

Elvira Martín-Contreras /
Lorena Miralles-Maciá (eds.)

The Text of the Hebrew Bible

From the Rabbis to the Masoretes



Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

V&R Academic

Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements

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Volume 13

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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;
detailed bibliographic data available online: <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-525-55064-9

ISBN 978-3-647-55064-0 (E-book)

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht LLC, Bristol, CT, U.S.A.

www.v-r.de

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Cover image: Design by Jorge Morales-de Castro

Printing and binding: CPI buchbuecher.de GmbH, Birkach

Printed in Germany

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List of Abbreviations

1. Journals, periodicals, major reference works, and series

AB	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AJEC	<i>Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity</i>
ANES SS	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Studies Supplement Series</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BZAW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CBET	<i>Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DJD	<i>Discoveries in the Judaean Desert</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
EDSS	<i>Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls</i>
EncJud	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>
FBBS	<i>Facet Books, Biblical Series</i>
FRLANT	<i>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des AT und NT</i>
HALAT	<i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament</i>
HdO	<i>Handbuch der Orientalistik</i>
HS	<i>Hebrew Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBQ	<i>Jewish Bible Quarterly</i>
JBR	<i>Journal of Bible and Religion</i>
JCP	<i>Jewish and Christian Perspectives</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JPS	<i>Jewish Publication Society</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>

JQR NS	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review New Supplements</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	<i>Supplements to The Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS n.s.	<i>Journal of Theological Studies New Series</i>
MEAH	<i>Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos</i>
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
OBO	<i>Orbis biblicus et orientalis</i>
OTL	<i>Old Testament Library</i>
OTS	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
QHBT	<i>Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
SOTSM	<i>Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series</i>
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
Sub. Bi.	<i>Subsidia biblica</i>
TCAAS	<i>Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences</i>
TLQ	<i>Temple Law Quarterly</i>
TSAJ	<i>Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
WUNT	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
YOS	<i>Yale Oriental Series</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

2. Bible Texts, Versions

BH ³	Biblia Hebraica, eds. R. Kittel – P. Kahle
BHQ	Biblia Hebraica Quinta
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OG	Old Greek
Pes	Peshittā
RSV	Revised Standard Version

3. Hebrew Bible

Gen	Genesis
Exod	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deut	Deuteronomy
Josh	Joshua
Judg	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1 – 2 Sam	1 – 2 Samuel
1 – 2 Kgs	1 – 2 Kings
1 – 2 Chr	1 – 2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Esth	Esther
Job	Job
Ps/Pss	Psalm/Psalms
Prov	Proverbs
Qoh	Qoheleth
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Ezek	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniel
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad	Obadiah
Jonah	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zeph	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zech	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

4. New Testament

Matt Matthew

Mark Mark

5. Apocrypha and Septuagint

1 – 2 Esd 1 – 2 Esdras

1 – 2 Macc 1 – 2 Maccabees

6. Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud

m. Mishnah
 t. Tosefta
 b. Babylonian Talmud
 y. Jerusalem Talmud

Abot 'Abot
 Arak 'Arakhin
 AZ 'Abodah Zarah
 Ber Berakhot
 BQ Baba Qamma
 Erub 'Erubin
 Git Giṭṭin
 Hul Ḥullin
 Ket Ketubbot
 Mak Makkot
 Makhsh Makhshirin
 Meg Megillah
 Men Menahot
 Mid Middot
 Naz Nazir
 Pes Pesahim
 Qid Qiddushin
 RH Rosh Hashanah
 Sanh Sanhedrin
 Shab Shabbat
 Sheq Sheqalim
 Sot Soṭah

Suk	Sukkah
Taan	Ta'anit
Tam	Tamid
Tem	Temurah
Yad	Yadayim
Yeb	Yebamot
Yoma	Yoma
Zab	Zabim
Zeb	Zebaḥim
Soph	Sopherim

7. Other Rabbinic Works

ARN	'Abot de Rabbi Nathan
GenR	Genesis Rabbah
LamR	Lamentations
LevR	Leviticus Rabbah
Mek	Mekhilta
MidrPss	Midrash to Psalms
NumR	Numbers Rabbah
PesRab	Pesiqta Rabbati
PRK	Pesiqta de Rab Kahana
QohR	Qoheleth Rabbah
RuthR	Ruth Rabbah
Sifra	Sifra
SifreDeut	Sifre Deuteronomy
SifreNum	Sifre Numbers
SongR	Song Rabbah

8. Targumic Texts

SamTg	Samaritan Targum
TgJon	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TgOnq	Targum Onqelos

9. Josephus

Ag. Ap. *Against Apion*

Ant. *Jewish Antiquities*

War *Jewish War*

10. General Abbreviations

<i>ca.</i>	circa
chp	chapter
e. g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
f./ff.	and the following
<i>id.</i>	<i>idem</i> , the same
K	<i>ketiv</i>
L	Ms Leningrad
LXX	Septuagint
Ms/s	Manuscript/s
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
<i>passim</i>	here and there
pl.	plural
Q	<i>qere</i>
Sam. Pent.	Samaritan Pentateuch
sg.	singular
Tg	Targum
v./vv.	verse/s
vs.	versus
Vulg	Vulgata

Preface

Many questions shrouding the history of how the Hebrew Bible text was fixed and transmitted have not yet been answered. In spite of the various working hypotheses, some major issues still remain unsettled and new ones have also emerged. In recent years, the project “The Role of Rabbinic Literature in the Textual Transmission of the Hebrew Bible” (Ref.: HUM2007–60109 and Ref.: FFI2011–22888) within the R&D Programme of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICCIN), has focused on some of these questions, attempting to illuminate the processes involved in that history.

Aware that the history of the Hebrew Bible text is studied in different areas (textual criticism and Rabbinic and Masoretic studies) and has traditionally been researched according to diverse periods and following different methodologies, and having identified some of the problems resulting from the lack of ‘interrelation’ in this field, one of the purposes of this project is to lay the foundation for the creation of an adequate space for dialogue among scholars devoted to the history of the Hebrew Bible text in various research areas. Indeed, as a contribution to this dialogue, the international symposium “Fixing, Transmitting and Preserving: Early Jewish and Rabbinic Literature in the History of the Hebrew Bible,” held in Madrid on 20–21 September 2010 was organised within the framework of this project.

To encourage free-flowing and fruitful dialogue in that symposium, some questions were formulated beforehand and categorised into three areas:

1) Rabbinic literature and fixing the Bible text

Who were the *sopherim* (scribes)? Were they the editors of ancient texts who aimed to standardise the written form of the Bible text? Did they carry out textual criticism work? What relationship existed between the *sopherim* and the Rabbis?

2) Rabbinic literature and transmitting the Bible text

What were the methods and mechanisms of textual transmission? What role did the Rabbis play in the transmission process? How can Rabbinic literature be used to study the textual history of the Hebrew Bible?

3) Rabbinic literature and preserving the Bible text

What is the relationship between Rabbinic literature and the Masorah? What is the function of pre-masoretic notes in Rabbinic literature? What is the history of the Masorah? Was the transmission oral or written? Did the Masorah really appear five centuries after the Bible text was fixed?

This book, *The Text of the Hebrew Bible from the Rabbis to the Masoretes*, offers some attempts to answer these questions. In addition to the works presented by most of the authors who took part in the symposium, the decision was taken to include other contributions developed in different contexts in order to enrich the discussion about the history of the Hebrew Bible text. Even so, it was unfortunately impossible to include each and every one of the potential proposals in this debate in only one volume.

The book is divided into two sections. The first, which focuses on the preservation and transmission of the Hebrew Bible, includes studies by Emanuel Tov (“The Myth of the Stabilization of the Text of the Hebrew Scripture”), John van Seters (“Did the *Sopherim* Create a Standard Edition of the Hebrew Scriptures?”), Arie van der Kooij (“Standardization or Preservation? Some Comments on the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Josephus and Rabbinic Literature”), Elvira Martín-Contreras (“Rabbinic Ways of Preservation and Transmission of the Biblical Text in the Light of Masoretic Sources”), Günter Stemberger (“Preliminary Notes on Grammar and Orthography in Halakic *Midrashim*: Late Additions?”) and Julio Treballe and Pablo Torrijano (“The Behavior of the Hebrew Medieval Manuscripts and the Vulgate, Aramaic and Syriac Versions of 1–2 Kings vis-à-vis the Masoretic Text and the Greek Version”). The second section consists of different approaches to the study of the text of the Hebrew Bible presented by Nathan Jastram (“The Severus Scroll and Rabbi Meir’s Torah”), Alexander Samely (“Some Literary Features of Midrashic and Masoretic Statements”), Willem F. Smelik (“Targum & Masorah. Does Targum Jonathan Follow the ‘Madinhae’ Readings of *Ketiv-Qere*?”), Lea Himmelfarb (“Does the Tiberian Accentuation System Preserve the Babylonian Accentuation System?”), Yosef Ofer, (“Three Enigmatic Notes from the Babylonian Masorah Comparing the Language of the Hebrew Bible and the Mishnah”) and David Marcus (“The Practical Use of the Masorah for the Elucidation of the Story of Samuel’s Birth”).

Opening the book is the chapter, “Interdisciplinary Perspectives for the Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible: Open Questions”, based on a series of topics, ideas and proposals resulting from the discussions that took place in the international symposium. The editors selected those they considered most innovative and constructive to provide continuity to the debate and future reconsideration of the study of the history of the Bible text. Issues affecting various

discussions or the general field of research took priority, regardless of the specific details of each paper. Although, as mentioned, the ideas suggested provided the starting point, the final product is entirely our responsibility. Its content and structure are our choice, which does not mean it is not arbitrary. To highlight the novelty of the proposals, we decided to classify them with regard to the state of the question. This is presented very briefly with some bibliographical suggestions to provide the interested reader with more information. The aim therefore is not to be exhaustive in the treatment of the subject or bibliography, but simply to offer some guidance instead.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to all the participants at this very thought-provoking symposium, including among them the scientific committee, members of the research project itself, CSIC members and members of the various universities involved that provided such useful suggestions and encouraged us from the early preparation stages of the symposium through to the production of this book. Without their efforts and willingness, the success of the symposium would not have been possible nor would this publication. Finally, we would also like to thank the editors of the Supplements to the *Journal of Ancient Judaism* for accepting the manuscript and giving us the opportunity to present this volume.

The Editors

Elvira Martín-Contreras and Lorena Miralles-Maciá

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives for the Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible: Open Questions

I

The study of the biblical text has been characterized by the multiple approaches that have been used over the years. Since ancient times, the standardization, transmission and preservation of the text have been the fundamental objectives of those who have approached this area of study. Interest in the text of the Bible began in the first centuries of our era, when the Church Fathers compared the biblical Hebrew and the different Greek versions of the text, although it was only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the critical investigation of the textual testimonies emerged as such, with the appearance of the Polyglot Bibles, whose publication in columns allowed for comparison.

This lengthy process, intrinsic to the very history of the text, has stimulated the high degree of specialization that the field of biblical studies currently possesses, compartmentalizing the fields according to their different phases, factors, languages, periods, or simply their interests. In spite of the great advantages of specialization when acquiring a deeper knowledge regarding certain aspects, this specialization itself also implies the taking on an accumulation of deficiencies. Each area of study has created its specific tools and methodologies, giving way to a fragmentation of biblical studies that is too rigid (Septuagintal, Qumranic, Rabbinic, Targumic, and Masoretic, among others). This fragmentation could become detrimental to the development of biblical studies without an adequate interaction between the different areas of study. For this reason, in order to obtain the most advantage from the benefits of this specialization and avoid any problems that could arise, it is necessary to encourage interdisciplinary work and promote venues and channels of communication (publications, congresses and other formats), particularly among areas that are closely related. In this manner, the results of studies carried out in the different areas could be integrated into a broader field of analysis.¹

1 In this sense, we wish to convey the general vision that M. Goodman presents regarding “The

The biblical text presents numerous complications due to its long history, such as: loss of original manuscripts, errors in the copies, confusion of letters and words, deliberate changes, the updating of a text or harmonization; other problems derive from the different versions of the text (MT, LXX, etc.). Added to these problems are the difficulties that confront textual criticism itself and the further sciences implied in the study of the biblical text.

From this perspective, we wish to make known some of the questions relating to the biblical text that continue to be problematic, and we will present some proposals arising from the exchange of information and results gathered from among specialists in the different fields that are involved in this book: textual criticism, rabbinic studies and Masoretic studies. The subjects that are proposed are centered on the questions that have directly influenced the understanding and study of the standardization, transmission and preservation of the biblical text, and that are derived from work that has been carried out in the symposium.

II

One relevant question in the framework of the textual criticism of the Hebrew biblical text concerns the terminology employed. The fact that several articles in this book deal with the suitability of some of the concepts most employed in this field,² as well as the numerous references to terminology, in the form of clarifications and qualifications that took place in the symposium's debates, points to the necessity of once again taking up the terminological debate from the Seventies of the past century. Since that time, the lack of definition, vagueness and ambiguity of this terminology has been pointed out, and there have been some attempts at offering alternatives that would resolve some of the problems that derive from this issue.

One of the main problems has been the creation of specific terminology that is applicable to the texts. Thus, David W. Gooding,³ upon analyzing the work of Frank M. Cross, in which he develops upon his theory of local texts,⁴ demon-

Nature of Jewish Studies" (in *id.* [ed.], *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002], 1–13) to biblical studies and particularly its related fields (textual criticism, Rabbinic literature, the Masorah, etc.). In that work, Goodman sets out the situation of the interdisciplinarity of the Jewish studies, dealing with the division of the areas of study and a certain isolation of these studies from each other. In response to the question, "Where should the subject go in the future?," he advocates taking advantage of the diversity and making room at the same time for what he calls "cross-disciplinarity."

2 E.g. see the contributions of E. Tov. and A. van der Kooij in this book.

3 D. W. Gooding, "An Appeal for a Stricter Terminology in the Textual Criticism of the Old Testament," *JSS* 21 (1976), 15–25.

4 F. M. Cross, "The Evolution of a Theory of Local Texts," in F. M. Cross and S. Talmon (eds.),

strates that the terminology employed in the textual criticism of the OT was unnecessarily vague. He points out, among other things, the lack of distinction between ‘text-type’ and ‘family.’ Emanuel Tov also joins this debate with his own analysis, pointing out the interchangeable use of terms such as ‘family’ and ‘recension,’ which caused him to propose an “uncompromising term for the textual witnesses, they should be called text.”⁵ The work of the former was subsequently addressed by James R. Davila,⁶ who, in spite of criticism, did not propose any other option.

Other researchers, dedicated to the field of Qumranic studies, have noted the importance of establishing adequate terminology.⁷ Among them, it is necessary to mention Eugene C. Ulrich, who has touched upon this subject on several occasions. In the first place, recognizing that we are only “in a position to propose tentative terms” due to the difficulty entailed, he proposes, with his corresponding definition, the terms and categories ‘text family,’ ‘text type,’ ‘text tradition,’ and ‘text group.’ In order to test their application to textual data, Ulrich presented as an example the analysis of the two longest manuscripts of Daniel that are found in the Qumran.⁸ More recently, Ulrich has dealt with the categories into which the Scriptural scrolls of Qumran are divided.⁹ While recognizing the pedagogical advantages, for students and non-specialists, of the classifications that had been proposed, he suggests the need for the next step in this field as being to “re-describe the situation in terms appropriate to a first-centuries mentality;” he also points out the anachronism of categories such as ‘Masoretic,’ ‘Proto-Masoretic Text,’ ‘Proto-Rabbinic,’ ‘Pre-Samaritan,’ and proposes, as an alternative, that “the text types for each book be classified according to the successive editions for which we have evidence.” Such terminological debate regarding the Second Temple texts is well underway.¹⁰

Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 306–320.

- 5 E. Tov, “A Modern Textual Outlook Based on the Qumran Scrolls,” *HUCA* 53 (1982), 11–27.
- 6 J. R. Davila, “Text-Type and Terminology: Genesis and Exodus as Text Case,” *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1993), 3–37.
- 7 E.g. P. Flint (*Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* [STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 13–26) dedicates an entire chapter to the problem of adequate terminology, in which he offers a bibliography concerning the previous discussions, terms that require further study, and the definition of the terminology used in this study.
- 8 E. C. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge/Leiden: Eerdmans/Brill, 1999), 94–98.
- 9 E. C. Ulrich, “Clearer Insight into the Development of the Bible – A Gift of the Scrolls,” in A. D. Roitman, L. H. Schiffman and S. Tzoref (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (July 6–8, 2008)* (STDJ 93; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 119–137, esp. 126–130.
- 10 M. Zahn, “Talking about Rewritten Texts: Some Reflections on Terminology,” in H. Hanne von Weissenberg, J. Pakkala, and M. Marttila (eds.), *Changes in Scripture: Rewriting and*

Throughout this debate two fundamental problems can be noted. One of them lies in the adoption of terms employed in the textual criticism of the NT by specialists in the OT. This adoption would not be adequate, due to the great differences that exist between the textual data of both areas.¹¹

The other problem that arises is that the terminology is determined by the theories that try to explain the object or process that is named. This is clearly noticed in the articles of Tov and Arie van der Kooij contained in this book. In those articles, the distinction between ‘standardization’ and ‘stabilization’ has to do with the interpretation that the researchers make of the data to construct these processes or with their ideas regarding them. The nuances that are distinguished when speaking about the history of the text cause them to propose terms such as ‘growing stability’ or ‘process of stabilization,’ emphasizing that it was a progressive process. The same occurs with terms such as ‘proto-Masoretic’ and ‘proto-rabbinic,’ which are used indiscriminately according to the standpoint of those by whom they are applied. In this manner, the vagueness and ambiguity of the concepts, which has been underscored by some researchers, only seems to reflect the actual state of the research in which it is found. How can a process that is explained by means of diverse hypotheses and revised time and again without precision be precisely named?

To a certain extent, the same issue arises with the text models that researchers create and use for the development of the biblical text. In fact, specialists have already pointed out a number of disadvantages concerning this: its abstract and hypothetical nature, due to, among other reasons, the scarcity of textual evidence, a certain amount of ideological baggage, and the difficulty of knowing if the models employed from other literary compositions are adequate parallels for the biblical books.¹² In this manner, then, the need arises to determine what relationship can be established between those models and the biblical texts that have been handed down to us. In order to determine this, it would be very helpful to observe the models of other *corpora* that have undergone a similar process during the same period as that of the biblical texts that we possess. In this manner, perhaps the practice of using more modern texts anachronistically to explain more ancient texts could be avoided.

Interpreting Authoritative Traditions in the Second Temple Period (BZAW 419; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 93–120.

11 For a summary of the issue, see J. R. Adair, Jr., “Old and New in Textual Criticism: Similarities, Differences, and Prospects for Cooperation,” *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 1 (1996). Online: <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v01/Adair1996.html>.

12 M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “The Development of the Hebrew Text of the Bible: Theories and Practice of Textual Criticism,” *VT* 42:2 (1992), 204–213; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2d ed. rev.; Minneapolis/Assen: Fortress Press/Royal Van Gorcum, 2001), 171, 175.

III

The use of rabbinic literature in the field of textual criticism is also not without objections. Some of these objections are due to a lack of knowledge of one of the fundamental and still-open issues in the field of rabbinic studies: the use of this literature as valid historical evidence.

Since the nineteenth century, when the first attempts were made to apply a critical method to the literary production of Classical Judaism, an answer has been sought for this question, allowing for differing tendencies and opinions. Scholars of that century, spearheaded by Isaac Markus Jost, believed without a doubt that the Talmud was a source for history, that of the Jewish people in the rabbinic period. According to the textual and philological ideas of that century, at the end of that era it was concluded that it was necessary to establish the original text in order to obtain the history it contained. Thus it was that the projects of critical publication were begun, and these would continue in the twentieth century under the leadership of great scholars such as J. Epstein, Saul Lieberman or Samuel Rosenthal, who shared this idea. Literary criticism, a new school of thought introduced by J. Frankel at the end of the Seventies of the past century, began to question this idea. His work concerning the Aggadic components of the rabbinic corpus by means of this method led him to affirm that these were “literary constructs with overarching didactic messages,” and therefore, that the rabbinic histories were produced by certain Rabbis for other Rabbis. In his opinion, it was necessary to complete the literary analysis before using those Haggadic histories. The followers of both methods demand that historians wait until their work is completed before beginning to use this literature as historical evidence. During the latter part of the twentieth century, and before finishing the work of resolving the initial question, a new proposal arose as a result of the works of Shamma Friedman and David Weiss Halivni: the editorial process carried out by the anonymous editors (*stammaim*) and primarily centered on the Babylonian Talmud. The impact this editorial process had on how the Talmudic period had been represented until that point drastically changed that portrayal.¹³

In view of this brief presentation, it can be observed that some of the arguments used in the field of textual criticism and based upon rabbinic texts demonstrate that the approach to the rabbinic literature from that field gives us an undeniable historic value without taking any other consideration into ac-

13 For a more extensive explanation concerning this issue, see I. Gafni, “The Modern Study of Rabbinics and Historical Questions: the Tale of the Text,” in R. Bieringer et al. (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (JSJSup 136; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 43–61, and the bibliography noted in that work.

count. Thus, the accounts concerning the archetypical text of the Torah from where the copies were made (e.g. NumR 11:3) or the three rolls kept in the Temple (y. Taan 4:2 68a), the variants of the Severus scroll (GenR 9:5), or the references to the work of the *sopherim* (*tiqqune sopherim*, etc.) are taken to be trustworthy descriptions of what occurred with the biblical text. As a consequence, they are considered to be valid proofs of the activity of textual criticism developed by the *sopherim* and the basis of the theory of an editorial process; in other words, they allow for an explanation of what took place with the biblical text during the eight centuries that date from the defended standardization of the text until the first Tiberian codices that we know of.

Furthermore, within the field of rabbinic studies, the works concerning the validity of the rabbinic literature as historic evidence have led to the questioning of other aspects of this literature, also related to and utilized in the textual criticism of the biblical text, such as: the dating of the traditions contained in the rabbinic texts and the point of view of rabbinic Judaism as unitary and dominant in Palestine after the destruction of the Second Temple.

Up until several decades ago, it was accepted without question that the rabbinic traditions had been transmitted from generation to generation in a reliable manner. The attributions to well-known Rabbis allowed for determining the date in which they had occurred; in the same way, the anonymous texts were considered, in principle, to be very ancient. However, in recent years, it has become particularly important to consider how the traditions contained in the rabbinic literature can be dated, before using these traditions to understand the history and thoughts of the Jewish people in the rabbinic era.¹⁴ This becomes especially necessary if we take into account that one of the arguments employed until now to date the texts, the attribution of some sayings to the names of Rabbis, has been questioned.¹⁵ The reliability of those attributions is doubtful for several reasons: a) the errors in the transmission of names, b) the attribution of the same statements or opinions to different Rabbis depending upon which document is consulted, c) the mention of the paradigmatic histories of the Rabbis as mere examples, for which reason they can be changed. Despite these problems and the difficulty of establishing a methodology that allows for a better dating of the texts, an approximate dating of the rabbinic literature exists. This dating, as

14 See G. Stemberger, "Dating Rabbinic Traditions," in R. Bieringer et al. (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (JSJSup 136; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 79–96.

15 See W. S. Green, "'What's in a Name' – The Problematic of Rabbinic 'Biography,'" *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* 1 (1978), 77–96; D. Kraemer, "On the Reliability of Attributions in the Babylonian Talmud," *HUCA* 60 (1989), 175–190; J. Neusner, "Evaluating the Attributions of Sayings to Named Sages in Rabbinic Literature," *JSJ* 26:1 (1995), 93–111; S. Stern, "Attribution and Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *JJS* (1994), 28–51; *id.*, "The Concept of Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *JJS* (1995), 183–195.

Günter Stemberger argues, should be taken into account when attempting to date the rabbinic traditions.¹⁶ In the same manner, the parallels should be borne in mind, when they exist, without presupposing that these have always been produced at a later date.

Taking into consideration the importance of the dating of the rabbinic texts in order for their correct usage, the need arises to make certain clarifications. These have a bearing on some of the ideas pointed out in the field of textual criticism that are used to describe the status of the biblical text in the first and second centuries based upon the rabbinic texts. Thus, the existence of a ‘master’ copy of the Torah scroll kept in the Temple cannot be spoken of without taking into account that the idea comes from the Babylonian Talmud (b. Ket 106a), that is, from a later point of view, for which reason this should not be used to describe the situation of the first centuries of our age. Arguments that are based upon the names of the Rabbis should also be reviewed, such as the ascribing of copies of the Torah scrolls to Severus and R. Meir and thereby connecting them with the Temple circles, or the use of the exegetic method attributed to R. Aqiba as an indicator of that the biblical text was necessarily standardized in that period already.

On the other hand, the fact that the same rabbinic sources are the only documents that allow us to understand the internal development of this train of thought, has fomented the erroneous idea of what has been identified as “normative Judaism.”¹⁷ The idealized image of a unitary and dominant rabbinic Judaism in Palestine after the destruction of the Temple has been steadily unraveling among historians.¹⁸ Traditionally, the origins of the rabbinic movement were established to be the time immediately following this destruction,

16 “The Mishnah is usually dated to about 200 CE, the Yerushalmi to about 400 CE. There is less agreement regarding the Tosefta and the Halakhic Midrashim, but the majority would place them somewhere between Mishnah and Yerushalmi, probably closer to the Mishnah. The same could be argued regarding some Halakhic Midrashim, above all Sipra. The classical Amoraic Midrashim, Midrash Rabbah on Genesis, Leviticus and Lamentations, and the Pesiqta de-Rab Kahana, are normally dated in the fifth century, and many other Midrashim are thought to fit the time bracket between 400 and 600. As to the Bavli, the traditional dating to about 500 is still maintained by many; a date somewhere after the Islamic conquest seems to be more realistic. And finally we have a group of later Midrashim – e.g. Pirque de-R. Eliezer or Seder Eliyahu Rabbah – which are generally considered to be post-talmudic, late eighth or early ninth century” (Stemberger, “Dating,” 82–83).

17 G. Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (9th ed.; München: C.H. Beck, 2011), 15.

18 C. Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (TSAJ 66; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); J. L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylon Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); H. Lapin, “The Origins and Development of the Rabbinic Movement in the Land of Israel,” in *The Late Roman-rabbinic Period* (vol. 4 of S. T. Katz [ed.], *Cambridge History of Judaism* (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206–229).

based upon the account of the escape of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai to Yavneh and the destruction of the Temple (ARN 4:7–8). This was considered to be the foundational episode of the rabbinic movement, despite the fact that it is only found in relatively later accounts.¹⁹ It would seem to be more appropriate to imagine the Rabbis in Palestine between the year 70 CE and the middle of the fourth century as a small group of religious men with hardly any influence; and the same also took place in Babylon.²⁰ Current studies also maintain that the Rabbis did not have much influence on the Jewish communities of Palestine and Babylon until the Arab Period. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that rabbinic Judaism of the first and second centuries was that which represented Judaism as a whole. For this reason, the texts of other groups that existed in that period must also be taken into account in the study of the history of the biblical text.

Furthermore, other open questions exist within the field of rabbinic studies that make clear the need to revise other arguments employed from the field of textual criticism for the account of the phases of the Hebrew biblical text.

One of these questions has to do with the nature of the rabbinic sources, or the texts themselves. At the end of the decade of the Eighties of the past century, Peter Schäfer presented a series of questions that called into question terms that had been used until that point (such as text, ‘Urtext,’ recension, tradition, citation, redaction, final redaction, work); at the same time, these questions undermined the traditional objectives of searching for the ‘best text’ or creating critical editions of any rabbinic work.²¹ The debate was open, reactions came quickly, and the discussion continues until today.²² Within this debate can be found a relevant aspect referring to implication in the field of textual criticism: the fact that the majority of extant rabbinic manuscripts were produced in the Middle Ages, which is the equivalent of stating that the Medieval authors understood the text, and consequently the need to be careful in its use.²³ The fact

19 See S. J. D. Cohen, “The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism,” *HUCA* 55 (1984), 27–54.

20 “Auch wenn man ein Mehrfaches der namentlich bekannten Rabbinen annimmt, dazu eine grössere Zahl ihrer Schüler, machten sie wohl auch noch in späterer Zeit sicher weit weniger als ein Prozent der jüdischen Bevölkerung aus” (Stemberger, *Das klassische Judentum. Kultur und Geschichte der rabbinischen Zeit* [München: C.H. Beck, 2009], 86).

21 P. Schäfer, “Research Into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis,” *JJS* 37:2 (1986), 139–152.

22 Schäfer’s ideas were refuted by C. Milikowsky, “The Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature,” *JJS* 39:2 (1988), 201–211. Schäfer responded in the article, “Once Again the Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature: An Answer to Chaim Milikowsky,” *JJS* 40:1 (1989), 89–94. See G. Veltri, “From the best Text to the Pragmatic Edition: On Editing Rabbinic Texts,” in R. Bieringer et al. (eds.), *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature* (JSJSup 136; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63–78, esp. 69–70, for the applicability to this subject.

23 M. Beit-Arié, “Transmission of Texts by Scribes and Copyists: Unconscious and Critical

that the texts are much later than the dates established for the process of stabilization and standardization of the biblical text is cause for reflection concerning the usage made of the biblical citations contained in the rabbinic literature as a reflection of that process or earlier stages. On the other hand, it must be assumed that the biblical text that is reflected by the manuscripts is already the MT after having undergone a process of standardization.

Concerning this point, another factor must be taken into account that directly affects the standardization process of the rabbinic literature and consequent use of the biblical text: the task of publishing such fundamental works as the two *talmudim* continued to take place centuries after what is considered to be their official redaction. Furthermore, it would seem that the Talmudic manuscripts were still scarce in the Geonic period.²⁴ When the copies of the Talmud, and mainly that of Babylonia, became more prevalent, the MT would have already been generalized. For this reason, it is difficult to speak of the biblical text of the Rabbis.

To leave out this fact, which has been attempted to be employed as an argument in favor of the existence of variants between the MT and biblical text cited by the Rabbis,²⁵ is to only delve more deeply into the same question: how to assess, then, these variants? Thus, Tov considers them as a reflection of the second phase of the history of the text, from the prior plurality to the stabilization of the same text,²⁶ but it is certain that not much work has been carried out in this vein.²⁷ The most notable attempts form part of the Hebrew University Bible Project. In order to include the variants of rabbinic literature in the second

Interferences,” in P. S. Alexander and A. Samely (eds.), *Artefact and Text: the Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1994), 33–52; I. M. Ta-Shma, “The ‘Open’ Book in Medieval Hebrew Literature: the Problem of Authorized Editions,” in P. S. Alexander and A. Samely (eds.), *Artefact and Text: the Re-Creation of Jewish Literature in Medieval Hebrew* (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1994), 17–42.

24 Possibly due to the cost of the materials, the parchment, and the interest the *geonim* had in not revealing too much of the Talmud, in order to have total control over the tradition; see Stemberger (*Das klassische Judentum*, 251–255) regarding the process of the ‘canonization’ of the tradition.

25 The variants that are found in the Former Prophets are compiled in V. Aptowitzer, *Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur* (4 vols.; Wien: Alfred Holder, 1908; repr. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1970); for the variants found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel see M. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah: The Hebrew University Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995); C. Rabin, S. Talmon and E. Tov (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah: The Hebrew University Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997); M. Goshen-Gottstein and S. Talmon (eds.), *The Book of Ezekiel: The Hebrew University Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2004).

26 E. Tov, *Textual Criticism* (2d ed.), 34–35.

27 For a study of this issue see Y. Maori, “The Text of the Hebrew Bible in Rabbinic Writings in the Light of the Qumran Evidence,” in D. Dimant and U. Rappaport (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Forty Years of Research* (Leiden/Jerusalem: Brill/Magnes Press/Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1992), 283–289.