

EXEGETICAL VARIATION IN EXODUS 2: THE HERMENEUTICS OF ASSIMILATION IN LXX AND 4QEXOD^b

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ABSTRACT: In this study, I analyze textual variants within Exodus 2 that reflect interpretive activity, specifically as found within LXX and 4QExod^b (4Q13). Of particular interest is the phenomenon of assimilation. The article is organized according to expanding contexts to which scribes have assimilated the text of Exodus 2: immediate context (intra-episode), near context (adjacent episodes), and distant context (Genesis). This study identifies one intra-episode assimilation via expansion in Exodus 2:3 in 4Q13. Three assimilations between adjacent episodes in LXX are discussed. Two instances derive from scribal coordination through translation choices (ἄρσεν [1:16, 22; 2:2, 10]; ἀναίρέω [2:5, 10, 14–15]), while the other case of assimilation derives from the translator's Hebrew *Vorlage* (2:22). Finally, the article discusses one case of assimilation to Genesis via expansion attested in both 4Q13 and LXX. Cumulatively, these cases demonstrate a tendency for scribes to increase the cohesion of Exodus 2 within its immediate, near, and distant literary contexts. These assimilations are not an attempt to correct the text but are instead an explication and extension of what was perceived as implicit within the *Vorlage*.

KEYWORDS: Exodus 2, exegetical variation, assimilation, scribal hermeneutics

Introduction

The textual witnesses to the Hebrew Bible provide data not only for establishing the earliest extant text of the Hebrew Bible but also for understanding its earliest interpretation. Transmission history is reception history. In the present study, I explore secondary readings within the textual witnesses to the early life of Moses in Exodus 2 that reflect interpretive activity. I limit my examination to two textual witnesses, LXX and 4QExod^b (4Q13) (text editions: Cross 1994 and Wevers 1991), and to one method of textual change attested in these textual traditions, assimilation (for assimilation, see Zakovitch 1985; McCarter, Jr. 1986: 38; Mackie 2015: 121–22). Assimilation indicates the intentional alteration of Text A towards the language of Text B,

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which may be located in the near or distant context. While many scholars use the term harmonization for this phenomenon (Tov 2012: 258–59; Tov 2017: 2; Person, Jr. 2023: 131–66), assimilation is preferred since harmonization implies that the textual change is an attempt to reconcile two contradictory texts (Teeter 2014: 182–83). Assimilation, on the other hand, recognizes the formal correspondence between the textual alteration and a source text without specifying the motive for the change. I will analyze examples of assimilation within the versions of Exodus 2 represented by LXX and 4Q13 for what they reveal about the techniques, aims, and assumptions of the scribes responsible for them. This will demonstrate some ways in which interpretive reworking is embedded within the transmission of the narrative of Moses's early life. In this article, I argue that the aim of the scribes responsible for the textual assimilations in the LXX and 4Q13 versions of Exodus 2 was to produce a version of Moses's early life that increased the cohesion of the narrative within immediate, near, and distant literary contexts. In the examples under consideration, this operation was not an attempt to correct the text; rather, it was an explication and extension of what was perceived as implicit within the *Vorlage*.

A key methodological issue at play in this essay, and in the text-critical study of the Hebrew Bible more broadly, is the question of whether a textual assimilation represents a conscious alteration or whether it is an unconscious effect of scribal memory and oral transmission. David Carr and Raymond Person have both discussed the phenomenon of oral and memory variants (Carr 2011: 25–36; Person, Jr. 2023: 131–66); however, William Tooman has cautioned against too readily ascribing the cause of textual variants to orality and scribal memory (2019). While explanations of the data will always be somewhat subjective, two factors increase the likelihood that an instance of assimilation is intentional and exegetical. First, how prevalent is assimilation in the document under consideration? A higher frequency of assimilation increases the likelihood that such changes are intended by the scribe (Teeter 2014: 208). While an assessment of the prevalence of assimilation within all of LXX Exodus and 4Q13 is beyond the scope of the present article, previous studies have demonstrated that both are characterized by extensive assimilation (for LXX, Tov 2017; for 4Q13, Longacre 2014: 183–86, 205, 245; for their interrelationship, Cross 1994: 84). Second, how strong are the internal connections between the source text and the borrowing text? How unique is the shared word or phrase? To what extent can the language of the secondary reading be traced to a specific source text rather than to general biblical idiom? As the strength of the internal connections between the two texts increases, the likelihood that the assimilation is intentional and exegetically productive also increases.

With these concerns in mind, the discussion of exegetical variants in Exodus 2

Inner-Episode Assimilation: Expansion in Exodus 2:3b (4Q13)

MT ותשם בה את־הילד ותשם בסוף על־שפת היאר
She set the child in it and set [it] in the reeds on the bank of the Nile.

The addition is strange and evidently out of place. It may be a variant reading to

the phrase ותשלח את אמתה below in v. 5, and somehow has crept into the text at the wrong place (1994: 86).

Rofé, on the other hand, argues that the expansion is intentional and an example of early midrash that has entered into the transmission of the text. He bases his analysis on two primary features: 1) other cases in which a secondary expansion in a textual witness introduces an intermediary into a narrative (1 Kingdoms 1:14; 3 Kingdoms 12:24) and 2) the later Rabbinic tradition that Amram was 'the greatest of his generation,' which Rofé takes to mean that he was the leader of the community (2002: 43). On this basis, Rofé asserts:

One cannot depict the leader's wife as one who did everything by herself; certainly she had a maid who took the basket to the Nile. Thus the midrashic interpreter added: 'And she said to her maid, "Go!"' (Rofé 2002: 43).

While both explanations are possible, neither gives sufficient attention either to the wording of the expansion or to the possible source(s) for its language. Cross's assumption that a variant of ותשלח את אמתה from v. 5 crept in from the margin neglects the fact that ותשלח את אמתה has no words in common with the expansion in 4Q13. Rofé's explanation requires a logical jump from a later tradition about Amram to the introduction of his wife's maidservant into the text. Though possible, the explanation is indirect, providing no direct connections to the language of the expansion.

An examination of the language of the expansion suggests two sources within the narrative itself for the origin of the reading. First, Cross and Rofé have both connected Moses's mother's maidservant to Pharaoh's daughter's retrieving the basket from the river by means of a maidservant in v. 5b β , though both attribute the correspondence to accidental causes. For Cross, a variant version of v. 5b β is the source of the expansion in terms of mechanical error. Rofé explains the correspondence as follows:

In this way, there resulted a nice symmetry between both 'mothers' of Moses, Jochebed and Pharaoh's daughter. One sent her maid to place the basket in the reeds; the other sent her maid to take the basket from the reeds... Indeed, the midrashic interpolator inadvertently created the symmetry (2002: 43).

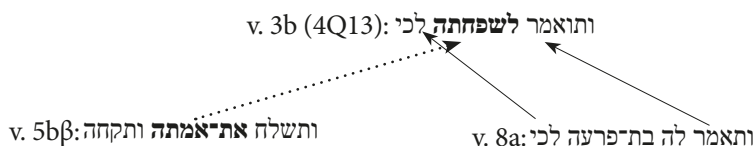
Others, however, see the symmetry between both mothers acting by means of a servant in sending the child to the river and retrieving him as too strong to be accidental. James Kugel states:

It seems that the editor or copyist of this text was anxious that Moses' natural mother be no less honored than his adoptive mother: if (according to the traditional Hebrew text and the Septuagint) the latter had a handmaid whom she sent to pick up the bas-

ket, then the former ought likewise to have had a handmaid to deposit it on the shore of the Nile (1998: 529; see also Propp 1998: 144).

Though different terms for maidservant are used in 4Q13's expansion (שפחה) and in v. 5 (אמה)—terms that are virtual synonyms (1 Samuel 25:41; 1:16//1:18; Ruth 2:13//3:9; BDB 51a, 1046b)—recognition of the second source of the language of the expansion confirms the sense that the reading in 4Q13 is an assimilation of the presentation of Moses's mother to that of Pharaoh's daughter later in the narrative.

The verbal sequence and syntax of 4Q13's expansion find an exact parallel later in v. 8a, where Pharaoh's daughter addresses Moses's sister: ותאמר לה בת־פרעה לֵכִי, 'The daughter of Pharaoh said to her, "Go!"' Both the expansion in v. 3 and v. 8a follow the sequence לֵכִי + object + ותאמר + ל. Thus, the expansion is crafted out of two different features of the presentation of Pharaoh's daughter later in the episode. The presence of a maidservant in v. 5bβ is added in the syntactic slot of the object in the sentence structure of v. 8a:



The hypothesis that 4Q13's expansion is an inner-episode assimilation of Moses's mother to Pharaoh's daughter is strengthened by the underlying analogy between the two women in the narrative:

1. Both are referred to as a 'daughter' (v. 1b: בת־לוי; vv. 5, 7–10: בת־פרעה). These 'daughters,' as well as other female leading characters in Exodus 1–2, are an important aspect of the narrative. Pharaoh's attempt to exterminate the 'sons' born to the Hebrews is twice thwarted by women who rebel against his orders, the last of whom is his own daughter. The deliverance of the Hebrew son Moses is carried out by two daughters and the boy's sister.
2. Both the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh are the main actors in the story, being the subject of a large number of verbs in quick succession. The daughter of Levi is the subject of nine consecutive verbs in vv. 2–3, and the daughter of Pharaoh is the subject of eight consecutive verbs in vv. 5–6. Notice, in particular, that both 'take' (לקח: vv. 3a, 5b) the basket and 'see' (ראה: vv. 2b, 6a) the child. This is the case even if the daughter of Pharaoh 'takes' the basket through an intermediary in v. 5b. In fact, this is the point of correspondence that the expansion in 4Q13 strengthens. Both 'daughters' act through an intermediary to set the basket in and retrieve it from the river.

3. Both the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh act as the child's mother. In biblical narrative, the birth of a child is immediately followed by his naming, usually by his mother (Genesis 4:25; 19:37; 29:32, 33, 34, 35; 30:5–6, 7–8, 10–1, 12–3, 17–8, 19–20, 21, 23–24; 38:3, 4, 5; 1 Samuel 1:20; 4:19–21; 2 Samuel 12:24 [Q]; father: Genesis 16:15; 21:2–3; Exodus 2:22; 2 Samuel 12:24 [K]; God: 2 Samuel 12:25; Isaiah 8:3; Hosea 1:4, 6, 9). The birth and the naming are narrated as a single event. Thus, the report of the child's birth in v. 2 raises the reader's expectation that the child will now receive his name. However, the naming is delayed until the end of the episode in v. 10, and his adoptive mother, rather than his birth mother, assigns the name. This narrative technique lends unity to the story and the complementary maternal roles played by both the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh.

These details demonstrate that the analogy between the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh is a central feature of the narrative in the *Vorlage* of the scribe responsible for the expansion in 4Q13, increasing the probability that the expansion in 4Q13 in Exodus 2:3 is an intentional assimilation. The symmetry between the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh is already latent within the narrative. Yet, the expansion amplifies the analogy, making it more explicit for the audience for whom 4Q13 was intended.

Assimilation to Adjacent Episodes: Exodus 1–2 (LXX)

Expanding the scope to Exodus 1–2, there are several instances of assimilation across adjacent episodes in LXX, some of which reflect the Hebrew *Vorlage* of LXX and some of which are shifts resulting from the work of the translator (for translation 'shift,' see van der Louw 2007: 383). The use of the LXX for purposes of both textual criticism and the history of exegesis must take into account the nature of LXX as a translation. The control for proposals of either a variant *Vorlage* behind LXX or an interpretive rendering by the translator must be the overall 'textual-linguistic make-up of the translation' (Pietersma 2006: 38; also Dhont 2021: 29; Theocharous 2012: 11–15, 21; Theocharous 2021: 115–16; Tov 2015: 19–26). Particularly important for this study is the statistical assessment of lexical stereotyping, or isoglossing, within a translation (Pietersma 2006: 38; Tov 2015: 22–24). The translation profile of LXX Exodus, in addition to frequent agreement with Qumran manuscripts and the Samaritan Pentateuch, suggests that the default position should be that LXX Exodus carefully represents its *Vorlage*, even when departing from extant Hebrew witnesses (Aejmelaeus 2007: 85–104; Perkins 2007: 43; Perkins 2016; Salvesen 2015: 30–33; Srenock 2017; Tov 2017: 3). Therefore, proposals of interpretive translation activity

must be demonstrated to be both a representation of a Hebrew *Vorlage* and a departure from the translator's standard technique (see Barr 2003: 541–42).

Assimilation between Exodus 1:15–22 and 2:1–10

There is one instance of assimilation between the episode of the Hebrew midwives in Exodus 1:15–22 and Moses's birth and adoption in Exodus 2:1–10 in LXX resulting from the activity of the translator. Exodus 2:2a reports that the daughter of Levi conceived and gave birth to a son (וַתֵּהוֹרַת הָאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן). LXX reads, καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔλαβεν καὶ ἔτεκεν ἄρσεν (NETS: 'And she conceived and bore a male child'). While this seems to be a rather straightforward rendering of the Hebrew text, the use of ἄρσεν, 'male,' rather than υἱόν, 'son,' is unusual against the background of the Greek translator's normal practice. Out of 211 occurrences of בֵּן in the Hebrew text of Exodus, υἱός occurs as the translation equivalent in LXX 194 times (91.94%).¹ Conversely, ἄρσεν translates בֵּן only three times in all Greek translations of the Hebrew scriptures, all three occurring in Exodus 1–2 (1:16, 22; 2:2). While the shift is subtle, it results in a text with stronger lexical cohesion between Exodus 1 and 2. A commonplace lexical connection between the narrative about the Hebrew midwives and Moses's birth and adoption in the Hebrew text (בֵּן) has become more unique in the Greek text (ἄρσεν).

Consideration of underlying cohesive ties between Exodus 1 and 2 in the Hebrew text gives further context to this translation shift and illuminates its significance. Exodus 1:15–22 and 2:1–10 are closely related thematically. Both episodes concern female saviors who deliver baby boys from Pharaoh's murderous decree. Supporting this element of thematic cohesion is lexical alternation between בֵּן and יָלַד. In both episodes, בֵּן is used in the first and last instance (1:16, 22; 2:2, 10), with יָלַד occurring in the middle (1:17–18; 2:3, 6–10). Lexical links also occur near the join of the two episodes. These form a small chiasm around Pharaoh's decree for all Hebrew baby boys to be thrown into the river, which fulfills a Janus-like function as both the conclusion to the preceding episode (cf. 1:22 with 1:16) and the necessary background information for the episode in chapter 2 (see Walsh 2001: 188–90 ['double-duty hinges']):

- A 'God was good to the midwives' (טוֹב 1:20a)
- B' He made houses for them' (בָּתִּים: 1:21b)
- XPharaoh's new decree (1:22)
- B'' ...the house of Levi...the daughter of Levi' (בֵּית, בַּת : 2:1)
- A''She saw that he was good' (טוֹב : 2:2b)

¹ This excludes uses of בֵּן in genealogies (usually rendered by ἐκ or the genitive case) and in expressions of age ('son of x years').

Further cohesive ties relate to recurring allusions to Genesis 1–11, with a particular emphasis on the creation account, across Exodus 1–2 as a whole:

1. Exodus 1:7 contains clear resonances of Genesis 1 and 9: ‘And the Israelites were fruitful, swarmed, multiplied, and become very mighty; the land was filled with them’ (ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד ותמלא הארץ אתם). Note the combination of רבה and פרה in both Genesis 1:28 and 9:7 as well as in Exodus 1:7. The verb שרץ occurs in both Exodus 1:7 and Genesis 9:7. Filling (מלא) of the land (הארץ) occurs in both Exodus 1:7 and Genesis 1:28. Thus, allusion to the early chapters of Genesis in Exodus 1 conflates language from the accounts of both creation and the flood. The multiplication of the Israelites remains a central theme throughout Exodus 1 (רבה: vv. 10, 12, 20).

2. The events surrounding Moses’s birth echo both the creation and flood narratives. Exodus 2:2ba reports that Moses’s mother ‘saw that he was good’ (ותרא אותו כִּי) טוב הוא; cf. Gen 1:4, 9–10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Dozeman 2009: 80–81). This is related to a larger literary strategy in Exodus 1–2 surrounding ראה. The Hebrew midwives are to carry out Pharaoh’s orders when they see (ראה) the Hebrew women in labor (1:16a), but the midwives fear (ירא) God instead (1:17a, 21a). The ‘seeing’ of both Moses’s mother and the daughter of Pharaoh represents a major moment in the story of his birth and rescue (ראה 2:2, 5–6). The verb plays a key role in the narrative of Moses’s slaying of the Egyptian overseer (vv. 11–12), leading to Moses being afraid (ירא: v. 15). Then, the final verse of chapter 2 recounts that ‘God saw the Israelites’ (v. 25: וירא אלהים את־בני ישראל). After seeing that the child is good, Moses’s mother prepares an ‘ark’ (תבה) for him in v. 3. The only other occurrence of the term is in reference to the ark of the flood narrative (Genesis 6:14ff.). Seth Postell has demonstrated further analogies between the flood narrative and the life of Moses (2022: 440–41; also Dozeman 2009: 81).

3. There seem to be several thematic connections with Genesis 3. Pharaoh’s statement, ‘Come, let us deal shrewdly with them’ (1:10a: להבה נתחכמה לו), recalls the description of the serpent, who is ‘more crafty (ערום) than any other beast of the field’ (Genesis 3:1a). The Israelites suffer regarding harsh labor (Exodus 1:8–14; cf. Genesis 3:17–19) and childbirth (Exodus 1:15–22; cf. Genesis 3:16).

The list above is by no means exhaustive but demonstrates that allusion to the early chapters of Genesis is an underlying and unifying element in Exodus 1–2. This observation brings clarification to the nature of the unusual translation of בן by ἄρσεν in Exodus 1 and 2 discussed above (1:16–8, 22; 2:2). In LXX Exodus 1, the translation of בן by ἄρσεν occurs alongside the equally unusual translation of בת by θῆλυς, ‘female’ (vv. 16, 22). Aside from Exodus 1:16 and 22, θῆλυς always translates נקבה in the

Greek Pentateuch (23x). Similarly, ἄρσεν translates זָכָר in all of the other occurrences of the Greek term in LXX (46x). The appearance in LXX Exodus 1–2 is exceptional for both ἄρσεν and θῆλυς (Perkins 2017: 73). This is likely an inner-Greek intertextual allusion to Gen 1:27b, where God creates humanity in his image as ‘male and female’ (MT: זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה; LXX: ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυς). This translation shift bridges adjacent narratives (near context), but this is the case because it is part of a larger strategy of allusion to Genesis 1 (distant context). And the Greek allusion is an extension of allusion already present within the translator’s *Vorlage*, matching Myrto Theocharous’s concept of ‘the translator’s enhancement of intertextuality’ (2021: 113–14).

Assimilation between Exodus 2:1–10 and 2:11–22

Further instances of assimilation between adjacent narratives may be found when comparing Exodus 2:1–10 (Moses’s birth and adoption) with Exodus 2:11–22 (Moses’s killing of an Egyptian, flight to Midian, marriage to Zipporah, and naming of Gershom). One assimilation occurs via a translation shift, and expansion in the *Vorlage* of the LXX best accounts for a second assimilation.

The Hebrew text of Exodus 2:5b reports of Pharaoh’s daughter, וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אִמָּתָהּ, וַתִּקַּח (‘She sent her maidservant, and she took it’). LXX reads closely with the Hebrew, ἀποστείλασα τὴν ἄβραν ἀνείλατο αὐτήν (‘She sent an attendant; she picked it up’). While the middle voice of ἀναίρέω (=ἀνείλατο) is an appropriate translation for לקח in this context, it is not the expected translation equivalent, since the translator renders 74 out of 79 occurrences of לקח in Exodus with a form of λαμβάνω (93.67%). The middle voice of ἀναίρέω—which elsewhere in LXX/OG translates *hiphil* רִם (Numbers 17:2; Joshua 4:5) or *qal* נָשָׂא (Joshua 4:3; Daniel 1:16)—translates לקח nowhere else in all Greek translations of Hebrew scripture. In Exodus 2, the middle voice of ἀναίρέω occurs again in v. 10b, translating מִשֵּׁה in Pharaoh’s daughter’s explanation of Moses’s name (כִּי מִי־הָיָה מִשֵּׁהוּ; LXX: Ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος αὐτὸν ἀνείλόμην). Le Boullec and Sandevour suggest that the repetition of the verb in LXX ‘reinforces the narrative coherence’ (1989: 83; also Perkins 2017: 93). While this is true for 2:1–10, the use of the verb continues in the following episode as well. The active voice of ἀναίρέω occurs three times in vv. 14a and 15 as a translation for הָרַג, ‘to kill’ (for the range of meaning for ἀναίρέω, see Muraoka 2009: 40a). This is not the expected translation for הָרַג either, which the translator renders by ἀποκτείνω elsewhere in LXX Exodus (4:23; 5:21; 13:15; 21:14; 22:23; 23:7; 32:12, 27). The data suggests that all five appearances of ἀναίρέω in Exodus 2, which are distributed across the episodes of Moses’s birth/adoption and flight, are unexpected. This likely indicates an intentional strategy on the part of the translator to increase the lexical cohesion between the episodes. While this does not precisely fit the definition of assimilation used above—the intentional alteration of Text A toward the language of Text B—it is

an example of scribal coordination of adjacent narratives by means of shared unique translation choices.

Another case of assimilation is found in LXX Exodus 2:22a, but, in this instance, the change was probably introduced in the transmission of the Hebrew *Vorlage* rather than by the translator. In Exodus 2:22a, the birth of Gershom is narrated with an additional clause lacking in MT and SP:

MT ותלד בן ויקרא את־שמו גרשם
She gave birth to a son, and he (Moses) named him Gershom.

LXX ἐν γαστρὶ δὲ λαβοῦσα ἡ γυνὴ (=וְתָהָר הָאִשָּׁה) ἔτεκεν υἱόν, καὶ ἔπωνόμασεν Μωϋσῆς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Γερσαμ
Now when she became pregnant, the woman bore a son, and Moyses called his name Gersam (NETS).

Aejmelaeus also sees the plus in LXX Exodus 2:22a as reflecting its Hebrew *Vorlage*, though she argues that this is the earliest reading, which was lost through parablepsis due to *homoiooteleuton* on the basis of the plus in SP at the end of v. 21 (וְתָהָר הָאִשָּׁה): וְתָהָר הָאִשָּׁה (2007:94-95). It is also possible to explain the loss of the longer reading attested by LXX without the plus in SP at the end of v. 21. In this case, the loss could be due to *homoioarkton* (וְתָהָר הָאִשָּׁה וְתָלַד). Nonetheless, intentional expansion in the *Vorlage* of LXX should not be ruled out as an option, and the nearness of the language of the plus to Exodus 2:2 suggests that this is a fruitful line of inquiry. If the plus in LXX is an assimilating expansion, it is unlikely that the expansion is an assimilation to general biblical idiom, since biblical style shows no clear preference for הָרָה + יָלַד over only יָלַד in narrating childbirth (יָלַד + הָרָה: Genesis 4:1, 17; 19:36-37; 21:2; 29:32-35; 30:5, 7, 17, 19, 23; 38:3-4; 1 Samuel 1:20; 2:21; Isaiah 8:3; Hosea 1:6, 8; Ruth 4:13; יָלַד alone: Genesis 4:20, 22, 25; 16:15; 22:20; 25:2; 30:10, 12, 21; 36:4ff.; 38:5; Exodus 6:20, 23, 25; Judges 8:31; 11:2; 2 Samuel 11:27; 12:24; 1 Kings 11:20; Ezekiel 23:4; both patterns occur together in Genesis 29-30 and 38:3-5). The longer reading in LXX also has an additional noun, ἡ γυνή (=הָאִשָּׁה), which is not part of typical birth narration. In fact, the full combination הָרָה + הָאִשָּׁה + יָלַד occurs in only two verses in the Hebrew Bible, Exodus 2:2 and 2 Kings 4:17. This increases the probability that the plus in LXX represents an expansion intended to assimilate the narration of Gershom's birth in v. 22 to the narration of his father's birth in v. 2 (so Tov 2017: 11).

Pre-existing connections between Exodus 2:1-10 and 2:11-22 show that these instances of scribal coordination, whether introduced by the Greek translator or already present in his *Vorlage*, amplify rather than create cohesion between the narra-

tives. The episodes of Moses's birth/adoption (2:1–10) and flight to Midian/marriage (2:11–22) are united by several themes. First, each story involves Pharaoh's intent to kill Moses. Second, in each episode, Moses meets a group of women at a water source. Third, each episode features drawing from/of water. This is particularly interesting due to the oddity of Moses's name being in the form of an active participle in 2:10, even though in the story he is the object of the drawing (מִשֶּׁה rather than מִשֵּׁה). In the subsequent episode, however, he has taken on the role of savior (2:17b) and now has become the subject of the drawing (2:19b: וגם־דלה דלה לנו). Dozeman comments:

According to this interpretation 'Moses' means 'drawer from water.' A passive form of the verb would better conform to the details of Moses' birth (i.e., 'one drawn from the water'), but the active meaning may be pointing ahead to Moses' role at the well in Midian or to his leading Israel through the water (2009: 82).

Fourth, Moses is hidden in the first episode yet hides the slain Egyptian in the second. Fifth, the first episode of Exodus 2 opens with marriage to the daughter of a priest and the birth of a child; the second concludes with marriage to the daughter of a priest and the birth of a child. This final correspondence is even stronger in LXX since in that version of Exodus 2:1 Moses's father takes 'one of the daughters of Levi' (ἔλαβεν τῶν θυγατέρων Λεβί) as opposed to the singular 'daughter of Levi' attested in MT, SP, and 4Q1. While this shift to the plural is likely the work of the translator and is probably not an intentional assimilation (see Wevers 1990: 12; Gurtner 2013: 182; Perkins 2017: 72), the resulting text nonetheless strengthens the parallels between the circumstances of Moses's birth and his own marriage. Just as Moses's father married one of the daughters of Levi (2:1), so Moses married one of the daughters of the priest of Midian (2:16).

Summary

The examples of assimilation between adjacent episodes discussed above demonstrate a variety of methods of increasing cohesion between a narrative and its immediate literary context. This can be the result of the activity of the translator, as seen in the use of ἄρσεν as a translation for כֵּן in Exodus 1:16–18, 22, and 2:2. This translation shift, which creates a strong point of lexical cohesion between the two narratives, relates primarily to a strategy of inner-Greek allusion to the creation account that spans Exodus 1–2. The translator also increases cohesion between adjacent narratives by using the verb ἀναιρέω to translate three different Hebrew verbs across the two episodes of Exodus 2 (vv. 5, 10, 14–15). This translation choice does not fit the definition of assimilation used so far in this study since it does not change the wording of a text toward the language of a specific source text. Nonetheless, it is clearly a case of scribal coordination that creates a catchword connection between adjacent episodes. Another case

of assimilation across episodes within Exodus 2 occurs within the translator's *Vorlage*. The expansion in 2:22a assimilates the narration of Gershom's birth to the narration of his father's birth in v. 2. Despite the varied character of the examples of assimilation between adjacent units, the cumulative effect of the evidence suggests a common concern for unity and cohesion between units. The interest in the relationship between adjacent units is significant since the juxtaposition of units was an important feature of the redaction and composition of biblical literature itself as well as later Rabbinic interpretation (Gilmour 2014: 7–18; Zakovitch 2012: 42–43).

Assimilation to Genesis: Expansion in Exodus 2:16 (4Q13 and LXX)

Exodus 2:16a supplies the reader with important background information by introducing the seven daughters of the priest of Midian. 4Q13 and LXX share a plus that extends the description:

MT ולכהן מדין שבע בנות
Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters.

4Q13 ולכהן מדין שבע בנות רועות צאן
Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters who were shepherd-
ing his flock.

LXX τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν
Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters who were shepherd-
ing the sheep of their father.

Several scholars have suggested that the expansion in LXX and 4Q13 is a logical addition in light of v. 16b, which describes the daughters doing shepherding tasks, such as filling the troughs with water for the flock (Tov 2017: 7; Wevers 1990: 20; Le Boulluec and Sandevour 1989: 85). However, such a detail is hardly necessary; the narrative flows logically without the expansion. Why, then, did the scribe responsible for the expansion find it necessary to describe the priest of Midian's daughters as shepherdesses? Careful attention to the language of the plus is key to recognizing its function.

Surprisingly, the only other person in the Hebrew Bible to be called a shepherdess (feminine participle רעה) is Rachel in Genesis 29:9b: 'Rachel came with the flock that belonged to her father, for she was a shepherdess' (כי רעה לאביה). Aejmelaeus recognized Genesis 29:9b as the closest parallel to the expansion in LXX and suggested that the plus was based on a variant *Vorlage* before 4Q13 had been published (2007: 95 [the essay was first published in 1987]). The parallel

in Genesis 29:9b accounts for both aspects of the expansion in Exodus 2:16. Rachel is a shepherdess, and she is with her father's flock.

The many underlying points of contact between the story of Jacob and Rachel's meeting at the well and the story of Moses's rescue of the daughters of the priest of Midian at the well support the proposal that the expansion is an intentional assimilation to Genesis 29:9b. Many scholars have noted the shared elements between the two stories as examples of the type-scene of the 'romance at the well,' in which 1) a man journeying away from home encounters a maiden at a well, 2) one of the figures draws water for the animals, 3) the maiden rushes home to report to her family, 4) the family invites the man to a meal, and 5) a marriage follows. The most prominent examples of this type-scene are in Genesis 24, Genesis 29, and Exodus 2 (Alter 1981: 47–62 [on the type-scene in general]; Bodner 2016: 142–44, esp. n. 60 [on the romance at the well in particular]).

However, two additional observations suggest that the relationship between Genesis 29 and Exodus 2 extends beyond being two realizations of a common type-scene. First, the stories share several details that are not a feature of any other examples of the type-scene. These include: 1) the man at the well becomes the husband; 2) the man interacts with shepherds at the well (Genesis 29:4–8; Exodus 2:17); 3) the man waters a 'flock (צֹאן)' (Genesis 29:10; Exodus 2:19b); 4) the man subsequently lives/stays with the family (יָשַׁב: Genesis 24:14, 19; Exodus 2:21a). Furthermore, the events preceding and following the meeting at the well are also conspicuously similar: 1) each man is fleeing from a member of his household who is seeking to kill him (בִּרְחָהֶרֶג: Genesis 27:41b, 43; 35:1, 7; Exodus 2:15); 2) each is subsequently employed as a shepherd for his father-in-law (רִעָה: Genesis 30:31; Exodus 3:1); 3) each considers his stay with his father-in-law a sojourn (גֵּוֶר: Genesis 32:4; Exodus 2:22). The accumulation of so many details shared uniquely between the encounters at the well and the surrounding events suggests that the interrelationship between the narratives extends beyond a shared type-scene to an intentional narrative analogy between them (Zakovitch 1991: 46–48; Daube 1983: 62–72; Postell 2022: 445–46).

This survey of the analogical relationship between Jacob's sojourn in Aram and Moses's sojourn in Midian supports interpreting the expanded description of the daughters as shepherdesses of their father's flock in 4Q13 and LXX as an assimilation to a perceived intertext. This provides another example of the scribal practice of altering a text in order to explicate an intertextual relationship that is latent in the *Vorlage*.

Conclusion

This survey of variant readings of Exodus 2 found in LXX and 4Q13 illuminates

some of the techniques, aims, and assumptions driving textual change in the transmission of the Hebrew Bible. The particular technique observed is the assimilation of the text's wording toward the wording of another text, whether in the immediate, near, or distant context. In the examples discussed in this article, assimilation is accomplished by means of textual expansion (2:3 [4Q13], 16 [4Q13/LXX], 22 [LXX]) or coordinated translation choices (ἄρσεν [1:16, 22; 2:2, 10]; ἀναίρέω [2:5, 10, 14–15]). This source text usually shares underlying connections with the scribe's *Vorlage*, which hints at one aim of this form of scribal alteration, the explication of inner-scriptural relationships. Furthermore, these cases of assimilation suggest some of the hermeneutical assumptions that lie behind this scribal model. Assimilation to the immediate and near contexts implies a mode of reading that is sensitive to internal analogies and parallels within episodes as well as a concern for unity and cohesion between adjacent units. Assimilation to Genesis shows a still more expansive notion of context.² The textual examples discussed in this study also demonstrate the close interrelationship between textual change and interpretation within the process of transmission. These productive changes are governed by the horizon of the *Vorlage*; textual change is an extension of exegesis. Therefore, a historically sound approach to the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible requires careful attention to the poetics of the text and the hermeneutics of the late Second Temple period.

While exegetical variation is the result of scribal interpretation, for the scribe's target audience, the altered text itself serves as the source of further interpretation. This principle is articulated particularly well by Andrew Teeter:

It seems clear that tradents of the interventionist or facilitating scribal model produced not only individual variant readings, but also entire manuscripts characterized by such readings. The product is a recognizable kind of manuscript . . . designed to serve interpretive aims by means of the presentation of text. These manuscripts embody introductory steps toward the reading and construal of the scriptural text, even as they (re)present that text itself. In terms of readership, they appear to be oriented toward a highly attentive and textually sophisticated audience. . . . it is a scholarly product resulting from intense study that also seeks to promote precisely

² Based on spatial reconstruction, Drew Longacre argues that 4Q13 would have originally contained Genesis as well (2014: 110). Armin Lange suggests it would have originally contained the entire Pentateuch (2009: 58). It is probable, then, that Genesis–Exodus at least was considered a single literary work by the scribes responsible for the assimilations to Genesis. See also van der Louw's argument that LXX Genesis and Exodus are the work of a single translator (2020). Other examples of exegetical variation within the textual witnesses to the Hebrew Bible also show a tendency to assimilate to texts that are not part of the same literary work, suggesting that the scribal understanding of context extends to that of an emerging scriptural collection. See Mackie 2015: 213–18; Teeter 2014: 201–4.

such interpretive scriptural engagement. . . . They provide a kind of guided reading, an exegetical tool for approaching the scriptural text (2014: 265–67).

Thus, the textual assimilations in 4Q13 and LXX for Exodus 2 highlight textual analogies for readers that might otherwise be missed, alerting readers to important internal and inner-scriptural relationships in the text. The assimilating readings in 4Q13 and LXX in Exodus 2 highlight underlying analogies between the daughter of Levi and the daughter of Pharaoh, between the marriage of Moses's parents and his marriage to Zipporah, between the birth of Moses and the birth of Gershom, and between Jacob's sojourn in Aram and Moses's sojourn in Midian. In short, they encourage an analogical reading of Exodus 2. Therefore, for ancient readers, exegetical variations were not a problem to be solved but a source for reflection and interpretation. And so they can be for contemporary biblical interpreters as well.

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