

BASIC PRINCIPLES EMPLOYED BY THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT TEXT COMMITTEE

In working out principles and procedures for the analysis of textual problems in the Hebrew Old Testament, the Committee found it necessary to recognize four phases in the development of the Hebrew text.

- The First Phase, consisting of oral or written literary products in forms as close as possible to those originally produced. Literary analysis is the means primarily employed in attempts to recover these types of texts usually called "original texts".
- The Second Phase, consisting of the earliest forms of text which can be determined by the application of techniques of textual analysis to existing textual evidence. This text stage may be called the "earliest attested text" (attested either directly or indirectly).
- The Third Phase, consisting of the consonantal text as authorized by Jewish scholars shortly after A.D. 70. This text stage may be called the "Proto-Massoretic text".
- The Fourth Phase, called the Massoretic text, as determined by the Massoretes in the 9th and 10th Centuries A.D., and for all practical purposes essentially identical in vowel pointing and accentuation with that which exists in the principal manuscripts of the schools of the Tiberian Massoretes.

In the treatment of various departures from the text tradition as found in the Massoretic text, the Committee has attempted to ascertain what is most likely to have been the form or forms of the Second Phase of Hebrew Old Testament text development. In line with this purpose, the Committee has employed in its work those basic principles of text analysis which have been generally accepted as applicable to all such research. Certain of the more common factors involved in such analysis are enumerated in a separate document, and in this Interim Report they are referred to by numbers in order to provide the reader with at least an indication as to some, though not necessarily all, of the more important factors which entered into the judgment of the Committee as it dealt with the different forms of the text.

The textual problems treated in this report are listed in order by chapter and verse. In each instance the form of the Massoretic text is given first, following by one or more textual and/or conjectural variants, given in most instances in Hebrew. Square brackets indicate that in the absence of direct Hebrew witnesses the text is reconstructed. However, no attempt is made to indicate the complete Hebrew or versional evidence (in most instances some of this is available in the Kittel apparatus, and in the full report all the relevant textual data will be given).

Immediately preceding the form of the text which the Committee has regarded as best representing the text of the Second Phase, the letters A, B, C, or D are employed to denote the degree of probability for such a form.

- **A** - This form of the text has a very high probability of representing the text of the Second Phase
- **B** - This form of the text probably represents the text of the Second Phase, but there is some doubt
- **C** - This form of the text possibly represents the text of the Second Phase, but there is considerable doubt
- **D** - There is a possibility that this form of the text represents the text of the Second Phase, but this is highly uncertain

This system of rating from A to D is essentially similar to the practice employed by the New Testament Text Committee which prepared the Greek text published by the United Bible Societies.

In those instances in which the members of the Committee were divided in their judgment as to which of two or more variant forms of the text was most probable, the majority decision is marked in the same way as in those instances in which there was full agreement.

Each variant form of the text, given normally in Hebrew, is followed by a literal translation, first in English and then in French. In turn this is followed by renderings in the "base translations": RSV, J, L, NEB, and TOB, with certain supplementary expressions placed in parentheses, if these are necessary for understanding the translation.

After each variant there follows a listing of some, but not necessarily all, of the factors which prompted the Committee to decide either for or against the variant, and insofar as possible these factors are given in the order of their importance. In a few instances, the reasons for a particular decision are so specific that the series of factors is supplemented by a brief description of certain other considerations which prompted the Committee to decide as it did. In those instances in which there are special problems of translation, advice on the translational difficulties is added.

The renderings which are suggested in the advice to translators should, however, be regarded not as models for translation into various receptor languages, but only as bases for such adjustments as may be required in satisfactorily rendering the meaning of the text.