

Philology and Textual Criticism

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Edited by

Innocent Himbaza and
Jan Joosten

Innocent Himbaza is Titular Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and Hebrew, University of Fribourg, Switzerland.
orcid.org/0000-0003-1284-1571

Jan Joosten is Regius Professor of Hebrew, University of Oxford; Student of Christ Church.
orcid.org/0000-0002-8553-3994

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Considerations on Questions Philology Cannot Solve While Reconstructing the Text of the Hebrew Bible

Viktor Golinets*

Reconstruction of the text and textual history of a literary work is a task of and a challenge for philologists. In the case of the Hebrew Bible that has been transmitted over a long period and that is attested in various textual witnesses, philologists receive great support from other humanities like theology and history. However, the main text-critical work, such as collecting, analysing, and explaining textual variants, including reconstructing the oldest accessible text, belongs to the domain of philology. While philology can (often) explain changes that occurred during the process of textual transmission and development of textual variants, it cannot always identify the original textual form or the author's intention in terms of grammar and vocabulary.¹ Many of such cases involve questions of Hebrew orthography and morphology, and the reasons for the variance in, and the ambivalence of, decisions made by textual scholars lie in the nature of Hebrew orthography and morphology. The present study deals with cases where no philological arguments can be brought for the establishing of the oldest inferable reading.

1. Orthography of plural nouns before suffixed pronouns

In the orthography of plural nouns before a suffixed pronoun 3d person m. sg. in the Masoretic manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, two forms are attested: the *defective* form י- and the *plene* form י-. The morphophonological development of the *plene* form has been explained in different ways. According to some scholars, the letter *Yod* of the *plene* form originates in the morphophonology of the

* I am grateful to Ross Teasler for proofreading the text.

¹ For the present study, it is irrelevant whether we understand an author of a biblical book as a person or as a collective of authors or as a collective of tradents. In any case, the question arises, which specific form was intended in a specific time and place, and how it was understood in a later time and in another place.

plural nouns with suffixed pronouns.² According to another view,³ the letter *Yod* is merely a graphic marker of the plural form of the noun. It originates in the use of *Yod* in other plural forms but has no phonological or phonetic value in connection with the digraph יו-. Whatever the morphophonological development of the *plene* form,⁴ it is clear that the orthographically *defective* form is the older one, as it is featured in ancient Hebrew inscriptions,⁵ while the *plene* form is only marginally attested in this corpus.⁶

The alternation between י- and יו- has been a problem for ancient and modern students and editors of the Bible text. As far as the work of the ancients is concerned, different ways of dealing with this issue are attested in the Masoretic Bible manuscripts. The following six types of form attestation can be discerned.

² H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1918–1922; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1962), § 25f; G. Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik. I. Teil: Einleitung, Schrift und Lautlehre* (Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1918; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms, 1962), § 16e; F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman *Early Hebrew Orthography. A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (American Oriental Series 36. New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1952), 47.

³ H. M. Orlinsky, “The Biblical Prepositions *tāḥat*, *bēn*, *bāʾad*, and Pronouns *ʾanū* (or *ʾanū*), *zōʾtāh*,” *HUCA* 17 (1942–1943): 267–292, at 288–289; E. A. Knauf, „War „Biblisch-Hebräisch“ eine Sprache? – Empirische Gesichtspunkte zur linguistischen Annäherung an die Sprache der althebräischen Literatur,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 3 (1990): 11–23, at 20, and D. N. Freedman, “The Evolution of Hebrew Orthography,” *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Orthography*, ed. D. N. Freedman, A. D. Forbes and F. I. Andersen (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 2. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 3–15, at 9, nr. 6. In this position it is comparable with its employment after feminine plural markers before suffixed pronouns like in מְצֻיָּה (passim) vs. מְצֻיָּה (Ps 119:98).

⁴ Cf. F. M. Cross, “Some Problems in Old Hebrew Orthography with Special Attention to the Third Person Masculine Singular Suffix on Plural Nouns [-āw].” *Eretz Israel* 27 (2003): 18*–24* [reprinted in F. M. Cross, *Leaves from an Epigrapher’s Notebook. Collected Papers in Hebrew and West Semitic Palaeography and Epigraphy* (Harvard Semitic Studies 51. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 351–356].

⁵ Cf. G. B. Sarfatti, “Hebrew Inscriptions of the First Temple Period – a Survey and Some Linquistic Comments,” *Maarav* 3/1 (1982): 55–83, at 65; J. Renz, *Materialen zur althebräischen Morphologie* (Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik II/2. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 8.

⁶ Cf. the forms *šryh* “his enemies” in an inscription from Ḥirbet el-Kōm [J. Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften. Teil 1. Text und Kommentar* (Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik, vol. I. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995), 209, Kom(8):3,3], and *pnw* “his face” in Ketef Hinnom (455, Jer(x):35,9). Because of the *plene* orthography of the latter form, the date of second inscription from Ketef Hinnom has been assigned to the post exilic times (448), and not to the second part of the seventh century BCE as originally proposed by G. Barkay, “ברכת הכוהנים על לוחיות כסף מכתב הינום שבירושלים,” *Cathedra* 52 (1989): 37–76, at 64 (in Hebrew; translated as “The Priestly Benediction on Silver Plaques from Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem,” *Tel-Aviv* 19 (1992): 139–192, at 174). See the discussion about the attestation of the *plene* form *pnw* in connection with dating the inscription in G. Barkay, M. J. Lundberg, A. G. Vaughn and B. Zuckerman, “The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation,” *The BASOR* 334 (2004): 41–71, at 52–55, 67, and in A. Berlejung, “Ein Programm fürs Leben. Theologisches Wort und anthropologischer Ort der Silberamulette von Ketef Hinnom,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 204–230, at 208–212.

1.1. Both defective and plene forms are attested in the consonantal text

Some words are attested both in *defective* and *plene* forms in the *Ketiv* of the consonantal text. Two subcategories can be discerned in this item.

a. The *defective* form is the common, while the *plene* form is marginally attested:

In the Leningrad Codex the form יְחַדּוּ is attested 92 times,⁷ while יְחַדִּי appears only in Jer 46:12, 21; 49:3.⁸

b. The *plene* form is the common, while the *defective* form is marginally attested: תַּחֲתָיו x 99;⁹ תַּחֲתֹו appears only in 2 Sam 2:23, 3:12; 16:8; Job 9:13 in each case with a *Qere* note.

1.2. Plural forms written defective

In some instances, the orthography is *defective*, while the context demands a plural form.

Deut 27:10

וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וַעֲשִׂיתָ אֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־חֻקָּיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנִכִּי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם:

In Deut 7:9 and 8:2 the form מִצְוֹתָיו is furnished with the *Qere* מִצְוֹתָיו. DP¹⁰ features *Qere* notes in all three places.

1 Sam 18:14

וַיְהִי דָוִד לְכָל־דָּרְכּוֹ מִשְׁכִּיל וַיְהִי עָמוֹ:

The Aleppo and the Cairo Codices¹¹ feature here the *Qere* דָּרְכָיו. L features the *Masora parva* note ד חסר “four times defective,” while the *Masora magna* to

⁷ In the following all Hebrew examples are cited according to the Leningrad Codex: D.N. Freedman (ed.), *The Leningrad Codex. A Facsimile Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans / Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1998), if not otherwise noted. In the following it is abbreviated as “L.”

⁸ In Jer 48:7 it appears as *Qere* for יַחַד (this way also in the Aleppo and Cairo codices and in BCP).

⁹ One instance is מִתְחַתִּי Exod 10:23 and the other is וּמִתְחַתִּי Zech 6:12.

¹⁰ “DP” – “Damascus Pentateuch”: D. S. Loewinger (ed.), *The Damascus Pentateuch. Manuscript from about the year 1000 containing almost the whole Pentateuch. Jewish National and Univ. Library, Jerusalem, Hebr. Quart. 5702. Part I* (Early Hebrew Manuscripts in Facsimile 1; Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1978); M. Beit-Arié (ed.), *The Damascus Pentateuch. Manuscript from About the Year 1000 Containing Almost the Whole Pentateuch. Jewish National and Univ. Library, Jerusalem, Hebr. Quart. 5702. Part II* (Early Hebrew Manuscripts in Facsimile 1; Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1982).

¹¹ In the following abbreviated as “A” and “C.” Cf. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *The Aleppo Codex. Provided with Massoretic Notes and Pointed by Aron Ben Asher. The Text Considered Authoritative by Maimonides. Part One. Plates* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1976); <http://www.aleppocodex.org/aleppocodex.html>; all internet pages retrieved on February 6th, 2018). D. S. Loewinger (ed.), *Codex Cairo of the Bible. From the Karaite Synagogue at Abbasiya. The Earliest Extant Hebrew Manuscript Written in 895 by Moshe ben Asher. A Limited Facsimile Edition of 160 Copies* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1971).

Ps 10:5 in L correctly lists five occurrences of the plural דרכו “his ways” (cf. Mm 3210).¹²

1 Sam 18:22

וַיֵּצֵא שָׂאוּל אֶת־עַבְדּוֹ דָּבָרוֹ אֶל־דָּוִד בְּלֹט לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה חַפֵּץ בְּךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל־עַבְדָּיו אֶהְבֹּד וְעַתָּה הִתְחַתֵּן בַּמֶּלֶךְ:

While A and L have no *Qere* for עַבְדּוֹ, C features the *Qere* note דָּוִי. The *Masora parva* on עַבְדּוֹ in A and L reads ב חסר “two times defective,” the second instance being Jer 22:4 (cf. Mm 2571).

1.3. Defective and plene forms are attested in the same verse

Sometimes *defective* and *plene* forms are attested in the same verse on nouns that correspond with each other within the verse on the semantic level. Due to the semantics of the context (enumeration of items, parallelism), either singular or plural is expected in both occurrences.

Deut 7:10

וּמִשְׁלֵם לְשֹׂנְאָיו אֶל־פָּנָיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵז לְשֹׂנְאָו אֶל־פָּנָיו יִשְׁלֹם־לוֹ:

The form שֹׂנְאָיו – which is also the reading of DP and B¹³ – should be singular here, because it corresponds to the second attestation of this word and is referred to in the forms לְהַאֲבִידוֹ and לוֹ by the singular pronoun. BHQ 5:25 suggests to read the singular form.¹⁴ Some textual witnesses, however, took another path of interpretation and understood the form שֹׂנְאוֹ in the second part of the verse as plural (cf. BHS and BHQ).¹⁵

Prov 6:13

קֹרֵץ בָּעֵינָיו מִלֵּל בְּרִגְלוֹ מֶרֶה בְּאַצְבָּעָיו:

The context of the verse demands to understand the three prepositional objects as plural. The Masoretic vocalization regards the first two indirect objects בָּעֵינָיו and בְּרִגְלוֹ as plural notwithstanding their *defective* orthography. While A and the manuscript “Cambridge University Library Add. 1573” feature *Qere* for both

¹² “Mm” – *Masora magna*, G.E. Weil, *Massorah Gedolah iuxta Codicem Leningradensem B 19 a*. (Rom: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971).

¹³ “B” – British Library Or. 4445 (http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_4445). In this chapter, however, in the second, Yemenite hand of 1540 CE.

¹⁴ “BHQ” – *Biblia Hebraica, quinta editio cum apparatu critico novis curis elaborato* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft): 1. *Genesis* (prepared by A. Tal. 2015). 5. *Deuteronomy* (prepared by Carmel McCarthy. 2007). 13. *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (prepared by A. Gelston. 2010). 18. *General Introduction and Megillot*, ed. A. Schenker, Y.A.P. Goldman, A. van der Kooij (G.J. Norton, S. Pisano, J. de Waard, R.D. Weis. 2004). 20. *Ezra and Nehemiah* (prepared by D. Marcus. 2006).

¹⁵ “BHS” – K. Elliger and W. Rudolph (eds.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Editio funditus renovata* (Editio quinta emendata opera A. Schenker. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997).

nouns (cf. BHQ 17:35*–36*), L has *Qere* only for the first one and notes that this *defective* form appears eight times (Mm 1543; BHQ 17:24*). CB¹⁶ has the same orthography as L, and because of the torn margins of the folio it is unclear if there has been a *Masora parva* note.

In some other similar instances, plural is suggested by *Qere*, eg. 1 Sam 18:7; 1 Sam 29:5; Ezek 47:11 (s. the examples in the following rubric). For 1 Sam 18:22, s. section 1.2.

1.4. Orthography is defective, while the context demands plural forms, and the latter are suggested by the *Qere*

The examples of this type are ubiquitous¹⁷ and their amount varies from manuscript to manuscript. I cite only a few of these examples. The forms in round brackets are *Ketiv*, while forms in square brackets are *Qere*.

Exod 27:11

וְכֵן לַפֶּאֱתָא צִפּוֹן בְּאַרְבַּע קִלְעִים מֵאָה אַרְבַּע (וְעַמּוּדִי) עֲשִׂימִם וְאֲדִינֵיהֶם עֲשִׂימִם נְחֹשֶׁת וְיֵה עֲמֻדִים
וְחִשְׁקֵיהֶם כֶּסֶף:

DP also has a *Qere* note here. B features the form עֲמּוּדִי where the letter *Yod* has been inserted after the form was originally written without this letter.

1 Sam 8:3

וְלֹא־הָלְכוּ בְנֵי (בְּדָרְכָּו) וַיִּשְׂאוּ אַחֲרָיִהּ בְּבָצַע וַיִּקְחוּ־שָׁחַד וַיִּשְׂאוּ מִשְׁפָּט:

A has no *Qere*, but it features a frequency note in which the figure has been partly erased. The letter traces allow reconstructing the letter *Heh* so that the note could have been “five times *defective*.” C features *Qere* and notes that this *defective* form appears 5 times (cf. Mm 3210 and 1 Sam 18:14 in section 1.2).

Jer 17:10

אֲנִי יְהוָה חֹקֵר לֵב בְּתֵן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלִתֵּת לְאִישׁ (בְּדָרְכָּו) כִּפְרִי מַעֲלָלִי:

A has here only the note ה חס “five times *defective*,” while C features a *Qere* note. Singular דָּרְכּוֹ also yields sense in this context, but the plural has a morphological counterpart in the parallelistic apposition מַעֲלָלִי.

2 Sam 1:11

וַיִּתְּחַק דָּוִד (בְּבִגְדָּו) וַיִּקְרָעם וְגַם כָּל־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:

C also features *Qere* here, while A has only the note ל חס “*defective* only once.”

Ezek 47:11

(בְּצִאֲתוֹ) [בְּצִאֲתָיו] וְגַבְאִיו וְלֹא יִרְפְּאוּ לְמַלַּח נִתְּנוּ:

¹⁶ “CB” – Codex Berlin Or. Qu. 680 (I. Yeivin, *Bible Hagiographia. Codex Berlin Or. Qu. 680 – Codex New York, JTS 510*. (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972); http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN737242485&PHYSID=PHYS_0005).

¹⁷ Cf. also Deut 7:9; Jer 22:4; Ezek 43:11; Job 27:15; 38:41.

A, BCP, C and R also feature *Qere* here.¹⁸

Job 40:17

יִחַפֵּץ זָנְבוֹ כְּמוֹ־אָרְוֵי גִידֵי (פַּחֲדִיו) [פַּחֲדִיו] יִשְׁרְגוּ:

פַּחֲדִיו “his thighs” designates a paired body part and the form has here to be considered as dual. The Aleppo Codex also features *Qere* here.

In יִדְיוֹ (יָדָיו) [שְׁתֵּי יָדָיו] Lev 16:21,¹⁹ the plural of the noun is being demanded by the cardinal number that specifies the noun. Similarly, the readings יָדָיו and יָדָיו are attested in contexts that describe actions carried out by two hands, like Exod 32:19; Lev 9:22; Job 5:18.²⁰

In the following synonymous examples, the distribution of *Ketiv* and *Qere* in A, C and L is fluctuating:

1 Sam 18:7	בְּרַבְּבָתָיו	בְּאַלְפֵי (בְּאַלְפֵי) יָדָיו	הֵכָה שְׂאוֹל
1 Sam 21:12	[בְּרַבְּבָתָיו]	יָדָיו [בְּאַלְפֵי]	הֵכָה שְׂאוֹל
1 Sam 29:5	[בְּרַבְּבָתָיו]	בְּאַלְפֵי יָדָיו	הֵכָה שְׂאוֹל

The same distribution of forms in these three verses in the three manuscripts displays certain stability of the notes in these verses within the Masoretic text tradition.

1.5. Plural forms contradict context or the word usage

Sometimes the reading of the plural in the Masoretic text contradicts the context or the word usage attested elsewhere:

Job 26:14

הַיָּאֵלָה | קָצוֹת (דְּרָכָו) [דְּרָכָיו] וּמֵה־שִׁמְעֵן דָּבָר נִשְׁמַעֲבוּ וְרַעַם (גְּבוּרָתוֹ) [גְּבוּרוֹתָיו] מִי יִתְבּוֹנֵן:

Instead of the plural *Qere* גְּבוּרוֹתָיו “his mighty deeds” the singular *Ketiv* form גְּבוּרָתוֹ “his might/power” of the consonantal text should be preferred. The reason for this reading is that the uncountable abstract noun גְּבוּרָה suits the context better than the countable noun גְּבוּרוֹת “mighty deeds.” “His mighty

¹⁸ “BCP” – the “Babylonian Codex of Petrograd” (St. Petersburg, National Library of Russia, shelf-mark Бвп. I B 3. Cf. H.L. Strack, *Prophetarum posteriorum Codex Babylonicus Petropolitanus* (St. Petersburg: C. Ricker / Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs 1876) [reprinted as *The Hebrew Bible – Latter Prophets. The Babylonian Codex of Petrograd*. Prolegomenon by P. Wernberg-Møller (New York: Ktav, 1971)]. “R” – “Codex Reuchlinianus” (A. Sperber (ed.), *Codex Reuchlinianus*. No. 3 of the *Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe (Formerly Durlach No. 55)*. With a *General Introduction: Masoretic Hebrew*. (Corpus codicum hebraicorum medii aevi. Pars II. The Pre-Masoretic Bible Discovered in Four Manuscripts, Representing a Unique Tradition. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1956); <http://digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/blbhs/Handschriften/content/titleinfo/3395233>).

¹⁹ Also in B and DP.

²⁰ In Ezek 43:26, however, singular should be read because the idiomatic expression מִלֵּא יָד “to consecrate somebody” is construed with singular “hand” (cf. Exod 28:41; 29:9, 29, 33, 35; 32:29; Lev 8:33; 16:32; 21:10; Num 3:3; Judg 17:5, 12; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 9:24; 1 Chr 29:5; 2 Chr 13:9; 29:31).

roaring/thundering” is more appropriate here than “the roaring/thundering of his mighty deeds.” To put it in morphosyntactical terms: גְּבוּרוֹת appears in the Hebrew Bible as *nomen regens* (Deut 3:24; Isa 63:15; Ps 20:7; 71:6; 106:2; 145:4, 12), but it never appears as *nomen rectum*.²¹

1.6. The Masoretic text features *Qere*, yet both readings suit the context

Sometimes the reading of the singular in the consonantal text is furnished with the *Qere* of the plural form, but the meaning of the context allows for both readings. This seems to be the most interesting category in the context of the present study, since the unambiguous reading cannot be established. This category comprises examples of an ambivalent form, which is being explained by the Masoretic notes in one way, while the other way of interpretation is ruled out.

Ps 106:45 : וַיִּזְכֹּר לָהֶם בְּרִיתוֹ וַיַּנְחֵם בְּרַב (חֲסָדִי) [חֲסָדִי]
Lam 3:32 : כִּי אִם-הוֹדָה וְרַחֵם בְּרַב (חֲסָדִי) [חֲסָדִי]

In Ps 106:45, A also features a *Qere* note. Which form did the author(s) or editor(s) of Ps 106:45 and Lam 3:32 intend? Which was the earliest inferable form?

The singular form בְּרַב חֲסָדִי “according to the abundance of thy mercy” is attested in Neh 13:22. Although the plural בְּרַב חֲסָדִי “according to the abundance of his mercy deeds” is attested in Isa 63:7, with the following arguments, the case can be made for the secondary nature of this expression with plural.

- The *defective* orthography in Ps 106:45 and Lam 3:32 is a strong argument for the primacy of the singular form.
- When the comparative phrase בְּרַב is construed with abstract nouns, the noun is in singular, because abstract conventionally are not used in plural; cf. בְּרַב גְּדֻלוֹ “according to the abundance of his greatness” (Ps 150:2).
- The use of the form חֲסָדִי in Isa 63:7 and hence the plural of *Qere* in Ps 106:45 and Lam 3:32 may have been triggered by the synonymic expression בְּרַב רַחֲמֵיךָ “according to the abundance of thy compassion” (Ps 51:3; 69:17). While רַחֲמִים “compassion,” being an abstract noun with the derivation morpheme *-im*,²² is not comparable to the plural חֲסָדִי, the use of the plural רַחֲמִים may have influenced the numerus and orthography of חֲסָדִי. In Isa 63:7, similarly as in Ps 25:6, חֲסָדִים is a synonymic expression to רַחֲמִים. The plural of חֲסָד, “*Gnadenerweise*,” is attested in the Bible, albeit not in connection with the noun רַב “abundance.”²³

²¹ According to S. M. Paul, ישעיה. פרקים מ–סו עם מבוא ופירוש (Tel Aviv: Am Oved / Jerusalem: Magnes, 2008), 33 [in Hebrew; translated as *Isaiah* 60–66. *Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans 2012), 44], the use of abstract substantives with masculine or feminine plural ending is indicative of Late Biblical Hebrew, although it is not confined to this period. In case of Job 26:14, the later form גְּבוּרוֹתֵי appears as *qere*.

²² Cf. e.g. אֶהְבֵּם וְדָדִים (Prov 7:18) “love”; אֲמָנִים “reliability”; אַפִּים “wrath” Dan 11:20; בְּחוּרִים “youth” Num 11:28; בְּתוּלִים “virginity”; etc.

²³ E.g. Gen 32:11; Ps 25:6; 89:2, cf. J. J. Stamm (ed.), *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Unveränderter Nachdruck der dritten Auflage [1967–1995]; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2004), 323.

While these arguments clearly speak for the secondary nature of the plural הַסְדִּי in Ps 106:45, Lam 3:32 and Isa 63:7, this form fits the context in the three occurrences just as well as the singular הַסְדִּי . On account of this, Ps 106:45 and Lam 3:32 are listed here and not under item 5, although they can reasonably be placed there.

1.7. *Interim conclusion*

All the forms discussed in section 1 are attested in only a few manuscript representatives of the Tiberian Masoretic text. These examples demonstrate that their orthography and hence their meaning can vary, and that the Masoretic text handles these forms in different ways. If a few textual witnesses already demonstrate different treatments of orthographically ambivalent *defective* plural forms with suffixed pronouns – as far as morphology and meaning are concerned –, then other textual witnesses would multiply cases of morphological and semantic ambiguity. The Hebrew variants from Qumran and from other mediaeval manuscripts, as well as renderings of the versions demonstrate the perception of relevant forms in these textual witnesses. This means that the textual variants concerning singular and plural forms of nouns with suffixed pronoun of the 3rd person singular are sometimes of no help in establishing the earliest inferable reading. The textual witnesses in their entirety – without any preference for any textual tradition – only demonstrate ancient exegetes' efforts to understand relevant contexts. It turns out that modern readers are mere guildsmen of ancient interpreters, and neither of them has any other guide in establishing the original or the earliest inferable form and meaning of a given text than by means of considering context and word usage. Philological and exegetical reasoning will help in many cases to establish the form required by the context, but in many places both singular and plural forms will semantically suit the textual environment.

The modern grammarian's classification of Biblical Hebrew orthographic forms as the singular for י- and plural for י- should be abandoned as unanchored in the texts: Although there are observable tendencies of writing י- for singular and י- for plural, which result in accepting this as a "rule" in Hebrew grammatical works, the textual reality demonstrates that the form י- designates the plural, while the form י- designates both singular and plural. The Masoretic treatment of the pertinent form has eliminated the morphological ambiguity, but it has also eliminated polysemy of expressions (cf. Deut 2:33; 33:9; 2 Kgs 13:16). In ancient Hebrew, there was no semantic ambiguity between the forms of the suffixed pronoun on singular and plural nouns because the pronoun on the singular noun was written ה- (cf. Renz 2003:7).

If readings with singular and plural variations are included in modern textual editions, the reason for this entry could only be to demonstrate exegetical possibilities and paths wandered by the exponents of particular traditions.²⁴ The

²⁴ There are, however, interesting cases of exact correspondence of grammatical number

graphic form h- for the plural is sometimes characterised in the BHQ as a graphical error, but this assessment is misleading.²⁵

If a modern editor wants to reconstruct a form in the text, it is advisable to reconstruct a *defective* form according to the principle *in dubio pro defectivo* (cf. Golinets 2010:458). The *defective* form is historically the older one and it allows two interpretations.

2. Orthography of forms of *tertiaie vocalis* roots

In this section, the *status constructus* forms of masculine nouns and participles of the roots *tertiaie vocalis* will be dealt with.

2.1. Challenging the common view

Masculine nouns and participles of *tertiaie vocalis* roots exhibit two *status constructus* forms in biblical Hebrew, the one ending in h- and the other ending in v- . The former form is commonly considered in modern grammars to be singular, while the latter is analysed as plural. However, while many form attestations support this rule, there are many examples which militate against it.

Some examples for the interchange between final h and v have already been mentioned elsewhere.²⁶ Sperber compared *Ketiv/Qere* forms as well as Masoretic text forms with those of the Samaritan Pentateuch. There is a tendency in the Samaritan Pentateuch to write the final *Yod* in the singular of nouns and participles where the Masoretic text has *Heh*. This tendency is also discernable in the nominal and verbal forms from the Qumran scrolls collected by Gottstein. In Masoretic manuscripts, another tendency is attested: there are more examples

between the Hebrew and the Septuagint forms in the cases, where one might expect another reading than that of the Masoretic text. In 2 Kgs 13:16, $\text{וַיִּמְרֹא לְמַלְכֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָרֹכֵב יָדָיו עַל־הַקֶּשֶׁת}$, the Septuagint translates the same number of “hands” as the Hebrew text, being sg., sg., pl., pl. In the first two instances plural is conceivable because a person has to use both hands in order to shoot. “Bow” in this context can mean both the bow and metonymically the bowstring.

²⁵ Cf. V. Golinets, review of BHQ 18, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 102 (2007): 492–501, at 499, and review of BHQ 5, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 105 (2010): 453–462, at 458. Fortunately, in other places in the BHQ there is no judgment made concerning *defective* forms (cf. Prov 6:13). In Deut 2:33 and 33:9, the editor prefers the *plene* forms, but she gives no characterisation of *defective* forms.

²⁶ A. Sperber, “Hebrew Based Upon Biblical Passages in Parallel Transmission.” *HUCA* 14 (1939): 153–249, at 205, § 68 (reprinted in Sperber, *A Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew. A Presentation of Problems with Suggestions to Their Solution* (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 234, 476–490, 562–566, 235–297; at 256, § 25); M. H. Gottstein, “Studies in the Language of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I. The Interchange of Final *Yod* and *He*.” *JJS* 4 (1953): 104–105; V. Golinets, review of BHQ 20, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 103 (2008): 60–68, at 65–66.

of plural forms ending in ה- than of singular forms ending in י-. The following chart illustrates the distribution of forms:

	<i>constructus</i> sg.	<i>constructus</i> pl.
Qumran	י-, ²⁷ ה-	י-
Samaritan Pentateuch	י-, ²⁸ ה-	י-, ²⁹ ה-, ³⁰ י-
Masoretic manuscripts	י-, ה-	י-, ה-

2.1.1. Forms ending in י- as singular

I could find in the Masoretic text only one example of a form which ends in י- and which is singular according to the context.

Eccl 11:9

שָׁמַח בְּחֹר בְּיִלְדוּתוֹ וְיָטִיב לִבּוֹ בִּימֵי בְּחֹרֻתוֹ וְהָלַךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבּוֹ וּבְמַרְאֵי עֵינָיו וְיָדַע כִּי עַל-כָּל-אֵלֶּה
יִבְיָאֵן הָאֱלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט:

Some Hebrew manuscripts feature מְרָאָה instead of מְרָאֵי, and versions translate with singular. *Masora parva* in L comments on this word “only once and in this orthography.” According to the Masoretic notes collated by Ginsburg מְרָאֵי of Eccl 11:9 is treated in some manuscript(s) as a case of *Ketiv*.³¹ According to a *Masora magna* note placed in L at Josh 18:24, the form מְרָאֵי belongs to six words that are written with *Yod* at the end but should be read with *Heh* (cf. Mm 1344).³² This note is absent in A but is featured in C and R at Josh 18:14. In the latter two, the note lists seven occurrences of such words, and Ginsburg cites a comparable note which also lists seven forms.³³

²⁷ 1QIsa^a 36:2 שָׁדִי versus שָׁדָה of the Masoretic text; 65:10 נִי צוֹאֵן versus נִי-צוֹאֵן; 66:2 רוּחַ versus נִי-רוּחַ. Cf. statistics brought by E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Harvard Semitic Studies 29. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1986), § 100.34, and cf. also עוֹשֵׂי in 4QPhyl¹ for עוֹשָׂה Deut 5:10 (s. BHQ), as well as examples cited by G. Geiger, *Das hebräische Partizip in den Texten aus der jüdischen Wüste* (Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 101; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 83 (singular עוֹשֵׂי from IQM XII:11; XIX:3) and 86, § 72.

²⁸ E.g. Gen 21:20 רָבִי vs. רָבָה of the Masoretic text; 47:4 מְרַעֵי vs. מְרַעָה (some Samaritan manuscripts read מְרַעָה (cf. L.-F. Giron Blanc, *Pentateuco hebreo-samaritano. Génesis. Edición crítica sobre la base de manuscritos inéditos* (Textos y Estudios „Cardenal Cisneros“ de la Biblia Políglota Matritense 15. Madrid: Instituto de filología del SCIC, 1976), 371); Lev 26:36 עֵלָה vs. עָלָה.

²⁹ E.g. Gen 13:7 (x2) רָעִי vs. רָעָה of the Masoretic text; Deut 18:1 אֲשֶׁה vs. אֲשֵׁי.

³⁰ E.g. רָעִי in Gen 13:8; 26:20 (x2); 46:34.

³¹ C. D. Ginsburg, *The Massorah Compiled from Manuscripts Alphabetically and Lexically Arranged. Vol. I. Aleph-Yod* (London: Georges Brög, 1880; reprinted Jerusalem: Makor, 1971; New York: Ktav, 1975), 345.

³² The letter at the beginning of the note is י but the note features only six instances.

³³ *The Massorah*, 681, nr. 29: Josh 18:24; 2 Sam 16:10; 21:21; 23:18; Mal 3:5; Eccl 11:9 + Jer 37:19. The last case is featured in R and in a note cited by Ginsburg, *The Massorah Compiled*, as the one of difference in opinion (פְּלִיג) concerning the correct reading.

מְטִי־גַר “who turn aside the alien” (Mal 3:5) is another instance of a form of *tertiæ vocalis* verbs recorded is this *Masora magna* note. However, the reason for the inclusion of מְטִי in this list is not clear. The form is paralleled by the participle עֲשֵׂקִי,³⁴ and both should be regarded as plural because they are paralleled by three plural nouns mentioned in the first half of the verse. Each of these five nominal forms refers to a group of persons and not to a single person. The *Masora parva* note on מְטִי in A reads ל “only once,” while the note in C and L read י ל כ ת, and the note in BCP reads ל ב יוד, “only once and written with *Yod*.” The *Masora parva* note in R has ל כ ת ב י וכל קריא בה “only once written with *Yod*; in the whole Scripture written with *Heh*.”

It is not clear why the Masorah suggests to read מְטִי as מְטָה. Another instance where the participle of the verb נטה is written with *Heh* is Deut 27:19. The syntax of the verse demands to understand this form as singular. The text of Mal 3:5 is an allusion to Deut 27:19, and the construct form מְטִי in the former has the same lexical meaning as the absolute form מְטָה in the latter. Presumably, the *Masora magna* note demands to read מְטִי as מְטָה for bringing the former in orthographic equality with מְטָה of Deut 27:19.

2.1.2. Forms ending in ה- as plural

In many instances in the Masoretic text, the forms ending in ה- are plural according to the context.

2.1.2.1. Nouns

2.1.2.1.1. מְדִיָּה/י

Deut 28:60

וְהָשִׁיב בָּךְ אֶת כָּל־מְדִיָּה מְצָרִים אֲשֶׁר יִגְרֶת מִפְּנֵיהֶם וְדָבְקוּ בָּךְ:

The plural pronoun of the anaphoric prepositional object מִפְּנֵיהֶם and the plural of the predicate דָּבְקוּ imply that מְדִיָּה is plural. Vulgate, Targum and Peshiṭta translate here with plural, and many medieval Hebrew manuscripts read מְדִיָּי. The syntagm כָּל־מְדִיָּי מְצָרִים is attested in Deut 7:15 (cf. BHQ). Samaritan Penta-teuch reads מדוי in both instances.

2.1.2.1.2. מַעֲשֵׂה

The expression “the work of the hand(s) of” (ידי) מַעֲשֵׂה- with its forty-one attestation³⁵ is more frequent in L than “the works of the hand(s) of,” (ידי) מַעֲשֵׂי-

³⁴ וְקִרְבָּתִי אֵלֶיכֶם לְמִשְׁפָּט וְהִיִּיתִי עַד מִמָּחָר בְּמִכְשָׁפִים וּבִמְנַגְּפִים וּבְנִשְׁבָּעִים לְשֹׁקֵר וּבְעֲשֻׁקֵי שְׂכָר־שְׂכִיר אֲלֻמָּה וְיָתוֹם וּמִטִּי־גַר וְלֹא יִרְאוּנִי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת:

³⁵ Deut 4:28; 16:15; 24:19; 27:15; 31:29; 1 Kgs 16:7; 2 Kgs 19:18; 22:17; 2 Chr 32:19; Job 1:10; 14:15; 34:19; Ps 19:2; 28:4–5; 90:17; 102:26; 115:4; 135:15; 143:5; Eccl 5:5; Cant 7:2; Isa 2:8; 5:12; 17:8; 19:25; 29:23; 37:19; 60:21; 65:22; Jer 10:3; 25:6–7, 14; 32:30; Lam 3:64; 4:2; Hos 14:4; Mic 5:12; Hag 2:14, 17.

which is attested seven times.³⁶ Hebrew manuscripts and ancient version deal differently with these expressions. The form *מַעֲשֵׂה* is found in medieval biblical manuscripts in places where L features *מַעֲשֵׂי* and where the context demands plural forms: Ps 8:7; 107:24; 111:2, 7; 118:17.³⁷

In Ps 19:2, the form *מַעֲשֵׂה* should be considered as plural because of the anti-congruence of the grammatical number within this parallel and chiasmically-structured verse.³⁸

A ₁	הַשְּׁמַיִם	pl.
B ₁	מַסְפָּרִים	pl.
C ₁	כְּבוֹד־	sg.
D ₁	אֵל	sg.
C ₂	וּמַעֲשֵׂה	pl.
D ₂	יָדָיו	pl.
B ₂	מִגִּיד	sg.
A ₂	הַרְקִיעַ:	sg.

Symmachus Targum and Vulgate translate here in the plural. BHS cites a Hebrew manuscript from Genizah that reads here *מעשי*, but I was unable to locate this manuscript.

Mic 6:16

וַיִּשְׁתַּמְרְ חֲקוֹת עַמִּי וְכֹל מַעֲשֵׂה בֵּית-אֲחָאָב וּתְלָכוּ בַּמַּעֲצוֹתָם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶינָה לְשִׁבְיָהּ לְשִׁרְקָהּ
וְחִרְפַּת עַמִּי תִשָּׂאוּ:

Septuagint, Aquila, Peshitta and Targum translate with plural what the Masoretic text features as *מַעֲשֵׂה*. The plural form fits the context better than the singular, since the preceding and the following noun of the three direct objects are in plural.

Ps 8:4

כִּי-אֶרְאֶה שָׁמַיִךְ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ יָרֵחַ וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָה:

The *Masora magna* note on *מַעֲשֵׂי* in L reads: כת יו למער כת, “according to the Orientals is written *מעשי* with *Yod* and according the Occidentals is written with *Heh*.”³⁹ Interestingly, the reading of L is the eastern one, although L originates in the West, in Egypt. The original reading of the Aleppo Codex was *מַעֲשֵׂי*, but the last letter has been changed into ה. The form *מַעֲשֵׂה* is

³⁶ Jer 1:16; 44:8; 2 Chr 34:25; Ps 8:7; 92:5; 111:7; 138:8.

³⁷ Cf. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum*; G. B. de Rossi, *Variae lectiones veteris testamenti librorum* (Parma: Bodoni, 1798; reprinted Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1969/1970); C. D. Ginsburg *The Writings. Diligently Revised according to the Massorah and the Early Editions with the Various Readings from MSS. and the Ancient Versions* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1926).

³⁸ Cf. W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOT.Supp. 26. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 118 f., for examples of anti-congruence in ancient Hebrew poetry.

³⁹ Cf. Mm 3206.

also featured in the edition of Jakob Ben-Ḥayyim⁴⁰ and in some medieval manuscripts. Septuagint, Vulgate, Targum, and Peshiṭta read or translate the plural. In verse 7, in contrast, A and L as well as the edition of Bomberg feature (יָדֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי) but some medieval manuscripts exhibit the form מַעֲשֵׂה.

Both the singular and the plural forms are contextually acceptable in verse 4. The singular “the work of your fingers” is the semantic apposition to שְׁמִיךָ, while the plural “the works of your fingers” is the morphological apposition to the plural of שְׁמִיךָ. The parallelism between verse 4 and 7 suggests that the forms should be regarded as plural in both verses.

2.1.2.2. Participles

2.1.2.2.1. The verb בנה

Mic 3:10

בְּנֵה צִיּוֹן בְּדָמִים וִירוּשָׁלַם בְּעוֹלָה:

Versions translate here with the plural the form that they saw in place of בְּנֵה of the Masoretic text. The BHQ explains this translation as “harmonisation with the context,” arguing in the commentary on the critical apparatus that “it is difficult to see why an original pl. might have been changed to a sg.” (BHQ 13:101*). BHQ also surmises that “reference may be to the king, as one category of leader alongside the groups listed in v. 11.” Admittedly, the reference in the context is made not to a single person but to groups of persons designated as the “heads of the house Jakob and chiefs of the house Israel” (verse 9) as well as “heads” and “priests” of Jerusalem (verse 11). The versions have perfectly understood the issue and they either have had בְּנֵי in their *Vorlagen* or they have not adhered to a modern orthographical rule that the editor of BHQ *Dodekapropheton* follows, and which determines his understanding of the Masoretic text.

2.1.2.2.2. The verb רעה

In Gen 46:34 and 47:3, the Masoretic text features רָעָה צֹאן, while in Gen 46:32 the reference to the same group of people reads רָעִי צֹאן. Semantically, the formulation תּוֹעֲבַת מִצְרַיִם כָּל־רָעָה צֹאן in 46:34 is a collective expression saying “all shepherds is an abomination unto the Egyptians,” and not “every single shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians,” which is a distributive expression. While in 46:34 the Septuagint translates distributive πᾶς ποιμὴν προβάτων “every shepherd,” Targum, Peshiṭta and Vulgata understand this expression as a collective one and translate it here and in 47:3 in the plural. In the latter instance, also Septuagint translates with plural. The Samaritan Pentateuch features in all three instances רָעִי, a form that is morphologically ambivalent.

⁴⁰ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *Biblia rabbinica. A Reprint of the 1525 Venice Edition. Edited by Jacob Ben Hayim ibn Adoniya* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1972).

2.1.2.2.3. The verb עשה

2 Chr 26:11

וַיְהִי לְעֹזִיָּהוּ חֵיל עֲשֵׂה מִלְחָמָה יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא לְגִדּוֹד בְּמִסְפָּר פְּקָדֹתָם

The participle עֲשֵׂה seems to be plural because the expression מִלְחָמָה יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא with *nomen regens* in the plural. Although the singular עֲשֵׂה מִלְחָמָה could be understood as an apposition to חֵיל, the context suggests that the hendiadys מִלְחָמָה יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא as a whole is the apposition to חֵיל. In the biblical vocabulary of warfare, designations for warriors construed with the nouns צָבָא and מִלְחָמָה usually feature the participle in the plural, cf. יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא 1 Chr 12:34; מִלְחָמָה לְעֶרֶךְ צָבָא יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא 1 Chr 12:37; יוֹצְאֵי צָבָא 1 Chr 5:18; מִלְחָמָה עוֹשֵׂי 2 Chr 26:13.

2 Chr 34:10

וַיִּתְּנוּ עַל־יַד עֲשֵׂה הַמְּלָאכָה הַמִּפְקָדִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה וַיִּתְּנוּ אֹתוֹ עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂים בְּבֵית יְהוָה לְבָדֹק וּלְחֹזֶק הַבַּיִת:

Here both עֲשֵׂה (הַמְּלָאכָה) and עוֹשֵׂי (הַמְּלָאכָה) are attested, while the reference is made to the same group, “the workmen.” The parallel text 2 Kgs 22:5 reads twice עֲשֵׂי. This group of persons is also referred to in 2 Chr 34:10 as עֲשֵׂה. Some of the manuscripts read עֲשֵׂי instead of עֲשֵׂה in both verses. Similarly, 2 Kgs 12:12 features the form עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה while the parallel text 2 Chr 24:12 has עוֹשֵׂה מְלָאכָת. Some manuscripts read עוֹשֵׂה (עוֹשֵׂי) in 2 Kgs 12:12, while in 2 Chr 24:12 the form עֲשֵׂי is attested in the manuscripts.

עֲשֵׂה הַמְּלָאכָה are also mentioned in 1 Chr 23:24, Ezra 3:9 and Neh 2:16, and some Hebrew manuscripts read there עוֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה, and versions translate with the plural. BHQ explains the rendering of Ezra 3:9 as “harmonisation with the context.”⁴¹ If we recognise the form עֲשֵׂה as plural, the translation of the versions would not need a comment.

In Ps 107:23 and Neh 11:12, some manuscripts read עֲשֵׂה, where the Masoretic text features עֲשֵׂי. The plural in Ps 107:23 is supported by the parallelism within the verse. In the following instances the analysis of עֲשֵׂה as plural is also supported by parallelism: Ezek 38:12; Mal 3:19; Ps 106:3. In addition, the versions translate here in the plural and some Hebrew manuscripts feature עֲשֵׂי.⁴²

2.2. Ambivalent forms

As in section 1.6, the most interesting examples for the present study are contextually ambivalent forms of nouns and participles which allow interpretation both as singular and plural.

⁴¹ This explanation is also given in the BHQ at Mal. 3:19. Neh 2:16 is not commented upon.

⁴² Septuagint, Targum and Peshitta translate in Isa 64:4 also with plural what they saw where of the Masoretic text has עֲשֵׂה and 1QIsa^a has עוֹשֵׂי.

2.2.1. Nouns

2.2.1.1. מַעֲשֵׂה/י

The form ambivalence of singular and plural nouns of *tertiæ vocalis* roots in the construct state has brought about the following interesting case of divergent readings.

Deut 11:7

כִּי עֲנִיכֶם הָרֵאָתָה אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה הַגָּדֹל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

8QMez, the Septuagint, Vulgate, Peshitta and Targum Neofiti read plural for מַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה הַגָּדֹל. Similarly, the Qumran fragment 4QDeut^{kl} reads מעשה יהוה הגדלים, while in 4QDeut^l only יהוה הגדלים is preserved. On the one hand, it can be argued, that the context requires a plural form, because, in this pericope, some wonders are listed that had occurred during Israel's wilderness journey. On the other hand, it can be argued, that the plural adjective הגדלים in Qumran texts and probably in the versions or their *Vorlagen* has emerged because the "originally" singular form מעשה had been understood as plural. The syntagm אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה is also attested in Judg 2:7. Both singular and plural construct of מעשה are contextually acceptable in these two instances.

2.2.1.2. מַעֲשֵׂה/י יָדַי־

As mentioned in section 2.1.2.1.2, there is a variation in different textual witnesses in treatment of the expressions יָדַי מַעֲשֵׂה- and יָדַי מַעֲשֵׂי-. In some places, both readings are possible, while the textual attestation fluctuates. For instance, 2 Kgs 22:17 features מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם, while the parallel text 2 Chr. 34:25 has מַעֲשֵׂי יָדֵיהֶם.

Lam 3:64

תָּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּלָה יְהוָה כְּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם:

Lam 4:2

בְּגֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים הַמְסֻלָּאִים בָּפָז אֵיכָה נִחְשָׁבוּ לְנִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי יוֹצֵר:

Septuagint, Vulgate and Targum translate in Lam 3:64 כְּמַעֲשֵׂה as plural. Both singular and plural forms are acceptable in the context.

In Lam 4:2, מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי יוֹצֵר may refer to נִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ. מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי יוֹצֵר may refer to נִבְלֵי־חֶרֶשׁ *ad sensum* as singular, but the apposition may also have the same morphological structure as the construction it refers to. Two Hebrew manuscripts read מַעֲשֵׂי,⁴³ and Septuagint and Targum translate with plural, while one

⁴³ G. B. Rossi, *Scholia critica in V.T. libros seu supplementa ad varias sacri textus lectiones* (Parma: ex Regio Typographeo, 1798; reprinted Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970), 130. According to the list of differences between Oriental and Occidental Masorettes, מַעֲשֵׂי is also a *Ketiv* reading of Oriental Masorettes (Leningrad codex, fol. 468v). This instance is not featured in the corresponding list in Jacob Ben-Hayyim's 'Second Rabbinic Bible' edition (cf. *M. H. Goshen-Gottstein* (ed.), *Biblia rabbinica*, vol. 4, second part, 246).

Targum manuscript translates with singular.⁴⁴ BHQ 18 explains in both verses the translations of the versions as a phonological error. This explanation is not correct.

Ps 138:8

יְהוָה יִגְמַר יִגְמַר בְּעַדִּי יְהוָה חֲסִדָּךְ לְעוֹלָם מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֶיךָ אֶל־תִּרְףּ:

This case is similar to Lam 4:2. The form מַעֲשֵׂי may refer to the psalmist morpho-syntactically “correctly” as singular (manuscripts and versions read מַעֲשֶׂה), or *ad sensum* as plural.

The case of מַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵיכֶם in Jer 44:8 is similar to Lam 3:64. The reference is made to the deeds of people in both constructions, and both singular and plural suit the context. Many manuscripts read in Jer 44:8 בְּמַעֲשֶׂה instead of בְּמַעֲשֵׂי of A, C and L. The word has been written as במעשה in BCP and then corrected to במעשי, because the *Masora parva* note in BCP writes “א דכת ביוד 11” times written with *Yod*.” A and L feature a similar note, יא כת יוד (Mm 2706),⁴⁵ while the note in C says “ב כת י בס” “two times written with *Yod* in the book.”⁴⁶

Isa 37:19

וַתֵּן אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בְּאֵשׁ כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה כִּי אִם־מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֵי־אָדָם עַץ וְאֶבֶן וְיֶאֱבֹדִים:

Isa 60:21

וְעָמְדוּ כָל־סִדִּיקִים לְעוֹלָם יִירָשׁוּ אֶרֶץ נֹצֵר (מִטְעוֹ) [מִטְעֵי] מַעֲשֶׂה יְדֵי הַתַּפְאָר:

In Isa 37:19, Septuagint and Vulgate translate the counterpart of Masoretic מַעֲשֶׂה with plural, but Targum and Peshitta translate with singular. In Isa 60:21 Septuagint translates it with plural, and one Hebrew manuscript reads מַעֲשֵׂי,⁴⁷ while Targum, Peshitta and Vulgate translate with singular.

Mic 5:12

וְהִכְרַתִּי פְסִילֶיךָ וּמִצְבֹּתֶיךָ מִקִּרְבְּךָ וְלֹא־תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה עוֹד לְמַעֲשֶׂה יְדֶיךָ:

BCP and some medieval Bible manuscripts collected by Kennicott and Ginsburg read here לְמַעֲשֶׂה,⁴⁸ and versions translate it with plural. BHQ characterises the reason for this translation as exegetical, but it can also be orthographic or due to ancient scribes’ and translators’ understanding of word usage.

⁴⁴ É. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1966; 2nd printing 1981), 51. This could be an inner-Targumic variance.

⁴⁵ A has כתב יוד יא.

⁴⁶ The second instance is Jer 1:16 לְמַעֲשֵׂי (cf. Mm 2706), where the note is יא כת י “eleven times written with *Yod*.”

⁴⁷ B. Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum cum variis lectionibus* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1776, 1780; reprinted Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 2003).

⁴⁸ Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum*; C.D. Ginsburg, *The Later Prophets. Diligently Revised according to the Massorah and the Early Editions with the Various Readings from MSS. and the Ancient Versions* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1926).

2.2.1.3. עֵלָה/י

Gen 3:7

וּתְפַלְחֶנָּה עֵינֵי שְׂנֵיהֶם וַיִּדְעוּ כִּי עֵרְוָם הֵם וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עָלָה תְּאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת:

עֵלָה is rendered in some medieval Bible manuscripts and in the Samaritan Pentateuch as עֵלִי, and Septuagint, Vulgate as well as Targum Onkelos and Targum Jerushalmi translate the noun as the plural “leaves.” The form עֵלָה can be plural, but it can also be understood as collective noun “foliage.” As it seems, it is impossible to decide which form was originally intended. Probably, a systematic study of the use of Hebrew generic terms could bring arguments for a contextually assured explanation of such forms.

2.2.1.4. קֶצֶה

Ps 19:7

מִקֶּצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם | מוֹצְאוֹ וְתִקְוַתּוֹ עַל־קִצּוֹתָם וְאִין לְסֹתֵר מִחַמָּתוֹ:

The form קֶצֶה can be considered as plural in parallelism to the plural קִצּוֹתָם: “from the ends of heaven ... to their edges.” Targum and Peshitta translate with plural, while the Septuagint and Vulgate render with singular. These four versions similarly translate two occurrences of קֶצֶה in Deut 4:32. Besides Targum Onkelos, *Targum Neofiti* and *Fragmentary Targum* also translate in the latter case with plural.

2.2.1.5. שָׂדֵה/י

For שָׂדֵי in Ps 132:6 and Prov 23:10, Hebrew manuscripts and versions read שָׂדֵה. Both forms yields sense in these contexts, and it is impossible to say whether singular or plural is intended, as already noted by Buhl.⁴⁹ According to Buhl, both שָׂדֵה and שָׂדֵי are singular *constructus* forms.

In Ruth 1:6; 2:6;⁵⁰ 4:3, the form שָׂדֵה מוֹאָב is used, while 1:1, 2, 6 and 22 speak about שָׂדֵי מוֹאָב. Both singular and plural can be used in this context. As singular “field” is used as synonym for “land” – it does not mean a particular Moabitic field. In plural it can mean the realm of Moab as the entirety of its fields (cf. German *Gefilde*). All versions translate in all places in the book of Ruth as singular. This land designation also appears in Gen 36:35 = 1 Chr 1:46; Num 21:20; 1 Chr 8:8, where Kennicott, de Rossi and Ginsburg register no various readings.⁵¹

⁴⁹ F. Buhl (ed.), *Wilhelm Gesenius' hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das alte Testament* (zwölfte völlig umgearbeitete Auflage; Leipzig F. C. W. Vogel, 1895), 750.

⁵⁰ In 2:6, L reads מִשָּׂדֵה, while the Aleppo Codex, Munich Cod.hebr. 2 and Berlin Ms. or. fol. 1211 feature מִשָּׂדֵי.

⁵¹ Kennicott, *Vetus Testamentum*; de Rossi, *Variae lectiones*; C. D. Ginsburg, *The Pentateuch. The Writings. Diligently Revised according to the Massorah and the Early Editions with the Various Readings from MSS. and the Ancient Versions* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1926).

Similarly, in מְגֵרֶשׁ עָרֵיהֶם 2 Chr. 31:19 “the field(s) of the grassland of their cities,” the form שְׂדֵי describes the land or the fields around cities. Some of the medieval Bible manuscripts read here שָׂדֶה.

2.2.2. Participles

2.2.2.1. The verb כסה

Prov 10:18

מִכְסֶּה שִׁנְאָה שִׁפְתֵי־שָׁקֶר וּמוֹצֵא דָבָר הוּא כָסִיל:

The form מִכְסֶּה can be regarded as singular because the predicate of the parallel half verse – מוֹצֵא – is definitely singular. However, the question arises whether the thought of the first half verse is continued in the second one or the second one introduces a new thought. If we understand the two halves of the verse as unrelated to each other with regard to content, then we can regard מִכְסֶּה as plural. While שִׁפְתֵי־שָׁקֶר is the predicate construction to שִׁנְאָה with the semantic nuance of identification,⁵² the plural of the feminine predicate “deceitful lips” does not agree with the masculine (singular) מִכְסֶּה of the Masoretic text. This construction presupposes that the agent of the “deceitful lips” is being referred to *ad sensum* as the one who “conceals hatred.”

The incongruence in number can be obviated if the form מִכְסֶּה is recognized as plural. Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate have chosen this way of interpretation. They disregard the gender incongruence and understand שִׁנְאָה as a verb with the direct object: “they cover enmity.” BHQ 17 explains the rendering of מִכְסֶּה with plural in the versions as syntactic error. Before we accept this judgment, it should be studied, how ancient translations deal with similar cases of syntactic incongruence in gender and number. At any rate, the syntax of the Hebrew has posed a problem for translators, and either the version had מְכַסֵּי in their *Vorlagen* or they interpreted מכסה as plural.

2.2.2.2. The verb עלה

Deut 14:7

אֵד אֶת־זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּעֵלֵי הַגֶּרֶה וּמִמְּפִרְסֵי הַפֶּרֶסָה הַשְּׂסוּעָה אֶת־הַגָּמֹל וְאֶת־הָאֲרָנֶבֶת וְאֶת־הַשָּׁפָן כִּי־מִעֲלֵה גֶרֶה הִמָּה וּפֶרֶסָה לֹא הִפְרִיטוּ טְמֵאִים הֵם לָכֶם:

מִעֲלֵה גֶרֶה can be plural, parallel to מִעֲלֵי הַגֶּרֶה of the first half verse and referring to the three animals listed immediately before, or it can be singular, meaning a generic term “ruminant.”

2.2.2.3. The verb עשה

Prov 12:22

תוֹעֲבַת יְהוָה שִׁפְתֵי־שָׁקֶר וְעֵשִׂי אֱמוּנָה רְצוֹנוֹ:

⁵² “What conceals hatred are deceitful lips” or “who conceals hatred *has* lying lips.”

The grammatical number of the participle עֹשִׂי is ambivalent here. עֹשִׂי can be plural, paralleling the plural שֹׁפְטֵי in the construct state, or it can be singular, referring to a single person, the owner of the “deceitful lips.” The Septuagint reads ὁ δὲ ποιῶν, corresponding to the singular, as already noted by de Lagarde.⁵³

2.3. Interim conclusion

In all cases discussed in section 2, the nouns and participles from *tertiaie vocalis* roots show two orthographic forms of the construct state in plural, namely with *Heh* and with *Yod* at the end. Both letters are used as a graphical expression of the vowel /ē/. This orthography has parallels in the Qumran and Samaritan Hebrew, it fluctuates in medieval biblical manuscripts, and forms with *Heh* have been recognised as plural by ancient Bible translators. Modern Hebrew grammarians and text editors should also acknowledge this orthographic variation. The readings attest the ancient exegetes’ understanding of the relevant phrases, but no Hebrew orthographic rules can be deduced from the latter.

The orthography with *Yod* at the end of forms of *tertiaie vocalis* verbs is also attested in the Masoretic text on nouns in the absolute state (e.g. Isa 38:12 רָעִי for רָעָה) and on finite verbal forms (cf. Gottstein 1953:105).

The BHQ’s treatment of orthographical and grammatical variations in the forms of nouns and participles of *tertiaie vocalis* roots can be recapitulated in the following chart:

Reference	Form	Form in mss and versions	Judgment of BHQ
Gen 3:7	עֵלָה	plural	facil[itation]
Gen 47:3	רָעָה	plural	–
Deut 28:60	מְדוּוֹה	plural	–
Mic 5:12	מַעֲשֵׂה	plural	exeg[esis]
Lam 3:64	מַעֲשֵׂה	plural	err-phonol[ogy]
Lam 4:2	מַעֲשֵׂה	plural	err-phonol[ogy]
Ruth 1:6	שָׂדִי	singular	–
Prov 10:18	מְכַסֶּה	plural	err-synt[ax]
Mic 6:16	מַעֲשֵׂה	plural	assim-ctext
Mal 3:19	עֲשֵׂה	plural	assim-ctext
Ezra 3:9	עֲשֵׂה	plural	harm-ctext
Neh 2:16	עֲשֵׂה	plural	–

⁵³ P. de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863), 42.

The treatment of these forms in the BHQ is inconsequent on a variety of grounds. Firstly, not every variant reading is being commented upon. Secondly, different reasons are considered as explanation for the same phenomenon. Thirdly, the orthographical and grammatical variation in forms of *tertiaie vocalis* roots is no error at all.

The modern grammarian's and editor's classification of the orthography of forms as always singular for ה- and plural for י- should be given up as unanchored in the texts. The distribution of forms allows only formulating a tentative rule that in medieval manuscripts in many cases the forms of nouns and participles of the roots *mediae vocalis* appear in the construct state with ה- for singular and י- for plural. This graphic differentiation of forms is an orthographic device developed out of the notion that the letter *Yod* often appears in plural morphemes. This device is convenient but not always applied in the text. This distinction of forms depending on their orthography is applicable to construct state without pronoun only, since forms with suffixed pronouns are written with *Yod* both in singular and plural, cf. רֵעֵיהֶם "their shepherd" and קִנִּיָּהֶן "their buyers" in Zech 11:5.

3. Synonymous readings

Synonymous readings pose a problem for textual reconstruction, if there are no convincing arguments to make a choice between variants. In Gen 1:9, for מְקוֹם of the Hebrew text, the Septuagint translates συναγωγῆν, which presupposes the noun מְקוֹה in the *Vorlage*. The reading מְקוֹה is also attested in the Qumran fragment 4QGen^{h1} – if this tiny fragment represents the Bible text indeed. Because of the Septuagint's rendering, the form מְקוֹם of the Masoretic text was explained as מְקוֹה with the suffixed pronoun 3rd person m. pl. with a syncope of intervocalic *h*,⁵⁴ or as מְקוֹה with the enclitic particle *-m*.⁵⁵ Both explanations are astute, but the word מְקוֹם fits the context equally good as the reading of the Septuagint *Vorlage*. The reading of the Septuagint may be an assimilation on מְקוֹה in verse 10, but it may also be original, while the reading of the Masoretic text could have arisen as a result of letter confusion between ה and ם.⁵⁶

Another case of synonymous readings I would like to mention, is the Septuagint variant ἐν βουλῇ "in the council" for בַּעֲדָה "in the assembly" in Ps 1:5. The reading of the Septuagint corresponds to Hebrew בַּעֲצָה. The translation of the

⁵⁴ D. N. Freedman, "Notes on Genesis." ZAW 64 (1952): 190–194, at 190–191.

⁵⁵ W. F. Albright, "The Refrain 'And God Saw Ki Tob' in Genesis." *Mélanges bibliques rédigés en l'honneur de André Robert* (Travaux de l'Institut Catholique de Paris 4. Paris: Bloud & Gay [1956]): 21–26, at 24, note 1. In this case additional questions arise. Did the Septuagint translators recognize the meaning of the particle? How did they treat other cases where modern philological treatment recognizes this particle?

⁵⁶ Cf. S. Krauss, "Textkritik auf Grund des Wechsels von ה und ם." *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 48 (1930): 321–325, about the confusion of these letters.

Septuagint may be assimilation on בַּעֲצָה in verse 1. However, in verse 5 both Hebrew nouns suit the context. Since the noun עֲדָה is also used in pejorative sense,⁵⁷ no argument connected with the use of the noun can be put forth.

In both aforementioned instances, a tendency of assimilation in the Septuagint can be seen, and there are indeed many cases of such assimilations in the Septuagint. However, the tendency of lexical dissimilation and use of synonyms in the Hebrew text is conceivable too. This point needs further investigation. I do not see compelling internal or external arguments to opt for one of the readings, if one not merely accepts the overall priority of one of the textual traditions.

Both instances belong to an array of cases, in which each of the synonymous readings can be explained grammatically and contextually, but the textual critic, trying to reconstruct the earliest inferable textual state, has no arguments to make a choice between two readings. Similarly, there is a difficulty in reconstructing a Hebrew *Vorlage* of a version, if Hebrew has synonyms for a term. Cf. also E. Tov, who discusses this problem in connection with reconstructing אֲנִי vs. אָנֹכִי in the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint in 1 Sam 2:23–24.⁵⁸

4. Conclusions

There are different types of textual variations in the text of the Hebrew Bible and in its versions, in which either of two readings – both within morphological forms or synonyms – make perfect sense in contexts under consideration. None of the variants could claim priority over another, and neither internal nor external textual evidence permits the textual scholar to make a well-grounded decision. Even if not every case of synonymous readings brought in section 3 appears evident, the main line of the argumentation is clear, and other similar types of textual variations could be adduced.⁵⁹

The recognition of such cases should not bring about text critical resignation in view of textual aporiae, but it should establish a somewhat new perspective of the Hebrew Bible text. In the case of the *defective* form of the suffixed pronoun 3rd ms. sg. and in the case of nouns and participles of the *tertiæ vocalis* roots,

⁵⁷ Cf. עֲדַת מְרָעִים “the assembly of evildoers” Ps 22:17; עֲדַת חָנָף “the assembly of godless(ness)” Job 15:34.

⁵⁸ E. Tov, “The Textual Affiliations of 4QSam^a,” *JSOT* 4/14 (1979): 37–53, at 39 (review of E. Ch. Ulrich, *The Qumran Text of Samuel and Josephus*. Harvard Semitic Monograph 19. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978). He writes “2 Sam 2:23–24.” This error has not been corrected in the reprints of this review in E. Tov (ed.), *The Hebrew and Greek Texts of Samuel* (Proceedings IOSCS – Vienna. Jerusalem: Academon, 1980), 189–216; in revised form and with new pagination in E. Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible. Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (VT.Supp. 72; Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 1999), 273–283.

⁵⁹ For synonymous readings, cf. the classical paper of S. Talmon, “Synonymous Readings in the Textual Tradition of the Old Testament.” *Studies in the Bible*, ed. Chaim Rabin (Scripta Hierosolymitana 8. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 335–383.

an orthographic form allows two morphological interpretations. The reader becomes the interpreter of the text because it is up to him or her how to understand the forms in question. It is possible that behind readings that have emerged out of a whim or lapse of a scribe, the interpreter will discover a textual meaning that has not been seen before. In the case of the synonymous readings, their use is not derogation but an enrichment of textual meanings. The reader discovers an array of textual meanings presented and preserved by ancient exegetes.

In the examples considered in this study, philology can explain the morphology and the meaning of the forms as well as their genesis and development, but it is impossible to elucidate whether the author/editor of the text has intended a plural or a singular form, and which of the two synonymous words he has used.⁶⁰ Textual editions and commentaries should direct reader's attention to the cases of polysemy and should not follow a textual tradition that tries to eliminate the ambiguity. In conclusion, it should be mentioned that even the identification of what philology cannot solve or achieve in the study of the Hebrew Bible text is also an achievement of philology.

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⁶⁰ Similarly, it is not always possible to reconstruct the original text in the cases where small lexical items are affected, e.g. interchange of prepositions, presence or absence of the conjunction ו, or of the object particle את.

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