

Modern editions of the Hebrew Bible

EMANUEL TOV

Background

The hundreds of different Hebrew scripture editions and thousands of modern translations in various languages are more or less identical, but they differ in many large and small details. Yet, in spite of these differences, all these sources are known as ‘the Bible’. The differences between the Hebrew editions pertain to the following areas: (i) the text base, (ii) exponents of the text presentation and (iii) the overall approach towards the nature and purpose of an edition of Hebrew scripture. In this chapter, we will review the philosophies behind the various text editions.

Behind each edition is an editor who has determined its parameters. Usually such editors are mentioned on the title page, but sometimes they act behind the scenes, in which case the edition is known by the name of the printer or place of publication.

The differences among Hebrew editions pertain to the following areas:

1. The text base, sometimes involving a combination of manuscripts, and, in one case, different presentations of the same manuscript. Codex Leningrad B19^A is presented differently in the following editions: *BH* (1929–51), *BHS* (1967–76), *Adi* (1976), *Dotan* (2001) and *BHQ* (2004–) – *BH*, *BHS*, and *BHQ* will be referred to as ‘the *BH* series’. These differences pertain to words, letters, vowels, accents and *Ketiv/Qere* variations. Usually the differences between the editions are negligible regarding scripture content, while they are more significant concerning the presence or absence of *Ketiv/Qere* variations. Equally important are differences in verse division (and accordingly in their numbering). In the case of critically restored texts (‘eclectic editions’), differences between editions are by definition substantial. In addition to these variations, most editions also introduced a number of mistakes and printing errors, reflecting an additional source of divergence.

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2. The exponents of text presentation, partly reflecting manuscript evidence: the presentation of the text in prose or poetry (in the *BH* series often against codex L), details in the chapter division, the sequence of the books, the inclusion of the Masorah and details in the masoretic notation (*inter alia*, *Ketiv/Qere*, sense divisions).
3. Editorial principles pertaining to small details in the text, as well as to major decisions: the inclusion of the traditional Jewish commentators, of ancient or modern translations, and of a critical apparatus of variants. Editorial principles are also reflected in liberties taken in small changes in the base text(s) or the combination of base texts. Some of these conceptions are closely connected with the intended readership (confessional/scholarly). The major decision for a modern editor pertains to the choice of base text, which could be a single manuscript, a group of manuscripts or the adherence to 'tradition', which implies following in some way or other the second rabbinic Bible (RB₂). The principle of accepting a base text of any type is considered conservative when compared with 'eclectic' editions in which readings are deliberately chosen from an unlimited number of textual sources, and in which emendation is allowed (see 'Addition of an apparatus of variants to the text of critical editions' below). With most editions being either of a Jewish confessional or a scholarly nature, one's first intuition would be to assume that the difference between the two would be that the former adhere to tradition, and the latter to scholarly principles, among them the precise representation of a single source. However, precision is not necessarily a scholarly principle, just as adherence to tradition is not necessarily linked with religious beliefs. Thus, not only Jewish editions but also several scholarly editions (among them the first edition of the *Biblia Hebraica*, ed. R. Kittel, Leipzig, 1905) follow RB₂, while among the modern Jewish (Israeli) editions several are based on a single codex: Adi (1976) and Dotan (2001) (both codex L). See also below regarding the editions of Breuer and the *Jerusalem Crown*.

As a result of these divergences, there are no two editions that agree in all their details. Some editions differ from each other in their subsequent printings (which sometimes amount to different editions), without informing the reader (Letteris and Snaith). On the other hand, photographically reproduced editions or editions based on the same electronic (computer-encoded) text usually present the same text. Such computerised versions of Hebrew scripture, usually accompanied by a morphological analysis of all the words in the text, are almost always based on codex L or *BHS*. When using L or *BHS*, in principle

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these editions should be identical, but in practice they are not (among them: Accordance, Bible Works, Jewish Classical Library, Quest, Logos, Word-Search, Gramcord, Stuttgart Electronic Study Bible). Two electronic editions are based on the Aleppo Codex (*Tokhnit 'HaKeter' –Ma'agar HaTanakh*, Ramat Gan, Bar-Ilan University; part of the *Mikraot Gedolot 'HaKeter' Project*).

Modern translations differ from one another in many of the text-base parameters mentioned above and much more. These translations usually follow MT with or without a selection of readings from other sources.¹

Development of editorial conceptions

Editorial concepts have changed over the course of the centuries. The following approaches are presented more or less in chronological sequence.

No exact indication of the source

Virtually all Jewish editions of Hebrew scripture, with the exception of eclectic editions, are based on manuscripts of MT, more precisely TMT² (the Tiberian MT). As the masoretic manuscripts differed from one another, the very first editors and printers needed to decide on which source(s) their editions should be based (see below). The perception that an edition should be based on a single manuscript, and preferably the oldest one, had not yet developed, as had not the understanding that the choice of readings from several manuscripts requires the indication of the source of each reading. When the first editions were prepared, based on a number of relatively late masoretic manuscripts, the earlier manuscripts that were to dominate twentieth-century editions (codices L and A) were not known to the editors or recognised as important sources.

The first printed edition of the complete biblical text appeared in 1488 in Soncino, a small town in the vicinity of Milan. Particularly important for the progress of subsequent biblical research were the so-called polyglots, or multilingual editions. The later polyglot editions present in parallel columns the biblical text in Hebrew (MT and SP), Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin and Arabic, accompanied by Latin versions of these translations and by grammars and lexica of these languages, while the earlier ones present a smaller range of texts. The first polyglot is the Complutense prepared by Cardinal Ximenes in

¹ For an analysis, see Tov, 'Textual Basis'.

² The term was coined by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein. See *Mikraot Gedolot. Biblia Rabbinica. A Reprint of the 1525 Venice Edition*, with introduction by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972), pp. 5–16.

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Alcala (in Latin: Complutum), near Madrid, in 1514–17. The second polyglot was prepared in Antwerp in 1569–72, the third in Paris in 1629–45 and the fourth, the most extensive of all, was edited by B. Walton and E. Castellus, in London, in 1654–7. The first polyglot edition was followed by the rabbinic Bibles (later to be called *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, 'folio edition'), which included traditional Jewish commentaries and Targumim. The first two rabbinic Bibles (RB) were printed at the press of Daniel Bomberg in Venice, the earlier one (RB1, 1516–17) edited by Felix Pratensis and the later (RB2, 1524–5) by Jacob Ben-Ḥayyim ben Adoniyahu.³

These editions were based on several *unnamed* manuscripts, to which the editors applied their editorial principles. The editors of RB1 and RB2 derived their base text from 'accurate Spanish manuscripts' close to the 'accurate Tiberian manuscripts' such as L and A.⁴ In the words of Goshen-Gottstein, '[w]ith a view to the fact that this is the first eclectic text arranged in the early sixteenth century, it seems amazing that, until the twentieth century, this early humanistic edition served as the basis for all later texts'.⁵

Adherence to the second rabbinic Bible (RB2)

Because of the inclusion of the Masorah, Targumim and traditional Jewish commentaries in RB2, that edition was hailed as *the* Jewish edition of the Hebrew Bible. RB2 also became the pivotal text in scholarly circles since any text considered to be central to Judaism was accepted as authoritative elsewhere. Consequently, for many generations following the 1520s, most new editions reflected RB2, and deviated from it only when changing or adding details on the basis of other manuscripts, when altering editorial principles or when removing or adding printing errors.

Ever since the 1520s, many good, often precise, editions have been based on RB2. The most important are those of J. Buxtorf (1618), J. Athias (1661), J. Leusden (2nd edn. 1667), D. E. Jablonski (1699), E. van der Hooght (1705), J. D. Michaelis (1720), A. Hahn (1831), E. F. C. Rosenmüller (1834), M. H. Letteris (1852), the first two editions of *BH* (Leipzig, 1905, 1913), C. D. Ginsburg (1926) and M. Koren (1962). The influence of RB2 is felt into the twenty-first century,

³ For a modern edition of the *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, see M. Cohen, *Miqra'ot Gedolot 'Haketer'. A Revised and Augmented Scientific Edition of Miqra'ot Gedolot Based on the Aleppo Codex and Early Medieval MSS*, parts I–VII (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1992–2000).

⁴ Thus J. S. Penkower, 'Jacob Ben-Ḥayyim and the Rise of the Biblia Rabbinica', unpubl. PhD thesis [Hebrew, with English summary], Hebrew University, Jerusalem (1982); J. S. Penkower, 'Rabbinic Bible', in J. H. Hayes (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), vol. II, cols. 361–4, at col. 363.

⁵ Goshen-Gottstein, 'Editions', p. 224.



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as the edition of Koren, probably the one most frequently used in Israel, is based on that source.

The aforementioned polyglot editions, though influential for the course of scholarship in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, did not continue to influence subsequent Bible editions or Bible scholarship.

Adherence to the Ben-Asher tradition

RB2 became the leading edition because of its status within Judaism and the scholarly world, not because of its manuscript basis, which remains unknown (although its type has been recognised). The uncertainty regarding the textual base of these editions is problematic for precise scholarship, and therefore several new editions have tried to improve upon RB2 in various ways. Sometimes readings were changed according to specific masoretic manuscripts (e.g. J. D. Michaelis (1720) and N. H. Snaith (1958) following B. M. Or 2626–8). At the same time, since all these editions reflect the Ben-Asher text, the centrally accepted text in Judaism, the recognition developed that any new edition should involve an exact representation of that tradition. Thus S. Baer and F. Delitzsch attempted to reconstruct the Ben-Asher text on the basis of, among other things, Ben-Asher's grammatical treatise *Diqduqqê ha-Ṭeamim*, particularly with regard to the system of *ga'yot* (secondary stresses). C. D. Ginsburg (1926) tried to get closer to the original form of the Ben-Asher text on the basis of his thorough knowledge of the notations of the Masorah. At the same time, the edition itself reproduces RB2. Cassuto (1953) hoped to reach the same goal by changing details in an earlier edition (that of Ginsburg) on the basis of some readings in the Aleppo Codex that he consulted on the spot.

Only in later years did the search for the most precise Bible text lead scholars to use manuscripts presumably vocalised by Aaron ben Moshe ben Ben-Asher *himself* (the Aleppo Codex = A), or those corrected according to that manuscript (Codex Leningrad B19^A = L), or codex C, there being no better base for our knowledge of the Ben-Asher tradition.

The first single manuscript to be used for an edition was codex L from 1009, which was used for the third edition of *BH* (1929–37, 1951), *BHS* (1967–77), two editions by A. Dotan (Dotan (1976) and Dotan (2001)) and *BHQ* (2004–). The great majority of computer programmes using a biblical text are also based on this manuscript.

The second manuscript used for an edition is the Aleppo Codex (vocalised and accented in approximately 925 CE), used for the *HUB*. The lost readings of this manuscript (in the Torah) have been reconstructed on the basis of new evidence by J. S. Penkower, *New Evidence for the Pentateuch Text in the*

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Aleppo Codex [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1992) and had previously been included in the editions of Breuer (1977–82 and 1997 (Breuer, Horev)) on the basis of Yemenite manuscripts. The *Jerusalem Crown* (2000) follows the Breuer edition.

Representation of a single manuscript

The search for the best Ben-Asher manuscript involved the use of a single manuscript rather than a combination of sources. This development coincided with one of the leading ideas in *Editionstechnik* of producing a diplomatic edition on the basis of a single manuscript, not ‘improved’ upon by readings from other sources. Soon enough, the use of a single manuscript became a leading principle in Hebrew scripture editions, as in the case of some of the editions of the LXX, Peshitta and Targumim.

Addition of an apparatus of variants to the text of critical editions

The search for an exact representation of a single source (in this case: a Ben-Asher *codex unicus*) often went together with the presentation of a critical apparatus (*BH* series, *HUB*) containing inner-masoretic and extra-masoretic variant readings. However, the two procedures are not necessarily connected, as codex L in Dotan’s editions (Adi (1976) and Dotan (2001)) is not accompanied by a textual apparatus. These critical apparatuses became the centrepiece of the critical editions.

A critical apparatus provides a choice of variant readings that, together with the main text, should enable the reader to make maximum use of the textual data. Naturally, the critical apparatus provides only a selection of readings, and if this selection is performed judiciously, the apparatus provides an efficient tool.

‘Eclectic’ editions

In the course of 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 MT alone is not satisfactory 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 necessitates that the user place the variants in imaginary (virtual) boxes that in the user’s mind may replace readings of MT. Since each scholar evaluates the data differently, everyone creates in his/her mind a different reconstructed (original) text. In

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other words, users of the *BH* series constantly work with two sets of data, a real edition (MT) that they see in front of them and a virtual one, which is composed eclectically from the apparatus.

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. It is no longer necessary to replace in one's mind a detail of MT with a variant reading found in the apparatus, as these preferred readings have actually been incorporated into the running text. Thus, in MT in Gen. 1:9, the command 'let the water under the heaven be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear' is followed by an abbreviated account of its implementation 'and so it was'. However, in the edition of R. S. Hendel⁶ the detailed implementation is included in the text itself ('and the water under the heaven was gathered into one place, and dry land appeared'), following a harmonising plus in 4QGen^k and the LXX. An edition of this type provides a very convenient way of using the textual data together with an expert's evaluation. This 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), and also has much to recommend it for the study of Hebrew scripture. As a result, a rather sizeable number of eclectic editions of biblical books or parts thereof have been published since around 1900. Eclectic editions probably influenced scholarship less than the *BH* series and the *HUB*, but their influence should not be underestimated because of the inclusion of eclectic editions in scholarly translations. A major exponent of this approach is the *Critical Edition* series edited by Haupt (1893–1904) and its English translation, by Haupt, *Polychrome Bible*. These editions are radical in their approach since they freely change the sequence of chapters according to the editor's literary insights. Thus, the book of Jeremiah in the series by C. H. Cornill (1895) is rearranged chronologically according to the dates of the composition of its components. In modern times this idea has been revived in several monographs, especially in Italian scholarship. Among other things, plans for a complete scripture edition are now under way, incorporated in the so-called *Oxford Hebrew Bible (OHB)*, introduced by R. Hendel's programmatic introduction.⁷ By 2010 only individual chapters had been presented in this way, but the complete *OHB* will present an eclectic edition of the whole Bible. The *OHB* project does not present a novel approach when compared with the

6 R. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11. Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

7 'The Oxford Hebrew Bible. Prologue to a New Critical Edition', *VT* 58 (2008), 324–51.

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editions of around 1900, such as C. H. Cornill, *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886), but the data on which the project is based are more extensive, including the Dead Sea scrolls, and the reconstruction of the source texts of the ancient translations is more sophisticated.

Evaluation of critical editions

The needs of various Bible users differ, but all users benefit from a precise representation of Hebrew scripture based on a single manuscript, be it L, A or any other source. Evaluations of textual readings as in the *BH* series are greatly welcomed by some scholars, but criticised by others for being intrusive and often misleading. Near-completeness as in the *HUB* is welcomed by some, but considered cumbersome by others because of the wealth of data. Finally, many scholars consider the eclectic system of the *OHB* too subjective, while others consider it helpful for the exegete. In short, there will never be a single type of edition that will please all users, partly due to the fact that these editions are used by the specialist and non-specialist alike.

Bearing in mind these different audiences, inclinations and expectations, we will attempt to evaluate the extant editions with an eye to their usefulness, completeness and precision, and to the correctness of their data. However, it should be understood that any evaluation is hampered by the fact that the *BH* series is constantly being revised, that only the Major Prophets have been published in the *HUB*, and that none of the volumes of the *OHB* has been published yet (2012). The use of these editions by scholars is uneven since most use the *BH* series, while the *HUB* is probably consulted mainly by specialists in textual criticism, authors of commentaries and specialists in the intricacies of the Masorah. Our evaluation of the *BH* series will bypass *BH*, focusing on both *BHS* and *BHQ* (fascicles to date, 2004, 2006, 2008).

HUB

The *HUB* edition is meant for the specialist. The *HUB* does not present an evaluation of the evidence, considered an advantage by some and a disadvantage by others. Most relevant evidence is covered, and in addition the edition focuses on Jewish and rabbinic sources, but is not matched by an equal amount of attention to biblical quotations in early Christian sources and in the intertestamental and Samaritan literature. However, the third volume published, that of Ezekiel, does cover the non-biblical Qumran writings. The technical explanations in the apparatus realistically reflect the complexity of the evidence (e.g. regarding the LXX) but, by letting the reader sense the variety of

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possibilities, the edition is not always easy for readers to approach; in fact, it may be impossible to compose a user-friendly tool in this complex area. At the same time, many of these technical considerations and explanations are located in a special apparatus of notes rather than in the main apparatuses themselves. In fact, the reader who is well versed in the languages quoted in the first apparatus may use the more straightforward evidence of that apparatus also without these notes.

The exegetical and translation-technical formulaic explanations attached to translational deviations from MT in the *HUB*, an innovation by M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, were influential in the development of the *BH* series and the *OHB*. In this system, in a series of types of differences such as in number, person, verbal tenses and vocalisation of the Hebrew, the apparatus specifies neither the data nor its text-critical value, since in these cases such a decision is impossible according to the *HUB*. Instead, the apparatus describes the versional reading in general terms as, for instance, '(difference in) num(ber)'.

The *HUB* is hailed by all as a perfect tool for the specialist, albeit a little too one-sided in the direction of MT and Jewish sources, and less practical for the non-specialist who would like to be spoon-fed with evaluations.

BHS and BHQ

BHS improved much on *BH* in method, but several aspects remained problematic:

1. Every collection of variants presents a choice, but *BHS* often presents fewer data than *BH*, filling up the apparatus with less significant medieval variants from the Kennicott collection (1776–80) and the Cairo Genizah.
2. In spite of much criticism voiced against the earlier *BH*, the number of medieval Hebrew manuscripts attesting to a certain variant is still taken into consideration in *BHS* in such notations as 'pc Mss', 'nonn Mss', 'mlt Mss' (see, e.g., 1 Sam. 8–9).
3. Inconsistency in approach among the various books is visible almost everywhere. A glaring instance is the lack of evaluations in Samuel against the policy of *BHS* elsewhere.
4. Versional data are often presented as if unconnected to suggestions by *BHS*, and therefore create the impression of emendations for those who are not conversant with the ancient languages. This system resulted from the overly cautious approach by the editors of *BHS*, who preferred not to make a direct link between the text of a version and a Hebrew reading actually reconstructed from that version.

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5. As in the *HUB*, the *BH* series focuses on the Ben-Asher text and its Masorah. It would have been better had some or equal attention been paid to the Masorah of the Samaritans and the biblical quotations in the New Testament and in Second Temple literature.

The system of *BHQ* substantially improves *BHS*, as shown in the first published fascicle that includes a very instructive 'General Introduction' by the editorial committee:

Texts from the Judaean desert

The texts from the Judaean desert are covered in full by *BHQ* (see, e.g., the full coverage of the Canticles scrolls from Qumran). See 'Manuscripts from the Judaean desert' below.

Formulaic explanations

The apparatus contains a long series of formulaic explanations of the background of the deviations from MT in the versions that are explained as exegetical rather than pointing to Hebrew variants. Thus 'and she said to him' in S in Ruth 3:14 for 'and he said' in MT is explained in the apparatus as 'assim-ctext' ('assimilation to words in the context'). Amplifications found frequently in the LXX and Targum of Esther (e.g. 1:4) are described in the edition as 'ampl(ification)' or 'paraphr(ase)'.

These notes provide the reader with helpful explanations of the versions, and show the editors' intuition; at the same time they may be criticised as not belonging to a critical apparatus of a *textual* edition. In my view, this type of recording should be left for borderline cases in which it is unclear whether the translational deviation reflects the translator's exegesis or a Hebrew / Aramaic variant, and should not be employed when the editors themselves suggest that the translation reflects content exegesis.

The principles behind this system have been adopted from the *HUB* and they improve the information provided but, as in the case of the *HUB*, they make the edition less user-friendly. Besides, *BHQ* contains many instances of exegetical renderings in the versions, while the *HUB* only contains borderline cases between exegesis and the reflection of possible variants in the translation. The notation of *BHQ* is more complicated than that of the *HUB*, since in the latter edition the explanations are included in a separate apparatus of notes, while in *BHQ* the evidence is adduced *together* with its explanation in a single apparatus.

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Textual and literary criticism

BHQ heralds a major change in approach towards textual data that, according to the editors, should be evaluated with literary rather than textual tools since they involve data that may reflect literary editions of a biblical book different from MT. *BHQ* now absolves such details from textual judgement.

The application of the principle of 'lit(erary)', although heralding a novel and positive approach, is admittedly subjective and by definition can never be applied consistently. Indeed, some features in the LXX of a book may be considered by its *BHQ* editor to be literary differences, while similar features in another book are not considered literary by the *BHQ* editor of that book. This issue can be examined in the *BHQ* fascicles of Proverbs and Esther. In Esther, the LXX and LXX^{AT} texts are considered by several scholars to reflect a different, even superior, Hebrew text. In *BHQ*, however, the major deviations of these two Greek texts, if adduced at all, are never described as 'lit(erary)'. The only elements that are described as 'lit' in the apparatus are details from the so-called Additions to Esther, also described as the non-canonical parts of the LXX (see, e.g., the notes in *BHQ* to Esth. 1:1, 3:13, 4:17). However, these Additions cannot be detached from the main Greek texts on the basis of their style, vocabulary or subject matter, and therefore at least some of the other major discrepancies of the LXX or LXX^{AT} could or should have been denoted as 'lit'. The practice of *BHQ* in Esther is not wrong, as the editor probably espoused a different view. But the editor's view is problematical in some instances in which the Greek deviations are based clearly on Semitic variants constituting a different literary edition of the book. Similar problems arise in the fascicle of Proverbs where the major deviations of the LXX (addition, omission and different sequence of verses), which in my view are literary (recensional),⁸ are only very partially reflected in the apparatus. Once again, this procedure reflects a difference of opinion, so that *BHQ* is not intrinsically incorrect.

Cautious evaluation

BHQ presents reconstructed variants from the versions more cautiously than in the past, but stops short of making a direct link between a reconstructed reading, preferred by that edition, and the text of the version (this practice is carried over from *BHS*; see above). The reconstruction (mentioned first)

⁸ See my study 'Recensional Differences between the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint of Proverbs', *Greek and Hebrew Bible* (1999), 419–31.

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and the versional reading are linked by the reference ‘see’, which leaves room for much uncertainty and does not reflect the real relation between the two elements. In an example given in the introductory material to *BHQ* as ‘Figure 1’ (p. lxxiii), in Jer. 23:17 MT *limena’asay dibber YHWH* (‘to men who despise me <they say:> “The Lord has said”’) where the LXX reads τοῖς ἀπωθοιμένοις τὸν λόγον κυρίου, reflecting *limena’asê devar YHWH* (‘to those who despise the word of the Lord’), the edition does *not* say ‘read *limena’asê devar YHWH* with G’ or the like. As does *BHS*, *BHQ* separates the two sets of information, suggesting that the reading which is actually reconstructed from the LXX is to be preferred to MT: ‘pref *limena’asê devar YHWH* see G (S)’. In this and many similar situations, *BHQ* presents the preferred reading almost as an emendation, since the reference to the LXX (phrased as ‘see’) does not clarify that the suggested reading is actually based on the LXX. Users who are not well versed in the ancient languages do not know the exact relation between the suggested reading and the ancient sources. More seriously, by presenting the evidence in this way, injustice is done to one of the basic procedures of textual criticism. It is probably accepted by most scholars that equal attention should be paid to MT and the LXX, and that both MT and the LXX could reflect an original reading. If this is the case, preferable readings from the LXX ought to be presented in the same way as preferable readings from MT, even if the difficulties inherent in the reconstruction complicate their presentation and evaluation.

Manuscripts from the Judaean desert

The manuscripts from the Judaean desert are fully recorded in *BHQ*, including both significant readings – possibly preferable to the readings of MT and/or the LXX – and secondary variants. The latter type of readings does not contribute towards the reconstruction of the original text of Hebrew scripture, but merely illustrates the process of textual transmission. On the whole, due to the extensive coverage of the scrolls in *BHQ*, this edition can be used profitably as a source of information for the scrolls. On the other hand, the reader is overwhelmed with the large amount of information on secondary readings in the scrolls. Since *BHQ* provides value judgements on these readings, that edition could have differentiated between the stratum of possibly valuable readings and that of clearly secondary readings. From reading the apparatus of Esther, one gets the impression that the greater part of the readings belong to this second stratum.

The material from the Judaean desert is rightly recorded more fully than the medieval Hebrew evidence (see below). At the same time, the apparatus

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will include all the material for the SP except for orthographic and linguistic variants, all the Cairo Genizah material prior to 1000, and select Tiberian manuscripts (see below).

Medieval manuscripts

Following the study of M. H. Goshen-Gottstein,⁹ *BHQ* does not record the content of the individual manuscripts from the collections of medieval manuscripts by Kennicott and de Rossi. On the other hand, eight early masoretic manuscripts listed in the 'General Introduction', pp. xx–xxv, are covered. The reduction in the number of medieval manuscripts covered is a distinct improvement.

Textual commentary

The publication of a detailed textual commentary (part 18, 51*–150*) in which difficult readings are discussed, including an analysis of all readings preferred to MT, represents a great step forward from all other editions. The discussion describes all the relevant issues and is usually thorough and judicious. The readings discussed present textual problems, for all of which an opinion is expressed. One of the many advantages of this commentary is that it discusses conjectures regardless of their acceptance by the editors.

The strength of a commentary is in the relation between the generalisations and the remarks on details. Indeed, the authors of the commentary constantly deducted generalisations from details, and explained details according to what is known from comparable instances.

Conservative approach to evaluations

The textual evaluations in *BHQ* are very conservative when compared with earlier editions in the *BH* series. Thus, while in Canticles in *BHS*, thirty-two variants are preferred to MT, the editor of *BHQ* makes only three such suggestions (phrased as 'pref'). In all other cases, the text of MT is preferred.

Retroversions

The apparatus contains a rather full presentation of the textual evidence that is at variance with the main text, MT as represented by codex L. However, the presentation of this evidence in *BHQ* differs from that in all other critical editions in that the versional evidence is presented mainly in the languages of

⁹ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, 'Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts. Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition', *Bib* 48 (1967), 243–90.

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the translations, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac and Latin. All other editions retrovert many versional readings into Hebrew, while some of them are described as readings preferable to MT (such preferences are not expressed for readings in the *HUB*). However, in the past many such retroversions in the *BH* series were haphazard, imprecise or unfounded. Probably for this reason, *BHQ* is sparing with retroversions, presenting only one type, as stated in the 'General Introduction', p. XIII: '[r]etroversion will be used only for a reading proposed as *preferable* (italics added) to that found in the base text'. While these retroversions are thus reduced to a minimum, other types of retroversions are nevertheless found in the apparatus, although for the editors of *BHQ* they are not considered 'retroversions':

1. Versional readings that present a shorter text than MT are presented as '<' or 'abbrev'. This is a form of retroversion, although in the case of an ancient translation the editor wisely does not tell us whether the shortening took place in the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the translation or in the translator's mind.
2. Etymological renderings based on a certain Hebrew form ('via . . .') which is reconstructed in the edition, but not named 'reconstruction' in the *BHQ* system.

In their wish to record no retroversions other than those of preferred readings, the editors of *BHQ* may have gone a little too far, since the nature of the undertaking requires these retroversions. Thus, loyal to its principles, *BHQ* retroverts none of the many deviations of the Greek Esther from MT. However, *BHQ* accepts the idea of multiple textual and literary traditions in *Hebrew*. Therefore why should these traditions not be retroverted from time to time? *BHQ* records many secondary readings (see above, 'Formulaic explanations'), thus rendering in line with its principles to record, in Hebrew, readings that have the potential of being primary literary parallel traditions. It seems to us that, because of the lack of these reconstructions, the reader is often deprived of much valuable information.

On the whole, *BHQ* is much richer in data, more mature, judicious and cautious than its predecessors. It heralds a very important step forward in the *BH* series. This advancement implies more complex notations that almost necessarily render this edition less user-friendly for the non-expert. The juxtaposition in the apparatus of a wealth of exegetical readings and important variants as well as some of the complex explanations in the introduction will be grasped only by the sophisticated scholar. I do not think that *BHQ* can live up to its own ideal: 'As was true for its predecessors, this edition of *Biblia Hebraica* is intended as a *Handausgabe* for use by scholars, clergy,

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translators, and students who are not necessarily specialists in textual criticism . . . specialists in textual criticism should also find the edition of use, even though it is not principally intended for them' ('General Introduction', p. viii). The commentary and the introductions (see below) go a long way in bridging the gap for the non-specialists, but I do believe the specialist will grasp the finesses of the sophistication better than the non-specialist who will often be confused. Time will tell whether this assessment is correct.

OHB

The *OHB* presents critical reconstructions of an original text that, while imperfect, as editor-in-chief Hendel realises, still represent the best option among the various possibilities. The system chosen by the *OHB* editors can easily be examined in such an edition as Hendel's *Genesis*, and is well covered by the explanations in Hendel's 'Prologue'. This introduction describes in detail the notes accompanying the readings in the apparatus as opposed to the 'original' readings included in the text itself. It also describes at length the shortcomings of the other types of editions. However, what is lacking is a detailed description of the principles of the decision-making process relating to the very choice of these original readings. Hendel's own critical edition of Gen. 1–11 includes a discussion of 'types of text-critical decisions' (pp. 6–10) as well as valuable discussions of the relations between the textual witnesses. However, these analyses do not elucidate why the author earmarked specific details as 'original' in certain constellations. Probably much intuition is involved, as in all areas of the textual evaluation.

The older eclectic editions provided very little theoretical background for the procedure followed. It was supposed to be self-understood that scholars may compose their own editions, following a longstanding tradition of such editions in classical scholarship and the study of the NT. On the other hand, Hendel's 'Prologue' deals at length with the theoretical background of the eclectic procedure justifying the recording of the preferred readings in the text rather than an apparatus, as in the *BH* series. Nevertheless, the preparation of eclectic editions involves a difficult or, according to some, impossible enterprise.

In his theoretical introduction, Hendel says: "The practical goal for the *OHB* is to approximate in its critical text the textual "archetype," by which I mean "the earliest inferable textual state"' (p. 3). He further cautions:

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

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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.

However, 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. 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.

The point of departure for the *OHB* is the assumption that there was one or, in some cases, that there were two such editions that may be reconstructed. The *BH* series, and *BHQ* in particular, struggles with the same problems (see above), but in that enterprise the difficulties are fewer, since the edition itself always presents *MT*. 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 details, 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. On a practical level, what is the scope of the changes one should allow oneself to insert in *MT*? 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 (Jon. 2). If all 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

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of Jeremiah (see below) seems to be a simple case in comparison with the problems arising from very complex compositional and transmission stages visible elsewhere.

On a closely related matter, the *OHB* proposes implementing a different, more advanced, procedure for ‘multiple early editions’ of biblical books from that used in the past by presenting them in parallel columns. This is an important step forward, but the problems in the details of the published reconstructions of these parallel editions (1 Kings 11 MT and LXX, Jer. 27 MT and LXX;¹⁰ and 1 Sam. 17) jeopardise their existence: (i) presently each of the editions is not represented by MT and the reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX, but by an eclectic version of these sources; (ii) the apparatuses of the two parallel columns refer mainly to each other.

The presentation of the orthography of the reconstructed original text poses an almost insurmountable problem. Hendel was aware of this issue, and decided to adhere to the spelling of Codex Leningradensis, together with its vocalisation and accentuation. Words differing from MT included in the eclectic text are presented without these two dimensions, but the reconstructed *Vorlage* of the LXX in 1 Kings 11, when agreeing with MT, is reconstructed together with the masoretic vowels and accents. Cornill’s *Ezechiel* showed already in 1886 that the reconstructed text ought to be unvocalised.

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 or she may exclude a whole verse or change the wording, language and orthography. All these decisions are acceptable within the discipline of textual criticism. Since these choices are the brainchildren of a scholar, they may be changed by the same scholar after further study or may be contradicted by the majority of scholars. These decisions are as subjective as the ones reflected in the *BH* series, but the difference between the two editions is that, with *BHS* or *BHQ* in one’s hand, one continues to use the transmitted text (MT), 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 manoeuvring, in my view, because the object of our study is the Bible, imperfect as Codex Leningradensis 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 more unstable. Further, what should we do if two parallel eclectic

¹⁰ For these see White Crawford, Joosten and Ulrich, ‘Sample Editions’.

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editions of the same biblical book were to be published? Should we read the Bible according to Smith or according to Johnson?

Some remarks on all existing editions

The centrality of MT

Despite statements to the contrary, all critical and non-critical editions of Hebrew scripture revolve around MT, which is more central than ever in everyone's thinking.¹¹ Non-critical editions present MT more precisely TMT (see n. 2), while all critical texts present MT together with an apparatus. Furthest removed from MT is the *OHB*, but even that edition uses MT as its framework, occasionally changing the base text to what is now a variant reading in one of the versions. Even when versions disagree with MT on small details, and possibly reflect superior readings, these readings have not been altered. Other critical editions (the *BH* series and the *HUB*) meticulously present the best Ben-Asher manuscripts, including their Masorah and open/closed sections. This precision is absolutely necessary for the study of Tiberian Hebrew and the history of MT, but somehow the readers' focus is moved away from the very important ancient material contained in the LXX and the Qumran scrolls. Readings from these sources are mentioned – in a way, hidden – in an apparatus to the text of MT rather than appearing *next* to it. The decision to structure editions around MT is natural; after all, MT is the central text of Judaism, and it is much valued by scholars. Besides, the Dead Sea scrolls are fragmentary, and the LXX is in Greek, not in Hebrew. Notwithstanding, I see a conceptual problem in the focusing of all editions on MT. I am afraid that the editions we use, despite the fullness of data in the *HUB* and *BHQ* apparatuses, perpetuate the perception that MT is *the* Bible. The systems employed in the present editions do not educate future generations towards an egalitarian approach to all the textual sources.

In my study 'The Place of the Masoretic Text', I tried to show in detail how the centrality of MT negatively influences research. Although critical scholars, as opposed to the public at large, know that MT does not constitute *the* Bible, they nevertheless often approach it in this way. They base many *critical* commentaries and introductions mainly on MT; occasional remarks on other textual witnesses merely pay lip-service to the notion that other texts exist. Many critical scholars mainly practise exegesis on MT. I have given examples from Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Eissfeldt's

¹¹ See Tov, 'The Place of the Masoretic Text'.

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Einleitung, the commentaries of Gunkel, Dahood, Noth, Westerman, Milgrom, Levine and so on, showing that important remarks and theories by these scholars were based on MT only, although all of them are aware of the LXX.

Since the focus on MT does not advance literary analysis and exegesis, one wonders whether the approach behind these editions can ever be changed. We believe it can, as we think that an edition should be devised in which all textual witnesses obtain an equal status. Details from the LXX and the scrolls are currently lost in the mazes of apparatuses, but, if they were to be presented more prominently, they would receive more attention. Under the present circumstances, scholars hold any one of the mentioned editions in their hands, and misleadingly call it 'the Bible'. All scholars know that our editions do not contain *the Bible*, but merely one textual tradition, but we often mislead ourselves into thinking that this tradition is *the Bible*. However, the text of the Bible is found in a wide group of sources, from MT, through the Dead Sea scrolls, to the LXX and the Peshitta. Accordingly, the *Biblia Hebraica* is not a *Biblia Hebraica*, strictly speaking, but a *Biblia Masoretica*. So far there is no *Biblia Hebraica* in existence, unless one considers the details in the apparatus of the *BH* series to stand for the larger entities behind them.

Explanations in an apparatus

In the last half-century, critical editions have developed through constant interaction with one another, much in the direction of the *HUB* system, which has been known since the publication of M. H. Goshen-Gottstein's edition of Isaiah.¹² *BHQ* and the *OHB* have been influenced by the *HUB* in including descriptions of types of readings in the apparatus itself, mainly in order to elucidate the *secondary* status of several Hebrew and versional variants. In *BHQ*, these explanations are even more extensive and diverse than those in the *HUB*, and they are juxtaposed with the evidence, while in the *HUB* most of them appear in an apparatus of notes under the text. The recording of admittedly secondary readings together with their explanations in the apparatus of *BHQ* itself is a novelty in biblical editions, and it may deter readers from using a critical edition rather than attract them to one. It should probably be noted that, in the extensive literature on the nature of editions and apparatuses, I have not found parallels for the listing of such notes in the critical apparatus *itself*. In my view, these notes disturb the flow

¹² M. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah. Sample Edition with Introduction* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965).

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in an apparatus that serves as an objective source of information; rather, they should be relegated to a separate apparatus of notes, as in the *HUB*. I am afraid that with the attempt to explain these variants, the main purpose of the apparatus is lost, that of providing information about non-masoretic traditions to be used in biblical exegesis. This leads to the next point.

A multi-column edition?

The existing editions of Hebrew scripture present the following options:

1. MT only: all extant non-critical editions of the Hebrew Bible
2. MT + variants (and emendations) in an *apparatus*: the *BH* series and the *HUB*
3. MT + variants and emendations in the *text*: eclectic editions

In the preceding discussion we described the advantages and disadvantages of these editions, and one wonders whether a different type of edition will ever be devised, in which all the evidence will be presented in an egalitarian way in parallel columns:

4. A multi-column edition

The purpose of a multi-column edition would be to educate users towards an egalitarian approach to the textual witnesses that cannot be achieved with the present tools. Such an edition would present MT, the LXX, the SP and some Qumran texts on an *equal* basis in parallel columns, with notes on the reconstructed parent text of the LXX, and perhaps with English translations of all the data. The presentation of the text in the parallel columns would graphically show the relation between the plus and the minus elements. Only by this means can future generations of scholars be expected to approach the textual data in an unbiased way, without MT forming the basis of their thinking. This equality is needed for literary analysis and exegesis, and less so for textual specialists.

The earliest example of such a multi-column edition, Origen's *Hexapla*, served a similar purpose when enabling a good comparison of the Jewish and Christian Bible. In modern times, scholars have prepared similar editions in areas other than the Hebrew Bible, when the complexity of the original shape of the composition made other alternatives less viable.

However, a close parallel is available also in the area of Hebrew scripture: the *Biblia Qumranica* records the complete texts found in the Judaean desert together with parallel columns containing other textual

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witnesses.¹³ The reader learns more quickly and easily than in all other editions about the differences between the texts from the Judaean desert and the other texts, including in matters of orthography. However, this specific edition provides only a fragmentary picture of the biblical text, as its coverage does not go beyond that of the contents of the scrolls and their counterparts in other witnesses. The use of this edition for the exegesis of the running biblical text is limited, but it does provide a paradigm for other editions.

It may well be the case that there are too many practical problems involved in preparing such an edition of the Hebrew Bible, but a future discussion of this option will help us better to understand all other editions.

¹³ B. Ego, A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger and K. De Troyer (eds.), *Biblia Qumranica. Vol. IIIB: Minor Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

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