Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel

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Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel

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Emanuel Toy

New Editions of the Hebrew Scriptures: A Response

The organizers and participants of the symposium on Bible editions¹ spared no effort in turning the description of the various editorial projects into a fruitful group effort. The publications by our five learned colleagues are in front of us in an impressive fascicle of the new journal HeBAI.² Each author has described his own project and criticized the others - how else! - claiming the superiority of his own system. Such criticism has accompanied the publication of critical editions from the very beginning. Thus, the BH series, usually conceived of as the first such enterprise, was actually created as a reaction against a still earlier edition, viz. the Critical Edition series edited by P. Haupt (1893–1904) and its English sequel, *Polychrome Bible* (1897–1899), both of which are incomplete.³ R. Kittel, the initiator of BH, stated in 1901 that his new project was born as a criticism of Haupt's edition.⁴ Likewise, M. Goshen-Gottstein, the initiator of the HUB, wished to prove P. Kahle's judgments wrong. In its turn, the HBCE (Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition; previously: OHB) was created by R. Hendel in reaction to the leading editions of his time, the BH series and the HUB. The BO criticized the other Bible editions, and S. Schorch criticized the other editions of the SP, mainly the two editions by A. Tal. In this way, scholarship proceeds productively, and these five contributions continue discussions that began earlier.

Impartiality in my review is not an easy task under the circumstances. At this point, I have no official link to any one project, but I do have historical links to the *HUBP*, of which I was one of the editors until 2004.

¹ IOSOT, August 5, 2013, Munich. I herewith present my oral review, with very slight changes.

² HeBAI 2 (2013), edited by G. N. Knoppers.

³ A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Printed in Colors, Exhibiting the Composite Structure of the Book (ed. P. Haupt; Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1893–1904); The Polychrome Bible: The Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments: A New English Translation, Printed in Colors, Exhibiting the Composite Structure of the Book (ed. P. Haupt; London: Clark, 1897–1899). By combining textual data and literary principles and including a large number of emendations, P. Haupt's edition radically changed the text of MT.

⁴ R. Kittel, Über die Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit einer neuen Ausgabe der hebräischen Bibel: Studien und Erwägungen (Leipzig: Edelmann, 1901).

The projects that lie in front of us change constantly, especially when the members of a team develop ideas together. Thus, the various formulations of *HBCE* constantly improve on earlier ones and the description of the upcoming Minor Prophets volume of the *HUB* mentions several new procedures.

The projects are not of the same kind. The *BH* series (pp. 6–16), *HUB* (pp. 38–62) and *HBCE* (pp. 63–99) present competing editions of the Hebrew Bible. The other two editions are different. The *Biblia Qumranica* (pp. 17–37) is an edition of the biblical Dead Sea Scrolls and, at the same time, a partial edition of Hebrew Scripture. It lacks the biblical verses for which no scroll fragments have been preserved. The SP edition by Schorch (pp. 100–120) is also a partial edition of the biblical text, focusing on SP.

I cannot offer a comprehensive comparison of these editions because they are all incomplete. At most, I am able to compare concepts. The most advanced is *BHQ*, the last one in the *BH* series. Six of its fascicles have been released to date,⁵ none of which cover the most challenging books for textual criticism. Its innovative approach to literary variants, which is one of its achievements, cannot be examined at this stage, since the volumes of Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel have yet to be published.

Strictly speaking, we have no volume available for the *HBCE*, but the Proverbs volume is forthcoming,⁶ and we have at our disposal theoretical statements and a handful of sample chapters. In these samples the system changes constantly, which is a sign of flexibility, but I often wonder on which samples the project would like to be evaluated.

Three volumes of the *editio maior* of the *HUB*, prepared over the course of some fifty years, were published in 1995, 1997 and 2004, accompanied by very extensive introductions.⁷ One volume of the *BQ* was released in 2005,⁸ and the critical edition of SP is represented by Schorch's sample editions.

⁵ Part 5: Deuteronomium (ed. C. McCarthy, 2007); Part 7 Judges (ed. N. Fernández Marcos, 2011); Part 13: The Twelve Minor Prophets (ed. A. Gelston, 2010); Part 17: Proverbs (ed. J. de Waard, 2008); Part 18: General Introduction and Megilloth (ed. P. B. Dirksen et al., 2004); Part 20: Ezra and Nehemiah (ed. D. Marcus, 2006).

⁶ M.V. Fox, *Proverbs. A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford Hebrew Bible; New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁷ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, The Book of Isaiah: Sample Edition with Introduction (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1965); idem, The Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Isaiah (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995); C. Rabin, S. Talmon & E. Tov, The Hebrew University Bible, The Book of Jeremiah (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997); M. H. Goshen-Gottstein & S. Talmon, The Hebrew University Bible: The Book of Ezekiel (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004).

⁸ B. Ego et al., Biblia Qumranica, vol. 3B, Minor Prophets (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

Instead of reviewing each edition separately, I will structure my remarks around four central axes: (1) central philosophy; (2) literary variants; (3) place of MT in the edition; and (4) the target audience and usefulness.

1. Central Philosophy

All five editions are critical and scholarly. Four are diplomatic, which means that the edition is built around a base text, while the HBCE is eclectic, although it prefers to be called "critical" rather than eclectic. The adjectives "diplomatic" and "eclectic" give some idea of the dichotomy between the different types of editions, but they are only partially relevant since there is much room for diversity within the spectra of diplomatic9 and eclectic. I believe that we do have to make a choice between these two systems, since they reflect completely different Weltanschauungen. Although Hendel says that the HBCE is not contradictory to the BH series, but rather supplementary (p. 96) to it, I disagree. The two projects do have much in common, but the fact that the HBCE produces a new text and the BH series does not change the base text (MT) creates a rift between the two systems. Now, what is this new text of the HBCE? The proof of the pudding is in the eating. However, at this stage we do not have enough material available in order to judge how different the text of the HBCE will be from MT. Hendel's sample edition of Genesis 1 is only partially helpful, 10 since there is very little textual variation in that chapter and, accordingly, HBCE presents only a slightly improved form of MT,11 which is actually quite appealing to the reader. However, how comfortable would the reader be with an eclectic edition of Deuteronomy 32, Joshua 24, or many chapters in 1 Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (e.g., Ezekiel 7)? Neither is Fox's excellent edition of Proverbs typical of the HBCE, since he says that the LXX presents a literary revision different

⁹ Two diplomatic editions of the same manuscript should in principle be identical, but in practice they are not. Thus, the different editions that are based on codex L do differ from each other because their editors took different editorial decisions. By the same token, the Brooke-McLean edition of the LXX and that of Swete, both based on codex B, also differ.

¹⁰ Hendel, "The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Its Aims and a Response to Criticisms," HeBAI 2 (2013): 75-78. See further idem, The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

¹¹ In addition to the sample, I also refer to the attractive video clip on http://vimeo. com/63116507 also shown at the meeting in Munich (accessed 24 December 2013).

from that of MT, 12 but he does not present that edition in a separate column, an inclusion which is either mandatory or optional – I do not know which – in the HBCE system. Fox does not provide that column, because according to him it cannot be reconstructed. Instead, he records many details from the greatly divergent LXX text in the apparatus to the more-or-less MT text. He provides a superb textual commentary and I agree with Fox that it is probably impossible to reconstruct a Hebrew column for the Greek Proverbs. However, does this not mean that the HBCE system of providing parallel columns for different revisions cannot be implemented in Proverbs? I will go one step further. In my view, neither of the two parallel columns can be fully reconstructed in the other books due to similar problems. More importantly, there is a basic flaw in the philosophy of *HBCE* as it tries to reconstruct an original text that in my view did not exist and therefore should not be reproduced in a modern edition in the source language. 13 Further, we will never know enough about the ancient translations in order to include their reconstructed Hebrew Vorlagen in the text itself, as opposed to in an apparatus. There are additional problems as well, for which I refer to my reviews. 14 In my opinion, there is no common denominator for eclectic and diplomatic editions and we have to choose between them. In light of the aforementioned problems, I vote for a diplomatic edition, though in other aspects HBCE is more desirable than the diplomatic editions, as we will see below.

That leads us to the four diplomatic editions. There is no difference between BHQ and the HUB in their approach toward the base text, since both represent their base text, codex L and the Aleppo codex, with admirable precision. The BQ and the new edition of the SP by Schorch are equally loyal to their sources.

Which diplomatic edition would I like the public to hold in their hands when studying the Bible: the *BH* series with value judgments on the variants; the *HUB* without such guidance; or a biblical edition (not yet existing) like the *BQ* edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls by Ego, Lange, Lichtenberger, and De Troyer with blocks of material in parallel columns yet without guidance? We will return to this issue below.

¹² M.V. Fox, "Editing Proverbs: The Challenge of the *Oxford Hebrew Bible*," *JNSL* 32 (2006): 1–22, here 4.

¹³ In the words of a member of the OHB team, this text "never had physical existence." I agree, but if so, why should we reconstruct it? Fox, "Editing Proverbs" (see n. 12), 7.

¹⁴ See especially my "Eclectic Text Editions of Hebrew Scripture," in "Go Out and Study the Land" (Judges 18:2): Archaeological, Historical and Textual Studies in Honor of Hanan Eshel (ed. A. Maeir et al.; JSJSup 148; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 323–333.

2. Literary Variants

From the different types of variants recorded in the apparatuses, I single out literary variants because, in my view, they are of central importance for the evaluation of critical editions. A literary variant is a detail or usually a group of details that pertains to the literary history of the book, and usually reflects a recension (edition) other than MT. In the last two decades, we have witnessed a new and blessed development in editorial technique, since the BHQ and HBCE do not submit these variants to textual judgment. At an earlier stage, some scholars, including myself, analyzed this issue in theoretical analyses. In BHQ, such variants are indicated as "lit" and Schenker notes: "Examples include the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Kings." 15 However, so far, none of these books has been published, so that we can only examine the books of Esther and Proverbs in which some scholars, including myself, recognized such variants in the LXX. However, no "lit" notes were included in these two editions, which makes me wonder to what extent the system is actually being implemented. In my view, the BHQ editions of these two books do not sufficiently take the possibility of literary variants into consideration, but there is no right or wrong in this area since the recognition of literary variants is a subjective matter.

In the HBCE, also, literary variants are singled out as belonging to a revision differing from MT, which is presented in a parallel column. This system is very good, since the information concerning the two literary editions will probably be provided in full. However, here too we do not know to what extent the HBCE will adhere to this system, since the relevant volumes have not yet been published. The parallel columns in the two samples of Jeremiah 27 and 1 Kings 11 give room for optimism. 16 For 1 Samuel 17, Hendel published a very small sample of one of the two parallel columns, but we do not know what the complete edition will look like. 17 The editor of Proverbs also would have wanted to present the material in parallel columns but he found this impossible on a practical level.¹⁸ Therefore, I previously expressed my doubts as to whether the system really can be implemented.

¹⁵ A. Schenker, "The Edition Biblia Hebraica Quinta (BHQ)," HeBAI 2 (2013): 10.

¹⁶ See S. W. Crawford, J. Joosten & E. Ulrich, "Sample Editions of the Oxford Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 32:1-9, 1 Kings 11:1-8, and Jeremiah 27:1-10 (34 G)," VT 58 (2008): 352-366.

¹⁷ R. Hendel, "Plural Texts and Literary Criticism: For Instance, 1 Samuel 17," Textus 23 (2007): 97-114.

¹⁸ Fox, Proverbs. A Critical Edition.

3. The Place of MT in the Editions

My discussion of the place of MT in the editions starts with a terminological problem relating to the name *Biblia Hebraica*. That name has been in circulation for several hundreds of years for various Scripture editions, but it is actually imprecise since the SP and the Qumran scrolls may be named *Biblia Hebraica* equally as well as the MT editions that we all hold in our hands. Therefore, in my view, the *Biblia Hebraica* series is not actually a *Biblia Hebraica*, but rather a *Biblia Masoretica*. The giving of the general name *Biblia Hebraica* to MT is just one example of the central position of MT in our conceptual world.

MT is the main text of the Hebrew Bible, around which all scholarly and non-scholarly editions revolve. Presently, MT is more central than ever in everyone's thinking, even if most editors deny so.¹⁹ Both non-scholarly and scholarly editions present the Tiberian MT with or without an apparatus. Furthest removed from MT are eclectic editions, but even they use MT as their framework and *HBCE* reconstructs the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX according to the Tiberian vocalization system. The *BH* series and the *HUB* meticulously present the best Ben-Asher manuscripts, including their Masorah and section divisions. This precision regarding the intricacies of MT is laudable and necessary for the study of Tiberian Hebrew but, because of the preoccupation with the medieval layer of MT, the readers' focus is diverted from the very important ancient material contained in the LXX, SP and Qumran scrolls. Readings from these three sources are recorded in the apparatus, but are fragmentized in the lemmas in an apparatus to the text of MT, rather than appearing next to it or in its place.

In small details, the *HUB* and *BH* series could have made the MT less central by providing more material on non-MT evidence such as biblical quotations in Second Temple compositions including the Qumran scrolls and the NT, some patristic data and definitely more Samaritan data, such as the Samaritan reading tradition, which is included in the editions of Tal-Florentin and Schorch.

In large details, an edition is not only a tool that records a text. It should also be an educational tool that allows readers to perceive the nature of the textual evidence and to apply exegesis to it. In my view, for philological notes

¹⁹ See E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed., revised and expanded; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 160–161; and my study "The Place of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (ed. L. McDonald & J. A. Sanders; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 234–251 (236–239).

on individual words, the BH series, HUB and HBCE provide good to excellent tools, but not so for blocks of variants embedded in the textual sources. The fragmentation of the details of the textual sources in the lemmas of the apparatuses is a necessary consequence of the systems used in text editions, but it is not beneficial for the evaluation of complete contexts. As a result, blocks of readings that differ from MT cannot be extracted from the apparatus. This pertains, for example, to the LXX versions of Genesis 31, Josh 20:1-6, and to many chapters in Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In order to grasp the essence of these blocks of variants, the information needs to be presented en bloc, for example in a parallel column. We do not know yet how the HBCE will handle this issue, but it will likely do better than the known diplomatic editions. The very best solution would be the presentation of the data in parallel columns as in the BQ edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In any event, the *HUB* and the *BH* series perpetuate the perception that MT was the main representative of Scripture that was circulating in antiquity. These excellent editions undoubtedly wanted to obtain diametrically opposing results, but the way in which the Scripture texts continue to be quoted and the way in which scholars are trained suggest that my fears may be well-founded.

4. The Target Audience and Usefulness of the Editions

Evaluating the editions' usefulness is dependent upon a prior definition of the intended readership, about which I have no sound information. A further complication is that editors and publishers may have certain idealized conceptions of their readership. I have the following categories of readership in mind: (1) Bible scholars and students; (2) Bible translators; and (3) the learned public.

All five editions are primarily scholarly, meant for the university communities (category 1). To what extent they are or will be used also by the other groups remains unknown. BHQ describes itself as also intended for the general public and Schenker repeats this statement of purpose. 20 He also says "The editors of the BHQ are convinced that the format of the apparatus is a user friendly presentation of the textual situation ... "21 I allow myself to disagree with this judgment, claiming that the sophistication and complexity of the notation is above the head of the non-university schooled public,

²⁰ Schenker, "BHQ," 13.

²¹ Ibid.

including many Bible translators. This does not imply that the learned public does not buy and use these books. It only means that I doubt whether they will understand the intricacies of BHQ. After all, even textual experts like myself do not always understand the notation of the BHQ or the HUB.

The apparatus of the HUB is difficult on all counts, but BHQ is equally difficult. It is often difficult to understand some of the explanations given on the nature of the readings and translation equivalents, as well as many of the definitions in the introduction. BHQ is more difficult than BHS, since the former introduced sophisticated distinctions. However, there are always pleasant surprises. We hear that some of the information in the *HUB* is used also in *yeshivot* and I am sure that BHQ is also used in unexpected settings. However, I suspect that these unexpected readers still do not appreciate the finesse of the edition.

In conclusion, all five editions are useful for the scholarly public, and the easier their system, the better they can be used also by the general public. The SP edition and the BQ edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls are easy to use. Somewhat more difficult is the eclectic edition of Hendel (HBCE), and the most difficult are the HUB, BHS and BHQ. As for innovation in training a new generation of exegetes, I believe that *HBCE* and *BQ* excel in this area.

Some Final Remarks

It is difficult to summarize these diverse remarks succinctly. I have used and will continue to use all the editions that are being reviewed today. They all have their strengths and weaknesses. I have pointed out some of them, but I cannot go into greater detail. In several respects, the *HBCE* is preferable to the diplomatic editions, but I am not happy with the attempted reconstruction and perpetuation of an *Urtext* that in my view never existed. The *HUB* gives more philological data than the other editions, sometimes too much, and BHQ likewise provides much philological data and allows us the benefit of its cautious judgments. However, editors of biblical editions should not only aim at the philological correctness of their remarks, but should also educate the next generation of biblical scholars with regard to the relevance of textual sources to literary criticism. In this realm, BHQ has taken an important step forward, albeit one probably insufficiently large, since within their system they are not able to fully represent the fruits of modern textual-literary criticism. For the blocks of literary data, I actually prefer a type of edition not yet in existence; it would resemble the parallel-column edition of the BQ, and I have written a detailed program for this new type of edition.²² This is not the place to outline my plan, but, in my view, editions should create a visual electronic device that reflects the notion that the biblical text exists in several sources beyond MT. Today, even the most experienced Bible scholar who is not an expert in textual criticism continues to work mainly with MT. Thus, it is impossible for the reader, whether experienced or not, to follow the logic of the LXX text of Jeremiah 27 in the BH series or HUB, because all the details, although well recorded in the complicated apparatuses of these editions, cannot be combined into the sort of coherent picture that would benefit the exegete.²³ I would like Bible scholars to be able to work simultaneously with MT, the LXX, SP, and some Qumran scrolls on an equal footing. For that purpose, one needs a device that would enable us to visualize groups of variants and alternative literary editions in parallel columns. Only in this way will we be able to teach our readership an egalitarian approach toward all textual sources.

Until such an edition sees the light of day, we will enjoy the editions that have been presented, remembering the wise words of Prof. Hendel who very modestly says at the end of his exposé: "This is our theory of what a critical edition should be. It will not be a perfect edition."24 I agree, and add that the other editions are not exactly perfect either. Some will say that they are far from perfect. However, these five scholars do not just talk about textual criticism, but they are actively engaged in this area and should be congratulated for making things happen.

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²² Unpublished.

²³ The reader of OHB is better off with the edition of that chapter according to the system of E. Ulrich, although I do criticize its apparatus. Ulrich's edition falls into the trap of filling the critical apparatuses appended to the two parallel columns. In this case, the text of col. B is provided in the apparatus to col. A, and vice versa. However, they are not variant readings of each other, but serve as two parallel literary editions.

²⁴ Hendel, "Oxford Hebrew Bible," 99.

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Gary N. Knoppers (Notre Dame IN), Oded Lipschits (Tel Aviv), Carol A. Newsom (Atlanta GA), and Konrad Schmid (Zürich)

Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel is a new, peer-reviewed, quarterly journal focusing primarily on the biblical texts in their ancient historical contexts, but also on the history of Israel in its own right. Each issue has a topical focus. The primary language is English, but articles may also be published in German and French. A specific goal of the new journal is to foster discussion among different academic cultures within a larger international context pertaining to the study of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel in the first millennium B.C.E.

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