Repetition Due to Homoeoteleuton

Leeor Gottlieb

Theory

Scholars of textual criticism have long used the term “homoeoteleuton” to describe the omission of textual details originally situated between two identical or similar words or strings of letters. The rationale behind this scribal phenomenon is that after copying the initial similar component, the copyist erroneously continued his source text reading from the second similar component, the inevitable outcome being the omission of all the text in between. Scholars accurately identify the cause of the mistake in the similarity of the two words or word endings, hence the term “homoeoteleuton” (identical ending). What has been taken for granted is the textual result caused by the identical endings. When using the term “homoeoteleuton”, textual critics actually mean “omission due to

* The argument presented in this article is part of an M.A. thesis in preparation under the direction of Prof. E. Tov for the Department of Bible at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Thanks are due to Prof. Tov for his helpful comments and to Professor A. Rofé with whom I have repeatedly discussed the issue addressed here.

Citations from the Septuagint throughout the article are according to the editions of the Göttingen series where available. Citations from Kingdoms are from the editions of Brooke-McLean-Thackeray.

1 Strictly speaking, the field of textual criticism in general may distinguish between three closely related textual phenomena: “homoeoarcton” (identical beginning), “homoeomeson” (identical center) and “homoeoteleuton” (identical ending); cf. J. Willis, Latin Textual Criticism (Chicago, 1972) 113–118. Some scholars refer to all three as “parablepsis” (oversight). The usage here of “homoeoteleuton” is simply due to this being the most common of the three in textual discussions about the Hebrew Bible. For a definition of homoeoteleuton and examples from the Hebrew Bible, see E. Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (2nd ed.; Minneapolis and Assen, 2001) 238–240.

homoeoteleuton” for it is the scribal omission that should be regarded as the textual phenomenon and the identical ending the cause thereof.

This distinction is not just a lexical formality. Had the only potential error to arise out of identical endings of words been omission, the term “homoeoteleuton” could have been used as an abbreviation of the full term, but that is not the case. At least one other type of scribal error can arise due to the identical endings of two words or phrases. This error would be the exact opposite of omission: repetition. Let us consider once more the assumed process of scribal omission due to homoeoteleuton. The copyist raises his eyes from the source text and writes a sequence of letters which we shall call “A₁” in his own copy. Returning to his source text, his eyes erroneously continue reading from a similar sequence, “A₂,” that actually appears later in the text, resulting in the omission of all the letters between “A₁” and the first letter following “A₂.”

The textual comparison of MT Isaiah 38:20–39:1 with its 1QIsa counterpart is a well-known example of omission due to homoeoteleuton. In MT, verses 20 and 22 conclude with the same sequence of letters “בְּיִהוּדָה.” The first appearance shall be designated as A₁, the second as A₂ and the text in between as B₁:²

\[
\begin{align*}
A₁ & \text{היהוּדָה יְהוָהַלְוָאֹרָיִם לֶאֱלֹהִיםֵי נָגִיתָהּ נְגוֹיָהִים רָאִים} \text{על דָּוְאִים} \\
B₁ & \text{ןָוָא רָאִים יְהוָהַלְוָאֹרָיִם לֶאֱלֹהִיםֵי נָגִיתָהּ נְגוֹיָהִים רָאִים} \text{עֶלְּדֹא} \text{אָנָּאָה} \text{נָוָא} \text{יָהָה} \\
A₂ & \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָן כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְn}
\end{align*}
\]

In 1QIsa (plate XXXII, lines 13–15) all the words between A₁ and “בְּיִהוּדָה” which follows A₂ in MT are absent:

\[
\begin{align*}
A₁ & \text{רָאִים יְהוָהַלְוָאֹרָיִם לֶאֱלֹהִיםֵי נָגִיתָהּ נְגוֹיָהִים רָאִים} \text{על דָּוְאִים} \\
B₁ & \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְנָה} \text{כִּתְn}
\end{align*}
\]

² “A” stretches are underlined throughout the article by a straight line and “B” stretches are marked with an oblique line.
It seems that the scribe wrote $A_1$ in his scroll, returned to his source text and confused $A_2$ for $A_1$, resulting in the omission of all the words in between ($B_1+A_2$). In this particular example we can almost witness the scribal process, for a later hand detected this scribe’s mistake and added the missing words in the remainder of the line and in the margin of the column.

Now let us consider the reverse scenario as well. In a text with similar characteristics, namely one containing two similar stretches of letters, it is conceivable that having copied “$A_2$”, a scribe might return to his source text and erroneously proceed to copy from the earlier “$A_1$”. The inevitable outcome would be repetition of the “$B$” stretch and the second “$A$” stretch, resulting in three “$A$” stretches and two “$B$” stretches ($A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2+A_3$). This occurrence shall be designated as repetition due to homoeoteleuton, for this type of repetition is caused by the same textual features that lead to omission due to homoeoteleuton. This can be illustrated by the following example:\footnote{1Q5 VI, 4–6. This example was presented in R. Weiss, “A Peculiar Textual Phenomenon,” Textus 18 (1995) 27–32; trans. of a Hebrew article that appeared two decades earlier in זוכרי ישראלי: Studies in Bible Dedicated to the Memory of Israel and Zvi Broide (ed. J. Licht and G. Brin; Tel Aviv, 1976) 93–96. On Weiss’ contribution to this subject, see below pp. 27–28.}

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{וזהו כי ערכו השולחן לאכלה ואת המיתוך לשמחת המ suce...} & B_1 & A_1 & A_3 & B_2 & A_2
\\
\text{וא המיתוך לשמחת המ suce... וברוחו בברך בראותיו המלכים...} & \text{וזהו עדשה אחר נשמה המלך.}
\end{array}
\]

Stretches “$B_2$” and “$A_3$” are contextually uncalled for and are clearly a repetition of stretches “$B_1$” and “$A_2$”, the impetus for which is the presence of the identical “$A_1$” and “$A_2$” stretches.

However, an important distinction must be drawn here between omission and repetition. While omission due to homoeoteleuton must necessarily result in the absence of $B_1 + A_2$, the outcome of repetition need not necessarily be uniform in every case. Although the expected result would
be, as above, a text that includes a second “B” stretch and a third “A” stretch \((=A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2+A_3)\), henceforth denoted as complete repetition), in many cases it seems that the process of repetition was discontinued before it reached completion. Incomplete repetition denotes cases where the text cuts off at any point between the beginning of \(B_2\) and the end of \(A_3\), whether the cessation occurs anywhere within the second “B” stretch (henceforth designated as \(B_2^-\), therefore yielding a sequence of \(A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2\), immediately after the second “B” stretch \((A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2)\), or within the third “A” stretch \((A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2+A_3^-)\). The following example,\(^5\) in 2 Samuel 6:3-4, illustrates a sequence of \(A_1+B_1+A_2+B_2^-\).

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Note that the Septuagint does not record the “B₂-” stretch:} \\
\text{LXX:} καὶ ἐπεβίβασεν τὴν κιβωτὸν κυρίου ἐφ' ἀμαξαν καὶ πνημὸν καὶ ἔπεαν αὐτὴν \\
\text{ἐξ οἴκου Αμινάδαβ τοῦ ἐν τῷ βουνῷ καὶ Ὀζὰ καὶ οἱ ἄδελφοι αὐτοῦ νῦν} \\
\text{Αμινάδαβ ἦγεν τὴν ἀμαξαν.} \text{σὺν τῇ κιβωτῷ καὶ οἱ ἄδελφοι αὐτοῦ} \\
\text{ἐπορεύοντο ἐμπροσθεν τῆς κιβωτοῦ}
\end{array}
\]

The Greek reading points to a Hebrew Vorlage which did not contain the repetitive elements, let alone the lack of agreement in the use of the definite article between the noun \(κιβώτιο\) and its modifying adjective \(ῥυθμός\).\(^6\) Why was

\(^4\) The latter sequence is presented here only as a theoretical possibility, for which I do not have examples at the present time.

\(^5\) Also brought by Weiss, “A Peculiar Textual Phenomenon,” without the comparison to the LXX.

\(^6\) A lack of agreement which led Gesenius to omit the modifying adjective. Cf. GKC §126z.
the repetition discontinued in this and in other cases? One possibility would be that the scribe recognized his error midway and therefore deliberately discontinued his erroneous repetition at the point of this realization. If this is correct, the consequential text that was later passed down through other scribes included words that, at least at the time of their initial writing, were recognized as mistakes.

Is such a text feasible? If a scribe detected his own error, would he not make an effort to repair the text and erase the excess text from his copy? The solution for this obvious difficulty may be discerned from the knowledge available today about the correction procedures prevalent in the texts from the Judean Desert, texts that serve as a prism to the scribal practices of the Second Temple period in general, especially those corroborated by rabbinic literature as well. It may be shown from E. Tov's extensive description of the various methods of correction in the Judean Desert texts,7 that although the scraping of erroneous letters with a sharp instrument or their expunging with liquid was practiced in these writings, more frequent correction procedures were those that did not physically remove the erroneous letters from the scroll or render them indecipherable. These latter procedures include cancellation dots above erroneous letters, enclosure of words between parentheses and others. While these measures were presumably intended to be accepted cancellation symbols for later scribes as well as for readers, there is no certainty that these methods achieved their intended goal in all cases. If a later scribe did not know what the symbols meant or if he had inhibitions about changing the text he had before him, he might transmit the erroneous text into his copy, either without the symbols or including them (as most probably occurred with the several puncta extraordinaria to be found throughout the MT).

By way of this explanation we may better understand how incomplete repetition came into being. These cases reflect recognized mistakes that, even if initially marked as such, survived and eventually achieved an equal status as that of the initial text. The same may be said, of course, about cases of complete repetition that may have been detected and marked.

Method

Examples of repetition due to homoeoteleuton are scattered throughout the corpus of MT. Their approximate number may only be determined after a full systematic study geared to this end is carried out on the entire Bible. A computerized survey would, no doubt, be of great assistance for a study of this kind, but this is beyond the present aim of this article. The cases brought here serve as a preliminary group of examples, collated together in order to illustrate and help define the textual phenomenon of repetition due to homoeoteleuton.

All examples from MT, after being initially identified as redundant and contextually awkward, were compared with the relevant extant textual witnesses. First and foremost among these was the Septuagint that showed in most cases that the suspected Hebrew repetition lacked a Greek counterpart. In these cases, the LXX recorded just the first two "A" stretches with one "B" stretch in between \((A_1+B_1+A_2)\). This, of course, corroborates the secondary nature of the repetitions in MT, but the existence of such confirmations is not compulsory. Where textual and contextual indications point in the direction of repetition due to homoeoteleuton, even

---

8 This presumed process is somewhat similar to the assimilation process of textual doublets. In the initial stage, text was added into a scroll, sometimes in the margin or between lines. In a later stage the added text penetrated into the running text, not instead of a prior reading but rather by its side. Cf. S. Talmon, "Double Readings in the Massoretic Text," *Textus* 1 (1960) 144-184.

9 Most of the examples presented below feature comparisons to the LXX in which the various "A" and "B" stretches have been marked in both texts in order to illustrate discrepancies.
when all extant witnesses support the repetition, one may assume that the repetition was introduced at a very early stage, prior to the textual divergence of the various ancient versions.

Some examples identified here as repetition due to homoeoteleuton have eluded scholars. Others, even when some form of repetition was detected in them, were laconically termed "dittography." R. Weiss, conversely, essentially recognized the phenomenon at hand and classified it as a nameless rare textual error. He correctly evaluated the error as "the reverse of the homoeoteleuton, and much less common," meaning to say that the textual error in question, like the accepted (omission due to) homoeoteleuton, stems from the similarity of two words in the source text. Surprisingly enough, Weiss' illuminating examples were not corroborated by comparison with the Septuagint even though two out of three of his biblical examples would have been greatly strengthened by such a comparison.

Not all the examples presented below call for lengthy explanations. The reader is requested to focus principally on the Hebrew and Greek texts, along with the underlined markings of "A" and "B" stretches. Additional

10 While dittography indeed defines the mechanical scribal repetition of letters or words, this term should not be applied when the repetition is caused by similarity of letters or words. Precision would have us regard dittography as an error of the mind, the unwarranted duplication of letters or words not owing to any specific feature in the copied text, whereas repetition due to homoeoteleuton is an error caused by textual similarity. The relation between dittography and repetition due to homoeoteleuton, as proposed here, is precisely that of haplography and omission due to homoeoteleuton. Undoubtedly every omission due to homoeoteleuton is a type of haplography in the literal sense of the word, but almost all scholars distinguish between the two due to the different causes of error. For the same reason one should distinguish between dittography and repetition due to homoeoteleuton.

11 R. Weiss, "A Peculiar Textual Phenomenon." Although Weiss seems to be the first to try to define the phenomenon and bring examples, scholars have alluded to the existence of this textual category. See, for example, S. Talmon, "Aspects of the Textual Transmission of the Bible in the Light of Qumran Manuscripts," Textus 4 (1964) 95-132, at p. 109.
explanations are offered where deemed necessary. The examples already clarified by Weiss (1QS IV 4–6, 2 Samuel 6:3–4, as brought above and 2 Kings 7:13, Isaiah 17:12–13, as presented below) need no additional explanations, but are marked to match the format of the other examples and are compared, when relevant, to the Septuagint.

Weiss amply demonstrated how repetition due to homoeoteleuton might occur within the span of a line or two, but at least from a theoretical point of view this scribal occurrence need not be confined within such a short range. Strictly speaking, the same type of error may arise at much larger distances (as shall be demonstrated), e.g. from one column to another.

Examples of Complete Repetition: \( A_1 + B_1 + A_2 + B_2 + A_3 \)

a. 2 Kings 7:13

\[
\text{אש ינשא בך הָּֽהַּֽמֶּֽמֶּֽנֶּֽרֶּֽשֶּֽאֶּֽלֶּֽל הָּֽכֶלֶּֽמֶּֽנֶּֽנֶּֽרֶּֽשֶּֽאֶּֽל}
\]

LXX: καὶ ἀπεκρίθη εἰς τῶν παιδῶν αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπεν λαβέτωσαν δὴ πέντε τῶν ἄπω τῶν ὑπολειμμάτων ὧν κατελειφθησαν οἱ κατελειφθησαν ὧν ἔδει εἰς τὸν πρὸς πᾶν τὸ

b. Isaiah 17:12–13

\[
\text{לָאֵּֽמֶּֽנֶּֽרֶּֽשֶּֽאֶּֽל מִּֽסְכִּֽיִּֽם יִּֽשְׁרַּֽעַּֽלְּ הָּֽמַּֽשְׁרַּֽעַּֽל בָּֽאֵּֽֽמֶּֽֽנֶּֽרֶּֽשֶּֽאֶּֽל}
\]

\[12\] Weiss hesitantly proposed that errors such as these may occur when both similar words are also situated in the same position (i.e. beginning or end) of the line. While this proposal could help explain some of the cases analyzed here, it does not fit all the examples, nor is it essential from a theoretical point of view.
c. Ezekiel 44:19

Evidence of the same textual occurrence can be found in the Qumran scrolls as well, as shown in the following examples:

d. 1QS VI, 4–6 (see above, Theory)
e. 4Q417 f 2 i:5

The redundant elements, B₂A₃, were erased from the scroll, but they are still easily identified. This example illustrates the fact that scrolls existed with recognized repetitions that were erased or marked. This represents the transitional stage before the erroneous repetition achieved equal textual status and found its way back into the text.

Examples of Incomplete Repetition: A₁+B₁+A₂+B₂/2.

a. 2 Samuel 6:3–4 (see above, Theory)
b. 2 Kings 11:17

In this verse a covenant is made by the high priest between three parties: YHWH, the king and the people. The final four words of the verse were

---

13 J. Strugnell, D. J. Harrington and T. Elgvin, Sapiential Texts, Part 2: Cave 4.XXIV (DJD XXXIV; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 172–174. See also the facsimile (Plate IX). The notes on p. 174 explain that the error arose due to the double appearance of והזה, but the error is still classified as dittography, due to the lack of another term.
traditionally explained as an additional covenant between two parties: the
king and the people,\textsuperscript{14} but one cannot escape the feeling of needless
repetition here. Two important textual witnesses do not reflect these words:

(1) The parallel verse in 2 Chronicles 23:16 reads:

\begin{quote}
ירבדת חוהו ברד ביהו \textsuperscript{15} בּוּכּ כּ הָעָם בּוּכּ מֵאֵל לֵיהוּ לֵיהוּ
\end{quote}

(2) The Septuagint translates 2 Kings:\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{quote}
καὶ διέθετο ὅδε ἀπέλθη άνὰ μέσον κυρίου καὶ άνὰ μέσον τοῦ

\textsuperscript{1} Βασιλέως καὶ άνὰ μέσον τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦ εἶναι εἰς λαὸν τοῦ κυρίου.

\textsuperscript{2} \end{quote}

Accordingly, the explanation for the superfluous words at the end of the
verse in MT 2 Kings should be that both identical phrases appear after the
Tetragrammaton (A\textsubscript{1} and A\textsubscript{2}). After writing A\textsubscript{2}, a scribe copied the words
following A\textsubscript{1}, the result being repetition due to homoeoteleuton.

\textsuperscript{14} Rashi, Kimhi et al. See also the discussion in M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, \textit{Il Kings}
(AB 11; New York, 1988) 132–133.

\textsuperscript{15} Notice that 2 Kings reads בּוּכּ while 2 Chronicles reads בָּנִי. The latter seems
preferable also for 2 Kings, its current reading possibly reflecting a reading of the
\textit{waw} (which may have been mistaken for a \textit{yod}) as an abbreviation of the
Tetragrammaton (for a description of this phenomenon see G. R. Driver,
Abbreviations,” \textit{Textus} 4 [1964] 76–94). This difference between the two sources is
also crucial for explaining the repetition due to homoeoteleuton in 2 Kings, for the
presence of both Tetragrammata would have been needed in order to have caused
the erroneous repetition. In 2 Chronicles only one Tetragrammaton is used, therefore
there are no grounds for the occurrence of the repetition there.

\textsuperscript{16} Though some Greek manuscripts repeat in accordance with MT καὶ άνὰ μέσον
tоῦ βασιλέως καὶ άνὰ μέσον τοῦ λαοῦ at the end of the verse, the majority of
manuscripts do not, including those of the Lucianic tradition. This is especially
noteworthy since the Septuagint to this chapter is regarded as belonging to the
\textit{kai}γε-Theodotion revision.
Repetition Due to Homoeoteleuton

c. 2 Kings 18:17

The double appearance of יריעל יבשה, though not exegetically impossible, seems awkward. The Septuagint, on the other hand, preserves the reading in 2 Kings quite literally, save the second appearance of יריעל יבשה:

LXX: καὶ ἀπεστείλει βασιλεὺς Άσσωρίων τὸν Θαρβαν καὶ τὸν Ραφεῖς καὶ τὸν Ραψακὴν ἐκ Λαχείς πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα Εζεκιαν ἐν δύναμι βαρεῖα ἐπὶ Ἰεροσολύμου καὶ ἀνεβησαν καὶ ἔθεσαν εἰς Ἰεροσολύμου καὶ ἐστησαν εἰς τῷ

This is the case with the Peshitta and the Vulgate as well:

...qui cum ascendissent venerunt in Hierusalem et steterunt...

d. Ezekiel 36:14–15

Both verses end with the identical consonantal script: וגרgetReference text here, making the second appearance awkward and redundant. Both appearances follow the similar word order in an identical syntactical structure: ועב + (verb: impf.fem.2.sgl.) + אל. The Septuagint provides a reading that does not include most of the repetitive elements:

17 Notice that the parallel verse in Isaiah 36:2 does not record many details mentioned here, including both appearances of "יריעל יבשה": יריעל יבשה א푀 רואץ וארשכ אל ירשכאל ורשכאל ילב רושכאל אל חמל חקיך לכל ייער ימער ימער חצתה ורבחה.

העלית הכנствие שזד כרכז:
LXX: 14δια τοῦτο ἄνθρωπος οὐκέτι φάγεσαι καὶ τὸ ἔθνος σου οὐκ ἀπεκδόσεις

A1

ἐτι λέγει κύριος. 15καὶ οὐκ ἀκούσθησαι οὐκέτι ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀτιμία ἔθνων καὶ

B1

ὅνειδαιοὺς λαῶν οὐ μὴ ἐνέγκητε ἐτι λέγει κύριος.

A2

The second Hebrew appearance of וְנֶפֶל אֵל bruít is not represented in
the Greek (though the second וַיְהִי אוֹלֵד as is). 18 The discrepancy between MT
and the more preferable reading of the Septuagint seems to have been
caused by a repetition due to the homoeoteleuton רֹד in a predecessor of
MT. Had we been lacking any textual evidence other than MT, a more
elegant proposal would have been to regard the second וַיְהִי אוֹלֵד as part of

18 As for the Masoretic Qere instructions on these verses, notice that the first וְנֶפֶל is read וְנֶפֶל, while the second וְנֶפֶל is left in its consonantal order and vocalized וְנֶפֶל (though Tg. Jon. translates this appearance according to וְנֶפֶל as well). The Greek verb ἀπεκδόσεις for the first וְנֶפֶל (Ketib) conforms with the Qere reading וְנֶפֶל, both pointing to a transposition of וְנֶפֶל/וְנֶפֶל. That וְנֶפֶל better suits the context can be ascertained from the recurrence of this root in vv. 12 and 13. The root וְנֶפֶל does not fit the context and is only forcibly explained in this verse. M. Greenberg, Ezekiel 21–37 (AB 22A; New York, 1997) regards Malbim’s explanation of וְנֶפֶל (causing to stumble through sinning) as “an alien idea” and the repetition of וַיְהִי אֵל וְנֶפֶל as “repeated to no clear purpose”. This selective masoretic instruction may point to the manner in which the redundancy was dealt with in pre-masoretic times (for to suggest that the Masoretes themselves created the distinction between the two verbs would be incongruous with what is known about masoretic scribal practices). If only one transposition was corrected, the text would no longer be redundant. For an analysis of the agreement between the Septuagint and Ketib–Qere
instructions, see Z. Frankel, Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta (Leipzig, 1841) 219–242; R.
65.
the erroneous repetition as well, but its appearance in the LXX makes this proposal less probable.¹⁹

Near Omission Leading to Repetition

As explained above, incomplete repetition is an indication that the scribal error was recognized midway and the repetition discontinued. Midway recognition may occur in the course of omission due to homoeoteleuton as well. In the following example, this sort of midway recognition generated another type of textual repetition.

Exodus 8:12-14

In v. 12, YHWH commands Moses to instruct Aaron to lift his staff and strike the dust of the earth, thereby bringing the plague of lice on Egypt. The first two words of v. 13, והעשׂה, denote that both Moses and Aaron participated in the following action, though the rest of the verse clearly specifies Aaron as the sole performer of the deed. This grammatical tension has been traditionally explained by including in the plural verb והעשׂה Moses’ role of telling Aaron the content of YHWH’s commandment together with Aaron’s actual striking of the earth.²⁰ This form of exegesis strains the plain sense of the verb and therefore does not fully alleviate the tension in the verse.

¹⁹ In order to retain this proposal, one would have to assume that both MT and the LXX preserve different textual errors caused by a similar reason. In the LXX (or its Vorlage), את נאם איש א簽 ערי ה והush מטשל על/ecum not ל the was repeated due to the homoeoteleuton את נאם איש א簽 ערי ה והush מטשל על/ecum not ל the, while in MT את נאם איש א簽 ערי ה והush מטשל על/ecum not ל the was repeated, due to the homoeoteleuton את נאם איש א_sign ערי ה והush מטשל על/ecum not ל. This type of reasoning is not impossible but is more complicated and ultimately less preferable.

Let us compare then the very similar descriptions recorded in Exod 8:1-3 with Exod 8:12-14. In vv. 1 and 12 alike, YHWH gives Moses the instruction for Aaron to generate a plague using his staff. V. 2 immediately describes Aaron’s action (יָדַע אָדָם אֲדֹנָיו), while v. 13 reports the same only after the peculiar appearance of the plural verb clause (יָדַע כָּל אֵת אֲדֹנָיו). Vv. 3 and 14 both shift the focus to Pharaoh’s sorcerers and begin with the same words (יָדַע כָּל הָעָשָׁה בְּעַכְּרָתָה).21 The similarities between both sequences highlight the oddity of יָדַע כָּל in v. 13. Granted we must not force the text to repeat itself verbatim,22 however in this case the textual deviation does not give the impression of variation but rather seems detached from the natural flow of the verse.

21 יָדַע כָּל of v. 14 conforms with the immediate context (vv. 12-15) and with the broader context as well. Pharaoh’s sorcerers appear five times in the plague narrative (Exod 7:11,22; 8:3,14; 9:11). The sorcerers are Pharaoh’s way of competing with YHWH’s power in the priestly stratum of this story. Thus they are shown to barely tie in the first three competitions, fail in the fourth and be utterly shamed in the fifth. In their initial appearance, the competitive element is introduced by the words יָדַע כָּל מִצָּה. In the next three show downs, this element continues by the recurrence of יָדַע כָּל, while in the fifth they were not even able to attempt an action of their own because they themselves were afflicted and could not stand before Moses. Therefore there can be no doubt as to the contextual conformity of יָדַע כָּל in v. 14. As for the other two appearances of יָדַע כָּל in regard to Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:10,20), these can be understood within their own context and do not create the same kind of tension as 8:13. In 7:10, both Moses and Aaron are the subject (יָדַע כָּל מִצָּה), though this changes in the second part of the verse. The same is correct in 7:20, though there this derives from the complex nature of this verse from a source-critical point of view.

22 Compare MT רָאָת אָדָם אֲדֹנָיו (v. 13) as opposed to the Samaritan reading רָאָת אֲדֹנָיו מִצָּה (v. 12) with לְהַעֲשָׂה כָּל (v. 13) as opposed to the Samaritan reading לְהַעֲשָׂה מִצָּה in v. 12 and LXX that suggests the same. The deviation in MT in this case causes no friction and therefore, lacking additional evidence, the other versions should be suspected of textual standardization.
The Septuagint has no record of the problematic words 23 רִשְׁעָה כְּ. 12 ἔδεικνυ δὲ κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν εἶπόν Ααρων ἐκτείνον τῇ χείρι τὴν ῥάβδων σου ... 13 ζέτεινεν οὖν Ααρων τῇ χείρι τὴν ράβδων ...

This reading seems preferable to MT, but this does not exempt us from trying to explain why two seemingly needless words appear in the Hebrew text. 24 Notice that the endings of vv. 12 and 13 and beginnings of 13 and 14 are nearly identical:

... 12 οὔσιν ἡ ἁρμάτη τὸν κόκκον ἀρτίῳ μετέριον: ῥισοῦ ταῖς ταῖς ...
... 13 οὔσιν ἡ ἁρμάτη τὸν κόκκον ἀρτίῳ μετέριον: ῥισοῦ ταῖς ταῖς ...

Now all the pieces of the puzzle can be put together. When copying the end of v. 12, the copyist’s eye returned to the source text at the end of v. 13 due to the similarity of both verse endings. He began writing v. 14. In other cases, this would have resulted in the complete omission of v. 13 from the Hebrew text. In fact this would have been regarded as a text-book case of omission due to homoeoteleuton, had we compared this presumed text to LXX. But the scribe detected the error and turned back to copy v. 13 as well. Having finished copying the whole verse, he again wrote the two words רִשְׁעָה כְּ, this time in their correct location and continued copying v. 14. What we have here, in this case, is an example of repetition due to near omission due to homoeoteleuton.

23 Save the Hexaplaric traditions that unsurprisingly read like MT.

24 Many scholars adopt the Greek reading, though an explanation for the plus in MT is usually not supplied. W. H. C. Propp, Exodus 1–18 (AB 2; New York, 1999) 296 prefers MT over LXX and explains the lack of the reflection of רִשְׁעָה כְּ in LXX as a probable haplography by homoeoteleuton from רִשְׁעָה. Propp’s explanation does not seem to take the comparison of v. 13 to v. 2 into consideration.
Long-Distance Repetition

a. Leviticus 13:55

The principle underlying the rationale of repetition due to homoeoteleuton need not be confined to short distances of one line or two. The same can be applied from column to column when the circumstantial evidence points in this direction.\(^{25}\)

Lev 13:55b can serve as a suitable example, although the nature of this example will necessitate a longer discussion. Lev 13:47–59 deals with scale disease (רָזִית) in fabrics. An affected article of clothing must undergo examinations, quarantines and cleansings before it can be used again. Not all articles of clothing pass all these tests; some of them are consequently burned. For example, if a fabric affection grows larger in the course of the first quarantine period, the cloth must be burned. Or if an affection remains undiminished after the second quarantine period, this cloth too must be burned. V. 55 describes the burning in the following manner:\(^{26}\)

The end of this verse seems to emphasize the hopeless situation of the garment. The clothing must be burned because the affection is a חתת in its bald crown (קרهة) or bald forehead (בכתה). This statement is highly unclear for two reasons. First, the meaning of חתת has never been sufficiently explained. Second, referring to a garment as having a crown and a forehead (bald or otherwise) is an oddity, to say the least.

The roots קָרָה/בָּכָה appear as a pair (in various forms) just five times in the MT, all of them in Leviticus 13. The other four appearances of this pair, besides the one in v. 55, are in vv. 40–43, which, together with v. 44,

\(^{25}\) This is true for omission due to homoeoteleuton as well. Prof. A. Rofé suggested one such occurrence in LXX Jer 39:3–13; see idem, Introduction to Deuteronomy (Jerusalem, 1988) 208 (Heb).

\(^{26}\) The SP agrees on whole with MT, but contains two minute differences, reading חותת אשת ועיית for חותת אשת ועיית.
comprise one legal unit defining קשת on bald pates. As such, their first four appearances are quite natural and intelligible. The fifth appearance in the law about fabrics was understood generally in light of the first four appearances to be an analogy to the human head. The common exegetical motif employed was the identification of clothing characteristics that correlate to the two forms of baldness described in vv. 40–41. According to these verses, both קָרָה and נְבֻּהָה are a lack of hair, the difference between the two being the location thereof, the נְבֻּהָה being in the front part of the head and the קָרָה in the back. Following this pattern, the נְבֻּהָה and קָרָה of garments were explained as being two similarly corresponding aspects of clothing.

Early rabbinic exegesis explained the nature of the correlation in terms of the garment’s age and condition. The front side, accordingly, meant a new garment and the back side a well-worn one. This explanation seems to be the basis for all the subsequent Aramaic Targumim and the Syriac Peshitta.

27 Vv. 45–46, which buffer between scale disease on bald pates and in fabrics, apply to the whole passage of human סָרָת (i.e. Lev 13:1–44).

28 Leviticus does not explicitly define the קָרָה as being in the rear part of the head, but this is implied by the contrast to נְבֻּהָה (v. 41) which is stated to be in the front part of the head. Accordingly, rabbinic law later defined the two terms: “...from the crown sloping backwards is the קָרָה and from the crown sloping forwards is the נְבֻּהָה.” (Sifra, Neg. Tazria’ 10:7)


30 These somewhat cumbersome English translations are my own. They differ from other English translations in the understanding of the Aramaic possessive article as describing two possible qualities of a garment and not necessarily two parts of the same garment. Needless to say, these Aramaic translations of קָרָה and נְבֻּהָה occur only here, in the segment about garments. The translators used literal translations for these roots in vv. 40–43, in the segment about bald pates.
Tg. Onq.: בֵּשַׁחְיוֹתָיו (in its wornness or in its newness)
Tg. Neof.: בְּכָלָיוֹתָיו (in its well-wornness) or in its newness
Tg. Ps.-Jon.: בֵּרִדי (in its beatenness or in its hairiness)
Peshitta: בֵּכָלָיוֹתָיו (in its newness or in its well-wornness)

Though the Rabbis did not choose this path, the most natural correlation would certainly be one of location, i.e. בֵּרָדִי being the front side of the garment and קָרַת being the posterior. This is, in fact, the meaning of the two according to Saadia Gaon and many modern scholars as well.

Another alternative remains within the confines of location but instead of back and front, it refers to the inside and outside of the clothing.

The Septuagint offers an alternative ending of the verse, reading:
LXX: καὶ ὄψεται ὁ ἵερεύς μετὰ τὸ πλυθῆσαι τὴν ἄφην καὶ ἑδεὶ μὴ μετέβαλεν τὴν ὄψιν ἢ ἄφη καὶ ἡ ἄφη οὗ διασχίσται ἄκαθαρτῖον ἐστιν ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται ἐστηρίκται ἐν τῷ ιματίῳ ἐν τῷ στήμονι ἢ ἐν τῇ κρόκῃ.

The first part of the verse conforms fully to the Hebrew text of MT, but the difficult ending in MT is not to be found in the Greek version. Instead of “in its bald crown or forehead”, the Septuagint reads “in the garment in the

31 Tg. Neof. literally reads, “in its kidney” (בֵּכָלָיוֹתָיו), but based upon the translation found in the Peshitta, it seems probable that Tg. Neof.’s reading is the result of a very common scribal error in which the ב was replaced with the similar ב.

32 Although Tg. Ps.-Jon. uses different terminology than the other Targumim, and is the only one which does not use “new” (וברוד), the meaning of his translation seems to grow out of the initial tradition of “worn and new”. I. Drazin (Targum Onkelos to Leviticus [Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 1994] 129, n. 44), even regards Tg. Ps.-Jon.’s choice of words as synonyms to those of Tg. Onkelos.

33 K. Elliger, Leviticus (HAT; Tübingen, 1966) 161; J. Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16 (AB; New York, 1991) 814 et al.

34 KJV et al.
warp or in the woof." These words are but one segment of a larger phrase, recurrent several times in vv. 47-55 and much more at home than the extant Hebrew ending of v. 55. The differences between MT and the Septuagint are so great that it seems difficult to assume that they shared the same parent text, in spite of their similarity in the beginning of the verse. But whether the Hebrew text is primary or secondary, the question at hand is how to explain its meaning or its development and therefore it should be noted with interest that the Greek translation diverges from MT at the precise location of the cause of our perplexity.

Up to this point the question that has been dealt with was how to understand the usage of human terms in a unit about fabrics. Now we must also consider the purpose that such a metaphorical usage serves. Most exegetes did not supply an answer to this question, possibly because such an answer was not at hand. Even after considering the few explanations for the metaphoric bald pates in the description of clothing, one is still left

35 Although the equivalent ἴστριπάκτως = פשחת is worthy of a discussion of its own, it is not essential for the present argument, therefore it will suffice to reiterate that the meaning of the hapax פשחת has long eluded translators and exegetes.

36 On the other hand, one cannot ignore the uncanny morphological resemblance of the suggested Hebrew reading of the Septuagint (בַּעַרְוָא בֵּשָׁה אֲנָ בֵּרֶבע”) to the MT (םְכַרְוָא אֲנָ בֵּרֶבע). Both Hebrew phrases present two antonyms prefixed with the prepositional ב and regulated by א. This may point to the manner in which the Septuagint translator or the writer of his Hebrew Vorlage dealt with the oddity of בֵּרֶבע אֲנָ בֵּרֶבע in reference to garments. Perhaps one of the above understood that the use of bald pates in garments can only be an analogy to the body and then sought out the warp and the woof as the only word pair in the unit of fabric סַרַּעַת that also have an antonymous relation like בֵּרֶבע אֲנָ בֵּרֶבע. The word preceding these two, בֵּרֶבע, would confine the usage of the analogy to the realm of garments.

37 Rashi, however, tackled this question head on and quoted a baraita from b. Nid. 19a, which claims that the analogy of cloth to man enables the application of a law dealing with human סַרַּעַת on fabric סַרַּעַת as well. Paraphrasing Rashi’s words, the reason the Torah used the terms בֵּרֶבע אֲנָ בֵּרֶבע when dealing with fabrics is to teach that if the סַרַּעַת spread over the garment’s entire surface—it is pure (the same is halakhically derived about the human body from Lev 13:13).
with the feeling that the text has nothing to gain from this metaphor, neither in meaning nor in aesthetics.

This realization should strengthen the reader’s suspicion of the integrity of the text. In a review essay on J. Milgrom’s commentary on Leviticus, V. A. Hurowitz proposed to regard the words פָּרַתָהּ הָאָבְרָהָם אֵא בְּכָרְחָהּ אֵא בְּכָרְחָהּ as a horizontal dittoography based on Lev 13:42b (פָּרַתָהּ הָאָבְרָהָם אֵא בְּכָרְחָהּ אֵא בְּכָרְחָהּ).

According to Hurowitz the scribal error was twofold:
1. The scribe erroneously recopied the end of v. 42 when he was writing v. 55.
2. The scribe misspelled פָּרַתָהּ, resulting in the unintelligible הָאָבְרָהָם.

In this manner Hurowitz explains the two aforementioned difficulties. The usage of human terms in the unit dealing with clothing is due to horizontal dittoigraphy, i.e., the erroneous copying of words from one column to another. The puzzling hapax פָּרַתָהּ should actually be regarded as a “ghost-word,” originally non-existent in biblical Hebrew. This suggestion subsequently received Milgrom’s approval.

According to Hurowitz, the presumed original verses share no connecting point other than their assumed location in their respective columns. While this cannot be discarded as an impossibility, a more probable hypothesis should be preferred, if one exists. The key to such a hypothesis depends on showing a link between vv. 42 and 55, one that could confuse a copyist into thinking that he was copying from v. 55 when in reality his eye was reading v. 42. If the hapax פָּרַתָהּ were to be found originally in v. 55, the link between the two verses would be an obvious graphic similarity:

If the above was the original ending of v. 55, it would be a sound assumption to state that after the copyist finished writing פָּרַתָהּ הָאָבְרָהָם אֵא בְּכָרְחָהּ, he

returned to his source text and continued copying the words after מָהְתָּ הָה. Of course, this would mean that מָהְתָּ הָה is not a “ghost-word”, a cacography of מָהְתָּ הָה, but a genuine hapax legomenon. Although, as stated above, this word has never been satisfactorily explained, its nature is anything but foreign in its context. Its root and form are well attested to in biblical Hebrew and other Semitic languages, the meaning of the root fits the semantic range of other terms used in the וְרָעָה laws, while its larger syntactical context within the verse conforms well with similar priestly literature. Therefore it may be concluded that מָהְתָּ הָה should not be regarded as a “ghost-word” but rather as an exegetical challenge that has yet to find its complete solution. As for the scribal error that seems to have taken place, it ought not to be classified as dittography but rather as repetition due to homoeoteleuton.

b. 1 Chronicles 8–9

The scribal error presumed in Lev. 13:55 thus demonstrates how repetition due to homoeoteleuton may occur even over a span of fourteen verses. Another possible long distance occurrence of this type of error may be found in 1 Chronicles 8–9, in what may be the largest scribal error in the

---

40 Though reached here independently, this hypothesis is hinted by J. Licht in his edition of S. L. Gordon’s commentary on Leviticus (Tel Aviv, 1972). That commentator states that נַכְרְוַת בָּנְבֵיהָ may have been erroneously copied from the unit dealing with head סֶםֶשׁ at. This brief comment does not appear in the earlier edition that was written and arranged by Gordon himself (Tel Aviv, 1945–7), and is therefore ascribed here to Licht.

41 BDB, 809.

42 Consider the word “עָשָׁה” and roots such as נַכְרְוַת שֶׁמֶשׁ that are prevalent in the וְרָעָה laws.

whole MT, at least from the point of view of the amount of erroneous repetition.

1 Chr 8:29-40 lists the Benjaminites settlers of Gibeon (vv. 29-32) and the genealogy of the family of Saul (vv. 33-40). A near exact duplicate of the first ten verses of this passage appears one chapter later in 9:35-44.44 Scholars have offered several explanations for this peculiar repetition. Most agree that both lists were intentionally inserted in the text, while the dispute between them focuses on the question of how many hands were involved in this intentional repetition. Did one author use the same list twice for literary reasons or did a later interpolator with a new agenda add one of the lists, or even both of them?45

Of cardinal importance in solving the question at hand is understanding the place of the two verses preceding each list, verses that function as summaries of two other lists in their respective locations. Surprisingly enough, these two, though unrelated to the following lists and to each other, are also nearly identical:

(1 Chr 8:28) אלה ראש אביהם לדורותם ראשם אלה绝缘 בירושלם;
(1 Chr 9:34) אלה ראש האבות לדורותם ראשם אלה绝缘 בירושלם.

Though all extant textual witnesses support MT, the textual symptoms presented here (i.e. two similar textual units followed by another two similar units, while the repetition of the latter is perplexing or at least unnecessary), should at least warrant the consideration of one of the duplicate lists as an erroneous repetition due to the similarity of 8:28 and 9:34. A. B. Ehrlich, in fact, propounded this possibility, though his proposal

---

44 For a summary of the minute differences between the two lists, see S. Japhet, **I & II Chronicles** (OTL; London, 1993) 218.

seems to have been unjustly neglected or overlooked. Ehrlich suggested that a copyist confused 9:34 for 8:28 and copied the list that had appeared originally only in 8:29ff. after 9:34.

The type of scribal error surmised by Ehrlich conforms with the proposed definition of repetition due to homoeoteleuton. The distance between the original and secondary texts in Chronicles is even larger than that in Leviticus (45 verses as opposed to 14), while the amount of excess text erroneously copied adds up to ten whole verses. The technical, even tedious, nature of the list genre may have played a part in the origin of this scribal error; it would be much more surprising to find an error of this magnitude in narrative. If such a large textual repetition continued undetected for ten verses, this example adequately illustrates just how mechanical the work of a scribe was.

Conclusion

The examples discussed here are certainly not the only ones to be found in MT, nor is MT the sole textual source in which repetitions of this sort can be discerned. Repetition due to homoeoteleuton is a textual phenomenon that is bound to occur in any text that was recorded and transmitted in similar historical conditions as the Hebrew textus receptus. Acknowledgement of this phenomenon will undoubtedly provide scholars with one more instrument with which to study and analyze MT and other ancient texts. By distinguishing it from common dittography, we indicate the specific cause that brought about the textual error, a cause that may be isolated and defined within the text. From an exegetical point of view, the examples shown here help illustrate how peculiarities such as the baldness of garments were unintentionally introduced into the biblical text, left to puzzle readers and commentators throughout the generations.