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## Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit

## Fragment of the month

## FOTM 2022

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- > Fragment of the Month: October 2022
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## FOTM 2023

## FOTM 2021

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## Fragment of the Month: December 2016

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## Fragment of the Month: October 2016

## Fragment of the Month: September 2016

## Fragment of the Month: August 2016

## Fragment of the Month: June 2016

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## Fragment of the Month: March 2015

## Fragment of the Month: January 2015

## Fragment of the Month: December 2014

## Fragment of the Month: November 2014

## Fragment of the Month: October 2014

## Fragment of the Month: September 2014

## Fragment of the Month: May 2014

## Addendum to November 2011's Fragment of the Month

## FRAGMENT OF THE MONTH ARCHIVE

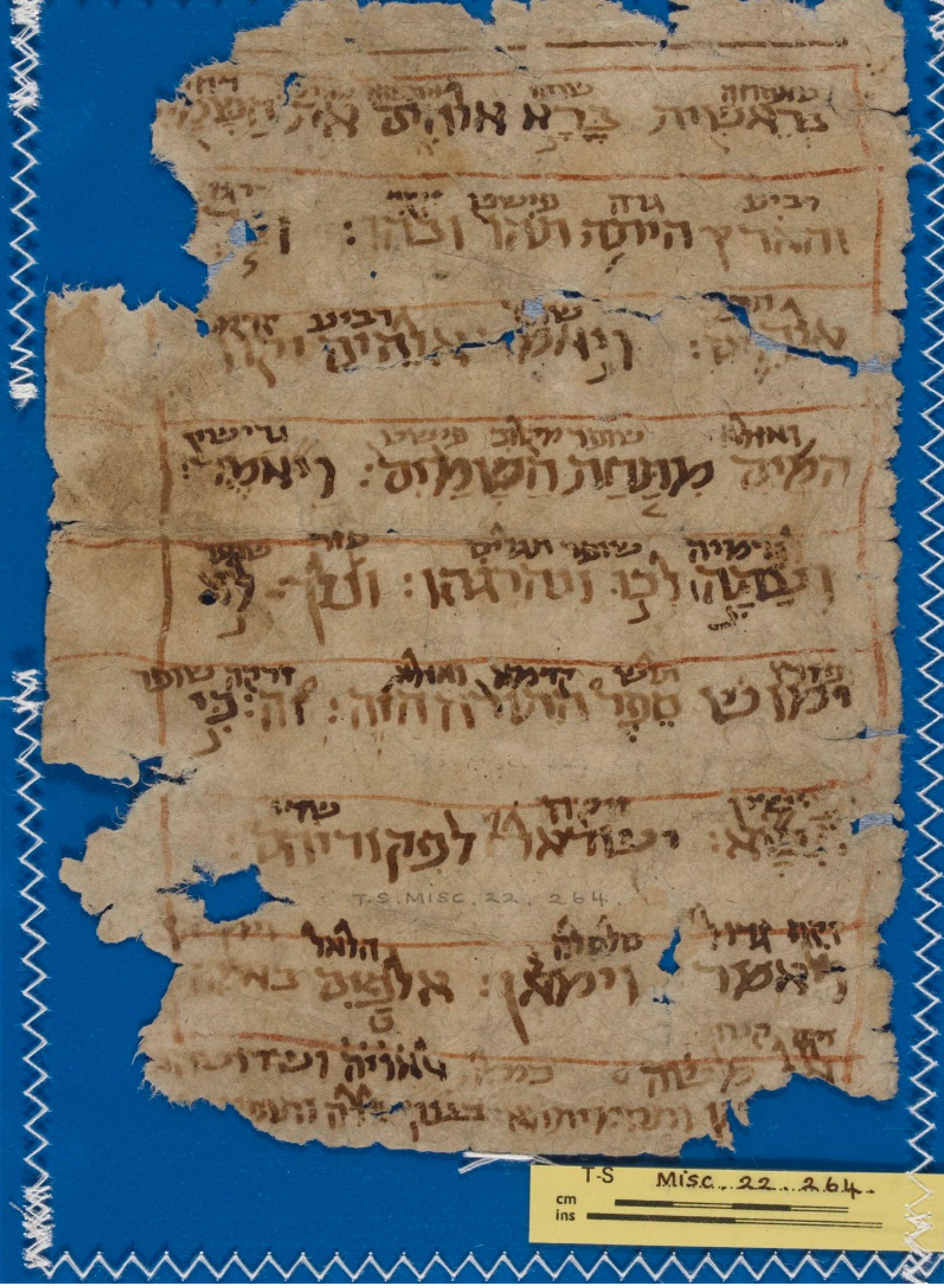
## Fragment of the Month: July 2022

## T-S Misc.22.264 - a trope trainer from the Cairo Genizah

## Marc Michaels

Whilst searching for more fragments related to my PhD, I cannot but notice other fragments of interest that catch my eye, whether flicking through the screens of the FGP app or flipping the pages of the folders of large Genizah fragments in Cambridge University Library. Indeed it can be quite a distraction and lead you into other side paths of possibilities and alleyways of adventure.

As a *ba'al qore* (lit. master of the reciting) who periodically *leins* (the Yiddish word typically used for chanting) from the Torah in my own and other synagogues, one such fragment that leapt out at me was **T-S Misc.22.264**, our fragment of the month.



T-S Misc.22.264 recto

The musical notation system we employ today was developed by the Masoretes in the 8th to 10th centuries. However, they did not invent this, but were codifying the tunes referenced in Mishnaic times, likely from earlier traditions that accompanied the declaiming of the Torah text in the marketplace and synagogue.<sup>1</sup> For example in Megillah 32a, we read *וְהָיָה קוֹל הַקּוֹרֵא אֶת הַתּוֹרָה וְהָיָה קוֹל הַשֹּׁמֵר אֶת הַתּוֹרָה* (‘And the voice of the reader and the voice of the keeper of the Torah shall be heard’). Initially the reader (or singer), was assisted by means of hand signals from the *sofer* (assistant) that gave general directions as to the notes to use. ‘The system was called *chronomy*. Indeed, hand signals to assist the modern reader are still present in some synagogues, and even enjoying a resurgence, and it is a system that I, for one, would like to learn as it would be very helpful. These, however, were largely replaced by the 28 symbols<sup>2</sup> that are placed above or below words in the biblical text of codices, which govern the notes that one uses when chanting from a Torah scroll from the *bima* (lectern/reading desk) in a service and also indicate the position of the main stress in that word.

When one learns the *je amin* (trope, lit. ‘tastes’ or ‘favours’) from a list, one sings the name of the note to the tune of the note. So, I can quite easily reel off typical standard musical phrases such as *maḥpaḥ paḥa zaqef aṭon, zaqef gadol*. However, when reading from a Torah, scribal halakha forbids the inclusion of any notation (either *je amin* or *nequdot* (vowel signs)<sup>3</sup>). Thus, you have to remember it all, having practised from a *tiqqun qor'im* (readers guide) prior to the service. So, as you are chanting, in your head you are having to combine a musical note that has a name with the word that is written and sing the word and not the name, with the emphasis on the right syllable.

I had seen other cantillation related pages as I searched through, such as T-S Misc.10.179 and T-S AS 139.14,<sup>4</sup> each of which give a listing of the names and respective symbols. Moreover, the orders of notes given, the spellings, vocalisation and the names of the notes and how comprehensive the list was varies between fragments.<sup>5</sup> The names of the individual notes reflect either the shape of the grapheme employed or the melody associated with the sign, for example *munah* (‘sustained’ or ‘rest’) is called *rev* (*šofar*) in Genizah fragments because of its bent shape, *rev* (*paṣer*, ‘scattered’) is perhaps more a reflection of its moving in and out sound,<sup>6</sup> and the even rarer *rev* (*šafet*, ‘chain’), called in Judeo-Arabic *rev* (*šafet*) in our fragment of the month,<sup>7</sup> echoes both the zigzag shape of the sign and the extremely long wavering note.

However, **T-S Misc.22.264** is very different from these other fragments. Instead of presenting a simple listing, the musical notation and their names are appended to parts of biblical verses in phrases and single words, starting with the very first half of the first verse, Gen. 1:1.

Visiting the CUL reading room in mid-February 2022, I measured the fragment as 19.8 cm high by 14.6 cm wide.<sup>10</sup> It is on rag paper, with barely visible laid lines and, based on the script employed, it is possibly mid-11th century.<sup>11</sup> It is noted in FGP only as ‘Cantillation notes – Personal handlist – preliminary description, further examination required’, but it is a short and perhaps more practical training manual for someone learning to chant from the Torah. It seems to represent an intermediate stage between the lists of notes and learning from the actual text, since it allows you to sing the words which are written large but still see the name of the notes which are in superscript. A clear example of pedagogy at work, as one generation trained the next.<sup>12</sup> Either this teacher, or at some point in time some other teacher from whom this teacher is copying the text, had taken time out and scoured the bible for examples where phrases would cover the individual notes, including those that rarely occur. This would speed up the student’s learning, since otherwise it may be some time before he would encounter a *paṣuq* (verse) where a particular rarer musical phrasing occurred. Our teacher has mostly, but not consistently, added *nequdot* (vowel pointing)<sup>13</sup> presumably to help the student further. He has then drawn boxed rules around each line to separate them off and make them even easier to deal with on the page.

I say, teacher and student, but this could equally be a father passing the tradition down to his son. The *chazzan* at my current *Mizrachi* synagogue, Shimon Tivony, whose father Moni was the *chazzan* at a Cairo synagogue, recalls the seriousness of lessons in the cantillation art and the importance attached to accurate renditions. The grandson, also named Moni, continued the singing tradition, finding fame on TV’s ‘The Voice’.

It is possible there is another page since not all the notes are covered here, though the last instance on this folio, *וְהָיָה קוֹל הַקּוֹרֵא* (‘And the voice of the reader’) ending part way through the last line may suggest it ended here, as does the fact that the reverse is blank.<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly some of the names appended to the *je amin* are sometimes different from any of the traditions mentioned above or those in other Genizah fragments, mixing Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic nomenclature, showing the variation by which the trope was conveyed in different localities.

The first line begins a fairly standard phrasing attached to Gen. 1:1a, *בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם* (‘In the beginning God created the heaven...’). The first note shown has an extra *alef* suggesting the vocalisation *אֱלֹהִים* (*ēlāh*, ‘hand-breath’) rather than *ēlāh*.<sup>15</sup> We have already discussed above. Similarly, *אֶת* (*etnaḥ*, ‘rest’) instead of *etnaḥ*, usually marking the mid-point of a *paṣuq*. The *me arḥa* (to lengthen) is our modern *meir* *meir*. The last note is not fully clear. It is another *leḥa* but is not marked as such, instead using the name *deḥi* (‘thrust back’) used before a hemistich break *paṣuq* (*šilluq*).<sup>16</sup>

We skip to the next biblical verse with *וְהָיָה קוֹל הַקּוֹרֵא* (‘And the earth was formless and void’) from Gen. 1:2a which introduces a more complex sequence *rev* (*rev*, ‘your-square’ – a reference to its diamond shape) is followed by a further *meir* but this is called here *me* which, according to Prof. Geoffrey Khan, may be the Arabic (*garf*, ‘runner’).<sup>17</sup> What has become known in modern times as double *paṣa* is rendered here as *paṣa* (*paṣa*, ‘extended’ or ‘stretching’).<sup>18</sup> The last note in line 2 is not particularly legible. It is a *zaqef aṭon* (‘lesser upright’) but is given here as *garf* (*garf*, ‘zevching’).

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The next sequence involves Gen 1:5a *וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַיָּם* (‘And God created the sea’). This sequence is followed by a further *meir* but this is called here *me* which, according to Prof. Geoffrey Khan, may be the Arabic (*garf*, ‘runner’).<sup>17</sup> What has become known in modern times as double *paṣa* is rendered here as *paṣa* (*paṣa*, ‘extended’ or ‘stretching’).<sup>18</sup> The last note in line 2 is not particularly legible. It is a *zaqef aṭon* (‘lesser upright’) but is given here as *garf* (*garf*