HOW BHQ DIFFERS FROM BHS IN THE BOOK OF EZRA-NEHEMIAH

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The major differences between BHQ and previous editions of Biblia Hebraica (and in particular BHS) have been described in detail in the General Introduction to BHQ in the recently published Megilloth volume.¹ These include format changes such as the layout of the text, the principles for inclusion of collated witnesses, explanation of the critical apparatus, and the rationale for including cases in the commentary volume. This article will illustrate more specific points of differences between BHQ and BHS as far as the book of Ezra-Nehemiah² is concerned. These points are to be seen in the following five areas: (1) availability of new resources; (2) comparison with other Tiberian MSS; (3) representation of the Masorah; (4) inclusion of 1 Esdras as a constant witness; and (5) the circumscribed use of suggestions for textual emendation.

1. Availability of New Resources

The first major improvement of BHQ over BHS is to be seen in the availability of new resources such as the color transparencies and new facsimile edition of M⁴, the publication of the Qumran fragments of Ezra, and of new editions of G and S.

a. The Color Transparencies and New Facsimile Edition of M⁴

The color transparencies of the text of M⁴ were made available by the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, who also produced the new facsimile edition in 1998.³ Although the

¹ A. Schenker, et al. (eds.), General Introduction and Megilloth (Biblia Hebraica Quinta 18; Stuttgart, 2004), VII–XXVI. It is a pleasure to present this essay in honor of our colleague Adrian Schenker whose energetic leadership has helped bring our BHQ project from dream to reality.

² The Masoretic tradition regarded the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as one book, and in this article we shall refer to the book as Ezra-Nehemiah.

actual text of Ezra-Nehemiah has not suffered any damage, the availability of both the color transparencies and the new facsimile edition has enabled some clearer readings to be seen. Here are three examples. One is at Ezra 4:11, where BHS identified a Kethib and Qere on יִדְבַּג. But closer scrutiny of the transparencies and facsimile shows that there is no Kethib and Qere here. Another is at Ezra 7:14 in the form יִדְבַּג, where an attempt was made by a second hand to erase an original וָאָמ. The attempt was not entirely successful since the upper part of the וָאָמ is clearly visible on the color transparencies. A final example is at Ezra 10:44 where the Kethib and Qere appear to have exactly the same form דַּבְג. Closer investigation shows that a second hand has changed the יְָּד of an original Kethib form דַּבְג into a וָאָמ.

b. Qumran Fragments of Ezra

Entirely new in BHQ is the inclusion of the Qumran fragments from the book of Ezra (4QEzra) which were published by E. Ulrich in 1992 and again in 2000. The fragments contain parts of Ezra 4:2–6, 9–11; 5:17–6:5, and exhibit two orthographic and two grammatical variants with מק. The two orthographic variants, involving interchanges of א and י, are at 4:10 where 4QEzra reads יִדְבַּג for יִדְבַּג, and at 6:2 where 4QEzra reads יִדְבַּג for יִדְבַּג. The two grammatical variants concerning singular and plural forms of verbs are at 6:1 where 4QEzra reads a singular יִדְבַּג “he searched” for יִדְבַּג “they searched”, and at 6:5 where 4QEzra reads a plural יִדְבַּג “they brought” for יִדְבַּג “he brought.” Apart from these minor variations 4QEzra generally reflects מק and, where extant, agrees with it in those cases where the other witnesses have different readings. For example, at 5:17, 4QEzra agrees with מק against 1 Esdras and V in reading יִדְבַּג; at 6:3, 4QEzra agrees with מק against 1 Esdras, V and S in reading יִדְבַּג; and at 6:5, 4QEzra agrees with מק against 1 Esdras in reading יִדְבַּג. As a pre-Tiberian witness, 4QEzra is constantly cited in the critical apparatus whenever it offers relevant testimony.

1 E. Ulrich, “Ezra and Qoheleth Manuscripts from Qumran (4QEzra, 4Qēbh a. b.),” in E. Ulrich, et al. (eds.), Priests, Prophets and Scribes (JSOTSup 149; Sheffield, 1992), 139–157. See also E. Ulrich, et al., Qumran Cave 4, XI, Psalms to Chronicles (DJD XVI; Oxford, 2000), 291–293.