

‘Go Out and Study the Land’ (Judges 18:2)

Archaeological, Historical and
Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel

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ECLECTIC TEXT EDITIONS OF HEBREW SCRIPTURE

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1. *Logic of Eclectic Editions*

In the course of the critical investigation of the Hebrew Bible, it is often felt that the combination of a diplomatically presented base text (codex L or A) and a critical apparatus do not suffice for the efficient use of the textual data. Consultation of \mathfrak{M} alone is considered unsatisfactory since it is merely one of many biblical texts. By the same token, the use of an apparatus is cumbersome as it involves a complicated mental exercise. The apparatus makes it necessary for the user to place the variants, which in his/her mind may replace readings of \mathfrak{M} , in imaginary (virtual) boxes. Since each scholar evaluates the data differently, everyone mentally creates a different reconstructed *Urtext*. In other words, the user of the *BH* series constantly works with two sets of data, a real edition (\mathfrak{M}) that lies before him/her and a virtual one, composed eclectically from the apparatus.¹

Against this background, it is not surprising that a system has been devised to transform the fragmented and often confusing information of a critical apparatus into a new and stable type of tool, named an “eclectic” or “critical” edition.² It is no longer necessary to replace in one’s mind a detail of \mathfrak{M} with a variant reading found in the apparatus, as these preferred readings are now incorporated into the running text. An edition of this type provides a very convenient way of using the textual data together with an expert’s evaluation. This

¹ The user of the *HUB* does not create his/her own virtual edition, since that edition does not evaluate the readings, as does the *BH* series, leaving the decision process to the user. This neutral presentation probably is profitable for those who prefer to evaluate the readings themselves during the course of writing commentaries or studies, but many users would prefer to have the data provided together with a value judgment by an expert in textual criticism.

² The term “critical edition” is probably misleading for this type of edition at the present stage of research, since the *BH* series also provides critical editions. The earlier edition of Haupt (see n. 5) was also named “critical” (“a critical edition of the Hebrew text printed in colors...”), but that edition appeared before the *BH* series.

procedure is common in classical studies (see the many editions of Greek and Latin classical texts published by Oxford University Press and Teubner of Leipzig),³ and also has much to recommend it for the study of Hebrew Scripture. Besides, the best editions of the Septuagint are also eclectic, and very few scholars would contest the wisdom of the system used by the *Göttingen Septuaginta Unternehmen* in producing their magnificent editions. If it works for the Septuagint, why would it not work for Scripture as a whole? Indeed, some of the best textual critics were involved in such enterprises in the past and are also involved in present projects.

2. *Old and New in Eclectic Editions*

I do not know when the first eclectic edition of Hebrew Scripture or part thereof was produced; I can trace these editions back to Cornill's edition of Ezekiel produced in 1886.⁴ Cornill's edition is based on sound, mature scholarship and therefore it would be hard to imagine that earlier editions did not precede it. We should, of course, remember that this edition was preceded by several eclectic translations included in scholarly commentaries that must have influenced the production of similar editions in Hebrew. Important eclectic editions of the Biblical books were produced in the following decennia under the editorship of P. Haupt in an impressive series.⁵ Cornill, B. Stade and other eminent scholars participated in this series. These editions influenced scholarship to some extent, and shortly thereafter a different type of critical edition was created, viz., the first editions in the *BH* series in which the critical notes were included in the apparatus and not in the text.⁶ From 1900 onwards, we witness a series of eclectic editions of parts of books, often of parallel sources, such as Psalms 14//53.⁷ The

³ See the instructive study of M.L. West, "The Textual Criticism and Editing of Homer," in *Editing Texts—Texte edieren* (Aporemata, Kritische Studien zur Philologiegeschichte 2; ed. G.M. Most; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 94–110.

⁴ C.H. Cornill, *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886).

⁵ P. Haupt, ed., *The Sacred Books of the Old Testament, A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Printed in Colors, with Notes* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1893–1904).

⁶ First and second editions: Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1905, 1913, ed. R. Kittel.

⁷ For a list of such editions, see my *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2d rev. ed.; Minneapolis and Assen: Fortress Press/Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 372, n. 2 (henceforth: *TCHB*).

creation of eclectic editions continued in modern times, especially in Italian scholarship.⁸ The production of these editions has been institutionalized, since plans for a complete eclectic Scripture edition are now under way. The so-called *Oxford Hebrew Bible (OHB)* is scheduled to present biblical scholars with an eclectic edition of all the Scripture books that will enable scholars to use an edition that incorporates the fruits of textual scholarship not in an apparatus, but in the text itself.

The system of *OHB* is presented in a lucid programmatic introduction by its editor-in-chief, R. Hendel.⁹ That system does not differ much from the earlier eclectic editions, but a comparison with these older editions is not of central importance for the new project.¹⁰ The *OHB* presents critically restored texts accompanied by an apparatus of readings that differ from the main text and a series of textual notes defending the decisions. The readings of \aleph are often included in the apparatus when the editor preferred a reading of a Qumran scroll, ϕ , or another source.¹¹

⁸ P.G. Borbone, *Il libro del Profeta Osea, Edizione critica del testo ebraico* (Quaderni di Henoch 2; Torino: Zamorani, [1990]); G. Garbini, *Cantico dei Cantici: Testo, tradizione, note e commento* (Brescia: Paideia, 1992), 142–67; A. Catastini, *Storia di Giuseppe (Genesi 37–50)* (Venice: Marsilio, 1994); this study needs to be viewed together with Catastini's detailed textual analysis, *L'itinerario di Giuseppe, Studio sulla tradizione di Genesi 37–50* (Dipartimento di Studi Orientali. Studi Semitici, N. S. 13; Roma: Università degli Studi "La Sapienza," 1995); R.S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11—Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); K. Hognesius, *The Text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, A Critical Edition with Textual Commentary* (ConBOT 51; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003); cf. my review of the latter in *SEÅ* 68 (2003): 208–13.

⁹ "The Oxford Hebrew Bible; Prologue to a New Critical Edition," *VT* 58 (2008): 324–51. See also *idem*, "A New Edition of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Vol. One, Scripture and the Scrolls* (ed. J.H. Charlesworth; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2006), 149–65.

¹⁰ Haupt's edition is mentioned in Hendel, *Prologue*, 335, but not the other ones referred to in notes 7 and 8.

¹¹ The following samples have been published so far: H. van Rooy, "A New Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible," *JNSL* 30 (2004): 139–50 (Ezekiel 1); S. White Crawford, "Textual Criticism of the Book of Deuteronomy and the Oxford Hebrew Bible Project," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients. Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. R.L. Troxel et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 315–26; M.V. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the Oxford Hebrew Bible," *JNSL* 32 (2006): 1–22; R. Hendel, "Plural Texts and Literary Criticism: For Instance, 1 Samuel 17," *Textus* 23 (2007): 97–114; S.W. Crawford, J. Joosten, and E. Ulrich, "Sample Editions of the Oxford Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 32:1–9, 1 Kings 11:1–8, and Jeremiah 27:1–10 (34 G)," *VT* 58 (2008): 352–66.

3. *Theoretical Foundations of Eclectic Editions*

The older eclectic editions provided very little theoretical background for the procedure followed. It was supposed to be self-evident that scholars may compose their own editions following a longstanding tradition for such editions in classical scholarship and the study of the NT. On the other hand, Hendel presents at length the theoretical background of the eclectic procedure that justifies the recording of the preferred readings in the text rather than an apparatus, as in the *BH* series. The difference between the two systems is significant, since most scholars are used to the apparatus of the *BH* series. The system of the planned editions is not innovative when compared with the editions of the beginning of the twentieth century, although they present new material, such as the valuable Dead Sea Scrolls, and are more advanced and thorough. Further, Hendel is probably correct in stating that the procedure followed is not necessarily in disagreement with that of the *BH* series; in the words of Hendel, “[t]he *BHQ* and *OHB* are complementary rather than contradictory projects.”¹²

The goals of the eclectic editions were phrased best by Hendel in constant dialogue with other scholars. “The practical goal for the *OHB* is to approximate in its critical text the textual ‘archetype,’ by which I mean,” says Hendel,¹³ “the earliest inferable textual state’.” He further cautions:¹⁴

The theory of an eclectic edition assumes that approximating the archetype is a step towards the “original text,” however that original is to be conceived. (...) In the case of the Hebrew Bible it is difficult to define what the “original” means, since each book is the product of a complicated and often unrecoverable history of composition and redaction. The “original text” that lies somewhere behind the archetype is usually not the product of a single author, but a collective production, sometimes constructed over centuries, perhaps comparable to the construction of a medieval cathedral or the composite walls of an old city.

¹² Hendel, “Prologue,” 337.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 329–30. For this statement, Hendel refers to E.J. Kenney, “Textual Criticism,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 18.191. On the other hand, the guiding principle of the edition of Fox, “Editing Proverbs,” 7, within the same *OHB* project, aims at “the correct hyparchetype of the Masoretic Proverbs, that is to say, the proto-Masoretic text.” I do not know whether the following statement by Fox, *ibid.*, 7 is compatible with Hendel’s formulations: “Hence the text I am aiming at *never had physical existence*. It is a construct. It can be defined as the proto-MT *as it should have been* [emphasis M.V. Fox]...”

¹⁴ Hendel, “Prologue,” 332.

It is a sign of good scholarship that Hendel constantly struggles with the question of the original text, as seen also in the continued analysis, in which he discusses my views. The same difficulties are recognized by Hognesius:¹⁵

It is not the intention of the present author to claim that this edition presents *the* text of 2 Chronicles 1–16, but, rather, that it attempts to make a contribution to serious scholarly discussion on text-critical matters. If eventually, such serious discussion would lead to the publishing of critical editions of the text of the Old Testament, this would be for the benefit of all Old Testament scholars.

In spite of the problems encountered, the editors of the *OHB* believe that there *was* an original text (or in some cases two), since otherwise they would not have reconstructed such an entity. However, now more than ever it seems to me that there never was an “archetype” or “original text” of most Scripture books.¹⁶ For most biblical books, scholars assume editorial changes over the course of many generations or even several centuries. If this assumption is correct, this development implies that there never was a single text that may be considered *the* original text for textual criticism; rather, we have to assume compositional stages, each of which was meant to be authoritative when completed. Each stage constituted an entity that may be named an “original text.” These compositional stages did not always take the form of a completely new edition of the whole book, but may have involved the change of what is now a single chapter or an even smaller unit. In the wake of earlier studies,¹⁷ we ought to ask ourselves which stage, if any, may be presented as original or archetypal in a modern edition.

The point of departure for the *OHB* is the assumption that there was one or, in some cases, two such editions that may be reconstructed. The *BH* series, and *BHQ* in particular, struggles with the same problems,¹⁸

¹⁵ Hognesius, *Chronicles*, 28–9.

¹⁶ True, the composition and transmission history of some units in Scripture was simpler than that of others. For example, in many individual Psalms, the textual evidence is probably very close to that of the poems created by the ancient poets, that is, they attest to a stage rather close to the original text. Equally important is the assumption that in these cases an original text existed that was created by the poet and usually not changed by later editors.

¹⁷ See my analyses in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran—Collected Essays* (TSAJ 121; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 155–70, 206–20.

¹⁸ Several large or small deviations from \aleph are indicated in the apparatus as “lit(erary).”

but in that enterprise there are fewer difficulties since the edition itself always presents \mathfrak{M} . In its apparatus, the *BH* series presents elements as original or archetypal, but it can always allow itself the luxury of not commenting on all the readings recorded, while the *OHB* has to make decisions in all instances.

If the principle of reconstructing an original edition based on evidence and emendation is accepted, it remains difficult to decide which compositional level should be reconstructed. In other words, what is the scope of the changes that may be inserted in \mathfrak{M} ? Small changes are definitely permissible, but why should one stop at verses? An editor of the *OHB* may also decide to exclude the secondarily added hymns of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1–10) and Jonah (Jonah 2). If most scholars agree that these psalms are secondary, I see no reason why an editor of *OHB* should not exclude them. I am only using this example to illustrate the problems involved; I do not think that an *OHB* editor would actually exclude these chapters (although, according to the internal logic of the *OHB*, they should, I think). However, I can imagine that someone would exclude Gen 12:6 “And the Canaanites were then in the land,” considered secondary by all critical scholars.

In short, innumerable difficulties present themselves in places where complex literary development took place. In fact, the evaluation of the two editions of Jeremiah (see below) seems to be a simple case in comparison with the very complex compositional and transmissional stages visible in other units.

In the words of Hendel, in the case of multiple editions, “[T]he practical goal for the *OHB* is to approximate in its critical text the textual ‘archetype,’ by which I mean the ‘earliest inferable textual state.’ In the case of multiple editions the practical goal is to approximate the archetype of each edition, and where one edition is not plausibly the ancestor of the other[s], also the archetype of the multiple editions.”¹⁹ This is an important step forward, but the problems in the details of the published reconstructions of these parallel editions (1 Kings 11 \mathfrak{M} and \mathfrak{G} , Jeremiah 27 \mathfrak{M} and \mathfrak{G} ,²⁰ and 1 Samuel 17)²¹ are so complex that the above description may be considered naive. The problems mentioned above are not diminished, but increased.

¹⁹ Hendel, “Prologue,” 329–30.

²⁰ For these, see White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions.”

²¹ Hendel, “Plural Texts”, 114 admits that the edition proposed in his paper heralds merely the beginning of a dialogue between scholars.

3. Principles behind the Eclectic Choice of Readings

The backbone of the textual procedure is the evaluation of readings, that is, an analysis of their comparative merits. The purpose of this procedure has been formulated in different ways. Most scholars assert that their intention is to choose the *original* reading from the relevant data, i.e., the one reading that, although not necessarily the best, was most likely to have been contained in the original text. Others attempt to identify the reading from which all others developed, or from which their existence can be explained. Textual guidelines have been formulated, but I have pointed out the limitations of such guidelines.²² Whatever we may think of the formulation of the purpose of textual criticism and the validity of the textual guidelines, textual critics continue to compare readings. In this regard, there is no difference between the principles used in the evaluation of readings for the *BH* series and for eclectic editions. Some such principles have been formulated in a rudimentary way for *BHQ*,²³ but they can hardly be activated objectively, because of the differences in outlook among scholars. I have suggested that both external and internal arguments are usually invalid and that the essence of the textual procedure is the subjective evaluation of readings; textual evaluation is an art rather than a science.

If there are no generally accepted rules for textual evaluation, we should not expect the impossible from the editors of eclectic editions. Nevertheless, Borbone provided some rules for his eclectic edition.²⁴ However, these rules are so abstract and general that they are of little practical use for establishing the critical text of Hosea.²⁵ Hendel's own critical edition of Genesis 1–11 likewise did include a discussion of "types of text-critical decisions."²⁶ On the other hand, in his *OHB* project, Hendel did not provide such rules, possibly rightly so, since there are no workable rules.

²² *TCHB*, chapter 6.

²³ A. Schenker et al., eds., *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), P.B. Dirksen et al., eds., *Part 18: General Introduction and Megilloth* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2004), LXXXV–XCIV.

²⁴ Borbone, *Osea*, 26–32, 55–9.

²⁵ For example, rules 6 ("*Lectio, quae cum stylo scriptoris convenit, melior est*") and 7 ("*Ea lectio vera et genuine esse nequit, quae nullo modo contextui apta aut consilio scriptoris prorsus contraria est*").

²⁶ Hendel, *Genesis*, 6–10.

As expected, all eclectic editions (including *OHB*) and the *BH* series are subjective in their textual evaluations. An *OHB* editor may include a long plus from a Qumran text, and he/she may exclude a whole verse, change the wording, language, and orthography. All these decisions are acceptable within the discipline of textual criticism. Since these choices are the brainchild of an editor, they may be changed in the future by the same scholar following further study or may be contradicted by the majority of scholars. These decisions are as subjective as those reflected in the *BH* series; however, the difference between the two editions is that with *BHS* or *BHQ* in one's hand, one continues to use the transmitted text (Ⓜ) with a reconstructed text in one's mind, as recorded in the apparatus. On the other hand, in the case of eclectic editions one *has* to use the reconstructed text, while the transmitted text remains somewhere in one's mind. This mental exercise involves much maneuvering, in my view, because the object of our study is the Bible, imperfect as codex L or any other source may be, and not the brainchild of a given scholar. If we should use an edition that is more daring than others, the basis of our study is even less stable.

4. *Difficulties in Reconstructing Details in the Text*

While several eclectic editions have been published, only a few editors are aware of the pitfalls of reconstructing the details. Cornill, *Ezekiel*, who offered the first serious reconstruction, was aware of the difficulties in reconstructing the orthography of the original version of that book. He describes the system employed as well as the criticisms voiced against him, and he wisely decided not to include vocalization in his reconstructed original text.²⁷

Likewise, Hendel realized that he could not reconstruct all the details in the reconstructed original text, so he gave up the idea of reconstructing what he calls the "accidentals" (spelling and paragraphing), and focused on "substantive readings"²⁸ of the central text, which for *OHB* is codex L, which he names the "copy-text."²⁹ He further notes:

²⁷ Cornill, *Ezekiel*, 160–64.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 343. Hendel follows the system of W.W. Greg, see Sir Walter Wilson Greg: *A Collection of His Writings* (ed. J. Rosenblum; Lanham, 1998), 213–28 [*non vidi*].

“Where the critical text differs from the copy-text in its substantive readings, the critical text will lack the vocalization and accents of the copy-text (but maintaining its orthographic style).”³⁰

The presentation of the orthography of the reconstructed original text poses an almost insurmountable problem. Hendel was aware of this problem, and decided to retain the spelling of codex L, together with its vocalization and accentuation.³¹ Words included in the eclectic text that differ from מ are presented without these two sets of data, but the reconstructed *Vorlage* of the ט in 1 Kings 11, when agreeing with מ, is reconstructed together with the Masoretic vowels and accents.

However, in all other instances *OHB* leaves the vowels in the text, even in the reconstructed *Vorlage* of the ט such as in “edition B,” which reflects the Hebrew text reconstructed from the ט in 1 Kings 11.³² The reconstructed *Vorlage* of ט contains not only the Masoretic vowels but also the cantillation signs (!),³³ so that the reader can now see what the *Vorlage* of the ט would have looked like with the medieval cantillations. It seems to me that in these two details the system went a little too far.

Hendel realizes that the textual critic cannot in all cases reach a verdict regarding the words to be included in the text. In such cases, especially those of “synonymous readings” recognized by Talmon³⁴ and alternative readings postulated by Goshen-Gottstein,³⁵ the copy-text is left intact, while the apparatus includes another reading considered to be of “equal” value. For example, in 1 Kgs 11:5 for שקץ of מ the apparatus records a variant אלהי reconstructed from the Peshitta and named “equal” by the editor, Joosten.³⁶

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

³¹ On the other hand, van Rooy, “A New Critical Edition” provides both the unvocalized and the vocalized critical text.

³² See the contribution of Joosten in White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions.”

³³ Only in words that are identical to מ. In other cases, only the consonants are provided.

³⁴ S. Talmon, “Synonymous Readings in the Textual Traditions of the Old Testament,” *ScrHier* 8 (1961): 335–83.

³⁵ M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The History of the Bible-Text and Comparative Semitics,” *VT* 7 (1957): 195–201.

³⁶ Joosten in White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions,” 359.

5. *Textual Commentary*

Above we discussed the problematic aspects of the use of a Bible edition that is based on subjective principles. Accepting for a moment the subjectivity of such an edition, we would at least expect that the reader be given detailed and soundly based reasons for preferring a variant reading to the content of מ. We wonder whether that really is the case in the following instances:

מ is preferred

Deut 32:3 גדל מ SP is preferred to גדול >ה of 4QDeut^b with the following argument: “גדולה in 4QDeut^b is a more common synonym of גדל; the less common form is preferable.”³⁷ The reader would like to know why it is preferable.

Ezek 1:1 מראות מ is preferred to מראה of “G^{LCat} οἱ λ (ορασις) Syr Text.”³⁸ The reason given is “assim?” but the reader wonders whether we have any firm criteria for making that choice between the readings.

מ is corrected

Deut 32:5 “Verse 5 presents a text-critical challenge: its first clause is almost hopelessly corrupt. The reading of each version displays different errors and subsequent attempts to make sense of the result.”³⁹ I agree, but I do not think that the correction suggested (שחתו for מ שחת) makes the text much better.

Ezek 1:3 מ היה היה is corrected to a single היה with V (*factum est*) S T.⁴⁰ However, the translations often leave out the second word in this construction, and the presentation of the original text as a single word (מ is presented as “ditto!”) is rather unlikely (יהי would be expected as in 6:1, 7:1, etc.).

³⁷ White Crawford in White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions,” 355.

³⁸ Van Rooy, “A New Critical Edition,” 145.

³⁹ White Crawford in White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions,” 355.

⁴⁰ Van Rooy, “A New Critical Edition,” 145. The author must have meant this although the vocalized text left מ intact, and the unvocalized text (144) reflects the author’s intentions.

Reconstruction of the LXX Column

In Jeremiah 27, *OHB* does not reconstruct one, but two original texts, “Edition A (\approx G),” and “Edition B (\approx MT).” The reconstruction of the original Hebrew text from G is not easy, especially so if the *OHB* text of Jeremiah is to be used as the basis for continued scholarship. In the course of the reconstruction of the G column, ביד מלאכים in v 3 M is changed to ביד מלאכיהם probably because G has a suffix ($\epsilon\nu$ $\chi\epsilon\rho\sigma\iota\nu$ $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\nu$ $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omega\nu$) and possibly because the author⁴¹ wished to correct the syntax of M ביד מלאכים הבאים (“...by envoys who have come”). However, the Hebrew relative clause construction is normal and the added pronoun of the LXX is common practice in G .

6. Summary

The criticisms voiced a century ago against eclectic editions are very similar to those that may be voiced today. For example, the reconstruction by Torrey in 1927 of the archetype of the parallel Psalms 14 and 53 was criticized the following year by Budde, who at the same time presented his own reconstruction in a much longer study!⁴² The idea of producing eclectic (critical) editions is logical and has much to recommend it, but too many theoretical and practical problems stand in our way. Further, what should we do if two parallel eclectic editions of the same biblical book are published? Should we read the Bible according to Smith or according to Johnson?

⁴¹ Ulrich in White Crawford–Joosten–Ulrich, “Sample Editions,” 363.

⁴² C.C. Torrey, “The Archetype of Psalms 14 and 53,” *JBL* 46 (1927): 186–92; K. Budde, “Psalm 14 und 53,” *JBL* 47 (1928): 160–83.

