How to Edit an Elusive Text? The So-called Poem of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:12–13 MT // 8:53a LXX) as a Case Study

Matthieu Richelle
Faculté libre de théologie évangélique, Vaux-sur-Seine, France
matt_richelle@yahoo.fr

Abstract

The creation of an eclectic edition of the Hebrew Bible is complicated by the hypothetical nature of reconstructing its textual evolution, and the uncertainty involved in retroversion from Greek to Hebrew. These issues are especially apparent in the case of the so-called “poem of Solomon” (1 Kgs 8:12–13 MT // 8:53a LXX), which I examine here as a case study to demonstrate that even such a difficult text can be dealt with responsibly in a critical, eclectic edition. Specifically, I show how such an edition can adequately address the retroversion of the Greek text, the existence of two versions of the poem, and the location of this poem in the chapter.

Keywords

Books of Kings – eclectic editions – Septuagint – Masoretic Text – 1 Kgs 8:12–13

1 Introduction

A frequent objection to the making of critical, eclectic editions of Hebrew Bible texts is that no edition can represent sufficiently the complexity of textual history, especially in difficult passages. For example, how can an eclectic edition be produced for a passage that appears in different locations in the textual witnesses, with scholars disagreeing about its original location? Critics also object to the integration, in the main text, of a word from the Septuagint’s Vorlage in place of the Masoretic Text, when one thinks that the former represents the archetype. How could such a task be achieved when there are hesitations about
Table 1

Comparison of the Main Textual Witnesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>M (vv. 12–13)</th>
<th>G (v. 53a)</th>
<th>OL(^a) (v. 53a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>הֹמלְֹשׁרַמָאזָא</td>
<td>τότε ἑλάλησεν Σαλωμων</td>
<td>Tunc locutus est Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ύπὲρ τοῦ οἴκου</td>
<td>pro domo, quam consumavit</td>
<td>aedificans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ἤλιον ἐγνώρισεν</td>
<td>τὸν κατοικεῖν</td>
<td>in dedicatione domus(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ἔπειν</td>
<td>et dixit</td>
<td>commorare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ἁὁ ἥλιον ἐγνώρισεν</td>
<td>ἐν οὐρανῷ</td>
<td>Dominus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>οὐκ ἰδοὺ αὕτη γέγραπται</td>
<td>Nonne haec scripta sunt</td>
<td>in libro Cantici?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^b\) Moreno Hernandez mentions a variant reading: in nebula aedificationis domus (Las Glosas Marginales de Vetus Latina, 138).

the retroversion of the Greek text? These two problems are crucial in the case of the so-called “poem of Solomon” (1 Kgs 8:12–13 MT // 8:53a LXX), which is notorious for its difficulty.\(^1\) In the LXX, this passage is longer (see Table 1) and appears much later in the same chapter, after Solomon’s prayer of dedication.

---

In the following, I examine Solomon’s poem as a case study to demonstrate that even such a difficult text can be represented adequately in a critical, eclectic edition. To do so, I answer the following questions:

1. Is it possible to provide a retroversion of the Greek text of the poem? While most commentators reconstruct part or all of the Hebrew Vorlage, their results are not identical and one sometimes has the impression

---


that there is a profusion of equally plausible possibilities. I shall attempt to distinguish between the hypotheses that are philologically stable and those that are not, in order to circumscribe the realm of what is plausible. The problem is not that there are no possible retroversions, but that more than one retroversion is plausible in the case of a few words; yet the number of options is limited.

2. How can the substantial differences between MT and LXX be explained? I will discuss these textual differences and conclude that the legitimacy of attempts to reconstruct an Urtext is doubtful.

3. What are the possible scenarios concerning the original location of the poem? Although the majority view is that MT preserves the original place of the poem, a text critic has recently defended the notion that the oldest arrangement appears in the LXX, and another believes that both textual traditions exhibit two independent manners of inserting a fragment into the chapter.

In the last section of this article, I demonstrate how a critical, eclectic edition can accommodate the challenges given by these three issues (retroversion, different versions of the text, and location).

2 The Retroversion of the Greek Text

Virtually all scholars accept the view that the Greek translates a Hebrew text. Let us review each part of the poem (see the division in the table above).

2.1 τότε ἐλάλησεν Σαλωμών — אָמַר שִׁלְמֹהוּ (= MT)

2.2 ὑπὲρ τοῦ οἴκου ὡς συνετέλεσεν τοῦ οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν — עַל הָבִית מְכַלְכֹּתוֹ — מְכַלּותָיו — מִן הָבִית אֵת מִן הָבִית

---

4 E.g. Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 177–178.
5 Schenker, Septante et texte massorétique, 135.
6 Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 414.
7 Ehrlich is an exception (Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel, 232).
8 The Old Latin (pro domo, quam consumavit aedificans) does not reflect αὐτόν, but this word seems necessary in Greek and in Hebrew.
2.3 ἥλιον ἐγνώρισεν (_GB/) / ἔστησεν (GL) ἐν οὐρανῷ κύριος

This is the most discussed part of the poem. The first problem is the verb: ἐγνώρισεν in GB, ἔστησεν in GL; the latter is reflected in the Old Latin (statuit). There are basically two possibilities here. The first is to regard ἐγνώρισεν as the Old Greek and ἔστησεν as a facilitating reading, or as an assimilation to Josh 10:12–13, where the same verb is repeatedly used to state that the sun “stood still.” The various retroversions suggested for the reading ἐγνώρισεν have been presented conveniently by Percy S.F. van Keulen.9 Table 2 synthetizes these hypotheses and their possible difficulties. No option is without problem.10 The main difficulty with ἐγνώρισεν is that the final sentence (“YHWH made the sun known in heaven”) looks a little feeble, so to speak, and unlikely to reflect the original wording of this part of the poem. Nonetheless, there seems to be a growing consensus in recent research in favor of ὤρος.

TABLE 2 Retroversions of ἐγνώρισεν Suggested in Previous Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retroversion of ἐγνώρισεν</th>
<th>Does γνω-ρίζω translate this verb elsewhere?</th>
<th>Further analysis</th>
<th>Translation of the stich</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ὤρος                      | no                                          | error for ἡμέρα, which corresponds to ἔστησεν (GL)
                                            | “(YHWH) has set the sun in heaven” | (1) the equivalence is unattested;
                                            |                                            | (2) ἔστησεν looks like an “improvement” or an “explanation” of ἐγνώρισεν;
                                            |                                            | (3) the meaning is unlikely (واجب does not square with the fact that the
                                            |                                            | sun was perceived as moving in the sky) |
| ἱππιλέα                   | yes (Ps 77:20; 79:10)             | stems from an erroneous vocalization of ἱππιλέα
                                            | “the sun is made known/can be discerned in the sky” | this hypothesis involves a yiqtol, whereas the Greek uses an aorist |
| ἡδονή (hīphil)            | yes (often)                       | corruption of ἅδονή
                                            | “Sun, shine forth in heaven!” | the paleographic confusion between θ and β is unlikely. |
|                                            |                                            | ἡδονή is to be divided as ἡδονή ἑιππιλέα
                                            | “the sun of glory beclouds the heavens” | (1) ὤρος is attested only once (Lam 2:1); (2) the meaning is unlikely |

9 Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 168.
10 Thackeray spoke of an “unintelligent translator” (The Septuagint and Jewish Worship, 77).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retroversion of ἐγνώρισεν</th>
<th>Does γνωρίζω translate this verb elsewhere?</th>
<th>Further analysis</th>
<th>Translation of the stich</th>
<th>Difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ὠδύσθαι (וֹדֵעַ hiphil)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>to be read with a defective spelling</td>
<td>“He made the sun known in heaven”</td>
<td>the wording (i.e., the choice of a verb) is a little surprising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לְבַכְּרָה (לְבַךְָר hiphil)</td>
<td>yes, once</td>
<td>corruption of לְבַכְָר</td>
<td>“(YHWH) has summoned the sun in heaven”</td>
<td>(1) the equivalence is unattested; (2) the meaning is unlikely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c Burkitt, “The Lucianic Text of 1 Kings VIII 53b,” 441.
g Burkitt, “The Lucianic Text of 1 Kings VIII 53b,” 441.
h Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship*, 77.
i *Pace* Van Keulen, who thinks that this proposition “certainly fits a context making reference to clouds” (*Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative*, 168); the notion that the sun could becloud the heavens is odd.
j Van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative*, 172.
k A. van den Born, quoted by Van Keulen (*Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative*, 168).
l Van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative*, 168.
m Mentioned as a possibility by Gray (*1 and 11 Kings*, 212 n. a).

The alternative is to regard ἐστησεν as the Old Greek, a view that is supported by the attestation of this reading not only in G but also in the Old Latin and in the Bohairic version. In this case, the Hebrew Vorlage could be ביצה (cf., e.g., Gen 35:14; 2 Sam 18:18), שִׁכֵּה (cf. Josh 4:19, 20; 1 Kgs 16:32; Dan 3:1), and לעני (cf. 2 Chr...
8:14; 20:21; 23:10; 29:25; 34:32), or ἡμῖν (Isa 40:22). If the latter were correct (which is possible but not very likely, since this equivalent is attested only once), a corruption to ἄνωθεν ἡμῖν may explain ἔγνωρισεν,11 but this lexical equivalence is unattested in the LXX. Some scholars prefer הנופה, notably Julio Trebolle Barrera;12 it should be noted, however, that it is difficult to find an explanation for the reading ἔγνωρισεν in this scenario.

In what follows, I accept the most favored retroversion in recent research (וַיָּרָב), but it should be kept in mind that it is not the sole possibility.

The syntax of the Hebrew substratum is problematic. The first possibility is to follow the syntax of the Greek sentence, where κύριος is the subject:

However, the sequence object > verb > prepositional phrase > subject is surprising.13 The second possibility is that the subject of the verb is implicit and that הוהי belongs to the next clause, where it is the first word in the sentence. While a subject-first clause is normal in the MT, where the clause is at the very beginning of the statement,14 in the Old Greek’s Vorlage it is a little more surprising since it constitutes the beginning of the second clause. Yet this is appropriate if the aim is to draw a contrast between שמש and הוהי.15 However, one has to wait for the second colon for an explicit mention of the subject, separated from the first clause, which is unusual in Hebrew poetry (“He has set/made known the sun in heaven/YHWH has said that he would dwell in the dark cloud”):

The oldest Hebrew text was identical to the consonantal text of the MT.16
2.5 οἰκοδόμησον οἶκόν μου οἶκον ἑκπρεπή (GR) / ἑυπρεπὴ (GL) σαυτῷ τοῦ κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ καινότητος

The analysis is complicated:

- οἰκοδόμησον οἶκόν μου—הניב (with the imperative הביב).\(^\text{17}\)
- οἶκον ἑκπρεπὴ / ἑυπρεπὴ (GL) σαυτῷ: the difference between the manuscripts is probably due to an internal corruption of the Greek tradition.\(^\text{18}\) Both adjectives could theoretically translate ביב, and in all the other occurrences of the latter word, other equivalents are used. Although it is difficult to decide which of the two Greek words represents the OG, this uncertainty does not affect the retroversion since both point to ביב.\(^\text{19}\)
- לשהב.
- ἐπὶ καινότητος—ותבשל. This is a very rare word in the LXX; the sole other occurrence of καινότης (“newness”) in the LXX is Ezek 47:12, where it renders שדחל. This has led some scholars to retroversions based on this word, e.g., לדם (“for New Moon Feasts”).\(^\text{20}\) Some other scholars prefer to reconstruct a word slightly different from the MT בַּעֲלֶמִים: בַּעֲלֶמִים.\(^\text{21}\) Van Keulen notes: “it does not seem possible to restore the Hebrew underlying ἐπὶ καινότητος with reasonable certainty,” but לשהב is the “best conjecture.”\(^\text{22}\) A better retroversion still would be לשהב, with the preposition ל rendered by ἐπὶ (cf. Zeph 2:15; Ezek 38:8).\(^\text{23}\) Maybe the translator faced a Vorlage similar (or identical?) to the MT and made a contextual guess. He may also have regarded the notion of permanence (לשהב, with or without

---

\(^{17}\) This is preferable to הניב because the Old Latin aedifica mihi domum seems to presuppose οἰκοδόμησον μοι οἶκόν, which is the Old Greek (Trebolle Barrera, “From Secondary Versions through Greek Recensions to Hebrew Editions,” 205–206).

\(^{18}\) Takamitsu Muraoka translates ἑυπρεπή as “preeminent” and ἑκπρεπὴ as “good-looking, comely” (A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint [Leuven: Peeters, 2009], 215, 303).

\(^{19}\) As for the pronoun σαυτῷ, its absence in the OL reflects the OG according to Trebolle Barrera (“From Secondary Versions through Greek Recensions to Hebrew Editions,” 205–206), since σαυτῷ does not make sense after the command “build my house.” Instead, the original sentence would have been οἰκοδόμησον οἶκόν μου ἑκπρεπὴ or οἰκοδόμησον μοι οἶκόν ἑκπρεπὴ. The pronoun σαυτῷ would be due to a harmonization towards the MT (ךל), where one reads “I have built” instead of “build my house.” This, in turn, would have led to the insertion of a second occurrence of οἶκόν.

\(^{20}\) Burkitt, “The Lucianic Text of 1 Kings viii 53b,” 442; Schenker, Septante et texte massoretique, 131.

\(^{21}\) See the discussion in Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 171.

\(^{22}\) Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 171.

\(^{23}\) Still another possibility would be בַּעֲלִים (assuming a dittography of the first two letters of בַּעֲלִים). I thank the anonymous reader for this suggestion.
out preposition) as inconsistent with the fact that Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. In search of an alternative meaning, he may have interpreted the expression in light of the notion that the temple was a new house for YHWH. Hence the surprising yet not too radical shift in meaning from שִׁמְלוע to קָאָנוֹתַתָּ. In this scenario, it is uncertain whether the Vorlage contained a preposition before שִׁמְלוע (a scribe may have previously added -ל during the transmission of the Hebrew text). In the following, I take on שִׁמְלוע as a working hypothesis in order to stay close to the Greek in the retroversion, on the grounds that the translation of the books of Kings was generally made on an isomorph basis.

2.6 οὐκ ἰδοὺ αὕτη γέγραπται ἐν βιβλίῳ τῆς ᾠδῆς
While τῆς ᾠδῆς translates רשיה, and a “Book of the Song” would make sense as a collection of poetic works,25 most scholars follow Julius Wellhausen in assuming that a metathesis or a misreading occurred and that the oldest text was רשיה.26 Cf. the “Book of Yashar” (ספר יהשך) in Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18. Moreover, since the meaning of רשיה is far from obvious, it may be regarded as lectio difficilior. Furthermore, “it is far more typical to name an ancient book for a name or key word than for a genre,” and the title may come from a title of YHWH (“the Upright”) found in Deut 32:4.27 In the end, strictly speaking, the retroversion of רשי would be רשיה, but if one is allowed to correct mistakes of the Vorlage, especially in the framework of a critical edition,28 רשיה seems preferable. The precise form of the retroverted text depends on the context.

25 Kittel, Die Bücher der Könige, 74. Montgomery and Gehman (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings, 192) suggest that רשיה is a corruption of רש not only in 1 Kgs 8:13 MT but also in Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18.
26 Wellhausen, Die Composition des Hexateuchs, 269; Benzinger, Die Bücher der Könige, 59; Burney, Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings, 111; Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 413; etc.
27 Edward L. Greenstein, “What Was the Book of Yashar?” Maarav 21 (2014): 29, 34. Sweeney thinks that the formula refers to a psalm legitimating the construction of the temple (Sweeney, 1 & 11 Kings, 132). On the basis of an Ugaritic parallel, Gray (1 and 11 Kings, 211) thinks that רשיה means “the legitimate one” (which would be Solomon here), but this is hardly convincing. In addition, this explanation would not work for Josh 10:13; 2 Sam 1:18, and it seems most probable that these texts and 1 Kgs 8:12 refer to the same book. See also Greenstein, “What Was the Book of Yashar?” 29–30 for other possibilities.
28 This is the case with the HBCE, which aims at a corrected archetype (see Ronald Hendel, Steps to a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible, Text-Critical Studies 10 [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016], 23, 50).
2.7 Tentative Retroversion of the Greek Version of the Poem

In summary, it is possible to provide a retroversion of the Old Greek’s Vorlage for this passage. The main difficulty is that one may provide multiple retroversions for some words, but we have seen that some options are more likely than others. The range of possibilities is more limited than one may think when looking at the publications on the subject. The retroversion above is an example and on several points other options are possible.

3 The Main Differences between the MT (vv. 12–13) and the LXX (v. 53a)

A comparison between the two forms of the poem shows that the LXX includes three important pluses (see parts 2, 3, and 6 in Table 1). No obvious scribal error seems to explain the loss of any of these clauses in the MT. Scholars disagree about whether they were originally part of the poem. There are also some additional minor but significant differences.

3.1 The Clause about the Subject and the Circumstances of the Poem (זא
ותאתונבלתולככתיבהלעהמלשרמא
)

This clause is not, strictly speaking, part of the poem; rather, it is metatextual information. It will be discussed in section 4 below.

3.2 The Clause about the Sun (שמש
הוריתבשמיר)

Many scholars think that a copyist might have deleted the clause about the sun from MT for theological reasons. This depends on the interpretation of the verse consisting of this colon and the next, which, in turn, depends on the retroversion and sometimes on scholarly emendations of the text.

Those who regard שמש as the subject of the first colon often think that it refers to the Sun-God, and that the poem would have been read as a relic of some solar cult. Some exegetes reach this conclusion by way of an emendation,29

29 E.g., hence “Sun, shine forth in the heavens” (mentioned by Thackeray, The Septuagint and Jewish Worship, 78).
but Juha Pakkala has recently made the same suggestion based on the same retroversion I adopted above, which he translates as follows:30

“The Sun(-God) made (it) known in the heavens, Yahweh said, (he wants) to live in darkness”

Importantly, it is possible that the poem did not mention two distinct gods (the Sun-God and YHWH), but simply regarded YHWH as a solar god, congruent with a theological view that may have existed in Judah in the late Iron Age.31 Such an association might have prompted a scribe to suppress the colon.32 On the other hand, some scholars interpret the sentence in a way that is presumed to be compatible with Deuteronomistic “orthodoxy.” For August Klostermann, the verse draws a contrast between the sun that is visible in the sky and its creator who hides himself;33 a “fine theological contrast” in James A. Montgomery and Henry Gehman’s view.34 John Gray sees here a theological statement that, in spite of his presence among Israel, God never entirely reveals himself.35 This interpretation seems valid whether the text stipulates that Yhwh “has set” (ךתיו, דמעה) or “made known” (דוה יע) the sun in heaven.36 However, assuming that the colon was present in an older stage of the Hebrew text (before being deleted), we cannot be sure that the form of this colon was exactly the same as in the Vorlage of the LXX. Therefore, even if we reconstruct it on the basis of the LXX in a way that happens to be “Deuteronomistically correct,” we cannot

31 There are possible hints of this in the Hebrew Bible and in the iconography of seals (Thomas Römer, L’invention de Dieu [Paris: Seuil, 2014], 171–172). In addition, some scholars have pointed out parallels in the ancient Near East and in Egypt (e.g., Gerhards, “‘Die Sonne lässt am Himmel erkennen Jahwe ...’,” 222–253).
32 Würthwein, Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 1–16, 85; Barthélemy, Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament, vol. 1, 351 (although, in the end, he does not reintroduce the colon into the text). On omissions in the Hebrew Bible made for ideological or theological reasons, see Pakkala, God’s Word Omitted, 183–252.
33 Klostermann, Die Bücher Samuels und der Könige, 315.
34 Montgomery and Gehman, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings, 190. The same contrast is noted by DeVries (1 Kings, 125), Richard D. Nelson (First and Second Kings, Int [Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1987], 51), and Fritz (1 & 2 Kings, 90).
35 Gray, 1 and 11 Kings, 212.
36 Würthwein has proposed an original analysis: the verse claims that God does not appear as the sun, which is only a created entity; rather, he is invisibly present in the darkness of the clouds. This would be confirmed by the imagery of the cherubs: God rides on them (as Baal), and they represent the dark cloud in which YHWH dwells (Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 1–16, 88–89).
exclude the possibility that it was different in the MT. At any rate, even if this colon was “orthodox,” it may have been read as “heterodox” by a scribe due to the terseness of the wording and the difficulty of interpreting it. In sum, the theory that the colon was deleted due to theological censorship is plausible.37

What about the opposite scenario? Could a scribe have deliberately added the clause about the sun in the Vorlage of the LXX? Sweeney thinks that the aim was to clarify an obscure text. The colon on God’s decision to dwell in darkness is difficult to understand, so a scribe or the translator created a parallel colon to explain it by way of contrast with the sun.38 In my view, if this happened, it was probably the work of a copyist of the Hebrew text, because Kings was translated on the basis of a scrupulous isomorphic equivalence. However, this scenario raises the question regarding why a redactor would ascribe to Solomon such a sibylline assertion in the first place if one judges it obscure. This is not necessarily so, because it is possible to make sense of the text as it stands in the MT, without any reference to the sun: for instance, Lissa Wray Beal writes that “Yhwh has long been associated with dark cloud and now that association continues in this grand house where he might dwell forever.”39 Regardless, the colon about the dark cloud may have been perceived as obscure by a scribe. Finally, it may be argued that this poetic colon has a ring of authenticity, but this is a subjective argument; even a moderately skilled scribe could have created it.

3.3 The Clause about the Building (הנה לא בתי יBahיוס להים)
There are several minor differences between MT and LXX here. The most important concerns the implicit identity of the speaker and the analysis of the main verb. In the MT, Solomon claims: “I have built a house for you.” In the Old Greek, he apparently quotes Yhwh saying: “Build a house for me,”40 or he asks God to build a house for him, a royal palace. Some commentators try to explain the textual difference as a scribal accident,41 but other scholars suspect a deliberate modification. Note that it would have been odd to have Solomon speaking about the royal palace in v. 13, between the entrance of the ark into the holy of holies and the dedicatory prayer concerning the temple. The problem is less

37 Contra Cogan, who writes that “the loss of this stich from MT has not been convincingly explained” (1 Kings, 281).
38 Sweeney, 1 & II Kings, 132. See also Wray Beal, 1 & 2 Kings, 136.
39 Wray Beal, 1 & 2 Kings, 136.
40 As we have seen, the anomalous presence of the pronoun σαυτῷ may be due to a secondary harmonization towards the Mt; it has no equivalent in the Old Latin.
41 E.g., Gray, 1 and II Kings, 212.
apparent in v. 53a, but it would still be surprising to read here a mention of the palace. Thus, Adrian Schenker believes that the Greek is *lectio difficilior* and that the MT stems from an adaptation to the context of v. 13.42

David W. Gooding, on the other hand, thinks that the text has been modified in the Septuagint in order to avoid Solomon arrogantly claiming “I have built for you a house,” noting a comment in Midrash Tehillim that attests to this perception of Solomon.43 Most scholars, however, regard Solomon’s “bold claim” as original.44

3.4 The Clause Indicating the Origins of the Poem (הלל הרותא חכובא עלפשפ
היה)

Insofar as it resembles other references to a source book in Kings, this clause seems to have a ring of authenticity. The existence of other references to the Book of Yashar/the Song reinforces this impression. For the same reason, however, a scribe may have imitated these sentences in order to “to stress its authenticity.”

3.5 Should We Reconstruct an “Ideal Form” of the Poem?

The discussion above reflects the kind of reasoning scholars rely on when considering the form of the poem. Their goal is not always evident: even commentators who stick to the MT discuss the LXX, and not all of them state clearly which text they are reconstructing and which literary edition they are concerned with. Whereas these commentators can aim to reconstruct an “ideal” form of a self-contained poem, such isolating of the poem is not possible in the making of a critical text. It is not clear whether we should emend the form of the poem in one literary edition in view of its form in the other. What if the form of the poem is related to the place it occupies in the chapter? Considerations regarding the role played by the pluses in the reconstruction of the text cannot be dissociated from the debate about its original place in the chapter, to which I turn next.

42 Schenker, *Septante et texte massorétique*, 134.
4 Location of the Poem

The divergence between the witnesses in the placement of the poem is no less striking than the differences in its form. In the following, we will ask first if the placement of each tradition is fitting; second, in which direction a transfer could have taken place and why; and third, whether the poem was inserted independently in two different places. In the process, we shall see that the location of the poem is tied to the presence, absence, and/or form of some clauses in the poem.

4.1 Is the Place of the Poem in the Masoretic Text Appropriate?

Two difficulties have been noted in the placement of the poem in the MT. First, Tov thinks that the sequence of events in the MT is problematic because it juxtaposes two dedications: the poem of vv. 12–13 and the blessing of vv. 14–21. Moreover, the second dedication "starts off as if the previous poetry dedication had not yet occurred." In my view, it is difficult to tell whether the sequence of events or passages is a key to understanding the text’s evolution, since Kings generally is not arranged that well compared to other works of the Hebrew Bible, which admittedly is a subjective evaluation. We should not try to reconstruct a flowing sequence of units if the oldest redaction did not exhibit these literary qualities. At any rate, the poem should not necessarily be regarded as a dedication. Rather, Solomon pronounces it in response to the appearance of Yhwh's glory, accompanied or symbolized by a cloud filling the temple. Having reacted thus to this impressive event, Solomon turns to the assembly and pronounces a blessing and prayer, which belong to other “speech” genres.

Second, according to Schenker, the stich about the sun was probably part of the oldest form of the poem, and it situates the darkness (לֶפָرياض) in heaven. As a result, the connection between this darkness (v. 12) and the cloud (נן) filling the temple in v. 11 disappears, along with the sole justification of the poem's placement in the MT. However, even if one accepts that the stich about the sun is original, it can be interpreted differently: the darkness may be regarded as the obscurity inside the holy of holies. If so, Solomon reacts to the cloud in the temple by noting the paradoxical fact that YHWH dwells in obscurity or in a dark cloud. This link is the main reason why the placement of the poem

46 Ehrlich states that the place of the poem in the MT is not appropriate, but he does not give his reasons or discuss the issue further (Randglossen zur hebraischen Bibel, 232).
47 Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 413.
48 Schenker, Septante et texte massorétique, 135.
49 Otto Thenius doubted the relevance of this connection because he thought that in
in the MT seems appropriate to many scholars. Another reason is that vv. 12–13 are required narratively: v. 14 states that “Solomon turned his face” (ךְֶלֶמַּהּבֵסַּו וַיִּנְפּ־תֶא), seemingly from the temple to the assembly of Israelites, and yet vv. 1–11 never say that he was turned towards the temple; only vv. 12–13 suggest it. It is difficult to assess the strength of this argument, and one could counter that vv. 6–11 suggest implicitly that Solomon was looking at the scene depicted: it is difficult to imagine that he was looking elsewhere when the priests brought the ark into the temple, and even more so when a cloud became visible in it.

4.2 Is the Place of the Poem in the Septuagint Appropriate?
In contrast to the arrangement of the Hebrew text, the sequence in the Greek faces several important difficulties. First, the poem does not seem to be tied to its immediate context. Whereas in vv. 12–13 it can be seen as an immediate reaction to the apparition of a cloud, in v. 53a its connection to the prayer that precedes it is loose at best; as Van Keulen notes, “the pronouncement does not take up issues raised in the verses of the prayer immediately preceding it” and the sole "possible point of contact" is “the theme of heaven as Yhwh’s abode (vv. 30, 36, 39, 45)." After the long prayer of vv. 23–53, the poem looks like an afterthought, oddly different from what precedes.

Second, the presence of the poem seems to interrupt the flow of the text. As the beginning of v. 54 shows ("When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the Lord"), v. 54 should immediately follow the prayer of vv. 23–53. It is not impossible, but unlikely, that the poem is included in the “prayers and supplications” mentioned in v. 54.

Third, the indication at the beginning of v. 53a (“When Solomon had finished building the temple”) seems out of place in the middle of the dedication of the temple; at that point, it is quite clear that this building has been completed! In addition, the completion of the building has already been used in the LXX as a temporal point of reference in 8:1, and in a more precise way (“And it happened, when Solomon finished building the house of the Lord and his

v. 11 designated a light and bright cloud (Die Bücher der Könige, 130). But both words are used in combination in Deut 4:11 to refer to the Sinai theophany (Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988], 123).

51 Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 178.
own house after twenty years”). However, this difficulty does not concern the poem directly, only the temporal clause introducing it, and we cannot exclude the possibility that the words “about the temple, when Solomon had finished the temple” are a secondary gloss made by a copyist who wanted to make clear that the poem concerned the temple. However, this would be testimony to the obscurity of the poem in its current place in the LXX. It is also conceivable that a redactor had originally inserted here an excerpt of the Book of Yashar/the Song together with the introduction to the poem; the words “when Solomon has finished building the temple” may have been present already in the source.

4.3 In Which Direction Could a Transfer Have Taken Place, and Why?

All in all, the place of the poem in the MT seems fitting, whereas in the LXX it seems to be intrusive. Hence a plausible hypothesis is that a copyist or translator transferred the poem from vv. 12–13 to v. 53a. Scholars have pointed out several possible motives behind such a displacement.

a. The poem was regarded as “ritually secondary to the following solemn prayer of dedication.” However, it is difficult to know if and how the poem and prayer were evaluated in these terms, and if it would have been regarded as more fitting to have the “more ritual” pronouncement first.

b. The poem was moved to v. 53 in “an effort to provide a suitable conclusion to Solomon’s prayer.” However, the poem is loosely connected to the prayer and they form a heterogeneous unit.

c. It was perceived as abnormal that Solomon did not immediately look away from the temple filled by the glory of the Lord. However, in that case it may have been more natural to place the poem immediately after the indication that “Solomon turned his face” in v. 14.

d. Inadvertently or deliberately, the translator or a copyist of the Hebrew substratum read the clause involving the verb הָנָב as a request from Solomon to have a house built rather than a bold claim to have built the temple; therefore, the poem does not concern the sanctuary and had to be moved to appear after the prayer.

---

54 Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 178.
56 Montgomery and Gehman, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings, 189.
The last scenario is plausible, although its strength is not overwhelming; it must be admitted that the reason for a transfer from vv. 12–13 to v. 53a remains uncertain.

Could it be argued that the displacement occurred the other way around? In view of the difficulties created by the presence of the poem in v. 53a, a copyist could have tried to move it to a more appropriate place. Since the poem evokes a “darkness”/“dark cloud” and since v. 11 also mentions a cloud, he may have turned the poem into a reaction to this phenomenon. This is possible, although one loses on one hand what one gains on the other: there is no explanation for the fact that the poem was inserted in such an awkward place as v. 53a in the first place. Admittedly, the sequence of units in Kings is not always very harmonious, as noted above, yet here the difficulties are numerous.

In sum, the strength of each hypothesis is the weakness of the other. The fact that the poem fits the context of vv. 12–13 makes it tempting to think that it is original, but it could also have motivated a transfer in this direction. The difficulties created by the poem in v. 53a make it hard to think that a redactor placed it here in the first place, but it is not easy to explain why a copyist or a translator would have moved it here either. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that the poem was transferred from vv. 12–13 to v. 53a is more likely for two reasons. First, it seems to me that a copyist is more likely than an author/redactor to create a bad context for a sentence, given that it happens more frequently. Second, if one assumes that a scribe found the poem at v. 53a and searched for a better context, it would be a strange coincidence that such a fitting context already existed in fairly close proximity.

### 4.4 The Hypothesis of Two Parallel Insertions

Perhaps we do not have to choose between these two options. Tov has suggested that the poem was inserted independently at two different places in the chapter.\(^60\) This kind of conclusion is attractive given how the variety in the witnesses points to some instability in the textual traditions. The textbook case is the pericope of the adulterous woman in the New Testament, which appears in several places depending on the manuscripts: after John 7:36, after John 7:52, after Luke 21:36, or at the end of Luke. In the books of Kings, Trebolle Barrera has formulated the hypothesis of a double parallel insertion in other cases, including:

- the last narrative involving Elisha: it belongs to 2 Kings 13 (vv. 14–21) in the MT, but is found after 2 Kgs 10:30 in the Old Latin;\(^61\)

---

\(^{60}\) Tov, The Greek and Hebrew Bible, 414.

\(^{61}\) See the discussion in Matthieu Richelle, Le Testament d’Élisée: Texte massorétique et Sep-
– the so-called Miscellanies: we read information in Greek (notably after 1 Kgs 2:35 and 2:46) that is found scattered in several places in the Hebrew.62

In the present case, Tov finds support for this conclusion in the problematic sequence of events in the MT. As already noted, I am less sure of this than Tov. Another question is the source of the poem and the insertion process; thus Van Keulen has objected to Tov’s hypothesis as follows:

This view presupposes that there were at least two source documents in circulation in which the additions were made. Moreover, the additions must have been created and inserted by the same scribal circle, as they cannot have existed previously as independent documents. This raises the question for what reason the scribe(s) inserted their materials at different places in the sources. The sequence differences may be more easily explained in terms of diachronical textual development.63

In spite of Van Keulen’s doubts, it is conceivable that the poem existed in a source document—such as a poetic collection (perhaps the “Book of Yashar”—and was independently “extracted” by two scribes (possibly belonging to different circles), who inserted it in two different locations in 1 Kings 8. Though it is improbable that two scribes would have had the same idea independently, the source document may have given a context to the poem, situating it during the ceremony of dedication of the temple, in which case it was natural to insert it in this section of Kings. This kind of scenario would be more difficult to imagine if one were speaking of a fragment of text supposed to have existed as a self-contained unit, because it would raise difficult questions about its prehistory: its origins and preservation.64 That said, the same type of questions arise regarding the pericope of the adulterous woman, and


63 Van Keulen, Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative, 178–179, n. 47.

64 For example, were some isolated pericopes preserved on sheets of papyrus or on ostraca? See an objection to the “fragment hypothesis” for the redaction of the Pentateuch in Joel Baden, The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 59–60.
perhaps in our case we should reckon with some oral transmission. In sum, Tov’s hypothesis remains attractive and plausible.

4.5 The Relationship between the Form of the Poem and Its Placement
Having explored the various possible scenarios for the placement of the poem, we should consider possible ties between the place of the poem in the chapter and the main textual differences between MT and LXX. Though I have touched on some points of this topic above, here I summarize and fill out the remarks:

a. The clause about the subject of the poem plays a significant role in v. 53a because the reader would not expect the poem here and because it is not self-evident that it concerns the temple. This indication would have been superfluous at the beginning of v. 12. At the same time, this clause also gives a chronological indication about the time of the pronouncement by Solomon that is problematic. Perhaps this clumsy indication comes from an early redaction of the text or is due to the moving of the pericope by an unskilled scribe; alternatively, it is perhaps a gloss.

b. The clause about the sun would not have played the same role in v. 12 as in v. 53a. In the MT, the sequence of vv. 11–12 suggests that לֶפָרֲﬠ in v. 12 should be interpreted in light of נָﬠ in v. 11. According to Schenker, inserting the clause about the sun in between results in a bicolon, which suggests another interpretation: the dark cloud (לֶפָרֲﬠ) serves as a contrasting comparison of the sun and Yhwh. This suggests that the colon about the sun has been deleted in the MT in order to fit the (secondary) context of v. 12. On the other hand, one may also understand that Solomon, seeing the temple filled by a cloud, reacts by saying that Yhwh has chosen to dwell in darkness in contrast to the sun, which is visible in the sky. Thus, the mention of the sun may merely serve to highlight the surprising nature of Yhwh’s choice; far from erasing the connection between לֶפָרֲﬠ and נָﬠ, it reinforces it. By contrast, it may be argued that the clause about the sun is necessary in v. 53a because there is no explanation in the immediate context for why Solomon suddenly speaks about a cloud or the darkness.

c. The clause about the building would be out of place in v. 13 if it concerned the royal palace (if we understand that Solomon is saying to God: “build my house”; see § 3.3 above). The divergence between MT and LXX may be due to scribal confusion, but it is not easy to tell precisely how it happened. If it was intentional, we have seen that it may be due to an adaptation to the context in the MT (so Schenker) after the poem had

65 Schenker, Septante et texte massorétique, 134.
been moved from v. 53a to vv. 12–13. It might also be due to a desire to make Solomon look less arrogant (so Gooding), with the result that the sentence may be read as concerning the royal palace. This, in turn, may have motivated a scribe to move it to after the dedicatory prayer because it was inappropriate in vv. 12–13. However, one may also understand that Solomon is quoting God in his poem: “build my house,” that is, the temple; this is all the more plausible if the pronoun σαυτῷ (“for yourself”) was absent from the OG, as Trebolle Barrera argues.

d. The clause about the source of the poem does not seem to be tied to the place of the poem. If placed after vv. 12–13, it would have interrupted the flow of the narrative, but this is also the case in v. 53a.

In light of this, let us review the three possible scenarios:

a. If the poem was inserted independently in two places, it is possible that the MT scribe chose to insert only a part of the poem even though his source included other parts that another scribe chose to insert in his own work (hence the long form in the LXX). In particular, this could be the reason why the colon about the sun is lacking in the MT. But it is also possible that the poem existed in the form we know thanks to the MT, and that it was expanded in the LXX or its Vorlage when it was inserted in v. 53a, or even later during the transmission of the text.

b. If the poem was moved from vv. 12–13 to v. 53a, it is possible that the pluses of the LXX were made in the wake of the transposition: (i) the clause about the subject and the circumstances of the poem, because it was not natural in the new location; (ii) the clause about the sun, in order to clarify the colon about the dark cloud; (iii) the clause about the source of the poem, in order to stress its authenticity. Strictly speaking, the last motive is not necessarily tied to the location of v. 53a, but it is possible that a scribe who decided to transpose the poem took it as an opportunity to make this “improvement” in the process. The weakness of this scenario is that it postulates that the same scribe did completely different things at the same time; moreover, it seems difficult to find parallels to (ii) and (iii) in other textual situations.

c. If the poem was moved from v. 53a to vv. 12–13, then one can imagine that the scribe responsible for the transposition deleted the clause about the sun for theological reasons or, less likely, because he wanted the connection between לֶפָרע and ןָנָﬠ to be clearer. Perhaps he suppressed the other two clauses because they would have interrupted the flow of the narrative, even more so in the case of the clause about the subject and the circumstances of the pronouncement since it would appear superfluous and odd in that context.
Many scenarios are conceivable and many arguments are reversible. One wonders if certainty can ever be attained in this matter. Nevertheless, it should be noted that scenario a) has the advantage of elegantly explaining the situation.

5 Towards an Eclectic Edition of Solomon’s Poem

Despite the complications of the text discussed above, the text(s) of the poem can be represented in an eclectic edition. I will address the three issues discussed above—retroversion, the form of the poem, and its original location—in reverse order.

5.1 Location of the Poem

The first decision to be made concerns the place of the poem. As attractive as the hypothesis of a double parallel insertion might be, such a hypothesis pertains to the realm of compositional criticism, more precisely to a stage of the composition that is unattested in the extant textual witnesses. In many situations, compositional criticism and textual criticism overlap insofar as an older form of the text is attested in at least one witness. The present case is different: although it is the divergence between the witnesses that suggests the oldest stage might not have included the poem, this stage is not represented in manuscripts. As a result, even if one were to adopt Tov’s hypothesis, this would not affect the fact that the MT and the LXX represent two literary editions, with the oldest attainable form of each containing the poem. In other words, a text without the poem would correspond to a stage prior to the archetype of each edition.

The problem of textual plurality is alleviated if the chapter is presented in two columns at the relevant places (vv. 12–13 in the MT, v. 53a in the LXX). In doing so, we could speak of “edition A” and “edition B.” This kind of “synoptic” presentation is now regarded as a normal feature of eclectic editions.66 It could then be indicated in the apparatus and/or in the textual commentary that two competing scenarios may explain the origins of the differences: either one edition results from a transposition of the poem or both editions reflect two independent choices regarding where to insert it. Thus, the diverging arrangements of the text in the textual witnesses do not constitute a problem in an eclectic edition, if such an edition were committed to represent the various

---

Table 3  Representation of the Literary Editions in Columns in 1 Kings 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אָמַר שָלָמָה</td>
<td>אָמַר שָלָמָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וְהָאָרֶץ אֵלֵֽךְנֹ֖כְּשִׁלרַ֔מָא</td>
<td>וְהָאָרֶץ אֵלֵֽךְנֹ֖כְּשִׁלרַ֔מָא</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וָֽהְיוֹמָ֖שָׁרַ֣מָאזָ֖א</td>
<td>שָׁמַֽת הָוָ֖דִּית בְּשֶׁמֶֽית</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>עָלָ֝וֹלֶֽפָּקָ֖לֹ֯כָּמְךָשֶֽׁלֲבַ֣י</td>
<td>גֶּנֶ֣ה לִֽי בְּדֶלֶֽכְּבַ֣ל הָֽעַלְוָ֥לֶֽמֶס</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לֶֽפָּרֲﬠָבּ֖נֶֽכְּשִׁלרַ֔מָא</td>
<td>הָלֶ֝אָרֶ֥ה הַחָ֖טֵּב עַלְפַּרְפָּרַֽם</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(vv. 14–53) (vv. 14–53)

(Blank) (Blank)

(vv. 54–66) (vv. 54–66)

literary editions in columns. In Table 3, I show how this may be represented concretely. Note, however, that my present discussion is deliberately limited to the presentation of the text in columns: it does not cover minor matters that are “accidentals.” Whether the Vorlage of the LXX (edition B) should be vocalized and include accents, whether it should be presented in cola or not, and whether it should aim at reconstructing the corrected archetype of the corresponding literary edition (hence רשיה instead of רישה; see § 2.6), all these are secondary issues that would depend on the general editorial principles adopted in the critical edition. None of this would affect my present thesis.

5.2 Form of the Poem

The second decision concerns the form of the poem. Should the MT be edited in light of the Septuagint? Many scholars assume so, at least for the clause about the sun. However, there is a good chance that the global shape of the poem in each literary edition (notably the presence or absence of the three clauses in question) is an inherent feature of this edition. Under these circumstances, it is not advisable methodologically to reshape the form of the poem in the MT edition in light of its form in the LXX, and vice versa. Neither is it a necessary requirement of a critical, eclectic edition as defined in most recent research on the subject. Indeed, contrary to the widespread preconception about eclectic

---

67 E.g., Gooding, “Problems of Text and Midrash,” 25.
68 See the presentation of the eclectic text of HBCE in Hendel, Steps to a New Edition of the Hebrew Bible, 15–40.
editions, such an edition does not amount to the reconstruction of a hypothetical *Urtext*. Rather, eclectic editions attempt to reconstruct the archetype of the extant textual witnesses. As long as the edition provides the possibility of representing several literary editions in the “main text” (in columns), the principle of eclecticism is not an obstacle. Rather, an eclectic edition presents the advantage of clearly laying out the textual plurality for all readers, in a way that is not permitted in diplomatic editions.

5.3 Retroversion of the Septuagint into Hebrew

The last issue regards the retroversion of the Greek parent text. As shown in § 2, doubts remain regarding the retroversion of details in Solomon’s poem. In the framework of a critical, eclectic edition, this presents some significant dilemmas, inasmuch as the editor can only choose one possibility for each word in the main text. In other cases, the concept of the copy-text offers a solution: inserting the word present in the copy-text (e.g., the MT) in the main text, and indicating the alternative in the apparatus with the diagnostic “equal” (equally possible). But the situation is different when one deals with the retroversion of the Septuagint and when it will appear in a column as the main text. What can be done is to make a choice for the main text of the edition that corresponds to the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint, and indicate alternatives in the textual apparatus and/or the textual commentary.

In my view, this is the most significant challenge for an eclectic edition. Some scholars will certainly, and understandably, regard it as an insurmountable obstacle to making any attempt to produce an eclectic edition. They may argue that relegating equally plausible reconstructions to footnotes and/or a textual commentary is unsatisfactory. Yet this concerns the practicality of such an edition, not its feasibility or its accuracy, since all the relevant scientific details are given to the reader who does not neglect any of the components of an edition (including the main text, critical apparatus, and in some cases a textual commentary).

Generally speaking, in books such as Kings that are written mainly in prose, and where the Greek translation has been made on an isomorphic

---

69 It would be tempting to indicate equally possible options separated by slashes (X/Y), as epigraphists often do when different readings are equally plausible. Yet this would result in a complicated main text that is difficult to read, whereas the responsibility of an editor is arguably to make decisions.

70 In this regard, it is worth noting that Michael V. Fox, in his eclectic edition of Proverbs, has not attempted to make a retroversion of the Septuagint (*Proverbs: An Eclectic Edition with Introduction and Commentary*, HBCE [Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015]).
basis, retroverting the Greek proves easy most of the time, with few doubts regarding the *Vorlage*. Difficulties such as those encountered with the poem of Solomon are exceptional.\footnote{I thank Jan Joosten, John Screnock, and the anonymous reviewers for their remarks and for their help in revising my manuscript.}