

ABSTRACT

THE LAYOUT OF THE SONG OF MOSES (*HA'AZINU*)
IN MEDIEVAL ITALIAN BIBLICAL MANUSCRIPTS

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This article describes the traditions reflected in medieval Italian biblical manuscripts with regard to the layout of the *Ha'azinu* poem (The Song of Moses; Deut 32:1–43). It traces the relationship of these traditions to other early traditions of transmission, mainly in Ashkenaz.

The most significant finding is that in slightly fewer than half of the Italian manuscripts, *Ha'azinu* was written in 70 lines, as found in Massekhet Soferim and as is commonly practiced today (46.2%); in another 32% it was written in two columns and with fewer or more than 70 lines. Thus, in medieval Italy, the combined group (a+b) comprises 78.2% of the manuscripts as compared to 43.8% in Ashkenaz. The most prominent feature in Ashkenaz is the writing of *Ha'azinu* in ways that diverge from the halachic norm, 47.8% – almost half of the manuscripts, compared to only 10.9% in Italy (a gap of 36.9%). Another difference is that while in a small number of Italian manuscripts, fewer than 7%, *Ha'azinu* was written in 67 rows as in the Aleppo Codex, in Ashkenaz only a tiny fraction of manuscripts, 0.9%, display this practice.