

M. H. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN and S. TALMON (eds), *The Book of Ezekiel* (The Hebrew University Bible Project). Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2004. lxi, 231, 40\* pp. \$90.00. ISBN 9654931869.

This is the third in the sumptuous and monumental series of the Hebrew University Bible Project, a series which after decades of preparatory research is now coming steadily to fruition. The first volume was Isaiah (1995) and the second Jeremiah (1997).

One of the prime movers of the project, Professor Goshen-Gottstein, sadly died when he and his team had prepared chapters 1-31 of Ezekiel, and this circumstance no doubt explains the longer gap which preceded this volume's appearance.

The basis for this edition of the Hebrew Bible is the Aleppo codex, which is printed as faithfully as possible (for the few minor exceptions to this rule, see p. xvi/15\*) in large and clear type at the head of each page and which is then provided with no less than five types of apparatus underneath. The first presents variants from the ancient versions in Greek, Latin, Aramaic, and Syriac. Many of these are not true textual variants, of course, but may be based on alternative understandings or misunderstandings of the original by the translators, adaptation to contextual or other considerations, and so on. The detailed listings in this apparatus therefore need critical evaluation, some of which is provided later (see below).

The second apparatus presents variants in early Hebrew witnesses such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and in quotations in Rabbinic literature, the third lists variants from the Genizah and a small selection of other medieval manuscripts which it is thought may have preserved some genuine variants (see the discussion by Goshen-Gottstein in *Biblica* 48, 1967, 243-90), and the fourth attends to variations in orthography, vowels, and accents within the Masoretic tradition.

The final apparatus, which is presented in both Hebrew and English in parallel columns, includes in the tersest possible form the editors' comments on the significance of some of the variants listed. (An oddity here is that citations from Greek, Syriac and so on are properly represented in the English column but are translated into Hebrew in the Hebrew column, which arguably forestalls discussion of the problems of retroversion.) My impression here is that things have improved somewhat from the Isaiah volume (with which I am particularly familiar). There, the editors would sometimes add a comment such as 'hardly x', where 'x' represents some scholarly suggestion. Without an intimate knowledge of the secondary literature, it is not always clear what lies behind such an observation; the reader's first reaction is 'but I never thought that anyway'. In the present volume, however, this has been replaced by direct references to the secondary sources, so making the apparatus even more useful to the scholar. A severe weakness in this regard, however, is the failure to take any account of the rich resources furnished by the series of detailed volumes on the textual history of the Hebrew Bible edited by D.

Barthélemy (*Critique textuelle de L'Ancien Testament*, 1982, 1986, 1992). It is to be strongly hoped that this will be rectified as work on the edition proceeds.

Self-evidently, therefore, this is a 'diplomatic' edition of the Hebrew Bible, that is to say, one which faithfully presents the text of an attested original and then all the evidence which is needed for reconstructing a history of that text. It does not privilege the text as printed in terms of text-critical judgments, but works on the basis of secure evidence and makes a clear distinction between what is more and less certain. Furthermore, given the long history of the Biblical text (some 1500 years or more of transmission is represented here), it enables scholars working on different aspects of the text's history to access the material that they need (it will not have escaped notice that the four main apparatuses are in roughly speaking chronological order).

In this regard, this edition may be compared with the standard *Biblia Hebraica* editions, which are based on the Leningrad codex. The current edition, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, while a great improvement on its predecessors, gives far less information in its apparatus, however, and still includes there a much greater proportion of scholarly conjecture as to what the 'original' may have been. It is in turn being reworked in a new edition, *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (only the first fascicule of which has so far appeared), which will move in the direction of HUBP in restricting its apparatus to the reporting of data and in relegating editorial opinion to a form of separate commentary.

These two editions, each based upon one of the two best Masoretic manuscripts, is to be contrasted with the projected so-called *Oxford Hebrew Bible* currently being prepared under the editorship of Ronald Hendel. This is advertised as an eclectic text, that is to say, one where the editor prints his or her best judgment as to what the 'original' Hebrew text may have been. While few would doubt for a moment that the current manuscripts include a greater or lesser number of scribal and other errors which call for correction for certain scholarly purposes, the methodological problems involved in preparing such an edition specifically of the Hebrew Bible raise severe questions as to the lasting value of this new enterprise.

An innovation in the present volume is the provision of an Appendix listing in full where open and closed sections are marked in all the Hebrew textual witnesses collated in the apparatuses. The use of these annotations has become the subject of considerable interest in some quarters of late, so that this development will be found helpful by those with such interests. It should now be possible to reflect on the variations in evidence in a way which has often not been properly considered before. A detailed introduction in both Hebrew and English sets out some of the underlying principles upon which the edition is based as well as explaining in detail how the evidence is recorded. Inevitably with so much material to be presented, there are subtle distinctions between the use of numerous sigla and abbreviations, the full significance of which are not always initially apparent. It will therefore be necessary to have constant recourse to this introduction in order fully to unlock the wealth of information so painstakingly assembled in this magnificent edition.

Christ Church, Oxford

H. G. M. WILLIAMSON