

# A GUIDE TO THE USE OF THE BHS CRITICAL APPARATUS

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The objective of textual criticism is to ascertain as closely as possible the original reading of the text. Primarily, one is dealing with changes that may have occurred by

NOTES:

1. Copyist's error,
2. Physical damage to the text,
3. Intentional changes.

## 1 Critical Apparatus

The first register of footnotes contains the masorah magna (Mm). The bottom register of footnotes, the critical apparatus, contains the data we will use for text criticism. The sigla (symbols & abbrev.) used in the apparatus are explained in the Prolegomena beginning on p. XLIV. Although the explanations are all in Latin, most are easily understood. An English key is available to use with your BHS: H.P. Ruger, *An English Key to the Latin Words and Abbreviations and the Symbols of Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck, 1981.

## 2 Manuscript and Version Resources for Textual Criticism

It is perhaps more difficult (but very important) to understand the relative significance of the various MSS and versions cited in the apparatus. G. L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 37-54, provides a good, concise explanation.

Scholarly consensus places the MT in prime position as the most reliable witness to the original text. This, of course, does not mean that the MT is without problems. There are problems indeed, and these can, to a large extent, be cleared up with the aid of extant manuscript and version witnesses to the text.

NOTES:

Witnesses to the text of the Old Testament in the order of their relative importance to textual criticism are as follows.  
*Using Archer pp. 37 - 54, annotate each in term of its strengths or weaknesses for textual criticism*

- Q 1. Dead Sea Scrolls
- ss 2. Samaritan Pentateuch
- Ⲙ 3. Septuagint
- α' 4. Aquila
- σ' 5. Symmachus  
convert from Samaritan acc. Epiphanius
- θ' 6. Theodotion
- Ⲥ 7. Peshitta
- Ⲯ 8. Targums
- ⲉ 9. Vulgate c. 400
- ℓ 10. Itala (Old Latin)
- Sa 11. Sahidic
- Ⲭ 12. Coptic (Sahidic = S. dialect; Boharic = N dialect)
- Ⲛ 13. Ethiopic
- Ⲁ 14. Arabic
- Arm 15. Armenian

### 3 Selected Latin terms and abbreviations in BHS Apparatus

NOTES:

ad	to, towards, according to
add	<i>additum</i> : added
al	<i>alii</i> , etc.: others, another
aut...aut	either...or
bab	<i>Babylonicum</i> , -e, etc.
c	<i>cum</i> : with
cj	<i>conjunge(ndum)</i> etc.; <i>conjugit</i> , <i>conjugunt</i>
dl	<i>dele</i> , <i>delendus</i> : delete, to be deleted
Edd	editions of Hebrew Bible
et	and
ex	from, out of,
dub	<i>dubium</i> : doubtful, uncertain
fin	<i>finis</i> , etc.: limit, boundary
frt	<i>fortasse</i> : perhaps
gl	<i>glossa</i> : gloss
hab	<i>habent</i> , <i>habet</i> : they have, they esteem; it has
huc	hither
init	<i>initium</i> : beginning
ins	<i>insere</i> , <i>inserit</i> : insert, it inserts
L	Leningrad Codex
l	<i>lege(ndum)</i> : reader
mlt	<i>multi</i> , <i>multae</i> , <i>multa</i> : many
Mss	medieval manuscripts of Heb. Bible
nonn	<i>nonnulli</i> , <i>nonnae</i> , <i>nonna</i> : some, several
pc	<i>pauci</i> : few, little
post	after
prb	<i>probabliter</i> : probably
prp	<i>propositum</i> : it has been proposed
sed	without; but, however
sic	so, thus
tr	<i>transpone</i> : transpose
vel	or, rather; even, for example

### 3 Kinds of Errors in Reading and Writing

NOTES:

Errors do occur when one copies out a text by hand, as we all know. These kinds of error are common and can be demonstrated from extant witnesses. *Using Archer, define and then find and copy out of your Hebrew Bible examples of the following types of scribal error:*

a. Misreading of similarly appearing letters:

\* כַּ / כָּ / כֹּ / כֻּ – e.g. Isa 28:20

\* דָּ / דִּ / דֹּ / דֻּ – e.g. Isa 9:8

\* הָ / הַ / הֹּ / הֻּ – e.g. Isa 30:33

\* הָ / הַ / הֹּ / הֻּ – e.g. Isa 42:25

\* יָ / יַ / יֹּ / יֻּ – e.g. Isa 5:29

\* עָ / עַ / עֹּ / עֻּ – e.g. 2 Kgs 20:4

\* כַּ / כָּ / כֹּ / כֻּ – e.g. Isa 33:1

b. Metathesis: e.g. Isa 32:19

c. Haplography: e.g. Isa 26:3

d. Dittography: e.g. Isa 30:30

e. Fusion: e.g. Isa 3:15

f. Fission: e.g. Isa 2:20

g. Homophony: e.g. Isa 9:2(3)

h. Homeoteleuton: e.g. 1 Sam 14:41 LXX cp. MT

i. Accidental omission: e.g. 1 Sam 13:1

NOTES:

j. Misreading vowel letters: e.g. Amos 2:7

k. Intentional Changes: e.g. Samaritan Pentateuch

#### 4 Methodology of Textual Criticism

Würthwein (*The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*, Eerdmans, 1979) observes that "there is no precisely defined method for Old Testament textual criticism. It is questionable whether one is possible, because the tradition is so varied that an effective procedure for one problem would not be appropriate for another." (p.111)

In general, however, the student or pastor can comfortably begin with the MT since significant variants are rather rare. Again, Würthwein observes:

In every instance it [the MT] deserves special attention because it is based on direct transmission in the original language, and it has been handed down with great care. The earlier tendency to undervalue מ in favor of the Greek version or even of modern conjectures has now been almost entirely abandoned, because מ has repeatedly been demonstrated to be the best witness to the text. Any deviation from it therefore requires justification. ...It is clear from the history of the text that the vocalization of מ does not have the same significance as the consonantal text, and that alterations in the pointing do not qualify properly as emendations.

As a general rule מ is to be preferred over all other traditions whenever it cannot be faulted either linguistically or for its material content, unless in particular instances there is good reason for favoring another tradition. The question whether מ can be faulted either linguistically or materially is to be decided at times only after intensive investigations. Specifically, if a reading of מ is rejected, every possible interpretation of it must first have been fully examined. It is unscholarly to oppose a reading of מ merely for its lack of agreement with an interpreter's viewpoint. When such a conflict arises, it is the theory that should defer to the textual tradition, and not the reverse. (p. 113-114)

Emmanuel Tov (*Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*) is in essential agreement.

NOTES:

Readings which can be shown to be the result of scribal carelessness or deliberate alteration can be fairly set aside.

## 5 Canons of Textual Criticism

Beyond this, a series of general rules for dealing with MS evidence may be applied. These "canons" are in descending order of importance. Often, more than one canon may apply to a single passage.

1. The older reading is preferred.
2. The more difficult reading is preferred.
3. The shorter reading is preferred.
4. The reading which best explains the variants is preferred.
5. The reading with the widest geographical support is preferred.
6. The reading which most closely fits the style and diction of the author is preferred.
7. The reading which reflects no doctrinal bias is preferred.

Archer summarizes the text critical methodology set forth by Würthwein on pp. 61-62. *In your own words, write a précis of the methodology.*

## 6 Additional Helps:

Gleason L. Archer. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. rev. ed. Chicago: Moody, 1974.

Ellis Brotzman. *Old Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

Roland K. Harrison. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.

Page Kelley, et al. *The Masorah of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: Introduction & Annotated Glossary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Emanuel Tov. "The History & Significance of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, vol. 1, ed. M Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) 49-63.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.

Bruce Waltke. "Old Testament Textual Criticism," in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by David Dockery. Nashville: Broadman & Holmna, 1994.

Ernst Würthwein. *The Text of the Old Testament : An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

## 7 Exercise