Text & Canon of Hebrew Bible

Data Sheet
© Paul W. Ferris, Jr.

1 Definitions

1.1 Canon: fr. Gk ἅπασα “measure, principle, standard” << Heb. נָעַר “reed’s length”

1.2 Antilegomena: “spoken against” = Talmudic discussion of Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Proverbs, Ezekiel

1.3 Apocrypha: Jerome “spurious, hidden”:
   - Tobit
   - Judith
   - Additions to Esther
   - Wisdom of Solomon
   - Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirah

   Additions to Daniel:
   - Prayer of Azariah & Song of the 3 Holy Children
   - Susanna
   - Bel & the Dragon
   - 1 & 2 Maccabees

   Baruch

1.3.1 not in Syriac Peshitta
1.3.2 not recognized in Targum
1.3.3 not recognized by Jerome Latin version (prologus galeatus “helmeted prologue”)
1.3.4 not in Aquila's Gk version (Alexandrian)
1.3.5 never quoted by Philo (1st cent. Alexandrian)
1.3.6 significant to Alexandrian Jews but not authoritative (Jerome, Prologue to Wisdom of Solomon)

1.4 Pseudepigrapha: c. 75 written under pseudonym

2 Issues
2.1 Authority
2.2 Audience
2.3 Accordance
2.4 Avenue

3 Claims (examples)
3.1 Ex 31:18
3.2 Ex 32:16
3.3 Dt 4:13
3.4 Dt 31:24-26
3.5 Jer 26:18 << Mic 3:12
3.6 Dan 9:2 << Jer

4 Responses
4.1 Pre-Conquest
4.1.1 Ex 12:14...24
4.1.2 Ex 24:24
4.1.3 Ex 25:16, 21
4.1.4 Ex 31:18
4.1.5 Dt 10:1-5
4.1.6 Dt 18:15-20
4.1.7 Dt 30:11-20
4.1.8 Dt 31:9-13
4.1.9 Josh 1:7-9

4.2 Pre-Monarchy
4.2.1 Josh 8:30-32 cp Dt 27:2-8
4.2.3 Josh 24:25

4.3 Monarchy
4.3.1 1Sam 10:25
4.3.2 1Chr 28:11-19
4.3.3 2Kgs 14:3-6
4.3.4 2Kgs 22:8-11
4.3.5 Jer 30:1-2
4.3.6 Jer 26:18 cp Micah 3:12
4.3.7 Dt 17; 31:9-13 - Priests as custodians of Torah and Psalter
4.3.8 Dt 17; Prov 1:1; 10:1; 25:1 - Kings as custodians of Chronicles & Wisdom
4.3.9 Dt 18; 1Sam 19:20-21; 2Kgs 2:3, 5, 15; Isa 8:16; Jer 18:18

4.4 Exile/Post-Exilic
4.4.1 Dan 9:2 cp. Jer 25:11-14; 29:10-14
4.4.2 Neh 8:1-3
4.4.3 Zech 1:4-6
4.4.4 1QPs
4.4.5 4QMMT B.II.9ff

4.5 Linkage
4.5.1 Dt 34:5ff
4.5.2 Mal 4:4-6

5 Cessation of Revelation
5.1 Babylonian Talmud, Yomah 9b (also Sota 48b; Sanhedrin 11a; Midrash Rabbah on Canticles 8.9.3)
5.2 2 Baruch 85:3
5.3 1Macc 9:27
5.4 1Macc 14:41-43

6 1st cent. A.D.
6.1.1 John 1:19-23
6.1.2 Josephus. Contra Apionem 1:8
6.1.3 Luke 24:27, 44
6.1.4 John 10:34-36
6.1.5 Mt 26:54
6.1.6 John 5:39
6.1.7 John 2:2
6.1.8 Acts 8:32

7 Texts
7.2 Tanak: << Torah - Nevi’im - Kehtuvim (Instructions - Prophets (Former//Latter) - Writings)
7.3 Biblical Period: 15th -4th cents. B.C. Composed >> Compiled >> Received
7.3.1 Text “families”: Proto-Samaritan; Proto-Masoretic; Proto-LXX; Unaligned
7.4 Second Temple Period: c 300 B.C. - A.D. 100 Texts Transmitted & Translated
7.5 Early Church - Middle Ages: A.D. 100 - 1500 Canons & Versions
7.6 Reformation - Present: A.D. 1500 to date. 1546 Trent >> Vulgate as Canon. Explosion of translations and distribution
7.7 B. Albrektson, “Reflections of the Emergence of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible” VTSuppl 29, p. 63
7.8 Masoretes: c. A.D. 500-1000 – concerned with preserving 1) consonantal text 2) pronunciation (vowel marking, accents/cantilation, word division/spacing) 3) textual integrity (annotations to prevent scribes from altering text whether by mistake or on purpose)

8 Versions
8.1 Aramaic Targums: Targum=“translation” (cp Neh 8.8)EXODUS 10:15 - 14:21 Aramaic translation is verse by verse. Among the earliest group of surviving Hebrew targum Bible MSS in codex form. Found in the Genizah of a Kurdistan Jewish community, North Iraq (until 1950/59) (Photo 11 th c. MS of T. Onkelos)
8.1.1 Palestinian Targum not officially edited so no single “authoritative” text.
8.1.2 Targum Onkelos – 3rd c. AD (some scholars argue for 1st c. others for 4th cent.)
8.1.3 Targum Jonathan – 4th c. AD
8.1.4 Targum Yerushalmi I (Pseudo-Jonathan) – c. AD 700
8.1.5 Samaritan Targum

8.2 Syriac (photo - BM 14,425 Peshitta AD 464)
8.2.1 Peshitta– Eastern Aramaic (vs W. Aramaic spoken by Jews in Bab & Israel) 2nd – 3rd c AD from Hebr. – later revised per LXX
8.2.2 Syriac trans of 5th col (LXX) of Origen’s Hexapla

8.3 Greek LXX 250-150 B.C.
8.3.1 Codex Vaticanus (B) (c. A.D 325-350)
8.3.2 Codex Sinaiticus (ε) (c. A.D 375-400)
8.3.3 Codex Alexandrinus (A) (c. A.D 450)

8.4 Latin
8.4.1 Itala << LXX (2nd c. A.D.)
8.4.2 Vulgate << Hebrew (4th c. A.D.)

9 Early Lists
9.1 Jesus ben Sirach (d. pre 175 B.C.) Prologue to Ecclesiasticus
9.2 Jesus of Nazareth (d. c. A.D. 33) Lk 11:49-51; 24:44
9.4 Josephus Flavius (c. A.D. 37-100) Contra Apionem 1:8
9.5 Babylonian Talmud, Bab Bathra 14b (2nd cent. A.D.)
9.6 Bishop Melito of Sardis (c. 170 A.D.)
9.7 Origen (d. A.D. 254) - cited by Eusebius in Ecclesiastical History 6:25.1-2

10 Canonical Schema
10.1 Liberal Approach:
10.1.1 Torah canonized by 444 B.C. (Neh. 8:1-8)
10.1.2 Prophets canonized 300-200 to accommodate assumed 3rd cent. portions of Isaiah, Joel & Zechariah
10.1.3 Writings canonized sometime between 150 B.C. and A.D. 90

10.2 Conservative Approach:
10.2.1 Torah canonized c. 1405 B.C. depending on date of Exodus
10.2.2 Prophets: no explicit record; implicitly immediate
10.2.3 Writings: no explicit record; implicitly immediate
10.2.4 “In all its essentials the canon was most probably complete by about 300BC.” R.K.Harrison, Intro to the OT. p.287

11 Conclusion
12 “The MT is itself a system of preservation and interpretation of five interrelated elements: the consonants, vowel, accent markings, spacings and marginal notes designed to keep scribes from altering the text either intentionally or unintentionally. There is no other literature in the world quite like it, designed so guardedly to guarantee accurate transmission and interpretation.” --James A. Sanders, “The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process,” in The Canon Debate, ed. L.M. McDonald & J.A. Sanders (2002) p. 256

13 “The Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss from generation to generation throughout the centuries.” -- Frederic Kenyon, late Dir. & Principal Librarian, British Museum in Our Bible & the Ancient Manuscripts, p.23

14 “The scope & variation within all these textual traditions is relatively restricted. Major divergencies which intrinsically affect the sense are extremely rare. A collation of variants extant, based on the synoptic study of the material available, either by comparison of parallel passages within one Version, or of the major Versions with each other, results in the conclusion that the ancient authors, compilers, tradents and scribes enjoyed what may be termed a controlled freedom from textual variation.” -- Shemaryahu Talmon, Prof. Emer., Hebrew Univ., in Qumran & the History of the Biblical Text, p.326

15 “We may rest assured that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible, though not infallible, has been preserved with accuracy perhaps unparalleled in any other Near Eastern literature.” --Wm. F. Albright, Johns Hopkins Univ., in Rowley’s OT & Modern Study p.25

16 “It is fair to say that the verses, chapters, and books of the Bible would read largely the same, and would leave the same impression with the reader, even if one adopted virtually every possible alternative reading to those now serving as the basis for current English translations.” --Douglas Stuart, Gordon-Conwell Sem., in Inerrancy & Common Sense, p.98