

Check list for observation and evaluation of Hebrew script

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This Check-list is a shortened English version of a more detailed guide of the description of Hebrew handwritings "Petit guide de description des écritures hébraïques : identifier la main du scribe", see www.hebrewmanuscript.com.

Some useful terms

1. The line of writing:

headline



baseline

2. average letter

the body of the letter



Beth: upper horizontal bar



Beth: base



Beth: vertical downstroke



Beth: serif

Lamed: ascender



Lamed: the body of the letter

Qoph: the body of the letter



Qoph: descender

I Presentation

1. Identification of the documents

- Collection
- Shelfmarks

2. Writing material

- papyrus
- leather
- parchment
- paper
- textile
- wood
- other

3. Ink and pigments

4. State of conservation

5. Style and quality of the script

- square
 - calligraphic
 - informal
- documentary
 - calligraphic
 - informal
- bookhand
 - calligraphic
 - informal

6. Type of script

7. Text

II External features

1. Format

- books
 - scroll
 - rotulus
 - codex
 - leaf
 - uncertain
- documents

- broader than the width of an average *vav*
- equal to the width of an average *vav*
- smaller than the width of an average *vav*

IV Text rapidity

1. *General impression*
2. *Number of movements to trace a given letter (ductus)*

V Lines

Ruled manuscripts

1. *Pricking*

- yes
- no
- instrument
- regularity of the row
- pattern

2. *Ruling*

- yes
- no
- instrument
- pattern

3. *Number of written versus ruled lines*

4. *Position of the written line in respect to the ruling*

- in the middle
- in the upper part
- in the lower part
- attached to the upper/lower line
- ascenders go beyond the upper line
- descenders descend below the lower line

Manuscripts without ruling

1. *The line is:*

- regular
- irregular
- throughout the page
- in a part of the page
- parallel to the line of writing

lifting towards the end
 sinking towards the end
 sinking in the middle
 undulating

VI Letters

1. Letters and the line of writing

- upper horizontal strokes are parallel to the headline
- bases are parallel to the baseline
- they are not parallel
- vertical downstrokes are perpendicular to the baseline
- they lean (to the right, to the left, how much?)
- average letters descend below the baseline
- average letters go above the headline

2. The width of the letters

- regular
- irregular

3. Vertical downstrokes are parallel:

- in a word
- in a line
- on a page
- ascenders/descenders are parallel to the downstrokes
- ascenders/descenders are parallel between them:
 - in a word
 - in a line
 - on a page

4. Ascenders and descenders: proportions

- ascenders/descenders are longer than the height of the average letter (how much)
- ascenders/descenders are equal to the height of the average letter
- ascenders/descenders are shorter than the height of the average letter (how much)

5. The width of the strokes

- thick (full width of the tip of the calamus/pen)
- thin
- shading: differences between the width of strokes in a letter

6. Ligatures (list, shape, frequency)

VII Morphology of the letters

1. *Vertical downstrokes*

- straight
- leaning to the right/left
- rounded (open to the right/left)
- undulating
- thickened at the end
- thinner at the end
- variable
- turned or broken at the end

2. *Horizontal bases*

- straight
- lifted to the right/left
- convexe
- concave
- variable

3. *Horizontal upper bars*

- straight
- convexe
- concave
- variable
- longer/shorter/equal to the bases
- diamond shaped

4. *Additional strokes*

- serifs
- relative width
- relative length
- shape (like a coma, triangle, hook, diamond, straight stroke)

- feet (at the extremity of vertical downstrokes in aleph, gimel, tav)
- flag (on the ascender of the lamed)
- nose (pe)
- hook (top/bottom end of the vav, yod, some vertical strokes)

5. Meeting point between the strokes in a letter

- shape
 - cross
 - angular
 - rounded
 - loop
 - with a neck
- meeting place
 - the strokes touch/do not touch each other
 - (if they touch) in what part of the stroke (middle, upper, lower part)
 - they continue beyond the meeting point
 - place of a stroke in respect of the other strokes of the letter (ex. Shin: middle stroke)

VIII Regularity

1. Number and shape of the different forms of the same letter

2. Distinction/ no distinction between similar letters:

beth and kaph, dalet and resh, he and heth, vav, yod and final nun, vav and zayin, final mem and samekh.

IX Vowels and accents

1. Frequency

2. Vocalisation system

- Tiberian
- Extended Tiberian
- Babylonian
- Palestinian
- Hybrid

X Punctuation

- yes

- no

- graphic shape

XI Abbreviations, Corrections, Glosses