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## Traditional Textual Criticism Reconsidered: MT<sup>L</sup>-Ezek 35, LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35 and its Hebrew *Vorlage* as Variant Editions and the Implications for the Search for the “Original” Text

Traditional textual criticism usually takes MT (codex L) as its point of departure, focusing mainly on select variants in small textual units in order to evaluate whether a given reading is preferable to an alternative reading. This approach, however, is insufficient for several reasons: a variant may belong to a cluster of variants made by an “editor-scribe,” or may be an “individual textual variant” made by a “copyist-scribe” in the long course of textual transmission. The nature of a variant can only be revealed by separately analysing passages or books in different ancient versions. Furthermore, traces of different scribal activities as discernable in many proto-masoretic and early non-masoretic manuscripts imply, as will be demonstrated in this article with the help from Ezekiel 35 as a test case that there is no rational way to reconstruct the “original” shape of a passage or a biblical book.

*Keywords:* Book of Ezekiel; Ezekiel 35; variant literary editions of Ezekiel; papyrus 967 Ezekiel

In most traditional textual-critical studies and books, taking usually the MT (usually codex L) as the point of departure for describing textual variations, variants are collected and evaluated “with the implication that reading  $\alpha$  may be preferable to all other readings, also phrased as the assumption that all other readings may have derived from that reading. If a scribal development such as textual corruption of reading  $\alpha$  to (an)other reading(s) is assumed, the aim of this comparison is to select the one reading that was presumably contained in the original form of the text.”<sup>1</sup> In light of the Judean Desert Scrolls, revealing that many texts of the Hebrew Bible were pluriform and developing diachronically, Eugene Ulrich suggested a classification of four categories of those variants, operating on independ-

1 E. Tov, “Nature of Textual Criticism,” in *Overview Articles*, Vol. 1A of *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible* (ed. A. Lange; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 3–7, here 7.

ent levels: (1) “variant editions<sup>2</sup> of books or large passages, (2) isolated insertions of a verse or more, (3) individual textual variants, and (4) orthographic and morphological forms.”<sup>3</sup> Ulrich’s classification sheds light on a major problem of traditional textual criticism: since the focus is mainly on (selected) variants in small textual units (verses), it would be next to impossible to decide if a variant is an “individual textual variant,” an “isolated insertion” or an expression of a “variant edition.” To determine the nature of a variant, it would first be necessary to analyse a book or a given passage in the different ancient versions separately.

The necessity of this approach will be demonstrated in this study with the help of Ezekiel 35, a passage with many differences between the MT (codex L) and the LXX (papyrus 967<sup>4</sup>), of which an appendix with a synoptic translation provides a quick overview. At first, in order to show the limitations of the traditional text-critical evaluation, I will refer to Walther Zimmerli’s renowned commentary – though critical, I wish not to be misunderstood as to question or to diminish Zimmerli’s impressive exegetical contribution to Ezekiel research. Secondly, a rough analysis of Ezekiel 35 in both versions separately will reveal a different structure of the passage in connection with different clusters of variants. It was in all likelihood not the Greek translator who edited and restructured the passage, rather, he translated from a Hebrew non-masoretic manuscript as I will explain in the third point. Apart from the obvious editorial activity, masoretic and non-masoretic version display “individual variants,” made presumably by different “copyist-scribes” in the course of the textual transmission; in several cases the relationship between the variants cannot be discerned. Fourth, the

2 Especially interesting for the purpose of this study is the category “variant editions,” defined as “two or more distinct forms of a book or large passage that differ from each other due to scribal design, exhibiting discernible, patterned, systematic features, presumably by a single person,” E. Ulrich, “Nature of the Textual Evidence,” in *Overview Articles*, Vol. 1A of *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible* (ed. A. Lange; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 19–22, here 20.

3 Ulrich, “Nature,” 20–21.

4 The papyrus is dated to the late second or early third century C.E. and contained Ezekiel, Daniel and Esther; see S. Kreuzer, “Papyrus 967. Bemerkungen zu seiner buchtechnischen, textgeschichtlichen und kanongeschichtlichen Bedeutung,” in *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006* (ed. M. Karrer et al.; WUNT 219; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 64–82; I. Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel. Papyrus 967 and the Masoretic Text as Variant Literary Editions* (VTSup 150; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1–7. Undisputedly, p967-Ezek (preserved onwards from 11:25) is the best representative of the Old Greek Ezekiel. I wrote the present article in connection with a current research project on p967-Ezek, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. My thanks go to Dr. Dr. Norbert Jacoby, with whom I discussed several issues.

impact of Ezekiel 35 as a test case for defining the aims of textual criticism are discussed. As Moshe Greenberg<sup>5</sup> did nearly half a century ago I will argue against the search for an “original” text and in favour of a stronger connection between textual criticism and exegesis.

## I. Traditional textual criticism on Ezekiel 35: a sampling from Zimmerli’s commentary

Walther Zimmerli wrote his major commentary on Ezekiel in the second half of the last century.<sup>6</sup> In accordance with the design of the *Biblischer Kommentar* series, textual criticism was a major focus. Zimmerli’s commentary quickly became most influential and was subsequently translated into English and published in the *Hermeneia* series. In the following I will present and discuss a few examples of his collecting and analysing the textual data of Ezekiel 35,<sup>7</sup> especially with regard to the LXX (including the text of papyrus 967, of which Zimmerli had knowledge<sup>8</sup>).

### (1) First example: differences in person / number

Whereas the recognition formula in v. 9 according to the MT has<sup>9</sup> the second person plural, the Greek text has the second person singular. Zimmerli claimed the singular to be a secondary adjustment in keeping with the context. He did not link, however, this case with two other similar cases within Ezekiel 35: with regard to the difference in v. 13 (the MT has second person plural, the Greek text has second person singular) Zimmerli

- 5 M. Greenberg, “The use of ancient versions for interpreting the Hebrew text: a sampling from Ezekiel II 1 – III 11,” in *Congress Volume Göttingen 1977* (VTSup 29; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 131–148.
- 6 W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel. 1. Teilband Ezechiel 1–24* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; BK XIII/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979); idem, *Ezechiel. 2. Teilband Ezechiel 25–48* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; BK XIII/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979).
- 7 All examples are taken from the critical apparatus: Zimmerli, *Ezechiel 25–48*, 852–854.
- 8 Zimmerli reviewed the dissertation of L.G. Jahn, who edited the Cologne leaves of papyrus 967, see L.G. Jahn, *Der Griechische Text des Buches Ezechiel nach dem Kölner Teil des Papyrus 967* (PTA 15; Bonn: Habelt, 1972), 7 (note). The Princeton leaves (including Ezek 35) were published some time beforehand. See A.C. Johnson *et al.*, *The John H. Scheide Biblical Papyri: Ezekiel* (PUSP 3; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938).
- 9 Most scholars would use the term “read” instead. However, this term is incorrect, since a manuscript or a textual tradition cannot “read.” Rather, a manuscript or a textual tradition “has” or “displays” words/texts. Cf. already the critical remarks on the use of the expression “the LXX reads” made by J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 238 f.

just evaluated the data as he did in v. 9. The textual difference within the formula in v. 15 (the MT has third person plural, the Greek text has second person singular) is only mentioned in the critical apparatus without further comment. Thus, the pattern behind these cases in the Hebrew as well as in the Greek text escaped his notice (see below II.).

(2) Second example: differences of content in v. 10

Zimmerli noted the difference between the Hebrew and Greek text with respect to the verb in the second sentence of Edom's quoted words. He suggested plausibly that the Greek *καὶ κληρονομήσω αὐτάς* "and I will inherit them" may go back to *וירשתן* in the *Vorlage* (MT: *וירשנוהו* "we will inherit it"). However, Zimmerli did not pay attention to the substantial differences at the beginning of v. 10 between the MT (*ען אמרדך* "because you said") and the main Greek Mss (e.g. LXX<sup>967</sup> has *διὰ τοῦτο εἶπεν σοι* "therefore, he said to you"; LXX<sup>A</sup> has *διότι εἶπας* "for indeed you said"). These differences play a major role concerning the overall structure of the passage (see below II.2.).

(3) Third example: differences of content in v. 12b

The textual difference at the beginning of the sentence (MT: *שמעתי את כל נאצותיך* "I heard all your blasphemies"; LXX: *ἤκουσα τῆς φωνῆς τῶν βλασφημιῶν σου* "I heard the voice of your blasphemies") is evaluated by Zimmerli as a mistake which was made by the Greek translator: *כל* has been misheard as *קול*. Whereas it is indeed most likely that the Greek translator read or heard *קול*, Zimmerli's text-critical evaluation is not convincing: both readings are so appropriate in their respective contexts that a preference of one over the other seems to be hardly justified. In other words: it cannot be excluded that it was a proto-masoretic scribe (and not the Greek translator) who "misheard" or "misread" *קול* as *כל*. With regard to the further differences in the sentence (MT: *אשר אמרת על הרי ישראל לאמר שממה* [Qere: *שממו*] "which you said against the mountains of Israel, saying: they are laid desolate;"; LXX: *ὅτι εἶπας τὰ ὄρη Ἰσραηλ ἔρημα* "for you said: the mountains of Israel [are] desolated"), Zimmerli argued in favour of a free translation insofar as the Greek translator assumed *הרי ישראל* to be the subject of *שממה* (Ketib), ignoring *על* and *אשר*. However, the question why the translator should have ignored those words remains unanswered.

(4) Fourth example: plus/minus in v. 13

The Hebrew sentence *והעתרתם עלי דבריכם* "and you defied me with your words/and you made imprudent against me your words" has no equivalent

in the Greek text. Zimmerli assumed that the Greek translator left out this sentence, because he did not know how to translate the verb עָתַר. Since, however, most difficult Hebrew words and passages throughout the entire book are faithfully and reasonably translated into Greek, it is not very convincing to insinuate a dropping of words due to a lack of knowledge.

(5) Fifth example: plus/minus in v. 15a

Since MT's v. 14b is syntactically ambiguous, Zimmerli considered v. 15a, which has no equivalent in the Greek text, as a scribal gloss, having been inserted secondarily into the main text in order to explain point by point the wording of v. 14b. It is rather astonishing that Zimmerli did not refer to the Greek version of v. 14b, which in terms of content does not correspond to the MT. This difference has significant implications for the evaluation of the textual development of the last unit 35:14–15 altogether (see below part III., the second example).

As these few examples may show, Zimmerli's critical apparatus on the one hand is certainly helpful to get an impression about the textual diversity. On the other hand, the methodological difficulties are obvious. First, since Zimmerli evaluated more or less single variants verse by verse without paying much attention to the context, broader patterns in the different textual traditions escaped his notice. Second, he noted only selected variants, thus overlooking substantial differences (between the main textual witnesses and between the Mss of one textual version). Consequently, Zimmerli's judgement not least about the work of the Greek translator<sup>10</sup> remains inconsistent and insufficient (a criterion why and when the translator may or may not have followed his Hebrew *Vorlage* does not emerge).

## II. Structural analysis of MT<sup>L</sup>-Ezek 35 and LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35

### 1. Structural analysis of MT<sup>L</sup>-Ezek 35

In the world of the book the main voice is that of the prophet who, however, while narrating, mostly quotes other voices, especially the voice of God, who

<sup>10</sup> In this study, the term "translator" is used for the sake of convenience, not implying that it was only one person who was involved in the translation of Ezekiel into Greek. It is debated, whether Ezekiel was translated by one person or several persons/a group; see J. Lust, "Multiple Translators and the History of Research," in *Pentateuch, Former and Latter Prophets*, Vol. 1B of *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible* (ed. A. Lange and E. Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 584–585.

himself may quote other voices. With regard to the different levels of communication, the rough structure of Ezekiel 35 can be described as follows:

35:1: Ezekiel tells his implicit addressees that God's word came to him

35:2–15: Ezekiel quotes God's word.

Furthermore, the quoted word of God may be divided in the following two parts:

35:2–3a: God's command to Ezekiel to speak to Edom

35:3b–15: God's message to Edom which Ezekiel must pass on.

The divine message to Edom contains two units, each beginning with the *כה אמר יהוה* formula (35:3b $\alpha$ ; 35:14a), which indicates a new saying of God.<sup>11</sup> The first unit (35:3b $\alpha$ –13) has a rather complex structure, being divided into four segments:

35:3b $\alpha$ : introduction with the *כה אמר יהוה* formula

I 35:3b $\beta$ –4: announcement of the desolation of Edom, ending with the recognition formula

II 35:5–9: first judgement speech against Edom

(v. 5: *יען* – v. 6: *לבן*), ending with the recognition formula

III 35:10–12a: second judgement speech against Edom

(v. 10: *יען* – v. 11: *לבן*), ending with the recognition formula

IV 35:12b–13: assurance of God's hearing of Edom's blasphemies with regard to the desolated Israel (v. 12b first word: *שמעתי*; v. 13 last word: *שמעתי*)

In the first segment God announces Edom's impending destruction. The following two judgement speeches (second and third segment) serve as a kind of justification for this deadly decision:<sup>12</sup> God accuses Edom not only of everlasting enmity towards Israel (v. 5), but also, quoting Edom's own voice, of the presumptuous claim on the territory of the people (v. 10). The fourth segment contains God's assurance that he had heard Edom's blasphemies directed against the God of Israel and against the desolated "mountains of Israel," again quoting Edom's own voice. At first glance this assurance seems to be an independent statement. However, this last segment is connected with the first one by the key-terms *שמם + הוה*, thus implying a direct relation between Edom's behaviour and his punishment:

11 The speaker of the formula is not the prophet, but God (introduction of his message, which the prophet must pass on). See K. Finsterbusch, "Who is the Speaker of the So Called 'Messenger Formula'? Some Remarks on *כה אמר יהוה* in the Book of Jeremiah," *RB* 124 (2017): 369–380.

12 Cf. D. I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel. Chapters 25–48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 316.

because of his boasting that the “mountains of Israel” are desolated (v. 12b), “Mount Seir” (epithet for Edom) will be rendered a desolation (v. 3b–4).

In the short second unit (35:14–15), the relation between behaviour and punishment is confirmed: just as Edom rejoiced over the desolated land of Israel (v. 14b), all Edom will be rendered a desolation (v. 15). Noteworthy are the very last words of God’s message to Edom, displaying a revealing difference with respect to the other concluding verses of the previous segments:

- 35:4: you (sg.) will know that I (am) YHWH  
 35:9: you (pl.) will know that I (am) YHWH  
 35:12a: you (sg.) will know that I (am) YHWH  
 35:13: you (pl.) boasted against me with your (pl.) mouth  
 35:15: they will know that I (am) YHWH

Whereas the first four concluding verses display an alternation of the second person singular and the second person plural, the final concluding verse shifts to the third person plural. This may well be interpreted as an expression of irrevocable distancing: at the very end of his message to Edom (in the whole book) God doesn’t even address Edom directly any more.

## 2. Structural analysis of LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35

Only the rough structure of Ezekiel 35 according to LXX<sup>967</sup> is the same as MT, as after the word event formula the prophet quotes God’s word, consisting of two units (35:3b $\alpha$ –13; 35:14–15). Both units display significant differences in comparison to the MT with regard to structure and content. The first unit is divided into three segments:

- 35:3b $\alpha$ : introduction with the  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\delta\epsilon \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\epsilon\iota \kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$  formula  
 I 35:3b $\beta$ –4: announcement of the desolation of Edom, ending with the recognition formula  
 II 35:5–12a: judgement speech against Edom  
 v. 5: protasis, introduced by  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\acute{\iota}$   
 v. 6–9: first apodosis, introduced by  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ , ending with the recognition formula  
 v. 10: interruption of God by the prophet:  
 second apodosis, introduced by  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$   
 v. 11–12a: third apodosis, introduced by  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha \tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron$ , ending with the recognition formula  
 III 35:12b–13: assurance of God’s hearing of Edom’s blasphemies with regard to the desolated Israel (v. 12b first word:  $\eta\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$ ; v. 13 last word:  $\eta\kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$ )

The core of the unit, embedded between the first and the third segment, is the judgement speech against Edom (35:5–12a), consisting of a formal

accusation (protasis) and three consequences (apodoses). Especially interesting is the unexpected shift of the speaker within the judgement speech: whereas God is the speaker of the protasis and the first and third apodosis (addressing Edom, announcing his punishment), the speaker of the second apodosis is undoubtedly the prophet (addressing God and quoting Edom's voice):

10 διὰ τοῦτο εἶπεν σοι  
τὰ δύο ἔθνη καὶ αἱ δύο χώραι ἐμαὶ ἔσονται  
καὶ κληρονομήσω αὐτάς καὶ κύριος ἐκεῖ ἔστιν

10 Therefore, he (i. e. Edom) said to you (i. e. God):  
“The two nations and the two countries will be mine,  
and I will inherit them, and Kyrios is there!”

In terms of communication the prophet interrupts the divine speech,<sup>13</sup> giving a kind of affirmative commentary on God's judgement. Edom would not gain knowledge about this interruption, the prophet's implicit addressees, however, certainly would.

Whereas in the first unit the focus is on the local conflict between Edom and Israel, in the second unit a universal aspect is added: the “whole world” will look on the desolation of “whole Edom” with glee. By this approval not only the singular wickedness of Edom within the community of the nations is emphasized, but also God's punishment is certainly fully justified. God's last words to Edom are designed as a kind of climax of the whole message, as a comparison of all concluding verses of the segments in both units may demonstrate:

35:4: you (sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios  
35:9: you (sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios  
35:12a: you (sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios  
35:13: you (sg.) boasted against me with your (sg.) mouth  
35:15: you (sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios, their God.

At his very doom, Edom will learn a very final lesson – namely it is the God of Israel alone, who has the power to turn a situation upside down: whereas powerful Edom is being desolated, desolated Israel is being restored, since God is and remains “their God.”

To sum up: the rough separate analysis of MT<sup>L</sup>-Ezek 35 and LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35 has revealed different *clusters* of textual elements that contribute significantly to the respective structure of the passage. By focusing on single

13 This phenomenon is especially present in the book of Jeremiah; see K. Finsterbusch, “Unterbrochene JHWH-Rede. Anmerkungen zu einem rhetorischen Phänomen,” *BZ* 60 (2016): 1–13.



variants in single verses only, however, it would have been impossible to understand their impact on both versions as “variant editions.” The next step in the realm of textual criticism would be to examine the relationship between the two “variant editions.” Since one of the analysed editions is a translation, it stands to reason to first ask whether the Greek translator is to be held responsible for the change of design or if the Greek text reflects a non-masoretic Hebrew *Vorlage*.

### III. LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35 and the question of the Hebrew *Vorlage*

With respect to Ezekiel, most scholars would not deny that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Greek translator differed at least in some cases from a proto-masoretic manuscript – even between the medieval masoretic manuscripts themselves there are rather vivid textual variations which hint at a heterogeneous textual development of the book.<sup>14</sup> There is no consensus, however, to what extent the Hebrew *Vorlage* was a non-masoretic manuscript. In my view, the assumption of the existence of such a non-masoretic manuscript, differing in terms of structure and extent from a proto-masoretic manuscript, seems indisputable, since the translator rendered as a rule in all parts of the book the Hebrew rather faithfully in terms of word order and syntax (the Greek text “sounds” or should have “sounded” like Hebrew).<sup>15</sup> In other words: the Greek translator had obviously no interest in freely “interpreting” or significantly changing the text of his *Vorlage*. In addition, many textual details point to a non-masoretic Hebrew *Vorlage*. In the following, two examples, each related to one of the two units in Ezekiel 35, may demonstrate the evidence:

(1) 35:10 (LXX<sup>967</sup>: διὰ τοῦτο εἶπεν σοι; MT<sup>L</sup>: דַּע אֲמַרְךָ)

The frequently used Hebrew sequence דַּע (+ Inf.) ... לְכֵן is rendered throughout the book of Ezekiel with ἀντί (+ Inf.) / ἀνθ' ὧν (+ finite verb form) ... διὰ τοῦτο. As expected, this is the translation in 35:5–6 (MT<sup>L</sup>: דַּע ... לְכֵן; LXX<sup>967</sup>: ἀντί ... διὰ τοῦτο). Therefore, it is highly implausible to assume a sole exception with regard to 35:10–11. If the translator had read a

<sup>14</sup> See B. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum hebraicum, cum variis lectionibus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1780), 2:173–246; J.B. de Rossi, *Variae lectiones Veteris Testamenti* (repr. Amsterdam: Philo, 1969 [orig. Parma: Regio, 1786]), 3:126–170.

<sup>15</sup> See J. Lust, “Translation Character and Technique,” in *Pentateuch, Former and Latter Prophets*, Vol. 1B of Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible (ed. A. Lange and E. Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 582.

second instance of the sequence יען ... לכן, as it is in the MT, why shouldn't he have rendered it as he usually did, including only some sentences beforehand?<sup>16</sup> Rather, the translator read in all probability at the beginning of v. 10 לכן in his Hebrew *Vorlage* (לכן is usually translated with διὰ τοῦτο). This, however, implies that the whole first unit in the Hebrew *Vorlage* had indeed a structure different to that in the MT.

(2) 35:14b (LXX<sup>967</sup>: ἐν τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ; MT<sup>L</sup>: בשמח)

In 35:14b, with regard to preposition and word class, there is hardly any way to move from the masoretic בשמח (“just as the rejoicing”) to the Greek ἐν τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ (“in the joy”). Rather, the Greek sentence (ἐν τῇ εὐφροσύνῃ πάσης τῆς γῆς ἔρημον ποιήσω σε) points to Hebrew כל הארץ בשמחה לך שממה אעשה לך בשמחה (“just as the joy”), thus indirectly supporting at least in part the reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX<sup>967</sup>. Since the meaning of the non-masoretic version of 35:14b is unambiguous, there was no need for a further explanation. This observation supports Zimmerli's evaluation of MT-Ezek 35:15a as a gloss related to the ambiguous masoretic version of 35:14b. According to Ulrich's terminology, 35:15a should be considered as an “isolated insertion” by a proto-masoretic scribe. In short, the second unit in the Hebrew *Vorlage* differed to that in the MT in all likelihood significantly in terms of content and extent.

Having defended the case of a non-masoretic Hebrew *Vorlage* for LXX<sup>967</sup>, I do not want to claim, however, that *all* textual variations in Ezekiel 35 are connected with the hand of only *one* “editor-scribe”<sup>18</sup>: some variants are probably punctual changes made by different “copyists-scribes” in the course of the textual transmission (see the enclosed synoptic translation with the many more or less small differences between the versions). In several cases, a reasonable decision as to which text was (later) changed by a “copyist-scribe” is not possible.<sup>19</sup> The evidence would but allow only

16 In spite of the differences between the oldest Greek manuscripts with regard to the beginning of v. 10, none has ἀντί or ἀνθ' ὧν.

17 See S. Talmon, “Fragments of an Ezekiel Scroll from Masada 1043–2220 (Ezekiel 35:11–38:14),” in *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg* (ed. M. Cogan et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 53\*–69\*, 58\* (Hebrew).

18 The rough distinction between “copyists-scribes” and “authors-scribes / editors-scribes” suggested by Tov is in my view rather helpful, see E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 240.

19 Some examples: 1) the beginning of v. 4: supposed Hebrew *Vorlage*: ובעריך חרבה אשים (“and in your cities ...”); MT<sup>L</sup>: עריך חרבה אשים (“your cities ...”); 2) v. 5: supposed Hebrew *Vorlage*: את בית ישראל (“the house of Israel;” one masoretic manuscript, too,

*grosso modo* the assumption of the existence of at least two Hebrew “variant editions” of Ezekiel 35 in the time before the Common Era.

#### IV. Search for an “original” text? The aims of textual criticism reconsidered

The main interest of traditional textual criticism can be described as the search for the “original” text.<sup>20</sup> In my view, there is no rational way to reconstruct the “original” shape of Ezekiel 35 let alone of such a complex book like Ezekiel or many other scriptures on the basis of the textual data currently available to us. In the case of “variant editions” it is *within certain limits* possible to establish the chronological relation between the editions: agreeing with the arguments provided by Johan Lust, Michael Konkel and other scholars I would assume, for instance, that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX<sup>967</sup> is *grosso modo* older than the proto-masoretic text.<sup>21</sup> However, “older” is certainly not the same as “original,” and, as already pointed out, with respect to many “individual textual variants” no sufficient criteria exist to decide between them and to describe them as older as opposed to younger.

Furthermore, according to another approach of traditional textual criticism, the MT should be “improved” by adopting details from other ancient versions.<sup>22</sup> This approach, too, is proven to be difficult in light of the “variant editions,” since these have their own legitimacy. In cases of textual corruption and scribal mistakes, however, textual criticism is without a doubt helpful (for example choosing a “best” manuscript like MT<sup>L</sup> or

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has <sup>ל</sup>בית ישראל, see the apparatus in the BHS); MT<sup>L</sup>: את בני ישראל (“the children of Israel”); 3) v. 7: supposed Hebrew *Vorlage*: אדם ובהמה (“human being and beast,” cf. 25:13); MT<sup>L</sup>: עבר ושב (“who come and go”).

20 See E. Tov and E. Ulrich, “The Search for an Original Text,” in *Overview Articles*, Vol. 1A of *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible* (ed. A. Lange; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 15–19.

21 See J. Lust, “Major Divergences between LXX and MT in Ezekiel,” in *The Earliest Text of the Hebrew Bible. The Relationship between the Masoretic Text and the Hebrew Base of the Septuagint Reconsidered* (ed. A. Schenker; SCS 52; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 82–92; M. Konkel, “Das Ezechielbuch zwischen Hasmonäern und Zadokiden,” in *Juda and Jerusalem in der Seleukidenzeit. Herrschaft – Widerstand – Identität. FS H.-J. Fabry* (ed. U. Dahmen and J. Schnocks; BBB 159; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2010), 159–178; K. Finsterbusch, “Ezechiel 33,21–39,29: Anmerkungen zum Profil der Sinneinheit in der nicht-masoretischen Textfassung (Papyrus 967) und zu Veränderungen durch proto-masoretische Redaktoren,” in *Sources and Interpretation in Ancient Judaism. FS Tal Ilan* (ed. M. M. Piotrkowski et al.; AJEC 104; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 109–129.

22 Tov and Ulrich, “Search,” 15.

papyrus 967 as “Leitmanuscript” and trying to emend them with the help of the variants).

About half a century ago Moshe Greenberg defined the aim of textual criticism as follows: “To avoid premature text-alteration, exegesis and text-criticism must proceed together, each illuminating the other. The exegete, whose task is to interpret text in hand, must work on the hypothesis that every element in his texts has significance [...] Only such a hypothesis keeps him alert to discover significance and design if it is there [...] While he notes the particulars of the versions, his focus is the MT, not because it is the best or oldest, but because it is the only complete text of the Hebrew Bible.”<sup>23</sup> I would add: because the MT as *textus receptus* has been instrumental in creating the identity of Jewish and Christian communities over centuries. In our present times in which this identity is at stake as probably never before in history, it is in my view all the more necessary to closely relate textual criticism and exegesis not least in order to show the theological significance of the texts also for today’s addressees.

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23 Greenberg, “Ancient versions,” 147.

## Appendix 1: Translation of LXX<sup>967</sup>-Ezek 35

Additions are set in *italics*; important differences are underlined.

35,1 And the word of Kyrios came to me, saying:

2 Son of man, turn your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it  
3a and say to it:

3b $\alpha$  Thus says Kyrios:

3b $\beta$  Behold! I (am) against you, Mount Seir!

And I will stretch out my hand against you and render you a wilderness  
and you will be desolated.

4 *And in* your cities I will make a solitude, and you, you will be a wilderness.

And you will know that I, I am Kyrios.

5 Because you had everlasting enmity

and (because) you took your seat on the house of Israel *with treachery*

by the hand of *the nations* with a sword

in the time of injustice at the end (of the house of Israel),

6a therefore I live – says Kyrios,

if not unto blood you have sinned and blood will pursue you

(then may it come to pass to me that ...)!

7 And I will render Mount Seir into a wilderness, a desolated,

and I will destroy from it human being and beast.

8 And I will fill with your slain / wounded (men)

the hills and the ravines,

and *in* all your plains *they will be* slain / wounded by the sword, they will fall in you.

9 An everlasting solitude I will place for you,

and your cities will no *more* be inhabited.

And you (i. e. sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios.

10 Therefore, he (i. e. Edom) said to you (i. e. God):

“The two nations and the two countries will be mine,

and I will inherit them, and Kyrios is there!”

11 Therefore, I live – says Kyrios,

and I will do *unto you* according to your enmity

–

and I will make myself known when I judge you.

12a And you (i. e. sg.) will know that I, I am Kyrios.

12b I heard the voice of your blasphemies,

for you said: “The mountains of Israel

(are) desolated,

they have been given to us for food!”

13 And you (i. e. sg.) boasted against me with your mouth,

–

I, I heard (it).

14a Thus says Kyrios:

14b In the joy of all the earth,

a wilderness I will make you.

15a –

–

15b A wilderness you will be, Mount Seir, and all Idumea will perish.

And you will know that I, I am Kyrios, *their God*.

## Appendix 2: Translation of MTL-Ezek 35

Additions are set in *italics*; important differences are underlined.

35,1 And the word of YHWH came to me, saying:

2 Son of man, set your face against Mount Seir and prophesy against it  
3a and say to it:

3ba Thus has said *the Lord* YHWH:

3bβ Behold! I (am) against you, Mount Seir!

And I will stretch out my hand against you and render you a desolation  
and a desert.

4 Your cities I will lay waste, and you, you will be a desolation.

And you will know that I (am) YHWH.

5 Because you had everlasting enmity

and (because) you handed over the children of Israel  
to the hands of the sword *in the time of their calamity*,

in the time of the iniquity of the end (i. e. the iniquity which will lead to the end),

6 therefore, I live – the declaration of *the Lord* YHWH,

surely to blood I will make you and blood will pursue you!,

*if not blood you hated and blood will pursue you* (then may it come to pass to me that ...)!

7 And I will render Mount Seir into a desert *and* a desolation,

and I will cut off from it (all) who come and go.

8 And I will fill *his mountains* with his slain / wounded (men),

*your hills and your valleys*

and all your ravines, those slain / wounded by the sword shall fall in them.

9 Everlasting desolations I will render you,

and your cities will not be inhabited.

And you (i. e. pl.) will know that I (am) YHWH.

10 Because you (i. e. Edom) said:

“The two nations and the two countries will be mine!”

and “We will inherit it!”, and “YHWH *was* there!”,

11 therefore, I live – the declaration of *the Lord* YHWH,

and I will do according to your anger

*and according to your envy which you used out of thy hatred against them*,

and I will make myself known *among them* when I judge you.

12a And you (i. e. sg.) will know that I (am) YHWH.

12b I heard all the blasphemies

which you said *against* the mountains of Israel, *saying*:

“They are laid desolate,

they have been given to us for food!”

13 And you (i. e. pl.) boasted against me with your mouth

*and you defied me with your words / and you made imprudent against me your words*,

I, I heard (it).

14a Thus has said *the Lord* YHWH:

14b Just as the rejoicing (with regard to) the whole land,

a desolation I will do unto you.

15a *Just as you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel,*

*because it (i. e. the inheritance) was desolate, so I will do unto you.*

15b A desolation you will be, Mount Seir, and all Idumea, all of it.

And they will know that I (am) YHWH.