

Emanuel Tov. *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*. 3rd edition. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015. Pp. xxx + 248. ISBN 978-1575063287. Paperback, \$47.50.

- [1] Emanuel Tov's widely-used tome on the use of the Septuagint in biblical textual studies has entered a new and exciting phase. The third edition of *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research* has been "completely revised and expanded," now published by Eisenbrauns. The major improvements are listed in the preface (xii): (1) theories in chapter 1 have been revised; (2) new sections address the use of electronic tools; (3) case studies have been expanded and implement more English translations (making it more accessible); (4) the LXX and DSS portions have been "completely rewritten"; and finally, (5) sections have been shortened to accommodate the use of Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (3rd ed.). In the end, students and scholars who are interested in how to use the Septuagint in textual criticism will find the volume immensely helpful.
- [2] Chapter 1 introduces "Some Basic Notions," including the basic theories and processes, behind textual criticism, uses of various tools, and identifies the specific characteristics of the LXX (such as "literal" and "free" translations, and how these categories may or may not be legitimate). The section on the meaning of "the original text" was particularly interesting, especially in light of Michael Holmes's discussion of the topic in New Testament textual criticism (see "From 'Original Text' to Initial Text," in Bart Ehrman and Michael Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, 2nd ed. [Leiden: Brill, 2014]). Far from irrelevant, Tov contends that "scholars involved in textual comparisons cannot afford themselves the 'luxury' of not having an opinion on the original text of Hebrew Scripture" (7).
- [3] His own position is largely summarized in the following sentences: "Textual criticism keeps in mind the original text as defined here or a series of determinative (original) texts. This formulation involves the understanding that the original text(s) remain(s) an evasive entity that cannot be reconstructed, although each assumed scribal error requires the determination of original/secondary status" (8). However, Tov later revisits this topic and speaks of it in slightly different terms: "In *individual* instances it is probably legitimate to reconstruct the 'original' reading that is superior to all the other readings. This applies especially to readings that have been corrupted in the course of scribal transmission. In such cases, one indicates as 'original' that reading which was presumably contained in the text, the reconstruction of which is aimed at by textual criticism. A more moderate version of this procedure is often phrased as the search for the reading that, in the most natural way, explains the origin of the other readings, or the reading from which all others developed" (228). Such a highly-nuanced position obviously does not allow for a simple answer to the questions of "what is the 'original text'?" and "should textual critics be seeking such an 'original' text?" Nevertheless, what is certain is that all textual-critics must have decided in their own mind what it is they are after and the extent to which an "original text" must be sought.
- [4] Despite such sophistication, Tov is careful not to exclude instruction about basic textual-critical principles, such as how our language of "emendation" and "correc-

tion” assumes a point of reference. Twice in a short span, in fact, Tov stresses that the “MT is but one witness of the biblical text” (7; see also 5 n. 2). This may remind some readers about similar discourse regarding English Bible translations (e.g., KJV vs. modern translations): what is “missing” may actually have been “added.” At any rate, in navigating the complex history of the LXX, Tov suggests (according to one theory) that “one Greek translation must be presupposed as the base of the manuscripts of most, if not all, the books of the LXX” (11), but on the other hand, “in very few cases can more than one book be ascribed to a given translator” (16). This multidimensional and highly-qualified complexity calls for extreme care in “retroverting”—recreating a “better” or “more original” (my words) Hebrew text based on the Greek LXX. This is, of course, “the ultimate purpose of the textual-critical analysis of the LXX”—to “isolate deviations in that translation that presumably were based on a Hebrew *Vorlage* different from the MT and, accordingly, to reconstruct elements in that *Vorlage*” (18).

- [5] Chapter 2 and 3 tackles the question of when a textual critic may initiate this task of reconstruction. “When analyzing the text-critical value of deviations from MT in the LXX,” Tov notes, “one constantly oscillates between the assumption of inner-Septuagintal factors (exegesis and textual corruption) and underlying Hebrew variants” (48). In other words, the LXX text may not be a good basis to reconstruct the Hebrew text, because the LXX translation was either motivated by exegetical concerns or because the LXX text that we have today is textually corrupt to begin with. Discerning when this is or is not the case is no “pure science.” Indeed, “Much depends on one’s textual judgment, much on one’s linguistic feeling, and even more on the analysis of the translation techniques involved” (66). Tov does not shy away from cases when the *Biblica Hebraica* fails to consistently embody this reality (73–74).
- [6] To complicate matters further, it is noted that “even if a retroverted variant bears all the marks of a well-supported reading, such a reading may never have existed anywhere but in the translator’s mind.... One cannot know whether the mistake was made by the translator who misread his *Vorlage*, or was already found in his Hebrew source” (99). Tov later spends substantial time investigating these “pseudo-variants” (178). Chapter 4 assesses case studies involving all of these variables and the role that vocalization (yet another variable in the mix!) plays in textual variation.
- [7] Chapter 5 contains a large survey of case studies. Most of the studies helpfully include English translations. Readers will find little lack of variation in the examples surveyed. The final part of the book culminates in a fruitful discussion of what can really be known about the source text of the LXX (Chapter 6, “The Nature of the Hebrew Text Underlying the LXX”) and where the current state of affairs in biblical research stands with regard to the whole topic (Chapter 7, “The Evaluation of Retroverted Variants”). The former chapter opens the door for several corrections by Tov. Forceful criticism is directed towards the theory that the post-Pentateuchal books of the LXX have an Alexandrian background. “The default assumption for the post-Pentateuchal books,” remarks Tov, “should be that they were produced in Palestine, and not in Alexandria or any other part of the Jewish Diaspora.... Except for the arguments produced by Albright, no proof has been offered in favor of the assumption that the Hebrew parent text of the LXX is

somehow connected with Egypt” (203, 206). Tov also corrects the faulty language in today’s discussions of the LXX, such as a “septuagintal text-type,” which Tov says is “misleading,” “unrealistic,” and “not on the basis of any evidence” (217). At this point in the discussion, Tov narrates the possible construction of the LXX in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and its connections with the LXX—perhaps one of the more popular topics in contemporary discussions of the role of the LXX. Lastly, Chapter 8 (“The Contribution of the LXX to the Literary Criticism of the Bible”) is a two-page chapter that ends the book.

- [8] In conclusion, the volume is definitely a “handbook.” I have never read a book with so many interspersed bibliographies and excursuses. I wondered at first why there is no bibliography at the end of the volume. But after reading through it, I realized that it was more convenient for readers to divide the material into numerous, topical interchapter lists (some simple and some annotated).
- [9] As much as everyone can praise the advent of various technological revolutions and their service to biblical research, Tov is to be praised for not succumbing to modernist hysteria about the digital, mathematical, mechanical, and systematic conquering of all disciplines and fields of knowledge (including textual-criticism): “To a large extent textual evaluation cannot be bound by any fixed rules,” Tov writes. “It is an art in the full sense of the word, a faculty that can be developed, guided by intuition based on wide experience.... Common sense, rather than textual theories, is the main guide, although abstract rules are sometimes helpful” (232). Indeed, “In modern times, scholars are often reluctant to admit the subjective nature of textual evaluation, and, as a consequence, an attempt is often made, consciously or unconsciously, to create an artificial level of objectivity by the frequent application of abstract rules” (ibid.). One can only hope more scholars will take this wisdom seriously in whatever corner of research they are involved.
- [10] I cannot imagine a student of the Hebrew or Greek First Testament that will not benefit from reading or utilizing Tov’s book. It is a “mountain of scholarship” if there ever was such a thing. Tov confesses that the Septuagintal textual criticism is “a complicated process, and the more one recognizes the problems involved, the more one realizes how hazardous the undertaking is” (18). For however much of an understatement this is, the book’s balance of clarity and depth can hardly be matched in the field of Septuagintal studies, and everyone interested has much to be thankful for.

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