



Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2013.05.07

Edson de Faria Francisco, *Manual da Bíblia Hebraica: Introdução ao Texto Massorético - Guia Introdutório para a Bíblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. São Paulo: Vida Nova, 2008. R\$115.90. ISBN: 9788527504058.

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In 2003 the first edition of a special guide was published for specialists and students of biblical texts as well as anyone interested in the study of scripture. Edson de Faria Francisco, a Brazilian specialist in Masoretic studies, wrote this guide in Portuguese as an introductory handbook to the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). He is a professor of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek at Methodist University of São Paulo (UMESP) in Brazil. He has dedicated his academic life to the study of the Tiberian Masorah, its traditions and history (or histories, if we think of its beginnings in Babylonia and its development in Palestine, reaching its zenith among the families of Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali from Tiberias). Today, the *Manual* is in its third edition (originally published in 2008), an up-to-date, enlarged and revised version that shows how closely the author follows the academic and bibliographical production that has come to light on the studies of the Masorah around the world, especially the huge work carried out by the crew of specialists preparing the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ), the successor of BHS, as well as the research involved in the Hebrew University Bible Project (HUBP).

The *Manual* is remarkable for the scope of information it provides. Footnotes contain further references on more detailed topics and academic discussions not covered in an introductory guide. Francisco takes all the necessary precautions for the proper elucidation of the material, explaining abbreviations, providing precise transliterations of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek letters, useful tables, plates, and helpful examples. This careful work is evident in each of the two parts of this handbook, divided into a fluid sequence of chapters and subchapters as well as seven appendices and several comprehensive lists with exhaustive and easy-to-find information. For example, in the second chapter of part one, all the abbreviations written in Latin used in the critical apparatus of the BHS are alphabetically displayed in tables with translation and biblical references where they can be found in the critical apparatus. Nonetheless, the *Manual* is not bound to the signs and abbreviations chosen by the modern specialists and used in the BHS or other critical editions, for it also includes complete lists of terms and abbreviations used by the Masoretes in the *masora parva* as well as technical terms (e.g., *Sebirin*), expressions (*Ketib*

wela' Qere or *Qere wela' Ketib*) and the accents of cantillation. Gérard E. Weil provides a lot of information about the *Massorah Gedolah iuxta Codicem Leningradensem B19a* in the second volume of BHS dedicated exclusively to the *masora magna*. In the *Manual*, all of this data is presented with key explanations. Basically, the first part of this guide shows one how to use the BHS and read its critical apparatus, *masora parva*, summary and also the *masora magna*, which can be found in the *Massorah Gedolah*. Francisco also paid attention to the changes and “corrections” carried out by the editors of the BHS in relation to the original *masora parva*, *masora magna* and the summary found in the Leningrad Codex B19a (L).

The second part of this manual deals with several texts and versions (e.g., the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Cairo Geniza, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, the Vetus Latina, and others), recensions, and manuscripts (e.g., the manuscripts discovered in Khirbet Qumran, Wadi Murabba‘at, Nahal Hever, and Masada) of what we call today the Hebrew Bible. Here one may find information about the versions dependent on the Septuagint, for instance, the Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, and Arabic translations of the Bible. The author describes the date, origin, name(s) of the scribe (or scribes) who redacted the Masoretic manuscripts, and their owner (or a sequence of owners throughout history) or the place where the documents are kept nowadays. The second section begins with the historical transmission of the Bible looking back to the Proto-Masoretic Text. The differences between the vocalization, accentuation, and textual annotation systems created by the Eastern and Western Masoretes are distinguished in detail. The reader also learns about the two most important Masoretic families from Tiberias, Ben Asher and Ben Naphtali, and their contribution to the definitive development of the Masoretic Text. All texts written by the Masoretes or having the Masoretic Text as their bases are depicted, especially the manuscript named Codex L (see chapter II of the second part and Appendix I), the text, together with its Masoretic annotations, published in the BHS and other editions (still the choice of BHQ, while HUBP has chosen the Aleppo Codex [A]). The bibliography on all the themes and texts mentioned throughout the *Manual* as well as the modern editions where the ancient documents can be found are listed almost exhaustively. And finally, the editorial work is also outstanding, making the display of the information and its arrangement on the sheet very clear.

Many other things could be said about this very rich Portuguese guide to the BHS prepared by Francisco, one of the new specialists on the Masorah in the academic world. It will prove to be a useful tool for all people interested in deepening their knowledge about the biblical text if the *Manual* were translated into English or other languages. It is not an accident that Adrian Schenker, the president of the Editorial Committee of the BHQ, commented on the back cover of the *Manual* by Francisco in the following way: “This manual for the Hebrew Bible fills a long felt need. The Hebrew Bible text is a monument of scribal learning of many centuries. Without a thorough introduction into its history and its many aspects it is impossible to fully understand it. Here the present manual comes in and provides the reader with a comprehensive explanation of all relevant data of the Hebrew Bible text.”