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A NEW CRITICAL EDITION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE¹

ABSTRACT

The critical text of Ezekiel is currently being prepared for the Oxford Hebrew Bible project. This project has as its aim to reconstruct an 'original' text, or rather to provide an eclectic text containing the readings preferred by the individual editor. This article deals with issues related to the work on Ezekiel, with special attention to the questions raised by the Septuagint and Peshitta. An example is provided of a proposed text of Ezekiel 1:1-9, with a discussion of relevant examples from this passage. This article deals with recent developments in editorial policy as well.

1. INTRODUCTION

The critical text of Ezekiel is currently being prepared for the Oxford Hebrew Bible project. This project departs from the normal practice for critical texts of the Old Testament by attempting to reconstruct an 'original' text, or rather to provide an eclectic text containing the readings preferred by the individual editor. Questions on methodology and procedures have to be solved in the process of preparing the text. These questions are related, *inter alia*, to the role of the different versions. This paper will deal with issues related to the work on Ezekiel, with special attention to the questions raised by the Septuagint and Peshitta. Examples to illustrate the problems will be taken from Ezekiel 1, and especially those instances where important variants occur which are not dealt with in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph 1984), for example, such as in verses 1, 2, 4 and 5. Questions to be answered include which variants should be dealt with in such an edition and whether the reasons for the existence of variants can be described adequately. This paper will also deal with recent developments in editorial policy.²

1 It is a privilege to contribute to this volume dedicated to Prof S Mittmann. I still have fond memories of my visit to him in Tübingen in 1990.

2 This paper is a revised version of a paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Toronto, November 2002. It reflects work done as part of a project on the text of Ezekiel funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa. Views expressed in this article are those of the author and must not be ascribed to the NRF.

2. *THE APPROACH TO BE FOLLOWED*

A full explanation of the approach to be followed in this project will not be attempted here. Ron Hendel, who is to a large extent the instigator of this project, has written a preliminary introduction to the project and outlines the aims and methodology to be followed. These were also addressed in the guide given to editors working on the different volumes of this project. The aim of this project is to produce a critical edition of the Old Testament that is different from existing editions. This is basically the approach followed by Hendel (1998) for his critical edition of Genesis 1-11. This kind of critical text is very well known in the field of the text of the New Testament, where this approach has been followed from the time of the *textus receptus* up to the modern editions of the United Bible Societies or the Nestle-Aland editions. Such a text is usually called an eclectic text and, as we all know, does not reproduce the text of a single manuscript, but rather makes a choice with regard to the variants in different manuscripts and versions. The end result is a text not similar to any manuscript, but the result of a process, defined by Wevers as follows: the presentation by an editor after weighing all the textual evidence at his disposal of the earliest reconstruction of the text as possible, an approximation to the original insofar as that is reasonable (Wevers 1974:186). This will only be an approximation of the original, as a reconstruction of the (or a) original text will always remain an unattainable ideal (cf. Hendel 1998:113). Because the critical text is based on more than just one manuscript, it should in fact be closer to the original than any single manuscript (Hendel 1998:115).

Originally the plan was to publish the text in at least two columns. The first column would contain the Masoretic text, such as in the BHS, and the second column the critically reconstructed text, unvocalised. Where more than one edition of a book can be distinguished, more columns could have been added. This plan has now been changed to use the Masoretic text as copy-text, giving only the changes to the Masoretic text in unvocalised characters. A second column can still be added for different editions of a book, as for example in the case of Jeremiah.

3. *THE WITNESSES TO EZEKIEL, ESPECIALLY THE SEPTUAGINT AND PESHITTA*

The words spoken by Cooke in 1936 about the state of the Hebrew text of Ezekiel still express the consensus of scholars in this regard (Cooke, 1936:x1): "In the Hebrew Bible perhaps no book, except 1 and 2 Samuel,

has suffered more injury than the text of Ezekiel". These words echo the sentiments of many of his predecessors. Cooke (1936:xl-xli) mentions especially Cornill and Jahn in this regard. Of the modern commentaries, Zimmerli (1979:75-77) mentions these difficulties, emphasising the importance of the Septuagint for recognising the corruptions that have entered the text. Tov (1999:397) thinks that these views on the problem of the text of Ezekiel may represent an overstatement of the problem. He argues that many of the differences could be related to the time of the literary growth of the book. One has to take account of the possibility of more than one edition of the book, making it necessary to publish a critical text with more than one column in some, or perhaps even all, sections.

It is a pity that the texts from Qumran do not preserve much of the text of Ezekiel, even though the book of Ezekiel was very important for the Qumran community. Only a few fragments of text have been preserved and they frequently reflect early forms of the Masoretic text (Allen 1994:xxiii). The following fragments occur, with only parts of the texts referred to preserved in most instances:

- 1QEzek (4:16-17; 5:1) (Barthélemy and Milik, 1955)
- 3QEzek (16:31, 33) (Baillet 1962)
- 4QEzek^a (10:6-22; 11:1-11; 23:14-18, 44-47; 41:3-6) (Sanderson 1997)
- 4QEzek^b (1:10-13, 16-17, 18-24) (Sanderson 1997)
- 4QEzek^c (24:2-3) (Sanderson 1997)
- 11QEzek (1:8-10; 4:3-6, 9-10; 5:11-17; 7:9, 11-12; 10:11) (Herbert 1998)
- MasEzek (36:1-11, 13-14, 17:35; 37:1-16, 28; 38:1-4, 7-8). (Talmon 1999)

A discussion of most of the important variants was offered by Lust (1986). This appeared before the final publication of many of the fragments and must be re-evaluated in the light of the final publication.

In only a very few of these instances does a variant occur, such as a masculine suffix in 1:10 against a feminine suffix in the MT. Other minor variants appear in 1:11, 10:8 and 37:7. In Ezekiel 5 11QEzek may perhaps preserve a shorter text, as does the Septuagint. A shorter text appears in Ezekiel 23:16 and 17 as well.

There is also consensus that the Septuagint is the most important aid to reconstructing the text of Ezekiel in many instances (Zimmerli 1979:75). In this respect papyrus 967 has played, and still plays, an important part

in the discussion (cf. Zimmerli 1979:76-77). Tov's view is that the Masoretic text of Ezekiel and the Septuagint reflect two different editorial stages in the book of Ezekiel, although the differences between the two editions are not as great as in the case of Jeremiah (Tov 1999:410). If this is the case, the critical edition of the book of Ezekiel will have to reflect these two editions. Tov's view is that the Masoretic text reflects the second, often longer, layer of the book (cf. Tov 1999:400). Tov discusses the position of Ezekiel 36:23c-36 in papyrus 967 as well (Tov 1999:408-410). In agreement with Johan Lust, Tov regards the section as a late insertion in the Masoretic text. It was not part of the Old Greek.

The edition of Ziegler (1977) is very important on the use of the Septuagint of Ezekiel. In the *Nachtrag* a full collation is given of those parts of papyrus 967 that were not available for the first edition of Ziegler. This papyrus, together with the *codex vaticanus* (B), is the most important witness to the pre-hexaplaric text of Ezekiel. In the light of extensive discussions on papyrus 967 and the text of the Old Greek, the critical edition of the Hebrew text will have to give special attention to the Septuagint. In some instances it will be necessary to give two versions of the critical text, one based on the Masoretic text and the other on (some manuscripts of) the Septuagint, especially B and papyrus 967.

As far as the Peshitta is concerned, the edition of M J Mulder is an invaluable tool for the text-critical use of that version (Mulder 1985). He states that it is difficult to divide the manuscripts of the Peshitta into families, except for the family of 9a1. There are, however, groups of manuscripts with textual agreement. Their actual relationships are difficult to determine (Mulder 1985:viii). Although the manuscript 7a1 was used as the basic text for the edition, Mulder is of the opinion that 8a1 contains the preferred text of Ezekiel, because it has fewer mistakes and unique readings (Mulder 1985:IX). This remark has not really been followed up as far as the text of Ezekiel in 8a1 is concerned, and in the proposed edition of the Hebrew text of Ezekiel special consideration must be given to the readings in this text. Jenner, who regards it as an authoritative text serving as norm for official manuscripts (Jenner 1988; cf. also Jenner 1993:1-27), also demonstrates the importance of this manuscript. In the study of the text of Ezekiel in the Peshitta, more research is necessary to determine possible textual traditions.

The editor of Ezekiel in the Leiden edition remarks that in Ezekiel, as in most of the other books of the Old Testament, only few really essential variants are found (Mulder 1988:171). It is a relatively verbatim translation (Mulder 1988:174). However, he is of the opinion that only

the Septuagint is more important of all the versions than the Peshitta for a text-critical and exegetical study of the book of Ezekiel. The older manuscripts are also more important than the younger ones (Mulder 1988:180). In this respect Mulder's conclusions differ radically from those of older scholars, like Zimmerli, who did not have such a high regard for the value of the Peshitta (Zimmerli 1979:77).

4. EXAMPLES

As an example the first 9 verses of Ezekiel 1 is given below. The first block contains the Masoretic text similar to that in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (or *codex leningradensis*). The second block contains the critical text according to the first model proposed for this project, where the critical text is unvocalised. The third block contains the critical text according to the newer methodology, followed by the footnotes. This will then be followed by a discussion of some of the examples to demonstrate the methodology and highlight some problems.

Masoretic Text

1 וַיְהִי בַשְּׁלֹשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרַב־יְעִי בְּחַמְשָׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וְאָנִי
בַּתּוֹךְ־הַגּוֹלָה עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נִפְתָּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאִרְאָה
מֵרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

2 בְּחַמְשָׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ הִיא הַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית לְגָלוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
יֹזִבָּד:

3 הִיא הִיא דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יְחִזְקִאל בֶּן־בוּזִי הַכֹּהֵן
בְּאֶרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר וַתְּהִי עָלָיו שֵׁם יְדִי־יְהוָה:

4 וְאִרְאָה וְהִנֵּה רוּחַ סְעָרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן עָנָן גָּדוֹל
וְאִשׁ מִתְּלַקַּחַת וְנִגְגָה לוֹ סָבִיב וּמִתּוֹכָהּ כְּעֵין הַחֹשֶׁמֶל
מִתּוֹךְ הָאִשׁ:

5 וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דָּמוֹת אַרְבַּע חַיּוֹת וְזֶה מֵרְאִיָּהֶן דָּמוֹת אָדָם
לְהֵנָּה:

6 וְאַרְבַּעַה פָּנִים לְאַחַת וְאַרְבַּע כַּנְּפִים לְאַחַת לָהֶם:

7 וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כַּכַּף רַגְלֵי עֶגְלָה
וְנִצְצִים כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלִיל:

8 וַיֵּדוּ אָדָם מִתַּחַת כַּנְפֵיהֶם עַל אַרְבַּעַת רַבְעֵיהֶם
וּפְנֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם לְאַרְבַּעַתָּם:

9 חִבְרַת אִשָּׁה אֶל־אֲחֹתָהּ כַּנְפֵיהֶם לֹא־יִסְבוּ בְּלִכְתָּן
אִישׁ אֶל־עֵבֶר פָּנָיו יִלְכוּ:

Critical text – older model, unvocalised text

1 ויהי בשלשים שנה ברביעי בחמשה לחדש ואני
בתוך־הגולה על־נהר־כבר נפתחו השמים ואראה
מראות אלהים:

2 בחמשה לחדש היא השנה החמישית לגלות המלך
יויכין:

3 היה דבר־יהוה אלי־יחזקאל בן־בוזי הכהן בארץ
כשדים על־נהר־כבר ותהי עלי שם יד־יהוה:

4 וארא והנה רוח סערה באה מן־הצפון ענן גדול
ואש מתלקחת ומתוכה כעין החשמל:

5 ומתוכה דמות ארבע חיות וזה מראיהן דמות אדם
להנה:

6 וארבעה פנים לאחת וארבע כנפים לאחת:

7 ורגליהם רגל ישרה וכף רגליהם ככף רגל עגל
ונצצים כעין נחשת קלל:

8 וידי אדם מתחת כנפיהם על ארבעת רבעיהם
ופניהם וכנפיהם לארבעתם:

9 חברת אשה אל־אחותה כנפיהם לא־יסבו בלכתן
איש אל־עבר פניו ילכו:

Critical text, with Masoretic text as copy-text

1 וַיְהִי בְשָׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה בְּרַב־יַעֲלֵי בַחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ וְאֲנִי
בְּתוֹךְ־הַגּוֹלָה עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נִפְתַּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאָרְאָה
מֵרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים:

2 בַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ הַיָּא הַשָּׁנָה הַחֲמִישִׁית לְגָלוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
יֹזִכִּין:

3 הִיָּה הִיָּה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יַחֲזַקְאֵל בֶּן־בּוּזִי הַכְּהֵן
בְּאֶרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר וַתְּהִי עָלָיו שֵׁם יַד־יְהוָה:

4 וְאָרְאָה וְהִנֵּה רוּחַ סַעֲרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן עֲנַן גָּדוֹל
וְאִשׁ מִתְּלַקַּחַת וְנִגְגָה לוֹ סָבִיב וּמִתּוֹכָהּ כְּעֵין הַחֲשַׁמַּל
מִתּוֹךְ הָאִשׁ:

5 וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דָּמוֹת אַרְבַּע חַיּוֹת וְזֶה מֵרְאִיָּהוּן דָּמוֹת אָדָם
לְהִנָּה:

6 וְאַרְבַּעָה פָּנִים לְאַחַת וְאַרְבַּע כְּנָפִים לְאַחַת לָהֶם:

7 וּרְגְלֵיהֶם רַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַף רַגְלֵיהֶם כְּכַף רַגְלֵי עֲגֹל
וְנִצְצִים כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלִיל:

8 וַיְדוּ אָדָם מִתַּחַת כְּנַפְיָהֶם עַל אַרְבַּעַת רַבְעֵיהֶם
וּפְנֵיהֶם וְכַנְפֵיהֶם לְאַרְבַּעֵתָם:

9 חֲבַרְת אִשָּׁה אֶל־אַחֻתָהּ כְּנַפְיָהֶם לֹא־יִסְבּוּ בְּלִכְתָּן
אִישׁ אֶל־עֵבֶר פָּנָיו יִלְכוּ:

Notes

1. G הרביעי בחמשה לחדש בחדש M] ברביעי בחמשה לחדש
(ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ μηνὶ πέμπτῃ τοῦ μηνὸς) V (explic)]
כַּחֲמִשָּׁה לַחֹדֶשׁ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַרְבִּיעִי Syr
(mod) || M] G וּנִפְתַּחוּ (καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν) Syr (mod) ||
M G] מראה G^{LCat} οἱ λ (ορασιν) Syr T (assim?) || 2
Syr מלך יהודה M G] המלך יזכין
(ܣܚܒܥ ܡܠܟܐ ܝܫܪܐܝܝܠ) G⁵³⁴ (exeg?/harm?) || 3 V
היה M (dittog)] היה היה G (καὶ ἐγένετο)
(factum est) Syr T]

(assim 1:1) || עלי G (ἐπ' ἐμὲ) Syr] עליו M (assim 3a) || שם M] > G (equal) || 4 ענן M] וענן G (καὶ νεφέλη) V (mod) || ענן G (καὶ νεφέλη μεγάλη ἐν αὐτῶ) (assim גדול] גדול בו] גודל M (antic מתלקחת] ואש מתלקחת) || (מתוכה] ואש before וגה לו סביב G transp וגה לו סביב (καὶ φέγγος κύκλω αὐτοῦ καὶ πῦρ ἔξαστράπτων (harm ענן] לו > Syr (ܡܠܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܡܝܬܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ) (exeg) || כעין M (explic) Syr? (ܟܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ for החשמל] האש] החשמל (mod) V? (quasi species electri id est de medio ignis) (explic)] כעין החשמל וגה לו סביב G (ὡς ὄρασις ἡλέκτρου ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ φέγγος ἐν αὐτῶ) (explic) || 5 דמות אדם להנה M G (ὁμοίωμα ἀνθρώπου ἐπ' αὐτοῖς)] *אדם בני אדם Syr (ܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ) (explic, mod) || 6 2° לאחת G (τῶ ἐνί) V (uni)] > Syr (om)] רגל ישרות] M (harm להנה vs 5) || 7 רגל ישרה M] ישרות G (ὀρθά) Syr V (pedes recti) T (רגלין כיונן) (mod) || *וכף רגליהם ככף רגל עגל] (ܟܦܝܐ) (mod) || כפות רגליהם] כפות עגליהם Syr (ܟܦܝܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ) (harm pl)] וכנפות רגליהם G (καὶ πτερωτοὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν (prps graph) || ונצצים כעין נחשת קלל] (καὶ σπινθηρες ὡς ἔξαστράπτων χαλκός, καὶ ἔλαφραι αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν) (transp כנפיהם from 8a and harm קלל) || 8 וידו M^K T (וידין) V? (et manus)] וידו M^Q (graph וי) G (χειρ) Syr (ܟܝܘܢܐ) V? (manus) ||

It is important to mention with regard to the notes that the reason for a variant will be indicated, as far as this can be determined with certainty, or reasonable certainty. In the notes above the following abbreviations are used:

antic	anticipation
assim	assimilation
dittog	dittography
equal	equal, that is where one encounters two or more variants, each as plausible as the other
exeg	exegetical expansion or rendering
explic	explication
graph	graphic error
harm	harmonisation
mod	linguistic modernisation

prps perhaps

In the examples noted below the commentaries of Cooke (1936), Zimmerli (1979), Allen (1994) and Block (1997) have been consulted, for the sake of comparison, to determine how they dealt with the different variants.

Example 1: verse 1

הרביעי בחמשה לחדש בחדש M] הרביעי בחמשה לחדש G
(ἐν τῷ τετάρτω μηνὶ πέμπτῃ τοῦ μηνός) V (explic)]
הרביעי בחדש בחמשה Syr (ܟܘܢܝܢ ܒܚܕܫܐ ܒܚܡܫܐ)
(mod)

In this instance the Hebrew text has an elliptical construction: in the fourth, on the fifth of the month. The Greek has added the word "month" to the number. This can be regarded as an explicating plus. In most of the dates in Ezekiel the word for month does not appear in conjunction with the number of the month. The only exceptions are Ezekiel 24:1 and 32:1. In the Greek a set formula, like the one in this verse, appears in all instances except 29:17, where a slightly different formula is used (on the first of the first month). This kind of explicating plus is usually not mentioned in BHS. The Syriac has a different reading, which can be regarded as a linguistic modernisation, by putting the day first followed by the word for month and the number of the month. Of the four commentaries consulted, only Block (1997:79 n.10) has a reference to this example, saying that the word for month was omitted by the Hebrew, but preserved by the Greek. This means that he thinks that the Septuagint has preserved the original meaning. It is quite possible that this variant may be ascribed to translation technique.

Example 2: verse 2

המלך יהודה M G] יויכין מלך יהודה Syr (ܡܠܟܐ ܝܘܝܟܝܢ ܝܘܕܐ)
G⁵³⁴ (exeg?/harm?)

The reading of the Syriac and one Greek manuscript can be regarded as an exegetical revision, or an attempt at harmonisation. The title King of Judah is frequently used with the names Jehoiachin and Jehoiakim in Jeremiah and Kings. This variant is not mentioned by any of the commentaries consulted.

24), but he does not mention the variants in the versions at all. The linguistic problem is the fact that the predicate is single, while one would suppose it to be plural. Two different variants occur amongst the versions, and both can be regarded as linguistic modernisations to solve the problem of MT. The Vulgate and Targum change the singular phrase of MT to a plural, while the Greek and Syriac omit the noun of the predicate and change the adjective to the plural. Cooke (1936:12) refers to the variant in the Greek and Syriac, but not in the Vulgate and Targum. He states that the reading of the Greek and Syriac is as good a restoration as any. Allen (1994:5) refers only to the variant of the Greek, stating that it could perhaps reflect the original reading. As the more difficult reading the MT is to be preferred. Zimmerli (1979:83) follows the Septuagint and Syriac in his translation, but does not discuss the reading of the text and the variants.

What can be seen from the remarks about these variants in the four commentaries consulted is that there is no consistency in their choice of variants or witnesses referred to. This is frequently the case with the choice of variants in BHS as well. This new edition will have to search for consistency in this regard.

5. CONCLUSION

This project to compile an eclectic critical text of the Hebrew Old Testament is still in its early stages. The methodology and representation of the final product will still be defined further as the work progresses, but one hopes that the end result would be of great use to scholars and students of the Old Testament. The problem of inconsistency in the choice of variants selected for inclusion and discussion in the critical text must be dealt with in the process. At the moment one could perhaps use as a rule of thumb all those instances that could point to a different *Vorlage*, but the final text will probably include more than variants identified according to this rule.

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