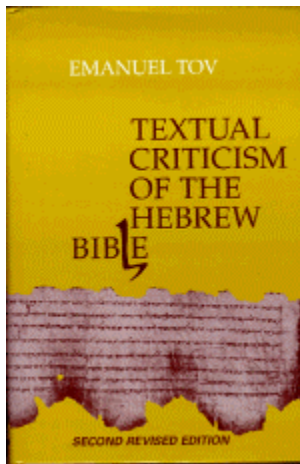


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Tov, Emanuel

Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible

Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. Pp. xl + 456, Cloth,
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Edition: Second Revised

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The title of this book is a good description of its purpose, but it does not indicate the wealth of information included, all of which must be understood and evaluated in order to accomplish the task stated. Textual criticism deals with the origin and nature of all forms of a text, and an analysis of the relationships between them. Textual criticism only deals with data deriving from textual transmission. This would exclude data of textual witnesses created at an earlier stage during the literary growth of Biblical books. In the case of the Hebrew Scriptures this task is complicated by two factors: more than one edition of a composition is included in the textual witnesses, and much of the textual evidence is known only in translations. There have been relatively few attempts to reconstruct the original text of a Biblical book (pp. 289, 372). The Hebrew *Vorlage* of the ancient translations cannot be reconstructed satisfactorily, and it is often impossible to make a decision with regard to the originality of readings.

The Editor-in-Chief of the Dead Sea Scrolls is arguably one of the most qualified individuals to elucidate textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. The Biblical manuscripts of the Scrolls increased the amount of textual data by approximately 220 manuscripts, providing textual evidence that goes back into the third century B.C.E. The witness of the Scrolls has transformed theories of composition and transmission, it has both clarified and complicated an understanding of the history of the text.

It is now ten years since the first English edition of this work. A decade of continuing research has provided new publications of Biblical texts, and has led to some revision and clarification of the task of textual criticism. Recent bibliography has been incorporated in the new edition; the bibliographical abbreviations (pp. xxix-xxxiv) and the indexes of ancient sources and authors (pp. 411-442) have been modified accordingly.

The revisions have been limited by the use of many camera-ready pages from the previous edition. The new edition has the same format and the same number of pages, though it does have significant revisions, particularly in the sections dealing with the original shape of the Biblical text (pp. 167-180) and consideration of the textual evidence for two literary strata in the preservation of compositions (especially pp. 345-350). There is at least one major flaw in this effort to combine camera-ready pages with extensive revisions. Three lines of bibliography have been apocoped from the bottom of page 180 resulting in a disjunctive to the next page. The bibliography on the next page has an addition not in the original version. The amount of technical data in the text make it desirable to use camera-ready pages, as it is almost impossible to eliminate typographical error with the incorporation of so many examples of foreign text. The additional bibliography and the clarification of thought make the new edition necessary.

After a brief introduction (chapter 1), the second chapter provides a catalogue of the textual witnesses of the Hebrew Bible, both the Hebrew and translations (pp. 21-154). The Hebrew is divided into four parts: the Proto-Masoretic and Masoretic texts; the Pre-Samaritan and the Samaritan texts; the Biblical texts found at Qumran; and a brief section on other texts such as the Silver Rolls from Ketef Hinnom, the Nash Papyrus, and the Severus Scroll. The section on translations divides into two parts; the first deals with the use of translations for textual criticism, the second provides the evidence of three translation traditions (Greek, Aramaic, and Latin) under five topics.

Tov provides a most instructive introduction to the Masoretic text, illustrating its character, its interpretive features, and its distinctive developments. One of the distinct contributions of the Qumran Scrolls was the provision of early Hebrew evidence for the distinct character of the late Samaritan manuscripts. The main feature that characterizes the pre-Samaritan texts is the harmonizing additions taken from Deuteronomy (p. 98). Some of Tov's most original work is his analysis of the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls. The manuscripts were written in diverse times and places, but Tov has shown that distinct scribal practices are observable in about one-fifth of the Biblical scrolls. These scrolls are distinguished by their orthography, morphology, and peculiar characteristics, such as writing the names for God in paleo-Hebrew script. This scribal school was most logically that of the Qumran covenanters themselves, so Tov refers to these belonging to Qumran practice. Tov has significantly altered his breakdown of the other categories of texts found at Qumran. He now says about 35 percent belong to the Proto-Masoretic text type (p. 115), as opposed to 60 percent; about 5 percent are Pre-Samaritan and 5 percent the *Vorlage* of the Greek, as opposed to 5 percent for both these categories previously. The result is that about 35 percent of the texts are regarded as non-aligned, as opposed to 15 percent previously. The non-aligned fall into two categories, those inconsistent in agreeing with other known types, and those that diverge significantly from all other known readings. Tov does not provide reasons for his significant reduction of the number of Proto-Masoretic manuscripts, but he clearly has opted for accentuated diversity in the extant texts rather than conformity to particular patterns.

The history of the text (chapter 3) is divided into three sections: the relation between the witnesses, the original shape of the text, and the development of the text. It is

imperative that a textual critic work towards an original text, but it is most difficult in the case of the Hebrew Bible to establish what might be meant by the original text. Adherents of the oral tradition school must work with a broader definition (p. 288), since they do not accept one original written form. Tov does not accept this theory of composition, and has established some important clarification on this point. The original text begins when the composition is considered complete and authoritative, even if it is by a limited number of people. In the first edition the shorter version of Jeremiah was presented as a layer within the compositional process, rather than being a version of the final composition (p. 177). This gives a very high priority to the canonical status of the Masoretic form of Jeremiah, even though the shorter version, now known to be a Hebrew composition from Qumran texts, functions as a final canonical form up to the present time. The fact that the short version of Jeremiah could serve as the basis for the Greek translation is evidence that at an early stage it was circulated and considered authoritative (p. 178). This consideration is extremely important for textual criticism in books that have more than one literary form. Textual differences that belong to a distinct literary tradition of a composition are not evidence for textual criticism within another literary tradition (p. 290). Textual criticism must evaluate differences created in the process of textual transmission.

The presence of readings from more than one literary strata in a single manuscript makes the task of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible exceedingly complex. Chapter 4 provides a wealth of data on the kinds of variants produced by textual transmission. Chapter 5 (pp. 287-291) delineates the task of the textual critic as an investigation of the development, the copying and transmission, and the creation of variants in Biblical texts. Chapter 6 examines external and internal criteria as a means to establish variants created during the process of textual transmission.

One of the most helpful aspects of this text for Old Testament introduction is the consideration of textual and literary criticism (chapter 7). Tov provides 12 examples of distinct literary strata, and in the new edition adds to these 4QJosh^a as well as rearranged and shorter texts. Minor differences between the Greek text form and the Masoretic text are often part of different literary strata, and are not the result of the textual transmission process. The note about Joshua in 1 Kings 16:34 seems to be just such an example; it is a literary addition by the Deuteronomistic editor to point out that that the curse of Jericho was an example of a fulfilled prophecy.

The book concludes with helpful additional information. Chapter 8 deals with types of conjectural emendations, and chapter 9 describes critical editions of the Hebrew Bible. There are 30 illustrative plates as in the first edition, illustrating the text over the centuries. It is safe to say that this book is indispensable for anyone wishing to become acquainted with textual criticism in the Hebrew Bible, as well as for many related questions of canon and composition. As a textual critic Tov accepts a relatively early date for the standardization of text forms, which has implications for the formation of the canon. This detailed examination of the Hebrew texts is an invaluable resource for many contested questions.