

is reasonable but one wonders why they then describe the twelve disciples as a “politburo” or “central committee,” some members of the crowd as “card-carrying members of the Jesus party,” the aim of millenarianism as the “dictatorship of the peasantry,” Gehenna as “gulag,” the peasantry as “freedom fighters” and their struggle as “class warfare,” and the teaching of the Jesus movement as a “manifesto.”

Perhaps the most contentious element is the description of John’s gospel as “proto-fascist.” The gospel is further compared to Nazism in its use of totalitarian language (John 14:6), the exclusivity of which is based on a form of spiritual (born from above) racism. The expression “the Jews” to designate the gospel’s opponents is also highlighted. But the argument fails to take note of recent debate over this title and its loaded nature in modern usage. “The Judeans,” it is suggested, is a better translation of the title. Furthermore, the criticism of John’s gospel avoids any consideration of its context of composition; here one thinks especially of the apparent dispute over admission to the synagogue (cf. John’s use of ἀποσυνάγωγος) and the problem that this might pose to a religious community that was novel in Roman eyes. John’s gospel appears to be judged by the use to which it was later put.

STEPHEN R. LLEWELYN

EMANUEL TOV, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 4th ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2022). Pp. xlv + 524. Hardcover. US\$90.

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Having “grown up” with the first edition (1992) of Emanuel Tov’s *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, and reviewed both the second (2001) and third (2012) editions, it is a joy to have the opportunity of reviewing Tov’s latest edition. Tov is a model scholar in that he is always re-evaluating his previous views, searching for better ways to understand the evidence.

It is difficult in a review of whatever length to do justice to a work of this scope and importance. Tov has produced quite a different book to previous editions. He spends five pages in the Preface just outlining some of the major changes in the structure in the book and in his understanding of the subject matter (xxi–xxv). One of the most significant differences that he flags is the lessening of focus on the technical details of the various sub-fields of textual criticism, and adding more focus on practical engagement with the texts themselves. This is related to a complete reorganisation of the book, with his Part I: “Hebrew and Translated Scripture: The Texts” presenting the description of the evidence of the main textual witnesses, while his Part II: “Practicing Textual Criticism” introduces the theoretical bases and practicalities of textual criticism. It should be noted that the change of focus does not mean that this edition of the book lacks a detailed introduction to the textual witnesses discussed. In fact, for example,

some sections on aspects of the MT such as the “Extraordinary Points” have more detail than before. This edition retains the volume’s status as an indispensable source of information related to textual criticism. That said, there are places where Tov refers back to the third edition on various points for more detail (e.g., 315 n.80).

Tov’s Part I reflects his recognition that the Masoretic Text (MT), the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, and the Samaritan Pentateuch are more important witnesses to the ancient text of the Hebrew Bible than other ancient sources, such as the Peshitta or the Vulgate (14). After chapters of “Introduction” and “Printed Editions, Translations, and Digital Editions of the Hebrew Text” (chapters 1–2), each of the first four witnesses gets its own chapter (chapters 3, 5, 6, 8) whereas there is one following chapter (chapter 9: Remaining Ancient Primary Translations) which covers the Targumim, Peshitta and Vulgate (the various later Greek revisions are briefly discussed in the chapter on the LXX, and chapter 7 is a general introduction to using the ancient translations in Hebrew Bible textual criticism). These chapters present not only technical information and discussion, but also give detailed examples of sample texts with commentary on their text critical significance, both at various points of the discussion, and also in special sections, see: the “Sample Texts from Qumran” (138–66); “Sample Text: Exodus 21 in the Samaritan Pentateuch” (198–201); “Literary evidence preserved in the LXX” (232–53). These give an invaluable chance to watch a master text critic at work as he discusses and evaluates textual variations.

One greatly expanded section of this edition is Tov’s new chapter 4, “Passages in the Masoretic Text in Parallel Transmission” which is 22 pages long (87–108) compared to just six in the third edition on this subject (12–17). Parallel passages in the MT show that one does not need to head to other Bible versions to get the full range of phenomena of textual variation: “textual transmission features are visible through the comparison of inner-Masoretic parallels” (105). This chapter would be enriched by taking note of the work we have done on linguistic variation in parallel passages.<sup>1</sup>

Tov’s Part II is entitled “Practicing Textual Criticism” (although as we have seen, there is much that is “practical” in Part I). chapter 10 deals with the

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<sup>1</sup> See especially: Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach*, SBLANEM 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 145–69, 413–52; Ian Young, “Ancient Hebrew Without Authors,” *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 972–1003; cf., Ian Young, “‘Loose’ Language in 1QIsa<sup>a</sup>,” in *Keter Shem Tov: Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Alan Crown*, ed. Shani Tzoref and Ian Young; Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts 20 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2013), 89–112 (107–11), and beyond language: Ian Young, “Literature As Flexible Communication: Variety in Hebrew Biblical Texts,” in *Registers and Modes of Communication in the Ancient Near East: Getting the Message Across*, ed. Kyle H. Keimer and Gillan Davis (London: Routledge, 2018), 156–73.

preliminary questions of “Copying and Transmitting the Biblical Texts,” which includes topics such as the division of the Bible into verses and sections, scribal corrections, spelling practices, types of scribal errors, intentional changes, etc. Chapter 11 is “Textual and Literary Criticism Combined,” discussing the topic of different literary editions of biblical compositions. Chapter 12 covers “Shape(s) and Development of the Early Texts of the Bible.” Here Tov gives his new thoughts on the topic, as well as other topics such as the existence of scribal groups. After these chapters of more general theoretical discussions, chapter 13 is “Practicing Textual Criticism.” Here Tov reiterates his well-known position that “textual evaluation is an art” with common sense as the main guide (400), and makes important arguments that many textual variations cannot be evaluated for textual priority: “Is a textual decision possible under all circumstances? No” (405). Chapter 14 covers “Scholarly Text Editions,” including discussion of the *Biblia Hebraica* series, the Hebrew University Bible, and the Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition. Chapter 15 is the “Appendix: Hebrew Bible Textual Criticism Compared with the Textual Criticism of Other Literatures,” which, as Tov notes, is not regularly done beyond the New Testament. Chapter 16 gives “Suggestions for Exercises,” an innovation of this edition. These 41 activities allow students to gain practical experience dealing with many of the topics covered in the book. The volume finishes with a helpful “Glossary,” indices, and a selection of images that aid visualization of various aspects of the book, e.g., “Illustration 1. Annotated sample column of a Qumran scroll.”

With a work of this scope, all scholars will find points with which they disagree. I am sure that Tov would find this disagreement healthy and productive since he himself is often, as mentioned, at the forefront of refining his own conclusions. As an example of some topics where I hope Tov will continue to develop his thoughts, I mention three.

This edition has pleasing references to Person and Carr on the topic of textual criticism and orality, which were not there in edition 3 (337–38, cf., 439–40). Nevertheless, I would hope that in his future thinking Tov would take more seriously the idea that the variety of written texts that we have are multiple instantiations of the community’s oral traditions, and that therefore, the essential nature of such texts is always pluriformity.<sup>2</sup>

I remain unconvinced of Tov’s socio-religious explanation of the striking contrast between the variety of types of biblical texts from Qumran and the strictly proto-Masoretic texts found at Masada, Murabba‘at, etc. This distinction is even more obvious since Tov has moved from describing 60% (or 80% when

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<sup>2</sup> For some of my work in this vein, see: Ian Young, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible: The View from Qumran Samuel,” *ABR* 62 (2014): 14–30; Ian Young, “The Original Problem: The Old Greek and the Masoretic Text of Daniel Chapter 5,” in *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, ed. Raymond F. Person, Jr. and Robert Rezetko; SBLAIL 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 271–301; Young, “Literature As Flexible Communication.”

adding “Qumran Practice Scrolls”) of the Qumran scrolls as “proto-Masoretic” in his first edition (114–15) to now saying: “Thus, for Qumran, the overall preponderance of the LXX-SP block in the Torah, the nonaligned texts in the other books, and the almost absence of the proto-MT text from both segments is evident” (136). Tov proposes that the proto-MT texts were “the text of the central organized group of prerabbinic Judaism” (73) and “With the exception of the community that espoused the proto-MT, textual variety characterized the entire community of ancient Israel including the Qumran settlement” (367, cf., 65, 79, etc). Even granting the connection of the proto-MT with just one group, is it plausible that this group forbade any of the other supposedly widespread types of texts from even being brought to the other Judean desert sites?<sup>3</sup>

Finally, I hope that Tov might see how the textual variety he knows so well problematises the identification of the “Late Biblical Hebrew” features that he mentions at various points (76 n.76; 89; 96; 101–03 etc; with references to the very old works of Kropat, Kutscher and Polzin). Even study of the parallel passages in the MT shows that ancient scribes were not at all interested in preserving the non-basic linguistic forms of the compositions they copied.<sup>4</sup> For ancient Hebrew we lack a significant corpus of dated and localized linguistic evidence. Instead, the majority of our evidence is found in late, multiply-copied literary manuscripts. This means therefore that we lack enough reference points to be able to untangle what might be earlier or later linguistic forms evidenced in these manuscripts.

Given the fundamental importance that understanding the history of the biblical text has for all aspects of Biblical Studies, engagement with Tov’s rich, and well-thought through, presentation of the field of which he is a master, is essential reading for everyone engaged in academic study of the Bible.

IAN YOUNG  
Australian Catholic University

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<sup>3</sup> My own solution is chronological, involving some “heretical” views on Qumran, and therefore has made almost zero impact on the scholarly debate. See Ian Young, “The Stabilization of the Biblical Text in the Light of Qumran and Masada: A Challenge for Conventional Qumran Chronology?” *DSD* 9 (2002): 364–90; Ian Young, “The Biblical Scrolls from Qumran and the Masoretic Text: A Statistical Approach,” in *Feasts and Fasts. A Festschrift in Honour of Alan David Crown*. ed. Marianne Dacy, Jennifer Dowling and Suzanne Faigan; Mandelbaum Studies in Judaica 11 (Sydney: Mandelbaum Publishing, University of Sydney, 2005), 81–139; Ian Young, “The Contrast Between The Qumran And Masada Biblical Scrolls In The Light Of New Data: A Note In Light Of The Alan Crown Festschrift,” in *Keter Shem Tov: Collected Essays on the Dead Sea Scrolls in Memory of Alan Crown*, ed. Shani Tzoref and Ian Young (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2013), 113–19.

<sup>4</sup> See the references in note 1.