Clarifying Ibn Ezra’ Directive to Not Pause at the End of a Verse

Glossing the verse “The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed… that they would keep these two days according to the writing thereof, and according to the appointed time thereof, every year” (Est 9:27), Ibn Ezra wrote in his first commentary:

Its meaning is: The scroll of Esther shall be read. Since Ezra the Scribe, who was many years later, demarcated the verses, the Sages instructed that the reader should not stop at the end of a verse.[[1]](#footnote-1)

According to this, given the command to do all that is written in the Megillah, there is an obligation to actually read it, and not just recite it by heart or speak about it.[[2]](#footnote-2) Ibn Ezra parenthetically added a detail pertaining to the reading of the Megillah; his statement, however, is very obscure, requiring the interpretation of Bible scholars. These scholars offer several ways of understanding this statement, as well as different versions of his commentary. Surprisingly, none of the scholars attended to the halakhic scholars who dealt with Ibn Ezra’s writings and attempted to explain them, in such a way as may shed light on at least some of his statement. The first halakhic scholar who mentioned Ibn Ezra’s commentary on *Megillat Esther* was R. Yosef Caro in his book *Beit Yosef*,[[3]](#footnote-3) and he was followed by several other halakhic sages who tried to elucidate it. This paper aims to present a wide range of varied explanations of Ibn Ezra’s words, and by so doing, to contribute to a better understanding of the issue.[[4]](#footnote-4)

# The Difficulties Which Arise from Ibn Ezra’s Directive

Commentaries on Ibn Ezra’s works, as well as halakhic scholars and scholars of his commentary all struggled with several difficulties which his directive presents. I will first list these difficulties, and then discuss each of them separately:

1. “Since Ezra the Scribe… demarcated the verses”: Nowhere in the writings of the Sages is the demarcation of the verses explicitly attributed to Ezra the Scribe. The only reference to the breaking up of verses is attributed to Moses: “Any verse that Moses did not demarcate we do not demarcate, and Shmuel said that we do demarcate.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
2. “Who was many years later”: Ezra did not live many years after Mordechai and Esther. Mordechai and Esther lived and were active at the end of the seventy years of the First Temple exile, and Ezra lived at the beginning of the Second Temple period.[[6]](#footnote-6)
3. “The Sages instructed that the reader should not stop at the end of a verse”: It seems that Ibn Ezra’s dictum pertains to all the verses of the Megillah; however, the only case where the Sages of the Talmud apply this rule is concerning the continuous recitation of the ten sons of Haman without pause between the verses.[[7]](#footnote-7)
4. The logical connection between the two parts of Ibn Ezra’s sentence is unclear. What connects the Sages’ motivation to ignore Ezra’s demarcation of the verses and read the Megillah without stopping at the end of the verse, to the fact that he “was many years later?”
5. The authority of the one who demarcates the verses: Ibn Ezra attributes weighty exegetical significance to the demarcation of the verses.[[8]](#footnote-8) In two of his books, he expanded upon this and even criticized R. Saadia Gaon and R. Moshe Ibn Gikatilla for interpreting verses while ignoring the breaks between them.[[9]](#footnote-9) How, then, does Ibn Ezra accept this blatant deviation [in the case of the Megillah] without noting it?[[10]](#footnote-10)

We will now discuss each of these questions and present the various approaches taken by Bible scholars and halakhic scholars on this issue.

# Ezra Demarcated the Verses of the Bible

When noting the source for Ibn Ezra’s assertion that Ezra demarcated the verses, Uriel Simon referenced the Talmud passage in *Megillah* (3a) and *Nedarim* (37b):[[11]](#footnote-11)

This is as Rav Ika bar Avin said… that Rav said: What is [the meaning of] that which is written: “And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh 8:8)? [The Gemara explains:] “They read in the book, in the Torah of God”⸺that is the Bible. “Distinctly”⸺that is the Aramaic translation. “And they gave the sense”⸺this is [the division into] the verses.

“And they gave the sense⸺this is the division into the verses” means that Ezra read according to the demarcation of the verses.[[12]](#footnote-12) However, this refers only to verses in the Torah and not the rest of the Bible, as is written: “The entire people assembled… and they asked Ezra the Scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses… [and] Ezra the priest brought the Teaching before the congregation… [and] he read from it… [and] they read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading” (Neh 8:1-8).[[13]](#footnote-13) It seems that this is what motivated a number of Sages to determine that Ezra did not demarcate the verses, but rather reconstructed the demarcation made by Moshe, as noted in the Gemara, “the people forgot them and then re-established them” (BT *Megillah* 3a).[[14]](#footnote-14)

Ibn Ezra was not alone in this matter. R. Isaac Abravanel also wrote in several places that the division of the verses was carried out by Ezra the Scribe: “And before Ezra started to punctuate and cantillate and demarcate the verses;”[[15]](#footnote-15) “And Ezra also taught Israel the punctuation and cantillation and demarcation of verses, and thus preserved and prevented them from any failure and mistake.”[[16]](#footnote-16) It seems that those who attribute the demarcation (or the reconstruction) of the verses to Ezra, also expanded his activities (as described in the book of Nehemiah, and the aforementioned passages in the Talmud) to the entire Bible, and not only the Pentateuch.

# “…(who was) [and not] many years later”

Ibn Ezra’s statement cited above was a translation of the version that appears in Mishali and Zippor’s diplomatic critical edition,[[17]](#footnote-17) comparing fourteen manuscripts. A close examination of the textual apparatus for this verse shows that this time they decided to deviate from the textual version that appears in the base manuscript and used the phrasing from other manuscripts. The version in their base manuscript was: “and who was not many years after”; they changed the word *ve-lo* [and [was] not] to the word *ve-hu* [who was], rendering the sentence: “who was many years later.” However, this version raises the difficulty noted above (question 2), and, as they wrote: “Indeed, there is some difficulty… according to the widespread understanding regarding Mordechai’s era, and therefore the time when the Megillah was written, Ezra lived and was active not long after.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

In contrast to the direction taken by Mishali and Zippor, others who examined Ibn Ezra’s statement wrote: “and [was] not many years later.” This is found in R. Yosef Caro’s quotation of Ibn Ezra’s words in the laws of Megillah, as well as in the discussions of all the halakhic scholars who followed him. This version is also brought in *Mikraot Gedolot HaKeter* and is favored by Simon, based on an earlier edition.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The version of Ibn Ezra’s text which R. Haim Benvenisti consulted, without much success at elucidating, stated “and was not many years later.” However, he notes that he found a gloss in the manuscript that added the word “but”: “and was not *but* many years after.” This only reinforces the problem, as he wrote:[[20]](#footnote-20)

And I found a gloss in the manuscript, “and was not but many years later.” Besides the fact that in Ibn Ezra’s commentary the word “but” is not written, Ezra was not many years after Mordechai but was rather a contemporary, and even if the events of the Megillah occurred before Ezra demarcated the verses it would only be a short time before, as Ahasuerus was after Belshazzar and our Sages said that he counted and was mistaken,[[21]](#footnote-21) and Ezra established the verse demarcations at the beginning of the Second Temple period when Nehemiah built the Temple, as is written “And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading,” and from this verse, our Sages learned in the first chapter of *Megillah* “and they gave the sense”⸺these are the verses. And Rashi wrote: These are the verses, the way they are demarcated. And how could there be many years between the time of the Megillah and the time during which Ezra demarcated the verses; just the opposite, it would have been better to not write any gloss and leave the version as it was, “and was not many years later,” for this is the truth.

The addition of “but” also appears in R. Shlomo Alkabetz’s edition of Ibn Ezra’s statement.[[22]](#footnote-22) To avoid the difficulty expressed by R. Haim Benvenisti, the Maharitz[[23]](#footnote-23) wrote that the statement referred to the time when the books of the Bible were written. This means that much time had passed since the biblical books were written, and therefore, Ezra needed to reconstruct the demarcation of the verses as this was forgotten.[[24]](#footnote-24) R. Yosef Iskapa’s version of Ibn Ezra also had “and was not many years after.” Without glossing, he wrote: “meaning, and lived not but after many years since the Megillah was written.”[[25]](#footnote-25)

All this leads to the conclusion that it is preferable to adopt the version of the excellent manuscript which Mishali and Zippor chose as the basis for their edition, which is the version also preferred by Simon and used by *Mikraot Gedolot haKeter*. This version is also identical to the one cited by R. Yosef Caro and subsequent halakhic scholars and was also the version used by R. Haim Benvenisti, a version that most likely reflects the historical truth.

# The Sages Instructed That the Reader Should Not Stop at the End of a Verse

We will now discuss the main difficulty with Ibn Ezra’s statement (question 3): Where did the Sages say to not stop at the end of a verse, and why? Mishali and Zippor understood that this refers to the known custom of reading the names of Haman’s ten sons with one breath.[[26]](#footnote-26) Even though the list of Haman’s sons is written over three verses, they are read in one breath without pausing between the verses. In addition to this possibility, Mishali and Zippor also suggest the possibility of a continuous reading of Haman’s ten sons including two other words: the word *ish*, “men,” which concludes the verse preceding the list of sons, and the word *‘aseret*, “the ten,” found at the beginning of the verse following this list. These words bracket the poetic form of Haman’s ten sons, and are therefore read together with them in one breath without pausing at the end of each verse.[[27]](#footnote-27) This yields a continuous reading of about five verses. In addition, they suggested that Ibn Ezra’s intention was to also continuously read verses whose subject matter continues past the end of a verse, such as verses 9:30-31.

In their appendices,[[28]](#footnote-28) they discuss this matter further, and cited other versions which contradicted the one used in their edition: “The Sages said to not stop *but* at the end of the verse.”[[29]](#footnote-29) They claim that though these versions support Ibn Ezra’s method of insisting upon the demarcation of verses, they contradict the Sages who explicitly said to not stop between the verses listing Haman’s ten sons.

Others accepted this version,[[30]](#footnote-30) and there were even those who posited a typographical error in the other version.[[31]](#footnote-31) However, this version is difficult, as it would mean no difference between the way we are to read the Megillah and the way we read the rest of the Bible. Therefore, they suggested that the difference lies in the fact that the demarcation of verses in the Megillah is not dependent only upon Ezra’s wisdom, but also on his chronological proximity to Esther (Simon); or that the innovation is that even though it is termed an *iggeret* (missive), and was sent to all the provinces of the kingdom without a prior tradition of reading it continuously, it should be read continuously as one reads the rest of the Bible (Rosenberg), even though they were already used to doing so (Karmi); or, even though Ibn Ezra claims that there are “ten verses which should be appended to the adjacent ones and one should not stop between them,” one should still stop between them as one does with other verses of the Bible (Sherim).

It is difficult to accept both the opinions of those who limit the application of Ibn Ezra’s statement to the reading of Haman’s ten sons, as well as those who compare the reading of the Megillah to the reading of the rest of the Bible. It seems that Ibn Ezra advocated a different and unique reading of all the verses of the Megillah. Indeed, viewing Ibn Ezra’s statement within the context brought by R. Yosef Caro clearly shows that Ibn Ezra intended a methodical and fixed reading of all the verses in the Megillah, while taking care to not pause at the end of the verses, but rather to connect the verses to each other as one who “reads a missive.” R. Yosef Caro wrote his opinion following R. Natan’s directive to stop this custom, as quoted by R. Yaakov Ba’al HaTurim:[[32]](#footnote-32)

According to R. Natan, one who reads *Megillat Esther* in public should do so consecutively as if he is reading a missive; only Haman’s ten sons and the word *‘aseret* (“the ten,” Est 9:10) need to be read in one breath, therefore he is permitted to stop between the other verses.[[33]](#footnote-33)

R. Yosef Caro first explained R. Natan’s statement, and, as was his custom, also listed additional opinions on this matter:

According to R. Natan… this means that there is no need to read the end of each verse and the beginning of each verse in one breath…

And the Rokeaḥ (236) wrote of the custom to not breathe between the verses as it is called an *iggeret* (“missive,” Est 9:26).[[34]](#footnote-34)

And in *Shibbolei HaLeket* (198): R. Yeshaya deduced from the *baraita* (BT *Megillah* 21b) that they would translate it, they would read one verse until the end and then translate and then read the next verse, and not as is our practice to not stop at the end of a verse.

And Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra wrote in his commentary on Esther (9:27): “Since Ezra the Scribe demarcated the verses, and he was not many years after, our forefathers may they rest in peace ruled that the reader not stop at the end of the verse.”

After explaining that according to R. Natan there is no need to make sure to connect the verses of the Megillah without pausing between them, R. Yosef Caro cited the opinion of the Rokeaḥ who encourages upholding this custom, and the opinion of the *Shibbolei Leket* which reflects the custom of his day to read continuously (although he seems to agree with R. Yeshaya who rejects this practice).[[35]](#footnote-35) Immediately after, he cited the opinion of Ibn Ezra who posits that this custom should be upheld – “Our Sages may they rest in peace ruled that the reader not stop at the end of the verse.” There is no doubt that R. Yosef Caro understood that the custom mentioned here by Ibn Ezra was not the reading of Haman’s ten sons in one breath, but a systematic linking of all the verses in the Megillah as one who reads an *iggeret*, which is different from how one reads the rest of the Bible.

R. Yoel Sirkis (*Bayyit Ḥadash*, ibid.) understood that this is what the halakhic discussion was focused on, and he wished to deny the validity of this custom. In his opinion, one should not follow this practice, as R. Natan explicitly said that only the verses of Haman’s ten sons should be attached to the word *‘aseret* which follows them, meaning that there is no need to continuously read any verses other than these.

This practice is at present upheld only by Yemenites, whose rabbis defended the custom’s validity and settled the difficulties raised by the *Shibbolei Leket* and the *Bayit Hadash*.[[36]](#footnote-36) This custom dates back to the time of the Geonim and the great Sages of France, and there is no doubt that this is what Ibn Ezra intended. The Geonim write: “R. Yehudah son of Rabbeinu Yitzḥak said... This was his father’s custom, after leaving the synagogue he would read the Megillah out of a scroll, and would not stop at the end of a verse but rather start reading the next verse, and then pause. And proof of this is ‘Five hundred men… and Vayzatha *‘aseret*’” (Est 9:6-10).[[37]](#footnote-37) This custom is also mentioned by a student of Rashi and by several of the early Spanish Sages.[[38]](#footnote-38)

In the version of Ibn Ezra’s statement quoted by R. Yosef Caro, this custom was attributed to “our forefathers” and not to “the Sages,” and it seems that this refers to the Geonim and the aforementioned Sages. Although most versions attribute this custom to “our Sages,” it appears that Ibn Ezra did not verbally differentiate between the sages of the Talmud and the early Rabbis.

# The Logic of the Directive

The relationship of cause and effect in Ibn Ezra’s directive challenged all those who approached this issue (question 4). R. Haim Benvenisti was the first to discuss it, writing that he did not understand its meaning: “However, in any case, I find it difficult, that Ezra demarcated not only the verses of the Megillah but also those of the entire Bible, and why did he rule that only in *Megillat Esther*, and not in the rest of the Bible, should one not stop between verses? In the end, I did not fully understand Ibn Ezra’s position on this matter.”[[39]](#footnote-39) It seems that he understood that according to Ibn Ezra, it was Ezra the Scribe, who demarcated the verses of the entire Bible, who ruled to not pause at the end of the verses in the Megillah. According to this explanation, our Sages ruled to heed Ezra and to not stop between the verses of the Megillah.

Aron Gumperz took this in an entirely different direction, writing that since this verse is “uncommonly” long, Ibn Ezra therefore noted that one should stop after the words *ve-lo ya’avor* (‘that it not be altered’), but our Sages did not want to do other than what Ezra, who lived in a time proximal to Mordechai, ruled, “and anyone who was proximal to the author of a book understands his words and intentions better than later ones.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

These two explanations of Ibn Ezra’s statement are unusual. As mentioned above, Mishali and Zippor argued that it referred only to the reading of Haman’s sons. According to them, Ibn Ezra contended that since Mordechai was not the one who demarcated the verses of the Megillah, a task completed only later on by Ezra, the Sages did not consider it imperative to break up the verses listing Haman’s ten sons, and therefore ruled that the verses listing Haman’s sons should be read in one continuum.

R. Moshe Amarilio took a different stance, similar to the one brought in the previous section, positing that Ibn Ezra’s statement applied to the reading of the entire Megillah:[[41]](#footnote-41)

And it seems that this is what it means, that when it says *kekhtavam* (‘according to the writing thereof’), this means that the Megillah should be read as it is written, without breaks between the verses, and the reason is that since it is taught that Ezra demarcated the verses of the Torah, meaning that it was forgotten and then reconstructed, and as it says in the first chapter of *Megillah* (3a), and if so then if there is an obligation to stop the verses in the Megillah similar to those in the Torah, why did Mordechai, who was proximal to Ezra, not explicitly decree this, for we cannot say that this was forgotten as Ezra was not many years after Mordechai.

R. Moshe opines that Ezra’s demarcation of the verses of the Bible is only a reconstruction of the original demarcation which took place at the time the texts were written. However, Ezra did this for all the verses of the Bible except for those of *Megillat Esther*, since the Megillah says “according to the writing thereof,” meaning the way they were written, without demarcation. However, this explanation is difficult because it does not appear in the text. If this opinion were correct, then Ibn Ezra should have written that “since Ezra the Scribe demarcated the verses [and did not demarcate the verses of the Megillah].”

R. Yosef Iskapa also maintained that Ezra reconstructed an earlier demarcation of the verses. However, since Ezra did so long after the books were written, therefore “our holy forefathers ruled that the reader should not stop at the end of the verse.”[[42]](#footnote-42) In what way are the verses of the Megillah different than the verses of the rest of the Bible, where we do make sure to stop at the end of the verses? R. Yosef responds: “And I say that concerning the Torah that was given at Sinai, it was given with punctuation and cantillation marks as everything was given at Sinai. But these were forgotten, and Ezra reconstructed them.” His explanation is difficult, as it does not explain why the Sages chose to ignore Ezra’s opinion regarding the demarcation. R. Mordechai Karmi commented on R. Yosef’s explanation, “and his words are not clear.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

R. Reuven Mizraḥi wrote a similar explanation, except that according to him, Ezra reconstructed the demarcation of all the verses *other* than those of the Megillah, because there was no need for it:[[44]](#footnote-44)

And in my humble opinion, I think that the words of R. Ibn Ezra are clear in and of themselves, and there is no need for dangerous ways or any emendation. The meaning is that many days and years passed from the Torah and the Prophets and the Writings until Ezra the Scribe came, and the demarcation of the verses was forgotten from Israel, and Ezra reconstructed [them] with God’s good grace. However, concerning the Megillah, not many days had passed as it was [written] proximal to his time, all of Israel knew the demarcation of the verses, and he did not need to provide a [new] demarcation as it was already well-known in his time, and since he did not demarcate them, our Sages ruled that the reader should not stop, since Ezra the Scribe did not demarcate them, and this seems simple to me.

According to this explanation, since Ezra did not demarcate the verses, our Sages ruled to not read the Megillah according to the demarcation of the verses, but rather to read it continuously. This requires clarification, as the Maharitz wrote in the name of his son, R. Avraham:[[45]](#footnote-45)

And each time I read the book *Ma’ayan Ganim* my son Avraham, may God protect him, raised the difficulty why we do not stop⸺if the reason is that Ezra did not demarcate the verses because the demarcation was still remembered, then in the days of Ezra they did stop, and if so we should also stop as we do in the other verses of the Bible. And this requires further study.

It is possible that since Ezra himself did not demarcate them, then we should not stop even though Mordechai demarcated them, as we follow Ezra’s amendment. An example of this is as is written in *Berakhot* (12b), that any portion of the Torah which Moshe did not demarcate – we do not demarcate, and the Gemara in *Megillah* (22) also says that any verse that Moshe did not demarcate we do not demarcate, and examine this.

This explanation is significant and bears an important halakhic implication. Since we follow the amendment of Ezra the Scribe, there is no need to read the verses other than according to his demarcations, not even according to the demarcations set by Mordechai and Esther, the authors of the Megillah.

Another way to settle this question was suggested by Rabbi D.B. Rosenberg and Rabbi A. Zilber. They write that several years before Ezra demarcated the verses of the Megillah, the custom was to read it as an *iggeret* – a missive – without an oral tradition or a demarcation of the verses. Therefore, even after Ezra demarcated the verses, we should not deviate from the earlier custom but should continue to read it as an *iggeret*.[[46]](#footnote-46)

# The Validity of the Demarcation of the Verses

As mentioned above, Ibn Ezra felt obligated to explain verses based on their demarcation.[[47]](#footnote-47) However, it seems that Ibn Ezra distinguished between reading for exegesis, and reading for a ceremonial or ritual purpose. An exegetical reading necessitates the demarcation of verses, whereas a ceremonial reading is less constrained. An example of this can also be found in his *piyyutim* (liturgical poetry). Although Ibn Ezra tended to explain the verses based on the *peshat* (the simple, or literal, reading) without relying upon *midrashim* (homiletical exegesis), when composing his liturgical poems he allowed himself to compose them using a homiletical approach, even though this sometimes contradicted his opinion in his exegesis of *peshat*.[[48]](#footnote-48)

# Conclusion

It seems that the correct version of Ibn Ezra’s statement is:

Since Ezra the Scribe, and he was not many years later, demarcated the verses, the Sages instructed that the reader should not stop at the end of a verse.

This means that Ezra reconstructed the demarcation of the verses of the Bible. However, whether or not this included also the demarcation of the verses of the Megillah, our forefathers in any case ruled to not read the entire Megillah according to the demarcation of the verses. The reason for this is that if it was Mordechai, and not Ezra, who demarcated the verses of the Megillah and we follow the decree of Ezra. If it was Ezra who in fact demarcated the verses of the Megillah, since it says *kekhtavam* (“according to the writing thereof,” without the demarcation of the verses), or since over several years the custom was to read it as an *iggeret* without heeding the demarcation of the verses, our forefathers ruled that we continue this early custom of reading it as an *iggeret* – and not according to the demarcations.

1. [מה זה?]The passage is a translation by Academic Language Experts of the text in A. Mishali and M. Zippor, *Shnei Perushei R. Avraham Ibn Ezra ‘al Megillat Esther*, Ramat Gan (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A. Mishali and M. Zippor, *Shnei Perushei R. Avraham Ibn Ezra,* p. 104. In his second commentary, Ibn Ezra wrote: “According to the writing thereof – this implies reading the Megillah.” The Jerusalem Talmud (*Megillah*, beginning of ch. 2) learns from this verse several issues pertaining to the reading of the Megillah, such as: to not read it out of order, to not read it by heart, and to not read it in translation. The *Targum* on the Megillah writes: “According to the writing thereof… to read this scroll… in their places of worship.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. R. Yosef Caro, in: *Arba’a Turim haShalem*, Mosdot Shirat Devora, Jerusalem (1999), *Beit Yosef, Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, 5, 690, 15, p. 659. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Of course, this also acknowledges the contribution of the halakhic scholars to the study of the Bible and its exegetes. I will dedicate a separate article to a discussion of this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. BT *Megillah* 22a. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. This difficulty was also noted by: R. Haim Benvenisti, *Knesses HaGedolah*, 3, *Makhon haKtav*, Jerusalem (1990), *Oraḥ Ḥayyim*, p. 522; Mishali and Zippor, *Shnei Perushei,* p. 183; and further mentions below. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. BT *Megillah* 16b. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Abraham Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznayim*, eds. Lorenzo Jiménez Patón and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, Cordoba (2002), p. 13 (מהד' שאול גודמן, ירושלים תשע"ו, עמ' יח):: “And before all these mentioned are possible, I warn you to follow the cantillations, and to not heed any explanation that is not according to the cantillations. And to not pay attention to the ten verses mentioned by one of the Geonim (=R. Saadia Gaon) that are connected to the verses that follow them; all are correct, demarcated appropriately. And in *Sefer Ṣaḥot* (Carlos del Valle Rodríguez, *Sefer Ṣaḥot de Abraham Ibn Ezra – Edition critica y version Castellana*, Salamanca (1977), pp. עג עמוד א – עד עמוד א; and in the del Valle Rodriguez edition, p. 192) he wrote: “There are many commentators who lead the demarcator astray, and they spoke incorrectly… all this occurred because they found a single opinion stating that there are ten verses in the Bible which should be appended to the adjacent ones. And I wonder greatly, how the demarcator erred, even though he be Ezra the Scribe. And the principle is – there was never one as wise as the one who demarcated…” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Uriel Simon, Ozen Milim Tivḥan – Meḥkarim b’darko haparshanit shel R. Ibn Ezra, Ramat Gan (2017), pp. 195-197. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. We should note that despite these declarations, in several places the Ibn Ezra deviated from his rule and explained matters as against the cantillations. See Simcha Kogut, *HaMikra bein Te’amim l’Parshanut: Bḥinah leshonit v’inyanit shel zikot umaḥlokot bein parshanut hate’amim laparshanut hamesortit*, Jerusalem (1994), pp. 196-230; Simon, *Ozen Milim*, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Simon, *Ozen Milim*, p. 197. Of course, Simon was not the first to make this connection; earlier scholars also viewed these passages as the Ibn Ezra’s source. For example, R. Eliyahu Baḥur, who wrote (Yedidya Shlomo Rafael Norẓi, *Minḥat Shai ‘al Ḥamishah Ḥumshei Torah*, compiled by Zvi Beẓer, ed. Yosef Ofer, Jerusalem [2005], on Deut 31:16): “We accept that any verse that Ezra did not demarcate we do not demarcate, as proved in the chapter of *ein bein hamudar*.” It appears that he is referring to the issue discussed in that chapter of *Nedarim*. On the other hand, see ibid. n. 26: “Norẓi may have been referring to the dictum ‘Any verse that Moshe [Rabbeinu] did not demarcate, we do not demarcate’ (BT *Megillah* 22a and *Taanit* 27b).” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. This is as Rashi explained (ibid.): “*Eilu hapsukim –*‘These verses’ – the way they are demarcated,” and so also R. Nissim (*Nedarim*, ibid.): “And they gave the sense: This is the division into verses. The markings which mark a stop between the verses. And they are called ‘giving the sense’ because they allow the person to understand the Bible according to the cantillations.” It seems that the letter *peh* in the word *pesukim* should be marked with a *hirik* – *eilu hapisukim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mishali and Zippor (*Shnei Perushei*, p. 184) noted this as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See, for example, R. Yeshaya Mitrani (Neh 8:8): “And they read in the book, in the Law of God – this means that they read it in Hebrew… and they gave the sense - these are the verses… to teach you that all were given to Moshe at Sinai, and were forgotten in the exile, and were re-founded by Ezra and his faction. This is how our Sages interpreted it.” Many Sages(חכמים כאן הכוונה לתלמידי חכמים) took this line, see also the words of R. Moshe Amarilio, R. Yosef Iskapa and others, in the section “The logical reasoning of his words,” below. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Don Yitzḥak Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah*, [Hebrew] Yehuda Shaviv, ed., Jerusalem (2014), “Introduction to the Commentary,” pp. ?? [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Don Yitzḥak Abarbanel, Introduction to *Naḥalat Avot* Commentary on *Avot,* [Hebrew] Feldheim edition, Jerusalem-New York (2006), p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. “This means that the text precisely reflects the version found in the manuscript chosen as source, except for necessary emendations which were based on other manuscripts” (Mishali and Zippor, *Shnei Perushei*, p. 30). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See above, n. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Simon, *Ozen Milim,*, p. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Benvenisti, Knesses HaGedolah, Oraḥ Ḥayyim, p. 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See BT *Megillah* 11b. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See R. Shlomo Alkabetz, *Manot haLevi ‘al Megillat Esther*, Haim Yudah Friedman edition, Beit Shemesh (2014), clause 9, 27 pp. 339-340. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. R. Yiḥyah Ṣalaḥ, לא צריך להוסיף 'שו"ת'?*Pe’ulat Tzaddik*, 2, Bnei Brak (2003), 150, p. 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. This is similar to Mishali and Zippor, *Shnei Perushei*, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. R. Yosef Iskapa, *Rosh Yosef*, Izmir (1658)*, Hilkhot Megillah*, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. This is found in BT *Megillah* 16b: “‘And Parshandatha…and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman’ (Est 9:6–10). Rav Adda from Jaffa said: When reading the Megillah, the names of the ten sons of Haman and the word ‘ten’ must be said in one breath. What is the reason for this? It is that their souls all departed together.” [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. At the end of their discussion, Mishali and Zippor referenced *Maḥzor Vitri* and *Ma’aseh haGeonim* brought below, but it seems that they intend to not offer other possibilities but rather to reinforce the source of the custom of reading the names of Haman’s ten sons, written over several verses, in one continuum. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Mishali and Zippor, *Shnei Perushei*, pp. 183-184. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. An alternative suggestion was brought (ibid.) in the name of Aharon Mondschein, who in a private conversation suggested, by conjecture, to add the word *she’lo* – ‘not at’ – that the reader should not stop [not at] the end of the verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Simon, *Ozen Milim*, p. 197; Dov Berush Rosenberg, *Davar Tov*, Jerusalem (2001), p. 361; R. Mordechai Karmi, *Maamar Mordechai*, *Oraḥ Ḥayyim* 690, 10 (he believes that this was the intention of the proofreader mentioned by R. Haim Benvenisti in adding the word ‘but’, and he added it in the wrong place); in the commentary *Pituḥei Ḥotam*, in: Rafael Firschtental, *Kol Sasson*, Krotoszyn (1839), p. 31b: “and it was not many years after that our Sages ruled that the reader not stop but at the end of a verse.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Yitzhak Sherim, *Hadar Azar, Ḥamesh Megillot*, Izmir (1865), p. 118b. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Caro, Beit Yosef. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See the footnotes ibid. (n. 16), where it is written: “In the Mantua, Spain, and Saloniki editions, and in the manuscript, the version is ‘R. Natronai’…” [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. R. Elazar of Worms, *The Rokeaḥ*, Cremona, (1556): “The custom is to not breathe between verses because it is called and *iggeret*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The *Shibbolei Leket* was written by R. Zedekiah ben Avraham HaRofe, 13th c. Italy. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Maharitz, *Takhl’el ‘Etz Ḥayyim*, at the end of the section dealing with Purim (166, 2); Ṣalaḥ, *Pe’ulat Tzaddik*; R. Shlomo Koraḥ, *‘Arikhat haShulḥan*, 9 (1930), 7, p. 190; R. Yizhak Rasabi, *Shulḥan ‘Arukh haMekutzar*, *Mo’adim* (1930), 122, 13, p. 279; R. Yosef haCohen ‘Araki and Adam bin Nun, *Iggeret haPurim*, Bnei Brak (2013), pp. 129-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. *Ma’aseh haGeonim*, Epstein and Freimanen edition*,* Berlin (1910), 56, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. R. Simchah, a student of Rashi, wrote: “And one is permitted to stop wherever he wishes, both at the end of a verse and in the middle of a verse, and such is the custom in two *yeshivot* (places of learning), and also R. Amram Gaon the headmaster said this, as well as R. Yehudai Gaon” (*Maḥzor Vitri*, Shimon haLevi Ish Horovitz edition, Nierenberg, 1923, 247, p. 213). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Knesses haGedolah, Oraḥ Ḥayyim, p. 522. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Aron Emmerich Gumperz, *Migaleh Sod*, Lvov (1911), p. 48. His commentary was also copied by Shlomo Zalman Stern, *K’tonet Passim – Gedulat Mordechai* (still in manuscript form, the National Library of Israel, no. F4571). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. R. Moshe Amarilio, *D’var Moshe,* Salonik (1642), 48, p. 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Iskapa, *Rosh Yosef*. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Karmi, Maamar Mordechai. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. R. Reuven Mizraḥi, *Ma’ayan Ganim*, Constantinople (1720), 23, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. R. Yiḥyah Ṣalaḥ*, Pe’ulat Tzaddik*. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Rosenberg, *Davar Tov*. He believes that it is therefore clear why the Ibn Ezra, in R. Yosef Caro’s version, says “our forefathers ruled” and not our Sages. R. A. Zilber bases his interpretation upon a hairsplitting analysis: “And it is possible that we need to clarify according to what R. Y.Z. HaLevi wrote, that there are two issues concerning the writing of the Megillah, and that at first it was written to be read out loud, and later the Men of the Great Assembly included it in the holy writings [=the Bible]. And it is possible that at first the verses of the Megillah were not demarcated, and afterwards, when it was inserted in the holy writings, Ezra determined the demarcations as we have it today, and this is perhaps the way to explain the words of the Ibn Ezra.” (R. Aryeh Zilber, *Az Yashir*, Jerusalem [2009], p. 409). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Ibn Ezra, *Sefer Moznayim*. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. As demonstrated by Miriam Sklarz, “*Hashlakhat Avraham l’Kivshan ha-Esh b’Kitveihem shel R. Ibn Ezra v’Ramban*,” *Oreshet* 3 (2012), pp. 23-33 [referencing pp. 28-29]. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)