

IDAN DERSHOWITZ

The Dismembered Bible

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Herausgegeben von

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Idan Dershowitz

The Dismembered Bible

Cutting and Pasting Scripture
in Antiquity

Mohr Siebeck

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1. Introduction

“His errors ... are the portals of discovery.”
– James Joyce, *Ulysses*

In contemplating the composition history of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets, scholars have focused a great deal of attention on theological and political motives for textual collation and intervention.¹ In particular, much has been written about the purpose and historical background of the Pentateuch’s redaction.²

Since the late twentieth century, there has been increasing interest in establishing the nature and scope of biblical editing on the basis of “empirical” bib-

¹ Theorization on the topic is nearly as old as the discipline of biblical studies itself. See, e.g., Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, trans. J. S. Black and A. Menzies (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885), 495–97, et passim; Abraham Kuenen, *The Five Books of Moses*, trans. John Muir (London: Williams & Norgate, 1877), 27–33. More recently, Peter Frei and Erhard Blum have revived and augmented an influential theory according to which the Pentateuch received “imperial authorization” from the Achaemenid administration. For a critical review of this subject, see Konrad Schmid, “The Persian Imperial Authorization as a Historical Problem and as a Biblical Construct: A Plea for Distinctions in the Current Debate,” in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Bernard M. Levinson and Gary N. Knoppers (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 23–38. Cf. Jean-Louis Ska, “‘Persian Imperial Authorization’: Some Question Marks,” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, ed. James W. Watts (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2001), 161–82; Christophe Laurent Nihan, “The Emergence of the Pentateuch as ‘Torah,’” *Religion Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 353–64.

² For a recent discussion of the concept of biblical redaction, see John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), especially chs. 6–7. Van Seters considers the terms “redactor” and “editor” to be anachronistic and inapt in biblical contexts, preferring “author” or “historian,” for instance. This is not the place to address all of Van Seters’s arguments; I will say only that although the modern editing profession has little in common with ancient activities that scholars often refer to as editing or redaction, the same is true of Van Seters’s preferred terms. Furthermore, leaving aside overarching questions regarding the composition histories of the Pentateuch and other biblical works, as long as there exist some passages that conflate multiple sources that were once separate – and even if those sources are not parts of cohesive documents – then there must be cases of biblical composition that differ greatly from traditional authorship. While I readily admit that the terms are imperfect, I use “redaction” and “editing” to refer to the conflation, supplementation, and reworking of existing texts – all well-established phenomena – reserving “authorship” for the initial production of a freestanding text. See Bernard M. Levinson, “*The Right Chorale*”: *Studies in Biblical Law and Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 200.

lical and non-biblical data and their interpretation.³ These studies tend to focus on variance in content – whether on a textual or literary level – in manuscripts of ancient texts.

In addition, a paradigm commonly labeled “New Philology” has crystallized in the past several decades, aiming to bring the manuscripts themselves, and the scribes who produced them, into higher relief.⁴ Bernard Cerquiglini, a French linguist and scholar of medieval literature, is usually portrayed as the progenitor of this approach.⁵ Rejecting Lachmannian stemmatology, which is interested in manuscripts principally as tools for Urtext recovery,⁶ New Philologists embrace codicological tools and insights, highlighting the variants’ intrinsic values.⁷ Most importantly, according to this approach, a text’s meaning is inextricable from its material manifestations and those objects’ methods of production.

³ See Jeffrey H. Tigay, ed., *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Hans Jürgen Tertel, *Text and Transmission: An Empirical Model for the Literary Development of Old Testament Narratives* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994); Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014); Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, eds., *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?* (Leuven: Peeters, 2017). For alternative perspectives, see, e.g., Raymond F. Person, Jr. and Robert Rezetko, eds., *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Seth Sanders, “What if There Aren’t Any Empirical Models for Pentateuchal Criticism?” in *Contextualizing Israel’s Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 281–304.

⁴ “Material Philology” is some scholars’ preferred designation, following Stephen G. Nichols, “Why Material Philology? Some Thoughts,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 116, Supplement (1997): 10–30.

⁵ Bernard Cerquiglini, *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989); English edition: Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁶ In the field of Hebrew Bible, this approach is often associated with Paul de Lagarde. See especially Paul A. de Lagarde, *Anmerkungen zur griechischen Übersetzung der Proverbien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863), 1–4.

⁷ Indeed, this often goes hand in hand with a rejection of the notion that all textual witnesses of a work derive from a single progenitor. Paul Zumthor developed similar ideas some two decades before Cerquiglini, although his focus was on variance due to oral performance and transmission, which he termed *mouvance* (Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* [Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972]; I thank Jacqueline Vayntrub for this reference). Several decades earlier still, Paul Kahle proposed a similar thesis, according to which a literary work might previously have had disparate textual instantiations, which he termed *Vulgärtexte*, that were later consolidated into synthetic versions, or in some cases suppressed. Kahle saw this as a pervasive and ongoing phenomenon, suggesting that extant manuscripts do not always have a single common ancestor. See Paul Kahle, “Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Pentateuchtextes,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 88 (1915): 436–37, et passim. The roots of this approach were already present in Kahle’s doctoral dissertation: Paul Kahle, “Textkritische und lexikalische Bemerkungen zum samaritanischen Pentateuchtargum” (PhD diss., University of Halle, 1898). Cf. Soferim 6:4 on the purported textual consolidation of three Pentateuch scrolls in the Second Temple period.

In the introduction to her edited volume of essays on New Philology in a biblical context, Liv Ingeborg Lied writes:

[W]hen studying a text, it is important to also study the manuscript, the relationship between the text and for instance the form and layout of the manuscript, as well as other features of the material text carrier: other texts collected in the same manuscript, front-matter, colophons and marginal notes, bindings, and cartonnage, etc. Material artifacts come into being at particular times, in particular places, for particular purposes. [...] The emphasis is placed firmly on extant texts as they are found in actual manuscripts, with no intention of using them to reconstruct a hypothetical prior text, or to make them serve as stand-ins for such a text. Texts as they appear in manuscripts are not seen as mere stepping-stones, or obstacles to be overcome, on the way to the ideal text, but are instead the primary focus. By this shift in focus, texts can be studied in the context of the manuscripts containing them, taking seriously the various media cultures that shaped the way readers engaged with texts in their material context, and emphasizing the interpretation of texts in the context of their use.⁸

This newfound focus on the material aspect of ancient texts is a substantial development, and its currency within biblical studies is growing.⁹ It has opened the door to in-depth analyses of textual artifacts – manuscripts – that had previously been studied chiefly for their stemmatological value.

For instance, recent studies of Papyrus 967 and 4QJoshua^a (discussed in § 2.3.2–2.3.3, below) are interested in those manuscripts as examples of scribal creativity in specific times and places in history, and not just for the odd “original” variant they might contain. And the secondary additions to 4Q448 (see § 2.3.4, below) tell us something about the people and processes behind this textual artifact, much of which would be masked in any descended manuscript.

Notwithstanding these developments in biblical studies and beyond, the materiality of biblical *redaction* – that is, how the texts of the Bible were physically edited and compiled – seems as out of reach as ever. Despite the increased interest in materiality associated with the advent of New Philology, this paradigm – like its antecedents – is not well suited for assessing the material methods of biblical redaction, due to the meager material evidence from the pre-Hellenistic biblical era.¹⁰ Relevant archaeological artifacts, epigraphic material, and contemporary accounts relating to editorial activity are simply too scant.

⁸ Liv Ingeborg Lied, ed., *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*, TU 175 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 11–16.

⁹ Similar trends can be observed in kindred disciplines. A recent Assyriological article depicts a generational shift: “Understanding cuneiform tablets as archaeological objects is a practice that had few exponents for much of the twentieth century, when Assyriologists too often gave all their attention to the inscribed text as a self-contained intellectual resource disembodied from the medium on which it was written” (Farouk N. H. Al-Rawi and Andrew R. George, “Back to the Cedar Forest: The Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 66 [2014]: 71).

¹⁰ Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 75–108, et passim.

The methods of biblical redaction have thus rarely been considered from a material perspective, much less so in any systematic manner. In the apparent absence of hard data, most scholars simply take for granted that redaction was a scribal endeavor. In an oft-cited passage, Susan Niditch depicts a common imagining of documentary redaction:

The work of combining sources takes place in some library work room or scriptorium where the sources can be laid out partially or fully side by side on tables or benches or on the floor; a third or fourth roll is also laid out for preparation of the new, revised edition.

[The redactor has] his various written sources laid out before him as he chooses this verse or that, includes this tale not that, edits, elaborates, all in a library setting.¹¹

Niditch herself finds the scene to be utterly far-fetched, leading her to reject the idea that documentary redaction took place at all:

Did the redactor need three colleagues to hold J, E, and P for him? Did each read the text out loud, and did he ask them to pause until he jotted down his selections, working like a secretary with three tapes dictated by the boss?¹²

It is important to note that this elaborate depiction – and its rejection – are not accompanied by internal biblical evidence, comparative data from the ancient Near East, or inferences from excavated artifacts. The only redactional technique that Niditch entertains is a scribal one, and she deems it an anachronistic projection of biblical scholars: “I suggest that the above imagining comes from our world and not from that of ancient Israel.”¹³

Some scholars have imagined a less scribal mode of redaction – specifically one involving razor and paste, rather than reed and papyrus or parchment. Here too, however, data and analysis are thin, and the elaborate depictions tend to be polemical. Just as Niditch dismisses scribal redaction, Albin Lesky argues that a cut-and-paste technique is surely an anachronism dreamed up by philologists:

Es ist ganz unvermeidlich, sich alle diese Redaktoren mit geschriebenen Texten in der Hand vorzustellen, da streichend, dort einsetzend und verschiedene Schnittstellen aneinanderpassend. Von Schreibtisch, Schere und Kleister zu sprechen, ist natürlich ein boshafter Anachronismus, aber die Richtung, in der alle Annahmen dieser Art liegen, scheint er mir treffend zu bezeichnen. Buchphilologen haben diese Theorien erdacht und Arbeit an Büchern und mit Büchern ist für sie die Voraussetzung geblieben.

It is quite irresistible to imagine all these redactors with written texts in their hands, deleting here, inserting there, and fitting together various passages they have snipped out. To speak of writing desk, scissors, and paste is, naturally, a blatant anachronism – but appropriate, it seems to me, to indicate the direction in which all suppositions of this kind

¹¹ Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature*, Library of Ancient Israel (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 112–13.

¹² Ibid., 113.

¹³ Ibid., 112.

tend. Philology authors have thought up these theories, and for them work on books and with books has remained the basic assumption.¹⁴

But if texts were ever conflated or otherwise reworked in ancient times, this had to have been done somehow. Few scholars today – including those who have long abandoned the Documentary Hypothesis – would deny that *some* biblical passages contain multiple literary strands, and that these strands are not invariably interdependent.¹⁵ Likewise, there is wide consensus that many texts in the Hebrew Bible are the product of supplementation. I believe that the techniques of these ancient redactors have not been sufficiently explored, and that the existing philological tools used to analyze these techniques are inadequate. In this work, I endeavor to reconstruct material editorial processes, relying in part on an analysis of redactional error – a phenomenon whose forensic utility, as it were, has not been thoroughly appreciated.

This book focuses on disordered texts in the Hebrew Bible. In some cases, biblical authors chose to construct narratives that do not progress in chronological order, leading to intentional disorder. Other times, editors decided to reorganize texts for various reasons. Both of these phenomena will be addressed, but the focus will be on a third phenomenon: biblical passages that are jumbled due to error. In many of these cases, scholars agree on the error, as well as the assumed original order. What they typically neglect to consider is the practical matter of *how* the error occurred. When scholars do reflect on the real-world aspects of such errors, it can lead to an impasse. On the one hand, the existence of disordered texts is hard to deny. On the other hand, plausible mechanisms for accidental jumbling have not been forthcoming. Henry Smith's comments on a potential case of jumbling in 1 Samuel 24 are illustrative: "This is obviously an unnatural order [...] But it is difficult to see how the dislocation took place. It

¹⁴ Albin Lesky, "Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Homerischen Epos," in *Festschrift für Dietrich Kralik, dargebracht von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern*, ed. Albin Lesky, Walter Steinhäuser, et al. (Horn, South Austria: Verlag Ferdinand Berger, 1954), 2. Translation by John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 175. Lesky is referring here to the Homeric corpus.

¹⁵ For overviews of current approaches to Pentateuch criticism, see Konrad Schmid, "Has European Scholarship Abandoned the Documentary Hypothesis? Some Reminders on Its History and Remarks on Its Current Status," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 17–30; David M. Carr, "Changes in Pentateuchal Criticism," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø, vol. 3/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 433–66; Adele Reinhartz et al., "The JBL Forum," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 3 (2014): 647–81. See also Jakob Wöhrle, "There's No Master Key! The Literary Character of the Priestly Stratum and the Formation of the Pentateuch," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch; Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, ed. Jan C. Gertz et al., FAT III (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 391–403.

cannot be intentional, for there is no motive for it; the accidents of transmission do not generally work in this way.”¹⁶

I will argue that such accidents often *do* work this way, and the key to understanding their genesis lies in reimagining the material methods of redaction. Namely, editors sometimes worked by assembling inscribed snippets of text, rather than writing a fresh version on a blank scroll.

Several scholars have discussed ancient scribal technology, if not in connection with editorial activity *per se*.¹⁷ In particular, Emanuel Tov has written a number of articles on Judean scribal realia in which he considers the relevance of material constraints – the dimensions of margins, for instance – for biblical criticism.¹⁸ However, Tov’s studies pertain to a later era than the period in question, and his investigations are largely limited to leather scrolls, which make up the vast majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Given that the first redacted editions of the biblical works in question are more likely to have been written on papyrus, as discussed below,¹⁹ different considerations and constraints would have been at play. One must therefore turn to ancient Egypt and the Classical world for more pertinent data regarding the compilation of papyrus scrolls.²⁰

Vis-à-vis the impact of material factors on textual order, Haim Gevaryahu has argued that in antiquity colophons were frequently transferred from the ends of units to their beginnings.²¹ According to Gevaryahu, this phenomenon may have been born of material constraints. Appending material to the edges of scrolls, whether in the available space or by attaching additional sheets, would have been simpler than interpolating material in the heart of the unit. This observation is not limited to colophons and must be considered whenever the cause of a textual transposition is contemplated. To name one example, some have proposed on the basis of literary and epigraphic evidence that a sheet with new material was tacked onto the beginning of a pre-“canonical” incarnation of

¹⁶ Henry Preserved Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Samuel*, ICC 8 (New York: Scribner, 1904), 217.

¹⁷ An important collection of studies on the topic in an Egyptian context is Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw, eds., *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ E.g., Emanuel Tov, “Copying of a Biblical Scroll,” *Journal of Religious History* 26, no. 2 (2002): 189–209; Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah (Leiden: Brill, 2004); and especially Emanuel Tov, “The Writing of Early Scrolls: Implications for the Literary Analysis of Hebrew Scripture,” in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran: Collected Essays*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 206–20.

¹⁹ See § 7.2.1, below.

²⁰ See § 5.3–5.5, below.

²¹ See, e.g., Haim Moshe Itzhak Gevaryahu, “חומר קולופוני מסיומי,” *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* 2 (1977): 37–48; Haim Moshe Itzhak Gevaryahu, “Biblical Colophons,” in *Congress Volume: Edinburgh, 1974*, VTSup 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 42–59. See discussion below.

Jubilees, thus creating the present introductory chapter.²² Also pertinent to this study is Alexander Rofé's suggestion that the sheets of ancient scrolls sometimes came loose and were then accidentally transposed, leading to jumbled texts.²³ Given the multiplicity of factors that could lead to textual jumbling, an important element of my research will be the development of a systematized methodology to distinguish between various potential causes.²⁴

In chapter 2, I discuss known causes for textual jumbling in the Hebrew Bible. Chapter 3 contains a philological analysis of several passages that appear to exhibit unexplained jumbling errors. These mistakes, I argue, betray the *modus operandi* of the editors who formed them, revealing parts of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets to be literal cut-and-paste jobs – not the work of redactors-scribes. Chapter 4 covers the methodological ramifications of this conclusion. In chapter 5, I review several examples of patched scrolls in the ancient world and investigate instances of material – that is, non-scribal – redaction. Chapter 6 examines modern works produced by means of cut-and-paste compilation. These artifacts prove to be surprisingly useful comparanda, allowing us to observe the process “in action,” complete with concomitant errors. Insights relating to cognitive studies are also discussed here. Chapter 7 addresses several consequences of these findings for biblical research.

²² Charlotte Hempel, “The Place of the Book of Jubilees at Qumran and Beyond,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. Timothy H. Lim (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 179–96. See below.

²³ See, for instance, Alexander Rofé, “לאור השערה בדבר ‘וילך’ (דברים לא) לאור השערה בדבר שאלת חיבורה של פרשת ‘וילך’ (דברים לא) לאור השערה בדבר,” *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1978): 59–76.

²⁴ See § 4.2, below.

2. The Jumbled Bible: Established Causes

“We call it cutting. It isn’t exactly that. Cutting implies severing something. It really should be called assembly. Mosaic is assembling something to create a whole.”

– Alfred Hitchcock

Numerous instances of apparent jumbling in the Hebrew Bible have been observed over the centuries, and various explanations have been proposed to explain them. One such category is the class of “dismembered scripture” (מקרא מסורס).¹ Talmudic and medieval scholars would occasionally “dismember” (מסריס/מסרס) biblical texts in various ways – typically through textual rearrangement – as an exegetical tool.

Pesiqta de Rab Kahana 10:2:

בטח בי”י ועשה טוב שכן ארץ ורעה אמונה ר’ חגי בשם ר’ יצחק מסריס הדין קרייא עשה טוב ובטח בי”י להגרנימוס שיצא לשער את המידות וראה אותו אחד והתחיל מיטמן מלפניו אמ’ לו מה לך מיטמן מלפני שער מדותיך ואל תתירא הד”ה דכת’ עשה טוב ובטח בי”י.

“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security” (Ps 37:3). Rabbi Haggai, citing Rabbi Isaac, dismembers it, reading: “Do good, and trust in the LORD.” There was once a marketplace commissioner who set out to evaluate measures. He was spotted by someone who tried to hide from him. [The commissioner] said to

¹ The root סרס is multivalent and its history is convoluted. In this context, I prefer the translation “dismembered,” rather than “transposed,” “reversed,” etc. (For the more common rendition, see, e.g., Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, vol. 2 [New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1903], 1029; William G. [Gershon Zev] Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, eds., *Pesikta dē-Rab Kahana: R. Kahana’s Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days*, 2nd ed. [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society Press, 2002], 251.) What began as the phrase *ša rēši* (“the one who is the head”) in Akkadian became a common noun meaning “chief,” which was then sometimes used in the specialized sense of “chief of harem,” leading to the sense of “eunuch” (see *HALOT* 2:769–70; *BDB* 710). Once this definition developed, it was only natural for there to be a corresponding verb meaning “to make a eunuch” or “castrate.” That verb apparently evolved into the more abstract “mangle” or “dismember,” which could then be applied metaphorically, as in the cases discussed here.

him, “Why are you hiding from me? Evaluate your measures and fear not. This is what is written: ‘Do good, and trust in the LORD.’”²

This idea of scriptural dismemberment was not always applied to scholarly exegesis, as in the example above, but could even describe the state of the biblical passage *prior* to the scholar’s rearrangement. According to this view, some biblical texts are jumbled in the extant manuscripts and must be read out of sequence for their original meaning to become clear.

B. Sotah 38a:

רבי יאשיה אומר אינו צריך הרי הוא אומר בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך בכל מקום שלקא דעתך אלא מקרא זה מסורס הוא בכל מקום אשר אבוא אליך וברכתך שם אזכיר את שמי והיכן אבוא אליך וברכתך בבית הבחירה שם אזכיר את שמי בבית הבחירה.

Rabbi Josiah says: “This is not necessary. For it says, ‘in every place where I cause my name to be mentioned I will come to you [and bless you]’ (Exod 20:24). Would you truly entertain the idea that [God causes his name to be mentioned] ‘in every place?’ Rather, this is a [case of] dismembered scripture: ‘in every place where I come to you and bless you, there I will cause my name to be mentioned.’ And where will I come to you and bless you? In the chosen temple. There, in the chosen temple, I will cause my name to be mentioned.”³

In this example, Rabbi Josiah argues that the text of Exod 20:24, in its familiar form, resulted from a transposition and is therefore in need of repair. Whether or not these talmudic examples attest to genuine lost variants, they – and the many other examples of dismembered scripture⁴ – clearly reflect an acceptance of the idea that the text of the Hebrew Bible is sometimes jumbled.⁵ More speculatively, it is conceivable that the rabbis were familiar with redactional techniques that made texts more susceptible to dismemberment.⁶

² My translation. Braude glosses over the fact that the market commissioner’s “dismembered” version is cited as scripture, substituting “this is what is written” with “hence” (Braude, *Pēsiḳta dē-Rab Kahana*, 251).

³ My translation. Cf. Sifre 39:1 on Num 6:23; Numbers Rabbah 11:4; Yalqut Shimoni (Pentateuch) 305:2, 710:5.

⁴ See, e.g., Genesis Rabbah 58; Leviticus Rabbah 22; y. Berakhot 9:5, 68a; y. Rosh Hashanah 2:8, 14a; y. Ta’anit 4:1, 18a; y. Nazir 7:2, 35b; Sifra Shemini Mekilta de-Milu’im 2:29 on Lev 9:22 and 2:41 on Lev 10:6; Mekilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el *Vayyissa’* 4; Yalqut Shimoni (Pentateuch) 260:6, 524:2, 526:3.

⁵ That “there is no early or late in the Torah” (אין מוקדם ומאוחר בתורה) is a related, if wholly exegetical, rabbinic notion. See, e.g., b. Pesahim 6b; b. Sanhedrin 49b; Mekilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el *Shira* 7; Sifre 64:1 on Num 9:1.

⁶ See discussion of Africanus’s *Kestoi* in § 5.6, below.

2.1. Misplaced Interlinear and Marginal Supplements

The phenomena of marginal and interlinear insertions are very well attested and are indeed present in a substantial portion of manuscripts, biblical and otherwise.

Insertions are sometimes self-corrections: an accidentally omitted word might be inserted between the lines of a manuscript, for instance. More often, though, they represent an addition by a later scribe. Some secondary insertions are explanatory glosses, some are corrections based on other manuscripts or on memories of divergent versions, and some are creative additions. What all these examples of insertions have in common is that they generate fertile ground for future error. A word or phrase written between lines in one manuscript might be incorporated by a later scribe in any number of different positions in the new copy, and the same is true of marginal insertions.

The following images of 1QIsaiah^a (the Great Isaiah Scroll from Qumran) and 4QDibHam^a (Words of the Luminaries) illustrate the problem.



Fig. 1. Section from 1QIsaiah^a (columns XXXI-XXXIII) displaying interlinear, marginal, and hybrid insertions. (Photo: Courtesy of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem)