CHAPTER FOUR

GLOSSES, INTERPOLATIONS, AND OTHER TYPES OF SCRIBAL ADDITIONS IN THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

I. Glosses in Greek and Latin texts from antiquity and the Middle Ages

The appearance of glosses, interpolations, and other scribal additions in the textual traditions of the Hebrew Bible has special relevance to the LXX. First some definitions relating to different types of additions to the text:

(1) Glosses. Ancient and medieval manuscripts contained many glosses, as defined by the usage of the word in Latin and not according to the original meaning of the word in Greek. In the study of ancient Greek and Latin texts the term ‘glossa’ carries a very distinct technical sense, which is also applied to medieval texts, though with some differences. ‘A word inserted between the lines or in the margin as an


2 Oxford English Dictionary (2nd ed.; Oxford 1989) VI, 591. The Dictionary adds: ‘hence applied to a similar explanatory rendering of a word given in a glossary or dictionary. Also, in a wider sense, a comment, explanation, interpretation.’ The Oxford Classical Dictionary (2d ed.; Oxford 1970) [= OCD] subdivides the entry ‘glossa’ into two sub-entries, focusing on the meaning of the word in respectively Greek and Latin sources. For the former OCD provides the following definition:
explanatory equivalent of a foreign or otherwise difficult word in the text.\(^3\) Of a different nature are glosses in Sumerian and Akkadian texts (see below), since these glosses, often written within the text, were meant to be an integral part of that text.

(2) **Scholia.** Like the gloss, the scholion (σχόλιον) is a marginal note, but usually it explains a difficulty in the context or section rather than the meaning of individual difficult words. Individual scholia usually are part of a larger collection of scholia on the text, forming a commentary to that text. Thus, while the term gloss is usually applied to sporadic interpretations of separate words, the scholion is part of a hermeneutic tradition. Some scholia are short, similar in length to glosses, while others are more extensive.\(^4\) In the world of the Bible the Masoretic notes are the closest parallel to the scholia from the Greek and Latin world. In classical Greek and Latin manuscripts glosses and scholia usually are not found together in the same manuscript.

Glosses and scholia were not the only elements that were added to texts upon the completion of the copying. Six additional types of elements were sometimes added as well.

(3) **Interlinear and marginal corrections.** Single letters or complete words were inserted into the text by the original scribes or subsequent ones after the copying of the main body of the text was completed when it was recognized that the text was wrongly copied. In principle, correctional activity could also adapt the manuscript to another manuscript of the same composition, but there is little evidence for such practices in the case of the Bible.

(4) **Exegetical elements (‘interpolations’).** Such elements were often inserted into the text by later scribes or readers, in the margin, between

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\(^3\) At a second stage these glosses were often collected, alphabetically or not, as so-called ‘glossae collectae’ or glossaries, and some of these actually constitute the basis of primitive dictionaries of equivalents. These glossaries were numerous in antiquity, and even more so in the Middle Ages. See especially the detailed description by B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (3d ed.; Oxford 1983) 46-66. In fact, although the glossaries had their origin in the margins of manuscripts, once collected, they became independent units and thus started a life of their own.