



The Oxford Hebrew Bible: Prologue to a New Critical Edition

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Abstract

The Oxford Hebrew Bible project aims to construct a critical edition—featuring a critical text—of each book of the Hebrew Bible. The “Prologue to a New Critical Edition” addresses the rationale and methodology for this project. Three sample editions, including text-critical commentary, accompany this theoretical statement in order to illustrate its practice and utility. The samples are Deuteronomy 32:1-9, 1 Kings 11:1-8, and Jeremiah 27:1-10 (34 G).

Keywords

Oxford Hebrew Bible, critical edition, rationale, methodology, sample texts

The concept of the “definitive text” corresponds only to religion or exhaustion.

—J. L. Borges, “The Homeric Versions”

Every edition is a theory.

—B. Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*

I. Rationale and Method

The discovery, analysis, and publication of the roughly two hundred biblical manuscripts (mostly fragmentary) from Qumran have ushered in a new era in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.¹ Among the many issues now facing

¹ M. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: Rise, Decline, Rebirth”, *JBL* 102 (1983), pp. 204-213; A. van der Kooij, “The Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible Before and After the Qumran Discoveries”, in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries*, eds. E. D. Herbert and E. Tov (London, 2002), pp. 167-177; E. Tov, “Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible 1947-1997”, in *Perspectives in the Study of the Old Testament and Early Judaism*, eds. F. García Martínez and E. Noort (VTSup 73; Leiden, 1998),

textual critics is how best to integrate the knowledge gained in the post-Qumran era with the aims and procedures for constructing new scholarly editions of the Hebrew Bible. Currently there are two new editions in process—the Hebrew University Bible (HUB, founded in 1955) and the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ, founded in 1991). These two critical editions are motivated by different theories but share a commitment to the model of a diplomatic edition, that is, a transcription of a single manuscript with textual variants and editorial judgments included in one or more critical apparatuses. Adrian Schenker, president of the editorial committee of BHQ, describes the relationship between these two editions as an *editio critica maior* (HUB) and an *editio critica minor* (BHQ).²

I believe that it is worth considering the desirability and possibility of another type of critical edition—an eclectic edition, that is, a critical text with an apparatus presenting the evidence and justifying the editorial decisions—as a complement to these diplomatic editions. A comparable situation exists for Septuagint studies, for which there is a one-volume *editio critica minor* (Rahlfs' eclectic edition), a multi-volume diplomatic *editio critica maior* (the Cambridge LXX), and a multi-volume eclectic *editio critica maior* (the Göttingen LXX). It is arguable that an eclectic *editio critica maior* will be of benefit to scholarship of the Hebrew Bible. Such is the plan for the Oxford Hebrew Bible (OHB).³

There are obstacles and advantages to an eclectic critical edition. To consider the latter first, one signal advantage (which some will doubtless consider a disadvantage) is that such a critical edition requires its editors to exercise their full critical judgement concerning the variant readings and textual problems of the Hebrew Bible. This contrasts with the existing diplomatic editions where the burden of making text-critical decisions often falls to the reader, who is often innocent of the discipline of textual criticism. Unfortunately this

pp. 61-81; see also the broad historical panorama of B. Chiesa, *Filologia storica della Bibbia ebraica* (2 vols.; Brescia, 2000).

²) A. Schenker, "Eine Neuauflage der Biblia Hebraica", *ZAH* 9 (1996), p. 59; see also R. D. Weis, "Biblia Hebraica Quinta and the Making of Critical Editions of the Hebrew Bible", *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* [<http://purl.org/TC>] 7 (2002); and A. Schenker and P. Hugo, "Histoire de texte et critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament dans la recherche récente", in *L'enfance de la Bible hébraïque: L'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament à la lumière de recherches récentes*, eds. A. Schenker and P. Hugo (Genève, 2005), pp. 11-33.

³) This series of volumes—one for each book or collection of small books—will be published by Oxford University Press (by analogy with the Oxford Classical Texts). For additional information, see the OHB website (<http://ohb.berkeley.edu>).

creates a widespread situation in which important text-critical judgments tend to be exercised by those least qualified to make them. It is arguable that textual critics ought to take up the burden of such decisions and not leave them to others. Such, at least, is the premise of the OHB. The decisions and analyses will then be available for discussion, refinement, and refutation—the normal process of scholarship.

A second advantage will be the ability of such an edition to represent multiple early editions of biblical books in cases where such multiple editions are recoverable. Analysis of the Qumran texts in relation to the other major versions—the Masoretic Text (M), the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), and the Septuagint (G)—has made it clear that numerous portions of the Hebrew Bible circulated in multiple editions in the Second Temple period.⁴ The OHB aims to produce critical texts of each ancient edition, which will be presented in parallel columns. The relationship among these editions will be discussed fully in an introductory chapter to each volume. In cases where one edition is not the textual ancestor of the other(s), a common ancestor to the extant editions will be reconstructed, to the extent possible.

Textual decisions regarding the nature and history of multiple editions are often difficult. There are no clear guidelines to pinpoint where a group of scribal revisions is sufficiently systematic to constitute a new edition,⁵ and the stemmatic relationships among multiple editions are sometimes difficult to ascertain,⁶ so such decisions will always be provisional. Nonetheless, the ability to

⁴ Important general and theoretical discussions include E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 313-350; E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, 1999), pp. 34-120; J. Trebelle-Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 382-404; Z. Talshir, "The Contribution of Diverging Traditions Preserved in the Septuagint to Literary Criticism of the Bible", in *VIII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, eds. L. Greenspoon and O. Munnich (Atlanta, 1995), pp. 21-41; H.-J. Stipp, "Textkritik—Literarkritik—Textentwicklung: Überlegungen zur exegetischen Aspektsystematik", *ETL* 66 (1990), pp. 143-159; K. De Troyer, *Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible* (Atlanta, 2003).

⁵ On the difficult editorial issue of "when is a revised text a new work?" see the thoughtful discussion of P. L. Shillingsburg, *Resisting Texts* (Ann Arbor, 1997), pp. 165-180. He sensibly argues that this question "has a variety of possible answers depending on one's theoretical position" (p. 174).

⁶ See recently the essays in A. Schenker, ed., *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible: The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered* (Atlanta, 2003); E. Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Leiden, 1999), pp. 313-455; and above, n. 4.

reproduce multiple editions will be a notable advantage of the OHB concept and format. Diplomatic editions, since they are tied to a single manuscript, are not well-suited to this task. In some biblical books multiple editions exist only in certain sections, so parallel columns will appear and disappear in the critical edition as needed. By producing critical texts of multiple editions, the OHB will provide scholars with a valuable resource, since Hebrew texts of the multiple editions are in most cases unavailable in the scholarly literature.

A third advantage will be the information on scribal hermeneutics contained in the apparatus. The apparatuses in the existing diplomatic editions are heterogeneous, mixing primary readings (i.e. earlier and text-critically preferable) with secondary readings (scribal errors and revisions) and only selectively discriminating among them. The OHB apparatus will systematically distinguish, to the best of the editor's ability, the primary from the secondary readings, and will analyze the motivation or cause of the secondary readings. These analyses not only serve to justify the decisions made in the critical text, but will also enhance the value of the secondary readings for the study of the reception of the biblical text in scribal circles in the Second Temple period and beyond. Interpretive phenomena such as harmonizations, explications, linguistic modernizations, and exegetical revisions open a window onto scribal interpretation in the period prior to the textual stabilization of the various biblical books.⁷ These types of variants ought not to be seen as mere "corruptions"—as is the older text-critical nomenclature—but rather as evidence of the process of scripturalization, i.e. the conceptual shifts by which texts became Scripture.⁸ In this respect, the annotations of the apparatus will open new perspectives onto the early reception of the biblical text.

The practical obstacles to such an eclectic edition are many, chief among them the difficulty of using translation documents—above all, the Septuagint—for text-critical purposes. As Moshe Goshen-Gottstein cautioned, there is

⁷) Important recent studies include Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 258-285; A. Rofé, "The Historical Significance of Secondary Readings", in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* eds. C. A. Evans and S. Talmon (Leiden, 1997), pp. 393-402; idem, "The Methods of Late Biblical Scribes as Evidenced by the Septuagint Compared with the Other Textual Witnesses", in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, eds. M. Cogan, B. L. Eichler, and J. H. Tigay (Winona Lake, 1997), pp. 259-270; M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 23-88.

⁸) See the perceptive treatment of J. L. Kugel, "Early Interpretation: The Common Background of Late Forms of Biblical Exegesis", in Kugel and R. A. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 1986), esp. pp. 13-27 ("The Rise of Scripture").

always a residue of uncertainty when retroverting the Greek translation into its Hebrew *Vorlage*.⁹ Nonetheless, in most books of the Hebrew Bible the Greek translation technique is discernible and reliable, allowing a good measure of confidence in many retroversions. The degree of confidence varies depending on the literalness of the translation technique in each book. Most useful is where G represents each Hebrew sense-unit by a Greek equivalent, yielding a creolized “translation Greek” which easily exposes the Hebrew words and syntax. Fortunately there exists a considerable body of scholarship on the important topic of translation technique in the Septuagint.¹⁰ On the basis of such studies, the textual critic can proceed cautiously but profitably in the text-critical use of the Septuagint. In other words, the fact that much important textual evidence exists in translation documents does not render this evidence unusable for textual criticism. Because of the importance of the Septuagint, it may be relatively more difficult to produce a reliable critical text for the Hebrew Bible than it is for other texts, but this does not diminish the desirability or possibility of the task. The nature of the Septuagint translation technique will be addressed fully in the introduction to each volume in the OHB.

The rationale for the OHB rests on the presupposition that the goals and procedures for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible are not unique. As Bertil Albrektson has argued, “The textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible should not be regarded as a game of its own with special rules”.¹¹ This means, among other things, that the production of scholarly editions with critical texts should be regarded as a viable activity, as it is in other fields. The OHB does not aim to be a definitive text, which, as Borges observes, is a category that pertains only to religion or exhaustion. Rather the OHB aims to be a reliable and circumspect critical eclectic edition, and a worthy complement to the

⁹ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Theory and Practice of Textual Criticism: The Text-critical Use of the Septuagint”, *Textus* 3 (1963), p. 132.

¹⁰ On method and major issues, see J. Barr, *The Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (Göttingen, 1979); E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem, 1997), esp. pp. 17-29; idem, *Greek and Hebrew Bible*, pp. 129-269; I. Soisalon-Soininen, *Studien zur Septuaginta-Syntax*, eds. A. Aejmelaeus and R. Sollamo (Helsinki, 1987); A. Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays* (Kampen, 1993); J. Lust, “Translation Greek and the Lexicography of the Septuagint”, *JSOT* 59 (1993), pp. 109-120.

¹¹ B. Albrektson, “Translation and Emendation”, in *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (Oxford, 1994), p. 32. See also B. Chiesa, “Textual History and Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Old Testament”, in *The Madrid Qumran Congress*, ed. J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (Leiden, 1992), vol. 1, p. 265: “it seems quite unnecessary to postulate an *ad hoc* status for the Biblical writings alone”.

diplomatic editions. As is the case in the textual criticism of other works, the OHB aims to stimulate further textual scholarship and expects to be superseded by future eclectic editions. It is not the dream of a final text, but a provisional work of scholarship, based on new evidence and the achievements of many textual critics.

Emanuel Tov has observed that while textual critics of the Hebrew Bible have generally been unfavorable to the production of critical texts,¹² many scholarly commentaries present critical texts in their translations and notes, and many modern translations construct their own implicit critical texts.¹³ The OHB, in this respect, is not a departure from standard scholarly practice but an attempt to do openly what scholars have been doing piecemeal or unsystematically all along. The format of a critical edition allows such scholarship to be undertaken fully and openly, inviting conversation and critique. There is obvious advantage in doing such work with full presentation of the data, problems, analyses, and arguments.

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”.¹⁴ In

¹² Recent exceptions are P. G. Borbone, *Il libro del Profeta Osea: Edizione critica del testo ebraico* (Torino, 1990); A. Gelston, “Isaiah 52:13-53:12: An Eclectic Text and a Supplementary Note on the Hebrew Manuscript Kennicott 96”, *JSS* 35 (1990), pp. 187-211; G. Garbini, *Il Cantico dei Cantici: Testo, traduzione e commento* (Brescia, 1992); A. Catastini, *Storia di Giuseppe (Genesi 37-50)* (Venice, 1994); R. S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (Oxford/New York, 1998); and K. Hognesius, *The Text of 2 Chronicles 1-16: A Critical Edition with Textual Commentary* (Stockholm, 2003). See further the theoretical and methodological considerations of F. M. Cross, “Problems of Method in the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible”, in *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts*, ed. W. D. O’Flaherty (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 31-54, esp. pp. 50-54; and Chiesa, “Textual History”, pp. 257-272, esp. pp. 262-265.

¹³ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 372 n. 2; idem, “The Textual Basis of Modern Translations of the Hebrew Bible: The Argument against Eclecticism”, *Textus* 20 (2000), pp. 193-211. Tov argues against eclecticism in translations for believing communities because of the lack of adequate scholarly resources to make textual decisions, the inherent subjectivity of the task, and the difficult (and usually unaddressed) theoretical issues. He does not contest the legitimacy of eclecticism in scholarly commentaries and other studies, which he grants is “accepted practice” (p. 204).

¹⁴ E. J. Kenney, “Textual Criticism”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed.; Chicago, 1984), vol. 18, p. 191. On the concept of the archetype, see further P. Maas, *Textual Criticism* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 2-5 (“The exemplar from which the first split originated we call the *archetype*”); and the exemplary study of M. D. Reeve, “Archetypes”, in *Studi in onore di Adelmo Barigazzi* (Rome, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 193-201 (the archetype is “the manuscript at the top of the stemma” or more precisely, the “latest common ancestor of known witnesses”—which in some rare instances is one of the known witnesses).

the case of multiple editions, the practical goal is to approximate the archetype of each edition and, where one edition is not plausibly the ancestor of the other[s], also the archetype of the multiple editions.¹⁵ This task involves two major types of text-critical decision, each with differing degrees of difficulty:¹⁶

1. Adjudicating among variants to determine which is most plausibly the archetype, i.e. which reading is ancestral to the other(s).
2. Proposing a reconstruction or conjecture of the archetype where none of the variants is plausibly the archetype.

The majority of text-critical decisions belong to type 1, adjudicating among variants, following the prime rule of textual criticism, *utrum in alterum abiturum erat?*, “which reading is the more liable to have been corrupted into the other”.¹⁷ Most variants are generated by simple scribal error, i.e. graphic confusion, haplography, dittography, word misdivision, etc. A less frequent cause of variants is deliberate scribal revision, in which the secondary revision reveals something of scribal hermeneutics. In cases where one cannot plausibly adjudicate among the variants, and where there is no warrant to propose a reconstruction or conjecture, the OHB critical text will retain the reading of the copy-text, and the apparatus will mark the other reading(s) as “equal(ly plausible as archetype)” (see below, IV.)

The minority of text-critical decisions belong to type 2, reconstruction or conjecture. This type of decision proposes an archetypal reading not extant in the textual evidence, and as such will usually be enclosed by angled brackets < > in the critical text and apparatus.¹⁸ Reconstruction and conjecture are two overlapping varieties of this type of decision, which are usually classed together

¹⁵ An example is the chronology of Genesis 5 and 11, for which there are three editions, and which can be used to reconstruct, with a reasonable degree of certainty, the archetypal chronology; see Hendel, *Text*, pp. 61-80. In this case, the archetypal readings will be included in the critical text and the variants from the subsequent editions will be included in the apparatus.

¹⁶ This typology incorporates and revises Hendel, *Text*, pp. 6-10, and corresponds to Tov’s distinction (*Textual Criticism*, pp. 351-53, esp. p. 352, n. 1) between “preferences” and “emendations”.

¹⁷ M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique* (Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 51-53; P. K. McCarter, Jr., *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia, 1986), p. 72.

¹⁸ In some cases the brackets may enclose a single letter or portion of a word. For cases of word misdivision no brackets are required.

as emendation.¹⁹ By reconstruction I mean instances where one can infer a prior form that was liable to have been corrupted or changed into the existing reading(s). In many cases the archetype can be reconstructed convincingly by appeal to common types of scribal error—graphic confusion, word misdivision, haplography, etc. By conjecture I mean instances where one cannot plausibly reconstruct the prior form but can only make an educated guess where the text is clearly corrupt. Though conjecture should be held to a minimum, careful conjecture is an important part of text-critical method. Notably, a number of past reconstructions and conjectures have been validated by their appearance in the Qumran texts, as Tov and others have noted.²⁰ Where a clearly corrupt text cannot be remedied by reconstruction or conjecture, the reading in the critical text will be marked by superscripted c's, as ^c____^c.

Establishing a critical text is a historical-philological enterprise, which aims to determine or reconstruct the best set of readings. These are the earliest or more original readings, approximating the archetype (or in the case of multiple editions, archetypes) that generated the extant textual evidence. The method is not different from that of other historical disciplines, but has its own set of problems and skills. The historical quality of this inquiry is emphasized by Frank Cross: “The sole way to improve a text, to ferret out error, is to trace the history of readings, to determine an archetype which explains or makes transparent the introduction of error or corruption”.²¹ Textual criticism involves the history of change, and the decisions of a critical edition analyze and contextualize these changes.

As Tov observes, textual criticism is “the art of defining the problems and finding arguments for and against the originality of readings. Indeed, the quintessence of textual evaluation is the formulation and weighing of these arguments”.²² Each reading rests on a network of philological arguments, and

¹⁹ I am wary of the term “emendation”, which is often used to assign priority to the Masoretic Text; see the cautionary remarks of Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 351-353. In producing a critical text the OHB is not “emending” a particular manuscript, but restoring the text, which currently exists in multiple manuscript versions, toward its archetype(s). One can, of course, produce a critical text which is an emended manuscript, as in the Bédierist model of critical editions of medieval texts; see B. Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology* (Baltimore, 1999), pp. 64-71.

²⁰ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 351-369.

²¹ Cross, “Problems of Method”, p. 50. I would substitute “change” for “corruption”, as discussed above.

²² Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 309-310.

each decision is an invitation to enter further into scholarly dialogue. The process of formulating, evaluating, and contesting arguments is the essence of the task.²³

The apparatus will supply the text-critical reasoning behind the decisions in the critical text, and will present all the substantive textual evidence (on substantives versus accidentals, see below, IV). In addition, each volume will have a chapter of text-critical commentary in which the editor presents in fuller form the arguments and analyses for the more interesting or complex textual decisions. This follows the imperative for scholarly editions, as formulated by G. T. Tanselle: “it is [the editor’s] responsibility to furnish all the information required for evaluating and rethinking his textual decisions”.²⁴ This procedure allows the reader to reanalyze each case and reach different conclusions. Hence the edition will not assert a final authority, but will invite further analysis.

The theory of an eclectic edition assumes that approximating the archetype is a step toward the “original text,” however that original is to be conceived. John Wevers succinctly states this task: “The printing of a critical text . . . is the presentation by an editor after weighing all the textual evidence at his disposal of the earliest reconstruction of the text possible, an approximation to the original insofar as that is reasonable”.²⁵ In the case of the Hebrew Bible it is difficult to define what the “original” means, since each book is the product of a complicated and often unrecoverable history of composition and redaction. The “original text” that lies somewhere behind the archetype is usually not the product of a single author, but a collective production, sometimes constructed over centuries, perhaps comparable to the construction of a medieval cathedral or the composite walls of an old city. At some point in time, the process of textual production became the process of textual transmission. It may be unwise to draw too sharp a line between textual production and textual transmission, since, as Shemaryahu Talmon aptly observes, the scribes involved in textual transmission should be regarded as “a minor partner in the creative

²³ See the cogent treatment of rules and procedures in Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 293-311 (“The Evaluation of Readings”).

²⁴ G. T. Tanselle, “Some Principles for Editorial Apparatus”, in Tanselle, *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (Charlottesville, 1990), p. 123. Cf. Gelston’s remarks (“Isaiah”, p. 188): “the most useful text is an eclectic text, accompanied by an apparatus containing the evidence for variant readings with a claim to be considered as serious alternatives to those adopted in the text, and ideally accompanied by a textual commentary explaining the reasons for the selection of the preferred readings”.

²⁵ J. Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Genesis* (Göttingen, 1974), p. 186.

literary process".²⁶ The difference between these two phases is a historical transition from major to minor textual intervention, rather than a change from all to none. Some scribes became major partners once again, when the changes were so thoroughgoing as to create a new edition. In these cases, new textual production occurs after the period of textual transmission has begun.

Tov offers a cogent definition of the "original text" for the books of the Hebrew Bible which is compatible with the position of the OHB:

At the end of the composition process of a biblical book stood a text which was considered authoritative (and hence also finished at the literary level), even if only by a limited group of people, and which at the same time stood at the beginning of a process of copying and textual transmission.²⁷

In other words, the public authority of a text (even if only to a limited public) is a sign of the transition from the process of composition to that of transmission. Tov notes that this concept of the "original text" can accommodate the existence of what he calls "consecutive 'original editions'".²⁸ There are a number of conceptual terms and historical issues in this definition that are difficult to specify clearly—such as "composition process", "considered authoritative", and "finished at the literary level"—but it provides a plausible model of what such a theoretical definition should look like, and is particularly useful in its inclusion of a potential plurality of consecutive "original texts".

Tov remarks on the basis of this definition that "textual criticism attempts to reconstruct details from both the preserved evidence and suggested emendations... [of] a textual entity... which stood at the beginning of the textual transmission stage".²⁹ The OHB differs slightly from this statement by stressing that the "original text" or "original editions" that stood at the beginning of the transmission process constitute an ideal goal or limit, and focuses on the archetype as the more practical and feasible goal of textual criticism. The

²⁶ S. Talmon, "The Textual Study of the Bible: A New Outlook", in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text*, eds. F. M. Cross and S. Talmon (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p. 381.

²⁷ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 177.

²⁸ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 180; and idem, "The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon", in *The Canon Debate*, eds. L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders (Peabody, 2002), p. 248: "all of these literary stages were equally original, or alternatively, none of these stages should be thought to constitute 'the original text'".

²⁹ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 180. Recently Tov ("Status", pp. 249-250) seems to have moved away from this aim in favor of an "unbiased" Polyglot edition, like the monumental Polyglot editions of the 16th-17th centuries; on the elusive goal of an "unbiased" edition, see below, III.

degree to which the details of the archetype are equal to the details of the “original text” is, by definition, indeterminable, since a plausible approximation of the archetype is all that our evidence allows.³⁰ The “original text” is, in this respect, not entirely thinkable in text-critical terms, or perhaps better, it is a theoretical notation with which to inspire our empirical work.

As a practical matter, the critical texts of the OHB are the earliest inferable readings of (each edition of) each book of the Hebrew Bible, on the basis of the available evidence and the editors’ acumen and arguments. The extant evidence is our starting point, and we work to restore the textual works that gave rise to the diversity of evidence. As Arie van der Kooij submits:

one should aim at the ‘original’ (complete) text in the sense of the text/edition, whether it is proto-MT or pre-MT [i.e. non-MT-type—R. H.], that underlies available copies and/or editions. That is to say, one should go as far back as the textual evidence allows and requires.³¹

Similarly, Julio Treballe Barrera states: “Text criticism considers it possible and therefore its aim to reconstruct . . . the earliest form or forms of text attested by texts which have reached us”.³²

The shape of the archetype is determined (retrospectively) by the texts and editions that we have. This means that the critical text includes all the textual compositions that are ancestral to the existing texts and editions.³³

Every edition is a theory, as the medievalist Bernard Cerquiglini aptly observes.³⁴ It is a theory of the nature of the textual evidence, how best to comprehend its interrelations, and how to detect the direction of time and change. An eclectic critical edition presupposes that scribal change—accidental errors and deliberate revisions—can, at least in some cases, be identified and the text restored to an earlier and more pristine state. The revisions can

³⁰ The archetype includes, for example, explicating glosses and other intentional changes that are in all the textual versions but may not have been in the “original”. The isolation of all changes from the “original” is far beyond our methodological reach.

³¹ van der Kooij, “Textual Criticism”, p. 174.

³² Treballe Barrera, *Jewish Bible*, p. 384.

³³ This comment responds to Tov’s recent query on whether the OHB should, in theory, include compositions judged to be secondary by literary criteria, e.g. the poems in 1 Sam 2:1-10 and Jonah 2; see Tov, “Hebrew Scripture Editions: Philosophy and Praxis”, in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech*, eds. F. García Martínez, A. Steudel, and E. Tigchelaar (Leiden, 2006), p. 306.

³⁴ Cerquiglini, *Praise*, p. 79.

then be studied as evidence of the text's reception and scribal interpretation. Similar principles apply to the restoration of works of art other than texts, such as Michelangelo's frescos in the Sistine Chapel, or Leonardo's Last Supper and Pieta (to mention works that have had restorations in recent years). Such works accumulate secondary accretions during the passage of time, just as texts accrue changes at the hands of the scribes who transmit and preserve them. A critical text attempts to turn back the hands of time, a nostalgic gesture perhaps, but one that restorers of other works of human hands will recognize. An advantage of textual restoration is that it can be rethought and improved without damaging the original. In this respect, as Pier Giorgio Borbone observes, a critical text is actually the opposite of eclectic, since it attempts to reverse the eclectic agglomeration—from diverse times, places, and scribal hands—of secondary readings in the existing manuscripts:

This text—except of course for the erroneous evaluations of the writer, which the benevolent reader can remedy using the apparatus—will be more certain and less 'eclectic' than the text of a single ms.³⁵

Which then is the more eclectic edition, *BHQ*, *HUB*, or *OHB*? Perhaps it depends on the theory of the edition. It may be useful to compare the theories of these three editions, a matter to which I now turn.

II. *Biblia Hebraica*

The founder of the *Biblia Hebraica* project, Rudolf Kittel, held to the classical ideal that the goal of textual criticism was to produce critical editions with critical texts. In 1895 he published a critical Hebrew text of of Chronicles for the "Polychrome Bible" project organized by Paul Haupt.³⁶ The "Polychrome Bible" (its popular nickname) combined textual criticism and source criticism (the different sources were printed in different colors) to present the fruits of modern scholarship to a non-specialist audience. Although the textual notes of its sixteen volumes of Hebrew text are often very useful (e.g. S. R. Driver on

³⁵ Borbone, *Osea*, p. 26.

³⁶ R. Kittel, *The Books of Chronicles: A Critical Edition of the Hebrew Text, Printed in Colors Exhibiting the Composite Structure of the Book, with Notes* (The Sacred Books of the Old Testament, Part 20; Leipzig, 1895).

Leviticus, Julius Wellhausen on Psalms), this project did not have lasting impact because of its diverse goals and audiences and its lack of explicit or consistent text-critical methodology. Its considerable expense also inhibited its access and use. This project has been almost entirely forgotten by biblical scholars.

In 1902 Kittel published a monograph, *On the Necessity and Possibility of a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible*, which launched the *Biblia Hebraica* project.³⁷ In it he outlined the need for a genuine scholarly edition of the Hebrew Bible (which the “Polychrome Bible” did not intend to be). He conceded that a critical edition with a critical text was the proper goal, but concluded that a diplomatic edition was a more practical goal:

In principle one must absolutely agree that this arrangement [viz. an eclectic edition—R.H.] is the only proper one; the question can only be whether it is practical as well as easily accomplished, compared to the other, basically inferior alternative [viz. a diplomatic edition].³⁸

The clearest example he gives for the impracticality of producing a critical text is the uncertainty of how to treat Masoretic accents in a critical text. To attempt a “corrected” set of accent marks where the critical text differs from M is a daunting and probably impossible task.³⁹ Since Kittel prudently regarded the Masoretic accents as too important to omit in a critical edition, he resolved to produce a diplomatic critical edition. The document he reproduced was the Hebrew *textus receptus*, descended from the eclectic text (!) edited by Jacob Ben-Hayyim for the Second Rabbinic Bible of 1525. Beginning with the third edition of the *Biblia Hebraica*, at the urging of Paul Kahle, the *textus receptus* was replaced with the text of Firkovitch B19A from the State Public Library in Leningrad (now the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg), better known as the Leningrad or St. Petersburg Codex.

The *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* project (BHQ), the fifth incarnation of Kittel’s project, will be an improved diplomatic edition, based on the advances in textual criticism of the past generation and the availability of the evidence

³⁷ R. Kittel, *Über die Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeit einer neuen Ausgabe der hebräischen Bibel* (Leipzig, 1902).

³⁸ Kittel, *Notwendigkeit*, pp. 77-78: “Im Prinzip wird man also dieser Anordnung als der allein richtigen unbedingt zustimmen müssen, die Frage kann nur sein, ob sie praktisch ebenso leicht durchführbar wäre, wie die andere grundsätzlich minderwertige”.

³⁹ For the OHB’s approach to this problem, see below, IV.

from Qumran.⁴⁰ Its editorial committee considered the possibility of producing a critical text of the Hebrew Bible, but decided that the complexity and uncertainty of the task was too great: "Indeed it seems to us premature to produce a critical text of the Hebrew Bible. The complexity of the textual situation does not yet allow such a reconstruction at the present time".⁴¹ Like Kittel, the *BHQ* has decided to produce a diplomatic edition in deference to "the complexity of the textual situation". This decision is certainly defensible, and perhaps in the case of an *editio minor* well warranted. I wish to note, however, that within the mandate of the *Biblia Hebraica* project, a decision to produce a critical text would have been theoretically justifiable. It is a question of when such a move ought to be made, and whether we have sufficient grasp of the textual evidence to justify an attempt. On this issue, *BHQ* has chosen to defer a critical text and to continue the more practical task of a diplomatic edition.

The *BHQ* and *OHB* are complementary rather than contradictory projects. The *BHQ* promises a "selective apparatus,"⁴² while *OHB* aims to collect all substantive textual variants (see below, V.). Both will express the editor's judgments regarding primary and secondary readings, including warranted conjectures, and will include a text-critical commentary. The *BHQ* will not include systematic treatment of multiple editions, since it is wedded to the text of B19A. As an *editio critica minor* it does not intend to be comprehensive, but it promises to be an essential tool in biblical scholarship, and it will be an important conversation partner for the analyses and decisions in the *OHB*.

⁴⁰ The previous edition, *BHS*, has been heavily criticized for "its inappropriate selection of variants, its lack of accuracy and consistency, and the insufficient attention given to the Qumran scrolls" (Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 376).

⁴¹ Schenker, "Neuausgabe", p. 59: "Es scheint uns in der Tat verfrüht, einen kritischen Text der hebr. Bibel herzustellen. Die Komplexität der Testsituation erlaubt im derzeitigen Zeitpunkt eine solche Rekonstruktion noch nicht". Schenker and Hugo ("Histoire du texte", pp. 22-27) expand on these reservations, including the problem of retroverting Greek readings, the issue of accents and vocalization, and the existence of multiple editions.

⁴² Schenker, "Neuausgabe", p. 59. The "General Introduction" of the first published fascicle (*Megilloth* [BHQ 18; Stuttgart, 2004], p. xii), states: "As was the case for all the earlier editions in the series, the critical apparatus for this edition will present only a selection of textual cases, emphasizing those that are of substance for translation and exegesis". It is not entirely clear what textual evidence this criterion includes and excludes.

III. Hebrew University Bible

The Hebrew University Bible project, founded by Moshe Goshen-Gottstein in 1955, is based on a very different theoretical aim. The preface to the sample edition of Isaiah states that the goal of the project is “to present nothing but the facts”.⁴³ The current editor, Shemaryahu Talmon, has recently reiterated this goal: “The HUB presents the textual facts without assessing their comparative merits or professing preference for one or the other reading”.⁴⁴ The HUB attempts to minimize as far as possible subjective text-critical judgments, though the editors recognize that this is not entirely possible. The editors provide some guidance in terse notes in the fifth apparatus (Goshen-Gottstein calls them “hints”), particularly regarding Septuagint readings that are unlikely to represent authentic Hebrew variants. The massive presentation of raw data and the intentionally limited expression of editorial judgment yields an edition that often seems overwhelming. It mingles authentic variants and non-variants together in multiple apparatuses, arranged sometimes by language and sometimes by source, not by text-critical importance.⁴⁵ As Goshen-Gottstein cautions, users are “in danger of drowning in the flood of variants”.⁴⁶

The HUB is a monumental work, based on enormous erudition. It is arguable, however, that it is a category mistake to think that textual criticism should strive to be objective and to eschew as far as possible the exercise of text-critical judgment. The HUB, in this respect, is not only a reaction against

⁴³ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Book of Isaiah: Sample Edition with Introduction* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 7.

⁴⁴ S. Talmon, “Textual Criticism: The Ancient Versions”, in *Text in Context*, ed. A. D. H. Mayes (Oxford, 2000), p. 164.

⁴⁵ For example, the second apparatus mixes biblical manuscripts from the Dead Sea scrolls with biblical citations from rabbinic texts composed roughly half a millennium or more later; the former are of primary text-critical importance, the latter’s text-critical utility is questionable; see Goshen-Gottstein’s remark (*Sample Edition*, p. 18) about “the special problems of the tradition of this literature”; and Y. Maori, “The Text of the Hebrew Bible in Rabbinic Writings in the Light of the Qumran Evidence”, in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, eds. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (Leiden, 1992), pp. 283-289. The third apparatus collects variants from medieval Masoretic manuscripts, about which Goshen-Gottstein has demonstrated that, with rare exceptions, “the medieval readings illuminate the processes of textual dynamics and the continuous new creation of variants, but that for the reconstruction of the Biblical *Urtext* their value is practically nil” (*Sample Edition*, p. 39); see further idem, “Hebrew Biblical Manuscripts: Their History and Their Place in the HUBP Edition”, in Cross and Talmon, *Qumran*, pp. 73-89.

⁴⁶ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sample Edition*, p. 12.

the unsystematic practices of earlier textual critics, but is also clearly colored by the positivism and “scientism” of the early post-WWII era. During this period many fields in the humanities and social sciences strove to emulate the objectivity (and prestige) of the hard sciences, attempting to quantify, mathematize, and to erase subjectivity. The HUB is a product of its time, and its problems and difficulties reflect its theoretical roots. Goshen-Gottstein opined that “it is not the task of an apparatus to explain readings but to record facts”.⁴⁷ But even the textual “facts” are sometimes illusory, since many of the readings in the apparatus are, as the editors sometimes explain, unlikely to be authentic textual variants. The data alone do not provide guidance regarding the preferred textual readings, nor do they explicate textual problems. The HUB in this respect is a curious hybrid between textual criticism and a positivistic dream of textual science.

But textual criticism is not a science. It is a type of historical inquiry into the past states of a text and a form of philological critique. It strives to be methodologically rigorous and self-critical, but requires the exercise of educated judgment. (So too, of course, does inquiry in the sciences, though with different degrees of self-correction and falsifiability.) Goshen-Gottstein insisted that “the reader is required to go into the subject more deeply himself in order to understand what has been hinted at in the apparatus”.⁴⁸ This is in itself a worthy goal, since much learning is required in order to make sound text-critical judgments, but it is arguable that a critical edition should not strive to be difficult or arcane.

Goshen-Gottstein was ambivalent about the ideal goal of textual criticism and changed his position, at least slightly, over the years. One of his last summations shows his ambivalence:

The fact that our evidence does not allow us to recover *ipsisima verba* is immaterial to the axiomatic assumption that there was such a thing and that the positivistic utopian effort to recover them remains a legitimate goal, though unattainable (with the means at our disposal). The student of the Bible text must be content to deal with facts. . . . One of the major differences between models a century ago and such a model today is precisely that we do not look out any more for the *veritas* of an *Urtext*, but are satisfied with recapturing its reflex pragmatically, as far as our evidence allows. To be sure, seldom enough do we possess even today this kind of unequivocal evidence, which by definition cannot come from Hebrew

⁴⁷ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sample Edition*, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sample Edition*, p. 19, n. 44.

sources alone. Often enough, we may end by making a desperate conjecture, in order to force the text to yield some sense.⁴⁹

In Goshen-Gottstein's layered thinking, the idea of an *Urtext* is at the same time positivistic and utopian (a bold antithesis!), yet it is also "a legitimate goal, though unattainable". He wisely notes that "we are satisfied with recapturing its reflex pragmatically, as far as our evidence allows", though he counters that we "must be content to deal with facts". Goshen-Gottstein was torn between a desire for textual criticism to be an objective science and an acknowledgement that scholarly judgment (i.e. subjectivity) is a necessity for the task. The HUB project is a tribute to his extraordinary but conflicted intelligence in a discipline that is—like it or not—based on the premise that scribally transmitted texts can be improved (i.e. scribal accretions identified and removed), at least to some extent, by judicious evaluation of the textual evidence.⁵⁰

The current HUB editor, Shemaryahu Talmon, has advanced a theory of "pristine textual traditions", which seems to cohere with the theory of the HUB.⁵¹ He argues that in many cases of textual variation

[w]e have no objective criteria for deciding which reading is original and which derivative. Therefore both have the same claim to be judged genuine pristine traditions. . . . [A] hypothesis which postulates the existence of a single *Urtext* is incompatible with the proposition which assumes the co-currency of 'various pristine texts.' These theories envision diametrically opposed transmission processes of the biblical text.⁵²

⁴⁹ Goshen-Gottstein, "The Development of the Hebrew Text of the Bible: Theories and Practice of Textual Criticism", *VT* 42 (1992), p. 206.

⁵⁰ Cf. A. E. Housman's classic definition ("The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism", *Selected Prose*, ed. J. Carter [Cambridge, 1961], p. 131): "Textual criticism . . . is the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it. That is its definition, that is what the name *denotes*". Housman's juxtaposition of "science" and "art" has a salutary effect, though I would stress that it is neither science nor art, but a field of historical scholarship, which shares features of each but has unique characteristics.

⁵¹ S. Talmon, "Textual Criticism", pp. 154-163; idem, "The Transmission History of the Text of the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Biblical Manuscripts from Qumran and Other Sites in the Judean Desert", in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years After Their Discovery*, eds. L. H. Schiffman, E. Tov, and J. C. VanderKam (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 46-50; idem, "The Old Testament Text", in *The Cambridge History of the Bible. Vol. 1: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 162, 198; reprinted in Cross and Talmon, *Qumran*, pp. 4, 40.

⁵² Talmon, "Textual Criticism", p. 162.

In sum, Talmon denies the validity of the *Urtext* model for the transmission of biblical texts in favor of an original irreducible diversity.

This seems an extreme inference based on a common text-critical problem. As Talmon observes, often it is impossible to adjudicate among conflicting readings. But, as Isaac Seeligmann aptly noted, this “inability to choose” reflects the limits of our knowledge, not the history of the text.⁵³ Goshen-Gottstein argued that where it is impossible to adjudicate among conflicting readings, the critic should regard the variants as “alternative readings”:

Unless and until we are forced by strict philological evidence to regard a certain reading as secondary or corrupt, we have to look upon conflicting readings in our primary sources as alternative readings, none of which must be considered as superior to the other.⁵⁴

This is a cautionary statement regarding our inability in many cases to discern which is the superior reading, a bulwark against unwarranted subjective judgments. Talmon’s theory transforms this methodological caution into a thesis about an original historical diversity of pristine textual traditions and readings.

As Tov has pointed out, Talmon’s theory of pristine textual traditions is difficult to defend. Tov avers that “one’s inability to decide between different readings should not be confused with the question of the original form of the biblical text”.⁵⁵ In other words, Talmon has taken a methodological or epistemological problem (our inability to know which is the archetypal reading) and made it into a statement of essence or ontology (there is no archetypal reading). There are certainly cases—in oral epic, for example—where the idea of an “original” from which all subsequent versions derive is untenable. One cannot construct an archetype of all the oral performances of the epic of “The

⁵³ I. Seeligmann, “Studies in the History of the Biblical Text”, *Textus* 20 (2000), pp. 22-23, 29-30 (Hebrew original, 1955-56).

⁵⁴ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The History of the Bible-Text and Comparative Semitics: A Methodological Problem”, *VT* 7 (1957), p. 198, reprinted in Goshen-Gottstein, *Text and Language in Bible and Qumran* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 159 (italicized in the original). Goshen-Gottstein (“History”, p. 200) does seem to grant, however, that the alternative readings descend from a textual archetype, which can sometimes be determined: “In general, the alternative hyparchetypal readings could thus be established, and in some cases we would even be able to reach the old ideal target, the biblical archetype”.

⁵⁵ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, p. 174.

Song of Baghdad” in Serbo-Croatian epic tradition.⁵⁶ But biblical texts, which are literary productions, are amenable to such historical and stemmatic analysis, at least in theory. We may lack sufficient evidence to construct a viable history of the readings in many cases, but our lack of knowledge does not mean that the different textual versions are pristine and historically unrelated. Talmon gives an example from 2 Sam 7:23, where the major versions differ slightly:

וואלהים M] וואלהים 4QSam^a G (καὶ σκηνώματα)

He asks, “Are both readings original or did one result from an inversion of the letters *he* and *lamed*?” His theory prefers the view that they are “genuine pristine traditions”,⁵⁷ but surely the most cogent text-critical analysis is that this is an ordinary case of metathesis of *he* and *lamed*, and that one reading is ancestral to the other (the reading of M is most plausibly the archetype in this instance).⁵⁸ Our limited ability to adjudicate among variants does not warrant a theory of irreducible historical multiplicity. This is a logical error, conflating the epistemology of textual criticism with the ontology (and history) of textual objects.

Talmon, like Goshen-Gottstein, is ambivalent about the theoretical goal of textual criticism. While he denies the theory of an *Urtext*, he seems to admit that the goal of a critical text approximating the archetype(s) is theoretically valid:

[T]he biblical writings must be subjected to textual criticism like any other ancient literary document. Ideally the critical analysis aims at recovering the original wording of the sacred writings. However, in actuality the target cannot be attained because of the unavailability of reliable ancient sources from a time close to the creation of a biblical book. Scholarly analysis can only attempt to recapture primary formulations underlying the current major Hebrew and translational versions.⁵⁹

The HUB, however, prescinds from attempting to recapture the archetypal “primary formulations” in favor of a desirable but elusive objectivity.

⁵⁶ A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 45-49, 76-77, 117-118, and more generally pp. 99-123 (“Songs and the Song”).

⁵⁷ Talmon, “Textual Criticism”, p. 161.

⁵⁸ P. K. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel* (AB 9; New York, 1984), p. 235.

⁵⁹ Talmon, “Textual Criticism”, p. 142.

IV. The Concept of Copy-Text

A critical text of the Hebrew Bible will necessarily be imperfect and provisional, but as all the scholars addressed above seem to agree (some rather reluctantly), the attempt remains theoretically viable. Yet even if one grants the theory, a number of practical problems remain. Kittel pointed to the problem of what to do with the accents when the critical text differs from the Masoretic Text. The problem of orthography is also daunting—does one dare reconstruct the spelling of the archetype? Such a reconstruction would be wholly conjectural. Yet surely it is anachronistic to produce a critical text with the orthography of Firkovitch B19A (from 1008 C.E.), or even of the Qumran manuscripts of the Hellenistic-Roman period, which differ widely among themselves in spelling practices.⁶⁰

An elegant and theoretically cogent response to these problems is offered by W. W. Greg, a textual critic of English Renaissance literature, in his classic essay, “The Rationale of Copy-Text”.⁶¹ In this essay Greg draws a distinction between the “substantive” readings, i.e. the sequence of words, which are the focus for the textual critic, and the “accidentals”, matters such as spelling and punctuation, which pertain to form or presentation and are more susceptible to scribal revision in all ages. He recommends that the textual critic select a good manuscript (not necessarily the earliest) as a copy-text, which “should govern (generally) in the matter of accidentals”, but which should not govern in the matter of substantives. Here is the gist of Greg’s argument:

[W]e need to draw a distinction between the significant, or as I shall call them “substantive”, readings of the text, those namely that affect the author’s meaning or the essence of his expression, and others, such in general as spelling, punctuation, word-division, and the like, affecting mainly its formal presentation, which may be regarded as the accidents, or as I shall call them “accidentals”, of the text. The distinction is not arbitrary or theoretical, but has an immediate bearing on textual criticism, for scribes (or compositors) may in general be expected to react, and experience shows that they generally do react, differently to the two categories. As regards substantive readings their aim may be assumed to be to reproduce exactly those of their copy, though they will doubtless sometimes depart from

⁶⁰ E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 20-24.

⁶¹ *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950-51), pp. 19-36; reprinted in *Sir Walter Wilson Greg: A Collection of His Writings*, ed. J. Rosenblum (Lanham, 1998), pp. 213-228 (pagination from the latter).

them accidentally and may even, for one reason or another, do so intentionally: as regards accidentals they will normally follow their own habits or inclination, though they may, for various reasons and to varying degrees, be influenced by their copy.... Since, then, it is only on grounds of expediency, and in consequence either of philological ignorance or of linguistic circumstances, that we select a particular original as our copy-text, I suggest that it is only in the matter of accidentals that we are bound (within reason) to follow it, and that in respect of substantive readings we have exactly the same liberty (and obligation) of choice as has a classical editor.⁶²

Greg's distinction between substantive readings and accidentals works extremely well for the Hebrew Bible. (It arguably works better for ancient texts than modern ones.)⁶³ As a general rule, biblical scribes in antiquity were more careful in transmitting substantive readings than they were in transmitting "accidental" matters such as spelling or paragraphing. In the Qumran biblical scrolls, the style of spelling appears to be a matter of local fashion or scribal guilds, and does not necessarily correspond to the textual affinities or families of the manuscripts.⁶⁴ Even among the medieval and early modern Masoretic manuscripts, spelling varies far more than the substantive readings. The details of vocalization, accents, and paragraphing differ in every Masoretic manuscript. In sum, we can make a legitimate distinction between substantives and accidentals in the textual history of the Hebrew Bible.

The concept of copy-text provides a useful solution to the problem identified by Kittel. The critical work of the OHB will focus on the substantive readings, while reproducing the accidentals (orthography, vocalization, accents) of a copy-text. For an edition of the Hebrew Bible, the most reasonable choice of copy-text is Firkovitch B19A (the Leningrad or St. Petersburg Codex), since it our earliest complete manuscript and compares favorably with other early Masoretic manuscripts such as the Aleppo Codex (which lacks most of the Pentateuch and several other biblical books).⁶⁵ The OHB will usually (see

⁶² Greg, "Copy-Text", p. 215.

⁶³ See G. T. Tanselle, "Classical, Biblical, and Medieval Textual Criticism and Modern Editing", in Tanselle, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 292-298, who points out that in modern works spelling and punctuation are often matters of authorial intent; but see also J. J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago, 1983), pp. 28-34, on the difficulty of relating authorial intent to the concept of the copy-text.

⁶⁴ Tov, *Textual Criticism*, pp. 107-117; F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (3rd ed.; Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 174-177.

⁶⁵ The Aleppo Codex begins with Deuteronomy 28 and ends with Cant 3:11, and some other

below) follow this copy-text in its accidentals (spelling, vocalization, accents, paragraphing).

Where the critical text differs from the copy-text in its substantive readings, the critical text will lack the vocalization and accents of the copy-text (but maintaining its orthographic style). This convention maintains the accidentals of the copy-text while visually signaling the extent of non-copy-text readings. The beginning of non-copy-text readings will also be signaled by a superlinear square, which indicates an entry in the apparatus (see below). This siglum also serves as a quasi-accent that marks a hiatus or gap in the accentual chain, functioning as an accentual ellipsis. These strategies regarding the copy-text solve several technical and theoretical problems, and will make the critical text and apparatus maximally intelligible.

Two new “accidentals” will be inserted into the critical text to note entries in the apparatus. Where the reading in the critical text is the same as the copy-text, the cross-reference to the apparatus will be indicated by a superlinear circle (circlet), after the Masoretic siglum for a marginal note. Where the reading in the critical text differs from the copy-text, the cross-reference will be indicated by a superlinear square (squarelet). These two sigla will mark all references to the apparatus and will distinguish the distinctive readings of the critical text.

Greg further observes, “there is no reason for treating [the copy-text] as sacrosanct, even apart from the question of substantive variation. Every editor aiming at a critical edition will, of course, correct scribal or typographical errors”.⁶⁶ The OHB will correct obvious scribal errors in B19A (such as those corrected in Aron Dotan’s edition),⁶⁷ and will, at the editor’s discretion, include variant or preferred vocalizations in the apparatus. The critical text will therefore have the accidentals of its copy-text, with occasional corrections, while the substantive readings will be subject to the general principles and procedures of textual criticism.

There is one situation where this rule bends and the copy-text is allowed to govern substantive readings. Greg sensibly argues that

The choice between substantive variants is, I have explained, generally independent of the copy-text. Perhaps one concession should be made. Suppose that the

books and pages are missing. The St. Petersburg Codex (B19A) is complete with the exception of Josh 21:36-37.

⁶⁶ Greg, “Copy-Text”, p. 221.

⁶⁷ A. Dotan, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* (Peabody, 2001), pp. 1229-1237.

claims of two readings, one in the copy-text and one in some other authority, appear to be exactly balanced: what then should an editor do? In such a case, while there can be no logical reason for giving preference to the copy-text, in practice, if there is no reason for altering its reading, the obvious thing seems to be to let it stand.⁶⁸

He states that this “at least saves the trouble of tossing a coin”.⁶⁹ There are many instances where substantive variants exist but where the text-critic cannot reach a sound adjudication among them or reconstruct the archetype or propose a reasonable conjecture. These are cases of what Goshen-Gottstein calls “alternative readings” (which include Talmon’s “synonymous readings”), where there is no text-critical rationale by which to determine the archetype. Greg’s concession makes the default value in such instances the substantive reading in the copy-text (viz., B19A). The alternative reading will be included in the apparatus with the explanation “equal”, meaning it is equally plausible that it is the preferred reading. Only in this situation does the copy-text exert an overt influence in the selection of substantive readings in the critical text. As Jerome McGann comments, “Copy-text serves the editor as a means of arranging his apparatus and of adjudicating textual cruxes when reason and learning fail”.⁷⁰ This is a condition that textual critics face commonly, and therefore provision must be made for it in an eclectic critical edition.

V. The Apparatus

The heart of a critical edition is its apparatus. The OHB aims to provide in the apparatus all the substantive textual evidence⁷¹ and clear (though abbreviated) argumentation, both to justify the editor’s decisions and to allow the reader to rethink the problems and evaluate them differently.⁷² The brief text-critical

⁶⁸ Greg, “Copy-Text”, p. 222.

⁶⁹ Greg, “Copy-Text”, p. 228, n. 18.

⁷⁰ McGann, *Critique*, p. 57.

⁷¹ That is, not including orthographic variation and other types of “accidentals” (with an exception for Qumran mss, which are intrinsically interesting; see n. 75). This revises my vague characterization of “significant variants” (*Text*, p. 115), which has been rightly criticized by Weis (“*Biblia Hebraica Quinta*”, para. 34) and Tov (“Hebrew Scripture Editions”, p. 305). The concept of the copy-text allows a more rigorous distinction between substantive readings and accidentals, the former of which is the main concern of a critical edition.

⁷² G. T. Tanselle, “Editorial Apparatus”, p. 119-120.

explanations in the apparatus will be supplemented by a chapter of text-critical commentary, where the most interesting and difficult cases are treated at greater length.

The apparatus contains readings that are, in the editor's judgment, ancient textual variants of the Hebrew Bible. This means that readings from the Septuagint and other translations that do not plausibly represent a Hebrew variant but are most likely products of the translation process (e.g., grammatical smoothing, paraphrases, double translations, guesses, etc.) are not included in the apparatus. These types of readings will be discussed in the introductory chapter concerning translation technique, and interesting cases will be included in the text-critical commentary. This differs from the approach of *BHQ* and *HUB*, in which many such "non-variants" are included in the apparatus.⁷³ For the same reason, the mass of minor variants from medieval and early modern Masoretic manuscripts are not included, since they generally represent random scribal "noise" within the M tradition, as Goshen-Gottstein has established.⁷⁴ Only rarely are these variants sufficiently interesting to warrant inclusion, and will be generally included only where they correspond to a distinctive non-M reading in an ancient version and plausibly descend from that reading. Similarly, readings from rabbinic literature will be generally included only where they agree with distinctive non-M readings. Differences of spelling will only be included in interesting cases, since this is a difference of accidentals, not substantives.⁷⁵

The textual evidence of the major versions—the Masoretic Text (M), the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP), the Septuagint (G), and the Qumran biblical texts (Q with additional sigla, e.g. 4QSam^b)—will be treated differently than the evidence of the minor versions—the Aramaic Targums (T), the Syriac Peshiṭta (S), and the Latin Vulgate (V)—since the latter in most instances reproduce the readings of M. The testimony of the minor versions will be listed only where they arguably preserve non-M readings. This practice reduces clutter

⁷³) On the distinction between variants and non-variants, see Tov (*Text-Critical Use*, p. 154): "The first objective of the text-critical analysis of the LXX is to identify elements which reflect Hebrew variants . . . For text-critical purposes, every deviation from MT in the LXX that does *not* reflect a variant, could be called a non-variant".

⁷⁴) Goshen-Gottstein, *Text and Language*, p. xi: "We may go on quoting 'atomistally' from MT codices; but the value of such comparisons is practically nil"; see above, n. 45.

⁷⁵) At the editor's discretion, orthographic variants from the Qumran texts may be included in the apparatus or listed separately in the introductory chapter. However, orthographic variants from SP and medieval MSS will not be included.

and redundancy in the apparatus without any appreciable loss of information. Hence, where T, S, or V are not listed in an entry, they agree with M. (Exceptions to this procedure—e.g. in books where S is particularly important—will be justified in the introduction to those volumes.) Every instance of substantive variation among the versions will be included in the apparatus and analyzed.

All readings included from translation documents will be retroverted into Hebrew, with the reading in the original language presented in parentheses. This procedure shows clearly the editor's judgment of the Hebrew *Vorlage* and allows the analysis to be more transparent. Retroversion is sometimes perilous and uncertain, but it is a necessary part of text-critical analysis. (Another advantage of this procedure is that non-variants from the translation documents are more easily winnowed out.) Where the retroversion is not seconded by an extant Hebrew reading (from M, SP, or Q), the retroversion will be marked in the apparatus by an asterisk, e.g., אלהים* G (ὁ θεός).

Since we are aiming for a full collection of substantive variants in the Hebrew textual traditions, daughter versions of the Septuagint will not be included (Old Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, Old Slavic, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Arabic), except in instances where the Old Latin is the best evidence for the G reading and there is no equivalent Greek text. Where the Göttingen LXX exists for a biblical book, it will be followed except in instances where the editor argues for a different reading for G. Where the Göttingen LXX does not exist, the editor will use Rahlfs' *editio minor* in conjunction with the Cambridge LXX and other resources and will describe the major sources for the Old Greek in the introduction. The OHB does not intend to construct new critical texts of G, and is content to use the best resources available for each biblical book. Fortunately, there is an abundance of scholarly tools available for the critical use of the major and minor versions, far more than in previous generations.

Other ancillary textual evidence will be included in the apparatus where it is deemed text-critically significant, such as readings from the genre of the "rewritten Bible" (e.g. Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, Jubilees, Pseudo-Philo, and the "para-biblical" texts from Qumran) and readings from other works of biblical interpretation (e.g. the Qumran pesharim). These readings will generally be included only where they agree with a non-M reading from the major or minor versions.

Each reading that is judged to be secondary will be accompanied by a proposed explanation for its cause or motive. Where no motive for a scribal error is inferable, the explanation will be "crp" (corrupt). The brief explanation will

reproduce the relevant textual data and references. Often the explanations will be prefaced by prps (perhaps), followed by a question mark, or followed by an alternative explanation. Such expressions of uncertainty are important parts of self-conscious text-critical method, and signal the (inevitably) provisional nature of the analysis.

The OHB apparatus will not be a prison-house of variants, where secondary readings are (literally and figuratively) marginalized.⁷⁶ To this end we envision a DVD or web supplement to each volume, in which the apparatus will expand in several dimensions. The electronic version will link each verse in the critical text to its apparatus, and ideally will have the capacity to supplement each lemma at a click into parallel lines of the text of each version. Each lemma which is discussed at greater length in the chapter of text-critical commentary will be connected to that discussion by a link. A grand desire is to link each explanation with other explanations from other studies—such as the *BHQ*—and to discussions of inner-Greek and inner-Aramaic phenomena in such works as *La Bible d'Alexandrie* and *The Aramaic Targums*. Some of these desires are precluded by law and technology. Nonetheless, such an expanded electronic apparatus is our goal and will make the OHB a more fruitful work.

VI. Conclusion

The OHB will consist of one volume for each book of the Hebrew Bible, with the exceptions of one volume each for the Minor Prophets, the Megillot, and Ezra-Nehemiah. Each volume will begin with a chapter of text-critical introduction, which will address the translation technique of the Septuagint and other non-Hebrew versions, the textual affinities of the Qumran manuscripts, questions of multiple editions (where germane), the book's textual history, and other significant textual phenomena or problems. The introductory matter will be followed by the critical edition proper—the critical text and apparatus. The third section will be a text-critical commentary, in which significant and representative problems are analyzed and the arguments behind editorial decisions in the critical text unpacked at greater length than available in the apparatus.

In his reflections on the critical edition in the *Oxford Shakespeare*, Stephen Greenblatt observes that the “dream of the master text”, which was the initial

⁷⁶ Cerquiglini, *Praise*, p. 73: “This deposit, nevertheless, though not a reject (it is arranged in order), by its very disposition takes on a prisonlike air”.

stimulus for the task of textual criticism and aimed at transparent access to the author's creative work, has led to a more chastened and realistic goal:

Paradoxically, this feverishly renewed, demanding, and passionate editorial project has produced the very opposite of the transparency that was the dream of the master text. The careful weighing of alternative readings, the production of a textual apparatus, the writing of notes and glosses . . . all make inescapably apparent the fact that we do not have and never will have any direct, unmediated access to Shakespeare's imagination.⁷⁷

In the case of the Hebrew Bible, where we are not even dreaming of access to a single author, but to the final edited text(s), the realization of the non-transparency of a critical text comes at a price. We cannot have unmediated access to the master text; it is beyond our evidence and our capabilities. The dream of a perfect text is unreal, counterfactual. The best we can do is to make a good text, a useful and competent edition, one that takes account of the evidence we have and the acumen we can muster. It will, however, open up a richer understanding of the grounds for its imperfection, which is to say, the complexities of the Bible's textual condition. The OHB does not presume to escape this limitation, but to engage it forthrightly, to make the best of it that we can, and to invite others to continue the work.⁷⁸

The advisors and editors of the OHB are the following:

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⁷⁷) S. Greenblatt, "The Dream of the Master Text", in *The Norton Shakespeare, Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. S. Greenblatt (New York, 1997), p. 71.

⁷⁸) My thanks to the OHB advisors and editors, particularly Arie van der Kooij and Chip Dobbs-Allsopp, for their valuable comments on a previous draft of this essay. In the last revision I also benefited from the critical evaluation of Tov, "Hebrew Scripture Editions", pp. 303-307.

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