POSSIBILITY AND PROBABILITY OF TEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION:
THE TRANSITION FROM 4QJOSH\(^{1}\), FRG. 2 TO FRG. 3 AND
THE TRANSIT OF THE ISRAELITES THROUGH THE JORDAN

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Ancient texts that have survived only fragmentarily arouse the researcher’s interest. This holds true for two reasons. First, there definitely is an answer, because the fragment was once a complete text. Second, the reconstruction of the fragments might be of interest to ongoing research, because each text has its special value as a connecting link in the long chain of textual tradition.

While methods have been developed for the material reconstruction of fragmentarily preserved texts, there has been very little discussion about the possibilities and limitations of textual reconstruction of those ancient witnesses, or of their value for further argumentation. Quite to the contrary, every researcher seems to find his own way to deal with the problem. Even if this leads to contradictory results, (as was the case with 4Q522, frg. 9), this does not provoke further discussion.\(^{1}\) Where the textual reconstruction as such is discussed, the focus is mainly on its technical and mathematical aspects.\(^{2}\) My interest differs from this approach. This article is dedicated to demonstrating the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of textual reconstruction by using a concrete example.

\(^{1}\) Puech and Qimron independently reconstructed this fragment and interpreted it, on the basis of their reconstruction, in two totally different ways: For Puech in his preliminary edition it was a Midrash on King David, while Qimron read it as a text on Joshua. Cf. É. Puech: “La Pierre de Sion et l’autel des Holocaustes d’après un manuscript hébreux de la Grotte 4 (4Q522),” \textit{RB} 99 (1992) 676–696; E. Qimron: “(52274) יִלְךָ קְרָדָת יִשָּׂא מַעְרָא" (Tarih 63 (1994) 502–508.


\textit{[Textus} 20 (2000) 71–81\textit{]}
The first part of this article will contain general reflections on the method of and criteria for textual reconstruction, as well as on the textual history of the book of Joshua. The second will examine the textual transition from 4QJoshb frg. 2 to frg. 3 and discuss the possibility and probability of the textual reconstruction both from a textual and literary point of view. Finally, I will offer some summarizing remarks on the value and plausibility of the results developed in parts one and two.

I

A. Criteria for Textual Reconstruction

In order to reconstruct the wording of a fragmentarily preserved document the following aids and criteria are available:

1) If parallel texts exist they are of course the main source for the textual reconstruction. For biblical texts, one may consider not only the MT, but also the ancient translations, especially the LXX, and—for the Pentateuch—the Samaritan Pentateuch. It is always possible that the document to be reconstructed shows closer relations to one of the other versions than to the MT.

2) The character of the text, where it is preserved, gives important information about the wording and orthography of the missing parts, for example concerning the spelling or the use of a special terminology.3

3) The material conditions of the fragment(s) in question cannot be neglected. Each proposal for a reconstruction must correspond with the existing (and the missing) remains of the letters. This includes their size and shape, the presence of vacats or indentations, and the length and number of lines in a column.

A crucial point for textual reconstruction that is easily forgotten or neglected is the uniqueness of each single text. Even if textual parallels do exist, one can never exclude the possibility that the text in question differs from this parallel, whether due to errors, material circumstances, or a differing Vorlage.4

3 In this respect the criteria developed by E. Tov are very helpful. Cf. E. Tov, “The Orthography and Language of the Hebrew Scrolls Found at Qumran and the Origin of these Scrolls,” Textus 13 (1986) 31–57.

4 4Q379, frg. 3, col. 1 provides an instructive example. At the end of the first couple of lines in this column, there is a hole in the leather, in the shape of a semi-circle. Obviously, this
Every proposal for a textual reconstruction, even if in each respect it seems to be highly probable, is nothing more than one possibility for the original wording. This is especially true for a text that is reconstructed at length or at crucial passages.

B. The Book of Joshua and the Current Discussion of the Development of the OT Text

The discussion about the textual history of the book of Joshua received an important impetus from the Qumran documents. From the time of their discovery the Hebrew manuscripts of the book of Joshua from Cave 4 have played an important role in the discussion about the relationship between the MT and the LXX of this biblical book. The debate is still far from arriving at a generally accepted solution. The characterization of the 4QJoshua texts by Cross as “presenting the tradition of the Septuagint” was a bit hasty and he has subsequently revised it. His claim that the Qumran discoveries are of great importance to ongoing LXX research nevertheless holds true: “This means that the Septuagint of the historic books must be resurrected as a primary tool of the Old Testament critic.”

hole existed before the text was written. The scribe did his best to arrange the text in the remaining space, but of course, the size of the letters and the number of letter spaces per line differ significantly from the remaining lines in that column. If only the beginning of these lines were preserved one would grant the highest probability to a reconstructed text corresponding to the measurements given in the bottom part of the column. One would never have reconstructed the text as it was actually found.


6 F. M. Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (The Haskell Lectures 1956–1957; New York, 1958) 133. His and Albright’s conviction that 4QJoshv as well as 4QJoshb would correspond to the Vorlage of the LXX resulted from their early examinations of the 4Q material in the 1950s.

7 In the third edition (1995), the idea that the Qumran manuscripts of the books Joshua–2 Kings would correspond to the LXX is not even mentioned. The text-critical value of the LXX text is only stressed for 1–2 Samuel. Cf. F. M. Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran (3rd ed.; Minneapolis, 1995) 132–133.

8 Cross, Ancient Library (1958), 133.
Before the Qumran documents came to light, it seemed possible to draw a complete picture of the textual development of the Hebrew Bible just from the MT, the LXX, and in the case of the Pentateuch, the Samaritan Pentateuch as well. This conviction was supported in the early days of Qumran research by the works of Albright and Cross.\(^9\) It soon became clear, however, that it was not sufficient to insist on three “text types”, consciously developed by three recensions, each with its own special theological and geographical background. This model was much too simple and could not explain the diverse and multiple texts found in the Judaean desert. The latest theories of Tov\(^10\) and Ulrich\(^11\), each claiming multiple texts or rather text-editions, avoid creating a new system or hastily establishing a general ranking of texts. Both of them first attempt to examine the material for each book individually and then, in a second step, find an explanation that fits the observations.

C. The Dilemma of Textual Reconstruction

The reflections on the reconstruction of each fragmentarily preserved text as developed above lead inevitably to a dilemma. In order to reconstruct a text one has to rely on the known textual witnesses, that is the MT, the LXX and possibly the Samaritan Pentateuch. At the same time, one has to bear in mind that the text to be reconstructed may differ from these witnesses more or less significantly. This dilemma is the reason for the hesitation present in any textual reconstruction.


A. Textual Reconstruction of 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b} frgs. 2-3

A total of 6 fragments from 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b} have been preserved. They contain parts of Josh 2; 3-4, and 17.\textsuperscript{12} The script is from the late Hasmonean period. Materially, the fragments are in very poor condition. Due to the small amount of material preserved, a reconstruction of the scroll is not possible. Even the average size of each single letter, as defined by Herbert,\textsuperscript{13} cannot be determined. Frgs. 4-6 are especially (even in the original and in the microfiche edition\textsuperscript{14}) extremely difficult to decipher, because of the leather’s darkness and its damaged surface.

Frg. 6 preserves only a few letters, all of which are difficult to identify. For this reason it can’t be claimed with certainty that this fragment indeed belongs to 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b}.\textsuperscript{15} The more important passages are contained in frgs. 2 and 3, which will now be discussed.

Frg. 2 contains six lines of text from Josh 3:15-4:1, as well as parts of the upper and the right margins. The distance between the lines is 8 mm. Frg. 3 shows the same distance between the lines. Its three lines contain text from Josh 4:1-3. The text preserved on both fragments runs as follows:

Frg. 2:

\begin{verbatim}
1 [ נָשַׁיָּר הָאָדָם נַעֲלֵי בַּכַּעַס ]
2 [ בְּכַנַּי קַעַר רַעַּל וְרָמָּה הַמִּס הָיוּ וְיָדְרֵי מַלְאָךְ ]
3 [ מַאֲרֵד מַאֲרֵד ]
4 [ ]
\end{verbatim}


\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Herbert, Reconstructing, 7-11.


\textsuperscript{15} According to Tov, DJD XIV, 160, the text from col II, [ ]אָלֶין, belongs to Josh 5:4-5. But this is not evident.
The text in frg. 2, l. 5 ends with [יִהוּדָה ב, which has according to MT and LXX, probably to be completed, as [בָּרָאָה יִהוּדָה ב. The following line shows nothing but the upper part of a single letter, which is read by Tov as the ה from הָעַבְרֶנֶת of Josh 4:1. Above this [הָעַבְרֶנֶת] can be read as a supralinear correction. After the ה in l. 6 there is empty leather where parts of the ה and the ה of הָעַבְרֶנֶת should be expected. The remains of the letter do not necessarily point to ה, ה or ה are also possible. On the other hand, however, there is no other possible identification of the letters in question supported by the text of Josh 4:1. They cannot be explained as a secondary addition in the bottom margin of the column because frg. 2 comes from the upper part of the column, a fact that can be proven by the upper margin which is partially preserved.

As a textual base for the reconstruction of these fragments, one can refer to either the MT or the Septuagint. There is no parallel Hebrew text found at Qumran. It can not, of course, be excluded that 4QJosh contained special readings that don’t have any parallels to the extant witnesses.

According to the text preserved in frgs. 2 and 3, they need to be arranged in the same column. This presents some problems with regard to the length of the lines in this column. If frg. 3 is reconstructed according to the MT (see below) the lines

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16 The fragment has suffered further decay since the photo presented in DJD XIV was taken. Currently only the very edge of a letter, which might have been ה, is to be seen before the supralinear correction. At the edge of the fragment the surface is partially missing. Therefore the material conditions don’t contradict the reconstruction as proposed by Tov.

17 In principle, the empty leather at the top of frg. 2 might be a vacat. In this case the vacat would have been before v. 15. This is highly improbale, for vv. 14 and 15 are connected very closely both in terms of syntax and content.
containing 81 and 67 letter spaces, respectively, are very uneven in length. They are also much longer than the lines in frg. 2, which have an average of 53 letterspaces, if reconstructed according to the MT.

Except for the supralinear תטיש (l. 2) in Josh 3:15 and the obvious scribal error at the beginning of l. 3, the text represented in 4QJosh⁶, frg. 2, l. 1–4 corresponds with the MT where MT and LXX differ. Lines 1–6 can therefore be reconstructed:


In the text represented on frg. 3, the deviations between MT and LXX are more serious. It is not evident according to which text the Qumran text can be reconstructed. If reconstructed according to the MT, the text reads:


As already mentioned, this reconstruction is to be rejected because of the differences in the length of the lines. Alternatively, one can reconstruct the text according to the assumed Vorlage of the LXX. Lines of equal length can only be found on the assumption that there has only been one איזי אבר in Josh 4:2. The text of LXX itself does not point in this direction; it is rather common to translate a

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18 Each letter and each space between words is counted as one unit. This method is much less exact compared to that proposed by Herbert, but due to the small quantity of text preserved it is the only practical method.

19 כמות ורגיל המחבר (v. 2) and כמות ורגיל המחבר (v. 3) are not represented in the LXX. Because the LXX of Joshua is generally faithful towards its Vorlage, those words might well have been missing from the Vorlage of the LXX.
double simply by ἐνα ἀνθρακιστῆς. The reconstruction of 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b}, frg. 3 according to the LXX runs as follows:

This too is obviously not the original wording of that fragment; line 3 counts 60 letterspaces and is still longer than the lines of frg. 2.\textsuperscript{21} Additionally, it is very difficult to find an even margin at the beginning of the column.

The text of 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b}, frgs 2 and 3 corresponds neither to the MT nor to the LXX-\textit{Vorlage}. Therefore alternative explanations must be sought for the textual reconstruction of these fragments.

Under the assumption that frgs. 2 and 3 really belong to the same column, and that l. 6 really reads ...הנה as claimed by Tov, one can suggest a homoioteleuton as the cause for the textual difference. In that case, the text from 3:17 to 4:1 would have been missing in 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b}. The MT of Josh 3:17-4:1 illustrates that this could happen rather easily:

The addition of והנה, which must be the subject of the sentence, in 4QJosh\textsuperscript{b}, frg. 2, l. 6 leads to the conclusion that the actual subject was, as found in the MT, not in the Qumran text. Consequently the verb must have been מָלַל instead of מִשָּׁרֲא, with מִשָּׁרֲא (3:17) as the only subject. It would not make any sense to add the singular וַיִּהָדֶשׁ as a subject to a plural verb.


\textsuperscript{21} Tov’s reconstruction of frg. 3 according to the LXX leads to lines whose length corresponds to those of frg. 2, but it is in no way evident why he skips לִאמְרו (l. 1) and (l. 2).
With this hypothesis, the fragments are to be arranged so that the first line of frg. 3 is identical with the last line of frg. 2. This results in lines with 53–57 letter spaces each, if there was actually only one זבחزاد in Josh 4.2. This range is quite small and it is easy to find an even margin at the right of the column.

All differences from the MT, as well as from the LXX, are—directly or indirectly—verified by the text preserved in 4QJosh, or explained by homoioteleuton, which is quite probable due to the multiple repetitions of words in these verses. Such an omission is similarly documented in the LXX tradition.22

B. The Contribution to the Textual History of the Book of Joshua

The text proposed at the transition from 4QJosh frg. 2 to frg. 3 is much shorter than the MT or the LXX-Vorlage. This is not necessarily due to a homoioteleuton. These verses, which are so similar that they can easily be confused, can also be explained by the literary phenomenon of a Wiederaufnahme.

If this is true, one could even suppose that the shorter text might be original. This view finds support by the observation that the MT is extremely redundant and contains, compared with the reconstructed text of 4QJosh, no more information other than that כל הגר had passed through the river.

4QJosh, on the other hand, makes it probable that originally no subject besides ישראל was mentioned, for היהש was added secondarily. In the MT alone, כל הגר was added as a subject, the verb was turned to the plural, and the באחר sentence (as a Wiederaufnahme) was repeated, functioning therefore as an introduction to the following verse.

22 Josh 4:1 קא – '领跑דני | O-576 cII oIII-15 cf-551,761 cII n-54 xz 30 59εγκ 77 84 92 417 509 739.
The idea of a *Wiederaufnahme* in the MT of Josh 4:1 is nothing but a hypothesis, built on a hypothetical reconstruction. Nevertheless I am convinced that it is worth thinking about. The missing דַּלָּל הָבְיָר is especially of interest. This expression as a term for Israel also occurs in the MT of Joshua in 5:6, 8 and in 10:13. At least in ch. 5 it is far from sure that this expression is original. In Josh 5 the term דַּלָּל הָבְיָר emphasizes that indeed the whole people of Israel was circumcised after crossing the Jordan. Israel therefore enters the Promised Land in an irrefutable condition (v. 8). In v. 6 the function of this term is to stress that the whole generation of the Exodus died in the desert because they despised the land that the messengers had spied out.

In the MT, everybody was circumcised when Israel fled from Egypt; a renewed circumcision became necessary after the death of the desert generation. This depiction contradicts the narrative in Num 14. According to this report only those who were older than 20 years would not reach the Promised Land. The LXX, as opposed to the MT, reflects the opinion that the circumcision at the Jordan was necessary because some of the men of Israel had fled Egypt without being circumcised.

In Josh 5 the MT is much longer and more complex than the LXX. If compared from a literary point of view, the MT was obviously revised in order to stress the integrity of the generation occupying the land.23 One element of the revision can be seen in the double insertion of לֶיהָי הָבְיָר. In the case of Josh 5:6 a further proof for the shorter text may be seen in CD XX, 14.24

III

These final reflections on the literary and textual history of the book of Joshua show that the reconstruction of the transition from 4QJosh b frg. 2 to frg. 3 is connected with the problem of the relation of the MT to the LXX, as well as of the


development of the book of Joshua. If the reconstructed text functions as a connecting link in the chain of texts, which finally led to the MT as the final form of the book of Joshua, then this serves as a further argument for the probability of the proposed reconstruction. The reconstruction of the fragmentarily preserved text, on the one hand, and the reflection of its contribution to the history of the text in question on the other, are mutually dependent.

It is important to stress that the reflections on the textual reconstruction I developed above show only that the text in question might well have read as proposed and that such a reconstruction fits well in the overall picture of the textual history of the book of Joshua. It cannot be judged as an independent witness for the text of Josh 3–4.