

From “Old Greek” to the Recensions: Who and What Caused the Change of the Hebrew Reference Text of the Septuagint?

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One of the best known features of the Septuagint, and at the same time one of its most complex problems, is that the original Septuagint, the so-called “Old Greek,” underwent several recensions, especially the famous so-called *kaige* recension, but also other earlier and later recensions.¹ A close analysis of the recensions shows that a major source for the differences was not different translation techniques but recourse to a different Hebrew text type. This change of the authoritative text type of the holy scriptures in early Judaism, with its far reaching consequences, is an amazing occurrence worthy of some discussion.

1. The Problem

Until about 1947–1950, i.e., until the discoveries at Qumran and in the Judean desert, we knew about the text of the Septuagint and about three other early Greek translations: there were the translations of Aquila, of Symmachus, and of Theodotion, all from the early to the late second century C.E. The old explanation for this seemingly clear-cut division between the old Septuagint from the third and second century B.C.E. and the newer translations from the second century C.E. was that Jews had given up the OG Septuagint, because Christians used it as the basis for their missionary activities and for their

¹ See, e.g., Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 74–99; Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 143–48; Mario Cimosà, *Guida allo studio della Bibbia greca (LXX): Storia, Lingua, Testi* (Roma: Società Biblica Britannica et Forestiera, 1995); Folker Siegert, *Zwischen hebräischer Bibel und Altem Testament: Eine Einführung in die Septuaginta* (MIS 9; Münster: LIT, 2001), 84–91; Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible* (trans. W. G. E. Watson; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 109–87; Karen H. Jobes and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 167–82, 273–87.

discussions.² We even know about these early discussions and about some of the arguments exchanged. Already in that time there was the argument and mutual objection that the other side had changed the Hebrew text,³ or to put it in modern terms, that the differences between the Greek translations and Hebrew Bible were not merely the result of different translation techniques but also different underlying Hebrew texts.

This old and simple picture had one problem, namely, that some readings of the Theodotianic translation are present in the New Testament,⁴ i.e., more than a century before the historical Theodotion and his translation. This observation gave rise to the idea of a so-called proto-Theodotianic translation or revision that must have existed before the New Testament, i.e., by the beginning of the first century C.E. Such a revision could not have originated as an alternative to the Septuagint because of Christian use of it. Although this might be the case for translations of the second century, this proto-Theodotianic revision must have had inner Jewish causes. This observation leads to the question: What caused this revision?

Also from the Septuagint itself there is the problem of the Hebrew reference text, i.e., the so-called Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint. It is well known that at least some books of the Septuagint are based on a text different from the standard MT. The best known example for this phenomenon is the book of Jeremiah, which in the Septuagint is about one eighth shorter than the MT of this book. Closer comparison of the two texts shows that the Septuagint did not shorten the text as it was translated but rather gives a quite exact translation of the Hebrew, although at the same time there are missing words and even

² Ernst Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments: Eine Einführung in die Biblia Hebraica* (4th ed.; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1973), 55. Melvin K. H. Peters, "Septuagint," *ABD* 5:1093–104, still comes close to this view as he talks quite reluctantly about the earlier revisions: "If Tov is correct, revision of the translation began almost as soon as they were copied for the first time but we can only speculate about the nature of such revisions" and then goes on to say: "We know for sure that by the second century C.E., Jewish scholars, reacting to the widespread co-opting and polemical use of the LXX by Christians, began to produce editions intended to correct mistranslation, expunge Christian additions and to conform to the Hebrew text that had by then become normative in Palestine" (p. 1097).

³ Cf. Martin Hengel, "Die Septuaginta als 'Christliche Schriftensammlung', ihre Vorgeschichte und das Problem ihres Kanons," in *Die Septuaginta zwischen Judentum und Christentum* (ed. M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer; WUNT 72; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 182–284; 192–3: "Die Berufung auf die siebzig und der Vorwurf der Schriftverfälschung" (esp. to Justin, *Dial.*, 71–73).

⁴ And in other early Christian writings such as *Barnabas*, *1–2 Clement* and *Hermas*. The phenomenon was already discussed by Frederik Kenyon and Paul Kahle, cf. Würthwein, *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, 57.

sentences. So the Septuagint evidently had a shorter Hebrew text as *Vorlage*. In all probability this shorter text would have been older than the longer MT.⁵ Besides Jeremiah there are other books or parts of books with different lengths or order of the text, e.g., Joshua, Ezekiel, I Samuel 16–18, that give evidence of reworking. In most cases the Septuagint seems to reflect an older stage of the text, while the MT shows the younger text-form.⁶

There are also specific texts or passages that lead to similar observations: in Exod 12:40 we are told that the Israelites had stayed in Egypt for 430 years. In the Septuagint we read the same number of years, but it is interpreted differently. To the words about the time in Egypt the Septuagint adds "and also in Canaan." In other words the MT reckons 430 years as the time from Joseph to Moses, but the Septuagint counts the years from Abraham to Moses. Evidently the Septuagint has a different understanding of the chronology. One would assume that the Septuagint translator made this change, but interestingly the Samaritan Pentateuch supports the Septuagint. We must conclude that the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch go back to a common tradition.⁷ This chronological tradition is not only to be found in Septuagint and in the Samaritan Pentateuch, but it has also left its traces in early Jewish and rabbinic literature and in the New Testament.⁸ As is well known there are many other cases where the text of the Septuagint agrees with the Samaritan text against the MT, and there are cases where the Septuagint has a separate tradition but a tradition that is based on a Hebrew *Vorlage*.

The facts mentioned so far have been well known for a long time and led to the theory of three major text types. The first is the text that later became the MT and therefore was called proto-Masoretic or pre-Masoretic. The second text type is the proto-Samaritan text, i.e., the text type later evidenced by the Samaritan Pentateuch. The third text type was the parent text of the Septuagint, which is not known directly but can be assumed and in many instances even reconstructed without difficulty. Going on from these three text types, there was the question about their background or their provenance. The Samaritan text evidently belonged to Samaria, the MT evidently belonged to Jerusalem, and the

⁵ See esp. Pierre-Maurice Bogaert, "Le Livre de Jérémie en Perspective: Les Deux Rédactions Antiques Selon les Travaux en Cours," *RB* 101 (1994), 363–406; and Emanuel Tov, "The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History," in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (ed. J. H. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 211–37.

⁶ See the discussion in Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 313–49.

⁷ Cf. Siegfried Kreuzer, "Zur Priorität von Exodus 12:40 MT: Die Chronologische Interpretation des Ägyptenaufenthalts in der jüdischen, samaritanischen und alexandrinischen Exegese," *ZAW* 103 (1991), 252–58.

⁸ Esp. in Gal 3:13 and Acts 7:2.

Vorlage of the Septuagint evidently belonged to Alexandria, or at least it had come to Alexandria and there it became the reference text for the translation.

Through the discoveries at Qumran and in the Judean desert this basic picture has partly been confirmed, partly changed, and has even been revolutionized. There are about 200 biblical texts from Qumran (and the Judean desert). The importance of these texts was underestimated for a long time, as is confirmed by the fact that the biblical texts were among the last ones to be edited.

On the one hand the biblical texts from Qumran have confirmed the good quality and reliability of the MT. This has enabled us to go back behind the oldest known manuscript about one whole millennium and has showed that there was a truly faithful Hebrew tradition. On the other hand there are also texts in Qumran that are quite close to the Samaritan tradition and so confirmed this branch of the Hebrew text. At the same time the fact of having proto-Samaritan texts in the Judean desert means that the Samaritan textual tradition—at least apart from some specific Samaritan differences—was not just a development in Samaria, but there existed the same kind of texts in Judea as well.

At least for Septuagint matters two further facts are even more important. One is that in Qumran we have Hebrew texts that evidently are very close to the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint. For instance, there is MS Jer^b (4Q71), which is very close to the Septuagint of Jeremiah and confirms the older theories about the Hebrew parent text. Beyond this they even give evidence for the accurateness of the OG Septuagint text, with respect to the work of the translators.

At the same time the discovery of these proto-Septuagint texts means that the textual tradition of the Septuagint is not just a tradition from Alexandria, but that the basic Hebrew tradition of the Septuagint is found in Judea as well. This observation further means that the theories about the local affiliation of the three text types have to be modified or probably abandoned altogether. We will return to this question later.

The other important fact is the discovery of actual Septuagint texts in Qumran and in the Judean desert. This fact was most surprising. It showed that Greek translations of the holy scriptures were not only in use in the Diaspora but also in Judea.

The Greek biblical texts from Qumran not only confirm that the Septuagint textual tradition existed earlier than previously thought, they also show the inner Jewish tradition of the Septuagint with some peculiarities that were not known from the later, mostly Christian, manuscripts, such as the use of Hebrew letters for the Tetragram in the Greek texts instead of κύριος.⁹

⁹For a description of these features of the early Septuagint manuscripts see Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 136–37, 143–44, and 220.

Even more important was the discovery of the scroll of the twelve minor prophets from Naḥal Hever. Beyond the evidence for the use of the Septuagint in Judea, this scroll showed that its text was based on the Septuagint but had undergone a revision, the famous *kaige* revision done by the *kaige*-group as Dominique Barthélemy named it.¹⁰ This *kaige* revision, or *kaige* recension, has its peculiarities in translation technique, especially the rendering of כּאֵלֶּיךָ by καίγει and of אֲנִי־אֵלֶּיךָ by ἐγὼ εἶμι, “I am.”¹¹

There is no need to expand on this here. What is more important for our case is the fact that this so-called *kaige*-revision not only shows some peculiarities in translation technique, but it represents a revision of the OG Septuagint text towards the MT. By this fact the Naḥal Hever scroll gives evidence both of the dominance of the MT during the first century C.E. and at the same time of an inner-Jewish revision of the Septuagint. This revision documents a reorientation away from the Hebrew *Vorlage* towards the MT. In other words, we can observe an inner-Jewish change of the Hebrew reference text.

Through this discovery the old picture has changed. We no longer think of the old Jewish Septuagint from the third and second century B.C.E. on the one hand, and new Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible in second century C.E. that developed because the Jews were abandoning the Septuagint, which was being used by the Christians. Instead we have the OG translation, begun and largely done in Alexandria, and accompanied by ongoing history of revisions. Those revisions not only used new translation techniques current at that time, but—even more important—those revisions had a new reference text, namely the then dominant MT. As a matter of fact, although those revisions used new and different linguistic principles and translation techniques, what gave rise to the revisions was the prominent role of the MT.

As can be seen at many points, the Septuagint was always intended to be a faithful rendering of the Hebrew holy scriptures in the Hellenistic world, and it was always measured against its parent text. Therefore the change to a different parent text by necessity led to a revision of the Septuagint. The very existence of the *kaige*-recension and the other revisions and translations are evidence that

¹⁰Dominique Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila* (VTSup 10; Leiden: Brill, 1963). It has become common to speak about the *kaige* recension or *kaige* revision, Barthélemy originally used the term group (“groupe *kaige*”).

¹¹Cf. *ibid.*, 1–88; and *idem*, “Prise de Position sur les Autres Communications du Colloque de Los Angeles,” in *Études d'Histoire du Texte de l'Ancien Testament* (ed. D. Barthélemy; OBO 21; Fribourg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 267–69. See the essay by Glenn Wooden, pp. 122–24, in this volume for more discussion and a list of the characteristics.

there had been a change in the authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible. It was a change from the proto-Septuagint Hebrew text to the proto-MT.

So the question is, how could there be a change in the authoritative holy text of the Hebrew Bible, and who and what caused that change with its significant consequences for the Septuagint?

2. Text types, Text-Groups, and Group-Texts

To answer this question we have to consider briefly the different Hebrew text-types existing in early Jewish times. As I already mentioned, the Hebrew biblical texts from Qumran confirm on the one hand the old picture of three different Hebrew text types, and on the other hand this old picture was modified as there are more text types and more differences.

Emanuel Tov has developed the idea of five different categories of biblical texts from Qumran, or more generally from early Jewish times.¹²

- The first category or group were texts written in the Qumran scribal practice. It is characterized by the use of *matres lectionis*, contextual adaptations, actualization, etc.; in short characteristics that were previously considered typical characteristics of vulgar texts.
- The second group are the so-called proto-, or pre-MTs, which were the precursors to the later Masoretic tradition. It is significant for our purposes that Tov also calls these texts proto-rabbinic texts, because evidently the predecessors of the rabbis used these texts.
- The third group are the proto-Samaritan texts, which were close to the later Samaritan text tradition.
- The fourth group are pre-Septuagint texts, which represent, or are close to, the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint.
- Finally there is a fifth group of what Tov calls independent texts. These show some of the characteristics of the other groups but at the same time are also different from the afore mentioned text groups, or they are texts with further, specific or single characteristics.

We do not need to discuss Tov's classification and its groups in detail. But there is one thing that I would like to mention: in my opinion Tov mixes two different

¹²Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 160–63, updated in “Die Biblischen Handschriften aus der Wüste Juda: Eine neue Synthese,” in *Die Textfunde vom Toten Meer und der Text der hebräischen Bibel* (ed. by U. Dahmen, A. Lange, and H. Lichtenberger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 1–34. See also the discussion in Siegfried Kreuzer, “Text, Textgeschichte und Textkritik des Alten Testaments: Zum Stand der Forschung an der Wende des Jahrhunderts.” *TLZ* 127 (2002): 132–35.

categories. One comprises formal aspects, the other concerns contents. What Tov calls Qumranic scribal practice (the first group) represents a formal and qualitative category, and some characteristics of the fifth group are also rather formal. On the other hand the proto-Masoretic, the proto-Samaritan, and the pre-Septuagint texts are categorized by content, i.e., by their relation to what we later know as the Masoretic, the Samaritan, and the Septuagint traditions. Tov's fifth group confirms this observation, because the texts of this group are mostly defined by their convergence with, or divergence from, the proto-Masoretic, proto-Samaritan, or proto-Septuagint group.

Basically there is a formal category with texts varying from those written very carefully to ‘not so carefully’ and those with modernizations. Then there is the other category, which is largely defined by content, i.e., by relationship to the three large traditions later known as the Masoretic, (pre-)Septuagint, and Samaritan traditions. In the midst of the textual plurality that was revealed through the manuscripts from Qumran, the later textual traditions can already be recognized in Qumran and in early Judaism.

3. Towards a Solution

Let us return to the question of who used these texts. We have already mentioned the local texts theory that relates the MT to Jerusalem, the Samaritan text to Samaria, and the pre-Septuagint texts to Alexandria.¹³ The Qumran texts showed that this distribution may hold true in a broad sense but that in earlier times the different text forms were used side-by-side in Judea. There were pre-Samaritan, pre-Masoretic, and pre-Septuagint texts in use at Qumran and most probably all over Judea.

But at the same time there was not just one large mixture. There are chronological differences and differences in regard to the groups that used the texts. If we look, for example, at Jeremiah (cf. above), we can assume that the shorter Hebrew form is older than the longer MT. Jeremiah was reworked and

¹³After earlier discussions of these questions by J. Olshausen, P. de Lagarde, and J. Wellhausen (cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 153–58), a special form of the local-text theory was put forward by William F. Albright, “New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible,” *BASOR* 140 (1955), 27–33. Albright was followed by Frank M. Cross, “The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text,” *IEJ* 16 (1966), 81–95, who related the (pre-) Septuagint text to Egypt, the Samaritan tradition to Palestine and the Masoretic tradition to Babylon (brought to Palestine by Hillel [!]). The basic idea is upheld in Frank M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 205–18 (cf. the discussion in Siegfried Kreuzer, review of Frank M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, *OLZ* 95 (2000): 428–36).

expanded. Evidently the older form was known and used at Qumran, but it was also brought to Egypt where it was used as the Hebrew *Vorlage* for the Septuagint.¹⁴ Evidently the Hebrew *Vorlage* of Jeremiah represented an old Hebrew text of good quality. We do not know when this text was brought to Egypt and when it came into use in Alexandria, but we can assume that it probably came from Jerusalem, and most likely from the temple. The close relations between the Egyptian Jewish Diaspora and Jerusalem, especially the temple, is already evident in the Elephantine texts, and it is later echoed in the *Letter of Aristeas*.

Things are a little bit different with the MT. The proto-MT texts also represent good, old manuscripts. Normally these manuscripts have fewer characteristics of the so-called vulgar texts, and so, for instance, they use fewer *matres lectionis*, and they conserve older forms or the *lectio difficilior*. There are many examples for this, such as in the numbers in the genealogies of Gen 5, in the interpretation of the 430 years of the stay in Egypt, or in the book of I Samuel with its insertion of the song of Hanna.¹⁵

At the same time the MT texts had also been reworked. Although the numbers in the genealogies and the interpretation of Exod 12:40 reflect an older phase of the text, the overall chronological system of the MT was changed. This was noted by several authors in earlier scholarship, e.g., Alfred Jepsen and Marshall D. Johnson, and in more recent time by Jeremy Hughes, Klaus Koch, and Martin Rösel, who have argued that the original chronology of the Pentateuch and the historical books led up to the dedication of the Solomonic temple.¹⁶ This aim in turn is confirmed by the fact that the Samaritan chronology

¹⁴ Bogaert, "Le livre de Jérémie en perspective," assumes that the book of Jeremiah (in its older form) had gained canonical status (as a book, but not yet in textual details) in the third century B.C.E., and that the (proto-) Masoretic expansion was also done in the same century.

¹⁵ On the interpretation of the 430 years, cf. Kreuzer, "Zur Priorität von Exodus 12:40 MT," As for the insertion of the song of Hanna, it can be shown that the inconsistencies caused by the introduction of the song (I Sam 2:1–10) are preserved in the MT, whereas 4QSam^a (4Q51) and LXX smooth out the text.

¹⁶ Jeremy Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology* (JSOTSup 66; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990); Klaus Koch, "Sabbatstruktur der Geschichte: Die Zehn-Wochen-Apokalypse (I Hen 93:1–10; 91:11–17) und das Ringen um die alttestamentlichen Chronologien im späten Israelitentum," *ZAW* (1983): 423–24; repr. in *Vor der Wende der Zeiten: Beiträge zur apokalyptischen Literatur* (Gesammelte Aufsätze 3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 68–69; and Martin Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung: Studien zur Genesis-Septuaginta* (BZAW 223; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 129–44. The temple was built in the year 2800 A.M. (*anno mundi*), cf. Alfred Jepsen, "Zur Chronologie des Priesterkodex," *ZAW* 47 (1929): 253. Hughes, *Secrets of the Times*, and Koch, Klaus, "Sabbatstruktur der Geschichte," agree

also led up to the construction of the Samaritan temple on Mt. Garazim. Evidently the Samaritans recognized the original aim and therefore felt the need to adapt it towards their central sanctuary.¹⁷

The chronological system of the Septuagint is more complex, because it stretches the years in the genealogies of Genesis but shortens other periods. Most probably the Septuagint chronology is intended to be compatible with contemporary Egyptian ideas about chronology, and also has as its focus the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple after the exile.¹⁸ Interestingly the MT also has a new chronological system, which had as its goal the rededication of the Jerusalem temple after the Syrian-Hellenistic crisis in the year 164 B.C.E.

The goal of all three traditions was to legitimate the establishment of a central sanctuary. For the Jerusalem tradition there was no difference between the first and the second temple. As I and 2 Chronicles shows the temple was the one that Solomon (and David) had built. However, in the second century B.C.E. a significant change occurred. The old Zadokite priesthood had given in to Hellenization, and its members had given up the faith of their fathers. They had even accepted that in Jerusalem it was not YHWH who was worshipped, but Zeus, or at the very least, that he was identified with Zeus. This failure of the priests in Jerusalem had led to the uprising of the Maccabees and to the installation of a new priesthood in Jerusalem. It was the Maccabees, and with them the priests and the nobility from outside Jerusalem, who had saved the old faith and who had brought it back to Jerusalem.

It is my thesis that this new political and religious elite also brought their own Scriptures with them to Jerusalem. I remind the reader of how Emanuel

about the importance of this date. Hughes goes on in assuming 480 years from the first temple to the second temple (in analogy to I Kgdms 6:1), and a last epoch with 720 years (in analogy to the time between Abraham and Exodus). "Die so rekonstruierte Chronologie würde demnach von der Vorstellung einer Weltalterdauer von 4000 Jahren ausgehen," Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung*, 135–36. It seems doubtful to me that the priestly writers would have thought that far into the future. In its important texts, P is concerned with the tabernacle (i.e., the temple), not with eschatology. But the kind of reckoning envisaged by Hughes could be a later development, and so could have become the starting point for the Masoretic chronology.

¹⁷ "Die Chronologie des Samaritanus hat offensichtlich das Jahr 2800 als Datum für die Gründung des Heiligtums auf dem Garizim im Blick ..." (ibid., 135).

¹⁸ Cf. ibid., 136–44, esp. 144: "Nach dieser Rekonstruktion hat der Genesis-Übersetzer das erste Jahr des zweiten Tempels auf das Jahr 5000 anno mundi fixiert, durch die runde Zahl wird damit der Beginn der Existenz des Tempels als Beginn einer neuen Epoche gesehen, vergleichbar dem Jahr 4000 für die Wiedereinweihung durch die Makkabäer, die der MT-Chronologie zugrunde liegt. Es läßt sich vermuten, daß eine solche Datierung des Tempels auf einen Epochenbeginn eine so hohe Bedeutung hatte, daß dies den Eingriff in die heiligen Schriften rechtfertigen konnte"

Tov also labeled the pre-MT tradition as the proto-rabbinic tradition. This pre-Masoretic or proto-rabbinic text of the Maccabean era was not entirely new. On the contrary it was basically a good, old tradition, although there were some differences and there were manuscripts with additions and expansions, as in the case of the book of Jeremiah.

As we discussed above, the chronological system of this proto-MT was changed to focus on the rededication of the Jerusalem temple. The new goal of the chronological system indicates the time of this change, which must have happened some time after 164 B.C.E. Most probably this change was not made immediately but some decades later, when the Maccabean movement was well established in Jerusalem and had developed into the Hasmoneans dynasty, probably towards the last quarter of the second century B.C.E.¹⁹ In the words of K. Koch, "... it was the Hasmonean priesthood that introduced into the chronology of the Torah what was for them a fundamental date, when they gained control of the temple. Could it not have been the Hasmonean rulers themselves who used the holy scriptures to legitimate their regime as the beginning of a messianic era?"²⁰

As I said before, the textual tradition of the pre-Masoretic text is certainly older in many cases, but the important point is the adaptation of the chronological system—and its relation to the Maccabean revolt.²¹ Throughout the time of the Maccabean revolt and the Hasmonean period the proto-rabbinic

text tradition gained in importance and by the end of that time had become the dominant textual tradition.²²

The spreading of, and the importance of, the MT textual tradition in itself also confirms our view. It is certainly true that after 70 C.E. the MT was left as the only relevant—probably also the only handed down (i.e., still copied) tradition of the Hebrew Bible. This dominance not only came about because the proto-pharisaic group was the only organized group that survived the destruction of the second temple²³ but also because of the dominance of the proto-MT at least one century earlier. This can be seen by its increasing proportion among the Qumran biblical texts, and especially by the very existence of the *kaige*-revision at the turn of the era at the latest but more probably in the course of the first century B.C.E.²⁴

The importance and dominance of the MT requires an authority behind this development. The most probable locus for this is the Jerusalem temple with its priesthood and its repository of texts. Only this central authority had the weight to effect the spread and the dominance of the—at least in some features—new text type.

¹⁹ In 142 B.C.E., Simon became "elected high priest and ruler of the Jews," and especially John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.E.) proved to be a powerful—and quite aggressive—king of the Jews. Jonathan A. Goldstein, "The Hasmonean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: The Hellenistic period* (ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2:292–351.

²⁰ "... die hasmonäische Priesterschaft hat die für sie grundlegende Bedeutung der Neugewinnung des Tempels in das Zahlensystem der Tora eingetragen. Vielleicht sind es sogar die hasmonäischen Fürsten selbst, die ihr Regiment als Anbruch einer messianischen Zeit für Israel dadurch aus der Heiligen Schrift legitimierten?" Koch, "Sabbatstruktur der Geschichte," 68.

²¹ Probably there are other adaptations, too. An interesting example is Amos 9:12: God will raise up again and rebuild the fallen booth of David, "in order that they might possess the remnant of Edom and (of) all the nations who are called by my name, says the Lord who does this." Here, LXX reads τῶν ἀνθρώπων, (of the human beings) presupposing אדם, "human being," instead of מֵאֲדוֹם, "Edom." That 'remnant,' in postexilic times, refers to Edom is surprising. In a parallelism to nations, אדם, "τῶν ἀνθρώπων," seems to fit better. The reading מֵאֲדוֹם with a ך as *mater lectionis*, would have risen in the light of the Hasmonean conquest of Edom in the year 128 B.C.E.

²² In research on early Judaism, there is much awareness of the importance of the religious-political crisis and the rise of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans for the development of the Jewish "sects" (cf. Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* [JSJSup; New York: Brill, 1997], and Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]), and for the reconstruction of their development and their beliefs the different "sectarian" writings are used. But there is not yet much awareness of the different traditions of the biblical text, and the different textual traditions are treated as a unity over against the "sectarian writing." See for example, Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 68, where the author refers to "the texts of Zadokite Judaism ...: proto-Masoretic, proto-Samaritan, proto-Septuagintal, and others."

²³ Cf. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 195: "It is not that מַלְכֵי triumphed over other texts, but rather, that those who fostered it probably constituted the only organized group which survived the destruction of the Second Temple."

²⁴ "And it cannot be forgotten that the latest paleographic analysis of the scroll of the Twelve Prophet from Nahal Hever dates to the 1st century BCE" (Fernández Marcos, *Septuagint in Context*, 152, referring to Leonard J. Greenspoon, "Recensions, Revisions, Rabbinics: Dominique Barthélemy and Early Developments in the Greek Traditions," *Text* 15 [1990]: 153–67). Cf. also Olivier Munnich, "Contribution à l'étude de la première révision de la Septante," *ANRW* 20.1:190–220, and Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 143: "early date, the middle of the first century BCE."

4. The Witness of the *Letter of Aristeas*

The thesis of the Maccabean / Hasmonean background of the MT type and its authority can be supported by an analysis of the *Letter of Aristeas* with its story about the translation of the Septuagint. As is well known and accepted, this letter is not an original document written by an eye witness but was written in the second century B.C.E. Its magnificent story not only shows the importance of, and reverence for, the Septuagint, it also defends it against changes. The main arguments in favor of the (original) Septuagint are its very special origin and its acceptance. The origin of the Septuagint is told to lie in Hebrew manuscripts brought from Jerusalem to Alexandria and in the translators' committee that was also sent from Jerusalem by the high priest. The acceptance of the Septuagint is shown by the Ptolemaic king, a king who listens to the wisdom of the men from Jerusalem, and by the acceptance of the Septuagint in the Jewish community of Alexandria.

Historically the Septuagint most probably was translated by the Jewish community in Alexandria and on the base of Hebrew texts available in this community.²⁵ If the *Letter of Aristeas* defends the Septuagint by referring to Jerusalem, to its high priest, and to manuscripts from the Jerusalem temple, most probably that is the very place from which the challenge to alter it was coming.

These considerations fit well with the probable date of the *Letter of Aristeas*. While the outer limits for dating it are the beginning and the end of the second century B.C.E., there is wide spread consensus that it belongs to the second half of the second century. There are even some indications that the letter was written around 120 B.C.E. These conclusions are reached by several authors and with arguments independent of what I want to use here.²⁶ A date around 120

B.C.E. for the *Letter of Aristeas* with its defense of the Septuagint fits my thesis quite well: about forty years after the victory of the Maccabees, i.e., after the reconsecration of the temple of Jerusalem, the MT must have reached a considerable distribution and importance. The use of the MT certainly highlighted the differences not only with other Hebrew texts but also the differences against the Septuagint. One could even assume that these differences were not so much recognized in individual words or expressions but could be seen most easily in the different numbers of the chronological system. In any case the *Letter of Aristeas* shows an awareness of differences in the biblical texts and a discussion about these differences. The probable date of the *Letter of Aristeas* fits well with, and confirms the fact that, the MT gained its importance in the Hasmonean period in the course of the second half of the second century B.C.E.

5. Conclusions

If we return to the question of our title (Who and what caused the change of the Hebrew reference text of the Septuagint?), we have to answer that the change was caused by the Hellenistic crisis of the old Jerusalemite priesthood in the time of Antiochus IV and especially by the success of the Maccabean revolt and the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty. These events and the establishment of a new temple hierarchy in Jerusalem led to the domination of the MT, and that led to the change in the Hebrew text type on which the Septuagint was based.

This change is reflected in the *Letter of Aristeas* with its defense of the OG Septuagint. Yet this defense, at least in the long run and especially in Palestine itself, could not avert the change of the reference text and the subsequent revisions of the OG towards the MT.

²⁵ The problem of the initiative by the Ptolemaic king needs to be treated separately. The tradition about an official initiative has a broad basis and it runs contrary to (later) Jewish interests. So it may not be neglected, although it must be maintained, that the primary need for a translation as well as the ability to produce it lay within the Jewish community of Alexandria. Cf. the discussion in Jellicoe, *Septuagint and Modern Study*, 29–73; Gilles Dorival, Marguerite Harl, Olivier Munnich, *La Bible Grecque des Septante: Du Judaïsme Hellénistique au Christianisme Ancien* (2d ed.; Initiations au Christianisme Ancien; Paris: Cerf, 1994), 66–79; Siegfried Kreuzer, "Text, Textgeschichte und Textkritik des Alten Testaments: Zum Stand der Forschung an der Wende des Jahrhunderts." *TLZ* 127 (2002): 142–44. For a new solution see Siegfried Kreuzer, "Entstehung und Publikation der Septuaginta im Horizont frühptolemäischer Bildungs- und Kulturpolitik." in *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta: Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der griechischen Bibel* (ed. S. Kreuzer, and J. P. Lesch; BWA(N)T 161; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003): 2:61–75.

²⁶ Esp. Norbert Meisner, "Aristeasbrief," in *Unterweisungen in erzählender Form* (ed. W. G. Kümmel; 2d ed.; JSRZ 2; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1977). Elias J. Bickerman, "Zur

Datierung des Pseudo-Aristeas," *ZNW* 29 (1930): 280–296; repr. in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (AGJU 9; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 109–36, suggested 145/127 B.C.E.; Oswyn Murray, "Aristeasbrief," in *RAC*, Supplement 1 (ed. T. Klauser and E. Dassmann; Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2001), 574 suggests "gegen Ende des 2. Jh. v.Chr." (towards the end of the second century B.C.E.).