

The Development of the Text of the Torah in Two Major Text Blocks

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Introduction

In the late Second Temple period, many biblical texts were in use in ancient Israel, especially in the case of the Torah. In contrast, biblical scholars almost exclusively base their exegesis of the Torah on one text, the Masoretic Text. This may sound strange, but such is reality. For example, the Documentary Hypothesis has from the beginning been based solely on the printed editions of MT.¹

It is remarkable that the Torah differs from all other Scripture books at the textual level. For example, there are many more witnesses of the Torah than of any other book. I recognize ten to twelve different textual branches of the Torah, in contrast to merely one, two, or three for the other books. Thus, in Judges, Job, Ruth, Qohelet, and Lamentations, we identify only a single textual tradition, since the witnesses do not differ significantly from one another. The present study focuses on the *clustering* of the textual sources of the Torah. It is important to know how these textual sources relate to one another.

Very few scholars have expressed a view on the number of witnesses there are to the Scripture books. Introductions list merely the textual sources without distinguishing between the biblical books and without recognizing

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¹ See my recent study "The Source of Source Criticism: The Relevance of Non-Masoretic Textual Witnesses," in *Text – Textgeschichte – Textwirkung, Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Siegfried Kreuzer* (ed. T. Wagner et al.; AOAT 419; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2015), 283-301.

patterns. Thus, Eichhorn's classical introduction to the Old Testament (1780–1783) listed many sources, and even included the secondary translations made from the LXX.² Modern introductions simply list the Hebrew texts and the primary translations without distinguishing between the Scripture books. In my own *Introduction*,³ I likewise list merely the textual sources, while in my more recent publications I note that the evidence is different for each book.⁴ No attention has been paid elsewhere to the fact that the number of textual branches in the Torah is much larger than in any of the other books.

What actually constitutes a textual branch? I consider a single text or a group of texts that have a distinct place in the genealogical tree (stemma) of a composition to be a separate textual branch. However, due to the lack of evidence, it is often hard to know whether we are faced with a large branch or a small twig in the pedigree of texts. We need to develop criteria in order to define what constitutes a separate textual branch, but we may not always succeed. Thus, which Qumran scrolls should be considered a separate branch and which were part of a larger group? For example, should the pre-Samaritan scrolls be considered one group or is each one a separate branch or twig? In my view, most pre-Samaritan texts form one group (**4** in the stemma in the appendix), foreshadowing the SP (**4a**). However, one scroll, 4QNum^b, forms a separate branch (**3**) because it has a unique position, sharing significant features with both the SP (**4**) and the LXX (**2**).

I realize that each classification is subjective. For the Torah in my tree of the manuscripts, MT forms one branch (**1**), as does the LXX (**2**); the SP group is composed of two branches (**3–4**), the various liturgical texts

² J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig: Weidmanns, 1780–1783; 2nd ed.: Leipzig: Weidmanns, 1787 and Reutlingen: Grözinger, 1790; 3rd ed.: Leipzig: Weidmanns, 1803; 4th ed.: Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1823).

³ E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed., rev. and exp.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) [henceforth: *TCHB*].

⁴ E. Tov, "Textual History of the Pentateuch," in *Textual History of the Bible Online*, vol. 1 (ed. A. Lange and E. Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2015), sec. 2.1; idem, "Textual History of the Pentateuch," in *Textual History of the Bible*, vol. 1B (ed. A. Lange and E. Tov; Leiden: Brill, 2016 [forthcoming]), sec. 2.1.

together with the *tefillin* are yet another branch (8), and 4QRP^{a,b} represent a different branch (5). As there were so many branches in the Torah, the question of their number is especially pressing in this book.

The question thus formulated has not been posed until now. Some views were expressed, but they were based merely on evidence available at the time; one cannot simply make a comparison of the views expressed in different periods on the number of textual witnesses in the Torah.⁵

Both Lagarde and Kahle thought in terms of three base texts for Scripture as a whole, while Kahle worked out this view in detail for the Torah. Kahle's study represents a monumental and original piece of thinking with implications for a stemmatic framework. Kahle suggested that the MT, LXX, and SP were created by way of revision from the three pillars of the Pentateuchal text. Half a century later, W. F. Albright, his student F. M. Cross, and their students developed a different theory based on the assumption of three local text families.⁶ The theory was still based on the magic number of three main texts that had developed in isolation in three different localities. The Masoretic Text is now named the Babylonian family or recension, the LXX is known as the Egyptian family, and the SP as the Palestinian family. No other families were assumed, and all of the Qumran texts were described as belonging to one of these families.

This theory remains very influential in biblical studies today, especially among American scholars. The theory has been criticized, but few alternative views have been offered in its stead. I offered a different view in 1982 in which I suggested that we should postulate an endless number of

⁵ It should be remembered that most scholars did not express a view on the number of textual witnesses in the Torah and therefore did not offer an opinion on stemmatic relations.

⁶ W. F. Albright, "New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible," *BASOR* 140 (1955): 27-33; F. M. Cross, "The Evolution of a Theory of Local Texts," in *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (ed. F. M. Cross and S. Talmon; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1975), 306-20.

texts in each of the biblical books, and not merely three textual branches.⁷ The Qumran scrolls have taught us that each scribe created his own text.

In two recent studies, I started counting these textual branches in the Torah, identifying ten to twelve separate branches.⁸ I now refine my earlier thinking. I still suggest that we should postulate a large number of different branches in the Torah, but I have come to realize that they should be reduced to two main tradition blocks, MT and its congeners (I), and all the other texts (II), that is the large LXX-SP group together with all the other texts. This new way of viewing the evidence is based on continued studies of the last few years in which the following aspects have become clear:

(1) The closeness of the SP and the LXX has become more and more evident. For example, in most of the differences between the SP and MT in Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49, the SP agrees with the LXX.⁹ This closeness is visible especially in their shared and separate harmonizing pluses, but also in individual readings. In each of the books of the Torah, the LXX contains even more harmonizations than the SP. Until one does a word-for-word analysis of each of the Pentateuchal books one does not realize how often the LXX and SP are in agreement and carry a secondary nature (see below);

(2) My recent study of the text of the *tefillin* likewise points to a two-fold division of that evidence, divided between the two main blocks, MT and SP-LXX (see below);

(3) The various compositions that are based on the Bible text likewise show a binary division. Recent study indicates the extent to which the various rewritten Bible compositions are based on the LXX and SP, and not

⁷ E. Tov, "A Modern Textual Outlook Based on the Qumran Scrolls," *HUCA* 53 (1982): 11-27. For an updated version of this view, see Tov, *TCHB*, 158-60.

⁸ E. Tov, "Textual Developments in the Torah," in *Discourse, Dialogue, and Debate in the Bible: Essays in Honour of Frank H. Polak* (ed. A. Brenner-Idan; Hebrew Bible Monographs 63; Amsterdam Studies in Bible and Religion 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 236-46. Revised versions: E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint: Collected Writings, Volume 3* (VTSup 167; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 239-49 and idem, "Textual History of the Pentateuch" (see n. 4).

⁹ This pertains to fourteen of the twenty different content differences between MT and the SP in verses 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 26.

on MT. On the other hand, MT served as the base text for rabbinic literature and not for additional compositions, as far as we know (see below).

Theoretical Background

The purpose of this study is to show that the Hebrew text of the Torah developed in two different streams of transmission, MT and all the other texts. I do speak in terms of textual plurality, but there is a structure to this plurality.

No solid facts are known about the textual condition of the Torah prior to 250 B.C.E., that is, the period of the first Qumran fragments, and therefore whatever happened before that time is mere speculation.

Written documents must have existed from a very early period although the date of the beginning of textual transmission is unknown. It is natural to assume that textual transmission began once the compositions contained in the biblical books had been completed. However, limited copying had already begun at an earlier stage when segments of the Scripture books existed in written form prior to the completion of the composition process. A description of the transmission of the biblical text thus begins with the completion of the literary compositions and, to a certain extent, even earlier.

It seems that each of the literary genres developed differently during the course of their textual transmission. Major differences between textual witnesses are probably found in all types of literature. On the whole, scribes who allowed themselves the liberty of changing the content did so more frequently in prose than in poetry segments because prose texts can be rewritten more easily than poetry. However, by way of exception, some poetic texts in the Torah were nevertheless rewritten; note, for example, the rewritten Song of Miriam in 4QRP^c (4Q365) 6aⁱⁱ and c. On the other hand, in the last stages of the literary development of the Torah such as reflected in the textual witnesses, little rewriting activity is evidenced in the reworking of legal sections. Thus, there are hardly any cases in which a law has been added or omitted in one of the textual witnesses. There are also almost no instances in which a law has been harmonized with another one when they

differed. For example, it would have been easy to adapt a law in Deuteronomy to a parallel one in Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers or vice versa, but, with very few exceptions, changes of this kind simply were not made in any of the textual witnesses. The editors/scribes knew the limitations of their activities and, had they inserted such changes in legal material, they would have been changing divine utterances and would have obliterated the differences between the Pentateuchal law codes. One major exception to this description is found in the small harmonizing additions (on occasion: changes) in the LXX and less frequently so in the SP group and other sources based on the formulation of parallel laws, but, as a rule, they do not change the content of the laws themselves.¹⁰

The textual development of the five books of the Torah differed from that of the other Scripture books, but this fact escaped the attention of scholars with the exception of a very significant study by Paul Kahle based on the limited evidence available to him in 1915.¹¹

An Annotated List of the Textual Witnesses of the Torah

The first step in describing the textual branches of the Torah text is an attempt to list them. They are listed here in a subjective fashion, based on my own interpretation of their nature. This subjectivity comes to light when one has to determine the following parameters:

1. Textual nature of the source;
2. Existence of a textual family and its scope, for example, the Masoretic family;

¹⁰ See the many examples adduced by D. A. Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period* (FAT 92; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 118–74. Teeter's analysis is innovative, but it should be remembered that many of his examples do not pertain to the laws themselves, but to the phraseology surrounding the laws, such as the Deuteronomistic terminology.

¹¹ P. Kahle, "Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Pentateuchtextes," *TSK* 88 (1915): 399–439; repr. in idem, *Opera Minora* (Leiden: Brill, 1956), 3–37.

3. Relative position of a text in the pedigree of the texts of the Torah, which is based on one's understanding of the text's relation to the other texts. This parameter refers to one of the most fundamental suppositions behind the drawing up of a stemma, namely whether a given text represents the central textual tradition, that is, the trunk itself, or a major or minor branch (a twig) issuing from the trunk.

In the Torah, the creation of a stemma is more complex than in the other books because of the large number of its textual branches. The construction of this stemma is plagued by the assumption that most of the textual sources that existed from the beginning of the book's scribal transmission until the early Middle Ages have been lost.

The placing of MT at the top of the stemma is based on the understanding that the LXX, the SP group, the exegetical texts such as 4QRP, the liturgical texts among which are the *tefillin*, and virtually all other texts display secondary features when compared with MT, especially in their harmonizing pluses.¹² A second scenario would be the assumption that MT and the LXX-SP text derived from a common archetype, but the multitude of secondary readings in the non-MT texts makes such an option unlikely. A third possibility would be the assumption of three or more parallel archetypes, à la Paul Kahle, but such an assumption has never been substantiated.¹³ Therefore, I resort to the possibility of a single trunk, that of MT, from which block II (all other texts) branched off.

The following list of branches of the ancient Torah text includes all assumed textual branches of the Torah, listed in their presumed historical or typological sequence. A textual branch may be represented by a group of texts or by an individual text that is sufficiently remote from the other texts in order to be recognized as a separate textual branch, e.g., the differences between 4QNum^b and the other pre-Samaritan texts (see n. 40). Since little

¹² This working hypothesis is based on the understanding that in a general sense most or all other witnesses are secondary to MT, although in individual instances any text may reflect original readings.

¹³ The differences between the parallel readings described by Kahle are not substantive enough in order to justify a parallel transmission.

material has come down to us from antiquity, it is indeed possible that a single extant text represents a whole group of texts or none at all.

Thanks to the Qumran discoveries, we now know many textual branches of the Torah.¹⁴ Through the Qumran discoveries of new texts, we also have a better understanding of the “old texts,” MT, LXX, and SP. In my view, all these texts, with the possible exception of the liturgical texts, enjoyed the status of authoritative Scripture texts.

The main assertion of this study is the suggestion that the witnesses of the Torah can be divided into two blocks, MT (I) and all other texts (II). The other texts (II) derived from the MT block (I) because of their common contents and the former’s secondary features. Further, the rift between the two blocks is easily recognizable in the texts based on them: the rabbinic literature based on block I, and the reworked Bible compositions based on block II. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Second Temple compositions based on MT.¹⁵ Below, I present some theoretical thinking backed by detailed studies on each of the books of the Torah.

The novel idea of subdividing the textual witnesses of the Torah into two text blocks is closely connected with the perception of two different scribal approaches, conservative and popularizing, which was recognized previously in the scholarly literature. That perception was not yet a developed idea when Kahle described SP as a popularizing vulgar

¹⁴ All of these should be considered texts with the exception of the SP group (SP together with the pre-Samaritan texts), which reflects a recension. The most characteristic readings of the SP group were created by substantial editorial changes inserted in the earlier text. For an analysis of these editorial changes, see M. Segal, “The Text of the Hebrew Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Materia giudaica* 12 (2007): 5–20; E. Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays* (TSAJ 121; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 57–70; M. Kartveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans* (VTSup 128; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 259–312; M. M. Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts* (STDJ 95; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

¹⁵ See my study “The Textual Base of the Biblical Quotations in Second Temple Compositions” (forthcoming).

recension¹⁶ and MT as an official and reliable recension.¹⁷ It was more developed in subsequent research, such as my own writing, in which I contrasted the conservative and popularizing approaches of copying and translating.¹⁸ Various additional scholars wrote about different approaches, and a good summarizing analysis has been presented by D. A. Teeter.¹⁹ This scholar distinguished between two main approaches that were given various names by scholars (conservative/official/standard, etc. as opposed to vulgar/popular/harmonizing/interpretive, etc.). However, these analyses were theoretical and not linked to specific texts or text groups beyond the mentioning of SP and the Qumran Scribal Practice as examples of the popularizing texts and MT as an example of a conservative text. I now connect the conservative approach with block I and the popularizing approach with block II in the Torah, and will attempt to assign most known texts to one of these two text blocks.

¹⁶ Kahle, "Untersuchungen," especially 5-12. Various scholars accepted from Kahle's writings the concept of "vulgar" texts, albeit with certain changes. H. S. Nyberg, "Das textkritische Problem des Alten Testaments am Hoseabuche demonstriert," *ZAW* 52 (1934): 241-54; G. Gerleman, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1948); M. Greenberg, "The Stabilization of the Text of the Hebrew Bible Reviewed in the Light of the Biblical Materials from the Judean Desert," *JAOS* 76 (1956): 157-67; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (2nd ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 20-27; and E. Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1 Q Is^a)* (STDJ 6; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 77-89 ("vernacular and model texts") posited in their descriptions the "careful" tradition of MT alongside "vulgar" texts. The scribes of these "vulgar" texts (e.g., 1QIsa^a and SP) approached the biblical text in a free manner and inserted changes of various kinds, including orthography.

¹⁷ Kahle, "Untersuchungen," 26-37 (35).

¹⁸ Tov, *TCHB*, 184-85 and idem, "Approaches towards Scripture Embraced by the Ancient Greek Translators," in *Der Mensch vor Gott: Forschungen zum Menschenbild in Bibel, antiken Judentum und Koran. Festschrift für Herrmann Lichtenberger zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. U. Mittmann-Richert et al.; Neukirchener: Neukirchen, 2003), 213-28.

¹⁹ Teeter, *Scribal Laws*, 240 and passim.

The MT group is composed of ancient and medieval texts, the former named proto-Masoretic, found at the Judean Desert sites,²⁰ and the latter being the medieval MT. The proto-MT is virtually identical to the medieval text. A second, related, stream from antiquity is a group of Masoretic texts found at Qumran in which scribes inserted some corrections away from the main tradition. These texts are named the MT-like texts,²¹ and they differ by up to ten percent from the medieval MT.

I. The MT Group

1a. Proto-Masoretic tradition

- i. Proto-Masoretic Scripture texts from the Judean Desert are known from a relatively late period (texts copied between 50 B.C.E. and 115 C.E.), differing by no more than two percent of their words from the medieval text. The more substantial texts are: 4QGen^b (although ascribed to Qumran, this text probably derived from one of the Judean Desert sites),²² MurExod, MasLev^b (30 B.C.E.–30 C.E.).²³ In fact, all the texts found at the Judean Desert sites (outside of Qumran) contain proto-Masoretic content.
- ii. Proto-Masoretic *tefillin*, agreeing with MT in content and spelling: MurPhyl (beginning 2nd century C.E.) and 34SePhyl. The choice of the four segments agrees with the rabbinic instructions. These texts

²⁰ Masada, Murabba'at, Nahal Hever, Nahal Mishmar, Nahal Se'elim.

²¹ The MT-like texts should probably be described as a twig deriving from the proto-MT texts. Other scholars, probably representing the majority position, adhere to the reverse assumption, that the proto-Masoretic text was created by way of revising the MT-like texts. For an analysis, see my study "'Proto-Masoretic,' 'Pre-Masoretic,' 'Semi-Masoretic,' and 'Masoretic,'" in *Fs. Leonard Greenspoon* (forthcoming).

²² This scroll was not found in a controlled excavation. See J. R. Davila in E. Ulrich and F.M. Cross, eds., *Qumran Cave 4.VII: Genesis to Numbers* (DJD XII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994; repr., 1999), 31.

²³ Beyond the Torah: MasEzek, MurXII, MasPsa.

follow the instructions of the rabbis with regard to the writing practices of *tefillin*.²⁴

- iii. Ancient translations: Targumim, Vulgate, *kaige*-Th, Aquila, Symmachus.
- iv. Quotations in rabbinic literature.

1b. MT-like tradition

- i. MT-like Scripture texts from Qumran (copied between 20 and 115 C.E.) differing from the medieval MT by more than two percent, usually up to ten percent. Well-preserved samples are: 4QGen^g, 4QpaleoGen-Exod^l, 4QExod^c, and beyond the Torah: 1QIsa^b, 4QJer^a, 4QJer^c, 4QPs^c, 2QRuth^a.
- ii. MT-like *tefillin*: XHevSePhyl. This text follows the conventions of the rabbis for the writing practices of *tefillin*.

II. All Other Sources: 2-12?

Most likely the kernel of this text block, the LXX-SP group, derived from the MT block, and at a later stage several branches and twigs branched off from it.²⁵ These texts represent one large Palestinian group.²⁶ While the witnesses

²⁴ 8QPhyl I (1st century C.E.; proto-MT) follows a different pattern as it includes a passage that was not required by the rabbis. The combined evidence for the *tefillin* thus shows that there were different streams in rabbinic Judaism; see my study "The *Tefillin* from the Judean Desert and the Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible" (forthcoming). The text-critical conclusions of that study differ from my earlier studies on *tefillin*.

²⁵ I can only guess at the background of the creation of this text block, but I think that historical changes in the history of the Jewish people may have played an important role in its creation. The second block may have been created in Palestine after the return from the exile, while the first one could have been brought back from Babylon with the exiles (Albright, Cross, see n. 6) or it could have co-existed with the first text block in Palestine. The SP and the derivatives of the LXX-SP group are indeed Palestinian, while all theories about the geographic background of the first text block are mere hypothesis.

²⁶ The possibility that MT reflects a Babylonian tradition was mentioned in the previous note. In its Greek garb, the LXX reflects Egyptian features but no Egyptian features of its underlying Hebrew text have been identified. See E. Tov,

of this textual block reflect several primary readings and even sections, when compared with MT (see below) its character is very often secondary.

These popular-exegetical versions were created in the Torah because of its great popularity. Undoubtedly, the Torah was the most liked part of Scripture as is recognizable from the many copies found in the Judean Desert and from the many new compositions based on it.

There is no way to date this large textual group. The popular text that is presupposed by the common ancestor of the LXX and SP group predated the time of the translation of the LXX, and therefore we find ourselves in the fourth century B.C.E. or earlier. There is insufficient evidence in order to claim that the Palestinian text of the Chronicler is based on this text in the Torah.²⁷

2-4. LXX-SP group.

The assumption of a common ancestor of the LXX and the SP group²⁸ was first surmised in the 1815 monograph by W. Gesenius, who guided the discussion of the SP and LXX in a sound direction.²⁹ In Gesenius' view, the two texts derived from a common source that he named the "Alexandrino-Samaritan edition."³⁰

The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research (3rd ed., completely rev. and enl.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 201-206.

²⁷ Preliminary investigations do not show a clear opposition between the MT on the one hand and the LXX and SP on the other in the Torah text quoted in Chronicles. However, G. Gerleman, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1948), 9-12, provided a few examples of agreements between SP-Torah and MT-Chronicles, but there are many more disagreements. Cross, "The Evolution of a Theory of Local Texts," 310, accepted the views of Gerleman.

²⁸ This common ancestor is hypothetical only, and therefore has no number in the stemma.

²⁹ W. Gesenius, *De Pentateuchi Samaritani origine, indole et auctoritate commentatio philologico-critica* (Halle: Bibliotheca Rengeriana, 1815).

³⁰ Ibidem, 14. Gesenius explained the background of the similarity between SP and the LXX by saying that "the Alexandrian translation and the Samaritan text derived from Judean codices which were similar to each other." This text, adopted by both the Jews of Alexandria and the Samaritans in Palestine, removed many problems from the original text, and should therefore be characterized as

Central in this analysis are both the large number of the agreements between the SP and LXX, and their special nature.³¹ In all books of the Torah, these two sources agree frequently in secondary readings, especially in harmonizing pluses. This agreement is extended to the so-called pre-Samaritan Qumran scrolls. Detailed studies on Genesis and Deuteronomy have been published,³² and studies on Leviticus and Numbers are forthcoming. Compared with MT, the two sources also have in common a revision of the genealogical lists in Genesis 5 and 11, in which revisional and hence secondary traits are recognizable.³³ These combined data show unmistakably that the LXX and SP share a common background in

secondary. Gesenius' approach was followed by S. Kohn, *De Pentateucho Samaritano ejusque cum versionibus antiquis nexu* (Leipzig: Kreyssing, 1865) and J. W. Nutt, *Fragments of a Samaritan Targum: Edited from a Bodleian Manuscript, with an Introduction, Containing a Sketch of Samaritan History, Dogma and Literature* (London: Trübner, 1874), 98.

³¹ For a detailed analysis of the close relation between the LXX and the SP group, see my study "The Shared Tradition of the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch," in *Die Septuaginta: Orte und Intentionen* (ed. S. Kreuzer et al.; WUNT 361; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 277–93.

³² E. Tov, "Textual Harmonizations in the Ancient Texts of Deuteronomy," in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays* (TSAJ 121; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 271–82; idem, "Textual Harmonization in the Stories of the Patriarchs," in *Rewriting and Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: The Biblical Patriarchs in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. D. Dimant and R. G. Kratz; BZAW 439; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 19–50; revised version: idem, *Textual Criticism ... Collected Writings, Volume 3* (2015), 166–88; idem, "The Harmonizing Character of the Septuagint of Genesis 1–11," in *Die Septuaginta: Text, Wirkung, Rezeption. 4. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 19.–22. Juli 2012* (ed. W. Kraus and S. Kreuzer; WUNT 325, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 315–32; revised version: idem, *Textual Criticism ... Collected Writings, Volume 3* (2015), 470–89.

³³ E. Tov, "The Genealogical Lists in Genesis 5 and 11 in Three Different Versions," in *From Author to Copyist: Essays on the Composition, Redaction, and Transmission of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Zipi Talshir* (ed. C. Werman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 37–52. Revised version: idem, *Textual Criticism ... Collected Writings, Volume 3* (2015), 221–38.

secondary readings, even though they also disagree as often as they agree.³⁴ Although the books of the Torah differ in content, the LXX and SP must have undergone a similar textual development or they were based on a common base text in all five books, while at a later stage the two texts diverged.

Compositions based on the common text base of LXX-SP.

The assumption that the LXX and SP derived from a common base text is supported³⁵ by the fact that several compositions are closer to the LXX and the SP than to MT:³⁶

1. 11QT^a
2. 4Q252 (4QComm Gen A)
3. *Jubilees* in its Ethiopic versions (the Hebrew texts are too fragmentary for analysis)
4. Pseudo-Philo
5. Genesis Apocryphon
6. 4QTestimonia

³⁴ The use of secondary readings as a guiding principle in composing the stemma follows Paul Maas' principle of *Leitfehler* (indicative errors): P. Maas, *Textual Criticism* (trans. B. Flower; Oxford: Clarendon, 1958), 42–49 = idem, *Textkritik* (vol. I, VII of *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft*; ed. A. Gercke and E. Norden; 3rd ed.; Leipzig: Teubner, 1957). These common secondary readings are so significant that the occurrence of a good number of them suffices to characterize textual witnesses. See *Appendix* below. By the same token, the occurrence of a good number of common harmonizations of SP and the LXX suffices to characterize these two sources as being textually close to each other. When this is recognized, the large deviations of the SP can be ascribed easily to a secondary factor (subsequent content editing of SP) even though these editorial manipulations are of a greater magnitude than the harmonizations themselves.

³⁵ Scholars who noticed the close connection of texts to both the LXX and the SP were not necessarily aware of Gesenius' theory and they simply noticed the proximity of a certain composition to the LXX and SP against MT, and therefore their witness may be considered independent support of the theory described here.

³⁶ For an analysis and bibliographical references to the studies dealing with these compositions, see my study "The Textual Base of the Biblical Quotations."

In fact, there are no rewritten Bible compositions that are based clearly on MT as opposed to the LXX and SP.

An additional group of texts based on the common LXX-SP base are the liturgical texts (group 8 below), further supporting the argument of the existence of a large text block.

Determining relationships between manuscripts is precarious when so many ancient texts have been lost, but in the case of the Torah we can attempt to do so because the evidence seems to be reliable. It seems to me that the SP group distanced itself more from the common LXX-SP tradition than the *Vorlage* of the LXX. This is suggested by the large editorial changes in Exodus 7–11 in SP, the addition of parallels to Deuteronomy 1–3 in Exodus and Numbers, and the reorganization of the Decalogue.³⁷ At the same time, there are no unmistakable instances of major secondary elements in the *Vorlage* of the LXX,³⁸ with the possible exception of Exodus 35–40.³⁹ I therefore think that the LXX remained in closer proximity to the common LXX-SP base than the pre-Samaritan texts and the SP.

2. *Vorlage* of the LXX.

The first textual tradition that branched off from the LXX-SP base was the *Vorlage* of the LXX, reflecting a greater number of late than early elements in the Torah.

The reconstructed Hebrew source of the LXX reflects a free approach to the text, like that of its base, the common LXX-SP text. This freedom is reflected in a large number of small contextual harmonizations, far more so

³⁷ See my *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran*, 57–70.

³⁸ At the same time, I note that the LXX—in my view reflecting an earlier stage in the development than the SP—contains many small harmonizing pluses in Numbers that adapt the text to Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. See 9:14, 15 (cf. Lev 19:33); 14:10 (Exod 16:10); 21:2 (Exod 34:15); 27:12 (Deut 32:49). See also Teeter as quoted in n. 10 and see *Appendix* below.

³⁹ See A. Aejmelaes, “Septuagintal Translation Techniques: A Solution to the Problem of the Tabernacle Account,” in eadem, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993), 116–30 (118). See further my own analysis in “The Source of Source Criticism.”

than in the SP group,⁴⁰ which until recently was considered to be the most harmonizing text among the Scripture texts.⁴¹ This feature is the most prominent among the textual features of the Hebrew source of the LXX, more so than textual mistakes or any other feature. The identification of these secondary features in the LXX of the Torah, not recognized by most scholars, is quite surprising. Remarkably, the nature of the *Vorlage* of the LXX in the Torah differs totally from the *Vorlage* of the LXX in all other Scripture books. However, the LXX also reflects important original readings in the Torah, such as in the song in Deuteronomy 32, where it is joined by 4QDeut^a.⁴²

As a result, it is probably not true that this text was chosen by the high priest Eleazar to be sent to Alexandria (thus the Epistle of Aristeas) as a choice copy of the Torah at a time when the careful text of MT already existed.

Hebrew texts based on the *Vorlage* of the LXX in the Torah: see the texts mentioned above, **2-4** (LXX-SP group).

3-4. SP group.

There may well have been a single text composed by an individual rather than a group of texts at the base of the SP group since the exegesis embedded in this text seems to reflect the thinking of an individual. According to our present knowledge, the SP group consists of three layers, listed in historical sequence: a single pre-Samaritan text resembling 4QNum^b (**3**) reflecting a transition stage between the LXX and the SP

⁴⁰ A large number of such harmonizations are also found in the pre-Samaritan texts, 4QExod-Lev^f, 4QNum^b, 4QRP^b, but since these texts are fragmentary, we have to be careful with statistical calculations. The common base of the SP and LXX harmonizations makes it likely that the LXX pluses were rendered from a Hebrew source and were not created by the translators, as is also suggested by inner-Greek differences. For examples see Appendix.

⁴¹ See n. 32.

⁴² See Tov, *TCHB*, 249-50 with literature.

group;⁴³ the other pre-Samaritan texts (4); and the medieval texts of SP (4a) that continued on from the pre-Samaritan texts.

The pre-Samaritan nature of this group is recognizable in a number of pure pre-SP texts that are best described as pre-SP twigs (4) of the SP branch: 4QpaleoExod^m, 4QExod-Lev^f, and possibly also 4QLev^d.⁴⁴ These three scrolls never lack an editorial addition of SP.

The SP group forms a popularizing offshoot of MT or a similar text. The most well-known member of this group, the medieval SP (4a), is a sectarian text created in antiquity on the basis of an earlier text. When its slight sectarian layer is peeled off, we are faced with an early text, the likes of which were found in the pre-Samaritan scrolls. This textual branch removes difficulties from the text and also harmonizes details.

Texts based on the SP group: See the texts mentioned above, 2-4 and see further:

5. 4QReworkedPentateuch^{a,b} (4Q158, 4Q364) are very close to the SP group or are part of it. At the same time, these texts differ substantially from SP since unlike group 3-4, they inserted several elements not found in MT. Group 5 thus reflects a further development of the SP group,⁴⁵ but we possess little information about the exact relation between the two texts.
- 6-7. 4QReworkedPentateuch^{c,d} (4Q365-366). Two exegetical texts that branched off from the LXX-SP group form another cluster, each of them carrying individual features. They contain running biblical texts intertwined with small and large exegetical additions such as an expanded Song of Miriam in 4QRP^c 6a ii and 6c, not equaled by any

⁴³ Typologically, 4QNum^b probably presents the oldest representative of the SP-LXX group, reflecting more significant agreements with the LXX than the other texts.

⁴⁴ 4QDeutⁿ is not a pre-Samaritan text; see E. Owen, "4QDeutⁿ: A Pre-Samaritan Text?" *DSD* 4 (1997): 162-78.

⁴⁵ For groups 5-7, see the analysis in E. Tov and S. A. White, "364-367. 4QReworkedPentateuch^{b-e} and 4QTemple," in *Qumran Cave 4.VIII, Parabiblical Texts, Part 1* (ed. H. Attridge et al., in consultation with J. VanderKam; DJD XIII; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 192-96; Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture*.

other source. Both texts are clearly closer to LXX-SP than to MT, but they are not direct members of that group.

8. Liturgical texts and *tefillin* (based on group 2-4). Several liturgical texts display more agreements with LXX-SP than with MT and they were based probably on the former group. These sources reflect a very free and harmonizing approach to the text: two different clusters of *tefillin* from Qumran (containing required passages and a mixture of required and non-required passages)⁴⁶ and three liturgical Qumran texts that contain the same pericopes as the *tefillin* (4QDeut^{i,k1,n}).⁴⁷ In all these texts, harmonization, including the addition of small pericopes, is the main textual-editorial feature.⁴⁸ These texts carried authority as liturgical texts, but not as Scripture texts.
- 9-12. *Appendix*. Four fragmentary scrolls that differ from the other texts in small details are not exclusively close to any of the mentioned texts, in other words, to either block I or II: 4Q[Gen-]Exod^b, 11QpaleoLev^a,⁴⁹ 4QDeut^{c,h}. As many or most of the scrolls from antiquity have been lost, the impression is created that these four fragmentary scrolls deserve a special place in the stemma but, due to the presumed loss of many or most ancient scrolls, the situation remains unclear. These fragmentary scrolls are not sufficiently independent to be recorded separately and

⁴⁶ See my study "The *Tefillin* from the Judean Desert" (forthcoming). Two groups of *tefillin* are closely related to the LXX-SP text base as opposed to MT, one containing required passages (4QPhyl C, D, E, F, R, S; 4QPhyl 4 [conservative spelling pattern]), while another one contains required as well as non-required passages (8QPhyl II, III, IV; XQPhyl 1, XQPhyl 2, XQPhyl 3; 1QPhyl (?) [conservative spelling pattern]).

⁴⁷ 4QDeutⁱ contains sections from Deuteronomy 5, 8, 10, 11, 32 and Exodus 12, 13; 4QDeut^{k1} contains sections from Deuteronomy 5, 11, 32.

⁴⁸ The liturgical character of 4QDeutⁱ is supported by its small size. See Tov, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran*, 37. Note further that both 4QDeutⁱ and 4QDeutⁿ start with Deut 5:1 and continue until the beginning of chapter 6. Both texts also contain a fragment that covers 8:5-10. See E. Eshel, "4QDeutⁿ: A Text That Has Undergone Harmonistic Editing," *HUCA* 62 (1991): 117-54 (151).

⁴⁹ See my study "The Textual Character of the Leviticus Scroll from Qumran Cave 11," *Shnaton* 3 (1978): 238-44 (Heb. with Eng. summary).

they may reflect transitional stages between texts mentioned in the stemma.

The listing does not include all the Qumran scrolls. Several are too fragmentary to be included in a stemma. Further, the classification does not include a group of texts whose major deviation from the others is in their orthographic character, especially in the case of the texts written in the so-called Qumran Scribal Practice.⁵⁰

Due to several uncertainties,⁵¹ no precise number can be quoted for the textual branches in the Torah, but it is probably around ten, and much larger than the one to three in the other books. In any event, the special sacred nature of the Torah, accepted by all sources and all scholars, did not prevent its exegetical-literary and textual development as reflected in its widely divergent textual branches from the third century B.C.E. onwards.⁵² To our modern eyes, the opposite may have been expected, namely that the special sanctity of the Torah would create a conservative approach of not allowing any changes in the text, as expressed by *b. Qidd.* 30a: “The ancients were called *soferim* because they counted every letter in the Torah.” However, this statement reflects a time significantly later than that of the Qumran scrolls and it pertains only to the proto-Masoretic manuscripts. This talmudic dictum shows that our modern thinking is often wrongly

⁵⁰ The many texts copied according to this scribal practice reflect an orthography and morphology that diverge widely from the other texts. See my *TCHB*, 100–105. This practice is best known from 1QIsa^a but is reflected also in several Torah scrolls and liturgical texts. Probably they are especially connected with the LXX-SP group, but there is no absolute proof for this assumption. A substantial group of *tefillin* connected with the LXX-SP group is mentioned above (see n. 46). The status of 1QDeut^a and 4QDeut^{k2,m} is unclear. In any event, none of the texts written in the Qumran Scribal Practice is close to MT.

⁵¹ The following uncertainties should be taken into consideration: 1) the SP group is counted as three units (see above), and not as two or one; 2) the exact number of the liturgical texts is unknown; 3) four “non-aligned” texts were singled out (9–12), but their number could have been smaller or larger.

⁵² See my study “The Authority of Early Hebrew Scripture Texts,” in *Meghillot: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls X* (ed. J. Ben-Dov et al.; Haifa/Jerusalem: University of Haifa/Orion Center/Bialik Institute, 2013): 57–71 (Heb.).

influenced by the character of only one segment of the transmission history of the Pentateuchal text, namely the proto-Masoretic tradition.

Diffusion of the Two Major Blocks I and II

The MT block (I) was not limited in scope. After all, it is the only one evidenced in the Judean Desert sites beyond Qumran (proto-MT), and the main one found at Qumran in the form of the MT-like texts. The MT block thus enjoyed a wide diffusion. However, it was not made the basis for additional compositions written in Hebrew with the exception of rabbinic literature. The alternative LXX-SP block (II) was also widely circulated, as it was made the source for all known rewritten Bible compositions. *Tefillin* contained both types of text, although more copies of the LXX-SP type are known than of the proto-MT type.

This brings me to the distribution at Qumran of the copies of blocks I and II, and I see the situation more clearly now than in the past.⁵³ There are more texts of block II than of block I at Qumran: there are more straightforward texts of LXX-SP (6) than of MT (4), and a large number of texts that indirectly reflect the tradition of block II: 3 liturgical texts, 4QDeut^{j,k,l,n}; 7 *tefillin* written in a conservative spelling pattern (4QPhyl C, D, E, F, R, S; 4QPhyl 4); and several rewritten Bible compositions: 11QT^a, 4Q252, GenApocr, 4QTest.⁵⁴ In addition, there are 20 texts that could reflect either MT or SP; in the past I included them with MT⁵⁵ but I now realize that they cannot be included in any statistics.

⁵³ See the studies quoted in n. 8 as well as my study "Some Thoughts about the Diffusion of Biblical Manuscripts in Antiquity," in *Transmission of Traditions and Production of Texts* (ed. S. Metso et al.; STDJ 92; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 151–72.

⁵⁴ I do not include a group of *tefillin* that is equally close to the LXX-SP text but written in the Qumran Scribal Practice: 4QPhyl A, B, G-H-I, J-K, L-N, O, P, Q.

⁵⁵ Tov, *TCHB*, 108.

Stemma

A description of the features of the textual branches of the Torah allows us to better understand the relationship between them and to compose a genealogical tree (*stemma*) that displays these relations graphically. This stemma pertains only to the Torah and is based especially on the presence or absence of harmonizing readings. At the top of the stemma⁵⁶ stands the source that displays fewer secondary features than the other texts, the block of MT (I). The texts of the second block (II), recognized chiefly by the presence of secondary elements, especially harmonizations,⁵⁷ derived from the first block because the majority of the texts overlap. The second block contains popular and facilitating texts, and their characterization is the topic of a future study.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ A different type of stemma was presented by A. Lange, *Handbuch der Textfunde vom Toten Meer, I: Die Handschriften biblischer Bücher von Qumran und den anderen Fundorten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 173. Among the leading ideas of that stemma that differ from my reconstruction are: 1) LXX preceded MT; 2) SP preceded MT; 3) 4QDeut^a is positioned near the top of the stemma. Another type of stemma appears in the presentation of Kahle's ideas in a chart in E. Sellin and G. Fohrer, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (10th ed.; Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965), 567, in which the development of the text of the Torah is described as a three-branched tree (MT, LXX, and SP), presenting three text types. This chart illustrates the classical view of both the tripartite division and the character of the textual witnesses that remained standard in the research until the importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls became truly felt. A third type of stemma limited to the text of Exodus has been offered by R. S. Hendel, "Assessing the Text-Critical Theories of the Hebrew Bible after Qumran," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. T. H. Lim and J. J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 281–302.

⁵⁷ Rather unexpectedly, contextual harmonization has become the main criterion for characterizing the texts. Thus already Eshel, "4QDeut^a." The importance of this textual and literary criterion is also stressed much by D. M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 90–98. These harmonizations appear more in the Torah than in the other books, not because those books provide fewer occasions for harmonization, but because the scribes of the Torah scrolls endeavored to create what they considered to be near-perfect copies of the most sacred book of all.

⁵⁸ E. Tov, "From a Popular Jewish LXX-SP Text to Separate Sectarian Texts: Insights from the Dead Scrolls" (forthcoming).

Due to the lack of sufficient information, not all details are worked out in the stemma, such as the relation between the two texts forming group 5. Likewise, the difference between major divisions (“branches”) and minor divisions (“twigs”) is not indicated in the stemma.

There are some practical implications to my theoretical considerations. The praxis of textual criticism involves the comparison of variants, and we know that any source may contain superior readings that are determined by content analysis, including sources that contain mainly secondary readings. But it is important that we now have an explanation as to why in the apparatus of *BHQ* of the Torah or the future apparatus of the *HUBP* we often find the clustering of *LXX-SP-tefillin*-liturgical scrolls, especially in secondary readings, and rarely in primary readings. A theoretical analysis like the present one is important in its own right, but should not be confused with the textual praxis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, when trying to understand the textual situation of the Torah in the Second Temple period, we are faced with a veritable textual plurality that is probably reflected in some ten different textual branches, more than in the other Scripture books. Moving beyond earlier textual theories, I suggest that this plurality should be reduced to a pattern of two tradition blocks, MT and all the other texts. Among these other texts, the (probably Palestinian) block composed of the *LXX*, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the pre-Samaritan scrolls, together with their congeners, are the major component. The *LXX* and *SP* were based on a common textual tradition characterized by harmonizing readings, especially pluses, among them several inappropriate ones (see *Appendix*). This assumption is supported by the binary division of the textual character of the *tefillin* belonging to either the MT or the *LXX-SP* groups. It is further supported by the fact that the MT tradition is quoted only in the rabbinic literature, while the *LXX-SP* block served as the basis for the rewritten Bible compositions. Unlike block II, the MT block remained relatively clean of secondary readings. Among the

biblical and non-biblical texts at Qumran, there is more evidence for block II than for block I.

Appendix

This appendix exemplifies harmonizing pluses in the LXX and SP group. This phenomenon is illustrated by these examples, but not proven by them. It would be hard to provide absolute proof of the existence of any textual feature, because that can be proven best by a conglomeration of examples that are not contradicted by a large number of counterexamples. Examples are provided here of harmonizing pluses in SP when joined by LXX, by the LXX and SP group alone, as well as by the pre-Samaritan scrolls.

Examples of Harmonizing Pluses in LXX and the SP Group

a. SP LXX

Gen 20:14 MT SP LXX (צאן ובקר ועבדים ושפחת) ויקח אבימלך; SP LXX + אלף כסף + (χιλίας δίδραχμα). Based on v. 16 MT SP LXX.

The harmonization in this verse reveals its secondary nature. According to v. 14 MT, Abimelech gave Abraham “sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves,” but according to v. 16 MT SP LXX he told Sarah that he had given him “a thousand pieces of silver.” That monetary unit probably represented the monetary value of the items he had given Abraham according to v. 14.⁵⁹ However, the SP LXX version of v. 14 added this detail from v. 16, and thus according to that version Abraham received twice as much in reparation.

Lev 5:6 MT SP LXX (וכפר עליו הכהן מחטאתו) ונסלח לו; SP LXX + (ἵς ἤμαρτεν, καὶ ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ). Based on v. 10.

⁵⁹ On the other hand, according to H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (HAT; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1902), 197 and J. Skinner, *Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1910), 319, the amount mentioned in v. 16 represents an additional gift.

c. SP

Gen 10:19 MT LXX מצידן באכה גררה עד עזה באכה סדמה ועמרה ואדמה וצבים; SP עד לשע; SP מנהר מצרים עד הנהר הגדול נהר פרת ועד הים האחרון. For the borders of the Canaanites, SP combines Gen 15:18 and Deut 11:24.

Gen 11:31 MT LXX ואת שרי + ואת מלכה + SP; ואת שרי כלתו אשת אברם בנו; SP = v. 29. The plus of SP is based on v. 29, where the two daughters-in-law of Terah are mentioned together. SP could not imagine that Abraham would have left Ur Kasdim with his wife but that Nahor would have left without his wife Milkah, and therefore Milkah was added in the context. However, the position of the plus in SP betrays its secondary nature: MT LXX "Sarai, his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abraham" has been changed in SP to "Sarai and Milkah, his daughters-in-law [note the hybrid form כלותו], the wife of his son Abram and Nahor his sons." The addition of Nahor in SP is equally as secondary as the change of "his son" to "his sons."

Deut 4:49 MT SP ועד ים הערבה; SP + ים המלח + based on 3:17 ועד ים הערבה ים המלח

Deut 11:6 MT SP LXX ואשר עשה לדתן ולאבירם בני אליאב בן ראובן אשר פצתה; SP + = Num 16:32; SP + הארץ את פיה ותבלעם

d. Pre-Samaritan Scrolls

Exod 39:21a ¹⁰ MT 4Q SP LXX] 4QpaleoExod^m + כאשר צוה יהוה + את משה; cf. v. 21b. Beyond v. 21b, where this phrase is found in all sources, it is found eight times elsewhere in chapter 39, more than in any other chapter in Scripture. Exodus 40 (7x) and Leviticus 8 (altogether 6x) come close.

Exod 40:17 בשנה השנית MT 4QExod-Lev^f SP LXX] 4QExod-Lev^f SP LXX + לצאתם ממצרים; cf. 16:1 מארץ מצרים. Cf. also Num 1:1; 9:1.

Num 20:20 לא תעבר MT SP LXX] 4QNum^b + לקראתכה; cf. MT v. 18 לקראתך. The words לא תעבר in v. 20 triggered the addition from v. 18 in 4QNum^b.

Num 22:11 והואה יושב [ממולי] MT SP (LXX)] 4QNum^b + והואה יושב ממלי 5; cf. v. 5 והוא יושב ממלי 5.

Num 22:16 בלק בן צפור MT SP LXX] 4QNum^b + מלך מואב; cf. v. 10 בלק בן צפור מלך מואב.

Num 22:19 וישבו [שרי] מואב + MT SP LXX] 4QNum^b + וישבו שרי מואב עם בלעם 8; cf. v. 8 וישבו שרי מואב עם בלעם.

Num 35:21 מות] LXX 4QNum^b + מות יומת המכה רצח הוא MT SP LXX (θανάτω θανατούσθω ὁ φονευτής). Based on v. 18 מות יומת (θανάτω θανατούσθω ὁ φονευτής). Even though the verdict has already been pronounced in this verse, the plus, which repeats the formulation of v. 18, is tautological.

Tentative Stemma of the Torah Texts

