Textual Criticism of the Old Testament[1]

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The standard critical edition of the Hebrew Bible used today, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,* hereafter *BHS,* contains as its text a virtually unchanged copy of a medieval manuscript, Codex Leningradensis, whose colophon dates it to 1009 C.E. This codex was produced in Cairo by Shemu'el ben Ya(aqob. The vocalization (use of vowels and accents) in this manuscript follows the Ben Asher tradition, which reached its final form under Aaron Ben Moses ben Asher, who died about 960 C.E. Another medieval manuscript, the Aleppo Codex, whose consonants were written by Sh^e lomo ben Buya(a, was vocalized and accented by Aaron Ben Asher himself about 925 C.E. Unfortunately about one fourth of this manuscript has been lost, including its copy of the Pentateuch.

The Hebrew Bible was written originally without vowels or accents, and three systems of vocalization arose between 500-700 C.E., the Tiberian, the Palestinian, and the Babylonian, until the Tiberian system eventually prevailed. The completed Masoretic Text (MT) then consists of the consonants, including instruction on how the text is to be laid out on the page, the vocalization of the text, the addition of accents, and the Masorah. The latter was created to insure that special care would be taken in transmitting the text and consists of three parts. The *Masorah parva* notes specific occurrences of spellings, vocalization, or forms (e.g. the form "in the beginning" at Gen 1:1 occurs five times, of which three are at the beginning of a verse). The *Masorah magna* gives detailed

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[1] For further, authoritative information on aspects of textual criticism, see the magisterial work of Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible,* Second Revised Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress and Assen: Royal Van Gorgum, 1992. References to this work will often be given within the text, Tov, *Textual Criticism,* followed by page numbers.

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information about the particulars noted in the *Masorah parva.* With regard to "in the beginning" the *Masorah magna* refers the reader to verses now known as Gen 1:1; Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:2; 48:34, where this form appears. The *Masorah magna* contains more than four thousand of such lists. The *Masorah finalis* gives lists of the phenomena already cited and provides information about the number of letters, words, and verses in each biblical book. At the end of Genesis the *Masorah finalis* reads: "The total number of verses in the book is one thousand five hundred and thirty-four."

Although there is no scholarly consensus on when the compositional phase of Old Testament books came to an end, most scholars would date the consonantal Masoretic Text (MT), the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible, to the end of the first century C.E. or early in the second century at the latest.[2] Thus about a millennium separates our earliest complete copy of the Hebrew Bible, *Codex Leningradensis,* from the consonantal form of MT in the late first or early second century CE. During that millennium this text seems to have been copied with extreme care and with very few changes.

Evidence for Variant Readings

The discovery of the Hebrew texts in the Judean desert, popularly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, between 1947 and 1956, and dating from approximately 250 B.C.E. to 135 C.E., revealed that in this period we should speak of textual plurality, in that the variants from MT are of far greater number than had been known from medieval manuscripts.[3] Emanuel Tov has identified five groups of texts among the 200 fragments

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[2] An early form of this text, called proto-MT, is present at Qumran and at other sites in the Judean desert. Tov estimates that 35% of the manuscripts from Qumran are proto-MT. At other first and early second century C.E. sites in the Judean desert, the proto-MT is the only text.

[3] Thousands of relative minor textual variants were collected by B. Kennicott and J. B. de Rossi in the 18th century and they are frequently cited in the apparatus of *BHS*. The majority of these readings arose after the end of the first century CE and rarely reflect earlier traditions (Tov, *Textual Criticism,* 35-39).

of biblical scrolls from Qumran itself:[4] 1. Proto-Masoretic texts whose consonants are very similar to MT; 2. Pre-Samaritan texts, whose expansionistic and harmonistic characteristics are similar to those noted earlier in the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP),[5] but without its ideological changes; 3. texts copied in the Qumran scribal practice (variations in orthography, morphology and the like; see Tov, *Textual Criticism,* 107-111); 4. texts close to the Hebrew source of the Septuagint; and 5. non-aligned texts that follow an inconsistent pattern of agreements and disagreements with MT, SP, and LXX. His third category is somewhat dubious since the variations in orthography and morphology noted in these texts were probably widespread in Palestine and not restricted to the Qumran community, but his point about the manifest textual plurality at Qumran is well taken.

Before the discovery of the texts from the Judaean desert, scholars were primarily dependent on variant readings known from medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and those reconstructed on the basis of the ancient translations of the Old Testament: the Septuagint (hereafter LXX), including the Old Latin, which is an ancient translation of LXX; the Aramaic Targumim,[6] the Peshitta (Syriac translation);[7] and the

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[4] There are fragments of every Old Testament book except Esther. For the number of scrolls extant for each book, see Tov, *Textual Criticism,* Table 19, pp. 104-105. The scrolls have been published in *Discoveries in the Judeaean Desert (of Jordan)*, beginning in 1955, by Oxford University Press.

[5] The Samaritan Pentateuch is a consonantal text of the first five books of the Old Testament preserved by the Samaritan community, that split off from the rest of the Jewish community in the second century B.C.E. Variants from the MT in SP are of two types. Ideological changes indicate that sacrificial worship should take place on Mount Gerizim instead of at Jerusalem. In Deut 27:4 the SP reads Mount Gerizim instead of Mount Ebal as the name of the place where the Israelites were to erect an altar after the crossing of the Jordan. From the Samaritan perspective Shechem had already been chosen at the time of the patriarchs as the place for cultic worship. Hence in Deut 12:5, 14, the text refers to the place the LORD *has* chosen rather than the place the LORD *will* choose. See also the addition of a commandment to the Decalogue at Exod 20:17 and Deut 5:18 referring to the sanctuary of Mount Gerizim instead of Mount Ebal. This addition is drawn from Deut 27:2b-7 and 11:30. Other differences from MT, dealing with features like harmonization, linguistic corrections, and expansions are also attested in the pre-Samaritan manuscripts from Qumran. That is, this second kind of variant was not introduced by the Samaritan community itself.

[6] Text critics recognize that there is much midrashic material in the Targumim, which is not directly relevant to textual criticism itself. The Hebrew text presupposed by the Targumim is very close to MT, with the exception of the Job Targum from Qumran.

Latin Vulgate, translated by St. Jerome between 390 and 405 C.E., from a copy of the Hebrew Bible in the MT tradition. Of the ancient versions LXX was and is the most important, containing more variants than all the rest of the ancient versions combined. The LXX translation was originally made in the third and second centuries B.C.E., and the translation stemming from this era is called the Old Greek. From time to time in antiquity the Old Greek was revised to agree with the current Hebrew text. Two of these recensions are known as the proto-Lucianic recension and the *kaige*-Theodotion recension. A third type of recension is the result of the creation of the Hexapla by Origen in the third century C.E. All three of these recensions will be defined in the following paragraphs.

Origen's Hexapla

Origen's hexapla was a mammoth manuscript, arranged in six columns, of which four contained Greek translations.[8] The columns had the following content. Column 1, the consonantal Hebrew text of Origen's day, which was not always the same as the consonantal text of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Hebrew text used by the translators of LXX; Column 2, the transliteration of that Hebrew text into Greek letters. This Greek transcription also included representation of Hebrew vowels and thus gives us some indication of how the Hebrew Bible was read or vocalized in the third century C.E. The third, fourth, and six columns, contained the translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion (or *kaige*-Theodotion [see below]). Aquila and Symmachus are second-century C.E. Jewish revisions of the Old Greek or new translations into Greek. Aquila was the most literal of the ancient translations and attempted to represent every word into

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[7] The Peshitta also is close to MT, showing fewer variants than LXX, but more than the Targumim and the Vulgate. Its greatest deviations from MT are in Chronicles.

[8] For a few books there were additional Greek columns called Quinta and Sexta.

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Greek, including the Hebrew sign for the definite direct object. Both Aquila and Symmachus seem to have based their revisions on *kaige*-Theodotion. At one time Theodotion was classified as another late second century revision, but the Greek scroll of the Minor Prophets found in *Naḥal Ḥever* in 1952 contains an early Greek revision of the Old Greek (mid first century B.C.E.) that is now known as *kaige,* because of its distinctive translation of the Hebrew word *gam*, and this revision is thought to be identical with Theodotion or, according to others, it should be called proto-Theodotion. This recension is also found in parts of the LXX in Samuel-Kings (2 Sam 11:1-1 Kgs 2:11 and 1 Kings 22:1-2 Kings), the Theodotion text of Daniel, and elsewhere. The discovery of this early date for *kaige* Theodotion solves an old crux since when the New Testament book of Revelation cites the book of Daniel, it follows the recension of Theodotion rather than the Old Greek. Since Revelation is usually dated to the last decade of the first century C.E., this created an anomaly since a first century C.E. document seemed to cite a second century C.E. translation, Theodotion. Now that *kaige*-Theodotion or proto-Theodotion has been shown to come from pre Christian times, the textual basis for Revelation's citations from Daniel is no longer a mystery.

The fifth column of the Hexapla contained the LXX of Origen's day, which was a derivative of the Old Greek. Origen's methodology was to compare the quantitative differences between the first and the fifth columns. When an element was present in Greek and not in the Hebrew, he marked it with an obelos; when an element was extant in Hebrew and not in Greek, he added the Greek from one of the other columns, usually *kaige*-Theodotion, and marked it with an asterisk. Origen's purpose was apparently to make the Greek Bible used by the Christians agree as closely as possible with the Hebrew

Bible used by Jewish scholars so that disagreements between Christians and Jews would not be based on alternative readings. Origen, of course, was unaware of Hebrew textual fluidity in the centuries prior to the end of the first century C.E. and assumed instead that the Hebrew text had always been the same. In emending the fifth column, he was destroying some of its ancient and more original readings. Most manuscripts of the LXX that have survived from antiquity are based on Origen's fifth column, but when this column was later copied into another manuscript, without the other five columns, the *obeloi* and *asterisks* were usually dropped, resulting in an expanded form of the text of the LXX that is called Hexaplaric. Despite this unintended negative effect of the Hexapla, the editors of the Göttingen Septuagint, a modern critical edition of LXX, have been able to use standard text critical methodology and surviving non-Hexaplaric manuscripts in their attempt to approximate the best text of the Old Greek for each book. The other modern critical edition of LXX, called the Cambridge Septuagint, on the other hand, is a diplomatic edition, printing one manuscript at the top of the page, usually the fourth century manuscript Vaticanus (abbreviated as LXX^B), and providing readers with a series of apparatuses that list all the variants that were known at the time the volumes were published. It is generally thought that LXX^B represents a pre-Hexaplaric form of the text. The two volume abridged edition of the LXX edited by Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta, id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1935) follows the Göttingen system, but is based primarily on three manuscripts, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus from the fourth century and Alexandrinus from the fifth century. Advanced text critical work requires use of one of the two larger critical editions, the Göttingen or Cambridge Septuagint.

The most important post-Hexaplaric revision is that of Lucian, who died in 312 C.E. Lucian is known to have made a number of linguistic changes to the text of LXX. But now scholars have identified within Lucianic manuscripts (called b, o, c_2 and e_2 in the Cambridge Septuagint), a substratum that seems to reflect another revision of the Old Greek toward a Hebrew text like 4QSam[a], which is dated to the first century B.C.E. The importance of this proto-Lucianic recension will be demonstrated in our discussion of 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21 at the end of this chapter.

Even when a text approximating the Old Greek has been identified through the use of a critical edition, such as the Cambridge Septuagint or the Göttingen Septuagint, the reconstruction of the Hebrew that lay before the LXX translator is difficult since the translator's translation technique and his exegesis of the Hebrew text played a role in the translation that was produced. Scholars therefore attempt to distinguish between true Hebrew variants lying behind the LXX and variant readings introduced by the translator.

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia

While professional exegetes and writers of biblical commentaries will use one of the critical editions of the LXX, all students will depend, at one time or another, on the textual apparatus, such as that in *BHS*. The editors of the individual books in this edition, listed on the reverse side of the title page, have approached the task in somewhat different fashions and do not use the abbreviations employed in the apparatus with absolute consistency. Nevertheless, a wealth of textual data is contained in the apparatus to *BHS*, based on medieval Hebrew manuscripts, the ancient versions mentioned above, and variants attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls that were available when this edition was produced (1967-1977). The editors often offer the reader advice in Latin, such as, read

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with a cited Hebrew manuscript or version, or add or delete a reading on the basis of such evidence. At other times the editors merely list the evidence and expect readers to make their own judgments. *BHS* has been criticized for resorting too often to conjecture and for including literary critical judgments in the textual apparatus. As a result, users of the apparatus in *BHS* are required to exercise their own critical judgment about the data and recommendations cited in the apparatus.

Biblia Hebraica Quinta

A new edition of the Hebrew Bible called *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (hereafter, *BHQ) is* now being produced and three preliminary volumes have appeared dealing with the *Megilloth,* Ezra-Nehemiah, and Deuteronomy. *BHQ* prints an unchanged copy of Codex Leningradensis that is based on newer and superior photographs of the manuscript. This edition will eventually appear in two large volumes, one containing the text of the Hebrew Bible, the Masorah, and a neutral critical apparatus, with the second volume containing introductions to the text history of individual books, translation of the notes to the Masorah, and commentaries on the Masorah and on data contained in the textual apparatus. For the first time the Masorot will be easily understandable by non-specialists. The information provided in the textual apparatus itself will be neutral, simply listing the variants, with no indication of editorial preferences. The variants included in the apparatus must meet two criteria. The variants must represent a Hebrew text differing from Leningradensis, and they must be potentially significant for translation or exegesis. This edition will be able to make full use of all the extant Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts and its citations from the Peshitta will be based on the Leiden Peshitta project, which is publishing a multi-volume critical edition of the Peshitta. It is in the second volume

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where the editors of each book will make specific comments on variant readings recorded in the apparatus.[9]

Representative Types of Textual Variants

Variants in the textual evidence for the Hebrew Bible arose both by accident and by intention. Accidental variants depend in part on the competence and attentiveness of the copyist. The following types of variants often occur:

- Haplography, writing one letter or one word instead of two. Judg 20:13 *Kethib:[10] bnymn* (Benjamin) *Qere: bny bnymn[11]* (sons of Benjamin or Benjaminites). The longer reading is clearly preferable because the verb in this sentence has a third common plural ending. In writing the sequence of letters *bny bny, a* scribe accidentally omitted one of them.

- Dittography, writing two letters or two words or two clauses instead of one. Lev 20:10 "And as for the man who commits adultery with the wife of *a man who commits adultery with the wife of* his neighbor, he shall be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress." The italicized works are dittographic and are lacking in various minuscule manuscripts of LXX.

- Conflation (the inclusion of both of two variant readings). 2 Sam 22:43MT "I crushed them and stamped them down" is a conflation of alternate readings. "I

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[9] Advanced students may also choose to use the volumes in the Hebrew University Bible Project. This edition has four separate apparatuses based on the ancient versions, the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic citations, medieval codices containing consonantal differences, and medieval codices containing differences in vocalization and accents. This exhaustive edition does not contain conjectural emendations and does not take a position on the comparative value of readings. So far volumes on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been published.

[10] The *Kethib/Qere* variants are recorded in *Masorah parva* and usually also in the textual apparatus of *BHS. Kethib* refers to the consonants that are written in MT while *Qere* refers to vowels that are to be read. The *Qere* readings often presuppose a different consonant or consonants, or a different vowel letter (See Tov, *Textual Criticism,* 58-63).

[11] In this case the Qere in MT has no consonants, but only the vowels necessary to spell the word "sons of." The longer reading is supported by many medieval Hebrew manuscripts, LXX, Syriac, and the Targum.

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crushed them" is attested by LXX[B] and "I stamped them down" is attested by 4QSam[a]. 2 Sam 21:22 MT "of the giants in Gath" [*lhrph bgt*]; LXX "of the giants in Gath, to Rapha a house" [based on a Hebrew Vorlage[12] *lhrph bgt lhrph byt*]. *Byt* (house) arose originally as a corruption of *bgt* (in Gath), and the two expressions were conflated in the Vorlage of the LXX.

- Glossing. Josh 2:15 She [Rahab] let them down *with a rope* through the window *for her house was in the city wall and it was in the wall that she lived*. The italicized words, lacking in LXX, explain more fully Rahab's strategy in letting the Israelite spies escape.

- Homoioarcton or homoioteleuton. This refers to the omission of a word or words because a scribe's eye skipped from the ending of one word to the ending of another word (homoioteleuton), or from the beginning of one word to the beginning of another word (homioarcton), and left out all intervening word or words. Homoioteleuton: 1 Sam 12:8 MT "When Jacob went to Egypt…." LXX "When Jacob went to Egypt, the Egyptians oppressed them…." In Hebrew the words Egypt and Egyptians come at the end of the clauses, with the result that the second clause was lost in MT. Homoioarcton: Gen 31:18 MT "that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had gained in Paddan-aram." LXX "that he had gained in Paddan-Aram." The Hebrew Vorlage of LXX had been damaged by homoioarcton.

- Expansion under the influence of other parts of the passage. Josh 2:16 "until the pursuers returned"; LXX "until those who pursued after you returned." The

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[12] *Vorlage* is a German word referring to the Hebrew text that lay before the LXX translator.

addition of "after you" may have been influenced by the expression "those who were pursuing after them" in Josh 2:7.

- Interchange of similar letters. (Tov, *Textual Criticism,* pp. 244-248, cites many examples). In the "square" script, such as that used in *BHS*,[13] the following letters are similar: *d/r*, *b/m*, *b/k*, *k/m*, and *h/h.*[9] In the earlier Hebrew script, in which some of the biblical books were composed, or in the paleo-Hebrew script that is present at Qumran, the following letters are similar: '*/t*; *s/*[9]; and *n/p*.

- Metathesis, the transposition of adjacent letters. Deut 31:1 MT "and Moses went (*wylk*) and spoke." LXX "and Moses finished (*wykl*) speaking." Clearly the position of *kaph* and *lamed* has been interchanged, a change that would have been easier before the use of final letters and vowel points in Hebrew.

- Incorrect word division. Spaces between words in the Dead Sea Scrolls were very narrow, and some early forms of biblical books may have been written with no word division at all. An example of such an incorrect word division is in a conjectural emendation in Amos 6:12. MT reads: "Can one plow with oxen (*bbqrym*)?" *BHS* proposes a different division of the letters of the last word (*bbqr ym*) "with oxen sea," taking the noun oxen as a collective noun. If one then revocalizes the verb plow from Qal to Niphal, the result is a superior translation: "Can the sea be plowed with oxen?" In this case two reasonable conjectures created a far superior text.

- Differences involving vowel letters (*matres lectionis*). Often the presence or absence of vowel letters does not affect the meaning. Judg 1:19 *wyrs* and 1:20

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[13] Sometimes this script is called Aramaic or even Assyrian.

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wywrs, both meaning "and he took possession." In 1 Sam 1:24.however, there is a significant difference between MT "with three bulls" (*bprym sٰlsٰh*) and LXX "with a three-year old bull" (*bpr msٰlsٰ]*. The variant in MT shows incorrect word division, the addition of an internal *yod* vowel letter as part of the masculine plural noun bulls, and the addition of the final *heh* on the number three.

- Alternate vocalizations. The MT of Isaiah 9:7 contains the reading *dabar* (=word). The LXX reads *thanaton* (death), which may presuppose a different vocalization of the consonants *dbr* as *deber* (pestilence or the like). "The LORD sent a word/death against Jacob." While in the vast majority of cases, the vocalization in MT seems correct, there are a significant number of cases where the word found in the MT has to be revocalized. Isa 7:11 "whether it is deep, ask" (*haʿmeq sٰeʾalah*) or "whether it is deep as Sheol" (*haʿmeq sٰeʾolah*). The latter vocalization is supported by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion and favored by the editor of *BHS*. The consonants are the same in either reading.

- Synonymous readings. The translations of one clause in 2 Sam 22:1 and Ps 18:1[14] in the NRSV are identical: "on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies." In Samuel the word for hand is *kp* while in Psalms it is *yd*. This change may have arisen consciously or unconsciously, and there is no easy way to determine which reading is preferable (Other examples in Tov, *Textual Criticism,* Table 16, p. 94).

Some accidental variants do not reflect any of these categories, but arose truly accidentally, based on factors such as scribal fatigue or lack of competence.

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[14] Here, as frequently in Psalms, the English and Hebrew verse numbers differ. What is considered v. 1 in Hebrew is construed as an unnumbered superscription to the Psalm in English versions.

Intentional changes include replacing rare words with more common ones, harmonizing tendencies (a scribe adapted a reading to other elements in the same verse, the same context, the same book, or in another book of the Bible); addition or expansion of personal or divine names; theological changes (e.g. using the word shame in place of the name Baal;[15] euphemistic changes; changing details of the text to agree with biblical laws; and interpolations). An example of a euphemistic change is found in 2 Sam 12:9. The MT reads: "Why do you treat the word of the LORD with contempt?" LXX[L] Why do you treat the LORD with contempt? The addition of "the word" softens the insult to the deity so that MT represents a euphemistic change. The Masoretes recorded some eighteen "corrections of the scribes," where they recognized that a change in the text had been deliberately made, often for euphemistic reasons. 1 Sam 3:13 indicates that the sons of Eli were cursing for themselves (*lhm*), but the corrections of the scribes recognized that these sons had originally been blaspheming God (*)lhym*). The original reading in this case is also preserved in LXX.

Deciding Between Alternative Readings

What are the bases for a text critic's decisions between individual variant readings? The collecting of ancient variants, whether from Hebrew manuscripts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or by retroversion from the ancient versions is a relatively objective procedure although, as we have indicated, retroversion from Greek or another ancient language into Hebrew requires high linguistic skills and there is always a danger that the variant reconstructed into Hebrew was a change made by the translator in the course of translating. Choosing which is the preferable reading, however, is a much more

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[15] 1 Kgs 18:19, 25 "the Baal"; LXX in both cases "the shame." Compare Jer 11:13 "to shame" and LXX "to Baal."

subjective activity, an art rather than a science. Textual critics have formulated "rules" for making textual decisions, but these rules are far from absolute.

"Rule" 1: The more difficult reading is to be preferred (*lectio difficilior praeferenda est*). If the variation is between a rare word and a more common word, the textual critic may decide that the rare word has been replaced by a common one in the course of textual transmission. But every scribal spelling error would also be the more difficult reading, and such misspellings are hardly to be preferred.

"Rule" 2: The shorter reading is to be preferred (*lectio brevior potior*). This rule assumes that scribes are likely to combine ancient variants known to them, fill out divine and human personal names, or otherwise expand the text. Texts generally get longer rather than shorter. But omissions caused by haplography or by homoioarcton and homoioteleuton are also shorter readings and are not to be preferred. In Jeremiah the shorter text attested by the LXX is usually considered superior by scholars whereas the many shorter readings in Samuel MT are thought to result from haplography by homoioteleuton, homoioarcton, or other factors.

"Rule" 3: Assimilation to parallel passages. The MT of Exod 32:10b reads: "I will make you [Moses] a great nation." The Samaritan Pentateuch adds at this point text from a parallel passage in Deut 9:20: "But against Aaron the LORD was exceedingly angry [enough] to destroy him; so Moses prayed on behalf of Aaron." This plus is already attested in 4QpaleoExod$^{\text{m}}$, demonstrating that many of the pluses in SP were not made for sectarian reasons, but merely reflect a harmonizing form of the text.

"Rule" 4: That reading is original if its presence suggests how all the variant readings arose. This can be slightly reformulated by asking which reading is more likely to have given rise to the other.

None of these rules works in every case, and perhaps not even in the majority of cases. Therefore, the textual critic makes judgments based on detailed knowledge of the writing style or theology of a given writer and chooses that reading as preferable which is contextually most appropriate. The textual critic tries to support his or her decision by marshalling as many arguments as possible, but we should not be surprised if two competent textual critics differ on how to interpret individual variant readings.

Despite the evidence offered by the scrolls, the LXX, and other ancient versions, much ancient evidence has been lost—we do not have in any case the hypothetical final text that existed at the end of the composition process, and the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves are highly fragmentary for most books (1QIsa^a, containing the complete text of Isaiah, is a notable exception). There may well be texts that the exegete perceives as corrupt although there is no any manuscript or versional evidence to support that conclusion. In such cases, the only resort may be conjecture, but this practice should be used very sparingly and with full awareness of all of its uncertainties (see Tov, chapter 8, pp. 351-369). Sometimes there is no sure way to emend a difficult or impossible text. In 1 Sam 13:1, the text of MT is surely corrupt, when it states that King Saul was one year old when he became king and he reigned for two years over Israel. Saul is clearly an adult in every mention of him in 1 Samuel and the many events in his life seem to require a length of reign far in excess of two years. The verse is lacking in LXX^B, perhaps intentionally. It could be that the entire verse was dropped by the translator or in the Hebrew Vorlage lest

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this error be perpetuated. A sure error can only be identified in this case, but the reconstruction of an original, superior reading is pure guesswork. The NRSV puts three dots for the age of Saul at his accession, and a note on the two year length of his reign states "Two is not the entire number; something has dropped out." That suggests, but does not prove, that Saul reigned for twelve, twenty-two, or thirty-two years.

The Goal of Textual Criticism

A major text critical study of the Old Testament was supported by the United Bible Societies and involved an international team of outstanding scholars. It was called the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project (HOTTP). The purpose of this project was to provide aid to Bible translators on some 5,000 passages that had proved troublesome to translators. Eventually that list was expanded to 6,000 passages. The team produced a bilingual (English and French) five volume work entitled *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* (1976-1980). Its final report has appeared in a four volume work, published only in French, entitled *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament.*[16]

These scholars noted four phases in the history of the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Bible: 1. Early literary forms of various blocs of texts in the hands of editors and schools before they became community texts. At this stage the biblical works were in the process of formation, and the investigation of this stage is beyond the province of textual criticism, but these methodologies are treated in other chapters of the present

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[16] OBO 50/1-4. Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982-1985. Those who do not know French can access most of the results of this project in the preliminary, bilingual publication. Fortunately, the outstanding introductions written by Dominique Barthelemy in the first three volumes of the final report and covering both the history of textual criticism and the text critical methodology of the HOTTP itself will be published in English by Eisenbrauns. This is not the place to review the individual judgments made by the team in these thousands of cases, but it needs to be noted that their decisions are, at least in my judgment, exceedingly cautious, declining to change the text in many cases where change seems to me to be necessary.

book. 2. A period of textual fluidity and diversity attested at Qumran and in the LXX. This is the first stage of textual transmission and is the earliest stage in which text critical work can be done. The scholars involved in HOTTP note that there is some overlap between the phase of textual formation and the phase of textual transmission. 3. The phase of proto-MT, which is evidenced by the Hebrew manuscript finds at Murabba'at and Masada, and in the second century C.E. Greek translations of Aquila and Theodotion. The Greek Minor Prophets scroll, mentioned above, is transitional between phase 2 and phase 3. 4. The full Masoretic Text present in the Aleppo Codex and Codex Leningradensis of the 10th and 11th centuries C.E.

While the team originally hoped to establish the text that had emerged at the beginning of phase 2, they found increasingly that they could not discover a text that was stable and unified before the time of the Old Greek translators. At the conclusion of their work, they chose the proto-MT of phase 3 as the basis for an edition of the Hebrew text of the Bible. The team identified three tasks for textual criticism. 1. Textual criticism must first determine which form of the text is most authentic to the classic Tiberian text. 2. It must then attempt, with the aid of other proto-Masoretic text witnesses, to restore the consonantal form which is most likely to represent the standard proto-Masoretic edition, as well as the vocalization and accentuation corresponding to it. 3. Finally, it must discern those corruptions and accidental mutilations suffered by the pre-Masoretic text and correct them to the extent that they have not produced literary restructurings. By this last point the team points out that some early variants required literary restructuring by

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ancient scribes to accommodate them and therefore the corruption could not be removed without removing the restructuring as well.[17]

Emanuel Tov has discussed at some length the question whether there once was an original text (Urtext) from which all subsequent texts derived or whether there were various pristine texts of the Bible, which did not derive from one another, but had equal status. He adopts a modified form of the original text theory and distinguishes between the various stages of literary composition of the biblical books (one might think of the gradual development of the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah [see the standard introductions to the Old Testament]) and the final status of a book like Isaiah or Jeremiah. Textual criticism, he proposes, deals with the transmission of the text after its final authoritative status had been achieved. But Tov also proposes that some books, like Jeremiah, achieved a final status more than once, that is, a final status in MT and an earlier "final status" in the shorter form of the text known from LXX and from manuscripts 4QJer[b and d] that were discovered at Qumran. The survival of this form of the text alongside the proto-Masoretic 4QJer[a and c] is thus explained. Textual criticism of Jeremiah, based on the LXX and 4QJer[b and d] enables students to distinguish between these two editions of Jeremiah. Tov goes on to argue (*Textual Criticism,* p. 189) that textual criticism of the "final and canonical edition," that is, of the MT, is the objective of textual criticism. The final MT form of Jeremiah may also contain corrupt readings that arose during the course of textual transmission, and which can be corrected on the basis of the Dead Sea Scrolls or the ancient versions.

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[17] Gen 24:67 notes that after taking Rebekah as his wife, Isaac was comforted after his mother (presumably implying after his mother's death). *BHS* suggests that this verse should be emended to read Isaac was comforted after his father's death. HOTTP admits that this may indeed have been the reading in a pre canonical form of the text, such as in the document J of the Documentary Hypothesis. But in the canonical text, Abraham only dies in Gen 25:8 so that in this structuring of the text no change should be made.

Eugene Ulrich takes issue with Tov on the purpose and function of textual criticism.[18] In his view the MT is merely the text of the edition of each book of the Bible which rabbinic Judaism eventually chose, but this choice was not based on careful collation of available manuscripts and creation of a perfected text. In the case of the books of Samuel, the final MT text that was chosen is notably inferior and must frequently be corrected on the basis of the scrolls and LXX. Unfortunately, the textual apparatus for the books of Samuel in *BHS* does not mention all of the variants from the MT that can be reconstructed from the LXX, or when it does cite them it does not provide enough information for the student to know the exact nature of the variation. The text of MT varies in quality from book to book, as does the value of LXX. Ulrich proposes that the purpose or function of textual criticism is to reconstruct the history of the texts that eventually became the biblical collection in both their literary growth and their scribal transmission. Ulrich calls attention to a number of double editions of biblical accounts that are now available to us: 1 Samuel 1-2 (Hannah and Samuel); 1 Samuel 17-18 (David and Goliath); the shorter (LXX) and the longer (MT) texts of Jeremiah; and Daniel 4 and 6, which are shorter in MT, and Daniel 5, which is shorter in LXX. The shorter and longer texts provide evidence for literary growth that can be identified by textual criticism. Scholars also make judgments about literary growth based on other criteria, such as in the putative pre-exilic and exilic editions of the Deuteronomistic History. But in the cases cited above, the evidence for literary growth comes from textual criticism itself. Textual criticism in Ulrich's view is *not just* to judge individual variants in order to determine which readings were superior or original, but of course it is to make judgments on such individual variants. But textual criticism is also to make distinctions

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[18] *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

between the shorter and longer versions of Jeremiah or the shorter and longer versions of the Goliath story on the basis of text critical evidence.

What unites Tov and Ulrich is that the idea of "the original text" is in some ways a distracting concept. In classical studies one often speaks of an autograph, that is, the finished literary product of a single author. Ulrich prefers to speak of the base text, which is the form of the text, or the literary edition, of any particular book that was current (during any given period) prior to a new, creatively developed literary edition. His approach to the history of the biblical text, therefore, is that it was diachronic [changing over time] and pluriform. The differences among MT, LXX, and SP in the Pentateuch demonstrate that numerous individual variant readings arose in these three texts. The SP contains a number of harmonistic readings that were also typical of some Pentateuchal manuscripts at Qumran, in addition to its specifically sectarian Samaritan readings themselves, which favor Mt. Gerizim rather than Jerusalem as the preferred worship center.

The Chronicler's Vorlage

In addition to the question about what form of the text a textual critic should try to reconstruct, textual criticism also helps in other aspects of biblical exegesis. The author of Chronicles (first half of the fourth century B.C.E) based his work in large part on the text of Samuel and Kings (whose final literary formation is probably to be dated to the mid sixth century B.C.E.). But the text of Samuel-Kings that lay before the Chronicler was not identical with MT. Hence a number of differences between Samuel-Kings on the one hand and Chronicles on the other do not reflect changes introduced by the Chronicler, but merely the fact that the Chronicler was using an alternate Vorlage of

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Samuel-Kings. Representative examples from 1 Chronicles 21, based on 2 Samuel 24, are cited below to illustrate one of the important uses of textual criticism.[19]

Examples of non-MT readings of Samuel that were Known by the Chronicler

1 Chr 21:1 "the commanders of the people"; cf. 2 Sam 24:2 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "the commander of the people" [referring to Joab].

1 Chr 21:2 "bring me a report"; cf. 2 Sam 24:2 LXX[L]. This clause is lacking in Samuel MT and LXX.

1 Chr 21 3 "to his people"; cf. 2 Sam 24:3 LXX[L]. Sam MT "to the people."

1 Chr 21:8 "in that I have done this matter"; cf. 2 Sam 24:10 LXX. Samuel MT "in what I have done."

1 Chr 21:9 "Gad the seer of David"; cf. 2 Sam 24:11 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "Gad the prophet the seer of David."

1 Chr 21:10 "saying"; cf. 2 Sam 24:12 LXX and LXX[L]. Lacking in Samuel MT.

1 Chr 21:11 "take your choice"; cf. 2 Sam 24:13 LXX. Lacking in Samuel MT.

1 Chr 21:12 "three years of famine"; cf. 2 Sam 24:13 LXX. Samuel MT seven years of famine.

1 Chr 21:12 "in the land"; cf. 2 Sam 24:13 LXX[L]. Sam MT "in your land."

1 Chr 21:12 "and now"; cf. 2 Sam 24:13 LXX[L]. Sam MT "now."

1 Chr 21:13 "let me fall"; cf. 2 Sam 24:14 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "let us fall."

1 Chr 21:13 "exceedingly"; cf. 2 Sam 24:14 LXX. Lacking in Samuel MT.

1 Chr 21:15 "God sent an angel to Jerusalem"; cf. 2 Sam 24:16 LXX "And the angel of God extended his hand." Samuel MT "The angel extended his hand to Jerusalem." The

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[19] For a complete list, see Ralph W. Klein *1 Chronicles*. Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 414-417. The readings cited from Samuel after "cf." reflect the alternate form of the Vorlage that the Chronicler used. LXX[L] is the proto-Lucianic recension from the first century C.E. discussed above.

word God was added secondarily in the Vorlage of Samuel LXX and this word shows up in a different position in Chronicles, where it became the subject of the sentence and turned the angel into the direct object, with the consequent omission of "his hand."

1 Chr 21:15 "was standing"; cf. 2 Sam 24:16 4QSam[a]. Samuel MT "was."

1 Chr 21:16 "David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out against Jerusalem. David and the elders, covered with sackcloth fell on their faces"; cf. 4QSam[a], which contains this long reading with minor variants. The whole verse is lost in Samuel MT and LXX by homoioarcton (a scribe's eyes skipped from "And David looked up" to And David said" in 2 Sam 24:17, leaving out everything in between.

1 Chr 21:17 "And I acted very wickedly" (*whr(hr(wty*); cf. 2 Sam 24:17 4QSam[a] "I the shepherd did wrong (*hr(h hr(ty*)." These two readings are closely related and 2 Sam 24:17 4QSam[a] may be superior. 2 Sam 24:17 MT "I have acted iniquitously (*h(wyty*)."

1 Chr 21:18 "an altar for the LORD"; cf. 2 Sam 24:18 LXX[L]. 2 Sam 24:18 MT "for the LORD an altar."

1 Chr 21:19 "which" (*)sr*); cf. 2 Sam 24:19 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "just as" (*k)sr*).

1 Chr 21:20-21 "Ornan was threshing wheat. As David came closer to Ornan, Ornan got a better look and recognized David"; cf. 2 Sam 24:20 4QSam[a], which adds in addition "and his servants covering themselves with sackcloth coming…." Lacking completely in 2 Sam 24:20 MT and LXX.

1 Chr 21:23 "take" (imperative); cf. 2 Sam 24:22 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "May he take."

1 Chr 21:23 "May my lord the king do"; cf. 2 Sam 24:22 LXX[L]. Samuel MT "May my lord the king offer up."

Conclusion

Textual criticism seeks to recover and preserve the authentic text of the Bible. A scholar can choose to recover the text of the proto-MT, removing errors that emerged after it arose at the end of the first century C. E. or errors that had emerged earlier and were therefore present when the MT came into existence. Scholars can also seek to recover and preserve alternate forms of the text as we know them from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the LXX, and other ancient versions. The different opinions about the goal of textual criticism noted above (by HOTTP, Tov, and Ulrich) have not been conclusively resolved.

In a sense text criticism is always one of the first steps in biblical exegesis, right after the initial translation of the text, but preliminary decisions about textual criticism may need to be adjusted when the passage has been thoroughly studied and the criteria for deciding between alternate readings have been clarified by a deeper knowledge of what the text was trying to say. In a similar way, a preliminary translation will always need to be revised during the course of exegesis. It is a pleasure to offer this essay in tribute to David L. Petersen, who has consistently demonstrated text critical expertise in his publications.