The Hebrew Bible

Volume 1C
Writings

Edited by

Armin Lange
Emanuel Tov

Area Editors

Alessandro Maria Bruni (Georgian Translations, Old Church Slavonic Traditions)
Ignacio Carbajosa Pérez (Syriac Translations [Peshitta, Syro-Hexapla, Jacob of Edessa, Syro-Lucianic])
Claude Cox (Armenian Translations)
Sidnie White Crawford (Samaritan Pentateuch)
Steve Delamarter (Ethiopic Translations)
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Armin Lange (Ancient Hebrew/Aramaic Texts)
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THB logo design: Lika Tov, Jerusalem

Cover design: Celine van Hoek Leiden, the Netherlands.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Lange, Armin, 1961- editor.
Title: The Hebrew Bible / edited by Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov.
Description: Leiden ; Boston : Brill, 2016- | Series: Textual history of the Bible, ISSN 2468-3027 | Includes bibliographical references and index. Contents: Vol. 1C Writings.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016013903 | ISBN 9789004337114 (v. 1C : hardback : alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Bible. Old Testament–Criticism, Textual.
Classification: LCC BS1136 .H43 2016 | DDC 221.6/7–dc23 LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2016013903

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 2468-3027
e-ISSN 2452-4107 (THB online)
ISBN 978-90-04-33711-4 (hardback 1C)

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with Symmachus (καὶ κατήχθη). In Cant 4:8, the Vulgate *veni* "come" and LXX Δεῦρο presuppose a vocalization of the Hebrew as an imperative with final *he*, אֲתֵה, whereas MT reads a preposition with first person suffix, אִתִּי "with me."

In cases where a distinction between *Ketiv* and *Qere* is clear from the translation, the Vulgate of the Five Scrolls agrees with the *Ketiv* much less often (3×: Esth 3:4; Lam 4:12; 5:5) than with the *Qere* (20×: Ruth 1:8; 3:3[2×], 4,14; Qoh 4:8, 17; 12:6; Esth 1:16; 9:27; Lam 2:2; 3:20, 25, 32, 39; 4:3, 16, 17; 5:3, 7[2×]).

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Vincent Skemp

13–17.1.8 Arabic Translations

13–17.1.8.1 Background

The most unstable textual history concerning the order of biblical books is associated with the collection of the Five Scrolls (*Megillot*).[1] The MT books of Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther (→ 13.2.2; → 14.2.2; → 15.2.2; → 16.2.2; → 17.2.2) are not grouped together in Qumran manuscripts and appear appended to certain books in the LXX versions and some Christian Bibles, where Ruth follows Judges and Lamentations follows Jeremiah (→ 1.3.1.1.4). In the medieval Leningrad Codex (→ 10–20.1), they are found grouped together in the following order: Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. The practice of grouping these books together in codices emerges in the Middle Ages and appears to originate from the oral custom of reading out these five books in the synagogue on the Jewish festivals.

The two most common orders of the Five Scrolls in Jewish (Masoretic) medieval codices are based on either chronological or ritual principles, the latter based on the sequence of the holidays in which they are read out in synagogue worship. The order according to chronological considerations is based on the assumed historical period in which they were written. This order seems to be in agreement with the Palestinian tradition: Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther. The order based on the sequence of the Jewish holidays seems to be in agreement with the Babylonian tradition: Song of Songs – read on Passover; Ruth – read on *Shavuʿot* (Pentecost), Lamentations – read on Ninth of Av, Ecclesiastes – read on *Sukkot* (Feast of Booths), and Esther – read on *Purim*. In as much as ritual readings of these books take place throughout the year, it is not surprising to discover that they were translated, among other languages, into Judeo-Arabic. This entry is limited to the description of modern scholarly editions of medieval Judeo-Arabic translations of the Five Scrolls.

13–17.1.8.2 Ruth (Karaite Translations)

Karaite Judaism, which emerged in the ninth century C.E., was motivated by the rejection of Jewish oral law and rabbinic authority, and an ethos of return to Scripture. Hence, the Karaites inaugurated a translation enterprise of their own. Most Karaite translations were written in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the golden age of Karaite literary activity (→ 1.3.6).

The Karaite exegete of the tenth century, Yefet ben ʿElī, translated the entire Bible into Judeo-Arabic, a translation that has survived in numerous manuscript sources (→ 10.3.8; → 12.3.8). The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts lists fourteen fragments of Yefet's translation and com-

[1] The writing of this article was supported by the Israel Science Foundation, grant No. 410/10.

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mentary on Ruth, the oldest of which is dated to the eleventh century and written in Arabic characters. The first modern publication of Yefet's translation and commentary on Ruth was prepared by Schorstein in 1903.[2] Schorstein's edition includes the first two chapters of Ruth. It is based primarily on BL Or. 2554, which is written entirely in Arabic characters, including Hebrew verses and terms. Schorstein did not adhere to the script of the manuscript, rather he transcribed the Hebrew verses and terms into Hebrew characters. In addition, Schorstein further changed the Arabic orthography to conform to Classical Arabic.[3] Schorstein's edition was later translated into Hebrew by Markon, who mistakenly attributed it to Salmon b. Yerūḥam.[4] In 1952, Nemoy published a translation into English of Yefet's introduction and commentary on Ruth 1–2 as part of a collection of Karaite literature.[5] A study of Yefet's translation and commentary on Ruth, including the analysis of his translation techniques, was published as a PhD thesis by Blumfield in 2001.[6] Subsequently, in 2003, Butbul published a critical edition of Yefet's translation and commentary on Ruth including a translation into Hebrew. In an effort to reflect faithfully her sources, Butbul's edition combines both Hebrew and Arabic script.[7]

Tanḥum ben Yosef ha-Yerushalmi, a Rabbanite scholar who lived in Egypt in the thirteenth century, wrote a Judeo-Arabic commentary on Ruth. However, this commentary does not include a translation. A scholarly edition of this commentary was published by Michael Wechsler in 2010.[8]

13–17.1.8.3 Song of Songs (Karaite Translations)

The first scholar who edited and published parts of of Yefet ben ʿElī's translation and commentary on the Song of Songs was Paul Achilles Jung, the father of Carl Gustav Jung, the famous psychiatrist. Jung included in his unpublished dissertation the first chapter of Yefet's work on Song of Songs.[9] Subsequently, Bargès published Yefet's entire translation and commentary on Song of Songs with a translation into Latin. Bargès' edition presents Yefet's writing in Arabic script speckled with Hebrew-script insertions wherever Yefet cites Hebrew text. The edition is prefaced with an introduction, which includes information about Yefet, his life and work, and an update on the state of the field of Yefet's studies.[10] A study of Jung's work on Yefet's Song of Songs was published recently by Ryce-Menuhin.[11] A new edition of Yefet's translation and commentary on Song of Songs 1 that includes a translation into English was published lately by Alobaidi.[12] Yefet's approach to Song of Songs is manifested in his commentary, which is made up of a two-tier interpretation, one literal and the other allegorical. On the allegorical level, Yefet views the Song of Songs as a prophetic revelation in which the male-female relationship represents the relationship between God and the community of Israel, its leaders and nobles. In addition, Yefet suggests that there is a correlation between the Song of Songs and the thirty psalms that are titled *shir*. Frank has published several studies in which he uses Yefet's commentary on Song of Songs as a model of Karaite thought and exegesis. His work is replete with sample passages of Yefet's translation and commentary on Song of Songs accompanied by Frank's English translation.[13] Salmon b. Yerūḥam also translated and wrote a commentary on Song of Songs. Salmon's work on Song of Songs has not been published yet in a scholarly edition. However, a study of both Yefet and Salmon's work on Song of Songs was published by Frank in 2003.[14]

[2] Schorstein, *Commentar*.
[3] Butbul, "Ruth."
[4] Markon, "Ruth."
[5] Nemoy, *Anthology*.
[6] Blumfield, "Ruth."
[7] Butbul, "Ruth."
[8] Wechsler, *Strangers*.
[9] Jung, "Über des Karäers Jephet arabische Erklärung des Hohenliedes."
[10] Bargès, *Canticum*; Zawanowska, "Review."
[11] Ryce-Menuhin, *Jung*.
[12] Alobaidi, *Old*.
[13] Frank, "Song of Songs"; Frank, "Shoshanim"; Frank, *Search*.
[14] Frank, "Song of Songs."

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13–17.1.8.4 Ecclesiastes

13–17.1.8.4.1 A Rabbanite Translation

An early Rabbanite Judeo-Arabic translation and commentary on Ecclesiastes was prepared by the Andalusian sage Isaac ben Judah Ibn Ghayyath (1038–1089) who lived in Lucena where he was the head of a Jewish academy. Ibn Ghayyath titled his work on Ecclesiastes *Kitāb al-Zuhd* "*The Book of Asceticism*." His translation reflects his approach to the book as a guide to ascetic living. His work betrays a great knowledge of philosophy and Greek sciences. He prefaces his work with a long introduction in which he includes a detailed study of the heavenly bodies, their positions and constellations. In addition to his emphasis on asceticism, his commentary includes long passages in which he further discusses the heavenly bodies and their movements. This work was included by Qafiḥ in his collection *Hamesh Megillot*[15] and translated into Hebrew. In his preface, Qafiḥ points out that the work is probably wrongly attributed to Saadia in Yemenite manuscript sources. Pines points out that this translation and commentary was identified as Ibn Ghayyath's by several scholars as early as the nineteenth century. He adds that the medieval Jewish proselyte who converted to Islam late in life, Hibatu Allah ʿAlī ibn Malkā Abū al-Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. ca. 1164), cites passages from Ibn Ghayyath's commentary in his own work on Ecclesiastes. Abū al-Barakāt unambiguously mentions his source.[16] Abū al-Barakāt's Judeo-Arabic translation and commentary on Ecclesiastes has not yet been published.

13–17.1.8.4.2 Karaite Translations

The first modern edition of Yefet's translation and commentary on Qohelet 1–6 was prepared by Bland.[17] This edition includes an introduction on Yefet's methods and style, his sources, and mode of interpretation. It also includes a critical edition of Yefet's Judeo-Arabic translation and commentary on the first six chapters of Ecclesiastes followed by an English translation. Numerous passages of Yefet's work on Ecclesiastes coupled with translation into Hebrew were prepared by Ben-Shammai as part of his unpublished PhD dissertation.[18] Prior to that, a study of Yefet's commentary on Ecclesiastes was published by Vajda.[19] Currently, Robinson is working on a critical edition of the entire text of Yefet on Ecclesiastes including a translation into English.[20]

The medieval Karaite, Salmon ben Yerūḥam, also wrote a translation and commentary on Ecclesiastes. Robinson recently published a critical edition of Salmon's work. The introduction to this publication includes a discussion of the role of Ecclesiastes in Karaism, Salmon's methods and approaches, his sources, the ideology behind his commentary, and a description of the manuscripts used.[21]

13–17.1.8.5 Lamentations

13–17.1.8.5.1 A Rabbanite Translation

According to the online catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, a few fragments of Saadia Gaon's translation and commentary on Lamentations have been identified. Based on some of these manuscripts, Qafiḥ published an edition of Saadia's translation of Lamentations in his collection *Five Megillot*.[22] The text is complemented with occasional comments that Qafiḥ refers to as "according to Saadia." He explains that these are a reworking of Saadia's comments by later copyists and commentators. Segments of Saadia's commentary on Lamentations found in the Cairo Genizah were published by Ratzaby.[23]

13–17.1.8.5.2 Karaite Translations

With regard to Yefet's work on Lamentations, Ben-Shammai, in his article in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, says "to date Lamentations is the only bib-

[15] Qafiḥ, *Hamesh*.
[16] Pines, "Four"; cf. Sáenz-Badillos, "Ibn Ghayyat".
[17] Bland, *Ecclesiastes*.
[18] Ben-Shammai, "Doctrines."
[19] Vajda, *Deux*.
[20] Robinson, *Qohelet*.
[21] Robinson, *Asceticism*.
[22] Qafiḥ, *Hamesh*.
[23] Ratzaby, "Selections"; Ratzaby, "Perakim."

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lical book on which no trace of Japheth's commentary has been identified."[24] However, recently, three manuscripts have been listed by the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (Israel National Library) as Yefet's work on Lamentations. In addition, Frank mentions a fourth unidentified manuscript, RNL MS Yevr.-Arab. I. 3806, which he suggests includes Yefet's work on Lamentations.[25] Nevertheless, none of these manuscripts has been published in a scholarly edition as yet.

Salmon ben Yerūḥam also wrote a Judeo-Arabic translation and commentary on Lamentations. More than one hundred fragments of this work are listed in the catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (Israel National Library). Modern scholarly publications of Salmon's work on Lamentations include Feuerstein's publication of the first chapter of Salmon's translation and commentary on Lamentations.[26] Much later, a critical edition of Salmon's work on Lamentations was completed by Abdul-Karim.[27] Lastly, Jessica Andruss is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation that will include the edition and translation of selected passages from Salmon's work on Lamentations. Her research entails primarily a study of Salmon's approach to theology and exegesis as reflected in his commentary.

13–17.1.8.6 Esther

13–17.1.8.6.1 A Rabbanite Translation

The earliest known translation of Esther into Judeo-Arabic is Saadia Gaon's. A modern critical edition of this translation, which does not include a commentary, was published in 1961 by Qafiḥ in his collection *Five Megillot*.[28] Recently, Wechsler published ten newly identified fragments of Saadia's commentary on Esther.[29] This publication does not include Saadia's translation of Esther. Wechsler included in this article a translation of these fragments into English. Often medieval commentators rename biblical books to reflect their own point of view concerning the essence of those books. In light of this tradition, Saadia titled his work on Esther *Kitāb al-īnās bi-'l-jalwa* "*The Book of Conviviality in Exile*."[30] Saadia's entire surviving commentary on Esther has been fully reconstructed and was published in 2015 by Wechsler.[31] For further details and background on Saadia's method and approach to translation, see, inter alia, → 10.3.8, → 11.3.8, or → 12.3.8.

13–17.1.8.6.2 Karaite Translations

Yefet's Arabic translation and commentary on Esther has survived in Hebrew script. It was edited and published in 2008 by Wechsler.[32] Interestingly, Yefet titled his work on Esther *Sharḥ megillat Ahashwerosh* "*Commentary on the Scroll of Ahasuerus*." The work includes an introduction in which Yefet outlines the events and transgressions that led to the exile. In his commentary on the first verse, he continues his introduction as he outlines the events that took place in exile and that led to the occurrences that are described in Esther. It is important to note that in his commentary, found at the end of chapter seven, Yefet suggests that the compiler (*mudawwin*) of Esther based his composition on the writings of Esther herself.[33] To wit, Yefet suggests that the book of Esther is based on the writings of the woman whose name comprises the title of the book.

No other translation of Esther into Judeo-Arabic has been published to date. Ten fragments of translation and commentary on Esther were identified as Salmon ben Yerūḥam's. However, they have not yet been published.[34] The commentary of Tanḥum ha-Yerushalmi on Esther was published by Wechsler together with his commentary on Ruth. However, Tanḥum did not include a translation into Judeo-Arabic.[35]

[24] Ben-Shammai, "Japheth."
[25] Frank, *Search*.
[26] Feuerstein, *Commentar*.
[27] Abdul-Karim, "Lamentations."
[28] Qafiḥ, *Hamesh*.
[29] Wechsler, "Ten."
[30] Wechsler, "Ten."
[31] Wechsler, *Conviviality*.
[32] Wechsler, *Esther*.
[33] Wechsler, *Esther*; Sasson, "Gender."
[34] Wechsler, *Esther*.
[35] Wechsler, *Strangers*.

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Many of the sources mentioned in this entry that pertain to Yefet's work are listed in two recent publications of Zawanowska.[36] For other Karaite scholarship, see also Walfish's recent survey of Karaite bibliography.[37]

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[36] Zawanowska, "Review"; Zawanowska, "Yefet Ben ʿElī."

[37] Walfish, *Bibliographia*.

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Ilana Sasson

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