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Text, Translation, Theology

Selected Essays on the Hebrew Bible

SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY SERIES

Bertil Albrektson

TEXT, TRANSLATION, THEOLOGY

Text, translation, theology – the three nouns in the title indicate the main fields of Old Testament study which are covered in this collection of essays. *Text* refers both to the history of biblical texts and to problems of textual criticism. *Translation* of the Hebrew Bible as a philological task is a central subject in several essays. *Theology* does not define what the essays are but what some of them are about: religious ideologies are objects of enquiry.

Bertil Albrektson gathers together a selection of his essays, some of which have become classics, which were written on separate occasions and published in different, sometimes rather remote, places. They cover more than four decades of research, and for the first time they are now brought together in this accessible volume.

Bertil Albrektson was born in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1929 and took his doctor's degree at the University of Lund in 1963, having been a research student there and at Cambridge. He was Professor of Old Testament exegesis at Åbo Academy in Finland 1967–76 and then moved back to his native Sweden, where he played a leading role in the Bible Translation Commission in Uppsala, which published the new official Swedish version of the Bible in 2001. Professor Albrektson is a member of several learned societies, among others the Royal Society of Sciences in Uppsala, of which he has been President, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities. The Society for Old Testament Study in Britain made him an Honorary Member in 1983, and he has received honorary doctorates from Edinburgh University and Åbo Academy. The British Academy awarded him the Burkitt Medal for Biblical Studies in 2003.

SOCIETY FOR OLD TESTAMENT STUDY MONOGRAPHS

Ashgate is pleased to publish the revived Society for Old Testament Study (SOTS) monograph series. The Society for Old Testament Study is a learned society based in the British Isles, with an international membership, committed to the study of the Old Testament. This series promotes Old Testament studies with the support and guidance of the Society. The series includes research monographs by members of the Society, both from established international scholars and from exciting new authors.

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Text, Translation, Theology

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Preface

I am grateful to Dr Margaret Barker and Professor John Barton for the initiative to publish this collection of essays in the series *Society for Old Testament Study Monographs*, and to other members of the Editorial Board. It is a privilege to be included in the friendly scholarly fellowship of SOTS, and I am honoured to be admitted into this monograph series. As a member from abroad I have experienced a remarkable fulfilment of the biblical appeal: 'The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself' (Lev. 19:34).

Some of the essays were first published long ago and needed transcribing into electronic format. This has been done by Karin Wejderot of the Swedish Bible Society, and I am indebted to her for her careful and competent help.

I am also grateful to the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities for a generous grant to cover the expense of the transcription.

Finally I want to thank my daughter Ingrid, resident in England for many years, for her advice in questions of English usage.

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B. A.

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1 Bertil Albrektson, *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations. With a Critical Edition of the Peshitta Text*, Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963, pp. 214–239.

2 P. R. Ackroyd and B. Lindars (eds), *Words and Meanings: Essays presented to David Winton Thomas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 15–28.

3 *Congress Volume Göttingen 1977* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, XXIX), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978, pp. 49–65.

4 *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute, vol. XI: Festschrift Gillis Gerleman*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978, pp. 1–10.

5 *Remembering All the Way ... A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland* (Oudtestamentische Studiën, ed. by A. S. van der Woude, vol. XXI), Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981, pp. 5–18.

6 *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 6, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1993, pp. 38–43.

7 S. E. Balentine and J. Barton (eds), *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, pp. 27–39.

8 T. Fornberg and D. Hellholm (eds), *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in Their Textual and Situational Contexts: Essays in Honor of Lars Hartman*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995, pp. 5–10.

9 A. D. H. Mayes and R. B. Salters (eds), *Covenant as Context: Essays in Honour of E. W. Nicholson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 1–9.

10 *Textus* XXIII: *Text-Criticism and Beyond: In Memoriam of Isac Leo Seeligmann*, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2007, pp. 33–49.

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BCAT	Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament
BDBF	Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BH(K)	*Biblia Hebraica*, ed. R. Kittel, 3rd and later editions
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
Bib.	*Biblica*
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament
BRA	Beiträge zur Religionsgeschichte des Altertums
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
BWA(N)T	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CT	*Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*
E.T.	English Translation
EÜ	Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
Gen.R.	Genesis Rabba
GK	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, as edited and enlarged by the late E. Kautzsch, Engl. ed. by A. E. Cowley
HAL(AT)	L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HK(AT)	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IntB	*The Interpreter's Bible*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*

JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KerDogm	*Kerygma und Dogma*
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint Version
MT	Masoretic Text
NCeB	New Century Bible
NJ(PS)V	New Jewish (Publication Society) Version
OLZ	*Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*
OTL	Old Testament Library
PIR	*Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project*
PJB	*Palästinajahrbuch*
P.L.	Patrologia Latina
REB	Revised English Bible
RGG	*Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*
RV	Revised Version
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEÅ	*Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*
SOTS	Society for Old Testament Study
StTh	*Studia Theologica*
SupplVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (cf. VTS)
TAik	*Teologinen Aikakauskirja*
TB	Talmud Babli
THAT	*Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*
ThLZ	*Theologische Literaturzeitung*
TJ	Talmud Jerushalmi
TOB	Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible)
UBS	United Bible Societies
UUÅ	Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift
V	Vulgate Version
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Supplements (cf. SupplVT)
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Introduction

The title of this collection of essays consists of three nouns, which are all taken from the headings of individual essays, and these three words serve to indicate, at least roughly, the main fields of interest which are covered here. *Text* refers both to the history of biblical texts and to problems of textual criticism. *Translation* as a philological task is a central subject in several essays. *Theology*, finally, does not define what the essays are but what some of them are about; religious ideologies are objects of inquiry.

The subtitle states the Hebrew Bible as the document studied. I could also have used the designation 'the Old Testament', and both terms are in fact employed indiscriminately in the present volume. Sometimes the choice between them is supposed to have a deep ideological meaning. For me this is not so. True, the name 'the Old Testament' is Christian in origin, but it has a long history as a common and conventional term for the Hebrew Scriptures, and I use it as such, alternately with the other term. Just as 'sunrise' does not signal an anti-Copernican standpoint, so in my usage 'the Old Testament' is simply a traditional term, without any religious implications.

The essays included in this collection were written on separate occasions and published in different – sometimes rather remote – places. They cover a long period of time: from 1963 to 2007. Inevitably my views on certain individual issues have not remained entirely unaltered during these decades. I have nevertheless decided to republish these papers without changes and modifications.[1] This is partly for purely practical reasons: just to incorporate new literature on the different problems treated would have demanded more time and effort than I feel able to mobilize, not to mention the work it would have required to revise passages where I now see things in a new light or would at least prefer to express myself differently. On the whole, however, these changes of opinion concern details which do not affect the general course of my arguments.

Another reason – perhaps a more weighty one – for an unaltered reprint is that it presents the texts in the form in which they were once published

[1] Except for a few cases where I have taken the liberty of correcting minor errors (not affecting the argument) that went unnoticed in the proofs of the previous publications.

and then quoted and exerting their influence (if any). No doubt this is the main cause why so many colleagues follow such a practice when publishing their collected essays, a tradition I readily follow.

Even if there are inevitable changes of opinion about a few individual problems, I believe that all the papers presented here show a common approach: they are all instances of traditional biblical criticism. Though my personal attitude to religious belief has altered a great deal during the time these essays were written (a slow and rather reluctant development from Christian faith to atheism), I am confident that this private change cannot be traced in my scholarly essays. Ever since I began doing biblical research I have tried to follow the rule that the arguments used should be uninfluenced by the writer's own religious faith, or lack of faith, and open to verification or falsification on grounds of evidence and logic alone, independently of religious presuppositions. I am of course aware that this aspiration for impartiality is nowadays often regarded as outmoded and misguided, but though I have tried to acquaint myself with such postmodern and relativistic arguments (learning one or two things on the way) they have failed to convince me. Of course total objectivity is a goal that is rarely reached. But the fact that completely germ-free hospitals is an unattainable ideal is not a valid reason for doctors and nurses to neglect hygiene. A serious striving for unbiased and objective knowledge is still the best way to make biblical studies a genuine scholarly undertaking and a proper university subject, undefiled by ideological speculation and propaganda, whether doctrinal or politically correct. 'Critical biblical scholarship *is* objective in the sense that its results are not predetermined by a given authoritative ideology' (James Barr). Or in the words of the Cambridge philosopher Simon Blackburn at the end of his instructive and encouraging book *Truth*: 'We can take the postmodernist inverted commas off things that ought to matter to us: truth, reason, objectivity and confidence'. By following such principles it is possible to avoid both old-fashioned confessional bias and new-fangled postmodern distortions of the exegetical task.

I have been asked by the Editor of the SOTS Monograph Series to provide a brief autobiography as an introduction, showing how my scholarship and ideas have developed and how the essays fit into that scheme. This proved to be slightly more difficult than I expected. At least I hesitate to speak of a distinct development as far as methods are concerned. As I indicated in the previous paragraph, I have held to traditional so-called historical-critical procedures, allowing the choice of appropriate methods to be governed simply by the type of questions to be answered. And the questions, I hope, derive from the textual material itself and are not imposed on it via some strange and gratuitous theory. There may be more of a development in

my choice of problems to be solved, though certain types seem to recur during my whole career. This is especially true of text-critical problems, as also of questions of the correct interpretation of single passages, frequently connected with issues of translation.

The essays could be arranged in two possible ways: either simply in chronological order, or gathered in groups according to subjects. But when I tried the second procedure it proved difficult to distribute the articles into distinct sections, and so they are just presented in the order they were once published. This arrangement has the advantage of revealing potential developments in my ways of working. Even if I myself fail to detect any marked differences between early and late papers, others may be able to do so.

The first essay is originally not a separate paper at all: it is simply the final chapter of my doctoral dissertation on the Book of Lamentations, submitted at the University of Lund in Sweden in 1963. I had not thought of reprinting it in the present collection, but the Editorial Board expressly asked for it to be included, and I see no reason to object to this proposal. The chapter is rather different from the rest of my thesis and can without difficulty be separated from the previous sections and read as an independent piece. It is the third of three distinct parts. Part one is a critical edition of the ancient Syriac translation (the Peshitta) of Lamentations, based on all available manuscripts not later in date than the sixteenth century. Part two of the dissertation is a comparative study of this Syriac version, the Hebrew original and the ancient Greek translation called the Septuagint. After these textual studies there follows a third section, shorter than the two previous parts, an attempt to establish the background and origin of the theology expressed in the Book of Lamentations. It is this section that is reprinted in the present volume of essays.

The concluding lines of this essay on the theology of Lamentations is an obvious example of a view which I no longer hold. The passage stresses the contrast between a general Near Eastern belief in gods enthroned in inviolable temples and Israel's faith in a god who reigns supreme in history, a formulation which reflects a scholarly opinion common at the time. In a later work, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series 1), Lund 1967, I tried to show that this alleged contrast is an oversimplification and that 'the Old Testament idea of historical events as divine revelation must be counted among the similarities, not among the distinctive traits: it is part of the common theology of the ancient Near East' (p. 114).

Essay number two, on a syntactical problem in Ex. 3:14, was written for the Festschrift presented to Professor D. Winton Thomas when he retired from the Regius Chair of Hebrew at Cambridge in 1968. He had been my supervisor during my year as research student there (1957–58, Selwyn College), made possible by a British Council scholarship. A decade later I wrote this philological study to honour my esteemed teacher, who always insisted on a proper grammatical analysis of a passage before any attempt at theological interpretation. At that time I had left Lund and had recently been appointed to the Old Testament Chair at Åbo Akademi, a university at Åbo (Turku) established for the Swedish-speaking population in Finland.

My years at Åbo – i.e the period between 1964 and 1976, only interrupted by a term as visiting fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge, in 1973 – were of course filled with the ordinary professorial duties of teaching and administration. In addition I became occupied with two major tasks. Together with Professor Helmer Ringgren of Uppsala I wrote an elementary Introduction to the Old Testament intended for Swedish students and published in 1969 (5th revised edition 1992). In this textbook Helmer Ringgren wrote the section on the history and religion of Israel, whereas I was responsible for the part dealing with isagogics, that is the origin, growth and nature of the Old Testament literature, its textual history and the development of the canon.

I then served as a member of a Swedish State Committee appointed to lay down the guiding principles for a new Swedish translation of the Old Testament (the corresponding work for the New Testament had already been done). Our report was published in 1974; I was responsible for the section on the textual basis of a new translation and the text-critical principles to be followed, as well as for the philological and text-critical notes on the specimen versions of seventeen chapters of the Hebrew Bible included in the report.

My paper for the Old Testament Congress in Göttingen in 1977 (essay number three here) grew out of my work for the Committee report, which had made me increasingly sceptical of the common view that the emergence of a standard text of the Hebrew Bible had been the result of a conscious and deliberate text-critical activity with the purpose of creating a normative recension. These ideas were first aired in a Swedish paper in 1975, and the Göttingen lecture is a revised and enlarged version of that essay. My view has met with approval, and I am particularly glad that it has been accepted in the leading handbook in the field, Professor Emanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible.*

Professor Gillis Gerleman had been my *Doktorvater* at Lund, and the fourth essay is my contribution to the Festschrift presented to him

on his retirement from the Old Testament chair. My discussion of two disputed passages in 1 Samuel is a consequence of my work on the new official translation of the Bible. The report of the preparatory Committee mentioned above had been favourably received, and the guiding principles we had suggested were made the basis of the instructions issued by the Swedish Government for the new version of the Old Testament. In contrast to most Bible translations the new Swedish version was not produced by the churches or by the Bible Society but by the State, the initiative having originally come from the Swedish Parliament. The instructions emphasized that the new version should meet common cultural requirements, stressing fidelity to the original texts, their literary and ideological character, rather than to confessional translation traditions. It should be a reliable version for both believers and unbelievers, satisfying modern scholarly and literary demands. These non-confessional goals of course tallied with my own scientific ambitions, and so it was easy for me to agree to join the Bible Translation Commission.

I had the privilege of being a member of the Old Testament translation unit from the beginning of the work in 1975 till its completion in the year 2000, bearing the main responsibility in matters of Hebrew philology and textual criticism, naturally in collaboration with other Hebraists. As this was a full-time job, paid by the Swedish Government, I gave up my chair at Åbo and moved back to my native country, settling down in Uppsala, where the Commission was stationed.

The translation task demanded almost all my time and left little or no opportunity for research not immediately related to my service on the Commission. As a result practically all the following essays are closely connected with these duties; they deal with principles and problems which were constantly topical in our attempts to establish and understand the text of the Hebrew Bible. This is certainly true of the fifth essay, which discusses a well-known precept of textual criticism and its use in Old Testament studies.

Essay number six is perhaps an exception to this rule. It is a contribution to a workshop on the Semantics of Classical Hebrew, held by a network in which I was involved and which had been set up by the European Science Foundation. My brief essay is a response to a paper by Professor J. C. Greenfield of Jerusalem, but I believe that it can be read without access to his contribution, as I do not so much examine his detailed arguments as attempt to treat more general problems of methods and principles.

The very title of essay number seven, a tribute to Professor James Barr, shows that it is another of the contributions closely related to problems which were continually present in the translation work. My criticism (in

essay number five) of the text-critical principles of the Committee of the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project, sponsored by the United Bible Societies, and my defence of conjectural emendation had been dealt with by the leading member of that Committee, Professor Dominique Barthélemy. In the extensive introduction to his *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament 1* (1982) he discussed my arguments under the heading of 'Objection d'Albrektson' (*74 ff.), but his response did not convince me, and my essay is an attempt to show why.

If 'Translation and Emendation' discussed general principles for the establishment of the textual basis for a modern translation of the Old Testament, essay number eight applies these principles to a single verse in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, suggesting a conjectural emendation of a difficult passage.

The ninth essay does not try to emend the traditional text but suggests that the current understanding of it could be replaced with a different interpretation of the same Hebrew words. The proposal takes as its point of departure earlier suggestions by other scholars and seeks to improve on them. Though published in 2003, after the complete new Swedish version of the Bible had appeared, this essay presents an interpretation that I had suggested while we were working on Genesis and which was introduced in a footnote as a possible alternative understanding of the text (first printed in a specimen edition of Genesis in 1991). It is an attempt to recover the original, plain meaning of a passage that has been frequently utilized for confessional purposes. As such the essay illustrates the translator's task to try to establish the correct interpretation of a biblical passage, regardless of whether the result favours or hurts a particular religious doctrine.

The last essay returns to the general problem of the role of textual criticism in a contemporary translation of the Hebrew Bible. It sums up my views on the subject in the light of the experiences of a quarter of a century. I set out from a paper by the eminent textual specialist, Professor Emanuel Tov, in which he rejects the eclectic principles followed in many modern versions, and I try to demonstrate that his pre-critical and highly conservative principles lead to unfortunate and impossible results. Instead my paper is a plea for the right – indeed the necessity – to correct the Masoretic text in passages where it suffers from scribal errors of different kinds, a procedure followed in our new Swedish version as well as in many other modern translations. Again the ambition is to do justice to the original, without being influenced by later interpretations, whether venerable or trendy.

Thus some of these essays suggest fresh ideas and interpretations, while others try to refute certain arguments and views, novel or traditional.

The latter, critical activity is sometimes regarded as less profitable and too negative. But the community of scholars surely also needs a cleansing department, and the job of a refuse collector, though humble, is necessary and salutary. Already Ecclesiastes knew that there is both 'a time to plant and a time to uproot'.

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1
The Background and Origin of the Theology of Lamentations
(*1963*)

1

As N. K. Gottwald has pointed out in the introduction to his *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, the question of the theology of Lamentations has been treated in rather a cavalier fashion by scholars.[1] Most works about this book have taken the form of commentaries, where the text is interpreted or paraphrased verse by verse, but where little or no space could be devoted to, for example, analyses of the leading ideas in the book or to its position within the theological traditions of Israel. Gottwald observes with justification that 'this is the peculiar fate of the shorter Biblical books.'[2] With the Book of Lamentations, moreover, the discussion has often been inseparably bound up with the problem of its authorship: the commentators, especially the older ones, have to a large extent devoted themselves to proving that Jeremiah either has or has not written the five laments on the destruction of Jerusalem.

Recently, however, the question has come to be viewed in a somewhat different light. The most important contribution is unquestionably Gottwald's book, where the theological analysis of the Book of Lamentations is at the centre of interest. The most recent commentaries also usually devote a special section in the introduction to theological questions, even though such a treatment must naturally be fairly brief. Kraus, in the second, enlarged edition of his commentary, has introduced a paragraph with the heading 'Zur Theologie der Threni',[3] and Weiser has a similar section in his commentary called 'Die religiöse Bedeutung der

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1 *Studies in the Book of Lamentations* (SBT 14), 1954, pp. 19 f.

2 P. 20.

3 *Klagelieder (Threni)* (BKAT 20), 2, erweiterte Aufl., 1960, pp. 15 ff.

Klagelieder'.[4] The problem has also been touched upon by E. Janssen in connection with an attempt to sketch the spiritual state of Judah in the time immediately after the catastrophe of 587.[5] It should also be mentioned that H. Wiesmann, both in his posthumously published commentary[6] and in a number of smaller articles,[7] has treated some of the theological problems in the Book of Lamentations. Gottwald's criticism of these contributions, however, seems justified: 'his treatment becomes highly speculative at points and seems frequently to be prematurely interested in relating the book's message to Roman Catholic Theology.'[8]

In these works the emphasis lies generally on a characterization of the religious concepts that can be found in Lamentations – the treatment has thus more of a descriptive character. An excellent example of such a presentation is Kraus' above-mentioned paragraph 'Zur Theologie der Threni'. Under some main headings, those ideas and concepts that dominate the Book of Lamentations are summarized: 'Gericht Gottes', 'Busse', 'Wendung des Geschicks', 'Jahwes Freiheit und Souveränität'. Again, Gottwald summarizes the message of the book in his two chapter headings 'The Theology of Doom' and 'The Theology of Hope'.

When the main motifs in the teaching of the Book of Lamentations have been thus presented, however, the theological analysis is not yet complete. At least one important question remains to be discussed: that of classification. What is the origin and background of the message of the Book of Lamentations? It not only contains a description of the calamities, but above all tries to understand and make sense of the catastrophe of 587. Especially true of the Book of Lamentations is H. Butterfield's characterization of the Old Testament as 'the search for an interpretation of history which would embrace catastrophe itself and transcend the immediate spectacle of tragedy.'[9] But he who attempted to elucidate the meaning of the disaster naturally started from some basic presuppositions which were implicit in his theological traditions, and which determined his method of interpretation. Of course Ancient Israel, from a theological point of view, was not a uniform milieu. On the contrary, one can distinguish

[4] 'Klagelieder. Übersetzt und erklärt', H. Ringgren und A. Weiser, *Das Hohe Lied. Klagelieder. Das Buch Esther* (ATD 16:2), 1958, pp. 44 ff.

[5] *Juda in der Exilszeit. Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Entstehung des Judentums* (FRLANT, N.F. 51), 1956.

[6] *Die Klagelieder*, 1954.

[7] See list in the commentary, p. XIV.

[8] P. 52.

[9] *Christianity and History*, 1949, p. 2.

different circles and groups of traditions, tendencies, and currents. And we are then faced with the question: where does the author of the Book of Lamentations belong? Which theological traditions form the background to his way of interpreting the catastrophe and the problems it presents? Which starting points, conscious or unconscious, does he have for his attempts to get a grip on the significance of what happened?

In the commentaries one can, of course, find certain suggestions about the direction in which one ought to look for the answers to these questions. One finds in them, however, rather vague reasoning along extremely general lines, often not directly connected with the discussion of theological problems, but with the question of the author, when the commentators are indicating, usually in brief, the circles within which we must look for the author of Lamentations. Haller, for example, writes that all we know about the authors is that though they were not themselves priests or prophets, they lived in the 'Gedanken- und Gefühlswelt' of these circles, and that certain features could indicate that they were temple-singers; but no positive conclusions are possible.[10] Kraus' suggestion is similar: the author(s) is (are) probably to be found in priestly or cult-prophet circles in Jerusalem.[11] If Kraus points to a connection with the temple prophets, Rudolph, instead, emphasizes the similarities with the great prophets: the author is 'Gesinnungsgenosse der grossen Propheten' but is himself neither prophet nor priest; he belongs rather to the Court or to the army.[12] Weiser goes further towards characterizing not only the general milieu of the author but also his theological setting when he says in his commentary:

> Aus dem Zusammenwirken von heilsgeschichtlichen Gemeindetraditionen, die sich im geschichtlichen Zusammenbruch als unüberwindlich erwiesen haben, wozu auch das ewige Königtum Jahwes zu rechnen ist (5, 19), aus der Botschaft der Propheten und aus persönlichen Gotteserfahrungen des Dichters ergeben sich in den Klageliedern die Fundamente, auf denen die Neuorientierung des Glaubenslebens nach der Katastrophe einsetzen konnte. Auch wenn der Verfasser der Klagelieder keine prophetische Funktion ausgeübt hat, befindet er sich doch insofern in einer Linie mit den Propheten, als er das unvergängliche Erbe der Überlieferung auf dem Hintergrund eigener Gottserfahrung für die Gemeinde zu neuer Aktualität und Geltung erhoben hat.[13]

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[10] 'Klagelieder', M. Haller und K. Galling, *Die fünf Megilloth* (HAT 1:18), 1940, p. 94.

[11] P. 15.

[12] *Das Buch Ruth. Das Hohe Lied. Die Klagelieder* (KAT 17:1–3), 1962, p. 196.

[13] *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

The difficulty with this description is that it is formulated in so general a manner and gives so little concrete information. 'Heilsgeschichtliche Gemeindetraditionen', 'die Botschaft der Propheten', 'das unvergängliche Erbe der Überlieferung' – certainly all this is part of the background of the theology of the Book of Lamentations, but the concepts must be made precise and delimited. Which 'Gemeindetraditionen', what, in the teaching of the prophets, forms the starting point for the interpretation of the catastrophe? 'Das unvergängliche Erbe der Überlieferung' is by no means uniform and uncomplicated; on the contrary, one must wonder whether it is at all possible to speak of 'die Überliefung' in singular, bearing in mind the multiplicity of theological traditions in Israel and their mutual differences.

The only author, as far as I know, who has treated in somewhat more detail the question of the background and origin of the theology of the Book of Lamentations is Gottwald. One of his chapters is called 'The key to the Theology of Lamentations'.[14] It seems reasonable by way of introduction to describe and discuss his points of view.

The starting point, according to Gottwald, is the religious doctrine of retribution and reward which has been given such a clear and conscious expression in Deuteronomy. There a simple rule is found: if the people of Israel obey the law of the Lord and do his will, they will enjoy peace and blessing; if, on the other hand, they fail to keep God's commandments and laws, they will be visited by curses and misfortunes. The Lord reigns in history, and it knows no exception to his will. The theory is clear and simple, and the conclusion is unavoidable: Israel's loyalty to God must be evident in their history. 'Such a conviction, so neatly stated, is obviously open to empirical testing'.[15] But if this key to history is applied, one sees the promising young Josiah slain at Megiddo in 609, and the stormy history of the next decades concludes with the catastrophe in 587. The contrast between the optimism of Josiah's reform and the bitter and desperate mood after the defeat is glaring. Here Gottwald quotes a few words from an unprinted thesis by G. Kubota: 'Why does the nation suffer more than ever before immediately after its earnest attempt at reform?'[16] The question is italicized by Gottwald, and is immediately followed by his own main thesis: 'It is precisely this tormenting question which the Book of Lamentations inherits, for it stands at the point in Israel's life where the tension between history and faith is, for the first time, most sharply posed.' The thesis is

14 Pp. 47 ff.

15 P. 51.

16 P. 51.

then summarized as follows: the author has found 'the situational key to the theology of Lamentations in the tension between Deuteronomic faith and historical adversity'.[17] The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to the structure of the Book of Lamentations: 'The Scheme of Reversal' is seen as a dominant element, in connection with Jahnow's work on funeral laments.[18] Gottwald's account is here, as he says himself, 'largely a summary of Jahnow'.[19]

Thus, for Gottwald, the tension between the Deuteronomic doctrine of retribution and reward and the historic reality is in fact the key to the theology of the Book of Lamentation. On closer inspection, however, this understanding of the theological background to Lamentations seems to involve some difficulties. The Deuteronomic theory means that Israel can count on a secure existence if they remain loyal to the will of the Lord and live in accordance with it; but on the other hand they must expect calamities and visitations if they abandon the straight path and desert the God of their fathers. To produce a real 'tension' between this pattern and the gloomy historical reality during the first decades of the sixth century, a strong positive understanding of Israel's relationship with God is demanded: only if you think that the people have really trodden the paths of righteousness can you see a contradiction between the retribution pattern and the fact that the people have been stricken by the catastrophe. But this view of the people's relationship with God cannot be established in the Book of Lamentations (it may be significant that Gottwald in this connection does not refer to any text passages). The problem 'Why does the nation suffer more than ever before immediately after its earnest attempt at reform?' is not even hinted at, still less formulated, in the text. We meet instead time after time the opposite view: *because* both the people as a whole, and particular groups within it, have sinned grievously, they have been struck by God's judgement: 'Yhwh has afflicted her (Zion) for the multitude of her transgressions' (1:5). 'Jerusalem has sinned grievously; therefore she has become filthy' (1:8) 'Ywhw is righteous, for I have rebelled against his word' (1:18) – examples can easily be multiplied and can be taken from all five chapters. To speak of a 'tension between Deuteronomic faith and historical adversity' makes no sense in the light of such statements. On the contrary, the historical outcome becomes a seal on the truth of the Deuteronomic faith, for the catastrophe has in fact

[17] Pp. 52 f.

[18] H. Jahnow, *Das hebräische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Völkerdichtung* (BZAW 36), 1923.

[19] P. 54, n. 1.

stricken a people of whom the author of the Book of Lamentations can say: 'For the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom' (4:6)! Defiance and desertion have earned their punishment – in complete accord with the retribution pattern. One cannot very well speak of any 'tension' at this point.

All the same, Gottwald might be correct in thinking that behind the theology of the Book of Lamentations lies a 'tension between history and faith', even though the faith in question here is not 'the naive theory of retribution and reward'[20] but a different faith, a different theological tradition.

2

Recent research has shown that, among the many Israelite forms of faith and lines of tradition, we must also take into account a specific Jerusalem tradition. The Zion traditions are one important element in this.[21] After David had made Jerusalem the capital and religious centre, the sacral traditions of the old amphictyony, to which the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, and the covenant at Sinai are central, were enriched with new ideas, which were later to play a decisive part in the religious history of Israel. The leading themes here are the election of David and of his house and the idea of Zion and its temple as the abode of God. This last motif is predominant especially in some of the psalms; this is not surprising, because it is precisely the temple in Jerusalem that is the original home of many of them.

Among these so-called Psalms of Zion, a special interest attaches to Ps. 46, 48 and 76, because the Zion motif in them is not linked with the other characteristically Jerusalemite theme, the choice of David and of his house, but is met with, so to speak, in purer form. Here special stress is given to the idea that Zion is unconquerable. Psalm 46 says of 'the City of God' (v. 5):

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[20] Gottwald, p. 50.

[21] For the following, see, above all, H. Schmid, 'Jahwe und die Kulttraditionen von Jerusalem', *ZAW* 67, 1955, pp. 168 ff.; E. Rohland, *Die Bedeutung der Erwählungstraditionen Israels für die Eschatologie der alttestamentlichen Propheten*, 1956, pp. 119 ff.; G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1, 1957, pp. 54 f.; 2, 1960, pp. 166 ff.; Kraus, *Psalmen* (BKAT 15), 1, 1960, pp. 342 ff. (the excellent survey 'Excursus 5: Die Verherrlichung der Gottesstadt'). These works are the basis for the characterization given here of the Zion traditions.

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be shaken;
God will help her as the morning dawns.
The nations rage, the kingdoms reel;
He utters his voice, the earth melts.
Yhwh of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold. (vv. 6–8).

God's presence guarantees that Zion is inviolable.

The heathen enemies, who are here touched on summarily, are in Psalm 48 depicted as an attacking army. Their attack has however miraculously been averted by God himself, who is King on Mount Zion:

Great is Yhwh, and greatly to be praised,
in the city of our God.
His holy mountain is beautiful in elevation,
the joy of the whole earth,
Mount Zion, in the far north,
the city of the great King.
In her palaces God has shown himself a stronghold.
For, lo, the kings assembled,
they came on together.
They saw, and so they were astounded;
they were dismayed, they took to flight.
Trembling took hold of them there;
anguish like a woman in travail.
By the east wind thou didst shatter
the ships of Tarshish.
As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of Yhwh of Hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God establishes for ever. (vv. 2–9).

The older commentaries tried to indicate an historical event to which this description of the rescue of Jerusalem from a hostile attack could refer.[22]

[22] Usually Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem is mentioned; e.g. in R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (KAT 13), 1914, p. 193, and C. A. Briggs, *The Book of Psalms* (ICC), 1, 1906, p. 402. This historical interpretation has its recent supporters too: E. Podechard thinks of 'd'armées assyriennes', *Le Psautier. Traduction littérale et explication historique*, 1, 1949, p. 214, and A. Cohen interprets 'the kings' in v. 5 as 'Sennacherib and his vassals', *The Psalms*, 1945, p. 150. H. Birkeland has also defended the historical interpretation in *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Avhandlinger utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo 2. Hist.-Filos.

More recently, however, it has been realized that all such attempts are useless. Von Rad rightly says: 'Die Frage nach einem dahinterliegenden historischen Ereignis wäre gewiss fehl am Platz, denn darauf sind diese sehr schwebenden und oft nur andeutenden Aussagen nicht angelegt. Sie sprechen mehr wie von einem mythischen Geschehen, das in zeitloser Ferne oder Nähe von der Gegenwart aus anvisiert wird.'[23]

The same event is also described in Ps. 76, where we again hear of God conquering the hostile armies from his abode on Mount Zion:

> In Judah is God known,
> his name is great in Israel.
> His booth has been established in Salem,
> and his dwelling-place in Zion.
> There he broke the flashing arrows,
> shield, and sword, and weapons of war. Selah.
> Glorious art thou and excellent,
> from the mountains of prey.
> The stouthearted are stripped of their spoil, they sank into sleep;
> all the men of war were unable to use their hands.
> At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
> Both rider and horse lay stunned. (vv. 2–7).
> He cuts off the spirit of princes,
> he is terrible to the kings of the earth (v. 13).

In these psalms we find a clearly formed tradition with a fixed pattern of motifs. Many elements in these lines about Mount Zion seem to have a non-Israelite origin and their application to Jerusalem is only secondary.[24] Zion is called, for example, הר־ציון ירכתי צפון 'Mount Zion, in the far north' (Ps. 48:3), which is absurd as a description of the geographical position. This designation has however nothing to do with geography, but indicates

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Klasse. 1955. No. 2), 1955, pp. 77 ff. But his argument presupposes the existence of a myth: 'The one historical event which had just taken place was more or less identical with Yahweh's total victory over the *gōyīm* related in the myths', and Occam's razor applied to this reasoning should eliminate the historical event.

[23] *Op. cit.*, 1, pp. 54 f. Cf. 2, p. 168: 'Das Ereignis, auf das diese Dichtungen zurückgehen, lässt sich in der Geschichte des davidischen Jerusalem nicht unterbringen'. Cf. also A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 1955, pp. 77 ff.

[24] Cf. von Rad: 'Das alles erhebt es über allen Zweifel, dass diese Zionsüberlieferung letztlich auf vorisraelitische Vorstellungen zurückgeht, die erst sekundär auf den Zion übertragen sind', *op. cit.*, 1, p. 55.

that Zion is the mountain of God, the place where the Most High has his abode.[25] As such, Zion is also the centre of the world, משוש כל־הארץ 'the joy of the whole earth' (Ps. 48:3). God's abode is a paradisal place. Therefore Ps. 46.5 refers to 'a river whose streams make glad the city of God', נהר פלגיו ישמחו עיר־אלהים. It would be useless to search for this river on the map. What we have here are mythical concepts of the river which springs up in paradise, applied to Jerusalem.[26] Probably such motifs were already incorporated into the Jerusalem traditions before David captured the city; thus they would belong to the Jebusite heritage within Israel. The idea of a hostile attack on the city of God seems to have been one firm element in these concepts. The powers of chaos and destruction, depicted sometimes as the waters that roar and foam (Ps. 46.4), sometimes as heathen kingdoms and armies (Ps. 46:7; 48:5 f.; 76:6 f.),[27] go to attack against the holy city. But as the abode of God, Zion is impregnable; the Lord himself repulses the attack and destroys the hostile powers. The city of God cannot be conquered or defeated: 'God is in the midst of her; she shall not be shaken' (Ps. 46:6).

This tradition, which has its roots deep in Canaanite cult and myth, is not limited to a few psalms, although it has perhaps had its clearest expression in the psalms just quoted. As Rohland has shown, themes from these traditions can be established in several Old Testament writings. For obvious reasons it is in authors who come from Jerusalem and Judah that they are found. It would be extremely unlikely that concepts so intimately linked with Jerusalem and its temple should be found also in writings of northern Israelite origin.

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[25] Cf. H. Gressman, *Der Messias* (FRLANT, N.F. 26), 1929, p. 165; O. Eissfeldt, *Baal Zaphon, Zeus Kasios und der Durchzug der Israeliten durchs Meer* (BRA 1), 1932, pp. 15 f., 21; A. Lauha, *Zaphon. Der Norden und die Nordvölker im AT* (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, B 49, 2), 1943, pp. 43 f.

[26] The connection with concepts of the paradise is found in Gunkel's *Das Märchen im Alten Testament* (Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher, 2. Reihe, 23–6), 1917, p. 47: here 'hat die Begeisterung der Juden für die heilige Stadt das Idealbild des Paradieses auf Jerusalem übertragen'.

[27] Cf. Gressman, who has emphasized that 'die verbündeten Völker, die am Ende der Tagen Jerusalem angreifen, ein Ersatz für die mytischen Wasser sind', *op. cit.*, p. 175. Gressman, like Gunkel, interprets the Zion psalms eschatologically. Against this interpretation, see S. Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien II. Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie* (Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter. 2. Hist.-filos. Klasse 1921. No. 6), 1922, especially pp. 65, 219; and more recently Kraus in his commentary in BKAT (see his sketch of the history of the interpretation of those psalms, p. 525).

In Isaiah the traditions of Zion are undoubtedly important.[28] One example is the great Ariel-poem in chapter 29, where the siege of Ariel (i.e. Jerusalem) is described in terms ultimately derived from the old traditions of the attack on Zion by the nations. As in the psalms, the attack is averted by God himself: the enemy is miraculously destroyed without human intervention. It is obvious that Isaiah was here drawing on Jerusalem traditions of Zion's impregnability. Elements from these old temple traditions also appear in Ezekiel,[29] and Deutero-Isaiah too draws on them when he speaks of the coming glory of Jerusalem.[30]

It is this theological tradition of the inviolability of Zion which stands in unbearable contrast to the harsh historical reality after the fall of Jerusalem. Here one really can speak of a 'tension between history and faith'; between the bitter fact that the temple had been burnt and ravaged and Jerusalem lay in ruins, and the faith in the impregnability of the city of God, of which the cultic traditions of Jerusalem so eloquently bear witness. In this tension one can perhaps see the background to the theology of the Book of Lamentations, to the intense struggle with the problem of how one should make sense of the catastrophe and find the key to it.

It is probable that the author of the Book of Lamentations was reared in these temple traditions, if only because he obviously belongs to Jerusalem: it is the fall of the temple that he laments, and the fate of the city is of central interest to him. And in fact the commentators in general do place the author in Jerusalem. But this hypothesis of the background to the theology of Lamentations would gain in probability if one could adduce more, and more detailed, evidence than the fact that there does exist a conflict between the historical reality and the Zion traditions, and that it seems *a priori* probable that the author belongs to Jerusalem. If the thesis is correct, one should be able to discover themes from these traditions or allusions to them in Lamentations. These traditions need not have a dominant position or completely shape the author's presentation; just because we are dealing with his background and presuppositions, it is enough if we can find certain elements of these groups of ideas in the text. Even those that are referred to more in passing can be of interest in this connection because the author reveals by them what were to him self-evident presuppositions, that he did not need to mention explicitly.

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28 Rohland, *op. cit.*, pp. 145 ff.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 194 ff.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 200 ff.

There can, I suggest, be found in Lamentations such expressions and concepts as indicate that their author was familiar with the Zion traditions. Lam. 2:15c runs as follows:

> הזאת העיר שיאמרו כלילת יפי משוש לכל־הארץ
> Is this the city that men called
> the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?

The interesting thing here is the designations of Jerusalem. To begin with the latter, משוש לכל־הארץ 'the joy of the whole earth', this very expression occurs further in just one more passage in the Old Testament, Ps. 48:3 (already quoted above):

> יפה נוף משוש כל־הארץ
> הר־ציון ירכתי צפון קרית מלך רב
> Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,
> Mount Zion, in the far north,
> the city of the great King.

It seems clear that the expression in Lamentations must be a direct quotation from or a direct allusion to the psalm's description of Jerusalem. It belongs to the mythical conceptions of the mountain of God, which are referred to Jerusalem and its temple; conceptions which, though of Canaanite origin, have been adopted by Israel as an expression for the unique position of Zion as the place where God has chosen to dwell. 'Als Göttersitz und Thron des „höchsten Gottes" ist der „Berg im Norden" Mittelpunkt der Welt; er ist מְשׂוֹשׂ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ.'[31] In this connection it is not very important whether v. 15c is to be taken as an ironic question asked by those who in v. 15ab scornfully[32] whistle and shake their heads at Jerusalem (with most of the commentators),[33] or as the poet's own gloomy reflection. In any case this passage shows that the poet must have known the description of Jerusalem

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[31] Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, p. 343.

[32] Or is it rather a question of 'apotropäische Gesten'? – see L. Köhler, 'Zum hebräischen Wörterbuch des Alten Testaments, *Studien zur semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte Julius Wellhausen ... gewidmet ...* (BZAW 27), 1914, p. 254. Cf. also Jahnow, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[33] E.g. Keil, *Biblischer Commentar über den Propheten Jeremia und die Klagelieder* (BCAT 3:2), 1872, p. 584; Budde, 'Die Klagelieder', K. Budde, A. Bertholet und G. Wildeboer, *Die fünf Megillot* (KHC 17), 1898, p. 89; Löhr, *Die Klagelieder des Jeremias* (HKAT 3:2,2), 2. umgearb. Aufl., 1906, p. 13; Rudolph, p. 225; Haller, p. 101; Weiser, p. 66; Kraus, p. 47.

in the Zion traditions and contrasted this title of honour with the actual devastation.

According to this verse in Psalm 48, Zion is also יפה נוף 'beautiful in elevation'. The same idea of the beauty of the city of God is found in the expression in Lamentations כלילת יפי 'the perfection of beauty'. Not only this idea but even almost exactly the same expression is found of Zion in Ps. 50:2:

> מציון מכלל־יפי אלהים הופיע
> Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
> God shines forth.

When Zion is here called 'the perfection of beauty', this expression is characteristic for the whole complex of laudatory descriptions of Jerusalem as the abode of God,[34] which are rooted in mythical conceptions, and belong at the centre of the Zion traditions.[35]

So both the expressions, which in Lam. 2:15c[36] are used of Jerusalem, and are there contrasted with the present condition of the city, belong to the Zion traditions. Again, in chapter 4:12 we read:

> לא האמינו מלכי־ארץ וכל ישבי תבל
> כי יבא צר ואויב בשערי ירושלם
> The kings of the earth did not believe, or any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

Here the view that Jerusalem was impregnable has been given the strongest possible expression. As mentioned above, this idea of the invulnerability of the city of God was one of the dominant motifs in the Zion traditions. Kraus has recognized the connection between the author's expression here and the theology of the Zion psalms.[37] It may however be closer than Kraus suggests. He says in his commentary[38] that in this verse 'werden … in dichterischem Überschwang die Könige der Erde und die Bewohner der Wält erwähnt. … es ist Israels eigener Glaube, der im dichterischen Überschwang,

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[34] Cf. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, p. 375.

[35] כליל יפי in connection with the ideas of the mountain of God and paradise is found also in Ez. 28.12; cf. G. Fohrer, *Ezechiel* (HAT 1:13), 1955, p. 162.

[36] Cf. also the discussion of this passage supra [= my *Studies in the Text and Theology of the Book of Lamentations*, 1963], pp. 113 f.

[37] Cf. also Weiser, p. 98.

[38] P. 78.

aber auch in der weltumspannenden Gewissheit alttestamentlichen Erwählungsvertrauens, den fremden Mächten zugeschrieben wird (Ps. 48:4 f.).' But Ps. 48 and the other Zion psalms show that it is inadequate to regard Lam. 4:12 as just a poetic exaggeration. For the sacral tradition, which has its classic expression in these psalms, records that the kings once plotted against Zion and attacked this abode of God – but were utterly vanquished (Ps. 46:6 f.; 48:5 f.; 76:4 f., 13). It seems to be this 'Motiv vom Sieg über die Könige aus der vorisraelitischen Jerusalemer Tradition'[39] rather than the author's 'dichterischer Überschwang' which has made him speak of the kings of the earth believing in the impregnability of Jerusalem: according to this tradition they had in fact their own bitter experience of it. The same expression מלכי־ארץ is found again in Ps. 76:13, where we read of the victorious King of Zion:

> יבצר רוח נגידים נורא למלכי־ארץ
> He cuts off the spirit of princes,
> he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

Lam. 4:12 thus seems not only to have adopted the idea of the inviolability of Jerusalem which the Zion psalms express so strongly, but also to have been influenced by this cult tradition in the language it uses too.[40]

Jerusalem, which in Ps. 48:2 is called עיר אלהינו 'the city of our God', is in the next verse also called קרית מלך רב 'city of the Great King'. This picture of Zion as the Mount of God in the north is closely linked to the idea of Yhwh's kingship: He who rules on Zion and establishes it for ever (v. 9) is the King of the whole world.[41] H. Wildberger has shown in his work on the concept of election in Israel[42] that in the Old Testament two originally

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[39] Rohland, *op. cit.*, p. 141. Mowinckel´s term is 'Völkerkampfmythus', *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff. Since it is throughout a question of themes which can be attested in specific texts, the argument does not depend on how one answers the question whether the motif of the attack of the Kings and other features in the Zion traditions had their *Sitz im Leben* in a dramatic cult ceremony on the lines of Mowinckel's hypothetical *Thronbesteigungsfest*, or whether with Kraus one thinks that such traditions 'in Erzählung und Lied auf dem Zion fortleben' (*Psalmen*, 1, p. 344).

[40] It can hardly be a coincidence that the term מלכי־ארץ appears precisely in passages connected with Jerusalem: all the recorded instances except one are found in the psalms; and the exception is found in Ezekiel (27.33), whose connection with Jerusalem and its temple traditions is again obvious.

[41] Cf. Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, p. 358.

[42] *Jahwes Eigentumsvolk. Eine Studie zur Traditionsgeschichte und Theologie des Erwählungsgedankens* (ATANT 37), 1960.

completely separate conceptions of Yhwh's kingship can be distinguished.[43] In the genuine Israelite election traditions, it is always said that Israel is the territory within which God rules as King. Within this tradition complex, the picture of the divine King is strongly reminiscent of the conception of 'Vätergötter', as analysed by A. Alt in his well-known work.[44] But in the Old Testament there is also found a completely different complex of ideas about the kingship of God. 'Hier ist die Gottheit nicht kämpfend und leitend, schützend und umsorgend bei den Ihren, sondern sitzt auf einem hohen, erhabenen Thron'.[45] In this tradition Yhwh is the majestic sovereign of the world who rules over all nations, even over the cosmos.[46] Now it is evident 'dass die zweite Traditionsgruppe örtlich gesehen an einer ganz bestimmten Stelle gepflegt worden sein muss, nämlich am Heiligtum zu Jerusalem. Der König des Alls hat seinen irdischen Sitz auf dem Zion.'[47] Gressmann had already seen this connection: 'Es ist nun sehr beachtenswert, dass Zion nach Ps. 48:3 ebenfalls auf dem Berg in äussersten Norden liegt, zugleich aber ausdrücklich als die Stadt des Grosskönigs bezeichnet wird. Danach müssen der Götterberg und der Götterkönig zusammengehörige Begriffe sein.'[48]

Against this background it is clear that Lam. 5:19 belongs to a specific group of traditions. This verse runs:

> אתה יהוה לעולם תשב כסאך לדור ודור
> Thou, O Yhwh, dost reign for ever;
> thy throne is from generation to generation.

This statement must be understood as an expression of the understanding of Yhwh's kingship which was current in the cultic traditions of Jerusalem, and was there linked to the idea of Zion as the abode of God (above Ps.

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[43] *Op. cit.*, pp. 83 ff.

[44] Der Gott der Väter (BWANT, 3. Folge, 12), 1929 (= *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel 1*, 1953, pp. 1 ff.).

[45] Wildberger, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

[48] *Der Messias*, p. 219. A. Frhr. von Gall early suggested that the concept of Yhwh as king had its roots in pre-Davidic Jerusalem: 'Über die Herkunft der Bezeichnung Jahwes als König', *Studien zur semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte Julius Wellhausen ... gewidmet ...* (BZAW 27), 1914, pp. 146 ff.

48:2; cf. also Ps. 9:8 and 12; 99:2 etc.); it is again an indication of where we must look for the theological background of Lamentations.

Now in Ps. 46, which was quoted above, v. 5 runs as follows:

> נהר פלגיו ישמחו עיר־אלהים קדש משכני עליון
> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy abode of ʿElyon.

God is here called עליון. The use of this name for God seems to have its origin in a quite specific tradition. 'עליון ist eine Gottesbezeichnung, die in Jerusalem eine traditionelle Bedeutung hatte und wahrscheinlich in vorisraelitische, altkanaanäische Zeit zurückreicht.' 'Im AT ist עליון eine Hoheitsbezeichnung Jahwes, die einen archaisch-hymnischen Charakter hat. Wahrscheinlich stammt diese Bezeichnung aus dem vordavidischen Jerusalem'.[49] This name for God is thus connected in Ps. 46 with the conception of Zion as the abode of God. The temple of ʿElyon is found on Zion, which the cultic traditions of Jerusalem refer to as the mountain of God in the north (Ps. 48:3).[50] It is therefore interesting to note that the name עליון is found in Lam.: 3:35 refers to turning aside the rights of a man נגד פני עליון 'before the face of ʿElyon', and v. 38 asks: מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב 'Is it not from the mouth of ʿElyon that evil and good come?' The occurrence of this name thus links the Book of Lamentations, if not directly with the concepts of Zion's inviolability (cf., however, Ps. 46:5 above), at least with the temple in Jerusalem, and so with the cultic and theological milieu in which the Zion traditions were developed.[51] Such passages in the Book of Lamentations are also interesting: though they do not directly pick up themes from this specific tradition, they are nevertheless evidence that the author is at home in and familiar with the traditions of the temple of Jerusalem. Even if what is here called the Zion traditions is a clearly definable unit characterized by

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[49] Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, p. 63, with reference to Schmid, *op. cit.* Cf. also Rohland, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[50] Kraus, *Psalmen*, 1, p. 200.

[51] Gottwald's treatment of the name עליון in the Book of Lamentations (p. 101) is rather unsatisfactory. The statement that 'the transcendence of God is seen in the appellation for the deity: Most High' seems to give too philosophical a meaning to a name for God that was taken over from Canaanites. Moreover, he is working with the possibility that 'the usage of *Elyon* in Lamentations is the first in Hebrew literature', which presupposes a dating of certain psalms that is surely now untenable. Though he admits the possibility that the name עליון is of pre-Israelite origin (ibid., n. 3), his whole attitude is neither clear not settled.

specific motifs, they have been combined and linked with other motifs and traditions (e.g. the election of David and of his house and the kingship of Yhwh), and together with them have formed a living unit, a Jerusalemite tradition complex. Features of these traditions too, which turn up in the Book of Lamentations, thus help to connect its author with the temple in Jerusalem and its theological milieu, and thereby give support to the thesis of the Zion traditions as the theological background of the work.

In this connection it is worth noting what is said about the king in Lam. 4:20:

> רוח אפינו משיח יהוה נלכד בשחיתותם
> אשר אמרנו בצלו נחיה בגוים
> The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of Yhwh, was caught in their pits, of whom we said, 'Under his shadow we shall live among the nations.'

Extremely strong formulations are met with here. Rudolph[52] has rightly emphasized that 'Der Ausdruck »unser Lebensodem« streift an Vergöttlichung des Königs', for as all life depends on the breath of God according to Gen. 2:7 and Ps. 104:29, so here is the life of the people described as depending on the king. The phrase 'Of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the nations' has a similar significance: this statement too attributes to the king a lifegiving function and draws him close to the divine sphere. Behind the expression undoubtedly lies the idea of the king as the tree of life.[53]

Gressmann[54] has pointed out that the idea of the king as the breath of his subjects is attested both for Egypt and in the Amarna letters for Canaan, and he maintains that one can scarcely think that it has twice come from Egypt, first during the Amarna times, and later towards the end of the time of the kings in Israel. It is more probable that a direct line runs from the Amarna letters to the Book of Lamentations, even though records from the period between happen to be missing. Gressmann's hypothesis has derived some support from the assertion in recent research of the importance of the Canaanite inheritance for the cult traditions of Jerusalem. The conception of the king expressed in Lam. 4:20 would then belong to the whole complex of traditions with its roots in Canaanite cult, in which the Zion traditions also are included. On the other hand the Amarna letters which

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52 P. 254.

53 Cf. G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (King and Saviour 4) (UUÅ 1951, 4), 1951, p. 58.

54 *Der Messias*, p. 49.

call the king 'the breath of life' come from Phoenician territory (and not for example from Abdiheba of Jerusalem): the expression occurs in letters from Ammunira of Beirut and Zimriddi of Sidon.[55] Despite Gressmann it is hardly more natural to think of 'a straight line' between an epithet which Phoenician princes gave Pharaoh and the expression used about the Davidic king in Lam. 4:20 than to reckon with 'a double borrowing from Egypt'. It seems entirely reasonable to suppose that Israel could have adopted this king-title during the Solomonic 'period of enlightenment',[56] when the connections with Egypt seem to have been active.[57] But even if Gressmann's theory is not accepted, this verse in the Book of Lamentations is nonetheless a clear indication of the spiritual home of the author. This high conception of the Davidic king and his functions belongs undoubtedly to the royal temple in Jerusalem, the hymns of which honour a ruler who is called 'Son' by God himself, and is established by him as king on Zion, his holy mountain (Ps. 2).

The passages quoted are perhaps enough to show that it is not only on general grounds probable that the author of the Book of Lamentations belonged to Jerusalem and was familiar with its temple traditions: in the text itself there are several indications, both in ideas and in characteristic expressions, to support the thesis that it is the cultic traditions of Jerusalem, particularly those conceptions connected with Zion, which constitute the background to the reaction of the author in the face of the catastrophe of 587. 'The key to the theology of Lamentations' is in fact found in the tension between specific religious conceptions and historical realities: between the confident belief of the Zion traditions in the inviolability of the temple and city,[58] and the actual brute facts.

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[55] Letters 141, 143 and 144 in J. A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln* (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 2:1–2), 1, 1907, pp. 592 ff.; cf. 2, 1915, p. 1518. Cf. also Alt, 'Neues aus der Pharaonenzeit Palästinas', *PJB* 32, 1936, pp. 12, 20.

[56] Cf. von Rad, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 56–65.

[57] Cf. the 'auffallende Berührungen des judäischen Königsrituals mit dem altägyptischen' as shown by von Rad, 'Das judäische Königsritual', *ThLZ* 72, 1947, col. 214 (= *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1958, p. 209).

[58] It may be objected that Jerusalem had been conquered many times before and that consequently its inhabitants could not possibly believe in the inviolability of Zion. Nevertheless there is clear evidence both in the psalms and in Lamentations that this belief was cherished, whatever counter-evidence the history of the city may have presented. Probably such a religious belief was, at least up to a certain limit, fairly independent of experience. Moreover the history of the period before the fall of Judah must in fact have strengthened the faith in the sanctity of Zion (cf. E. Janssen, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 f.). The most important fact was that Solomon's temple had

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The connection of the Book of Lamentations with the cult traditions of Jerusalem thus seems clear. This does not however mean that these are the only theological traditions with which the author was familiar and which have left traces in his work. A careful study of the text discloses other connecting links too. Lam. 1:3 says concerning Judah:

> היא ישבה בגוים לא מצאה מנוח
> She dwells among the nations, she finds no rest.

This description of the fate of conquered Judah seems to link up with a point in the description of the tribulations which according to Deut. 28 will strike the people if they turn away from God, if they 'are not careful to do all the words of his law' (v. 58). This chapter contains a detailed exposition of the blessings which the people will enjoy if they hearken to the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments (vv. 1–14), and all the curses which will come upon them if they do not hearken to their God and fail to do after his commandments (vv. 15–68). In the latter section we read that the Lord shall scatter Israel among all peoples (v. 64), ובגוים ההם לא תרגיע ולא יהיה מנוח לכף־רגלך 'And among these nations you shall find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot' (v. 65). It seems probable that a connection exists between this passage and Lam. 1:3. מנוח is furthermore a rare word: apart from these two passages, it occurs only five times in the whole of the Old Testament (the more usual form is מנוחה).

Lam. 1:5 begins thus:

> היו צריה לראש
> Her adversaries have become the head, i.e. are given dominion.

This description of the situation after the catastrophe of 587 also seems to have a parallel in Deut. 28. In the section of blessings, there is a promise that if Israel remains faithful to the Lord, it will itself prevail: ונתנך יהוה לראש ולא לזנב 'and Yhwh will make you the head, and not the tail' (v. 13), but if the people fall away, the result will be the opposite: the stranger will instead have the power and Israel itself will be subjected: הוא יהיה לראש ואתה תהיה לזנב 'he shall be the head, and you should be the tail' (v. 44). The similarity between this formulation and the expression in Lam. 1:5

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never been destroyed, and it was not until that happened that the conflict between the faith of the Zion traditions and historic reality became patent and irrevocable.

seems to be more than a coincidence. It should be noted that the expression היה לראש is not at all usual: except in these two passages, it is only found in the story of Jephthah, Jdc. 11:8 ff., and in 1 Chron. 11:6.

The same verse in Lam. 1 also grieves over the deportations:

> עולליה הלכו שבי
> Her children have gone into captivity.

Here too there seems to be a close connection between the Book of Lamentations and Deuteronomy's description of the punishment awaiting disobedience and desertion. It says in Deut. 28:41. בנים ובנות תוליד ולא־יהיו לך כי ילכו בשבי 'You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity'. In 1:18 the author of the Book of Lamentations seems again to refer to this passage. The last line in this verse runs as follows:

> בתולתי ובחורי הלכו בשבי
> My virgins and my young men have gone into captivity.

Here the agreement is even more exact, because the phrase is now הלך בשבי, with the preposition ב as in Deut. 28:41 and elsewhere in the Old Testament; only Lam. 1:5 has הלך שבי without ב.

Lam. 1:9 reproaches Jerusalem for un-cleanliness and that 'she took no thought of her end', and it concludes:

> ותרד פלאים
> Therefore she came down wonderfully, i.e. her fall was terrible.

It is tempting, especially in view of the parallels shown above, to see here a connection with Deut. 28:43, which threatens that the stranger shall have more and more power, ואתה תרד מטה מטה 'and you shall come down lower and lower'. The similarity is however perhaps too general to establish a definite connection here.

One of the worst horrors that occurred in the catastrophe in Jerusalem was that the terrible famine even drove people to cannibalism. Twice this theme recurs in the poems. In 2:20 it says:

> אם־תאכלנה נשים פרים עללי טפחים
> Should women eat their offspring, children whom they have nurtured?

Mentioned here in a shocked question to the Lord it is also described in 4:10:

> ידי נשים רחמניות בשלו ילדיהן
> היו לברות למו בשבר בת־עמי
> The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children;
> they were their food in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

This too comes into the threatened consequences of Israel's disobedience indicated in Deut. 28: ואכלת פרי־בטנך בשר בניך ובנותיך אשר נתן־לך יהוה אלהיך 'And you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom Yhwh your God has given you' (v. 53). The agreement between Deut. 28 and the two passages in the Book of Lamentations lies in the facts themselves, rather than in the words and terms used.

In Lam. 3:45 the people lament:

> סחי ומאוס תשימנו בקרב העמים
> Thou hast made us offscouring and refuse among the peoples.

A similar thought seems to be expressed in v. 14 of the same chapter:[59]

> [60] הייתי שחק לכל־עמים נגינתם כל־היום
> I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,
> and their song all the day.

Deut. 28 uses this fate too to threaten the backsliders with: והיית לשמה למשל ולשנינה בכל העמים אשר־ינהגך יהוה שמה 'And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword, among all the peoples where Yhwh will lead you away' (v. 37). Again it is more the thought than the terminology that is shared, though it is perhaps worth noting that the word for 'peoples' in all three passages is עמים, not גוים.

Twice Lamentations adduces as an example of the cruelty of the conquerors the fact that they showed no consideration for the aged:

> פני כהנים לא נשאו זקנים לא חננו
> The respected not the priests,
> they favoured not the elders. (4:16)

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[59] For the collective interpretation of the 'I' of the third chapter cf. supra [= my *Studies*, 1963], pp. 126 ff.

[60] Cf. supra [= my *Studies*, 1963], pp. 137 f.

פני זקנים לא נהדרו
They honoured not the elders (5:12).

Here again is an obvious connection with the threats in Deut. 28. There the people who will carry out the Lord's judgement on unfaithful Israel are described as גוי עז פנים אשר לא ישא פנים לזקן ונער לא יחן 'a nation of stern countenance, who shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young'[61] (v. 50).

The agreements between Deut. 28[62] and these passages in the Book of Lamentations seem too numerous and detailed to be dismissed as pure coincidences.[63] The problem is then to decide how the connection between the two texts should be understood. The most obvious view is undoubtedly that the author of the Book of Lamentations, in his description of the consequences of the catastrophe, consciously alludes to those visitations that Deut. 28 depicts as the wages of sin. In that case his description would be more than just detailed and realistic pictures; for by means of such allusions it would at the same time serve as a theological interpretation of the catastrophe. The author would already have indicated by his choice of expressions that what had happened must be understood as God's punishment for the sins of the people. This reasoning presupposes that Deut. 28 is older than Lamentations. The difficulty is that several scholars regard large sections of this chapter as secondary expansions,[64] added after

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[61] The next verse in Lam. 5 (v. 13) could also possibly refer to this passage:
בחורים טחון נשאו ונערים בעץ כשלו
Young men endure the labour of grinding,
and boys stagger under the wood.
For the translation cf. supra [= my *Studies*, 1963], pp. 201 f.

[62] Lam. 3.38, מפי עליון לא תצא הרעות והטוב 'Is it not from the mouth of ʿElyon that evil and good come?', may possibly be an allusion to the whole chapter with its blessings and curses.

[63] According to Rignell there is a similar connection between passages in Deut., especially chs 28–32, and Isa. 1: 'Isaiah Chapter 1. Some exegetical remarks with special reference to the relationship between the text and the book of Deuteronomy', *StTh* XI, MCMLVII, 1958, pp. 140 ff.

[64] Cf. e.g. C. Steuernagel, *Übersetzung und Erklärung der Bücher Deuteronomium und Josua und Allgemeine Einleitung in den Hexateuch* (HKAT 1:3), 1900, pp. 99 ff.; A. F. Puukko, *Das Deuteronomium. Eine Literarkritische Untersuchung* (BWAT 5), 1910, pp. 220 ff.; Eissfeldt, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, 2. Aufl. 1956, p. 276; Noth, '„ Die mit des Gesetzes Werken umgehen, die sind unter dem Fluch"', *In piam memoriam Alexander von Bulmerincq* (Abhandlungen der Herder-Gesellschaft und des Herder-Instituts zu Riga, 6:3),

the collapse of 587, in fact as *vaticinia ex eventu*. In that case these sections would be approximately contemporary with the Book of Lamentations and could not very well serve as a starting point for its interpretation of the collapse.

Those scholars who hold that the main part of the section treating curses in Deuteronomy was added after 587 generally do not present any detailed justification for their views,[65] either in the form of their own analysis or by reference to anyone else's investigation. For the majority it seems to be sufficient to establish a correspondence between the described punishments and the actual course of events to reach the conclusion that it is *ex eventu*. The parts rejected are not exactly the same for all scholars, but generally vv. 25b–37 and 47–68[66] are reckoned as 'nachträgliche Erweiterungen'.

It is in any case a rather dubious idea that the similarity between Deut. 28 and the disasters which struck the people on the collapse of the Southern Kingdom proves that most of this chapter was written *ex eventu*; but apart from that there is another interesting fact which perhaps justifies a reconsideration of the current view on later additions in Deut. 28. This is the fact that those passages in Deuteronomy to which there are, as we have seen, striking parallels in Lamentations are distributed among both those parts usually considered original and those sections regarded as later expansions. Among the verses that have been quoted from ch. 28, vv. 41, 43 and 44 belong to those that are usually reckoned more original, whereas verses 37, 50, 53 and 65 are commonly thought to be secondary material. Now the relation between the first group of passages and those verses in Lamentations that are reminiscent of them must for chronological reasons be due to the author of the Book of Lamentations using or alluding to formulations in Deuteronomy. But in that case it would seem most probable that in the other passages too the agreements are a result of a conscious effort on the part of the author of Lamentations to link on to expressions in already existing traditions about the consequences of apostasy. It would

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1938, pp. 130, 132 (= *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 2., erw. Aufl. 1960, pp. 158, 160); von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1, 1957, p. 229, n. 89; Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 16, n. 5. The pattern of blessings and curses is itself of course old and can be traced back by form-historical methods to cultic uses; cf. Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien V. Segen und Fluch in Israels Kult und Psalmdichtung*, 1924, especially pp. 112 ff.

[65] E.g. Noth and von Rad.

[66] So e.g. von Rad, *loc. cit.* Noth, *loc. cit.*, indicates as later additions vv. 20b, 21b, 29, 34, 36, 37, 47–68, possibly also 38–41. Janssen, *loc. cit.*, suggests vv. 25b–37, 47–57, 62–8.

be absurd to regard Deut. 28 as an entirely later work, deliberately picking from Lamentations some of its expressions; and any other interpretation of this connection would have to be improbably complicated. It would seem rather that a revision of the current view of Deut. 28 is well worth considering.[67]

Two more points can be adduced to support the view that in Lamentations we are dealing with a conscious reminiscence of Deuteronomy's descriptions of punishment.

First there is another obvious allusion to Deut. 32, the so-called 'Song of Moses'. Recently good reasons have been advanced for the view that this passage is very ancient,[68] and one can be confident here that it is the author of Lamentations that is alluding to the Deuteronomy passage. Lam. 1:20 runs:

מחוץ שכלה־חרב בבית כמות
In the street the sword bereaves,
in the house there is as in (the realm of) death.[69]

The connection with Deut. 32:25 is transparent:[70]

מחוץ תשכל־חרב ומחדרים אימה
Without the sword shall bereave,
and in the chambers terror.

Secondly there is a passage in the Book of Lamentations which explicitly formulates the actual principle that must, if the view put forward here is

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[67] In that case the scholars who do not consider these sections to have been added after 587 would be right, e.g. S. R. Driver, *Deuteronomy* (ICC), 3rd edn, 1902, and A. C. Welch, *Deuteronomy. The Framework to the Code*, 1932, pp. 126 ff. Welch connects these sections with the downfall of Samaria instead of that of Jerusalem. The thought of a northern Israelite origin is interesting – cf. A. Alt, 'Die Heimat des Deuteronomiums', *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 2, 1953, pp. 250 ff.

[68] O. Eissfeldt, *Das Lied Moses Deuteronomium 32:1–43 und das Lehrgedicht Asaphs Psalm 78 samt einer Analyse der Umgebung des Mose-Liedes* (Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-historische klasse, 104:5), 1958.

[69] On this translation cf. supra [= my *Studies*, 1963], pp. 81 f.

[70] A further parallel with Deut. 32 may occur in Lam. 3:12–cf. 32:23. The metaphor found in these passages is however not uncommon; cf. e.g. Job 16:12 f.

right, lie behind the tendency to describe the devastation in close connection with earlier threats of severe punishments. In 2:17 it says:

עשה יהוה אשר זמם בצע אמרתו
אשר צוה מימי־קדם הרס ולא חמל
Yhwh has done what he purposed,
he has fulfilled his word;
as he ordained long ago,
he has demolished without pity.

That is to say if there is seen in the author's citation of parallels from descriptions of threatened visitations evidence of a theology of the catastrophe as a visitation from God, then this is strongly supported by finding the basic idea which is assumed from the author's manner of alluding to other texts in addition clearly formulated in the words just quoted.

Now this theology thus indirectly expressed in the author's references to phrases in Deuteronomy, and directly formulated in Lam. 2:17, is nothing new or unfamiliar. 'Yhwh has done that which he devised; he has fulfilled his word' – this line from the Book of Lamentations could serve as an epitome for the whole understanding of history, for the whole theological view of the significance of and driving force behind the events which marks what is usually called the Deuteronomic history work.[71] 'Es waren die Drohungen und die Flüche des Deuteronomiums, die in den Katastrophen der beiden Reiche sich erfüllt hatten.' This is how von Rad[72] characterizes the basic idea of the Deuteronomist, but the formulation could equally well serve as a summary of the view of history which is both indirectly and directly expressed in the Book of Lamentations. Even in the actual method of giving expression to this judgment of history, a resemblance exists: cf. the following characterization of the Deuteronomist's method of working: 'Der Deuteronomist sah in dem Geschehen von 598 und 587 das Eintreffen jener Prophetenworte. Er beschrieb daher die Zerstörung der Stadt und die Exilierung des Volkes mit den Worten, die er den Propheten in den Mund gelegt hatte, und gab damit dieser Katastophe seines Volkes eine Deutung.

[71] Cf. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* 1 (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, 18. Jahr, Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse, Heft 2), 1943, pp. 100 ff.; von Rad, 'Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern', *Deuteronomium-Studien Teil B* (FRLANT, N. F. 40), 1947, pp. 52 ff. (= *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, 1958, pp. 189 ff.); *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1, 1957, pp. 332 ff.

[72] *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1, 1957, p. 341.

Sie war für ihn das Eintreffen von Jahwes angedrohtem Gericht über die Sünde des Volkes.'[73]

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Thus we come back to the concept of 'Deuteronomic faith', which formed our starting point in connection with an account and criticism of Gottwald's views. But his thesis of a tension between this theology and the reality as the key to the theology of the Book of Lamentations seems, after investigation, less convincing than ever. It has also proved debatable whether one can speak at all of 'the key' in the singular. The question to which theological milieu the author of Lamentations belongs, which tradition forms the background for his attempt to understand the catastrophe, has no one simple answer. An analysis shows that those opinions encountered in this book have from a traditio-historical point of view roots in at least two directions. They bear obvious traces of the cult traditions of Jerusalem, especially the Zion traditions; they are also marked by those fundamental ideas which characterize the theology of the Deuteronomist.

This double inheritance is not surprising, in view of the period in the history of Israel to which the Book of Lamentations belongs. It is only in the oldest times that the different tradition complexes exist side by side as relatively isolated units. Gradually they begin to influence one another, and for the later periods the mingling of different streams of tradition is characteristic.[74] In this respect the Book of Lamentations is thus a child of its time. Nor are the conditions for a connection between the two lines of tradition lacking. In its strong emphasis on the centralization of the cult to Jerusalem, Deuteronomic theology had a point of contact with the main theme of the Zion traditions; that is, the city of God and the temple.[75] Their concentration on the temple of Jerusalem links them both together.

When however it has been established that the author was familiar with both these groups of traditions, and reveals this double inheritance in his formulations and conceptions, this must not obscure another important observation, that the two traditions nonetheless function in different ways in the Book of Lamentations. They do not have identical functions in the author's attempt to come to grips with the catastrophe theologically and

[73] Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[74] Cf. von Rad, *op. cit.*, 1, pp. 220, 336 f.

[75] Cf. E. Janssen, *op. cit.*, p. 59 (where there is however no real insight into the significance of the Jerusalem cult traditions).

to disclose its inner meaning. These elements of different origins have not in the last resort been united to form a new whole. The reference to the blending of traditions must be understood as meaning that elements from different traditions can be found in the same author or in the same work, but this does not in itself mean that any real synthesis has been established. The different lines of tradition have in fact different functions in the attempt by Lamentations at an interpretation of history. It could perhaps be expressed a bit schematically thus: the problem, the tension, between faith and historic reality, is created by those elements within the author's ideas which ultimately have their origin in the cult theology and temple traditions of Jerusalem; the solution, the possibility of finding a meaning also in defeat, lies in the Deuteronomic view of the catastrophe as a divine judgment, as part of 'das Funktionieren des göttlichen Wortes in der Geschichte'.[76] In this, the most difficult crisis in the history of Israel, no help or meaning can be glimpsed in conceptions of God as enthroned in his inviolable temple, conceptions which Israel has inherited from and shares with its heathen neighbours, but only in the native faith of Israel in a Lord who, unfettered by the fate of his cult-centre,[77] reigns supreme in history.

[76] von Rad, 'Die deuteronomistische Geschichtstheologie in den Königsbüchern', *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, p. 204.

[77] Cf. V. Maag, 'Malkût Jhwh', SupplVT VII, 1960, p. 145: 'Diese Freiheit gegenüber örtlicher Bindung hindert Jhwh daran, das Verhängnis anderer thronender Götter zu teilen, deren Throne gestürzt worden sind.'

2
On the Syntax of אהיה אשר אהיה in Exodus 3:14

(*1968*)

I

Most papers on the explanation of the divine name in Exod. 3:14 seem to begin with a statement that 'the passage has remained one of the unsolved difficulties for both translators and exegetes'[1] or words to that effect. The short sentence אהיה אשר אהיה has been understood and interpreted in an almost endless number of ways. Indeed the very abundance of explanations – several of them advanced with impressive learning and admirable ingenuity – serves to emphasize the ambiguity of the sentence and could perhaps be taken to support the view that the statement is an evasive and mystifying answer to Moses's question about the name of God. In fact Martin Noth, in his well-known commentary on the Book of Exodus, asserts with a certain resignation that the words allow of several explanations and that it is hardly possible to settle the question conclusively.[2] Nor is the purpose of this article primarily to advocate one particular exegesis of the disputed words, still less to suggest a new interpretation. My intention is simply to discuss a question which must be studied before we begin to ask how the divine answer should be expounded, namely, the question of the syntactical structure and the correct translation of the sentence. And I hope that here at least, in insisting on the necessity of dealing with the philological problem before any attempt at interpretation and exegesis, I may prove a faithful pupil of the eminent Hebraist to whom this discussion is gratefully dedicated and who has constantly tried to impress this rule of method on his pupils. I do not intend to investigate either the problem of the original significance of the tetragrammaton or the correctness of the explanation which is given in Exod. 3:14; nor do I wish to consider the

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[1] So W. A. Irwin, 'Exod. 3:14', *AJSL*, LVI (1939), 297.

[2] *Das zweite Buch Mose. Exodus. Übersetzt und erklärt* (ATD, V, 1959), 31. English translation, *Exodus* (London, 1962), 44.

theory about an earlier and more original formulation of this explanation which may lie behind the present wording, as suggested by P. Haupt,[3] and accepted by W. F. Albright,[4] and others.[5] I am only concerned with the correct analysis of the syntax of the divine answer to Moses in the Exodus narrative as it has come down to us in the Masoretic text.

The problem of the correct grammatical analysis of אהיה אשר אהיה is as a rule not given much attention by the commentators. Generally they take for granted that the syntax and the translation of the sentence do not involve any difficulties, and they simply accept the traditional translation which is represented – with minor variations without material differences – in most editions of the Bible: 'I am that I am' (AV and RV), 'I am who I am' (RSV), 'I will be that I will be' (RV^{mg}), or 'I will be what I will be' (RSV^{mg}). As a rule opinions are divided only on the question of the precise import of this statement.

Lately, however, there have been attempts to master the difficult problem of the correct interpretation by contesting the current translation and propounding an analysis of the syntax of the three words resulting in a new translation: 'I am the one who is', which creates also a new basis for the endeavours to reach the real meaning of God's reply to Moses. Recently this new understanding has been maintained by Joh. Lindblom of Lund in an interesting article on the explanation of the divine name in Exod. 3:14.[6] For the grammatical problem Lindblom also refers to a detailed investigation by E. Schild of Toronto, who reached the same conclusion.[7] Schild's analysis of the syntactical problem, especially the understanding of the relative clause, seems to be the most exhaustive so far.[8]

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[3] 'Der Name Jahwe', *OLZ*, XII (1909), cols 211 ff.

[4] 'The Name *Yahweh*', *JBL*, XLIII (1924), 376.

[5] E.g. D. N. Freedman, 'The Name of the God of Moses', *JBL*, LXXIX (1960), 152 ff. (with some modification of Haupt's suggestion), and F. M. Cross, Jr., 'Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs', *HTR*, LV (1962), 255.

[6] 'Noch einmal die Deutung des Jahwe-Namens in Ex. 3:14', *ASTI*, III (1964), 4 ff., esp. 8 f.

[7] 'On Exodus 3:14 – "I am that I am"', *VT*, IV (1954), 296 ff.

[8] The most detailed recent study of the sentence is otherwise a thesis by M. Reisel, *Observations on* אהיה אשר אהיה, הואהא, *and* שם המפורש (dissertation, Amsterdam, 1957). Reisel's treatment of the question of the correct translation is however not quite clear: on p. 13, for instance, he seems to accept Schild's view, which is said to be 'undoubtedly supported by the facts', but his own final translation on p. 24 runs: 'I *shall* (show to) be, who I *would* (show to) be', which is precisely the type of translation that Schild is arguing against.

The situation appears to be that the only detailed discussions of the syntax of אהיה אשר אהיה in Exod. 3:14 have been provided by scholars whose aim is to defend the unusual translation 'I am the one who is', whereas those who retain the traditional rendering 'I am who I am' or some similar translation have not in fact thought it necessary to discuss the syntactical question at all. It seems justified, therefore, to reconsider the subject and to examine in some detail the arguments which have been put forward in favour of the new syntactical analysis. Moreover, the very fact that this new thesis has been defended by so eminent a scholar as Lindblom certainly makes it worthy of serious consideration.

II

It seems appropriate first to present fairly fully the view of the syntactical structure of the sentence which is the basis of the new translation 'I am the one who is', and the arguments for it. As mentioned above, the most detailed investigation is that of Schild, and so I shall in the main follow his exposition.

Schild first gives an account of the traditional interpretations and notes some minor variations between them. He then observes: 'All these interpretations rest on the same syntactical approach to the text of our passage. They must be regarded as highly questionable, however, in view of a point of syntax which seems to have been generally overlooked. On the basis of the syntax of the relative clause in Hebrew, an entirely different translation may be obtained and yield a greatly preferable meaning.'[9] This point of syntax is the rule which in Cowley's translation of Gesenius-Kautzsch's Hebrew grammar (*GK*) has been formulated thus (§138*d*): 'If the governing substantive forms part of a statement made in the first or second person, the retrospective pronoun (or the subject of the appositional clause) is in the same person.' A typical case, quoted in the grammar, is Gen. 15:7 אני יהוה אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים 'I am Yhwh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans'. But Schild is not satisfied with the formulation in Gesenius-Kautzsch as far as the bracketed part is concerned. He points out that it applies only if 'the governing substantive is the *subject* of the relative clause', and suggests the following wording of the bracketed part of the rule: 'If the governing substantive is the subject of a relative clause and is, in the main clause, equated with, or defined as, a personal pronoun, then

[9] *VT*, IV (1954), 297.

the predicate of the relative clause agrees with that personal pronoun.'[10] He then proceeds to analyse the different ways in which the governing substantive may be equated with the personal pronouns.[11] There are four such cases. The governing substantive may be (1) a personal pronoun, as e.g. in 1 Sam. 25:33 וברוכה את אשר כלתני 'and blessed be you who restrained me …'; (2) a vocative, i.e. in implicit apposition to the personal pronoun of the second person, as e.g. in Isa. 51:17 קומי ירושלם אשר שתית 'arise, O Jerusalem, who have drunk.'; (3) a predicate noun (in the main clause) defining a personal pronoun, as e.g. in Judg. 13:11 האיש אשר־דברת אל־האשה האתה 'Are you the man who spoke to the woman?'; (4) a noun in apposition to the predicate noun defining a personal pronoun (in the main clause), as e.g. in Lev. 20:24 אני יהוה אלהיכם אשר־הבדלתי אתכם מן־העמים 'I am Yhwh, your God, who have separated you from the peoples'.

The next step in the argument is to establish that the same rule applies to the type of sentence called 'independent relative clause', which is not dependent on a noun but itself expresses a substantival idea.[12] In such clauses אשר is usually translated 'he who', etc. One of the examples quoted is 1 Chron. 21:17 אני־הוא אשר־חטאתי והרע הרעותי, which is rendered 'I am the one who sinned and did wrong'. This leads up to the main thesis of Schild's paper:

> Here, in my opinion, we have the key to a better understanding of Exod. 3:14 אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. Except for the absence of the copula, which is unnecessary because the whole sentence is a verbal one, the construction is identical with that of 1 Chron. 21:17. אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה is the predicate of the first אֶהְיֶה and the verbal form of היה must therefore agree with the person of the main clause subject, which is contained in the form אֶהְיֶה, i.e. first person. Just as 1 Chron. 21:17 is translated as 'I am the one who (or: he who; or: one who) sinned', Exod. 3:14 ought to be translated and interpreted as 'I am the one who is' or 'I am he who is', the 'am' expressing identity and the 'is' expressing existence.[13]

As is pointed out by Lindblom, the problem of the interpretation would become much simpler if this translation could be accepted: the divine answer would then clearly indicate 'dass Jahwe im gewissen Sinne der Seiende wäre'.[14]

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10 *VT*, IV (1954), 298.

11 *Ibid*., 298 ff.

12 In *GK*, §155*a*, such relative clauses are called 'complete relative clauses'.

13 *VT*, IV (1954), 300 f.

14 Lindblom, *ASTI*, III (1964), 9.

Lindblom has also called attention to the fact that the syntactical analysis which he himself adopts, and which has been argued most fully by Schild, in fact had advocates long ago, though they have been few and far between. He mentions August Knobel, who in his commentary on Exodus and Leviticus in 1857 referred to the same rule of grammar and suggested the translation 'I am the one who is'.[15] Both Schild and Lindblom also refer to Edouard Reuss. In his French translation of the Bible in 1879 Reuss gave this rendering of the disputed sentence: 'Je suis celui qui est', with the following comment: 'On remarquera que nous traduisons: Je suis celui qui *est*, et non pas: celui qui *je suis*. Cette dernière traduction provient de ce qu'on méconnait une règle de la syntaxe hébraïque, d'après laquelle la proposition relative se met à la meme personne que le sujet.'[16] Schild gives vent to his surprise that this explanation of the sentence has escaped the notice of later scholars,[17] and Lindblom finds it strange that the grammatical rule in question has not been applied more often to the passage in Exodus.[18]

III

As far as the rule of grammar is concerned there can hardly be any doubt that Schild's detailed discussion of its correct formulation and his distinction between four different subsections is valuable and a definite improvement in comparison with Gesenius-Kautzsch. One could possibly object that his introduction to the series of examples, 'The OT yields the following examples of this rule',[19] is likely to give the impression that what follows is a complete list of all instances found in the Old Testament, which is not correct: several clear cases have not been included. I have for instance noted 1 Kings 13:14 האתה איש־האלהים אשר־באת מיהודה 'Are you the man of God who came from Judah?' and Neh. 9:7

[15] *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum A.T.*, XII, Leipzig, 1857), 28: 'eig. *ich bin, welcher ich bin*, d. h. ich bin derjenige, welcher ist, also der Seiende, wirklich Existirende. Nämlich אֲשֶׁר zu den beiden Verbis gehörig ist *is qui* wie im Num. 22:6. 2 Sam. 18:4. und das zweite אֶהְיֶה für יִהְיֶה gesetzt, indem der Hebräer mit dem Relat., wenn es auf eine erste Person zurückgeht, gern die erste Person verbindet …'.

[16] *La Bible. Traduction nouvelle avec introductions et commentaires*, III, 2 (Paris, 1879), 9 n. 3 (the words quoted above are found on p. 10).

[17] *VT*, IV (1954), 302.

[18] *ASTI*, III (1964), 9.

[19] *VT*, IV (1954), 299.

אתה־הוא יהוה האלהים אשר בחרת באברם וחוצאתו מאור כשדים ושמת שמו אברהם 'Thou art Yhwh, the God who didst choose Abram and bring him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and give him the name Abraham'. Of these instances the first should be included in Schild's subsection (3) and the second in (4).

The assertion that the rule applies also to independent relative clauses is more questionable. From a purely formal point of view the statement seems oddly self-contradictory: an independent relative clause is, by definition, one which has no antecedent, and the rule in question is one which defines how the predicate of the relative clause agrees with the antecedent, so that it would appear intrinsically impossible for the rule to apply to an independent relative clause. And it is in fact doubtful if the two examples which Schild adduces in support of his thesis can be labelled 'independent relative clauses'. The first example is Ps. 71:20 אשר הראיתנו צרות רבות ורעות תשוב תחיינו, translated by Schild 'Thou, who hast made us see many dangers and disasters, do thou quicken us again'. The verse seems to be difficult from a text-critical point of view, and many commentators delete אשר at the beginning of the sentence,[20] but as the reason for this emendation is not particularly strong: *metri causa*, it is not unreasonable of Schild to retain MT. But one may wonder whether this is at all an *independent* relative clause: the word אלהים in the vocative (originally probably יהוה) is found several times in the preceding lines of the psalm (verses 17, 18, 19), and the words immediately before those quoted by Schild run: אלהים מי כמוך. It seems much simpler and more natural to take this vocative אלהים (also represented by the suffix in כמוך) as the antecedent of the following relative clause: 'O God, who is like thee, who hast made me see many and sore troubles …'. In that case we have here simply a case of Schild's subdivision (2), where the governing substantive is a vocative. It should be noted that Schild himself assigns the beginning of the preceding verse of the same psalm to this subdivision (2): וצדקתך אלהים עד־מרום אשר־עשית גדלות, translated 'Thy righteousness, O God, extends unto the high heavens, thou, who hast done great things'. I see no reason why the two relative clauses in verses 19 and 20 should be differently classified; they seem entirely parallel, and verse 20 should be analysed in the same way as verse 19.

Schild's second example of an independent relative clause where the rule of concord applies is also questionable. It is the sentence from 1 Chron. 21:17, quoted above in section II: אני־הוא אשר־חטאתי והרע הרעותי,

[20] E.g. R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen übersetzt und erklärt* (*KAT*, XIII, Leipzig, 1914), *ad loc.*; H. Schmidt, *Die Psalmen* (*HAT*, I, 15, 1934), *ad loc.*; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen* (*BK*, XV, 1960), *ad loc.*; cf. also F. Buhl in *BH*.

which Schild renders 'I am the one who sinned and did wrong'. A still better translation would perhaps be 'It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly' (so, e.g., RSV). As was pointed out above, a true independent relative clause is one which has no antecedent or governing noun; a clear case is for instance found in Deut. 27:26 ארור אשר לא־יקים את־דברי התורה־הזאת לעשות אותם 'Cursed be he who does not keep the words of this law to do them'. It is hardly satisfactory to regard the clause in 1 Chron. 21:17 as a parallel case: obviously the word אני here serves as a kind of antecedent which governs the verb of the relative clause. Such cases, where a so-called independent relative clause functions as the predicate of a subject which is then allowed to influence the construction of the relative clause, form the background of Schild's seemingly self-contradictory statement. The current Hebrew grammars as a rule do not mention these cases at all; generally it is only said that an independent relative clause can be the subject of the principal clause, the object of its verb, or dependent on a noun or a preposition in it.[21] V. Baumann, however, in his study of relative clauses in Hebrew, mentions that an independent relative clause may also serve as a predicate.[22] He gives two examples. The first is 2 Sam. 2:4 אנשי יביש גלעד אשר קברו את־שאול 'It was the men of Jabesh-Gilead who buried Saul'. But this sentence is difficult, and most scholars hold that the word רשא has been accidentally transposed and should stand immediately before the words quoted (cf. 2 Sam. 1:4).[23] This passage must therefore be regarded as not altogether reliable evidence. Baumann's second example is however safer from a text-critical point of view: Josh. 24:17 runs כי יהוה אלהינו הוא המעלה אתנו ... ואשר עשה לעינינו את־האתות הגדלות האלה 'For it is Yhwh our God who brought us ... and who did these great signs in our sight'. The question whether a relative clause of this kind ought really to be regarded as *selbständig*, 'independent', is intricate; at any rate it seems clear that it refers back to a sort of antecedent (a possible influence upon the verb of the relative clause is not, of course, noticeable here, as the antecedent is in the third person), which is by no means the case in the passage Deut. 27:26 just quoted, where we find an entirely clear case of an independent relative clause.

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[21] See, e.g., *GK*, §138*e*; H. S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk grammatik* (Uppsala, 1952), §94*h*; C. Brockelmann, *Hebräische Syntax* (Neukirchen, 1956), §151.

[22] *Hebräische Relativsätze* (dissertation, Leipzig, 1894), 22.

[23] See, e.g., S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1913), *ad loc*., and cf. *BH*. This transposition is accepted also by H. W. Hertzberg, *Die Samuelsbücher* (ATD, X, Göttingen, 1956), *ad loc*. English translation, *I and II Samuel* (London, 1964), 245.

IV

The question of the classification of this type of relative clause is not, however, of crucial importance, though it is not without interest. More important is the question whether the comparative material which is the basis of Schild's and Lindblom's analysis of the syntax of the sentence אהיה אשר אהיה is relevant and entirely parallel. The vital passage is 1 Chron. 21:17, quoted by Lindblom and regarded by Schild as the principal support for his solution: it is, in his own words, 'this example which is directly and forcefully relevant to our problem and affords an excellent parallel to it'.[24]

On closer consideration, however, the alleged parallelism turns out to be far from complete. As a matter of fact the two sentences are differently construed on a vital point: in 1 Chron. 21:17 there is an אני which the relative clause refers back to and which decides the form of the verb, whereas in Exod. 3:14 no such pronoun is found, only the verbal form אהיה. Or, in other words: the main clause in 1 Chron. 21:17 is a nominal clause, whereas in Exod. 3:14 it is a verbal clause. Lindblom does not deal with this difference at all; Schild mentions it in passing without really discussing it seriously. But as I understand it, this difference is a strong argument against the suggested new analysis; it means in fact that no complete parallel to the syntactical construction presupposed in the new translation has been presented. It is not only 1 Chron. 21:17, the main passage referred to, that is different in this respect: *all* the alleged parallels cited by Lindblom (Gen. 15:17; 45:4; Exod. 20:2 par.; Lev. 20:24; Num. 22:30; 1 Kings 13:14; Isa. 41:8; 49:23;[25] 1 Chron. 21:17), as also all those adduced by Schild (in addition to Lindblom's, also Judg. 13:11; 1 Sam. 25:33; 1 Kings 8:23 f.; Isa. 51:17; Jer. 5:22; 32:17 ff.; Ps. 71:19; Eccles. 10:16 f.),[26] as well as other examples of this rule of syntax, have one thing in common: the antecedent is always an explicit noun or pronoun, *never* as in the suggested analysis of Exod. 3:14 a pronominal concept implied in a verbal form. Schild, it is true, has suggested the possibility that the governing substantive in Isa. 51:17 קומי ירושלם אשר שתית 'arise, O Jerusalem, who have drunk …', is the

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[24] Schild, *VT*, IV (1954), 300.

[25] These two passages from Isaiah do not belong in the same category as the rest and are hardly relevant at all: they are not examples of agreement between the antecedent and the verb in the relative clause but of the use of a retrospective pronoun, the *'ā'id* of the Arab grammarians.

[26] What is said above in n. 25 about Isa. 41:8 and 49:23 is true also of Eccles. 10:16 f.

pronoun implied in קומי,[27] but this is neither necessary nor even probable: the governing noun is certainly the vocative 'Jerusalem'. Thus it is at any rate clear that the comparative material adduced is not sufficient to prove the thesis: true parallels to the construction which is said to occur in Exod. 3:14 still remain to be found.

If it should be objected that the suggested new analysis is not unproved merely because parallels are shown to be lacking, it must be remembered that the only argument advanced by both Schild and Lindblom is the argument of parallels: they explain the construction of the disputed sentence by referring to other Hebrew sentences which are said to be built on an identical pattern. If it is shown that the pattern is in fact not identical, the argument of course breaks down. It may perhaps even be claimed that a grammatical explanation always requires the existence of parallels even if this is not explicitly stated. For a rule of syntax is a statement of how words are in fact connected. 'Philology is an empirical science',[28] and to formulate a syntactical law is to say that such and such a pattern has been observed in several sentences. Thus to explain a construction by referring to a grammatical rule is to say that the construction explained is another instance of a pattern which has been found in other cases, i.e. that parallels exist.

But it seems possible to take a further step and to maintain not only that the thesis is not proved but also that it is wrong. It seems to be the case that the main clause must contain an explicit noun or pronoun with which the verb of the relative clause agrees. This means that in a case like 1 Chron. 21:17, where the relative clause is syntactically the predicate of the subject of the main clause, it is not an accidental and insignificant detail that the main clause is a nominal clause: on the contrary this is necessarily so. In general, this rule seems not to have been formulated in the grammars. I am aware of one exception only: J. Pedersen's original and independent Hebrew grammar (unfortunately available only in Danish), where the section on the relative clauses contains the following rule: 'If the principal clause is a *nominal clause*, the subordinate clause may thus be its predicate.'[29] This is to say that 'I am the one who …', 'This is that which …', etc., is in biblical Hebrew expressed by a nominal clause.

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[27] *VT*, IV (1954), 299.

[28] M. Macdonald, 'The Philosopher's Use of Analogy', *Logic and Language* (First Series), ed. A. G. N. Flew (Oxford, 1951), 83.

[29] *Hebræisk Grammatik* (2nd edn, Copenhagen, 1933), §129*o*, p. 275: 'Hvis den overordnede Sætning er en *Nominalsætning*, kan den underordnede Sætning saal. udgøre dennes Prædikat' (my italics).

There are several instances in Old Testament Hebrew with the predicate of such a nominal clause consisting of a relative clause: Ezek. 38:17 האתה־הוא אשר־דברתי בימים קדמונים 'Are you the one of whom I spoke in former days?'; Gen. 44:5 הלוא זה אשר ישתה אדני בו 'Is not this the one from which my lord drinks?'; Deut. 14:12 וזה אשר לא־תאכלו מהם 'And these are the ones which you shall not eat:…'.[30] This is of course the natural Semitic mode of expression: in the Koran, for instance, phrases like *huwa 'llaḏī yursilu 'r-riyāḥa* 'He is the one who sends the winds' (Sura 7:55) are frequent (cf. 6:97 ff., 114, 165; 9:33; 10:23; 42:24, 27; etc.).[31]

It may be added that our 'I am the one who..', etc. is in Hebrew also often expressed by a participle where we have a relative clause, as for instance in Josh. 24:17, quoted above in section III, or in 1 Sam. 4:16 אנכי הבא מן־המערכה 'I am the one who has come from the battle'. This construction seems to be especially frequent in Deutero-Isaiah, for instance 43:25 אנכי אנכי הוא מחה פשעיך למעני 'I, I am the one who blots out your transgressions for my own sake'; 51:9 f. הלוא את־היא המחצבת רהב מחוללת תנין: הלוא את־היא המחרבת ים 'Are you not the one who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? Are you not the one who dried up the sea …?'; or 51:12 אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם 'I, I am the one who comforts you'. But of the syntactical pattern presupposed by Schild I have not been able to find any examples.

V

It is interesting to note that when Lindblom and Schild discuss the syntax of אהיה אשר אהיה, it is exclusively a matter of arguing *for* the suggested new analysis. The traditional understanding of the structure of the sentence is said to be wrong but this is simply stated, never demonstrated. Neither Schild nor Lindblom has at all attempted to show precisely where the mistake is to be found: there are in fact no arguments *against* the common syntactical understanding. Apparently the correctness of the new explanation is regarded as so evident that the older view of the grammatical construction of the sentence is thought to disappear as a possible alternative once the arguments for the new view have been presented. But of course this is not necessarily so. Even if the new explanation had been acceptable, the traditional understanding would not of necessity have been wrong: a sentence

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[30] In these cases, of course, the subject of the relative clause is not identical with that of the principal clause, so that the rule of concord does not apply here.

[31] For further examples in Arabic see C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, II (Berlin, 1913), §385 *b*.

may be ambiguous and admit of more than one grammatical analysis, and in such a case Schild's arguments for his understanding would not imply the denial of a different explanation. It might have been a question of two equally possible ways of understanding the disputed phrase, and strictly speaking there is no basis for more far-reaching conclusions than this in Schild. The fact that there are no arguments against the usual translation in Schild's detailed paper is of some importance when his own analysis is shown to be inadequate: consequently no such arguments remain to be refuted.

The reason why the advocates of the translation 'I am the one who is' have not attempted to explain what is wrong with the syntactical analysis which yields the translation 'I am who I am' is probably simply that it is so difficult to refute; in fact it seems entirely faultless. This becomes particularly clear if we, so to speak, turn the problem over and ask what is the Hebrew for the English sentence 'I am who I am' or 'I will be what I will be'. It would seem that this is naturally expressed by the sentence אהיה אשר אהיה. As is well known, this is a paronomastic construction which is normal in Semitic languages: *sami'a 'llahu liman sami'a* 'Allah hears whom he hears'; *ḳāla ma ḳāla* 'he said what he said', and common also in Hebrew, as for instance in 2 Sam. 15:20: אני הולך על אשר־אני הולך 'I go where I go'.[32] Accordingly 'I am who I am' may well be rendered אהיה אשר אהיה. It is sometimes thought that the imperfect form of the verb, אהיה, is not quite appropriate in this connection. But it must not be forgotten that the whole phrase is a kind of wordplay on the divine name יהוה – rather reminiscent of many folk-etymologies of names in the Old Testament – and this of course considerably restricted the author's choice of forms. It should perhaps be mentioned that neither Schild nor Lindblom discusses the paronomastic character of the disputed clause, which is all the more surprising as this is a feature which has been emphasized and dealt with in considerable detail by Th. C. Vriezen in his well-known and important article in the *Bertholet-Festschrift*.[33] To my mind Vriezen is entirely right in stressing the paronomastic character of the sentence and it is certainly a mistake to disregard this feature altogether. It is however unnecessary to repeat here what has so convincingly been demonstrated by Vriezen.[34]

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[32] See H. Reckendorf, Über Paronomasie in den semitischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft (Giessen, 1909), 156 ff., and cf. Th. C. Vriezen, ''Ehje 'ašer 'ehje', Festschrift Alfred Bertholet (Tübingen, 1950), 498 ff.

[33] See n. 32 above.

[34] It is however doubtful if Vriezen is right in making the paronomastic construction yield an 'intensive' meaning (*Festschrift Alfred Bertholet*, 500 ff.).

VI

The situation thus seems to be that the unusual translation revived by Lindblom and Schild presupposes that the sentence is construed in a way to which – despite affirmations to the contrary – there are no real parallels in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and which is not the natural way of expressing in Hebrew the idea which is supposed to be found in the passage. The traditional rendering on the other hand regards the sentence as one of many examples of a common and characteristic Semitic mode of expression which is often found also in Hebrew, and the translation is irreproachable from a grammatical point of view. Only one conclusion is possible: there is every reason to retain the syntactical analysis of אהיה אשר אהיה which has resulted in the classical rendering represented by almost all Bible translations. Unfortunately this means that we are back in the difficulties of interpretation which the new translation was designed to solve. But this is no argument against the grammatically correct rendering. And if we should have to admit that though the words are not difficult to translate, we do not quite understand their meaning and cannot give them an entirely satisfactory interpretation, this is not after all surprising: many sayings in the Old Testament are so ancient and have had so eventful and varied a history that we may well expect their original meaning to be sometimes irrecoverable. This does not, of course, exempt us from the duty to use every conceivable means to reach a solution. But perhaps we should admit more often than we do that we simply do not know. Old Testament scholars, too, would perhaps do well to ponder upon the famous and equivocal dictum of a great teacher at Cambridge: 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.'

Paronomastic sentences of this type usually express indetermination, and there is no reason to try to avoid this shade of meaning in Exod. 3:14. Cf. A.-M. Dubarle, 'La signification du nom de Iahweh', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, XXXV (1951), 7 ff.

3

Reflections on the Emergence of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible

(*1978*)

One of the most important and interesting features in the history of the Hebrew Bible is the emergence of a standard consonantal text. The variety of text-types attested by the discoveries in the Judaean Desert and by the ancient versions disappeared at the beginning of the Christian era, and later manuscripts reflect one single text-type which superseded all others. Diversity was replaced by unity.[1]

This development from a plurality of text-types to a single standard version of the sacred text is commonly regarded as a conscious and controlled process. In the profound and difficult crisis of Judaism after the destruction of the temple in the year A.D. 70 and the emergence of the Christian Church, the Pharisees managed to preserve and strengthen the national unity of the Jews by establishing a definite canon of the Holy Scriptures and, we are told, by establishing and promulgating a normative standard recension of the text of these writings. The rabbis are often pictured as having constituted a kind of editorial committee, carefully selecting variants from different manuscripts and fixing an authoritative text, which was to serve as the official norm.[2]

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[1] For a general survey see, e.g., E. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, [4]1973, pp. 15 ff.; G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville and New York, 1968; London, 1970), pp. 489 ff. = *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Heidelberg, 1965), pp. 538 ff.

[2] See, e.g., P. Kahle in H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments* (Halle, 1922; reprinted Hildesheim, 1962), p. 74; R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York, 1941), p. 78; F. M. Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran And Modern Biblical Studies* (New York, [2]1961), pp. 171 ff.; D. Barthélemy, 'Text, Hebrew, history of', *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (Nashville, 1976), pp. 881 f. Similar views are also found in S. Talmon, 'The Old Testament

My purpose is simply to call in question the current idea that the emergence of the standard text must have been the result of a conscious and deliberate text-critical activity with the purpose of creating a normative recension. I shall first attempt a brief discussion of the validity of the evidence commonly adduced in favour of the current view (I); I shall then indicate certain difficulties which this view seems to involve (II); and finally I shall try to sketch – very tentatively – a possible alternative (III).[3]

I

First, then, something about the evidence for the view that the rabbis created an official recension using the methods of textual criticism.

One important aspect of this problem is the question whether the Jewish sages responsible for the biblical text were influenced by the principles and practices of textual criticism pursued by Greek scholars, especially the famous grammarians attached to the Museum at Alexandria.

At the beginning of the Hellenistic period many texts of the classical Greek authors were in a state of corruption: in a number of passages in Homer, in lyric poetry and in the works of the great tragedians, different copies of the same text showed considerable discrepancies.[4]

The large collection of books which was brought together in the library of Alexandria may have contributed to making this state of affairs more conspicuous; at any rate it was here that methods were developed to put the text in order. This important work, which went on for many generations and which 'led to a great advance in learning and scholarly methods',[5] was not restricted to the problem of textual criticism proper. The aim of the great Alexandrian scholars was not merely to restore the literary creations of the past but also to explain them, and so they interpreted difficult passages and commented on all kinds of problems found in the classical texts.

Practically no book of any Hellenistic scholar has survived, but enough can be reconstructed from fragments and quotations, included in marginal commentaries known as *scholia* and preserved in medieval manuscripts,

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Text', *The Cambridge History of the Bible* 1 (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 159, 168 f.; cf. however below, n. 34.

[3] For an earlier version (in Swedish) of some of my arguments see *SEÅ* 40 (1975), pp. 18 ff.

[4] L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford, ²1974), pp. 5 ff.

[5] Reynolds and Wilson, p. 7.

to give us a reliable picture of the methods and achievements of the Alexandrian scholars.[6]

Their attempts to restore the text of Homer and other poets seem in many cases to have been based on manuscript evidence: they examined copies in the library and collected variant readings, which were then sifted and evaluated and used to remedy the deficiencies of the manuscript selected as a basic text.[7] The scholars also introduced corrections without support in the available manuscripts: some of their alterations were evidently conjectures of their own.[8] They also worked out a system of critical signs (such as the *obelos* and the *asteriskos* later used by Origen); these were used to mark corrupt or spurious verses, to indicate noteworthy points of language or contents, or to denote passages in which the lines were thought to be in the wrong order, and they could refer the reader to a separate volume containing a commentary on the text.

The critical and editorial work of the Alexandrian scholars was not without influence on the ordinary texts in circulation:[9] the later 'vulgate' manuscripts of the Iliad, for instance, show a text which is in several respects superior to that of the pre-Alexandrian papyri (though it seems to be an open question whether the credit for this purification of the text is due more to the labours of the scholars than to the demands for uniformity of the booksellers).[10] It is important to note that the critical recensions produced by the Alexandrian grammarians were not edited for the general public in a large number of copies: their so-called 'editions', (ἐκδόσεις) were in fact 'individual copies of the poetical work in question – normally only one copy, and thus not available on the market'[11] – 'there is no reason to suppose that copies were multiplied by the book trade'.[12] And so many of their corrections and proposals seem to have remained in the commentaries without ever being incorporated in the current manuscripts of the text. P.

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[6] R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship from the Beginnings to the End of the Hellenistic Age* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 266, 276; Reynolds and Wilson, pp. 10 f.

[7] R. Pfeiffer, pp. 110, 114; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I (Oxford, 1972), pp. 451, 457, 464.

[8] R. Pfeiffer, pp. 110, 114, 276; Fraser, pp. 459, 464; see also M. van der Valk, *Researches on the Text and the Scholia of the Iliad* 2 (Leiden, 1964), pp. 13 ff., 90 ff., 201 ff.

[9] See Reynolds and Wilson, p. 8.

[10] Fraser, p. 477.

[11] Fraser, p. 447.

[12] Fraser, p. 476.

M. Fraser, in his monumental work *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, summarizes the effects of the text-critical endeavours of the grammarians in the following words: 'not only did the work of Alexandrian scholars mostly survive only for a short time, but even when it did its influence outside the learned world seems to have been restricted' (p. 477).

Now it seems indisputable that Palestinian Judaism of the first century A.D. was deeply influenced by Hellenism,[13] and so from a general point of view there is nothing *a priori* unreasonable in the conception of 'the influence of the Alexandrine philologists' ideas of textual criticism upon Jewish circles'.[14] But a possibility is not a fact and on closer inspection there is little to make such an influence certain or even likely.

The main evidence for Jewish dependence on the methods and practices of the Alexandrian grammarians was collected by Saul Lieberman, who discussed in great detail a number of interesting parallels and traced 'Hellenistic influence in the behavior, rites, practices, conceptions and literary methods of the Jews' (op. cit., p. 20). It is, however, essential to observe that the correspondences between the early rabbis and the Alexandrian grammarians pointed out by Lieberman belong to two distinct areas: that of purely scribal procedures concerning the copying of texts and the terminology used in this connection, and that of principles of interpretation and exegesis. Lieberman's parallels do not fall in the area of textual criticism and recensional endeavours in any strict sense. In fact Lieberman, who otherwise tends to make the most of the similarities, expressly denies Alexandrian influence on the Jewish scribes in this respect: 'The Rabbis never suggest a correction of the text of the Bible. In the entire rabbinic literature we never come across divergencies of opinion regarding Biblical readings. It is therefore obvious that the textual corrections of Greek classics practiced by the Alexandrian grammarians have no parallels in the rabbinic exegesis of Scripture' (p. 47; cf. also p. 37).

Lieberman seems to be right: there are no valid reasons to think that the methods used by the Alexandrian scholars in their recensional work on Homer and other classical authors were ever applied to the biblical texts by the Jewish scribes. There is no detailed evidence to prove such a dependence; and there are general differences which seem to tell against it. In the Hebrew material the striking and important thing is the emergence

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[13] See, e.g., S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York, 1950); M. Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus* (Tübingen, ²1973); id., *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren* (Stuttgart, 1976).

[14] C. Rabin, 'The Dead Sea Scrolls and the History of the O.T. Text', *JTS*, NS 6 (1955), p. 182.

of a standard text, whereas questions of textual criticism with scholarly discussions of variant readings and proposals of conjectural emendations are conspicuously absent from the rabbinical literature. But it is precisely these problems that are the focus of interest at Alexandria: the emphasis is on learned treatments of textual difficulties, whereas less importance seems to be attached to the task of influencing the current text and enforcing a single, authoritative recension; producing a critical edition for a limited circle of scholars (which is what the grammarians did) is something different from standardizing all existing manuscripts (which is what the rabbis are alleged to have done). In the absence of further and more decisive evidence of rabbinical activities in the sphere of textual criticism, general references to a possible influence from Alexandrian textual methods remain inconclusive.

It is a common argument that the method of exegesis practised by R. Aqiba and his school, involving arguments from details of the text such as the presence or absence of certain particles or even variations in the spelling of individual words, presupposes a text that has been unified in its slightest details.[15] A characteristic formulation of this argument can be found in an article by M. Greenberg, who maintained that the 'prevalence of the standard … is the necessary precondition of the highly literal exegesis which flourished in the Tannaitic academies. Such an exegesis, undertaken in all seriousness by earnest men is inconceivable had the text not been hallowed in its letter well beforehand'.[16] Another version of this argument makes the standardization not a precondition but rather a consequence of Aqiba's exegetical methods; it is represented for instance by O. Eissfeldt: 'Rabbi Akiba … darf, wenn nicht geradezu als Anfänger, so doch als der erste überragende Vertreter der Schriftauslegung gelten, die auf den Buchstaben Wert legte und damit die textliche Sicherung eben auch des kleinsten Buchstabens erforderlich machte'.[17]

Now it is certainly true that in his exegesis Aqiba argues from insignificant grammatical or orthographical details of the text.[18] But the question is whether the conclusions drawn from this fact are really necessary. Superficially it may seem reasonable to maintain that Aqiba's

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[15] See, e.g., R. H. Pfeiffer (above, n. 2), p. 77; N. M. Sarna in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 4 (Jerusalem, 1971), col. 835.

[16] 'The Stabilization of the Text of the Hebrew Bible Reviewed in the Light of the Biblical Materials from the Judaean Desert', *JAOS* 76 (1956), p. 166.

[17] *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, ³1964), p. 929.

[18] On Aqiba's exegesis see, e.g., D. Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila*, SupplVT 10 (Leiden, 1963), pp. 3 ff.

and his followers' interpretation of minor formal peculiarities of the Bible text 'presumes' – to quote G. F. Moore – 'a standard text, copies of which consistently agreed in these peculiarities'.[19] Further reflection shows, however, that this is not necessarily the case. Strictly speaking this kind of interpretation does not in itself presuppose that everybody else has got exactly the same text: the only *necessary* requirement is that there is *a* text which can serve as a starting-point for the hermeneutic exercises. Moreover – and this is more decisive – it can be shown that certain exegetical arguments of this type in the rabbinic literature are in fact based on a text which deviates from the standard text of the Masoretes. Precisely in cases where, according to the usual argument as stated by Moore and others, the detailed exegesis ought to require absolute uniformity in all manuscripts, the rabbis do in fact sometimes rely on a spelling which is at variance with that found in the MT.

A case in point is a rabbinical exposition intended to supply scriptural proof for the rule that the phylacteries worn on the head should consist of four sections, each containing a scriptural passage (TB Men. 34b; cf. TB Sanh. 4b). The words *wᵉhayû lᵉṭôṭapot bên ʿênêka* 'they shall be as frontlets between your eyes' occur – with minor variations – three times in the O.T.: Ex. xiii 16; Deut. vi 8, xi 18. The rabbinical argument for the number four is based on the spelling of the plural ending *–ôt* in the word *ṭôṭapôt*: in one case it is written *plene* and in two cases *defective*, and if it is written without the letter *waw*, these forms can be read as singular forms, and so, according to this subtle calculation, the result is 1 + 1 + 2 = 4. Now the interesting thing is that the word is in fact written *defective* in all three cases in our *textus receptus* – and so the argument which is supposed to require a text standardized down to the very use of *matres lectionis* is in this case based on a text which deviates from the standard precisely on the crucial point.

This is not the only passage where a rabbinical argument is based on deviations from the standard text, and this phenomenon seems to take the force out of the argument that an exegesis based on single letters of the words of Scripture presupposes a rigidly uniform text. It is difficult to maintain that a method of interpretation requires a state of affairs which demonstrably did not exist when the method was being used.

A few passages from rabbinic literature are sometimes adduced as evidence for the idea of the rabbis as textual critics, collating manuscripts and weighing variant readings. The text which is most frequently invoked

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[19] *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* I (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), pp. 100 f.

is probably the tradition of the three scrolls in the temple. Already Abraham Geiger in his *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel* quoted this report as testimony of how the rabbis proceeded when fixing the standard text.[20] The tradition is found in several rabbinic writings, and the versions differ from one another in certain respects.[21] We are told that three scrolls were found in the temple court, called *sepær m^{e}'ônî* (*m^{e}'ônā, -îm*), *sepær zăʾ^{a}ṭûṭê* and *sepær hî'*. In one of these was written *ma'ôn*, and in the other two was written *m^{e}'ônā*; so they adopted the reading of the two scrolls and discarded that of the one. In one of the scrolls was found the reading *zăʾ^{a}ṭûṭê b^{e}nê yiśra'el*, and in the other two it was written *năʾ^{a}rê b^{e}nê yiśra'el*; in this case too the majority reading was retained and the reading of the single witness was abandoned. Some similar procedure seems to have been adopted in the third case, but here the four versions differ more markedly, and it is difficult to get a clear picture: in one passage (TJ Taʿan. IV 2) it is said that one manuscript had *hî'* nine times and the two others eleven times; in another text (Soferim VI 4) it is stated that one scroll ha *hû'* eleven times and two scrolls had *hî'* eleven times; a third passage (Aboth de R. Nathan, B, 46) is almost unintelligible on this point, and in the fourth version of the story (Sifre 2, 356) this item is missing altogether.

From this ancient tradition it is frequently inferred that the rabbis carefully compared manuscripts to produce a critically revised text of the Bible and that they proceeded more or less like Nestle in his edition of the Greek text of the New Testament: when the authorities disagree, the reading of the majority is mechanically followed. The question is, however, whether the tradition is really able to carry the burden of proof which has been laid upon it.

A comparison between the four versions shows that we must allow for different strata in the story: the original notice, and later additions and embroideries. This is agreed by the scholars who have analysed the texts, even if their assessments of what is original and what is secondary differs

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[20] *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* (Breslau, 1857; reprinted Frankfurt am Main, 1928), pp. 231 ff. See also C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1897; reprinted New York, 1966), pp. 408 f.; Kahle (above, n. 2), p. 74.

[21] See L. Blau, *Studien zum althebräischen Buchwesen und zur biblischen Litteraturgeschichte* (Strassburg, 1902), pp. 101 ff.; J. Z. Lauterbach, 'The Three Books Found in the Temple at Jerusalem', *JQR*, N.S. 8 (1917–18), pp. 386 ff.; S. Talmon, 'The Three Scrolls of the Law that were found in the Temple Court', *Textus* 2 (1962), pp. 14 ff.

in details. Ludwig Blau is of the opinion that the kernel of the tradition is the notice about three scrolls in the temple and their names, whereas the explanations of the names are a typical talmudic development of the tradition.[22] Blau, like Talmon in his discussion of the subject, regards the scrolls as manuscripts of the Torah, but all do not agree on this point: according to Lauterbach the original report referred to books 'containing the genealogical lists of various classes of the people, or family records' (p. 401), which were kept in the temple at Jerusalem, and the idea that it speaks of copies of the Torah is a mistake made in the commentaries by the later teachers (pp. 413, 416 ff.). Blau also emphasized that it is inconceivable that a Torah scroll in the temple, serving as a model manuscript, would have contained the reading *zā' ᵃṭûṭê bᵉnê yiśra'el* in Ex. xxiv 5 instead of *nā' ᵃrê bᵉnê yiśra'el* 'the young men of Israel', *zā' ᵃṭuṭê* not even being a Hebrew word.[23]

Thus we may establish that the story is probably composed of an original record and later explanations and additions, that the information about the collating of manuscripts and the variant readings is likely to belong to the rabbinic embroidery, and that it is even disputed whether the original report concerned biblical manuscripts at all. In view of all this it seems to me that one must use this tradition with far greater caution than has usually been the case. Source criticism seems seriously to reduce its value as a principal witness, and it is difficult to see how it could serve as decisive evidence for the thesis that the scribes at the beginning of the Christian era created an eclectic recension of the Hebrew scriptures using text-critical methods.

There are a number of rabbinic traditions about certain persons entrusted with the task of checking newly written manuscripts, and these talmudic passages have been interpreted as evidence of the existence of 'an authoritative text by which the accuracy of other scrolls was measured'.[24] In TB Keth. 106a it is recorded that the book correctors in Jerusalem received their fees from the Temple funds. A similar statement is preserved in the Palestinian Talmud (TJ Sheq. IV 3): those who corrected the Torah scroll kept in the temple were paid in the same way. That the copy of the Torah in the temple was used for the checking of other scrolls appears from TJ Sanh. II 6.

It is however important to notice precisely what these talmudic passages tell us and what they do not tell us. Here, as so often in traditional material of this kind, it is sometimes difficult to decide which period the statements

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22 Pp. 101 ff.; cf. Lauterbach, pp. 385, n. 1, 398 ff.

23 P. 102. The derivation and meaning of the word are disputed.

24 Sarna (above n. 15), col. 834.

refer to. But above all it is hard to see how they could really prove an official standard text common to all Jewry. It is evident from these passages that new manuscripts of the sacred scriptures, especially more or less official copies, were carefully checked to ensure their complete agreement with the *Vorlage*. But as far as I can see, they do not imply that this *Vorlage* had to represent an authorized standard text. Accuracy in transcription and collating of the copy is one thing; the claim that the copy must not only be faultless but also reproduce a certain type of text is another. The rabbinic traditions testifying to the importance of flawless copying are in themselves compatible with the existence of different types of text. In TB Meg. 18b it is reported that R. Ḥisda found R. Ḥananel writing scrolls without any *Vorlage* and admonished him: you are quite qualified to write the whole Torah by heart, but according to the Sages it is forbidden to write one single letter except from a copy. The point of R. Ḥisda's reproof is that it is necessary to write a biblical manuscript from another copy; there is not a word to indicate that this copy had to represent the official and authoritative recension.

The manuscripts found at Murabbaʿat have frequently been adduced as decisive proof of a standardization of the text during the decades following the fall of Jerusalem. As is well known, the biblical manuscripts from Qumran include several different text-types and exhibit a great number of variant readings, whereas the manuscripts found at Wadi Murabbaʿat represent in all essentials the textual tradition which is later attested by the medieval Masoretes. Now the Qumran texts belong in the period before the destruction of the temple, while Murabbaʿat was a last place of refuge for Jewish patriots of the Second Revolt. In the view of many scholars this leads to the conclusion that the rabbinic standardization of the consonantal text must have been carried out in the period between the two revolts, between A.D. 70 and 132. This view is cautiously adumbrated already in R. de Vaux's first presentation of the material from Murabbaʿat in the *Revue Biblique* in 1953,[25] and it has since been formulated with ever increasing confidence: one might for example quote the article in *RGG* by C.-H. Hunzinger, stating that the 'Konsonantentext nun also nachweislich zwischen den beiden Aufständen fixiert worden ist'.[26]

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[25] 'Les grottes de Murabbaʿat et leurs documents. Rapport préliminaire', *RB* 60 (1953), p. 264.

[26] *RGG*³ 5 (Tübingen, 1961), col. 755. Cf. also P. W. Skehan, 'The Qumran Manuscripts and Textual Criticism', SupplVT 4 (1957), p. 148; Cross (above, n. 2), p. 171.

It is difficult to see how this argument could be conclusive. First, there is a certain tendency to overstate the agreement with MT, which is certainly striking but not complete. In particular ms 88, the well-known scroll of the Twelve Prophets, contains some variants which make it difficult to speak of a strict standardization affecting every detail.[27] Second – and this is more important – the proto-masoretic character of the Murabbaʿat manuscripts, however impressive, does not prove that the rabbis must have carried out a deliberate standardization in the period between the Jewish revolts. We know that the ancestor of the standard text is found already in Qumran, and the fact that all manuscripts from Murabbaʿat belong to the same type could be due to their origin in a certain group, namely followers of the rebel leader Bar Kochba, who was closely connected with the master of 'normative' Judaism, R. Aqiba. The fact that these circles used the Bible text which was to become prevalent cannot tell us much about textual conditions elsewhere and it does not allow any definite conclusions about successful rabbinical efforts at textual unification. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein has called for caution on this point, and there is no doubt that his appeal is justified.[28]

II

A scrutiny of the grounds commonly given for the current view thus shows that they are not as solid as one might have expected, and that the evidence is not conclusive. But it seems possible to go a step further and maintain that there are reasons which tell against the idea that the Jewish scribes created a normative recension through a careful sifting of manuscript readings.

The main argument is simply that the MT displays certain characteristics which are hard – if not impossible – to reconcile with such a theory. We all know that the MT is not a flawless text. On the contrary it has a number of peculiarities and deficiencies: there are inconsistencies of spelling and transpositions of letters, there are haplographies and dittographies, there are erroneous word-divisions and faulty joining of words. Some of these deficiencies are of such a kind that it is virtually inconceivable that they

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[27] See the list of variants in P. Benoit, J. T. Milik and R. de Vaux, *Les grottes de Murabba'at. Texte, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* 2 (Oxford, 1961), pp. 183 f., 205.

[28] 'The History of the Bible-text and Comparative Semitics. – A Methodological Problem', *VT* 7 (1957), p. 200, n. 1(= *Text and Language in Bible and Qumran* [Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, 1960], p. 161, n. 1).

could have been allowed to stand if the text had really been subjected to thorough and deliberate recensional activities. Is it at all plausible to picture the MT of the Books of Samuel as the outcome of a careful comparison of manuscripts and textual traditions, when it is obvious that it is an inferior text, full of errors and lacunae which could easily have been remedied with the aid of contemporary manuscript material? Could the traditional text of the Book of Jeremiah, notoriously marked by expansion, conflation and harmonizing, really have been deliberately preferred on *text-critical* grounds to the type of text found in the Septuagint and in 4QJer[b], far superior to the MT? Is the inconsistency in the use of *matres lectionis* found in the MT compatible with the idea of a thorough-going recension, which is supposed to have affected precisely details of this kind?

It is most instructive to observe how adherents of the current theory run into difficulties when trying to reconcile their knowledge of the actual characteristics of the MT with the thesis of a conscious textual recension of the rabbis. Let me quote a telling description of the 'recensional endeavours' of the scribes, written by no less an authority than F. M. Cross:

> The principles which guided the scholars who prepared the recension were unusual. The recension was not characterized by wholesale revision and emendation, nor by eclectic or conflating procedures. Nor was a single, local textual family chosen. In the Pentateuch the current Palestinian text-type was rejected, … Rather the conservative, superb text of Babylonian origin, recently introduced into Palestine, was selected for the standard text. In the Former Prophets, the same pattern was followed, a Babylonian text was chosen, despite the existence of the superior Old Palestinian textual family. … In the Latter Prophets, the scholars shifted textual families. In these books a Palestinian text was chosen, perhaps because Babylonian texts were not available. However that may be, the orthographic type chosen was not the new *plene* style common in many Palestinian manuscripts beginning in Maccabaean times.
>
> The process of recension was basically one of selecting traditions deriving from two old textual families available in Palestine in the first century A.D.
>
> There was some leveling through, not always successful, of the conservative orthographic style chosen, and some revision, within narrow limits, was undertaken.[29]

[29] 'The Contribution of the Qumrân Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text', *IEJ* 16 (1966), p. 94. See also his 'The History of the Biblical Text in the Light of the Discoveries in the Judaean Desert', *HTR* 57 (1964), pp. 288 f.

The principles of this recension seem to have been 'unusual' indeed: readings from different traditions were not adopted; instead one single text-type was chosen for entire parts of the canon – but so that in one case a good text was selected and in another an inferior text, in spite of a better one being available; a certain orthography was decided on but never consistently carried out. The crucial question is: how could one distinguish a text which has been revised according to such principles from a text which has not been revised at all? As soon as we rid ourselves of the preconceived notion that an official textual recension must have taken place, it becomes clear that what Cross describes is in fact a text which has not been subject to recensional and text-critical activities.

Now of course some scholars have seen that we have no conclusive evidence of a recensional work in the sense that a new text-form was created. Already John Allegro, in his well-known book on the Dead Sea Scrolls, wrote that the rabbis who fixed the authoritative text 'did not compose a standard text, or even make an eclectic version from many traditions, but settled on one particular textual tradition as the norm for all time'.[30] But though Allegro did not think of a rabbinic recension in the ordinary sense, he still adheres to the traditional idea of an authoritative fixing of the text, even if it consisted in the promulgation of an already existing version. The distinction between the idea of text-critical activity on the part of the rabbis and the concept of an official promulgation of a normative text is important, but I would suggest that it is possible to dispense with the latter hypothesis as well. There is no clear evidence in its favour, and it does entail difficulties: the character of the MT in, say, the Books of Samuel tells not only against the theory of a text-critical recension but also against the idea of a conscious selection among different text-types: who would deliberately have preferred this inferior version to other and better manuscripts which were available?

One might also ask the question whether we are really justified in taking for granted that absolute uniformity must have been an ideal for the tannaitic scholars. There is a risk that our arguments may be somewhat anachronistic, based on a modern approach which was not necessarily shared by the ancient rabbis. With our historical way of looking at the matter, we tend to assume that a text has one and only one original meaning which it is the task of the exegete to recover (with the obvious exception of intentionally ambiguous statements), and by the methods of textual criticism

[30] J. M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Harmondsworth, 1956), p. 51. See also, e.g., B. J. Roberts in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 4 (New York and Nashville, 1962), pp. 582 f.

we endeavour to reconstruct the original wording of a text or at least to identify which reading has the best claim to represent the oldest attainable stage in the history of the text. When we speak of the standardization of the text, it sometimes sounds as if we believed the rabbis to share our outlook and our ideal: Aqiba is pictured as the leader of a Hebrew Text Project pretty much as Professor P. A. H. de Boer is the leader of the Peshiṭta Project. But what to us is an embarrassment, the multitude of incompatible readings, does not seem to have been so regarded by the rabbis themselves. Our views about the meaning of a text were not theirs: Scripture contained many strata and many meanings, and one did not exclude another. For them the ideal was not to find one and only one signification but to discover the entire fullness of divine truths which lay hidden in the sacred writings.[31] Variety was not primarily a problem but an asset. Is it unreasonable to imagine that those who approached the texts with such assumptions regarded the multiplicity of readings and variants differently from us, did not feel our need of recovering *the* correct reading but could even see the pluralism as something positive, or at least did not find it necessary to enforce absolute unity, to single out one possibility while discarding all others? After all they were capable of freely using both *Kethib* and *Qere* in their expositions, regarding the two variants as equally authoritative.[32] They even invented variants, the so-called *'ăl-tiqre'*-readings, to broaden the basis for their ingenious expositions.[33] Perhaps it is symptomatic that the remarkable readings found in R. Meir's copy of the Torah seem to be reported not only with equanimity but even with appreciation and with not a little of that playful temper which is an essential element in rabbinic hermeneutics. In Gen. iii 21 we read that God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, but in R. Meir's Torah it was found written 'garments of light', *'ôr* instead of *'ôr* (Gen. R. 20:12). And this obvious mis-spelling of a guttural is simply made the basis of a new interpretation, without a word of criticism of the deviation from the standard text. The same is the case with another variant in the same scroll: 'death was good' instead of 'it was very good', reading *mawœt* instead of *m^{e}'od* (Gen. R. 9:5): the

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[31] For the rabbinic striving to produce multiple meanings see J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1968), p. 44.

[32] Cf. Lieberman, p. 26; W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur* 2 (Leipzig, 1905; reprinted Darmstadt, 1965), pp. 92 f.

[33] A. Rosenzweig, 'Die Al-tikri-Deutungen. Ein Beitrag zur talmudischen Schriftdeutung', M. Braun und J. Elbogen (hrsg.), *Festschrift I. Lewy* (Breslau, 1911), pp. 204 ff.

reaction is not a condemnation of a faulty reading but a grateful acceptance of another lesson taught by the inexhaustible Torah. Such an attitude to variant readings would not seem to have been particularly fertile soil for tendencies towards a rigidly fixed recension.

III

To my mind there is much to be said for the view that the crystallization of a standard consonantal text is not primarily the outcome of conscious and deliberate measures taken by the rabbis but, to a much greater extent than is usually thought, the result of historical coincidences, of a number of concurrent factors which are not in the main of a textual kind.[34]

The two revolts against the Romans led to a radical change in the conditions of life of the Jewish community. Before the downfall we have a broad spectrum of different religious movements and groups, but only the Pharisees survive the disasters and have the strength to reorganize in new and changed conditions. Religious diversity is replaced by unity: the Pharisees alone dominate the development. Similarly before the revolts there is a diversified textual tradition, but afterwards one single text-type gradually becomes predominant. It is tempting to connect these parallel developments and to suggest that the victorious text was one which had been used by Pharisaic scribes and that it came to supplant other texts because the Pharisees supplanted other religious groups.

Such a view might explain the partly paradoxical properties of the MT: it is at the same time a good text – as a whole it is clearly superior to other textual traditions like the LXX or the Samaritan – *and* an uneven text with obvious and in places rather embarrassing defects. If the text which was to hold the field in the future was what Pharisaic scribes happened to have left after the defeats imposed by the Romans (to put it briefly and perhaps to oversimplify), this might explain both the merits of the text and its deficiencies. It had been handled in circles which devoted much care and attention to the word of Scripture, and so it is plausible that on the whole it should have an archaic and authentic character, lacking many of the defects which are typical of the so-called vulgar texts. But at the same time it is not

[34] Occasionally remarks can be found which point in this direction: see, e.g., H. M. Orlinsky, 'Prolegomenon: The Masoretic Text: A Critical Evaluation', in the reprint of Ginsburg's *Introduction* (above, n. 22), p. XX. This happens even in authors who elsewhere would seem to subscribe to the current view: see, e.g., Sarna (above, n. 15), col. 836; Talmon (above, n. 2), pp. 194, 198 f.

the result of a thorough-going recension, it is based on manuscripts which happened to be preserved after the downfall, and its dominating position is not based on text-critical grounds – and therefore in places it does display lacunae and errors which would not be found in a thoroughly revised text.

Thus facts which are difficult to fit into the current view seem to fall into place in this pattern. Another fact of this kind is the silence of the rabbinic sources. The process of the fixing of the canon can be documented in the Talmud: it is reported that the rabbis discussed the canonical status of certain biblical books, and it seems quite natural that such an important and far-reaching procedure should have left its traces in the traditions. It is all the more remarkable that an equally important and far-reaching procedure, the alleged official standardization of the text, has not left corresponding traces. It is a notable fact that in the rabbinic writings we never come across cases where the sages disagree about the wording of the Bible or base conflicting arguments on variant readings affecting the consonants proper. Though arguments from silence have a limited value, it seems reasonable to adduce this one to cast doubt on the theory of an organized and official recensional activity.[35] After all a development towards unification without official and determined action would not be entirely unparalleled. There did exist a number of rival systems of vocalization, but in the end one such system prevailed, the Ben Asher variant of the Tiberian punctuation, and all others were superseded. And this seems not to have been the result of an official decision: rather it was a case of one tradition gaining prestige and ousting the others in a gradual process of development in which the decisive factors are not always easy to discern. I would suggest that similar mechanisms may have been at work in our case as well: a textual tradition may have supplanted all others not because it was carefully constructed on the basis of the best manuscripts and given official sanction but because it happened to belong to a leading group, was favoured by famous rabbis (many of them were, of course, scribes) or had become authoritative in some similar way. Recently S. Talmon has stressed, to my mind rightly, what he

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[35] Cf. the similar argument in B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript. Oral and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lund and Copenhagen, 1961), p. 53. For Gerhardsson the silence of the rabbinic sources is an indication that the standardization must have occurred much earlier. This is however unlikely: see my paper 'Josefus, Rabbi Akiba och Qumran. Tre argument i diskussionen om tidpunkten för den gammaltestamentliga konsonanttextens standardisering', *TAik* 73 (1968), pp. 201 ff.

calls 'the social and societal aspects of the preservation of literature',[36] and this is certainly a relevant aspect of this problem as well.

I am not saying that there were no conscious measures to ensure a safe and unitary manuscript tradition – on the contrary the scribes systematically aimed at a deliberate and methodical preservation of the text, and obviously this must have been an important factor in the development towards the predominance of a single standard text. But to reckon with these elements in the scribal procedures is something different from imagining that 'the Jews refined their texts on the basis of what they judged to be the best available manuscripts and the best attested readings';[37] there seems to be little reason to believe that this was ever the case.

In conclusion I should like to emphasize how limited our information really is in these matters: there is little we know for certain, much less than confident talk about 'the promulgation of the official textual recension of the rabbis'[38] would seen to presuppose. And so I may perhaps be allowed to end – as seems most fitting in this place – with a quotation from Julius Wellhausen. It is taken from the end of his sketch of the history of Old Testament scholarship written for the 4th edition of Bleek's *Einleitung*, 1878. There Wellhausen expressed three wishes for the future; the last wish was for 'etwas mehr Nichtwissen'.[39]

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[36] 'The Textual Study of the Bible – A New Outlook', in F. M. Cross and S. Talmon (ed.), *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1975), p. 325.

[37] Greenberg (above, n. 16), p. 166. – I ought to add that, when I read this paper in Göttingen, Professor Greenberg's contribution to the discussion made it clear that this quotation from 1956 does not reflect his present views.

[38] Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, p. 173.

[39] 'Kurze Übersicht über die Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft', in R. Smend (hrsg.), *Grundrisse zum Alten Testament* (München, 1965), p. 119.

4

Some Observations on Two Oracular Passages in 1 Sam.

(*1978*)

The importance of textual criticism for a scholarly translation of the Old Testament has only recently been fully recognized. The present official Swedish version, authorized by the King in 1917, is a faithful rendering of the medieval Masoretic text – and as such an admirable achievement – with a few reluctant (and unacknowledged) emendations in a very limited number of passages. The guiding principles issued by the Swedish government for the translation now in preparation emphasize, however, that the new version should be based on a Hebrew text which has been restored according to the methods of modern textual criticism. This means, of course, that before embarking upon his proper task of rendering the Hebrew text into modern Swedish, the translator must attempt to solve a number of textual problems, often intricate and complex, and to decide whether to accept or reject theories propounded by other scholars. The purpose of the present article is simply to examine two recent suggestions which, if valid, would affect the translation of two disputed passages in the First Book of Samuel. I make no scruple to advance negative conclusions: disproving a theory is a way of leading the discussion a little farther forward. It is with gratitude and pleasure that I dedicate these observations to Professor Gillis Gerleman, who has made so many valuable contributions to the study of the Old Testament text and who first taught me the art of textual criticism.

I

In 1 Sam. 10:22 the choice for textual critics and translators has usually been between two different forms of the question put to Yahweh, both represented in ancient witnesses. The MT reads *hᵃba' 'ôd hᵃlom 'îš* 'Is there yet a man to come hither?', whereas the LXX has Εἰ ἔρχεται ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐνταῦθα; which may go back to a Hebrew *Vorlage hᵃba' hᵃlom ha'îš* 'Did

the man come hither?'. The choice is far from easy, and a glance at some modern translations shows that there is no consensus as to which reading represents the original text. The two versions of the question do however agree in their understanding of its first word, *hᵃba'*.

Recently, however, T. N. D. Mettinger has suggested that *hᵃba'* is a corruption of an original *habā*: the sentence should not be understood as a question but as a prayer to Yahweh, *habā 'ôd hᵃlom ha'îš* 'Bring the man here again'.[1] The arguments adduced for this emendation of the text run as follows.

(a) Mettinger explains the word *hb'* as an early mistake for *hbh* during the oral stage of transmission. He points out that the latter verb occurs together with *hᵃlom* also in Judg. 20:7 and that it is furthermore used in connection with an oracular consultation in 1 Sam. 14:41, where the MT reads *habā tamîm*, translated by Mettinger 'give a true decision'.[2]

(b) The word *'ôd* may mean 'again' as well as 'besides', 'yet'.

(c) The reading *ha'îš* 'the man' instead of MT's *'îš* 'a man' is supported by several ancient versions of the text: the LXX, the Targum and the Peshitta.

Mettinger ends his analysis of this passage with an exposition of the reasons why the emended text ought to be preferred which deserves to be quoted in full: 'Thus the crucial words of v. 22 appear as an integral part of the context. The tradition relates the following course of events: (1) Samuel arranged for lot-casting. (2) When Saul, who was present *in figura* at this procedure, was taken by lot he immediately disappeared and hid himself among the baggage. (3) The problem of where he had hidden himself could not be solved by means of the alternative lot-casting procedure. Instead, a consultation of the divine Urim oracle was arranged, which probably answered by means of some alphabetic device which had to be interpreted by a priest. The crucial part of v. 22 contains the prayer to God to reveal Saul's hiding place: "Oh, bring the man here again!" This connects with the preceding part of the text. It is a natural request under the circumstances. It also connects with what follows: "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage" (v. 23). This interpretation helps us to see the

[1] T. N. D. Mettinger, *King and Messiah. The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 8, Lund, 1976), pp. 180 f. The emendation *habā* was suggested already by A. Bruno, *Gibeon* (Leipzig and Erlangen, 1923), p. 64 (not mentioned by Mettinger). The rest of Bruno's reconstruction of the sentence differs however from Mettinger's.

[2] Mettinger here follows J. Lindblom, 'Lot-casting in the Old Testament', *VT* 12 (1962), pp. 173, 176.

original unity of the text: the question and the answer were congruent. It is thus wholly unnecessary to assume that two different accounts of Saul's divine designation have been secondarily intertwined'.[3]

This attempt to solve the problems of v. 22, ingenious at it is, seems however to involve certain difficulties which seriously reduce its cogency. First some minor points.

In (a) the reference to the use of *habā* in connection with an oracular consultation in 1 Sam. 14:41 is not very helpful: the difference between the objects of the verb in the two phrases 'Bring the man back' and 'Give a true decision' seems too great for the expression in 14:41 to constitute a relevant parallel to the alleged use of the word in 10:22. Moreover, *habā tamîm* is itself a disputed reading, probably due to a scribal error.[4] Nor is the construction with *hᵃlom* entirely identical with that in Judg. 20:7. In our passage *habā hᵃlom* is supposed to mean 'Bring hither', whereas in the passage in the Book of Judges the word *hᵃlom* has a slightly different syntactical function and means 'here', not 'hither': *habû lakæm dabar wᵉʿeṣā hᵃlom* 'give your advice and counsel here'.

On both these points there are thus differences between the text as reconstructed by Mettinger and the parallels adduced. These observations do not disprove his theory, but they seem to reduce the value of the arguments from parallels.

As regards the evidence of the versions, quoted in (c), it should perhaps be noted that Mettinger's use of the LXX is selective: he accepts the variant with the definite article, *haʾîš*, which seems to have been the basis of the Greek translator's ὁ ἀνήρ, but he retains the *ʿôd* of the MT in spite of the fact that it is lacking in the LXX tradition (except in ms A and Lucianic mss, where ἔτι seems to be a correction on the basis of the Hebrew text). The reference to the Targum in support of the reading *haʾîš* is dubious. It is true that the determinate form of the Aramaic noun is used here, *găbraʾ*, but this does not permit the conclusion that it stands for Hebrew *haʾîš* as opposed to *ʾîš* without article. The emphatic state of Aramaic nouns sometimes corresponds to Hebrew forms without the definite article.[5] A case in point is 1 Sam. 9:16, where MT's *ʾîš* has been rendered *găbraʾ* in the Targum. Thus Mettinger's claim that the variant *haʾîš* is attested by the Targum goes beyond the evidence. Nor does the Peshitta have much to contribute here. The Syriac version of the question in v. 22 is quite free,

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

[4] See further below, section II.

[5] See G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig, ²1905, reprinted Darmstadt, 1960), p. 188.

'Where is this man?', a deviation from the MT which seems so dominated by the context that it is difficult to regard it as evidence of a different Hebrew tradition. Again these objections do not in themselves invalidate Mettinger's hypothesis, though his case would perhaps have been stronger, if the text-critical arguments had been more cogent.

The main argument against Mettinger's theory lies however in a different area and concerns an aspect of the text which he himself has not discussed at all.

The controversial question of v. 22 is preceded by the words *wăjjiš'ªlû-'ôd bjhwh* 'and they inquired again of Yahweh'. The expression *ša'ăl bᵉ* is frequently used to describe the procedure of consulting a divine oracle.[6] There are twelve cases of the phrase *ša'ăl bjhwh* in the Old Testament (Judg. 1:1; 20:23, 27; 1 Sam. 10:22; 22:10; 23:2, 4; 28:6; 30:8; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23) and seven cases of *ša'ăl be'lohîm* (Judg. 18:5; 20:18; 1 Sam. 14:37; 22:13, 15; 1 Chr. 14:10, 14). In a number of these passages the actual inquiry is quoted, and every time it is formulated as a real question, such as *mî jă'ªlē-lanû 'æl-hăkkᵉnă'ªnî băttᵉḥillā lᵉhillaḥæm bô* 'Who shall be first among us to attack the Canaanites and to fight against them?' (Judg. 1:1) or *hă'ered 'ăḥªrê pᵉlištîm* 'Shall I go down after the Philistines?' (1 Sam. 14:37). None of these passages contains an exhortation or a request of the kind presupposed in Mettinger's emendation. This is not surprising: one does not expect such an utterance after a verb meaning 'inquire of'. It is difficult to regard the wording suggested by Mettinger as 'a natural request under the circumstances': on the contrary this type of sentence is never found after *ša'ăl bᵉ* in the entire Old Testament. Moreover, out of fourteen interrogative sentences following after *ša'ăl bjhwh* or *ša'ăl be'lohîm* (Judg. 1:1; 20:18, 23, 28; 1 Sam. 14:37 (two questions); 23:2; 30:8 (two questions); 2 Sam. 2:1 (two questions); 5:19 (two questions); 1 Chr. 14:10), no less than ten are introduced by the particle *hªa-*. Thus the reading of the MT in 1 Sam. 10:22, beginning with *hªba'*, agrees with the type of sentence which is by far the most common in questions put to an oracle, whereas Mettinger's conjecture is entirely without parallel in this *Gattung*. From a form-critical point of view it is overwhelmingly more likely that the consultation of a divine oracle should begin with the question *hªba'* than with the exhortation *habā*. This seems to me to be a powerful objection to the suggested emendation. But it must of course be weighed against the advantages of Mettinger's hypothesis. Of the arguments adduced by him only one remains: that the

[6] Cf. C. Westermann, 'Die Begriffe für Fragen und Suchen im Alten Testament', *KerDogm* 6 (1960), pp. 11 f.; G. Gerleman *'š'l* fragen, bitten', *THAT* II (München and Zürich, 1976), col. 843.

reconstructed wording fits the context better and so makes it unnecessary to assume that two different traditions have been combined. It appears however rather doubtful whether the answer in v. 23, 'Behold, he is hiding among the baggage', is really easier to construe as a reply to the request 'Bring the man hither' than to the question 'Is there yet a man to come hither?' or 'Did the man come hither?' And there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the assumption that originally independent traditions have been combined[7] – indeed Mettinger himself, like all critical scholars, finds this to be the case in a number of passages in the Book of Samuel. The advantage of avoiding this assumption here seems small in comparison to the disadvantage of having to assume a formulation of the words spoken to the divine oracle which conflicts with all known examples of the *Gattung*. There can hardly be any doubt that the traditional *hᵃba'* found in the MT and attested by ancient versions ought to be preferred to the suggested emendation *habā*.

II

The principal problem in 1 Sam. 14:41 is whether the shorter reading represented by the MT or the longer text found in the LXX should be regarded as original. The difference between the two versions of Saul's prayer is apparent from the following translation, in which the words based on the LXX reading but lacking in the MT are written in italics: 'Yahweh, God of Israel, *why did you not answer your servant to-day? If this guilt is in me or in my son Jonathan, Yahweh, God of Israel, give Urim; but if it is in your people Israel*, give Thummim.' The consonants of the last word, *tmjm*, were read by the Masoretes as *tamîm* 'perfect'.

It has long been common to regard the longer Greek version as superior to the shorter Hebrew text, not least because of the detailed and persuasive argumentation of Wellhausen[8] and Driver.[9] However, in an article published some years ago J. Lindblom defends the MT and maintains that it ought to

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[7] For a recent discussion of this problem with references to earlier literature on the subject see H. J. Boecker, *Die Beurteilung der Anfänge des Königtums in den deuteronomistischen Abschnitten des 1. Samuelbuches* (WMANT 31, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969), pp. 44 ff.

[8] J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871), pp. 93 ff.

[9] S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, ²1913), pp. 117 f.

be preferred to the LXX in this passage.[10] His arguments have apparently met with approval: in several recent works reference is made to his article,[11] and it has been suggested that the new Swedish translation of the Old Testament should follow the Masoretes rather than the LXX here, on the ground that Lindblom has demonstrated the superiority of the Hebrew text.

Lindblom first attempts to counter three common objections to the MT. Against the allegation that it is extremely condensed and cryptic he maintains that 'our passage is in its concentration an example of good Hebrew narrative style and does not differ much from many narratives in Genesis against which no objection is raised'.[12] The vague reference to the narrative style of other biblical books without any specific examples is hardly a sufficient justification of a text as obscure as this; moreover it disregards the fact that the narrative in this particular book is sometimes long-winded and circumstantial rather than condensed (as, e.g., in 13:8–14 or 14:34–5).

Another reason often adduced for regarding the MT as corrupt is that the statement that Saul and Jonathan were 'taken' (i.e. by the lot) is insufficiently prepared and comes rather abruptly, no lot-casting having been mentioned in the foregoing. This objection Lindblom dismisses with the assertion that 'to every Hebrew reader or hearer it was immediately clear that the measures taken in the previous part of the narrative in order to discover who was guilty … had reference to an ordinary lot-casting procedure'.[13] There is some force in this remark by Lindblom, though it seems to be too summary a dismissal of serious objection; above all a pertinent observation by Wellhausen is passed over in silence: that the narrator nevertheless finds it necessary to introduce the lot-casting in the *following* verse (v. 42), 'wo sie viel entbehrlicher ist'.[14]

One of the most important objections against the Hebrew text in its traditional form is that the phrase *habā tamîm* is in fact unintelligible. Lindblom, however, translates it by 'give a true decision', with the following explanation: 'from the sense "complete, intact, blameless" there

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[10] *Op. cit.*, (above, note 2), pp. 172 ff. Lindblom gives a survey of the views of a great number of scholars from Wellhausen onwards on pp. 174 f.

[11] See e.g. H. J. Stoebe, *Das erste Buch Samuelis* (KAT VIII: 1, Gütersloh, 1973), p. 270; B. Johnson, 'Urim und Tummim als Alphabet', *ASTI* 9, 1973, p. 27; Mettinger, *op. cit.*, p. 181, note 74a.

[12] P. 176.

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Wellhausen, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

is only a short step to the sense "correct, true, reliable".' It may be that the step assumed by Lindblom is a short one, but that this step was ever taken in the semantic history of the word *tamîm* is not shown by examples from Old Testament usage, in spite of the fact that the word occurs about 80 times in the Hebrew Bible. As long as no new arguments are adduced, Driver's conclusion remains incontestable: such renderings as Lindblom's 'are without support'.[15]

These are the arguments that Lindblom states in defence of the shorter version found in the MT. He realizes, however, that they do not suffice 'to reach an incontrovertible result'.[16] But he goes on to argue that there are material grounds for rejecting the LXX version of our passage in favour of the traditional Hebrew text: the Greek translators' '*description of the lot-casting by which Jonathan was detected as the offender is materially unacceptable*'.[17] And the mistake made in the LXX is described as follows: 'By the notice of the priestly lot-casting in vv. 36–37 the Greek translators (just like the great majority of modern interpreters) have been led to believe that the lot-casting in vv. 38–42 was also a cultic one performed by the priest. … This interpretation of the narrative is, however, erroneous. Neither the Greek translators nor those modern scholars who adopt their text have properly distinguished between the two different forms of lot-casting in the OT. While vv. 36 f. have reference to the priestly lot-casting vv. 38–42 refer to the civil one performed by the laity'.[18]

Thus Lindblom's main argument is not primarily one in favour of the shorter version found in the MT but one directed against the longer version preserved in the LXX. Clearly it is decisive only if the lot-casting described in v. 38–42 cannot possibly have been a cultic one, performed by a priest. If this is not necessarily so, then Lindblom's argument must be rejected.

Lindblom's distinction between 'civil' and 'cultic' lot-casting is not immediately convincing. One of the instances regarded by him as 'a civil affair'[19] is the lot-drawing performed by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, assigning one goat for Yahweh and one for Azazel (Lev. 16:8). One would have thought that this lot-casting if any would merit the designation 'cultic' rather than 'civil', being part of a solemn ritual of expiation at one of the principal Israelite feasts. In fact Lindblom himself admits that what he calls the 'civil lot-casting' was sometimes performed

15 *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

16 P. 176.

17 *Ibid.* (Lindblom's own italics).

18 Pp. 176 f.

19 P. 170.

at a holy place; in such cases 'the procedure in question had the character of a sacral act'.[20] Such a characterization would seem to blur the distinction considerably. A further possibility is to argue that the 'civil' lot-casting (even in cases where it turns out to be a 'a sacral act') was performed by laymen and the cultic one by priests. But this definition is incomplete too: the lot-casting in Lev. 16, which is considered to belong to the civil type, is performed by Aaron himself, i.e. the high priest, who cannot by any stretch of imagination be regarded as a layman. Indeed Lindblom has carefully avoided this objection: when defining the civil type of lot-casting he says that it was '*as a rule* performed by laymen',[21] but he does not seem to have realized that he has thereby admitted that the priestly or non-priestly status of the person or persons acting is not a sufficient criterion: even if the fact that the lot-casting is performed by a layman is enough to classify it as civil, the fact that it is performed by a priest is evidently not sufficient for a contrary classification.

A number of formulations in Lindblom's paper in fact show that the distinction he has in mind can be stated as follows: cases of lot-casting by means of the priestly lot-oracle, Urim and Thummim, are called 'cultic'; all others are termed 'civil'.

Against this it may be repeated that it does not seem particularly useful to define the terms 'civil' and 'cultic' in such a way as to exclude from the 'cultic' group acts performed by cultic personnel in the course of a religious ritual. Indeed, the sharp distinction itself appears to be unsuitable for a realistic description of the rather varied and many-sided practice of lot-casting in ancient Israel.

Moreover, it is difficult to see how this distinction, as defined by Lindblom, could in the end decide between the Hebrew and the Greek versions of the text of our passage. When Lindblom blames the LXX translators for not having properly 'distinguished between the two different forms of lot-casting in the OT', he appears to beg the question: what if the procedure in vv. 38–42 was in fact, as the LXX would have it, also a cultic one performed by the priest? The two points raised by Lindblom are not in any way decisive. He first mentions the terminology, which is supposed to show that the procedure in vv. 38–42 must have been of the civil type: 'Saul and Jonathan were "taken" and the people "went out". Lots were thrown between Saul and Jonathan and Jonathan was "taken"'.[22] But this does not prove that the priestly oracle cannot have been used. The verbs

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[20] P. 169; cf. also p. 173.

[21] P. 170 (my italics).

[22] P. 177.

lakăd 'take' and *jaṣa'* 'go out, escape' are certainly found in descriptions of the civil type of lot-casting, but the few passages which mention Urim and Thummim are very brief and do not include verbs of this meaning at all. Consequently we do not know or whether *lakād* and *jaṣa'* were employed in connection with the use of the oracle Urim and Thummim or not, and so their occurrence in 1 Sam. 14:41 f. proves nothing at all. Second, Lindblom maintains that the lot-casting was not performed by a priest but by a group of laymen, the leaders of the army. But this is not expressly stated in the text, nor does it appear to be a necessary inference: on the contrary it seems perfectly possible that the priest mentioned in vv. 3, 18 f., 36 did also take part in the procedure described in vv. 38–42, especially as v. 3 and the Greek version of v. 18 (accepted by Lindblom as 'preferable to the MT')[23] tell us that he was in charge of the ephod, with which the priestly lot-oracle was apparently closely connected.[24]

Thus it seems clear that Lindblom's main argument does not stand a close scrutiny, and the generally accepted evidence for the superiority of the Greek text of the passage under discussion is unaffected by his objections. Two last points remain to be made. The Qumran material has made it probable that the longer version found in LXX is not a creation by the Greek translator but a rendering of a Hebrew text which differed from that available to the Masoretes. Lindblom, however, entirely ignores this possibility and regards the Greek version as a free explanatory addition on the part of the translators in Egypt, 'a valueless product of fancy'.[25] And perhaps more important: he does not even mention the fact that the shorter version is in fact easily explained as a scribal error, a haplography due to homoeoteleuton, if we assume the *Vorlage* of the LXX to be the original text. The fact that there are several lacunae of this kind in the MT of 1 Sam. seems to be a strong argument in favour of the Greek version of our passage. Lindblom's thesis would in fact presuppose that a secondary addition which is a product of pure fancy has by mere chance been given a form making the shorter original version look like the result of an omission because of homoeoteleuton. The explanation that it is a real lacuna, not an apparent one, seems indeed preferable.[26]

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[23] P. 173, note 1.

[24] Cf. Lindblom, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

[25] P. 177.

[26] For a carefully argued vindication of the view that the LXX here reflects the original Hebrew version see A. Toeg, 'A Textual Note on 1 Samuel XIV 41', *VT* 19 (1969), pp. 493 ff.

There appear to be very good reasons to follow the example of many modern translations of the Old Testament, such as the Revised Standard Version, the French Jerusalem Bible, the New American Bible and the New English Bible,[27] and base the new Swedish version of 1 Sam. 14:41 on the longer text preserved by the Greek translators.

[27] Cf. also *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project*, ed. by the United Bible Societies, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 179 f.

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Difficilior lectio probabilior: A Rule of Textual Criticism and its Use in Old Testament Studies

(*1981*)

'It is a good plan', says Martin West in his excellent little book on *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique applicable to Greek and Latin texts*, 'to make a translation. Nothing more effectively brings one face to face with the difficulties of the text'.[1] I have come to know the truth of his statement the hard way: these last few years I have been engaged in full-time work on the new official translation of the Bible into Swedish (a project sponsored and financed not by churches or Bible Societies but by our secularized state), and this has certainly brought me face to face with the difficulties of the text. It is in the course of the efforts of our translation panel to establish the textual basis of the new version that I have come to pay attention to the rule that a more difficult reading is to be preferred to an easier and more conventional variant, a rule usually referred to as the principle of *lectio difficilior*, and to the problems of its application. It is a maxim that is frequently invoked: one cannot study modern commentaries or works on the Old Testament text without constantly coming across arguments which are based on its validity, whether explicitly or implicitly. Though the rule may seem simple and straightforward, it is nevertheless quite difficult to handle; sometimes it seems to be applied much too rigidly, and there are cases where it has been overworked and misused. This state of affairs may perhaps justify my offering a few observations on the canon of *lectio difficilior*, a handful of chips from the Bible workshop at Uppsala.

As one of the standard canons of textual criticism, the criterion of *lectio difficilior* is not, of course, a modern methodological refinement: it was explicitly formulated centuries ago and applied in practice earlier still. In standard works on the textual criticism of the Bible, such as B. M.

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[1] Stuttgart 1973, p. 57, n. 9.

Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament*, we learn that the great German biblical scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel was the first to define the rule. In an epoch-making essay published in 1725 he drew up the principles of his projected edition of the New Testament, which appeared in print nine years later. 'For the weighing of variant readings Bengel formulated a canon of criticism that, in one form or other, has been approved by all textual critics since. It is based on the recognition that a scribe is more likely to make a difficult construction easier, than make more difficult what was already easy. Formulated in Bengel's pithy Latin it is, *proclivi scriptioni praestat ardua* ("the difficult is to be preferred to the easy reading")'.[2] This is certainly a clear and concise formulation of the principle, but it is not in fact the first one. The Italian scholar Sebastiano Timpanaro, an authority on the textual criticism of Greek and Latin authors, has pointed out[3] that a quarter of a century before Bengel, the rule of *lectio difficilior* was distinctly expressed by Jean le Clerc or Ioannes Clericus, the form in which his name appears on the title page of the famous treatise he wrote on the problems of textual criticism, the *Ars Critica* first published in Amsterdam in 1697. The second volume of this work contains a section called *De Emendatione locorum corruptorum*, in which Clericus lays down the following rule as regards variant readings: '*Saepe enim variae lectiones occurrunt, quae omnes cum re ipsa, serie orationis, & stylo Scriptoris consentiunt, ex quibus tamen una eligenda est. Si omnia sint paria, non multum quidem interest quae eligatur; sed si una ex iis obscurior sit, ceterae clariores, tum vero credibile est obscuriorem esse veram, ceteras glossemata*'.[4]

If this is the first explicit and theoretical formulation of the criterion, it had been applied in practice much earlier. It seems to have been followed in the editorial work of one Irnerius, a brilliant lawyer and philologist of

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[2] B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament. Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, Oxford [2]1968, p. 112. The statement that Bengel formulated the principle frequently recurs in the introductions to the New Testament: see e.g. H. Riesenfeld, 'Den nytestamentliga textens historia', in G. Lindeskog, A. Fridrichsen and H. Riesenfeld, *Inledning till Nya testamentet*, Stockholm [3]1964, p. 394, or A. Wikenhauser and J. Schmid, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, Freiburg … [6]1973, p. 164.

[3] *La genesi del metodo del Lachmann*, Firenze 1963, p. 21; second revised ed. in German: *Die Entstehung der Lachmannschen Methode*, Hamburg 1971, p. 19.

[4] I quote from an edition printed in 1699, p. 389. Timpanaro, who quotes from the first edition, p. 293, has *alias* instead of *ceteras* (p. 21, n. 2; German transl. p. 19, n. 60a). Cf. also L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, Oxford [2]1974, p. 248.

the eleventh century.[5] A passage in St. Augustine has been pointed out by Professor Metzger;[6] it shows that the venerable author had 'a keen critical judgement in textual problems'. Discussing the passage in the Gospel of Matthew (xxvii 9) which ascribes to Jeremiah a saying which is in fact found in the Book of Zechariah, Augustine is first tempted to follow those manuscripts which do not contain the name of Jeremiah, but he then changes his mind and comes quite close to enunciating the principle of *lectio difficilior*, realizing 'that there was no reason why this name should have been added…; whereas there was certainly an intelligible reason for erasing the name from so many of the manuscripts': scribes 'might readily have done that, when perplexed with the problem presented by the circumstance that this passage cannot be found in Jeremiah'.[7] And the practical application of the rule can in fact be traced even further back: Timpanaro quotes a passage in Galen (second century A.D.) in which the argument is based on considerations of a similar kind.

Instead of speaking of *lectio difficilior*, which presupposes a scholar weighing the merits of variant readings and trying to decide which of them is more likely to represent what the author originally wrote, one may start instead in the scribal process. The mistake resulting in an easier but faulty reading can then be described as a case of trivialization or banalization. Timpanaro has a good description of this phenomenon in a highly interesting book called *The Freudian Slip: Psychoanalysis and Textual Criticism*, published in Italian in 1974 and in an English translation in 1976. He says: 'Anyone who has anything to do with the written or oral transmission of texts (including quotations learnt by heart) knows that they are exposed to the constant danger of banalization. Forms which have a more archaic, more highflown, more unusual stylistic expression, and which are therefore more removed from the cultural linguistic heritage of the person who is transcribing or reciting, tend to be replaced by forms in more common use'.[8] In German this principle has been called 'der Grundsatz der steigenden Plattheit'.[9] Timpanaro then goes on to show how the process of banalization can affect different aspects of a word: its

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[5] See H. Kantorowicz, *Einführung in die Textkritik. Systematische Darstellung der textkritischen Grundsätze für Philologen und Juristen*, Leipzig 1921, p. 31.

[6] *Op. cit.*, pp. 153 f.

[7] *De consensu Evangel.* iii.7.29 (Migne, P.L. xxxiv.1174f.), quoted in Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

[8] *The Freudian Slip*, p. 30.

[9] See Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, p. 30. Kantorowicz himself prefers to speak of 'steigende Anpassung'.

spelling, its phonetic character, its lexical character and its syntactic or stylistic-syntactic character. And frequently, of course, the process may involve not just a single word but the whole context.[10]

In a great number of cases variant readings can indeed be described as specimens of trivialization, and the canon of *lectio difficilior* can serve as a safe guide to the textual critic in his attempts to reach the most original form of the piece of literature which he is investigating. For instance, in the masoretic text of 1 Sam. xvii 7 we hear that Goliath was preceded by his shield-bearer, *nośe' hăṣṣinnā*. In the Septuagint version the man who goes before the Philistine champion is instead called ὁ αἴρων τά ὅπλα αὐτοῦ corresponding to a Hebrew *nośe' kelâw*, 'his armour-bearer'. Which of the two variants is likely to be original, 'shield-bearer' or 'armour-bearer'? Well, the former expression occurs only in this chapter (and twice in the Books of Chronicles), whereas 'armour-bearer' is a fairly frequent term, found more than a dozen times in 1 Sam. alone. There is reason to believe that the more unusual phrase is original and that the armour-bearer of the Greek text represents a trivialization. Or as Wellhausen puts it in his brief but sufficient comment on this passage: '*hăṣṣinnā* ist in der Verbindung mit *nś'* origineller als *kelâw* der LXX'.[11]

The rule can be illustrated by another example, this time from the text of Ecclesiastes. Happy is the land, says the Preacher in x 17, where princes feast at the proper time, in strength, and not in drunkenness. In the Hebrew original the concluding line runs as follows: *big^{e}bûrā w^{e}lo' băšš^{e}tî*. The last word is a rare noun, a *hapax legomenon* from the same root as the common verb *šatā*, 'drink'. The Greek translators, who wrote αἰσχυνθήσονται, seem not to have taken the first letter as the preposition *b^{e}*, 'in', but to have read it as the first consonant in the word *bošæt*, 'shame' (possibly they read *b^{e}bošæt*). As Hertzberg argues in his commentary,[12] the more peculiar reading of the MT is to be preferred: obviously the translators could make neither head nor tail of the rare Hebrew word for 'drinking' and so misconstrued it as a different and much more common word – a clear case of banalization. But it is worth noting that Hertzberg does not base his argument solely on the fact that the expression in the MT is unusual. He speaks of 'die eigenartigere und sinngemässere Lesart' of the masoretes.

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[10] *The Freudian Slip*, p. 30

[11] J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis undersucht*, Göttingen 1871, p. 104. – H.-J. Stoebe explains this reading of the LXX by the fact that the shield has already been mentioned in the Greek text: *Das erste Buch Samuelis* (KAT VIII:1), Gütersloh 1973, p. 318.

[12] H. W. Hertzberg, *Der Prediger* (KAT XVII:4), Gütersloh 1963, p. 194.

It is not enough for a reading simply to be *difficilior*: it must also fit the context and make better sense than the rival variant (or at least not make poorer sense). Now the reading 'shame' testified to by the Septuagint is not impossible in the context, but it is general and vague, whereas the 'drinking' or 'drunkenness' found in the MT creates a much better connection with the feasting mentioned twice in the preceding lines.

Not only 'eigenartig' but also 'sinngemäss' – this points to an important aspect which must never be forgotten when the canon of the more difficult reading is being applied. From the many cases where its use is unproblematic, one is easily tempted to draw the conclusion that the principle can be regarded as an unfailing rule which may be brought to bear almost mechanically on all cases involving one variant reading which is in some sense harder than another. One sometimes encounters an ambition to reduce the art of textual criticism to a handy set of rules, ready to be applied with as little mental exertion as possible. Paul Volz once published an article called 'Ein Arbeitsplan für die Textkritik des Alten Testaments'[13] which contains many useful observations, but the author seems spellbound by his idea of a *Regelsammlung*, a collection of strict regulations whereby the textual criticism of the Old Testament is to be raised to a level of rigorous method. Law and order must be established; Volz expressly states that organized text-critical work must not proceed from individual cases of corruption; instead the starting-point should be the rules, and the task is to find instances to verify the rules: *Es muss vielmehr umgekehrt ausgegangen werden von den gefundenen Regeln und Beobachtungen, und zu diesen müssen die Belege gesucht werden.*[14] It is the same view of textual criticism which made the American scholar Joseph Reider define it as a 'discipline which depends largely on fixed rules and immutable norms';[15] he went so far as to call the art of conjectural emendation 'an exact science' with 'rigid rules'.[16] The futility of such ideas is relentlessly exposed in the famous paper entitled 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism' which A. E. Housman read to the Classical Association here in Cambridge more than half a century ago. One of his penetrating and pitiless passages runs as follows:

[13] *ZAW* 54 (1936), pp. 100–113.

[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 105 (emphasized by Volz himself in spaced-out letters).

[15] 'The Present State of Textual Criticism of the Old Testament', *HUCA* 7 (1930), p. 287.

[16] *Op. cit.*, p. 298.

> … textual criticism is not a branch of mathematics, nor indeed an exact science at all. It deals with a matter not rigid and constant, like lines and numbers, but fluid and variable; namely the frailties and aberrations of the human mind, and of its insubordinate servants, the human fingers. It therefore is not susceptible of hard-and-fast rules. It would be much easier if it were; and that is why people try to pretend that it is, or at least behave as if they thought so. Of course you can have hard-and-fast rules if you like, but then you will have false rules, and they will lead you wrong; because their simplicity will render them inapplicable to problems which are not simple, but complicated by the play of personality. A textual critic engaged upon his business is not at all like Newton investigating the motions of the planets: he is much more like a dog hunting for fleas. If a dog hunted for fleas on mathematical principles, basing his researches on statistics of area and population, he would never catch a flea except by accident. They require to be treated as individuals; and every problem which presents itself to the textual critic must be regarded as possibly unique.[17]

I wonder what Housman would have said if he had read Volz's advice to Old Testament scholars: the German professor in all seriousness recommended his colleagues to amuse themselves with textual criticism in the intervals between the efforts of theological research which is so much more exacting for the brain, and to regain, through this refreshing pastime, the appetite for more profound problems. You will naturally think this a malevolent distortion, so I had better quote his own words:

> Die im bisherigen geschilderte textkritische Arbeit kann von den ATlichen Forschern in den Pausen zwischen die den Kopf stark anstrengende theologisch-systematische Forschung hinein geleistet werden. Sie bedeutet eine Ausspannung, Abwechslung, Erfrischung mitten unter den anderen Arbeiten. Sie kann unternommen werden, wenn nach mühsamer Arbeit eine gewisse Unlust zur tiefbohrenden Denkarbeit sich einstellt, und man kann auf solchem etwas mehr mechanischem Arbeitsweg wieder Lust zum tiefergrabenden Forschen gewinnen.[18]

Housman's reluctance to allow rigid and infallible rules in the practice of textual criticism is borne out by the many difficulties encountered in the application of the principle that the more difficult reading is also

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[17] *Selected Prose*, ed. by J. Carter, Cambridge 1961, pp. 132 f. Housman's paper was first published in *Proceedings of the Classical Association* 18 (1922), pp. 67 ff.

[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

better and more original. There are cases where a *lectio difficilior* may be more difficult simply because it is wrong:[19] it is necessary to distinguish between the unusual and the impossible.[20] A meaningless scribal error, a mere slip of the pen, results in a variant which is of course more difficult than the genuine reading, but it would be foolish to raise the mistake of the copyist to the status of original text with reference to the canon of *lectio difficilior*. Such folly is, however, not entirely unknown in the province of Old Testament textual criticism, and once an error has been incorporated into the sacrosanct and inviolable MT, the pious mind is apparently always capable of defending it as the word which was from the beginning, if need be by invoking the rule of the more difficult reading.

If we compare the obscure MT of Ps. xlix 12, *qirbam batêmô l^{e}'ôlam*, literally 'their inward part (or: their midst) their houses for ever', with the emendation suggested by the versions, *qibram batêmô l^{e}'ôlam*, which gives the excellent meaning 'their grave is their home for ever', there is of course no doubt that the reading of the Masoretic manuscripts is infinitely more difficult. Nevertheless most scholars do not hesitate to follow the evidence of the ancient translations and regard the easier *qibram* as the genuine reading and *qirbam* as a corruption caused by the accidental transposition of two letters by a Hebrew scribe. I would regard this as an indisputable case of a plain error, faithfully perpetuated by scrupulous scribes, and indeed the great majority of modern translations presuppose the corrected reading here. Even in the New Jewish Version published by the Jewish Publication Society of America in 1972, which is a translation 'According to the Traditional Hebrew Text', as expressly stated in the subheading on the title-page, the passage runs 'Their grave is their eternal home', and it is a pity that the text-critical sincerity of the translators of this admirable version is marred by an ambiguous marginal note on the word 'grave' which reads as follows: 'Taken with ancient versions and medieval commentators as the equivalent of *qibram*'. Of course not even the cleverest rabbinical conceit can make *qirbam* the equivalent of *qibram*: the aim of the note is merely to save the appearances, especially as the preface to this translation unreservedly states that 'emendations of the text have not been proposed'.[21] But the translation itself testifies to the necessity of emendation and to the superiority of *lectio facilior*.

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[19] See Reynolds and Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[20] West, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[21] *The Book of Psalms. A New Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*, Philadelphia 1972, p. vi.

Thus it is essential to distinguish between *lectio difficilior* and *lectio impossibilis* – though it goes without saying that in certain cases it may be quite difficult to determine whether a word or a construction is consistent with Hebrew usage or not, Biblical Hebrew being, in the words of a former President of his Society, Professor Ullendorff, 'no more than a linguistic fragment'.[22]

But there are further complications. Not only is it hard to decide between the exceptional and the admissible: words like 'difficult' and 'easy' cannot be regarded as absolute terms, as Giorgio Pasquali has emphasized in his great work on textual history and textual criticism.[23] Something which appears difficult – that is unusual – to us may well have been easy to people of a different age with different habits and assumptions. What makes decisions about the relative difficulty of variant readings so hard is the fact that it is not enough to be familiar with the author and his age: ideally one should also have intimate knowledge of the time and circumstances of the scribe to be able to judge what may have seemed easy or difficult to him.[24]

Moreover, a reading which from one point of view appears more difficult may well be considered easier from another. A characteristic example of this is found in Hans Walter Wolff's commentary on Amos, in his discussion of i 11.[25] Amos condemns the people of Edom for having pursued their brothers, the Israelites, without mercy, and in this context the prophet says, according to the MT: *wăjjiṭrop laʿăd'ăppô*, 'his anger tore perpetually'. Instead of *wăjjiṭrop* many scholars read however *wăjjiṭṭor*, 'he kept', a reading which is supported by the Syriac translation. This emendation involves also a change of subject: if one reads *wăjjiṭrop*, 'tore', the subject must be *'ăppô*, 'his anger', whereas the variant *wăjjiṭṭor*, 'he kept', makes Edom the subject, as in the beginning of the verse, and turns *'ăppô* into an object of the verb *naṭăr*, 'keep'. Wolff points out that taken by itself the verb *ṭarăp* occurs far more frequently in the Old Testament than *naṭăr* and so could be secondary because it is the easier reading. On the other hand, if we move our attention from the isolated verb to the whole phrase *ṭarăp 'ăppô*, with *'ăp* as subject, then the reading of the MT no longer comes out

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[22] E. Ullendorff, 'Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?' *BSOAS* 34 (1971), p. 254 (= *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?*, Wiesbaden 1977, p. 16.).

[23] *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*, Firenze ²1952, p. 123.

[24] See also Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 209, and J. Willis, *Latin Textual Criticism* (Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, 61), Urbana 1972, p. 228.

[25] *Dodekapropheton 2: Joel und Amos* (BKAT XIV/2), Neukirchen-Vlyun ²1975, pp. 161 f.

as the easier one: on the contrary it is more difficult and more rare – and therefore possibly more original. The case is a difficult one, and Wolff adduces other arguments as well, but enough has been said to show how the principle of *lectio difficilior* may cut both ways.

These and similar problems certainly give weight to Pasquali's warning that we should use this criterion with prudence;[26] obviously it cannot be regarded as a safe rule of thumb. In view of these difficulties it is somewhat surprising to find how important a part it plays in the text-critical decisions registered in different volumes of the *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* by an international and interconfessional committee, sponsored by the United Bible Societies. Each volume[27] opens with an account of the principles employed by the committee in its treatment of the textual problems and a useful list of factors which have been operative in the development of variant readings. These factors have been numbered, and in the treatment of the individual textual problems in the main part of these books, the factor which prompted the committee to decide for or against a particular variant is indicated by its number; sometimes more than one factor is listed. The rule of *lectio difficilior* corresponds here to factor 4, which is described in the following way:

> *Simplification of the text (easier reading)* = Factor 4. When a text was particularly difficult, there was a tendency for ancient scribes and translators to simplify the text by employing contextually more fitting lexical, grammatical, and stylistic forms (these modifications are often spoken of as "facilitating"). … This tendency toward simplification means, however, that quite often the more difficult text may be regarded as the better, since one may readily explain why a complicated form is made simpler, but find it difficult to explain why a clear, simple text would have been purposely made more complex.[28]

The committee distinguishes between two kinds of modificational factors: conscious alterations, and unconscious or 'mechanical' errors. This is of course a natural and self-evident division; the strange thing is, however, that factor 4, the tendency to simplify, is only listed in the first group. As if a *lectio facilior* could not arise through the unconscious and involuntary substitution of a common word or a familiar construction for a more singular

[26] *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

[27] Pentateuch, London n.d.; Vol. 2: *Historical Books*, Stuttgart 1976; Vol. 3: *Poetical Books*, Stuttgart 1977.

[28] *Op. cit.*, p. XI (in all volumes).

or unexpected one! That every variant which may be termed a trivialization should have originated in a deliberate alteration is of course a preposterous idea. The consequence is that all such cases in the Old Testament will have to be included under 'Factor 12' of the *Report*, a kind of surplus group with the heading 'Other scribal errors', in which a miscellaneous mixture of unspecified accidental mistakes are lumped together.

On the title page of the *Preliminary and Interim Report* is a list of the members of the committee, and this list is a most impressive one, including among others the name of Professor Dominique Barthélemy. It is not without hesitation that I venture to criticize so formidable a team of scholars, but as the report is distributed by the influential United Bible Societies and intended to guide Bible translators all over the world, it is only reasonable to examine the validity of its principles and decisions. I will make no secret of the fact that in our translation panel in Uppsala we have frequently found ourselves compelled to disagree with our learned colleagues.

In my opinion one of the fundamental rules of the UBS committee is a false and misleading rule, and since it is related to the application of the principle of the more difficult reading, a few words should be said about it here. What I have in mind is the committee's total rejection of any conjectural emendation of the received Hebrew text. It is stated in the introduction that 'it would be outside the terms of reference adopted by the Committee to propose suggestions which are purely conjectural, that is to say, those which are not reflected, either directly or indirectly, in some existing forms of the Old Testament text, whether in Hebrew or in the various ancient versions'.[29] The reason given for this decision is very strange indeed: the committee refers to the fact that it 'was asked to analyse the textual rather than the literary problems of the Old Testament'.[30] Admittedly it is sometimes difficult to define the boundary between literary criticism and textual criticism, but conjectural emendation is not in itself a borderline case at all: it is universally regarded as one of the essential tasks of textual criticism, as may be established by consulting any of the current manuals of the subject. The textual criticism of the Hebrew Old Testament is no exception: the task of the scholar cannot properly be restricted to weighing the existing variants, as there are cases where a corruption is so old that it is found in all extant manuscripts and translations, and then there is no way out except by conjectural emendation. It is one thing

[29] *Op. cit.*, p. XV (in all volumes).

[30] *Ibid.*

to remember the well-founded warnings of H. S. Nyberg[31] and others[32] against needless and premature emendation, but something quite different to disallow conjectures altogether by an arbitrary redefinition of the limits of textual criticism. Nyberg himself, of course, made several conjectural emendations in his book on Hosea.[33] In fact to make it a principle never to allow conjectures means *either* to presuppose that no corruption is early enough to be present in all extant Old Testament texts (which is absurd) *or* to prefer deliberately what is almost certainly wrong to what is probably right (which seems a strange choice).

And here the canon of *lectio difficilior* is often made to serve a bad cause. It is not uncommon to deny the need for emendation and to defend the MT at all costs.[34] As long as some sort of meaning, however remote, can be forced out of the traditional Hebrew text, its very difficulty tends to be regarded as an argument against the need for emendation. Even such an acknowledged master of textual studies as Barthélemy seems to me to have yielded to this temptation. In an interesting paper published in 1978 in his important collection of studies in the history of the Old Testament text,[35] he describes as exemplary the early Hebrew grammarians who refused to find errors in the MT: their task was a descriptive one, and they treated anomalous forms of interesting exceptions, without correcting them to make them agree with general rules. And this is the method Barthélemy recommends for modern textual critics as well – and indeed has put into practice with his colleagues in the *Preliminary and Interim Report*: in nine cases out of ten, he maintains, the textual problems should not be settled by what he calls 'the lazy solution of correcting that which is difficult to interpret';[36]

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[31] *Studien zum Hoseabuche. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Klärung des Problems der alttestamentlichen Textkritik* (Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift 1935:6), Uppsala 1935, pp. 12 ff.

[32] E.g., S. R. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*, Oxford [2]1913, pp. XIf. Nyberg does not mention Driver, but all that is justified in Nyberg's criticism of arbitrary conjectures can in fact be found in a nutshell in the brief preface to the second edition of Driver's book.

[33] For a list of these passages see the summary, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[34] Cf. West, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[35] 'Problématique et tâches de la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament hébraïque', *Études d'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 21), Fribourg and Göttingen 1978, pp. 365 ff.

[36] *Op. cit.*, p. 378: 'la solution paresseuse de corriger ce dont l'exégèse est difficile.'

instead one should look for the least improbable interpretation of a difficult passage.[37]

This is dangerous advice, the more so as it comes from an authority like Barthélemy. Surely the right question is not whether a difficult reading can be given a more or less improbable explanation – I cannot believe that there is any passage at all in the Old Testament which can in the end defy the exegetical devices of learned and pious rabbinical minds, whether Jewish or Christian. Rather the right method must consist in a careful weighing of probabilities. Two possible explanations must be compared: is a particular difficulty due to an error in the textual transmission or to a linguistic anomaly, puzzling but explicable? The answer cannot be given in advance, and the possibilities must be considered on equal terms[38] – whereas Barthélemy seems to allow for the possibility of textual error only after all other conceivable explanations have failed.

It is this method, 'the art of explaining corrupt passages instead of correcting them' (to borrow once more a phrase from the incomparable Housman),[39] which pervades the treatment of the textual problems in the *Preliminary and Interim Report*; in fact the express purpose of Barthélemy's paper is to present the principles which have guided the committee responsible for the report. Consequently 'factor 4', which is the committee's notation for the rule of *lectio difficilior*, occurs on almost every page as a motive which has caused the committee to retain the MT and discard other readings. In 1 Sam., for instance, 77 passages have been considered, and in no less than 60 of these the principle of the harder reading has been invoked (in about half of these as the only factor mentioned).[40] In all of these cases except one the reading of the MT has been preferred. The common opinion among scholars about the text of the Books of Samuel is well summed up by a recent commentator, Professor Mauchline: 'The Hebrew text is in a poor state of preservation. In a number of places the text is not intelligible as it stands'.[41] It is also generally agreed that the Qumran fragments and the LXX have often preserved a better

[37] *Op. cit.*, p. 381.

[38] Cf. J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1968, p. 191.

[39] *Op. cit.*, p. 41 (the preface to his edition of Manilius, I, London 1903, reprinted Cambridge 1937).

[40] The proportion is not quite so high in other parts of the Bible but still considerable: factor 4 is said to have affected the decisions of the committee in about 1/3 of the passages discussed in books like Ruth and Ecclesiastes.

[41] J. Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel* (New Century Bible), London 1971, p. 33.

text, which can be used to remedy the deficiencies of the standard Hebrew manuscripts.[42] These conditions are reflected in many modern translations: the New American Bible, for instance, is based on a corrected Hebrew text in about 230 passages in 1 Sam., the corresponding number in the New English Bible being about 160 (as against about 140 in the new Swedish version). The *Report*, however, suggests that the MT of 1 Sam. should be emended in 16 passages in all.[43] With 'factor 4' figuring so frequently in the committee's listing of its arguments, it is difficult not to regard this as the most conspicuous use of the principle of *lectio difficilior* in a modern exegetical work. Despite protestations to the contrary by the committee, one cannot but suspect 'some underlying, or even unconscious, bias in favour of the Massoretic tradition'.[44]

About the reasons in this particular case one can only speculate. But I may perhaps add a more general reflection. Our preoccupation with the Old Testament, including textual study and translation, should be as free as possible from all ideological bonds. One of my colleagues in the Bible Translation Committee, Jonas Palm, who is Professor of Greek at Uppsala, has published a paper entitled 'Wie soll man das Neue Testament heute übersetzen? Ein humanistischer Problemkomplex',[45] and the word 'humanistic' is programmatic: the task is purely philological and scholarly. But this ideal is not always acknowledged. A translator of the Old

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[42] The question to what extent divergences between the MT and the LXX are due not to errors in the transmission of the text but to recensional differences is of course important. It must, however, be emphasized that the Greek version may be used to correct copyist's errors in the standard Hebrew text even in cases where the MT and the LXX represent different recensions of a biblical book. It cannot be determined in advance whether a particular textual variation is due to a difference between two recensions or to a mistake in the manuscript transmission. Each passage must be judged separately (cf. the similar situation in certain Greek and Latin texts: West, *op. cit.*, p. 70).

[43] It should perhaps be noted that *Good News Bible: Today's English Version* (1976), which according to the Foreword 'has been translated and published by the United Bible Societies', deviates from the solutions suggested in the *Report* in a number of cases: according to the footnotes the translators have adopted a reconstructed text in 51 passages in 1 Sam., nine of these emendations being conjectural.

[44] *Op. cit.*, p. XVI (in all volumes).

[45] *Philosophie und humanistische Philologie, drei Vorträge* (Griechische humanistische Gesellschaft. Internationales Zentrum für klassisch-humanistische Forschungen. Zweite Reihe: Studien und Untersuchungen, 26), Athens 1974, pp. 75 ff.

Testament often has reason to remember a story told about Wellhausen. In 1882 Wellhausen gave up his chair of Old Testament studies at Greifswald to teach Semitic philology at Halle. Theodor Noeldeke then sent him a postcard: 'Dear Wellhausen, how could you exchange the oasis of the Old Testament for the desert of Oriental Studies?' Wellhausen replied by return of post: 'If only this oasis were not polluted by so many theological camels!'[46] And the camels, like the poor, are always with us.

[46] H. von Campenhausen, *Theologenspiess und -spass*, Gütersloh [4]1976, p. 157.

6
Etymological Semantics: Response to J. C. Greenfield
(*1993*)

Professor Greenfield finds it 'difficult to add' anything to Professor Barr's treatment of etymological semantics,[1] and he believes that it 'would have been much easier … to be the respondent.' In fact my task is more difficult: not only do I agree with Professor Barr, but I also agree in all essentials with Professor Greenfield, who has provided us with a series of learned and useful examples of the different types of etymological studies distinguished by Professor Barr. Thus there seems to be even less left for me to do than there was for Professor Greenfield.

True, I can think of one or two points in his examples where I might perhaps be able to add an observation or query a particular statement. But these are all minor details, and I hesitate to start a discussion of particular examples when our foremost task should be the general problem of methods and principles. My response will be to try instead to go on where Professor Greenfield leaves off. That is, I shall attempt to say something, however briefly and superficially, about different types of etymological studies and about the limitations of etymology as a method to discover the meaning of words. I must confess that as regards linguistics theory I am something of an innocent, and my tools are blunt (and as a reader of English detective novels I realize how much harm a blunt instrument can do).

The typology of etymological study suggested by Professor Barr seems to me sensible and useful. It is not so much a strictly logical classification with an entirely consistent common basis of subdivision as, rather, a pragmatic attempt to list several different operations which have been termed etymological. This means that there is some overlapping: a particular procedure may legitimately belong to more than one type.

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[1] J. Barr, 'Etymology and the Old Testament', *Language and Meaning. Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis* (OTS 19), Leiden 1974, pp. 1–28.

Naturally, this typology is not the only possible one. Professor Yakov Malkiel of Berkeley once published a paper which he called 'A Tentative Typology of Etymological Studies'.[2] In this he classified contributions according to three major criteria: (1) by scope; (2) by material; and (3) by degree of complexity. His classification 'refers strictly to approaches, not to solutions'.[3] It is a highly readable article, full of interesting information, but the examples are as a rule taken from living languages with an almost unlimited corpus, and so it is not as immediately useful to us as Professor Barr's typology, which is directly adapted to biblical Hebrew.

Not all the types listed by Professor Barr are equally relevant to our problem, i.e. in what way etymological arguments can be used in attempts to discover the sense of a word in classical Hebrew or other dead languages. Our question in fact coincides with Professor Barr's type E, defined as 'Use of a cognate language to discover the sense in Hebrew'.[4] If we look to etymological studies in general, this particular approach is in fact unusual (it does not figure at all in Professor Malkiel's typology). The point of departure for the etymologist is normally a word with a known meaning, and the task is to establish its family relations to other words and to follow its semantic history as far back as possible. But when we talk of etymological semantics as a method in the study of classical Hebrew, the meaning of a word is not the starting-point but the goal which we hope to reach: the whole enterprise moves in the opposite direction from ordinary etymological research.[5] By comparing words from the same root in cognate languages such as Arabic or Aramaic or Accadian we hope to establish – at least roughly and approximately – the meaning of a Hebrew word that has hitherto not been fully understood.

This heuristic function in not really the normal application of etymological research, and it is characteristic that all the other types of etymology listed by Professor Barr are of a different kind. These other types are certainly not without interest for the semantics of biblical Hebrew but they do not help to determine meanings not otherwise known.

A possible exception is Professor Barr's type C: 'Identification of adoptions from another language'.[6] This can in certain cases be a sub-

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[2] Y. Malkiel, 'A Tentative Typology of Etymological Studies', *International Journal of American Linguistics* 23, 1957, 1–17; reprinted in: Y. Malkiel, *Essays on Linguistic Themes*, Oxford 1968, pp. 199–227.

[3] *Essays*, p. 200.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

[5] Cf. Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

division of type E: a difficult word may be explained, not as an indigenous Hebrew derivation from a common Semitic root but as a loan-word from a foreign language, cognate or not. But type C is of course not restricted to words of unknown or disputed meaning: clearly it is a scholarly task to establish also the foreign descent of words the meaning of which is not in doubt, as Professor Barr's example, *hykl* 'temple, palace', from Sumerian É.GAL 'great house', or Professor Greenfield's *srnym*, the 'lords' or 'rulers' of the Philistines, supposed to be related to Greek τύραννος. Not least for the lexicographer is it important 'to identify the language from which they came, their meaning in that language and, if there is sufficient information, the date of their adoption into Hebrew'.[7]

Professor Barr's types A and B which he calls 'Prehistoric reconstruction'[8] and 'Historical tracing within an observable development'[9] also belong to the traditional kind: both have to do with 'the search for word origins'[10] (to quote Professor Malkiel's refreshingly simple definition of etymology), and both are clearly important scientific tasks in themselves. But if we are talking of methods to discover the meaning of words, then they are obviously not immediately relevant. They may, however, help us to distinguish homonyms which coincide in Hebrew but can be separated by their etymology.[11]

Professor Barr's type D, 'Analysis of words into component morphemes'[12] seems to me to be essentially a question of grammatical derivation, and I would hesitate to regard it as a branch of etymology proper (and Professor Barr himself seems to entertain similar doubts). Of course we need to know from which root a verb is derived to be able to list it correctly in the dictionary and this is not always straight-forward, but such cases are quite rare. The verb *hštḥwh* is a case in point: it depends on the grammatical analysis (from *šḥh* or from *ḥwh*?) whether you should put it under *š* or *ḥ* in a dictionary.[13]

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[7] Barr, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

[10] Y. Malkiel, 'Etymology and General Linguistics', *Word* 18, 1962, pp. 198–219; reprinted in *Essays* (above note 2), pp. 175–98; the quotation is on p. 177.

[11] See, e.g., U. Rüterswörden, 'Response to J. Barr', *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 6, 1993, pp. 15–20.

[12] *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

[13] For a detailed dicussion of the conflicting theories see J. A. Emerton, 'The Etymology of *hištaḥ"wāh*', *Instruction and Interpretation. Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis* (OTS 20), Leiden 1977,

The only remaining type is the last one in Professor Barr's series, type F, defined as 'Simple comparison of institutions with cognate names'.[14] I share Professor Barr's own doubts whether this is a real case at all; it is, as he says, 'rather something found in association with etymology'.[15] Professor Greenfield is mildly critical of this and argues that Professor Barr has obscured the matter, but I must confess that I do not fully understand how his own example, which is the term *nḥlh*, shows this. To my mind it remains true that the linguistic affinities of *nḥlh* are one thing, a question that belongs to etymology proper, whereas the degree of similarity between phenomena for which the word *nḥlh* and cognate names are used is a different problem which cannot be decided on linguistic grounds.

I am, on the other hand, a little uncertain about the legitimacy of treating 'institutions with cognate names' as a special case. The reason why Professor Barr has chosen to single out this as a type of its own is clear: it is quite common in biblical studies to compare Israelite institutions with similar phenomena bearing similar names in the neighbouring cultures. But in principle this is, I think, just another case of *signifiant* and *signifié*, and there seems to be no methodological reason why the fact that the *signifié* happens to be a social phenomenon should demand a different treatment from when it is, say, an astronomical object, or a religious concept, or an agricultural implement.

Thus we may perhaps conclude that of Professor Barr's six types taken over by Professor Greenfield, only E, and partly C, are strictly relevant to our main problem, how to discover meanings of words in a dead language. Types A, B, and partly C are not methods of detecting semantic values: rather they are ways of explaining meanings already known on other grounds and of elucidating the semantic history of words. Types D and F, finally, may be disregarded as not belonging to etymology in any strict sense.

I should like to add, however, that the dividing-line between the first two of these three groups ought perhaps not to be drawn too sharply. There are cases where the meaning of a word may be known on other grounds, for instance with the aid of context and parallelism, but where an etymological argument may corroborate the understanding of the meaning which has been reached by other routes. In Isaiah 28 there occurs in v. 15

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pp. 41–55. Cf. also G. I. Davies, 'A Note on the Etymology of *hištaḥᶜwāh*', *VT* 29, 1979, pp. 493–5; S. Kreuzer, 'Zur Bedeutung und Etymologie von *hištaḥᶜwāh* / *yštḥwy*', *VT* 35, 1985, pp. 39–60.

[14] *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

the problematic word *ḥozeh*. It has long been thought that it must mean something like 'agreement' or 'contract', not least on the basis of the parallelism with the word *bryt* 'covenant'.[16] This understanding is found already in several ancient versions: the Septuagint has συνθήκη and the Vulgate has *pactum*. But the etymology of the word has created difficulties: attempts to derive it from the well-known verb *ḥzh* 'see', 'behold' seem rather strained. However, in an article in 1937 G. R. Driver presented comparative evidence which confirms the traditional sense: South Arabic has a noun from the same Semitic root meaning 'agreement'.[17] This appears to be a better explanation than the earlier attempts to derive the meaning from *ḥzh* 'see' (and it is perhaps a little surprising that this etymology is not even mentioned in HAL – there the emendation *ḥsd* is suggested, though with a question-mark). This is a case where comparative etymology has helped to support a traditional meaning rather than suggesting a new sense for an obscure word. But the mode of procedure is similar, and whether the meaning defended by an etymological argument is traditional or new, it needs in both cases support from other arguments as well, above all the argument from context.

For it seems to be characteristic of the etymological method that it cannot as a rule achieve certainty by itself: it must be used in combination with other methods, chiefly of course a study of the context or contexts in which an obscure word is used. This uncertainty appears to characterize not only etymology as a way to discover meanings but also etymological studies in general. There is an important difference in precision and certainty between on the one hand the study of sound-changes and on the other the study of changes of meaning.[18] It has been possible to formulate phonetic laws according to which the sounds in different languages have developed. We are all acquainted with tables showing how for instance the sibilants in different Semitic languages correspond to one another and how they can be seen to have developed from the sounds of a hypothetical proto-Semitic language. But it is not possible to discover a similar regularity

[16] See J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1968, pp. 230, 326 (no. 123).

[17] G. R. Driver, 'Linguistic and Textual Problems: Isaiah I–XXXIX', *JTS* 38, 1937, p. 44.

[18] See J. Trier, *Wege der Etymologie* (Philologische Studien und Quellen, 101), Berlin 1981, p. 16. The sound-laws, of course, are generalizations which are not universally applicable: exceptions do exist. Cf. V. Pisani, Die Etymologie. *Geschichte – Fragen – Methode*, München 1975 (German translation of the second, revised Italian edition, 1967), pp. 165 f.

in the development of meanings. It may be possible to establish common types of semantic change, but nothing really comparable to the sound laws which were one of the great discoveries of nineteenth-century linguistic scholarship.

The French linguist Michel Bréal asked just over a hundred years ago: 'Est-il possible de formuler les lois selon lesquelles le sens des mots se transforme?' – and his answer was 'nous sommes disposés à répondre que non. La complexité des faits est telle, qu'elle échappe à toute règle certaine'.[19]

This is of course especially obvious in Professor Barr's type E. In his other types, as we saw, the result of the semantic development is known, and the task of the etymological investigation is to retrace this development as far back as possible. Even if there is no lack of difficulties and uncertainties, it is perhaps slightly less precarious to follow the track backwards than to start from a root, found only in a cognate language, and to guess which of many possible routes the semantic development has taken. The possibilities of going astray are alarmingly numerous.

It can be quite instructive to apply the etymological method to modern cases where we do know the answer. Suppose for example that English were a dead language with a limited corpus and that we were confronted with a *hapax legomenon* 'queen', occurring only in the plural in the name 'Queens' College', which, to judge from the context, seems to be an institution in a university city called Cambridge, known also from other texts in classical English. Now if there is no other occurrence of this word, we must look to cognate languages for a solution. And indeed there exists in the Scandinavian languages a word of the same root as 'queen': it is the common word for 'woman' – Swedish 'kvinna', Danish 'kvinde', Norwegian 'kvinne'. It would seem a reasonable hypothesis that the word did in fact have the same meaning in the closely related English language, and the designation 'Queens' College' would then indicate that this was a college for women – which fits perfectly with the plural form of this obscure *hapax legomenon*. This conclusion can be supported by a historical argument: there is some evidence in the limited corpus of classical English that the first colleges were reserved for men, so that it would be quite natural for a college for women, especially if it was the first one, to have its revolutionary character indicated in its very name, 'Queens' College', meaning 'women's college'.

Well, there is nothing wrong with this etymological argument – except that it is completely mistaken. The English word 'queen' is etymologically

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[19] M. Bréal, *L'histoire des mots*, Paris 1887, quoted by Pisani, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

the same as the word for 'woman' in the Scandinavian languages,[20] but the English word has followed a semantic development of its own, which has resulted in the highly specialized meaning of 'female sovereign' or 'king's wife'. This is how words tend to behave – and Hebrew words are no exception. That is why the etymological method of discovering the meaning of obscure words is frequently so unreliable. Vittore Pisani, in his book on etymology, rightly concludes that 'in questions of meaning the developments move in such a way that one cannot as a matter of fact draw any line between the possible and the impossible'.[21]

The study of etymology is a fascinating branch of learning and a valuable activity in its own right. But its applicability in our particular case, its possible value for the study of the semantics of biblical Hebrew, is restricted. It is a route that we must sometimes take, but then we should be aware of the many snares and pitfalls that await us. Etymology is, to borrow once more a phrase from Professor Malkiel, 'the domain of individuality in language history'.[22] Each case of semantic change may possibly be unique. That is why etymological arguments and results do not lend themselves easily to abstraction and formalization.

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[20] See, e.g., *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, Oxford 1966, s.v. queen; E. Wessén, *Våra ord, deras uttal och ursprung*, Stockholm 1960, s.v. kvinna.

[21] *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

[22] *Essays*, p. 221.

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7
Translation and Emendation
(*1994*)

'It is a main concern of both scholarship and theology that the Bible should be soundly and adequately interpreted'. These words are found on the first page of James Barr's first book,[1] and it is a motto that is indeed relevant to all branches of biblical scholarship. It is applicable not least to the important task of translating the Bible: a sound and adequate interpretation must be based on solid and scholarly philology and exegesis.

The difficulties that a Bible translator must overcome are manifold and varied; they range from determining the exact meaning of rare words or constructions in the source language to selecting equivalents with suitable connotations and accurate stylistic nuances in the target language. But before one can begin to solve the problems of *how* to translate, there is an even more fundamental task: to decide *what* to translate. Before the translation proper can begin, the text-critical problems must be solved.

It was therefore a laudable initiative by the Unites Bible Societies to set up a Committee consisting of biblical scholars of international repute with instructions to study the principal textual difficulties in the Old Testament and to issue advice and recommendations to the many committees which, under the guidance of UBS, were (and are) engaged in the preparation of new translations of the Old Testament. The Committee worked from 1969 to 1977 and produced first a *Preliminary and Interim Report on the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project*[2] (abbreviated *PIR* below), followed by the definitive report, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*[3] *(abbreviated*

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[1] *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford, 1961), p. vii (Preface).

[2] Vol. i. (Pentateuch) (London, n.d.); vol. ii. *Historical Books* (Stuttgart, 1976); vol. iii. *Poetical Books* (Stuttgart, 1977); vol. iv. *Prophetical Books I* (New York, 1979); vol. v. *Prophetical Books II* (New York, 1980).

[3] D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, i (Orbis biblicus et orientalis, 50/1; Fribourg, 1982); ii (50/2; 1986). Three more volumes are expected, as is also an English version.

CT below), giving not only the results of the deliberations of the Committee but also a full account of the evidence and the arguments.

The great expectations with which the Committee's work was awaited were not quite fullfilled. There was a widespread impression that the Committee had been guilty of a certain bias in favour of MT as against other textual witnesses. In an earlier paper[4] I raised two main objections to *PIR*: first, that it is unreasonable to exclude as a matter of principle conjectural emendations from the textual basis of a translation of the Old Testament; and secondly, that it is wrong to use the principle of the more difficult reading to defend what are in all probability scribal errors in MT. Barthélemy has replied to the first objection in the first volume of *CT* i;[5] to the second there has been no explicit answer. The purpose of the present paper is to examine Barthélemy's reply and the problems raised by textual choices in *PIR* and *CT*.

In the concluding essay of his truly instructive and illuminating *Études d'histoire du text de l'Ancien Testament*[6] Barthélemy presents his view – which is also that of the UBS Committee – of the problems and tasks of the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. There is much in this essay that is valuable. Barthélemy writes about the history of the Old Testament text, the transition from a state of textual diversity to one of unity, the difference between the literary growth of a work and its textual development, the too easy recourse to emendation by too many exegetes earlier this century, the need to analyse carefully difficulties in the Hebrew text before resorting to emendation, and to examine closely a divergent reading in one of the ancient versions before accepting it as evidence of a variant in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, and in all this there is in fact little that should arouse opposition.

As is well known there existed at an early stage different redactions of some biblical books, for example the Book of Jeremiah, of which we have both the shorter edition witnessed by LXX and 4QJer^{b} and the longer one represented by MT. Barthélemy attaches great importance to this fact and stresses strongly the danger of resorting to text-critical operations which entail an illegitimate mixing of two separate traditions. This is in principle a justified warning. But it is also important to realize that this does not render

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[4] B. Albrektson, 'Difficilior lectio probabilior: A Rule of Textual Criticism and its Use in Old Testament Studies', *Remembering All the Way* ... (Oudtestamentische Studiën, 21; Leiden, 1981), 13 ff.

[5] *CT* i, *74 ff.

[6] 'Problématique et tâches de la critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament hébraïque', *Études d'histoire du texte de l'Ancien Testament* (Orbis biblicus et orientalis, 21; Fribourg, 1978), 365 ff.

the shorter version of LXX unusable for the textual criticism of MT.[7] It is not difficult to imagine that in our own time a book is first published in a carefully proof-read first edition and then in an enlarged second edition containing many misprints. It is perfectly possible to make use of the first edition in order to correct printer's errors in the second without making the shorter size of the first edition the norm. Likewise, we may use the reconstructed *Vorlage* of LXX in the Book of Jeremiah as a potential source of correct readings in passages where MT is corrupt without having to delete everything which is not represented in LXX. In fact this is also admitted by Barthélemy, who expressly states that it is legitimate to use one textual tradition to correct the other, if the priority of the one over the other can be demonstrated and if the difference between them is due to textual vicissitudes.[8]

There seems to be only one point where the text-critical *theory* as stated by Barthélemy and in *PIR* and *CT* does not agree with general practice in textual criticism. Already in the first volume of *PIR* it was established that the committee did not under any circumstances allow conjectural emendations.[9] In view of the fact that some textual errors are old enough to have crept into all existing manuscripts and versions, this appears to be an impossible rule.

In his reply to this objection Barthélemy first points out that many conjectures which have been suggested are arbitrary and premature. In this there is no disagreement between us (as Barthélemy himself observes). That conjectures should be employed with restraint is a sound rule. But restraint is one thing and the absolute refusal of the UBS Committee to allow conjectures another. To defend the committee's rigid attitude Barthélemy mobilizes two arguments.

The first argument proceeds from the Committee's division of the development of the Hebrew text of the OT into four distinct phases. The first phase consists of 'oral or written literary products in forms as close as possible to those originally produced.'[10] This definition is perhaps not entirely clear, but it seems to describe a stage which lies before the final redaction of the biblical texts, and the 'literary products' mentioned appear

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[7] For a balanced view which recognizes both the peril of mixing different editions of OT texts and the possibility of reconstructing original readings in individual instances see E. Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* (Jerusalem, 1981), esp. 32, 277 ff., 307 ff.

[8] *Études*, 369.

[9] *PIR*, vol. i, p. XV (also in vols ii–v).

[10] *PIR*, vol. i, p. VI (also in vols ii–v).

to correspond to what is otherwise called 'sources' or 'strata'. It seems obvious that the recovery of such texts is not the task of textual criticism but of source criticism and tradition history. The second phase is defined as 'the earliest form or forms of the text which can be determined by the application of techniques of textual analysis to existing textual evidence', it is further described as 'the earliest attested text'.[11] It is this stage of the history of the text that the Committee seeks to establish. Barthélemy maintains that it would be reasonable to resort to conjectures if the goal of the Committee were to recover the first type of texts; as it aims, however, at establishing the texts of the second phase, conjectures are ruled out. The reason why this is so, according to Barthélemy, is that they run the risk of reaching behind phase two and restoring instead a text which belongs to phase one. In the Pentateuch one would be in danger of recreating one of the earlier strata instead of the final form of the biblical book; this would destroy the literary unity created by the last redactor(s).

But it is not only the literary integrity that is said to be threatened by conjectural emendations. Barthélemy musters also a second argument. The aim of the Committee has been to restore a text that has functioned as Holy Scripture, and has been regarded as canonical. And a text which has been recovered by means of conjecture may never have served any community as Sacred Scripture. The important thing is not to have a text free from clerical errors but to have one which is 'authentic', i.e. which has canonical authority.

Neither of these arguments seems to me to be valid. The first suffers from a failure to distinguish properly between literary criticism and textual criticism. True, the distinction seems to be made in the descriptions of phases one and two: the first is recovered by means of 'literary analysis', the second 'by the application of techniques of textual analysis'. The trouble is that the first stage is regarded as part of the *textual* development; this leads to an unfortunate confusion of the literary and the textual history of the biblical books. It is important to distinguish in principle between the process resulting in the final literary product and the process of transcribing this text, between the literary creative phase, when the text is produced, and the phase of copying, when the text is reproduced. This has been well expressed in a recent important contribution by Emanuel Tov: 'Even if we assume a very complicated literary development, at some time that process was ended. At the end of that process stood a finished literary product which at the same time stood at the beginning of a process of copying and

[11] *PIR*, vol. i, pp. VI f. (also in vols ii–v).

textual transmission. … This entity forms the textual source aimed at by textual criticism.'[12]

The tasks of literary criticism and of textual criticism are different; Wellhausen rightly protested 'gegen eine *grundsätzliche* Vermischung der Aufgaben'.[13] To be sure, in practice it may sometimes be difficult to keep them apart; in Wellhausen's words: 'es ist schwierig die Grenze zu finden, wo die Literarkritik aufhört und die Textkritik beginnt'.[14] But even if the borderline is at times difficult to discern, it is essential not to blur the fundamental demarcation – as the UBS Committee tends to do by incorporating the literary history of a text in its textual development. Barthélemy makes it sound as if conjectures were part of the literary criticism of biblical books rather than of the textual criticism. This is simply not the case, and Barthélemy's first argument for disallowing conjectures seems frail, as there is no reason why conjectures should not aim at the point where the literary growth of a text is completed and its textual history in the strict sense begins. Conjectures do not reconstruct sources or strata prior to the final form of the text: they are attempts to restore that very form.

Even more surprising than Barthélemy's ban on conjectures is a pronouncement of another member of the Committee, J. A. Sanders. He actually wants to banish conjectures as such from the discipline of textual criticism and to relegate them to other areas of research: 'Conjectures about a non-extant Urtext of any biblical passage have their place elsewhere in biblical study – form criticism, philology, perhaps archaeology, the general domain of "higher criticism" – but not in text criticism *in sensu stricto*'.[15] This is a strange position to take. (Conjectural emendation as a branch of archaeology?) A cursory look in any standard textbook on textual criticism is sufficient to find conjectures described as an indispensable tool of the text-critical craft.[16] The textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible should not be regarded as a game of its own with special rules: it is subject to the same methodological laws as all other attempts to restore ancient texts.

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[12] E. Tov, 'The Original Shape of the Biblical Text', *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (VTS 43; Leiden, 1991), 345–59.

[13] J. Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871), p. XI.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] J. A. Sanders, 'Text and Canon: Concepts and Method', *JBL* 98 (1979), 12.

[16] See e.g. P. Maas, *Textkritik*, 4th edn. (Leipzig, 1960), 10 ff. His statement on p. 13 is noteworthy: 'Dass die Konjekturalkritik eine Zeitlang grundsätzlich bekämpft wurde, sei als vorübergehende Verirrung der Forschung nur eben erwähnt.'

In this connection some revealing pronouncements made by the UBS Committee deserve attention. Gen. 21:14 is a passage where MT is obviously out of order, and this seems to have been realized by the Committee. No emendation is however accepted, and the note in *PIR* on this passage gives the following reason: 'The principles of textual analysis as stated in the Introduction did not allow the Committee to change the MT.' This is a remarkable statement. The principles referred to are not like the unalterable law of the Medes and Persians which cannot be revoked. They are the Committee's own maxims: to state that the principles do not allow emendations is not in fact giving any reason at all. It means simply 'we do not make emendations because we have decided not to make emendations.' If, in a particular passage, the principles conflict with what the Committee regards as sound textual practice, the sensible thing would seem to be to question the principles. A similar oddity can be found in *CT* as well. Discussing 1 Chr. 26:17 Barthélemy seems inclined to accept a conjectural emendation by Houbigant but in the end refrains from this solution: as it has not been preserved by any existing textual witness 'textual criticism cannot here correct the MT'. Of course it can: Houbigant did it, and it is only Barthélemy's own particular kind of textual criticism with its self-imposed ban on conjectures which prevents him from doing what he himself believes to be right.

Another striking example is found in 2 Kgs. 19:26. In a prophecy against the the king of Assyria, spoken by the prophet Isaiah, the inhabitants of destroyed cities are likened to withering herbs and to grass on the rooftops 'before standing grain', לפני קמה. This prophecy has been preserved also in the Book of Isaiah, and in Isa. 37:27 the MT has the same reading, 'before standing grain'. The expression is strange and the text hardly intact. It was conjectured long ago[17] that the reading of MT is a corruption of an original לפני קדים 'before the east wind': the east wind is mentioned several times in the OT as the cause of desiccation. This conjecture was confirmed by the reading לפני קדם in 1QIs^{a} (with a י added above the word between ד and ם), and many biblical scholars and modern translations accept this as the correct text in both 2 Kings and Isaiah. The extraordinary thing is that *PIR* and *CT* treat these two passages differently: the text is emended in Isa. 37:27 whereas MT is retained in 2 Kgs. 19:26. Barthélemy states two reasons for not correcting the text of the latter passage. One is that the variant 'east wind' is only attested in the Isaiah scroll and not in a manuscript of Kings, and to write it in Kings would therefore mean accepting a conjecture. And

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[17] O. Thenius, *Die Bücher der Könige* (Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament, 9; Leipzig, 1849), *ad loc.*

the other reason is that one must respect the special character of each of the two parallel passages. Both arguments seem absurd. Barthélemy gives good reasons for regarding 'east wind' as the original reading, and to refuse to benefit by the Qumran variant to restore also the correct wording in Kings seems to be carrying the ban on conjectures to extremes. And the statement about the individuality of the parallel passages is hard to understand: the two passages may be different in other respects, but in MT they do have the word for 'standing grain' in common, so that by emending this word in one passage and not in the other the UBS Committee has in fact *created* a difference that was not in MT.

It is also difficult to attach much weight to Barthélemy's second main argument against conjectures: the importance of canonical authenticity. One natural objection is that such authenticity is a concept hard to define and above all irrelevant to a strictly textual criticism, the aim of which must be to restore the form of a composition which was the starting-point of the textual process, disregarding religious evaluations of different stages of that process. Perhaps the UBS Committee could in turn retort that it is the canonical status of MT that governs the choice of this particular form of the biblical text as the basis of textual criticism. A possible reply to this would be that the concept of canonicity need not be invoked at all. MT is the only extant complete version of the Hebrew Bible, and this inescapable fact leaves the textual critic without choice: anyone seeking to recover the original text of the Hebrew Bible must take MT as a point of departure.

It seems also questionable whether the concept of canonicity or religious authority can reasonably be applied when it comes to such small parts of a text as readings consisting of just one word or emendations affecting a single letter. To discuss the question whether the Book of Judith is canonical or not seems perfectly meaningful, and it also makes sense to ask whether the longer or the shorter version of the Book of Jeremiah should be regarded as authoritative. Canonicity seems to be a property which is first and foremost attributed to books and texts. The unintelligible בגדרות in Jer. 49:3 '(run to and fro) in the sheepfolds (?)' can be restored to excellent meaning and coherence by simply changing the ר into a ד, which makes it possible to understand the whole phrase as 'lash yourselves with gashes'.[18] Is it at all adequate to oppose the legitimacy of this conjecture with the argument that the ד lacks canonical authority? Canonical authority may be ascribed to the Book of Jeremiah, but it seems absurd to credit a single letter that is in all

[18] G. R. Driver, 'Linguistic and Textual Problems: Jeremiah', *JQR* 28 (1937–38), 124 f. It is Driver's interpretation of the verb which makes this translation possible; the change from *resh* to *daleth* is common. Cf. NEB and REB.

probability a simple scribal error with this mysterious quality. If there are valid reasons for an emendation, I do not quite see why those accepting the authority of the text should not continue to do so after it has been rid of a mistake and restored to what is probably a less flawed condition. If the aim had been to restore an earlier stage of the literary growth of the text which had never functioned as authoritative Scripture, Barthélemy's resistance would have been more reasonable. But if the aim is in fact to restore the canonical text itself as one restores an old painting, ridding it of garbling layers of later varnish, then it is difficult to see how the argument from canonicity could be effective against conjectures as such.

Tov uses a positive definition of the aim of textual criticism, speaking about the 'tradition or copy' which the textual critic endeavours to reach.[19] My favourite definition of the task is a negative one. It is found in the beginning of A. E. Housman's famous lecture on 'The application of Thought to Textual Criticism' and is as simple as it is ingenious: textual criticism 'is the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it'.[20] The difference between this definition and Tov's may be negligible, at least in practice, but Housman's wording has certain advantages. It relieves us of the duty to specify exactly a definite stage, the reconstruction of which is the hypothetical but unattainable goal of Old Testament textual criticism, and it directs our efforts to something more tangible: existing errors in an existing text. The removal of errors is an attainable goal even it the removal of *all* errors is not.

In his reply to my criticisms Barthélemy has discussed only the question of conjectural emendations. But my main objection was in fact directed against the Committee's remarkable resistance to emendations of MT in cases where it seems clear that a variant reading has valid claims to originality. This aversion is in a way surprising. If one looks at certain formulations of the principles of the Committee as well as at their actual decisions in some cases, it is obvious that they regard emendations (though not conjectural emendations) as permissible.[21] I have already referred to a statement by Barthélemy to that effect, and in some passages it is put into practice. In Jer. 47:5, to quote an example chosen at random, *PIR* recommends translators to follow LXX (29:5) and to read instead of MTs strange and difficult

[19] Tov, 'The Original Shape of the Biblical Text', 351.

[20] A. E. Housman, 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism', *Selected Prose*, ed. J. Carter (Cambridge, 1961), 131. Housman's paper was first published in *Proceedings of the Classical Association*, 18 (1922), 67 ff. See also J. Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford, 1983), 84 f.

[21] *PIR*, vol. i, pp. VII f. (also in vols ii–v).

עמקם '(remnant of) their valley' the variant preferred by the majority of the commentators, ענקים '(remnant of) the Anakim'.[22] This seems a perfectly sensible thing to do, and the argument adduced by Barthélemy is strong: he refers to Josh. 11:22 and the parallelism with a similar expression used of the Philistines in the preceding verse ('remnant of the island of Caphtor'). But one cannot help wondering why the Committee has not followed a similar course in a number of similar cases. Their treatment of Jer. 47:5 is untypical: as a rule emendations are avoided and the reading of MT retained. More than 300 difficult passages in the Book of Jeremiah are treated in *PIR*, and only in 19 cases is an emendation of MT recommended. This number should be compared with Brockington's list of readings adopted by the translators of New English Bible, where 343 emendations of the text of Jeremiah are registered.[23] The policy of the Swedish Translation Committee is somewhat more conservative than that of the scholars who produced NEB, but we have nevertheless decided to emend MT in the Book of Jeremiah in 265 passages.[24] Of course many textual problems are so intricate and the evidence so difficult to interpret that it is only to be expected that scholars should sometimes come to different conclusions. But the disparity between these two modern translations on one hand and *PIR* on the other is striking and reveals unmistakably a fundamental difference.

The chief drawback in the text-critical principles applied by the UBS Committee seems to be the idea that any explanation – however implausible – of the received text is preferable to an emendation. James Barr rightly speaks of 'far-fetched exegetical speculations to justify the MT'.[25] This seems to be at least indirectly admitted by Barthélemy, who in his refusal of conjectures recommends those interpretations which are

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[22] This emendation appears to me more plausible than the solution suggested by G. R. Driver, who explains the Hebrew not as the common word for 'valley' but as the equivalent of Ugaritic *ʿmq* 'strength', 'Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets', *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson* (Edinburgh, 1950), 61. The case for 'strength' seems stronger in Jer. 49:4.

[23] L. H. Brockington, *The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament: The Readings Adopted by the Translators of the New English Bible* (Oxford, 1973), 199–217.

[24] See *Tre bibelböcker i översättning av bibelkommissionen: Första Moseboken, Ordspråksboken, Jeremia* (Stockholm, 1991), a specimen volume of the new Swedish translation of the Bible now in progress (a non-denominational project paid for by the State, not supervised by UBS). A list of all the emendations in the Book of Jeremiah is found on pp. 355–63.

[25] Review of *CT* ii, in *The Society for Old Testament Study: Book List 1987*, 36. See also Barr's review of *CT* i, in *JTS* 17 (1986), 445 ff.

'least improbable' – a revealing expression.[26] Such interpretations are frequently drawn from medieval commentators. Even if their explanations may at times be instructive, it seems wrong to ignore the fact that their task was utterly different from that of a modern textual critic. They simply had no choice; the MT had to be interpreted in its received wording and spelling, however strange.[27]

In Jer. 32:12 a certain Hanamel, who has already been identified as Jeremiah's cousin, the son of his uncle, is unexpectedly said to be Jeremiah's uncle, דדי 'my uncle'. This is evidently a simple mistake for בן־דדי 'the son of my uncle' – the word בן 'son' has been accidentally dropped, a common type of scribal mistake, sometimes even corrected by the Masoretes themselves (as e.g. in Judg. 20:13 or Jer. 31:38). As the reading בן־דדי is in fact found in some Hebrew manuscripts and is moreover supported by both LXX and Peshitta, one would have expected *PIR* to recommend this variant. Instead translators are advised to retain MT. To avoid a glaring contradiction – Hanamel obviously cannot have been both Jeremiah's cousin and his uncle – they are recommended to interpret דד in v. 12 as 'cousin' rather than 'uncle'. This seems extremely forced: the word otherwise means 'uncle' and never stands for 'cousin'; moreover it is used three times in this very story with the sense 'uncle' (v. 7, 8, 9), so that it is highly unlikely to have a different meaning in v. 12. Barthélemy quotes Radaq, i.e. Rabbi David Qimchi (thirteenth century), who refers to two passages in Genesis: Lot is called Abraham's 'brother's son', בן־אחיו, in Gen. 12:5, whereas in 14:16 he is called 'his brother', אחיו. This is, however, not a valid argument, as it is quite normal for the Hebrew word for 'brother' both to have the meaning 'brother' in the narrow sense of male sibling and to refer more generally to a 'relative', whereas no corresponding ambiguity can be found in the word for 'uncle'. To adopt the reading of a few Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions could not possibly in this case be regarded as an illegitimate blending of two separate literary recensions of a biblical book, nor could it be construed as the restoration of a stratum which is older than the final form of the text. And arguments about canonical authority would seem entirely out of question here. To prefer a highly implausible explanation of the received text to a simple and natural emendation is unscientific and calls to mind Housman's sarcastic words about 'the art of explaining errors instead of correcting them'.[28] Of this art Barthélemy is a true master,

[26] Literally 'les moins improbables', *CT* i *76.

[27] See Barr, *JTS* 17 (1986), 449, and cf. also his *Holy Scripture*, 88 ff.

[28] *Selected Prose*, 41 (from the preface to Housman's edition of Manilius, i (London, 1903; repr. Cambridge, 1937)).

making use of his immense learning and intimate knowledge of medieval Jewish exegesis in the service of a dubious cause.

To sum up: the fundamental error of the Committee seems to be the reluctance to take into consideration the possibility of corruptions in MT. When variants occur in Hebrew manuscripts or in the versions it is not sound text-critical method to ask whether the wording of MT might possibly be given some far-fetched explanation (which is practically always possible, if one is prepared to stretch one's credulity). The proper question to ask is which of the variants is probably derivative and which more original; the proper conclusion to draw is that the latter should be preferred. And when all existing textual witnesses seem to offer erroneous readings, it is reasonable to attempt to reconstruct – with all due caution – the correct text from which the corruptions have developed, i.e. to resort to conjectural emendation.[29] Nothing in Barthélemy's defence of the principles of the Committee has convinced me that it is right to reject what is probably the genuine wording of a text and to prefer what is almost certainly a corruption of it. As Bible translators we owe the readers the best that serious and unbiased scholarship can offer.

[29] A fine example of the kind of textual criticism I have in mind, at once careful, cautious, and critical, is found in W. McKane's commentary on Jeremiah (vol. i, ICC; Edinburgh, 1986).

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8
Ezekiel 30:16 – A Conjecture

(*1995*)

It has long been recognized that the last words of the Hebrew text of Ezek. 30:16 are obscure and probably corrupt. The purpose of the present paper is to suggest a new emendation which involves only a minor change of the consonants of the MT and which makes acceptable sense in the context.

The difficult passage is part of an oracle in which Yahweh threatens to destroy Egypt. His judgement will affect various cities in Egypt. In v. 16 it is said that Yahweh 'will set fire to Egypt; Sin (Pelusium?) shall be in great agony; No (Thebes) shall be breached', and the verse ends with the obscure and disputed words ונף צרי יומם, literally 'and Noph (Memphis) adversaries of daytime'.

Most commentators are agreed that the MT is impossible as it stands. There are, however, exceptions. The construction with an adverb serving as a *nomen rectum* after a *nomen regens* in the construct state has been defended by, for instance, Rosenmüller[1] and Barthélemy[2] with reference to cases like 1 Kgs. 2:31 and Prov. 26:2, where the word חנם 'without cause' is found in a similar position. It is however doubtful if this reference is sufficient to save the wording of the MT. The instances adduced both include חנם, which may indicate that the construction is possible only with this particular word: no case containing an adverb of time like יומם is found in biblical Hebrew. But this is not the most serious objection to the formulation of the MT: the wording is suspect even if one is prepared to accept the construct phrase צרי יומם (in which case it might be preferable to regard יומם as a noun rather than as an adverb – cf. Jer. 15:9; 33:20, 25). To make sense, the MT 'requires a verb to be supplied'.[3] As it now stands, it would seem to mean something like 'and Noph (shall be) adversaries of daytime', which is nonsense. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion almost

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1 Rosenmüller 1810, 395.

2 Barthélemy 1992, 249.

3 Cooke 1936, 334.

unanimously drawn in the commentaries that the MT is corrupt and must be emended.

The witness of the ancient versions points in a similar direction; at least they show traces of textual confusion in the Hebrew text at an early stage. Even Barthélemy, a stout defender of the MT, allows for 'un éventuel accident textuel'.[4] The Septuagint reads καὶ διαχυθήσεται ὕδατα 'and waters shall be poured out', which may be an attempt 'to give an approximate sense to a slightly changed sequence of consonants' ('einen ungefähren Sinn in eine leicht veränderte Konsonantenfolge zu bringen')[5] and looks more like an awkward effort to handle a difficult text than a testimony of the correct original wording. The Syriac translation has even less to contribute: *wmps thw' lmpwlt'* 'and Memphis shall become a ruin' – a general phrase which appears to reveal the translator's perplexity rather than his *Vorlage*. Possibly the beginning of v. 17 in the Peshitta, *w'yk my'* 'and like water' should also be regarded as part of the translation of the disputed Hebrew text; as in the Septuagint the consonantal sequence מים seems to be presupposed instead of יומם in the MT. Both the Vulgate and the Targum appear to reflect a Hebrew text identical with the MT.

Thus the ancient versions do not contribute much to the emendation of the corrupt text; they present no variant which could have serious claims to represent a correct and original reading. The Septuagint, however, and perhaps also the Peshitta, is not without significance as evidence that the Hebrew text was out of order already at an early stage.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that a number of conjectures have been suggested. One of the more influential proposals is that of Cornill,[6] ונפרצו חומותיה 'and its walls shall be broken down', which is reproduced in the critical apparatus of *BHK* and *BHS* and accepted by, among others, Herrmann,[7] Cooke,[8] Fohrer,[9] May,[10] and Eichrodt.[11] This is certainly a possible text, but it involves more rewriting of the consonants than is desirable and so must be considered to have a fairly low probability; Eichrodt rightly characterizes it as a 'Geistreiche, aber ganz unsichere

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4 Barthélemy 1992, 249.

5 Zimmerli 1969, 727.

6 Cornill 1886, 370 f.

7 Herrmann 1924, 190.

8 Cooke1936, 334, 337.

9 Fohrer 1955, 171 f.

10 May 1956, 229.

11 Eichrodt1966, 284.

Deutung'.[12] The editor of Ezekiel in *BHK*, Bewer, suggests a phrase found in 2 Sam. 5:20 and 1 Chr. 14:11, כפרץ מים 'like a bursting flood'. It can claim partial support from the Septuagint but does not appear to fit the context particularly well. Smend's proposal[13] keeps closer to the wording of the Septuagint: ונפצו מימם 'and its waters will be spread about', but this too seems unsatisfactory from the point of view of content, and, as Cornill[14] observed, the verb פוץ is never used of water (Prov. 5:16 is different). G. R. Driver[15] has suggested ומים יפרצון 'and the waters shall burst in', which is perhaps more attractive, as it 'exactly uses up the letters of the M.T.',[16] but the consonants are redistributed in a way which is not entirely convincing. Still another restoration, also worth considering though perhaps not immediately persuasive, is Wever's[17] suggestion, offered with due caution and provided with a question-mark, that the original text may have run ונפרץ מוסד / יסוד 'and the foundation breached'.

More acceptable, perhaps, is the minimal change from צרי to צרו suggested in a version of the Book of Ezekiel published in 1986 as part of the new official Danish translation of the Bible.[18] This emendation results in the rendering 'og angriber Nof ved højlys dag', i.e. 'and attack Noph in broad daylight'. It is not entirely clear to me whether the translators assume the Hebrew verb to be צור I 'confine', 'besiege', or צור II 'show hostility to'. The first verb is more common and frequently used about cities, though it is normally construed with a preposition. The choice of Danish equivalent, 'angribe', points perhaps to the second alternative, as does the fact that the verb takes a direct object. In both cases, however, the qualification 'by day' arouses suspicion: sieges are normally carried on day and night, and it seems rather pointless to specify a threat of attack against the city in this way. A further weakness of the graphically highly attractive Danish solution is its use of the suffix conjugation of the verb: the immediately preceding statements about Sin and No are in the prefix conjugation, and one would have expected the same form to be used here.

The above list of emendations is not exhaustive,[19] but even this limited number may be sufficient to show both that the problem is difficult and that

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12 *Ibid.*, n. 8.

13 Quoted in Bertholet 1897, 158.

14 Cornill 1886, 371.

15 Driver 1938, 177.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Wevers 1969, 165.

18 Hezekiels Bog 1986, 79, 133.

19 Some more are listed in Barthélemy 1922, 247.

no obvious solution is available. As matters stand, it may be justifiable to suggest yet another restoration of the recalcitrant text.

As the adverb יומם 'by day' seems not to fit particularly well in the context, it is perhaps possible to interpret the word instead as the ordinary noun יום 'day' with a suffix for 3rd masc. plur., 'their day' (as for instance in Ezek. 21:34, E.T. v. 29). This is a suggestion found in the commentary by Kraetzschmar.[20] What could be said in this connection about the 'day' of the inhabitants of Noph? Perhaps that it shall be darkened, an idea which is expressed in v. 18; the passage about the clouds in v. 3 may also be compared. Kraetzschmar looks in this direction and suggests יעוף from a verb עוף II 'be dark'. The existence of such a verb is however in dispute: the only instance, Job 11:17, is questionable from a text-critical point of view.[21]

But Kraetzschmar's interpretation of יומם and his general understanding of the passage seem worthy of consideration, and a solution may be suggested which retains the advantages of Kraetzschmar's emendation without sharing its weakness. There is a verb with a meaning similar to that of the verb proposed by Kraetzschmar, a verb whose existence is less dubious and whose consonants, moreover, are closer to the letters preserved in the MT. It is the verb צלל III 'be shady, grow dark', of the same root as the common noun צל 'shadow', 'shade'. Admittedly the instances in the Old Testament are few. The Qal form is found only once, in Neh. 13:19, and the interpretation is a controversial issue. It is possible that צללו in that passage should not be derived from צלל 'grow dark' but taken instead as a form of a homonym with the sense 'be cleared', 'become empty',[22] suggested by its Syriac cognate and by the renderings of the ancient versions. The traditional translation may still, however, be regarded as a serious alternative: 'When it began to be dark in the gates of Jerusalem'. But if the Qal form in Nehemiah is uncertain, there is a clear case of the Hiphil form found in the very same section of the Book of Ezekiel, in 31:3, where it means 'to shadow', 'to shade'. So the existence of this verbal stem in biblical Hebrew seems secured; at the same time its comparative rarity could explain why it was misrepresented by scribes.

Thus it may be suggested that the original wording of Ezek. 30:16 could have been ונף יצל יומם 'and Noph, their day grows dark', i.e. 'the day of (the inhabitants of) Noph grows dark', with *casus pendens* according to

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[20] Kraetzschmar 1900, 226.

[21] Cf., e.g., Clines 1989, 256.

[22] Cf. Rudolph 1949, 206 f.; Clines 1984, 244; Blenkinsopp 1989, 357 f.

a common syntactical construction.[23] It is hardly a valid argument against the proposed emendation that a similar description of the judgement occurs in v. 18, 'At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark' (reading חשׁך with many Hebrew manuscripts and the ancient versions instead of חשׁך), as the section vv. 13–19 is indeed repetitive:[24] 'set fire' is used in v. 14 as well as in v. 16, 'execute judgement' both in v. 14 and in v. 19.

This conjecture results in a text which (a) is graphically quite close to the consonants of the MT; (b) makes good sense in the context; (c) adopts a mode of expression found elsewhere in this author; and (d) uses words known from other passages in the Book of Ezekiel.

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It is a pleasure to dedicate this short note in appreciation and friendship to Lars Hartman. I need not fear that he will look down on such preoccupation with minor textual details: in his work he has clearly shown that he recognizes the fundamental role of philology for sound exegesis. So I salute him with the wise words of Cornill[25] in the preface to his commentary on Ezekiel 1886: 'dass es sich hier nicht um kleinliche Wortklaubereien handelt, sondern dass wir, auch wenn wir dem Buchstaben unsere Mühe und unsere Sorgfalt zuwenden, doch für den Geist schaffen'.

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9

A Disputed Sense in a Covenant Context: On the Interpretation of Genesis 15:6

(*2003*)

Genesis 15 is a central covenant text. Its importance is undisputed; at the same time it presents a number of problems. No consensus has been reached on the question of its origin and composition, and the diversity of views put forward in recent research[1] seems to confirm the judgement expressed already in Skinner's commentary: 'the analysis is beset with peculiar, and perhaps insurmountable, difficulties'.[2] The present brief contribution does not attempt to solve those formidable problems. Its purpose is a more modest one: to suggest a partially new understanding of a crucial clause in this chapter, developing further an idea which has been introduced in recent studies.

Gen. 15:6 has been the object of innumerable expositions, not least as a consequence of its use by Paul (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6) and James (2:23). The New Testament reinterpretation has not only focused the attention of expositors on this passage. It has also – perhaps less fortunately – meant that many commentators have been governed, consciously or possibly more often unconsciously, by the particular theological understanding found in the New Testament (which is also the traditional Jewish interpretation, evidenced already in the Septuagint). Even when Old Testament scholars have endeavoured to understand the words in question in their Hebrew context, it has often proved difficult to escape the influence of this classic Jewish and Christian interpretation.[3]

Thus there has been almost unanimous agreement that there is a change of subject in the verse: whereas the subject of the first verb, והאמן 'and he believed', is Abraham (or rather Abram, as this is before the change of

[1] See, e.g., the brief but useful survey in Oeming (1998), 16–17 (with full bibliographic notes).

[2] (1912²), 276.

[3] Emphasized by Oeming (1998), 21.

name in 17:5), the second verb, ויחשבה 'and he reckoned it', is thought to have Yahwe as its subject. This interpretation is predominant in modern translations of the Hebrew Bible: 'Abram put his faith in the Lord, who reckoned it to him as righteousness' (REB); 'And because he put his trust in the Lord, He reckoned it to his merit' (NJPSV); 'Abram eut foi dans le Seigneur, et pour cela le Seigneur le considéra comme juste' (TOB); 'Abram glaubte dem Herrn, und der Herr rechnete es ihm als Gerechtigkeit an' (EÜ), to quote only a few major versions. It is also current in major commentaries on Genesis, for instance in those by Skinner,[4] Gunkel,[5] von Rad,[6] Speiser,[7] and Westermann.[8]

Nevertheless it is far from self-evident that this is the original meaning of the Hebrew sentence. The view that Abraham is in fact the subject also in the second clause has been argued by L. Gaston[9] and M. Oeming[10] (independently of one another). Their interpretation results in the following translation of v. 6b: 'And he (Abraham) counted it to him (YHWH) righteousness' (Gaston),[11] or 'und er (Abraham) achtete es (die Nachkommensverheissung) ihm (Jahwe) als Gerechtigkeit' (Oeming).[12] This translation presents itself more immediately and naturally as soon as one looks at the verse without being swayed by the conventional opinion. It is a considerable advantage to be able to avoid the abrupt change of subject presupposed by the traditional interpretation (though in itself formally possible), a change for which no indication is found in the Hebrew text itself.[13] It can hardly be denied that Gaston's and Oeming's

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4 (1912²), 280.

5 (1922⁵), 180.

6 (1958³), 153, 155–6.

7 (1964), 110.

8 (1981), 251, 264.

9 (1980).

10 (1983).

11 (1980), 41.

12 (1983), 197.

13 Oeming rightly speaks of 'das Fehlen jedes Hinweises auf einen Subjektwechsel' (1998, 19). B. Johnson (1986) has defended the traditional interpretation in an attempt to refute Oeming's first article. His detailed and careful exposition in a way tends to show the opposite of what it is meant to demonstrate: Johnson's main argument for the traditional idea of a change of subject turns out to be the shift of Hebrew tenses. But this shift must be regarded as irrelevant to the problem of the identity of the grammatical subject and thus in itself proves nothing; as Johnson himself admits, it is 'not decisive per se' (111). Only the context

interpretation results in a parallel sentence-structure that corresponds to Hebrew linguistic usage 'wesentlich besser als ein abrupter, fast gewaltsamer Subjektwechsel auf engstem Raum'.[14] At the same time we avoid the difficult task of explaining a 'remarkable anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith'[15] in this Old Testament context. Commentators have had difficulties with the traditional interpretation of v. 6b just because it introduces the idea of Yahweh reckoning Abraham's trust as a merit, an idea which seems irrelevant to the context. It has been explained as a late theological reflection on the preceding verses; von Rad in his commentary sees here a break in the narrative: the author as it were turns to the reader in order to communicate to him 'theologische Urteile von grosser theologischer Dichtigkeit'.[16] Such strange difficulties disappear if, instead, the section simply concludes in Abraham's trust in Yahweh.

Gaston's and Oeming's interpretation – anticipated in the thirteenth century by Ramban (Nachmanides),[17] arguing against Rashi, who held to the Jewish majority view – has been reviewed and defended and further developed in an important article by R. Mosis.[18] His thorough and detailed investigation includes an analysis of the syntactical connection of the clauses verse 6a and verse 6b. He succeeds in showing that the tense sequence is best understood as an entirely normal succession of perfect with a copulative waw (not perfect consecutive) followed by imperfect consecutive, or, in Mosis' own words, 'Neueinsatz mit einer perfektisch ausgedrückten stativischen Zustandschilderung, auf die ein im Narrativ ausgedrückter Bericht eines punktuellen Geschehens folgt'.[19]

Mosis thus takes the perfect והאמן in v. 6a as 'stativisch-durativ':[20] it does not describe Abraham's response to the divine promise of the preceding verses but relates a lasting state of things, the enduring faith in Yahweh which is the basis of Abraham's reaction narrated in 6b. And he interprets צדקה in 6b as a characterizing description of Yahweh's promise, which Abraham estimates as a 'Heilstat' or 'Gerechtigkeitstat'.[21] Thus Mosis

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could indicate such a change of subject – and it is indeed difficult to find any such indications.

14 Oeming (1983), 191.

15 Skinner (1912²), 280.

16 von Rad (1958³), 155. For a similar judgement see Westermann (1981), 264.

17 See Gaston (1980), 42–4.

18 (1989).

19 (1989), 235.

20 (1989), 244.

21 (1989), 251.

summarizes his interpretation of Gen. 15:6 in the following paraphrasing rendering: 'Nun lebte er beständig im gläubigen Vertrauen auf Jahwe, und so achtete er es für sich als eine heilswirkende und rechte Tat.'[22]

What I want to propose is a development of Gaston's, Oeming's, and Mosis' view. Central to this suggestion is an understanding of the key term צדקה which seems to me to result in a more adequate and more synonymous parallelism than these earlier interpretations. Oeming takes צדקה as Yahweh's 'Gerechtigkeitserweis',[23] a designation for his unfounded and incomprehensible mercy,[24] the divine grace which promises numerous posterity to Abraham, and Gaston's and Mosis' interpretations are along the same lines, with only slight differences.

The Hebrew word צדקה is notoriously ambiguous and frequently difficult to translate. The traditional English 'righteousness' (and its equivalents in other Western languages) is not always suitable. In some cases it can mean something like 'reliability', 'trustworthiness', 'truth'. Koehler's and Baumgartner's Hebrew dictionary registers this shade of meaning as 'das Verlässliche, die Wahrheit',[25] and in Brown-Driver-Briggs the relevant passages are listed under 'righteousness=truthfulness'.[26] The most illustrative example of this meaning may be Isa. 45:23,

> יצא מפי צדקה דבר ולא ישוב
> From my mouth has issued truth, a word that shall not turn back (NJPSV), mein Mund hat die Wahrheit gesprochen, es ist ein unwiderrufliches Wort (EÜ).

The closely related noun צדק can carry the same sense, as in Isa. 45:19,

> אני יהוה דבר צדק מגיד מישרים
> I the Lord, who foretell reliably, who announce what is true (NJPSV), Ich bin der Herr, der die Wahrheit spricht und der verkündet, was recht ist (EÜ).

This is further corroborated by the fact that it occurs as the opposite of שקר 'lie', 'falsehood', as in Ps. 52:5

22 (1989), 254.
23 (1983), 195.
24 (1998), 31–2.
25 *HALAT*, 944 a.
26 BDB, 842 a.

אהבת רע מטוב שׁקר מדבר צדק
You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than truthful speech (REB), Du liebst das Böse mehr als das Gute und Lüge mehr als wahrhaftige Rede (EÜ).[27]

In these passages the word צדק and צדקה denote, in K. Hj. Fahlgren's words, 'das Wort, das mit der Gemeinschaftsnorm übereinstimmt, d.h. Wahrheit'.[28] I suggest that this meaning is to be found also in Gen. 15:6.

The verb in Gen. 15:6b, חשׁב 'think', 'account', is not infrequently used to denote 'think (someone) to be (something)', 'take (someone) for', 'consider as'. A characteristic case is 1 Sam. 1:13, ויחשׁבה עלי לשׁכרה, said about the priest's reaction to Hanna's prayer: 'So Eli (regarded her as drunk =) thought she was drunk'. Used like this the verb is normally, as in the Samuel passage, construed with the preposition ל. But the preposition is not indispensable, as shown by Isa. 53:4, חשׁבנהו נגוע 'we accounted him plagued' (NJPSV).[29]

Thus the words ויחשׁבה צדקה in Gen. 15:6 can be rendered 'and he regarded it as trustworthiness', 'and he thought it reliable/true'. But between these words we find לו, literally 'to him' or 'to himself'. How should it be interpreted? In the traditional understanding of this passage it is of course taken to mean 'to him', i.e. to Abraham: 'and he (Yahweh) reckoned it to him as righteousness'.[30] Those who prefer the more natural interpretation which makes Abraham the subject of the second verb as well sometimes take 'to him' to refer to Yahweh (so Gaston and Oeming, quoted above). But others combine Gaston's and Oeming's identification of the subject of the verbs with a different understanding of לו: they give it a reflexive meaning and make it refer to Abraham. This is the interpretation defended by Mosis,[31] and H. D. Preuss, referring to Mosis, gives the following version in his Old Testament theology: 'Und da (und so) hat Abram sich

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27 See also Prov. 12:17.

28 (1932), 84–5.

29 See also *GK* § 117 *ii*.

30 Ps. 106:30–31 is not infrequently quoted as a parallel to Gen. 15:6. But, as Oeming (1998, 22) has emphasized, the formulations are not identical; nor is the context at all similar. And this passage in the Book of Psalms is unambiguous: only one translation is possible.

31 (1989), 252–4.

auf JHWH verlassen und die von JHWH zuvor gegebene Zusage "für sich (לו)" als eine Heilstat eingeschätzt.'[32]

I want to suggest, however, that one could take a further step in this direction and see לו as a case of the so-called *dativus ethicus*.[33] This is of course a well-known grammatical phenomenon in Biblical Hebrew. It is frequently used with verbs of movement, especially in imperatives, as e.g. in ברח־לך 'flee' (Gen. 27:43) or נטה לך 'turn aside' (2 Sam. 2:21), but its use is not restricted to this kind of verb. It is found with many other verbal types in different connections, as e.g. in השׁמר לך 'take care' (Gen. 24:6 and *passim*) or דמה־לך 'be like' (Cant. 2:17; 8:14). Nor is its use confined to imperative forms of verbs, as shown in e.g. שׂבעה־לה נפשׁנו '(our soul is=) we are sated' (Ps. 123:4); פרא בודד לו 'a lonely wild ass' (Hos. 8:9) or

> ותבטח לך על־מצרים
> and you relied on Egypt (Isa. 36:9).

The *dativus ethicus* is in fact frequently found with verbs 'denoting attitude of mind',[34] as in the previous example, or in

> אל־תבטחו לכם אל־דברי השׁקר
> Do not trust in deceptive words (Jer. 7:4).

And there is actually a passage where the verb חשׁב is used in the very same sense as in Gen. 15:6 and where it is also followed by לו, i.e. Job 19:11 ויחשׁבני לו כצריו 'he counts me among his enemies' (NAB). Perhaps it could be objected that this case is not absolutely clear: לו might conceivably be influenced – at least to some extent – by צריו 'his enemies'. But if it were dependent upon this word, one would expect it to come after it (as in Job 13:24; 33:10), not immediately after חשׁב as here. Thus it seems reasonable to regard it as a parallel case.

And even if Gen. 15:6 were the only case of חשׁב with a *dativus ethicus* this would in fact cause no problem. The Hebrew Bible is such a limited

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[32] (1992), 173. A further (though perhaps less convincing) reflexive interpretation has been suggested by D. U. Rottzoll: 'Und Abraham glaubte Gott und rechnete sich das (sc. das Glauben) als Gerechtigkeitstat an', (1994, 27).

[33] See, e.g., *GK* § 119 *s*; Meyer (1972[3]), § 107, 5. The appropriateness of this designation has not surprisingly been questioned; see, e.g., Joüon (1923), § 133 d, note 1, and notably Muraoka (1978), who prefers the term 'centripetal'. See also Waltke and O'Connor (1990), § 11.2.10d. The traditional term is retained here simply because no other designation seems to have become generally accepted.

[34] Waltke and O'Connor (1990), § 11.2.10d; cf. Muraoka (1978), 497.

corpus that many linguistic phenomena are bound to occur just once. If חשׁב qal, occurring some 77 times were only once found with an ethical dative, this would certainly be no more remarkable than the fact that עלה qal, of which there are more than 600 occurrences in the Old Testament, is found only twice with such a dative (Jos. 17:15; Isa. 40:9).

The Hebrew ethical dative is as a rule best left untranslated[35] (cf. the examples quoted above), and so Gen. 15:6 can be rendered: 'He trusted Yahweh and considered it (i.e. Yahweh's promise)[36] reliable.'

Oeming has rightly stressed the parallelism between verse 6a and verse 6b as a strong argument for his interpretation. The rendering suggested above appears to me to result in an even better and more synonymous parallelism. As Westermann has pointed out, it is necessary that we should be told here about Abraham's reaction, since in v. 2–3 he has hesitated to accept Yahweh's promise. Now Yahweh has made his pledge clearer, and so Abraham's response is described. His trust in Yahweh is related in full: we hear of his enduring faith, as the basis of his reaction, and of his immediate and confident response to the overwhelming divine promise. Yahweh acts, and Abraham reacts; we do not expect to be informed also of Yahweh's reaction to Abraham's reaction[37] – especially not in a brief sentence of five Hebrew words.

Several translations of this disputed verse may be philologically possible, and we may never reach an understanding of its original meaning that is incontestably the only correct one. But the very simplicity and naturalness of the interpretation suggested above seems to me to speak strongly in its favour. That is why we have included it in the new Swedish Bible. It is not in the text itself: there the traditional interpretation is still found ('Abram trodde Herren, och därför räknade Herren honom som rättfärdig'), on the ground that an official new version ought as a rule to reflect a majority view. But the new interpretation is presented in a footnote as an equally possible rendering of the original ('Abram trodde Herren och litade på att hans löfte var sant'). Perhaps, in a future version, this will become – after proper examination by the community of scholars – the main alternative.

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35 See, e.g., Meyer (1972[3]), § 107, 5.

36 For this interpretation of the suffix see Mosis (1989), 81.

37 It is interesting to note that Westermann (1981, 263), in spite of the fact that he adheres to the traditional interpretation of verse 6b, nevertheless declares: 'Der Text schliesst mit der Reaktion Abrahams auf die Verheissung'.

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10
Masoretic or Mixed: On Choosing a Textual Basis for a Translation of the Hebrew Bible*

(*2007*)

During the last quarter of last century a new official Swedish translation of the Hebrew Bible was worked out. We started in 1975 and finished in the year 2000, and the complete edition of the three parts of the whole Bible, the Old Testament, the Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament, were ceremonially presented to the Minister of Culture in February 2001.

Before the work began, a state committee had sat from 1971 to 1974 to draw up the guiding principles for the translation.[1] One of the central problems which we had to discuss was the question of the textual basis for this new Swedish version. There had been only two previous official and authorized translations in our country. The first, from 1541, was in all essentials a Swedish version of Luther's German Bible. The second translation, on which a Royal Commission had been labouring since 1773, was at last – after 144 years of diligent work – published in 1917. In contrast to the old version, this Swedish Bible was based on a careful study of the Hebrew and Greek originals. But whereas in the New Testament the translators were anxious to include the results of contemporary text-critical studies, in the Old Testament they decided to follow faithfully the Masoretic text practically without any textual criticism at all.[2]

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* An earlier (almost identical) version of this paper was read to the Summer Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study at Oxford in July 2004, subsequently published (with minor changes) in *Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: Essays in Memory of Karl-Johan Illman* (ed. J. Neusner *et al.*; Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 23–34.

[1] Published as *Att översätta Gamla testamentet: Texter, kommentarer, riktlinjer* (Statens offentliga utredningar 1974:33, Stockholm: Allmänna Förlaget, 1974).

[2] See *Att översätta*, 40–52.

Thus the first Swedish Bible had in all essentials followed a German original, and the second had rather slavishly kept to the Masoretic text. We decided that the time had at last come to allow the results of modern textual studies of the Hebrew original to influence the new version. This was not, of course, at all innovative: we were following in the footsteps of other modern Western translations of the Bible: the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, the New American Bible, the French Jerusalem Bible, and several others.

So the text-critical principles of the new Swedish translation of the Hebrew Bible are neither new nor uncommon. The reason why I want to discuss these principles is the fact that they have recently been challenged, not by some crackpot with a mania for originality but by one of the foremost experts on the textual history and the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. A few years ago Professor Emanuel Tov read a paper at the Triennial Translators' Workshop of the United Bible Societies in Mexico, and it was published in the year 2000 in vol. 20 of *Textus*. Its title is 'The Textual Basis of Modern Translations of the Hebrew Bible: the Argument against Eclecticism'.[3] When a distinguished scholar like Emanuel Tov suggests – and I quote his own words – 'returning to the principles of the first biblical translations that were based on MT, such as the KJV',[4] then I think we should either take up the gauntlet and scrutinize his argument or else follow his advice and abandon our eclectic principles. I for one have not been convinced by Tov's plea for a return to a pre-critical approach and I shall try to explain why. Let me emphasize that my scepticism does not imply any lack of respect for Professor Tov's scholarly standing: it is precisely because he is rightly regarded as an eminent authority in textual matters that his arguments must be taken seriously.

Tov begins his paper with a distinction between two different types of translations of the Hebrew Bible: 'scholarly translations included in critical commentaries, and translations prepared for believing communities, Christian and Jewish.'[5] These two kinds were originally distinct, but they have grown more and more similar: 'In recent decades', says Tov, 'the two types of translation have become almost indistinguishable and often share the same principles'.[6] Just like scholarly translations found in critical commentaries, modern versions intended for believing communities and the general public include readings from the Dead Sea scrolls or from the

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[3] E. Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', *Textus* 20 (2000), 193–211.

[4] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 209.

[5] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 193.

[6] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 195.

Septuagint and other ancient translations. 'It is more or less axiomatic for modern translation enterprises that the translation should be eclectic, that is, that MT should be followed in principle, but occasionally ought to be abandoned.'[7]

Having quoted or summarized descriptions of these eclectic principles in a number of modern versions of the Bible, Tov arrives at his main point: 'In spite of the obvious advantages of a critical procedure in the creation of translations, this approach is problematical'. And he continues: 'The main problem is the eclecticism itself, which some people regard as arrogance and which involves the subjective selection of readings found in the ancient translations and the Qumran manuscripts.'[8]

A key term here is the phrase 'subjective selection of readings'. It is evident that for Tov the main drawback of the eclectic method is the subjectivity involved in the choice of readings. The words 'subjective' and 'subjectivity' time and again recur in his argument, and it seems appropriate to take a closer look at his use of this term.

The term occurs in fact frequently also in Tov's well-known books *The Text-critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*[9] and *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*.[10] In the first of these instructive volumes we read, for instance, that 'Obviously it is a very subjective and difficult matter to earmark a certain variant as original, and the reading of MT as an error'[11] or that 'It goes without saying that all evaluations of readings are subjective'.[12] In his *Textual Criticism*, Tov adduces a number of examples of corruptions in the biblical text, based on the comparison of MT and other witnesses, and he writes: 'Such a comparison is based on objective textual data and recognized scribal phenomena. However, the final decision, at the level of the evaluation of these readings is necessarily subjective'.[13]

When Tov rejects an eclectic textual basis for a translation of the Hebrew Bible on the ground that it is subjective, what exactly does he mean by 'subjective'? Unfortunately he never makes quite clear in what sense he is using the terms 'subjective' and 'objective'. He simply talks about subjectivity and objectivity as if it were self-evident what these

7 Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 198–9.

8 Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 202.

9 Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged (Jerusalem: Simor, 1997).

10 Second Revised Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

11 Tov, *The Text-critical Use*, 194.

12 Tov, *The Text-critical Use*, 217.

13 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 10.

words stand for. Obviously this is not so: they are notoriously difficult to define exactly and may be used with several different shades of meaning.

If we turn to the definitions of 'subjective' in volume 17 of the *Oxford English Dictionary*,[14] some of these are obviously inappropriate when applied to Tov's text. 'Due to internal causes and discoverable by oneself alone' is clearly not what Tov means, nor is 'Existing in the mind only, without anything real to correspond to it; illusory, fanciful'. We are getting closer with 'Relating to the thinking subject, proceeding from or taking place within the subject; having its source in the mind', and in some cases at least this seems to be what Tov means, especially when he contrasts objective textual data and subjective evaluation of these data. But what Tov has in mind is perhaps sometimes better specified by another definition in the dictionary: 'Pertaining or peculiar to an individual subject or his mental operations; depending upon one's individuality or idiosyncrasy; personal, individual'. For Tov 'objective' means, it seems, something like 'existing in the external world, independently of the thoughts and feelings of the observer', whereas 'subjective' seems to carry either a more descriptive meaning, 'existing only in the mind of a human being', or a slightly pejorative sense, 'influenced by the individual scholar's personal opinions and ideas'. I do not think, however, that it is always possible to distinguish clearly between these two nuances, and in many of Tov's statements they seem to merge.

The purely descriptive sense states the rather obvious fact that comparisons and evaluations of variant readings are made by human brains and are therefore never independent of scholarly judgement, unlike the variant readings themselves, which clearly exist independently of the human mind, in the sense that any literate person can verify their factuality just by checking a manuscript or an edition. This is simply another way of stating the distinction between facts and observations on the one hand and conclusions and arguments on the other. To point out the subjectivity of textual judgements in this descriptive sense seems not very helpful: it is a characteristic which is necessarily shared by all judgements made in the humanities, by philologists, historians, literary scholars, and all the rest.

But the word 'subjective' as used by Tov is sometimes not strictly descriptive: it also has a pejorative shade of meaning, suggesting a lack of objectivity that is regarded as in itself a deficiency. Clearly 'objectivity' for Tov is a good thing, and 'subjectivity' a dubious quality that renders the eclectic method questionable and suspicious. And so 'subjective' is used almost as an equivalent to 'biased' or 'arbitrary'. Now this seems to me a rather simplistic view, too black and white, as if there were no degrees of

[14] Second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

subjectivity, no ways of deciding between loose speculations and reliable conclusions.

When arguing against the eclecticism of modern translations of the Hebrew Bible, Tov makes the somewhat exaggerated claim that in the evaluation of textual readings 'subjectivity is so pervasive that well-based solutions seem to be impossible'.[15] But as a learned and astute critic, he is of course aware that all textual arguments are not equally uncertain, and in his purely text-critical works he is sometimes more balanced and realistic. Discussing reconstructions of the hypothetical *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, for instance, he writes about 'reliable Greek-Hebrew equivalents' and 'satisfactory retroversions'.[16] And he allows for variants from the ancient versions if they have 'been obtained by reliable methods of reconstruction'.[17] Likewise Tov does not hesitate to make statements like the following: 'Both the Hebrew parent text of the Septuagint … and certain of the Qumran texts … reflect excellent texts, often better than that of MT'.[18] Evidently 'well-based solutions' are not always 'impossible'.

It seems to me that this less rigid and more balanced view, which is represented in many passages in Tov's works, invalidates or at least undermines his sweeping use of the term 'subjective' in his attack on eclecticism. All research in the humanities requires judgements and choices between alternative solutions, and it is certainly possible to distinguish between judgements for which there are conclusive or at least creditable arguments, based on solid evidence on the one hand, and judgements which can be shown to be based on misconceptions, defective logic or a misleading selection of facts on the other hand.[19]

The difficulty, of course, is that there is no clear or absolute line of demarcation between good and bad arguments. Arguments can be arranged along a scale reaching from the completely convincing to the barely credible, and it is in many cases possible for serious scholars to disagree about the precise place on this scale of a particular argument. This uncertainty, this subjectivity, is what Tov wants to avoid at all costs. As there is no unfailing and completely objective method to sort out the most original reading, he thinks that Bible translators should dispense with textual decisions altogether. His solution is not to untie but to cut the Gordian knot: we

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15 Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 203.

16 Tov, *The Text-critical Use*, 72.

17 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, *298.*

18 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 24.

19 See e.g. the useful discussion in G. Hermerén, 'Criteria of Objectivity in History', in *Danish Year-book of Philosophy* 14 (1977), 13–40.

should 'use a single source as the basis for a translation',[20] and 'If MT is chosen …, it should be followed consistently'.[21]

That this is only apparently a valid solution is evident already from Tov's use of the word 'chosen', which reveals that the necessity of a subjective choice has not been escaped. True, the choice has been made on a different level, but it is not therefore less subjective. And one could also say that in all the passages where we have a textual problem the choice between variants has not really been abolished by Tov, only predetermined: the question has in each single case been settled in advance in favour of the reading found in MT.

It is tempting to quote here what Tov has written elsewhere about MT: that 'we would still have to decide *which* Masoretic Text …, since the Masoretic Text is not a uniform textual unit, but is itself represented by many witnesses'.[22] These inner-Masoretic variations are of course much more limited than differences between MT and other witnesses, but (to quote an observation which Tov has made in a similar context) 'this is merely a matter of quantity, not of principle'.[23]

I should perhaps add that I do not for a moment question the standing of MT as the essential basis for a translation of the OT: it is, after all, the only complete version of the Hebrew original that is available, and so is simply our necessary point of departure. What I object to is Tov's claim that this traditional text should be preserved in every detail and must never be corrected.

According to Tov, modern scholarly translations 'claim to reflect the *Urtext* of the biblical books'.[24] I doubt that all scholars would uphold such far-reaching pretensions. The original form of the text has become an increasingly elusive goal, and even if 'it is likely that there has been an original text in the sense of the first (complete) edition' (as Arie van der Kooij has put it),[25] I would prefer a more cautious way of expressing

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[20] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 203.

[21] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 209. Tov allows for the possibility that some other source could be chosen, e.g. the Septuagint.

[22] Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 11. See also a similar statement in Tov's article 'The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of Canon', in *The Canon Debate* (ed. L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002), 242.

[23] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 202.

[24] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 193.

[25] 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*

our aim. A. E. Housman once gave a simple and ingenious definition of textual criticism as 'the science of discovering error in texts and the art of removing it'.[26] This definition may well be applied to the task of Bible translators: we should simply try to correct MT where scribal mistakes have been discovered and can be removed.

In a section called 'The Need for the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible', Tov has rightly stressed that 'a serious involvement in biblical studies clearly necessitates the study of all sources, including the differences between them'.[27] But why should the results of such studies be kept within the narrow circle of biblical scholars and not be allowed to influence translations made for the general reader? It seems odd that the very legitimacy of textual decisions should be questioned, and, as we heard, Tov even intimates that eclecticism might be regarded as arrogance.

A further objection immediately suggests itself: What does it mean to follow MT *consistently*? Is it really possible to do so everywhere? We all know that MT is in some passages corrupt and in fact incomprehensible. Tov is naturally well aware of this difficulty: 'Obviously there are many problems in producing a translation that follows MT only, and at times unconventional solutions will have to be found to include in modern translations details in the text that are unintelligible or even corrupt'.[28] The expression 'unconventional solutions' seems to be a euphemism here for something less honourable, in fact a way of misleading the ordinary reader. Even this is actually conceded by Tov. He first refers to an article by H. L. Ginsberg, telling 'The Story of the Jewish Publication Society's New Translation of the Torah', a version which expressly claims to be a faithful rendering of MT. Ginsberg wrote: 'where we have been convinced that the text is corrupt, we have made do with the received text if it was at all possible to squeeze out of it a meaning not too far removed from what we thought might have been the sense of the original reading'.[29] Tov himself

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the Judaean Desert Discoveries (ed. E. D. Herbert and E. Tov; London: British Library, 2002), 174. Cf. also K. Hognesius, *The Text of 2 Chronicles 1–16: A Critical Edition with Textual Commentary* (Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series 51, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003), 20–27.

[26] A. E. Housman, 'The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism', in *Selected Prose* (ed. J. Carter; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 131. Housman's paper was first read to the Classical Association meeting at Cambridge in 1921 and published in its *Proceedings* 18 (1922), 67 ff.

[27] Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 2.

[28] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 209.

[29] Quoted from Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 210, n. 45.

comments: 'The procedure described is in a way unfair to the reader, for it implies that the translators maneuvered the English language in order to make some sense of a passage that, according to their scholarly opinion, did not make sense.'[30] This, then, is what the method recommended by Tov is bound to entail, and it seems to me obvious that the manipulations involved in finding the 'unconventional solutions' which Tov favours are no less subjective than arguments used in favour of a variant reading.

Tov's kind of solution is moreover deliberately chosen against one's better judgement and is based on a reading which is understood to be corrupt, whereas the choice of a variant according to the eclectic method is based on the best available evidence and leads to a result which is probably and in several cases almost certainly right.[31] Tov's solution means, too, that the true nature of the problem is concealed: a difficulty which is essentially a textual problem is solved as if it were a problem of meaning and translation.

A moment ago I quoted Tov's candid statement that there are details in MT 'that are unintelligible and even corrupt'.[32] Perhaps it could be added here that corrupt, untranslatable and unintelligible are not always the same thing. A word or a passage may be perfectly translatable and intelligible and nevertheless corrupt, or an expression may be translatable in itself but unintelligible in the context. Many combinations are possible, and, as always, all text-critical cases must be analysed and assessed individually.

So far I have only discussed Tov's recommendation as a question of principle, and it is time to look at a few concrete examples. Unfortunately Tov's own discussion in his article against eclecticism is entirely abstract: there is not a single example of the practical consequences of the method he advocates. That is a pity, for as the English saying goes, 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Let us look at some passages and compare the results of the eclectic method and of Tov's proposal.

A well-known case of an unintelligible word in MT is found in Isa. 14:4. It is the noun מדהבה, which is unexplained – there is no known Hebrew root דהב. The word occurs in the opening of the taunt-song over the king of Babylon: 'How the oppressor has ceased, the מדהבה ceased!' It has long ago been suggested, with the support of several ancient versions,

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30 Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 210.

31 Cf. also a similar objection (against D. Barthélemy) in my 'Translation and Emendation', in *Language, Theology, and The Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (ed. S. E. Balentine and J. Barton; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 39.

32 Above, n. 27.

that we should read מרהבה 'insolence'[33] instead of MT's unintelligible מדהבה (*daleth* and *resh* are of course easily and frequently confused), and this emendation has since been confirmed by the first Isaiah scroll from Qumran. The interesting thing is that the version issued by the Jewish Publication Society of America (NJV),[34] which is expressly a version 'according to the Masoretic text'[35] – Tov even claims that 'it follows MT without exception'[36] – here chooses the Qumran variant, with the footnote 'Reading *marhebah* with 1QIs^a (cf. Septuagint). The traditional reading *madhebah* is of unknown meaning'. If we agree with Karl Popper that one single observation of a black swan allows us to conclude that not all swans are white,[37] we may infer from this passage that MT has not been followed consistently even in NJV – indeed telling evidence of the impracticability of the method recommended by Tov.

A clear case of an unintelligible and corrupt passage in MT which is easily remedied with the aid of the ancient versions is found in Ps. 49. The reading in MT is a common word, readily translated in isolation but unintelligible in the context. The psalmist speaks of the common fate of all men: the wise and the stupid alike must die. And in v. 12 he continues: קרבם בתימו לעולם 'their midst is their home forever'. This is extremely obscure, but the Septuagint and other ancient versions provide the solution. They have a word for 'grave', and evidently two letters have been transposed: instead of the difficult קרבם they have read קברם, which gives excellent meaning and fits perfectly in the context: all men die, and 'their grave is their home forever'. Very probably the Masoretic reading is a simple clerical error – mistakes of this kind are easily made, and I suppose most of us have committed similar transpositions many times (I certainly have). There can hardly be any doubt that the reading of the ancient versions

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[33] So already J. D. Michaelis: see E. F. C. Rosenmüller, *Scholia in Vetus Testamentum* III:1 (Leipzig: Barth, 1791), 315 ('Michaelis, qui hanc lectionem vulgari praefert').

[34] *The Torah* (1962), *The Prophets* (1978), *The Writings* (1982). These were brought together in a single volume (with revisions): *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

[35] So the first editions; the single volume has 'According to the Traditional Hebrew Text'.

[36] Tov, *Textual Criticism*, XXXV. Tov has, however, a more realistic formulation on p. 374: that it 'reproduces MT as much as possible'.

[37] See e.g. B. Magee, *Popper* (Fontana Modern Masters, London: Fontana/ Collins, 1973), 22.

represents the original text.[38] And it is highly interesting to note that the NJV translates 'Their grave is their eternal home', with a rather dishonest footnote: 'Taken with ancient versions and medieval commentators as the equivalent of *qibram*' – as if the text-critical operation which is the only possible basis for the rendering 'grave' could be rightfully represented as an interpretation of the traditional text.

In the first chapter of 1 Sam. we hear about Hannah and Elkanah and how they go up to the temple at Shiloh. According to MT Hannah takes little Samuel up with her, along with three bulls, בפרים שלשה (v. 24). This seems a clear and intelligible reading. There are nevertheless good reasons to regard it as corrupt. In the next verse we are told that they slaughtered 'the bull', in the singular, and instead of the three bulls the Septuagint has 'a three-year-old bull', presupposing a Hebrew בפר משלש, a simple case of different word division. It has long been recognized that this must be the correct reading,[39] and משלש is now also attested by the first Samuel scroll from cave 4 in Qumran. Tov agrees that this is the original wording: he writes that 'the common reading of the LXX and 4QSam^{a} in 1 Sam. 1:24 … reflects the uncorrupted text, while MT has been corrupted'.[40] But if we follow his advice, we should nevertheless keep the three bulls and leave the reader with the problem how this is to be reconciled with the singular in the next verse. No 'unconventional solution' can of course mitigate the difficulty here: the meaning of the erroneous text is quite clear, and the translation 'three bulls' cannot be avoided. Not all corruptions result in a text which is difficult to translate.

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[38] This is also the view of Abraham Geiger in his *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* ([1857] 2nd edn, Frankfurt am Main: Madda, 1928), 176. Geiger does not, however, regard the masoretic reading as a clerical error but explains it as probably (*wohl*) an anti-Sadducean alteration made by the Pharisees, who considered it offensive that the dead should remain forever in the grave, as if there were no resurrection. And so the objectionable wording, attested by the ancient versions, was changed into the reading now found in MT. Geiger admits, however, that MT is rather unintelligible (*ziemlich unverständlich*). But the idea that a conscious correction should result in an incomprehensible text seems to me considerably less probable than the explanation as a simple error.

[39] Since L. Cappellus (Cappel) in the seventeenth century: see the survey of early studies of this passage in D. Barthelémy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament* 1 (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 50/1, Fribourg: Éditions universitaires, 1982), 141–2.

[40] *The Text-critical Use*, 190.

In another passage in 1 Sam there is a well-known case of accidental omission in MT. It is found in 14:41, where the eye of a scribe must have jumped from the first appearance of the word Israel to a later occurrence, omitting all the intervening words, with the consequence that the remaining text is hardly intelligible (though some defenders of the sanctity of MT have of course found it perfectly satisfactory – there is no conceivable scribal error which cannot with learning, ingenuity and wishful thinking be promoted to a linguistic nicety). The passage occurs in a context where Jonathan has unwittingly broken Saul's ban on eating before evening, and Saul wants to find out who is guilty. According to MT v. 41 begins: 'Saul said to the Lord, the God of Israel: הבה תמים Give *tamim*' (whatever that may mean; RV has 'Shew the right'). The Septuagint and the Vulgate both have a much longer text which may be translated 'Saul said to the Lord, the God of Israel: Why have you not answered your servant today? If this guilt lies in me or in my son Jonathan, Lord God of Israel, give *Urim*, and if it lies in your people Israel, give *Thummim*'. No doubt this is the original text, clear and intelligible, and MT is the difficult and disconnected result of an accidental omission.[41] This is very clearly stated by Tov himself in his book on the text-critical use of the Septuagint: 'There seems to be no way of explaining the biblical text except with the aid of the section which has been transmitted solely by the LXX (and V) .... This section must have been omitted accidentally'.[42] It is difficult to see why this clarifying and salutary result of text-critical research should be denied to the general reader just for the pleasure of avoiding subjectivity.

In 2 Sam. 18:2 according to MT we read: 'And David sent out the people, one third under the command of Joab, one third under the command of Abishai the son of Zeruia, Joab's brother, and one third under the command of Ittai the Gittite'. But the following verses show that the army was not yet sent out: it is still there, and a conversation between King David and his men is reported; the troops do not march out until v. 4. Greek manuscripts of the Lucianic tradition, however, offer a variant to MT's וישלח 'sent out': they have a word meaning 'divided into three', which is clearly based on a Hebrew variant וישלש instead of MT:s וישלח. I do not think that there can be any serious doubt that this variant represents the original text, and it seems preferable to spare the reader the easily translatable but nevertheless corrupt reading of MT.

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[41] For a more detailed discussion of this passage see my 'Some Observations on Two Oracular Passages in 1 Sam.', in *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 11 (1978), 5–10.

[42] *The Text-critical Use*, 128–9.

In Micah chapter 5 Israelite leaders are promised victory against the Assyrians, and according to MT 'they will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in its gates' (v. 5). The last word, בפתחיה, is difficult in this context; it is, as Delbert Hillers has noticed in his commentary, 'unsatisfactory in sense and as a parallel to "sword"'.[43] Both problems are solved by a simple operation: if with a slight change we read בפתיחה 'with the drawn sword' instead of MT's בפתחיה 'in its gates' we get both a satisfactory sense and the expected parallelism: 'the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod with the drawn blade'. The word, though uncommon, is found in this sense in Ps 55:22, and there is support for this reading in minor ancient versions. MT cannot be forced to mean what it ought to mean, and the remedy is not some kind of strained interpretation but an elementary text-critical operation.

I could go on quoting literally hundreds of such examples, but I think this is enough to show that the principles recommended by Tov sometimes lead to unfortunate results. To my mind this is too high a price to pay for the doubtful gain of avoiding subjectivity – especially as it does not really save us from this menace, but merely moves it to a different area.

It is interesting to note Tov's sharp distinction between scholarly translations and those intended for the general public. He appears to regard the influence from the former as something deplorable: he talks of 'the subjective eclecticism imported from the world of scholarship',[44] and declares that such eclecticism 'has entered the world of confessional translations through the back door, coming from the academic world'.[45] It seems a strange attitude: to want to protect ordinary Bible readers from the results of serious and sincere studies. I cannot help recalling a discussion in Sweden a century ago about precisely this problem. The leading members of the Royal Translation Commission defended their decision to keep to the MT even in obviously corrupt passages with exactly the same arguments as Tov: though textual studies have produced good results, all reconstructions are nevertheless uncertain and subjective; to stick to MT is the only principle which can be followed consistently, and in a version intended not for 'more or less learned circles' but for the national church this is the only possible principle.[46] It is almost ghostlike to hear these arguments echoing once more in Tov's plea, not least in his warnings for the influence

[43] D. R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 68.

[44] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 210.

[45] Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 211.

[46] See *Att översätta Gamla testamentet* (above, n. 1), 41–7.

of scholarly research. The Swedish Commission was criticized by an OT professor at Uppsala named Erik Stave.[47] He reacted against the wholesale characterization of textual criticism as subjective and arbitrary, and when the Commission's fidelity to MT was defended with the argument that the translation was not meant for scholars but for ordinary people, he asked why the admittedly good results of scholarly research should be denied to the people. Stave also showed that the claim to have followed MT consistently was hollow – just as not even NJV has been able to live up to this principle, as we saw a moment ago, so he could demonstrate that the Commission had in fact deviated from MT in a number of passages.

Tov's argument against eclecticism is characterized by a marked reluctance to make textual judgements and choices. The same attitude was expressed by the gentlemen of the old Swedish commission: a key argument is that once you start abandoning MT, there is no given boundary: 'Where do you draw the line?' (as one of them wrote).[48] Tov does not phrase it exactly like that, but it is an important aspect of his aversion to eclecticism. It leads him into making statements like 'In due course reasoning along these lines could give rise to translations that are completely different from MT',[49] which seems an absurd exaggeration.

The fact that there is no absolute boundary between necessary amendments and possible proposals of course constitutes a real problem, but it is not a problem which should be evaded the way Tov suggests – as we have seen this leads to other problems and other subjective choices. Tov himself has written some wise words about the difficulty of evaluating text-critical arguments; he says: 'These difficulties, however, do not render the whole procedure of textual evaluation questionable, for such is the nature of the undertaking'.[50] Indeed, such is the nature of the undertaking – and it is a pity that Tov is not prepared to extend this insight to biblical translation as well.

There is no god-given version of the text which can be followed everywhere, there are only imperfect manuscripts and versions, the products of fallible men, and as all these texts 'differ from each other to a greater or

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47 *Att översätta*, 45–51. On Stave see R. G. S. Idestrom, *From Biblical Theology to Biblical Criticism: Old Testament Scholarship at Uppsala University, 1866–1922* (Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series 47, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000), 153–92.

48 See *Att översätta*, 42 (J. Personne: 'hvar går gränsen?').

49 Tov, 'Textual Basis of Modern Translations', 211.

50 Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 310.

lesser extent',[51] the translator cannot evade making a choice, trying to find out which of two or several readings is likely to be more original. Tov's wish to relieve the translator of this responsibility is difficult to understand. The real reason for this rather extreme view still eludes me. I find it strange to be so afraid of potential errors of subjective judgement as to deliberately prefer manifest errors of transcription. Tov's view reminds one of the futile attempts of fundamentalists to exalt the biblical words above all human shortcomings and rescue them from being evaluated and judged by sinful creatures. I have no reason to believe that Tov shares such ideas, but his recommendations come dangerously close to such an attitude. I prefer the view expressed by Eugene Ulrich, who wrote: 'What we must strive for is the best that the human mind and human methods can produce within our particular culture and our own generation'.[52]

Instead of trying to escape the difficulties involved in textual judgements we should face them, realizing that the Bible is written and copied by human beings and that the uncertainty of textual judgements, of interpretation and of translation are inevitably part of its earthly conditions. Bible translators too must – to quote a phrase from Reynolds and Wilson's fine book *Scribes and Scholars* – 'accept the necessities of an imperfect world'.[53]

[51] Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 2.

[52] E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 50.

[53] L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (3rd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 239.

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