



Assessing the Manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*

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Abstract This article examines the content and structure of the manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, engaging with ideas concerning its production addressed in Ivan Marcus’s recently published book on *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Marcus has argued that the book was written piece by piece and not as an integral book and further suggested that each and every manuscript of *Sefer Ḥasidim* should be taken as a distinct edition of the book prepared by Judah he-Ḥasid. The present study demonstrates that, notwithstanding the gradual process in which *Sefer Ḥasidim* was written and the great variations among the manuscripts, it is possible to reconstruct a textual process that led to the larger compilations found in the three well-known text editions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, represented by MS Parma 3280, MS JTS Boesky 45, and the edition printed in Bologna in 1538. The analysis focuses on the distribution of the text in the manuscripts. While it is difficult to show linear relations among them, the different versions demonstrate a gradual process of growth and enlargement of the material around topical structures. Since most of the material is transmitted in more than one exemplar and few passages appear in one manuscript alone, it is argued that the manuscripts can be linked to show how the material grew from random collections of single paragraphs to topically ordered clusters and into the larger compilations of *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

Keywords Sefer Ḥasidim · Book production · Transmission history · Compilation · Judah he-Ḥasid · Kalonymides · Eleazar of Worms

One of the manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, Cambridge Add. 379 (Ashkenaz, thirteenth/fourteenth century), concludes as follows (fol. 74r):

ותשלם מלאכת ספר החסידים אשר נלקט כגרגירים בראש אמיר וכענבים אשר
הבשילו בתוך הבאושים

“And finished is the work of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* which was gathered like berries at the top of the highest bough (Isa 17:6) and (plucked) like the good grapes from those (already) spoilt.”

In his coda, the copyist of this manuscript describes the labor exerted in producing the book, comparing it to “gathering” the berries and grapes with utmost care from the topmost branches and carefully selecting grapes from among those that were already spoiling. By means of this metaphor, the copyist is describing the manner in which he produced his manuscript—carefully selecting from an array of good and bad teachings the most appropriate and gathering them together.

Sefer Ḥasidim (Book of the Pious; thirteenth-century Ashkenaz) comprises a collection of ethical teachings and religious ideas from the circle referred to as “Ḥasidei Ashkenaz,” represented by Judah he-Ḥasid of Regensburg (d. 1217), his father Samuel he-Ḥasid, and Judah’s disciple Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (*ha-Roqeah*).¹ Their writings also include Bible commentaries, commentaries on the prayers, and ethical and mystical treatises.² *Sefer Ḥasidim* has interested scholars of medieval Jewish history since the nineteenth century, especially because the book is replete with historical realia that describe the everyday circumstances of Jews living in a Christian environment.³ The book also serves as an important source on the religious and intellectual history of the Jews in medieval Ashkenaz.

Recently, the focus of scholarly attention has moved from the book’s content to its form and structure and to the history of its transmission. Initially, *Sefer Ḥasidim* was believed to have survived in two distinct versions: the Bologna print edition of 1538 (known as SHB) and the Parma manuscript (known as SHP).⁴ The launch of the Princeton University *Sefer Ḥasidim* Database (PUSHD) in 2007 provided access to all known manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim*⁵ and enabled scholars to challenge this strict dichotomy. Other versions of the book came to light, and it soon became clear that scholarship on *Sefer Ḥasidim* and the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz had to take account of the fact

¹This article confines its considerations to the Kalonymide group; for other circles of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz see Joseph Dan, *The Esoteric Theology of Ashkenazi Ḥasidism* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1968); idem, *The “Unique Cherub” Circle: A School of Mystics and Esoterics in Medieval Germany* (Tübingen, 1999); Gerold Necker, *Das Buch des Lebens: Edition, Übersetzung und Studien* (Tübingen, 2001).

²For a recent examination of the lesser-known works of the Pietists see David I. Shyovitz, *A Remembrance of His Wonders: Nature and the Supernatural in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Philadelphia, 2017).

³Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Pennsylvania, 2014); idem, “Appropriation and Differentiation: Jewish Identity in Medieval Ashkenaz,” *AJS Review* 42, no. 1 (2018): 39–63; Johann Maier, *Fremdes und Fremde in der jüdischen Tradition und im Sefür Chasidim* (Trier, 2002); Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, 1996); idem, “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis,” in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York, 2002), 147–212; Peter Schäfer, “Jews and Christians in the High Middle Ages: The ‘Book of the Pious,’” in *The Jews of Europe in the Middle Ages (Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries): Proceedings of the International Symposium held at Speyer, 20–25 October 2002*, ed. Christoph Cluse (Trier, 2004), 29–42; Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, “Social and Institutional History: The Sources,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 6, *The Middle Ages: The Christian World*, ed. Robert Chazan (Cambridge, 2018), 307–34, esp. 326–28.

⁴*Sefer Ḥasidim* (Bologna, 1538); Judah Wistinetski, ed., *Sefer Ḥasidim: Based on the Recension in Parma Cod. de Rossi No. 1133* (Berlin, 1891), and 2nd ed. with introduction by Jacob Freimann (Frankfurt am Main, 1924).

⁵https://etc.princeton.edu/sefer_hasidim/index.php.

that SHP and SHB embody only two possible versions of this work.⁶ Ivan G. Marcus's 2018 monograph *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book in Medieval Europe* offers a new and innovative understanding of book production of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and other works produced by the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz. Marcus posits that the Ashkenazic Pietists did not set out to produce a single work in a final version but, rather, to collect material in notes and separate units to be compiled into larger sections with a topical structure. In this conception the various textual elements or single paragraph units often varied in their position within the larger framework. In other words, the book began as a collection of single paragraphs that only later coalesced into a book. Given the various manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim* that reflect quite a diverse transmission, Marcus proposes abandoning the concept of SHB and SHP as the principal recensions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, and that instead each manuscript should be regarded as a free-standing version of the text produced by Judah he-Ḥasid.⁷

This article will reexamine the manuscript transmission of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, with particular focus on the distribution of material within the manuscripts,⁸ seeking to establish relationships between the structure and the content of each manuscript. To that end, I closely examine the transmission of *Sefer Ḥasidim* through the known editions and manuscripts as well as the distribution of the material within these manuscripts. My argument is that despite variation within the manuscripts, SHB and SHP should still be considered as major recensions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Tracing the relationship between the manuscripts using the model of book production that Marcus introduced and that the copyist of MS Cambridge Add. 379 described as “gathering the berries,” I will focus on the production process of the longer manuscripts, especially MS Parma 3280 (de Rossi 1133; dated to around 1300 in Ashkenaz).⁹ I compare its structure and content to those manuscripts with shorter

⁶Marcus was the first to talk about several recensions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* in his 1978 article “The Recensions and Structure of *Sefer Ḥasidim*,” *Proceedings of the American Association for Jewish Research* 45 (1978): 130–153. Haym Soloveitchik also paid attention to the various parts of the book and their representation in the manuscripts; see Haym Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism: *Sefer Ḥasidim I* and the Influence of the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 92, no. 3–4 (2002): 455–93.

⁷Ivan G. Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, 2018).

⁸In this discussion only the manuscripts from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century are included. For the later manuscripts see the list in Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 90–112.

⁹See the description of the manuscript in Benjamin Richler and Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bibliotheca Palatina in Parma: Catalogue* (Jerusalem, 2001), 387; Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 101–2.

versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* and show that the Parma manuscript is a product of growth of material—by which I mean that MS Parma 3280 represents a final stage in the process of gathering and enlarging the extant material attributed to Judah he-Ḥasid.

Character of *Sefer Ḥasidim* as a “Book”

Sefer Ḥasidim consists of paragraphs (*simanim*) or short units, some of a narrative character (*ma'asim/stories*), arranged in a topical order, but lacking a systematic structure. This is reflected in the manuscripts themselves. Not one of the surviving manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim* is identical to another. All the manuscripts differ in scope, content, and often also in structure.¹⁰ Marcus has suggested that Judah he-Ḥasid collected these small textual units into clusters and may have compiled them into a “book.” (This also could have been done by one of his disciples.)¹¹ Such a process is reflected in use of the terms *maḥbarot*, *liqūṭim*, or *quntras* for notebooks, excerpts, or folios of *Sefer Ḥasidim* transmitted in manuscripts.¹² What this indicates is that *Sefer Ḥasidim* is not a book in the traditional sense, that is, there is no *Urtext*, and it is likely that there never was an original version written by Judah he-Ḥasid. It evades the classical characterization as a single work produced by a single author at a specific date. The book was not written in one piece, but was collected and compiled from textual units into clusters in various versions (quite similar to modern book production in the age of copy and paste). All these different forms are found in the manuscripts.

In his recent book, Marcus claims to be able to reconstruct no less than fourteen editions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* based on the material and its distribution in the manuscripts.¹³ These editions can consist of topical notebooks in various combinations, but they can also contain single paragraphs collected and copied, sometimes referring to the same subject, sometimes gathered without any apparent connection. The smallest unit in *Sefer Ḥasidim* is the single paragraph (*siman*).¹⁴ These paragraphs were collected and compiled, some-

¹⁰See the description of the manuscripts in Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 90–112.

¹¹Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, esp. chap. 1; idem, “Recensions and Structure”; Johann Maier, “Rab und Chakam im Sefer Chasidim,” in *Das aschkenasische Rabbinat: Studien über Glaube und Schicksal*, ed. Julius Carlebach (Berlin, 1995), 37–118.

¹²Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 17–20; sometimes it even says, “another *Sefer Ḥasidim*,” *ibid.*, 20.

¹³Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 19, 29–30.

¹⁴Johann Maier already stated this in his “Rab und Chakam im Sefer Chasidim,” 42.

times according to a topical order in a booklet (*maḥberet*). These booklets were then combined into bigger compilations of *Sefer Ḥasidim* represented in the longer manuscripts. Marcus describes this process using the image of an inverted pyramid, with the point on the bottom denoting the later editions and the broad upper section representing the many different paragraph units that appear in the manuscripts.¹⁵

In his recent work, Marcus returns to an argument he made in 1978 that there are five compilations of topical booklets found in the various versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim* (SHB I, II, III and SHP I and II).¹⁶ From this starting point, he has now defined several combinations of these topical booklets, represented in the longer manuscripts—MS Parma 3280, JTS Boesky 45, MS Cambridge Add. 379, and MS Oxford Add. 34, as well as the edition printed in Bologna in 1538.¹⁷ The remaining manuscripts contain only single paragraph collections, often with parallels in the larger compilations, but sometimes including original material not found in the other manuscripts. Yet, the majority of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* material is transmitted as single paragraphs in collections and as part of a larger textual unit—a booklet or a compilation of booklets.

This very fluid corpus of material is arranged in different combinations in the manuscripts. Comparing parallel paragraph collections in different manuscripts, we find that on occasion individual paragraphs are missing or added to these collections. Marcus calls this phenomenon the “independent circulation of individual paragraphs.”¹⁸ In what follows I will show that the individual paragraphs do not always circulate completely haphazardly, but rather that there was a process of structuring and growth of the material. This process is reflected in the fact that few *simanim* exist in only a single manuscript and that Parma 3280 encompasses the textual corpus of *Sefer Ḥasidim* almost in its entirety.¹⁹

The Production of MS Parma 3280

Parma 3280 represents the largest textual corpus of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. The manuscript was written in Ashkenaz around 1300, meaning that the cumu-

¹⁵Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 23.

¹⁶Marcus, “Recensions and Structure,” 145–48.

¹⁷Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 19, 27–29.

¹⁸Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 27.

¹⁹Moreover, there are later authors who cite from *Sefer Ḥasidim*, but the text quoted is not found in any of the textual witnesses claiming to be *Sefer Ḥasidim*; Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 33. For the same phenomenon concerning *Sefer Yosippon* see Saskia Dönnitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption des Sefer Yosippon* (Tübingen, 2013), 196.

lation of the textual units of *Sefer Ḥasidim* transmitted in the various other surviving manuscripts took place within eighty years after Judah he-Ḥasid's death in 1217. This supports the view that the book was not written as a single work at its inception but, rather, was composed of combinations of textual units and clusters eventually compiled into one long version, the one represented in Parma 3280. While Judah he-Ḥasid himself may have produced the full manuscript from his *maḥbarot*, the production process, as reconstructed below, suggests that his disciples or followers have carried out this task.²⁰ One fact that is clearly reflected in the transmitted manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim* is that within a relatively short period of time following Judah he-Ḥasid's death, the text went through a process of repeated expansion until it became the comprehensive version found in Parma 3280.

Marcus argued that Parma 3280 consists of two compilations of topically-ordered booklets.²¹ The first part of the manuscript (§§ 1–1385 = SHP I) consists of a compilation of five blocks concerning Shabbat, books, Torah study, charity, and honoring one's parents. The second part of the manuscript (§§ 1386–1983 = SHP II) comprises sixteen blocks of various contents, some of which, such as Torah study and books, are also discussed in SHP I. Interestingly, such passages in SHP II are introduced with the words: "Subject X is also discussed here." Other passages address subjects not included in SHP I, such as oaths, prayer, and damages. It therefore appears that the second part of Parma 3280 (SHP II) consists of text clusters on various topics that were collected and added to the compilation represented in the first part of the manuscript.

This assumption is corroborated by another manuscript: former JTS Boesky 45, now in private hands (Italy, fifteenth century).²² This witness of *Sefer Ḥasidim* shows the same textual structure as Parma 3280 and comprises the same material in the first compilation of booklets (§§ 1–1385 = SHP I), differing from the Parma manuscript only in the numbering of paragraphs. When it comes to the second compilation (SHP II), in comparison to Parma 3280, the Boesky manuscript has less material and a considerable number of paragraphs that are absent entirely, as shown in table 1.

The material presented in Parma 3280 §§ 1388, 1391, and 1392, for example, finds no counterpart in the Boesky manuscript. Furthermore, as can

²⁰No manuscript mentions Judah he-Ḥasid as the author of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. The book was only later ascribed to him; see Joseph A. Skloot, "Printing, Hebrew Book Culture, and *Sefer Ḥasidim*" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2017), 60–69; and the contribution by David Shyovitz to this volume.

²¹Marcus, "Recensions and Structure," 140 with n. 37.

²²See the description in Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 102–3, and in PUSHHD.

Table 1. Material from the beginning of SHP II

JTS Boesky 45	Parma 3280
§	§
565	1386
566	1387
–	1388
566	1389
566	1390
–	1391
–	1392
567	1393
567	1394
567	1395
567	1396

be seen in the table, text included in one paragraph in JTS Boesky 45 (e.g., § 567) is often divided into smaller units in the Parma manuscript. It seems that the paragraphs were split up and renumbered to enable the addition of extra material on the same subject, material not contained in JTS Boesky 45.²³ In Parma 3280 new paragraphs were inserted into SHP II wherever they were found thematically relevant.

This idea of progressively adding textual material into an existing structure is supported by other manuscripts containing SHP II. Irrespective of their later date, the following manuscripts encompass less material than both Parma 3280 and JTS Boesky 45. The version of SHP II in MS Cambridge Add. 379 (Ashkenaz, thirteenth/fourteenth century) consists of only 577 sections, but the paragraphs are structured according to the same topical order as in Parma 3280. Here again, as in the transition between Boesky and Parma, in the interval between the recension in Cambridge Add. 379 and the one found in JTS Boesky 45, the text was expanded by the insertion of more material into thematically relevant passages. The next witness, MS Oxford Opp. Add. 34 (Ashkenaz, fourteenth century), contains only twenty sections of SHP II. However, the paragraphs again follow the same topical order as the Parma manuscript and do not include extra material. All the paragraphs in Oxford Opp. Add. 34 are also found MS Cambridge Add. 379. All this material again is included in JTS Boesky 45 and in Parma 3280 as illustrated by table 2.

²³The numbering of the paragraphs in the manuscripts must be checked to see if it was originally done by the scribe of the manuscript or added later; see Marcus, *Sefer Hasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 14.

Table 2. Material from the end of SHP II

Oxford Opp. Add. 34	Cambridge Add. 379	JTS Boesky 45	Parma 3280
§	§	§	§
–	544	792	1931
–	545	793	1932
170	546–7	793	1933
–	547	794	1934
171	548	794	1935
–	–	795	1936
171	549	796	1937
–	550	797	1938
–	–	797	1939
–	–	797	1940

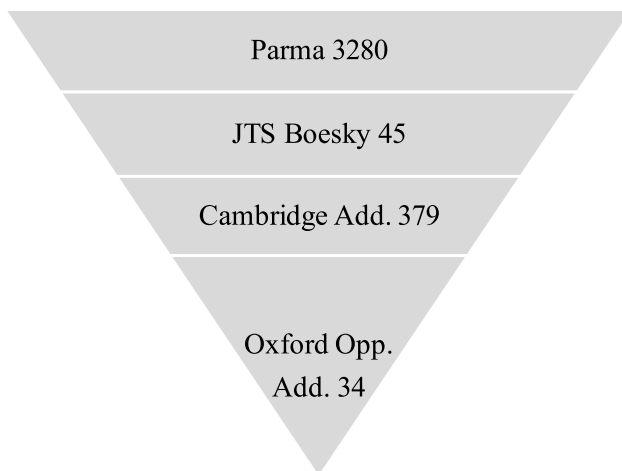
The distribution of the text in the manuscripts shown in the table supports the hypothesis that SHP II is built of material compiled in stages until it reached its most comprehensive version as reflected in Parma 3280. But during this process of growth the text clusters were not simply appended to the end of the text. The structure of the manuscripts shows that new passages were inserted into the existing topical structure of the compilations.²⁴ One can think of a skeleton of text clusters on various topics that was fleshed out with further material on the same subject.²⁵ Viewed from this perspective, the manuscripts containing less material may represent earlier stages in the compilation of *Sefer Ḥasidim* than the longer versions. Of course, these observations need to be supported by a full comparison of the contents of the manuscripts.²⁶

Imposing Marcus's metaphor of the inverted pyramid on the process of producing SHP II by means of the accumulation of material as reconstructed here, we offer the following model:

²⁴This is supported by the fact that both manuscripts, JTS Boesky 45 and Cambridge Add. 379, contain the final paragraphs of the book; see JTS Boesky 45, § 826, also transmitted at the end of Cambridge Add. 379, §§ 578–579.

²⁵My thanks to Elisabeth Hollender who brought up this metaphor in a conversation on the subject held in Frankfurt in September 2018.

²⁶In the framework of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* project in Berlin we produced a table that encompasses about a third of all the paragraphs of *Sefer Ḥasidim* in the manuscripts and shows the existing parallels in the different manuscripts. This table supports the claims made here. My thanks to Avraham (Rami) Reiner who started this work of inestimable value during the Berlin project, without which this article could not have been written.



In light of this reconstruction, Oxford Opp. Add. 34 would witness an early, first collection of the material, already structured around certain subjects. Then, the corpus is enlarged and extended by adding further material as evidenced in Cambridge Add. 379. The same process is repeated to reach the stage represented in JTS Boesky 45, which already contains about eighty percent of the material of Parma 3280. We can actually observe Judah he-Ḥasid and his disciples, or later compilers, working on the text, adding more and more material, until arriving at the final step of Parma 3280.

Manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim* Bologna

Turning to the version of *Sefer Ḥasidim* printed in Bologna in 1538, it becomes clear that there is a problem. No surviving manuscript of *Sefer Ḥasidim* represents the full scope of this printed edition.²⁷ Marcus defined four compilations within this version: SHB 0 and SHB I, II, and III. Several manuscripts belonging to SHB contain solely the first part (SHB 0 = §§ 1–152), which as Marcus and Haym Soloveitchik have demonstrated was not a part of the *Sefer Ḥasidim*, but of a different work, referred to as *Sefer ha-Ḥasidut* and produced in Northern France.²⁸ Soloveitchik further argued

²⁷ See now Skloot, “Printing, Hebrew Book Culture, and *Sefer Ḥasidim*.”

²⁸ MS Oxford Opp. 340 (France, 1299); MS Ambrosiana X 111 (Ashkenaz, thirteenth century); MS Moscow 103 (Ashkenaz, fifteenth century). See the description of the manuscripts in Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 96–98; Soloveitchik, “Piety, Pietism and German Pietism,” 465. On *Sefer ha-Ḥasidut* see Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 36–41.

Table 3. Content of MS Cambridge Add. 379

Cambridge Add. 379	Corresponding to SHB	Corresponding to SHP
§§ 1–152	Bologna §§ 1–152 (<i>Sefer ha-Hasidut</i> ; SHB 0)	
§§ 153–413	Bologna §§ 153–413 (<i>Sefer Hasidim</i> ; SHB I)	
§§ 414–579		Parma 3280 §§ 1310–1982 (SHP II selectively)

that the other clusters—SHB I, II and III—do not have any manuscript witnesses, but were only part of the printed edition. Research carried out in the past two decades has established that at least SHB I (§§ 153–411)²⁹ was, in fact, represented in manuscripts. As shown in table 3, MS Cambridge Add. 379 and MS Oxford Opp. Add. 34 start with SHB 0 (§§ 1–152), continue with SHB I (§§ 153–413),³⁰ and then change into the compilation of SHP II that was analyzed above.

These findings corroborate Marcus’s opinion that the text of *Sefer Hasidim* was transmitted in more than one version—certainly in more than the versions presented in SHB and SHP—but in so-called “mixed” ones as well.³¹ Furthermore, it proves that besides SHB 0, SHB I is also represented in the manuscripts, leaving the question of SHB II and III (according to Marcus’s classification) open, as they exist in Bologna 1538 but are not found in known manuscripts of *Sefer Hasidim*.³²

A closer look at Oxford Opp. Add. 34 (table 4) shows that, as we found in the case of the SHP II block in the manuscripts, this manuscript does not

²⁹Marcus, “Recensions and Structure,” 145, table II.

³⁰Cambridge Add. 379 shows the same numbering of the paragraphs as in the print Bologna 1538. Even when looking at the readings in the paragraphs, in most cases the text in Cambridge Add. 379 indicates a close connection to the printed version.

³¹In the description of the manuscripts in PUSHD both manuscripts are attributed to the so-called “mixed” group.

³²How the Bologna version in its full scope found its way into print remains an open question. During recent discussions, we repeatedly are faced with the situation that the early printed texts do not represent the extant medieval manuscript traditions. There must have been some process of selection and rearrangement in the making of models for printing in the early modern period. In other words, texts were produced in a new version, differing from the medieval manuscript tradition; see Skloot, “Printing, Hebrew Book Culture, and *Sefer Hasidim*”; Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem, 2013); Elhanan Reiner, “The Ashkenazi Élite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book,” in *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (London, 1997), 85–98; Jeffrey Todd Knight, “Organizing Manuscript and Print: from Compilatio to Compilation,” in *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches*, ed. Michael Johnston and Michael van Dussen (Cambridge, 2015), 77–95.

Table 4. Distribution of SHB I material in the manuscripts and in Bologna 1538

Oxford Opp. Add. 34	Cambridge Add. 379	Bologna 1538
§	§	§
68	188	188
69	189	189
–	190	190
–	191	191
–	192	192
–	193	193
–	194	194
–	195	195
–	196	196
–	197	197
–	198	198
–	199	199
–	200	200
70	201	201
–	202	202

contain the textual compilations of SHB 0 and SHB I in their full scope. SHB 0 and SHB I are only partially represented. Yet, all the paragraphs of Oxford Opp. Add. 34 related to SHB 0 and SHB I are also found in Cambridge Add. 379.

It is therefore possible to deduce the following: As in the process analyzed above for SHP II, SHB I was compiled from single paragraph units and text clusters to which more material was added according to content and subject.³³ Interestingly, at a certain moment in time this block (SHB I) was restructured and reordered to become SHP I in Parma 3280. SHP I and SHB I are similar in content, but not identical in structure. According to Marcus, SHP I is actually constructed of SHB I and additional material.³⁴ If this is correct, then Cambridge Add. 379 and Oxford Opp. Add. 34 represent manuscript witnesses to SHB I before new material was added, and the text units were reordered to become SHP I. Again, Oxford Opp. Add. 34 appears to represent the first draft, supplemented with further material found in Cambridge Add. 379. Then, the compilation was restructured, such that

³³It would also be legitimate to assume that Oxford Opp. Add. 34 represents an excerpt from Cambridge Add. 379. Of course, this could be the case. From that point of view, one would have to ask if there are any indications as to why the copyist chose only a selection of paragraphs for his copy—a study that exceeds the framework of this article. See also the discussion of the manuscripts with no correlation to SHB or SHP below.

³⁴Marcus, “Recensions and Structure,” 148–50.

SHB I changed into SHP I as represented in JTS Boesky 45 and Parma 3280. Again, we can see the author or compiler working on the text, collecting, and adding material from variant sources and combining them into textual blocks, sometimes restructuring the passages into different versions of the text.

Analysis of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* manuscripts enables us to reconstruct the process by which the editions SHP II and SHB I were compiled, based on the assumption that more and more material was added to notes Judah he-Ḥasid and his disciples wrote down on separate sheets that were later combined into topically arranged blocks and finally arranged in different versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

Manuscripts That Do Not Follow the Structure of SHB or SHP

Up to this point, the analysis has focused only on manuscripts that follow the topical structures of either SHB or SHP. Yet, there are also *Sefer Ḥasidim* manuscripts that do not follow either of these structures but, rather, are collections of single paragraphs.³⁵ The first such examples are MS Oxford Opp. 614 and MS Oxford Or. 146 (both Ashkenaz, fourteenth century).³⁶ Although both manuscripts contain eleven paragraphs each, they do not correspond to the order in SHB or SHP. Interestingly, they only comprise material from SHP I. Accordingly, it could be assumed that these manuscripts represent early collections of notes for the compilation of SHP I that were later rearranged into a larger version with a topical structure and paragraph numbers, similar to the process reconstructed above for SHP II and SHB I.³⁷

However, we might ask whether these manuscripts comprise collections of single paragraphs or, alternatively, were selections motivated by interest in particular topics made from a more complete source. In another manuscript of *Sefer Ḥasidim* it was possible to discern such an interest in a special topic from within the collection, i.e., an interest in prayer.³⁸ However, a similar intention could not be detected in the two manuscripts discussed here; they contain larger or smaller, seemingly unsystematic, collections of paragraphs.³⁹

³⁵Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 90–96.

³⁶Published by Haym Soloveitchik, “Appendix to ‘Pietists and Kibbitzers’,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): nos. 2 and 3, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/190747/pdf>.

³⁷This can only be proven by a more thorough analysis of the content of the paragraphs and their relation to each other.

³⁸MS Oxford 569 (Neubauer 1098; Ashkenaz, 1289); see Soloveitchik, “Appendix to ‘Pietists and Kibbitzers’,” no. 1, and idem, “Pietists and Kibbitzers,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96, no. 1 (2006): 63.

³⁹The beginning of the *Sefer Ḥasidim* collection in MS Oxford Opp. 614, fol. 30r, is titled *liqṭim mi-sefer ḥasidim* (“selections/collections from *Sefer Ḥasidim*”). The term *liqṭim* is

An even more interesting, but puzzling, example is the manuscript pair of MS Vatican 285 (Byzantium, fifteenth/sixteenth century) and JTS Reel 2499 (Italy, fourteenth/fifteenth century),⁴⁰ both of which contain the same 158 paragraphs.⁴¹ The majority of these paragraphs also appear in SHP, albeit in a different structure. Some seventy-five percent of the paragraphs (116 in number) belong to the compilation of SHP I. These manuscripts contain no material from SHP II. The remaining forty-two paragraphs (approximately twenty-five percent of the total) are not transmitted in any other manuscript of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. Other manuscripts, such as Frankfurt Heb. Oct. 94 and Zürich Heidenheim 51, also contain randomly selected paragraphs plus some material not found elsewhere.⁴² The question as to what kind of material is not included in the larger recensions of SHB and SHP and why is beyond the scope of the current article but should be addressed in future research in order to get a broader picture of their production and their relation to Parma 3280.

Since the order of the paragraphs in these manuscripts does not match the larger compilations of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, and since there is no evidence of topical interest that might have inspired copyists to pick them from a larger collection of material, I am inclined to assume that these manuscripts present early stages in the collection of material that was later sorted according to topics and copied into other, more comprehensive collections. In other words, these witnesses in particular offer a clue regarding the first stages in the organization of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, as it grew from single paragraphs in Judah's notebooks to the most comprehensive version reflected in Parma 3280.⁴³

also used in MS Frankfurt Heb. Oct. 94 and MS Zürich Heidenheim 51: *liqūtim ne'taqu mi-sefer ḥasidim* ("collections copied from *Sefer Ḥasidim*"). Marcus suggests that the term *liqūtim* refers to collections of notes rather than to selection of particular paragraphs from a bigger collection; see Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 18.

⁴⁰MS Vatican ebr. 285, fols. 108v–127v is published by Moshe Hershler in *Genuzot* 1 (1984): 125–62. This very interesting manuscript also contains excerpts from *Sefer Ḥasidim* on fols. 150r–52r; see the description in Benjamin Richler and Malachi Beit-Arié, eds., *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue* (Vatican City, 2008), 211–15.

⁴¹Only the first twelve paragraphs of Vatican ebr. 285 are not included in JTS 2499.

⁴²For Frankfurt Heb. Oct. 94 see Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 25; for Zürich Heidenheim 51 see Soloveitchik, "Appendix to 'Pietists and Kibbitzers,'" no. 4.

⁴³It could be worthwhile to consider the method of copying found in Latin literature called *pecia*. The model for the copy was not a complete codex; only single folios of the book were distributed among the scribes, so more than one could work on copying the book; see Maria L. Agati, *The Manuscript Book: A Compendium of Codicology* (Rome, 2017), 259–64; Hanna Liss, "Vom *Sefer Tora* zum *sefer*: Die Bedeutung von Büchern im 'Buch der Frommen' des R. Yehuda ben Shemu'el he-Chasid," in *Erscheinungsformen und Handhabungen Heiliger Schriften*, ed. Joachim Friedrich Quack und Daniela Christina Luft (Berlin, 2014), 224–25. This would not only fit into the use of the term *quntres*, but also the fact that Judah he-Ḥasid's

Consistent with recent notions on book production within medieval European Jewish communities, this hypothetical reconstruction of the compilation process of *Sefer Ḥasidim* material enables us to organize the manuscripts hierarchically. Manuscripts containing paragraphs lacking any systematic or topical order as in the pair of Vatican 285/JTS Reel 2499 probably reflect the earliest stage in the process of collecting the material. After this stage material was sorted by topics as illustrated in Oxford Opp. Add. 34. Additional relevant material was then added at different points in the text, as represented in Cambridge Add. 379. Yet another restructuring of the material must have taken place, as seen in the varying order of paragraphs in the first parts of JTS Boesky 45 and Parma 3280. Finally, all the material was compiled into the larger compilations of JTS Boesky 45, Parma 3280, and the Bologna print edition of 1538.

This process probably began in the lifetime of Judah he-Ḥasid and ended sometime around 1300, when Parma 3280 was produced. While the work likely was begun by Judah he-Ḥasid, in contrast to Marcus's idea that Judah himself produced all these parallel versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, it is equally possible that larger compilations that appear in SHB and SHP were the work of his disciples or later copyists and scholars.⁴⁴ What is new is the idea that there never was one original version of a book produced by one single author, but rather that the text initially consisted of collections of material and notes that were later compiled into a book, sometimes even generations later by a scholar (or scholars) who collected and synthesized all the material together, as illustrated in Parma 3280 of *Sefer Ḥasidim*.⁴⁵

This active style of redacting a text seems congruent with the idea that medieval Jewish book production involved private initiatives and individual scholars who copied the books for their own use.⁴⁶ In contrast to copies by

son said that his father wrote two pages (*shnei dappim*) before his death; see Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 18.

⁴⁴Marcus emphasizes the point that Judah himself produced all the existing versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, even though sometimes he also refers to his disciples or his followers who may have compiled them; see Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 7, 15, 29–30. For a discussion how others might have contributed to the process, see also the contribution of David Shyovitz in this volume.

⁴⁵See, e.g., the Byzantine scholar Judah Mosqoni who collected all existing versions of *Sefer Yosippon* accessible to him and produced a new recension of the book in the fourteenth century; Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption*, 92–102.

⁴⁶Malachi Beit-Arié, "Publication and Reproduction of Literary Texts in Medieval Jewish Civilization: Jewish Scribality and Its Impact on the Texts Transmitted," in *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Yaakov Elman and Israel Bartal (London, 2000), 225–47; idem, "The Individual Nature of Hebrew Book Production and Consumption," in *Manuscripts hébreux et arabes: Mélanges en l'honneur de Colette Sirat*, ed. Nicholas de Lange and Judith Olszowy-Schlanger (Turnhout, 2014), 17–28.

hired scribes, user-produced copies written by individual scholars show many deliberate interventions with the text and redactional activities of learned copyists who revised and reformed texts in light of their personal interests. We find this aggressive style of redaction in the Ashkenazic copyists' treatment of the *hekhlot* corpus as well as in many other works associated with Ḥasidei Ashkenaz circles.⁴⁷ It is also a characteristic of the Ashkenazic piyyut commentary tradition.⁴⁸ Collecting and compiling works that way, however, is not solely an Ashkenazi phenomenon, since the same manner of compilation is also found in the early works of the Kabbalists in Provence and Spain, as in the creation of the *Zohar*, the central kabbalistic work.⁴⁹ Perhaps this type of book production was a part of the individualistic character of bookmaking in medieval Jewish culture in general rather than to practices in particular geocultural areas.

Conclusion

This examination of the distribution of material within the manuscripts of *Sefer Ḥasidim* certainly supports Marcus's idea concerning the work's compositional process. The various manuscripts represent fluid textual versions of *Sefer Ḥasidim*, and it is not possible to reconstruct any definitive original *Urtext*. Instead, it appears that the manuscripts show the various stages of compilation of *Sefer Ḥasidim*'s textual units from indiscriminately collected material (sometimes in single folios) to smaller textual units arranged in topical order. In the following stage, more material was inserted *peau à peau* until finally flowering into the collection of paragraphs in Parma 3280 some eighty years after Judah he-Ḥasid's death. All these stages are equally represented in the manuscripts. However, not all of them follow the structure of SHP. Given that the material in the larger compilations of *Sefer Ḥasidim* is structured according to either SHB or SHP, it is difficult to agree with Marcus's suggestion that these compilations be completely ignored and that each

⁴⁷Marcus, *Sefer Ḥasidim and the Ashkenazic Book*, 75–86; Hanna Liss, "Copyright im Mittelalter? Die esoterischen Schriften von R. El'asar von Worms zwischen Traditions- und Autorenliteratur," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 21 (1994): 81–108; Klaus Herrmann, "Re-Written Mystical Texts: The Transmission of Heikhalot-Literature in the Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 75, no. 3 (1993): 97–116; Annelies Kuyt, "The Haside Ashkenaz and Their Mystical Sources: Continuity and Innovation," in *Jewish Studies in a New Europe: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Jewish Studies in Copenhagen 1994*, ed. Ulf Haxen et al. (Copenhagen, 1998), 462–71.

⁴⁸Elisabeth Hollender, *Piyyut Commentary in Medieval Ashkenaz* (Berlin, 2008).

⁴⁹Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem, 2010), esp. 89–97, 224–29, 254–62.

and every manuscript should be viewed as a parallel authoritative version of *Sefer Ḥasidim*. The foregoing analysis leads to the more likely assumption of a hierarchical order in the production of the teachings of the Ḥasidei Ashkenaz titled *Sefer Ḥasidim* that involved a process of growth and expansion of relevant material into compilations topically arranged by individual copyists and editors. To fully reconstruct the history of this intriguing book, future research should be dedicated to the life and growth of the topical clusters and inquire into the reasons copyists felt compelled to add or sometimes also remove material in *Sefer Ḥasidim*.⁵⁰

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⁵⁰It would be interesting to reconstruct the growth of the text by analyzing which paragraphs existed in the first place and what kind of material was added later; see David Shyovitz’s contribution to this volume.