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GREEK SCRIPTURE
AND THE RABBIS

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POST-MODERN TEXTUAL CRITICISM?

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After a brief description of the nature of the textual praxis, an analysis of the various theories about the original text of the Hebrew Bible is given. This leads to the question: 'What are the implications of these theories for the textual praxis?' Information about the literary development of the Hebrew Bible found in textual witnesses complicates the textual evaluation.

Scholars constantly struggle with the nature of the evaluation of variants. In our renewed investigation of this issue, we suggest undertaking the following steps:

1. An analysis of the task of textual criticism
2. A review of the different types of variants in the Appendix
3. A review of the theories concerning the shape of the biblical text in early periods
4. A discussion of the complex approach towards literary variations
5. A summary: some post-modern aspects

1. The task of textual criticism

Textual criticism deals with the nature and origin of all the witnesses of a composition or text, in our case the biblical books. This analysis often involves an attempt to discover the original form of details in a composition, or even of large stretches of text, although what exactly constitutes an 'original text' is subject to much debate. In the course of this inquiry, attempts are made to describe how the texts were written, changed, and transmitted from one generation to the next. Those scholars who express a view on the originality of readings do so while evaluating their comparative value. This comparison – the central area of the textual praxis – refers to the value of the readings included in the textual witnesses. However, not all differences should be subjected to an evaluation. In our view, (groups of) readings that were produced at the literary growth stage of the biblical books should not be subjected to textual evaluation, since they were not produced during the course of the transmission of texts.

See category II in the Appendix. At the same time, the difficulty in recognising readings of this type complicates the textual evaluation to such an extent that some scholars may avoid textual evaluation altogether. This study focuses on this issue, and the first step on this road will be a review of the different types of variants presented in the Appendix.

2. DIFFERENT TYPES OF ANCIENT VARIANTS

The different types of variants exemplified in the Appendix are treated in different ways in textual analyses. It is important to remember:

  a. In the terminology used by most scholars a variant is a detail in a textual source differing from the Masoretic Text, which is not necessarily preferable to the other sources, but in text-critical deliberations it has a central position.
  b. We distinguish between genetic and non-genetic variants. Category I variants are genetic and need to be evaluated. Category II variants may or may not be genetic but, in any event, most of them need not be evaluated.
  c. Finally, the evaluation of variants is closely connected to the issue of the original text or texts of Hebrew-Aramaic Scripture, to which we turn next.

3. THE SHAPE OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT IN EARLY PERIODS

3.1 Necessity of accepting a view on the original text

Before an interest in the early or original shape of the biblical text developed, the biblical text was considered to have existed originally in the same form as that known from the medieval Masoretic Text. However, with the development of critical analysis in the seventeenth century and the comparison of textual witnesses, a new approach was created, according to which one could 'improve' the Masoretic Text by adopting certain details from the Septuagint or one of the other textual witnesses.

In the course of this comparison, scholars came to recognise the concept of the originality or priority of individual readings. The first reflections on an original text are visible in the writings of Cappellus who indicated that the versions, especially the Septuagint, sometimes reflected the 'autograph' of a biblical book better than the Masoretic

Text.[1] In 1657, B. Walton[2] asserted that only one of two alternative readings found in different manuscripts could be original.[3] At that early stage of scholarship, the comparison of readings did not immediately create the understanding that the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint form part of a larger entity of texts. Also, the assumed existence of recensions of the biblical text described in section A did not give rise to theories on the original form of the biblical text. Nevertheless, some isolated observations were made on this issue at a later stage. Thus, Eichhorn's influential *Einleitung* spoke of the 'original external *shape* of the books of the Old Testament',[4] but his analysis did not involve a discussion of the original text of the Bible as a whole. Likewise, Glassius spoke explicitly about the 'reconstruction of the text of the Old Testament such as existed before the time of the Masoretes, that is, such as came from the hands of the authors'.[5] According to Glassius, not only inner-biblical parallels should be used in the reconstruction of this original text, but also the ancient versions.

Other scholars must have made similar remarks. However, it was the fame as well as the systematic thinking of de Lagarde, who formulated the first lucid formulations about the original text of the Bible that caused later generations to link this view with his name. De Lagarde's discussion was brief,[6] and more than what he actually said was ascribed to him by generations of scholars who drew inspiration from his formulations. His discussions touched upon not only the original shape of the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint, but also on that of the biblical text as a whole. De Lagarde was preceded by others, but these scholars – Eichhorn,

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[1] Ludovicus Cappellus, *Critica Sacra sive de variis quae in sacris Veteris Testamenti libris occurrunt lectionibus libri sex* (Paris, 1650), pp. 384–385; (Halle, 1775–[1786]), pp. 926–927 and passim.

[2] Brian Walton, *Biblia Polyglotta complectentia textus originales, Hebraicum, cum Pentateucho Samaritano, Chaldaicum, Graecum; versionumque antiquarum, Samaritanae, Graecae the LXXII Interpretum, Chaldaicae, Syriacae; Arabicae; Aethiopicae, Persicae, Vulg. Lat. etc.* (London, 1657), pp. 1:36–37 who suggested that both readings could have been original.

[3] At that stage of the research, the comparison of the MT and LXX was usually coloured by Catholic-Protestant polemics.

[4] Johann G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1780–1783; 2nd ed.: Leipzig, 1787 and Reutlingen, 1790; 3rd ed.: Leipzig, 1803; 4th ed.: Göttingen, 1823), title of vol. I, ch. II, §1.

[5] Georg L. Bauer (ed.), *Salomonis Glassii Philologia Sacra his temporibus accomodata … II, 1, Critica Sacra* (Leipzig, 1795), p. II.1.235.

[6] Paul de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig, 1863), pp. 2–4.

Rosenmüller,[7] and Olshausen[8] – referred only to the original text of the Masoretic Text and its antecedents, and not to that of the Bible as a whole.

After de Lagarde promulgated his theory on the existence of an original text of the biblical books, additional scholars expressed their view either for or against this suggestion. Several scholars questioned de Lagarde's assumption that a single copy once existed, named *Urtext* or *Urschrift*.[9] The many differences among the early textual witnesses would seem to contradict this assumption. However, an elucidation of the question of the original form of the biblical text does not only have theoretical aspects pertaining to an understanding of its history, but also very practical ones, since it determines (or should determine) the approach of scholars to the differences among all textual witnesses. Those who adhere to the assumption of an original text will try to reconstruct it, partially or fully, from these textual witnesses, while those who reject this view rarely resort to the search for an original text and sometimes renounce it altogether. Unfortunately, the question of the original text of the biblical books cannot be resolved unequivocally, since there is no solid evidence to aid us in deciding in either direction. As a result, the definition of the textual praxis may never be complete. Each generation has to redefine the issues involved, now especially in view of the content of the Judean Desert scrolls.

The formulation of the different positions was greatly influenced by the descriptions of two scholars who expressed views supported mainly by abstract arguments: De Lagarde was the first scholar to give pertinent expression to an opinion in favour of the assumption of an original text of the Bible, while Kahle expressed the opposite view. Kahle's formulations referred both to the history of what he named individual text recensions and to the text of the Bible as a whole. Apart from these scholars, others determined their positions on the basis of the evidence itself – as opposed to abstract arguments – but usually were not able to break free from the positions of de Lagarde and Kahle.

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[7] Ernst F.C. Rosenmüller, *Handbuch für die Literatur der biblischen Kritik und Exegese*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1797).

[8] Justus Olshausen, *Die Psalmen* (KeH; Leipzig, 1853), pp. 17–22.

[9] Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwickelung des Judentums* (Breslau, 1857; 2nd ed.: Frankfurt a. Main, 1928); and Julius Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871), p. 25, speak of an 'Urschrift', while most other scholars speak of an 'Urtext'. Scholars continue to use these German terms since the first scholars to deal with this abstract question were Germans.

It is difficult to describe the views from which one has to choose at the beginning of our analysis, since they have not been clearly defined.[10] Those who adhere to the assumption of an original text should probably content themselves with a vague theoretical statement involving an opinion on its repercussions. It is particularly important to know if one stage in the development of the biblical book can be identified as the original text. So far, those who rejected the assumption of an original text have not formulated an alternative model that explains the development of the texts and the relation between the existing differences. In this analysis, many questions remain unanswered.

A discussion of the original text of the Bible pertains not only to an analysis of the textual praxis, but also to our understanding of the development of the biblical books, including their literary history. In addition to these two basic positions, there are scholars who consciously refrain from taking a standpoint.[11] Since the questions are very complex, it is understandable why some scholars would rather refrain from expressing a view.[12] However, for the praxis of textual criticism, it is necessary to accept some approach. Thus, almost all scholars are involved with the evaluation of textual variants, but often they may not be aware that this procedure actually requires the acceptance of the idea of an original text in some form. For those who claim that a certain reading is preferable to another one are actually presupposing an original text, since they claim that that reading better reflects the original composition from the point of view of the language, vocabulary, ideas, or meaning. The very use of such an argument is based on the perception of an original text, since otherwise two or more different readings could have been equally original thus

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[10] The presentations of the different positions by Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London, 1979), pp. 84–106; and before him by Rudolf Kittel, *Über die Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit einer neuen Ausgabe der hebräischen Bibel: Studien und Erwägungen* (Leipzig, 1901), are probably the most detailed.

[11] E.g., Bleddyn J. Roberts, *The Old Testament Text and Versions: The Hebrew Text in Transmission and the History of the Ancient Versions* (Cardiff, 1951); Samuel R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (5th ed.; Edinburgh, 1898; New York, 1956); Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London, 1953), pp. 71–126; Ernst Sellin–Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (transl. David E. Green; Nashville–New York, 1968), pp. 489–515; Rudolf Smend, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, 1978), pp. 13–32; Childs, *Introduction*, pp. 103–104; Jacob Weingreen, *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford/New York, 1982).

[12] Bénédicte Lemmelijn, 'What Are We Looking for in Doing Old Testament Text-critical Research', *JNWSL* 23 (1997), pp. 69–80 [77]: '… I would rather start from the observation that at a certain moment in history several texts have indeed been current … without positing anything about their origin and the phases of their prior textual history'.

negating the need to make a decision. Therefore, the authors and users of the *BH*-series and *Oxford Hebrew Bible*, and the authors of all critical commentaries by implication, accept the idea of an original text. On the other hand, the authors and users of the *Hebrew University Bible* edition do not have to make a decision because that edition does not include value judgements. This understanding may be illustrated by a text example, viz., the well-known variation in Gen 2:2 between 'seventh' and 'sixth' day. Those who claim that one of the two readings is preferable (for example, *REB*: 'sixth') assume that that reading reflects or could reflect the original text. By claiming that either the reading of the Masoretic Text or the other one better reflects the original composition, they leave no room for the model of multiple pristine readings as analysed in §3.2.1.

3.2 Two models

In our view, scholars involved in textual comparisons cannot afford themselves the luxury of not having an opinion on the original text of Hebrew Scripture (§3.1).[13] Two models have been devised for the early written shape of the Bible, supported mainly by theoretical arguments and less so by actual data.

In brief, while some scholars posit the existence of an original text of the biblical books from which all or most known texts derived, others reject this assumption. The latter approach can also be formulated positively as referring to the existence of pristine texts that apparently had equal status. There seems to be no room for an intermediary position between these two views, but the presumably differing development of the various biblical books may necessitate different hypotheses for the various biblical books. The two models are:

   3.2.1 Multiple pristine texts.
   3.2.2 An original text or series of determinative (original) texts.

3.2.1 Multiple pristine texts

The assumption of multiple pristine texts has been developed as an alternative to the theory of an original text. However, scholars never formu-

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[13] In discussing the topic of the *Urtext*, scholars have often confused the question of the original text of the Bible with that of the original text of the MT. However, the MT is but one witness of the biblical text, and its original form was not identical to the original text of the Bible as a whole.

lated clearly the nature of these texts and their relation to the stages of the development of the biblical books. Common to the assumption of pristine texts is the further assumption that all/several early texts were of equal authority. The most detailed descriptions of this view are found *apud* Greenberg and Walters (below), both taking specific biblical books as their point of departure.

a) Kahle[14] suggested a multiplicity of pristine texts for the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, and also, the biblical text as a whole. He described the various textual witnesses as parallel 'vulgar texts'.

b) Barthélemy posited a number of undefined 'original texts' that lay beyond the sphere of textual criticism as he defined it.[15] However, he did not describe the relation between these early texts, which need to be analysed by literary analysis.

c) Goshen-Gottstein claimed that if any two readings cannot be described as primary as opposed to secondary, or original as opposed to corrupt, both of them should be considered to be alternative and original readings.[16] Goshen-Gottstein drew an analogy between procedures in linguistic reconstruction and the reconstruction of the text of the Bible.

d) Three other scholars rejected the assumption of an original text on the basis of textual data. Basing himself upon the occurrence of synonymous readings as variants in textual witnesses, Talmon claimed that such pairs as יד // כף (both: 'hand') אדמה // ארץ (both: 'land') reflect components that are equally early and original. In his view, neither one should be preferred to the other.[17] Likewise, Greenberg, basing himself upon a comparison of details in the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Ezekiel, suggested that various details in both texts are equally valid in the context ('alternative messages, each with its own validity … correlations between divergences within

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[14] Especially in his *Die hebräischen Handschriften aus der Höhle* (Stuttgart, 1951).

[15] Dominique Barthélemy, *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project,* vols. 1–5 (1st; 2nd ed.; New York, 1974, 1979–1980), pp. vi–vii.

[16] Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, 'The History of the Bible-Text and Comparative Semitics', *VT* 7 (1957), pp. 195–201.

[17] Shemaryahu Talmon, 'Synonymous Readings in the Textual Traditions of the Old Testament', *ScrHier* 8 (1961), pp. 335–383. He expanded this claim in reference to additional groups of readings in his study 'The *Old Testament* Text', in Peter R. Ackroyd and Christopher F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 1:159–199.

each version').[18] In Greenberg's view, these details are equally original. Similarly, Walters[19] tried to show that in 1 Samuel 1, the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint reflect two parallel stories differing slightly from each other.[20] Occasional readings, powerful as they may be, should not be invoked since the evidence may be misleading.

Reaction:

Although it cannot be denied that many readings are parallel, equally valid or appropriate in the context, the conclusion drawn from them by these scholars does not necessarily follow. For even if one is unable to decide between two or more readings, the possibility that one of them is nevertheless original and that the other(s) is (was) secondary cannot be rejected. One's inability to decide between different readings should not be confused with the question of the original form of the biblical text. The bottom line of this argumentation is that even synonymous variants need to be evaluated, necessarily with little success.

   In addition to the arguments mentioned above, the following *general arguments* against the theory of different pristine texts should be considered as well.

   a) The relation between the biblical composition and the presumed pristine parallel texts has not been addressed in the descriptions by the aforementioned scholars. Probably the proponents of this view support a general idea that could perhaps be called literary cycles, such as the Isaiah cycle or the cycle of Judges that were circulated in parallel and different formulations. While such a view is possible or likely at the level of oral transmission,[21] written parallel transmission is difficult to envisage and, in any event, the preserved manuscripts do not support this idea.

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[18] Moshe Greenberg, 'The Use of the Ancient Versions for Interpreting the Hebrew Text: A Sampling from Ezekiel ii 1–iii 11', *VTSup* 29 (1978), pp. 131–148 [140].

[19] Stanley D. Walters, 'Hannah and Anna – The Greek and Hebrew Texts of 1 Samuel 1', *JBL* 107 (1988), pp. 385–412.

[20] These four views pertain to details in the theory of an original text, and therefore for those who accept these views they provide a form of guidance for the textual praxis even though they refer to a very small number of instances. For example, Ronald Hendel, 'The Oxford Hebrew Bible; Prologue to a New Critical Edition', *VT* 58 (2008), pp. 324–351 [346], accepts the notion of synonymous readings for the *OHB* edition and therefore does not decide on the preference of one of a pair of such readings.

[21] See Robert B. Coote, 'The Application of Oral Theory to Biblical Hebrew Literature', *Semeia* 5 (1976), pp. 60–62.

b) The majority of the differences between the textual witnesses, that is, omissions, additions, and changes, may be explained as *genetic* differences deriving from *linear* developments. This pertains also to the great majority of the large-scale differences between textual witnesses that in my view were created in a linear way and not as parallel texts.[22] We do not exclude the possibility that parallel texts existed, but such an assumption is not supported by evidence. Possible exceptions are the differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint in Proverbs and Exodus 35–40,[23] but our inability to explain the relation between these texts should not be taken as proof of their parallel existence at one time.

c) Models devised for other literary compositions should not be invoked, since each literature may have developed differently.[24]

In sum, there is no positive manuscript support for alternative pristine texts.

3.2.2 An original text (single text/series of texts)

The hypothesis concerning the existence of an original text, accepted by most scholars, has been formulated in different ways. We do not refer to the *ipsissima verba* of the biblical authors or the most ancient form or earliest literary strand of a biblical book, or to the earliest attested textual form. Rather, we refer to the written text or edition (or a number of consecutive editions) that contained some form of the finished literary product. This entity stood at the beginning of the textual transmission process. This formulation gives a certain twist to the assumption of an original text as often described in the scholarly literature. Our definition does not refer to the original text in the usual sense of the word, since the copy (or copies) described here was (were) preceded by written stages. Reconstructing elements of this copy (or copies) is one of the aims of textual scholars, although the discussion is constantly plagued by the difficulty

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[22] See my *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd rev. ed.; Minneapolis, 2012), pp. 283–326.

[23] The MT and LXX of Joshua are a special case since both texts, as well as 4QJosh[a], reflect early as well as late elements.

[24] Kahle, *Handschriften,* invoked the model of the Targumim. Other models that have been invoked are: parallel versions of the Homeric epics, Rabbinic literature, and Second Temple prayers. For the latter, see Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Period of the Tanna'im and the Amora'im: Its Nature and Its Patterns* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 29–51 (Heb. with Eng. summ.).

of defining the written stages. There is no absolute proof for the existence of the model of an original text because of the late date of our evidence. The main arguments in favour of this assumption are as follows:

a) In terms of logic and plausibility, the *simplest* assumption is that the composition or editing of the biblical books was completed at some stage. At the end of this process, each of the biblical books was extant in the form of a single textual unit.
The biblical books are literary creations; literary unity and the mind, logic, and style of individual authors are often visible. These characteristics point to the assumption of a composition that was finalised and not to a multi-stage process of composition. However, in other cases we see signs of disunity and we should reckon with the possibility of a long process of written composition and transmission.

b) The improbability of the alternative theory of pristine texts (§3.2.1) forms an argument in favour of the original text.

c) Linear development of the biblical books is a major element in our analysis of the early history of the biblical text. Most of the biblical books were not written by one person nor at one particular time, but rather during many generations. This assumption applies especially to the books that underwent literary processes such as the deuteronomistic revisions in Joshua–Kings and the different editions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Since the process of literary development was long, one needs to decide which, if any, of the final stages in the presumed literary development of the book should be considered determinative for textual criticism. This problem, discussed already by Kittel, *Notwendigkeit* has become more acute in light of the preservation in textual witnesses of sections of early formulations that were circulated at the time.

A major complication to any theory is the assumption that the textual transmission was operative before the completion of the final literary stage as defined in §3.3. These earlier stages were not 'drafts', but each literary stage was considered final and then released, in modern parlance. Literary activity did not cease with the acceptance of the canonical status of the Masoretic Text since Greek Scripture also contained compositions subsequent to the Masoretic Text.

3.3 Definition of the original text(s)

At the end of the composition process of a biblical book stood a text that was finished at a literary level and subsequently was considered authorita-

tive, even if only by a limited group of people. Early scribal activity preceding the completion of the literary composition is disregarded in the textual analysis (a). At the same time, the composition stood at the beginning of a process of copying and textual transmission, creating genetic variants in a linear way (b), while earlier compositional stages were disregarded, but could not be eradicated (c). This assumption is complicated since each of these compositional stages was accepted as authoritative when it was produced, as recognised by their preservation in some textual sources. In these cases, the textual evidence does not point to a single 'original' text, but a series of subsequent authoritative texts. Each of these stages may be considered a type of original text, since in antiquity they were also considered authoritative. In more simple types of transmission, as probably evidenced in the case of some individual Psalms, no literary rewriting took place, allowing us to aim for a single 'original' text. The assumption of parallel pristine texts provides a possible, though impractical, model, since at present it is not supported by evidence. We suggest that textual criticism keeps in mind the original text (d) or a series of determinative or original texts (e), although only some elements included in one or more of these stages can be reconstructed. The original text as described here existed in a written unvocalised form (f). If ever found, that text would probably contain errors and inconsistencies (g).

Remarks:

(a) At all stages of the growth of the biblical composition, parts of the book were committed to writing. A well-known example is Baruch's writing of an initial scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies, and the prophet's subsequent dictating of a second scroll to Baruch (Jeremiah 36). These and all other stages that have not been preserved are beyond the concern of textual criticism. Thus, the activity of the Chronicler as a scribe copying from a scroll such as Samuel–Kings and as an author changing his *Vorlage*, are beyond the area analysed by textual critics.

(b) Scribal transmission creates variants that are both genetic and nongenetic. The recognition of these readings plays an important role in our definitions. A reading described as genetic may have developed – by change, omission, addition, or inversion – from another reading that may, or may not, be known today. Even though the direction of the development of the readings is often not clear, in such cases it is nevertheless described as linear (primary and secondary) as long as the alternative model cannot be supported. Non-

genetic readings are those that may have been parallel, synony-
mous, or alternative but, as argued in §3.2.1, the parallel status of
these readings is often misleading. Nevertheless, a parallel reading
may have been created linearly from another one, but scholars
have no means of determining originality.

The acceptance of an original text model is based on the admit-
tedly subjective understanding that the great majority of the vari-
ants are genetic. For example, most of the readings created in the
course of textual transmission reflect a genetic relation.

(c) Some biblical books, such as Jeremiah, reached several final states,
not just in the MT but also at an earlier stage, as attested by some
textual evidence. Thus, at an early stage, when the edition con-
tained the short texts of 4QJer[b,d] and when the Septuagint ('edition
I') was completed, it was considered authoritative and was circu-
lated in ancient Israel. Otherwise, that edition would not have been
made the basis for the Septuagint at a later period, and would not
have found its way to Qumran. By the same token, the early text
of Joshua, which was at the base of the Septuagint and partly
reflected in 4QJosh[a], must have been considered authoritative. At
a later time, the editions that are now contained in the Masoretic
Text also became authoritative. The same thinking pertains to the
short Septuagint texts of Ezekiel and 1 Samuel 16–18, which prob-
ably preceded the later editions of the Masoretic Text. However,
when a subsequent literary edition was created on the basis of the
previous one and was circulated, the previous one could not be
eradicated. Therefore, even at a late period such as the time of the
Septuagint translation or when the Qumran scrolls were written,
both literary forms were circulated. As a result, the Qumran man-
uscripts include both 4QJer[a,c] (= Masoretic Text), which probably
had the *imprimatur* of the Jerusalem spiritual centre, and 4QJer[b,d]
(= the Septuagint), which lacked such an *imprimatur* when it was
taken to Qumran.

(d) We use the term 'determinative texts', since the plural term 'orig-
inal texts' is too vague. Realising that the original text is far
removed and can never be reconstructed, several scholars aim for
the reconstruction of a relatively late form in the development of
the biblical text. The available Qumran evidence from 250 BCE to
70 CE enables us to draw closer to this period, but had we taken
this course, we would have been labouring under a misconception,
since the Judean Desert scrolls reflect a relatively late stage in the

textual development. For these reasons, it is preferable to adhere to an abstract, albeit remote, aim. Even if the accomplishment of this goal cannot be examined, it would at least appear to be correct on a theoretical level, and must therefore be adhered to. One of our goals is to formulate arguments about the compatibility of readings in the context of the biblical books, referring to such parameters as the language and style of the book, and for that purpose we must try to get back to the original composition while realising that the sources of our information are limited.

(e) The assumption of a series of consecutive 'original editions' in some biblical books necessitated that these several long and short texts should not be subjected to text-critical procedures. At the same time, these texts also reflect exponents of scribal activity that created scribal mistakes and other secondary readings. Such variants need to be evaluated with textual procedures.

(f) Undoubtedly, the intention was for the consonants of the 'original' text(s) to be read in a certain way, but the reconstruction of that reading (vocalisation) is equally hypothetical as that of the consonants.

(g) The wish of some scholars to create a perfect text is unrealistic because the presumed original text would have contained mistakes and illogical details.

4. Complex approach towards literary variations

The evaluation process is based on the assumption that the readings were created during the course of the textual transmission and that they should be evaluated according to the internal logic of that discipline. However, it appears that some of the variants were created at an earlier stage, during the literary growth of the biblical books. Therefore, textual evaluation should not be applied to them.

As a result, the readings recorded in the Appendix, category II.2, need to be analysed with literary criteria that differ from those used in textual criticism. In the analysis of literary traditions one does not speak in terms of preference. Just as one does not prefer one stage in the literary development to another, one does not prefer one of the readings described in category II.2 to another. For example, scholars who distinguish between the pre-deuteronomistic stage and the deuteronomistic editing of the historical books, do not give evaluations such as those that are customary

in textual criticism. In short, in the case of literary variants, one simply notes the difference while refraining from a textual judgment.

This view pertains to the examples of category II in the Appendix and to many others. *BHQ* now applies this approach to a series of variants that are indicated in the apparatus as 'lit'. This approach gives promise of a new direction in textual criticism.

However, the use of this principle in *BHQ* shows its problematic aspects. The application of the principle of 'lit', although heralding a novel and positive approach, is admittedly subjective and by definition can never be applied consistently. For example, some features in the Septuagint of a particular book may be considered by its *BHQ* editor to be literary, while similar features in another book may not be considered literary by that *BHQ* editor. In the published volumes of *BHQ*, 'lit' is in the meantime[25] limited to comparisons with the Apocrypha: the so-called Additions to Esther in Esth 1:1; 3:13; 4:17; 5:1; 8:12; and 10:3 in the Septuagint and the A-Text[26] and differences between Masoretic Text of Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras (e.g., Ezra 2:25, 28, 31, 47; Neh 8:6).[27] At least some of the other major discrepancies of the Septuagint and the A-Text with the Masoretic Text of Esther could have been denoted as 'lit'.[28] Similar problems arise in Proverbs, where the major deviations of the Septuagint (addition, omission, and different sequence of verses), which in my view are literary (recensional), are only very partially recorded in the apparatus and not as 'lit'.

While the use of 'lit' is advantageous, the major problem in applying this notation is the subjectivity in distinguishing between textual and literary elements. Furthermore, usually the data are not composed of a single block of evidence, but of many details occurring at different places in the chapter or book. The dispersion of these elements complicates their recognition as one tradition block, and possibly the very assumption is incorrect. The common denominator of these groups of readings is their reflection of a shared feature or tendency, such as:

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[25] At the same time, *BHQ* (xcii) mentions the recording of such readings in Samuel and Jeremiah.

[26] However, these Additions cannot be detached from the main Greek texts on the basis of their style, vocabulary, and subject matter.

[27] Other differences in small details between Ezra–Nehemiah and 1 Esdras are recorded in *BHQ* without 'lit'.

[28] The practice of *BHQ* in Esther is not intrinsically wrong, as the editor probably espoused a different view. However, that view is problematic when the Greek deviations are based on *Semitic* variants that constitute a different literary edition of the book. Note the pluses of the Septuagint in 1:1 καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους as well as readings of the LXX^A-Text in 3:5; 6:4 (2) and elsewhere.

a) The short text of the Septuagint in Joshua, 1 Samuel 16–18, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel
b) Editorial tendencies of the Samaritan Pentateuch in added segments, mainly in Exodus 7–11 and Deuteronomy 1–3
c) Large expansions of the Septuagint in 1 Kings, Esther, Daniel
d) The Song of Hannah and an anti-Hannah tendency in 1 Samuel 1–2 in the MT
e) Chronological differences in Genesis and 1–2 Kings.

According to the view presented here, these individual readings should not be treated separately but as one large block of readings that need not be evaluated. On the other hand, many scholars single out individual readings from large complexes such as described here, submitting them to textual evaluation. Thus, individual readings from the complex of typological details in the short texts of the Septuagint to Jeremiah and Ezekiel are often evaluated (and preferred to the Masoretic Text), but in our view this procedure is irrelevant. In my view, the particular instances that for some reason have been singled out for comment in *BHS* (as well as in many critical commentaries) are typical of the shorter and rearranged texts of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and therefore need not be evaluated. See category II.2 in the Appendix.

5. POST-MODERN ASPECTS

Although evaluation forms a necessary part of the process of textual criticism, the difficulties described above cause a lack of clarity. For, with regard to many small details such as those mentioned in the Appendix, II.2b, it is virtually impossible to ascertain whether they were created at the composition stage of the book or in the course of textual transmission. If such readings developed during the literary growth process, textual evaluation should be avoided, but if they were created during the course of scribal transmission, evaluation is essential. However, it is difficult to distinguish between the activity of editors-scribes and that of scribes-copyists. While some will claim that this distinction is artificial and that at all stages scribes behaved as editors, certainly until the third century BCE,[29] textual and literary critics cannot afford themselves the luxury of not trying to make a decision. This lack of clarity creates confusion and

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[29] See Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA–London, 2007).

could cause scholars to refrain from expressing an opinion on the original-
ity of readings that possibly need to be evaluated. If our analysis holds
ground, it will always be difficult to know at which stage certain changes
were inserted in the copies of the biblical books. In that case, with the
progress in research, we are sometimes required to take a step back. The
recognition of literary variants symbolises the progress made in modern
textual criticism. However, at the next stage, we often recognise that lack
of clarity requires us to take a step back when evaluating certain variants.
I consider this a worrying aspect of post-modern textual criticism.

APPENDIX: DIFFERENT TYPES OF VARIANTS[30]

This list exemplifies the different types of variants to be evaluated (I) and
disregarded (II) within textual criticism.

I. *Variants that need to be evaluated (Genetic Variants)*

1. Orthographic Variants

Gen 24:41b	MT	נקי
	SP	נקיא cf. v 41a MT תנקה, SP תנקיא
Isa 61:2	MT	אבלים
	1QIsaᵃ	אבילים

2. Linguistic Variants[31]

Gen 49:4	MT	אַל תּוֹתַר<apocopated form>
	SP	אל תותיר <regular form>
Isa 33:1	MT	יבגדו בך <regular form>
	1QIsaᵃ	יבגודו בך <'pausal' form>
Isa 47:2	MT	גלי צמתך חשפי שֹׁבֶל גלי שוק
	1QIsaᵃ	חשופי שוליך

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[30] In this *Appendix*, the following abbreviations are used: MT (Masoretic Text), LXX (the Septuagint), SP (Samaritan Pentateuch), T (Targum), S (Peshitta), and V (Vulgate). The relevant manuscripts are superscripted.

[31] Linguistic variants usually involve the replacement of one form with another, often in agreement with certain trends. If the trend is known, the genetic relation is clearly indicated, but often it is not. The use of the term 'linguistic' is not universally accepted among scholars. For example, Cross calls lengthened forms like הואה and מואדה ortho-graphic, as well as 4QSamᵃ ונתתיהו for MT ונתתיו in 1 Sam 1:11 (*DJD* XVII, p. 9).

3. *Content Variants*

a. Scribal Transmission (Unintentional Variants)

Jer 29:26	MT	(ה׳ נתנך כהן... להיות) פְּקִדִים בֵּית ה׳
		(The LORD has made you priest … to be) officers <in/of> the House of the LORD.
(36:26 LXX)	LXX =	(γενέσθαι) ἐπιστάτην ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ κυρίου
		פָּקִיד בבית ה׳ (= S V; ≈ T)
		an officer *in* the House of the LORD <interchange ב/מ>
Jer 48:45	MT	ולהבה מבין סיחן (= T V)
		and a flame *from the midst of* Sihon
	2QJer	ולהבה] מקרית [סיחן (= S) <harmonisation>
		and a flame] *from the city* [of Sihon
Cf. Num 21:28	MT	להבה מקרית סיחן (= LXX T V)

b. Scribal Activity (Intentional Variants)

1 Sam 2:16	MT	קטר יקטירון כיום החלב (≈ LXX S V)
		Let them first burn the fat.
	4QSamᵃ	יקטר הכוהן כיום ה]חלב[
		Let the priest first burn the [fat]. <nomistic change>
Gen 2:2	MT	ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי (= Tᴼ ᴾˢ⁻ᴶ ᴺ V)
		On *the seventh* day God completed (the work that He had been doing).
	SP	ויכל אלהים ביום הששי (= LXX S)
		On *the sixth* day God completed (the work that He had been doing) = *REB* <theological change>

II. *Variants that need not be evaluated (Non-Genetic and Genetic Variants?)*

1. *Synonymous Readings*[32]

| Num 21:5 | MT | למה העליתנו ממצרים (= MT 20:5) |
| | SP | למה הוצאתנו ממצרים |

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[32] For some scholars, the existence of pristine parallel readings is axiomatic, and hence in the system of the *OHB* there is room for readings that are of 'equal' value. E.g., in 1 Kgs 11:5, for שקץ of the MT the apparatus records a variant אלהא reconstructed from S and named 'equal' by the editor, Joosten, in Sidnie W. Crawford, Jan Joosten, and Eugene 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), pp. 352–366 (p. 359).

Exod 2:10	MT	הילד (= MT SP vv. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9)
	SP	הנער
Isa 39:2	MT	MT = (לא הראם חזקיהו בביתו ובכל) ממשלתו
		2 Kgs 20:13
	1QIsaᵃ	ממלכתו

2. *Differences created during one of the stages of the literary growth of books*

a. Extensive Differences (Exemplified by LXX-Jeremiah and LXX-Ezekiel)

Jer 27:19	LXX*	כי כה אמר ה' {צבאות אל העמדים ועל הים ועל המכנות}
		For thus says the LORD {*of hosts concerning the columns, the sea, the stands*}
		BHS: > LXX*, add cf 52,17
Jer 27:22	LXX*	{ושמה יהיו עד יום פקדי אתם}
		{*and there they shall remain, until the day when I give attention to them*}
		BHS: > LXX*, add
Jer 29:16–20	LXX*	*BHS*: LXX* om 16-20, add; cf. 8ᵃ
Ezek 1:27	LXX*	וארא כעין חשמל {כמראה אש בית לה סביב}
		I saw a gleam as of amber {*what looked like a fire encased in a frame*}

b. Short Differences

1 Kgs 8:2	LXX*	ויקהלו אל המלך שלמה כל איש ישראל בירח האתנים {בחג הוא החדש השביעי}
		All the men of Israel gathered before king Solomon in Jerusalem {*in the month of Ethanim at the Feast that is, the seventh month.*} LXX* adds the italicised words.

1 Kgs 16:34 lacking in LXX ᴸᵘᶜ (MSS boc²e²):

During his reign, Hiel the Bethelite fortified Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of Abiram his first-born, and set its gates in place at the cost of Segub his youngest, in accordance with the words that the LORD had spoken through Joshua son of Nun.[33]

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[33] For an analysis, see my *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* p. 324.