistratsbibliothek, Acten und sonstigen authentischen Quellen*. Erfurt : Hennings u. Hopf, 1861. 220  
<https://haab-digital.klassik-stiftung.de/viewer/image/1154979504/149/> (consulté le 21 juillet 2020)

<sup>8</sup> Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. Or. fol. 1215-1218

<sup>9</sup> Edna Engel, "The Analysis of the Letter – a New Palaeographical Method" in: Rück, Peter (ed.) *Methoden der Schriftbeschreibung, Historische Hilfswissenschaften*, 43-50.

reconstitution, nous permet de suivre l'évolution de la lettre dans son ensemble.”<sup>10</sup>

“Ce modèle repose sur deux principes: la "structure" et la "forme". Le terme "forme" implique le traitement de la morphologie de la lettre en ce qui concerne les éléments ornementaux (empattements). La modification de la "forme" d'une lettre peut être attribuée à des changements de caractéristiques ornementales. Elle peut également être attribuée, cependant, à la peinture du calame ou à son échange contre un autre. Cela se manifeste soit par la modification de la ligne de la lettre (par exemple, transformation d'une ligne droite en une ligne courbe), soit par une variation de son épaisseur.

Le terme "structure" exprime la relation mutuelle des lignes de la lettre. Sans ses ornements, la lettre hébraïque est constituée de 2 à 4 lignes droites. Ces lignes déterminent la structure de base de la lettre. Un mouvement ou un raccourcissement des lignes, ou un changement d'angle, peut entraîner une modification de la structure. En faisant la distinction entre "forme" et "structure," nous pouvons comparer des lettres qui ne possèdent pas les mêmes ornements.”<sup>11</sup>

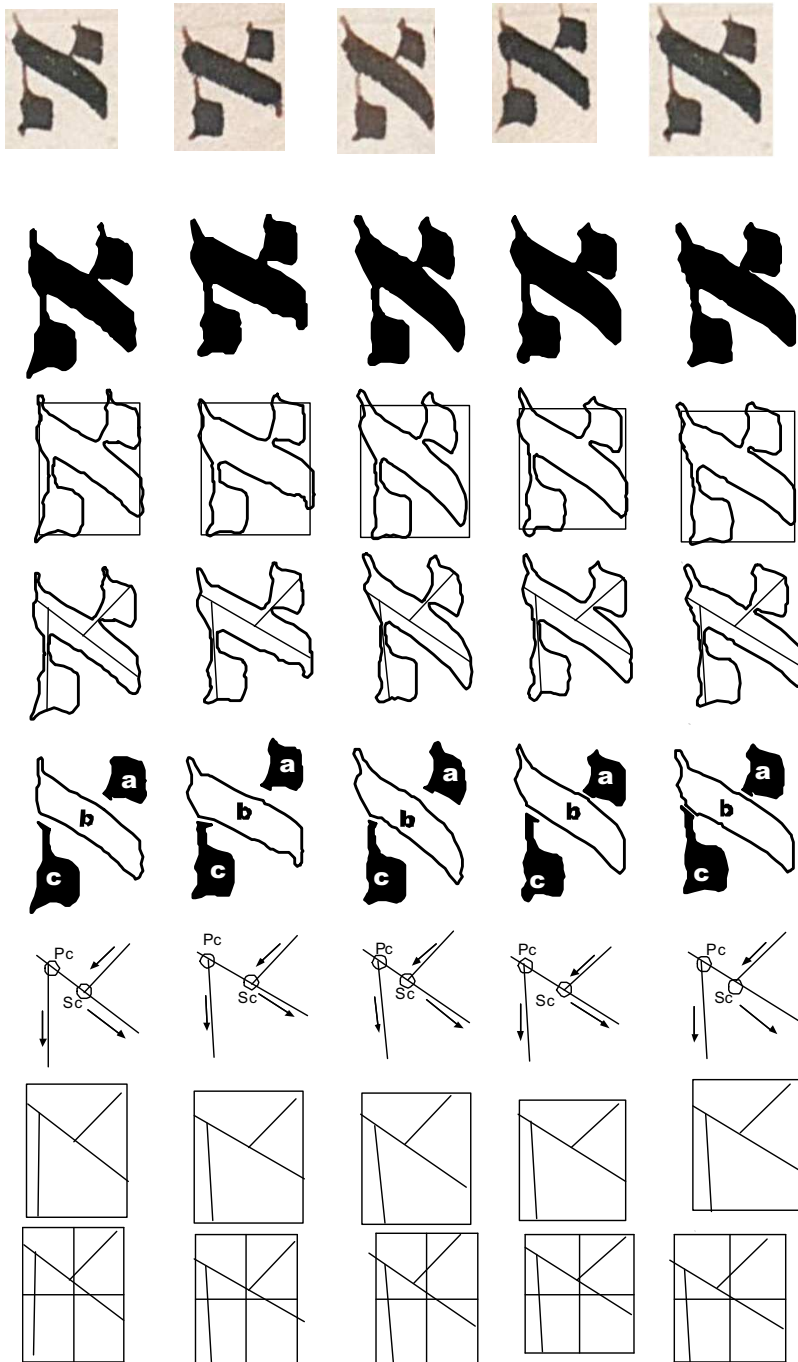
Je comparerai ensuite la structure et la forme du script des rouleaux d'Erfurt aux caractéristiques des scripts modernes de Beth Yosef et Arizal qui les différencient, en identifiant les similitudes et les différences.

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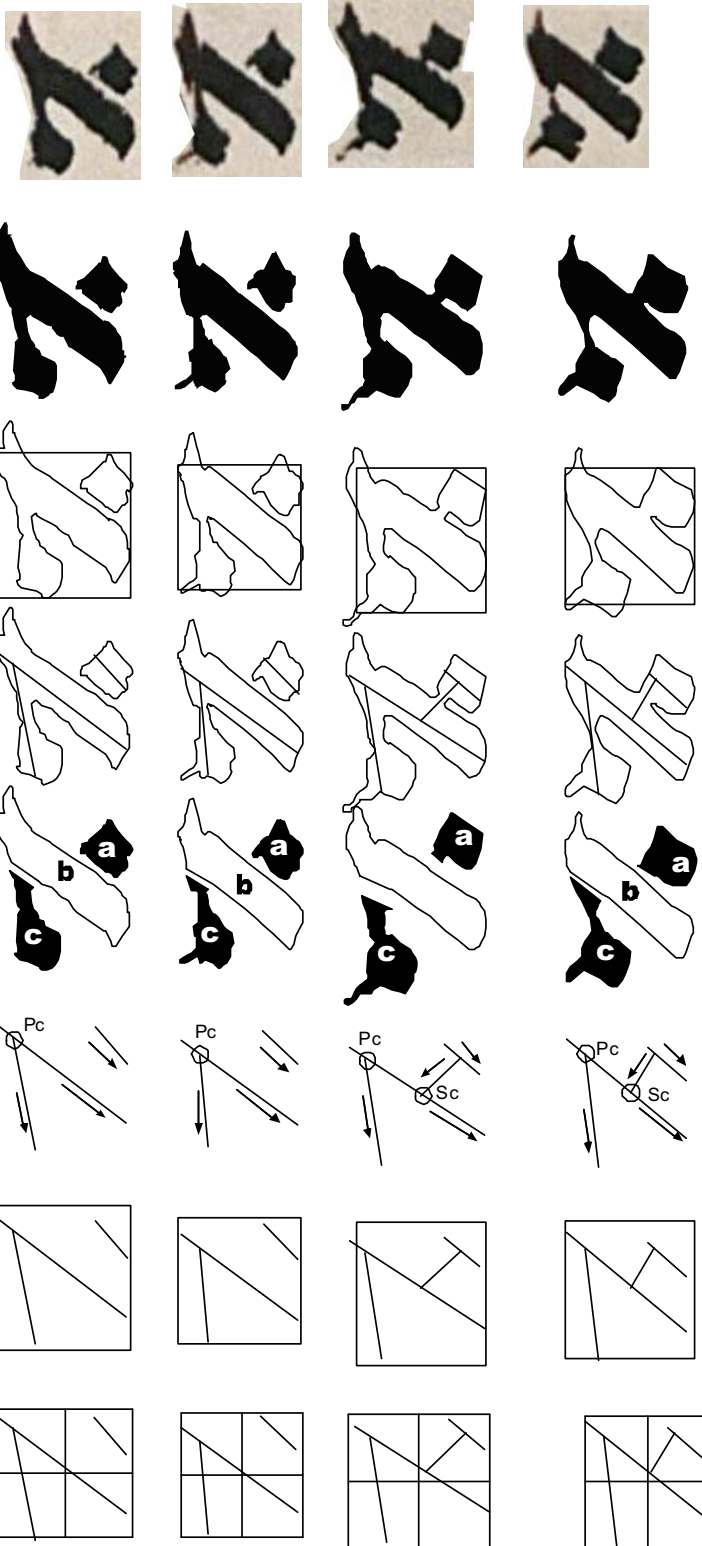
<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 43-44.

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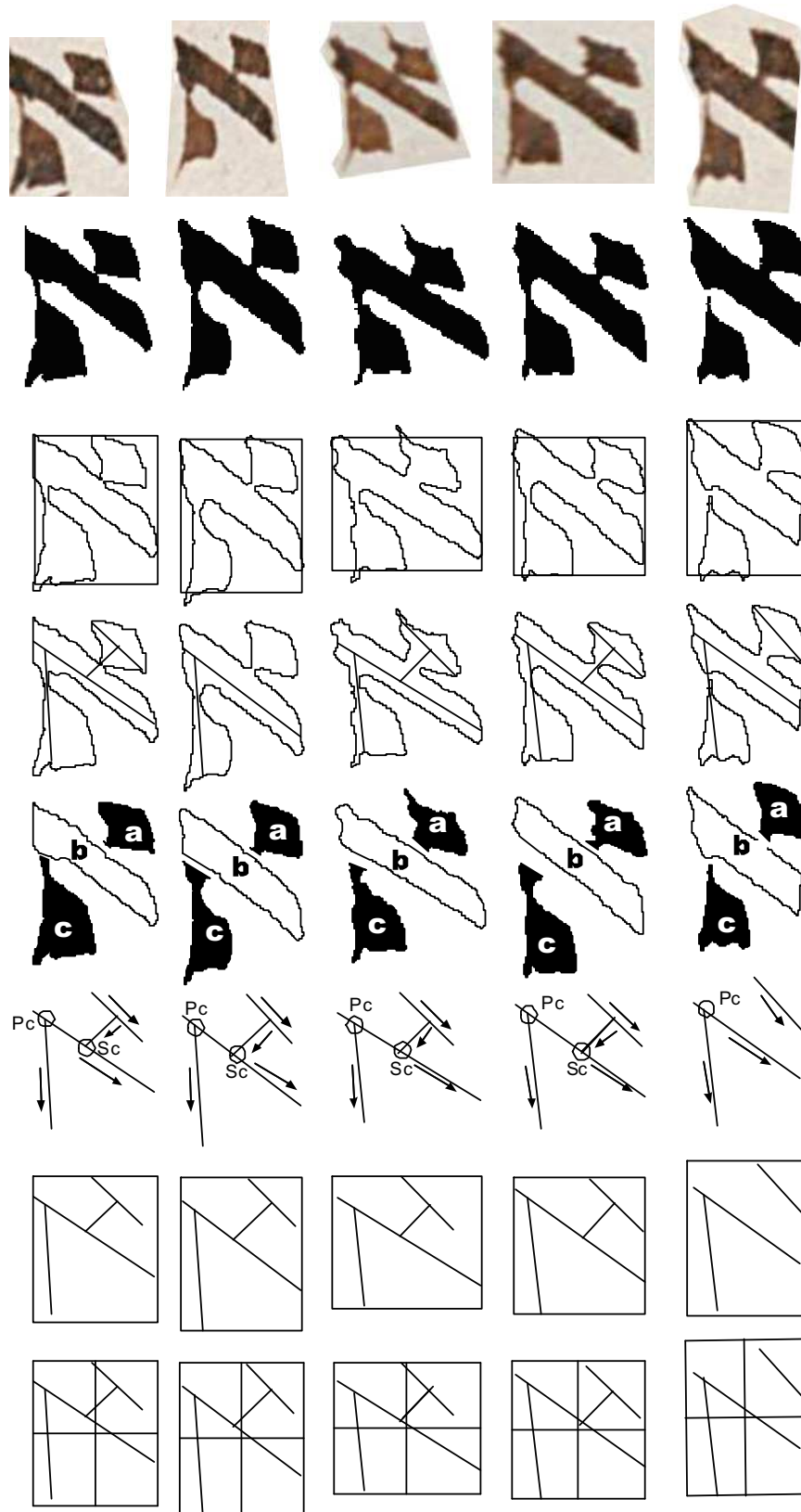


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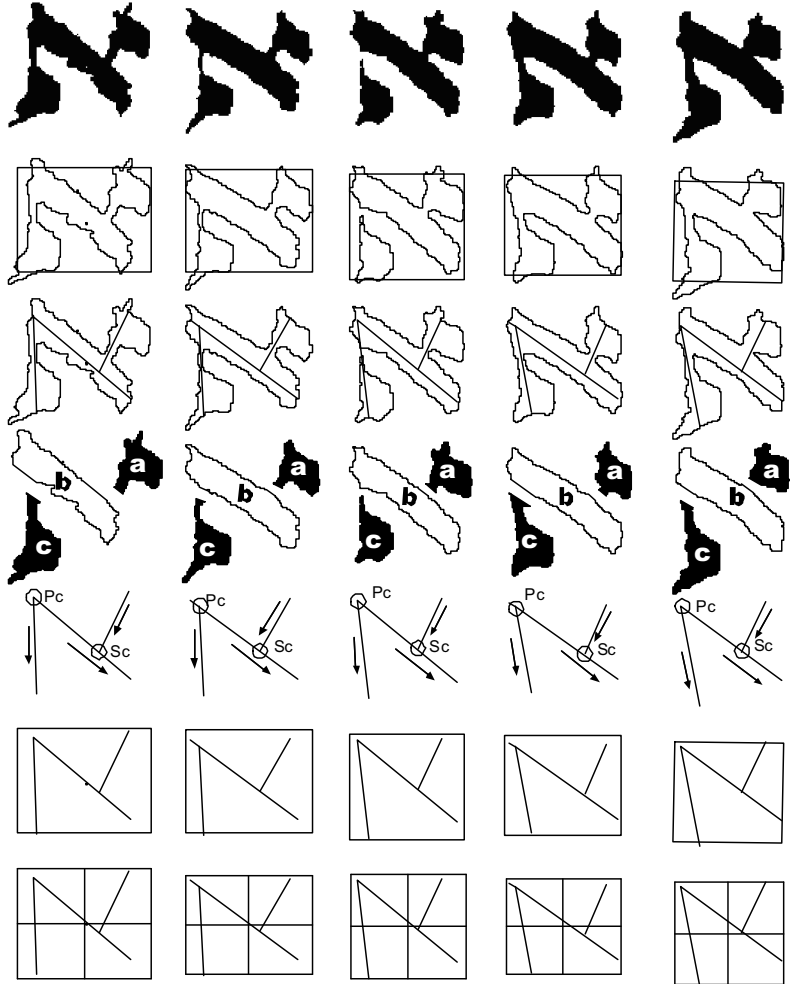




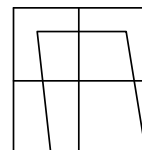
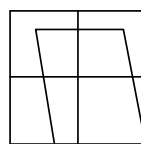
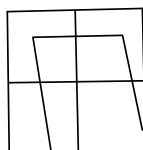
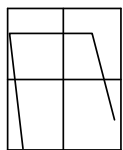
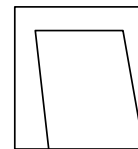
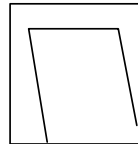
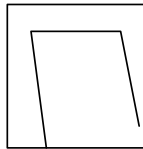
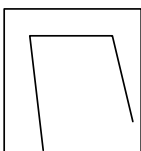
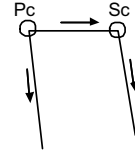
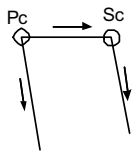
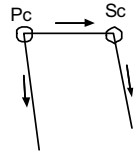
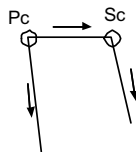
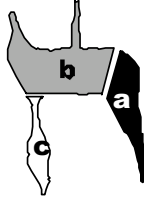
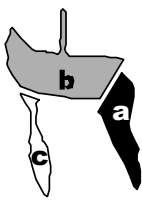
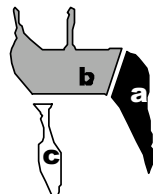
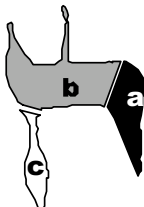
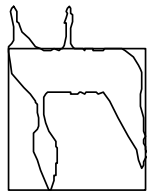
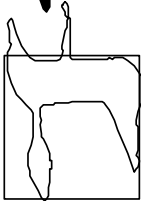
Une analyse graphique de la lettre *aleph* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



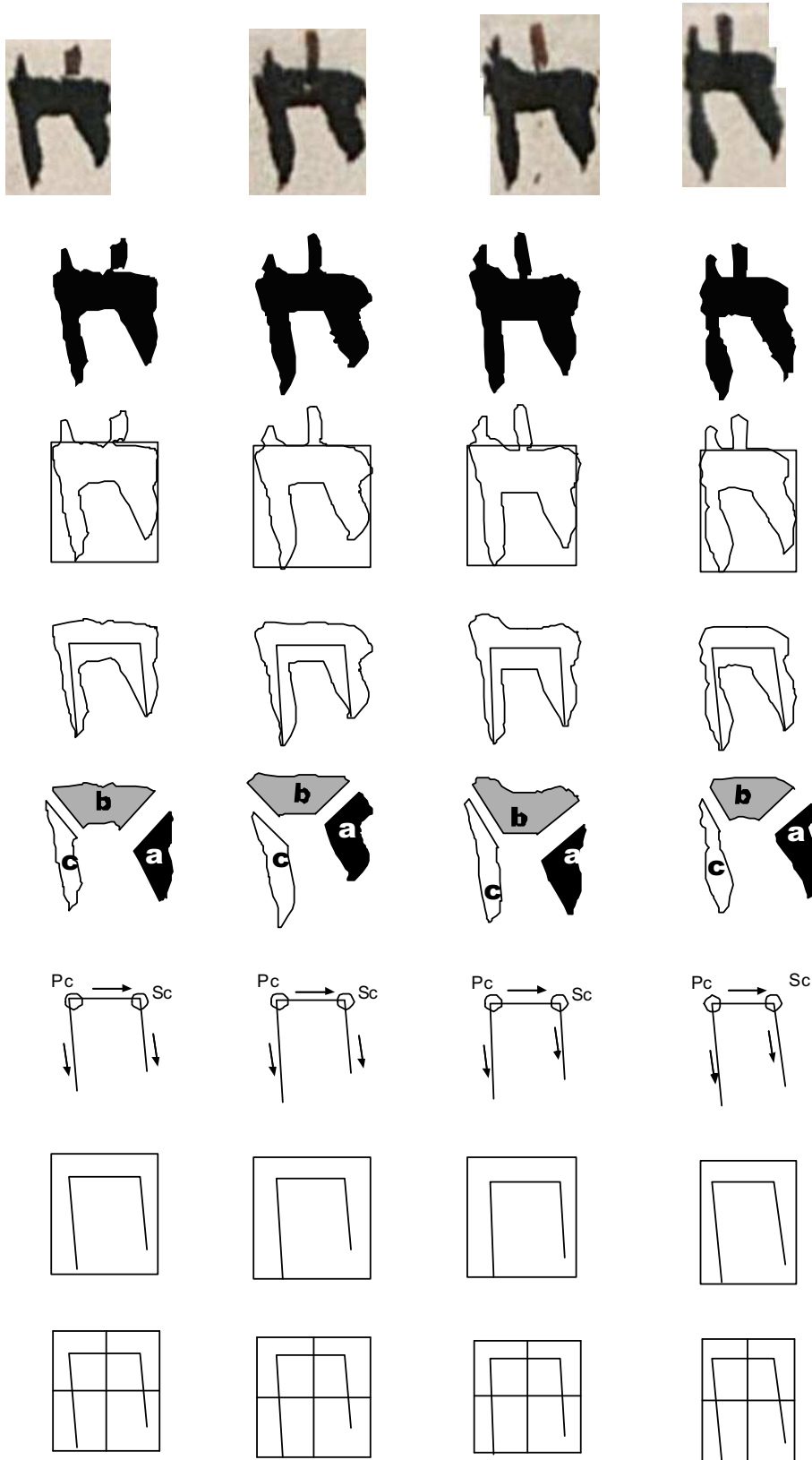
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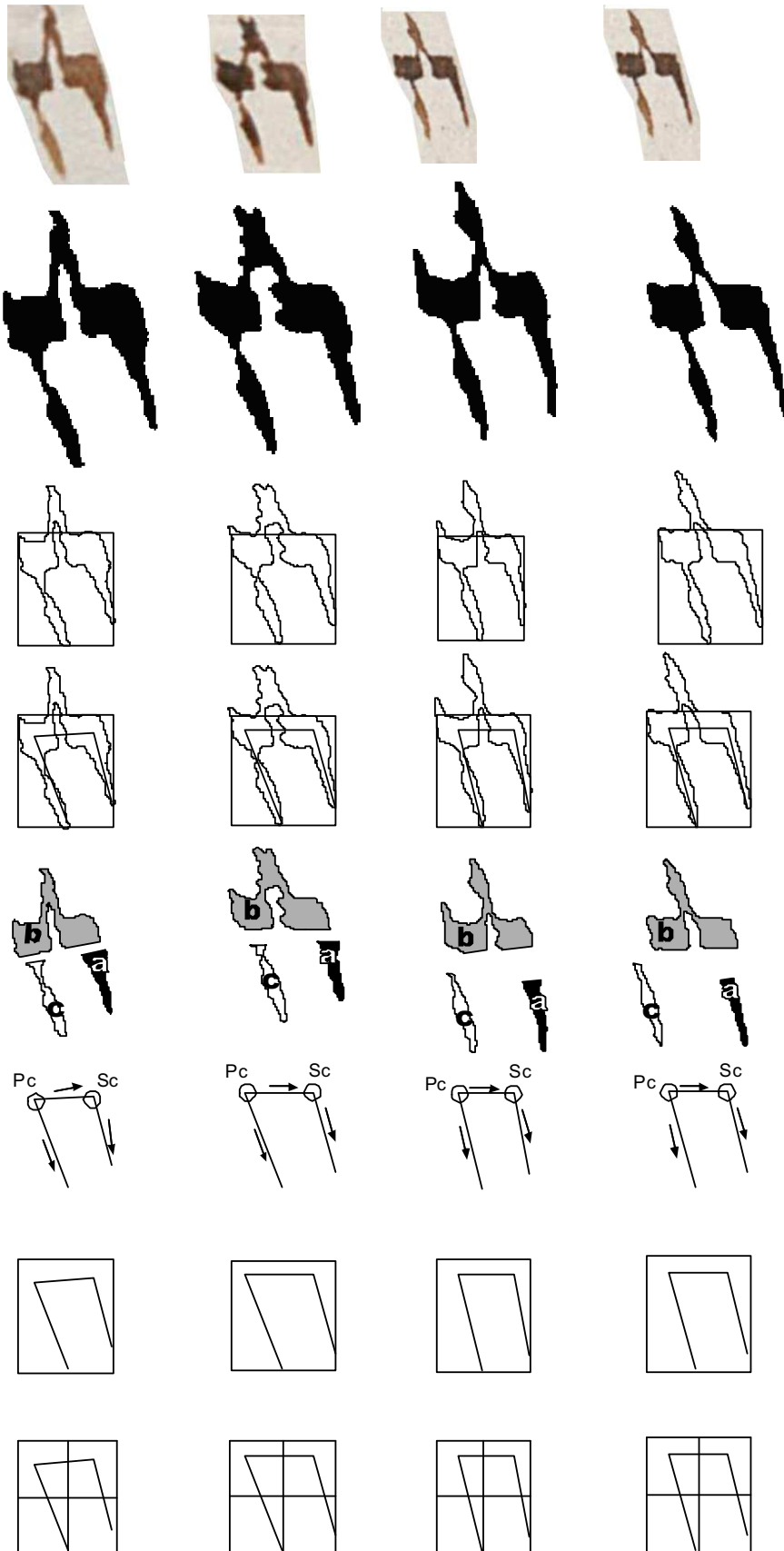
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 la Torah Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



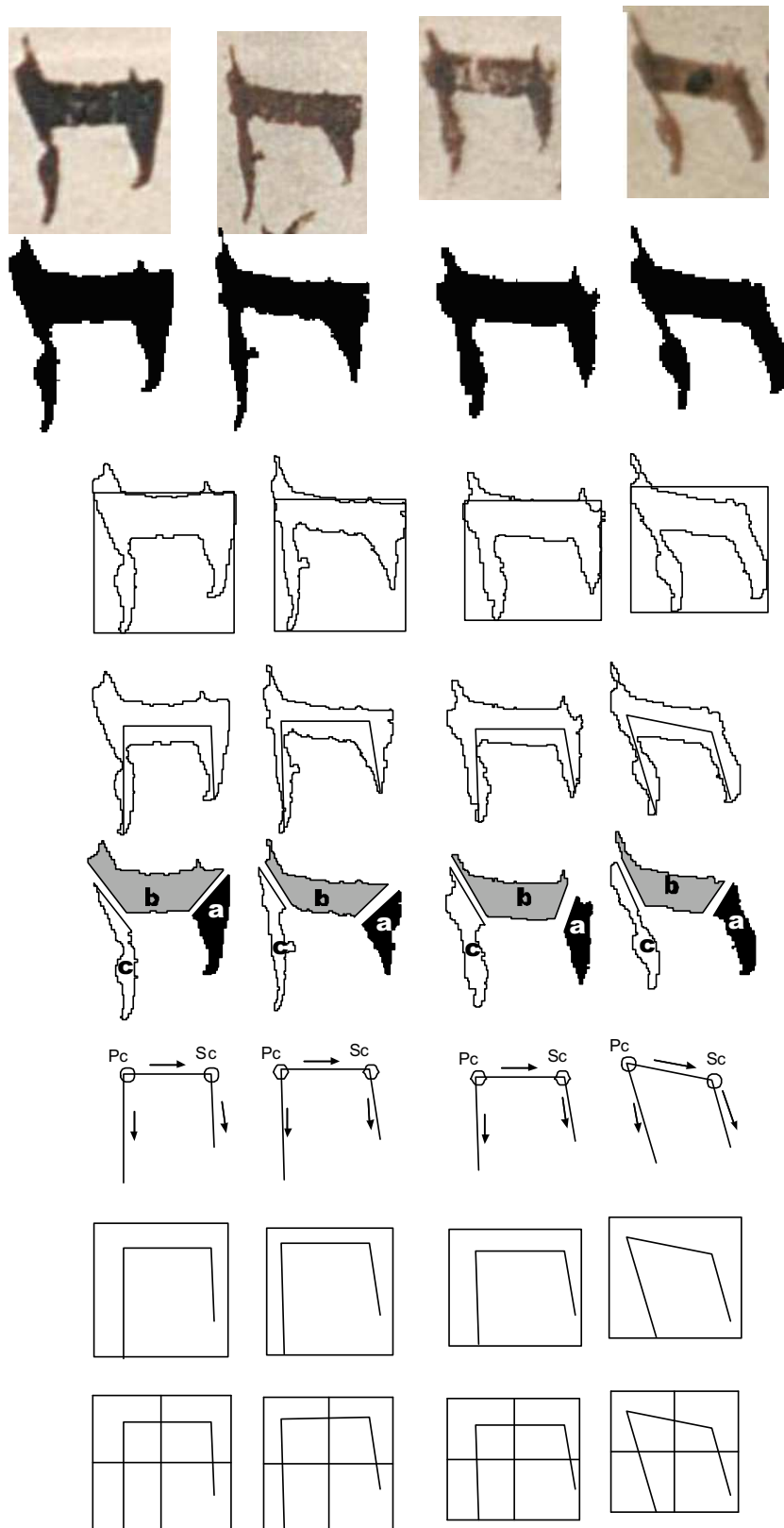
Une analyse graphique de la lettre *het* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)



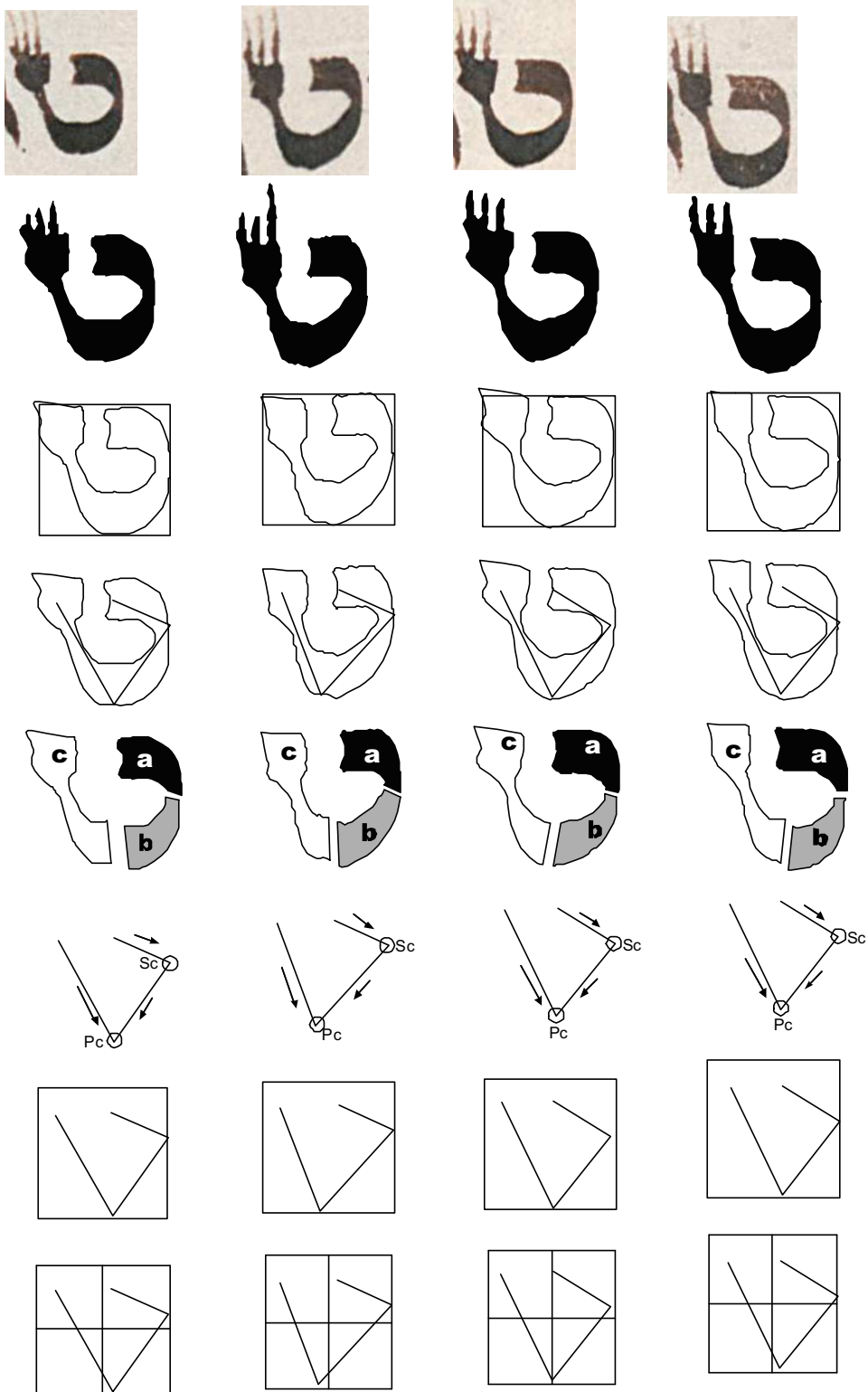
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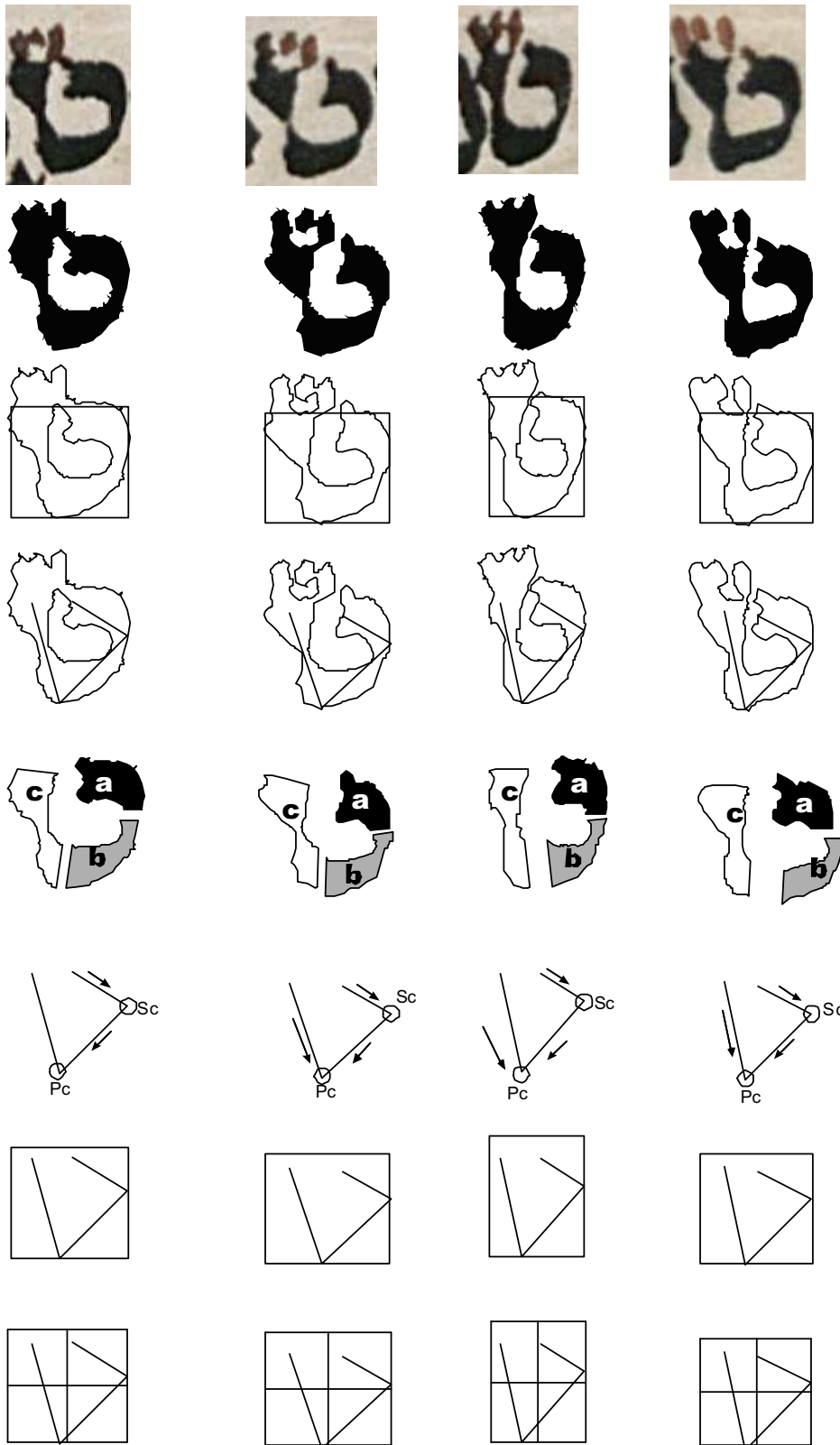
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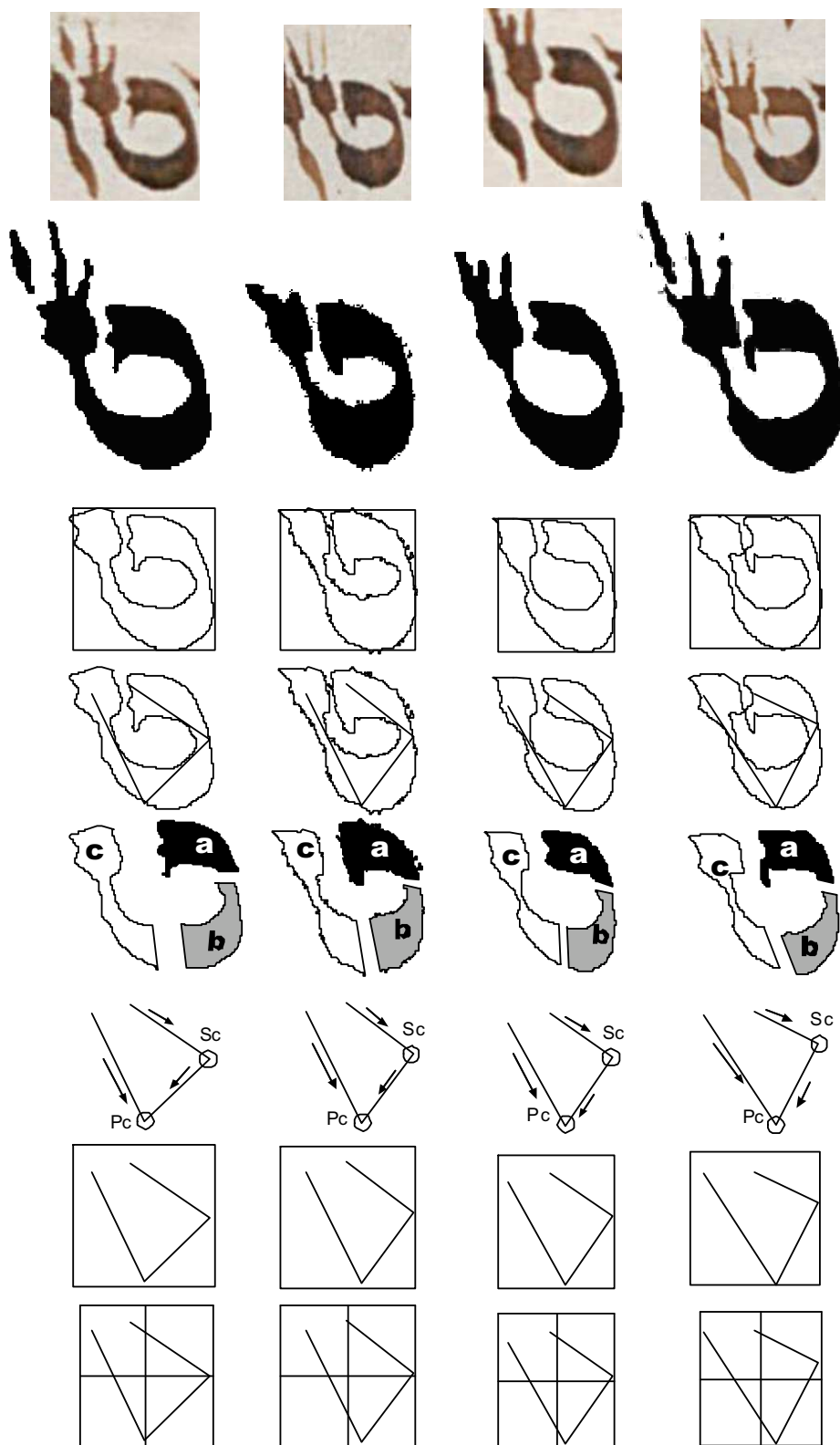


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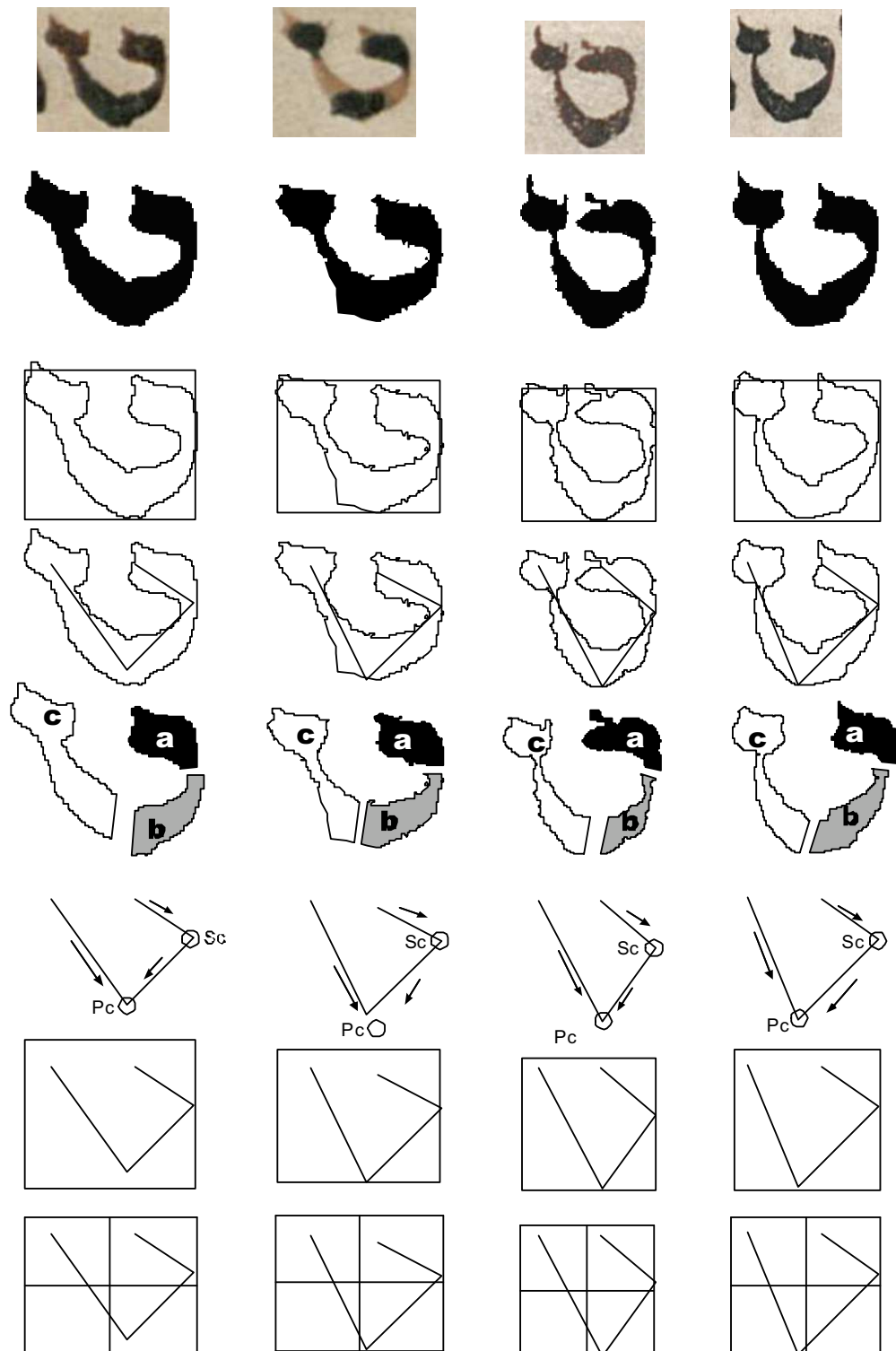




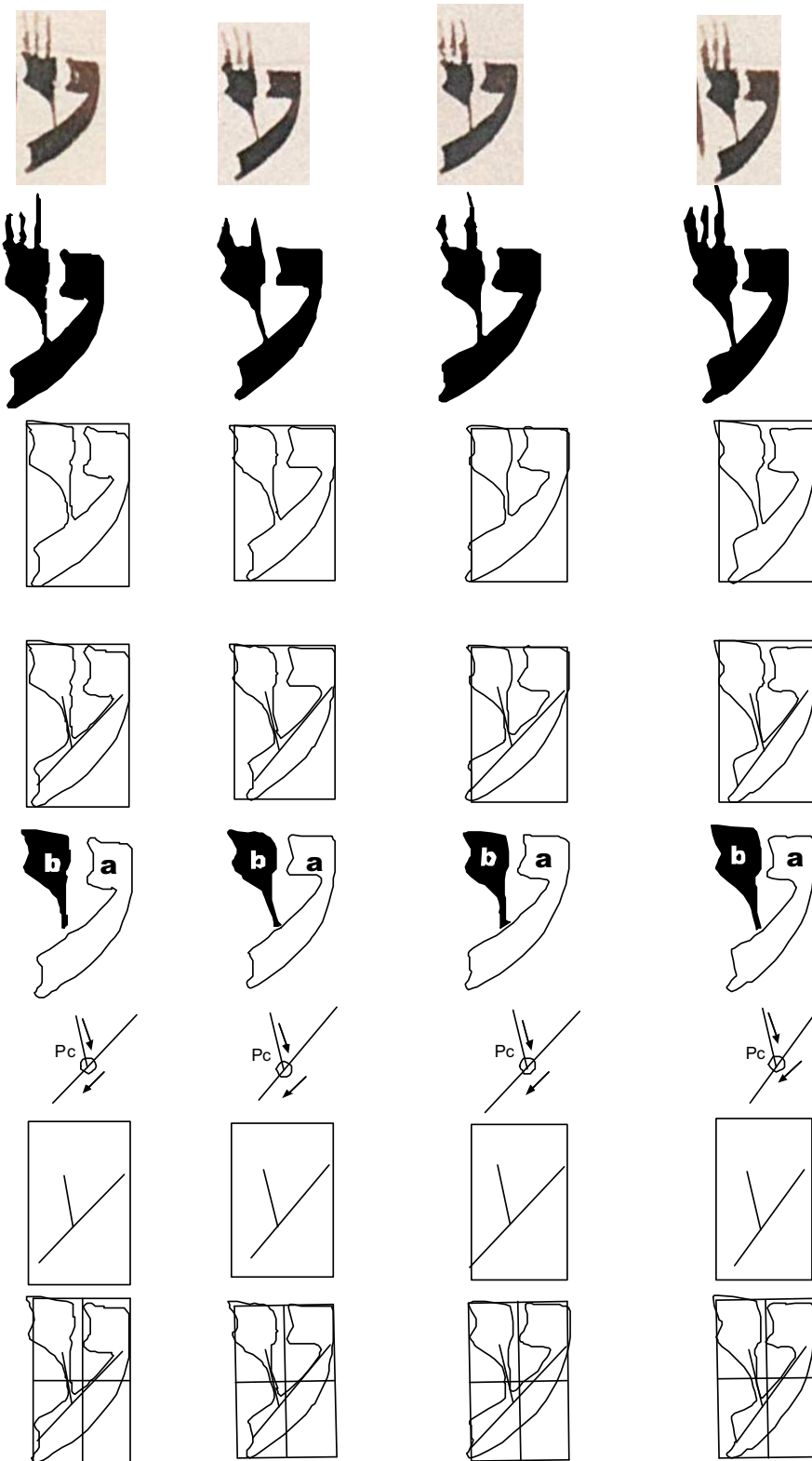
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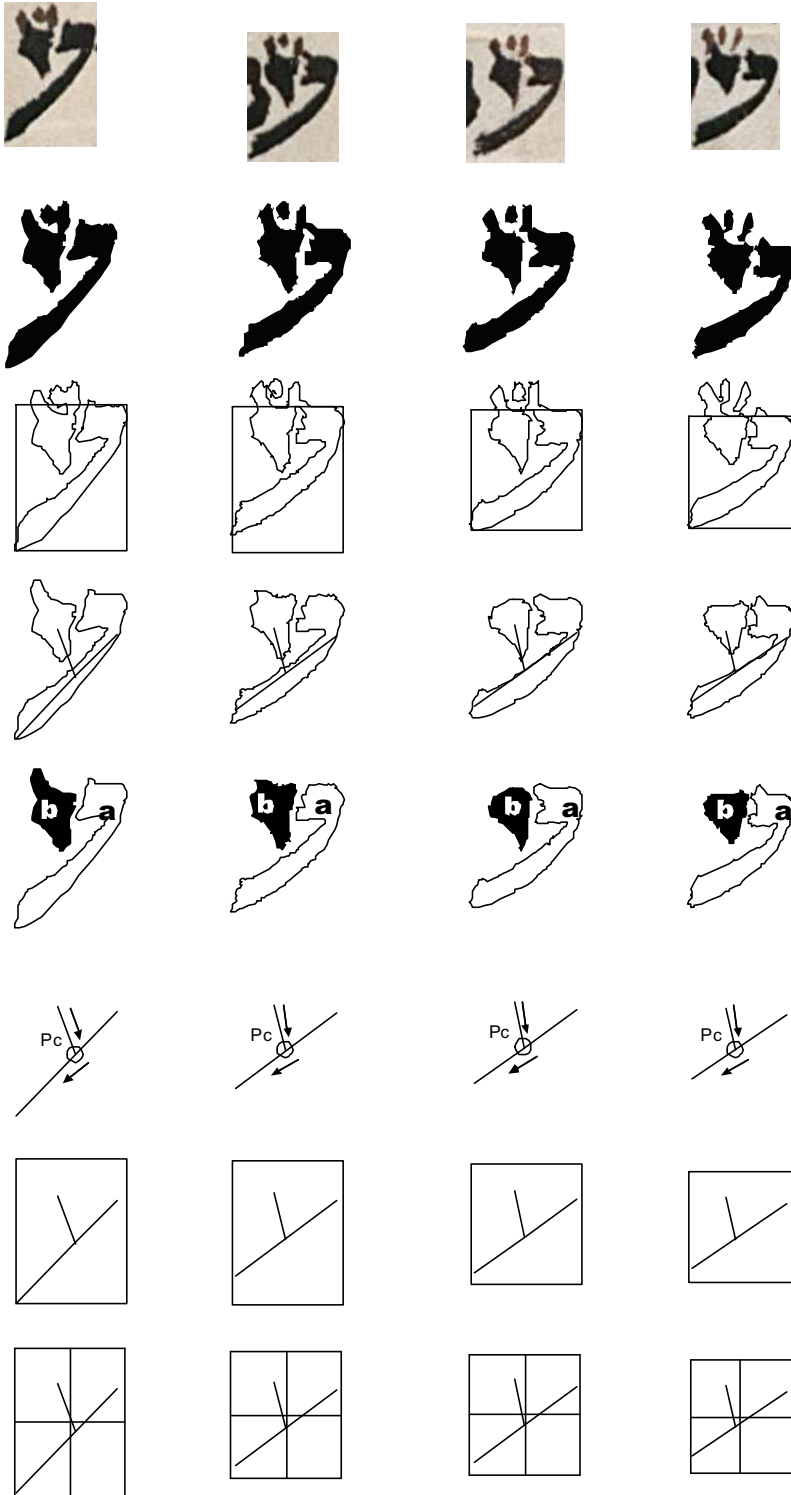
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Une analyse graphique de la lettre *ayin* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



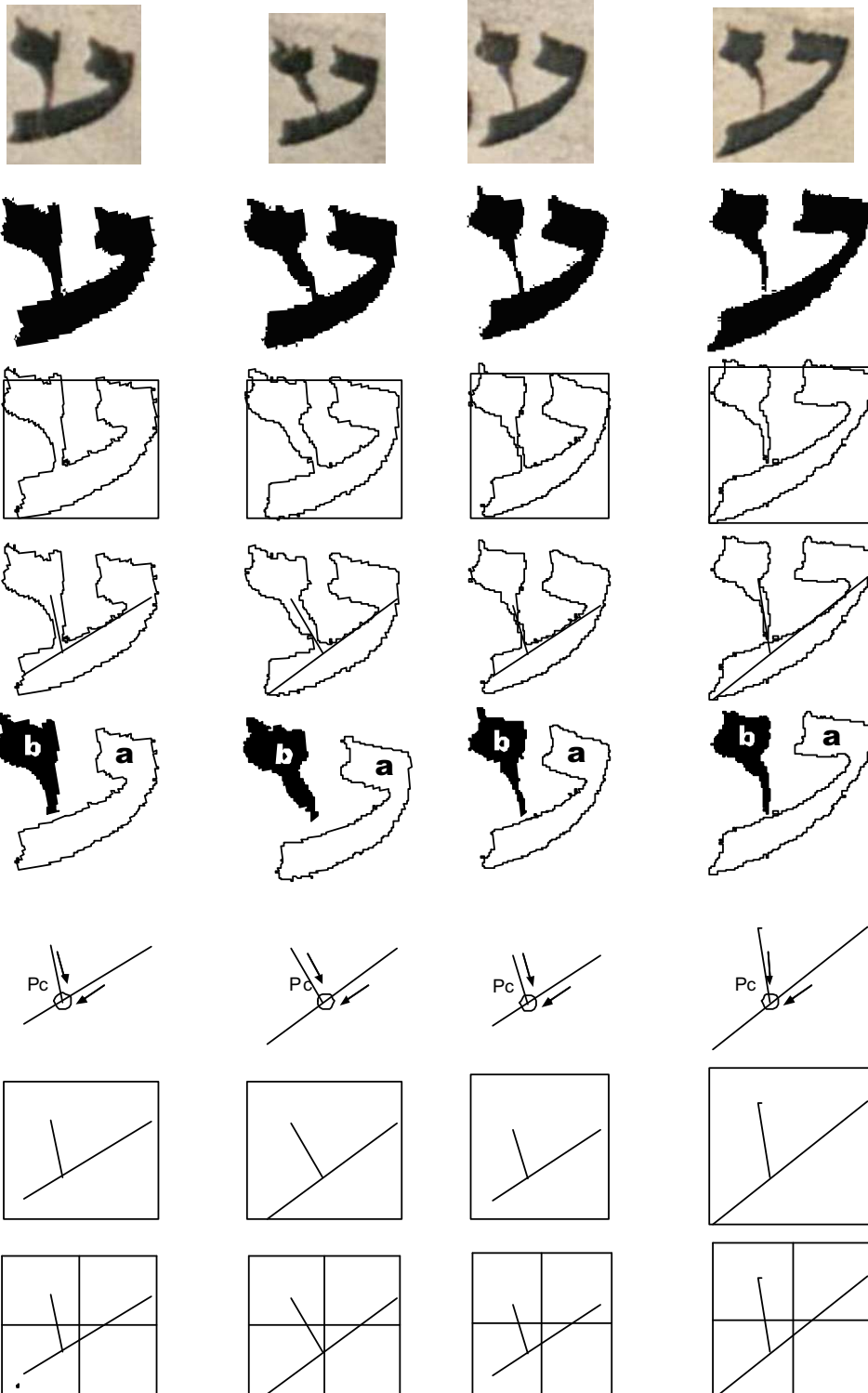
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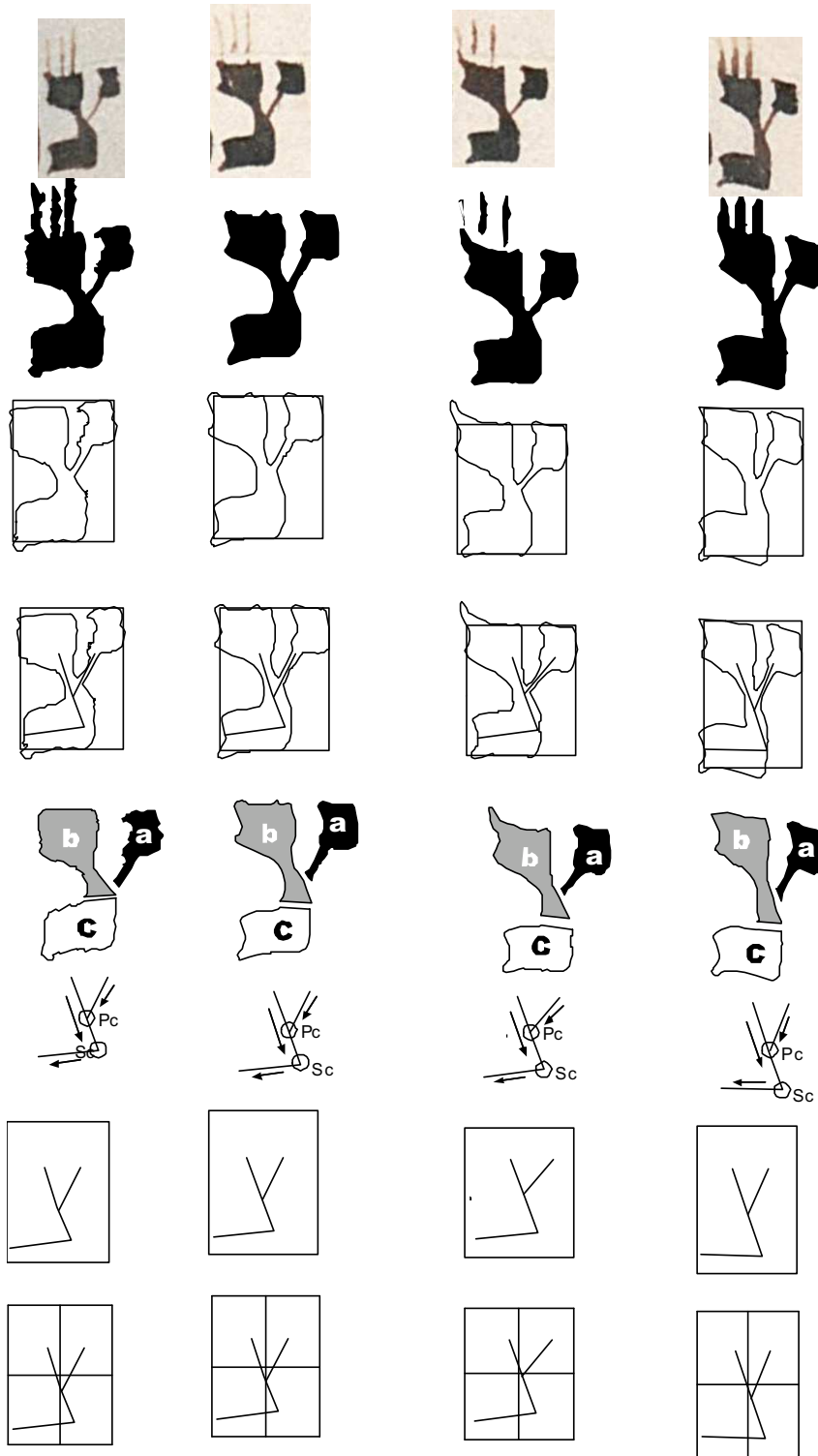
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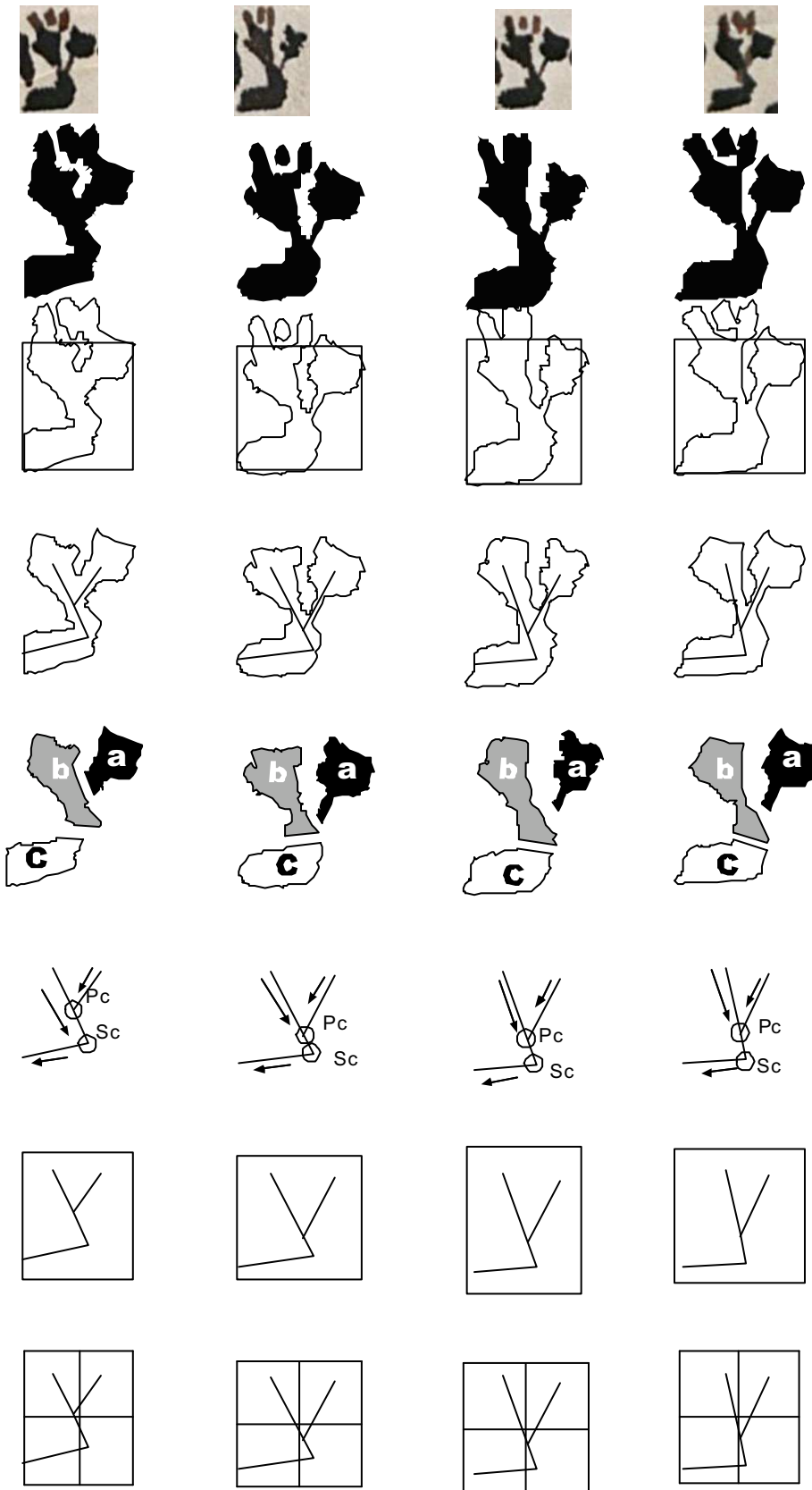
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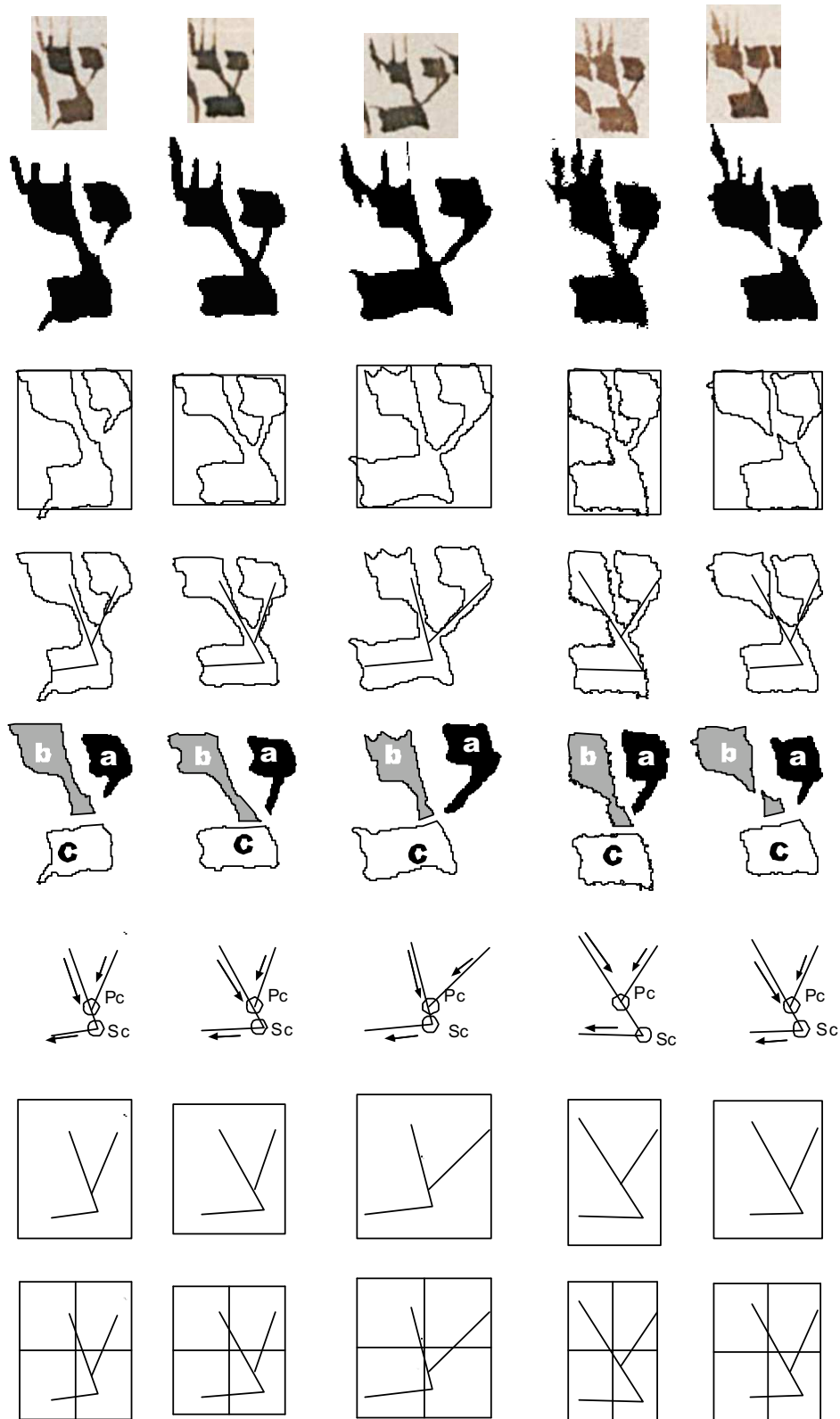


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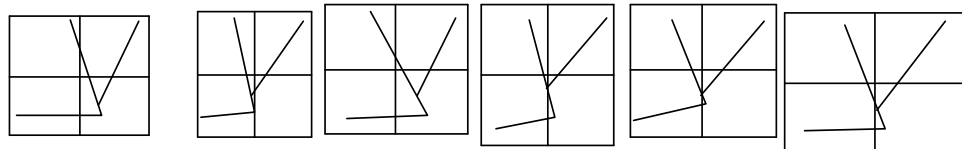
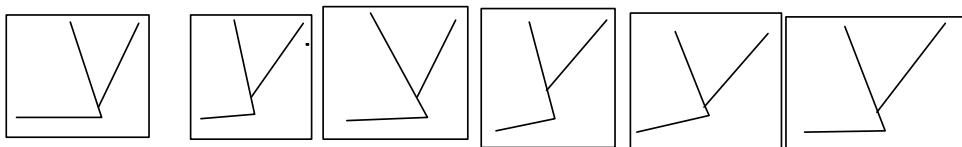
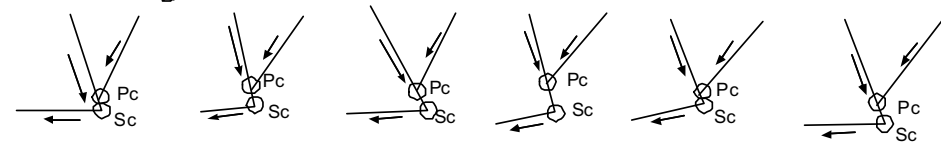
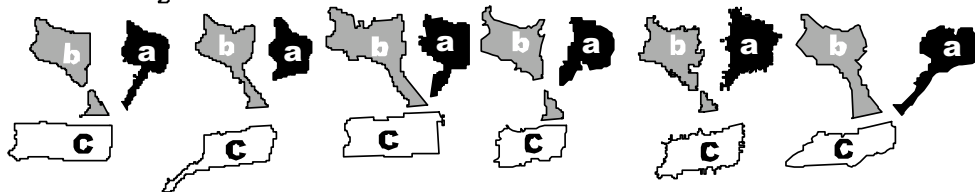
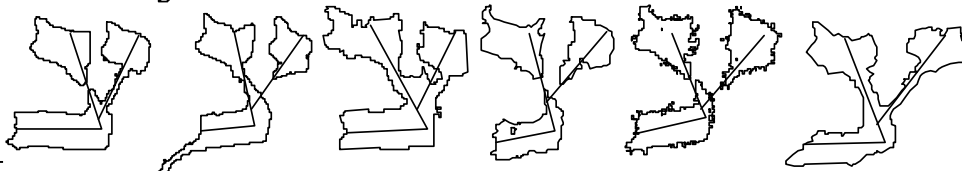
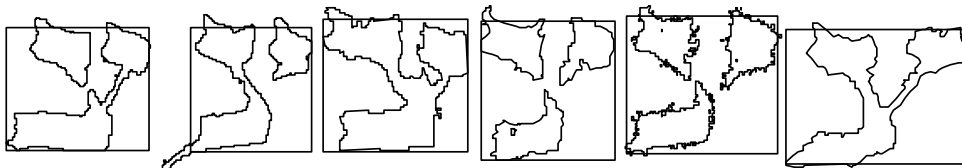




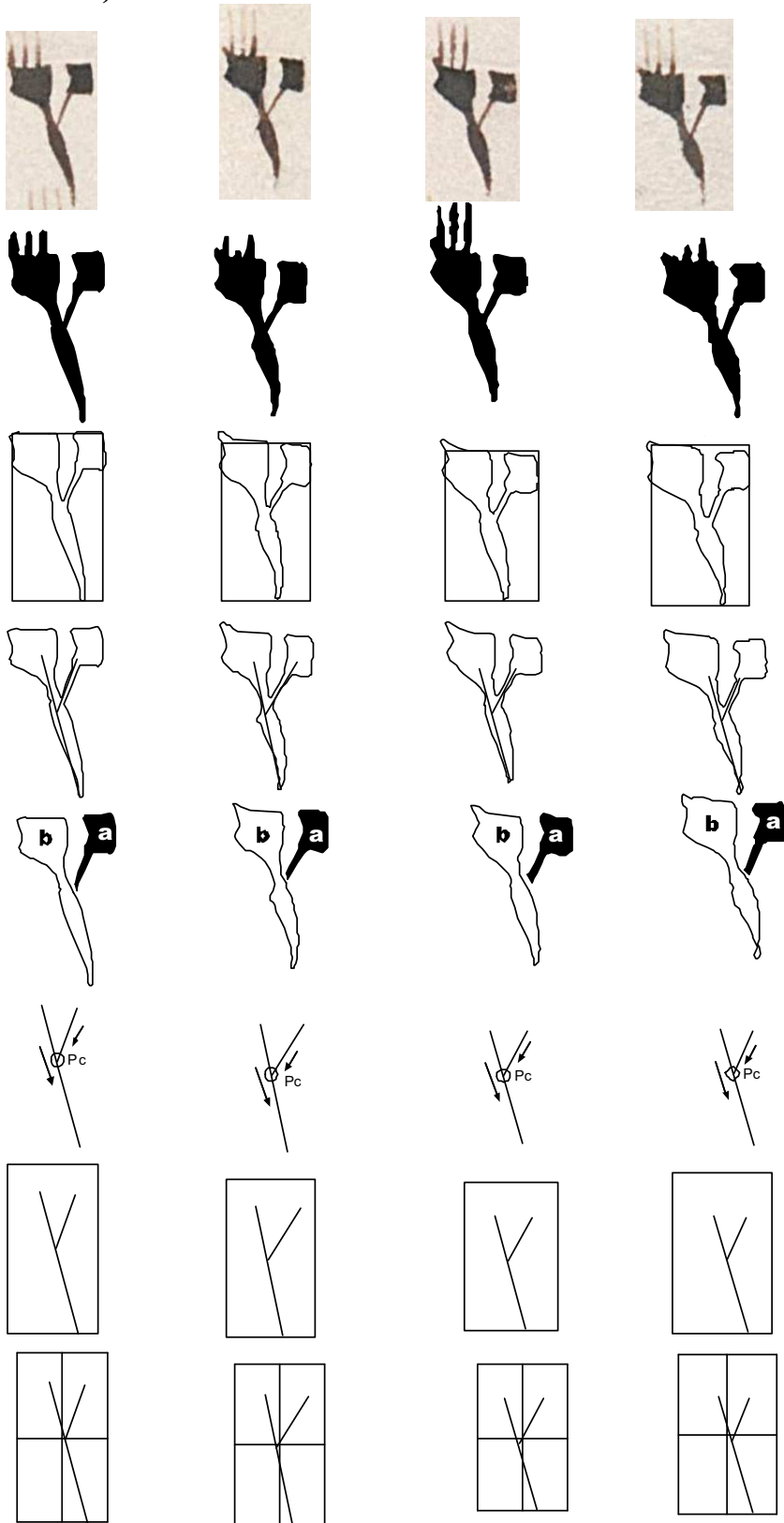
Une analyse graphique de la lettre *tsadé* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



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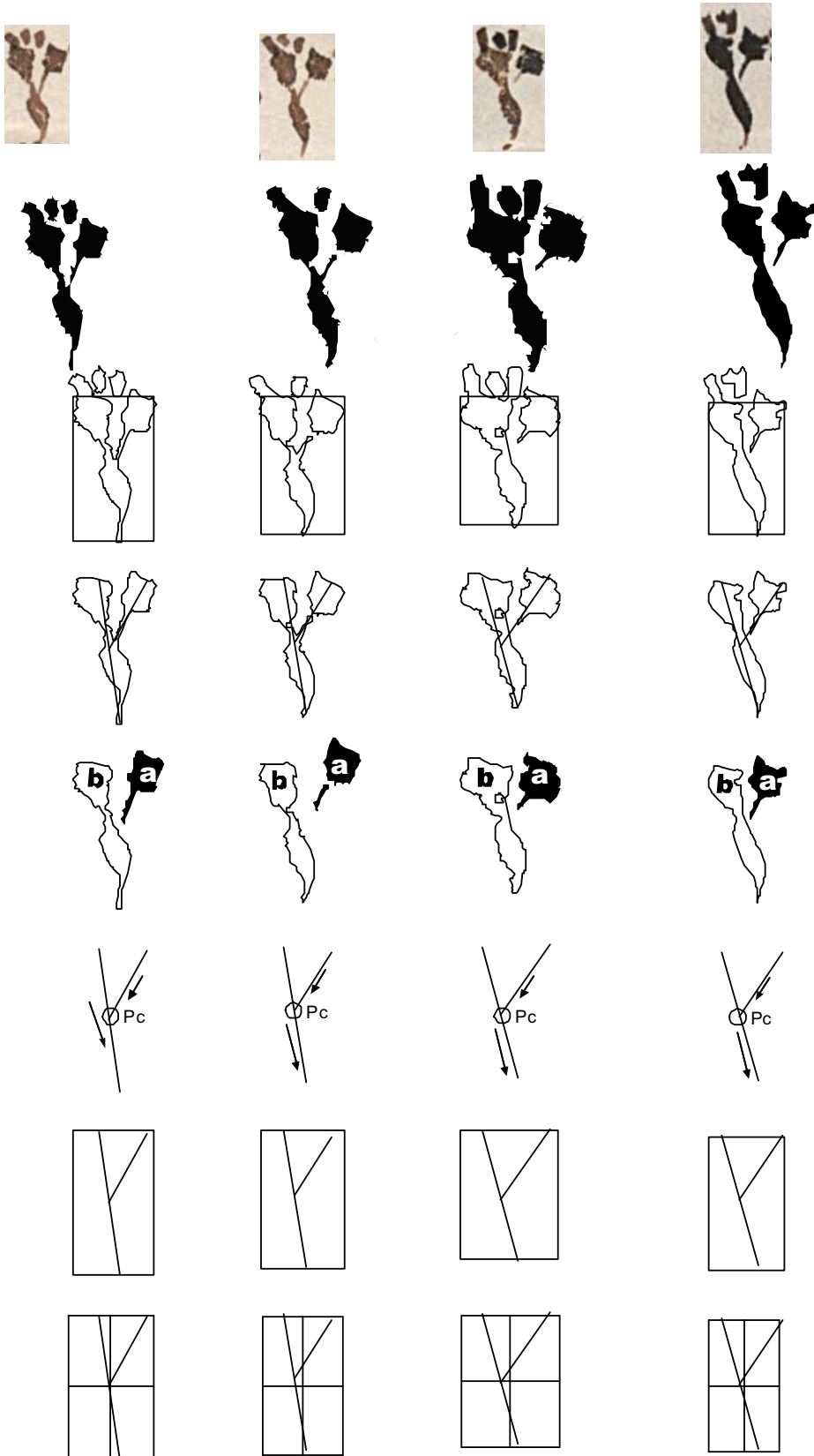


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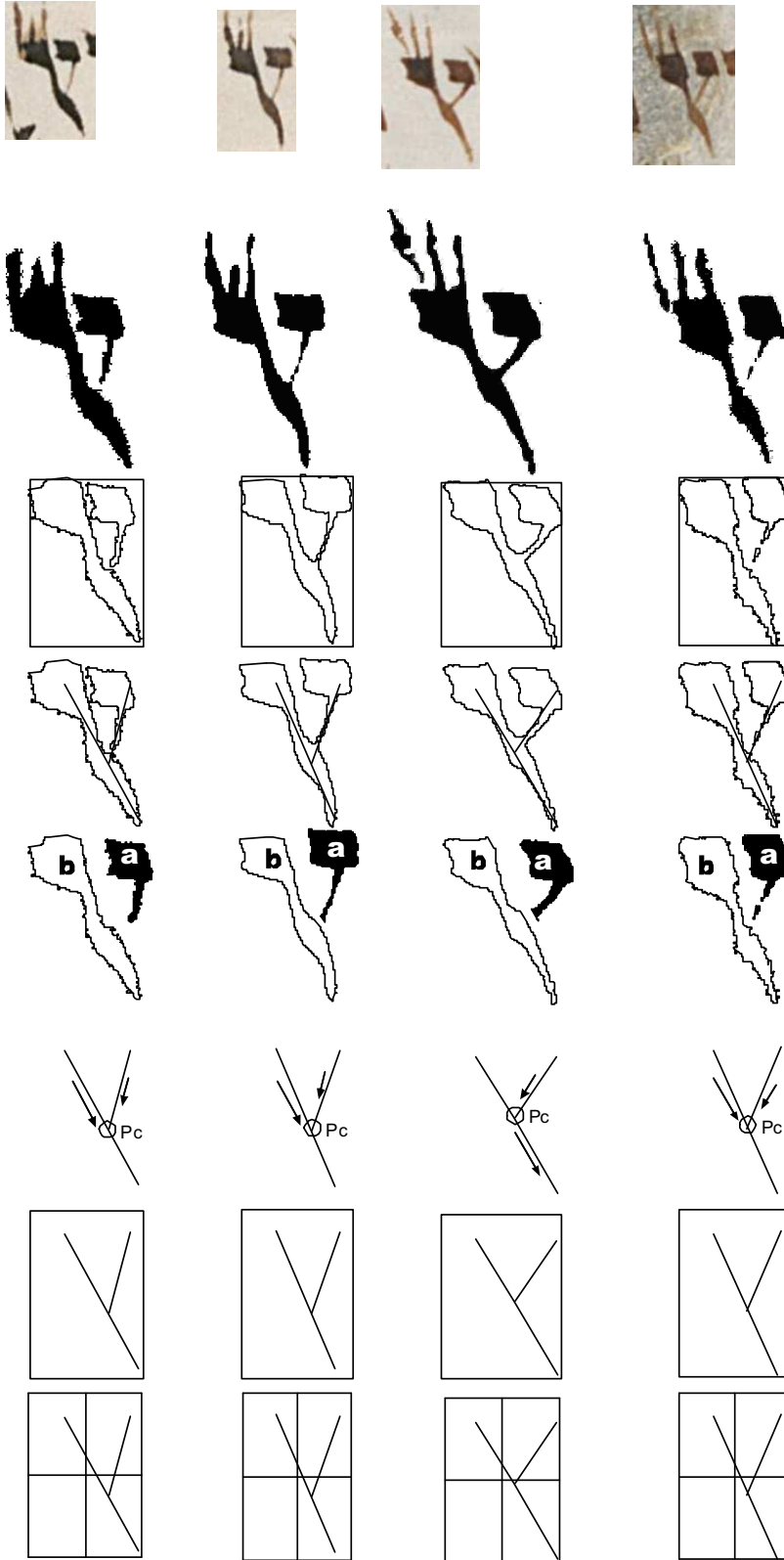


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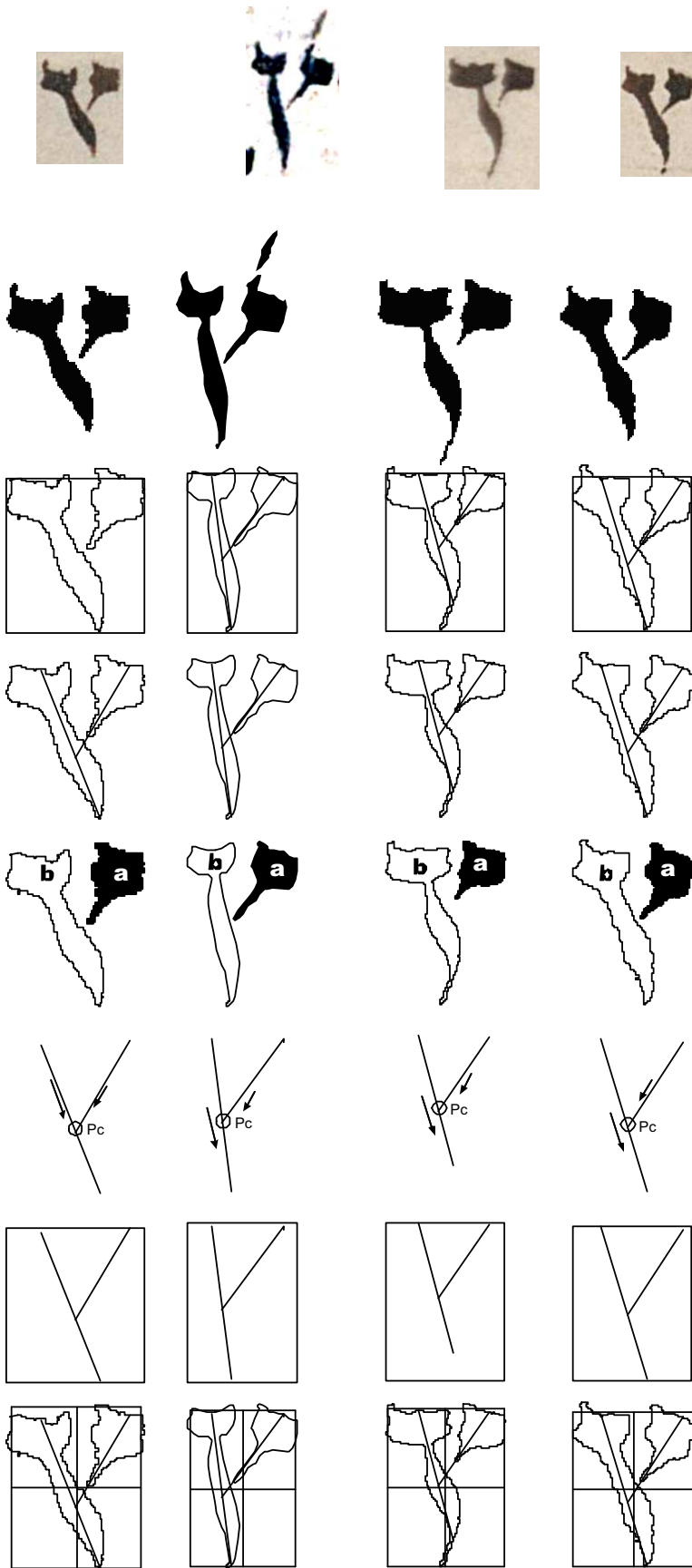
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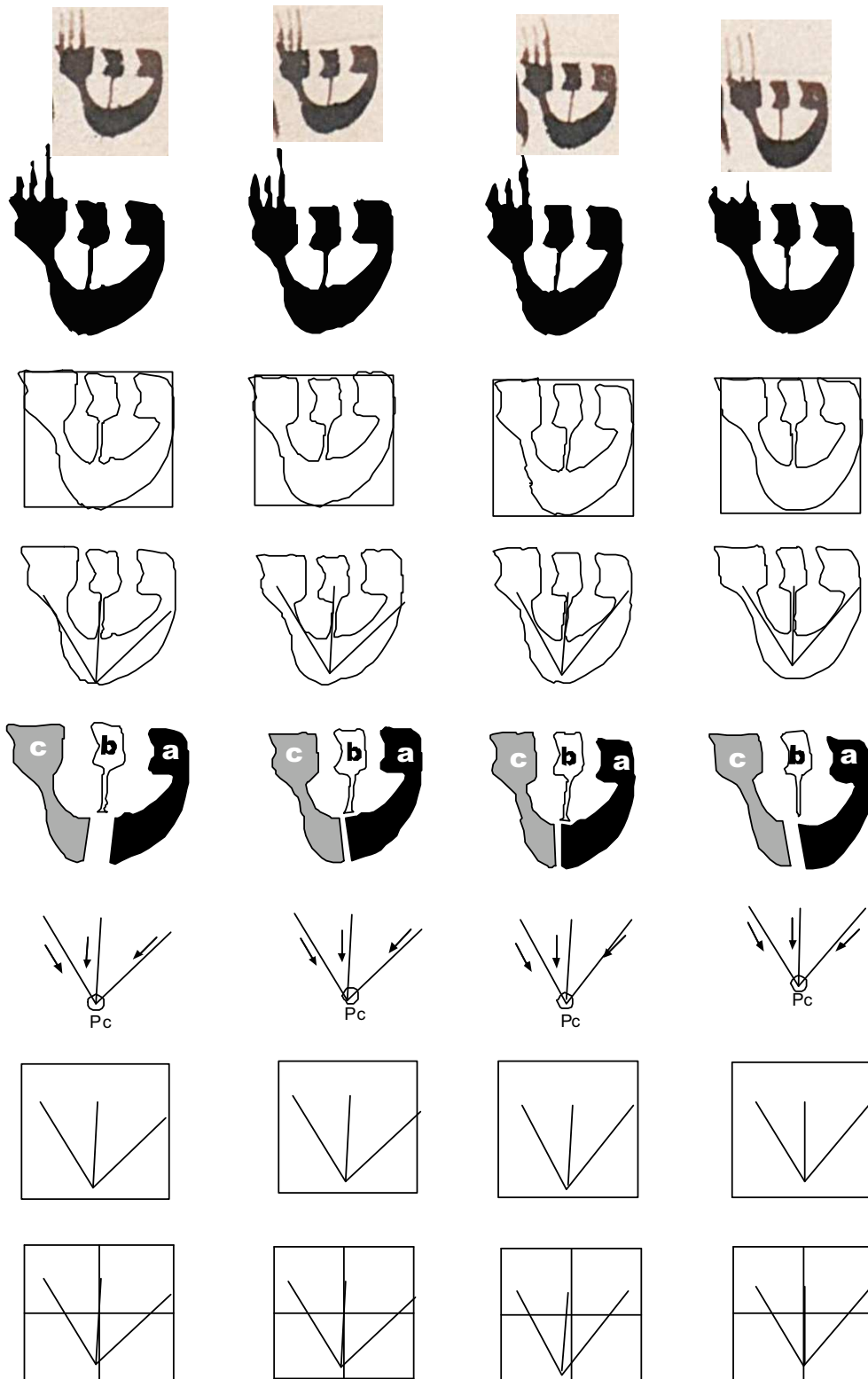
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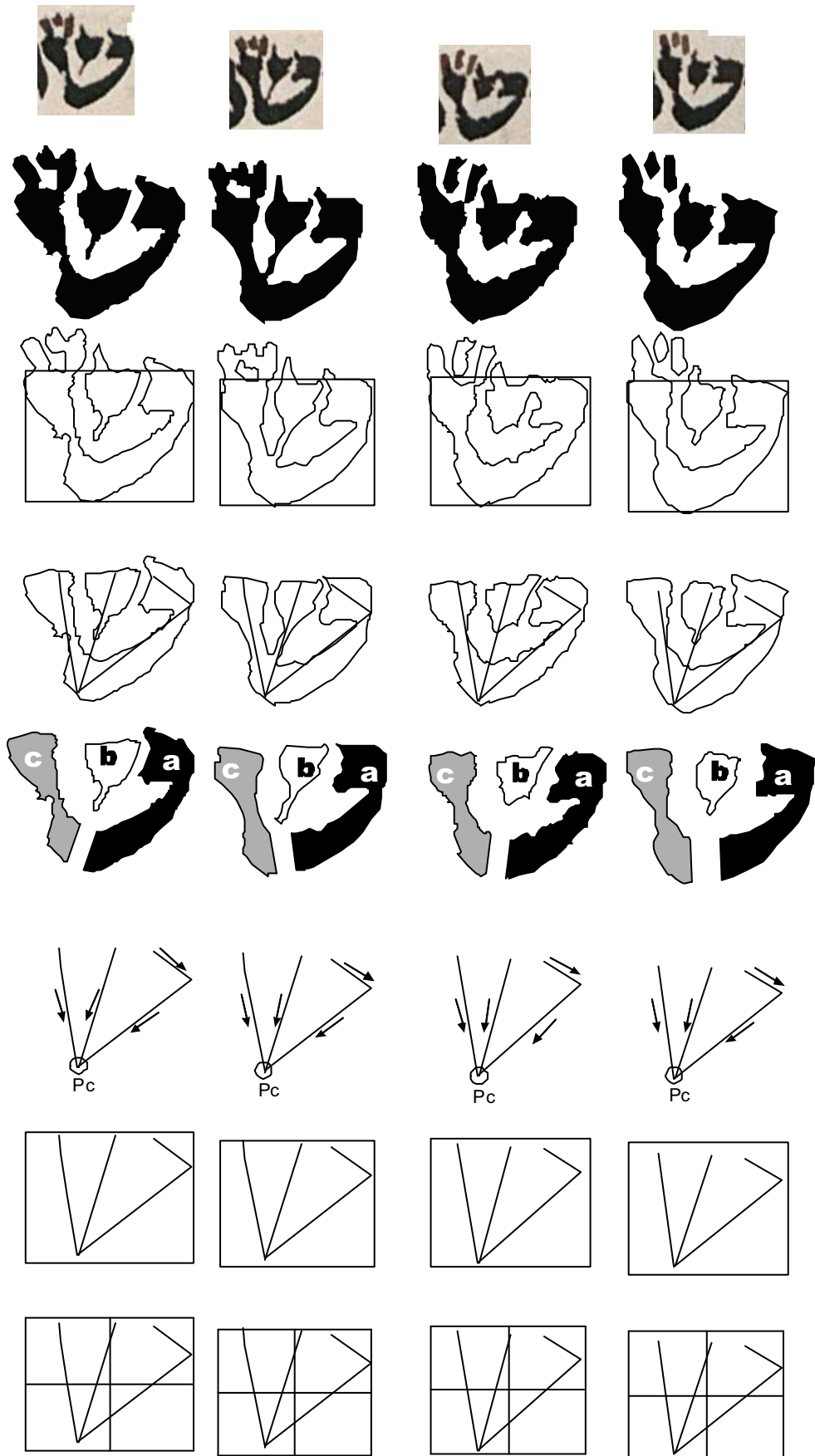
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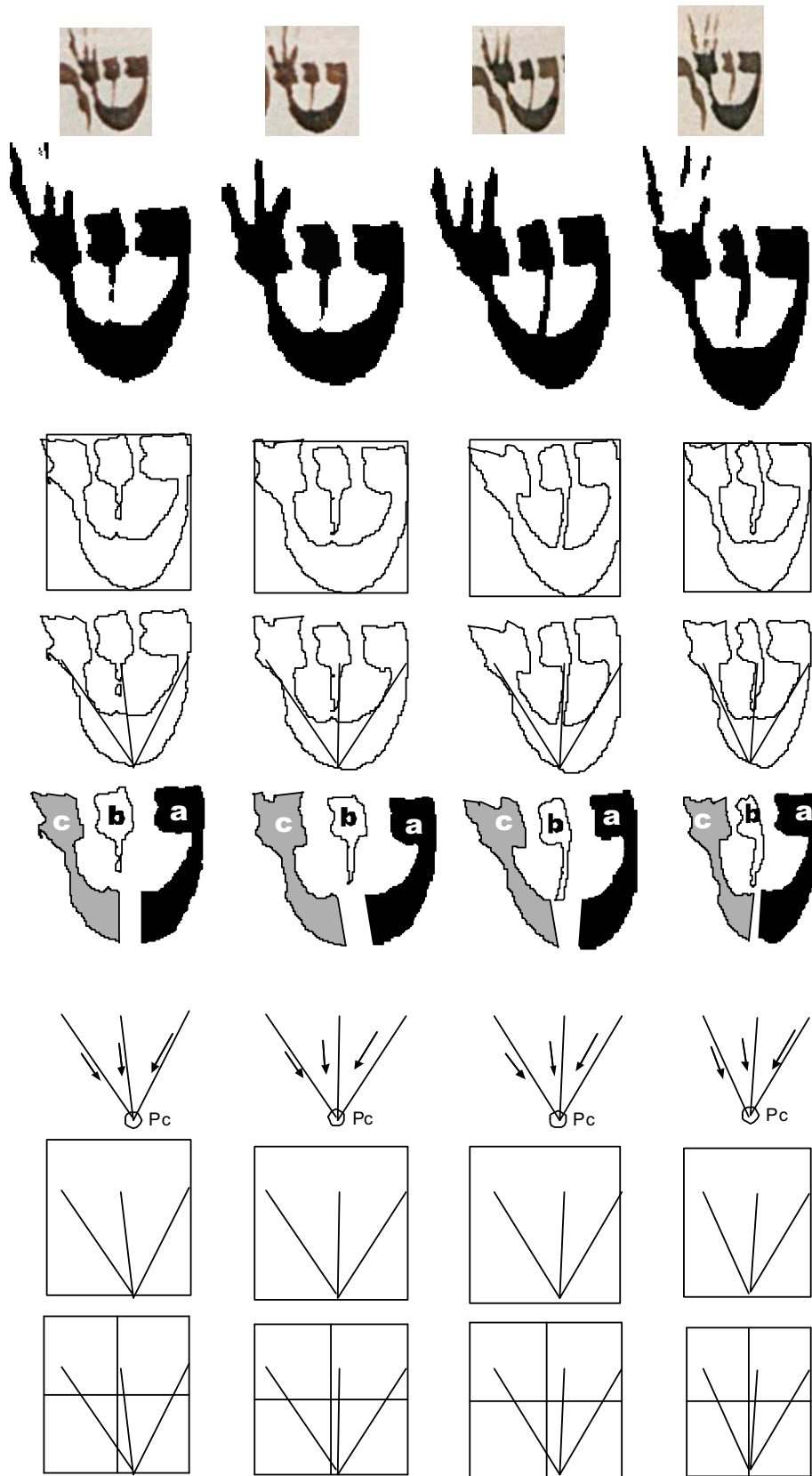


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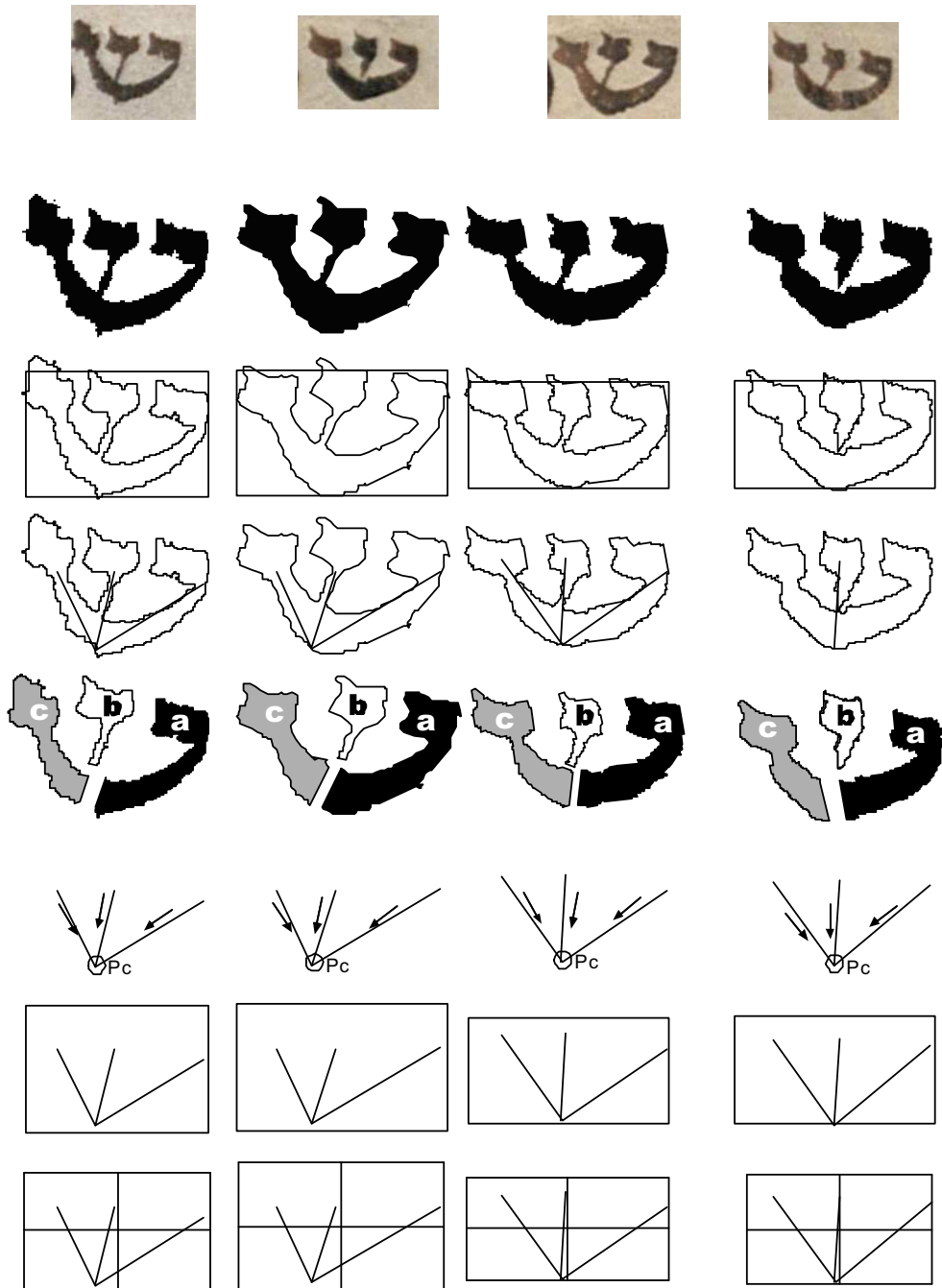




Une analyse graphique de la lettre *chine* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



Une analyse graphique de la lettre *chine* dans le rouleau de la Torah Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)



## **Conclusions**

L'examen des lettres des rouleaux d'Erfurt montre que les éléments des lettres qui font l'objet de l'étude sont souvent plus proches de l'écriture connue sous le nom d'Arizal que de celle connue sous le nom de Beth Yosef (alors que les rouleaux ashkénazes plus modernes utilisent plus souvent l'écriture de Beth Yosef). Cela montre qu'il existe une base historique médiévale pour les deux styles d'écriture. La conclusion de cette thèse suggère des explications possibles pour les changements historiques qui ont conduit à l'utilisation des différents styles d'écriture ashkénazes.

# 1 Acknowledgements

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Last, but far from least, thanks to the Holy One, blessed be He, who, according to the Talmud, created the Heavens and the Earth through the Hebrew letters<sup>12</sup> for letting me know his building blocks from closer and closer and from more and more different angles over the years. May He give me strength to continue this job.

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<sup>12</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 55a

## 2 Introduction

This thesis delves into specifics of scripts, but the subject matter itself is part of a broader topic: the halakhah (Jewish Law) of the scribal art and the articulation between the normative rules and technical - historical - palaeographical methods. I will study the way in which the Rabbinic normative approaches contributed to shape and transform the visual aspect of the Hebrew letters used in Torah scrolls from the Middle Ages until today. I will focus on the shift in the scribal world related to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century schools while examining the earlier origins of some of the letter forms promoted by the early modern scholars.

### 2.1 The Role of the Scribe: A Brief Synopsis

Since antiquity, the work of the scribes of Jewish liturgical scrolls has been an object of strict laws. These laws concern the materials as well as the script used in creating ritual manuscripts such as Torah scrolls, *Tefillin* (phylacteries), and *Mezuzot*.

The laws pertaining to liturgical writing and their scribes are of paramount importance in Jewish tradition and are discussed as such at length in Rabbinic texts, as in the commentary on the Babylonian Talmud of the Provençal scholar R. Menahem Ha-Meiri<sup>13</sup> (1249–1316):

כותבי ספרים תפלין ומזוזות צריכין להזהר במלאכתם מפני שהיא מלאכת שמים שאם יחסרו אות אחת כגון א' שבמלת וה' א-להים אמת או אם יותירו אות אחת כגון שיותר יו"ד אחת בהוה על הוה עד שיהא י-ה-ו-ה על ה' או שיוסיף וא"ו במלת ברא אלהים עד שיהא בראשית בראו א-להים נמצא מחריב את העולם וכן בכמה דברים כיוצא באלו ודרך כלל חסרות ויתירות הוא מן הדברים שפוסלין ספר תורה אפ"י בחסרה אחת או ביתרה אחת.<sup>14</sup>

Writers of Books (Torah scrolls) Tefillin and Mezuzot must be cautious in their craft because it is the work of heaven, if one letter is missing such as the *Aleph* in the word *E-lohim emet* or if one letter is added such as a *Yod* added to the word *hoveh* changing it to *Yod-He-Vav-He*<sup>15</sup> or if one added a *Vav* in the word *Bara E-lohim* (God created) so it becomes *Bereishit Baru E-lohim* (in the beginning gods created), the result is to

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<sup>13</sup> Menaḥem ben Solomon Ha-Meiri (1249, Perpignan–1316, Perpignan), scholar, Talmudist. He authored the scribal manual *Kiryat Sefer* in 1306, a two-volume compendium on the rules that are to be adhered to when writing Torah scrolls.

<sup>14</sup> Menaḥem ben Solomon Ha-Meiri, *Beit ha-Beḥira*, Tractate Sotah 20a. Zichron Yaakov edition, 1978

<sup>15</sup> The Tetragrammaton, a name of G-d considered holy.

destroy the world, as well as some instances similar to these, and usually missing and additional (letters) are one of the things that *poslin* (cause to be unfit for ritual use) a Torah scroll, even one missing or one extra letter.

The great importance of writing these ritual manuscripts, and the ease with which, without the most stringent adherence, one can in the words of the Talmud in tractate *Sotah* brought forth in the quotation by Rabbi Menaḥem Ha-Meiri- "destroy the world" - are the reasons that throughout the generations, the Jewish nation has strictly ensured that only expert scribes engage in this field. Hundreds of books of Jewish law written throughout history have paid special attention to how and what to write, with what, and upon what writing material.

The aim of this thesis is neither to analyse systematically the Rabbinic laws and attitudes to the sacred writing, nor to delve deeply into this subject. I nonetheless wish to emphasize a few important points before elaborating on the main topic, the ritually accepted shapes of the specific letters. Most of the aforementioned laws of scripture are not explicitly written in the Torah. Some laws are found in the commentary of the Sages, while others are "halakhah to Moses from Sinai," a part of the "oral law" received, according to tradition, on Mount Sinai, together with the written Torah. Indeed, it should be noted that the Bible does not contain any specification as to the writing materials and techniques of preparations of the scrolls. However, Rabbinic texts describe them in detail, and attributes their origin to the rules received by Moses on Sinai, subsequently transmitted through generations of Hebrew scribes.

אין כותבין ספרים תפילין ומזוזות, על גבי עור בהמה טמאה וחייה ועוף הטמאין; אבל כותבין על גבי עור בהמה וחייה ועוף הטהורים, ואפילו נבילות וטריפות שלהן. ואין כותבין על גבי עור הדג הטהור, מפני הזוהמה, שאין זוהמתו פוסקת בעבדה.<sup>16</sup>

"הלכה למשה מסיני, שיהיו כותבין ספר תורה על הגוויל, וכותבין במקום השיער; ושיהיו כותבין התפילין על הקלף, וכותבין במקום הבשר; ושיהיו כותבין המזוזה על דוכסוסטוס,

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<sup>16</sup> Maimonides, *Hilkhhot Tefillin*, 1:10

וכותבין במקום השיער. וכל הכותב בקלף במקום שיער, או שכתב בגוויל ובדוכסוסטוס במקום

בשר—פסל.<sup>17</sup>

One must not write Books (Torah scrolls), Tefillin and mezuzot on the skin of a non-kosher animal, beast or fowl; but one may write on the skin of a pure (kosher) animal, beast or fowl even if they are "*neveilot v'treifot*" (not ritually slaughtered according to the Law). And one must not write on the skin of a kosher fish, because of the filth, which does not desist even after it is treated."

"Halakhah to Moshe from Sinai, they should write a Torah scroll on "*gevil*" (leather) on the hair side; and they should write Tefillin on parchment (the animal's epidermis), on the flesh side; and they should write a mezuzah on "*duchsustus*" (the animal's dermis) on the hair side. And one who writes on the parchment on the side of the hair, or who writes on "*gevil*" or "*duchsustus*" on the side of the flesh, has nullified (the manuscript for ritual use).

Furthermore, the scribe must only use black ink according to the "Oral law" tradition, and he must also fashion his letters according to the same traditions.

Additionally, there are multiple laws and guidance pertaining to the process of the writing itself. Examples include that letters cannot touch one another, and that the name of God must not be erased.

## 2.2 Presenting the topic

Today, Sephardic scribes use a specific type of script for their Torah scrolls while Ashkenazic Jewish scribes mainly write using one of two other types of square Hebrew script, generally referred to as the Beth Yosef and Arizal scripts. This thesis presents a detailed study of the two Ashkenazic scripts, with only tangential mention of the Sephardic script; nevertheless the latter will be shown in some comparative figures and charts (see figures 8, 9 and 10.) The following lines are a short insight about the historical background of Sephardic script:

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1:8



The widespread Sepharadic type, contrary to its name, was not limited to the Iberian peninsula. Imported to the Maghreb by immigrants from the Middle East, it made its way to the Iberian peninsula, Provence and Languedoc, to the southern parts of Italy, and to Sicily. At the end of the 14th century, when Sepharadic Jews settled in the northern parts of Italy, the Sepharadic script became one of the main scripts in use there. The Sepharadic script was transported to western Turkey and the Balkans by Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal. There it served the local scribes in addition to their regular scripts. The Sepharadic script<sup>18</sup> revealed some Oriental characteristics at first but gradually abandoned them and developed into a distinctive script.<sup>19</sup>



FIG. 8 SEPHARADIC SCRIPT

The two Ashkenazic scripts, the Beth Yosef and the Arizal scripts are named

FIG. 9 BETH YOSEF SCRIPT



FIG. 10 ARIZAL SCRIPT



respectively after two great 16<sup>th</sup> Century

rabbis from the town of Safed in Galilee, then part of the Ottoman Empire.

“Beth Yosef” script is named after the monumental tome by Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575), the “Beth Yosef,” containing passages which emphasize and pay special attention to

<sup>18</sup> Figures 8, 9 and 10 are 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrations of the three different writing styles. They are taken from the encyclopedic halakhic work of Yehiel Michal Segal Gold, Hungarian Rabbi born in 1899 and killed in 1944. Gold, *Encyklopedie: "Measof Lechol Hamachnoth"*, 194.

<sup>19</sup> Edna Engel, “Script, History of Development,” 485.

the intricate form of the various letters. The Arizal script, which differs from Beth Yosef in regard to the shape of several letters, is based on the teachings of Rabbi Yitzhak Luria Ashkenazi (1534-1572), commonly known as "Ari" or "Arizal," who led a group of scholars who delved into the realm of Kabbalah.

While, in early modern and contemporary times, the Beth Yosef script is typically the one used in Ashkenazic tradition to write Torah scrolls, the Arizal script is characteristically used by Hasidic groups and other communities descended from Hasidim.

The topic of this dissertation—namely the historical development of the Ashkenazi Hebrew letters, and specifically the division into two these two main branches and the halakhic rulings that influenced their development—to the best of my knowledge, has never received an in-depth examination within either academic or public discourse focusing upon **both** the paleographic and halakhic aspects simultaneously. I plan to examine these aspects of this development beginning from the 13th century, when reliably dated manuscripts for examination and research are accessible.

### 2.3 Purpose of the study

The objectives of my research are to examine those letters of the Hebrew alphabet that distinguish these two types of Ashkenazic script: how these letters appeared in manuscripts at different periods, how they evolved, and what historical events influenced their development (including *halakhic* rulings, the growth of book distribution, geographical and demographic changes in the Ashkenazic communities, to name but a few).

### 2.4 The Hypothesis

Through my research, I propose to demonstrate that a specific way of tracing of what is commonly referred to as “the reverse *Yod* of the letter *Tzadi*,” that is the right-hand stroke of the *Tzadi* which is traced like the small letter *Yod*, not only characterized the Sephardic and Oriental Jewish tradition well before the times of Rabbis Yosef Caro and Arizal, but as ancient manuscripts indicate, it was also the original scribal tradition of the Ashkenazic Jewish communities.

As such, I posit that, contrary to accepted views, the use of the shape of the reverse *Yod* is neither due to the influence of the *Kabbalah* of the *Arizal* nor of the later Hasidic movement (that only spread in the eighteenth century); rather that it existed much earlier. Similarly, the left side of the shape of the *Vav* in the letters *Shin*, *Tet* and *Ayin* as well as the prominent left side of the left foot of the *Aleph*, in addition to other letters, that distinguish

the *Arizal* script from that of *Beth Yosef* (fig. 7 on page 9, circled sections) can be found in ancient Ashkenazic manuscripts.

## 2.5 Existing literature

Prior to this thesis, this topic was discussed in a relatively limited capacity mostly in short essays<sup>20</sup> published in journals from the field of Orthodox Jewish thought.<sup>21</sup> One such journal, in which numerous essays were published, is *Kovetz Beit Aharon v-Israel* by Karlin Stolin Institutions.

One specific work in this field to which we will pay particular attention to is the book *Tzidkat Ha'Tzadik* by Rabbi Aryeh Leib Friedman<sup>22</sup> (c.1902, Russia-1993, Israel), which is unique in being relatively large volume (it was published as a book by itself,) and

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<sup>20</sup> Blau, Moshe Isaac. "Be-Divrei ha-Zohar ha-Qadosh ve-ha-Arizal ve-ha-Rav Moshe Cordovero al Yod Hafukha she-b-Tzadi ve-Divrei ha-Posqim." *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, 27, 5 (2011/2012), 188-211; Greenfeld, David Yehuda (Leib). "Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi." *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, year 27, 4 (160) (2011/2012), 143-168; Havlin, Shlomo Zalman. "Od be-Inyan Sefer ha-Torah ha-meyuhas la-RaN. Ha-Tzadi be-Yod Hafukha." *Hama'ayan*, Tishrei, 5773 (2012) (53/1) 203, 27-41; Hol, Eliezer. "Be-Inyan Yod he-Hafukh ba-Ot Tzadi." *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, year 27, Issue 2 (158), (2011/2012), 149-156; David Holzberg, "Be-Inyan Tzurat ha-Yod shel Tzadi," in *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, year 27, Issue 5 (161), 183-7; Klein, Moshe Shaul. "Tzurat Rosh S'mali be-Ot Tzadi al-pi ha-Arizal." *Mi-Beit Levi*, 1994/1995, 83-85; Levin, Avraham Hayim. "Ot Tzadi be-Yod Hafukha she-al pi Ha-Arizal." *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, Issue 129, 87-101; Roth, Yehuda Asher. "Be-Dinei K'tivat Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi." *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, 27, 5 (161), 23-29; Strauss, Avraham. "Tzurat Ot Zayin ve-Tagei Sha'atnez Getz." *Eitz Hayim*, Volume 28 (2017), 94-112.

<sup>21</sup> I would like to mention two academic writings in this field. The first, the writing of Yehuda Liebes, *Tzidkat Hatzadik, Yahas ha-gaon mi-Vilna ve-hugo K'lapei Ha-shabta'ut*, an important essay that deals with the opposition to the reverted *Tzadi* by the halakic authorities. Second, Rabbi Prof. Israel M. Tashma's work *Custom and Reality in Franco-Germany, 1000-1350*, in which, the 5th chapter ('*Ha-Sifrut ha-Hilkhatit ha-Miktzo'it be-Ashkenaz*') deals both with Torah scribes ('*Sofrei STaM*', page 99), and with the work *Barukh She'amar* (page 106).

<sup>22</sup> Aryeh Leib Friedman was born in the Russian town Rechytsa (today in Belarus) in 1902 and died in 1993 in Israel. He was a disciple of the *Mussar* movement, a Jewish ethical, educational and cultural movement that developed in the 19th century in Lithuania. Aryeh Leib Friedman, *Sefer Tzidkat ha-Tzadik: Likkutei Dinim be-Shinui ha-Nusah Ot bi-Khtivat STaM be-Sof Mikhtavim mi-Maran ha-Ga'on ha-Hazon Ish* (Jerusalem: D'fus Safra, 1953/1954).

from the central role of Rabbi Yeshaya Karelitz (1878 –1953),<sup>23</sup> known as the Ḥazon Ish, in the eyes of the Orthodox Jewry. This book is a result of the latter rabbi's long correspondence with the author about but one of the letters that our thesis is dealing with: the letter *Tzadi*.

Another work that is connected to our topic is Mordechai Hess' *Sefer Tmunat ha-Otiyot*<sup>24</sup>. Rabbi Hess researches the original shapes of a collection of Hebrew letters. Importantly for our purposes, he does so with the shape of the letter *Zayin*. Unfortunately, Rabbi Hess – in keeping with other non-academic works of this genre – appears not to have examined original manuscripts, despite how this would have contributed to his research. In cases when he had access to reprints of microfilms of photographed manuscripts, the loss of the quality which occurred over the many stages of inferior reproduction was apparent, and it can be seen that using copies of sources can lead to a mistaken understanding of original shapes at times. From an academic point of view, another problem with essays of this genre is not referring correctly – if at all – to the origin of the manuscripts in question.

For the purposes of my research for this thesis, I nevertheless found the literature published in the field very helpful, despite the aforementioned challenges in some cases, and I remain very grateful to their authors.

Throughout this thesis, my objective is to make use of this literature, examining it from both the perspective of modern academic research methods and my personal expertise as a scribe.

### 2.5.1 The Book "*Tzidkat Ha'Tzadik*"

In his book "*Tzidkat ha-Tzadik*," Rabbi Aryeh Leib Friedman discusses in depth the shape of the letter *Tzadi*. Rabbi Friedman brings most of his evidence from the Sepharadic script, pointing out its antiquity, but also posits that both the Ashkenazic and the Sepharadic scripts

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<sup>23</sup> Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz known by the name of his magnum opus, Ḥazon Ish, was a Belarussian-born Orthodox rabbi who later became one of the leaders of Haredi Judaism in Israel, where he spent his final 20 years, from 1933 to 1953.

<sup>24</sup> Hess, Mordechai. *Sefer T'munat ha-Otiyot. Volume I*. Bene-Beraq: published by the author, 1993/1994.

are kosher, and that both are the "living words of God,"<sup>25</sup> and none of them should be ruled out. Ḥasidic communities used the Arizal script, meaning that according to their custom, the letter *Tzadi* has 'Reverse *Yod*' similarly to the Sepharadic custom. Therefore, after proving the Sepharadic script kosher, the allegation against the Ḥasidic custom, according to which they write "Reverse *Yod*" on the letter *Tzadi*, is invalid. Although, according to the *Hazon Ish*, the "reverse *Tzadi*" inhibits the kosher use of the manuscripts, this is only for those whose tradition is to write a "straight *Tzadi*" and not for those who practice the Sepharadic tradition, and have used the "reverse *Tzadi*" for generations. However, the author of the "*Tzidkat HaTzadik*" presents halakhic evidence that the use of the inverted *Yod* is valid in any Jewish community.

We will not deal with *Tzidkat ha-Tzadik* in depth, rather we will suggest a different angle from a historical perspective. It seems that historically, not only the Sepharadic communities wrote the letter *Tzadi* with the reverse *Yod*, so it is not equitable to state that those Ashkenazic communities who do the same do fulfil their obligation to the Torah commandments. On the contrary, as we will show in this thesis, the original custom of Ashkenazic Jews, many generations before the emergence of the traditions of the Arizal and the Beth Yosef, may very well have been to write with a reverse *Tzadi*, as well as the letters *Ayin* and *Shin* in the style later described by the Arizal.

## 2.6 Research Methodology

In order to study in depth both the developments of these specific features of the letters and the context of their development, I will first examine the historical square script as written in a number of early medieval Ashkenazic manuscripts. Yet not all square scripts fit this purpose, as halakhic rules were not followed strictly in all manuscripts. Indeed, there is a

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<sup>25</sup> A Talmudic expression. See Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b: "אמר רב אבא אמר שמואל: שלוש שנים נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל, הללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו, והללו אומרים הלכה כמותנו. יצאה בת קול ואמרה: 'אלו ואלו דברי אלהים חיים הן, וההלכה כבית הלל'."

"R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: For three years there was a dispute between Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel, the former asserting, 'The halakhah is in agreement with our views' and the latter contending, 'The halakhah is in agreement with our views'. Then a bath kol (a heavenly voice) issued announcing, '[The utterances of] both are the words of the living God, but the halakhah is in agreement with the rulings of Beth Hillel'."

different attitude towards the observance of the strict scribal rules in the sacralised Torah scrolls used in liturgy, and the square script of codices such as *maḥzorim* (festival prayer books). A Torah scroll, on the other hand, is ideal: due to the sacred role of the Torah scroll as a ritual object, the laws and traditions concerning the writing have been carefully preserved. However, a problem arises from a research standpoint, since Torah scrolls are usually not dated, save some instances where we find inscriptions on the *atze ḥayim*<sup>26</sup>.

To circumvent this challenge, I have decided to concentrate my research on four ancient Torah scrolls from Erfurt, Germany. The Jewish community of Erfurt was looted in 1349 following anti-Jewish accusations in the wake of the epidemic known as the Black Death, and the scrolls were confiscated then and there. We therefore know the terminus ad quem of their writing. These Torah scrolls are now housed in the State Library in Berlin.

For the analysis of the letters, I will use a method developed by Dr. Edna Engel.<sup>27</sup> This method is based on “(a)nalyzing the individual parts of the letter, graphing and putting them together again”<sup>28</sup> Since the conservative nature of the Hebrew writing requires adherence to rigid writing rules, I intend to examine the minute differences between the letters of the styles known as Beth Yosef and Arizal. “(T)hese morphological changes can best be expressed in terms of the modification of the individual parts of the letter rather than a whole.”<sup>29</sup> For a detailed explanation of the method, see Chapter 7.1.

## 2.7 The Erfurt Scrolls

As mentioned, Torah scrolls, in general, cannot be exactly dated as they have no colophon. In the case of the Erfurt Torah scrolls, we only know for certain that they were written before 1349, at which time they were confiscated from the Jewish community. Aside from this, as there are no clear inscriptions on the scrolls themselves, a more precise date is unknown.

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<sup>26</sup> Literally, “trees of life”; in singular, *etz ḥayim*.

<sup>27</sup> Edna Engel, "The Analysis of the Letter – a New Palaeographical Method," 43-50. See also Edna Engel, *Hitpathut ha-K'tav ha-Ivri mi-Mered Bar-Kokhba ad Sh'nat 1000*.

<sup>28</sup> Engel, "The Analysis of the Letter," 43.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## 2.8 Scope of this research

In this thesis we will introduce the Erfurt Torah scrolls as manuscripts that most fit the purpose of our research. We will explain what the halakhic terms of "Arizal" and "Beth Yosef" script stand for. We will introduce the relevant halakhic literature, works that deal with Kabbalah as a source for the Arizal script, and the sources of the Beth Yosef script found in Rabbi Yosef Caro's work, the Beth Yosef.

We will show that the source that is referred to by the Beth Yosef as Barukh She'amar is not really authored by "Rabbi Yitzhak Barukh She'amar" as mentioned by Rabbi Caro. We will discuss the different layers and the actual authors of that work.

As for the Arizal script, we will introduce what is written in Shaar ha-Kavanot and other literature. We will discuss which kind of liturgic uses the specific letters that in the Arizal script differ from the Beth Yosef script, and the purposes these have. We will show a range of opinions that suggest that these letters are meant for use in Tefillin only, and others that suggest that they are also meant for use in Torah scrolls.

These are the letters whose shapes will be investigated in this thesis:

*Aleph* (א), *Het* (ה), *Tet* (ט), *Ayin* (ע), *Tzadi* (צ), *Final Tzadi* (ץ), and *Shin* (ש).

In order to understand the nature of the differences between *Arizal* and *Beth Yosef* scripts regarding the variants of these letters, for the purposes of this thesis it will be only necessary to examine three specific letter components. This is because one of these components, the shape of the letter *Zayin*, also appears on the left side of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, *final Tzadi* and *Shin*.

These three components will be:

1 The letter *Zayin* as it appears the left side of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, *final Tzadi* and *Shin*.

2 The left leg of the letter *Aleph*

3 The *Yod*<sup>30</sup> incorporated in the letter *Tzadi*

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<sup>30</sup> We will also discuss the the approach that defines letters of the alphabet as composed of other letters, like in the example of a component of the letter *Tzadi* that is called *Yod*.

We will discuss what, if any, halakhic problems are involved with the slight differences between these two scripts.

As the central component of our research, we will show the shapes of the letters as they appear in ancient Ashkenazic writing: we will present a graphic analysis of the Erfurt scrolls according to the method developed by Dr. Engel.

From the aforementioned three graphic elements that we are going to research (the shape of the letter *Zayin*, the *Yod* of the letter *Tzadi* and the left foot of the letter *Aleph*) we will pay particular attention to the shape of the *Zayin* and the *Yod* of the letter *Tzadi*.

For both of these graphic elements we will quote considerable sources of the relevant literature. To provide additional explanation, and to support the various statements made throughout the thesis, we will also utilise the Hamilton Siddur's zoomorphic letters for demonstrating the ductus of the letters discussed by authorities of different eras and regions.

The overall objective of this research, that we hope to reach, is to examine whether through analysing the four Torah scrolls from Erfurt we will be able to see the similarities between the early Ashkenazic writing styles (predating both namesakes, Rabbi Yosef Caro and Rabbi Yitzhak Luria) and the modern scribal styles named after them. The goal of this research is to draw conclusions which can have practical and meaningful ramifications to both future research on the topic and to the field of paleography and scribal arts today.

### 3 Historical Background

The four Torah scrolls<sup>31</sup> from the city of Erfurt, Germany, were taken from the Jewish community during a pogrom connected with the Black Death epidemic that killed a

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31 Frank Hubmann, and Josef Oesch, "Betrachtungen zu den Torarollen der Erfurter Handschriften-Sammlung. Untersuchungen zu Gliederung und Sonderzeichen," in *Die jüdische Gemeinde von Erfurt und die SchUM-Gemeinden. Kulturelles Erbe und Vernetzung. Erfurter Schriften zur jüdischen Geschichte 1*, ed. F. Bussert and S. Laubenstein (Erfurt: Jena, Bussert & Stadeler, 2012) 96–117; Ephraim Caspi, "Gevilim Nisrafim be-Shabbat Rosh Chodesh Parashat ha-Chodesh" in *Yerushaseinu*, vol. 7, ed. Sh. Y. L. Hoffmann and D. Chichak (Bene Berak: Machon Moreshet Ashkenaz, 2014), 97–101; Jordan Penkower "The Ashkenazi Pentateuch Tradition as Reflected in the Erfurt Hebrew Bible Codices and Torah Scrolls," in *Zu Bild und Text im jüdisch-christlichen Kontext im Mittelalter*, ed. F. Bussert, S. Laubenstein and M. Stürzebecher, *Erfurter Schriften zur jüdischen Geschichte 3* (Erfurt:



significant part of the population in many areas of Europe in the middle of the 14th century. The Erfurt scrolls are of great importance for research because no updates, corrections, or changes were made to the spaces between sections or to the shapes and sizes of the letters since the scrolls passed into non-Jewish hands in 1349. This allows a rare window into the traditions of this time period.<sup>32</sup>



**FIG. 11 JEWS ARE BURNED ALIVE DURING THE POGROM FOLLOWING THE BLACK PLAGUE<sup>33</sup>**

The following illustrations are excerpts from the four Erfurt Torah scrolls:

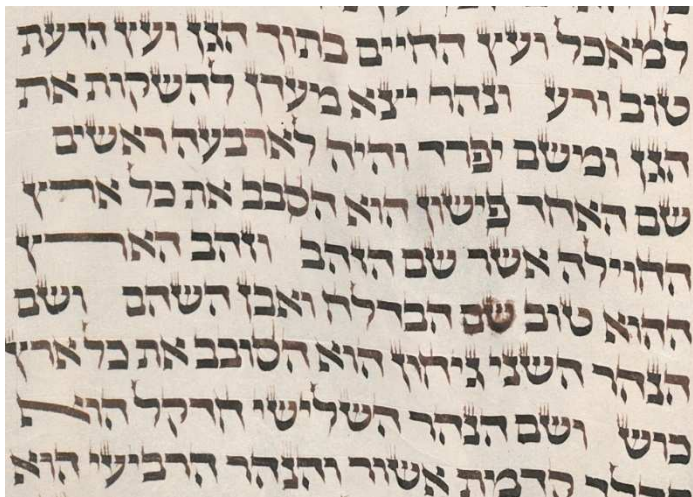
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Jena, Bussert & Stadeler, 2014), 118 – 141; Erfurt Collection: [https://juedisches-leben.erfurt.de/jl/en/middle-ages/hebrew\\_manuscripts/research/index.html](https://juedisches-leben.erfurt.de/jl/en/middle-ages/hebrew_manuscripts/research/index.html) (last accessed 14th March 2021); Annett Martini, „Die Geschichte der Erfurter Handschriftensammlung“ in: *Die hebräischen Handschriften der Erfurter Sammlung* (2018), [https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/erfurter\\_sammlung/index.html](https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/erfurter_sammlung/index.html) (last accessed 9.04.2021); Mark Farnadi-Jerusálmí, “Palaeographic and Halakhic aspects of the Erfurt Torah Scrolls,” in *Ritual Objects in Ritual Contexts, Erfurter Schriften zur jüdischen Geschichte 6*, ed. C. Bergmann and M. Stürzebecher, (Erfurt: Jena, Bussert & Stadeler, 2020)

<sup>32</sup> Torah scrolls from the same era that continued to be in use for the coming centuries were usually altered in multiple ways. For example, after the halakic rulings of Maimonides (1135 or 1138, Córdoba – 1204, Fostat) were widely accepted, originally-empty spaces were filled with elongated letters in order to eliminate superfluous separation into paragraphs. Or if originally there was no space between paragraphs, existing letters had to be squeezed in order to make space for the empty sections separating paragraphs. Shapes of letters were changed, for example, by making them squarer, in order to satisfy the standards of newer generations.

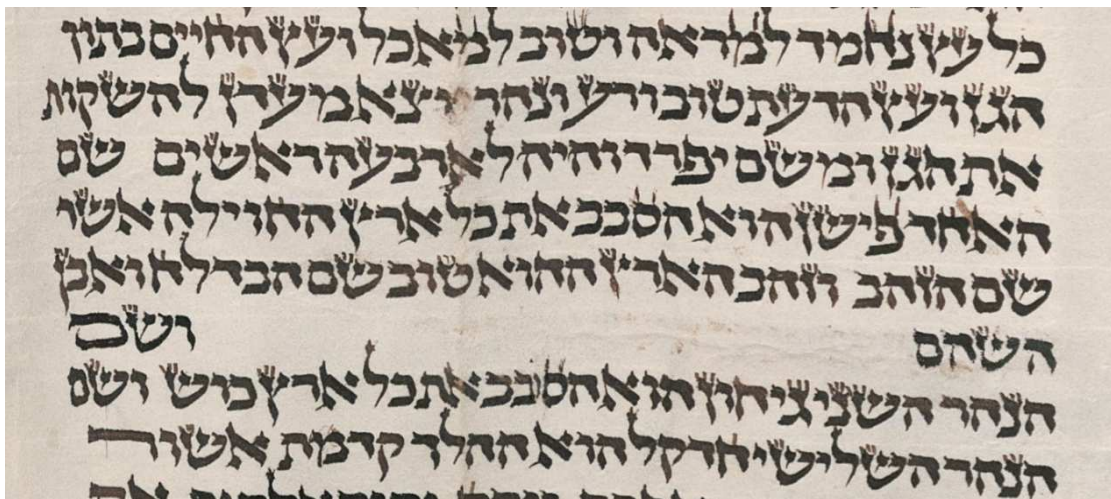
<sup>33</sup> Gilles Le Muisit, *Annales*, Tournai, 1353, Brussels, Bibliotheque royale de Belgique, Ms 13076 /7, f. 12V

FIGURE 12



Erfurt Torah scroll 6<sup>34</sup> today Ms. or. fol. 1215

FIGURE 13



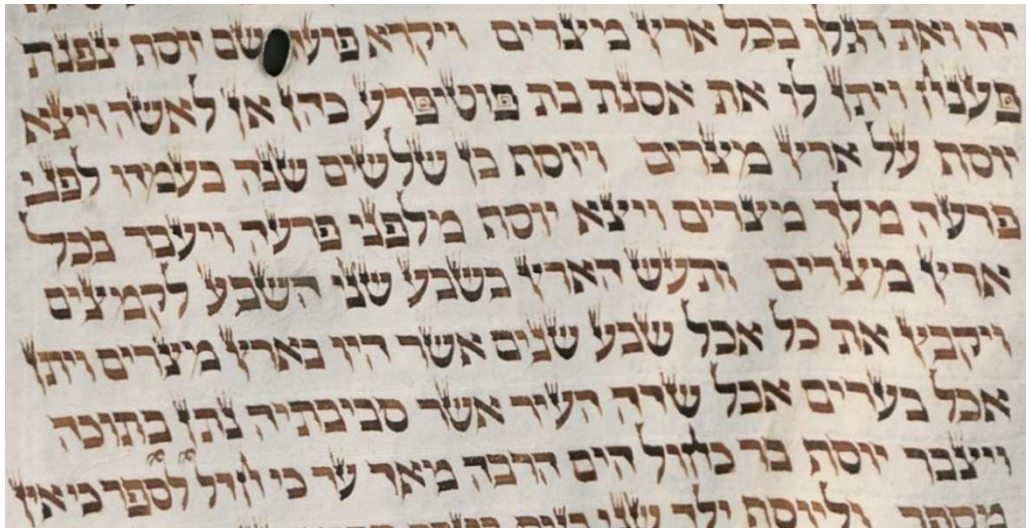
Erfurt Torah scroll 7<sup>35</sup> Today Ms. or. fol. 1216

FIGURE 14

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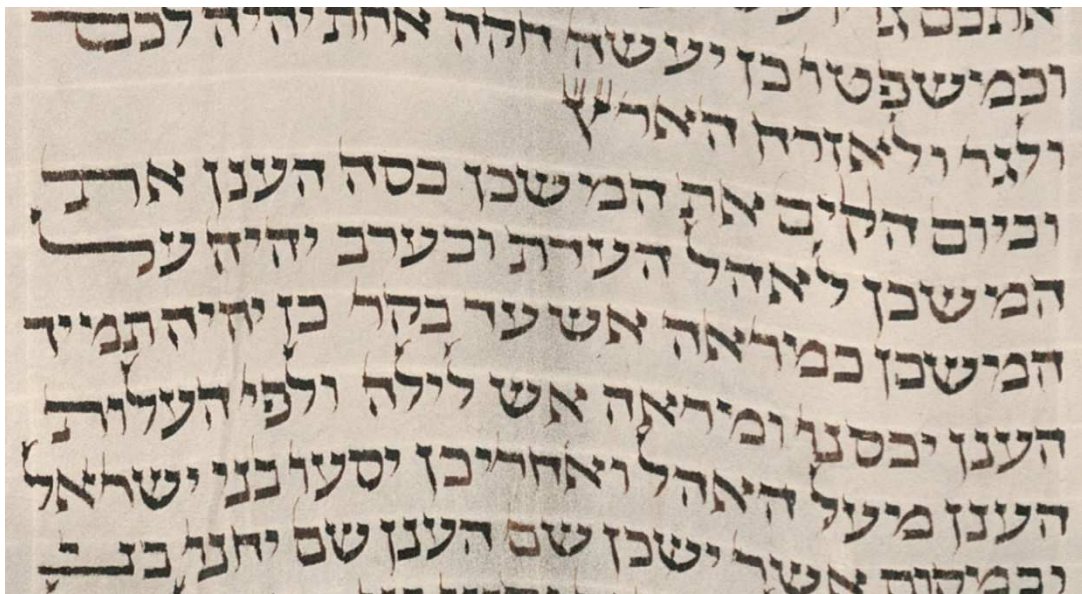
<sup>34</sup> digital version (last accessed on April 29, 2020) <[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN663193613&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0001](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN663193613&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001)>

<sup>35</sup> digital version (last accessed on April 29, 2020) <[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN666097267&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0001&view=picture-full](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN666097267&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001&view=picture-full)>



Erfurt Torah scroll 8<sup>36</sup> today Ms. or. fol. 1217

FIGURE 15



Erfurt Torah scroll 9<sup>37</sup> today Ms. or. fol. 1218

<sup>36</sup> digital version (last accessed on April 29, 2020) < [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN666097291&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0001](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN666097291&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001)>

<sup>37</sup> digital version (last accessed on April 29, 2020) < [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN66609733X&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0001](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN66609733X&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001)>

### 3.1 The approach that defines letters of the alphabet as composed of other letters

The palaeographical approach I have followed in my research considers the shape and the way of tracing (ductus) specific letters as composed of other simpler letters.<sup>38</sup> For example, according to this approach, the letter *Tav* is composed of a *Resh* followed by a *Nun*, or *Tzadi* is composed of a *Nun* and a *Yod*. This possibility of tracing the letter as a combination of components corresponding to simple letters (like *Yod* and *Vav*) has a long tradition, as we will see. Describing a certain graphic element of the letter shouldn't necessarily be understood as an instruction (and historically speaking it wasn't, or at least wasn't always understood as such)<sup>39</sup> to write that very element exactly in the shape of the mentioned letter. Rather it is a convenient way<sup>40</sup> to describe the shape of the letter.<sup>41</sup> It is also clear that opposing opinions exist as well: if not, a major part of this thesis - discussing whether the right-hand element of the letter *Tzadi* named 'Yod' has to be written in a way that exactly resembles the letter *Yod* - would have never been written.

One of the first examples of this can be seen in the late midrash "*Otiyot D'Rabbi Akiva*,"<sup>42</sup> where the right-hand element of the letter Aleph is referred to as a letter *Yod*.

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<sup>38</sup> As Colette Sirat writes (referring to Yardeni, *Sefer ha-Ketav ha-Ivri: Toldot, Yesodot, Signonot, Itzuv*): "Hebrew writing often gives an impression of having permanent features, which have been set out by Ada Yardeni in a sort of 'grammar' of the Hebrew letter, based on a mental schema of the letter, which gives a skeleton that underlies all the basic strokes, to which additional strokes must be added to produce the 'actual' letter form." Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, 171.

<sup>39</sup> It became understood as such when scribal tradition shifted from being 'mimetic' towards a text-based authority. Then scribes tried to write the graphic elements of letters in a way that letters that they are named after written. See chapter 4 Mimetic Tradition and Text-Based Authority.

<sup>40</sup> And besides that, it is also a basis of esoteric explanations.

<sup>41</sup> See David Holzberg, "Be-Inyan Tzurat ha-Yod shel Tzadi," in *Qovetz Beit Aharon vIsrael*, year 27, Issue 5 (161), 183-7, especially p.184 proving this statement.

<sup>42</sup> Attributed to the tanna (rabbinic sage from the Mishnaic period) Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef (c. 50– 135 CE, Palestine) based on Menaḥot 29b. Even though his authorship is not accepted by academic research, we can place the time of its writing of at least parts of it back in time as far as the early 10th century, when it was severely attacked and ridiculed by Solomon ben Jeroham, the Karaite sage from Jerusalem. (See Akiba ben Joseph, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*). Heinrich Grätz reached the conclusion that *Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva* was the

Although some posit that the original *midrash* refers to this section as "yad"<sup>43</sup> (literally "a hand") and not *Yod*, two medieval Ashkenazi sources, the *Sefer Ha-Teruma*<sup>44</sup> (by Rabbi Barukh ben Isaac active in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, emigrated to Palestine in 1237) and the *Hagahot Maimoniyot*<sup>45</sup> (Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg c. 1215–1293) quote this source with the understanding as the letter "Yod".

Therefore, we see that towards the end of the period of the Tosafot the letters were seen to be composed of other letters. The *Yod* as a component also appears in the "*Tikkun Tefillin*"<sup>46</sup>. The "*Tikkun Tefillin*" mentions other letter components, such as the *Zayin* within the letter *Het*.<sup>47</sup>

An additional source is the *Zohar*, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 10.2. An even earlier source is the *Sefer Ha-Bahir*, which is attributed to the *Tanna* Rabbi Neḥuniya ben Ha-kana:<sup>48</sup>:

שאלו אותו מאי צד"י, אמר להם זה נו"ן יו"ד צד"י אף זוגו נו"ן יו"ד הדא בוא דכתיב "וצדיק יסוד  
עולם" (משלי י, כה)<sup>49</sup>

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first text of the so-called Hekhalot literature (see Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, first page of Chapter Four). Thanks to Prof. Judith Schlanger for pointing out that it is an Oriental work.

<sup>43</sup> *Otiyot shel Rabbi Akiva*, 4A.

<sup>44</sup> Warsaw, 1899, repr. Jerusalem, 1979. *Hilkhhot Tefillin*, 1:19.

<sup>45</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 53

<sup>46</sup> Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM [Barukh She'amar]*, part I, 75 (Hebrew numbering). See also chapter 5.2 of this current thesis.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 105

<sup>48</sup> Rabbi Neḥuniya ben ha-Kana was a *tanna* (rabbinic sage from the Mishnaic period) who lived in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Even though his authorship is not accepted by academic research, according to Prof. Ronit Meroz from Tel-Aviv University we can place the time of the writing of at least parts of *Sefer ha-Bahir* back in time as far as "9th century or in the early 10th century," while other parts may date to the 12th century. "The Book Bahir's use of the Babylonian grammar and vocalization system (which also reflects a different pronunciation and was widely utilized throughout the East) decisively proves the existence of an Oriental layer.(...) Only if the Book Bahir was written in a region in which the Babylonian system was in use can we assign any meaning to a claim such as - "the Lord placed a pataḥ above [a letter] and a segol beneath." Meroz, "The Middle Eastern Origins of Kabbalah," 50.

<sup>49</sup> Yaakov Darḥi, *Sefer ha-Bahir la-Tanna Rabbi Neḥunia ben ha-Kana im Peirush Raḥash Libi Davar Tov*, 71.

They asked him, “What is the letter *Tzadi*?”

He said: Tzadi is a Nun and a Yod. Its mate is also a Nun and a Yod.

It is thus written (*Proverbs 10:25*), “The righteous (*Tzadik*) is the foundation of the world”<sup>50</sup>

### 3.2 Different writing styles by geographical breakdown

My research is concerned with the development of the Ashkenazi script styles. Scholars differentiate different script-types according to the broader geo-cultural areas: "The widespread of the medieval Jewish Diaspora in the sphere of several civilizations and cultures - Muslim-Arab in the East and West, Christian-Latin in Western Europe and Byzantine-Greek in territories that were part of the Byzantine Empire before its fall (and in South Eastern Italy) effected the diversity of Hebrew writing, and the formulation of the Hebrew script within their realm and its design."<sup>51</sup>

The following map shows the dispersion of the Jewish people in the diaspora (fig 16)

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<sup>50</sup> English translation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. Kaplan, Aryeh. *The Bahir: A Translation and Commentary*. Page number unavailable because of COVID-19.

<sup>51</sup> Beit-Arié, Malachi. Hebrew Codicology. Digital version (last accessed on November 17, 2020) <<https://www.nli.org.il/media/4959/hebrew-codicology-continuously-updated-online-version.pdf>>

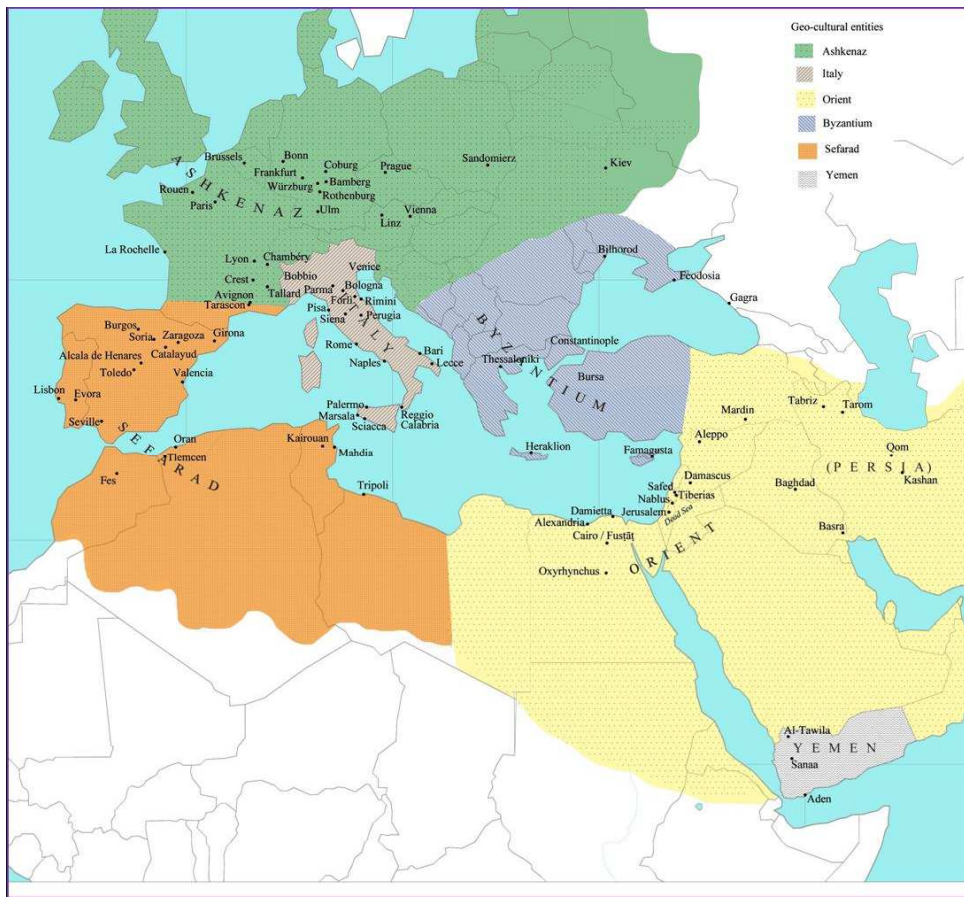


FIGURE 16<sup>52</sup>

Ashkenaz is a “designation of the first relatively compact area of settlement of Jews in N.W. Europe, initially on the banks of the Rhine”<sup>53</sup> and in France.

The term became identified with, and denotes in its narrower sense, Germany, German Jewry, and German Jews ("Ashkenazim"), as well as their descendants in other countries. It has evolved a broader connotation denoting the entire Ashkenazic Jewish cultural complex, (...) emanating from the center in northern France and Germany, later spread to Poland-Lithuania, and in modern times embraces Jewish settlements all over the world whose members share and activate it. (...) a possible source of explanation (of the word's etymology) may be in the name Scandza or Scanzia, the designation of Scandinavia in several sources, which was regarded as

<sup>52</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>53</sup> Encyclopaedia Judaica, s.v. “Ashkenaz”.

the cradle of some Germanic tribes. (...) According to another theory, the connotation derives from the phonic resemblance of "Ashkenaz" to "Saxons" who during the period of Charlemagne constituted the predominant Germanic element in the Frankish kingdom (...) Thus in Rashi's (1040–1105) commentary on the Talmud, German expressions appear as *lashon Ashkenaz* (Suk. 17a; Git. 55b; BM 73b). Similarly, when Rashi writes: "But in Ashkenaz I saw..." (Ket. 77b) he no doubt meant the communities of Mainz and Worms in which he had dwelt.<sup>54</sup>

During the period of the scholars known as the "*Rishonim*" (1038-1492) other communities of Ashkenazic Jews began to develop, further removed from the original Ashkenazic "homeland" (see fig. 17). At the new locations, (such as Austria, Bohemia, Poland, etc.) new communities developed with local modifications. and became known as new subgroups of Ashkenazic Jewry. Each community had different characteristics and customs.

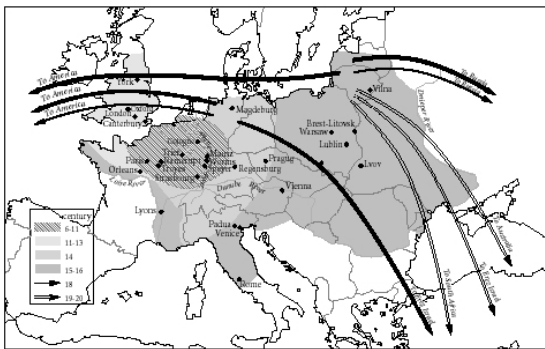


FIG. 17<sup>55</sup>

The difference between the shapes of the letters in the different areas of the Jewish diaspora had been discussed already in Medieval times. According to the following quotation, Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel, also known as the *Rosh* (acronym of ‘Our Master, Asher’) was aware of the difference between Sephardic and Ashkenazic scripts. His extensive travel helped him to learn closely from traditions of Jewish communities of various geographical areas. He was born around 1250 in Cologne, in the Holy Roman empire which

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Map from Encyclopaedia Judaica.



he had to leave. After settling first in southern France, he eventually became the rabbi of Toledo, Spain, where he died in 1328.

This is what he writes about the scribal styles of different regions:

וצורת האותיות אינם שוות בכל המדינות, הרבה משונה כתב ארצנו מכתב הארץ הזאת ואין פסול בשינוי  
הזה רק שלא יעשה ההי"ן חתי"ן כפי"ן בית"ן וכמו שמפרש בגמרא (שבת קג:).<sup>56</sup>

The forms of the letters are not the same in all countries. There is a large difference between the script in our country from that of this country, and there is nothing wrong with this difference, only that the letters *Heh* shouldn't be written as *Het* and *Kaf* as *Bet* and as interpreted in the Gemara (Shabbat, 103b).

Rabbi Uri Shraga Feivel Halevi Schreier<sup>57</sup> (1819-1889) in his work "*Mikdash Me'at*," quotes the words of the *Rosh*, written some six hundred years before him. *Mikdash Me'at* is a book of high importance in the field of laws of *STaM*, so much that today's *megihim* or scroll supervisors in order to receive a certificate from *Vaad Mishmeres STaM*<sup>58</sup> are tested on their knowledge on this book, among others. This is what he writes:

תשובת הרא"ש צורת האותיות אינם שוין בכל המדינות. הרבה משונה כתב ארצנו מכתב ארץ זו וכו'.  
מ"ש כתב ארצנו ר"ל ארץ אשכנז שהיא הרה וילדה את רבינו הרא"ש (ושם שימש את רבו הגדול ר"מ  
מרוטנבורג) וארץ ספרד גדלה שעשועיה שברה מארצו לספרד וכו' וכנראה דכתב דארץ אשכנז בימי  
רא"ש וטור היה מה שאנו קורין עתה וועלי"ש ולא נהגו בו עתה".<sup>59</sup>

The responsum of the *Rosh*: "The forms of the letters are not the same in all countries. There is a large difference between the script in our country from that of this country,

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<sup>56</sup> Asher ben Yehiel: *She'elot u'Teshuvot, Principle 3, siman 11*. In Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 25

<sup>57</sup> The Rabbi of Bohorodczany (Galicia). A prominent member and honorary president of the of the proto-Zionist Association Ahavat Zion. Rabbi Schreier published the book *Daat Kdoshim* -a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Caro's *Shulhan Arukh*- of his teacher, the famous Talmudic scholar and Ḥasidic leader Rabbi Avraham David Wahrman (of Buczacz, Galicia) with the commentary of his own, *Mikdash Me'at*.

<sup>58</sup> The centre for international activities to preserve and promote the integrity of the scribal arts.

<sup>59</sup> Halevy 1895-96, Oraḥ Ḥayim siman 36, se'if katan 3, p. 29a

etc.” By "our country" meaning the country of Ashkenaz, who bore and raised our master the *Rosh* (and there he served his great teacher, the Rabbi of Rotenburg), and the land of Spain...he escaped from his country to Spain, etc. Probably the script of land of Ashkenaz to which he referred, in the days of the *Rosh* and the *Tur*, was what we now call "Velish" and it is not practiced today.

To understand these few lines from Rabbi Schreier it is important to clarify the meaning of the term Velish used by him. In modern Ashkenazic halakhic literature of scribal art, it is used for describing Sephardic writing<sup>60</sup>. It might not be exactly the same meaning as Rabbi Schreier's usage, but when the word's etymology is explained, one can understand what is common between them.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Yehezkel Landau (1713, Poland – 1793, Prague) in *Noda Bihudah, Yore De'ah* 161; Rabbi Moses Schreiber (1762–1839) in his responsa *Hatam Sofer*, Volume 2, *Yore De'ah* 268; Rabbi Isaac Haver (1789–1852, Poland) in his responsa *Binyan Olam, Yore De'ah* 54; Sholom Mordechai Schwadron (1835 – 1911, Galicia) in his responsa *SHuT Maharsham*, volume 2, 120; Tzvi Pesah Frank (1873, Russia –1960, Israel) in his responsa *Har Tzvi, Oraḥ Hayim* 1:32; Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam (1905, Poland – 1994, Israel) in his responsa *Divrei Yatziv, Oraḥ Hayim* 32, just to mention a few.

<sup>61</sup> In German, the word *welsch* means foreign, especially Romance, southern. In Middle High German, *welsch*, *walhisch* and in Old High German *wal(a)hisc* =Romance (see Duden Dictionary). According to the Comprehensive Yiddish-English Dictionary of Solon Beinfeld and Harry Brochner (available online at <http://verterbukh.org/>), the word *Velish* in Yiddish means Italian.

The origin of the word is the following: Originally used for the Celtic tribe of the *Volcae*. This tribe lived in the south-eastern regions of Gaul (modern France). The sound w- in Germanic is regularly rendered as *gu-* / *g-* in French (Guillaume is the French equivalent of William, *guerre* is the French word for war, etc.). As exonyms, words from this root were applied by Germanic speakers to Celts and Latin-speaking people (see the names Wales, Cornwall, Wallonia, and Wallachia) and later by non-Germanic people as well.

The ancient Germanic people called the neighboring Celts by the name *Walha*. Consequently, in English the name of Cymru, a Celtic country in the UK, is Wales (from the Old English *Wealh*).

As the Celts on the European continent were gradually Romanized (between 2nd century BCE and 2nd century CE), the Germans began using the term *Walha* to also denote the Romans and Romance-speaking peoples in general. In Switzerland, the German-speaking inhabitants call their French-, Italian- and Rheto-Romance-

This quote shows that at the time of writing the *Mikdash Me'at*, in the 19th century, its author was familiar with at least three types of Hebrew script: the script common in Ashkenaz during the time of the *Rosh*, in the 13<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> century, the script that was common in Spain during the time of the *Rosh*, and the script that was "practiced today" – at the time of the *Mikdash Me'at*. The first script is that of Rabbi Asher ben Yehiel's vicinity, the region of *Ashkenaz* that was centred on the Rhineland and the (see fig. 17). This is the script that Rabbi Schreier calls "*Velish*" (differently from the most common Ashkenazic use of the word), see above. Apparently, the script known as "practiced today" in the words of Rabbi Schreier, was different from what was known to him from scrolls or manuscripts from Medieval times written in the area then called Ashkenaz. He called it *Velish*, a foreign script.

Indeed, the distinction between the medieval script and the one used in the 19th century, both in Ashkenaz, is relevant for our discussion.

The rules concerning the script of liturgical scrolls today are oblivious to the chronological developments and differences. In contrast to the modern uniformity of the script, rules and texts that regulate it, the Middle Ages witnessed a much greater diversity of styles.

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speaking compatriots *Welschen*, and the part of their country populated by them *welsche Schweiz*. The Romance-speaking population in the Low Countries accepted the term *Walha* as its own ethnic name under the form *Wallons* (in English *Walloons*).

The Italian language is *wloski* in Polish and is *olasz* in Hungarian. In Old Hungarian, the meaning of the same word included French-speaking people as well. Also in Hungarian, the word *oláh* means Romanian, all from the same route. The latter is connected to the principality of Wallachia, called *Vlashko* in Bulgarian, Wallachia became part of United Principalities of Moldavia, and in 1862 part of what became Romania in 1866. The Vlachs, closely related to the Romanians, are Romance-speaking peoples in the Balkan peninsula (in Serbia, Albania, Greece, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria).

Rotwelsch is a secret language or thieves' argot, spoken mainly by marginalized groups in southern Germany and Switzerland. It is based primarily on German. but contains numerous words from other languages. Even though it is used by people living in the same county, it is called 'Welsch,' a language of strangers. (This footnote is based partially on the Duden Dictionary).

After the spread of Ashkenazic Jews to the east, additional local styles developed in Europe: Russian, Polish and German style, etc. These slightly different styles existed respectively in the different geographical areas. In each community scribes—as Maimonides states – "practiced according to what was transmitted orally from one to another."<sup>62</sup>

## 4 Mimetic Tradition and Text-Based Authority

The shift that occurred later was well described in Rabbi Professor Haym Soloveitchik's<sup>63</sup> (1937-) essay "Rupture and Reconstruction." This essay has served as a lens through which one can understand the two different approaches in Judaism by differentiating between "mimetic tradition" and "text-based authority". As Soloveitchik describes, the shift between these approaches started from around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and became more and more widespread during the 20th century. He argues that the rupture was mainly caused by the relocation of Jews from the old European communities to new ones in America and Israel.

Established practice can no longer hold its own against the demands of the written word. (...) Custom is potent, but its true power is informal (...). Anything learned from study that conflicts with accustomed practice cannot really be right, as things simply can't be different than they are. (...) When interrogated, habit replies in approximations, a matter of discredit in the new religious atmosphere. (...) Habit is static; theoretical knowledge is dynamic and consequential.<sup>64</sup>

Although this text-based authority is clearly not unprecedented (and those precedents are also important for our topic<sup>65</sup>), researching the Hebrew scribal styles throughout history

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<sup>62</sup> Maimonides: *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Tefillin u-Mezuza ve-Sefer Torah, 7:10*. Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 25.

<sup>63</sup> Haym Soloveitchik was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1937, the son of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Among his roles during his career were professor at Hebrew University until 1984, and as a Rosh Yeshiva (dean) at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary.

<sup>64</sup> Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction," 71-72.

<sup>65</sup> As Rabbi Micha Berger writes: "Arguably, the very compilation of the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmuds were driven by similar ruptures in our cultural life, due to persecution and relocations, and this forced the

it is hard to disagree with Rabbi Soloveitchik's claim that it is more characteristic to the period starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century than ever before.<sup>66</sup> Following the upheavals in the world during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a process of unification in the styles of writing, so that today it is almost impossible to define writing styles by geographical location.<sup>67</sup> Within this uniform style, differences in the shape of a small number of letters result in the existence of basically only two Ashkenazic writing styles, Arizal and Beth Yosef.<sup>68</sup>

This text culture is the very reason of the polemic around the right-side component of the letter *Tzadi*. Even though the description in the *Barukh She'amar*<sup>69</sup> quoted by Rabbi Yosef Caro in his Beth Yosef describes it as *Yod*-like, during most of history scribes did not understand this as an instruction to write it exactly in the shape of the letter *Yod*.<sup>70</sup>

## 5 The terms "Arizal" and "Beth Yosef"

This study will trace the general development of Ashkenazic script throughout the generations, and in particular the development of certain letters in two types of Ashkenazic

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formalization of texts to lean on. And it is not likely coincidental that the Shulḥan Arukh was the product of a refugee of the Spanish Expulsion. The flight of Jews from Spain and Portugal ruptured the more natural mimetic chain of transmission, and this led to a greater need to depend on a codification of Halakhah in a text.” Berger, Micha: “Rupture and Reconstruction at 25 Years,” <https://www.torahmusings.com/2019/08/rupture-and-reconstruction-at-25-years/> (last accessed on April 29, 2020).

<sup>66</sup> The text that this ‘text-based authority’ is mostly based on is the *Mishna Berura* of Yisrael Meir (HaKohen) Kagan (1838 - 1933) from White Russia.

<sup>67</sup> The Russian style has been preserved and is in use by the Chabad sect as the script of the "*Alter Rebbe*", but cannot be defined by geographic location anymore.

<sup>68</sup> In addition to these Ashkenazic styles, there is also a Sephardic script which is beyond the scope of this thesis and will be referred to only as a matter of comparison.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 5.2 on Barukh She'amar.

<sup>70</sup> As will be shown in Chapter 10.

ritual scripts (*STaM*)<sup>71</sup> known today - the *Arizal* script and the *Beth Yosef* script.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, we will examine the accuracy of these diminutives used to classify the scripts, as there is room to suspect that they are not entirely halakhically and historically accurate, as the types of script attributed to Rabbi Yitzhak Luria and Rabbi Yosef Caro were not their invention but a result of a long process.

In any case, even if they prove to be inaccurate, one cannot ignore the significance now attributed to them among the public.

The following figures,<sup>73</sup> (Fig. 18, 19 and 20) illustrate the three types of Scripture known today, two of which are Ashkenazic (from left to right: Beth Yosef, Arizal and Sepharadic script):

FIGURE 18

FIGURE 19

FIGURE 20

The difference between the two Ashkenazic script styles, the Beth Yosef and Arizal, is exhibited in only a few letters. According to *Sha'ar Hakavanot* these letters are<sup>74</sup>: *Aleph* (א), *Vav* (ו), *Ayin* (ע), *Tzadi* (צ), *Final Tzadi* (ץ), and *Shin* (ש). The letter *Tet* <sup>75</sup>(ט) and the

<sup>71</sup> Acronym for *Sefer Torah*, *Tefillin* and *Mezuzot*, the three major liturgical objects written by a traditional Jewish scribe.


<sup>72</sup> This division does not derive from the above-mentioned geographical division. The differences that arose from the dispersal of Ashkenazic Jews across various areas have almost completely disappeared. These separate types of script are related to the separation of Ashkenazic Jews into followers of Ḥasidism and its opponents, this will be discussed further.

<sup>73</sup> Illustration from Gold, *Encyklopedie: "Measof Lechol Hamachnoth"*, 194.

<sup>74</sup> The main source that will be used is the *Sha'ar Hakavanot*, since it was written by a direct student of the Arizal, Rabbi Ḥayim Vital.

<sup>75</sup> The letter *Tet* (ט) is included also in the list of letters that is cited in *Sha'ar Hakavanot*, but the way the *Tet* is described in *Sha'ar Hakavanot* does not differ from the *Tet* described in *Beth Yosef*. Meaning, that its left hand component is a *Zayin* shaped element. The reason that letter *Tet* will be included in this research is that

letter *Het* (ה) will also be incorporated in this research, since according to the *Mishnat Hasidim*,<sup>76</sup> these two letters are included in the set of letters that have to be written in a specific way in consonance with the Lurianic teachings.

On the other hand, the letter *Vav* won't be included in this research, despite the fact that it is described in the *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot* as one of the letters that have a specific way (having a "small spike"<sup>77</sup>), of being written according the Kabbalah. We will exclude it because many of the writers who scribe this letter according to the Arizal tradition refrain from adding a spike on the *Vav*, especially when writing Torah scrolls. This is also possibly the intention of the *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*: he may have meant that the letters mentioned in the list are only made this way in letters of Tefillin and not in a Torah scroll.<sup>78</sup> The author of *Imrei Shefer*<sup>79</sup> explains the words of *Matzat Shmurim* ("And all the *Vav* shapes should have a body, a head and a small spike on the head"<sup>80</sup>) in a way that it is referring not to the letter *Vav*, but to the *Vav* shaped element at the right side of the letter *Het*, like this . Rabbi Moses Zacuto<sup>81</sup> (c. 1625, Amsterdam –1697, Mantua), also known by the Hebrew acronym *ReMeZ*, was a rabbi, Kabbalist, and poet, writes in his book, *Kol ha-ReMeZ*<sup>82</sup>:

ואותיות מ"ל"א"כ"ת ס"ו"פ"ר אין צריכין תג אך אות ו' בשם הוי"ה צריך לתייג אותו.

And the letters *Mem*, *Lamed*, *Aleph*, *Kaf*, *Tav*, *Samech*, *Vav*, *Pe*, *Resh* need no crowns, but the letter *Vav* in the Tetragrammaton has to be crowned" (a serif has to be done on it).

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other Kabbalistic works, such as *Mishnat Hasidim*, describe it in a unique way that differs from what is known from *Beth Yosef*, meaning that its left hand element has a *Vav*-like shape.

<sup>76</sup> *Mishnat Hasidim*, 67b.

<sup>77</sup> About importance of each spike and little graphic detail of the letters in Judaism in general we can learn already in the Talmud: "There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each tittle heaps and heaps of laws" From the Soncino Press translation of the Babylonian Talmud. *Menahot* 29b.

<sup>78</sup> See Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 479.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 694.

<sup>81</sup> Rabbi Moses Zacuto (c. 1625, Amsterdam –1697, Mantua), also known by the Hebrew acronym *ReMeZ*, was a rabbi, Kabbalist, and poet.

<sup>82</sup> Zacuto, *Kol HaRemez*, 249.

According to this latter opinion the Arizal meant to put a serif only on the *Vav* of the Tetragrammaton but not on every *Vav* in General. This view was followed by many of the early sages of the Ḥasidic movement regarding their phylacteries (see Appendix C). According to this view, if even in Tefillin serifs on the letter *Vav* are not used, in this work –where most of the examples checked are Torah scrolls – this letter shouldn’t be researched.

In this chart<sup>83</sup> (figure 21) each pair of letters, the right letter is in the Beth Yosef script and the left letter is in the Arizal script, the differences are indicated by the circles:

















	Beth Yosef	Arizal
<i>Aleph</i>		
<i>Vav</i>		
<i>Het</i>		
<i>Tet</i>		
<i>Ayin</i>		
<i>Tzaddi</i>		
<i>Final Tzaddi</i>		
<i>Shin</i>		

FIG. 21

In the Arizal script the *Aleph* has a bump (on its left leg), while in the Beth Yosef it does not. The left component of the letters of the *Ayin*, the *Tzadi*, the final *Tzadi*, and *Shin* has the shape of a *Vav* in the Arizal script, (the letter *Tet* and the letter *Het* are also included in this list according to some opinions, as mentioned earlier), whereas in the Beth Yosef script all these have a shape of a *Zayin*. And last but not least, the right component of the letter *Tzadi*, both its regular and final form, has a shape that is similar to a ‘*Yod*’ in the Beth Yosef script, whereas in the Arizal script it resembles a ‘reversed *Yod*’.

The differences are seemingly minimal, but among various rabbinical authorities they are seen as very significant. Particularly noticeable is the letter *Tzadi*, around which there was such a strong halakhic debate. Some even argued that the *Tzadi* of the Arizal script, which is composed of a reverse *Yod* and a *Nun*, is invalid, compared with the *Tzadi* of the Beth Yosef, in which the *Tzadi* is a regular *Yod* and a *Nun*. This research will examine these differences.

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<sup>83</sup> Letters in this chart are generated with computer graphics, those of Beth Yosef script are based on the writing of Shaul Bassel, a contemporary scribe, whereas those in Arizal script are based on the letters of a set of Hungarian tefillin from the 19th century, housed today in Jerusalem in a private collection.



## 5.1 Halakhic literature on the shape of the letters: The source of the term Beth Yosef

The main halakhic source on the importance of specific forms of certain letters is the Babylonian Talmud:<sup>84</sup>

מיתבי וכתבתם שתהא כתיבה תמה שלא יכתוב אלפין עיינין עיינין אלפין ביתין כפין כפין ביתין גמין צדין  
צדין גמין דלתין רישין דלתין היהין חיתין היהין חיתין יהיהין ווין יודין יודין ווין זיינין נונין נונין זיינין  
טיתין פיפין טיתין כפופין פשוטין כפופין מימין סמכין מימין סמכין מימין סתומין פתוחין פתוחין  
סתומין פרשה פתוחה לא יעשנה סתומה סתומה לא יעשנה פתוחה כתבה כשירה או שכתב את השירה  
כיוצא בה או שכתב שלא בדיו או שכתב את האזכרות בזהב הרי אלו יגנזו.

An objection is raised: U-kethabtam: it must be kethibah tammah [perfect writing]; thus one must not write the alef as an 'ayyin, the 'ayyin as an alef, the beth as a kaf, or the kaf as a beth, the gimmel as a zadde or the zadde as a gimmel, the daleth as a resh or the resh as a daleth, the heh as a heth or the heth as a heh, the waw as a yod or the yod as a waw, the zayyin as a nun or the nun as a zayyin, the teth as a pe or the pe as a teth, bent letters straight or straight letters bent, the mem as a samek or the samek as a mem, closed [letters] open or open letters closed. An open section [parashah] may not be written closed, nor a closed section open. If one writes it as the 'Song', or if one writes the 'Song' as the general text, or if one writes it without ink, or if one writes the 'Names' in gold, they [the Scrolls thus written] must be 'hidden'.<sup>85</sup>

In this section, the Talmud does not precisely define the forms of the letters mentioned. However, it does enumerate pairs of letters which are similar and could be confused: it mentions a number of features to be noted in order for the letters to be "kosher" (fit for use) and distinguished from other such similar letters. In general, most of the *Rishonim* (1038-1492) did not define the exact form of the letters in their halakhic books. For example, the "*Rema*"<sup>86</sup> (c. 1520-1572) referred to the subject of the form of letters as follows: "A priori

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<sup>84</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, 103b.

<sup>85</sup> From the Soncino Press translation of the Babylonian Talmud.

<sup>86</sup> Moses Isserles was an eminent Polish Ashkenazic rabbi, talmudist, and *posek* (expert on Jewish Law).

he should write (using) "perfect" writing, as mentioned in the *Tur*<sup>87</sup> and by other authorities, and which is well known to the scribes. Although, if he changes the form of writing, it is not invalid,<sup>88</sup> he does not go into further detail. In contrast, Rabbi Yosef Caro in his halakhic masterpiece the *Beth Yosef* quotes a detailed description of the shape of each letter. The discussion on this topic in the *Beth Yosef* begins as follows: "And know that I found an essay for a sage of a later generation<sup>89</sup> sage, named our master Rabbi Yitzhak Barukh She'amar, (who) speaks in length about the form of the letters, and his words found favour in my eyes and so I decided to copy it here."<sup>90</sup>

It should be emphasized here that this is not a halakhic ruling, but a sharing of information brought to the attention of the author and which he liked. In another book by Rabbi Yosef Caro, the *Shulhan Arukh*, the author summarizes all the laws discussed in *Beth Yosef*, but does not include the definition of how to write the letters. Why then did R' Caro choose to include this non-halakhic information which "found favour in (his) eyes" only in his book *Beth Yosef*, and even further discuss it in detail?

The answer might lie in the different natures of the two works.<sup>91</sup> The *Shulhan Arukh* is a legal codex whereas *Beth Yosef* is more of an encyclopaedical work where educated Torah scholars can find all the material they need for making decisions in Halakhic questions. The *Shulhan Arukh* however - as its name indicates, a "Set Table" - was meant to be used by the masses, wherein everyone is able to find the relevant law that he is looking for. A meticulously detailed description of the shape of the letters is therefore not needed in

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<sup>87</sup> *Arba'ah Turim* ("Four Columns") or in short *Tur* ("column") is an important Halakhic code composed by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269, Cologne - c. 1343, Toledo). He was the son of the *Rosh* (*Rabbeinu Asher*) mentioned earlier. He is often referred to as the Ba'al ha-Turim ("Author of the Turim"), after his main work.

<sup>88</sup> *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orah Hayim*, *Hilchot Tefillin*, Chapter 36.

<sup>89</sup> '*Aharon*' in the original Hebrew, literally means the "last one," namely an individual from the last generation(s). In later (importantly in modern) terminology, an *Aharon* means a Jewish sage living from roughly the 16th century to the present, so the Barukh She'amar's author(s) would be considered a *Rishon*, literally meaning "first one".

<sup>90</sup> *Beth Yosef*, *Orah Hayim*, Chapter 36.

<sup>91</sup> Mor Altshuler, *Life of Rabbi Yosef Caro*, 299.

such a book: Rabbi Yosef Caro seemingly did not think that minor changes (that would not affect the legibility of the writing) would invalidate the writing.

Not only the question of the two major works of Caro isn't obvious. Many have wondered why Rabbi Caro, a Sepharadi sage, chose to present the letters in Beth Yosef according to the Ashkenazic custom (since the essay quoted by Rabbi Caro, known as the Barukh She'amar, was written by Ashkenazic rabbis). Thus, Rabbi Ya'akov Emden<sup>92</sup> (1697 – 1776) writes in his book *Mor u-Ketzia*:<sup>93</sup>

נדבה רוחי אותי לדעת לרדוף ולחקור החלופים והשנויים שבין הכתיבה האשכנזית המבוארת כאן בית יוסף מס' ב"ש ובין הספרדית נפלאתי על שלא זכר אותה הרב המשביר בהיותה מנהג אנשי ארצו ז"ל ועדיין לא חקרת.

I felt an urge to know and pursue and explore the differences and changes between the Ashkenazic writing that is explained here in Beth Yosef (quoted) from the book Barukh She'amar, and the Sepharadic (style). I was marveled by the fact that the governor (Rabbi Yosef Caro) didn't remember it (the Sepharadic writing style) despite being the tradition of his compatriots, and I had not yet researched it.

The reason for this probably was that there were no writings available that were describing the letters in the Sepharadic writing tradition, and this is the uniqueness of the information that Rabbi Caro presented in his book. Ḥaim Palachi<sup>94</sup> (1788-1869) in his responsa, *Hayim ba-Yad* writes:<sup>95</sup>

ומה שיש לתמוה הוא מה שתמה הגאון היעב"ץ ז"ל בס' מו"ק סימן ל"ו על הרב המשבר (הוא הרב"י) מדוע העצים עינו מלהודיענו תמונת ספרדית מע"ש אלא דגם לזה אפשר לומר דאילו הרב"י היה מוצא

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<sup>92</sup> Jacob Emden, also known by the acronym the *Yave"tz* (Yaakov, the son of Tzvi), was a leading German rabbi and talmudist.

<sup>93</sup> Jacob Emden, *Mor u-Qtziah*, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Rabbi, commentator, arbiter and Kabbalist from Smyrna (İzmir). From the year 1857, Ḥacham Bashi (Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire)

<sup>95</sup> Ḥaim Palachi, *Hayim ba-Yad*, (Izmir : unknown publisher, 1873 ), 99.

איזה קונ' ג"כ שמדבר על תמונות ספרדית בודאי דהיה מאסף אותו הביתה בית יוסף ומה שלא נטפל הרב"י עצמו מדיליה על זה היינו משום דכיון דאין תמונות הרב ברוך שאמר מעכב וכמ"ש הגאון הרב נודע ביאודה ח"א ביו"ד סי' פ' וכמ"כ ליו"ד סי' ק"ע דכל שאינו סותר הש"ס אינו מעכב בשום שינוי (...) ואי"כ דכיון דהשינוי בין שני המכתבים אינו מעכב משום הכי לא נטפל עצמו הרב"י להורות כתב וועלייש כיון דאלו ואלו דברי א-להים היים.

And how puzzling is what Ya'akov ben Tzvi (Ya'avetz), the genius of blessed memory in his book *Mor u-Ketziah*, chapter 36 was wondering about the *Rav Hamashbir*<sup>96</sup> (he is the Beth Yosef), why did he (Rabbi Yosef Caro) close his eyes and refrain from showing us the Sepharadic image (of the letters). But rather, we can say, that if the rabbi, the Beth Yosef would also find a pamphlet that speaks about the Sepharadic images, he would have collected it surely “home to the House of Joseph” (to Beth Yosef) and what the rabbi, the Beth Yosef himself did not care about, was that because of the figures (explained) in the Barukh She'amar are not a necessary condition (for the script being considered kosher), and as the genius (the author of) *Noda Bihudah* writes in Volume I in Yore De'ah, chapter 80 and also in Yore De'ah, chapter 170, that any deviation (from what is written in Barukh She'amar) that doesn't contradict what is written in the Talmud, doesn't invalidate (the writing) (...) and since the change between the two scripts does not invalidate, the rabbi, the Beth Yosef did not care specifically to instruct *Velish* script because both these and these are (the *Velish* and the Ashkenazic writing) the words of the living God.<sup>97</sup>

This is what Rabbi Yehezkel Landau,<sup>98</sup> mentioned above writes in his book *Noda Bihudah*:

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<sup>96</sup> Rabbi Yosef Caro called his magnum opus *Beth Yosef*, based on (besides his own name, Yosef) the biblical figure of Joseph, as explained by Caro himself at the end of the foreword of his book. Yosef was “in charge of selling grain (*hamashbir*) to all the people” (Genesis 42:6, NLT), nourishing them physically; similarly, Caro's intention was that his work would nourish all the people spiritually.

<sup>97</sup> A traditional phrase expressing a case in which several different ways, opinions are all legitimate.

<sup>98</sup> Born in Opatów, Poland. He was the Rabbi of Prague, was known by the name of his book *Noda Bihudah*. He was one of the major Ashkenazic decisors of his time.

אומר אני שכל אלו התמונות המבוארים בב"י לא לעכוב נאמר רק למצוה ומה שאינו מבואר בתלמוד אינו מעכב. ופוק חזי כתב ספרדי הנקרא וועליש יש בהם כמה שינויים נגד המבואר בב"י<sup>99</sup>

I say that all these pictures brought down in the Beth Yosef are not meant to be a necessary condition, but only as a *mitzvah* and what is not explicitly mentioned in the Talmud is not a necessary condition. "Go out and see" the Sepharadic script called Velish that has some changes from what is explained in the Beth Yosef.

What Rabbi Landau says in these few sentences is that since we know that Sepharadic script differs from the Ashkenazic one, and since there is no question (to him) about the halakhic validity of either of these, the little details of the exact shape of letters explained in Beth Yosef cannot mean that only letters written exactly this way can be considered valid.

More on this subject can be learned from the language of the Beth Yosef himself. In the opening of section 36 of Orah Haim, where he discusses the shape of the letters, Rabbi Caro writes: "These are the letters that need to be carefully written," mentioning only a few letters: *Aleph, He, Het, Mem, Samech, Qof* and *Shin*. It can be understood that there may be problems in writing other letters, but in Rabbi Caro's opinion they are not inhibitive. Interestingly, this list does not include most of the letters in which the Beth Yosef and Arizal script differ.

The logical conclusion is that the Sepharadic Beth Yosef quoted the Ashkenazic Barukh She'amar in his work seemingly because there was no better summary of this kind, in either Ashkenazic or in Sepharadic literature. It may also be understood that he didn't consider the relatively small differences between the Ashkenazic and Sepharadic scripts significant enough, otherwise he would have most likely described the Sepharadic script in his own words instead of quoting an Ashkenazic source, or at least include these letters in the list of those needing special care. In an ironic twist of history, this Ashkenazic script was labeled "Beth Yosef" after the Sepharadic R' Caro's more well-known work and not after the

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<sup>99</sup>Yehezkel Landau, *Noda Bihudah, Yore De'ah, Mahadura Kama* (New York, Halakha Berura, 1959/1960), Chapter 80.

original Ashkenazic source, the "Barukh She'amar". Because the importance of this source, we should dedicate a chapter to it.

## 5.2 Barukh She'amar<sup>100</sup>

One of the most frequent references quoted in this thesis is "*Barukh She'amar*". Although this book is most often attributed to Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer of Prague, in fact, several works by different authors were merged into one book under this name. This book is cited by later halakhic decisors and has had a great influence on laws of liturgic scribal art throughout history and until today.

The authors and main works which compose the "Barukh She'amar" as we know it are as follows:

The first and base work is the *Tikkun Tefillin* by Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Moshe of *Sinsheim*<sup>101</sup> He was a student<sup>102</sup> of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg<sup>103</sup> (c. 1215-1293), a Tosafist.

A commentary on Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Moshe of *Sinsheim's Tikkun Tefillin* was written by Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer 'Barukh She'amar'. Rabbi Samson was born in Saxony around 1330.<sup>104</sup> When still a child he was taken to Prague by his parents, who died there when he was eight years old.

Rabbi Samson himself tells us the background of his nickname ('Blessed is who said'):

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<sup>100</sup> Almost all the references in this section are mentioned in the prefaces of Rabbi Menaḥem Mendel Meshi-Zahav's important work, *Kovetz Sifrei Stam*, Parts 1 and 3.

<sup>101</sup> The word זונשׂהיים might refer either to the town *Sinsheim* or to the town *Sinzheim* (the latter according to the Jewish Encyclopedia), both in the territory of the modern federal state of Baden-Württemberg. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13074-samson-ben-eliezer> (last accessed on March 31, 2020).

<sup>102</sup> Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 8. Based on this fact, he was born in the 13th century.

<sup>103</sup> Rabbi Meir ben Barukh (c. 1215, Worms –1293, Ensisheim, Alsace).

<sup>104</sup> Samson ben Eliezer. "Encyclopaedia Judaica" Encyclopedia.com. (March 31, 2020). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/samson-ben-eliezer>.

ונשארתי אני לבדי יתום בן ח' שנים, אז הדריכני ה' בנתיבתו כדין אבי יתומים, ועמדתי בכל בקר ובקר  
בהשכמה לבית הכנסת ואמרתי ברוך שאמר בקול ערב שחנני השם יתברך בו וכו' ועל כן כינו לי שם  
ברוך שאמר"<sup>105</sup>

And I remained alone as an eight-year-old orphan, and then the Lord guided me in his path as 'a father of the fatherless'<sup>106</sup>, and I stood in every single morning early in the morning in the synagogue, and I said *Barukh She'amar* with a sweet voice that the Lord – blessed be he – gifted me, etc. This is why I was called *Barukh She'amar*.<sup>107</sup>

He didn't give a title to his work, considering it only 'collections and glosses' (*liqutim ve-hagahot* in Hebrew). Later authorities referred to this work as 'the glosses of *Barukh She'amar*', consequently over time '*Barukh She'amar*' became the name of this work. In later generations the two works (*Tikkun Tefillin* and *Glosses of Barukh She'amar*) continued to appear in one format, referred to only as *Barukh She'amar*. Today, no copies of the Tikun Tefillin are known without Rabbi Samson's glosses.<sup>108</sup>

The *Barukh She'amar* remained in manuscript form for hundreds of years and was printed for the first time in its entirety in Dubna only in 1796, and then in Shklov in 1804. The Dubna and Shklov (both in the Russian Empire) editions were based on different manuscripts.

The next textual layer of the '*Barukh She'amar*' in its wider sense is the *Sefer Alpha Beta* of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann<sup>109</sup> ben Salomon Mühlhausen<sup>110</sup> (c. 1360-1421, Erfurt), an Ashkenazic Rabbi and decisor in the early 15th century. He was a disciple of Rabbi Meir Ben Barukh Halevi of Vienna and Rabbi Samson Ben Eliezer Barukh She'amar.

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<sup>105</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 15 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>106</sup> Psalms 68:6.

<sup>107</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 15 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>108</sup> Stern, Eli, (ed.), *Manuscript, Tikun Tefillin 'Baruch Sheamar'*, 18th Century. Jerusalem: Kedem, 2014, 90.

<sup>109</sup> Sometimes referred to as Rabbi Yom Tov, sometimes as Rabbi Lipmann.

<sup>110</sup> After a city in the north-west of Thuringia.

Unlike the *Tikkun Tefillin* and the ‘glosses’<sup>111</sup> added to it by Rabbi Samson Barukh She’amar, which discuss every detail of the making of tefillin from beginning to end, the *Sefer Alpha Beta* in *Barukh She’amar* deals with the shape of the letters only.

*Sefer Alpha Beta* includes four<sup>112</sup> lists of the Hebrew alphabet (the first two of which are quoted in Beth Yosef as ‘*Barukh She’amar*’), each time Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann addresses another aspect of the letters. This is how he describes his work in his own words:

בראשונה אבאר תואר צורתם לבד בלי טעם וראייה למען ידע כל אדם מבין בלשון הקודש ללמד האמת,  
ואחר כך אבאר לחכמים יודעי ספר מביני דת ודין ראייתם וסברתם לפי קבלת רבותחנו הגדולים,  
ואחר כך אבאר לנבונים סוד תמונת הרכבתם עם סוד תבניתם ואיך סדרם זה אחר זה,  
ואחר כך אבאר למשכילים הסודות אשר קיבלתי וידעתי תואר צורתם לפי הספירות עם ביאור שמותם  
וסדרם.

First, I will describe their form alone without reason and proof for the sake that everyone who understands the Holy Tongue should be able to teach the truth,

After which I will explain to the well-versed intellectuals who are familiar with religion and law. Their (the description of the letters) proof and explanation according to the tradition of our great masters,

After which I will explain to the wise ones the secret image of their construction, with the secret of their pattern and how they are arranged one after another,

After which I will explain to the educated secrets that I received and know the shape of their form according to the *sephirot* (a Kabbalistic term) with the explanation of their names and order.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The work that is called *Barukh She’amar*, after its author.

<sup>112</sup> After the first *Alpha Beta*, i.e. the first list of the Hebrew letters in *Sefer Alpha Beta* out of the four lists described below in Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann’s words, an extra list of the Alphabet, a very short one, is added, relating to the proportion of the height to the length of the letter. For example, the description of letter *Beit* is “תהיה מרובעת, ארכה כרחבה” “It should be square, its length is like its width” (Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 205, Hebrew numbering), meaning the letter *Beit* should be square.

<sup>113</sup> Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 199.



As an addition to the section of *Sefer Alpha Beta* including these four *Alpha Betas* by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann, there is a fifth alphabet, composed by an anonymous author.<sup>114</sup>

At the beginning of his work, this author<sup>115</sup> tells his readers:

עלה בלבי ג"כ לדרוש האלפא ביתא מאל"ף עד תי"ו לחבר את האהל להיות אחד ע"י ה"ר מה"ר ליפמן  
שדרש, וקצת סמך לידיעתי מצאתי כמו שנאמר דרשו א"ת ה' בה' מצאו, כלומר לדרוש מא' עד תי"ו על  
ה' פנים אולי ימצאו הסופרים כדי חובתם" <sup>116</sup>

I had the idea to interpret the alphabet from *Aleph* to *Tav* to connect the tent to be one by the great master, our teacher Rabbi Lipmann who taught. And a little reference for my knowledge I found, as it is written, “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6), that is, to demand from *Aleph* to *Tav*, (and) find in five ways, maybe the scribes would find they are obligated.<sup>117</sup>

This (in its translation hardly understandable) quotation shows two important aspects of the work of the fifth *Alpha Beta*'s anonymous author: First, this author is not the same person as Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann. And second, through attaching his work to that of Rabbi Yom Tov Lippman he recognized the greatness of the former's work and wanted to add his own contribution to the description of the Hebrew alphabet. These very same lines introducing the fifth Alpha Beta were omitted from the manuscripts (besides the one that will be mentioned later), therefore all five *Alpha Betas* were believed to be written by the same author.

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<sup>114</sup> Even after the recognition of Rabbi Yom Tov Lippman as author of *Sefer Alpha Beta* (see further), until recent times, this fifth Alpha Beta was believed to have been written by the same author.

<sup>115</sup> After Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann's conclusion and signing his work with the words: “השי"ת יכפר מה ששגיתי “ בקיצור ידיעתי וברוב גילוי ומה שהעלמתי בה כי שגיאות מי יבין מנסתרות נקני. כה תפילת החותם ט"ב יומ"י  
And Hashem – blessed be He - may atone for what I have erred in my knowledge and for revealing (too) much, and what I have hidden, because ‘Who can discern his errors? Clear Thou me from hidden faults’ (Psalms 19:13). This is the prayer of Tav Yomi (=Yom Tov).”

<sup>116</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part III*, 352 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

In order to assess the impact of the *Barukh She'amar* on the scribal practices, the following summary lists the development of the mentioned texts and shows how the Beth Yosef related to them:

1. *Tikkun Tefillin* by Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Moshe of Sinsheim. Not quoted in the *Beth Yosef*.
2. 'Glosses' of *Barukh She'amar* by Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer *Barukh Sheamar*. Not quoted in the *Beth Yosef*.
3. *Sefer Alpha Beta* of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen (Alphabets 1 to 4: The first two of them quoted by the Beth Yosef. The alleged '*Rabbi Yitzhak Barukh She'amar*' is credited for them.)
4. *This fifth Alpha Beta in Barukh She'amar*, written by an anonymous author. Not quoted in the Beth Yosef.

#### 5.2.1 Establishing the authorship of the (first four) *Alpha Betas Barukh She'amar*

As we saw, rather than a text of one author, the Alpha Betas are a construct of different sources, transmitted in manuscripts with variants.

“The text in our possession is in a state of considerable disorder, text and notes by many hands being so intermingled as to be practically indistinguishable, though later additions can sometimes be recognized.”<sup>118</sup>

Not only did the *five Alpha Betas* from two different authors<sup>119</sup> become known as one during the centuries, but the identities of all the aforementioned authors also became unknown at certain points in history. While the *Beth Yosef* quoting<sup>120</sup> from this work

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<sup>118</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/samson-ben-eliezer> (last accessed on March 31, 2020).

<sup>119</sup> The different authorship was proven by Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav in the second and third volumes of his 'Kovetz Sifrei STaM' series, a fact that was unknown even to him when publishing the first volume. See Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part III*, 350-353 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>120</sup> He quotes the two first *Alpha Betas* from Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen. So, when we are talking about the description of the Hebrew letters in the Beth Yosef, we are talking actually about the *Alpha Beta* of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann.

strengthened its status in halakhic literature, at the same time it increased the obscurity around the identity of its authors. As we saw, he wrote:

ודע, שמצאתי קונדריס לחכם אחרון שמו ה"ר יצחק ברוך שאמר, מדבר בדרך ארוכה בצורת האותיות,  
וייטבו דבריו בעיני ולכן ראיתי להעתיקו פה.<sup>121</sup>

And know that I found a pamphlet of an *aḥaron*<sup>122</sup> sage, named our master Rabbi Yitzḥak<sup>123</sup> Barukh She'amar, (who) speaks in length about the form of the letters, and his words found favour in my eyes and so I decided to copy it here.

Following the publishing of Beth Yosef, the authorship of the book by the alleged 'Yitzḥak' Barukh She'amar was generally accepted.

Later authors, who were familiar with the book Barukh She'amar of Rabbi Samson, and also with the 'section' quoted in the Beth Yosef as a pamphlet authored supposedly by Rabbi Yitzḥak, came up with different solutions to this contradiction.

The *Ḥida*,<sup>124</sup> in his encyclopedic work named *Shem ha-Gedolim* (The Name of the Great Ones) that contains bibliographical and biographical information on authors and works in the field of Jewish religious literature throughout the history, writes about Barukh She'amar as well, among the hundreds of other sages. He brings down the references of him by various authors. Although he is aware of the biographical information that the first name of Barukh She'amar is Samson, he doesn't disregard that Rabbi Yosef Caro mentions him as Yitzḥak Barukh She'amar. He concludes that the author of the work quoted in the Beth Yosef is a different person, a member of the same supposed 'Barukh She'amar' family. After citing what Yosef Caro wrote about him in the aforementioned quotation in the Beth Yosef, the *Ḥida* writes:

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<sup>121</sup> Beth Yosef, commenting on Tur Oraḥ Ḥayim, chapter 36.

<sup>122</sup> Literally the "last one" meaning from the last generation(s). In later terminology (importantly in modern terminology, an *aḥaron* means a Jewish sage living from roughly the 16th century to the present, so the Barukh She'amar's author(s) would be considered *Rishon*, literally meaning first one.

<sup>123</sup> Probably the letter Yod that stood for Yom Tov was misunderstood, but it is still unclear why the name Yitzchak was specifically mentioned.

<sup>124</sup> An acronym for the rabbinical scholar Ḥayim Yosef David Azulai (1724, Jerusalem - 1806, Livorno, Italy).

ונראה שזה החכם בעל הקונטרס שהביא מרן והוא אחרון הי' מיוצאי חלציו של מ' שמשון ברוך שאמר הגז' ונשאר כנוי ברוך שאמר לכל זרעו:<sup>125</sup>

And it seems that this sage, the author of the pamphlet quoted by Maran<sup>126</sup> is (indeed) a last one, from the descendants of our teacher, the aforementioned Samson Barukh She'amar, and the name 'Barukh She'amar' stayed on for all his offspring.

Thus, the *Hida* accepted both the authorship of Rabbi Samson of *Glosses of Barukh She'amar* (not quoted in the *Beth Yosef*) and the reference of the *Beth Yosef* to Rabbi Yitzhak as the author of the text quoted there, as a later section of the same work, written by a descendant of the author of the main part.

Another solution for the misinformation was that of *Magen Giborim*, a work co-authored by Joseph Saul Nathansohn (1808–1875)<sup>127</sup> and Mordecai Zeeb Ettinger (1804-1863):<sup>128</sup>

ובב"י הובא קונטרס אחד מחכם אחרון נקרא בשם ב"ש וביאר משפטי צורת האותיות והנה לא הי' למראה עיני הב"י רק הקונטרס אשר הב"ש לקט והעתיק הקיצור מכל הפוסקים<sup>129</sup>.

"הרב ר' אברהם מוזנשהיים סופר מהיר במלאכתו וילקט את כל החמודות אשר שמע מפי רבו המהר"ם ז"ל והמחברת הלז כאשר התגלגל ובא ליד ר' שמשון בר' אליעזר המכונה ברוך שאמר (והב"י קראו בשם ר' יצחק אמנם מחתימתו וחרזין נרא' כי ר' שמשון שמו) והגיהו ותיקנו מכל חרולי הטעיות אשר התבוללו במו, וישת עליו נוספות מפי רבותינו הקדושים הבאים אחריו, כאשר עם לבבו, וכפי הנראה הקונטרס אשר היה לפני הב"י הי' מר' שמשון לבד אשר קיצר כל הדינים<sup>130</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> Ḥayim Yosef David Azulai, *Shem ha-Gedolim, Ma'arekhet Sefarim*, Ot Beit (106), Barukh She'amar. In Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 25.

<sup>126</sup> 'Our lord' referring to Rabbi Yosef Caro.

<sup>127</sup> Galician rabbi and posek (1808–1875).

<sup>128</sup> Joseph Saul Nathansohn's brother-in-law of Lemberg (1804-1863).

<sup>129</sup> Joseph Saul Nathansohn and Mordecai Zeeb Ettinger, *Magen Gibborim Elef ha-Magen*, Chapter 36, subparagraph 1. In Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 25.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. See preface.

And in the Beth Yosef a pamphlet is brought down from an *aḥaron*<sup>131</sup> sage who was called Barukh She'amar and explained the laws of the forms of the letters, and behold, Beth Yosef saw only the pamphlet in which the Barukh She'amar<sup>132</sup> collected and copied the abbreviation from all the decisors.”

"Rabbi Abraham Sinsheim is a 'ready writer'<sup>133</sup> in his work and collected all the 'lovely ones' he heard from his master, the late Rabbi MaHaRaM<sup>134</sup> and when this writing arrived to the hands of Rabbi Samson the son of Rabbi Eliezer known as Barukh She'amar (and the Beth Yosef (Rabbi Yosef Caro) called him Rabbi Yitzḥak, though, by his signature and the rhymes it appears that R. Samson was his name) and corrected and adjusted it from all the erroneous mistakes that were mixed in it, and added to it supplements from the mouth of holy gentlemen who came after him (i.e. Rabbi Abraham) according to his heart, and apparently the pamphlet that was before the Beth Yosef was that of Rabbi Samson alone which abbreviated all the laws.

It is clear from these two quotations from the *Magen Giborim* that their authors understood that the 'pamphlet' quoted in the Beit Yosef (actually the *Sefer Alpha Beta in Barukh She'amar*) is not the main part of the Rabbi Samson's book, the *Glosses of Barukh She'amar*. They saw these two types of *Alpha Betas* in the Barukh She'amar corpus (four of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann and one by an anonymous author) as a collection and abbreviation of other decisors, accomplished also by Rabbi Samson. They understood that the name Yitzḥak was a mistake. But unlike the *Hida*, who recognized the different authorship of these two works – the 'glosses of' *Barukh She'amar* and *Sefer Alpha Beta in Barukh She'amar* – they credited Rabbi Samson with both works. (At this time the different authorship of the first four versus the fifth Alpha Beta wasn't recognized yet.)

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<sup>131</sup> Literally the "last one" meaning from the last generation(s). In later terminology (importantly in modern) terminology, an *Aḥaron* means a Jewish sage living from roughly the 16th century to the present, so the Barukh She'amar's author(s) would be considered *Rishon*, literally meaning first one.

<sup>132</sup> Meaning that Rabbi Yosef Caro didn't see Rabbi Abraham Sinsheim's original work (*Tikkun Tefillin*), only the 'glosses' of Rabbi Samson Barukh She'amar wrote based on the *Tikkun Tefillin*.

<sup>133</sup> Psalms 45:2.

<sup>134</sup> Rabbi Meir ben Barukh (c. 1215, Worms -1293, Ensisheim, Alsace).

The first who recognized Rabbi Yom Tov as the author of the *Sefer Alfa Beta* (without differentiating yet between the first four and the fifth lists of alphabets), was<sup>135</sup> Senior Sachs<sup>136</sup> in *Kerem hemed*<sup>137</sup>, giving credit for his findings also to his friend, Moritz Steinschneider.<sup>138</sup> He did so based on stylistic grounds (comparing the style of Sefer Alpha Beta with Rabbi Yom Tov's other works) and through understanding Rabbi Yom Tov's signature<sup>139</sup> at the end of his work: "ההוותם טב יומי" meaning "I, the undersigned, *Tav Yomi*" where *Tav Yomi* refers to his name Yom Tov (good day). After the final words of Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann, the scribe who copied the manuscript concluded: "סליק ספר הא"ב אשר יסד מהר"ל: שלי"ו" Meaning "End of the *Sefer Alpha Beta*, that was established by our teacher and master Rabbi "L" SLYV, is finished" where the letter L in the rabbi's name, as Sachs writes, surely means Lipmann, and SLYV means *she-yihye le-orech yamim u-shanim*, may he live for long days and years.<sup>140</sup>

### 5.2.2 Establishing the authorship of the fifth *Alpha Beta*

While the four Alpha Betas are thus firmly associated with Rabbi Yom Tov, the fifth one has a different origin. Recognizing the fifth Alpha Beta as a work authored not by Rabbi

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<sup>135</sup> Sachs, Senior. "Tikkunim, Hashmatot Ve-Hosafot." *Kerem Chemed* (Lieblicher Weinberg), Volume 8, 206-207.

<sup>136</sup> Hebrew scholar (Kaidany, Russia, 1816 - Paris, 1892).

<sup>137</sup> *Kerem Hemed* (Heb. כֶּרֶם הַחֵמֶד; "vineyard of delight"), Hebrew annual of the Galician *Haskalah*. Published in Vienna, Prague, and Berlin from 1833 to 1856, *Kerem Hemed* served as a central forum for Eastern and Western Jewish scholars and authors. The publisher and nominal editor, Samuel Leib Goldenberg, was a prominent Galician *maskil*. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/kerem-x1e24-emed> (last accessed on March 5, 2020).

<sup>138</sup> Bibliographer and Orientalist; (Prossnitz, today Prostějov, Moravia, the Austrian Empire - 1816. Berlin).

<sup>139</sup> Sachs, "Tikkunim, Hashmatot Ve-Hosafot," 206.

<sup>140</sup> With this discovery, they corrected the misconception by a source (that Sachs seemingly didn't want to name, maybe in order not to disgrace him), that the author of the Alpha Beta was Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne (c. 1080-85 = 1158), a Provençal rabbi, also known as Raavad II. The reason for this mistake was, as Sachs writes, that the title page referred the author of *Alpha Beta* as an author of another work called *Ha-Eshkol*, and as a fact, both Rabbi Abraham of Narbonne and Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen authored books under the same title, *Ha-Eshkol*. But of course, this claim was chronologically speaking unrealistic, since a person living a hundred years before Rabbi Samson Barukh She'amar couldn't possibly add his work to the Barukh She'amar, as Sachs pointed out.

Yom Tov but somebody else whose name and identity remains unknown is only a very recent development. It was argued by Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav in the second (2014) and third (2018) volumes of his 'Kovetz Sifrei STaM' series, a fact that was unknown even to him when publishing the first (1969) volume.<sup>141</sup>

The basis for this development was a formerly unknown manuscript of the Alpha Beta (quoted above) where the anonymous author differentiates himself from Rabbi Yom Tov Lippman. One can hope that further research will shed light on his identity.

### 5.2.3 Referring to the entire work as 'Barukh She'amar' despite the problems

Even if referring to this book, or more correctly this collection of works, as '*Barukh She'amar*' in its entirety might be based on disinformation, sometimes - especially when quoting different halakhic authorities - we still do not refrain from using this term. The reason for this might be clearer after reading the words of Rabbi Yosef Caro in the following quotation:

והנה בא לידי קצת תשובות הרשב"א כתובות בעט ברזל ועופרת בדפוס וכתוב בתהלתן שהם תשובות הרמב"ן. וכשאני כותב מאותן תשובות אף על פי שאני יודע שהיא תשובת הרשב"א אני כותב כתוב בתשובות להרמב"ן לפי שספרי הדפוס מצויים ביד כל אדם ומי שירצה לעיין לשון התשובה עצמה יוכל לעמוד עליה:<sup>142</sup>

And here came to me some responsa of the *Rashba*<sup>143</sup> written with iron pen and lead in print and written at the beginning that they are the *Ramban's*<sup>144</sup> responsa. And when I write from the same responsa, even though I know it is the *Rashba's* responsa, I write 'it says in the *Ramban's* responsa' since the printed books are in the hands of every person and whoever wants to read the text of the responsum itself, he can understand it.

Rabbi Yosef Caro recognized the importance of the fact that in the books available, people will be able find the responsa he is referring to as Naḥmanides' responsa only. Even

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<sup>141</sup> See Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part III*, 350-353 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>142</sup> Foreword to Beth Yosef. From Bar Ilan Responsa Project, version 25. See also Kelman, 53.

<sup>143</sup> Solomon ben Abraham, rabbi and Talmudist of the 13th century.

<sup>144</sup> Moses ben Naḥman, leading medieval Jewish scholar (1194, Girona - 1270, Acre), commonly known as Nachmanides,

though Caro knew that the real author of these Responsa is the *Rashba*, accuracy was less important for him than giving a useful bibliographical reference to his readers.

This is also the reason why in this current work both Alpha Betas (the first two lists out of *Sefer Alpha Beta* in *Barukh She'amar*) authored by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann and quoted by Rabbi Yosef Caro in his *Beth Yosef*, as well as other texts from the *Barukh She'amar* written by others, will be referred to as a whole as *Barukh She'amar*, unless specified otherwise.

After dedicating these previous pages to the source of the *Beth Yosef* script, the *Barukh She'amar*, we will similarly research the sources of the *Arizal* script.



## The Ari script used by Ashkenazi Jews in the different liturgical writings

### 5.3 The Letters of Ari Script

The “*Ktav Ari*” or “*Ktav Arizal*” was developed by Rabbi Isaac Luria, known as the *Arizal*, regarded as the most brilliant Jewish mystic of modern times. Isaac Luria was an eminent 16<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi, poet and teacher. He was born in Jerusalem and was taken to Egypt as a child. In 1569, he settled in Safed, where he developed a large following. He is famous for his elucidation of the seminal set of Kabbalistic (Jewish mystical) works known as the Zohar, which first appeared in Spain in the 13th century.

The ideas of Jewish mystics “proceed from the concepts and values peculiar to Judaism, that is to say, above all from the belief in the Unity of God and the meaning of His revelation as laid down in the Torah, the *sacred law*.”<sup>145</sup>

Lurianic Kabbalah, named so after Arizal’s family name, Luria, is one of the various forms of Jewish mysticism that (similarly to the other forms) “represents an attempt to interpret *the religious values of Judaism in terms of mystical values*.”<sup>146</sup> Such religious values include the writing – which is the subject matter of this dissertation. Writing of ritual liturgical objects requires the use of physical ingredients: parchment (made of the skin of an animal) and ink. The process of writing has to be done in a meticulous way obeying “*the sacred law*,” so that the result of this process is a halakhically fit Torah Scroll, which in Judaism is the holiest object in our physical world.<sup>147</sup>

Rabbi Isaac Luria was an original and innovative thinker. He had a great influence on Jewish prayer, tradition and law. However, he set down almost nothing of his doctrines in writing, with the exception of a short text that seems to be only a fragment: His commentary on the first chapter of the Zohar *Be-Resh Hormanuta de-Malka*. In addition, commentaries on isolated passages of the Zohar were collected by Arizal’s disciple, Ḥayim Vital, who attested to their being in his teacher’s own hand... What is called Lurianic Kabbalah is in fact

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<sup>145</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 10. Emphasis mine.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Mishna, Tractate Megillah 3:1.

a voluminous collection of Luria's Kabbalistic doctrines, recorded after his death by Ḥayyim Vital".<sup>148</sup>

More importantly for our purpose, Rabbi Isaac Luria was interested in the scribal practices and their mystical importance. On his teachings is based the script type which bears his name, 'Arizal'. As we shall see, the forms of the script promoted by Arizal—and communicated for the later generations mainly by Rabbi Vital (1543-1620)<sup>149</sup> in his *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*<sup>150</sup>—echo his Kabbalistic principles.

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<sup>148</sup> Encyclopædia Britannica, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isaac-ben-Solomon-Luria> (last accessed on May 11, 2020).

<sup>149</sup> Ḥayyim ben Joseph Vital, (born 1543, Safed, Palestine [now Zefat, Israel]—died May 6, 1620, Damascus [now in Syria]), one of Judaism's outstanding Kabbalists (...).

In Safed, Palestine, in about 1570, Vital became the disciple of Isaac ben Solomon Luria, the leading Kabbalist of his time, and after Luria's death (1572), Vital professed to be the sole interpreter of the Lurian school. He became the leader of Palestinian Jewish Kabbalism and served as rabbi and head of a yeshiva (school of advanced Jewish learning) in Jerusalem (1577–85). His major work was the *Etz ḥayyim* ("Tree of Life"), a detailed exposition of Lurian Kabbalah, which also appeared in altered editions by rivals that he repudiated. His son Samuel published accounts of Vital's dreams and visions posthumously under the title *Shivḥe R. Ḥayyim Vital* (from ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA).

*Sha'ar ha-Kavanot* of Vital is part of what is known as works known as "the *Shemona Shearim*" (Eight Gates). The first gate, *Shaar HaHakdamot*, (Gate of Introductions), covers the same theoretical ground as the *Etz Ḥaim*. The second is *Shaar Maamarei Rashbi*, the Gate of Zoharic Teachings; the third is *Shaar Maamarei Ḥazal*, the Gate of Talmudic Teachings, the fourth is *Sha'ar ha-Pesukim*, the Gate of Biblical Verses; the fifth is *Shaar HaMitzvot*, the Gate of the Commandments; the sixth is *Shaar HaKavanot*, the Gate of Meditations; the seventh is *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh*, the Gate of Divine Inspiration, which is a general recapitulation and describes how to use the Ari's system as a meditative discipline. In many ways, the *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* is the key to the entire *Kitvei Ari*, because all the previous gates deal with theory, while the *Shaar Ruach HaKodesh* teaches how to put this into practice. The eighth gate is *Shaar HaGilgulim*, the Gate of Reincarnations." (from Aryeh Kaplan: The Transmission of Kabbalah.

<https://www.sefaria.org.il/sheets/77936.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en> (last accessed on May 12, 2020).

	Beth Yosef	Arizal	Sepharadic
<i>Aleph</i>			
<i>Vav</i>			
<i>Het</i>			
<i>Tet</i>			
<i>Ayin</i>			
<i>Tzaddi</i>			
<i>Final Tzaddi</i>			
<i>Shin</i>			

FIGURE 22

The Arizal script differs from another contemporary script, the *Beit Yosef* script<sup>151</sup> in its modifications to few letters: *Aleph*, *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzaddi*, both final and regular form, and *Shin*, (and according to certain opinions, *Vav* and *Tet*)<sup>152</sup> see chart (fig. 22).<sup>153</sup> The former is only of significance for the Ashkenazic Jewish community, since Rabbi Luria considered that the Sepharadim already wrote in a way that satisfied Kabbalistic teachings.

According to the teachings of Rabbi Luria, as brought down in the work of Rabbi Haim Vital, his foremost student's<sup>154</sup> work, all of the letters can be (and should be) written according to the accepted local customs except for a small number of letters, that should

be formed (“drawn”) according to his Kabbalistic teachings:

ולא ישנה ממנהגו אם אפשר לו כי שרש יש לכל המנהגים האלה למעלה: כי ולכל המנהגים אותיות אלה אשר נצייר עתה כך ציורם בתפילין לכלם ואין לשנות כיצד האלפין יהיו ...

A person should not deviate from his custom if possible, because there is a source for all these customs in heaven. The letters we will draw now, this will be their form in the Tefillin, and they should not be changed: The Aleph...:<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Rabbi Yosef Caro was already introduced in the beginning of this thesis, in “Presenting the topic,” while the sources of the script that he gave his name to were discussed in the chapter 5.2 “Barukh She’amar.”

<sup>152</sup> According to Matzat Shimurim. See Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 694. Reasons for not including *Vav* in this thesis may be found in the chapter *The terms "Arizal" and "Beth Yosef"*.

<sup>153</sup> Letters in the chart are from Michal Gold: *Encyklopedie: "Measof Lechol Hamachnoth"* (Mukačevo: Grafia. 1935-1936), 194.

<sup>154</sup> Some of Rabbi Luria’s other students (also called *gurei ha-Ari* or the lion’s cubs) are Joseph ibn Ṭabul (c. 1545 - beginning 17th century), Moses Najara (c 1508, Safed - 1581, Damascus), Yoseph Arazin (? , Saloniki - Safed), Jonathan Sagis (?) and possibly Israel Sarug (also "Saruk") Ashkenazi (c. 1590 - c.1610..

<sup>155</sup> Ricchi, *Mishnat Hasidim*, 67.

As a result, the Ashkenazic script in which these specific letters are written based on these teachings of the *Arizal*, is named for him, although the remaining majority of the letters are shaped the same as in the *Beth Yosef* style. The shapes of the letters mandated by the Arizal, based on Kabbalistic teachings, were also consistent with the accepted practice of the Sepharadic community throughout the alphabet as a whole.

#### 5.4 Mentions of the Arizal script in the Halakhic literature

As for the Arizal's descriptions of letters, we already mentioned that the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzhak Luria, did not write books. Most importantly his great disciple, Rabbi Haim Vital, was the one who passed on his wisdom to future generations. As far as the shapes of the letters are concerned, Haim Vital reported on the differences in script preconized by his master.

Discussions on the specific shapes of the letters as prescribed by the Ari are found in early modern sources concerning the script of the holy texts and objects.

5.4.1 Description of the letters in Sha'ar ha-Kavanot  
Rabbi Vital's (1543-16120) record of his master's teaching contains the earliest mention of the Arizal script. According to him, the emphasis is placed on the tefillin parchments:

This is what he writes in his book, Sha'ar ha-Kavanot: <sup>156</sup>

"גם בצורת האותיות של כתיבת התפילין יש קצת שנויים ואלו הם:


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<sup>156</sup> The images are from a manuscript of Sha'ar Hakavanot from 1758 in the handwriting of Yosef David Edre'i, the scribe of the renown Kabbalist, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (1720, Sharab, Yemen -1777, Jerusalem). 32r [https://tablet.otzar.org/book\\_/book.php?book=62459&width=-17&scroll=0&udid=0&pagenum=69](https://tablet.otzar.org/book_/book.php?book=62459&width=-17&scroll=0&udid=0&pagenum=69) (last accessed on April 10, 2020).and 32v <https://tablet.otzar.org/book%20/book.php?book=62459&width=-17&scroll=0&udid=0&pagenum=70> (last accessed on April 11, 2020).


באות אלף יכוין כי כל האלפין יהיו בציור יו"ד מלמעלה (כנז' בתיקונים סוף תיקון י"ט), ומלמטה תהיה

בצורת ד'  (...)

באות ו' כולם יהיו להם גוף וראש וקוץ קטן על הראש וזה צורתה  [ ].


<sup>157</sup> באות י' כולם יהיו להם ג' קוצין -- אחד למעלה ואחד למטה ואחד באמציעתה. וזו צורתה  [ ].

באות ט' כולם יהיו קו שמאלי שבהם כעין ז'. וזה צורתה  [ ].

באות ע' כולם יהיו הקוין שבהם כעין ווין ולא כעין זיינין. וזה צורתה  [ ].

באות צ' כולם יהיו שני ראשים כעין שני יודין והימיני יהיה כעין י' הפוכה לאחריה, ושמאלי כעין נון

כפופה למטה; ויוד ישרה על ראש הנון כפופה. וזה צורתה  [ ].


באות ש' כולם יהיו הג' קוים שבהם כעין ג' ווין, ולא כעין ג' זיינין. וזה צורתה  [ ].



ושאלתי את פי מורי ז"ל בענין צורת האותיות אשר כמה שינוים וחילוקים יש בין כתיבת הספרדים לכתבת האשכנזים ואמר לי כי לכולם יש רמז וסוד נרמז למעלה; כי לכמה ציורים ושנוים וצורופים משתנים צורת האותיות.<sup>158</sup>


"The forms of the letters of the *tefillin* also contain differences and they are:

<sup>157</sup> The letter *Yod* is not one of the letters to be dealt in this work, since it described similarly in non-Kabbalistic Ashkenazic works, and as a result is written similarly in Beit Yosef and Ari scripts.


<sup>158</sup> Vital, Ḥayim: *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*, Volume I, (Jerusalem: Unknown publisher, 1961), 58.


The letter *Aleph*: it is intended that all the *Alephs* will have the shape of a *Yod* on the top ..., and from the bottom will be in the shape of a *Daleth*  (...)


In the letter *Vav* each should have a body and head and a little atop of the head. And this is its shape:  [  ].

In the letter *Yod* they will all have three spikes - one up and one down and one in the middle. And this is its form <sup>159</sup>[  ]

(...) In the letter *Tet*, in all of them the left line will be like the letter *Zayin*. 

In the letter *Ayin* all of the lines should be like the letter *Vav* and not the letter *Zayin*. And this is its shape: 

In the letter *Tzadi*, they should all have two heads shaped like a *Yod* and the right one should be like a reverse *Yod*, and to the left like a *Nun* bent downward with a straight *Yod* on the head of the bent *Nun*. And this is its shape: 

In the letter *Shin*, in all, the three lines should be like three of the letter *vav* and not three of the letter *zayin*. And this is its shape: 

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<sup>159</sup> The letter *Yod* is not one the letters to be dealt in this work, since it described similarly in non-Kabbalistic Ashkenazic works and, as a result, is written similarly.

And I asked my late teacher about the shape of the letters, in which there are some changes and divisions between the Sepharadic writing and the Ashkenazic writing and he told me that all have a hint and secret hinted at above..."

From the above, it is clear that the Arizal himself did not leave us a complete alphabet with detailed instructions for the precise writing of each letter. On the contrary, he confirms that all existing writings are valid, "All have a hint and a secret hinted at above." He comments on only a few letters, and also he does not give a detailed description, but only refers to certain points to emphasize the writing of *tefillin*. This is not necessarily an innovative opinion, as letters whose shape corresponds to the opinion of the Arizal not only existed but were common in Ashkenaz, not only in tefillin but also in Torah scrolls. To ascertain this, writings that are certainly older than the period of the Arizal should be examined, the form of their letters was certainly not influenced by esoteric teachings in general, the Ḥasidic movement in particular, which engrained many components of the Kabbalah into Eastern European Jewish traditions.

As already mentioned, this research will not include the letter *Vav*, which is described in the *Sha'ar Ha-Kavanoth* as having a "small spike," as other Kabbalistic books such as *Mishnath Ḥasidim*<sup>160</sup> or "*Matzath Shimurim*"<sup>161</sup> indicate it among the letters that have no spike. Many of the writers who write this letter according to the Arizal tradition refrain from adding a spike on the *Vav*, especially when writing Torah scrolls. This is also might be the intention of the *Sha'ar Ha-Kavanoth*: the letters mentioned in the list are letters of *Tefillin* only and not of a Torah scroll

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<sup>160</sup> "ודין התגין כך הוא ... ומלא" כת סופ"ר הוא בלי תג" <sup>160</sup> "And the law of the serifs is this (...) and 'work of a scribe' (acronym for the letters *Mem, Lamed, Alef, Kaf, Tav, Samekh, Vav, Pe, Resh*) is without a serif," meaning that the letters that make up the words 'work of a scribe' lack any serifs.

Ricchi *Tractate Tikkun Tefillin*, chapter 2, 11. In: David Greenfeld, "Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi," 692.

<sup>161</sup> "ואותיות מלאכ"ת סו"פר או אוכ"ל מספרת בלא תגין" <sup>161</sup> And the letters "*melekheth sofer*" ('work of a scribe') or "*okhel mesaperet*" (possible acronyms for the letters *Mem, Lamed, Alef, Kaf, Tav, Samekh, Vav, Pe, Resh*) are without serifs. In: Nathan Shapira ha-Yerushalmi, *Matzat Shimurim*, (Venezia, 1659/1660), Chapter 2, 11. In: David Greenfeld, "Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi," 694.

However, also as mentioned, the research will include the form of letter *Ḥet* which does not appear in the list of letters in the *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*. This is because other Kabbalistic books such as "*Mishnath Ḥasidim* and "*Matzath Shimurim*, describe the letter *Ḥet* as including the letter *Vav* on the right side, as opposed to including the letter *Zayin* as in the tradition of the Beth Yosef script.

We will present examples of scripts from several Torah scrolls but not from *Tefillin*, as we do not have sufficient knowledge of *Tefillin* from the period relevant to this study.

#### 5.4.2 Mentions of the Arizal script in other Halakhic literature besides Sha'ar ha-Kavanot

Religious leaders and scholars in the following centuries referred to a specific type of script as the Arizal script, and provided a description of characteristic letter forms of this script: Rabbi Aharon Mirles (1780-1837), in his book the Beit Aharon refers to the Arizal as the *RI z'l*, - Rabbi Isaac of blessed memory)<sup>162</sup> and describes the way of writing the letter *Aleph* as a combination of *Yod*, *Vav* and *Dalet*:

י"ד וא"ו דל"ת כזו ולדעת הר"י ז"ל בתפילין צריך לעשות כל הצורות אלפין כזו הצורה פרט בתפילין של ראש...

The letters *Yod* and *Daleth* [should be inscribed] this way and in the opinion of the *RI z'l* (in the Tefillin (phylacteries) all forms of the letter *Aleph* should be written like this, in particular in the head Tefillin.<sup>163</sup>

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812),<sup>164</sup> the founder of Ḥabad Ḥasidism, known after

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<sup>162</sup> HaGaon Rabbi Aharon II Mirels (Schwerin, Germany c. 1780 - Szczawno-Zdrój [Ober] Salzbrunn, Austria 1837) Av beit din, author of the works "Beis Aharon" and "Hadrass Habais," Rabbi of Wresznia (Wreschen) Poland, and previously of Chentshin, the district of Krakow, Kurów and Ożarów (see <http://www.loebtree.com/mirels.html>).

<sup>163</sup> Aharon Mirels, *Torat HaBayit*, 14.

<sup>164</sup> Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Ladi (Liazna, Belarus, 1745 – Pena, Kursk, Russia, 1812) Ḥasidic Leader and author of the Tanya, early work of Ḥasidic Philosophy and fundament of the Chabad movement.



his major work as the *Ba'al HaTanya*, refers to the ornamentation on the letters and points out that the tradition of the Ari is different:

וכן כל ראשי שמאל שבאותיות שע"ט נ"ז ג"ץ יהיו דומים לזי"ן ועל כן התגי"ן שעליהם נקראו זיני"ן<sup>165</sup>  
אבל קבלת האר"י ז"ל אינו כן כמו שיתבאר

... and so over the left hand side of the letters *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* there will be the likeness of the letter *Zayin*, and so the letters will be called *Zayins*,<sup>166</sup> but the tradition of the Ari ז"ל is different<sup>167</sup> as we will explain below.<sup>168</sup>

R. Moses Sofer (Schreiber), known as the Chatam Sofer (1762-1839)<sup>169</sup>, wrote, in the name of his teacher Rabbi Nathan Adler (1741- 1800):<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Babylonian Talmud 29b.

<sup>167</sup> In this quotation, when he writes that "the tradition of the Ari ז"ל is different," Rabbi Shneur Zalman meant the following: unlike in the tradition of Beth Yosef where all the left heads of the *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a zayin, in the tradition of the Arizal that *not* all the left heads of *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a zayin. In fact, the Arizal didn't talk about the shape of *Nun* and *Gimmel*. Thanks to Rabbi Moshe Weiner, author of "Sefer Otiyot Ha-rav," Jerusalem, Self-Published 1990 for explaining this point to me.

<sup>167</sup> In this quotation, when he writes that "the tradition of the Ari ז"ל is different," Rabbi Shneur Zalman meant the following: unlike in the tradition of Beth Yosef where all the left heads of the *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a zayin, in the tradition of the Arizal that *not* all the left heads of *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a zayin. In fact, the Arizal didn't talk about the shape of *Nun* and *Gimmel*. Thanks to Rabbi Moshe Weiner, author of "Sefer Otiyot Ha-rav," Jerusalem, Self-Published 1990 for explaining this point to me.

<sup>168</sup> Shneur Zalman, Shulḥan Arukh HaRav, Volume #1 - *Orah Hayim* Chap. 36, section 2, no. 3, Kehot Publication Society, New York: 2013.

<sup>169</sup> Rabbi Moses Schreiber, (Frankfurt a.M., 1762 – Pressburg, 1839) prominent Orthodox Rabbi and Jewish legal authority.

<sup>170</sup> Rabbi Nathan Adler Rabbi Nathan Cohen Adler (Frankfurt a.M., 1741 - Frankfurt a.M., 1800) also known as R. Nathan ben Simeon HaCohen Adler (1800-1741), Kabbalist and teacher and mentor of the Hatam Sofer, who called him "the Ḥasid of the priesthood." In 1782, Rabbi Adler was forced to leave his city following a ban by the community rabbis. Rabbi Adler left his city and travelled, accompanied by a young Ḥatam Sofer to the city of Boskovich in Moravia, in response to an invitation to become Rabbi there. But there also the rabbi and his students were unable to persuade the leaders of the community to drop a letter of protest they sent to the Frankfurt community, complaining that they had not been informed of his banishment. (from [https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/נתן\\_אדלר](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/נתן_אדלר))

הגני שולח לו מכתב מהאי ספרא דוקנא דידן שלמדנו עמו תמונת אותיות של הרב"י ומה שיראה ימיני  
הצדקי"ן מהופכין הוא עפ"י קבלתי ממורי זצ"ל עפ"י קבלת האר"י ז"ל<sup>171</sup>

I am sending him a letter from our meticulous scribe that we studied with him an image shape of the letters of R.B.I.<sup>172</sup> and as can be seen, the inverted letter *Yod* on the right side of the letter *Tzadi*, this is according to what I learned from my teacher, of blessed memory, according to the teachings of the Ari z"l.

## 5.5 The function of the Arizal script

In my dissertation, it is especially important to understand the use of Arizal script in Torah scrolls, and the historic examples of the Ashkenazic script referenced in this work will be Torah scrolls. There are no sufficient (if at all) datable tefillin or mezuzahs to use as a basis in this research. The relevant literature often mentions tefillin only as opposed to the other liturgical objects; in other cases tefillin are mentioned together with mezuzahs. The mezuzahs may or may not be in the same category as tefillin but this is not the topic of this current work.

The use of the Arizal script for the Torah scroll is not self-evident. In some texts it appears that the Arizal script was used specifically for tefillin, but other texts describe its use in Torah scrolls.

Indeed, the aforementioned and other early authors referred to the Ari script in the context of writing tefillin only. Contrary to this opinion, in today's scribal tradition, the Arizal script is often intended for various ritually inscribed objects, including Torah scrolls, based on other teachings.

In the following paragraphs we shall examine various early modern sources in order to shed light on the function of the Ari script in the past.

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<sup>171</sup> Ḥatam Sofer Responsa, Volume II, (Yore De'ah) paragraph 266. (Bar Ilan Responsa Project, issue 22).

<sup>172</sup> Rabbi Beth Yosef.

The rabbis<sup>173</sup> quoted here who side with the use of Ari script only in tefillin<sup>174</sup> are Rabbi Haim Vital, Rabbi Emmanuel Hai Ricchi and Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried.

Contrary to their opinion, Rabbi Ya'akov Kopil Lifshitz (referred to by Abraham Jaffe) argued that the Arizal style befits not only Tefillin but also other liturgical objects, such as Torah scrolls.

## 5.6 Use of the Arizal script in Tefillin

The most important and earliest source that sides with the use of the Arizal script only in Tefillin is the book "Sha'ar ha-Kavanot," where the Ari's disciple Rabbi Haim Vital<sup>175</sup> describes the definition of writing the letters according to the method of his teacher, the Arizal, referring to the Tefillin in these words:

גם בצורת האותיות של כתיבת התפילין יש קצת שנויים ואלו הם...

Also in the form of the letters of the Tefillin there are a few changes and these are ...<sup>176</sup>

From this quotation one can infer that the original destination of the Arizal script was to write Tefillin.

A later author, Rabbi Emmanuel Hai Ricchi (1688-1743)<sup>177</sup> also referred to Tefillin in his

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173 Biographic information will follow in the coming pages.

174 Either because it is not necessary to use the Arizal script in Torah scrolls or because *a priori* it is meant to be used in Tefillin only.

175 For Haim Vital's biography see note 141.

176 Vital, Haim b. Joseph, "Shaar HaKavanot," part 1, 58.

177 Rabbi Emmanuel Hai Ricchi, (Ferrara 1688 - Leghorn 1743) rabbi, poet and kabbalist. He is best known for his work *Mishnat Hasidim*, an exposition of the Arizal's school of Kabbalah by topic. He earned a living as a teacher. In order to illustrate to his students the biblical story of the work of the *Mishkan* or tabernacle and its vessels, he constructed a miniature model of the Mishkan and its vessels out of cardboard. His work *Ma'aseh Hoshev* explains the work of the Mishkan in the style of Mishnayot with commentary. When he was thirty years old, he moved to the Land of Israel and settled in Safed, where he studied Kabbalah and the teachings of the Arizal, and later returned to Italy to the city of Leghorn, where he wrote his main work, "*Mishnat Hasidim*."

description of the Arizal script, when he wrote in his book "*Mishnat Ḥasidim*". This work is based on the teachings of the Arizal<sup>178</sup> and is written explicitly with the purpose of organizing the Arizal's teachings as a "Set Table".<sup>179</sup> It states the following:

ולא ישנה ממנהגו אם אפשר לו כי שרש יש לכל הננהגים האלה למעלה: ח ולכל המנהגים אותיות אלה  
אשר נצייר עתה כך ציורם בתפילין לכלם ואין לשנות כיצד האלפין יהיו...

A person should not deviate from his custom if possible, because there is a source for all these customs in heaven. The letters we will draw now, this will be their form in the Tefillin, and they should not be changed: the Aleph...<sup>180</sup>, [meaning that the list of the letters that are mentioned should be written in a specific way in the Tefillin.]

Following the above-mentioned early authors, many later *poskim* (Jewish legal decisors) understood that only Tefillin should be written according to the Arizal method and not Torah scrolls. This opinion that the Arizal script was not intended for all ritually inscribed objects, but for Tefillin alone, exists among many *sofrim* (expert Jewish ritual scribes) today. Indeed, this is the view expressed in the work "*Keset ha-Sofer*,"<sup>181</sup> which all Jewish ritual scribes study and are tested on today:

ועפ"י קבלת האר"י ז"ל כל הצדיקי"ן שבתפילין יהיו...

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Rabbi Emanuel wanted to establish a yeshiva in Jerusalem. After two years of wandering, he returned to Eretz Israel, and on the way he was beaten and murdered between Modena and Bologna on Rosh Ḥodesh Adar 5503 (1743), later he was exhumated to be properly buried in the Jewish cemetery of Cento (Ferrara). In his courtyard in Jerusalem a yeshiva was established under the leadership of Rabbi Ḥaim ibn Attar (1696 - 1743), known as the Or ha-Ḥayim (light of life) after his major work. This Yeshiva existed until at least 1886 and the most eminent rabbis in Jerusalem at the time studied there. (based on [https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/חזן\\_ריקל](https://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/חזן_ריקל), thanks to Prof. Severio Campanini and to Rabbi Avraham Fishman for biographical information.)

<sup>178</sup> This attribution is mentioned numerous times in both forewords of this book, for example "this book of mine is collected from the writings of the Arizal," Ricchi, *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, 7.

<sup>179</sup> Shulḥan Arukh in Hebrew, referring also to the code of Jewish law by rabbi Yosef Caro. See Ricchi *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, 1.

<sup>180</sup> Ricchi *Mishnat Ḥasidim*, 67.

<sup>181</sup> Shlomo Ganzfried's monumental work on Jewish scribal laws. Ganzfried (1804, Ungvar, Hungary – 1886, Ungvar) was a rabbi and decisor best known as the author of the book *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh* ("The Abbreviated Shulḥan Arukh").

And according to the teachings of the Arizal, all the *Tzaddik* letters of the Tefillin will be...<sup>182</sup>

meaning that the Arizal script is meant to be used for writing Tefillin only.

## 5.7 Use of the Arizal script in Torah scrolls

However, there are numerous Rabbinic authorities who do not differentiate between Tefillin and other liturgical objects. Besides those that are mentioned by Rabbi Abraham Jaffe<sup>183</sup> in his book "*Mishnat Abraham*" (quoted below), a partial list of the early leaders of the Ḥasidism should be added. Even some of those authorities who did not leave us written Halakhic literature did leave their Torah scrolls written in Arizal script for future generations. Some of these rabbis include:<sup>184</sup> Rabbi Sholom Rokeach (1781 – 1855)<sup>185</sup> and Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Eischenstein (1763 - 1831).<sup>186</sup> The Torah scrolls belonging to Rabbi Eischenstein were written by a certain scribe, Netan'el Yeḥiel, who also wrote the Torah scroll for Rabbi Shalom Rosenfeld (1800–1852),<sup>187</sup> which was written in Arizal script as well.<sup>188</sup> Rabbi Mordechai Shapira (1741/2–1800)<sup>189</sup> and Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira (1741/2–1800)<sup>190</sup> had Torah scrolls in this script as well.

(See Appendix C for photos from the Torah scroll of Rabbi Yitzḥak Isaac Safrin (1806-1874),<sup>191</sup> also written in Arizal script).

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<sup>182</sup> Keset HaSofer, Section 5, para. 2, The letter *Tzadi*.

<sup>183</sup> Rabbi Abraham Jaffe served as Rabbi at Zhitomir in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, author of "*Mishnat Abraham*".

<sup>184</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, quoting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian Rabbi, Yosef Sholom Klein's work, *Kol Sofrim*.

<sup>185</sup> Sholom Rokeach (1781 - 1855) was the first leader of the Ḥasidic dynasty of Belz, Galicia.

<sup>186</sup> Tzvi Hirsch Eichenstein (1763 - 1831) was the first leader of the Ḥasidic dynasty of Zidichov, Galicia.

<sup>187</sup> Rebbe of Kaminka, Ukraine (1800 -1852).

<sup>188</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 697

<sup>189</sup> Rebbe of Niesuchojeże, Volhynia (1741/2 - 1800)

<sup>190</sup> Rebbe of Dinov, Ukraine (1783 - 1841), author of *Bnei Yissaschar*.

<sup>191</sup> In Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, this scroll is referred to as the scroll of "א"א מקאמא רבנא" although there was no rabbi of such a name in the Kamarno Ḥasidic dynasty. This is likely a mistake, and is actually a scroll of Rabbi Yitzḥak Isaac Safrin from Komarno (1806 -1874). Thanks to researcher Elimelech Safrin (a scion of the same dynasty) of Jerusalem for this clarification.

## 5.8 Summary of the different opinions on the use of the Arizal script

The book "Mishnat Abraham" summarizes the different opinions on the use of the Arizal script, both those that side with using Ari script only in Tefillin and those that side with its use for Torah scrolls as well. He testifies that the letter forms initially conceived for the Tefillin are also used in scrolls, and writes the following (Sha'ar HaTemuna section 23):<sup>192</sup>

סעיף פ"ח: "נהגו העולם לכתוב בס"ת ג"כ צד"י יו"ד הפוכה, אע"פ שהאר"י ז"ל לא צוה רק בתפלין מ"מ אם רוצה לעשות כן בס"ת מודה האר"י ג"כ דיותר טוב, דלא ליהוי תרתי דסתרי, כן ראיתי בס"ת של גדולים ומומחים מכמה דורות, ומס"ת מומחים שבדורותינו. וחדשים מקרוב באו שפרצו גדר והתחילו לכתוב בס"ת צד"י של יו"ד ישרה וישתקע הדבר ולא יאמר

Para. 89: "The general custom is to write the letter Tzadi with an inverted Yod in the Torah scroll too, even though the Arizal only gave this directive regarding Tefillin. If someone nevertheless wishes to follow this practice in a Torah scroll too, the Arizal also says<sup>193</sup> this is better, so as not to be contradictory.<sup>194</sup> This is what I have seen in the Torah scrolls of great people and experts across several Torah scrolls of our generation. Reformers<sup>195</sup> made a new ruling and started writing the letter *Tzadi* with an upright *Yod* and this innovation should disappear and never be mentioned again."

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<sup>192</sup> Jaffe, Abraham ben Tzvi. *Mishnat Abraham*. Zhytomyr: D'fus Avraham Shalom, 1868, 56

<sup>193</sup> "Arizal also says" doesn't mean that a quotation will follow. The Arizal did not say that it is better to use the letters that he teaches in Torah scrolls as well. On the contrary, we saw in the quotation of Shaar Hakavanot that he was talking about their use in Tefillin. "Arizal also says" means that according to the ideas that Rabbi Jaffe learned from Rabbi Luria's teachings it seems that it is better to use his script in Torah scrolls as well, even though it wasn't said explicitly by Arizal. So "Arizal also says" here means that the Lurian idea also says.

<sup>194</sup> A contradiction between two traditions: If by chance a man was using one kind of Tefillin (written in the tradition of the Arizal) and another kind of Torah scroll (in the tradition of the Beth Yosef), this presents a problem as the way of the Arizal might be not correct according to the way of the Beth Yosef. See *ibid.* para. 87.

<sup>195</sup> He calls 'reformers' those who write the *Tzadi* in the way that we call Beth Yosef script instead in the way of the Arizal script.

The same author adds later on (in Clause 21):

בתולדות יעקב כתב וז"ל אות צ' יש כותבין יו"ד הפוכה ויש כותבין כדרכה והוא עיקר, כד' הפוסקים. ונבאר ע"פ הכוונה והסוד וכו' עכ"ל ולא חילק בין ס"ת לתפלין. וכן בשערי גן עדן לא חילק. אך בפע"ה ובמצת שמורים ובמשנת הסידים שהם מכתבי האר"י כתוב שיש שני תמונות: כתב מרובע שהוא אשכנזי, וכתב ספרדי שקורין וועליש. וכ"א יש לו מקום ואין לשנות המנהג. רק בתפלין יש קצת שינוי באיזה אותיות שצ"ל כן. היינו באלפי"ן צ"ל יו"ד וי"ו דלי"ת. צ' צ"ל יו"ד הפוכה ע"ש. מלשון זה אינו מוכרח רק שבתפלין יש קצת שינוי ממנהג הסופרים שכותבים בס"ת כמה שרוצין וכמנהג המקום. אבל בתפלין צוה האר"י דוקא הפוכה מטעם הכמוס. או מטעם שכתבו הפוסקים שבס"ת בשעה"ד סומכים על הרמב"ם שמברכין על ס"ת פסולה. אבל באמת הסופר שרוצה לעשות בס"ת כמו בתפלין, גם האר"י מודה, ותבוא עליו ברכה. ובפרט לדעת הב"ש יהיה תרתי דסתרי להעולה בתורה בתפלין דהאר"י

In the *Toldot Yaakov* it is written: There are those who write the letter *Tzaddik* with an inverted *Yod*" and there are those who write it in the usual way; the latter is the halakhic ruling in the opinion of the *Poskim*. This is explained according to the revealed and concealed teachings etc. The author of the "*Shaarei Gan Eden*"<sup>196</sup> did not differentiate between Tefillin and Torah scrolls with regards to the letter *Tzadi*.<sup>197</sup> However, in the *Pri Etz Hayim*<sup>198</sup> and in the *Matzat Shimurim*<sup>199</sup> and *Mishnat Hasidim*<sup>200</sup> – which represent the teachings of the Ari – say that there are two forms: a square script that is Ashkenazi and the Sephardic script called *Vellish*.<sup>201</sup> And each

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<sup>196</sup> Written by the kabbalist Rabbi Ya'akov Kopil Lifshitz, who lived in the city of Mezrich shortly before the time of the Baal Shem Tov (passed away in 1740).

<sup>197</sup> See pp. 78A-78B

<sup>198</sup> By Rabbi Hayim Vital. Vital, *Pri Etz Hayim*.

<sup>199</sup> Written by Rabbi Natan (son of David Reuven) Shapira of Jerusalem was born in Krakow, Poland and died in Bergio, Italy in 1667), was a rabbi, *Dayan* and Kabbalist. After living in Jerusalem he was sent in 1655 by the Ashkenazic community of Jerusalem to Italy, the Netherlands and Germany to collect money. He lived in Italy for about ten years until his death.

<sup>200</sup> See above

<sup>201</sup> In Ashkenazic Halachic terminology the word *Vellish* is used for Sephardic writing. In German, the word *welsch* means foreign, especially Romance, southern. (in Middle High German *welsch*, *walhisch* and in Old

of them has its *raison d'être*, and the custom is not to be deviated from. Only in Tefillin there is a small change in which letters should be written in this way. The *Aleph* letters should be written as a (letter) *Yod*, *Vav* and a (letter) *Dalet*. The (letter) *Tzadi* should be written with an inverted *Yod* (see above). This is not compulsory, other than in the case of Tefillin. The custom of the scribes who write Torah scrolls *as they wish and according to local practice* (is acceptable). In the Tefillin, the Ari ordered an inverted *Yod* for a hidden reason, or on the basis of the reason the *Poskim* wrote [namely] that they rely on Maimonides' [opinion] that in an emergency a blessing can be made on an invalid Torah scroll.<sup>202</sup> But really, the scribe who wants to do it as in the Tefillin, the Ari would also agree to it and he shall be blessed. And especially in the opinion of the *Barukh She'amar*<sup>203</sup> it would be a contradiction<sup>204</sup> if a man would read from the Torah<sup>205</sup> while wearing Tefillin inscribed according to the Ari.

## 5.9 Basis for the differentiation between the different objects regarding *ketiva tama*

As seen in the presented pictures, the differences between the different writing styles are minor, they even seem to be insignificant for somebody not knowledgeable in the *halakhot* of Hebrew scribal art.

As we saw there is a halakhic opinion which posits that one must only use letters written according to the Arizal's teachings when writing Tefillin, but scripts according to

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High German *wal(a)hisc* =Romance), the word was originally used for the Celtic tribe of the Volcae (from Duden dictionary).

<sup>202</sup> See David Yosef (ed.), *She'elot u-Teshuvot Rabbenu Moshe ben Maimon Pe'er Ha-Dor*, 29.

<sup>203</sup> It is interesting to point out this seemingly anachronistic terminology. Strictly speaking, the book *Barukh She'amar* that was written in the 15th century cannot include anything about Rabbi Luria who lived in the 16th century. Still, we are not talking about a mistake: a Tefillin is "written according to the Ari" means that its letters are written according what is described in the Ari's teachings, and the halachic rulings found in the work *Barukh She'amar* may indeed include opinions about such shapes, because such shapes did exist before the Ari's time.

<sup>204</sup> It would be a contradiction if a man would read from the Torah while wearing Tefillin inscribed according to the Ari. Since the way of the Arizal might be not correct according to the way of the Beth Yosef, see above.

<sup>205</sup> A Torah scroll that is written – according to the widespread custom – not in Arizal script.



other rabbinic teachings may be used in the writing of Torah scrolls. This differentiation can be explained through the halakhic concept of “*ketiva tama*” or precise writing. The question raised by the authorities quoted is the following: does the concept of *ketiva tama* mean that the script in the different liturgic object has to be precise up to very small details of the letters, or (as we will see in the case of Torah scrolls) is it valid as long as letters themselves are written according to an accepted tradition.

We will examine this concept further in the coming pages.

According to the "Mishnat Abraham" as quoted above in chapter 5.8, there is a "hidden reason" (referring to an esoteric explanation) for the fact that in the Tefillin, scribes write letter *Tzadi* with a reverted *Yod*, a tradition that differs from that practiced in Torah scrolls. On the other hand, Torah scrolls are written according to “the scribe’s will and the local practice,” as the Ari instructed.

Beyond the two reasons mentioned by the Mishnat Abraham, meaning the “hidden reason” (we do not intend to deal with esoteric matters in this work), and beyond the reason that we “follow Maimonides and make a blessing on an invalid Torah scroll”<sup>206</sup> there is another reason for using the letters of the Arizal script in Torah scrolls.

This other reason is also a non-esoteric one,<sup>207</sup> based on Maimonides’s rationalistic approach. This reason can be found in the writings of Rabbis Landsofer and Avigdor:

Rabbi Yonah Landsofer (1712-1782), a *posek* and one of the great rabbis of Bohemia<sup>208</sup> writes in his work "Bnei Yona":

ע"כ נראה דרמב"ם ס"ל דוכתבתם דדרשי' מינייה כתיבה תמה. זהו בתו"מ דבהו קאי וכתבתם. ולא ילפי' ס"ת מינייהו (דלא כפוסקים הנ"ל סק"ז) ואין תמה מעכב בס"ת. וכ"כ בתשו' חו"י סי' רצ"ה לעצמו (ולא הרגיש בהנ"ל סק"ז) והסכים לו חכם א' בתשו' אור ישראל מ"ט. ובזה יתבאר ל' הרמב"ם רפ"א מתפלגין. ד' פרשיות כו' ואפי' קוצו דאות מהן מעכב לכולן מהתורה עד שיהיו נכתבות שלימות וכן ס"ת שחיסר אפי'

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<sup>206</sup> David Yosef (ed.), *She'elot u-Teshuvot Rabbenu Moshe ben Maimon Pe'er Ha-Dor*, 29

<sup>207</sup> Thanks to Avraham Strauss for drawing my attention to this point.

<sup>208</sup> Landsofer 1895/6 20:21

אות א' פסול. ע"כ. הרי בס"ת לא כתב חסר קוץ אלא חסר אות וכו' בתשו' אור נעלם בס"י ד' ובס' יד הקטנה  
דמזה מוכח דמכשיר בס"ת חסר קוץ

Thus, it seems that Maimonides held that the word "*Uketavtem*"<sup>209</sup> (and you shall write them) should be interpreted as "*ketiva tama*," precise writing. This applies to Tefillin and Mezuzot, about which it is written "And you shall write them..." And we do not derive the Sefer Torah from them (unlike the above mentioned poskim in סעיף קטן ז'), and perfect writing is not a necessary condition in the writing of a Torah scroll. Similarly, in the responsa of the *Chavot Yair*,<sup>210</sup> (and he did not perceive what it is written in in סעיף קטן ז' above) A certain sage agreed with him in the responsum *Or Yisrael* #49.<sup>211</sup> And this will explain a statement by Maimonides in the beginning of the first chapter of (the laws of) Tefillin: "All the four passages, and even the crown over a letter, invalidates all them according to the Torah, unless they are written perfectly, and so a Sefer Torah that is missing even one letter is invalid, from which he forbids all of them from the Torah until they are written intact." He did not write concerning a Torah scroll lacking ornamentation but missing a letter and so in the *Ohr Neelam*<sup>212</sup> responsum in paragraph 20 and in clause 14, from which it is compelling that a Torah scroll is valid even if it is missing a spike on a letter.

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<sup>209</sup> Deut. 6:9, 11:22.

<sup>210</sup> Written by Yair Hayim Bacharach, German rabbi, born at Leipnik, Moravia, 1639 and died in Worms on Jan. 1, 1702.

<sup>211</sup> Written by "Israel Lipschütz, [s]on of Eliezer Lipschütz; rabbi at Cleve. There he became notorious in connection with a "get" [bill of divorce] controversy which attracted the attention of a large number of contemporary Jewish scholars. The dispute arose over a divorce granted by him in August 1766, which was declared invalid and which the rabbinate of Frankfort-on-the-Main opposed with such persistence and vehemence that it became a "cause célèbre." Israel Lipschütz was severely criticized and stoutly defended. Toward his own defense he published (Cleve, 1770) seventy-three similar decisions, under the title "Or Yisrael," to counterbalance the "Or ha-Yashar" published by Simon Kopenhagen in the previous year at Amsterdam." (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906).

<sup>212</sup> Written by Isaac Seckel ben Menahem Etthausen, "German rabbi; flourished in the first half of the eighteenth century, officiating as rabbi in various German towns during a period of 55 years. He was the author of "Or Ne'elam," a collection of 58 responsa relating to subjects he had discussed with Barukh Rapoport,

The conclusion of the words of the book “*Bnei Yonah*” is that a deficiency in the way specific letters are written according the halakhah does not invalidate Torah scrolls but does invalidate Tefillin.

Rabbi Landsofer’s contemporary Rabbi Ḥaim Avigdor expresses a similar view in his book *Pri Etz Ḥayim*:<sup>213</sup>

וכן שתי פרשיות שבמזוזה שהם שמע והיה וכו' ס"ת אפי' אות אחת פסול וכו'. נראה מדבריו שס"ת אינו נפסל בקוצו של יו"ד כתפילין אלא בחסרון צ"ע אבל אפשר לומר כיון דבמזוזה כתיב וכתבתם כתיבה תמה ושלמה בעינין ובתפילין ג"כ כתיב והיו לטוטפות בהוייתן יהיו כמ"ש רש"י ז"ל בפרק הקומץ דף כ"ח ע"י שם.

Likewise, the two passages in the mezuzah which are the *Shema* and *Vehaya* even a single letter renders them invalid etc. It seems from his words that the Torah scroll is not invalidated by the spike of a *Yod* like the Tefillin, but only if [an entire letter and not just a part of it] is missing and this needs to be discussed further. However it is possible to say that since it is written about a Mezuzah “*Uketavtam*” (and you shall inscribe them), this means a perfect and complete inscription is needed, and it is also written about Tefillin and they will be *Totafot*, as they should be, as Rashi writes in Chapter Hakometz 28.<sup>214</sup>

Both the *Pri Etz Ḥayim* and the *Bnei Yonah* base their words on Maimonides:

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Jonathan Eybeschütz, and others; and “Ur Lo be-Ziyyon,” novellæ on Berakot and Halakot Ḳalakot Ḳeṭannot. Both works were published after his death by his son, Judah Löb Etthausen (Carlsruhe, 1765).” (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906).

<sup>213</sup> Rabbi Ḥayim Avigdor (Constantinople, 1700–?) He studied at the renowned Yeshiva of R. Ḥayim Kimchi. At a certain stage, Rabbi Kimchi set up his learning academy in Safed. Rabbi Ḥayim Avigdor was not blessed with children and he decided to move to Safed. When his teacher passed away, the yeshiva broke up and R. Ḥayim Avigdor returned to his native town, but he did not find peace and suffered much. His work ‘*Pri Etz Ḥayim*’ was printed in Amsterdam in 1741/2. (Bar Ilan Responsa Project, issue 25).

<sup>214</sup> Avigdor, *Peri Etz Ḥayim*, 11.

"וכן שתי פרשיות שבמזוזה שהן שמע והיה אם שמוע אפי' אות אחת משתי הפרשיות אם חסר קוצו מעכב מן התורה עד שיהיו שתיהן נכתבות שלימות, וכן ספר תורה שחיסר אפילו אות אחת פסול."

"Likewise, the two passages in the mezuzah which are the *Shema* and *Vehaya* even a single letter from the two passages is missing its tip, it renders them invalid as proscribed from the Torah, until both of them are written completely. In the same way, a Torah scroll where even one letter is missing is invalid"<sup>215</sup>.

Both R. Avigdor and R. Yonah Landsofer understand from the words of Maimonides that unlike Tefillin, where there is an obligation to be precise even with the crowns of the letters (and the absence of a crown will invalidate them), in the case of Torah scrolls the situation is different: it is valid as long as letters themselves are written according to an accepted tradition.

#### 5.10 Summary of the views that do not differentiate between Tefillin, mezuzah, and Torah scrolls

The level of accuracy in the shape of letters is closely connected to the halakhic question of the extent to which the concept of *ketiva tama* is required for the scribing of each liturgical object.

According to Jewish law, similarly to various fields of life, the script of liturgical objects has to meet certain criteria in order to be considered halakhically valid, or *kosher*. One of these criteria is called *ketiva tama* or precise writing, meaning that the shape of the letter, up to the smallest details, has to be formed according to a prescribed way. Throughout the ages, numerous Jewish sages taught their followers what aspects are included in the idea of perfect writing. One of these sages is the Arizal, who taught only about a certain set of letters. He described how these letters should look, especially in the Tefillin, in order that their writing should be perfect according his Kabbalistic ideas.

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<sup>215</sup> Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilkhos Tefillin u-Mezuzah ve-Sefer Torah 1:2.

We will be able to explain and summarize the words of the revealed and concealed (halakhah and Kabbalah) teachings in the writings of Maimonides and R. Haim Vital, respectively, in the following way:<sup>216</sup>

Optimally, one must write a perfect text in Torah scrolls, Tefillin and mezuzahs. However, whereas the lack of meticulous writing of the letters' shape does not render Torah scrolls invalid. On the other hand, Tefillin and mezuzahs must be written precisely,<sup>217</sup> because if the writing is not perfect, the writing and the liturgical object will be disqualified.<sup>218</sup> According to the Lurianic teachings, the more accurate script is either the one that adheres to Sephardic customs, or the Arizal script, which is the Ashkenazic script that implements the words of the Arizal in the letters *Aleph*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, both final and regular form, and *Shin*, (and according to certain opinions, *Vav*, *Het* and *Tet*).<sup>219</sup> The words of the Arizal only relate to certain characteristics in these letters. The rest of the attributes of the forms of these letters, or all the other letters, remain as is customary, be they written in Ashkenazic script (even if they do not implement these teachings, what we call Beth Yosef script), or in Sephardic script (that does implement the Lurianic teaching in its traditional form).

In principle, at least Tefillin<sup>220</sup> should be inscribed in letters of the Arizal script. Torah scrolls can be written with more freedom, namely it is left to the scribe's choice, and according to

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<sup>216</sup> This explanation in my opinion fits the views of both the decisors who do not differentiate between Tefillin and Torah scrolls and those who do.

<sup>217</sup> A possible way (probably a less academic one) of understanding of the "hidden reasons" is an idea explained to me orally by Rabbi Moshe Weiner: the Tefillin compared to other liturgical objects can be described as a more delicate one, so it should be more meticulously fine-tuned (to use a term from the world of electronic devices). In our reality, this is perceived in the form of letters, so according to the Arizal the letters of the Tefillin should be formed with a greater attention to detail than Torah scrolls.

<sup>218</sup> This doesn't mean that the Beth Yosef script in Tefillin would be disqualified by the Arizal, but only a general statement, that in the case of a Tefillin certain small deviations from the ideal Halachic norm might disqualify the script, even if the same problem would not disqualify it in a case of a Torah scroll.

<sup>219</sup> *Matzat Shimurim*, Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat HaOtiot*, 694.

<sup>220</sup> Only Tefillin is mentioned explicitly in *Shaar ha-Kavanot*. Regarding whether the teachings of Arizal about the shape of the letters in Tefillin should be applied for mezuzot as well, there is no agreement among the decisors, and it reaches farther than the scope of this thesis.

the local custom of his cultural milieu. However, in order to avoid contradiction<sup>221</sup> in the scribal work, it is preferable to write more accurately the above letters in Torah scrolls as well as in the Tefillin and mezuzahs.

### 5.11 Kabbalah v. Halakhah

The discussion about the validity of the Arizal script and its different uses should be placed in a broader issue of the validity of halakhic and Talmudic tradition in respect to the mystical teachings related to the Kabbalah.

From the earliest appearance<sup>222</sup> of Kabbalistic literature in the 13th century, especially with regard to practical laws, questions arose among rabbinic authorities when confronted with such cases in which the Kabbalistic laws differ from the non-esoteric tradition. In both Ashkenaz and Sepharad there were those who advocated the superiority of the Kabbalah's stipulation whenever it seemed to contradict the halakhah, while others preferred the Halakhic approach. This concerned the rules of the script, too. Among those who preferred the Halakhic approach there were some who referred to Rabbi Yosef Caro, the renowned author of the legal code the *Shulḥan Arukh*, and especially to his quotations in the Beth Yosef of the author Barukh She'amar.

However, Rabbi Yosef Caro's attitude is not so clear-cut. Although a recognized Talmudist, Rabbi Caro himself addressed the question of the recourse to the Kabbalah rather than to the Talmudic halakhah, when the Talmud did not provide a satisfactory answer. In his work, Beit Yosef, he writes:

ומאחר שבתלמודא דידן לא נתבאר דין זה בפירושו מי יערב לבו לגשת לעבור בקום עשה על דברי רבי שמעון בן יוחי המפליג כל כך באיסור הנחתן.

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221 As mentioned above, it would be a contradiction if a man would read from the Torah while wearing Tefillin inscribed according to the Ari, in case the way of the Arizal might be not correct according to the way of the Beth Yosef.

222 It is not my task to examine the question how old Kabbalistic literature is. "Despite many citations, anthologies and appearances in the liturgy, the circulation of Zoharic literature during the seventeenth century was limited to religious scholars and Kabbalists. This changed abruptly at the end of the century" (Weinstein 2016, 75)

And since in our Talmud this law is not explicitly explained, who would be inclined to transgress actively the words of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai,<sup>223</sup> who so strongly opposed donning them (the phylacteries during "*Hol Hamo'ed*," i.e. middle days of the holiday).<sup>224</sup>

So, according to Rabbi Yosef Caro, in specific issues such as the wearing of the Tefillin during the middle days of a holiday, if the Talmud does not address the issue in question, the words of Rabbi Shimon – considered as a mystical figure – should be followed.

Disagreement between opinions can be found in cases when one opinion is expressed in the Jewish legal literature of the Talmudic tradition in general, or in Rabbi Yosef Caro's writings in particular, and another opinion is found in the Kabbalah in general and in the teachings of the Arizal in particular.

The call to follow the Kabbalistic view in such discordant cases is expressed by many scholars, some of whom can be quoted here. For example, Rabbi Ḥaim Elazar Spira of Munkács<sup>225</sup> writes:

צ'ריכין אנו לשמוע בקולו של הארי החי דברי א-לוהים חיים'.

"We must hear in the voice of the living lion (Ari) the words of the living God."<sup>226</sup> meaning that whatever the Arizal says should overrule other opinions.

Another example is a modern rabbi of Tunisian origin, Rabbi Yitzḥak Barda<sup>227</sup> who writes:

הזוהר לא בא לקבוע הלכה ולחלוק על ד[עת] חכמי התלמוד, רק מבאר דעתו לפי סודן של דברים... ואם יש ספק בהבנת ד[ברי] הזוהר יש לסמוך ע"ד האר"י שהבין את כל ד' הזוהר. וכלמ"ש האר"י הוא הלכה

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<sup>223</sup> Simeon bar Yoḥai also known by his acronym Rashbi, was a 2nd-century sage in ancient Judea, said to be active after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. He was one of the most eminent disciples of Rabbi Akiva, and attributed by many Orthodox Jews with the authorship of the Zohar, the chief work of Kabbalah.

<sup>224</sup> Beth Yosef Oraḥ Ḥaim 31

<sup>225</sup> Rabbi Ḥayim Elazar Spira, known as the Minḥat Elazar (1871-1937) and the third Rebbe of Munkács Ḥasidism. One of the most important rabbis in Central Europe between the two world wars.

<sup>226</sup> Responsum Minḥat Elazar, Section 4, 10:7k

<sup>227</sup> Rabbi Ḥayim Yitzḥak Barda (born in 1952) author of Halachic books. Head of the Yitzḥak Yeranen institutions in Ashkelon.

למעשה[!]... ובודאי שלא יפסוק ההיפך מהתלמוד. ואילו ידעו הפוסקים מה שידע האר"י הוה הדרי בהו[!]

The Zohar does not seek to establish halakhah and disagree with the Talmudic sages, only by explaining its [own, Zoharic] opinion according to the concealed teachings... and if there is doubt regarding the understanding of the Zohar, one should rely on the Ari, who understood the entire Zohar. The teaching of the Ari is the de facto halakhah, **and certainly the Arizal would not have ruled halakhically in opposition to the Talmud.**<sup>228</sup> If the Poskim had known what the Ari knew, they would revise their views.<sup>229</sup>

In contrast to the opinions cited above in favour of ruling according to the Kabbalah, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef<sup>230</sup> argues:

ואנכי בעניי לא זכיתי להבין מנ"ל [=מנא להוין] להרבנים הנ"ל אומדנא זו בדעת מרן, שאילו היה רואה לד' רבינו האר"י היה פוסק כן. והרי עם כל הכבוד לרבינו האר"י ז"ל, עטרת בראש כל אדם, אנן קי"ל [=קיימא לן] לא בשמים היא. ומהיכא תיתי להניח דברי הפוסקים המפורסמים ולתפוס דברי האר"י ז"ל כהלכה למשה מסיני... וא"כ [=ואם כן] אף אם רב גובריה וחיליה דרבינו האר"י כחד מן קמיא, מ"מ כשיש פוסקים ראשונים שאומרים להיפך והם הרוב אזלינן בתר רובא... וא"כ מה כל החרדה הזאת להניח ד' כל הפוסקים וכללי הדינים מפני סברות האר"י

With humility I have to say that I never understood from where the rabbis derived the above presumption about Maran, that if R. Caro had read the words of the Ari he would have ruled the same way halakhically. With all due respect to our master, the Arizal, crown of all our heads, it is accepted by us that (the Torah) is not in Heaven.<sup>231</sup> From where do we derive that we can dismiss the words of the famous Poskim interpret the words of the Ari z"l as the law of Moses from Sinai... and therefore if

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<sup>228</sup> Emphasis mine, text quoted from "Halamish".

<sup>229</sup> Responsa *Yitzchak Yeranen*, Section 3, para. 13, quoted in Halamish, 275

<sup>230</sup> Ovadia Yosef (1920, Baghdad-2013, Jerusalem) scholar, a decisor, head of the rabbinical court of Egypt (1947-1050), the Sepharadic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv (from 1969) and of the State of Israel from 1973 to 1983.

<sup>231</sup> "Not in Heaven," a phrase from Deut. 30:12, is taken to mean that God's will may be interpreted by the sages.



even the way of the Arizal is greatness and strength and has dominion, nevertheless are the early poskim who say the opposite, and they are the majority who overrule the minority...So what is all this anxiety about the opinion of all the poskim and the principles of the halakhah in favor of the view of the Ari?<sup>232</sup>

Rabbi Ovadia Yosef and other like-minded authorities argue that if there is any contradiction between halakhah and Kabbalah, the former always overrules the latter. Based on this idea, all the letters should be written in a way that is described in the halakhic literature (as in Beth Yosef), and that Kabbalistic rulings could be respected as long as they do not contradict halakhic ones.

## 6 The textual Basis for Writing in the style of the “Beit Yosef”

As we have seen, when there is a clash between views some of the decisors give preference to the Kabbalistic viewpoint and the Arizal, and others give preference to legal reasoning based on the Talmud. Two of the most important compendia of the latter type are the Shulhan Arukh and the Beth Yosef, both authored by Rabbi Yosef Caro.

A preference for the Kabbalistic views in the general matters can apply also to the shapes of the letters. What, therefore, is the difference of opinion in the case of the shapes of the letters in general, and in the shape of the letter *Tzadi*, in particular?<sup>233</sup> We will see<sup>234</sup> that at least part of the Torah scrolls from the early days, that is, before the time of Rabbi Yosef Caro and the Arizal, were written in a manner that meets the requirements of the Kabbalah.

The way to write certain letters (that conform to the Sepharadi style) advised in the Lurianic teaching was employed by the scribes well before Arizal’s time, as can be seen in some Erfurt Torah scrolls that will be discussed in chapter 7.2, written a few hundred years before the Arizal. Some scholars however opposed the rules of Arizal concerning the shapes of the letters. On what grounds did certain halakhic authorities oppose the Kabbalistic

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<sup>232</sup> “Yabia Omer” Vol. 2, Section Oraḥ Hayyim, 25,13.

<sup>233</sup> None of the other changes to the Beit Yosef script that feature in the Ktav Ari aroused such a controversy and opposition among the Poskim as did the letter *Tzadi*.

<sup>234</sup> By the analysis of the Erfurt Torah scrolls in Chapter 7.2.

traditions? In what sense they considered that this tradition does not meet the expectations of halakhah?

The poskim who oppose the views of the Kabbalah, which in this case are equivalent to the Arizal, take the works of Yosef Caro as their basis. The words of Rabbi Yosef Caro in his book the “Beit Yosef” are indeed derived from the book of the Barukh She’amar. This book discussed the letters from a halakhic point of view, despite the fact that some of his teachings were mystical in nature.<sup>235</sup>

Let us quote here what is written in the Glosses of Barukh She’amar regarding what is said about the letter *Tzadi*:

פ'י רגל של ה'ו"ד, לאפוקי מסופרים שבארץ בירן שהיו בימי שאינם עושים שום רגל ל'ו"ד של הצד"י, אך שמדביקים פני ה'יד לצואר ה'צ' כמו כותבים במחזורים כזה, ובזה הם פוסלים מלאכתם ומחטיאים את הרבים באות אחת בתרי טעמי, **הדא שמפרידים בין רגל של ה'ו"ד לצואר של ה'צ'**, וכל האותיות צריכים להיות אדוקים בלי פירוד לבד מק' וה' כמו שהוכיח מהר"ם לעיל בהגה של האל"ף. ועוד שמדביקים **פני ה'יד לצואר אשר לא כדת**, כי היקף גויל בעינן כמו בראשי השינ"ין ובע' ובט' שאם נדבקו הראשים אפילו כחוט השערה נ"ל לפי קיצור דעתי שפסול<sup>236</sup>

...the foot of the *Yod*, unlike the practice of the scribes in the land of Bavaria who were in my days, do not trace any foot on the *Yod* of the *Tzadi*. But they connect the face of the *Yod* to the neck of the *Tzadi* as they are written in *Mahzorim* (festival prayerbooks), and thus they invalidate their work and lead many to sin in two ways, **the first is that they separate between the foot of the *Yod* and the neck of the letter *Tzadi***, and all the letters need to be whole and not broken except for the letters *Kof* and *Heh* as the Maharam<sup>237</sup> wrote above in the annotation on the *Aleph*. **Furthermore they attach the face of the *Yod* to the neck which is not acceptable**

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<sup>235</sup> Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Mühlhausen, the author of *Sefer Alpha Beta* in Barukh She’amar states at the foreword of this work: "I am opening the gates of secrecy," referring to the Kabbalah. See Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 198 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 149-150 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>237</sup> Meir of Rothenburg (c. 1215 – 2 May 1293) was a German Rabbi and poet, a major author of the Tosafot on Rashi's commentary on the Talmud. Born at Worms about 1215 and died in the fortress of Ensisheim, Alsace, May 2 1293.

**because every letter has to be surrounded by the empty space of the parchment, as with the heads of the *Shin*, *Ayin* and *Tet* letters, if the heads are touching even the tiniest bit, we would have to say in my humble opinion that they are invalid.**<sup>238</sup>

The words of Maharam quoted at length<sup>239</sup> in the “annotation on the *Aleph*” that the Barukh She’amar is referring to, are commented upon by the Barukh She’amar<sup>240</sup>:

וכל אלו פסולות מצאתי בארץ לוזי"ן שכל אלפ"ין וגמל"ין ופיה"ין וצד"ין לא היו מחוברים רק  
מפורדין<sup>241</sup>

And all these are invalid, I found in the province of Lusatia that all *Aleph*, *Gimmel*, *Peḥ* and *Tzadi* letters were separated.<sup>242</sup>

We can illustrate the words of Barukh She'amar in a visual form with the aid of a manuscript from Cologne<sup>243</sup> (Historical Archive of the City of Cologne, Ms. Best. 7020, 332/5), from the “European Genizah” (recovered from a book binding):

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<sup>238</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 149 -150 (Hebrew numbering)

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 79 -87 (Hebrew numbering)

<sup>240</sup> For more on the book Barukh She’amar and its author(s) see chapter 5.2.

<sup>241</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 87 (Hebrew numbering)

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Available online at

[http://historischesarchivkoeln.de/MetsViewer/?fileName=http%3A//historischesarchivkoeln.de%3A8080/actaproweb/mets%3Fid=EF2A0A7E-F3C4-43AE-8C8D-](http://historischesarchivkoeln.de/MetsViewer/?fileName=http%3A//historischesarchivkoeln.de%3A8080/actaproweb/mets%3Fid=EF2A0A7E-F3C4-43AE-8C8D-4AA0B6ADCF0B_332_Mikrofilm_20160803173323.xml)

[4AA0B6ADCF0B\\_332\\_Mikrofilm\\_20160803173323.xml](http://historischesarchivkoeln.de/MetsViewer/?fileName=http%3A//historischesarchivkoeln.de%3A8080/actaproweb/mets%3Fid=EF2A0A7E-F3C4-43AE-8C8D-4AA0B6ADCF0B_332_Mikrofilm_20160803173323.xml) on page 19 (last accessed on July 5, 2020).

F2162 PH 35/5. Historical Archive of the City of Cologne, Germany Ms. Best. 7020 (Handschriften (W\*)), 332/5

Thanks to R’ Avraham Deutsch who brought this rare manuscript to my attention and to Dr. Ezra Chwat for locating it, as well as to Dr. Alexander Gordin for his help with its microfilm.

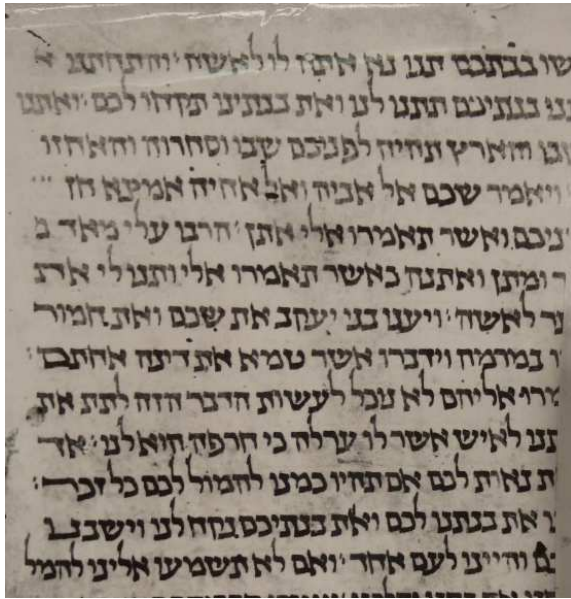


FIGURE 23

This fragment which includes the Biblical text of Genesis 34:8-35 (fig 23) is written with an unpunctuated Ashkenazic square script, and was probably originally part of a Pentateuch. This manuscript contains graphic features which make us understand the intention of the Barukh She'amar when he wrote letter descriptions such as "שמדביקים פני" "they attach the face of the *Yod* to the neck." The examples we bring are different forms of the letter *Aleph* (figures 24-32); this letter is also composed in the upper right of the letter *Yod*. (Indeed, the *poskim* who followed the Barukh She'amar also interpret his words regarding the letter *Tzadi*,<sup>244</sup> similarly the Barukh She'amar himself mentions them together, as we saw above in the previous paragraph.)

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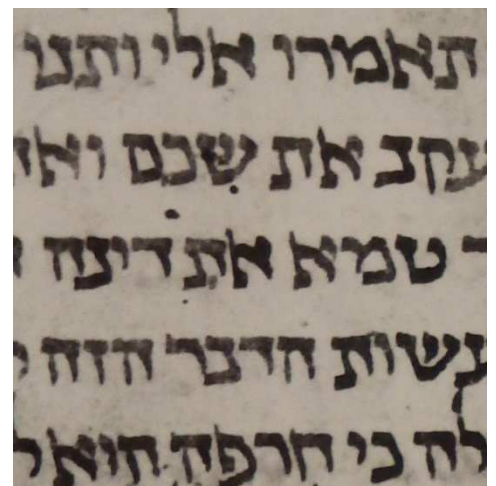
<sup>244</sup> "דכתוב בברוך שאמר (בצורת אות צ') בסופר שמדביק י' דהצ' מהשמאל דיו"ד שתיים רעות עושים, חדא דבעי להדביקה ברגלה הימני, ועוד מה שמדבק פני היו"ד לצואר הצ' הוי בפיסול כי היקף גויל בעינן שם כמו בראשי ש' וע' שנדבקו זה לזה כשערה דנראה לי שפסול ע"כ, וכמו דבעי מוקף גויל בין פני י' דצ' לבין גופה הכה נמי ממש בין פני י' הא' לבין גופה, ואין לומר דחדא באידך תליא דלפי דעתו דחיבור דצ' לצוארה צריך להיות דוקא ברגל ימני כיו"ד ישרה, לכן מה שחיברה בעוקצה השמאלי הוי נגיעה מיותרת ומקלקל (גולי הקדש - כלל ט"ו, תשנ"ו, עמ' ה'). "הגויל שביניהם וכמו נגיעה מאות לאות

"as it is written in the Barukh She'amar that he said regarding the form of a letter *Tzadi*, that a scribe who attaches the *Yod* of the *Tzadi* from the left hand side commits two misdeeds, one because he attaches it with its left foot and one more because he attaches it to the neck of the *Tzadi* and invalidates it, since (the law of) *heikef gevil* (the law of leaving blank space around each letter on the parchment) applies here, as in the case of the letters *Shin* and *Ayin*, where they are attached to each other like a hair, and therefore it seems to me that this is



**FIGURES 24-32**

The letters *Aleph* shown above (fig 23-32) are taken from the same page in this manuscript. We can see the right component of the letter *Aleph* in the form of *Yod* and how it is joined to the body of the *Aleph*, the diagonal line that is reminiscent of a letter *Vav*. We see that the scribe who inscribed them was not particular where he connected these components. The direction of the strokes is the same,



**FIGURE 33**

invalid, and as we learn that there has to be empty parchment space between the face of the *Yod* of the *Tzadi* and its body it is certainly the case here between the *Yod* of the *Alef* and its body, and it cannot be said that one opinion depends on the other because in his opinion the join of the *Tzadi* needs to be with its right foot with an upright *Yod*, so if it is attached to its left stem it is attached superfluously and it destroys the parchment between them and it is like when two letters are attached)” (Avraham David Wahrman, and Uri Shraga Feivel Halevi Schreier, *Da’at Kedoshim im Mikdash Me’at ve-Gidulei Hekdesh, Oraḥ Ḥayim*, 5).

Uri Shraga Feivel Schreier (1819-1889) was the Rabbi and *dayan* of Bohorodczany, Galicia, and the leader of proto-Zionist Association "Ahavat Zion". He was the prominent student of Abraham David ben Asher Anshel Wahrman (1770 at Nadvirna–1840 at Buchach), a Galician Talmudist. Rabbi Schreier’s commentary “*Da’at Kedoshim*” on his rabbi’s work, *Mikdash Me’at*, is a major work in the field of *STaM* and is obligatory to study for *megihim* (scroll examiners) until today.

the difference is the location and manner that the components meet.

This lack of close attention made the Barukh She'amar feel angry in such cases, as he expressed in the passage that we brought on the previous page.

In order to describe the small differences between the *Aleph* letters that were brought as examples and what the Barukh She'amar means, we must understand the concepts of the "foot," "face," and body of the letter *Yod*.

In order to better understand the letters' description and their components as discussed by Barukh She'amar, we will use the images of illuminated zoomorphic and anthropomorphic letters from the Hamilton Haggadah (MS Hamilton 288), known as the Hamilton Siddur, (fig. 34)<sup>245</sup> from collection of the Berlin State Library. While the Hamilton Siddur is a 13th century Sepharadi work, this is not a historical attempt to show a proximity between the Hamilton Siddur and the Ashkenazi script. This graphic representation is intended as a pedagogical illustration of the concepts used for the description of the letter components. The figurative pictures reflect the way the scribe imagined what the palaeographers call the 'ductus', that is the order and direction of the individual strokes and the way they connect to each other.



FIGURE 34

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<sup>245</sup> The image shown in figure 34 is from page 2v (19) SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288> [https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0012&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0002](https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0012&DMDID=DMDLOG_0002)



This is the letter *Aleph*<sup>246</sup> , and here it is in its original environment (fig.35):

FIGURE 35



And, this is the letter *Yod*<sup>247</sup>: , and here is the letter *Yod* in its original environment (fig. 36):



FIGURE 36

<sup>246</sup> The letter aleph that is shown here is from page 6r (19)  
 SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288>> [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0019&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0002](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0019&DMDID=DMDLOG_0002)

<sup>247</sup> The letter Yod is from page 19r (45)  
[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0045&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0004](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0045&DMDID=DMDLOG_0004)

The shape of the *Aleph* consists of three parts: the upper *Yod* (here in the form of a horseman or rider) the body of the *Aleph* (here in the form of the body of a horse) and the lower *Yod* that is almost identical in form to the upper *Yod* (shown here in the shape of the horse's front legs). (Please note that all the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic *Aleph*, *Yod* and *Tzadi* letters in the following pages, including the *Aleph* that is taken apart to components, are not found in the Hamilton Siddur the way they appear here. Here they are graphically manipulated in order to help us to understand the ductus of the letters.)



In the illustration, the foot of the *Yod* is the foot of the horseman, and the face of the *Yod* is the face of the horseman.

The neck of the letter *Aleph* is called the joint of the parts, where the thickness of the line is slight. This joint is called a neck because the neck connects the head to the body, and is thinner than both the body and the head (note that the neck of the horse and neck of the horseman are not the neck of the letter *Aleph* as a whole).

As mentioned above, the *Yod*– horseman - is supposed to touch the body of the *Aleph* - horse - with its leg: its thinnest part:





And not with its body, its thickest part:



To my understanding, the case that the *Barukh She'amar* considers as the scribes' "two misdeeds<sup>248</sup>" appears like this:



The two misdeeds are:

1. **The scribe separates the foot of the *Yod* from the neck of the letter**, i.e., its foot - its thinnest part - does not touch the main stroke.
2. The scribe joins the face of the *Yod* to the neck, which is not allowed. In this case the left side of the head of the *Yod* touches the body. The head of the *Yod* is thick and is not supposed to touch the body of the *Aleph*.

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<sup>248</sup> See page 113 (regarding the *Tzadi*) and footnote 249 (regarding the *Aleph*) on page 115.

The implication of the statement of the *Barukh She'amar* is that only one of two cases mentioned is already a misdeed. In other words, the case where the face of the letter *Yod* touches the body of the letter *Aleph*, even if the foot of the *Yod* is not separated from the body of the *Aleph*:



Similarly, the case where neither the feet nor the body of the *Yod* touch the body of the *Aleph*:



There are cases in which the upper *Yod* of the *Aleph*, similarly to the actual *Yod*, has hands (or forelegs), which in the case of the *Yod* is called the “*kotz* (serif) of Rabbenu Tam” in halakhic literature. The *kotz* (literally thorn or spike) here refers to the small serif in the lower left corner of the *Yod* (fig.38<sup>249</sup>). We are aided here by another illustration of a letter *Yod* (in the form of a dog, fig. 37) from the Hamilton Siddur (for the original environment

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<sup>249</sup> From Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)

of this letter *Yod* see fig. 39): the dog's forelegs are the *kotz*. The origin of this Halakhic term is the following. There are different explanations among the commentators of the Talmud regarding the meaning of the Talmudic expression “spike of the *Yod*” or *kotzo shel Yod*.<sup>250</sup> Rashi defines this *kotz* as “the right foot of *Yod*”<sup>251</sup> whereas according to Rabbenu Tam’s view, it is the spike on the bottom left corner of the *Yod*:

רב יהודה בהקומץ רבה מצריך קוץ, דאמר אפילו קוץ של יו"ד מעכב, ופרש"י זהו רגל ימין, ור"ת אומר שאינו קרוי קוץ כי אם רגל, והקוץ שלפנים לצד שמאל קרוי קוץ.

Rabbi Yehuda in (the Talmudic chapter) *Hakometz Rabba* requires a *kotz* since he said that even a *kotz* of the *Yod* is a necessary condition, and Rashi explained that it is the right foot, and the Rabbenu Tam says that it is not called a thorn but a foot and that the thorn at the front at the left is called thorn.<sup>252</sup>



FIGURE 37



FIGURE 38



FIGURE 39

In my opinion, the rulings of the Barukh She’amar in the case of “both of the misdeeds” do not relate to the case where the *kotz* of Rabbenu Tam (explained in the previous page<sup>253</sup>) of the *Yod* rather than the thicker part touches body of the *Aleph*. In this case there is no issue

<sup>250</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Menahot 29a

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Barukh She’amar in Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 110-111 (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>253</sup> See explanation on p. 120.

with the halakhic relevance of the law called “*heikef gevil*”<sup>254</sup> (blank space must be left around each letter on the parchment, in this specific case *heikef gevil* means that the elements of the letters shouldn’t touch each other at places where it is not necessary) because the *Yod* does not touch the body excessively. Only when the thicker part of the *Yod* touches the body of the *Aleph* would the issue that concerned Barukh She’amar – *heikef gevil* – be a problem.

The *Yod* does not touch the thick part of the letter, as shown here:<sup>255</sup>

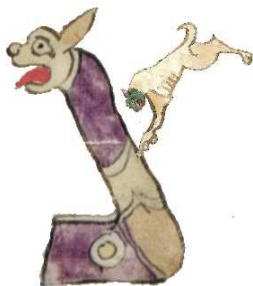


(that



is parallel to the head of the dog in this illustration:  
thin line that parallels to the foreleg of the dog.

), but with the






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<sup>254</sup> The letters have to be *mukaf gevil*, meaning leaving blank space around each letter on the parchment. Letters mustn’t touch each other or the end of the parchment. See Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayim 32:4.

<sup>255</sup> This image is a graphically manipulated version of an *Aleph* from Ms. Rhineland 1217. This Torah Scroll was presented by Ephraim Caspi at the Seventeenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 6-10, 2017, Jerusalem. A forthcoming article on it under the title “An unknown Ashkenazic Torah Scroll from the early 13th century,” expected to be published in 2020 in the *Henoch Journal*’s special edition “From Cairo to Amsterdam: Hebrew Scrolls from the 10th to the 18th Centuries”.

In short, according to this explanation a letter *Aleph* like

this<sup>256</sup>  should be kosher and this<sup>257</sup>  not, even though both have inverted *Yods* and the difference might seem minor.

(Of course, I brought these zoomorphic and anthropomorphic illustrations here only to aid understanding of the matter, but conclusions cannot be drawn from all the details of the illustrations, as the analogy is not perfect. Also note, that for better understanding of the concept the dog's head was graphically altered.)

Apparently, this is how Rabbi Yisrael Ḥarif<sup>258</sup> of Lublin, whose commentary was placed around the *Alfa Beta* of Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen<sup>259</sup>, understood the words of the Barukh She'amar. In this manuscript,<sup>260</sup> Rabbi Yisrael Ḥarif brings a series of letters that are kosher and also those which are “invalid and absolutely cannot be corrected”.

This is how the invalid *Aleph* letters appear in his handwriting:

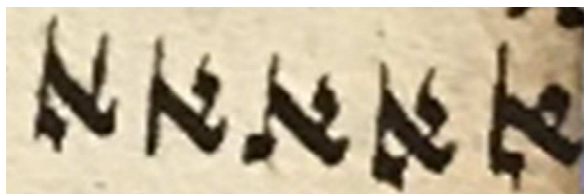


FIG 40

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<sup>256</sup> This *Aleph* originates in Ms. Rhineland 1217.

<sup>257</sup> This second *Aleph* is a graphically manipulated version of the former one.

<sup>258</sup> Rabbi Yisrael ben Rabbi Shalom Shachna (Shor) (1520-1598), also known as Israel Ḥarif. “Replaced his father as rabbi and head of a yeshiva in Lublin... He negotiated with his brother-in-law the Rema (see Rema's responsa 25), and the Maharshal filled his place in Lublin.” (Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat HaOtiot*, 706) The Rema also learned at the yeshiva he headed.

<sup>259</sup> For the manuscript see page 125 and Appendix D

<sup>260</sup> Oxford 803 Op. 330v. Thanks to Dr. Rahel Fronza, Curator of Hebrew manuscripts at the Bodleian Library.

As we can see, he does not include among the invalid *Aleph* letters the “inverted *Aleph*,” where the upper *Yod* is attached to the left side by a thin line.



FIG 41<sup>261</sup>

However, contrary to the explanations I cited above, with regard to the letter *Tzadi*, he does rule out a similar case (the top right one of the example with five shown):

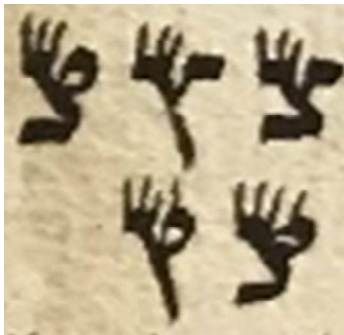


FIG 42

According to his words therefore, a Tzadi letter like this –  
 Tzadi in Arizal script –  
 would be unacceptable.<sup>262</sup>



Here we have a *Posek* who invalidates the *Tzadi* letter of the Arizal.

It is true, as it has been shown, that this form does not contradict the words of rabbi Samson son of rabbi Eliezer, known as Barukh She’amar, but as we explained in Chapter 5.2. the book “Barukh She’amar,” over the generations, was combined with other works, and it was called the “Barukh She’amar” in its entirety. What was written in the latest *Alpha*

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<sup>261</sup> These *Alephs* are taken from Torah scroll ‘Ms. Rhineland 1217’.

<sup>262</sup> From Torah scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215).

*Beta*<sup>263</sup> (that was written not by Rabbi Eliezer and not by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman but by an anonymous author) indeed opposes the letter *Tzadi* in the form that has an inverted *Yod*:

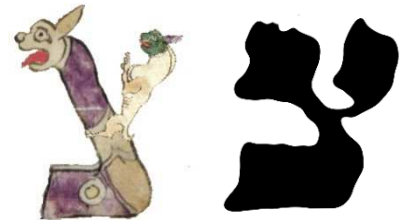
צ צריכה להיות ראש הראשון כמו יו"ד ממש שפניה נוטה קצת נגד מעלה וראשה עם גופה השני כמו  
 נון עקומה ממש<sup>264</sup>

In the letter *Tzadi* the first head should **really be like a *Yod*** with its face tilting slightly upwards and the head of the second body exactly like a slanted *Nun*<sup>265 266</sup>

In his opinion, the right-hand part of the letter *Yod* needs to be a real *Yod*:



That is to say the letter *Tzadi* should look like this:



and not be written with an inverted *Yod*:



which would make the *Tzadi* look like this:



<sup>263</sup> Section of the book *Barukh She'amar* in its wider meaning.

<sup>264</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 278.

<sup>265</sup> A Slanted *Nun* is the regular form of the letter *Nun*, as opposed to the final *Nun*.

<sup>266</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 278.



Or as an unedited version in the Hamilton Siddur appears:

FIGURE 43<sup>267</sup>

It should be noted here that although I quoted the following words from the last Alfa Beta (considered part of the book *Barukh Sh'eamar*<sup>268</sup>): “In the letter *Tzadi* the first head should really be like a *Yod*,” this is not what is written in the *Bet Yosef*.



FIGURE 44

There it is written: “In the *Tzadi* the first head should be a kind of *Yod* with its face turning slightly upwards,” that is to say the emphatic word “really” is missing. The *Beit Yosef* here is quoting from the first Alfa Beta, written by Rabbi Yom Tov Mühlhausen (see chapter 5.2 on *Barukh She'amar*) Despite the omission of this word, many poskim, above all the *Ḥazon Ish*<sup>269</sup>, thought that in the “*Beit Yosef*” script it is forbidden<sup>270</sup> to write a letter *Tzadi* with an inverted *Yod*. We have now seen what led to the consolidation of the

<sup>267</sup> Original illustration from the Hamilton Siddur page 25r SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288> >[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0057&DMDID=](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0057&DMDID=)

<sup>268</sup> see chapter 5.2.2 on *Barukh She'amar*

<sup>269</sup> *Ḥazon Ish*, chapter 9, paragraph 6.

<sup>270</sup> Except for those follow this tradition. According to a number of testimonies he changed his mind: *Responsa Minḥat Yitzḥak*, part 4, chapter 47:

האמת אגיד כי גם אנכי הפעוט, ה"פ הרבה עם מרן בעל חזו"א ז"ל בזה, וכאשר הראתי לו את דברי ח"ס הנז', הודה לי, שאין לפסול הצדיקין מהופכין, ועי' בס' חזו"א (סנהדרין צ"ג ע"א), ולא ידעתי אמאי השמיט את דברי החת"ס (שבחי"ד) הנז' "I will also say the truth that me, the little one, had many (opportunities to) talk with our Master, the author of *Ḥazon Ish* OBM about this, and when I showed him the mentioned words of the *Ḥatam Sofer* (Rabbi Moses Schreiber, 1762–1839), he admitted to me, that the reverse *Tzadi* letters should not be ruled out, and see the book *Ḥazon Ish* (Sanhedrin chapter three 71A), and I did not know why he omitted the words of the *Ḥatam Sofer* (in the section *Yore De'ah*) mentioned."



difference the Beit Yosef script and the Arizal script regarding the letter *Tzadi*.

This above<sup>271</sup> mentioned manuscript (fig. 44)<sup>272</sup> by Rabbi Yisrael Ḥarif is especially important, and is an early testimony of the reference to the work of the Barukh She'amar, who already had authority, since Rabbi Yisrael Ḥarif was from the Ashkenazic rabbinic elite, as we mentioned above. He brings his words in the name of his father<sup>273</sup>, Rabbi Shalom Shachna of Lublin.<sup>274</sup>

Even earlier and more significant evidence<sup>275</sup> of the importance of the Barukh She'amar amongst Ashkenazic Jewry is the Maharil.<sup>276</sup> The Maharil is considered the most important authority in everything related to the practice and customs of Ashkenazic Jewry, and was quoted by Rabbi Moses Isserles<sup>277</sup> in his glosses on the Shulḥan Arukh). In the responsa of the Maharil (section 98) he brings proof for his argument from "R. R. Samson," that is, from the work "Barukh She'amar."

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<sup>271</sup> On page 122.

<sup>272</sup> Oxford 803 Op. 330v. Transcription, translation and larger image see in Appendix D.

<sup>273</sup> See Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 708. Based on the understanding of the acronym *Aleph-Mem* understood as 'my father and my teacher'.

<sup>274</sup> Rabbi Shalom Shachna of Lublin was a Polish Talmudist, born about 1510 and died at Lublin on Oct. 29, 1558. He was a pupil of Jacob Pollak, founder of the method of Talmudic study known as the Pilpul. By the year 1528 he had already become famous as a teacher, and hundreds flocked to Lublin to receive instruction at his yeshivah. Many of his pupils became recognized rabbinical authorities, among them being: Moses Isserles of Cracow (Shachna's son-in-law); Moses Heilprin, author of "Zikron Mosheh"; Solomon ben Judah, rabbi of Lublin; and Ḥayyim ben Bezaleel, rabbi at Friedberg." (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906)

<sup>275</sup> Moelin 1980, p. 188.

<sup>276</sup> Rabbi Jacob Ha-Levi Moelin (Maharil Segal) (1360, Mainz-1427 Worms) was a Talmudist and posek (authority on Jewish law) best known for his codification of the customs (minhagim) of the German Jews.

<sup>277</sup> Rabbi Moses Isserles (born at Cracow about 1520; died there May 1, 1572) was an eminent Polish Ashkenazic rabbi, talmudist, and posek.

## 7 The shapes of the letters in ancient Ashkenazic writing<sup>278</sup>

In order to illustrate the above, the following are examples of early Ashkenazic Torah scrolls in which the shapes of the letters are very similar to the script that later came to be known as the Arizal script, and are certainly not based on a model similar to the script Rabbi Caro described as based on *Barukh She'amar*:

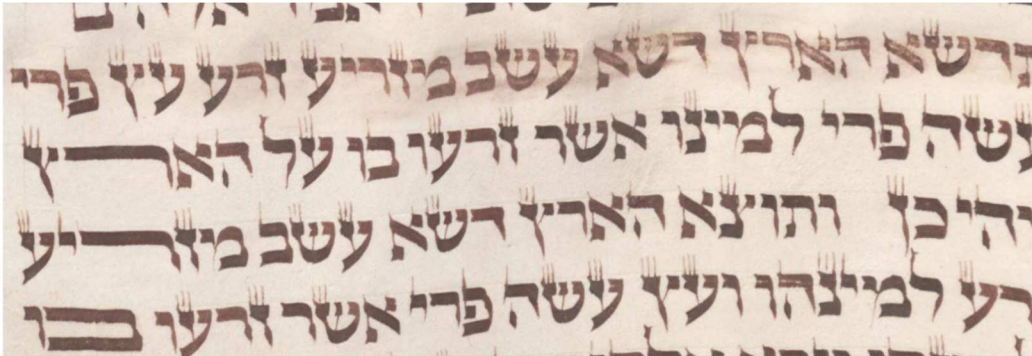


FIG 45. SECTION OF TORAH SCROLL ERFURT 6<sup>279</sup> (MS. OR. FOL. 1215) THAT INCLUDES LETTERS TZADI WITH A REVERSE YOD



FIG 46. A COLLECTION OF LETTERS TYPICAL TO WHAT WILL LATER BE KNOWN AS THE ARIZAL SCRIPT FROM MS. RHINELAND 1217

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<sup>278</sup> For understanding of the approach that defines letters of the alphabet as composed of other letters

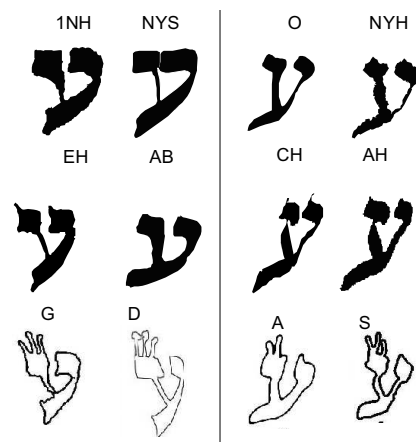
I would like to refer again to Chapter 3.1.

<sup>279</sup>> [http://digital.staatsbibliothek-](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN663193613&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001)

[berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN663193613&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0001](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN663193613&PHYSID=PHYS_0001&DMDID=DMDLOG_0001)< (last accessed on April 29, 2020).

The letter *Ayin* is one of the examples of a letter written differently in different styles of script. The comparative illustration below (fig. 47)<sup>280</sup> shows the development of the letter among Sephardic (right section) and Ashkenazic Jewry (left section). The images of the letters on the top row are from manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, that is, before the time of the Arizal and the Beth Yosef. The letters on the second line are from manuscripts from the eighteenth century. The letters on the third line date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The table shows that in most eras and styles of writing, the letter *Ayin* does not correspond to the modern use of the Beth Yosef script.

FIG 47



The form of the letter *Ayin* in Beth Yosef script that is used today appears this way:<sup>281</sup>



As mentioned earlier, the left side of the letter *Ayin* resembles the shape of a *Vav* in the Arizal script, whereas in the Beth Yosef script it has the shape of a

<sup>280</sup> For explanations about the manuscripts that these letters are taken from, including the meaning of the Latin letters in this chart see: Farnadi-Jerusalmi 2016, 9-19. The shelfmarks of the manuscripts are as follows: 1NH: Israel Museum Jerusalem Israel Ms. 181/060; NYS: MS. 4804; O: MS. Can. Or. 42; NYH; MS. 4817; AB: AMST.

Ros 147 (Cat. Fuks); CH: MT9; AH: AMST Ros 131 (Cat. Fuks); manuscripts G, D, A and S have no shelfmarks: see <https://digitalcollections.jtsa.edu/islandora/object/jts:507076> (last accessed on April 29, 2020).

<sup>281</sup> Letter generated with computer graphics, based on the writing of the script of Shaul Bassel, a contemporary scribe.

*Zayin*. This element of the letter *Ayin* will be discussed below in Chapter 8 on the letter *Zayin*.

After examining these examples, the obvious question is: What is the source of the letters described by the "*Barukh She'amar*," as quoted by Rabbi Yosef Caro in the Beth Yosef? Although the form of the letters similar to the Arizal script was common among Ashkenazic Jews, it was not exclusive. This can be deduced from the halakhic opinion that the form of letters does not cause the manuscript to be un-kosher as long as they do not contradict the teachings of the Talmud.<sup>282</sup>



FIG. 48

The figure above is an excerpt from the Torah scroll Erfurt 8<sup>283</sup> with script resembling that of the Beth Yosef, at least with regard to the letter *Tzadi*.

A regular and a final *Tzadi*, respectively, from the same scroll.

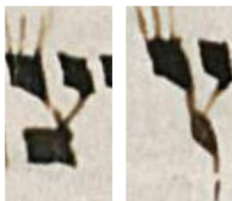


FIG. 49

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<sup>282</sup> Shulḥan Arukh, Oraḥ Ḥayim, Hilkhot Tefillin, Chapter 36.

<sup>283</sup> Will be discussed extensively in the coming chapters.



A final *Tzadi*: **FIG. 50**

This final *Tzadi* is from an inscription<sup>284</sup> noting the founding of the "Pinkas" synagogue in Prague in 1535. If this is indeed the original sign, this example can somewhat explain why the Beth Yosef script uses the straight *Yod*: It is possible that alongside the Ashkenazic custom of using the reverse *Yod* on the right side of the *Tzadi*, among the Jews of Prague (the home city of the *Barukh She'amar*) the custom was to write the *Tzadi* with a straight *Yod* on the right side.



**FIG. 51**

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<sup>284</sup> Volavkova, Hana. *Pinkasova škola : památník minulosti a našich dnů* . Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1954. available online at <http://pinkas.jewishmuseum.cz/dist/img/historie/pamdeska.jpg> (last accessed on July 6, 2020).

The image above (fig. 51) is a fragment discovered in the binding of the Latin manuscript in a Carmelitan Library in Cracow, Poland. It is of a fifteenth century *Get*<sup>285</sup> (divorce document), written in Nuremberg, Germany. Here, too, the *Tzadi* is written with a straight *Yod*. This may also be evidence that the *Barukh She'amar* applied the same writing tradition that was prevalent in Nuremberg. Sometimes the same manuscript can include several types of *Tzadi*<sup>286</sup> as seen in the figure below.



In these cases, the lack of uniformity in the formation of the *Yod* of the *Tzadi* seems to indicate the lack of importance of the direction of this *Yod*, in the scribe's opinion. In actuality, the difference between the straight and the reverse *Yod* is very small, and at times is difficult to discern at all. The example below shows the slight differences in the position of the *Yod* in order to emphasize the difficulty in categorizing it as "straight" or "reverse":



FIG. 52B

## 7.1 A Graphic Analysis of the Letters of the Erfurt scrolls according to the method developed by Dr. Edna Engel

The research method used to analyze the Torah scrolls from Erfurt was developed by Dr. Edna Engel of the Hebrew Paleography Project of the National Library of Israel.<sup>287</sup> This method is based on "decomposition of the letter into various components and the typological

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<sup>285</sup> I would like to thank to Jerzy Adam Mazur for sharing this yet unpublished manuscript. The binding that it is found in originates from pre-1539, most likely the end of 15th century. The date of writing the *get* is April 18, 1464 (10th of *Iyyar* 5224) – it is signed by two witnesses.

<sup>286</sup> From Ms. Rhineland 1217.

<sup>287</sup> Edna Engel, "The Analysis of the Letter – a New Palaeographical Method," 43-50. See also Edna Engel, *Hitpathut ha-K'tav ha-Ivri mi-Mered Bar-Kokhba ad Sh'nat 1000*.

examination of each component."<sup>288</sup> In this paper we intend to examine small differences in the letters as a result of the different styles, as "one must examine the development of script in the tiny transformations, expressed in the development of a small particle or other factor rather than the letter as a whole. The conservative nature of Hebrew script requires adherence to rigid writing rules."<sup>289</sup>

The contemplation, in itself, of a large number of letters, and the examination of all of their details and components is a very important tool for acquiring deep knowledge of the letters. This analysis provides the ability to differentiate between the different styles, even without calculating the exact measurements, as Dr. Engel did in her doctoral dissertation.<sup>290</sup>

The model is based on two principles: 'structure' and 'form'. The term 'form' implies the treatment of the morphology of the letter with regard to ornamental elements (serifs). Modification of the 'form' in a letter can be attributed to changes in ornamental features. It can also be attributed, however, to the sharpening of the calamus or exchanging it for another one. This will be manifested either in the alteration of the letter's line (for example, turning a straight line into a curved one) or in a variation of its thickness.

The term 'structure' expresses the mutual relationship of the lines of the letter. Without its ornaments, the Hebrew letter consists of 2-4 straight lines. These lines determine the basic structure of the letter. Movement, or shortening of lines, or changing the angle of a stroke may cause a change in the structure. By distinguishing between 'form' and 'structure', we can compare letters which do not possess the same ornaments."<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>288</sup>Ibid., 91.

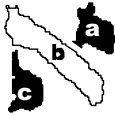
<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Edna Engel, *Hitpathut ha-K'tav ha-Ivri mi-Mered Bar-Kokhba ad Sh'nat 1000*

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

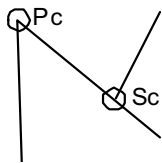
### 7.1.1 Components

According to Engel, each letter, including the decorative additions, should be broken down into components. A component is a section of the letter that is clearly separate from the other parts of the letter. The different letter components are usually marked by small Latin letters.<sup>292</sup>



Dividing the letter into components allows us to examine the use of similar components in different letters, and to compare different letters by examining their similar and different components.<sup>293</sup>

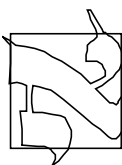
### 7.1.2 Conjunction of the Letter



As Engel writes of the joining elements within a letter, the “Intersection between two skeletal lines occurs between two strokes in different directions that are not done with one hand movement.”<sup>294</sup>

Of course, not every letter must have a join, and then there are letters that contain more than one. In letters where there is more than one join, the encounter between the two long strokes is called the Primary conjunction (PC in short), and the second join is called the Secondary conjunction (SC in short). Examining the movement of the junctions or their change of place over time may indicate the typological affiliation of different letters.

### 7.1.3 The Letter Template



The parameters of the letter can be defined by embedding the letter in a template, created by depicting a rectangle around the letter outline.

“This square fits the outlines of each variant of the letter and has been constructed by drawing four perpendicular lines through the extreme points of

<sup>292</sup> Ibid, 93


<sup>293</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, 96



the letter,”<sup>295</sup> not taking into consideration any decorative elements of the letter, which remain outside of the square.

#### 7.1.4 Shape

In addition to the  skeleton lines that make up the letter, each letter also has form elements, which include the ornamental extensions that develop on the skeleton line (such as tags, spikes, or heads) as well as changes in the skeleton line itself (such as bends, thickening, twisting, or the shape of an encounter with another line).<sup>296</sup>

For the purpose of sorting the form elements, the letters are divided into graphical units. Each graphical unit consists of similar components of several letters, in other words components that share a similar development.

Of the letter components listed below, those included in this discussion are marked in bold.

The horizontal line of the long roofs of the letters include:

*Beth, Daleth, Heh, **Het**, Kaf, Kof, Reish, Tav*



The horizontal line of the short roofs of the letters are seen in:

*Gimmel, **Zayin**, Nun, final Nun*



Right side vertical lines appear in: *Daleth, Heh, **Het**, Reish*



Letters with slanted lines that develop heads:

*Aleph, Tet, Mem, Ayin, Tzadi, Shin*



<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 103

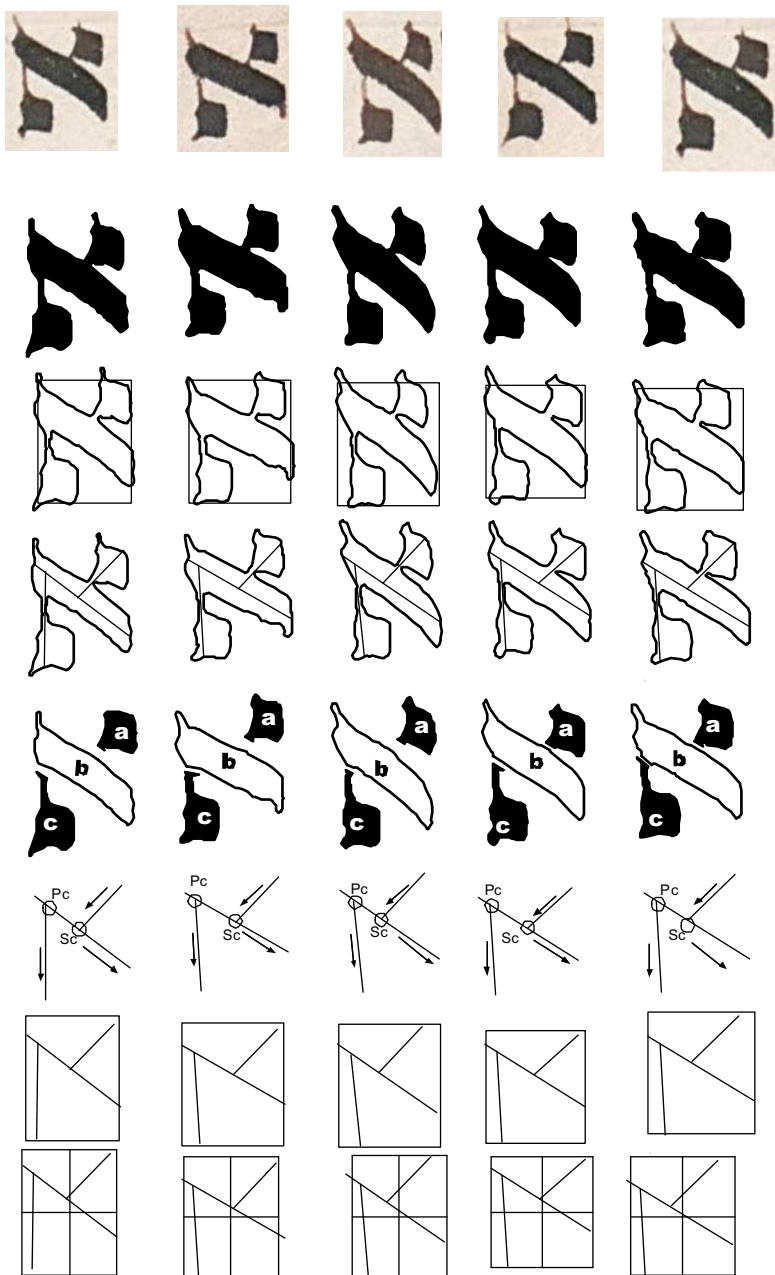
## 7.2 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letters in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

The images in this section are my own reproductions with the help of graphic programmes on the computer.

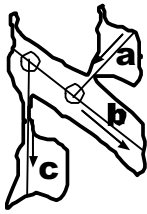
### 7.2.1 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter *Aleph* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

#### The letter *Aleph* in Torah scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)

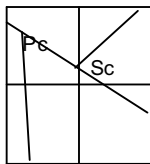
#### A graphic analysis of the letter *Aleph* in Torah scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



**The List of Characteristics of the *Aleph* in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)**



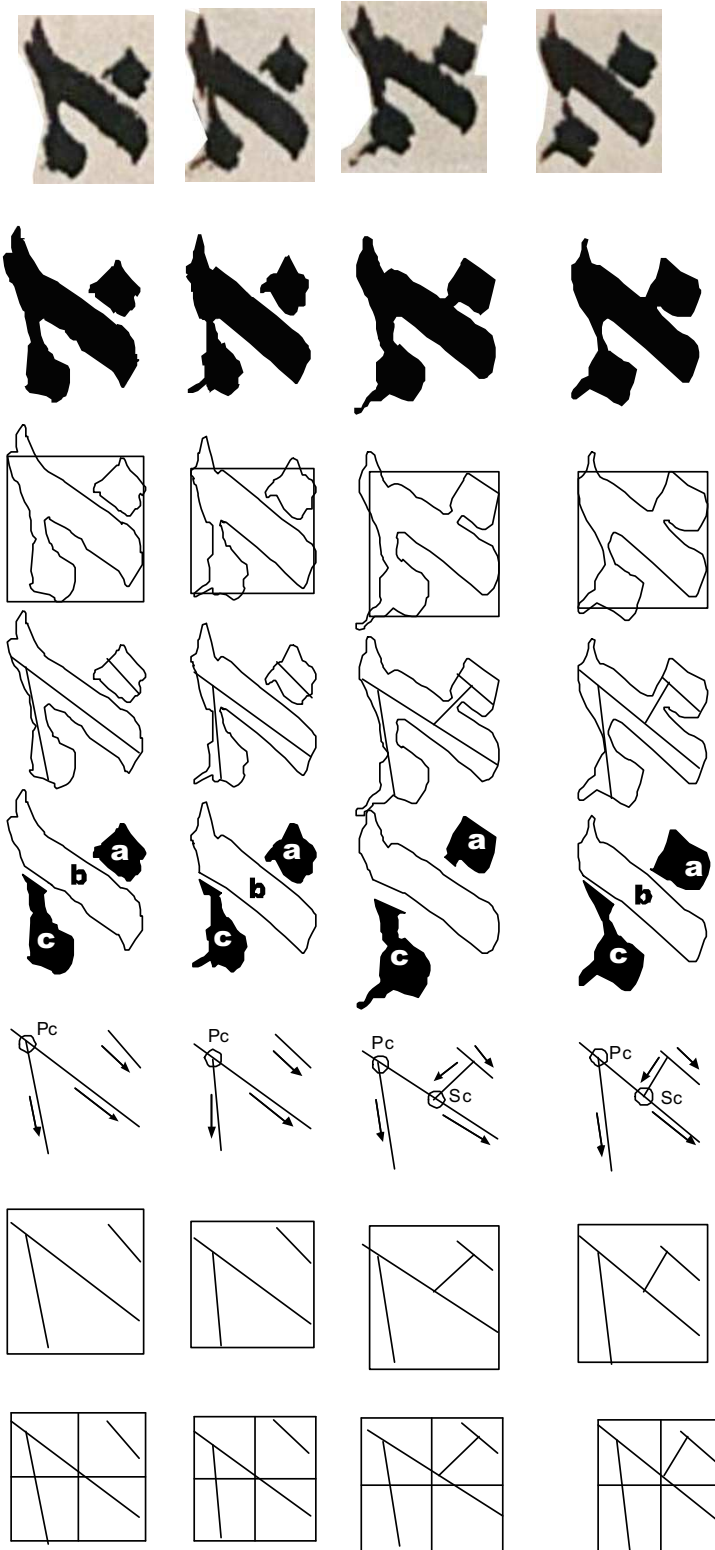
The letter *Aleph* has two skeletal conjunctions, the secondary conjunction (SC) is in the upper left quarter, close to the top of section "b" in the figure above. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the middle of the letter:



- a. A square head with a right turn
- b. A diagonal straight line with a spike at the top corner
- c. A right turn with a 90° angle and a spike in the corner



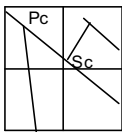
**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Aleph* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**






**The List of Characteristics of the *Aleph* in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)**

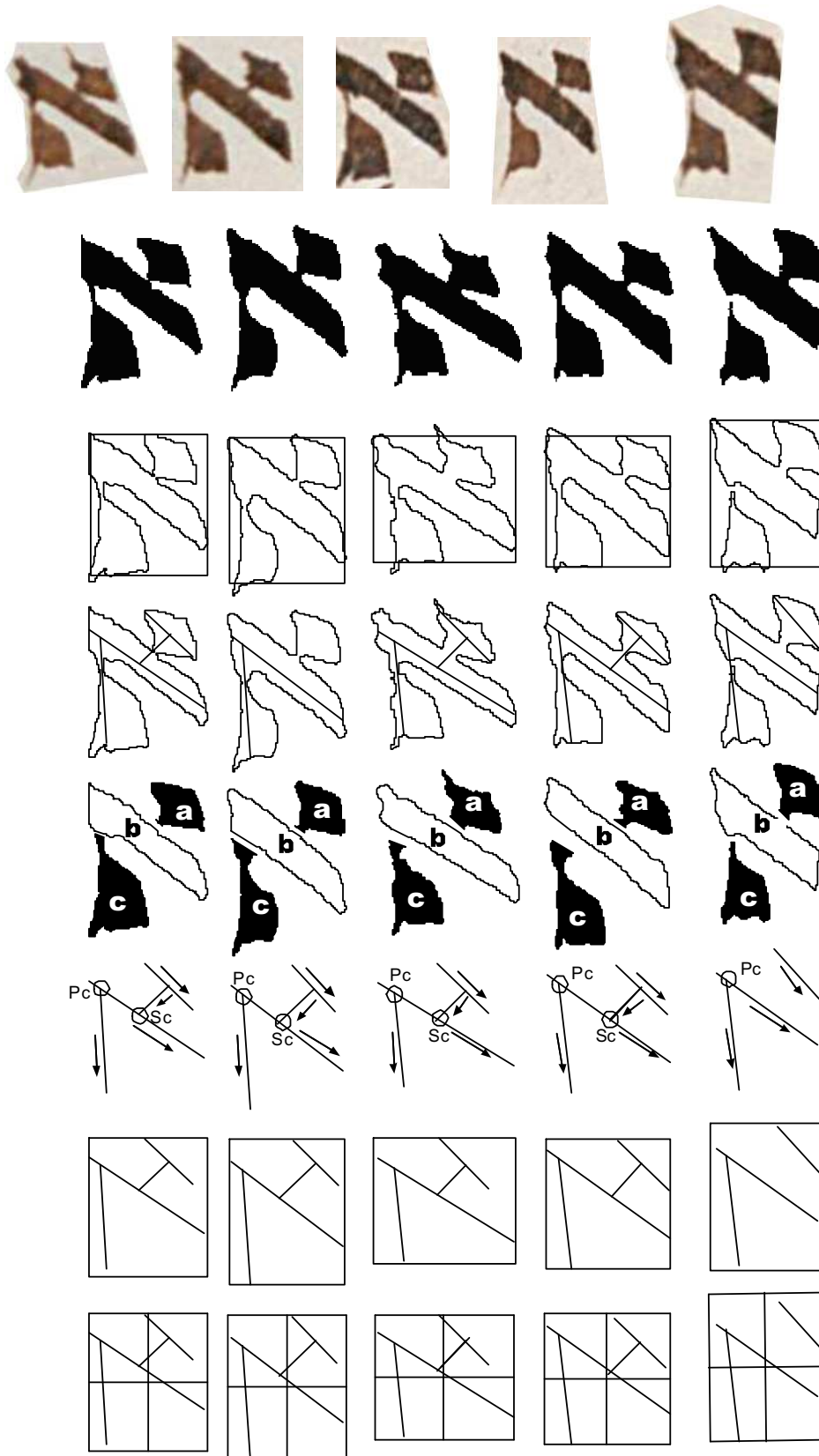


The letter *Aleph* has two skeletal conjunctions, the primary conjunction (PC) is in the upper left quarter, close to the top of section "b" in the figure above. The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the middle of the letter:

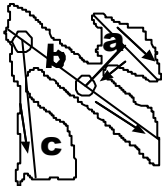


- a. A square head with a right turn, sometimes disconnected  from stroke b.
- b. A diagonal straight line with a spike at the top corner. 
- c. A right turn with a 90° angle and a spike in the corner. 

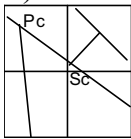
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Aleph* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



## The List of Characteristics of the *Aleph* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



The letter *Aleph* has two skeletal conjunctions, the primary conjunction (PC) is in the upper left quarter, close to the top of section "b" in the figure above. The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the middle of the letter.



- a. A square head with a right turn. The line connecting it to the line "b" is very short. Sometimes it doesn't touch stroke b.



- b. A diagonal straight line.



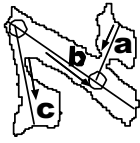
- c. Vertical stroke looping back leftwards with a 90° angle and a spike in the lower left corner.



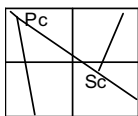




**The List of Characteristics of the *Aleph* in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):**



The letter *Aleph* has two skeletal conjunctions, the primary conjunction (PC) is in the upper left quarter, close to the top of section "b" in the figure above. The secondary conjunction (SC) is in lower right quarter in the lower third of line "b".



a. A square head with a right turn.



b. A diagonal straight line with a spike on the top corner.



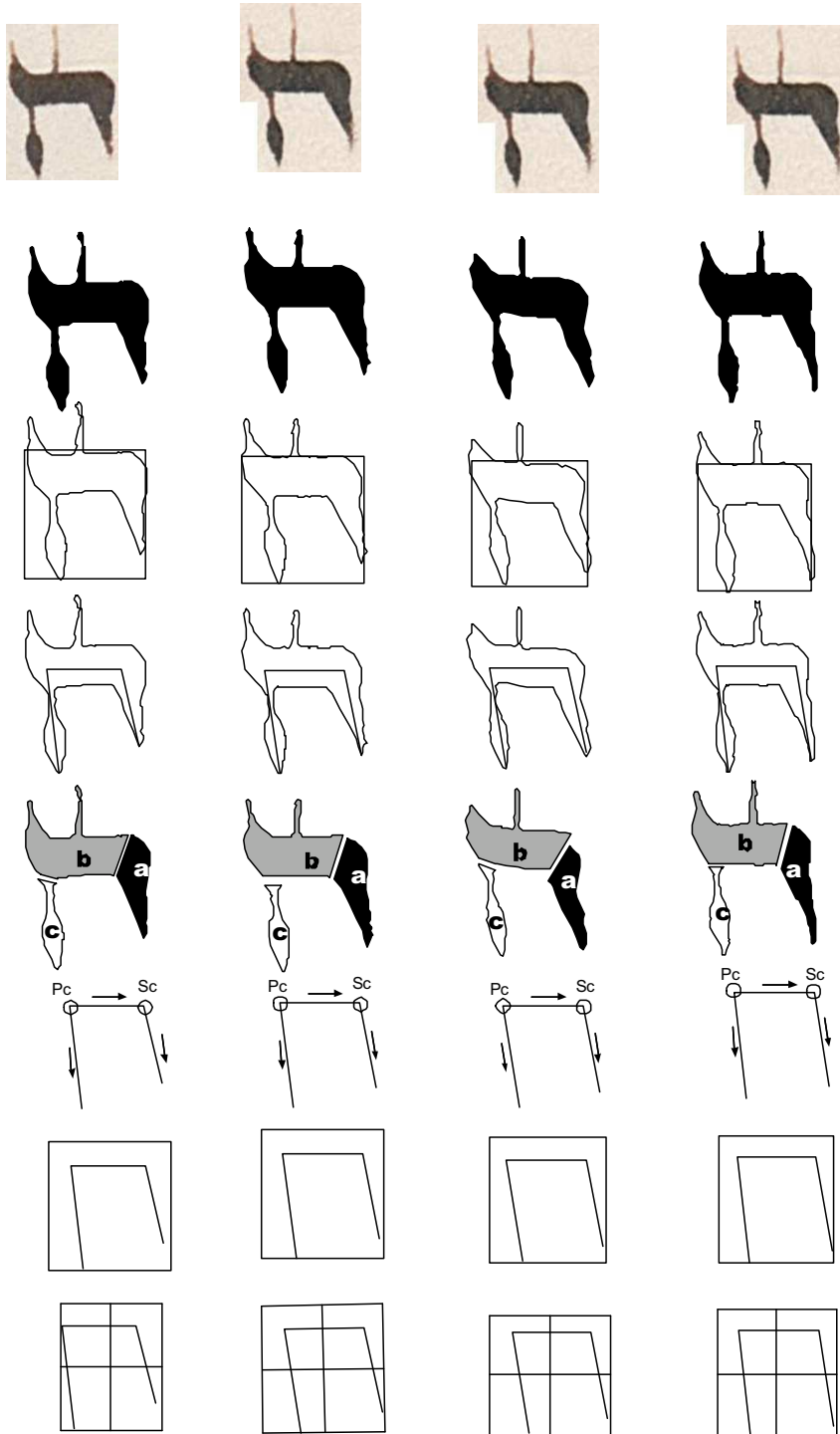
c. A right turn with a 90° angle and a spike in the lower left corner.



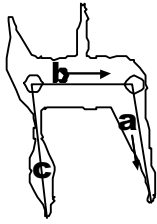
7.2.2 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter *Het* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

**The Letter *Het* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)**

**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Het* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):**

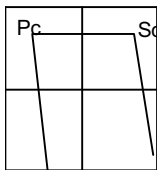


**The List of Characteristics of the *Het* in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):**



The letter *Het* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the top left section of the letter, close to the left end of section "b" in the figure above.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the upper right quarter, at right side of the stroke "b".



a. A right vertical line, wide at the top and tapered at the bottom edge.



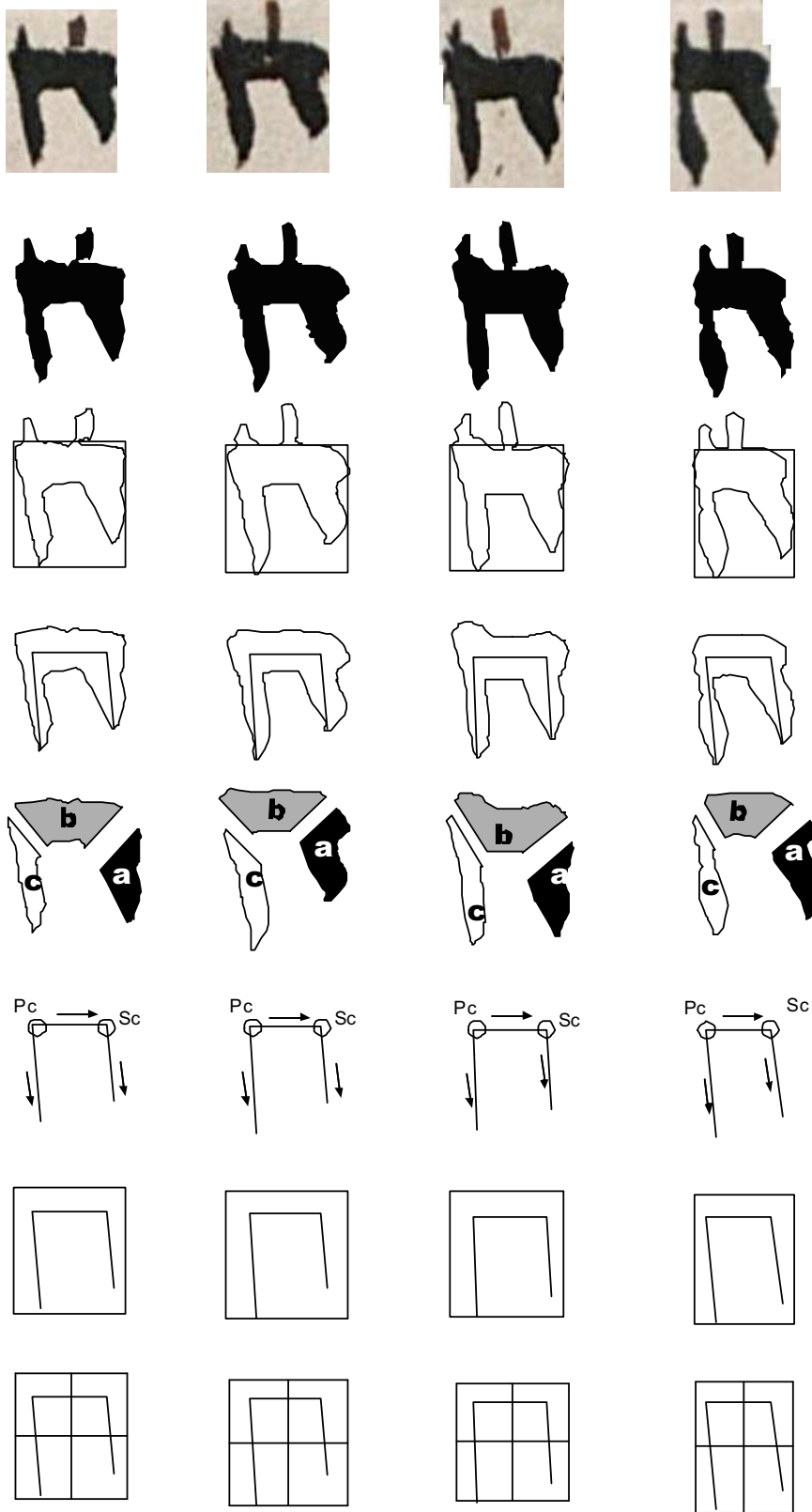
b. A long horizontal roof line, one thin vertical stick in the middle and a thick one at the left edge, tapered at the top.



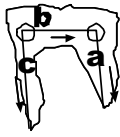
c. A left vertical line, in a diamond shape (tapered on the top and bottom).



**A Graphic Analysis of the letter *Het* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**

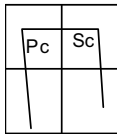


**The List of Characteristics of the *Het* in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**



The letter *Het* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the top left section of the letter, close to the left end of section "b" in the figure above.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the upper right quarter, at right side of the stroke "b". .



a. A right vertical line, wide at the top and tapered at the bottom edge.



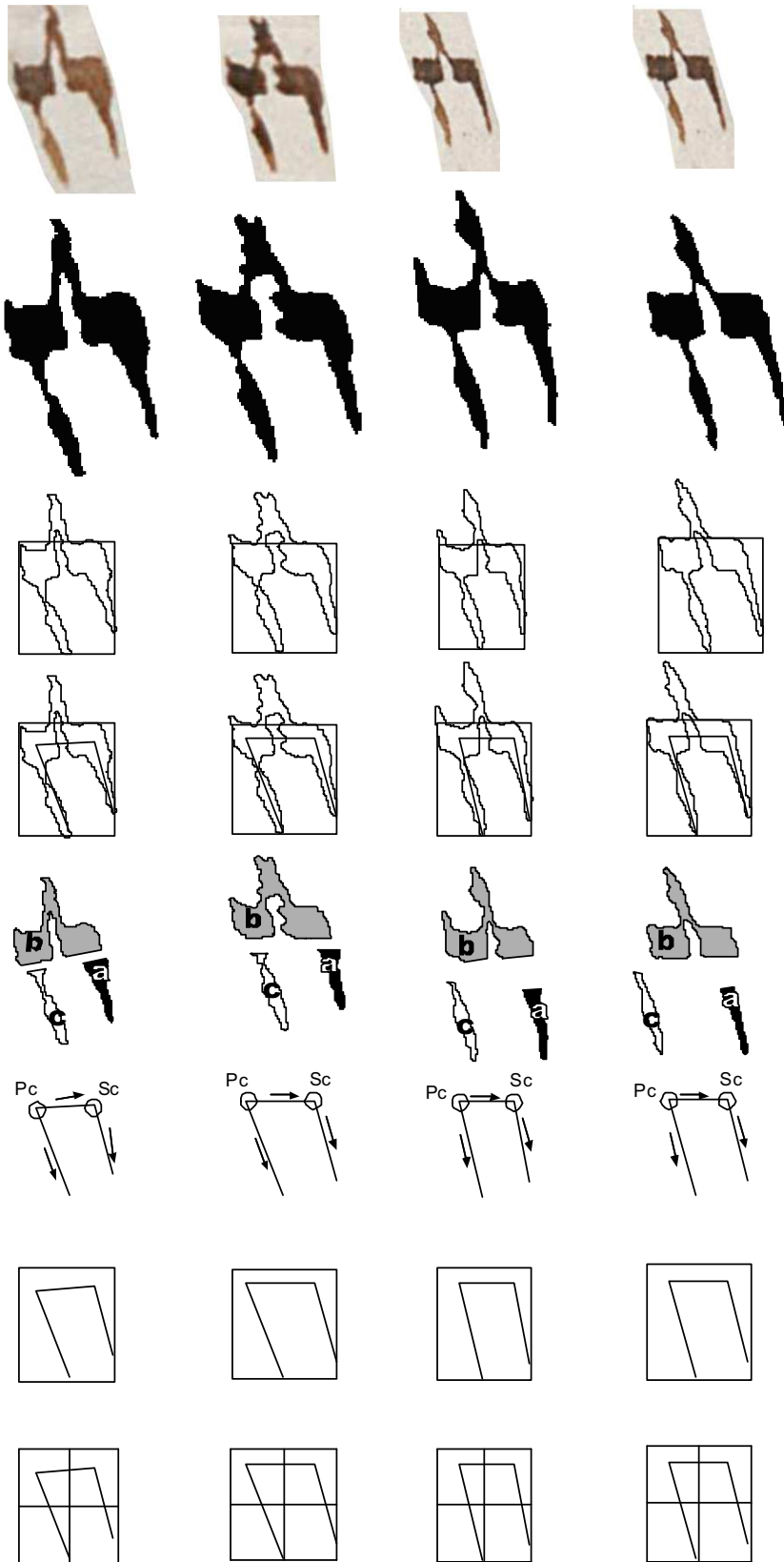
b. A long horizontal roof line.



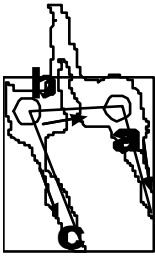
c. A left vertical line, with a more uniform thickness than the right line.



**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter Het in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):**

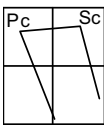


**The List of Characteristics of the *Het* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):**



The letter *Het* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the top left section of the letter, close to the left end of section "b" in the figure above.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the upper right quarter, at right side of the stroke "b". .



b. A right vertical line, wide at the top and tapered at the bottom edge.



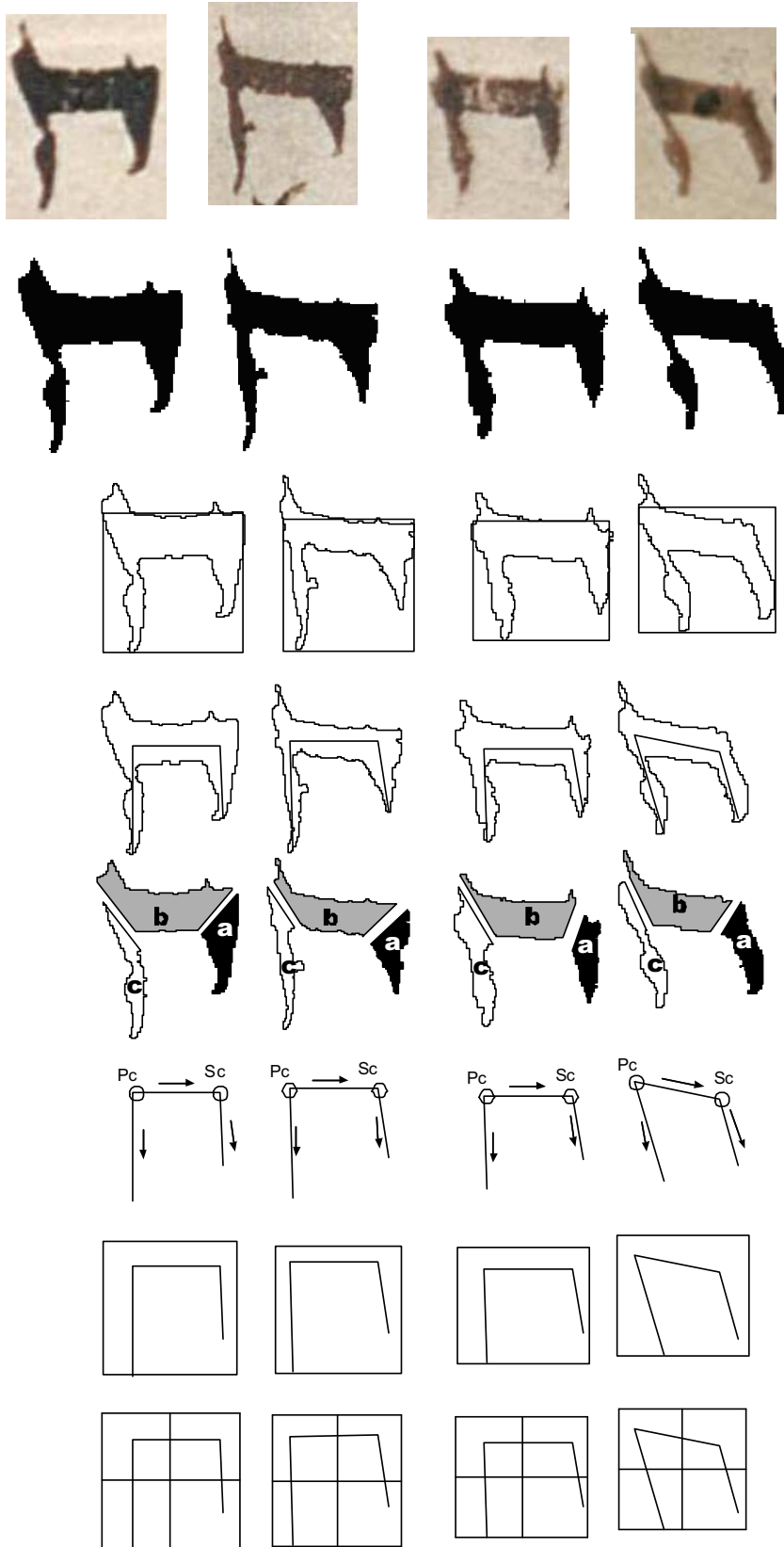
b. A long horizontal roof line, consisting of two strokes connected by a thin component referred to as a hump (*ḥatoteret* in Hebrew).



c. A left vertical line, in a diamond shape (tapered on the top and bottom).

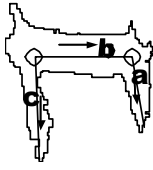


**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Het* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**



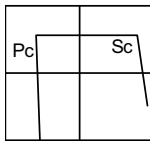


**The List of Characteristics of the *Het* in Erfurt 9:**



The letter *Het* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the top left section of the letter, close to the left end of section "b" in the figure above.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the upper right quarter, at right side of the stroke "b". .



c. A right vertical line, wide at the top and tapered at the bottom edge.



b. A long horizontal roof line with a vertical stick on the top left side which is tapered at the top.



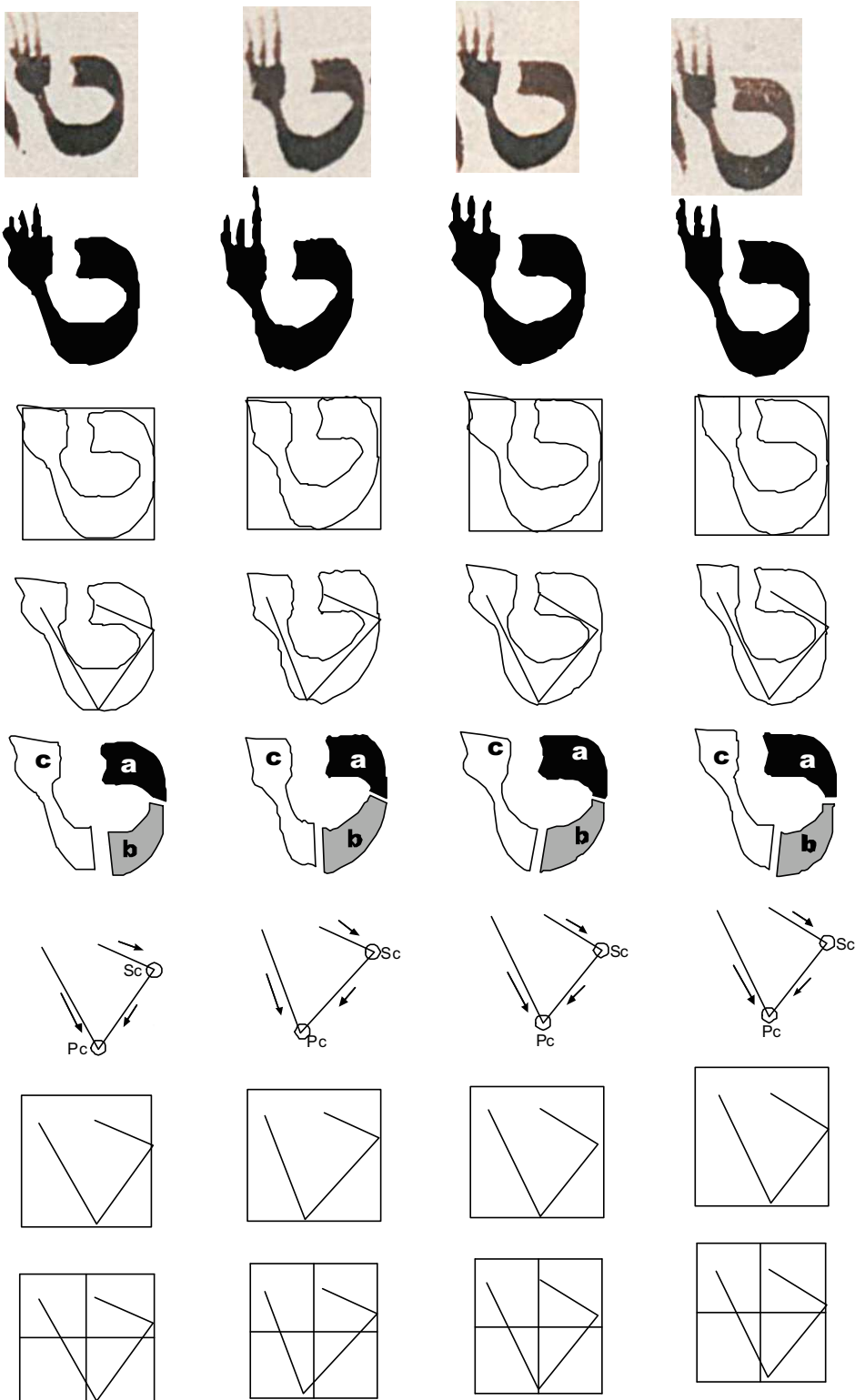
c. A left vertical line, tapered at the bottom.



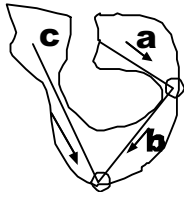
7.2.3 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter *Tet* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

**The Letter *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):**

**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)**

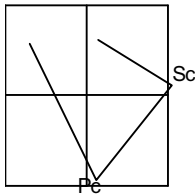


**The List of Characteristics of the Tet in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215) :**



The letter *Tet* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is at the bottom of the letter approximately at the center of the width of the letter.

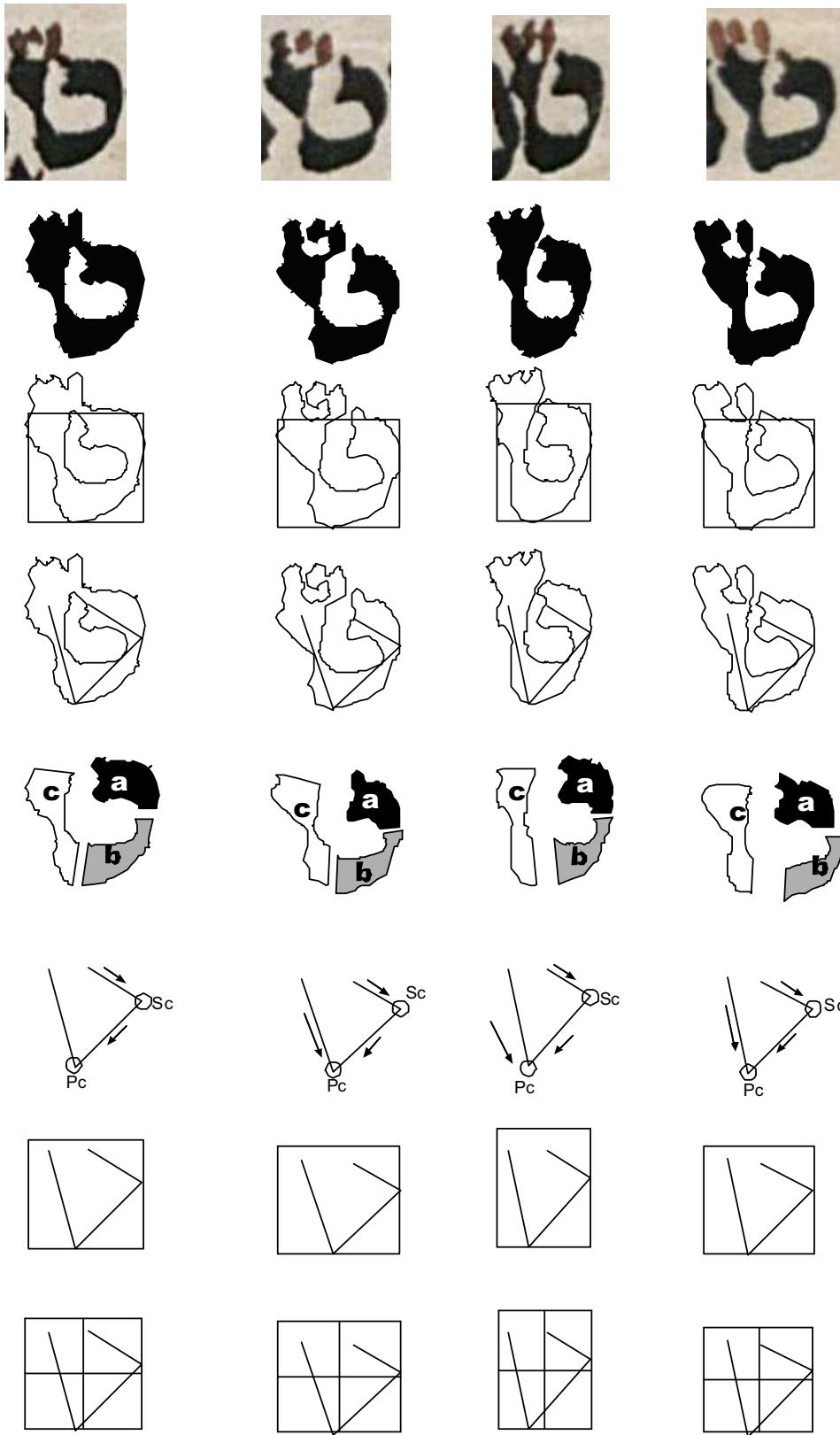
The secondary conjunction (SC) is on the right side of the letter, approximately at the center of the height of the letter.



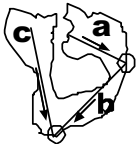
- a. A curved stroke, open to the left; this stroke is not bent towards the letter.
- b. An angled stroke, thick at the bottom and thin at the top.
- c. A square head, turned to the left.



**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**

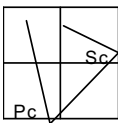


**The List of Characteristics of the *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**



The letter *Tet* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is at the bottom of the letter approximately at the center of the width of the letter.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is on the right side of the letter, approximately at the center of the height of the letter.



- a. A curved stroke, open to the left; this stroke is not bent towards the letter.



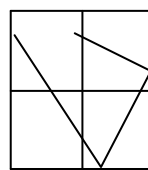
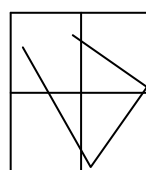
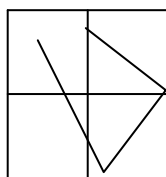
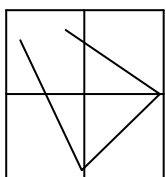
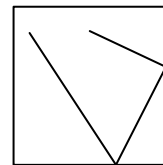
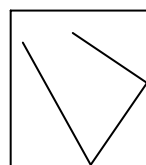
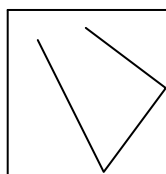
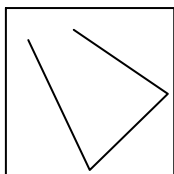
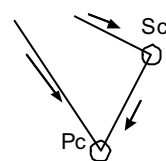
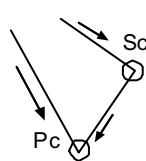
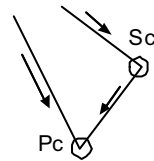
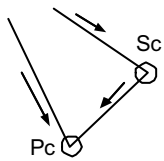
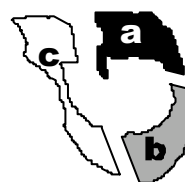
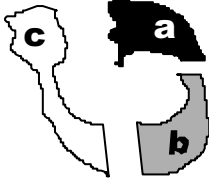
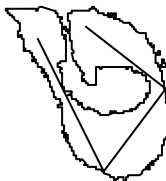
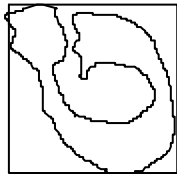
- b. An angled stroke, thick at the bottom and thin at the top.



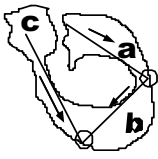
- c. A thick head, turned to the left; there is usually no angle where the thick section connects with the vertical line, rather it gradually thickens.



A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):

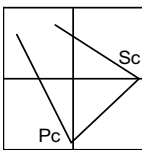


**The List of Characteristics of the *Tet* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):**



The letter *Tet* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is at the bottom of the letter approximately at the center of the width of the letter.

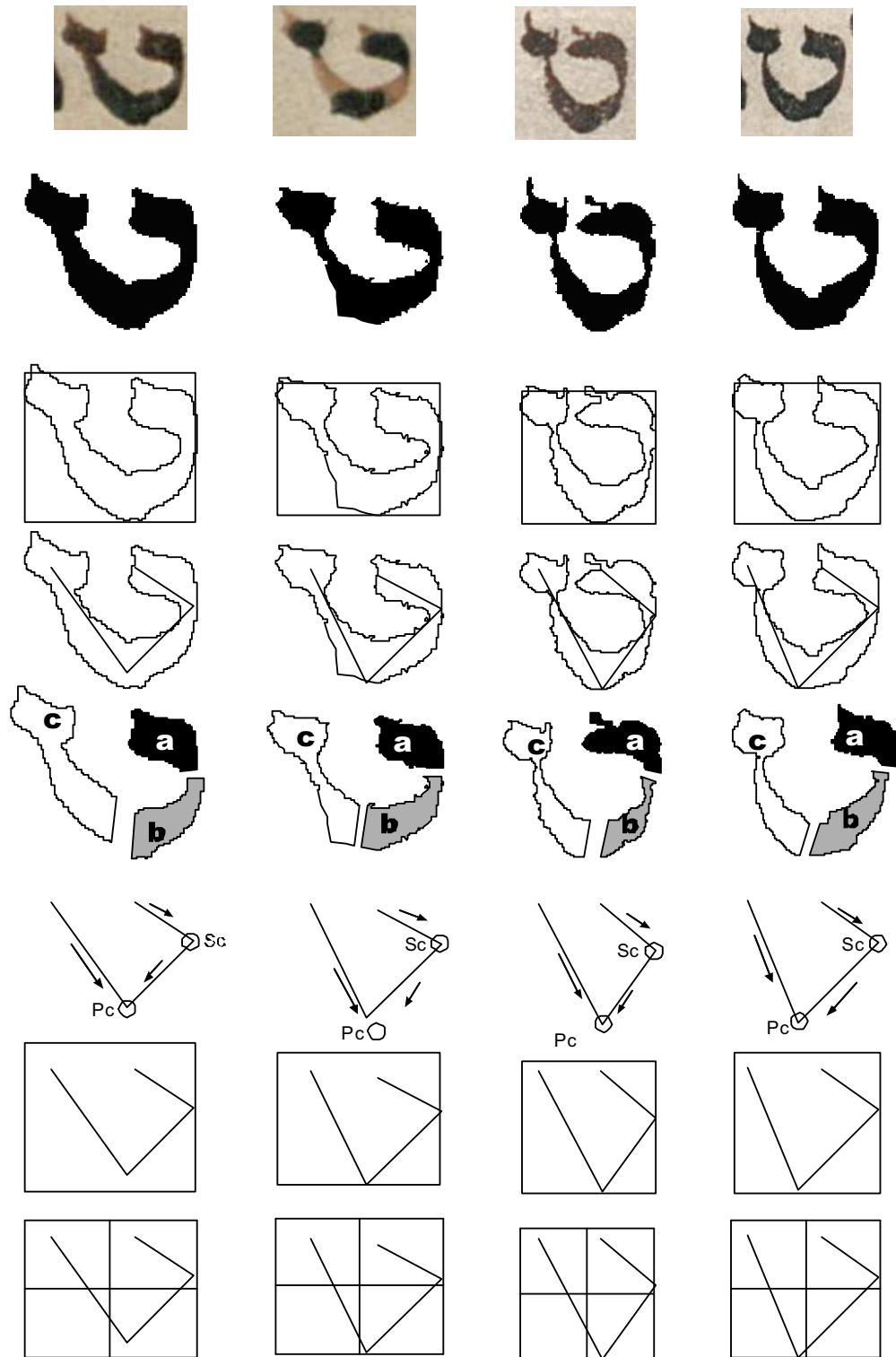
The secondary conjunction (SC) is on the right side of the letter, approximately at the center of the height of the letter.



- a. A curved stroke, open to the left and bent towards the letter by a spike on the lower left corner.
- b. A curved line, thick at the bottom and thin at the top.
- c. A square head, turned to the left.

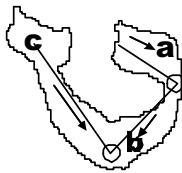


A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tet* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):



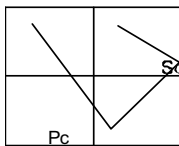


**The List of Characteristics of the *Tet* in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):**



The letter *Tet* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is at the bottom of the letter approximately at the center of the width of the letter.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is on the right side of the letter, approximately at the center of the height of the letter.



a. A curved stroke, open to the left, this stroke is not bent towards the letter.



b. An angled stroke, thick at the bottom and thin at the top.



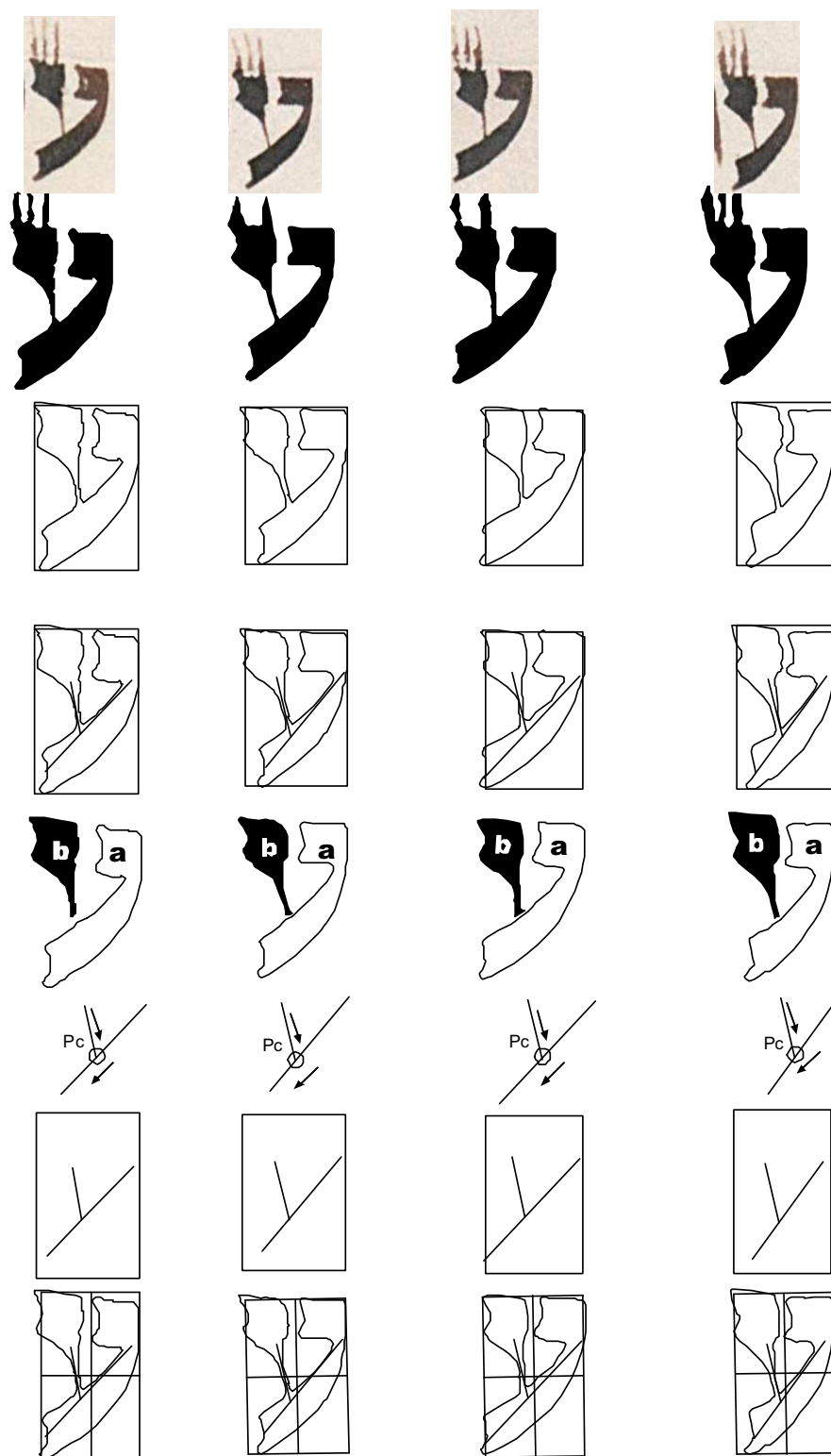
c. A square head, tangent to the line on which it sits. The head is usually slightly

descending.

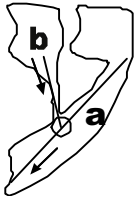


7.2.4 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter *Ayin* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

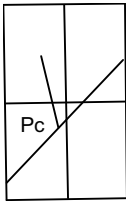
The Letter *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):



**The List of Characteristics of the *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):**



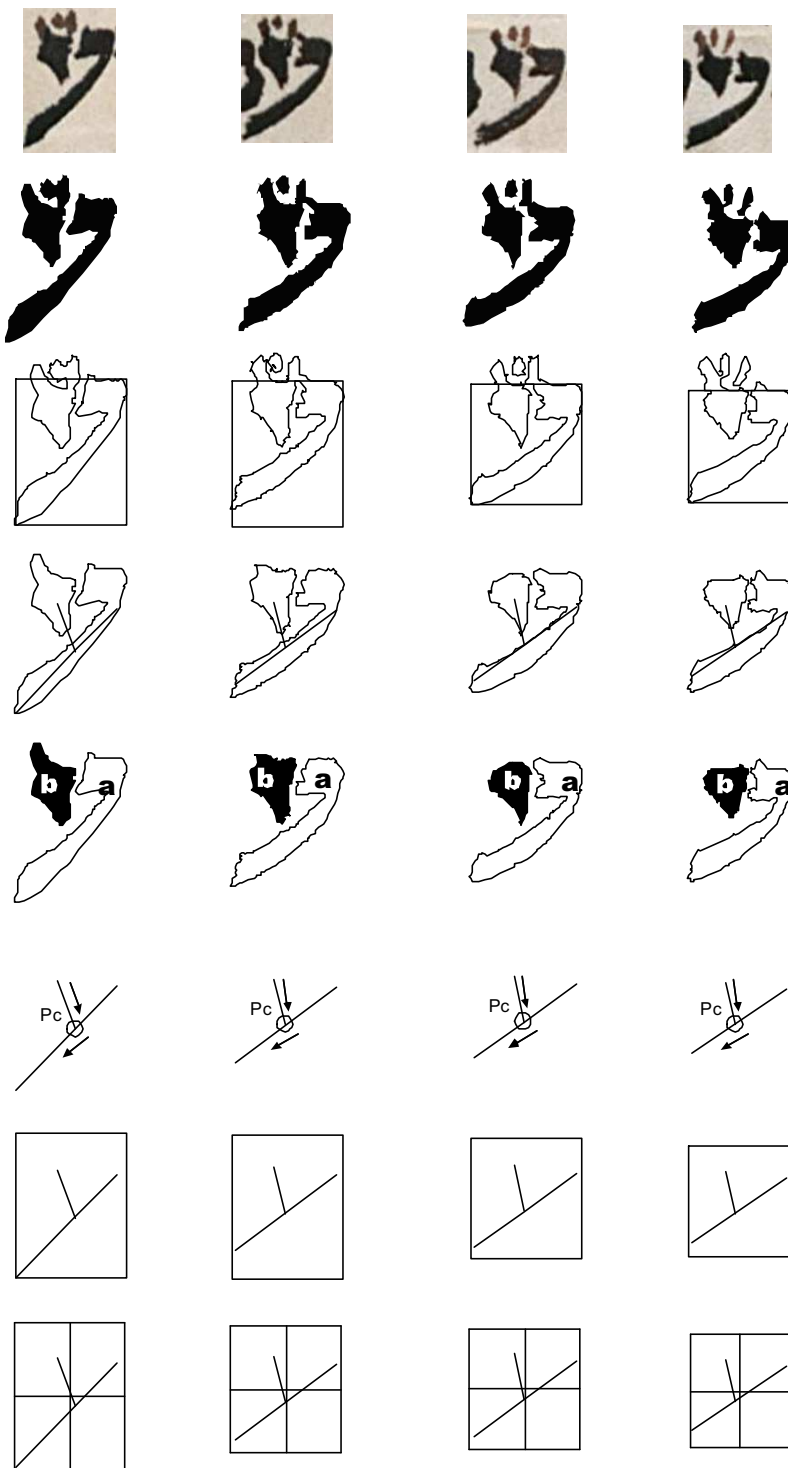
The letter *Ayin* has one skeletal conjunction, the primary conjunction (PC) is close to the middle of the letter.



- a. A rounded line with a square head facing left. This line is thick at the bottom and narrower at the top where it meets the head.
- b. A vertical line with a square head.



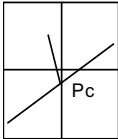
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):



**The List of Characteristics of the *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**



The letter *Ayin* has one skeletal conjunction, the primary conjunction (PC) is close to the middle of the letter.



- a. A rounded line with a square head facing left. This line is thick at bottom and narrower at the top where it meets the head.



the

- b. A vertical line with a square head.



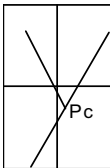
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):





## The List of Characteristics of the *Ayin* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)

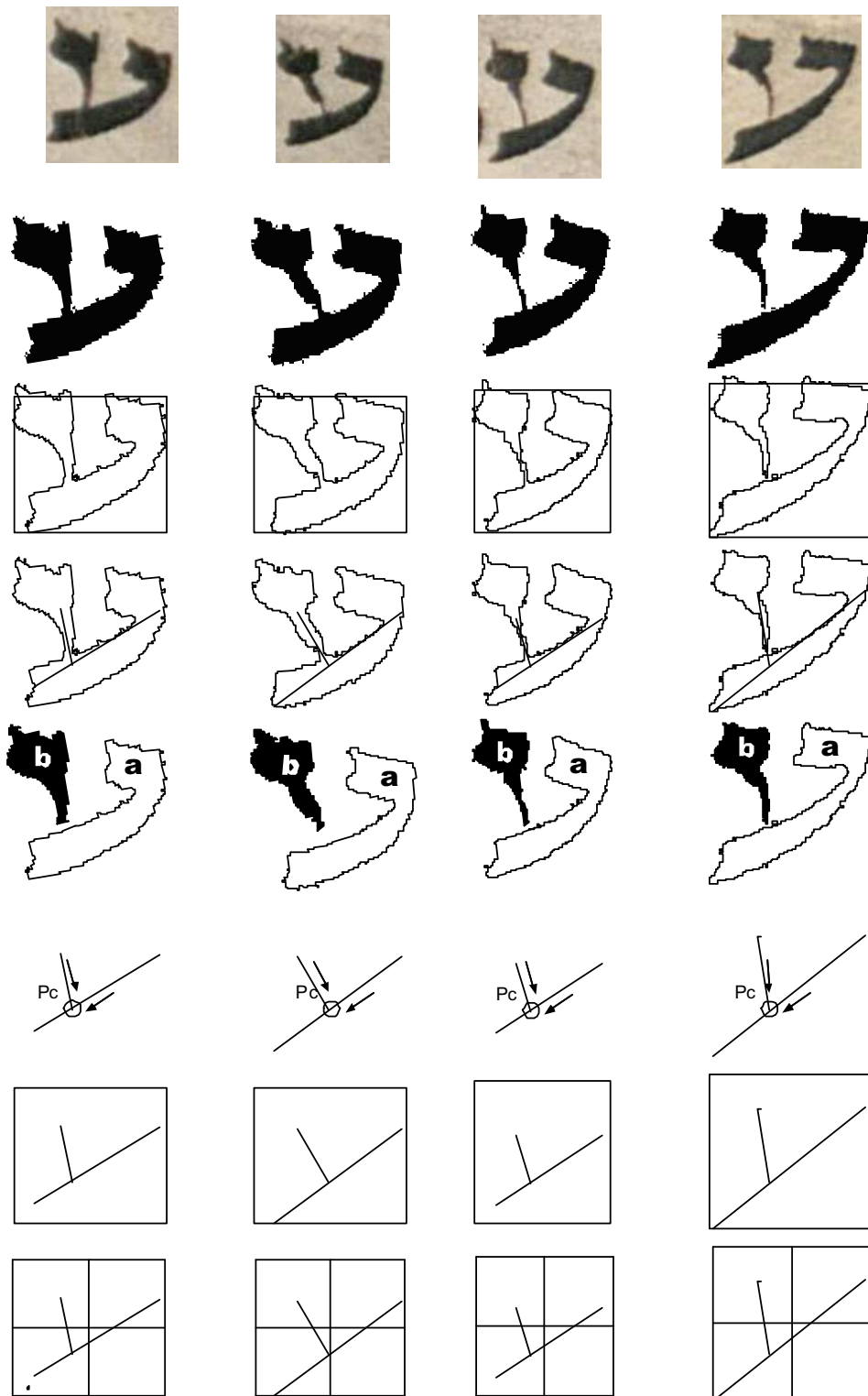


The letter *Ayin* has one skeletal conjunction, the primary conjunction (PC) is close to the middle of the letter.



- a. A rounded line with a square head facing left. This line is thick at the bottom and narrower at the top where it meets the head. 
- b. A vertical line with a square head. 

A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Ayin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):

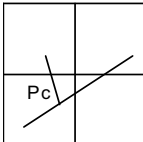




**The List of Characteristics of the *Ayin* in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):**



The letter *Ayin* has one skeletal conjunction, the primary conjunction (PC) is close to the middle of the letter.

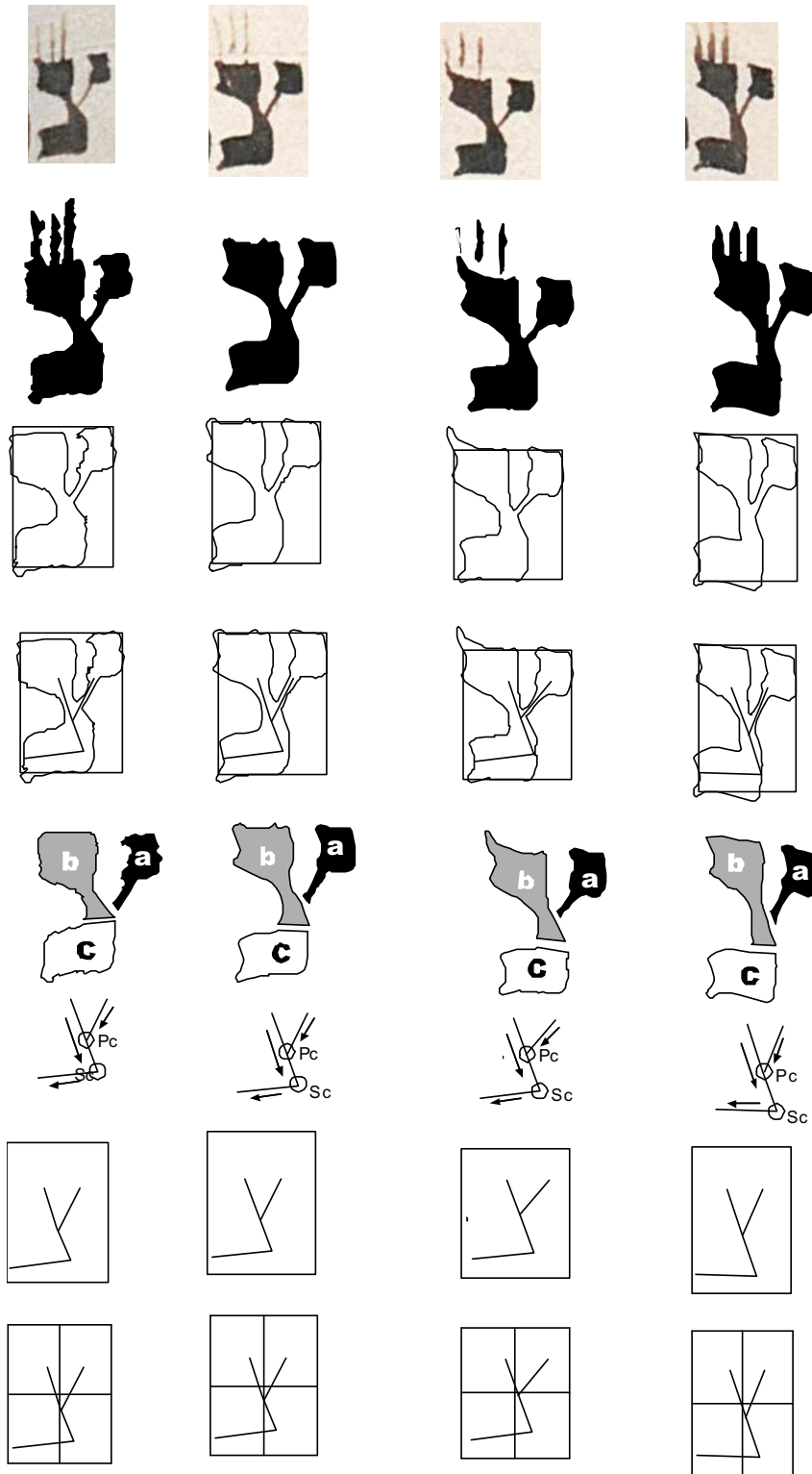


- a. A rounded line with a square head facing left, slightly slanted. This line is thick at the bottom and narrower at the top where it meets the head.
- b. A vertical line, slightly slanted, with a square head.

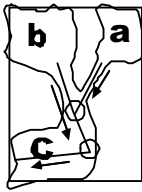


7.2.5 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter *Tzadi* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls

The Letter *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):

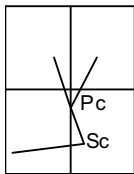


**The List of Characteristics of the *Tzadi* in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):**



The letter *Tzadi* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is the middle of the width of the letter, in the bottom half.

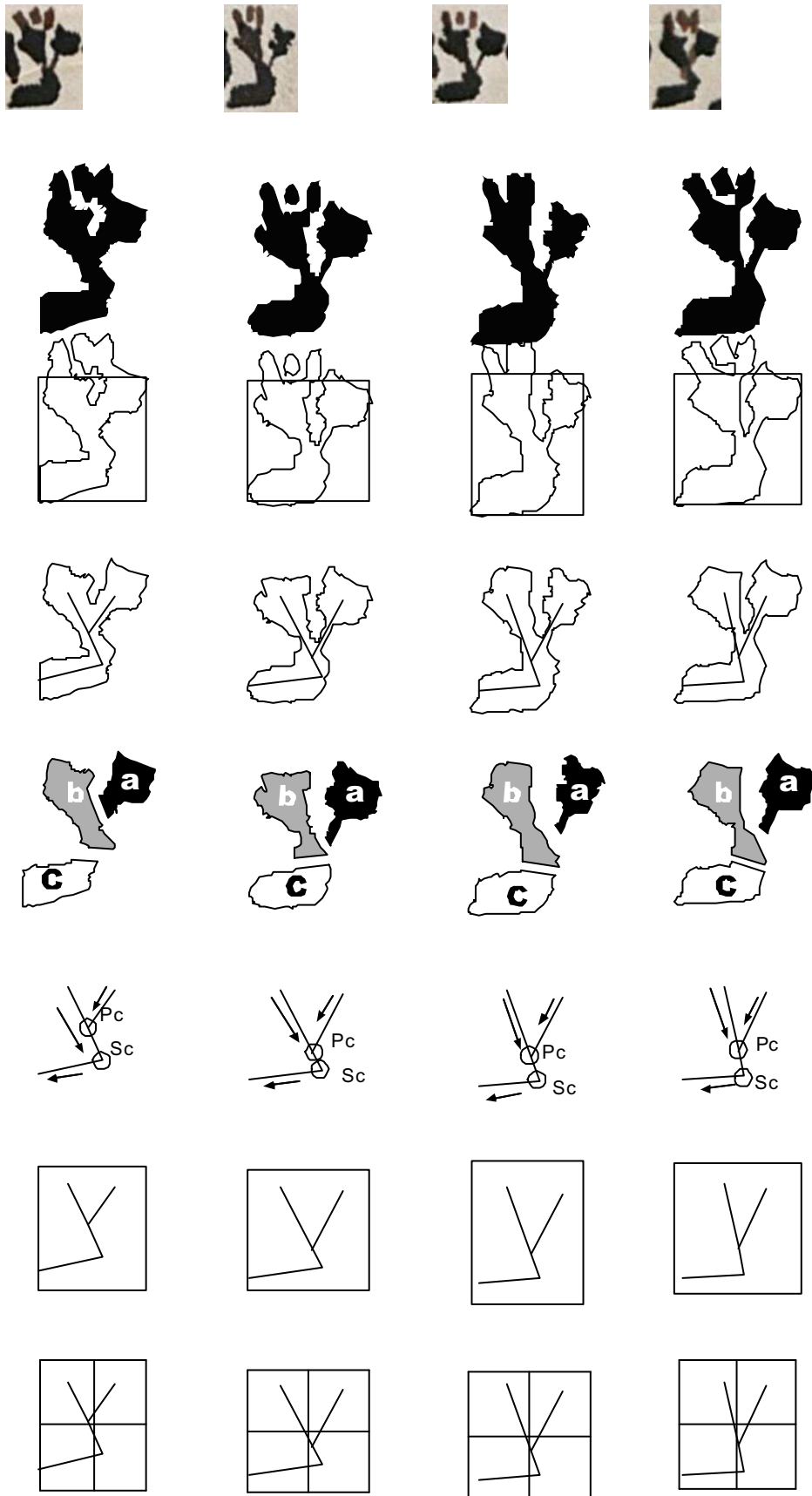
The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the lower right quarter of the letter.



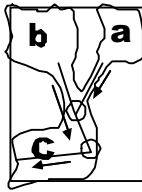
- a. A square head with a right turn that connects to a slender diagonal line.
- b. A diagonal line, thick at the bottom (where it meets line c) and thin at the top with a square head, rounded and turned left.
- c. A thick horizontal line curved on the right where it meets line b.



A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):

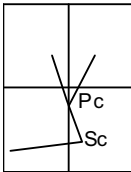





**The List of Characteristics of the *Tzadi* in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):**



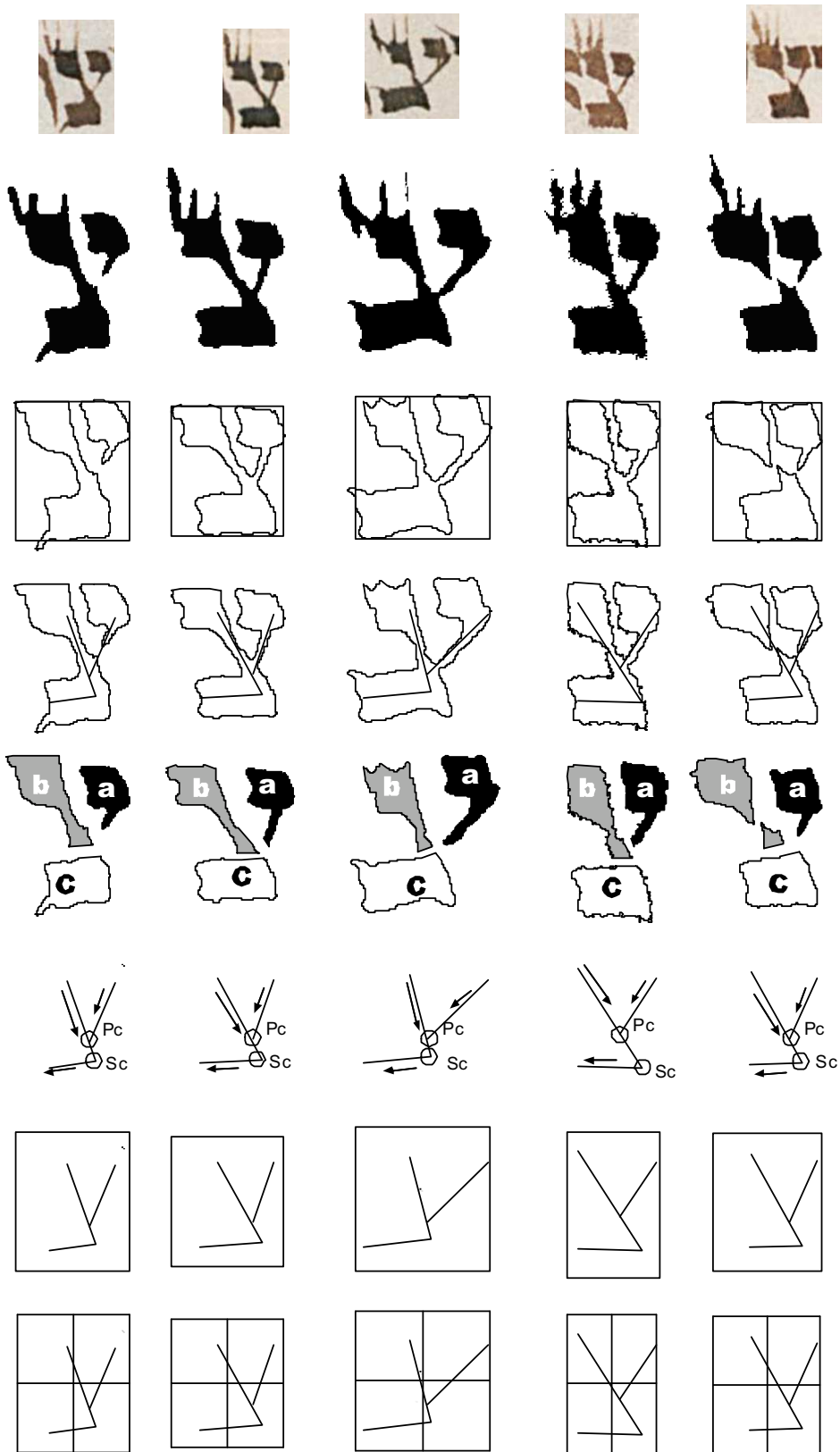
The letter *Tzadi* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is the middle of the width of the letter, in the bottom half.

The secondary conjunction (SC) is in the lower right quarter of the letter.



- a. A square head with a right turn that connects to a slender diagonal line. 
- b. A diagonal line, thick at the bottom (where it meets line c) and thin at the top with a square head, rounded and turned left. 
- c. A thick horizontal line curved on the right where it meets line b. 

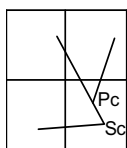
**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):**



## The List of Characteristics of the *Tzadi* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):



The letter *Tzadi* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the lower right quarter of the letter as well as the secondary conjunction (SC) which is also in the lower right quarter.



The proximity of the two skeletal encounters presents a halakhic problem, as it causes the letter *Tzadi* to closely resemble the letter *Ayin*. This halakhic problem is explained by Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer 'Barukh She'amar',<sup>297</sup> whose lifetime possibly intersected with the writing of this Torah scroll. We cannot know for sure if he saw the Torah scrolls of Erfurt, but according to his own testimony, he did see *Tefillin* from Erfurt. These phylacteries were seemingly written in a similar style to Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217), at least where the writing of the letter *Tzadi* is concerned:

"וכן כתב החסיד וז"ל עוקצו של היו"ד שאחורי הנו"ן לא יעמיק עד כפיפת הנו"ן כזה שאם כן יראה כע"ן, עכ"ל. וכן מצאתי בערפורט הרבה תפילין שהיו כל הצדי"ן כמו עיני"ן, ופסלתי אותם<sup>298</sup>

"And thus the Ḥasid<sup>299</sup> wrote and these are his words: the spike of the *Yod* that is behind the *Nun* should not be deep so that it reached the bend in the *Nun* such that it will then look like an *Ayin*, until here are his words. Indeed, I found in Erfurt many *Tefilin* in which all of the *Tzadis* were like *Ayins*, and I disqualified them."

We see that Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer's writing, based on Yehuda he-Ḥasid's teaching,




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<sup>298</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 151. (Hebrew numbering).

<sup>298</sup> Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 151. (Hebrew numbering).

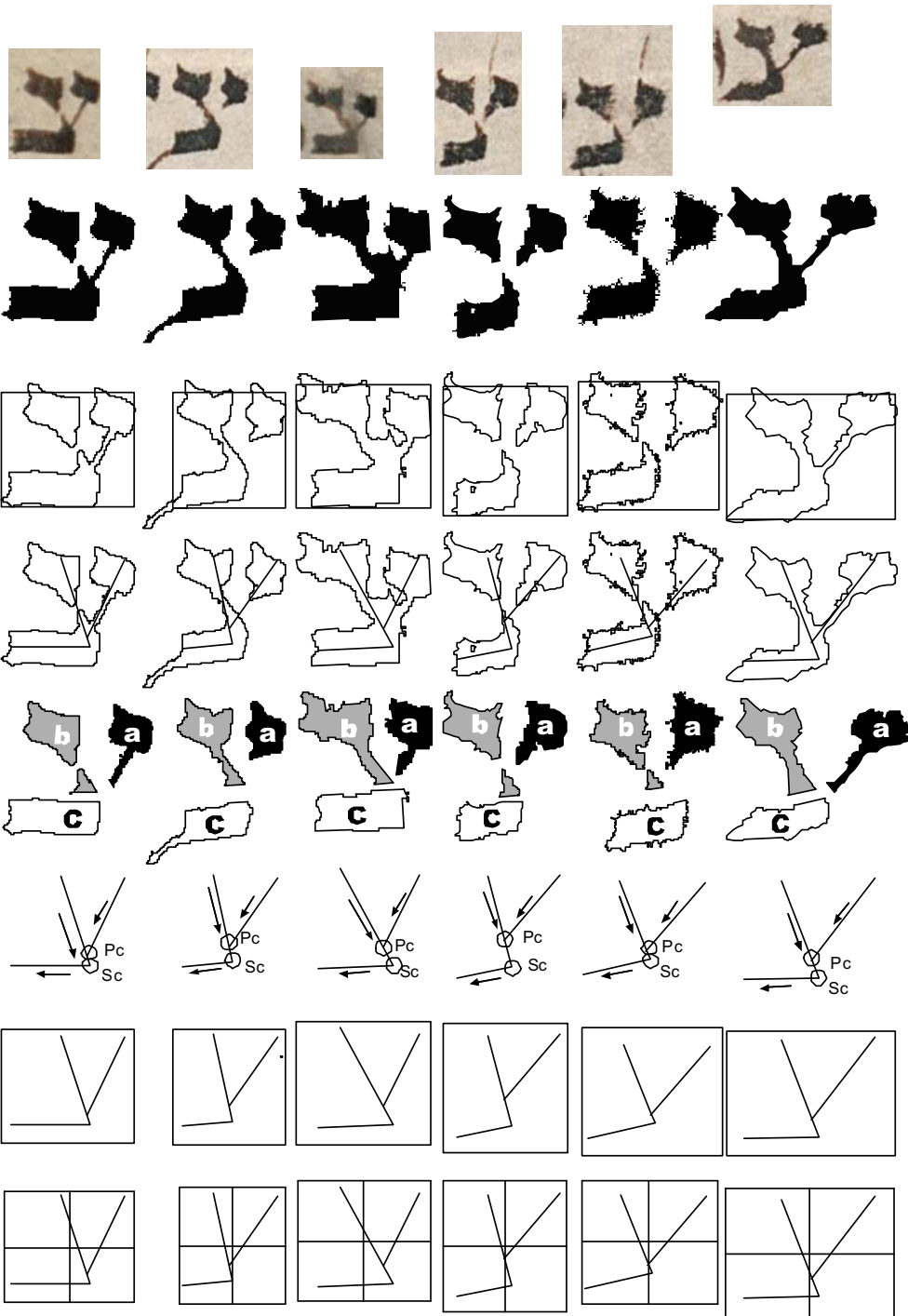
<sup>299</sup> Judah ben Samuel of Regensburg (1150 –1217), also called Rabbi Yehuda he-Ḥasid or 'Judah the Pious' in Hebrew, was a leader of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz, a movement of Jewish mysticism in medieval Germany.

disqualified *Tzadis* similar to the shape we see in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217). The reason for that is that such a *Tzadi* can be easily confused with a letter Ayin. In order not to cause confusions, one should make sure that element *a* (shown below) is attached to the body of the letter higher than it was done in our scroll.

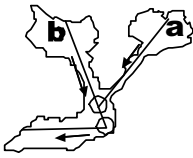
- a. A square head with a left turn that connects to a slender diagonal line. It is rounded on the right side. 
- b. A diagonal line, thick at the bottom (where it meets line c) and thin at the top with a square head, rounded and turned left. 
- c. A thick horizontal line curved on the right where it meets line b. 



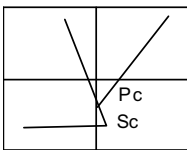
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)






**The List of Characteristics of the *Tzadi* in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)**



The letter *Tzadi* has two skeletal conjunctions. The primary conjunction (PC) is in the lower right quarter of the letter as well as the secondary conjunction (SC) which is also in the lower right quarter.

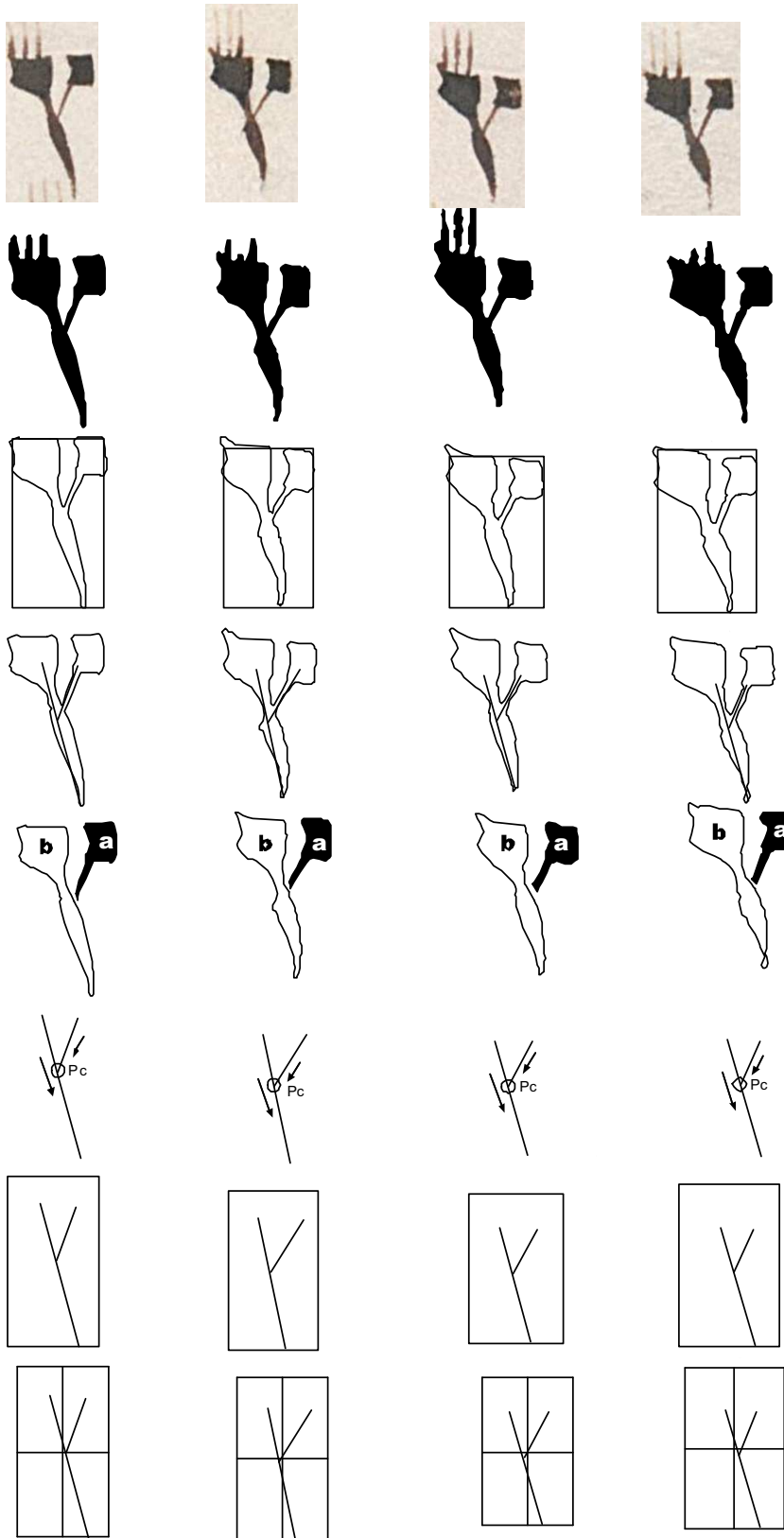


Similar to Scroll Erfurt number 8, the proximity of the two conjunctions causes a halakhic problem, as it causes the letter *Tzadi* to closely resemble the letter *Ayin*.

- a. A square head, usually slightly slanted, that connects to a slender  diagonal line.
- b. A diagonal line, thick at the bottom (where it meets line c) and thin at the top with a square head, slanted, rounded and turned left, usually with a bulge on  the right side.
- c. A thick horizontal line curved on the right where it meets line b. 

7.2.6 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the letter Final *Tzadi* in the Erfurt Torah Scrolls

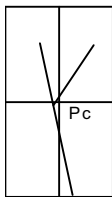
The Letter *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)





## The List of Characteristics of the Final *Tzadi* in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)

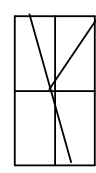
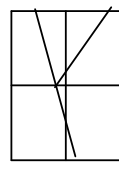
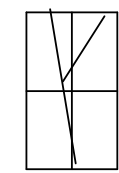
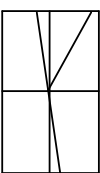
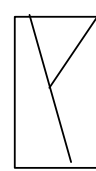
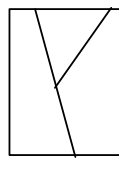
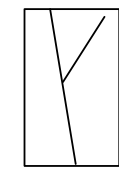
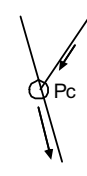
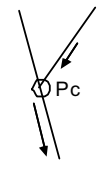
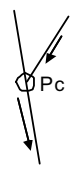
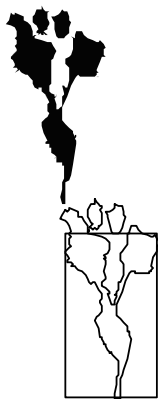


The letter Final *Tzadi* has one skeletal conjunction in the middle of the letter.



- a. A square head with a right turn that connects to a slender diagonal line. 
- b. A vertical line slightly inclined to the right as it descends, thin on top (with a square head rounded to the left), which thickens in the middle and tapers toward the bottom. 

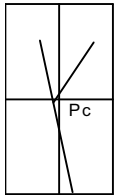
**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter Final *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)**




## The List of Characteristics of the Final *Tzadi* in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)



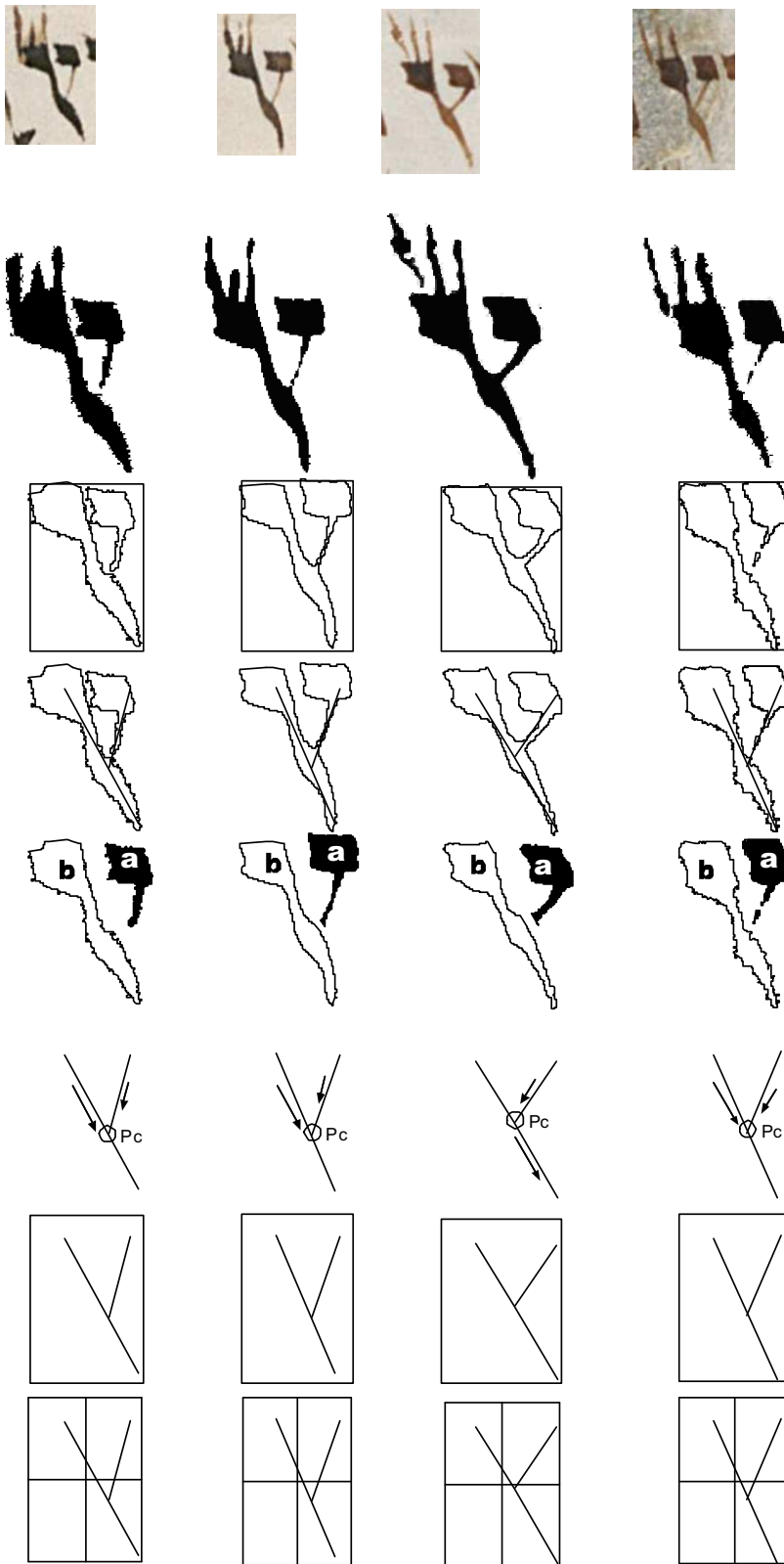
The letter Final *Tzadi* has one skeletal conjunction in the middle of the letter.



- a. A square head with a right turn that connects to a slender diagonal line. 
- b. A vertical line slightly inclined to the right as it descends, thin on top (with a square head rounded to the left), which thickens in the middle and tapers toward the bottom.



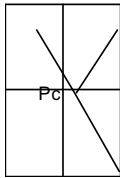
**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter Final *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)**



**The list of characteristics of the Final *Tzadi* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)**



The letter Final *Tzadi* has one skeletal conjunction in the middle of the letter.

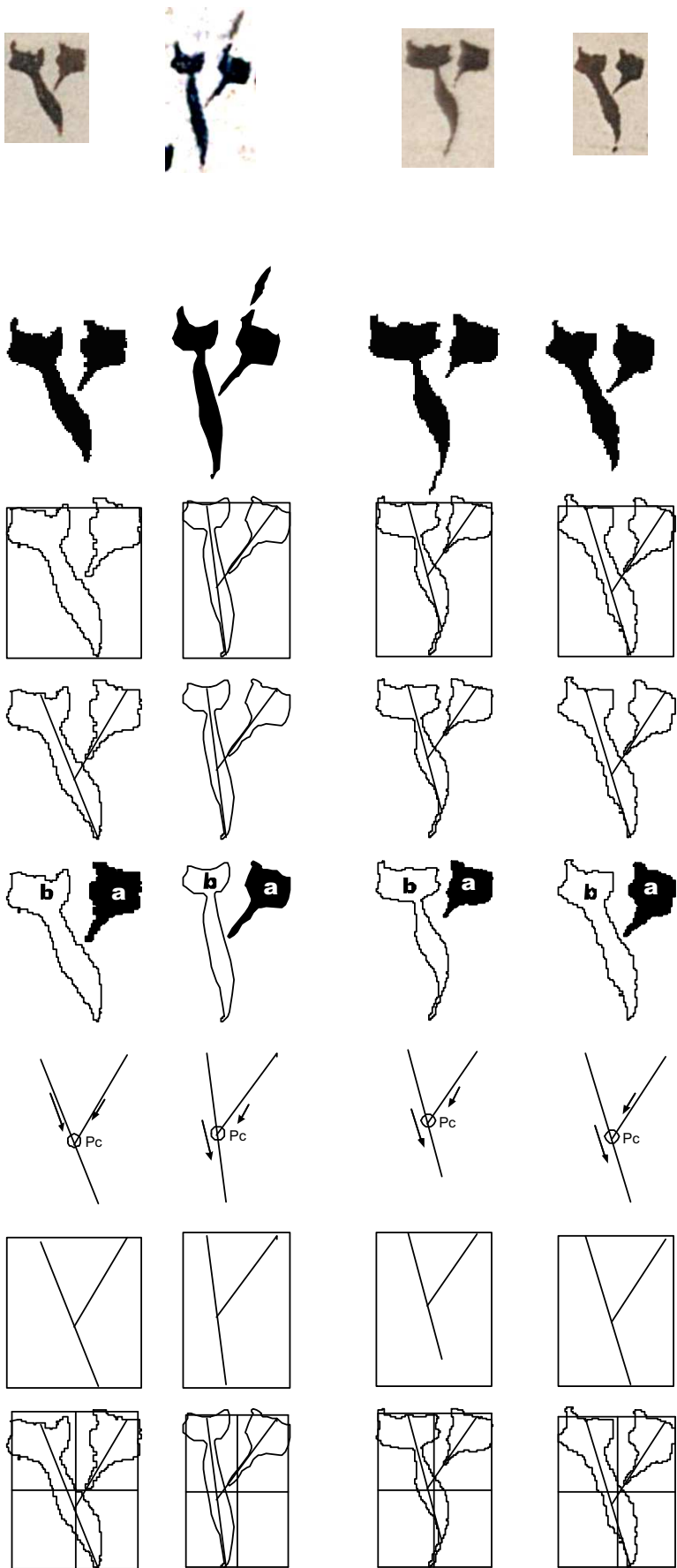


- a. A square head with a left turn that connects to a slender diagonal line. The head is connected to a long /vertical line.
- b. A vertical line slightly inclined to the right as it descends, thin on top (with a square head rounded to the left), which thickens in the middle and tapers toward the bottom.

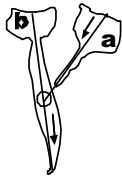




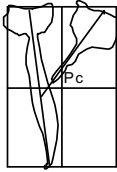
**A Graphic Analysis of the Letter final *Tzadi* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)**





## The List of Characteristics of the Final *Tzadi* in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)



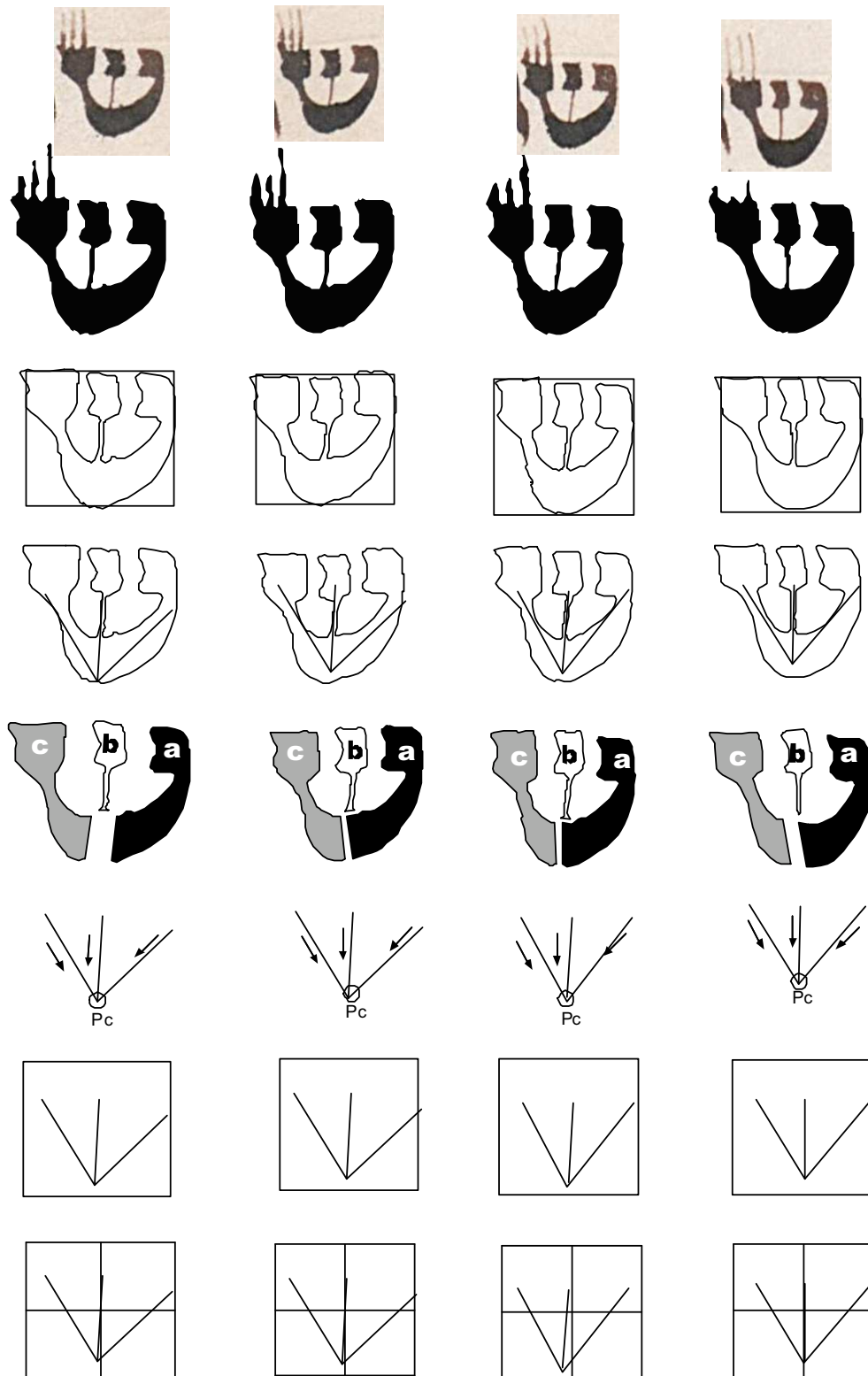
The letter Final *Tzadi* has one skeletal conjunction in the middle of the letter.



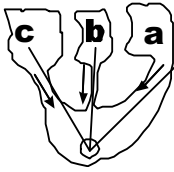
- a. A slanted square head that connects to a slender diagonal line. 
- b. A vertical line descending to the right, thin on top (with a slanted square head rounded to the left, with a slight bump on the right), which thickens in the middle and tapers toward the bottom. 

7.2.7 Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the Letter Shin in the Erfurt Torah Scrolls

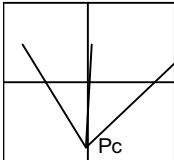
The Letter *Shin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



## The List of Characteristics of the *Shin* in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



The letter *Shin* has one skeletal conjunction, at the bottom of the letter, in the center of the portion with the greatest width.



a. A square head turned to the left.

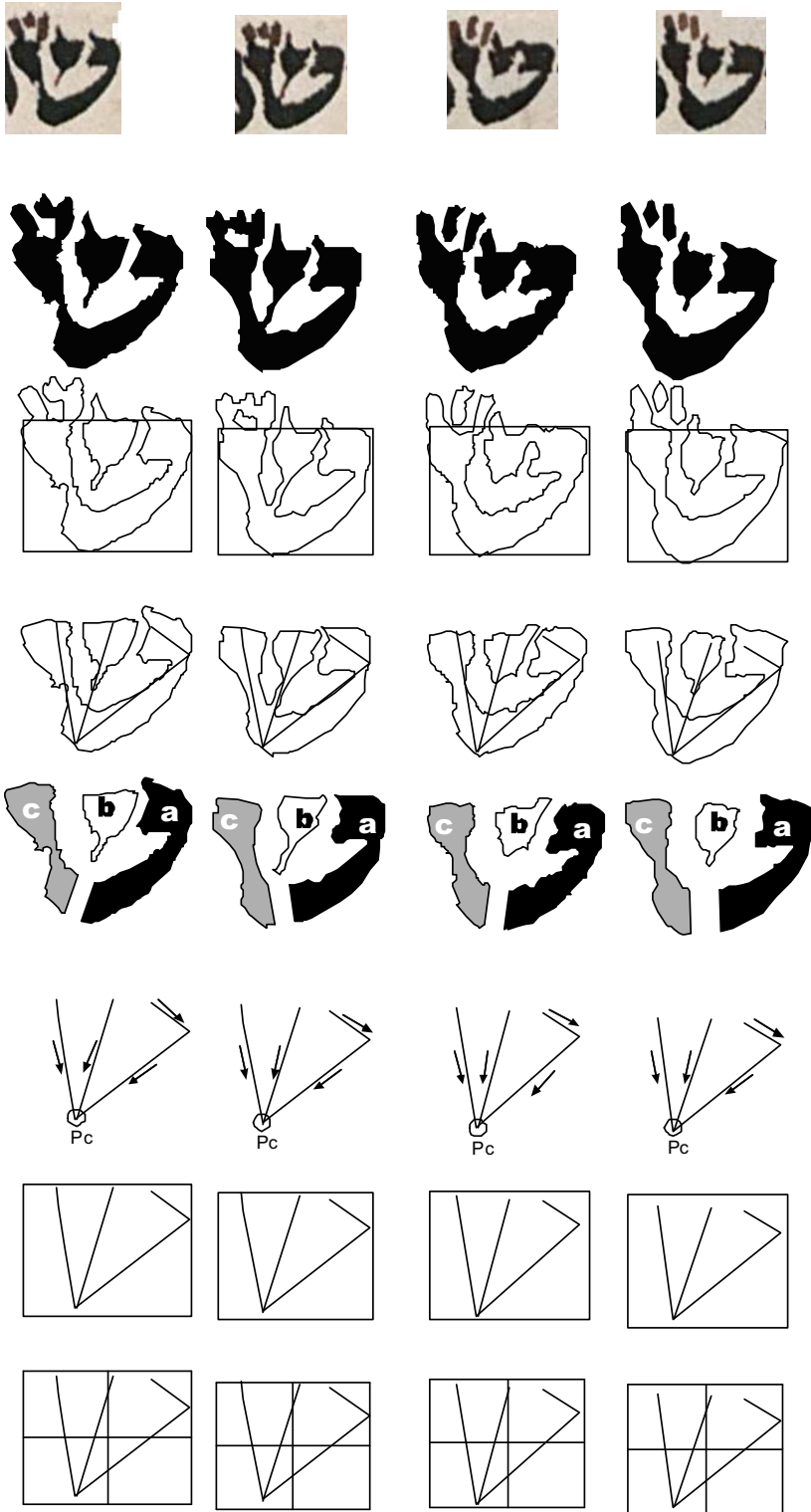


b. A vertical line with a square head on top.

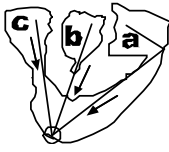
c. A square head tangent to a curved line that is thick at the bottom and thinner at the top, adjacent to the head.



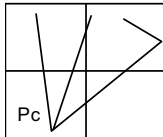
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Shin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)






**The List of Characteristics of the *Shin* in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216)**

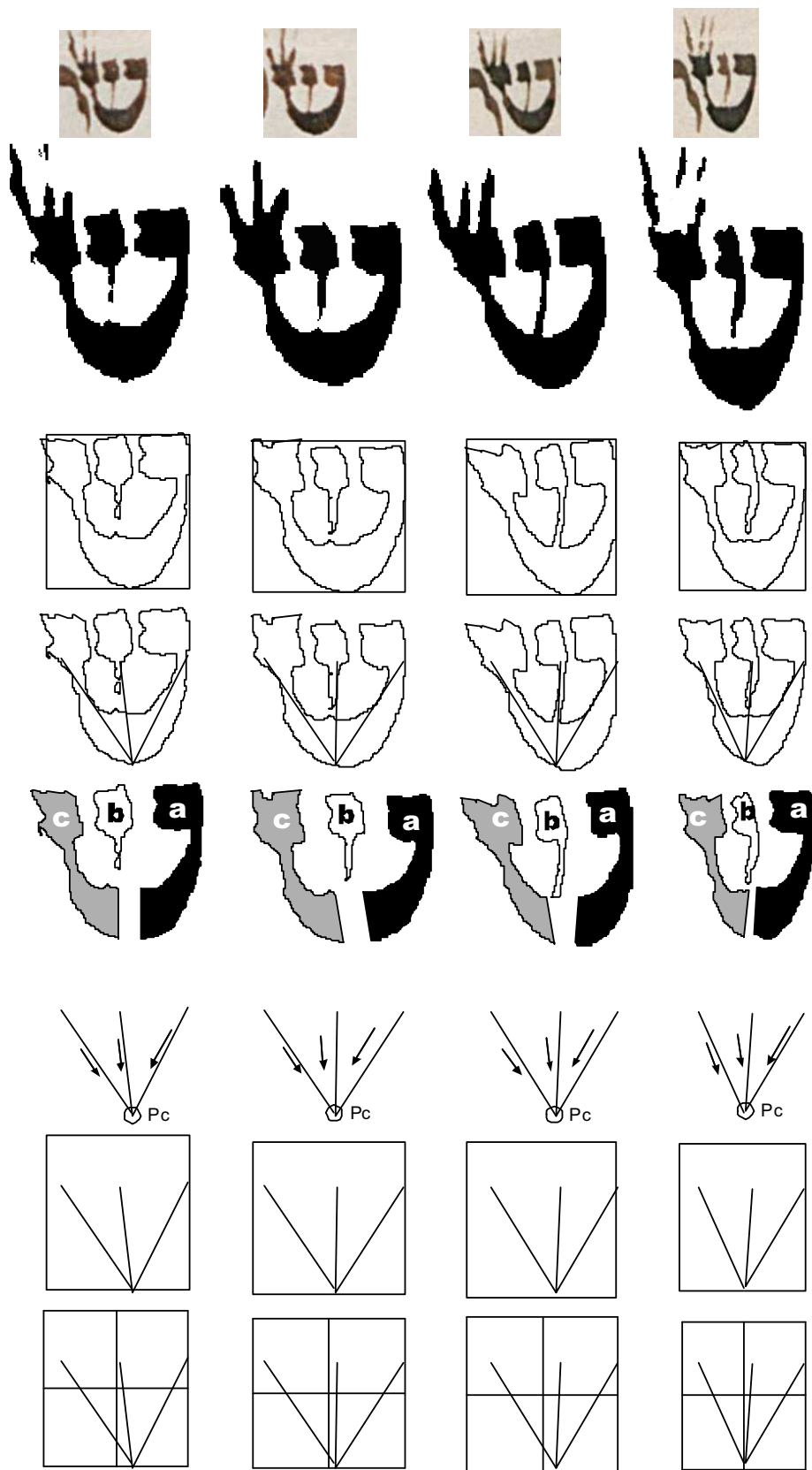


The letter *Shin* has one skeletal conjunction, at the bottom of the letter, toward the left side.

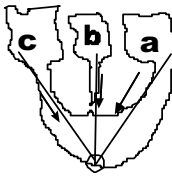


- a. A square head turned to the left. 
- b. An amorphous thickening on top of a thin diagonal line, which at times does not connect to the rest of the letter. 
- c. A vertical line with an amorphous thickening at the top. The line is very thin under the thickened section. 

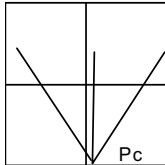
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Shin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



## The List of Characteristics of the *Shin* in Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217)



The letter *Shin* has one skeletal conjunction, at the bottom of the letter, in the middle.



a. A square head turned to the left.



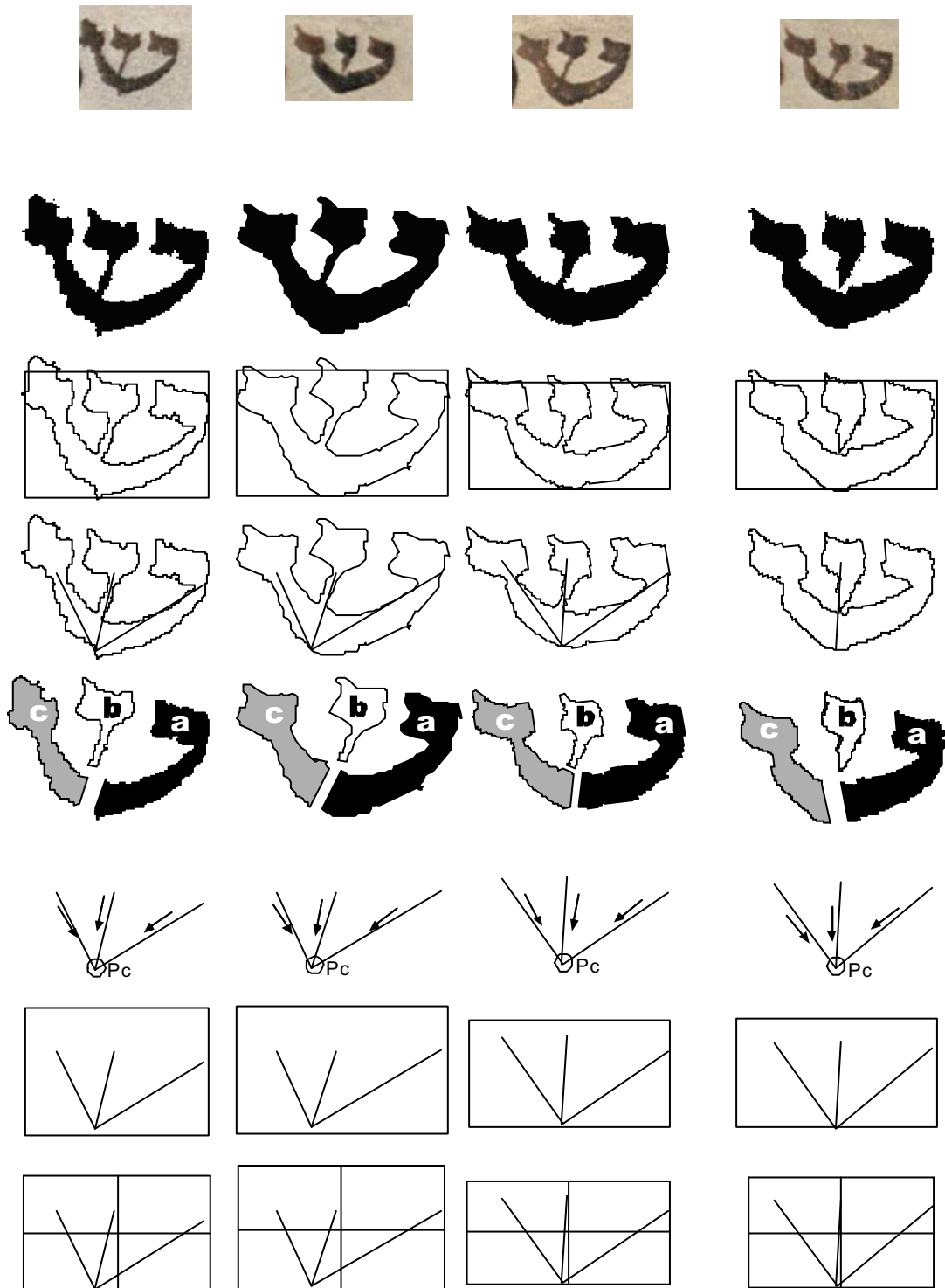
b. A vertical with a square head on top.

c. A square head tangent to a curved line that is thick at the bottom and thinner at the top, adjacent to the head.

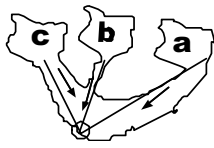




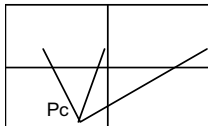
A Graphic Analysis of the Letter *Shin* in Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)






**The List of Characteristics of the Shin in Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218)**



The letter *Shin* has one skeletal conjunction, at the bottom of the letter, on the left side.



- a. A slanted square head turned to the left. 
- b. A vertical line with the addition of a small spike on the top corner. 
- c. A square head, slightly slanted, turned to the left with a small bump on the right side. 

### 7.3 Conclusions of the graphic analysis

	Beth Yosef JM21	Arizal JM19	Sepharadic JM22
<i>Aleph</i>			
<i>Vav</i>			
<i>Het</i>			
<i>Tet</i>			
<i>Ayi</i>			
<i>Tzaddi</i>			
<i>Final Tzaddi</i>			
<i>Shin</i>			

FIGURE 53

I would like to repeat the differences of the two writing styles as discussed in this thesis (see Figure 53).<sup>300</sup>

In the modern Arizal script the horizontal stroke of the left leg of the *Aleph* protrudes to the left of the vertical component of the leg, while in the Beth Yosef it does not. The left component of the letters of the *Ayin*, the *Tzadi*, the final *Tzadi*, and *Shin* has the shape of a *Vav* in the Arizal script, (the letter *Tet* and the letter *Het* are also included in this list according to some opinions, as mentioned earlier)<sup>301</sup>, whereas in the Beth Yosef script all these have a shape of a *Zayin*.

And last but not least, the right component of the letter *Tzadi*, both in its regular and final form, has the shape that is similar to a ‘*Yod*’ in the Beth Yosef script, whereas in the Arizal script it resembles a ‘reversed *Yod*’.

Although the differences between the types of script known as *Arizal* and *Beth Yosef* are expressed in six letters (or seven including the final form of the letter *Tzadi*, as they are shown here in fig 53, in the form of a chart), in order to understand the nature of these differences, it is only necessary to examine three specific letter components. This is because

<sup>300</sup> In this chart letters of three dated Torah scrolls of the Jewish Museum London from the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be seen. For the full list of letters of scroll JM19 and JM21 and information about them see Appendix A and Appendix B. See also figure 22, a chart with examples that implement the various teachings in a different way.

<sup>301</sup> According to Matzat Shimurim. See Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 694. Reasons for not including *Vav* in this thesis may be found in the chapter 5 *The terms "Arizal" and "Beth Yosef"*.

one of these components, the shape of the letter *Zayin*, also appears on the left side of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, final *Tzadi* and *Shin*.

These three components are:

- 1 The letter *Zayin* as it appears on the left side of the of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, final *Tzadi* and *Shin*.
- 2 The left leg of the letter *Aleph*
- 3 The *Yod* incorporated in the letter *Tzadi*

### ***Zayin***

Excluding the *Aleph*, all the letters that are different in the *Arizal* script as compared to that of the *Beth Yosef* include a component that is similar to the letter *Zayin*. The *Zayin* is the left-hand component in the group of letters known as "*SHAaTNeZ GeTZ*," as well as in the letter *Het* in which the left side is composed of a *Zayin* in both scripts, but in the *Beth Yosef* script the right side is a *Zayin* as well, whereas in the *Arizal* it is a *Vav*.

In the book the *Beth Yosef* (in the first *Alpha Beta*, see chapter 5.2 *Barukh She'amar*), Caro describes the letters that are composed of *Zayin* as follows (*Orah Haim* section 36):<sup>302</sup>

תהיה כמו שני זייני"ן<sup>303</sup> רחוקים זו מזו כעובי קולמוס ומחברים בגג גבוה יחדיו אבל הזי"ן  
שבצד ימין יהיה ראשו עגול לצד ימין ומקל קטן יהיה עליה בצד שמאל:

יהיה ראשו הימין קצת ארוך ומשפיל ראשו קצת ויהיה למעלה עגול ולא משוך בשוה ועוקץ פניו  
משוך למטה לתוכה והראש השני לצד שמאל יהיה דומה ממש לזי"ן והרגל משוך בשוה למטה  
ושלשה תגין על ראש השמאל:

יהיה אות הראשון כעין יו"ד שפניה קצת כלפי מעלה וגופה משוך תחתיה בעמידה קצת ובה תהיה  
זי"ן עומדת בשוה ונוגעת בירכה למטה מחציה:

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<sup>302</sup> The illustrations in the following section are taken from Torah scroll MST#1010, from the Memorial Scrolls Trust in Westminster, London. For the rest of the letters see Appendix B.

<sup>303</sup> Emphasis mine.



יהיה הראש הראשון כעין יו"ד שפניה קצת כלפי מעלה וידביק ירך האות למטה עב באמצע צואר הצד"י למעלה מן ירך הצד"י וראשה השני יהיה כמו זיי"ן והצואר יהיה קצת עב וקצת ארוך ומושבה משוך לצד שמאל יותר מן שני הראשים היטב בעקמומית תהיה עגולה ושלשה תגין על ראשה:



פשוטה יהיה ראשה כמו הכפופה וגופה ארוך עד שיורד ירכה מן דיבוק היו"ד אליה כעובי שני קולמוסים וחצי:



ראשה הראשון יהיה כמו יו"ד שפניה כלפי מעלה וימשוך הגוף בשיפוע למטה עד כנגד ראש השלישי והראש השני יהיה כמו כן כמו יו"ד שפניה למעלה ועוקץ קטן עליה וימשוך ירכה למטה בשיפוע לצד שמאל עד מקום חיבור ראש השלישי למטה אל גופה שיהיו שלשה ראשים מחוברים למטה במקום אחד וכנגד זה יהיה חד למטה וראש השלישי יהיה כמו זיי"ן ושלשה תגין על ראשה ולא יגעו הראשים זה בזהה: <sup>304</sup>



*Het*: Will be like two *Zayins* the width of a calamus-nib apart from one another and connected by a high roof together. But the *Zayin* on the right will have its head rounded to the right and a small stick will be on its left side:



*Tet*: The right head will be a little long and the head will be bowed down slightly and will be round and not pulled at the same level and the spike on its face<sup>305</sup> will be pulled down into it. The other head, on the left, will be very similar to a *Zayin* and the leg will be pulled at the bottom and it will have three tags on the left head;



*Ayin*: The first (part of the) letter will be a kind of *Yod* whose face is [turned] slightly upward and its body is pulled under it. And there will be *Zayin* standing straight and touching her thigh deeper down than halfway;

<sup>304</sup> Beth Yosef Oraḥ Ḥayim, chapter 36

<sup>305</sup> 'Face' in the halakhic literature means the left side of an element of the letter.



*Tzadi*: The first head is a kind of *Yod* whose face is slightly upward. And attach the thigh well in the middle of the neck above the thigh of the *Tzadi*. And the other head will be like *Zayin* and the neck will be a little thick and a little long and the base pulled to the left more than the two heads, well curved. It should be round and [there should be] three *taggin* on her head.



Straight (Final) *Tzadi*: Her head should be like that of the bent one (regular *Tzadi*) and her body long. Its thigh goes down from (the place of) the attachment of the *Yod* in the length of two and a half times the width of (the line coming out of) the calamus)



*Shin*: Her first head will be like a *Yod* with her face upwards and he (the scribe) should pull the body diagonally downwards against the third head. And the second head will also like a small *Yod*, turning her face upwards, with a small spike on her and he (the scribe) should pull down (the stroke of) her thigh slanting down leftwards until the place of the conjunction with the third head, down to her body that will have three heads. Connected down in one place and against it will be sharp [stroke] down and the third head will be like *Zayin* and there should be three *taggin* on her head, and the heads will not touch each other.<sup>306</sup>

Contrary to all that is stated above by the *Beth Yosef*, according to the style of the *Arizal*, all of these letters should be composed of the letter *Vav*.<sup>307</sup>

Why are these two opinions divided? Before attempting to answer this question, let us examine the shape of the letter *Zayin* in the Erfurt Torah scrolls.

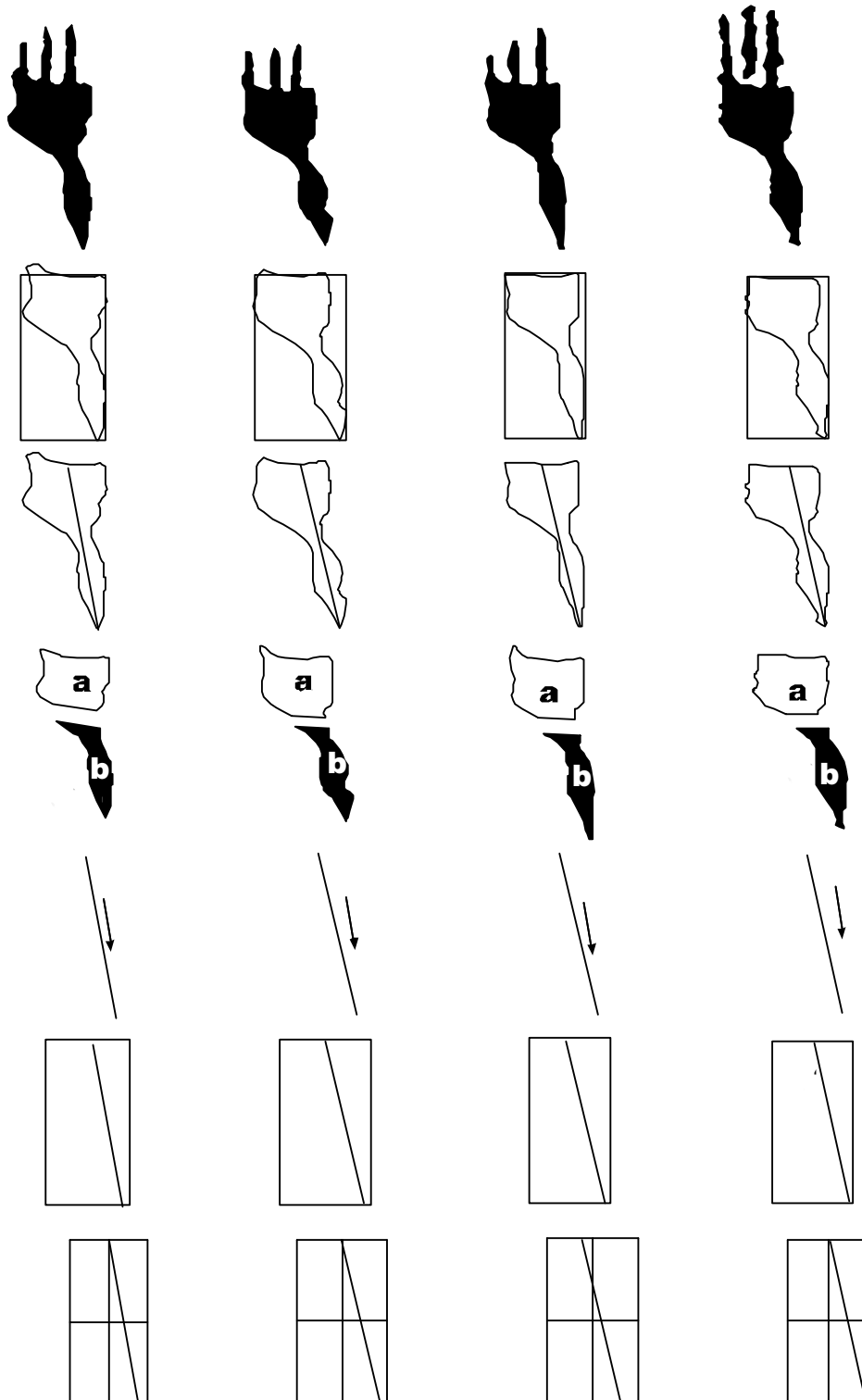
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<sup>306</sup> Beth Yosef, *Orah Hayim*, chapter 36.

<sup>307</sup> See Chapter 5.4.

## 7.4 A Graphic Analysis and the Characteristics of the Letter *Zayin* in the Erfurt Torah Scrolls

### 7.4.1 The Letter *Zayin* in the Torah Scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):

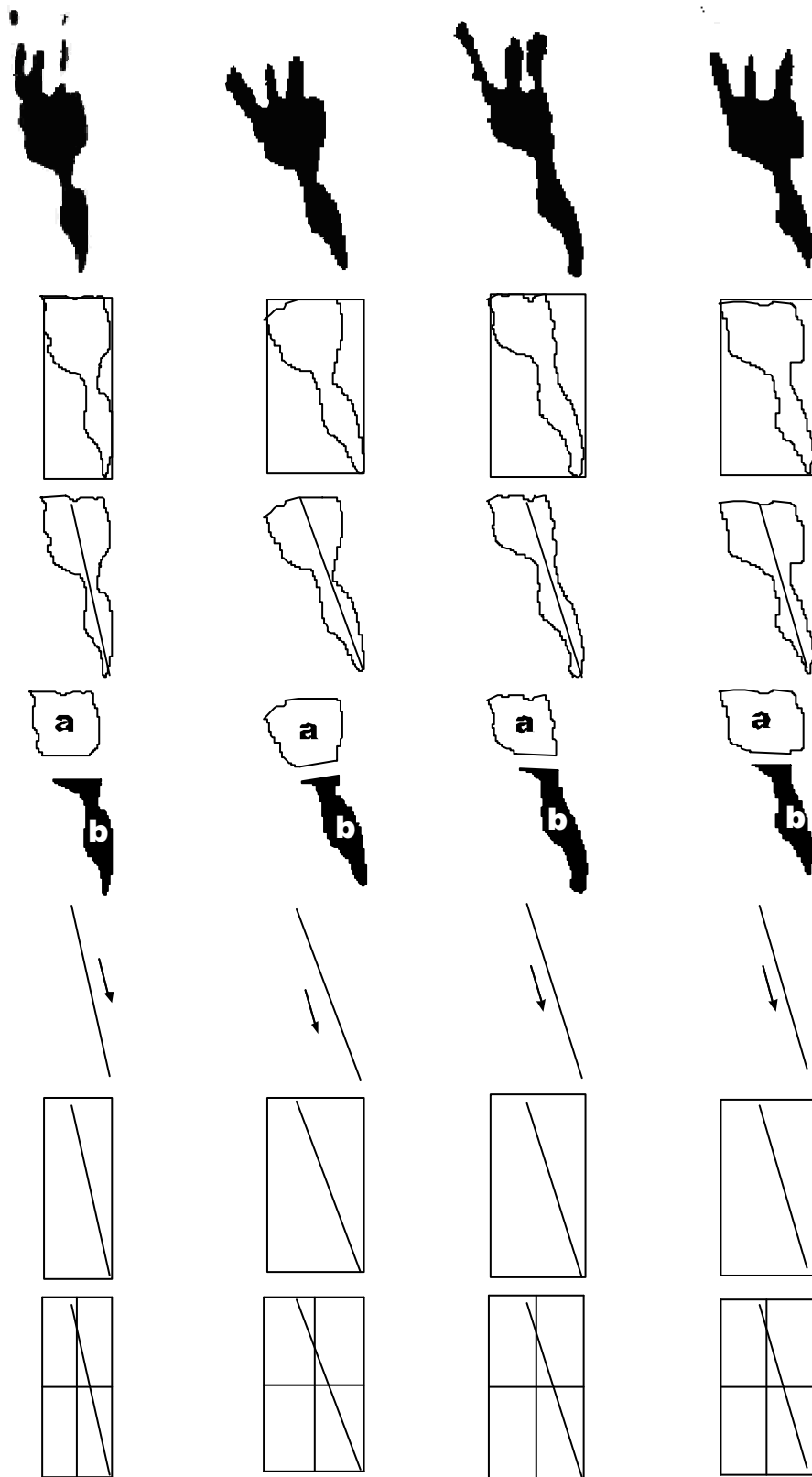


7.4.2 The Letter *Zayin* in the Torah Scroll Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):

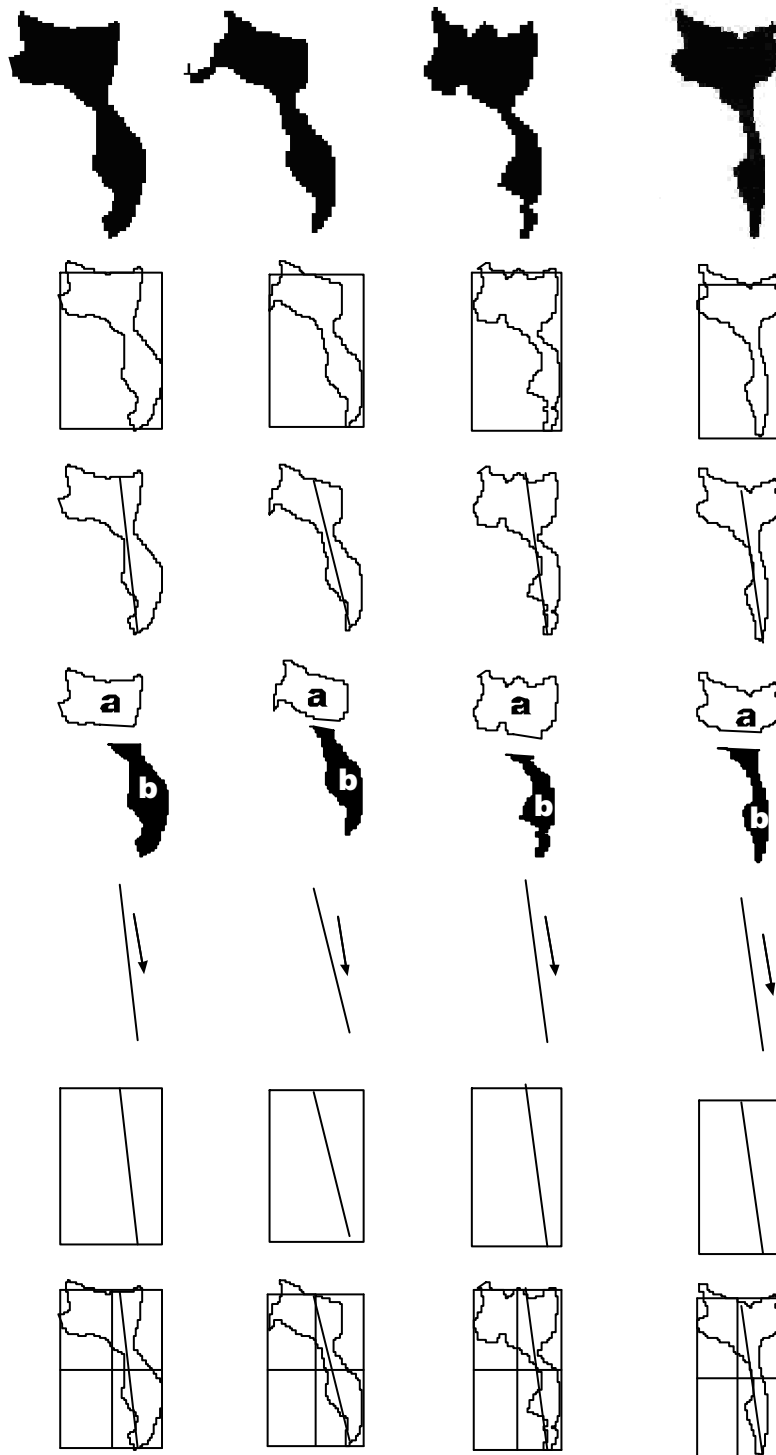




7.4.3 The Letter *Zayin* in the Torah Scroll Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217):



7.4.4 The Letter *Zayin* in the Torah Scroll Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):



## 7.5 A List of Characteristics of the Letter *Zayin* in the Erfurt Torah Scrolls

An in-depth analysis of the letter *Zayin* is not as necessary as with the previous letters, as it is the most basic component of almost all of the letters discussed in this study. As shown in the illustrations above, in the Erfurt scrolls 7 and 9, the head of the *Zayin* is slightly tilted and diagonal, not parallel to the lines. In scroll Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215), the head, in some cases, is also slightly tilted. But in any case, including when the head is parallel to the lines, the connection of the leg to the head is always on the right side of the head. In Erfurt 8 the position of the head of the *Zayin* is similar to Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215), but the leg is most often connected in the middle of the head.

It seems that lack of knowledge of the older style of writing caused controversy about what may be deemed "*kosher*," or fit for ritual use. In the time frame between the writing of the *Alfa Beta* by Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann and its quotation in the *Beth Yosef* by Rabbi Yosef Caro (as "*Barukh She'amar*"), changes took place in the writing style of these letters. As a result, when the average Ashkenazic scholar read *Beth Yosef* in the 16th century, he probably envisioned a different shape of the letter *Zayin* from that which Rabbi Yosef Caro referenced.

Caro's contemporary, the *Arizal*, and the *Arizal*'s disciple Rabbi Chaim Vital, had to define these letters as composed of the letter *Vav* and not *Zayin* in order for the writing to be compatible with the "*torat ha-sod*," or the secret kabbalistic teachings. This is because the original shape of the *Zayin* -component was, at that time, perceived as a *Vav*-shape, with the leg joined on the right of the head. And so, in the era of the *Arizal*, the essence of the shape of the *Zayin* was that the leg connects to the head NOT at the right side of the head, and that to the right of the connection there is a significant protrusion. In contrast, the leg of the *Vav* connects to the head at the right side and the head does not protrude to the right at all. This distinction will be further proven later in this work. For examples of post-medieval examples of Torah Scrolls (from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) written in *Beth Yosef* and *Arizal* scripts, see appendices A and B.

## 8 The "Ziyyunin" (Armaments) of the Letters *Shatne"z Get"z*

### 8.1 Sources for the Shape of the Letter *Zayin*

#### 8.1.1 Tosafot Menaḥot 29B

In order to find the halakhic source for the shape of the letter *Zayin*, we must approach the ultimate halakhic authority, the Babylonian Talmud. Perhaps through our modern printed tractates, the reason for the obscurity behind the original shape of the letter will become clear. The source for the necessity for some letters to include "*ziyyunin*"<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> I would like thank Sinai Turan, Ph.D. (from the Historical Dictionary Project of the Hebrew Language at the Academy of the Hebrew Language), who discussed with me in length the possible meanings and etymology of the word *ziyyun*. Based on the *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew* of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, and Marcus Jastrow's *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature*. I would like to propose that the meaning of 'ziyyunim' in our context *armament*. In the abovementioned dictionaries this meaning is based on the *zayin-vav-nun* root's secondary meaning. This is based on the primary meaning of this root, which is *providing, outfitting, sustaining, nourishing* because to be armed is also a way of being equipped or outfitted (if we are talking about warfare).

Another possible meaning, i.e. *decoration* or *ornament*, is based also on the aforementioned meanings: armaments for men can indeed be seen as decorations. As Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, one of the most prominent *tannaim* (sages of the Mishna) of the 1st and 2nd centuries explains in the Mishna (Shabbat 6:4): "A man may not go out with a sword, bow, shield, club, or spear, and if he does go out, he incurs a sin-offering. Rabbi Eliezer (disagrees and) says: they are *ornaments* for him (and for this reason it is not considered carrying)." Similarly, all the examples that are mentioned in Jastrow's dictionary for the possible uses of this word in the meaning of *decoration* are connected to the meaning of being *equipped* or *armed*. See *Targum Yonatan* on Genesis 14:14, where the word *armed* in "and he armed his trained men" is translated to Aramaic as וַיַּיָּזֵן יְת עוֹלָיְמוֹי.

I didn't find a direct Biblical or Talmudic (besides that of Rabbi Eliezer, but even that is not a direct one) use of the possible meaning of *decoration* (for a *Midrashic* use of the word *zayin* in this meaning see further in this footnote). Probably the earliest use for this meaning in Ben Yehuda's Dictionary is Ibn Janaḥ (Abu al-Walīd Marwān ibn Janāḥ, c. 990, Córdoba – c. 1055, Zaragoza). In his work *Kitab al-Usul* ("Book of Roots"), or *Sefer ha-Shorashim* (Ibn Janaḥ 1896, 174) he uses the word *ziyyun* in order to explain the Hebrew word *hishuq* (the silver bands in the Tabernacle, Exodus 27:10). On the other hand, at the more relevant entry of the the root *Zayin-Yod-Nun* (Ibn Ḡanāḥ. *Sepher Haschoraschim*, 128-129) he doesn't mention such meaning. For an out-and-out research of the possible meanings of the word *ziyunim* other than Hebrew, one should check its possible uses in Aramaic. Alexander Kohut's (1842, Kiskunfélegyháza, Hungary –1894, New York) eight volume dictionary called *Arukh ha-Shalem* (Kohut, *Arukh Completum*. 286-288), a revised and much expanded version of the classic *Arukh* ("Lexicon"), a Hebrew and Aramaic dictionary compiled by Nathan ben Yeḥiel

meaning they must have graphic design details causing them to appear similar to types of weapons or armaments, can be found in tractate Menaḥot 29B.

אמר רבא שבעה אותיות צריכות שלשה זיונין ואלו הן שעטנ"ז ג"ץ.

Rava<sup>309</sup> (c. 280 – 352 CE) says seven letters need three *ziyyunin* and they are *ShaATNeZ GeTZ*.

Next to the Talmudic text where it states "*ShaATNeZ GeTZ*" appears the commentary of the *Tosafot*<sup>310</sup> including illustrations explain the shape of the letter *Zayin* with the *ziyyunin* and it says:

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from Rome (c. 1035 – 1106) in addition to the aforementioned meanings in Hebrew *mentions the following meanings in Aramaic: damage, loss (Ibid, p287)*.

In the Hebrew context, *Arukh ha-Shalem (Ibidem)* again brings a quotation from Shemot Rabbah (chapter 45) where the word 'ornaments' in Exodus 33:5 ("put off thy ornaments from thee") are explained as '*kelei zayin*' or weapons. This aforementioned connection with ornaments has its parallel with the Arabic language, as shown by *Arukh ha-Shalem (Ibidem)*. In Arabic, the word زين means beauty, whereas it is also the name of the letter *Zayn*, which is equivalent with the Hebrew letter *Zayin*.

A less common usage of the word in classic literature (although not unusual in the modern Israeli Hebrew slang) brought down in *the Arukh ha-Shalem (Ibid, pp277-278)* in the name of *Yalqut Shim'oni* (Chapter 934) is a euphemism for the male genital organ. This latter usage is embraced also by Moses Cordovero (1522-1570) in his Kabbalistic work, *Pardes Rimonim* (27:10), where he bases this analogy less on the etymology (as does *Yalqut Shim'oni*) of the word but more on its shape (that includes the glans, etc.) and on its place of the Hebrew Alphabet (next to the letter *Het* which in this context resembles the two feet of a woman).

<sup>309</sup> Abba ben Joseph bar Ḥama, one of the most often cited rabbis in the Talmud.

<sup>310</sup> This interpretation in the *Tosafot* is by Rabbi Samson son of R. Avraham (c. 1150 – c. 1230). "The knight of the Torah and its protector completely identifies with his subject: His main emphasis is to interpret the difficult, to settle the contradictions and to ascertain the Halakha. The facts and deeds that aroused the discussion are very scantily described, and only what is most needed is noted by him, and with scant wording... His permanent residence was in Sens, a city published in the annals of Israel thanks to the additions of Rabbi Samson and his disciples, named after it "Tosafot Sens". From Urbach *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot: Toldoteihem, Hibureihem ve-Shitatom*, 271-279.



FIGURE 54

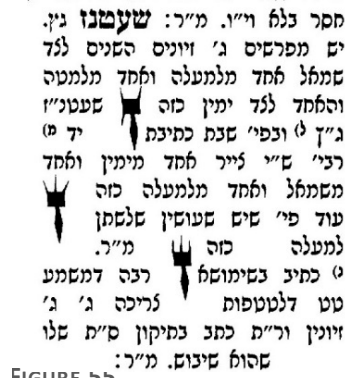


FIGURE 55

"שעטנז גין - יש מפרשים ג' זיונים השנים לצד שמאל אחד מלמעלה ואחד מלמטה והאחד לצד ימין כזה (במקור מופיע שרטוט) שעטנ"ו ג"ץ ובפי' שבת כתיבת יד רבי' ש"י צייר אחד מימין ואחד משמאל ואחד מלמעלה כזה (במקור מופיע שרטוט) עוד פי' שיש שעושין שלשתן למעלה כזה /במקור מופיע שרטוט/ מ"ר"

SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ – Some interpret three *ziyyunim*: two on the left side, one on top and one on the bottom, and one on the right, like so (original shows an illustration). [...] Rashi<sup>311</sup> drew one on the right and one on the left and one on top, like so (original shows an illustration), and there is another interpretation where all three are on top, like so (original shows an illustration). (Quoted from the) words of my master [Rabbi Samson of Sens mentioned in footnote 315].<sup>312</sup>

A close look at these illustrations, especially the first, shows that they are very different from what we see in the Erfurt Torah scrolls as well as other known scrolls. This is because all of the common modern editions of the Talmud are based on the 1886 edition printed by the Widow and Brothers Romm in Vilnius (see fig. 54 for the discussed page in the Vilnius edition and fig. 55 for the enlarged picture of the discussed section of the Tosafot), that was printed several hundred years after the writing of the Tosafot, and seemingly after the original drawings were lost. In these drawings, the letter *zayin* is shaped according to the more modern script acceptable at the time of the printing, and not as it was written in older manuscripts. However, what did the original illustrations look like? After a thorough search, it seems that the relevant manuscripts are not known to exist and probably do not exist

<sup>311</sup> “Rashi, acronym of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzḥaki, (born 1040, Troyes, Champagne—died July 13, 1105, Troyes), renowned medieval French commentator on the Bible and the Talmud (the authoritative Jewish compendium of law, lore, and commentary).” (Cited from Isadore Twersky, “Rashi: French Religious Scholar,” Encycloaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Rashi> [last accessed Feb. 11, 2020].)

<sup>312</sup> Tosafot, Tractate Menahot 29B.

today.<sup>313</sup> In the absence of the original manuscripts, the next logical step is to turn to the first printed edition of tractate *Menaḥot* with *Tosafot*, namely the Venice edition.<sup>314</sup> The first Venice edition of the Talmud was printed in Daniel Bomberg's printing press (1519–1523), which “became the standard for subsequent editions of the Talmud.”<sup>315</sup> To the credit of the editors, it should be said that they worked under immense pressure, “It was an awesome task to prepare all of this material for printing within three years. [...] The editor also had to edit the printed pages during this period.”<sup>316</sup>

As one can see (fig. 56) in this edition of the Venice Talmud, the illustrations are missing after the word *kazeh* (“like this”). It can be concluded that there were probably illustrations in the past, but over the generations they were lost. Apparently the later printers tried to reproduce them in later editions, but instead of

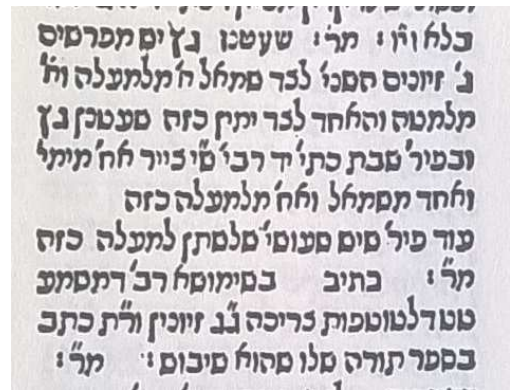


FIGURE 56

<sup>313</sup> Benjamin Richler's exhaustive work that includes 277 items of the known manuscripts of the Tosafot, *Kitvei ha-yad shel tosafot al ha-Talmud*, does not include an entry on Tosafot on Tractate Menaḥot. See Benjamin Richler, “Kitvei Ha-yad Shel Tosafot al Ha-Talmud,” 834. For possible reasons of the small number of surviving manuscripts of the Tosafot see Benjamin Richler, *ibid.*, 771-773.

One of the main reasons for the lack of Talmudic manuscripts in general is their destruction by anti-Semitic elements. The authorities of the church censored, confiscated, and burned the Talmud editions. Professor Menaḥem Schmelzer illustrates this by pointing out that “in the catalog of the outstanding collection of Hebrew manuscripts at the British Library are listed 161 manuscripts of the Bible and its translations, while the collection includes only five fragmentary Talmud manuscripts. At the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris the ratio is 132:0.” See Menaḥem Schmelzer, “The Hebrew Manuscript as a Source for Study of History and Literature,” *A Sign and a Witness: 2,000 Years of Hebrew Books and Illuminated Manuscripts*, New York Public Library (New York 1988), 64.

<sup>314</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat. Venezia 1519/1520-1522/1523. [with the commentary of Rashi, Tosafot, ‘piskei ha-Tosafot’, commentary on the Mishna and Rabbenu Asher] Reprint: Jerusalem: Or ha-Babylonian Talmud.

<sup>315</sup> Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud*, 153.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*.

adding the original letter illustrations, they added the letters in a way that was familiar to them from modern scripts:



FIG. 57. ILLUSTRATION OF SHA‘ATNEZ GETZ LETTERS AS KNOWN IN MODERN ASHKENAZIC SCRIBAL ART, BASED ON THE LETTERS OF A TORAH SCROLL WRITTEN IN 1858–1859, JUST A FEW DECADES BEFORE THE PRINTING OF THE TALMUD’S ROMM EDITION.<sup>317</sup>

### 8.1.2 Understanding the Various Forms of the Letter Zayin Through Otiyot D’Rabbi Akiva

It is possible to shed new light on the question of the shape of the letter *Zayin*’s head by examining a midrashic essay attributed to Rabbi Akiva,<sup>318</sup> "*Otiyot* (the letters of) *de-Rabbi Akiva* or *Alpha Beta* of Rabbi Akiva. In the field of literature dealing with the Hebrew alphabet this Oriental work<sup>319</sup> is one of the oldest, if not the most ancient, having been written in the Gaonic era.<sup>320</sup> Despite the fact that *Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva* describes the shapes

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<sup>317</sup> This Ashkenazic Torah scroll bears an inscription on its *etz hayim* that can be translated as follows: “This Torah scroll with an embroidered ‘cloak’ was donated by the noble gentleman Feivel Gomperz for God’s sake and for glorifying the Great Synagogue at the time of its inauguration, 5619 (1858–1859).” It is housed today in a synagogue in Budapest, Hungary.

<sup>318</sup> Attributed to the tanna (rabbinic sage from the Mishnaic period) Rabbi Akiva ben Yosef (c. 50– 135 CE, Palestine) based on Menaḥot 29B. Even though his authorship is not accepted by academic research, we can place the time of its writing (at least partially) as far back as the early 10th century, when it was severely attacked and ridiculed by Solomon ben Jeroham, the Karaite sage from Jerusalem. (See Akiba ben Joseph, *The Jewish Encyclopedia*). Heinrich Grätz reached the conclusion that *Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva* was the first text of the so-called Hekhalot literature (see Gruenwald 1980, first page of Chapter Four).

<sup>319</sup> According to what Rabbi Yitzḥhak of Vienna (1180-1250), one of the authors of the Tosafot writes at the beginning of his book *Or Zarua*, the book *Alpha Beta d’Rabbi Akiva* contains the same "heaps and heaps of laws " that Rabbi Akiva himself expounded as written in Menaḥot 29b and quoted above. See Wertheimer *Midrashei ha-Geniza, Batei Midrashot*, 337.

<sup>320</sup> The Geonic era spans c.589 CE- 1038 CE.



of the letters according to the Oriental scribal traditions, it also corresponds to the Ashkenazic script.

Although *Otiyot de-Rabbi Akiva* is not a *Halakhic* (legal) work but rather mainly a *Midrash* (Biblical exegesis), it is nonetheless a source from which one may gain understanding of the original forms of the letters. It is important to note that many great sages have preceded me on this subject and brought Halakhic proofs about the shapes of the letters from this book, including: Rabbeinu Tam (c. 1100 - 1171),<sup>321</sup> Barukh ben Isaac (c. 1140 - 1212) in *Sefer Ha'Teruma*, Abraham ben Nathan (c. 1155–1215),<sup>322</sup> Rabbi Samson *Barukh She'amar*,<sup>323</sup> Rabbi Meir ben Rabbi Yekutiel ha-Kohen of Rotenburg<sup>324</sup> (c. 1260–1298) in his *Hagahot Maimoniot*<sup>325</sup>, and the *Maharil* (c. 1365 –1427).<sup>326</sup>

The following is a quote from *Otiyot d'Rabbi Akiva*<sup>327</sup> on the shape of the letter *Zayin*:

"זי"ן מפני מה יש לו שני תגיין אחד כלפי וא"ו ואחד כלפי חי"ת מפני שכל אדם שמבקש לילך אצל אשה שאינה שלו לבא עליה עיניו אחד כלפי חטא ועבירה לטעות אחר יצרו ועינו אחת כלפי בשר ודם שאין בו ממש שמא יראו אותו בני אדם ויאמרו עליו וי הלך פלוני אצל זונה ואינו יודע שמי שהוא יושב בסתרי שמים פנים בו שנ' נואף שמרה נשף (איוב כ"ד:ט"ו)."

"*Zayin* - why does it have two *taggin*; one facing the *Vav* and the other facing the *Het*? Because every man who wishes to go to a woman who is not his (wife) one of

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<sup>321</sup> Jacob ben Meir (1100 - 1171, France), was one of the most renowned Ashkenazic Jewish rabbis and leading French Tosafists, a leading halakhic authority in his generation.

<sup>322</sup> Abraham ben Nathan was a Provençal rabbi and scholar. He was born in Lunel, Languedoc. For this reason, he is sometimes also called HaYarḥi (הירחי) "of Lunel," since Hebrew "yareah" is the equivalent of the French word *lune* "moon".

<sup>323</sup> See Chapter 5.2.

<sup>324</sup> He was one of the major students of Rabbi Meir ben Barukh (c. 1215 –1293) known as Maharam ("Our Teacher, Rabbi Meir") of Rothenburg, who was also the teacher of Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Moshe of Sinsheim, the author of *Tikkun Tefillin*. The Glosses of Barukh She'amar and consequently the entire literature of scribal Halakhot is built upon this work, as mentioned earlier.

<sup>325</sup> See pages 222-223.

<sup>326</sup> Yaakov ben Moshe Levi Moelin (c. 1365 –1427) was a Talmudist and decisor best known for his codification of the customs of Ashkenazic Jewry. See Wertheimer 1989, pp 335, 337, 338.

<sup>327</sup> Midrash Otivot d'Rabbi Akiva, according to Krakow and Amsterdam editions and manuscripts, cited in Greenfeld and Grantstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiot*, 43

his eyes is towards sin and wrongdoing to mistakenly go after his desire and one eye is toward flesh and blood lest people see him and say "*Vai-vai* ," So-and-so went to a prostitute. And he does not know that he who is sitting in the secret of heaven as it is written "the adulterer waiteth for the twilight (Job 24: 15)."<sup>328</sup>

This is the version<sup>329</sup> from the Krakow edition.<sup>330</sup>

"זי"ן מפני מה יש לו שני תגי"ן אחד כלפי וי"ו ואחד כלפי חי"ת מפני שכל בעל זנות כשהוא הולך אחר הזונה לבא עליה אחת מעיניו כלפי החטא לפיכך האחד כלפי חי"ת חטא ועבירה. ואחת כלפי בני אדם שהן דומין לעץ שנ' כי האדם עץ השדה (פרש' שופטים)<sup>331</sup> שמא יראו אותו בני אד' ויאמרו עליו ווי ווי פלוני הלך אצל הזונה לפיכך האחד כלפי הו"י"

*Zayin*, why does it have two *tagin* (crowns), one towards the *Vav* and one towards the *Het*? Because when every client of prostitution goes to a prostitute, one of his eyes is towards sin and therefore one towards the *Het* [representing] sin and transgression. And one [eye] towards people, who are similar to a tree "because man is a tree of the field" (book of Judges) lest people see him and say about him "*Vai-vai*," so-and-so went to a prostitute, therefore one is facing the *Vav*.

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<sup>328</sup> The complete verse is: "The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying: 'No eye shall see me'; and he putteth a covering on his face." The English translation of this Biblical verse is from Jewish Publication Society's 1917 edition of the Hebrew Bible in English, like most of the quotations in this work.

<sup>329</sup> In my opinion, this version seems more plausible. As in other letters (for example: *Vav* as *vai vai* and *Het* as *het*, meaning sin), the letter "*Zayin*" is also related to the concept that begins with the letter itself (*Zenut*=prostitution). In contrast, in the first edition brought here, instead of "every client of prostitution" is written "every man." And this is the version of Eliane Ketterer's scientific edition based on a manuscript at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Mic 1833):

זא"ן מפני מה יש לו שני ראשים אחד לוא"ו ואחד לחי"ת זא"ן בשביל הנואף אשר יעשה/ עבירה עינו אחת לעבירה ועינו אחד למקום "*Zan* (= *Zayin*), why does it have two heads, one towards the *Vav* and one towards the *Het*? For the *Zan*, the adulterer, who will sin, one of his eyes are towards the sin and one his eyes towards *Hamaqom*, meaning God" (Elian Ketterer's note: There is probably is a mistake here and he wanted to interpret: one eye towards people), so people shouldn't see him and he could hide from people and the Holy One, blessed be He, etc. See Ketterer, Eliane: *Otiyot de-Rabi 'Aqiva (Nusah 1-2)*, 17-18.

<sup>330</sup> *Otiyot shel Rabbi Akiva*. Cracow:D'fus Yitzhak of Prostitz, 1578/1579, 8.

<sup>331</sup> Deuteronomy 20:19.

In order to better understand the letters' description and their components as discussed, we will use the images of illuminated zoomorphic and anthropomorphic letters from the Hamilton Siddur (Ms Hamilton 288)<sup>332</sup> from the collection of the Berlin State Library (despite the fact that it is a Sepharadi manuscript).

This graphic representation is intended as a pedagogical illustration of the concepts used for the description of the letter components. It is not a historical attempt to show a proximity between the Hamilton Siddur and the Ashkenazic script. The Hamilton Siddur is a 13th century Sepharadic work. However, the figurative pictures reflect the way the scribe imagined what in the palaeography is called the 'ductus', that is the order, or direction of the individual strokes and the way they connect to each other.



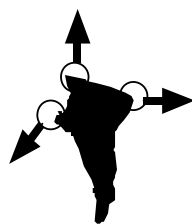
FIG. 58 THE ORIGINAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE LETTERS SHOWN IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES<sup>333</sup>

The Erfurt Torah scrolls include clear examples of the letter *Zayin* as described by the *Tosafot*:

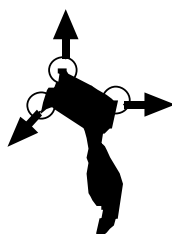
<sup>332</sup> Also known also as the Hamilton Haggadah. The letters Aleph and *Het* that are shown here are from page 9v (26).SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288>> [https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0026&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0003](https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0026&DMDID=DMDLOG_0003). (last accessed on April 30, 2020).

<sup>333</sup> The letters Vav and *Het* that are shown here is from page 9v (26) SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288>> [https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0026&DMDID=DMDLOG\\_0003](https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0026&DMDID=DMDLOG_0003). (last accessed on April 30, 2020).

K



A *Zayin* from Erfurt scroll 7:



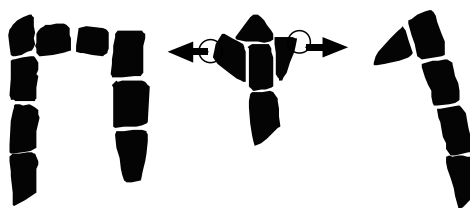
A *Zayin* from Erfurt scroll 9:

In the *STaM* letters, as they are known today, the *ziyyunim* of the letter *Zayin* do not point towards their ‘neighbours’ (to the left and to the right) but upwards. (fig 59)<sup>334</sup>



FIGURE 59

The *Midrash* can be best understood by examining the letters that appear in a mosaic in the ancient synagogue in *Tel Reḥov*<sup>335</sup> from the 6<sup>th</sup> century as it appears below (fig.60).<sup>336</sup>



<sup>334</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>335</sup> The Tel-Reḥov inscription is the world’s largest Hebrew Mosaic Inscription, dating from the 6th century. It contains 365 words, correlating to the number of the years of the solar year, and has 29 lines, corresponding to the days of the month. The text deals with details of the agricultural Halakhot and gives great insight to the geography and history of Jewish settlement in Palestine of that era.

Elisha Qimron, "Some Comments on the Tel-Reḥov Inscription," 54-156 and Ya’akov Sussman, "K’tovet Hillkhatit me-Emek Beit She’an - S’kira Mukdemet," 88-158.

<sup>336</sup> Ada Yardeni, *Sefer ha-Ketav ha-Ivri: Toldot, Yesodot, Signonot, Itzuv*, 181.

FIG. 60

Here are the same letters as seen in a manuscript from Toledo, Spain c. 1241.<sup>337</sup>

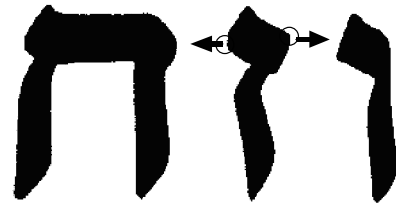


FIGURE 61

And the letters from the Kaufman manuscript of the *Mishna* (Ms. Kaufmann A 50).<sup>338</sup>

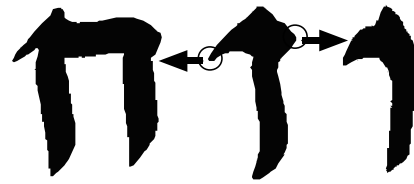


FIGURE 62

In at least some of the Erfurt scrolls, the letter *Zayin* matches the above illustrations, meaning the tags point to either side of the letter because the head was still slanted and not parallel to the lines.

For example, in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216):

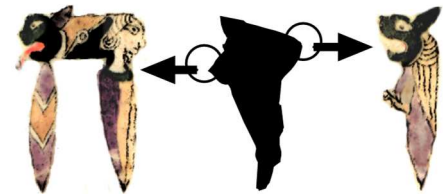


FIGURE 63

And in Erfurt scroll 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218):



FIGURE 64

<sup>337</sup> Ibid, 213. Manuscript from Jewish Theological Seminary, L 44a.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid, 201.

## 8.2 The Cause of the Change in the Letters SHaATNeZ GeTZ

The significant difference between historic forms of the letter *zayin* and the letters we find in modern scrolls is that the head of the *zayin* appears diagonally and not straight. The leg of the letter connects to the bottom corner that makes up the head, so there are three corners and not four. In this situation, the corners themselves constitute the *ziyyunim* mentioned in the Talmud and in the Tosafot, and so no additional crowns were needed to fulfill this requirement. What then caused the change in the shape of the letters, and how did this also bring about the change in how the crowns were added?

The following quotation, from Rabbi Eliezer Ben Samuel of Metz (d. 1175), another of the authors of the Tosafot who lived in the time period when the older of the Erfurt scrolls were most likely written, seems to support the shape of the head of the SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ letters as written in Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216) and Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218). In his book the *Sefer Yere'im*,<sup>339</sup> Rabbi Eliezer sounds quite emphatic about the serifs of letters SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ:

ז' אותיות צריכות ג' זיונין שעטנ"ז ג"ץ. פי(רוש) זיונין שלא יעשה ראשן עגול כזה אלא משוך כזה  
שעטנ"ז ג"ץ שיהא לכל ראש האות גד פינין וראיתי בני אדם שעושין תגין למעלה שעטנ"ז ג"ץ (ג' נקודות  
ארוכות לכל אחד) וטעות הוא בידם שלא בא רבא ללמדנו אלא גוף האות האיך נמסרה עשייתה למשה  
מסיני.

Seven letters need three *ziyyunin*: (these are) SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ. The meaning of *ziyyunin* is that the head of the letter should not be round but pulled out (at the sides) SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ so that the head of every letter has three corners. And I have seen people who make crowns on top of SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ (three elongated points on each), and they are mistaken, because Rava<sup>340</sup> came to teach us the body of letters and how they must be written according to Moses from Sinai.

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<sup>339</sup> *Sefer Yereim*, 212 (Hebrew numbering).

The exact time of its writing is unknown, but the book is first mentioned in *Sefer ha-Ittur*, which was written in 1179, so it can be concluded that the book was written beforehand.

<sup>340</sup> Babylonian Talmud 29B: "שבעה אותיות צריכות שלשה זיונין, ואלו הן: שעטנ"ז ג"ץ" Translation: "Rava says, seven letters need three *ziyyunin* and they are *ShaATNeZ GeTZ*".

The French Tosafist, Rabbi Barukh ben Isaac<sup>341</sup> (late 12th–early 13<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>342</sup> gives in his book *Sefer Ha-Terumah*<sup>343</sup> evidence as to the reason for the change in the forms of the letters of SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ, from how they were written in the early Ashkenazic scrolls, such as Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216) and Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218), to the forms seen later on. He shows that the change probably follows variants in the letter *zayin*, which is a component of all of these letters.

זיונין יש עושין אותן כזה ( ... ) שלשה תגין גדולים בכל אות :

And there are those who make Ziyunin (...) like this:  
three large crownlets in each letter,



FIGURE 65- ERFURT 8 (MS. OR. FOL. 1217):

ויש שאין עושין רק תג אחד גדול באמצע גדול ראש האות. ומימין ומשמאל יש תגין קטנים מן האות  
עצמה:

גרסינן פרק הקומץ שעטנ"ז ג"ץ כל אחת משבעה אותיות הללו צריכות שלשה זיונין בראש שמאל.  
(...) שעטנ"ז ג"ץ כאדם שאוחז זין ומניפו לימין ולשמאל ולפניו (...)

And there are those who make only one big serif in the middle of the letter head's size. And on the right and left side, (the corners of) the letter itself are forming small *serifs*":



FIGURE 66 FROM MS. OR. FOL  
1216 (MS. ERFURT 7)

<sup>341</sup> Rabbi Barukh ben Isaac of Worms, a Tosafist (sometimes referred to as ha-tzarfati, "the Frenchman"), was active in the early 13th c., and emigrated to Palestine in 1237.

<sup>342</sup> Rabbi Barukh ben Isaac lived more than a generation later than Rabbi Eliezer Ben Samuel of Metz, which may be important while relating to their different opinions.

<sup>343</sup> *Sefer ha-Teruma*, 57. Thanks to Avraham Strauss for explaining this to me.

We have learned in the chapter (of the Babylonian Talmud) *Ha-Kometz*: “SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ: Each of these seven letters needs three *ziyyunim* in the left head. (...) SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ as a man holding a weapon<sup>344</sup> waving with it to the right and to the left and in front of him”<sup>345</sup>(..)

על כן אני אומר שהכל אחד והכל תלוי בכתיבת הסופר. יש סופרים שאוחזים הקולמוס באלכסון ונעשי  
הזיונין כרבינו שלמה מן הכתיבה עצמה (...)

So, I say that it all depends on the scribe’s writing. There are scribes who hold the quill on a slant diagonally, and the *ziyyunin* become, like our Rabbi Shlomo (Rashi) says, part of the writing itself. [...]



FIG. 67. PICTURE FROM MS. OR. FOL. 1218.

(...) ועכשיו שפארו הסופרים כתיבותיהם לעשות ראשי האותיות שוין למעלה (...)

“And now that the scribes have glorified their writing, making the heads of the letters straight on top [...]”<sup>346</sup>

<sup>344</sup> See Appendix E.

<sup>345</sup> The quotation from *Sefer Ha-Terumah* from this point on (starting from the words “על כן אני אומר” or “So, I say”) is actually a quotation of Berechiah ben Natronai Krespia ha-Nakdan’s (lived in the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, according to Tashma, *Ritual. Custom and Reality*, 104.) annotation on the *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* of Rabbi Moses ben Jacob of Coucy (French Rabbi from the first half of the thirteenth century) quoted in *Sefer Ha-Terumah*.

<sup>346</sup> *Sefer ha-Teruma*, 77. I would like to thank Avraham Strauss for explaining his insights on the paleography of the SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ letters to me and for letting me read and use his writings. His article, “Tzurat Ot Zayin ve-Tagei SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ,” was since published in the Eitz Hayim periodical (Avraham Strauss, “Tzurat Ot Zayin ve-Tagei SHa‘ATNeZ GeTZ,” 94–112). Thanks also to Mordechai Weintraub, who first introduced me to the question of the shape of the letter zayin; to Avraham Deutsch, who discussed this topic with me in detail; and to Justine Isserles, Ph.D., for her input and comments, especially for providing me information about Rabbi Barukh ben Isaac.





FIGURE 68. PICTURE FROM MS. OR. FOL 1218.

"(....) טוב לעשות השלש זיונין אחר כל הכתיבה."

FIGURE 69. FROM MS. OR. 1215.



"[...] It is good to add the three *ziyyunin* after the writing."

The reason for the change in how the crowns were added, as the *Sefer Ha-Terumah* suggests (in the name of Berechiah ben Natronai), was the scribes' intention to "glorify the writing." The grandeur was reflected in the overall appearance of the writing, increased uniformity, and the letters becoming more square. The diagonal shape did not disappear all at once, but as we can see in manuscripts written over generations, the shape definitely faded over time, until finally disappearing completely. The four Erfurt scrolls bear witness to this change. The letter *Zayin* in scrolls Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215) and 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217) already appears with a straight head, while in scrolls 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216) and 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218), it appears with diagonal heads. The letter *Zayin* in these Torah scrolls are still written (originally) without the additional spikes as *ziyyunim*, but they are not necessary condition, since according the author of *Sefer ha-Teruma* "the thin *ziyyunim* are not restrictive" but "(...) it is good to add" them.

The question arises as to why there are any manuscripts at all wherein the heads of the letters SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ have both types of *ziyyunim* at the same time: thin lines and corners of the slanted head. A probable answer is that Erfurt 7 and similar scrolls may have been written so that the heads of the letters of SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ are diagonal and, originally without the thin spikes, and these crowns were added later. Confirmation of this assumption

can be found with the help of near infrared photography of the Torah scroll from the period



FIGURE 70

of the *Rishonim* (1038-1492).<sup>347</sup>

In this diagram, each line shows the same letter *Shin*, photographed twice. On the left is a regular photograph and on the right is in infrared light in which the newer ink looks dark and the original ink is lighter. The infrared photographs show that originally the letter was written according to the opinion that the corners of the head of the letters are considered the "*ziyyunim*," and the additional spikes were added later.

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<sup>347</sup> From Ms. Rhineland 1217..

In the few places where the scribe who adapted the Torah scroll to the modern style missed a certain letter, one can clearly see how the heads of the SHaTNeZ GeTZ letters were originally written:



FIGURE 71

### 8.3 The *Zayin* as a Sword and a Spear

It is also worth noting the parable from the *Sefer ha-Teruma* cited above: "As a man holding a *zayin* (weapon) and swinging to the right and to the left and to the front." This description fits a weapon called a *hanit* (spear), because its head is pointed both right, left, and upwards, so by aiming it at the enemy and swinging it in three directions, one can attack in any direction.

These are the words of the Ḥayim ben Betzalel (c. 1520-1588)<sup>348</sup> *Iggeret Ha-Tiyyul*<sup>349</sup> quoted by the Mishna Berura (section 36), one of the most important Halakhic works of the 20th century on the subject of the scribal art:

"שעטנז הוא אותיות שט"ן ע"ז, והם שני מקטרגים גדולים. וזהו גם כן סוד התגין של שעטנ"ז  
ג"ץ, כי ג"ץ גם כן שם מקטרג אחד, והתגים שעליהם הם כמו חרב וחנית להנצל מהם"

"*SHaATNeZ GeTZ* are the letters ‘*Satan Az*’ and these are the two great prosecuting (angels). This is also the secret of the crownlets of *SHaATNeZ GeTZ*, because ‘*Getz*’ is also the name of a prosecuting angel, and the crownlets are like a spear as a defense against them."

As previously mentioned, in the era of the *Rishonim* (1038-1492), the head of the *Zayin* straightened, as in the words of the *Sefer HaTeruma*: "ועכשיו שפארו הסופרים כתיבותיהם לעשות "ראשי האותיות שוין למעלה".  
"And now that the scribes have beautified their writing and make the heads of the letters equal (horizontal) on top."



FIGURE 72

This straightening forced the scribes to somehow distinguish the *Zayin* from *Vav*. Whereas the *Zayin* initially appears with the leg connected to the right corner of the head:

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<sup>348</sup> Rabbi Ḥayim ben Betzalel, born in Poznań, Poland, died in Friedberg, Hesse (Germany). He was a student of Rabbi Solomon Luria, known as Maharshal (1510 – 1573) and of Rabbi Shalom Shachna (c. 1510 – 1558). He learned together with Rabbi Moses Isserles, known as Rema (1530 – 1572). He was the rabbi of Worms (where he headed a Torah academy, a *yeshiva*) and later, until his death served as the rabbi of Friedberg. Rabbi Ḥayim ben Betzalel is most famous for being a brother of Rabbi Yehuda ben Betzalel (known as Maharal from Prague).

<sup>349</sup> Ḥayim ben Betzalel, *Iggeret ha-Tiyyul*, 6

[https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?sits=1&req=38261&st=%u05DE%u05E7%u05D8%u05E8%u05D2%u05D9%u05DD&\\_rnd=0.28304948432670907](https://hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?sits=1&req=38261&st=%u05DE%u05E7%u05D8%u05E8%u05D2%u05D9%u05DD&_rnd=0.28304948432670907) (last accessed on July 27, 2020).

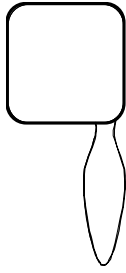


FIGURE 73

Scribes shifted the position of the head of the *Zayin* to be positioned in the middle of the leg:

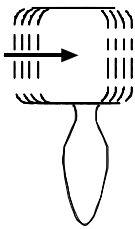


FIGURE 74

Although the shape of the *Zayin* changed, scribes continue to write the left side of the letters *Shin*, *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin* and *Tzadi* as they had previously, with the leg connected to the right corner of the head. This meant that this section of these letter came to resemble the letter *Vav* more closely than the "new" letter *Zayin*, thus we find that the *She'ar Ha'kavanot* (16<sup>th</sup> century) defines this element as a *Vav*. This is despite the fact that this element does not resemble a *Vav* exactly.

Despite what was written in *Sha'ar Ha'kavanot* defining this shape as a *Vav*, scribes continue to use this traditional form for the right side of these letters, and did not change its shape to that of an exact *Vav*. This is because, as Maimonides states "the scribes practiced according to what was transmitted orally from one to another,"

"נהגו בהם הסופרים וקבלה הוא בידם איש מפי איש." <sup>350</sup>

In other words, the scribes preserved the oral traditions passed on by previous generations.

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<sup>350</sup> Maimonides: *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Tefillin u-Mezuzah ve-Sefer Torah, chapter 7 Halakha 10*. Bar Ilan Responsa Project, issue 25.

Below is another illustration of this historical turn of events (fig 75). On the top line,



FIGURE 75

we see Ashkenazic script from the 15th century,<sup>351</sup> before the division into *Beth Yosef* and *Arizal* scripts.

In this example, it is clear that the left side of the letter *Shin* is similar to the *Zayin* and not the *Vav*. In the second line, the same words were taken from two separate manuscripts<sup>352</sup> of the book of Esther, from the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The example on the right was written in the *Arizal* script, and one can see that the left side of the letter *Shin* has more or less retained its original shape even though the letter *Zayin* has changed. In the left-most example, that of the *Beth Yosef* script, the left side of the *Shin* has changed similarly to the *Zayin*.

How does the shape of the left side of the letters *Shin*, *Het*, *Ayin* and *Tzadi* compare to the shape of the letter *Vav* in the *Arizal* script? The following are several examples of script from scribes belonging to the Ḥasidic movement, following the *Arizal's* teachings:

First, a letter from a Torah scroll<sup>353</sup> belonging to R' Yitzḥak Isaac<sup>354</sup> (1806-1874) from Komarno:



<sup>351</sup> [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley\\_ms\\_7620\\_f001r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_7620_f001r)

<sup>352</sup> Esther manuscripts are from a private collection in Hungary.

<sup>353</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiyot*, 704

<sup>354</sup> In Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiyot*, this scroll is referred to as the scroll of “א"א מקאמארנא” although there was no rabbi of such a name in the Kamarno Ḥasidic dynasty. This is probably a mistake and it is really a scroll of Rabbi Yitzḥaq Isaac Safrin from Komarno (1806-1874). Thanks to researcher Elimelech Safrin (a scion of the same dynasty) from Jerusalem for this clarification.

The difference between the shape of these two letters is clear, as the leg of the *Zayin* is connected to the middle of its head, and the leg of the *Vav* is connected to the right side of its head.



The letter *Shin* in the same scroll:



*Ayin*



*Tzadi*



*Het*

The following letter *Tet* is from the Tefillin of the Grand Rabbi of Munkacs<sup>355</sup> (1871-1937), the author of the book "*Darkei Teshuva*" (the ways of repentance), written by a scribe from the same city, Rabbi Haim Sofer.



It can be clearly seen that although the left heads of these letters do not connect in the middle, they are also not identical to the shape of the letter *Vav*, but have a small protrusion on the right side, so that they are still somewhat reminiscent of the letter shape of a *Zayin*.

The important H̳asidic Halakhic work, *Shulḥan Arukh Harav*<sup>356</sup> states:

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<sup>355</sup> Greenfeld and Granastein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiot*, 705

<sup>356</sup> *Shulḥan Arukh ha-Rav, Vol. I.*. Oraḥ H̳ayim Chapter 36 Para. 2. New York: Kehos, 2013/2014

"ויש מי שקבלה בידו שגוף הגימ"ל יהיה כמו זי"ן שימשוך רגל ימין מאמצע הראש ולא מקצהו כמו בוי"ו וכן כל ראשי שמאל שבאותיות שע"ט נ"ז ג"ץ יהיו דומים לזי"ן ועל כן התגי"ן שעליהם נקראו זייני"ן אבל קבלת האר"י ז"ל אינו כן כמו שיתבאר."

There is an authority who has received the tradition that the body of the *Gimmel* should resemble a *Zayin*, i.e., the right leg should extend from the middle [of the lower edge] of the head and not from its [right] side like a *vav*. Similarly, [this tradition maintains] that the left heads of the letters *SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ* should all resemble *Zayinin*. It is for this reason that the crownlets [of these letters] are called *zayinin*. The Kabbalistic tradition of the *Arizal* differs,<sup>357</sup> however, as will be explained.<sup>358</sup>

This ruling sums up the discussion about defining the head of the *Vav* and the head of the *Zayin* after the different changes and developments in the shapes of the letters since the appearance of the book *Barukh She'amar: Extending the right foot from the middle of the head of the letter* is the reason why the letter, or component, is called a *Zayin*. Therefore, when referencing the accepted shape of the letters, with the leg connected to the right side of the head, the *Arizal* has no choice but to call such a component a *Vav*.

It should be noted that when a component of a letter is defined in halakhic literature as a specific letter, it is not intended that this element be exactly the same as that letter in all specifications and details.<sup>359</sup> In his explanation of the very first letter of the alphabet in his

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<sup>357</sup> In this quotation, "The Kabbalistic tradition of the *AriZal* differs..." Rabbi Shneur Zalman meant to say the following: unlike in the tradition of Beth Yosef where all the left hand element of the *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a *Zayin*, the tradition of the *Arizal* is that *not* all the left hand elements of *SHaATNeZ GeTZ* letters look like a *Zayin*. Rather, the specifically left-hand elements of the letters *Shin*, *Ayin*, *Tet*, and *Tzadi* do not resemble a *Zayin*, whereas the heads of the letters *Nun* and *Gimmel* do resemble the head of the letter *Zayin*. (Of course, the head of the letter *Zayin* itself has to resemble the head of the letter *Zayin*). In fact, the *Arizal* (based on *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*) did not write about the shape of *Nun* and *Gimmel*. Thanks to Rabbi Moshe Weiner, author of "Sefer *Otiyot Ha-rav*," for explaining this point to me.

<sup>358</sup> Translation from [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/3284482/jewish/Shulhan-Arukh-Chapter-36-Laws-Relating-to-Precise-Shape-of-Scribal-Letters.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3284482/jewish/Shulhan-Arukh-Chapter-36-Laws-Relating-to-Precise-Shape-of-Scribal-Letters.htm). (last accessed on April 30, 2020).

<sup>359</sup> See chapter 3.1 and footnote 40.



work *Hagahot Maimoniot*, Rabbi Meir ben Rabbi Yekutiel ha-Kohen of Rotenburg writes of *Alpha Beta D'Rabbi Akiva*:

"באלפא ביתא דרבי עקיבא מפני מה יו"ד של אלף זקוף למעלה מצדו מפני שמעיד בו וצופה להקב"ה  
שהוא אמת משמע שעשוי קצת כמין יו"ד..."<sup>360</sup>

In *Alpha Beta d'Rabbi Akiva*: why is the *Yod* of the *Aleph* upright on its side? Because it stands as a witness looking toward the Almighty who is truth meaning it is made similarly to a *Yod*...

In other words, R. Meir of Rotenberg said that when describing that part of a letter **is** a *Yod*, this means it is **similar** to a *Yod*; it is safe to posit that the same can be said about components of letters compared to the *Zayin* or *Vav*.

This subject is also raised by Rabbi Uri Shraga Feivel Schreier (1819-1889)<sup>361</sup> in his work *Mikdash Me'at*, on the subject of the lower section of the *Aleph*, whose shape is sometimes defined as a *Yod* and sometimes as a *Dalet*. The *Mikdash Me'at* suggests a compromise between these two opinions:

אף שעשויה כד' לא יצאה לגמרי מידי דוגמת י' למרות שצורה של האות דל"ת שונה, כמובן, מצורת  
היו"ד, כשמדברים על רגל האל"ף, אפשר לקרוא לו גם דל"ת וגם יו"ד, בו זמנית.<sup>362</sup>

Even though it is made like a *Dalet*, it has not lost the shape of a *Yod*, the shape of a *Dalet* is obviously different than the shape of a *Yod*, but when discussing the shape of the leg of the *Aleph*, one can describe it as a *Yod* and a *Dalet* simultaneously.

The book *Temunat ha-Otiyot*<sup>363</sup> by Rabbi Mordechai Hess (a contemporary rabbi living in Bene Beraq, Israel) also contains information related to this topic. Although the relevant section discusses "the connection of the foot to the head of the letters *Gimmel*, *Zayin*, *Nun* and *final Nun*," it can be applied to all letters which include a component described as

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<sup>360</sup> Hagahot Maimoniyot, *Hilkhot Tefillin u-Mezuzo ve-Sefer Torah, Chapter 1*, Bar Ilan Responsa Project, issue 25.

<sup>361</sup> For biographical information see the end of footnote 249.

<sup>362</sup> Mikdash Me'at, Letter *He*, para. 19.

<sup>363</sup> Mordechai Hess, *Sefer T'munat ha-Otiyot*. Volume I, 111

<sup>347</sup>

the letter *Zayin*. In *Temunat ha-Otiyot*, although R' Hess refers to the connection of the letter *Zayin*, he did not examine Torah scrolls or early manuscripts such as the Erfurt scrolls. Although his work is based on evidence from the works of the *Rishonim*, such as the *Barukh She'amar*, Rabbi Bahya ben Asher ibn Ḥalawa (1255–1340), the *Rosh* and others, the illustrations he brings alongside his writings look like this:

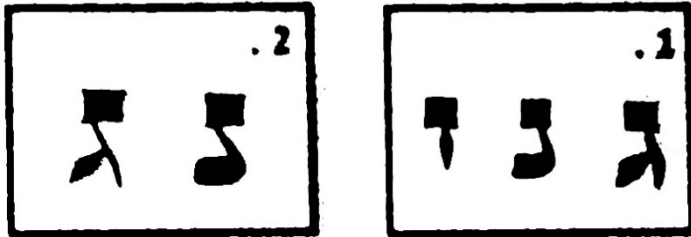


Figure 76

Although Rabbi Hess's goal was to correct inconsistencies in the modern liturgical script and restore the original practices,<sup>364</sup> (here he states that the legs of the letters should not connect directly in the middle of the head, but a little to the right), it seems he did not use earlier manuscripts as a guide. The only manuscript mentioned is a book of Esther from the 15<sup>th</sup> century shown here (the picture itself is not included in his work, only a reference to the journal named '*Tzfunot – Tora Quarterly*'):<sup>365</sup>

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"לחזור ולייסד הנשכחות מעם בני ישראל הק' זה כו"כ שנים, ולחזור הדבר ליושנה לכתוב האותיות בתוארם וצורתם הנגונה כהלכה לכתחילה" מתוך הסכמת הרב מאיר בראנסדארפער. הס, עמ' 12

"To return and establish the forgotten (traditions) of the holy people of Israel after many years, and to return to the old ways to write the letters in the proper shape according to the optimal halakha." from the consent of Rabbi Meir Bransdorfer. Hess, *Sefer T'munat ha-Otiyot. Volume I*, 12

<sup>365</sup> David Yitzḥaki, "Shitot ha-Rishonim be-Tzurat B'nei Haman shel ha-Massekhet Sofrim ve-ha-Yerushalmi," 55-63, esp. 57.

This is the picture that appears in the journal *Tzfunot*,<sup>366</sup> seemingly a photocopy of a microfilm (fig. 77):

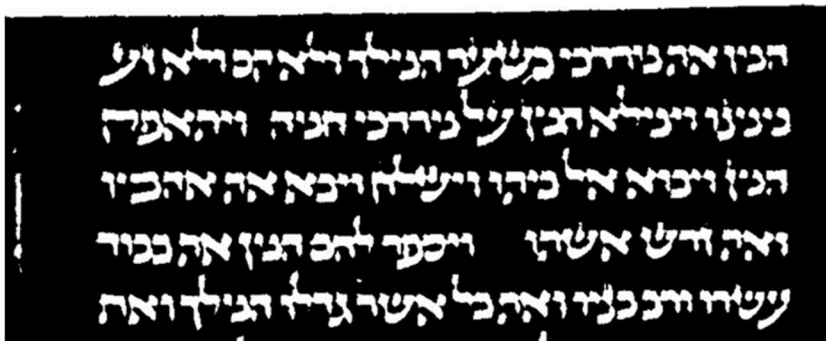


FIGURE 77

And this is a high-quality photo of the same scroll, Harley MS 7620 (currently available online, unlike in the time when it was published in *Tzfunot* (Fig. 78):

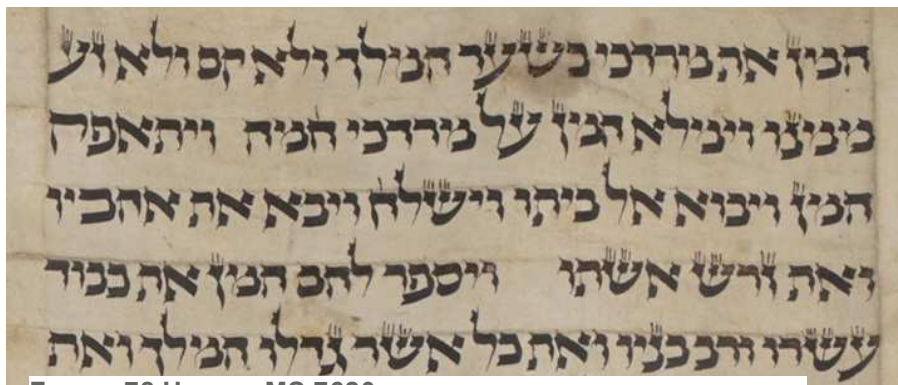


FIGURE 78 HARLEY MS 7620

As the letter *Zayin* is unclear in fig 77, this might have affected the way Hess illustrated the letter.

The following are several examples of the letter *Zayin* in MS Harley 7620:

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<sup>366</sup> Ibidem.

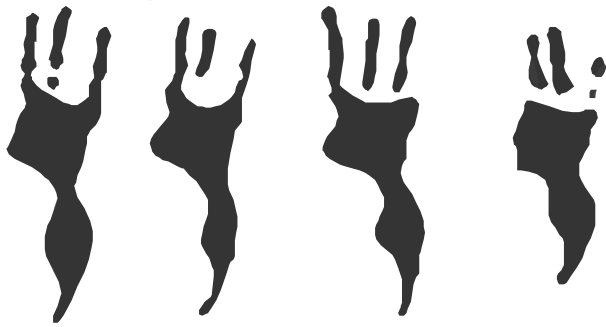


FIGURE 79A

This is the *Zayin* as illustrated by Rabbi Hess:



FIGURE 79B

The most notable difference between the two types of *Zayin* is the angle of the head. The head in the book *Temunot ha-Otiyot*, similar to those written by contemporary scribes, is a perfectly straight square, with parallel lines, and creates a 90 ° angle. This contrasts with the heads of the heads of *Zayin* in the scroll Harley MS 7620 that is similar to older manuscripts, such as some of the Erfurt scrolls, in which the obtuse angle on the left side of the head is an average of 113°. <sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> The exact angles of the four *Zayins* shown in fig 79a are: 107° 115° 117° 113°

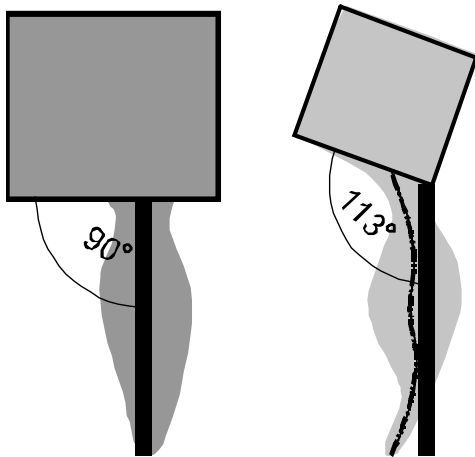


FIGURE 79C

Other Erfurt scrolls show another option for shaping the letter *Zayin*. Although the head is straight and parallel to the lines, the foot is tilted significantly so that the angle created between the foot and head is similar to that in the example above:



Most of the examples in Erfurt's scrolls are similar to the Esther scroll Harley MS 7620 that appears above. A contradiction between the reality that the leg connects to the middle of the head and one that connects it at its right hand side (as the Shulhan Arukh Harav described the letter *Vav*) exists only when the head is straight and parallel to the (horizontal) line. Unlike the head, the leg is vertical. This is demonstrated in the following illustrations:

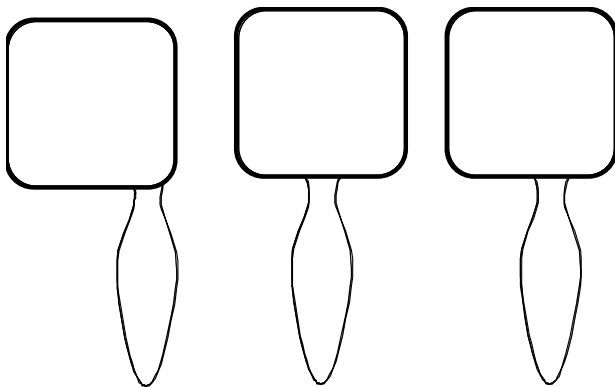


FIG. 80

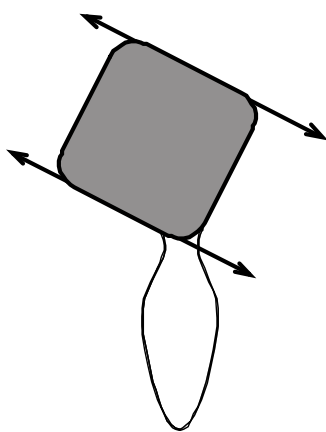
FIG. 81

FIG. 82

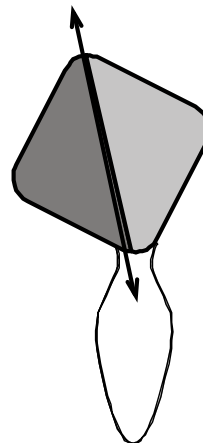
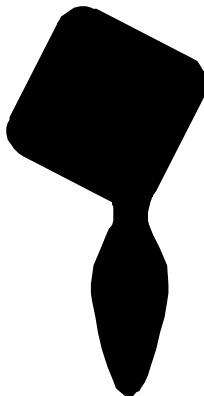
The connection between the head and the leg of the letter cannot be both on the side (fig 80 according to the book *T'munat ha-Otiyot* mentioned above) and in the middle (Fig 81 according to kabbalistic teachings).<sup>368</sup> Therefore, a compromise was proposed by Rabbi Hess, as seen in fig 82. The connection cannot be completely on the side, because it will be too similar to the letter *Vav*.

A type of *Zayin* that is similar to this appears already in the 19<sup>th</sup> c. Torah scroll from Komarno (see photo and information in appendix C), and it seems to be a relatively new method, different than the shape that appears in earlier manuscripts.

While examining the early form of the letter *Zayin* - seen in the Erfurt Torah scrolls or in Harley MS 7620 - with a slanted head, the apparent contradiction between the aforementioned two methods disappears. This is because in this case the connection of the leg to the head can be seen both at the end and in the middle simultaneously:



**FIG. 83 – CONNECTED AT THE SIDE  
MIDDLE**



**FIG 84 - CONNECTED IN THE  
MIDDLE**

In conclusion, it can be posited that a change in the direction of heads of the letters *SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ* (from slanted to horizontal) may have caused the division of the two

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<sup>368</sup> See Hess, *Sefer T'munat ha-Otiyot. Volume I*, 110. For a possible esoteric reason mentioned by Hess and Halakhic authorities, see what is written in Tikkun Tefillin by Rabbi Avraham ben Rabbi Moshe of Sinsheim in his Tikkun Tefillin in Menahem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 100 (Hebrew numbering).

styles of Ashkenazic script. On the one hand, the scribes writing in the *Beth Yosef* style have adhered to what is written in the book *Beth Yosef*, based on the words of the *Barukh She'amar* who designated the element of these letters as a *Zayin*,<sup>369</sup> and therefore continued to shape them as a *Zayin*, changing together with the changes in the shape of the letter *Zayin* over time. On the other hand, the scribes using the *Arizal* method preferred using a form that is graphically more similar to the older version<sup>370</sup> of the letter *Zayin* (which over time became more similar to the letter *Vav*), as stated in the *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*.

## 9 The Left Leg of the Letter *Aleph*

The left leg of the letter *Aleph* is described by modern halakhists either as a *Yod* or a *Dalet*. As opposed to the letter *Tzadi*, there are no serious *halakhic* arguments over the shape of the *Aleph*, and it is seemingly easier to settle the contradictions between the *Beth Yosef* and *Arizal* scripts.

The Keset ha-Sofer<sup>371</sup> mentions both opinions:

"ונקודה התחתונה פעמים שתמונתה כדל"ת קטנה הפוכה עפ"י הסוד וכן צ"ל בתפילין עפ"י קבלת האר"י ז"ל. ופעמים שתמונתה ג"כ כיו"ד תלויה בגגה ולכן לכתחילה צריך שיהא לה עוקץ קטן לצד ימין למטה. ועפ"י הסוד צריך שיהא עוקץ זה מכוון כנגד העוקץ העליון שעל היו"ד העליונה"<sup>372</sup>

The lower dot is sometimes shaped like a little upside-down *Dalet*, and one must do this based on esoteric reasons in Tefillin, according to the *Arizal*. Sometimes, the lower dot is shaped like another *Yod* suspended from the roof, and so it ought to have

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<sup>369</sup> 'Text-Based Authority', as described in Rabbi Professor Haym Soloveitchik's (1937-) essay "Rupture and Reconstruction" of 1994, see Chapter 4.

<sup>370</sup> 'Mimetic Tradition', as described in Rabbi Professor Haym Soloveitchik's (1937-) essay "Rupture and Reconstruction" of 1994, see Chapter 4.

<sup>371</sup> The monumental work on Jewish scribal laws written by Shlomo Ganzfried (1804, Ungvár, Hungary – 1886, Ungvár). He was a rabbi and decisor best known as the author of the book *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh* ("The Abbreviated Shulḥan Arukh").

<sup>372</sup> Keset HaSofer, Section 5, para. 2, The letter *Aleph*

a prickle on its lower right. According to the ‘secret’ (the mystical teachings) this prickle should be parallel to the upper prickle on the top *Yod*.<sup>373</sup>

The left leg of the letter Aleph in the Erfurt scrolls presented at a 180° rotation, to facilitate comparison to dalet:



These shapes indeed look like a small *Dalet*, a thick horizontal line with a thin leg, connected on the right side, and slightly slanted. Excluding Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217), they all also have the small bump on the right where the leg connects to the roof just like a letter *Dalet*.

These shapes can also be compared to a *Yod*, and there is no conflict between the two: we are not talking about the possibility that a letter can be both *Aleph* and *Yod* at the same time – which would be impossible, of course – but rather referring to a graphic element that is on the one hand is similar to the smallest letter, the *Yod*, but at the same time has a similar feature to the letter *Dalet*.

As stated earlier, this subject is also raised by Rabbi Uri Shraga Feivel Schreier in his work *Mikdash Me’at*, on the subject of the lower section of the *Aleph*, whose shape is sometimes defined as a *Yod* and sometimes as a *Dalet*, stating that it can be described "as a *Yod* and a *Dalet* simultaneously."

The letter *Aleph* in its entirety is written this way in the Erfurt scrolls:



Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215) – Here, the upper leg of the *Aleph* has a bump (on the left) similar to what is known today as the *Arizal* style.

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<sup>373</sup> Thanks to Jen Taylor Friedman for allowing me to use her translation in my thesis.





Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216) – The *Aleph* here is slightly different than Erfurt 6, but can still be categorized as similar to the *Arizal* script.



Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217) – Some of the *Alephs* are similar to the *Arizal* script such as the middle *Aleph* above.



Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218) – These letters can be categorized as similar to the *Arizal* script.

## 10 The *Yod* within the Letter *Tzadi*



FIGURE 85<sup>374</sup>

Of the three components discussed in this work, the (right)<sup>375</sup> *Yod* of the *Tzadi* is the one most widely written about,<sup>376</sup> including an entire book on this subject alone. (See chapter 2.5.1.) The difference between the two Ashkenazic writing styles discussed is this: in the Beth Yosef script, the *Yod* turns to the left, and in the *Arizal* script it turns to the right.

The following is a brief summary of the controversy that arose around this letter, to examine the causes and ramifications including information found in this research, beginning with an examination of the typical occurrences of the letter *Tzadi* and the final *Tzadi* from the Erfurt scrolls.

While the deciphering of these letters and their list of characteristics was detailed above in chapters 7.2.5 and 7.2.6, a brief summary will be included here with an emphasis on the right-side component that is called *Yod* in the Halakhic sources. As mentioned earlier, this terminology does not mean that the graphic components look exactly like the letter *Yod* that is named after, but it is a convenient way of referring to a graphic element that is somewhat similar to the *Yod*.

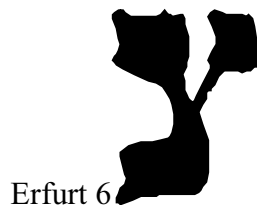
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<sup>374</sup> For the source of these letters see footnote 84.

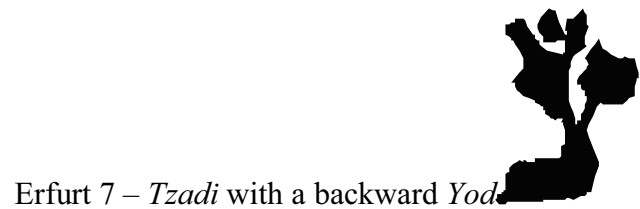
<sup>375</sup> Although the *Tzadi* is usually described as a combination of a *Yod* and a *Nun*, sometimes the left head is labeled as a *Yod* as well.

<sup>376</sup> A selection can be found in the bibliography.

## 10.1 The *Tzadi* and the Final *Tzadi* in the Erfurt Scrolls



Erfurt 6



Erfurt 7 – *Tzadi* with a backward *Yod*

with a slight bump on the left



Erfurt 8 – A straight *Yod* with a small bump on the right



Erfurt 9 – It is difficult to decipher the direction of the *Yod*



Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215) – Final *Tzadi* with a backward *Yod*



(Ms. or. fol. 1216) Erfurt 7



Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218) - It is difficult to decipher the direction of the *Yod*

Erfurt 8 (Ms. or. fol. 1217) – The *Yod* can be described as a straight *Yod* with a small bump



on the right side

In summary, both the *Tzadi* and the final *Tzadi* in the Erfurt scrolls have some characteristics of both types of contemporary writing: the *Arizal* and the *Beth Yosef* scripts. It seems both scripts existed side by side throughout history, as R' Haim Vital said, "Both are hinted at in secret from above."<sup>377</sup>

## 10.2 The Preface of the Zohar on the Letter *Tzadi*

What is the secret behind each of these styles? The answers may lie within the kabbalistic work, the *Zohar*, such as the meaning of the concept of the "face" of the letter

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<sup>377</sup> Haim Vital *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*, 58

and the direction towards which the letter points. *Tzadi*, as seen in the Hamilton Siddur,<sup>378</sup> will help illustrate this concept.

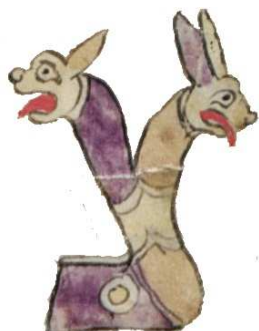


FIGURE 85 THE SHAPE OF THE LETTER *TZADI* AS IT APPEARS IN THE MANUSCRIPT <sup>379</sup>



FIGURE 86. THE ORIGINAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE LETTERS SHOWN IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES

We will continue to use this figure, while making changes in the direction of the faces, in order to illustrate the words of the Zohar. Illustrations are included in the original Zoharic

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<sup>378</sup> The Hamilton Siddur or Hamilton Haggadah (Ms Hamilton 288) from collection of the Berlin State Library it is a Sepharadic manuscript. This graphic representation is intended as a pedagogical illustration of the concepts used for the description of the letter components. It is not a historical attempt to show a proximity between the Hamilton Siddur and the Ashkenazic script. Hamilton Siddur is a 13th century Sepharadic work. However, the figurative pictures reflect the way the scribe imagined the 'ductus', that is the order, direction of the individual strokes and the way they connect to each other.

<sup>379</sup> Original illustration from the Hamilton sidur page 25r SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288>  
>[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0057&DMDID=](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0057&DMDID=)

text (which is written mostly in Aramaic with some Hebrew words) and in the English translation that will follow:

"עאלת את צ אמרה קמיה רבון עלמא, ניחא קמך למברי בי עלמא, דאנא (ס"א, דבי) בי חתימין צדיקים, ואנת דאתקריאת צדיק בי רשים, דכתיב (תהלים יא ז) כי צדיק יי' צדקות אהב, ובי יאות למברי עלמא. אמר לה צדי, צדי אנת, וצדיק אנת, אבל אנת צריך למהוי טמירא, לית אנת צריך

לאתגלייא כל כך, בגין דלא למיהב פתחון פה לעלמא. מאי טעמא צ איהי, אתיא י' דשמא דברית קדישא, ורכיב עלה ואתאחד בהדה,

ורזא דא, כד ברא קב"ה לאדם הראשון דו פרצופין בראו, ובגין כך אנפוי דיו"ד מהדר לאחורא כגוונא דא (FIG 87):



**FIG. 87. THE SHAPE OF THE LETTER TZADI AS IT APPEARS IN THE MANUSCRIPT 1<sup>380</sup>**



ולא אתהדרו אנפין באנפין כגוונא דא (FIG 88):

**FIG 88 GRAPHICALLY ALTERED VERSION OF THE ILLUSTRATION WITH THE "FACES" POINTED TOWARD EACH OTHER**

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<sup>380</sup> Original illustration from the Hamilton Siddur page 25r SBB Berlin <Hamilton 288>  
>[http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS\\_0057&DMDID=](http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN627706193&PHYSID=PHYS_0057&DMDID=)



אסתכל לעילא כגוונא דא (Fig. 88):

FIG 88

GRAPHICALLY MODIFIED SHAPE OF THE LETTER TZADI<sup>381</sup> WITH THE RIGHT "FACE" POINTED UPWARD



אסתכלת לתתא כגוונא דא (Fig. 89):

FIG 89

GRAPHICALLY MODIFIED SHAPE OF THE LETTER TZADI POINTED "FACE" WITH THE RIGHT<sup>382</sup> DOWNWARDS

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<sup>381</sup> The illustrations of the words “אסתכל לעילא כגוונא דא, אסתכלת לתתא כגוונא דא”, meaning “It looked upward like this; it looked downward like this” I prepared (based on the Hamilton Siddur) according to the understanding that the right part of the letter *Tzadi*, (the *Yod* component) is the one who is looking upwards and downwards, based on the commentary of Zohar Bahir (Eichenstein 1999, p.21 in the footnote). This is also one of the options in Tishby’s work (“it could mean that when the letter heard the reason for the rejection of her request, she moved the *Yod* part up and down in order to alter its position,” Tishby and Lackower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: an Anthology of Texts, Volume 2*, 564). But the majority of the commentaries of the Zohar explain it differently, and the illustrations based on these views are placed further on inside the English translation of the Zohar.

<sup>382</sup> The right-hand *Yod*-shaped element turning downwards is visible in the Erfurt scrolls as well:

in Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215):  and Erfurt 9 (Ms. or. fol. 1218): 

אמר לה קב"ה תו, דאנא זמין לנסרא לך ולמעבד לך אפין באפין, אבל באתרא אחרא תסתלק, נפקת מקמיה ואזלת.<sup>383</sup>

These images illustrate the text of the Zohar. The Zoharic text quoted above shows the importance of the way in which the *Yod*, the right-hand component of the letter *Tzadi*, is written. While Halakhic texts have other considerations, this most basic Kabbalistic text highlights that the question of writing even such a small graphic element is involved with no less than God's creation of man, and even more so, the creation of the universe. Bearing this in mind can help us to understand why certain scribal traditions take the chance of confronting authorities with different traditions from their own.

The following is a translation from the "*The Wisdom of the Zohar*" illustrated with pictures of the letter *Tzadi* from the Erfurt scrolls:<sup>384</sup>

“The letter *zadde* entered. She<sup>385</sup> said to Him<sup>386</sup>: ‘May it be Your will, Master of the worlds, to create the world through me, for the righteous (*zadikim*) are sealed with me, and You, who are called “Righteous,” are indicated by me, as it is written “For the Lord is righteous. He loves righteousness” (Psalm 11:7), and it is only proper that the world should be created through me.’

He said to her: *Zadde*, righteous you are, and “righteous”<sup>387</sup> is your name. But you must be concealed, and you must not be so revealed as to give the world an opportunity for accusation.<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> < גרסה אלקטרונית [5 בנובמבר 2017]. זוהר - הקדמה דף ב עמוד ב<sup>383</sup>

[https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%96%D7%95%D7%94%D7%A8\\_%D7%97%D7%9C%D7%A7\\_%D7%90#.D7.A4.D7.A1.D7.95.D7.A7\\_.D7.90](https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/%D7%96%D7%95%D7%94%D7%A8_%D7%97%D7%9C%D7%A7_%D7%90#.D7.A4.D7.A1.D7.95.D7.A7_.D7.90)> (last accessed on May 4, 2020).

<sup>384</sup> Tishby and Loackower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: an Anthology of Texts, Volume 2*, 563-564.

<sup>385</sup> The names of the letters are feminine in Hebrew.

<sup>386</sup> To God.

<sup>387</sup> The Hebrew term for righteous is *Tzadik*.

<sup>388</sup> “*Zadde*, as explained below, indicates the mystery of intercourse back-to-back, and the further revelation of this mystery in the creation of the world would provide an opportunity for the accusation that among the *sefirot*



Why is this? The letter *yod* of the name of the holy covenant came and rode upon the letter *nun* and became united with it.<sup>389</sup> And this is the mystery: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him with two sides,<sup>390</sup> and that is why the *yod* faces backward, like this:<sup>391</sup>



FIG. 90. ERFURT 6 (MS. OR. FOL. 1215)

and they are not turned face to face, like this:



FIGURE 91. ERFURT 9 (MS. OR. FOL. 1218)

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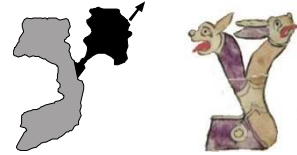
there is no complete, face-to-face form of intercourse.” Tishby and Lackower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: an Anthology of Texts, Volume 2*, 563.

<sup>389</sup> “The shape of the letter *zadde* can be seen as the letter *nun* with a *yod* superimposed upon it. This combination denotes intercourse between *Yesod* and *Malkhut*. *Nun* is the *female*, *Malkhut*; and *Yod* is (...) specific to *Yesod*,” Tishby and Lackower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: an Anthology of Texts, Volume 2*, 563.

<sup>390</sup> “Back-to-back. This was the original position of male and female among the *sefirot*, and is indicated by the relative positions of *yod* and *nun* in the letter *zadde*.” *Ibid.*, 564.

<sup>391</sup> In the English translation of the Zoharic text I included the illustrations from the Hamilton Siddur again, shown with the original Hebrew, in addition to the other illustrations that are introduced here.

It looked upward like this:<sup>392</sup>




it looked downward this:<sup>393</sup>



The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: Retract [your request], for I shall split you, and make you face-to-face. You shall, indeed, go away to a different place.”

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<sup>392</sup> Two illustrations in this line (in addition to the illustrations based on the Hamilton Siddur that were introduced next to the Hebrew text) illustrate the ‘looking upwards’ and ‘looking downwards’ according to many of the commentaries on the Zohar, such as *Matok me-Devash* (Frisch, Daniel. *Matok mi-D’vash*, 30), explaining that the *Yod* (male) is the one looking upwards and the *Nun* (the female) looks downwards. This is because the *Nun*, according to the *Matok me-Devash*, “does not look at her husband at all to get plenty of him.” The *Yod* is higher than the *Nun* “Therefore, *Yod* looks up and does not return to the face to the *Nun* that is below him” (Or Yakar, p24). In these new illustrations I give in the body of the text, I emphasize the direction of their gaze with arrows, and highlighted in black the component in question. The letter *Tzadi* that is presented

here is from the manuscript MS EX-SASSOON 535 and this is how it looks like without emphasis:  A reference to this specific manuscript, as an example of the *Tzadi* that the Zohar is talking about, appears in the personal copy of the Zohar belonging to Gershom Scholem, annotated with his own handwriting (Scholem, *Sefer ha-Zohar shel Gerschom Scholem*, 17). About this manuscript, see Isserles, Justine. *Maḥzor*. Special thanks to Justine Isserles, PhD (Postdoctoral research associate, EPHE-SAPRAT, Paris), for her help with the subject.

<sup>393</sup> The left image (which is also based on MS EX-SASSOON 535, see former footnote) “is interpreted by some as an explanation of the preceding. When *Tzadi* symbolizes back-to-back intercourse, the *Yod* part of it faces upward; but when it symbolizes face-to-face intercourse, the *Yod* faces downward, toward Malkhut, the *Nun*. However, it could mean that when the letter heard the reason for the rejection of her request, she moved the *Yod* part up and down in order to alter its position.” Tishby and Lackower, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: an Anthology of Texts, Volume 2*, 564.

### 10.3 An Objection to the Sepharadic Script, the *Arizal* Script and the Zohar, and the Dismissal of the Objection

As shown above, letters in the style of both the *Arizal* and the *Beth Yosef* can be found in ancient manuscripts. Why then, did a preference develop to use the straight *Yod* as opposed to the reverse *Yod*? According to Rabbi Friedman, mentioned in Chapter 2.5.1:

"לבזות את עדת החסידים כאילו הם מניחים תפילין פסולין, וכדי להיתלות באילן גדול תלו את הבוקי סריקי על ראש הגר"א ז"ל והוליכו שולל תמימים וישרים, המאמינים כאילו הגר"א אמרם"<sup>395</sup>

to disgrace the community of the Ḥasidim as if they were wearing unkosher Tefillin, and in order to lean upon a large tree, the *Buki Seriki* on the head of the GRA [Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilnius, known as the Vilna Gaon, 1720 – 1797] and they misled the innocent and the honest, who believe the *GRA* said this.<sup>396</sup>

We will not discuss the motives of spreading this opinion on behalf of the *GRA*, but we will examine the emergence of the objection against the *Tzadi* with a reverted *Yod*. The source is the 19<sup>th</sup> century scribe Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim (AKA *Smalevicher*)<sup>397</sup> of Minsk.<sup>398</sup> His objection was printed in 1857 in Vilna in his book "*Katuv le-Ḥaim (Ketiva Tama*<sup>399</sup>)".<sup>400</sup>

Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim “raged a war on the Sepharadic script, known as 'Velish'"<sup>401</sup> that we will see from the following quotation:

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<sup>394</sup> This phrase, *Buki Seriki*, means “pointless words”.

<sup>395</sup> Friedman, “*Va-yelkhu aḥarei ha-Hevel va-Yehbalu*,” 935

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>397</sup> Probably named after the Belarusian town *Smalyavichy (Smalevich* in Yiddish) in the Minsk Region (some 40 km from Minsk) of Belarus.

<sup>398</sup> He himself might not be famous, but since his book is quoted in the *Mishna Berura* of Yisrael Meir (HaKohen) Kagan (1838 – 1933), which became the most authoritative Halachic book of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his work gained importance.

<sup>399</sup> The *Mishna Berura* calls this work *Ketiva Tama*. Both titles, *Katuv le-Ḥaim* and *Ketiva Tama* appear on the book’s front page. The title *Ketiva Tama* is both an abbreviation of the expression *Ketiva Tama u-Verura*, meaning perfect and clear writing (see the asterisk signs above some of the letters *kaf*, *tav* and *vav* of the front page giving the first three letters of *Ketiva Tama*: *כתובה לחיים*, והוא הלכה מקובצת מן כתיבה תמה וברורה), and it also gives an indication for the author’s name, *Ḥaim*.

<sup>400</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 143

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 144, footnote 10

וקראו שם הכתב ששינו בכינוי וועלים-כתב, שביאורו מוועלים לשון חירות, שיצא מקדושה לחול. ולכן קראו אותו כתב בכינוי שלא יאמרו שזהו כתב המקודש, כי כתב המקודש אין לו שום כינוי כלל רק כתב אשורי [...] ובעת שהתחילו להביא בדפוס, האשכנזים<sup>402</sup> ידעו שזהו כתב ששינו הספרדים פריינקען הוא חול גמור ואין בו שום קדושה ולכן התחילו להדפיס כל הדברים בזה הכתב ששינו הספרדים.

And the name of the script that they changed is *Velish* script, the meaning of (*Velish*) is freedom,<sup>403</sup> leaving holiness for secular. That is why it is called by a diminutive, so they won't say it is a holy script, because the holy script does not have a diminutive, only the (name) *Ashuri*<sup>404</sup> script [...] At the time printing started, the Ashkenazic community knew that this was a script that was changed by the Sepharadim, the *Frenkim*,<sup>405</sup> and it is completely secular and has no holiness, that is why they began printing everything in this script, that the Sepharadim changed.

He continues on to say<sup>406</sup>:

וגם ראייה מהב"י שהיה ספרדי שאביו ואמו היו ספרדים פריינקען, ועל כל פנים בחיבורו בטור או"ח סימן ל"ו ביאר הב"י כל אות ואות להלכה למעשה לקבוע הלכה לדורות בכתיבה תמה ומרובע, ולא באותה כתיבה הארוך, הגם שהם שוים בציוור האותיות, כזה כן זה, המה שאחזו הספרדים מקדם, וכ"ש חו"ש לא באותו הכתב ששינו הספרדים מקדם וקראו שם הכתב וועלים שהוא פסול לגמרי לסת"ם... והברוך

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<sup>402</sup> Also a distortion of the facts. It was not the Ashkenazim who began to print in these Sepharadic letters. The reason why they used the Sepharadic letters in print is precisely that these were the letters that printers in Italy knew best. On this subject see Farnadi-Jerusalimi Mark: *Qedushat Otiyot ha-D'fus* [online] [ 4 January 2018] [<http://fontim.co.il/קדושת-אותיות-הדפוס/amp/>]

<sup>403</sup> It is unclear where this claim comes from. About the etymology of the word *Velish*, see above.

<sup>404</sup> A term for the Hebrew square script used in traditional Jewish sources. See Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 21b.

<sup>405</sup> Pejorative term used by Ashkenazic Jews in reference to Sepharadic Jews. The term derives from the Spanish word *Francos*, which had the meaning 'Western Europeans' as viewed by people in the East. The term was in use since the medieval times: during the crusades, people in the Middle East called all Christendom Franks, originally the name for inhabitants of the largest of the Christian realms in Europe, Francia, which gave its name to the Kingdom of France. In our case it referred to Sepharadic Jews (who originate from Spain, *Sepharad*) by Ashkenazic Jews. See for example the website of the linguist Ruvik Rosenthal Ph.D.: [ruvik.co.il/מוצא-המילים/שאל-את-רוביק/מוצא-המילים.aspx?page=55&q=7323](http://ruvik.co.il/מוצא-המילים/שאל-את-רוביק/מוצא-המילים.aspx?page=55&q=7323) (last accessed on April 29, 2020).

<sup>406</sup> Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 144, footnote 10.

שאמר ... מזהיר ואומר 'ולא כשכותבים ומדפיסים'<sup>407</sup> במחזוריים ובחומשים'

There is a proof from the Beth Yosef, who was Sephardic, his mother and father were Sephardic "*Frenkim*," and even so in his work the "Tur – Oraḥ Ḥaim" section 36 the Beth Yosef explained every letter and the laws pertaining to it, in order to set the law for generations for "*ketiva tama*" square script.<sup>408</sup> And not that "long" script the Sephardim used in days past and surely God forbid not the script which the Sephardim changed called *Velish* and is completely *pasul* (unfit) for *STaM* (...) and the *Barukh She'amar* (...) warns "not like what is written and printed in bibles and *maḥzorim*, (prayer books).

Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim uses the fact that Rabbi Yosef Caro in his Beth Yosef described the shape of the letters as written according to the Ashkenazic tradition, using the Barukh She'amar. For him it serves as a proof that the Sephardic writing is not kosher, and therefore unfit for liturgical use. He strangely quotes the Barukh She'amar as having concerns with printed Bibles and *maḥzorim*, despite the fact that the Barukh She'amar was written before the Hebrew printing presses.

Beyond what was published by Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim on the *Velish* script, he also comes out against the practices to shape the letters according to the *Arizal* among Ashkenazic Jews (because, as we saw earlier the *Arizal* script is parallel to the Sephardic script in the discussed letters). His writings eventually succeeded in undermining the status of the *Tzadi* with the backward facing *Yod*, to the extent that the mid-20th-century Halakhic authority for Lithuanian Jewry, Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz (1878 –1953),<sup>409</sup> known as the *Ḥazon*

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<sup>407</sup> It is interesting that the compilers of the manuscript did not notice the baseless claims of *Smalevicher*. Rabbi Samson ben Eliezer, the author of the Glosses of Barukh She'amar lived many generations before the first Hebrew printing presses. Rabbi Samson did not write the word "printers" but only "as they are written in *maḥzorim*" (Menaḥem Mendel Meshi Zahav, *Kovetz Sifrei STaM, Part I*, 149-150) that is, long before the first Hebrew printing presses were built in the last quarter of the 15th century.

<sup>408</sup> See Mark Farnadi-Jerusálmí, *Qedushat Otiyot ha-D'fus*.

<sup>409</sup> Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, known by the name of his magnum opus, *Ḥazon Ish*, was a Belarussian born Orthodox rabbi who later became one of the leaders of Ḥaredi Judaism in Israel, where he spent his final 20 years, from 1933 to 1953.

*Ish* wrote:

"ולכן אני מחמיר לקחת צ' ביו"ד ישר שלא ערער עליו אדם, וכן אני מייעץ לאחרים"<sup>410</sup>.

"And so, I am stringent to use a *Tzadi* with a straight *Yod*, that nobody opposes, and this is what I also advise others."

When Rabbi R. Shmuel Halpern<sup>411</sup> responded to the *Hazon Ish*<sup>412</sup> "nonetheless, the *Tzadi* with a reverse *Yod* is mentioned in the holy *Zohar*," Rabbi Halpern answered that "apparently the cult of Shabbetai Tzvi<sup>413</sup> disrupted the letter *Tzadi* even in the holy *Zohar*."<sup>414</sup>

Why did the *Hazon Ish* think that the students of Shabbetai Tzvi (the false Jewish Messiah who caused great upheaval in the Jewish world, 1626-1676) distorted the *Zohar*? He himself explained:

"והראו לי ספר [כתוב לחיים]<sup>415</sup> וכתוב שם דהגר"א הגיה בזוהר, וכן קלא דלא פסיק דהגר"א חלק

על זה"

"And they showed me a book [*Katuv le-Hayim*] and written there by that the GRA (Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu) corrected (the text of the) *Zohar* and there was a continuous rumour that the GRA disputed this"<sup>416</sup>.

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<sup>410</sup> Arie Leib Friedman, *Sefer Tzidkat ha-Tzadik: Likkutei Dinim be-Shinui ha-Nusaḥefer Tzidkat ha-Tzadik: Likkutei Dinim be-Shinui ha-Nusaḥ*, 78.

<sup>411</sup> Rabbi Shmuel Halpern (1875/76-1959) was the first rabbi of Zichron Me'ir neighbourhood of Bene Beraq.

<sup>412</sup> This is what it is brought down by Greenfeld in the name of Rabbi Yosef Halpern, the son of the aforementioned Rabbi Shmuel Halpern and the brother of Ya'akov Halpern, the founder of the Zichron Me'ir neighbourhood.

<sup>413</sup> Shabbetai Tzvi (1626 – 1676) From Smyrna (modern day Izmir, Turkey), who was active throughout the Ottoman Empire, claimed to be the Messiah. He was the founder of the messianic Sabbatean movement, named after him.

<sup>414</sup> David Greenfeld, *Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi*, 149

<sup>415</sup> Brackets are in the original text. For its reason, see Greenfeld, *ibid*.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid*.

אכן מקור קבלה זו בשם הגר"א נתפשטה ע"י הסופר ממינסק בעל המחבר ספר "כתוב לחיים [כתיבה תמה]"

Indeed, the source of this tradition in the name of the GRA was spread by the scribe from Minsk, author of the book *Katuv le-Ḥayim* [*Ketiva Tama*]<sup>417</sup>

שמעתי מהרב הג' ר' אלעזר משה ממאנשטירצענע נ"י משמיה דרבינו הגר"א מווילנא זצלה"ה שאמר דעיקר הגירסא בזוה"ק מהדר לאסתחרא ולא לאחורי, והראה לי הרב הנ"ל הגירסא כן בדפוס ישן

I heard from the rabbi Rabbi Elazar Moshe (1827-1890) of Monastyrshchina (Russia), in the name of the GRA of Vilna of blessed memory, who said the main (textual) version of the holy *Zohar* is *mihadar le-istahara* (turned around) and not *le-ahorei* (reversed) and the above mentioned rabbi showed me the version that is (written) like that in the old print.<sup>418</sup>:

In other words, this quotation the *Ketiva Tama* says that the textual version of the *Zohar* which says that the face (the left side) of the *Yod* (of the *Tzadi*) is turning "backwards" is found only in the new editions.<sup>419</sup> What Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim means in his "original" version, *mihadar le-istahara* (turned around) is that,

"שפני היוד מהדר וסובב את עצמו סחור סחור מן הנון כלפי מעלה קצת."<sup>420</sup>

"The face turns back and rotates itself around and around away from the *Nun* upward slightly."

That is, according to *Ketiva Tama*, the *Yod* Component of the letter *Tzadi* looks like this in the following illustration:

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<sup>417</sup> David Greenfeld, "*Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi*," 150, footnote 31.

<sup>418</sup> published in Vilnius in 1857-58, quoted in Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 463)

<sup>419</sup> David Greenfeld, "*Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi*," 150, footnote 31.

<sup>420</sup> Smalevicher 1858, 15A (Hebrew numbering or p28 in Arabic numbering)



FIGURE 92

Is it true that there are historical versions of the *Zohar* that include a *mihadar le-istahara* (turned) *Yod* element of the letter *Tzadi*?

Rabbi Shmuel Halpern, after the aforementioned exchange with the *Ḥazon Ish*, checked in the Cremona printing of the *Zohar* and found there the reverse *Yod*.<sup>421</sup> Due to the importance of this issue, Rabbi Greenfeld<sup>422</sup> also checked the sources, in order to examine the issue firsthand without solely relying on the testimony of Rabbi Halpern:

ע"כ החלטנו לברר בעצמנו בדפוס היזוהר הישנים (מלפני תקופת הצבי השבור<sup>423</sup>), ואכן **בכולם אין גירסא "לאסתחרא"**, והרי תוצאות בדיקתנו: **דפוס מנטובה** (שנת שי"ח) הגירסא "לאחורא", **דפוס קרימונה** (שנת ש"ך) הגירסא "לאחורא", **דפוס לובלין** (שנת שפ"ג) הגירסא "לאחורא".

"Therefore, we decided to examine ourselves the older printings of the *Zohar* (before the times of the 'broken Tzvi')<sup>424</sup> and indeed **in all of them there is no "turned" version**. These are hereby the results of our research: The Mantova edition (1558) – a reverse version, the Cremona print (1560) – a 'reverse' version, the Lublin print (1623) - a 'reverse' version."

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<sup>421</sup> For the development of the debate with the *Ḥazon Ish* see David Greenfeld, "Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi," 150.

<sup>422</sup> Rabbi David Yehuda (Leib) Greenfeld is the head of Vaad Mishmeres STaM, the center for international activities to preserve and promote the integrity of the scribal arts.

<sup>423</sup> A derogatory name for Shabbetai Tzvi

<sup>424</sup> A derogatory name for Shabbetai Tzvi.



Additional research for this current thesis did not uncover additional old printings of the Zohar. The following are copies of the printings mentioned above:<sup>425</sup>

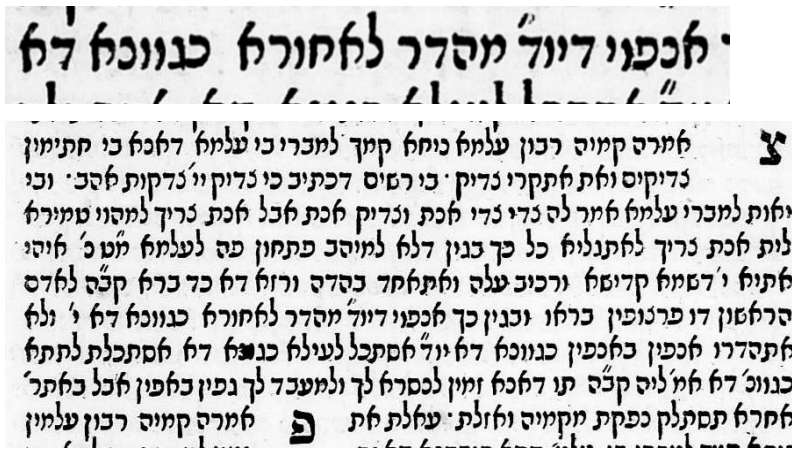


FIGURE 93. THE RELEVANT PASSAGE FROM THE MANTOVA EDITION (1558)<sup>426</sup>

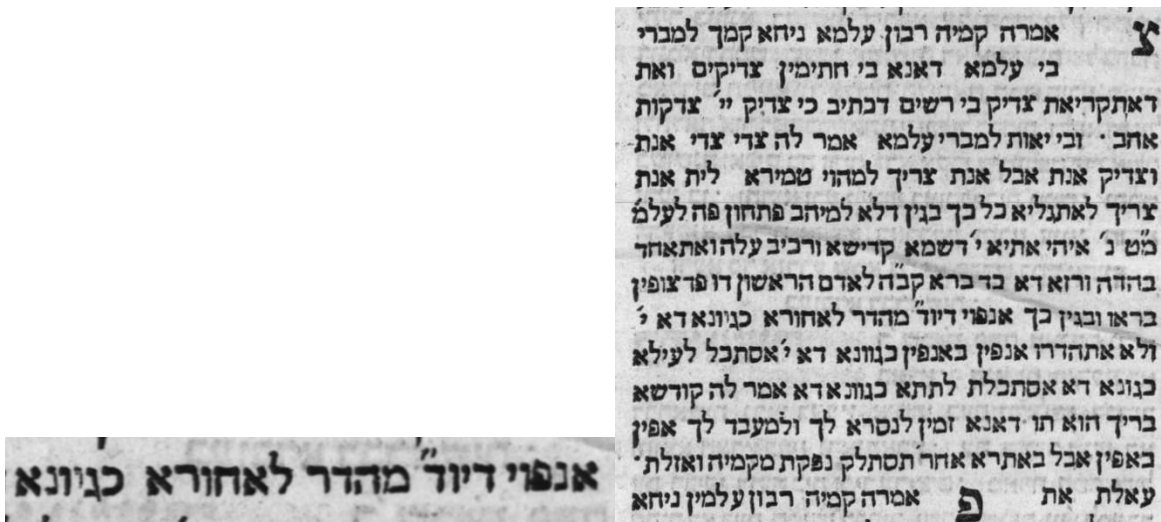


FIGURE 94. THE RELEVANT PASSAGE FROM THE CREMONA EDITION (1560)<sup>427</sup>

<sup>425</sup> Scholem, *Bibliographia Kabbalistica*, 166-167 Thanks to Avi Kellenbach from Bar-Ilan University for introducing me to this list of the prints of the Zohar.

<sup>426</sup> Zohar, Mantova edition, 1558, 13

<sup>427</sup> Zohar, Cremona: Vincenzo Conti, 1658-1659. p10 digital version (last accessed on November 2017)

[http://primo.nli.org.il/primo\\_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=NLI&docId=NNL\\_ALEPH001103391](http://primo.nli.org.il/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=NLI&docId=NNL_ALEPH001103391)

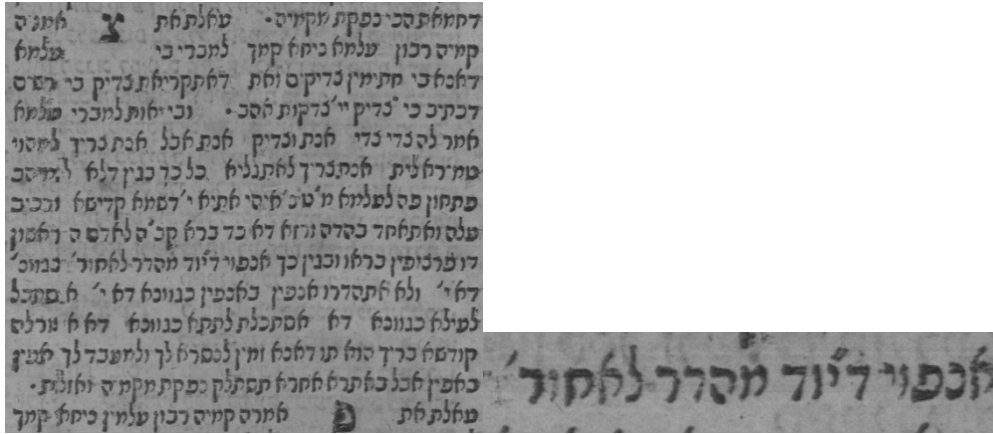


FIGURE 95. THE RELEVANT PASSAGE FROM THE LUBLIN EDITION (1620)<sup>428</sup>

We saw that contrary to the opinion of Rabbi Avraham Ḥayim the word "*le-istahara*," meaning turned, does not appear in the older versions of the Zohar. The reason for this argument between the textual versions *le-aḥorei* (reversed) or the imagined version *le-istahara* (turned around) is unclear, since their meaning is practically almost identical.<sup>429</sup>

Here it is worth noting that, following a conversation between the *Hazon Ish* and Yaakov Halpern<sup>430</sup> (1888-1988), 9 (64 the *Hazon Ish* retracted his disqualification of the *Tzadi* with a reverse *Yod*, "and about the *Tzadi* he told him that he saw that since he saw that the Hatam Sofer<sup>431</sup> wrote in his correspondence<sup>432</sup> that he studied with the scribe the form of the

<sup>428</sup> Zohar, Lublin: Tzvi ben Avraham Kalonymos Yoffe, 1622-1623. p14 digital version (last accessed on November 2017)

<[http://primo.nli.org.il/primo\\_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=NLI&docId=NNL\\_ALEPH001906366](http://primo.nli.org.il/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=NLI&docId=NNL_ALEPH001906366)>

<sup>429</sup> Moshe Isaac Blau, "Be-Divrei ha-Zohar ha-Qadosh ve-ha-Arizal ve-ha-Rav Moshe Cordovero al Yod Hafukha she-b-Tzadi ve-Divrei ha-Posqim," 188-211

<sup>430</sup> The brother of the aforementioned Rabbi Shmuel and the founder of the Zichron Meir neighborhood of Bnei Beraq. He was very close to the *Hazon Ish*.

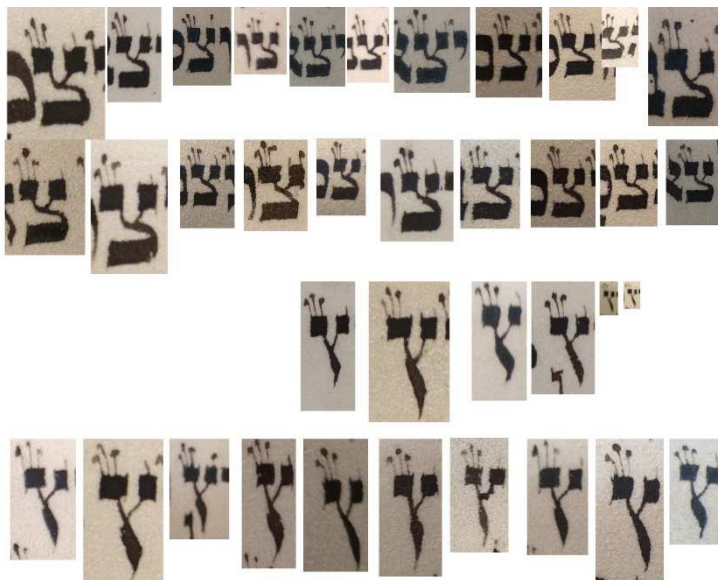
<sup>431</sup> The great Hungarian Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Schreiber), Frankfurt am Main, 1762 – Pressburg 1839.

<sup>432</sup> As quoted earlier: "I am sending him a letter from our meticulous scribe that we studied with him a image shape of the letters of RBI (Rabbi Beth Yosef, i. e. Yosef Caro) and as can be seen, the inverted letter *Yod* on the right side of the letter *Tzadi*, this is according to what I learned from my teacher, of blessed memory,

letters of the Rabbi the Beth Yosef,<sup>433</sup> and the *Tzadis* were composed of a reverse *Yod*, so he should therefore be counted on.<sup>434</sup> But apparently the *Hazon Ish* himself did not publish his change of opinion, so many today still strictly adhere to his first ruling and are careful not to use STa"M that have a reverse *Yod*.

#### 10.4 The Method of Compromise

After this lengthy discussion of the importance of the direction of the *Yod* in the writing of the letter *Tzadi*, and in order to slightly "lower the flames," let us examine pictures of the letter *Tzadi* as it appears in a Torah scroll.<sup>435</sup> This scroll was most likely written in Romania in the first half of the 20th century:



**FIGURE 96**

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according to the teachings of the Ari z"l." (Ḥatam Sofer Responsa, Volume II, (Yore De'ah) paragraph 266. From the Bar Ilan Responsa Project.

<sup>433</sup> Meaning the writing style that appears in the book of Beth Yosef, i.e., the Ashkenazic writing. In the eyes of Ḥatam Sofer, there is no contradiction between the Beth Yosef writing styles called Beth Yosef and Arizal!

<sup>434</sup> David Yehuda (Leib) Greenfeld, "Be-Tzurot Otiyot Pe ve-Tzadi," 151

<sup>435</sup> This Torah scroll, like Torah scrolls in general, has no shelfmark. It is housed in a synagogue in Israel.

The *Yod* element within these *Tzadis* can be seen as either a straight *Yod* or as a reverse *Yod*, depending on the eye of the beholder. As Rabbi Avraham David son of Asher Wahrmann (1771- 1840)<sup>436</sup> states in his book *Da'at Kedoshim*<sup>437</sup>

אודות יודי"ן הפוכין בצ' כתבתי במקום אחר להכשיר היטב וכן שמעתי בשם מו"ה נ"י שאפשר לתווך כעין מיצוע על ידי שהי"ד אינה בשווה כשאר יודי"ן רק היא בעיקום לצד הגבוה כב"י סימן ל"ו, ועל ידי זה בחיבור קוץ מזוית הי"ד אל הקו על ידי שגוף הי"ד היא באלכסון אין בה היפוך ויכול להיות עולה כב' התמונות או שקוץ הימני הוא המחובר או שהשמאלי הוא המחובר, כי בגוף מרובע שעומד כבאלכסון בסגנון כתב השוה ומרובע כהשרטוט אין הבחנה לגביה ולא ידוע בו בין ימני לשמאלי בהקוץ

About the reverse *Yods* of the *Tzadi*, I have written elsewhere that they are kosher, as I heard from my father-in-law<sup>438</sup> that a compromise can be reached where the *Yod* is not straight like the rest of the *Yods*, but tilted to the higher side, like in the Beth Yosef section 36, and by attaching a spike from the corner of the *Yod* to the line so that the *Yod* is diagonal, it is not reversed and can be seen as the two pictures (opinions) either the right side is connected or the left side is connected, because in (the case of) a square body which is diagonal, in the style of script which is even and square (parallel to the line), there is no distinction between (cases) when the spike turns to the right or left, and it is unnoticeable.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> Rabbi Avraham David son of Asher Wahrmann, Talmudic scholar and Ḥasidic leader (of Buczacz, Galicia).

<sup>437</sup> Avraham David Wahrmann, and Uri Shraga Feivel Halevi Schreier, *Da'at Kedoshim im Mikdash Me'at ve-Gidulei Hekdesh, Oraḥ Ḥayim*, 66

<sup>438</sup> Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Caro (Karo) (1740, Inowroclaw, Poland, - 1814, Buczacz, Galicia), author of the responsa *Neta Sha'ashu'im*.

<sup>439</sup> Continuation of the citation: "And before I heard it [from his father-in-law, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Caro], I wrote so a long time ago." Meaning that he was of this opinion before he heard that his father-in-law held the same opinion. And I, the writer of these lines, when I saw the Torah scroll shown in fig. 96 saw in these shapes of the letter *Tzadi* a compromise, it was before I read about it in *Da'at Kedoshim*.

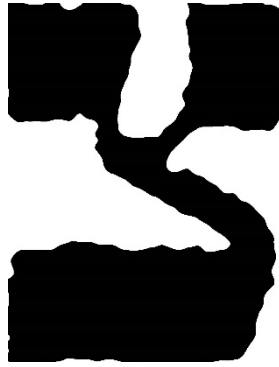


FIG. 97. ILLUSTRATION FROM THE SAME ROMANIAN TORAH SCROLL

Rabbi Wahrmann says that there is a way of writing the letter *Tzadi* that satisfies both the view of Arizal, who requires the ‘*Yod*’ being turned around, and those who, based on the Beth Yosef want to see it as a ‘straight *Yod*’: by writing the *Tzadi* so that its ‘*Yod*’ can be seen either as turning forwards or backwards.

It is interesting to examine the words of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak HaCohen Kook (1865-1935), Chief Rabbi of British Mandate Palestine – who was well versed in the secrets of the Kabbalah – in defining the shape of the letter *Tzadi*.<sup>440</sup>

Rabbi Kook defines the right side of the *Tzadi*, not as a straight *Yod* or a reverse *Yod*, but as a *Zayin* which is symmetrical, so there is no issue of it being straight or reversed.

This can be illustrated by switching the right component of the *Tzadi* from a *Yod* to a *Zayin*:



The original *Tzadi* from Erfurt 6 (Ms. or. fol. 1215)



A *Zayin* from the same scroll

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<sup>440</sup> Abraham Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook, *Reish Milin*, 21 and 90.

The *Tzadi* with the right component replaced with the *Zayin*

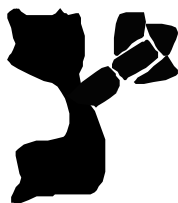


An additional illustration based on the mosaic from Rehov:



A *Zayin* from Rehov

The right component of the *Tzadi* from the Erfurt scroll replaced by the *Zayin* above



The results are realistic and are similar to the letter Tzadi in the Torah scroll from Romania shown above<sup>441</sup> (fig 97).

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<sup>441</sup> Perhaps Rabbi Kook's *Weltanschauung* that synthesises and contrasts different opinions caused him to define this graphic element as *Zayin*, differently from most of his predecessors. Similar to a compromise between straight and backward *Yods* in particular, that are written according to Ḥassidic and non-Ḥassidic tradition, he synthesises between the different movements in general. See Kook, *Eder Yakar* , 25.

## 11 Summary and Conclusions

This research set out to examine the appearance of Ashkenazic Scripts prior to the period of *Beth Yosef* and *Arizal* and what caused the shifts and splits following that period. My initial hypothesis states that the graphic elements of the scribal styles of what we now call the *Arizal* and *Beth Yosef* styles already existed in the Mediaeval period, well before the time of Rabbis Yosef Caro and Isaac Luria. The extensive research carried out as detailed above confirms this to be correct. As such, the aims and objectives in creating this thesis were to examine the evolution of the different styles from both Halakhic and Palaeographic perspectives, something that has not been combined before in previous research efforts. As the research progressed, I found the benefits of adding literary perspectives such as *Otiot d'Rabbi Akiva*, which had not served an academic purpose, to prove paleaographic history prior to my research. Using the Erfurt Torah Scrolls, which had remained entirely unchanged since 1349 in their style and form, provided a particularly potent example as they were not affected by the subsequent developments in both halakhah and paleaography. Travelling to Berlin to examine them with my own eyes and with multispectral photography to research the original shapes of the letters, witnessing the preserved texts and where the elements included eroded or erased letters, and applying my dual perspective as both a scribe and a scholar of halakhah, was extremely beneficial to my research. This was also true of the Ms. Rhineland 1217 Sefer Torah which I was privileged to view and examine using new, accurate technologies.

Furthermore, arguments brought forth previously, such as Rabbi Friedman's extensive work on the shape of the letter Tzadi, Rabbi Hess's discussions on the shape of the *Zayin* shaped graphic element of various letters and other scholarly works offered me unique foundations for my progression from his conclusions to more modern methods of research.

To summarise the conclusions of the novel research methods: The difference between the two Ashkenazic script styles, the Beth Yosef and Arizal, is exhibited in only a few letters. According to *Sha'ar Hakavanot* these letters are: *Aleph* (א), *Vav* (ו), *Ayin* (ע), *Tzadi* (צ), *Final Tzadi* (ץ), and *Shin* (ש). The letter *Tet* (ט) and the letter *Het* (ח) are incorporated in this research, since according to the *Mishnat Hasidim*, these two letters are also included in the set of letters that have to be written in a specific way in consonance with the Lurianic teachings. On the other hand, the letter *Vav* (ו) is not included in this research, based on other Kabbalistic books (like *Kol Ha-ReMeZ*) and other reasons, as explained, despite the fact that *Vav* was included in the list of *Sha'ar Hakavanot*.

Thus, these are the letters whose shapes are investigated in this thesis:

*Aleph* (א), *Het* (ה), *Tet* (ט), *Ayin* (ע), *Tzadi* (צ), *Final Tzadi* (ץ), and *Shin* (ש).

In order to understand the nature of these differences between *Arizal* and *Beth Yosef* scripts regarding the variants of these letters, it was only necessary to examine three specific letter components. This is because one of these components, the shape of the letter *Zayin*, also appears on the left side of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, *final Tzadi* and *Shin*.

These three components were:

- 1 The letter *Zayin* as it appears the left side of the letters *Het*, *Tet*, *Ayin*, *Tzadi*, *final Tzadi* and *Shin*.
- 2 The left leg of the letter *Aleph*.
- 3 The *Yod* shaped graphic element incorporated in the letter *Tzadi*.

The conclusions of the research are that even though of the two Ashkenazic scripts, the *Arizal* script is used almost exclusively by Hāsidic communities today, this type of script appears not unrelated to the style of the ancient Ashkenazic script that is the style called *Beth Yosef*.

Our topic, namely the differences between these two writing styles and especially the halakhic aspects involved, was dealt with in numerous writings before this thesis. The most major of these works is probably *Tzidkat Hatzadik* which was published as a book by itself, whereas most of the writings in this field are relatively short essays that were published in journals in the field of Orthodox Jewish thought.<sup>442</sup> The writing of Yehuda Liebes, *Tzidkat Hatzadik, Yaḥas ha-gaon mi-Vilna ve-ḥugo K'lapei Ha-shabta'ut*, an important essay that deals with the opposition to the reverted Tzadi by the halakhic authorities, and Rabbi Prof. Israel M. Tashma's book *Custom and Reality in Franco-Germany, 1000-1350* that deals with changes in the shapes of *ziyunim* and with Rabbi Samson Barukh She'amar, both discussed in this thesis, are two of the few academic writings in this the field.

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<sup>442</sup> See bibliography.



The following table is a summary of the graphic analysis of the letters in the Erfurt scrolls:

Scroll	Erfurt 6	Erfurt 7	Erfurt 8	Erfurt 9	Summary
Letter					
<i>Aleph</i>	Arizal	Arizal	more akin to Arizal	Arizal	more akin to Arizal
<i>Het</i>	more akin to Beth Yosef	Arizal	Arizal	Arizal	more akin to Arizal
<i>Tet</i>	Either BY or Arizal according to R' Haim Vital	Arizal according to R' Haim Vital	Either BY or Arizal according to R' Haim Vital	Either BY or Arizal according to R' Haim Vital	---
<i>Ayin</i>	Arizal	Arizal	Arizal	Arizal	Arizal
<i>Tzadi</i>	Arizal	more akin to Arizal	more akin to Beth Yosef	unclear	more akin to Arizal
<i>final Tzadi</i>	Arizal	unclear	more akin to Beth Yosef	unclear	more akin to Arizal
<i>Shin</i>	Beth Yosef	Arizal	Beth Yosef	more akin to Beth Yosef	more akin to Beth Yosef

The table above illustrates that although the four Torah scrolls from Erfurt are Ashkenazic, and from approximately the same time period, it is evident that they were written in slightly different styles. It can be stated that most of them are closer to what is commonly accepted as *Arizal* script today. A minority of the letters are difficult to define, yet there is not even a single Torah scroll that has all of the characteristics of the *Beth Yosef* script that differ from that of the *Arizal*. On the other hand, the oldest of the Erfurt Torah scrolls, Erfurt 7 (Ms. or. fol. 1216) could be, anachronistically, called a Torah scroll written in Arizal script.

The novelty of this current thesis is not its size alone, but more so the modern palaeographic methods used and the medieval manuscripts—especially the Erfurt Torah scrolls—consulted. Rabbi Friedman, the author of *Tzidkat Hatzadik*, in order to prove the halakhic and historic validity of the letter *Tzadi* with the reverse *Yod*, showed how common this type of letter in Sepharad historically was. In this thesis the same aspect was researched

mostly through some of the oldest Ashkenazic Torah scrolls. Had such manuscripts been easily accessible to Rabbi Friedman, his argument may well have been strengthened.

Another novelty that emerged from these research methods could be the use of the Hamilton Siddur's zoomorphic letters as aids for explaining the ductus of the letters discussed by authorities of different eras and areas. This approach has possibly created a more accessible way to explain these intricacies to those beyond the academic field.

While this thesis provides conclusive responses to the questions it set out to examine, it raises some additional questions on the topic, inviting the examination of many other Torah Scrolls for future research. As Tamás Biró<sup>443</sup> has aptly put it, “If one could exhaust the topic in one thesis (..) other people would have done it long time before us and for us nothing would remain to deal with. But fortunately, it is not so. (...) Our research (...) is nothing more than the boring of a [single] well. Science is a collective activity: many such borings allow us to understand the topic better, and our research is a contribution. The deeper the digging goes, the more our contribution is worth. It is the depth and precision of the boring that matters, not its width.”<sup>444</sup> The “boring” of this thesis may be highly precise and within a profound area. As such, it is my hope that the conclusions contribute in a significant manner to the depth of the field of Hebrew palaeography. To the best of my knowledge, my research uniquely combines both halakhic and academic perspectives on paleography, raising questions in both disciplines, which usually do not transverse the two fields, and delving into the respective fields provides contrasting approaches. As such, the current halakhic focus on the shape and style of letters within Torah Scrolls include intricate arguments over the exact paleography of the letters. My research highlights the indisputable fact that many types of letters were permitted by Rabbinic authorities of previous generations from both Ashkenazic and Sepharadic traditions. Perhaps this new research will influence the perspectives of those who make future halakhic decisions and consultations on this topic.

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<sup>443</sup> Tamás Biró is currently the deputy rector at Jewish Theological Seminary – University of Jewish Studies.

<sup>444</sup> Quoted from Biró Tamás's writing; *Tanácsok dolgozatok írásához (bölcészeknek)*, Available online at <http://birot.web.elte.hu/?a=dolg&l=hu> (last accessed on June 29, 2020).

I would like to conclude the thesis with a line from a manuscript's colophon written in an era close to some of the manuscripts I discussed in this thesis:<sup>445</sup>

“And may Hashem merit me to finish the rest as well.”



It is my hope that future research will help us more comprehensively understand the development and evolution of Hebrew palaeography.

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<sup>445</sup> Quotation from a work copied by the scribe Abraham ben Samuel Piabi in the Byzantium in a non-square (also called semi-cursive) script, in the year 1475. St. Petersburg NLR EVR. H.C. 4 fol.134v Available online at [sfardata.nli.org.il](http://sfardata.nli.org.il)

## Appendices

The particular scrolls in Appendices A, B and C are to serve the purpose of comparison. Although this dissertation's main features are other scrolls, those from Erfurt, it is important to show the later development of the researched palaeographical elements.

Torah scrolls appearing in Appendix A are written in Arizal script and those in Appendix B in Beth Yosef script, whereas Appendix C shows the use of the Arizal script in historic Torah scrolls and in phylacteries that belonged to Ḥassidic sages.

## Appendix A

### 12 Catalogue of Torah Scrolls written in Arizal script

#### 12.1 17th Century

MST#1521 from Memorial Scroll Trust<sup>446</sup> at Westminster, London

Origin: probably Germany



<sup>446</sup> Special Thanks to Jeffrey Ohrenstein, the Chairman, and Miles Laddie, the treasurer, of Memorial Scrolls Trust, London, for permitting me to research and photograph their scrolls.

## 12.2 The letters of Torah scroll MST#1521

Aleph



Beit



Gimmel



Dalet



He



Vav



Zayin



Het



Tet



Yod



Kaf



Final Kaf



Lamed



Mem



Final Mem



Nun



Final Nun



Samech



Ayin



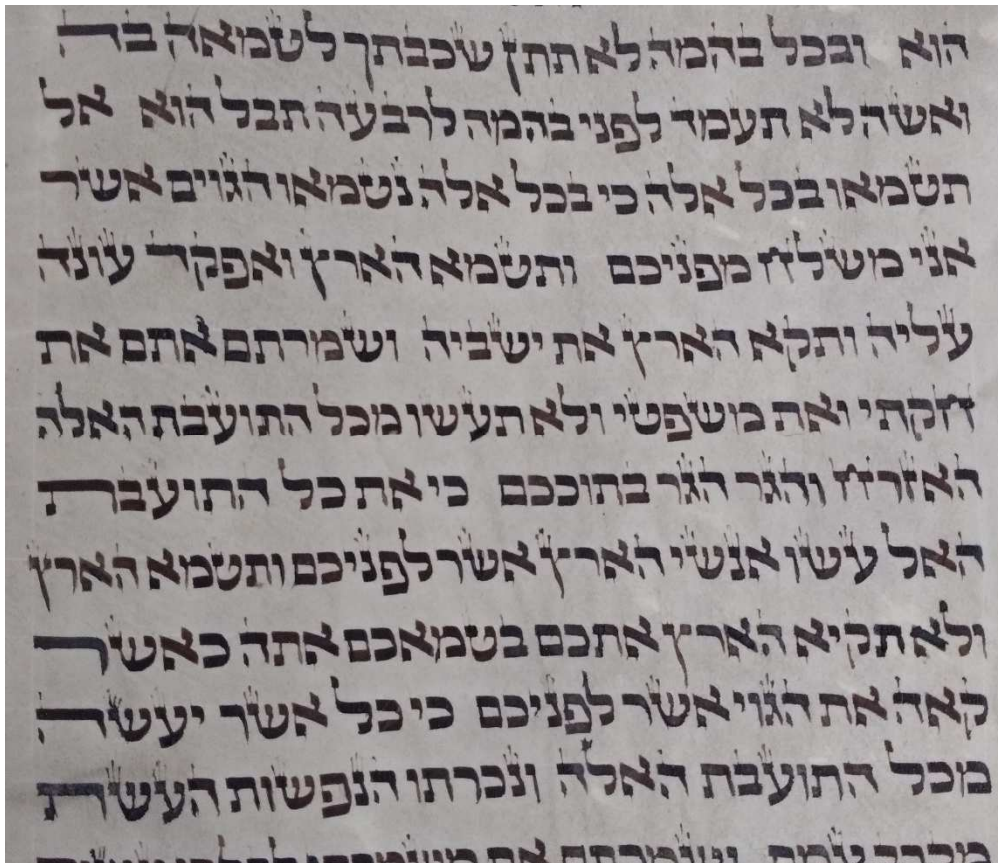
Pe	פ
Final Pe	ף
Tzadi	צ
Final Tzadi	ץ
Kof	כ
Resh	ר
Shin	ש
Tav	ת

## 12.3 18th Century

### 19JM

This Torah scroll is from the collection of the Jewish Museum, London.<sup>447</sup> Written in 1724, originally presented to the Hambro Synagogue in London.

**Catalogue number at the Jewish Museum: JM 19**



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<sup>447</sup> Thanks to Joanne Rosenthal, curator at the Jewish Museum, for providing photos of Torah scroll at JM.



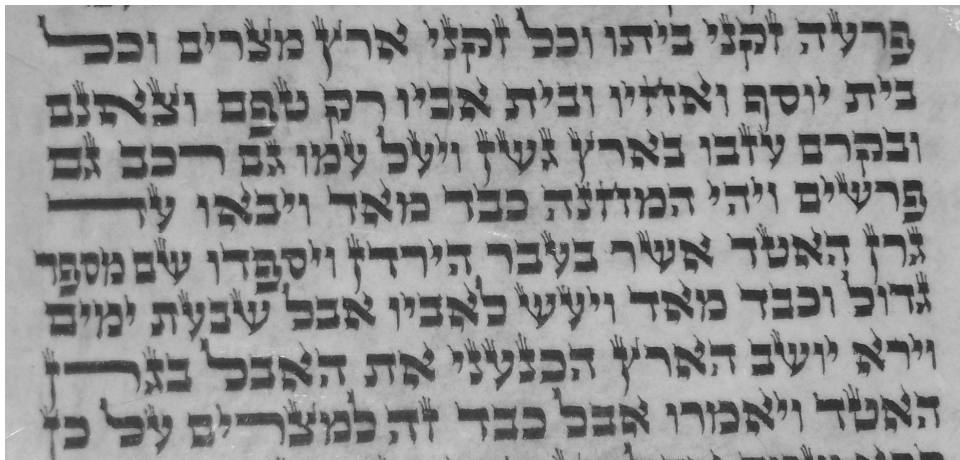
## 12.4 The letters of Torah scroll 19JM

Aleph	
Beit	
Gimmel	
Dalet	
He	
Vav	
Zayin	
Het	
Tet	
Yod	
Kaf	
Final Kaf	
Lamed	
Mem	
Final Mem	
Nun	
Final Nun	
Samech	
Ayin	

Pe	פ
Final Pe	ף
Tzadi	צ
Final Tzadi	ץ
Kof	כ
Resh	ר
Shin	ש
Tav	ת

## 12.5 19th Century

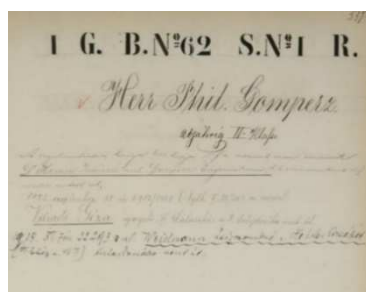
### Gomperz



This Torah scroll bears an inscription on its etz ḥayim which can be translated as follows: “This Torah scroll with an embroidered “cloak” was donated by the noble gentleman Feivel Gomperz for God’s sake and for glorifying the Great Synagogue at the time of its inauguration, 5619 (1858-59).”

This inscription does not mention in which city this ‘Great Synagogue’ is located. Nonetheless, because the scroll is housed in Budapest (at the Dózsa Street Synagogue) and because in 1859 the Great Synagogue of Budapest was the sole ‘great’ synagogue inaugurated in the region, or anywhere that a person named Philipp Gomperz (Philipp is not a translation of Feivel, but those with the Jewish name “Feivel” are often called “Philipp” in a secular context) was living), it is likely that we are talking about the renowned Great Synagogue of Dohány Street.

We even have a receipt that shows that one “Herr Phil. Gomperz “paid for his seat for twenty years in advance at the synagogue inauguration.



This Philip Gomperz is probably the grandfather of the wife of the famous David Kaufmann. He wound up not using the seat for twenty years as he died in 1867.

## 12.6 The letters of Torah scroll Gomperz

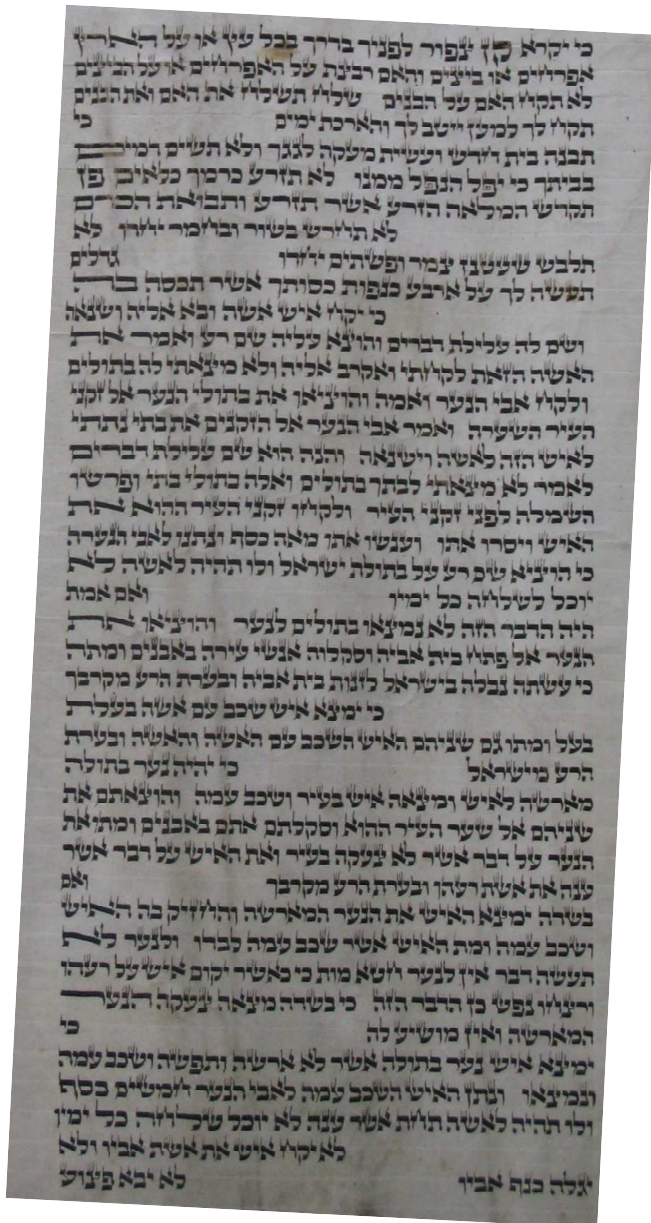
Aleph	
Beit	
Gimmel	
Dalet	
He	
Vav	
Zayin	
Het	
Tet	
Yod	
Kaf	
Final Kaf	
Lamed	
Mem	
Final Mem	
Nun	
Final Nun	
Samech	
Ayin	

Pe	
Final Pe	
Tzadi	
Final Tzadi	
Kof	
Resh	
Shin	
Tav	

## Appendix B

### 13 Catalogue of Torah scrolls written in Beit Yosef Script

#### 13.1 17th Century



MST#1010 from Memorial Scroll Trust at Westminster, London<sup>448</sup>

<sup>448</sup> Special Thanks to Jeffrey Ohrenstein, the Chairman, and Miles Laddie, the treasurer, of Memorial Scrolls Trust, London, for letting me research and photograph the scrolls at MST, Westminster, London.

### 13.2 The letters of Torah scroll MST#1010

Aleph	א
Beit	ב
Gimmel	ג
Dalet	ד
He	ה
Vav	ו
Zayin	ז
Het	ח
Tet	ט
Yod	י
Kaf	כ
Final Kaf	ך
Lamed	ל
Mem	מ
Final Mem	ם
Nun	נ

Final Nun

Samech

Ayin

Pe

Final Pe

Tzadi

Final Tzadi

Kof

Resh

Shin

Tav



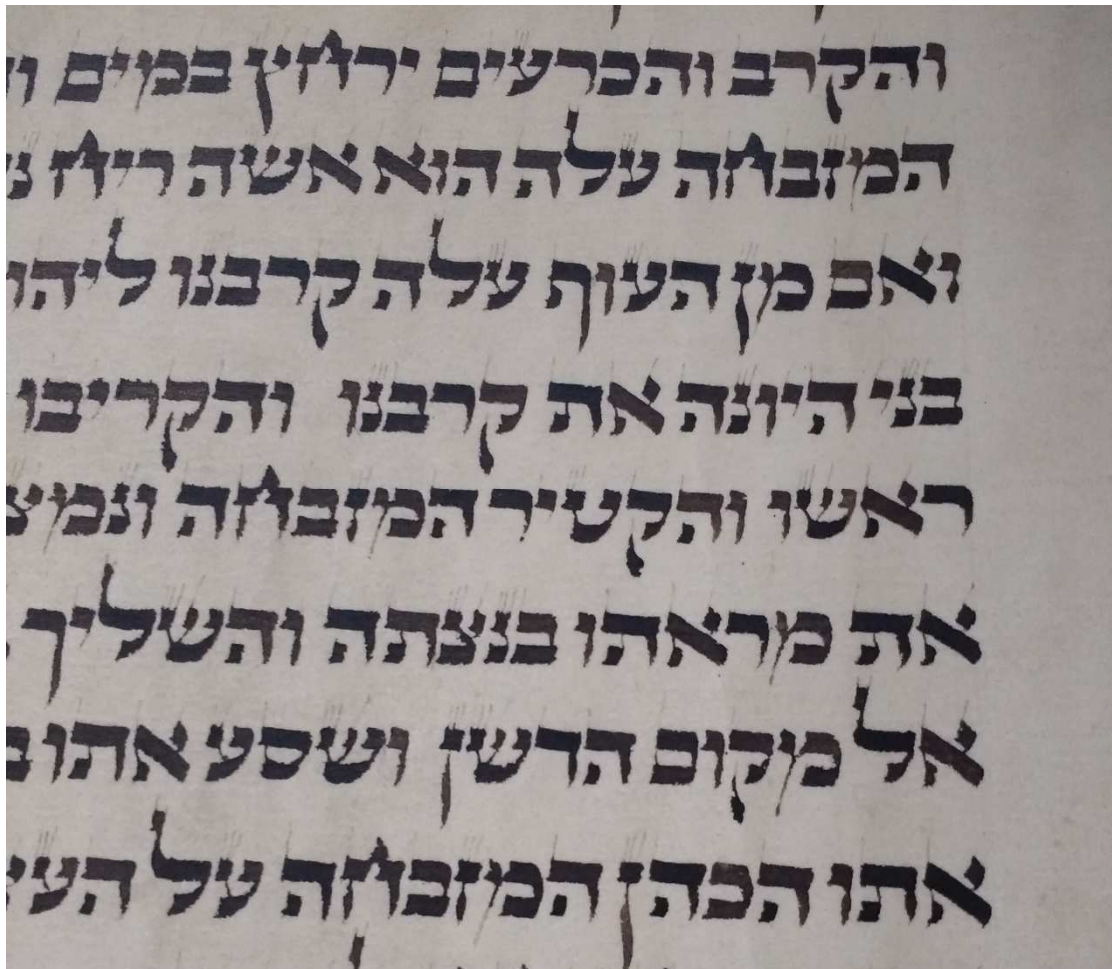


### 13.3 18th Century

#### JM21

This Torah scroll is from the collection of the Jewish Museum, London.<sup>449</sup> Written in 1766, it was originally in ritual use at the Hambro synagogue in London.

**Catalogue number at the Jewish Museum: JM 21**



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<sup>449</sup> Thanks to Joanne Rosenthal, curator at the Jewish Museum, for providing photos of Torah scroll at JM.

### 13.4 The letters of Torah scroll 21JM

Aleph	א
Beit	ב
Gimmel	ג
Dalet	ד
He	ה
Vav	ו
Zayin	ז
Het	ח
Tet	ט
Yod	י
Kaf	כ
Final Kaf	ך
Lamed	ל
Mem	מ
Final Mem	ם
Nun	נ

Final Nun

Samech

Ayin

Pe

Final Pe

Tzadi

Final Tzadi

Kof

Resh

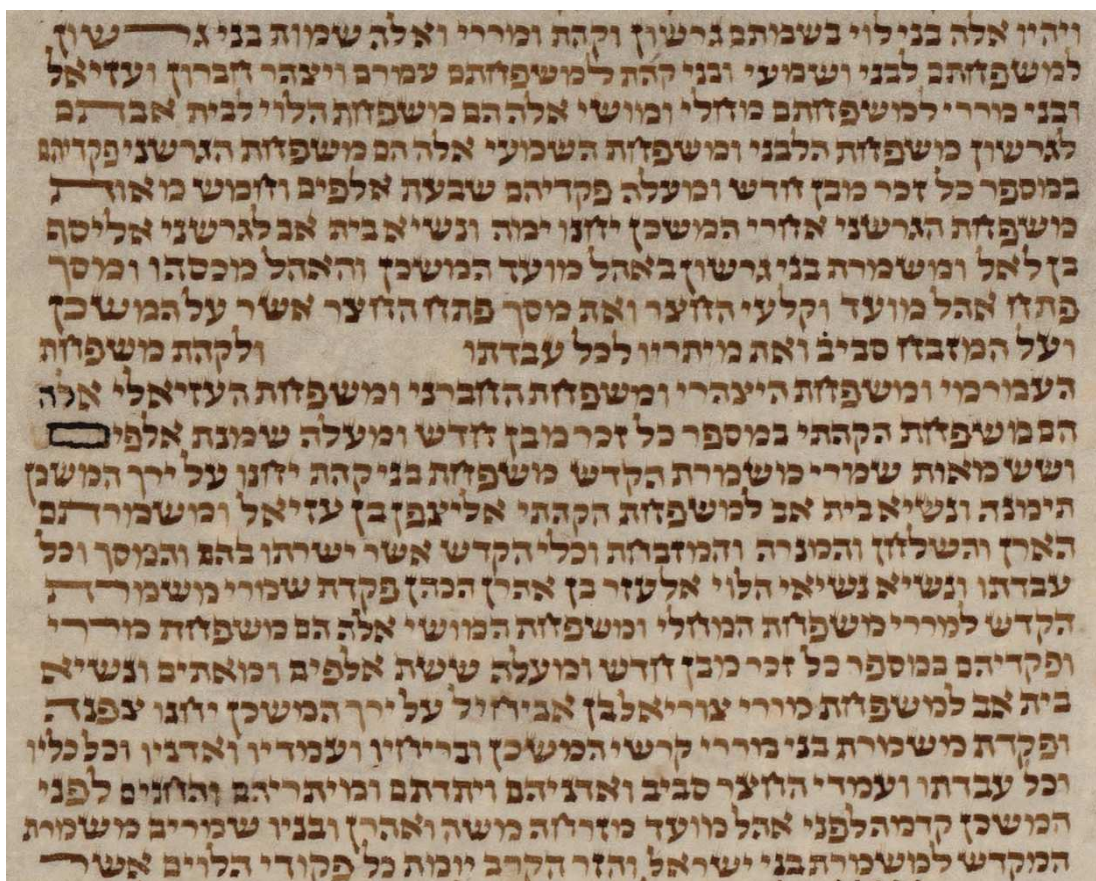
Shin

Tav

י  
ס  
מ  
פ  
פ  
צ  
צ  
כ  
ר  
ש  
ת

### 13.5 19<sup>th</sup> Century

13.6 Russian State Library,<sup>450</sup> Manuscript Department, F. 182, №436 (Hebrew)<sup>451</sup>



<sup>450</sup> Thanks to Evgeniya Zarubina from the Russian State Library for providing high resolution photos

[online] [2018.23.8.] <<https://dlib.rsl.ru/viewer/01006589128#?page=1>><sup>451</sup>

>

13.7 The letters of Torah scroll RST F. 182, №436

Aleph	א
Beit	ב
Gimmel	ג
Dalet	ד
He	ה
Vav	ו
Zayin	ז
Het	ח
Tet	ט
Yod	י
Kaf	כ
Final Kaf	ך
Lamed	ל

Mem	מ
Final Mem	מ
Nun	נ
Final Nun	נ
Samech	ס
Ayin	ע
Pe	פ
Final Pe	פ
Tzadi	צ
Final Tzadi	צ
Kof	כ
Resh	ר

Shin



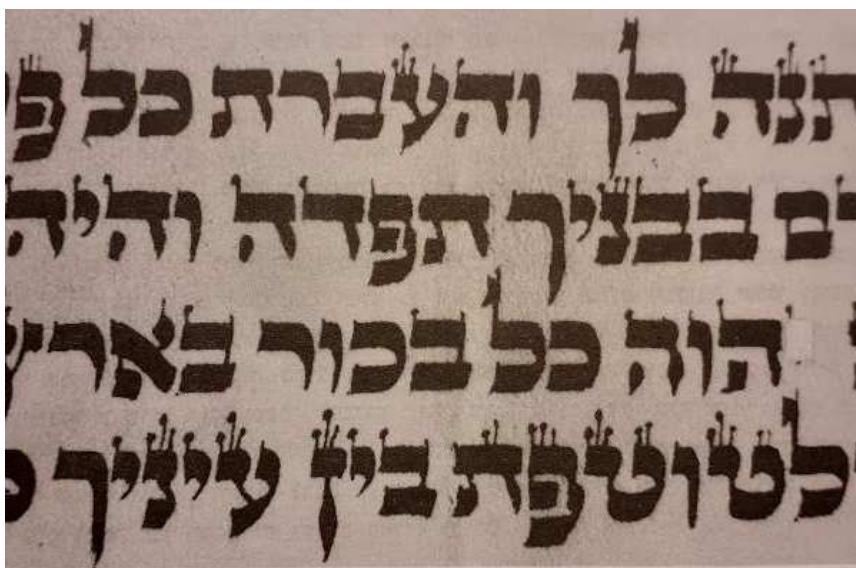
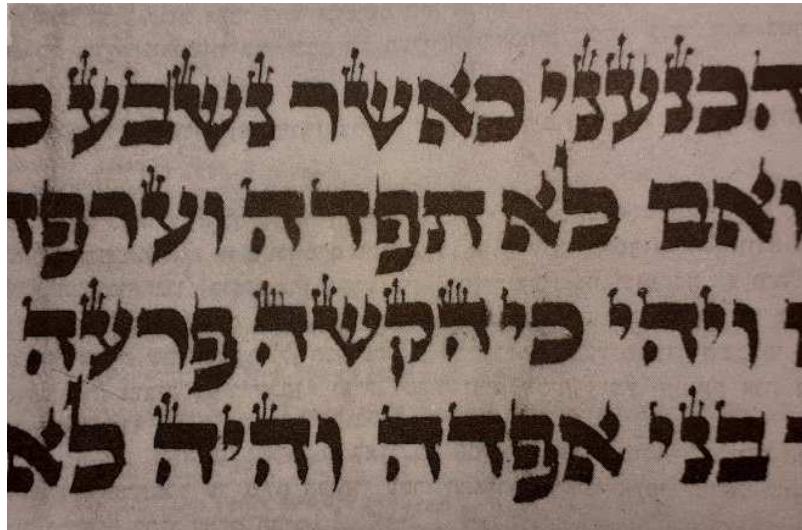
Tav



## Appendix C

### Photos of Historical scrolls belonging to Ḥassidic sages

Tefillin<sup>452</sup> of Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Shapira<sup>453</sup>

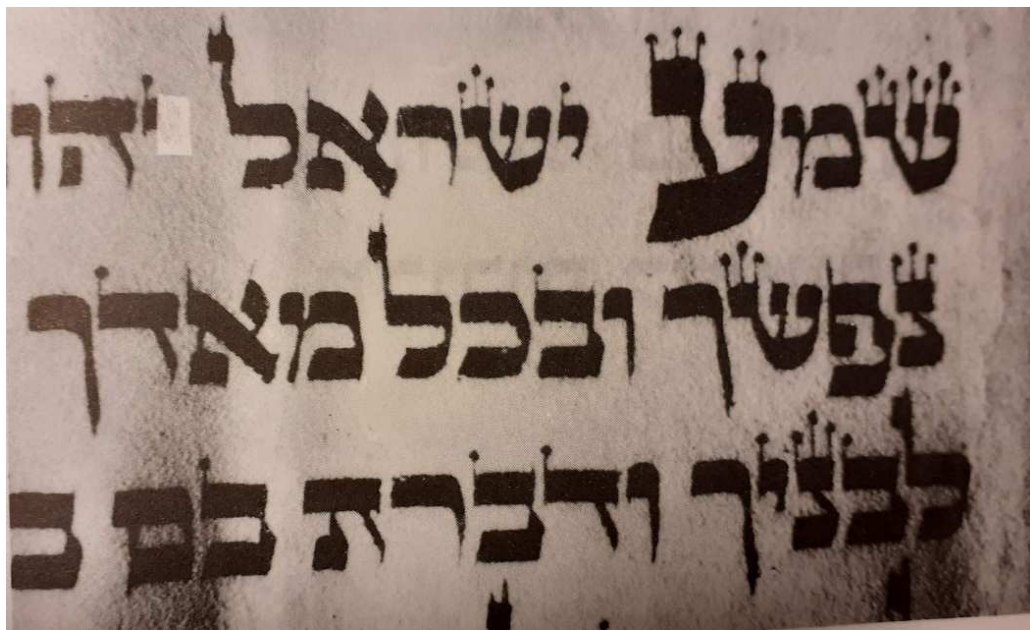
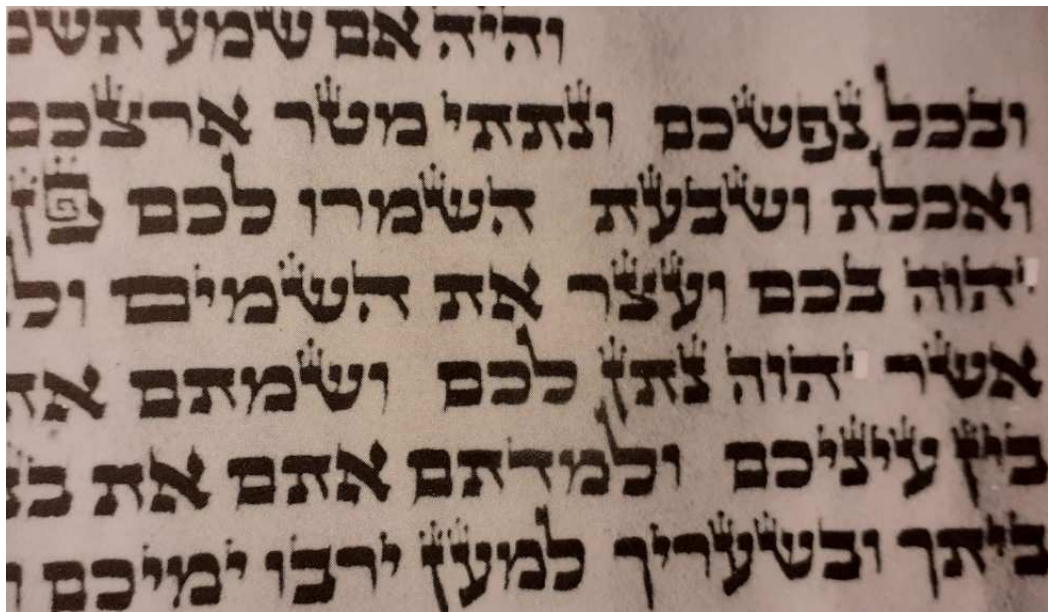


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<sup>452</sup> Images from Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiot*, 705.

<sup>453</sup> Rabbi Tzvi Hirsh Shapira (or Spiró, 1850, Poland-1913, Hungary), author of *Darkei Teshuva*, the second Grand Rabbi of the Ḥassidic dynasty of Munkács). Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiot*, 705.

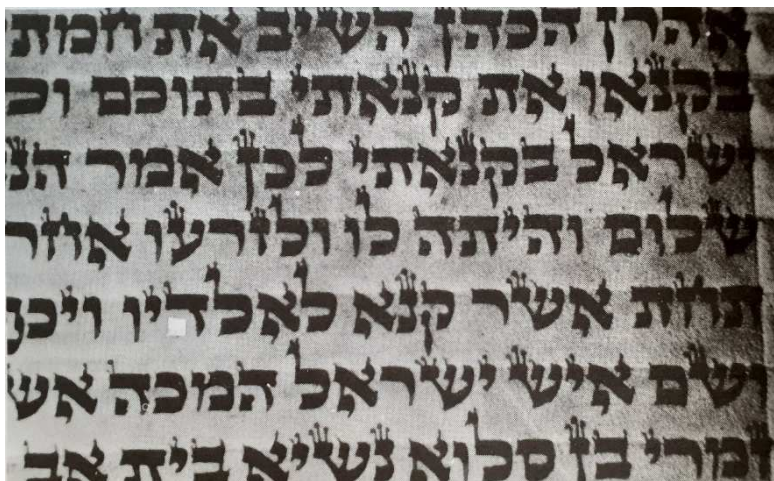
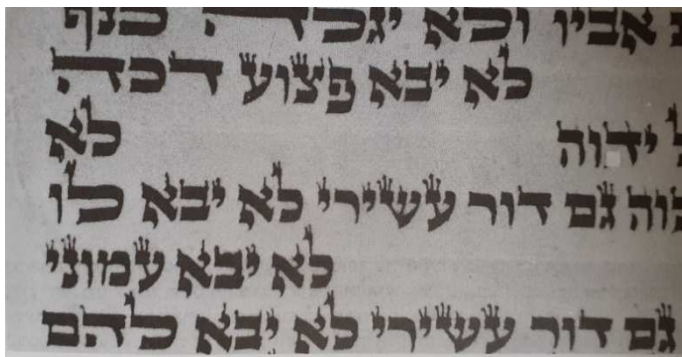
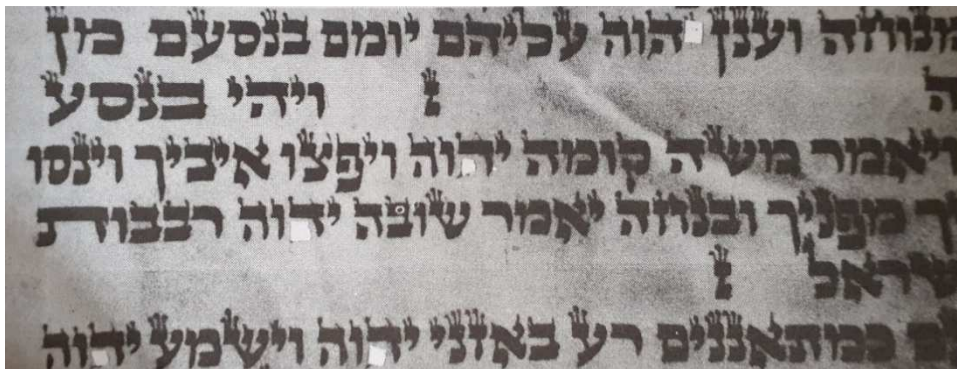




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<sup>454</sup> Images from Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiot*, 700

<sup>455</sup> Menaḥem Naḥum Twersky of Chernobyl (1730, Volhynia - 1787, Chernobyl) was a rabbi and the founder of the Ḥassidic dynasty of Chernobyl. He was a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov and the Maggid of Mezritch.



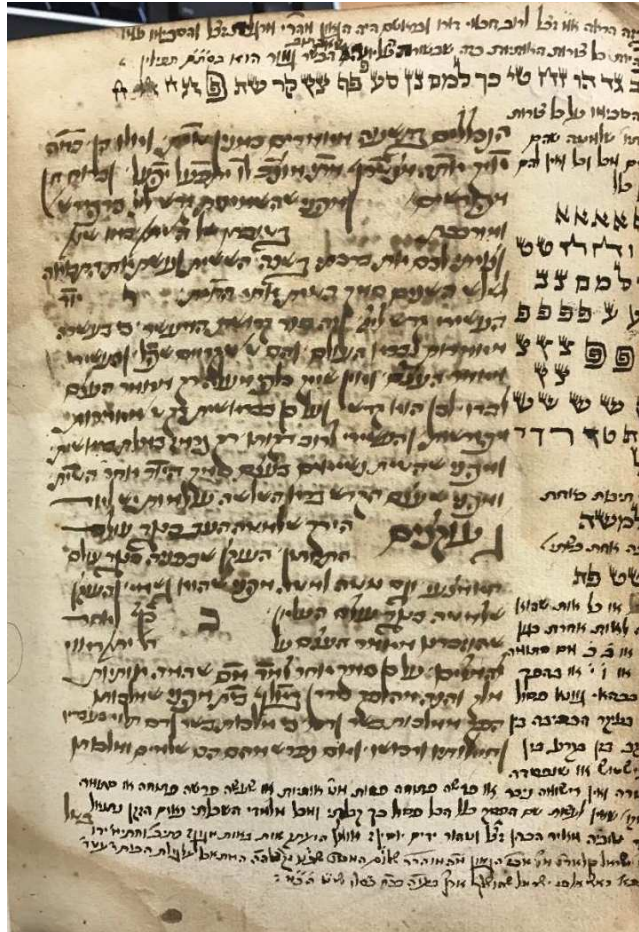
<sup>456</sup> Images from Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiot*, 704

<sup>457</sup> In the book *Yalkut Tzurat Ha-otiyot* this scroll is referred to as the scroll of "א"א מקאמארנא" although there was no rabbi of such a name in the Kamarno Ḥassidic dynasty. This is probably a mistake and it is really a scroll of Rabbi Yitzḥaq Isaac Safrin from Komarno (1806-1874). Thanks to researcher Elimelech Safrin (a scion of the same dynasty) from Jerusalem for this clarification.

## Appendix D

### Transcription<sup>458</sup> and translation of Rabbi Yisrael Ḥarif's commentary on the *Alfa Beta* of Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen

Oxford 803 Op. 330v<sup>459</sup>

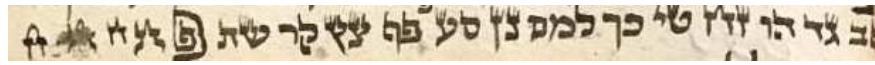


[זה הראה א"מ זצ"ל לרוב חכמי דורו ובראשם היה הגאון מהר"י מרגלית זצ"ל והסכימו עמו

<sup>458</sup> Transcription mostly based on the reading of Rabbi Yitzḥak Katz from Torat Ḥakmei Ashkenaz. (published in *Moriah*, year 11, issue 7-8 (127-128), 1972. Republished in Greenfeld and Granatstein, *Yalkut Tzurat ha-Otiyot*, 706, and with the help of Avinoam J. Stillman, a doctoral candidate at Freie Universität Berlin, who helped me while in quarantine during the Covid-19 pandemic. The manuscript (the glosses themselves, that were written around a different text, *Alfa Beta* of Rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Mühlhausen) was written with different hands and today we cannot identify the scribes.

<sup>459</sup> Thanks to Rahel Fronza, Ph.D. from the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford for photographing and sending an important manuscript me.

[היות כל צורות האותיות כזה שבשורה (שורות) [ה]עליונה (עליונות) <שמא כתוב?> הכשר גמור  
(הוא בסת"ם תפילין נוסף על יד יד מאוחרת)



הסכימו על כל צורות [א]ותיו['] שלמטה שהם [פסו]לים מכל וכל ואין להם [תק]ו[ן] כלל



[ש]תי תיבות כאחת


[א]  למשה

[תי] בה אחת כשתי'

[ל]  לשם פת

 ב

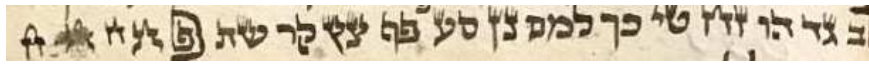
או כל אות שהוא [דומ]ה לאות אחרת כגון 'ב' כ'

 א או ו' י' או בהפך בכהאי גוונא פסול [בין] בעיקר הכתיבה, בין [בנ]קב בין בקרע בין [בט]ישטוש או שנפסדה [צ]ורה ואין רישומה ניכר, או פרשה פתוחה פחות מט' אותיות, או שעשה פרשה פתוחה או סתומה [במ]קו' שאין לעשות שם הפסק כלל, הכל פסול, כך קבלתי, ומכל מלמדי השכלתי נאום הזקן נתנאל [ב"ר] טוביה מאיר הכהן זצ"ל, וטהור ידיים יוסיף אומץ, הועתק אות באות מגוף כתיב' וחתימת ידו

[נ]א[ום] [ישראל בן לאדו] מו, אבי' הגאון מ"ה מוהר"ר שלו"ם המכונ' שכנ"ו זקצלה"ה המתאבל על גולת הכותר' עטר' תפא[רת] ראשי אלפי ישראל שהושלך ארץ בעו"ה בר"ח כסלו שי"ט הכ"מ.

(...) this is what A.M. of blessed memory (probably *adoni mori*,<sup>460</sup> my lord and teacher) showed most of the sages of his generation and first of all to the genius, our teacher Rabbi Y. Margalit and they agreed with him.

Since all the letter forms, like those that are written in the top line are completely kosher in *Torah* scrolls:<sup>461</sup>



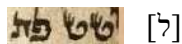
They agreed that all the letter forms below are totally invalid and cannot be corrected at all:





Two words as one:



One word as two:



Or any letter that is similar to another letter such as  (*Bet* and *Kaf*)

or  (*Vav* and *Yod*) or in a similar case of invalidity, whether it may be in the main part of the writing, or in the hole or in or rupture or in the blurring or the form is lost and there is no noticeable sign, or an 'open' *parasha*<sup>462</sup> less than nine letters, or he (the scribe)

<sup>460</sup> According to Professor Lawrence H. Schiffman.

<sup>461</sup> The words *In Torah scrolls, Mezuzah and Tefillin* are added by a late hand.

<sup>462</sup> *Parasha* in this case means spacing between two paragraphs, whereas 'open' *parasha* means a bigger break and 'closed' means relatively a smaller one.

made an ‘open’ or ‘closed’ *parasha* where there should be no break at all. All these are invalid, so I received, and “from all who taught me have I gained understanding.”<sup>463</sup>

I, the undersigned, Netanel the Old, son of Tuvia Meir ha-Cohen of blessed memory. “And he that hath clean hands waxeth stronger and stronger.”<sup>464</sup>

It was copied letter by letter from the body of his writing and his signature.

I, the undersigned, Israel, the son of my master, teacher, father the genius, our teacher Rabbi Shalom,<sup>465</sup> AKA *Shachno*, the memory of the righteous one for the life of the world to come, he who mourns the “crown of beauty”<sup>466</sup> of “the heads of the thousands of Israel”<sup>467</sup> who was thrown to the ground because of our numerous sins on *rosh chodesh Kislev* 319 (November 1558). I am atonement for his death.

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<sup>463</sup> Psalms 119:99. Translation from Hebrew by Dr. Joshua Kulp.

<sup>464</sup> Job 17:9

<sup>465</sup> Shalom Shachna (c. 1510 – 1558) was a rabbi and Talmudist, and Rosh yeshiva of several great *Aharonim* including Moses Isserles, (1530 -1572, known as the *Rema*), who was also his son-in-law.

<sup>466</sup> See Isaiah 62:3

<sup>467</sup> See Numbers 1:16

## Appendix E

### **Comparing the Head of the Medieval *Zayin* to Weapons: Spear and Sword. Comparing Modern *Zayins* with Medieval Weapons and Helmets**

The reason this section is included in an appendix is the following: such proofs are not meant to be an integral part of a serious scientific discussion such as a doctoral dissertation.

On the other hand, the nature of this dissertation is unusual in many aspects. Historical perspectives meet religious reasonings, rigid geometric measurements of letter shapes mingle with explanations about the actions of an adulterous husband or fantastic scenarios of fighting the Satan. In the very same picture of a medieval letter, the reader is asked to see the meeting of geometric shape analysis side by side with figures of imaginary dog-like creatures jumping on the back of a horse—concepts that, strictly speaking, clearly contradict each other. In such a context I felt that the situation will not get much worse by introducing the reader to pictures of medieval soldiers with Hebrew letters in their hands fighting each other, and I hope for understanding from the honorable members of the examining committee.

The image below, "A Dialogue with Death," which appears in a medieval English manuscript,<sup>468</sup> illustrates the war with Satan through the *ziyyunim* on the letters of the *SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ* letters. The devil, represented in this picture by Death, attacks the knight with a spear, and the knight is also armed with a spear. In the left hand picture, the head of the spear in the hand of the knight has been replaced with the rectangular shape which is commonly used to scribe the shape of a head of the *SHa'ATNeZ GeTZ letters* today. One can imagine how fair the "dialogue" is, with such a weapon in the knight's hand.

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<sup>468</sup> Written in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Stowe 39 f. 32 Dialogue with Death, The British Library < <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMINBig.ASP?size=big&IllID=8926> >



FIGURE 98



FIGURE 99

The kind of weapon that most likely fits the description in *Sefer ha-Teruma* " כַּאֲדָם 1140" "as a man holding a weapon waving with it to the right and to the left and in front of him," mentioned earlier, is the spear. On the other hand we have seen that the *Mishna Berura* mentioned "a sword and spear" in the name of the *Iggeret ha-Tiyyul*.<sup>469</sup> Therefore, I will also include a picture of warriors armed with a sword and spears, also taken from a medieval illustration, this time from France of the late 14th century.<sup>470</sup>



FIGURE 100

<sup>469</sup> Ḥayim ben Betzalel, *Iggeret ha-Tiyyul*, 56

<sup>470</sup> Morgan Library M.516 *Histoire universelle depuis la Creation jusqu'a Cesar*. France. Folio183r. 1390-1399, < <http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/icaimages/5/m516.403va.jpg>>



After changing the head of the weapon (*Zayin*) into the square shape used today, these soldiers probably would not be able to fight the enemy:



FIGURE 101

On the other hand, *Zayin* in its ancient form in various styles (the enlarged images of fig 103 is a *Zayin* based on Ms. Jewish Theological Seminary, L 44a whereas fig 104 includes two *Zayins* from the Rehov writing with a *Zayin* of the Kaufmann Mishna in the middle (Ms. Kaufmann A 50, while fig 102 includes all of them)) is indeed similar to the shape of weapons, thanks to the corners at the top and on both sides of its head:



FIGURE 102



FIGURE 103



FIGURE 104

Also in this figure (fig. 105), in which the *Zayin* is taken from the aforementioned Kaufmann manuscript (Ms. Kaufmann A 50),<sup>471</sup> the weapon will indeed be useful in dealing with Death:



FIGURE 105

It is interesting that in medieval manuscripts we do find images that graphically resemble the shape of the head of contemporary *Zayins*. But these are not images of swords and spears, but rather those of helmets, that are tools intended for defense and not for attack. It is especially interesting that precisely within "our" Erfurt collection is a picture that best illustrates this (fig. 106).<sup>472</sup>

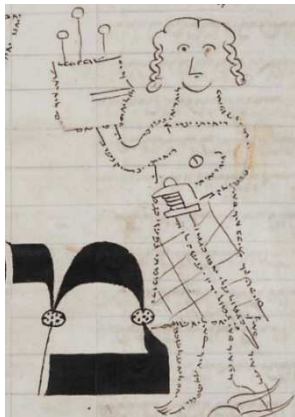


FIGURE 106

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<sup>471</sup> Yardeni, *Sefer ha-Ketav ha-Ivri: Toldot, Yesodot, Signonot, Itzuv*, 201

<sup>472</sup> Erfurt Bible 2, Berlin, Or. fol. 1212, fol. 521a

Here is the same type of helmet as in the image above, but without the top decorations:<sup>473</sup>



Similar ornaments on a helmet can be seen on the head of the knight brought above (Dialogue with Death) or in this painting<sup>474</sup>:



As a conclusion we can propose that the original letter *Zayin* was written with its head diagonally, and not straight with the addition of thin lines at the top, as is it known from contemporary scribal art. This is supported by the etymology of the word *Zayin* as weapon, as shown in the body of this thesis.

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<sup>473</sup> The German Historical Museum, Berlin

<sup>474</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 4, fol. 30a

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## Résumé

Sofrei STaM (Torah scribes) modernes utilisent fondamentalement l'une des deux versions du script carré hébreu ashkénaze: celle du Beth Yossef ou celle de l'Arizal.

Les deux styles d'écriture sont nommés d'après deux contemporains qui ont vécu et sont morts dans la ville de Safed, qui était alors considérée comme la Syrie ottomane.

Le script Beth Yossef est nommé d'après l'œuvre monumentale de Rabbi Yossef Caro (1488 -1575), le Beth Yossef, dans laquelle il consacre une attention particulière aux formes des lettres de l'alphabet hébreu. Le script Arizal, qui diffère de l'ancien par rapport au nombre de lettres, était basé sur Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534 -1572, communément connu sous le nom «Arizal» 'le lion de mémoire bénie'. Il dirigea un groupe d'érudits dans l'étude mystique de la Kabbale.

Alors que l'ancien script est généralement utilisé dans les rouleaux ashkénazes de la Torah, ce dernier est particulièrement caractéristique des communautés hassidiques.

Mon sujet de recherche, à savoir, le développement historique des lettres hébraïques, leur division en deux branches principales, les décisions religieuses qui ont influencé leur développement ainsi que leur analyse historique n'a pas encore fait l'objet d'une recherche approfondie.

Dans mes recherches, je cherche à montrer que la forme en yod inversé de la lettre tsade n'était pas caractéristique seulement du judaïsme séfarde, mais, comme l'attestent les anciens manuscrits ashkénazes, aussi d'une partie de l'ancienne tradition Ashkénaze. Ainsi on peut suggérer que ces formes de yod inverse ne sont pas originaires de la tradition kabbalistique de Rabbi Isaac Luria identifié avec Ashkenaz, encore moins dans la propagation du mouvement hassidique au 18ème siècle. La même chose peut être dit du pied gauche de l'aleph, ainsi que les autres lettres distinctives du script du Arizal et du Beth Yossef.

Le but de mes recherches est multiple: je cherche les caractéristiques des lettres de l'alphabet hébreu qui distinguent une version de l'écriture ashkénaze de l'autre - en utilisant les termes utilisés aujourd'hui - Beth Yossef et Arizal: Comment les lettres en question sont-elles apparues à différentes périodes, comment elles se sont développées et quels événements historiques (décisions des rabbins, propagation des livres, changements

géographiques et démographiques survenus dans les communautés ashkénazes) auraient pu faciliter cette évolution.

La méthode utilisée pour cette recherche afin de discuter en profondeur les sujets que je traite dans ma thèse, des différentes écritures historiques devraient être examinés.

Pourtant, les développements signalés ne correspondent pas à toutes les écritures carrées, car les règles halakhiques ne sont pas strictement respectées dans tous les manuscrits, tels que les maḥzorim (livres de prières du festival). Par contre, le script utilisé dans les rouleaux de la Torah est idéal car, en raison du rôle rituel des rouleaux, les règles pertinentes étaient strictement respectées. Du point de vue de la recherche, toutefois, un tel examen est également problématique, les rouleaux de la Torah ne sont généralement pas datées, sauf pour des cas individuels où l'on trouve une inscription sur la atze hayim (les manches en bois auxquels le parchemin du rouleau de la Torah est attaché).

Pour résoudre ce problème, j'ai décidé de me concentrer sur les quatre rouleaux médiévaux de la Torah d'Erfurt, en Allemagne. La communauté juive d'Erfurt a été pillée en 1349 à la suite de la peste connue sous le nom de 'peste noire'. Ces parchemins sont maintenant conservés à la bibliothèque d'État de Berlin.

Mon analyse des lettres des rouleaux de la Torah d'Erfurt montre que, dans le cas où l'écriture Arizal diffère de celle Beth Yossef, le rouleau médiéval d'Erfurt est plus proche de l'écriture Arizal. Dans ma conclusion, je suggère des raisons possibles pour les changements qui ont abouti à deux styles d'écriture ashkénazes différents.

## Abstract

Modern sofrei StaM (Torah scribes) use basically one of two versions of Ashkenazic Hebrew square script: that of the Beth Yosef or that of the Arizal.

The two writing styles are named after two contemporaries who lived and died in the town of Safed, which was then considered Ottoman Syria.

The Beth Yosef script is named after Rabbi Yosef Caro's (1488 –1575) monumental work, the Beth Yosef, in which he devotes particular attention to the shapes of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The Arizal script, which differs from the former with respect to a number of letters, was based on the teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazi (1534 -1572, commonly known as the "Ari" (meaning 'lion'), or the "Arizal," ("the Ari of blessed memory"). The Ari led a group of scholars in the mystical study of the kabbalah.

While the former script is generally used in Ashkenazic Torah scrolls, the latter is particularly characteristic of Ḥassidic communities.

My chosen theme, namely, the historical development of Hebrew letters, their division into two main branches, the religious decisions that impacted their development as well as their historical analysis, have thus far been overlooked in scholarship. To the best of my knowledge, the topic has not yet been treated in view of the significant palaeographic and halakhic aspects of Hebrew writing. My proposed scope of research will extend back to 12th century.

In my research, I seek to show that the 'reverse' Yod of the Tzadi was not characteristic only of Sepharadic Judaism, but, as attested in old Ashkenazic manuscripts, part of the ancient Ashkenazic tradition. As such, I suggest that this reverse yod did not originate in the Kabbalistic tradition identified with Rabbi Isaac Luria Ashkenazy (a.k.a. Arizal), and even less in the Ḥassidic movement that spread in the 18th century. The same can be said about the Vav-shaped left part of the Shin, Tet and Ayin, and about the protruding left side of the left foot of the Aleph as well as the other letters distinguishing the script of the Arizal from that of the Beth Yosef.

The purpose of my research is several-fold: I aim investigate the letters of the Hebrew alphabet which distinguish one version of Ashkenazic writing from the other - using the terms used today (which are not the most accurate ones) - the Beth Yosef and Arizal: How the letters in question appeared in different periods looked, how they developed and what historical events (rabbis' decisions, spread of books; geographic and demographic changes that took place in Ashkenazic communities) might have facilitated this evolution.



### **The method used for this research**

In order to discuss in depth the topics I deal with in my thesis, historical scripts should be examined. Yet not all square scripts fit this purpose, as halakhic rules were not followed strictly in all manuscripts, such as maḥzorim (festival prayer books). The script used in Torah scrolls, by contrast, is ideal, because, due to the scrolls' ritual role, the relevant rules were strictly respected. From the point of view of research, however, such an examination is problematic, as Torah scrolls are generally not dated, except for individual cases where we find an inscription on the atzei ḥayim (the wooden poles to which the parchment of the Torah scroll is attached).

To solve this problem, I decided to concentrate on the four medieval Torah scrolls from Erfurt, Germany. The Jewish community of Erfurt was plundered in 1349 in the wake of the plague known as the 'Black Death.' These scrolls are now housed in the Berlin State Library.

An analysis of the letters of the Erfurt Torah scrolls yields that the elements of the Hebrew letters that differ between the two writing styles more strongly resemble the script known as Arizal than they resemble the script known as Beth Yosef. In my conclusion, I suggest possible reasons for the changes that resulted in the two different Ashkenazic writing styles.

## RÉSUMÉ

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Cette étude englobe des recherches dans le domaine de la paléographie hébraïque, et notamment dans la typologie des écritures ashkénazes. Elle inclue une analyse comparative de l'écriture utilisée dans les rouleaux de la Torah médiévaux et post-médiévaux, montrant que certaines caractéristiques de la première période restent toujours visibles dans la seconde. L'écriture utilisée dans les rouleaux de la Torah de ces périodes reflète les caractéristiques des deux styles principaux d'écriture ashkénaze acceptés aujourd'hui, connus sous les noms d'Arizal et de Beth Yosef. L'un des principaux objectifs de cette recherche paléographique est de suggérer des raisons et des origines possibles - historiques, rabbiniques, graphiques, etc. - pour les divergences entre ces deux écritures, afin de comprendre l'impact de ces facteurs sur le développement des lettres hébraïques et leur division en deux branches principales telles qu'elles existent dans l'art scribal traditionnel d'aujourd'hui.

## MOTS-CLÉS

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scribes	lettres
Arizal	hébreu
Beth Yosef	scribal

## ABSTRACT

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This work encompasses research in the field of Hebrew palaeography, and notably to the typology of Ashkenazi scripts. It includes a comparative analysis of the script used in medieval and post-medieval Torah scrolls, showing that certain features of the former are still discernible in the latter. The script used in Torah scrolls from these time periods reflect characteristics of both of the central Ashkenazic writing styles accepted today known as the Arizal and the Beth Yosef. A primary objective of this palaeographical research is to suggest possible reasons and origins - historical, rabbinic, graphic etc. - for the discrepancies between these two scripts so that one may understand the impact of these factors on the development of Hebrew letters and their division into two main branches as they exist in the traditional scribal art of today.

## KEYWORDS

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Arizal  
Beth Yosef  
scribal  
Hebrew  
letters  
scribes