

## Textual Criticism and Biblical Interpretation: with Examples from Genesis, Joshua, and Esther

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'In the beginning God *made the* heaven and *the* earth. *Yet* the earth was *invisible and unformed*, and darkness was over the abyss, and a *divine wind* was *being carried along* over the water, And God said, "Let light *come into being*." And light *came into being*' (Gen 1:1-3 in the version of *NETS*).<sup>1)</sup>

The text is known, but one senses immediately that an unfamiliar translation is used. When this text is quoted as "God *made* the earth" one doesn't recognize the translation, even more so when the "divine wind" is mentioned. This is actually not one of the hundreds of English translations of Hebrew Scripture, but one of the translations of the Septuagint (LXX). The LXX is the Jewish-Greek translation of Scripture prepared in Alexandria in the third and second pre-Christian centuries.

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1) A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included Under That Title*, R. J. V Hiebert, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, forthcoming); The translation is based on the LXX edition of Genesis by J. W. Wevers, 1974. Deviations from the traditional English translations of MT into English are italicized.

This specific English translation is named *NETS (A New English Translation of the Septuagint)*, due to appear in Oxford in 2006. According to the LXX, in this primeval chaos, at the beginning of creation, the earth was *aboratos kai akataskewastos*, ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος that is ‘invisible and unformed.’ These two Greek words translate the Hebrew *tohu wa-bohu*, תהו ובהו a phrase that cannot be translated easily, but which is traditionally rendered as “without form and void.”<sup>2)</sup> The LXX thus added an exegetical dimension to a Scripture text in the course of the semantic identification process applied to all words in the source text. In this study we attempt to distinguish between semantic identifications of this type and reflections of different Hebrew readings, while focusing on the second type.

This study is concerned with Hebrew readings found and reflected in ancient textual sources. We focus on large differences, not small textual differences between the LXX and MT (that is, the traditional or Masoretic Hebrew text) such as in Gen 2:3 MT “And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.” In this verse the LXX (as well as the Sam. Pent. and the Peshitta) reads “And on the *sixth* day God finished the work that he had done.” Important and intriguing as this small variation may be, it still points to a divergence on a very small scale. Nor will we deal with another such small difference as 1 Sam 13:1 where MT reads, “Saul was *one* year old when he began to reign.” Probably the

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2) This equivalent, initiated by the *King James Version*, is probably influenced by the LXX.

received text contains a textual error and the earlier text probably mentioned realistic numbers for Saul's age at the beginning of his reign, such as 30 years in  $\dot{\Gamma}^{\text{Luc(bgoe2)}}$  (accepted by the *REB*), 21 years in the Peshitta, or 50 years as suggested by the *NEB*.

Thousands of similarly small textual differences help us in understanding the ancient sources, but the present analysis is limited to larger variations between texts, in particular those bearing on *literary* analysis. When differentiating between small details relevant to textual criticism and large differences bearing on literary criticism we follow formal criteria. A difference involving one or two words, and sometimes an isolated case of a single verse, is considered a small difference, while a discrepancy in a whole section or chapter indicates a substantial difference, often relevant to literary criticism. However, also a *group* of seemingly unrelated small differences might display a *common pattern*, pointing to a more extensive phenomenon. This pertains to many small theological changes in the MT of Samuel as opposed to the LXX and the Qumran scroll 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, the LXX translation of Ezekiel that is consistently shorter than MT, etc.

Who created the various types of such differences between ancient texts? In very broad terms, the individuals who were involved in the composition of the texts, that is, generations of authors and editors, inserted changes that we characterize today as large differences between ancient sources. At a later stage, scribes who copied the completed compositions inserted many smaller changes and they also made mistakes while copying.

However, the distinction between these two levels is unclear at both ends, since early copyists considered themselves petty collaborators in the creation process of Scripture, while authors and editors were also copyists.

We submit that most of the large differences such as analyzed in this study pertain to an early stage in the development of Hebrew Scripture, while some scholars such as A. Schenker believe that major changes were still inserted in MT as late as the Hasmonean period.<sup>3)</sup>

Larger differences often bear on exegesis as well as the literary criticism of Hebrew Scripture, involving such areas as authorship, date, possible revisional layers, and the structure of the composition. Readings found in ancient manuscripts are tangible and need to be taken into consideration, while scholarly hypotheses are mere assumptions, even the most established ones such as that of the deuteronomistic revision of the historical books and the documentary hypothesis for the Pentateuch. Readings found in ancient Hebrew manuscripts provide stable evidence, but there are many problems on the slippery road of our evaluation of the ancient translations, especially the LXX, since the evidence is not in Hebrew. One of these problems is that what looks to one scholar like a safely reconstructed Hebrew variant text is for another one a specimen of a translator's tendentious rendering. Literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible is interested only in evidence of

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3) A. Schenker, *Septante et texte Massorétique dans l'histoire la plus ancienne du texte de 1 Rois 2-14*, Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 48 (Paris: Gabalda, 2000).

the first type, since it sheds light on the background of the different Hebrew texts that were once circulating. The translator's tendentious changes are relevant to the exegesis of Scripture. But you cannot have the cake and eat it, too! Either the translation represents a much deviating Hebrew text or it displays the translator's exegesis. Now, how are we to differentiate between the two? For almost each variation of the LXX, large and small, one finds opposite views expressed in scholarship, and there are only very few objective criteria for evaluating these variations. In many cases, however, there is evidence supporting the view that the discrepancy of the LXX either reflects or does not reflect a much deviating Hebrew text. Probably the best supporting evidence for the assumption of a deviating Hebrew text is contained in Hebrew sources supporting the LXX. We further often turn to the argument from translation technique suggesting either a free or a literal approach,<sup>4)</sup> and the existence of Hebraisms supporting the assumption of a Hebrew underlying text. We now turn to three proof texts in which we present major deviations in the LXX, all of which are considered relevant to exegesis and

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4) The argument goes as follows: If a translator represented his underlying Hebrew text rather faithfully in small details, we would not expect him to approach that text freely in major details (changes, omissions, additions). On the other hand, if a translator were not faithful to his parent text in small details, even paraphrasing it occasionally, it would very well be possible that he also inserted major changes in the translation. Translators were not consistent, but we definitely do not expect to find in a single translation unit two diametrically opposed approaches.

literary criticism. In all these cases we present the text of the LXX in English translation together with notes on its deviations from MT.

## 1. The Septuagint Translation of Genesis 11:10–32 (Genealogy of Shem)

Gen 11:10–32 lists the nine generations of patriarchs from Shem to Terah (Thara in the LXX) the father of Abram, just like the earlier list in chapter 5 records the ten generations from Adam to Noah. This genealogical list presents the names of each person, his age at the time of begetting his first-born, and the number of years he lived afterwards. The seemingly dry list of data comes to life when the differences between its various attestations are scrutinized.

The LXX stands alone in presenting the list in chapter 11 as exactly ten generations by adding to the other witnesses presenting nine names the name of a patriarch in 11:12–13. The list in the LXX now has exactly the same number as the similar list in chapter 5. An additional feature of the LXX version is that it differs from that of MT and the Sam. Pent. in many details.<sup>5)</sup> The LXX is closer to the Sam. Pent. than to MT. The list provides two sets of numbers pertaining to the age at which a patriarch's first-born was born and the number of years the patriarch lived afterwards (see the summarizing table). There is a certain pattern to the discrepancies regarding

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5) Although in its present formulation the Sam. Pent. is a sectarian text, ultimately it derived from a non-sectarian text.

the patriarchs' ages at which their first-borns were born. These discrepancies ultimately derived from differences in outlook, but not all details are clear. The main difference between the traditions reflected in the three texts is that the LXX and Sam. Pent. usually add 100 years (50 in the case of Nahor) to the number given in the MT version.<sup>6)</sup> All other ancient translations (the Targumim, Peshitta, Vulgate, and the later Greek translations) agree with MT, while the chronology of *Jubilees* mainly reflects that of the Sam. Pent. and the chronological system of Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* mostly agrees with that of the LXX.

Since the Greek translation of Genesis presents its underlying Hebrew text faithfully, it stands to reason that the translator already found a widely differing system in the text translated by him that he equally faithfully represented in Greek. The partial agreement between the LXX and the Sam. Pent. supports this view since the latter is in Hebrew.

Opinions are divided regarding the nature of the differences between the three traditions. Some scholars consider the system of MT original, others prefer the LXX, and again others claim that both or all three (including the Sam. Pent.) derived from a common original text that was changed in different ways in all three sources. For a detailed analysis, see Hendel.<sup>7)</sup> Hendel

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6) The Sam. Pent. made up for these differences by subtracting 100 years from the number of years each patriarch lived after begetting his first-born.

7) R. H. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11, Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 61–80.

himself believes that the incorporation of the list in Genesis created incongruence between the list and the surrounding text that was solved in three different ways. The system of the LXX undoubtedly needs to be taken into consideration in the exegesis of this chapter:<sup>8)</sup>

(10) And these are the generations of Sem (Shem): Sem was a son of one hundred years when he became the father of Arphaxad (Arpachshad), in the second year after the flood.

(11) And Sem lived after he became the father of Arphaxad five hundred years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(12) And Arphaxad lived one hundred thirty-five years and became the father of Kainan. (13) And Arphaxad lived after he became the father of Kainan four hundred thirty years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

And Kainan lived one hundred thirty years and became the father of Sala (Shelah). And Kainan lived after he became the father of Sala three hundred thirty years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(14) And Sala lived one hundred thirty years and became the father of Eber. (15) And Sala lived after he became the father of Eber three hundred thirty years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(16) And Eber lived one hundred thirty-four years and became the father of Phalek (Peleg). (17) And Eber lived after he became the father of Phalek three hundred seventy years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(18) And Phalek lived one hundred thirty years and became the father of Ragau (Reu). (19) And Phalek lived

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8) The translation is that of NETS (see note 1), based on the LXX edition by J. W. Wevers, 1974.



after he became the father of Ragau two hundred nine years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(20) And Ragau lived one hundred thirty-two years and became the father of Serouch (Serug). (21) And Ragau lived after he became the father of Serouch two hundred seven years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(22) And Serouch lived one hundred thirty years and became the father of Nachor (Nahor). (23) And Serouch lived after he became the father of Nachor two hundred years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(24) And Nachor lived seventy-nine years and became the father of Thara (Terah). (25) And Nachor lived after he became the father of Thara one hundred twenty-nine years, and had sons and daughters, and died.

(26) And Thara lived seventy years and became the father of Abram and Nachor and Harran (Haran).

(27) These then are the generations of Thara. Thara was the father of Abram and Nachor and Harran, and Harran was the father of Lot. (28) And Harran died before his father Thara in the land in which he was born, in the country of the Chaldeans. (29) And Abram and Nachor took wives for themselves; Abram's wife's name was Sara (Sarai), and Nachor's wife's name was Melcha (Milcah), the daughter of Harran, the father of Melcha and the father of Iescha (Iscah). (30) And Sara was barren and she was not bearing children. (31) And Thara took his son Abram and his son's son, Lot son of Harran, and his daughter-in-law Sara, his son Abram's wife, and he brought them out of the country of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Chanaan (Canaan), and he came as far as Charran (Haran), and settled there. (32) And the days of Thara in Charran amounted to two hundred five years, and Thara died in Charran.

### 1.1. Commentary

*10. in...flood* Thus all versions, including MT, even though the chronological statement is problematic: Noah was 500 years old when his first-born son Shem was born (Gen 5:32), and 600 years old at the time of the flood (Gen 7:6). Accordingly, Shem should have been 100 years old when he became the father of Arpachshad, and not 102, as mentioned in this verse.

*Kainan MT*: “Shelah” (thus also Sam. Pent., Targum Onq., Targum Neophyti). The LXX replaces Shelah with Kainan, but since Shelah is mentioned afterwards, it actually adds a generation. As a result, in MT, Shelah is the son of Arpachshad, while according to the LXX he is his grandson. This Kainan may be named Kainan II, since all texts agree in having Kainan I (Kenan in Hebrew Scripture) in Gen 5:9–12. The addition of Kainan II in the LXX (similarly added in the LXX of 9:24) creates a round number for this genealogical list (ten names instead of nine in MT). Since this detail is lacking in the parallel lists in 1 Chron 1:18, 24, it probably did not belong to the original version of the list.

*and died. And Kainan...and died* Lacking in MT; Sam. Pent. “and he died.” The details in the LXX for the birth of Kainan’s first-born and the number of years he lived afterwards (130, 330) are identical to those of the next patriarch in the list, Shelah.

31. *be...out MT* “And they set out together <literally: with

them>.” The discrepancy between the two texts derives from their different reading of the consonants of the verb (wytz’) and the addition of a *waw* in MT. In the story of MT it is questionable who the “they” are (LXX has “he,” i.e. Thara [Terah]).

32. *in Charran* MT and Sam. Pent. lack this word.

*Summarizing table of the chronological differences between the sources*

Genesis 11:10–32 - Age of the Patriarchs when begetting their first-born			
Name	MT	SP	LXX
Shem (v. 10)	100	100	100
Arpachshad (v. 12)	35	135	135
Kenan II (v. 13)			130
Shelah (v. 14)	30	130	130
Eber (v. 16)	34	134	134
Peleg (v. 18)	30	130	130
Reu (v. 20)	32	132	132
Serug (v. 22)	30	130	130
Nahor (v. 24)	29	79	79
Terah (v. 26)	70	70	70

## 2. The Septuagint Translation of Esther 1 (Artaxerxes’s Banquets and the Rejection of Queen Vashti)

Our analysis provides examples of chapters reflecting different editorial stages of Scripture as presented in the MT

and LXX. The preceding example presented a chapter in which the exact relation between the two texts cannot be determined easily. That is, while the LXX undoubtedly reflected a Hebrew text different from MT, it is hard to determine whether the system of the LXX preceded that of MT, changed it, or was independent. The second example, Esther 1, exemplifies a translation whose underlying Hebrew text was probably created after MT.

The book of Esther is a historical novel in which much is left to the imagination in MT (the traditional or Masoretic Text). Like other biblical stories, the reader learns about the events from the actions of the heroes, not from background information. The LXX fills in some of this background information, but not all. The LXX adds, omits, and changes many small details, often amounting to whole verses.<sup>9)</sup> In MT chapter 1 provides a detailed description of the extent of King Artaxerxes's empire, his banquets, the banquet hosted by Queen Vashti, the invitation extended to her by the king, her refusal, and subsequently the dramatic rejection by the queen. The story in the LXX covers the same events, but also adds, omits, and changes many details, not with any specific pattern. A major change in that translation is the addition of a dream by Mordecai before the beginning of the Hebrew story. This

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9) The LXX omits details that it considers superfluous, as the Hebrew book is at times verbose (see 3:13; 5:6). The LXX also explains several details that are significant for understanding the plot. For example, the LXX explains that Vashti's feast was meant as a wedding banquet(1:5), but like MT, it does not explain why Vashti refused to come to the banquet.

dream, traditionally named Addition A, foreshadows the events narrated in the canonical book and introduces Artaxerxes and Haman.

Some of the features of the LXX are: a detailed depiction of the riches of the banquet (vv. 6-7), the description of the banquet as a wedding feast (vv. 5, 11), a dialogue and a course of actions in vv. 13-15 instead of a parenthetical remark in MT, and the rewriting of the scenario of vv. 17-18.

The rewritten book of Esther from which the LXX was translated was probably created in Hebrew (possibly Aramaic), as attested by Hebraisms in non-Masoretic elements in the translation<sup>10</sup>) and the language of the Additions that formed an integral part of the translation. Especially valuable is the study of Martin, who established the identification of the original language of any passage with the aid of seventeen syntactical features used as criteria to distinguish between “Greek-original” and “translation Greek.”<sup>11</sup>) In addition, it seems that some of the Additions had independent access to a Hebrew text different from MT.<sup>12</sup>) In spite of the free character of the LXX

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10) For example, 1:1 καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τοὺς λόγους τούτους=*wa-yehi abar ha-debarim ha-'eleh* (Hebrew phrase); 1:5 ἡμέρας ἕξ reflects *yamim shishab* (Hebrew sequence) instead of *shiv'at yamim* of MT.

11) R.A. Martin, “Syntax Criticism of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 94 (1975), 65–72.

12) For example, A 3 “Now he was one of the exiles whom Nabouchodonosor king of Babylon took captive from Ierousalem with Iechonias, the king of Judea.” This verse is based on the text of the canonical verse 2:6, but is actually closer to MT than to the LXX “who was an exile from Ierousalem, *which* Nabouchodonosor king of Babylon had taken captive.” The LXX deviates from MT there (“...had been

of Esther, there seems to be sufficient proof of its being based on a Hebrew text much different from MT: <sup>13)</sup>

(1) Now it happened after these things in the days of Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus)-this Artaxerxes controlled one hundred twenty-seven lands from India-(2) in those days when King Artaxerxes was enthroned in the city of Susa (Shushan), (3) in the third year when he was king, he gave a feast for his Friends, and for the other nations, and for those highly esteemed of the Persians and Medes, and for the rulers of the satrapies. (4) And after these things, after he had displayed to them the wealth of his kingdom and the glory of the celebration of his wealth for one hundred eighty days, (5) and when the days of the wedding feast were completed, the king gave a wine party for the nations present in the city, for six days, in the courtyard of the house of the king. (6) It had been decorated with linen and cotton curtains hung on cords of linen and purple attached to gold and silver blocks on pillars of marble and other stones. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of emerald, mother-of-pearl, and marble. There were gossamer throws in many colors embroidered with roses all around. (7) The goblets were made of gold and silver, and a miniature cup made of ruby was on display that was worth thirty thousand talents. The wine was

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exiled from Jerusalem in the group that was carried into exile along with King Jeconiah of Judah, which had been driven into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon”). The wording of A 3 reflects MT because it mentions Jeconiah, and its structure is preferable to that of the LXX where the feminine pronoun ην must reflect an earlier text referring to αἰμαλώσιαν that had been omitted.

13) The translation is that of NETS (see note 1), based on the LXX edition by R. Hanhart, 1966.

abundant and sweet, which the king himself drank. (8) Now this wine party was not by established law, but so the king wanted it, and he ordered his stewards to do as he and his men wanted. (9) And Astin (Vashti) the queen gave a wine party for the women in the royal quarters where King Artaxerxes was.

(10) Now on the seventh day, when he was feeling merry, the king told Haman (Mehuman), and Bazan (Bizzetha), and Tharra (Harbona), and Boraze (Bigtha), and Zatholtha (Zethar), and Abataza (Abagtha), and Tharaba (Carcas), the seven eunuchs who attended King Artaxerxes, (11) to bring the queen to him in order to proclaim her queen and to place the diadem on her, and to show her to the rulers and her beauty to the peoples, because she was beautiful. (12) But Astin the queen did not obey him to come with the eunuchs. The king was angry and he was enraged. (13) Then he said to his Friends, “This is how Astin spoke, therefore give (your) ruling and judgment on this.” (14) So Arkesaios (Carshena), Sarsathaios (Shethar), and Malesear (Meres, Marsena?), the rulers of the Persians and Medes who were close to the king and seated first by the king, approached him. (15) And they reported to him what, according to law, must be done with Astin the queen, because she had not done the things ordered by the king through the eunuchs. (16) Then Mouchaios (Memucan) said to the king and the rulers, “Astin the queen has wronged not only the king, but also all the rulers and governors of the king.” (17) (For he had reported to them the words of the queen, and how she defied the king.) “Therefore, just as she defied King Artaxerxes, (18) so this very day the other princesses of the rulers of the Persians and Medes, when they hear what was said to the king by her, will similarly dare to dishonor their husbands. (19) Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal order, and let it

be written according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, and let it not be applied differently, neither let the queen any longer come to him; and let the king give her royal position to a woman better than she. (20) Let the law declared by the king be heard, whatever law he enacts in his kingdom. And thus all women shall bestow honor on their own husbands, from the poor to the rich.” (21) This word pleased the king and the rulers, and the king did as Mouchaios said. (22) He sent word throughout the whole kingdom, to every land in its own language, so that they (that is, the men) were feared in their homes.

## 2.1. Commentary

*1. after these things* This phrase is added in the LXX after “Now it happened” of MT. It reflects a typical Hebrew expression (*abar ha-debarim ha-'eleb*) that must have been included in the parent text of the LXX since it reflects Hebrew and not Greek idiom. The addition of this expression suits the LXX version of v. 1 since that text added a lengthy dream of Mordecai before v. 1. The LXX adds a similar phrase (“after these things”) in the beginning of v. 4.

*Artaxerxes* MT “Ahashuerus.” While Ahashuerus of MT is usually identified with Xerxes (485–465 BCE), Midrash Esther Rabba and the LXX identify him throughout as Artaxerxes. Opinions are divided as to which of the three kings bearing that name was intended by the LXX, Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) son and successor of Xerxes I, ruled 465–425 BCE, Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) son and successor of Darius II, ruled 404–358 BCE, or Artaxerxes III (Ochus) son and



successor of Artaxerxes II, ruled 359–338 BCE. Josephus, *Ant.* XI, 184 identifies the king as Artaxerxes I.

3. *for his Friends...nations.* MT “for all the officials and courtiers.” The “Friends” with a capital F in the Greek translation is an official title used at the court of the Ptolemaic kings for the group of close associates of the king, The same term is used in v. 13 for the “sages learned in procedure” (MT) of the king.

5. *the...feast.* The LXX gives the general description of MT (“this period” [literally: “these days”]) a very specific twist by describing the banquet as a wedding feast, against all other sources, but parallel to the wedding banquet the king arranged for Esther (2:18), likewise called “wedding feast” in the LXX. See further v. 11 below.

*for six days* The second banquet, held “for the nations present in the city,” lasted six days according to the LXX, but seven according to the Hebrew and all other sources. In Hebrew Scripture “seven” usually has a symbolic meaning of completeness, and it indicates a recurring motif in Esther (seven chamberlains [eunuchs] in 1:10, seven princes in 1:14, seven chosen maids in 2:9, and the seventh year of the king’s reign in 2:16). In light of these data, the reason for the change of the LXX is unclear. Could this change imply that the feast started on a Sunday and ended just before the Sabbath? In any event, the sequence of the elements in the LXX (“days six” rather than “six days”) suggests a Hebrew rather than a Greek

origin for this reading.

*mother-of-pearl...around* The story goes into great detail describing the curtains, couches, and cups used at the banquet. Although not all the technical terms are clear in either language, the LXX expanded MT “alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics” with details reflecting the display of riches in Hellenistic times, possibly at wedding feasts of rich people (see v. 5). Indeed, from various historical sources it is known that much richness was displayed in the Persian cities Susa and Persepolis. Earlier in the verse the “silver rods” of MT were expanded in the LXX to “gold and silver blocks” (just like in the LXX of v. 7 “golden beakers” were expanded to “gold and silver”) and the “alabaster columns” to “pillars of marble and other stones.”

7. *and...talents* The cup described in Esth-LXX was worth an enormous amount of money.

*was...sweet* The LXX describes the wine as “sweet,” while MT names it “royal.”

8. *was...law* The description of the drinking procedure in the LXX, according to which the drinking at the banquet differed from the customary (probably, the customary restrictions), is diametrically opposed to that of MT, literally “and the drinking was according to the convention, no one compelled [the guests to drink].” These words in MT need to be understood in light of the next words, “to comply with each man’s wishes,” also rendered by the LXX. Usually the

king determined the amount of drinking (thus several Assyrian texts); when he drank, everybody drank. However, at this banquet “no one compelled.” The reason for the diametrically opposed rendering of the LXX is probably the translator’s misunderstanding of the words “according to the convention, no one compelled” which led him to add a negative (*no*).

10. *Haman* In the Greek version, Mehuman (one of the seven chamberlains of the king who attended the king) is identified with Haman. This identification may be based on the two names reflecting the same Hebrew root.

*Bazan...Tbaraba* The Greek names of the chamberlains differ from MT, either because of textual corruption in the transmission of the Greek manuscripts or because the translator used a slightly different Hebrew manuscript.

11. *in...on ber* In the LXX the king calls upon Vashti for her coronation ceremony, also reflected in v. 5 where the LXX refers to her wedding feast. “To proclaim her queen” of the LXX probably reflects similar consonants (*bimlikh*, “he crowned”) as MT (*ham-melekh*, “the king”). The phrase used in MT (“...before the king wearing a royal diadem”) does not necessarily refer to a wedding ceremony.

13. *MT* “Then the king consulted the sages learned in procedure [literally: ‘who knew the times,’ probably court astrologers]. For it was the royal practice to turn to all who were versed in law and precedent...” The LXX adds some color

to the description by referring to what Vashti's said and by having the king explicitly ask the sages for their advice what to do in the present situation, foreshadowing the formulation of v. 15. In MT the king turns to the sages in general terms, adding a parenthetical remark about the procedure followed under such circumstances. The LXX and MT share many words, yet their content differs, possibly because of the translator's misunderstanding the words *debar ham-melekh* ("the word of the king") as *dibber ham-melekh* ("the king spoke," rendered as "the queen spoke"). In the wake of this change, the general description of the advisers as "those who know law and precedent" has been changed to an actual request by the king "to give (your) ruling and judgment" (literally: "to do law and justice").

14. *So Arkesaios...him* In vv. 14–15 the LXX creates an action and dialogue instead of a parenthetical remark in MT continuing v. 13. This statement contains the names of those who were *close* to the king, while in the LXX they actually *approached* the king. The LXX probably misunderstood the consonants of MT, reading *we-haq qarov* ("and the one who was closest [to the king]") as *we-hiqriv* ("and he approached").

*Arkesaios...Malesear* MT has a longer list of the ministers of Persia and Media: "Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan." The number of these ministers is recorded as "seven" in MT, while no explicit number is given in the LXX.

15. *And...bim* The addition of these words in the LXX is almost required by the different scenario followed in that version. In MT the king addresses his advisers in v. 13a, but because of the long parenthesis explaining the task of the advisers (vv. 13b–14), the king’s question is posed only in v. 15. The reply, from the mouth of Memucan, one of the seven advisers, is contained in v. 16. However, in the LXX the king poses his question already at the end of v. 13, his advisers approach him in v. 14, and the introduction to the first reply is contained in the added words in the beginning of v. 15 (“and they reported to him”). Since the advisers had already approached the king in the LXX, there was no room in that version for a question to be posed in v. 15. This scenario made the translator rephrase v. 15, reshaping the king’s question in that verse into a reply by his advisers. Thus the question of the king in MT (“What,” he asked, “shall be done, according to law, to Queen Vashti...”) was rephrased in the LXX to “And they reported to him what, according to law, must be done with Astin the queen...” Memucan’s reply is in place in MT, but in the LXX it forms a *second* answer.

16. *and...of the king* According to the LXX, Queen Vashti sinned not only against the king, but also against “all the rulers and governors of the king.” In MT she sinned against a larger body of people, not just the rulers, but also “all the peoples in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus.”

17-18. *Therefore...Artaxerxes* While including Vashti’s sin in

defying the king as in MT, the LXX left out the suggestion that the actions of the queen would stir up all the wives in the kingdom. This idea has been moved in the LXX to the next verse: “will similarly dare to dishonor their husbands.” The rewriting of v. 18 in the LXX involved the omission of the last words of MT “and there will be no end of scorn and provocation.”

19. *the queen* MT Vashti. Upon the rejection of Vashti, from this point on MT does not refer any more to Vashti’s title “queen” (see also 2:1,4,17). However, the LXX does not share this subtle distinction in this verse, while in chapter 2 it reflects MT.

20. *kingdom* MT adds “vast though it is.”

22. *throughout...language* The LXX shortened MT’s long list “to all the provinces of the king, to every province in its own script and to every nation in its own language.” In a way, the separate mentioning of “script” is superfluous since it would be closely connected with differences in language.

*so...homes* The LXX rephrased and shortened MT “that every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people.”

### 3. The Septuagint Translation of Joshua 20 (Cities of Refuge)

The third example involves the LXX of Joshua 20, the Hebrew parent text of which probably preceded MT. In Num 35:9–15 (part of the so-called Priestly code) and Deut 19:1–13 the Torah gives detailed regulations for so-called cities of refuge to be set aside in the promised land upon its conquest. These are places of sanctuary or asylum where a person who unintentionally kills someone may reside without fear of blood revenge. These regulations were implemented by Moses himself (Deut 4:41–43) and by Joshua (chapter 20). In Joshua, after a reference to the prior discussion of the cities of refuge with Moses, God explains the idea of these cities to Joshua. Among other things, the procedure for admission to such a city is mentioned in Josh 20:4. At this point the textual sources differ among themselves. MT contains elements from both Numbers 34 and Deuteronomy 19, while the LXX mainly follows the text of Numbers. Most likely the short text of the LXX reflects an earlier text of this chapter, while the MT (followed by all other versions) reflects a later version that brought the legislation of the Priestly code in harmony with that of Deuteronomy. This assumption is not surprising since also elsewhere in the book the present shape of Joshua displays a deuteronomic revision.<sup>14)</sup> In this chapter the LXX is therefore

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14) See A. Rofé, “Joshua 20—Historico-Literary Criticism Illustrated,” *Tigay, Models*, 131–147; A. G. Auld, “Textual and Literary Studies in the Book

of great importance for exegesis:<sup>15)</sup>

(1) And the Lord spoke to Iesous (Joshua), saying, (2) “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘Give the cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moyses (Moses), (3) a place of refuge for the slayer who has smitten a soul involuntarily; and the cities shall be for you a place of refuge, and the slayer shall not die by the next of kin in blood, (6) until he stands before the congregation for judgment.”

(7) And he set apart Kades (Kedesh) in Galilee in the mountain of Nephthali (Naphtali). And Sychem (Shechem) in the mountain of Ephraim, and the city of Arbok (Kiriath-arba) (this is Chebron {Hebron}), in the mountain of Ioudas (Judah). (8) And beyond the Jordan he gave Bosor (Bezer) in the wilderness on the plain, out of the tribe of Rouben (Reuben), and Aremoth (Ramoth) in Galaad (Gilead), out of the tribe of Gad, and Gaulon (Golan) in Basanitis (Bashan), out of the tribe of Manasse (Manasseh). (9) These were the cities designated for the sons of Israel and for the guest abiding among them, that anyone who smites a soul involuntarily may flee there, so that he will not die by the hand of the next of kin in blood, until he stands before the congregation for judgment.

### 3.1. Commentary

3. *involuntarily* MT adds “unintentionally,” thus using two synonymous expressions “by mistake, unintentionally.” Usually

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of Joshua,” *ZAW* 90 (1978), 412–417; id., “The ‘Levitical Cities’-Texts and History,” *ZAW* 91 (1979), 194–206.

15) The translation is that of NETS (see note 1), based on the LXX edition by A. Rahlfs, 1935.



such duplication would be regarded as reflecting emphasis, but in this case the repetition has literary significance. The word “unintentionally” was added in MT on the basis of the law of the cities of refuge in Deut 19:4. The original phrase “involuntarily,” found in both MT and the LXX, is that of the Priestly law code (Num 35:11).

*a place...blood* MT has a slightly shorter phrase, leaving out “and the slayer shall not die.”

4-6. MT adds a long section (=vv. 4-5 and the beginning of v. 6): “He shall flee to one of those cities, present himself at the entrance to the city gate, and plead his case before the elders of that city; and they shall admit him into the city and give him a place in which to live among them. (5) Should the blood avenger pursue him, they shall not hand the manslayer over to him, since he killed the other person without intent and had not been his enemy in the past. (6) He shall live in that city.” The added section of MT follows the ideas and terminology of Deut 4:42 and chapter 19. See 19:11–12,4: “flees to one of these towns. (12) The elders of his town shall have him brought back from there... (4) ...without having been his enemy in the past.” The original law of Joshua 20 allowed the unintentional killer to stay in the city until the community could decide on his guilt. The added text, however, mentioned a hearing by the elders creating tension in the context. Accordingly in v. 4 (the long text of MT, not in the LXX), the manslayer is received into the city of refuge as one who is recognized as having killed by mistake and thus becomes a legally acceptable refugee. His acceptance into the city of

refuge is based upon the considered opinion of the elders of the city, who heard his version of the incident (vv. 4–5). On the other hand, according to the continuation of the text in v. 6 (common to MT and LXX), the manslayer has yet to be brought to trial (“until he can stand trial before the congregation”). In the short text of the LXX, in which vv. 4–5 are lacking, this tension does not exist.

6. *until...judgment* MT adds “until the death of the high priest who is in office at that time. Thereafter, the manslayer may go back to his home in his own town, to the town from which he fled.” The addition of MT (based on Num 35:25) determines that the manslayer will be protected as long as the high priest is in office, probably reflecting an ancient custom according to which a priest could guarantee the safety of those seeking asylum in a shrine or the Temple as long as he was in power (see the story in 1 Kings 2:28).

By way of summary, in this study we analyzed some large differences between MT and the LXX. Several similar discrepancies were analyzed elsewhere.<sup>16)</sup> Disregarding discrepancies that were created by the translators, we turned to such differences as were probably found in the translators’ *Vorlagen*. Probably only the deviating text of Job was produced

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16) See my paper. “The Nature of the Large-Scale Differences between the LXX and MT S T V, Compared with Similar Evidence in Other Sources,” A. Schenker, ed., *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible. The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuaginta Reconsidered*, SCS 52 (Atlanta; Georgia: Scholars Press, 2003), 121–144.

by the translator, while all other such discrepancies were already found in the manuscripts used by the translators. In most books support could be found for the assumption of a different parent text (external support in Hebrew manuscripts, Hebraisms, literal translations), but in free translations the decision is difficult (Joshua, Esther, Proverbs). Three chapters were analyzed in detail (Genesis 11, Esther 1, Joshua 20). In all these cases the LXX reflects editorial stages of Hebrew Scripture different from the one included in MT, prior or subsequent to that text. In these cases, the LXX should be used together with the MT and some Qumran scrolls in the literary analysis of Scripture. The relatively large number of editorial differences from MT in the LXX should probably be ascribed to the early date of the Hebrew manuscripts from which the translation was made and to their deriving from social circles different from the ones embracing MT.

<주요어>

본문 비평, 마소라 사본, 70인역, 문학적 분석, 저본, 편집 단계

<Key Words>

textual criticism, MT, LXX, literary analysis, Vorlage, editorial stage

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## &lt;초록&gt;

## 본문 비평과 성서 해석

### -창세기, 여호수아서, 에스더서를 중심으로-

임마누엘 토브  
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전통적으로 본문 비평이란 ‘원문의 뜻에 가장 가까운 독법’을 여러 사본들과 역본들에 비추어 찾는 작업으로 알려져 있다. 그러나 히브리어 본문과 고대의 역본들을 비교하여 볼 때, ‘하나님이 제 칠일에 일을 마치셨다.’(MT)를 ‘하나님이 제 육일에 마치셨다.’(LXX)와 같이 조그만 차이가 나타날 뿐 아니라, ‘문학적인 분석’(literary analysis)을 요청할 정도로 큰 단위가 다르게 나타나는 경우들이 많이 있음을 보게 된다. 이런 경우에 우리는 “누가 왜 이와 같은 차이를 만들게 되었으며, 현재의 본문은 어떤 형성과 필사의 과정을 거치게 되었는가?”라는 질문을 던지지 않을 수 없게 된다. 첫 번째 예로서, 창세기 11:10-32에 있는 셈의 족보를 보면, 70인역은 창세기 5장에 있는 명단을 따라 10세대를 정확하게 기술하고 있으나, 마소라 사본과 사마리아 사본은 9세대만 제시하고 있다. 또한 족장들의 수명에 있어서 70인역과 사마리아 오경은 마소라 사본에 나오는 숫자 보다 대부분 100살이 더 많다. 창세기의 70인역 번역자는 히브리어 대본을 충실하게 따르고 있고 번역자는 이런 큰 차이를 알고 번역하였음이 분명하기 때문에 편집 과정에 대한 설명을 요청하게 된다. 또한 에스더 1장의 아하수에로의 잔치와 여호수아 20장에 있는 도피성에 대한 본문들 사이에 나타난 방대한 차이점들을 살펴볼 때, 우리는 번역자들이 서로 다른 저본들(底本, Vorlangen)을 갖고 있었음을 추정

하지 않을 수 없다. 위에 제시된 세 경우에 있어서 70인역은 마소라 사본에 포함된 히브리어 성서와 다른 편집 단계들을 반영하고 있으므로, 마소라 사본과 콤파 두루마리와 함께 70인역에 대해서도 문학적 분석을 시도하여야 할 것이다. 마소라 사본과 70인역 사이에 있는 상당히 방대한 편집적 차이를 볼 때 히브리어 사본이 만들어지던 초기에 번역 작업이 이루어졌으며, 마소라 사본의 저본을 전수하던 공동체와는 다른 사회적 그룹들이 이것들을 보전한 것으로 추정해 볼 수 있을 것이다.

<Abstract>

**Textual Criticism and Biblical Interpretation:  
with Examples from Genesis, Joshua, and Esther**

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Traditionally, textual criticism has been defined as a search to find the best possible reading of the supposed original text in terms of the comparisons between divergent readings in a given text. Such an effort can bear fruits in cases where we can find minor differences such as in Gen 2:3, “On the seventh day God finished the work”(MT) which differs from “On the sixth day God finished the work”(LXX). However, there are numerous cases which reflect major differences in the editorial processes of the formation and transmission of the original text itself, thereby poses a question, namely, “who created the

various types of such differences between ancient texts?” In order to delve into the issue at stake, we have analysed three major texts such as the genealogy of Shem in Genesis 11:10-32, the banquets of Axraxerxes in Esther 1 and the rejection of Queen Vashti and the cities of refuge in Joshua 20 together with some textual notes. We have concluded that in all three cases the LXX reflects editorial stages of Hebrew Scripture different from the one included in MT. Therefore, we need more careful attention to the different editorial stages of the various versions in our future textual criticism.