
The first English edition of Emanuel Tov’s Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible appeared in 1992. The second revised edition of 2002 contained some larger revisions, and two small added sections, but because of limitations imposed by the publisher many revisions were impossible. This third edition, however, is a full revision, in which virtually no paragraph has remained the same. This revision is also an expansion, reflected in the larger number of pages and the many sections that are printed in a smaller font than in the previous edition. Tov himself lists the extensive changes and the smaller changes in his preface (xvii–xviii). The extensive changes include, amongst others, the major rewriting of Chapter Three (“History of the Biblical Text”), the expansion of Chapter Nine (“Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Editions”), and the addition of Chapter Ten (“Computer-Assisted Tools for Textual Criticism”). Other expansions (which Tov includes in the smaller changes), reflecting the growth of Septuagintal studies in the past decades, are found in the section on the Septuagint. For example, the section 2.II.B.1.h, “The Importance of G for Biblical Studies,” covering less than one page in the second edition, has been replaced by “Hebrew Source of G and Its Text-Critical Value” of more than five pages in the new edition. Some of these revisions and expansions of this edition have been published previously in articles and chapters of books. For example, Chapter Nine goes back to a large extent to his “Hebrew Scripture Editions: Philosophy and Praxis,” published in 2006 in the FS for Émile Puech, and in revised form in Tov’s 2008 Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran.

Tov’s work is characterized by an attention to details, a vast knowledge and referencing of relevant secondary literature, and the lucid, methodological discussion of the issues he deals with. In all these three respects this edition surpasses the previous ones. On certain topics new details are adduced and discussed (e.g., 249–50, the comparison of Deut 32:41–43 in M, LXX and 4QDeut⁴), the bibliographical references are entirely updated to 2011 and include forthcoming publications, and many of the changes in this edition attempt to discuss more clearly the points under discussion. For all those reasons, this third edition will surely be the most important introduction to the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible for the next decade or more.

A review in Dead Sea Discoveries should indicate how this new edition goes beyond the previous one in relation to the Scrolls. Section 2.I.C., “The Biblical Texts Found in the Judean Desert,” shows some large and many small changes vis-à-vis the second edition, mainly based on Tov’s own work and the ensuing discourse on some of his earlier positions, but also on ongoing research, as presented, for example, in Armin Lange’s Handbuch der Textfunde vom Toten Meer (2009). Thus in the new edition the Reworked Pentateuch manuscripts (4Q158,
4Q364–367) are now regarded as biblical manuscripts (xxiv, 91, 96, 323—even though the DJD V and XIII volumes with those manuscripts are not included on p. 99). The description of Tov’s hypothesis of a Qumran Scribal Practice (QSP) includes some of the scribal features which Tov connects to QSP, and which were not yet mentioned in the second edition. Because of the discussions about the QSP, Tov has added a new section on consistency and statistical analysis. However, the subsection “Contextual Adaptations” (“the scribes of the texts written in the QSP often adapted seemingly irregular forms to the context”) has not been changed and still only refers to examples from 1QIsa. It therefore remains unclear to what extent this feature holds true more broadly for the texts written in the QSP (103–4)—a question which might be dealt with in future research. More importantly, in the second edition Tov distinguished with regard to textual status five different groups of biblical texts (2d ed., 114–17), but in the corresponding section in this new edition, “Classification of the Scrolls According to Textual Character” (107–9), we only have four groups (MT-like texts; pre-Samaritan texts; texts close to the presumed Hebrew source of LXX; a cluster of non-aligned texts). The texts written in QSP, previously the fifth group, now are discussed in an appendix, which reflects the changing opinions about the relevance of this group of texts for textual criticism. Also elsewhere in the book there are ample references to the Dead Sea Scrolls, which generally are based on Tov’s life-long and thorough study of the scrolls. In the case of so many details it is inevitable that once in a while something seems to have gone wrong. For example, p. 214 seems to state that the plene spelling דוד is the only one used in the biblical and non-biblical Qumran scrolls. However, on p. 211 Tov does mention that 4QSamb (4Q52) is the most defective biblical text known and it therefore comes as no surprise that 4QSamb does indeed use the defective spelling דוד (which is also used in, e.g., 4Q85 for Ps 51:1).

Many other changes also reflect developing insights. For example, in 4.C.3, “Readings Reflecting Content Changes” (formerly called “Readings Intentionally Created by Scribes”), the sequence of the different types of changes has been altered, so that now the exegetical changes are discussed first, a rearrangement which aligns with the importance attached to ancient exegesis in modern research. This section has been expanded with the section “Large Theological Changes” which “reflect differences between the layers in the process of literary growth” (243). The first and second editions stated that such changes preceded the textual transmission and therefore “should not be discussed here” (2d ed., 266). However, because of the changing views on the relation between literary and textual criticism, they now have been included. In this section, the subsection “Anti-Polytheistic Alterations” has been organized differently, the tables 7 and 8 presenting the evidence more extensively and in a transparent way.

The most important changes do not, however, relate to the Scrolls or to such details, but to Tov’s own attitude towards the theory and practice of textual