

SCRIBAL ASSIMILATION AS INTER-TEXTUAL ALLUSION

MICHAEL A. LYONS*

St Mary's College, University of St Andrews

ABSTRACT: In this essay I examine instances of scribal assimilation in ancient Jewish scripture and identify the literary features that triggered scribal recollections of other texts. I argue that some instances of assimilation can be understood as inter-textual allusion, and should be analyzed as such with reference to their formal features and possible exegetical functions. Finally, I conclude with reflections on the relationship between assimilation and the formation of a scripture collection.

KEYWORDS: Assimilation; allusion; intertextual; textual criticism; scripture collection

In the last fifty years, our understanding of textual criticism has undergone some notable shifts, two of which are particularly relevant for this essay. First, our definition of the task of textual criticism has shifted from the simplistic ‘removal of errors’ (Housman 1922: 68) and the narrow ‘produc[ing] a text as close as possible to the original’ (Maas 1958: 1) to a broader definition, one that acknowledges that not all variants are errors and that studying the history of the transmission of ancient Jewish and Christian scripture can teach us much about the beliefs and values of the communities who preserved and used these texts (Tov 2012: 102; Epp 2020: xxiv). Second, as our knowledge of the profiles of textual witnesses has increased, we have discovered that many scribal interpolations are instances of assimilation—that is, the adjustment of one textual passage in light of another. It has become clear that this scribal coordination must be seen as a continuation of what was already going on in earlier stages of literary formation (Zakovitch 1985; Brooke 2013; Ausloos 2014; for examples of supplementation at a variety of stages, see the essays in Olyan and Wright 2018).

* MICHAEL A. LYONS (PhD 2005, University of Wisconsin-Madison) is a Senior Lecturer in Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in St Mary's College, University of St Andrews. Email: mal26@st-andrews.ac.uk

At the same time, we have become increasingly aware that inter-textual allusion is one of the most significant and pervasive literary techniques attested in ancient Israelite literature, and that many allusions have important exegetical or rhetorical functions. Beginning with Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (1985), researchers have investigated the formal qualities and the various functions of allusion (e.g., Zakovitch 1992; 1995; 2012; Willey 1997; Sommer 1998; Levinson 2002; Lyons 2009; Tooman 2011; Kynes 2012; Dell and Kynes 2013; Beyer 2014; etc.). The analysis of inter-textual allusion is no longer regarded as an optional 'method' that can be applied to biblical texts, but is seen as an obligatory step in the explanation of a text's meaning and the critical reconstruction of its compositional and redactional history (see e.g. Krause 2014; Bühner 2021).

In this essay, I will present examples of assimilation in our extant textual witness-ess to ancient Jewish scripture, and offer explanations for how these variants were generated. I will then suggest that these instances of assimilation should be studied under the rubric of allusion. Finally, I will reflect on the implications of these allusive interpolations for how we think of the formation of a scripture collection.

Definitions of Assimilation

The following definitions of assimilation will serve as a guide to the examples below:

'At times we find an original similarity which has been secondarily augmented with borrowed motifs. Such a phenomenon may be termed assimilation. It arises when a traditionist or editor increases the affinity of stories already similar in themselves by adding to one of them material borrowed from the parallel tradition or composed by him under the influence of the parallel tradition.' (Zakovitch 1985: 176)

'Attraction and Assimilation. Another cause of conflation was the influence of one part of the text on another. This occurred when something in the text of one passage brought another passage to mind, so that elements of the second passage were attracted into the first.' (McCarter 1986: 38)

'Assimilation to parallel passages. Some variant forms of a text arose because ancient editors, scribes, or translators assimilated the text of one passage to that of a similar or proximate passage, usually with the apparent purpose of attaining greater consistency. Some of the more common types of assimilation include assimilation to more explicit details given in a nearby passage, assimilation of described action to a previous account of plans or command for such action, assimilation to the form of a passage which has greater literary or theological importance, and assimilation to the recurring

grammatical and lexical forms of a particular passage. There are also many instances in which repeated content, instead of being presented in a more concise form (as is so often the case), is reproduced with precisely the same wording which it has at the place of its first occurrence. Whenever it seems clear that an assimilation has occurred, the unassimilated form is presumably earlier.' (Barthélemy 2012: 90–91)

Assimilation can of course be unconscious. Moreover, it can occur between different text-segments within the same literary composition: to eliminate morphosyntactic differences (Old Greek Ezekiel 11:17 displays assimilation to the surrounding third masc. pl. forms), or to replicate a feature in or the argument of another text-segment (medieval Masoretic [M] witnesses to Ezekiel 2:3 reflect the addition of פֶּשַׁע בִּי to המורדים to match the dual occurrence of these words in Ezekiel 20:38; Kennicott Ms 150 and Syriac Ezekiel 11:19 read 'new heart' in assimilation to Ezekiel 36:26). However, for the purposes of this essay, I am only considering instances that can plausibly be considered deliberate (due to the length or complexity of the interpolation, or to the creative activity involved) rather than unconscious, and instances in which a text is assimilated to passages in other literary compositions.

Examples of Assimilation

The following list is obviously not exhaustive; these are representative examples taken from across ancient Jewish scripture. The reason for the large number of examples from the book of Ezekiel is due to the unique nature of proto-M Ezekiel, which contains a significant layer of scribal expansions in comparison to the Hebrew *Vorlage* behind the Old Greek translation (Tov 2012: 299–300; Mackie 2015: 16–28). The scribe who produced this layer clearly knew other texts and was highly sensitive to lexical similarities. But we should not expect every textual witness to exhibit the same degree of assimilation.

Exodus 2:16

Exodus 2:15 relates how Moses fled from Egypt to Midian and sat down by a well. Our major textual witnesses (the Masoretic Leningrad Codex [M^L], 4QExod^b, the Old Greek [OG], and the Samaritan Pentateuch [SP]) to Exodus 2:16 report that 'the priest of Midian had seven daughters.' However, in the OG this is followed by a plus stating that the daughters were 'pasturing the sheep of their father' (ποιμαίνουσai τὰ πρόβατα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν). 4QExod^b also has a plus here (perhaps רוע[ו]ת 'pasturing'?), but the reading is uncertain. Davies (2020: 211) suggests that these longer readings are a forward assimilation to Exodus 3:1, where Moses is said to be 'pasturing the sheep of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian.' However, it seems just as likely to me that this is an assimilation to the *earlier* story in Genesis in which

Jacob met Rachel at a well. Rachel is described in $\mathfrak{M}^L$ Genesis 29:9 as ‘coming with the sheep that belonged to her father, because she was pasturing’ (ורחל באה עם הצאן). The scribe responsible for the plus in Exodus 2:16 would have recalled the story of Rachel because of the existing plot parallels and shared lexemes in both stories: ‘well’ (Exodus 2:15 // Genesis 29:2–3), ‘daughter(s)’ (Exodus 2:16a // Genesis 29:6), and ‘water the flock’ (Exodus 2:16b // Genesis 29:3, 10).

Exodus 4:12

In $\mathfrak{M}^L$ (SP Vg) Exodus 4:12, Yhwh promises Moses ‘And I will be with your mouth’ (וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם פִּיךָ). But here OG reads ‘And I will *open* your mouth’ (καὶ ἐγὼ ἀνοίξω τὸ στόμα σου). This is likely an assimilation to Ezekiel 3:27, where Yhwh promises Ezekiel ‘When I speak with you, *I will open your mouth*’ (אֲפֶתַח אֶת פִּיךָ). The passage in Ezekiel would have been easily recalled by the scribe because of the existing shared expressions and motifs in both texts: the possibility or certainty that the speaker’s audience will not listen (Exodus 4:1 // Ezekiel 3:7), a reference to being ‘heavy of tongue’ (Exodus 4:10 // Ezekiel 3:5, 6), and a commission to speak (Exodus 4:12 // Ezekiel 3:1, 4, 11). Moreover, Moses is depicted as a paradigmatic prophet, and the call narratives of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel have been coordinated with the call narrative of Moses (Teeter and Lyons 2021: 16–28).

Leviticus 8:31

$\mathfrak{M}^L$ Leviticus 8:31a describes Moses telling Aaron and his sons to ‘boil the flesh at the entrance to the tent of meeting’ (בִּשְׁלוּ אֶת הַבָּשָׂר פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד). Here both the SP and the OG contain a plus: ‘boil the flesh at the entrance to the tent of meeting, *in a holy place*’ (בִּמְקוֹם הַקֹּדֶשׁ; ἐν τότῳ ἁγίῳ). This plus is an assimilation to the text of Exodus 29:31: ‘You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh *in a holy place*’ (בִּמְקוֹם קֹדֶשׁ). The trigger for this assimilation was the existing connection between the narrative in Exodus (in which Yhwh gives Moses the law of priestly ordination) and the narrative in Leviticus (which reports the ordination of Aaron and his sons; see Leviticus 8:31b, which makes direct reference to the instruction in Exodus 29:32). On this, see Teeter (2014: 124).

1 Samuel 1:5–6, 13

Yardney (2017: 100–104) has noted that in the story of Hannah, extant Greek witnesses to Samuel contain plusses that assimilate to the stories of barren matriarchs in Genesis: in 1 Samuel 1:5, the plus ὑπερ ταύτην (‘[Elkanah loved Hannah] more than

the other') appears to reflect the influence of μάλλον ἢ Λειαν ('[he loved Rachel] more than Leah') in Genesis 29:30; in 1 Samuel 1:6a, the plus ὅτι οὐκ ἔδωκεν αὐτῇ κύριος παιδίον ('because the Lord did not give her a son') reflects the influence of κύριος . . . προσέδωκεν ('the Lord . . . gave') in Genesis 29:33; in 1 Samuel 1:6b, the choice of the word συνέκλεισεν 'shut up' (rather than ἀπέκλεισεν, as in 1:5) and the plus τοῦ μὴ δοῦναι αὐτῇ παιδίον 'so as not to give her a son' reflect συνέκλεισέν με κύριος τοῦ μὴ τίττειν 'the Lord shut me up so as not to give birth' in Genesis 16:2. Furthermore, in 1 Samuel 1:13 the reading καὶ εἰσήκουσεν αὐτῆς κύριος 'and the Lord listened to her' attested in the Greek witnesses M N b₂c₂e₂ reflects an assimilation to Genesis 30:22 (whereas $\mathfrak{M}^L$ and the Greek codices A B read 'her voice was not heard'). Of course, the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:1–20 was already patterned on the stories of Sarah, Rachel, and Leah. But the assimilations in the Greek witnesses cited create further connections to the Genesis narrative (on the assimilations in 1 Samuel 1:11, 22 to the Samson story in Judges 13, see Zakovitch 1985: 177–178).

1 Samuel 2:10

The Greek translation of the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1–10) contains a large plus in v. 10 consisting of material taken from Jeremiah 9:22–23. While Tov thinks the plus may have been a marginal note that was carelessly inserted into the text (Tov 1999: 448–52), Lewis thinks differently: 'Jer. ix 22-3 contains pious material which was widely circulated and suitable to be inserted into a text like ours' (Lewis 1994: 43). Given that a very similar plus can be detected in 4QSam^a (largely fragmentary at this point), it is most likely that the assimilation occurred in the Greek translator's Hebrew *Vorlage* (Aejmelaeus 2010: 34; Kratz 2018: 41–43). But regardless of the mechanics of insertion, the phenomenon that prompted the scribe to think of Jeremiah 9:22–23 and bring it into connection with the Song of Hannah was the same as what I have identified in the surrounding examples of assimilation: namely, observable shared features in both contexts. The triggers in this instance were the existing shared references to boasting (1 Samuel 2:3 // Jeremiah 9:22), the mighty (1 Samuel 2:4, 9b // Jeremiah 9:22), and the rich (1 Samuel 2:7 // Jeremiah 9:22); see further Kratz (2018: 43).

2 Kings 4:16

It is clear that the story of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings 4:8–37 is patterned on the story of Sarah in Genesis: in both cases the women have no son, and their husbands are old (2 Kings 4:14 // Genesis 11:30; 18:11), and both are promised that they will bear a son 'at the living-time [כעת חיה], at the appointed time [למועד]' 2Kings 4:16 // Genesis 18:10, 14; 21:2). When Elisha tells the Shunammite woman that she

will bear a son (v. 16), she responds: ‘Do not deceive [מ^L אל תכזב; LXX^B μὴ διαψεύσῃ] your servant!’ However, in Greek Lucianic witnesses the woman says: ‘Do not *laugh* [μὴ ἐκγελάσῃ = אל תצחק] at your servant!’ Here a scribe has seen the existing connections between the Shunammite woman and Sarah, and has made the connection even more explicit by alluding to the punning on Isaac’s name in Genesis 17:17, 19; 18:12–15; 21:3, 6 (McKenzie 2018: 277).

Isaiah 9:9

Isaiah 9:7–11 contains an accusation and description of judgment aimed at Israel for their refusal to heed the prophetic word. According to the Hebrew text of v. 9, they arrogantly respond: ‘Bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with dressed stones; sycamores have been hewn down, but we will replace them with cedars!’ The Old Greek translation renders their speech differently, and contains a plus at the end: ‘Bricks have fallen down, but come, let us hew stones, and let us cut down sycamores and cedars, *and let us build for ourselves a tower*’ (καὶ οἰκοδομήσωμεν ἑαυτοῖς πύργον). Here the text has been assimilated to Genesis 11:4a (καὶ εἶπαν Δεῦτε οἰκοδομήσωμεν ἑαυτοῖς πόλιν καὶ πύργον). The allusion to Genesis was likely triggered by the descriptions of arrogance in both texts (Isaiah 9:8 // Genesis 11:4b) and the shared words ‘bricks’ and ‘build’ (Isaiah 9:9 // Genesis 11:3, 4); see further Koenig (1982: 87–100).

Jeremiah 48:45–46

Jeremiah 48 contains oracles against Moab. It is clear that this material is intertextually related to the oracles against Moab in Isaiah 15–16 (Jones 1992: 499, 505–508; Wildberger 1997: 124–129). But the relevant verses for the present discussion lie in Jeremiah 48:45–47, which are attested in the longer edition of Jeremiah reflected by our medieval Masoretic witnesses and in fragmentary form by 2QJer, but are absent in the shorter edition of Jeremiah reflected by our extant witnesses to the Old Greek translation. According to M^L, v. 45b reads: ‘for a fire has gone forth from Heshbon, and a flame from between Sihon, and it consumed the forehead of Moab, and the scalp of the sons of tumult’ (כִּי אֵשׁ יֵצֵא מִחֶשְׁבוֹן וְלֹהָבָה מִבֵּין סִיחוֹן וְתֹאכַל פֶּאֶת מוֹאָב וְקִדְקֵד (בְּנֵי שֹׂאֵן)). This plus is made up of material taken from Numbers 21:28 + 24:17c and slightly modified. Jeremiah 48:46 reads: ‘Woe to you, Moab! The people of Chemosh have perished, because your sons were taken into captivity, and your daughters into captivity’ (אֹוִי לְךָ מוֹאָב אֲבָד עִם כְּמוֹשׁ כִּי לָקְחוּ בָנֶיךָ בְּשָׁבִי וּבְנֹתֶיךָ בְּשָׁבִיָּה). This plus is made up of material taken from Numbers 21:29 and slightly modified (Parke-Taylor 2000: 140–143; Stipp 2019: 681–682, 705–706). These allusions to the book of Numbers

were undoubtedly triggered by the shared subject matter in the two contexts and the shared lexemes ('Heshbon,' Jeremiah 48:2, 34 // Numbers 21:27, 28, 30; 'Moab,' Jeremiah 48:1, 2 // Numbers 24:17).

Ezekiel 3:1

Ezekiel 2:8–10 describes Yhwh offering the prophet a scroll on which was written 'words of lamentation, mourning, and woe.' The Hebrew witnesses to Ezekiel 3:1 contain a plus not present in the Old Greek: 'that which you find, eat' (את אשר תמצא, אכול). This appears to be a conflation of 'eat that which I am giving to you' (אכל את) from Ezekiel 2:8 plus 'your words were found, and I ate them' (נמצאו) (דבריו ואכלם) from Jeremiah 15:16a (Zimmerli 1979: 92; Mackie 2015: 193–94). This insertion was likely triggered by Yhwh's initial command to 'speak my words' in Ezekiel 2:7 plus the following referencing to eating, both of which would have brought Jeremiah 15:16 to mind.

Ezekiel 4:13

The Hebrew witnesses to Ezekiel 4:13 contain a plus not present in Old Greek at the end of the verse: 'where I will banish them there' (אשר אדיחם שם), referring to the nations where the exiles will eat unclean food. The verb נדח 'banish' is very rare in Ezekiel, occurring elsewhere only in chap. 36. The plus is probably an insertion taken from Jeremiah 24:9, also referring to exile: 'in all the places where I will banish them there' (בכל המקומות אשר אדיחם שם); see Mackie (2015: 194–195). The trigger for this allusion was the shared content in the contexts of the two books: the references to exile (Ezekiel 4:12–13 // Jeremiah 24:8–9), the threat of sword, famine, and pestilence (Ezekiel 5:12 // Jeremiah 24:10), and the references to verbal scorn and warning (Ezekiel 5:15 // Jeremiah 24:9). The scribe appears to have noted the similarities, and inserted an additional connection.

Ezekiel 6:5a

The Hebrew witnesses to Ezekiel 6:5a contain a plus not present in Old Greek: 'and I will place the corpses of the sons of Israel before their idols' (ונתתי את פגרי בני ישראל לפני גלוליהם). This plus is an allusion to Leviticus 26:30: 'and I will place your corpses on the corpses of your idols' (ונתתי את פגריכם על פגרי גלוליהם). This assimilation of Ezekiel to Leviticus was triggered by the existing allusions in Ezekiel 6:3–6, 8, 11–14 to Leviticus 26:25 ('I will bring a sword against you . . . pestilence'), 30 ('high places

... incense altars ... idols'), 33 ('scatter among the nations ... desolation ... cities a waste'); see Lyons (2009: 62–63, 139); Mackie (2015: 189–190).

Ezekiel 6:9

In Ezekiel 6:9, the Old Greek translation refers to 'their heart which whored away from me' (τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῶν τῇ ἀπορνεύουσῃ ἀπ' ἐμοῦ). Here our Hebrew witnesses have a longer reading: 'their whoring heart, *which turned* away from me' (לבם הזונה (אשר סר מעלי). Stromberg (2008: 75–78) argues that this plus is an inverted allusion to Jeremiah 32:40, which envisions a time when Yhwh will put his fear in the people's hearts 'so as not to turn away from me' (לבלתי סור מעלי). This assimilation of Ezekiel to Jeremiah may have been triggered by the existing shared vocabulary in Ezekiel 6 and the preceding verses in Jeremiah: forms of the root שמם 'to be desolate' (Ezekiel 6:4, 14 // Jeremiah 32:43), 'sword, famine, and pestilence' (Ezekiel 6:11, 12 // Jeremiah 32:36), 'high places' (Ezekiel 6:3, 6 // Jeremiah 32:35), 'abomination' (Ezekiel 6:9, 11 // Jeremiah 32:35), and 'my wrath' (Ezekiel 6:12 // Jeremiah 32:37). Additionally, the transformation envisioned in Jeremiah 32:39 ('I will give them one heart and one way') is very similar to what we see later in Ezekiel 11:19 ('I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them').

Ezekiel 7:5–14

There are large-scale differences in content and sequence between the Old Greek and the Hebrew witnesses to Ezekiel 7. For the purposes of this essay, the relevant differences are two triads of plusses attested in ℣:

Ezekiel 7:5bc–6a	רעה אחת רעה הנה באה: קץ בא
Ezekiel 7:6cd–7a	הקין אליך הנה באה: באה הצפירה
Ezekiel 7:10bc	הנה באה יצאה הצפרה
Ezekiel 7:12	כי חרון אל כל המונה
Ezekiel 7:13b	כי חזון אל כל המונה לא ישוב
Ezekiel 7:14b	כי חרוני אל כל המונה

The first triad of plusses (in vv. 5–7, 10) is unified by repetition of the keywords באה 'it is coming' and צפרה (apparently a gender doublet of צפיר 'goat'), and the second triad (in vv. 12–14) is unified by the repetition of 'because wrath is on [*or*: 'vision concerns'] all its horde.' These expansions seem to be derived from the following statements in Daniel: 'a male goat came' (צפיר העזים בא, Daniel 8:5), 'the vision is for

the time of the end' (לעת קץ החזון, Daniel 8:17), and 'horde' (המון, repeated in Daniel 11:10–11, 13) (Bogaert 1986; Mackie 2015: 201–205). This assimilation of Ezekiel to Daniel was likely triggered by the scribe's recognition of the existing similar vocabulary in Ezekiel 7:2 (קץ בא, 'and end is coming!'), 7:7 (בא העת, 'the time has come!') and Daniel 11:35, 40; 12:4 (עת קץ, 'the time of the end'), and the fact that both texts describe divine judgment.

Ezekiel 7:19

In Ezekiel 7:19, Hebrew witnesses contain a long plus not present in the Old Greek: 'their silver and their gold will not be able to save them on the day of the wrath of Yhwh,' an interpolation taken over almost verbatim from Zephaniah 1:18 (Zimmerli 1979: 199). The trigger for this allusion was undoubtedly the existing shared vocabulary in the contexts of the two books: 'the day [of Yhwh] is near' (יום יהוה / קרוב היום, Ezekiel 7:7 // Zephaniah 1:7, 14); 'their silver and their gold' (כסף וזהבם, Ezekiel 7:19a // Zephaniah 1:18); 'fil' + 'violence' (מלא חמס, Ezekiel 7:23 // Zephaniah 1:9); 'devastation' (שממה, Ezekiel 7:27 // Zephaniah 1:13); 'terrified / sudden' (בהל, Ezekiel 7:27 // Zephaniah 1:18).

Ezekiel 31:11b

Ezekiel 31 contains an oracle against Egypt that describes its king being given into the power of another ruler (Ezekiel 31:11a). The remainder of the verse (v. 11b) differs noticeably in our Hebrew and Greek witnesses. In $\mathfrak{M}^L$, v. 11b reads 'he will surely do to him according to his wickedness. I have driven him out!' (עשו יעשה לו) (כרשעו גרשתהו). The OG reads 'and he accomplished his destruction' (καὶ ἐποίησε τὴν ἀπώλειαν αὐτοῦ). The verb גרש 'drive out' is very rare in Ezekiel, occurring elsewhere only in chaps. 40–48 (where it refers to divorcees or to the princes of Israel who evict people from their land). Zimmerli (1983: 144) argued that כרשעו and גרשתהו are 'variants of the same word,' and that LXX abbreviated the material. However, it is also possible that the reference to banishment is an addition in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$, an assimilation to Genesis 3:24, where God 'drove out' (ויגרש) the humans from the garden (Stordalen 2000: 381, 391–393). The trigger for this assimilation would have been the fact that both contexts depict divine judgment, and both contain the same vocabulary: in Ezekiel 31:9, Pharaoh is described as a tree 'in the garden of God,' envied by 'all the trees of Eden' (cf. Genesis 2:8–9; 3:2, 23).

Ezekiel 32:21, 27

Ezekiel 32:17–32 contains an oracle against Egypt in which Pharaoh is envisioned as going down to the Underworld to join the dead of other fallen nations. It is said in v. 21a (מל) that ‘the chiefs of heroes will speak of him from the midst of Sheol’ (ידברו לו אלי גבורים מתוך שאול). However, the OG reads ‘and the *giants* in the depth of the pit will speak to you’ (καὶ ἐρῶσιν σοι οἱ γίγαντες ἐν βάθει βόθρου). Likewise, while in v. 27 מל states ‘they [= *Meshech and Tubal*] will not lie down with the fallen heroes from the uncircumcised’ (ולא ישכבו את גבורים נפלים מערלים), the OG reads ‘and they lay down with the fallen *giants from ancient times*’ (καὶ ἐκοιμήθησαν μετὰ τῶν γιγάντων τῶν πεπτωκότων ἀπ’ αἰῶνος). In both cases the Greek text of Ezekiel represents an assimilation to OG Genesis 6:4, which speaks of the offspring of the ‘sons of God’ and daughters of humans as ‘the giants from ancient times’ (οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος). The triggers for this assimilation were the shared *Hebrew* words נפלים (Ezekiel 32:27 // Genesis 6:4) and גבורים (Ezekiel 32:21, 27 // Genesis 6:4), even though the scribe rendered ‘heroes’ as ‘giants’ following the *Greek* translation of Genesis 6:4.

Ezekiel 35:5

Ezekiel 35:5 describes Edom’s hostility toward Israel, and here our Hebrew witnesses contain a short plus not present in the Old Greek: בעת אידם ‘at the time of their calamity.’ This is the only time the word איד is found in Ezekiel. It is likely an allusion to Obadiah 1:13, which admonishes Edom not to enter the gate ביום אידם ‘on the day of their calamity’ (Salo 2022: 204–205). The change from ‘day’ to ‘time’ in Ezekiel 35:5 was probably made in light of the following phrase ‘at the time of final punishment’ (בעת עון קץ). The trigger for this allusion was the fact that both Ezekiel 35 and Obadiah are oracles against Edom; both use the keyword ‘possess’ to describe Edom’s hostile intentions (Ezekiel 35:10; 36:2, 3 // Obadiah 1:17, 19, 20), both refer to Edom ‘magnifying your mouth’ (Ezekiel 35:13 // Obadiah 1:12), both refer to Edom’s ‘rejoicing’ at Judah’s misfortune (Ezekiel 35:15 // Obadiah 1:12), and both contain a similar reference to measure-for-measure justice (Ezekiel 35:15, ‘thus I will do to you’ // Obadiah 1:15, ‘just as you did, it will be done to you’).

Ezekiel 36:11

In the Old Greek translation of Ezekiel 36:11a, Yhwh promises to bring fertility to Israel: ‘And I will multiply humans and cattle upon you’ (καὶ πληθυνῶ ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀνθρώπους καὶ κτήνη). Our Hebrew witnesses contain a short plus: ‘And I will multiply upon you humans and animals, *and they will multiply and be fruitful*’ (והרביתי עליכם אדם ובהמה ורבו ופרו). This is an (inverted) allusion to פרו ורבו ‘be fruitful and

multiply’ in Genesis 1:28 (Stromberg 2008: 73–74; Mackie 2015: 195–196). It was likely triggered by the preceding statements ‘you will bear fruit’ (Ezekiel 36:8), ‘I will multiply’ (vv. 10, 11), and ‘humans and animals’ (v. 11)—all containing words present in Genesis 1:24, 26, 28.

Habakkuk 1:5a

The text of Habakkuk 1:5 according to $\mathfrak{M}^L$ reads: ‘Look on the nations and regard; and be astonished; be amazed’ (ראו בגוים והביטו והתמהו ותמהו). Among other differences, the Old Greek contains a short plus: ‘Look, O despisers, and regard; and wonder at marvellous things, *and be annihilated*’ (ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ ἐπιβλέψατε καὶ θαυμάσατε θαυμάσια καὶ ἀφανίσθητε). As I have argued elsewhere (Lyons 2024), the plus καὶ ἀφανίσθητε ‘and be annihilated’ is an assimilation either to OG Hosea 14:1 (which might also explain the translator’s rendering in Habakkuk 1:9) or to the word יַצְמִיתָ in the Hebrew text of Psalm 94:23. The trigger for the first option would have been a perceived analogy between the judgments on Samaria and on Judah, and the trigger for the second option would have been the numerous shared lexemes in Habakkuk 1 and Psalm 94 (‘how long’; ‘see’; ‘regard’; ‘iniquity’; ‘trouble’; ‘justice’; ‘wicked’; etc.) that would have brought to mind the fate of the wicked in Psalm 94.

Reflections on Assimilation

One of the first things that comes to mind when looking at these examples of assimilation is the remarkable erudition of the scribes who produced them. Their ability to recognise that certain words they were copying could also be found in other texts, to recall the larger context of those texts, and to take material from them and insert it into the text being copied points to a profound knowledge of and reflection on the contents of the texts in question. But I wish to further consider how we classify and study these instances of assimilation, and how we think of the motivations for and consequences of assimilation—particularly with reference to the formation of a scripture collection.

Assimilation as allusion

It is my contention that we should treat examples of inter-textual assimilation such as I have examined above as instances of *allusion*. Recent analyses of Greek translation technique have noted instances where assimilation can be explained as allusion: e.g., LXX Amos 7:1 alludes to Ezekiel 38–39 (Glenny 2009: 204–207; Theocharous 2012: 223–239); LXX Habakkuk 1:2 alludes to Job 19:7 (Mulroney 2016: 7); LXX Proverbs 1:7 alludes to LXX Psalm 110[111]:10 (Cook 2006: 127–128; Fox 2015: 85);

LXX Proverbs 3:16 alludes to Isaiah 45:23 + LXX Proverbs 31:25[26] (Fox 2015: 101). But these analyses examine isolated occurrences, and only in Greek translation. And while we possess exemplary studies of allusion in ancient Israelite literature, these do not treat assimilation in a comprehensive way. This means that we lack a complete description of text-referencing techniques in ancient Israel.

To date, the two most suggestive treatments are by Zakovitch (1985) and Mackie (2015). Zakovitch actually uses the term ‘allusion’ in his descriptions of assimilation, and writes about assimilation in much the same way that he writes about ‘innerbiblical interpretation.’ Mackie (2015: 181–205) analyses ‘expansions that coordinate related texts in Ezekiel and other scriptural books,’ a subset of which he treats under the rubric of ‘cross-reference / allusion to another text’ (2015: 66–67, 201–205). But I would argue that we have the resources and methodological frameworks to go further.

The examples of assimilation I have collected above are capable of being analysed as allusion using the rubrics laid out in e.g. Plett (1991), Hebel (1991), Helbig (1996), Sommer (1998: 10–31), Krause (2023) and other studies. In the examples above, a scribe has borrowed lexical material from one text and inserted it into another (the text he is copying), but without the kind of marking characteristic of quotation (i.e., by a reference to the name of the source text, to the putative author of the source text, or to the act of borrowing). And as with any occurrence of allusion, we can analyse the formal features of the examples above, e.g.:

- the *quantity* of material added to the target text (ranging in the examples above from the single word תִּצְחֶק in the *Vorlage* of LXX^L 2 Kings 4:16 or גִּרְשֶׁתְּהוּ in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 31:11 to the string of eight words in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 7:19 to the string of twenty-five words in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Jeremiah 48:45–46);
- the *quality* of the material added, i.e., whether it has been taken over unchanged from the source text (as in the *Vorlage* of OG Leviticus 8:31), or whether it has been modified in various ways (e.g., by conflation with another text, as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Jeremiah 48:45–46 and Ezekiel 3:1; by chiasmic inversion, as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 36:11; by replacement of a word to integrate the material more tightly into the target text, as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 35:5);
- whether the borrowed material is simply *added* to the target text (as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Jeremiah 48:45–46) or whether it *replaces* an existing element in the target text (as in OG Exodus 4:12 and LXX^L 2 Kings 4:16);
- the *source texts* drawn from, and whether some are used more than others in

a given work (see e.g. Mackie 2015: 214–215 on the high frequency of assimilation to Leviticus and Jeremiah in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel);

- the likely *trigger* for the assimilation (in every example above, both source and target texts already contain lexical and thematic similarities that would have brought the source text to the mind of the scribe).

We can also analyse the possible functions of these allusions, e.g.:

- to strengthen parallels between characters, as in Exodus 2:16 (OG); Exodus 4:12 (OG); 1 Samuel 1:5–6, 13 (OG, LXX^L); 2 Kings 4:16 (LXX^L); Ezekiel 3:1 proto- $\mathfrak{M}$);
- to create a new parallel between characters, as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 31:11b (earlier in Ezekiel 31 Pharaoh was compared to a tree in the garden of Eden, but in v. 11b he is described on analogy to the primal humans who were expelled from the garden);
- to tighten the linkage between a divine command and the description of the command's fulfilment, as in Leviticus 8:31 (OG, SP);
- to make explicit parallels between different descriptions of pious (or impious) behaviour, as in 1 Samuel 2:10 (OG) and Isaiah 9:9 (OG). In the latter case, a well-known text was used to shed light on an obscure passage; as Williamson (2018: 419) notes, 'The translator presumably thought that this [*viz.*, *the story of the tower in Genesis 11*] was a paradigmatic example of hubris.'
- to coordinate separate passages that are understood to contain the same outlook or future expectation, as in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Jeremiah 48:45–46 and Ezekiel 7:19;
- to explain a detail in context: the allusion in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 3:1 to Jeremiah 15:16a may point to v. 16b ('your words became gladness to me and the joy of my heart') as an explanation for the fact that while the scroll Ezekiel ate contained 'lamentations, mourning, and woe' (Ezekiel 2:10), it nevertheless tasted sweet (Ezekiel 3:3);
- to prevent misunderstanding: the allusion in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 6:5a to Leviticus 26:30 may have been prompted by the desire to explain why the 'mountains of Israel' (Ezekiel 6:2, 3) could be spoken of as having 'bones' (Ezekiel 6:5b); it clarifies that the term 'mountains' refers by metonymy to the *humans* on the mountains by mentioning the 'corpses of the sons of Israel';
- to supply a solution to a problem: the allusion in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 6:9 to Jere-

miah 32:40 highlights the difference between the apostasy and judgment described in Ezekiel 6:1–10 and the transformation and restoration described in Jeremiah 32:36–44. In doing so, it supplies a solution (‘the fear of Yhwh,’ Jeremiah 32:40; the shift from divine judgment to divine blessing, Jeremiah 32:42) to the problem of apostasy and judgment described in Ezekiel 6.

- to fill a gap in the source text: the allusion in OG Ezekiel 32:21, 27 to Genesis 6:4 (OG) draws not simply on a text, but on a particular interpretation of Genesis 6 that we know from 1 Enoch 6:1–3; 7:1–6; 10:9–15; 14:6–7; Jubilees 5:1; CD 2.17–19; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6 (cf. OG Numbers 13:33, which also translates the word נפילים as ‘giants’). In this interpretive tradition, the offspring of the angelic ‘sons of God’ and the daughters of humans are malevolent giants who are eventually condemned to death (in 1 Enoch 10:9–15, the giants are condemned to kill each other, while their angelic fathers are condemned to be bound; after this, apparently both are imprisoned in the abyss forever). The allusion in OG Ezekiel 32 to OG Genesis 6:4, then, attempts to further delineate the identity of the ‘ancient heroes’ in the Underworld who are described so sparingly in the Hebrew text of Ezekiel.
- the allusion in OG Habakkuk 1:5a to either Hosea 14:1 (in Greek) or Psalm 94:23 (in Hebrew) points the reader to a more detailed description of the deserved fate of the ‘despisers,’ and to the certainty that Yhwh will bring this about.

In some instances, it may be difficult to see a distinctive exegetical gain from the reference to the other text. For example, the assimilation in proto- $\mathfrak{M}$ Ezekiel 35:5 creates a link between two texts that proclaim doom on Edom for the same reasons, and even replicates the wordplay in the source text between אִדּוֹם ‘their calamity’ (Obadiah 1:13 // Ezekiel 35:5) and אֶדְוִם ‘Edom’ (Obadiah 1:8 // Ezekiel 35:15), but it is hard to see how this results in a development of the argument. By some definitions, this might be classified as ‘echo’ rather than ‘allusion.’ Yet even here, the coordination of two texts results in a richer and more complex perspective.

The formation of a scripture collection

The formation of an Israelite scripture collection was a gradual and complex process in which several different kinds of literary activity played a role. One kind of literary activity was characterized by *collection and extension*. We might think of how such literary activity contributed to the production of a ‘Primary History’ running from Genesis to Kings (see Schmid 2023): the history of Israel’s relationship with Yhwh

could be presented in narrative form with a temporal sequence. Stories and records of the past were collected into larger narratives; these were then updated and extended by adding further narratives.

Another kind of literary activity that contributed to the formation of a scripture collection was characterized by *coordination and allusion*. Descriptions of characters and events were patterned on earlier characters and events (e.g., Israel's exile to Babylon is set on analogy to the expulsion of the primal humans from the garden; the description of Elijah on Horeb in 1 Kings 19 was patterned on the story of Moses on Sinai; the descriptions of Esther and Mordechai were patterned on the Joseph narrative); texts were linked through networks of allusions (e.g., Isaiah 65:25–26 conflates Genesis 3:14 and Isaiah 11:6–9; the book of Job alludes to and interacts with material in Genesis, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Psalms, and Proverbs; 2 Chronicles 20:17, 20 alludes to Exodus 14:13 and Isaiah 7:9; the prayers in Psalm 144 and Daniel 9:1–19 are almost entirely made up of allusions to other texts); narratives about different time periods were editorially connected (e.g., 2 Chronicles 36:22–23 // Ezra 1:1–3); narrative books and prophetic books were editorially coordinated by inserting material from one text into another (e.g., 2 Kings 18:17–20:19 // Isaiah 36–39; 2 Kings 24:18–25:30 // Jeremiah 52).

A number of studies have explored the role that coordination and allusion played in the formation of a scripture collection. For example, Seeligmann (1953: 151–52, 161, 170–71) discussed examples of allusion that he took as evidence of what he called *Kanonbewusstsein* ('canon consciousness'). Nogalski (1993), Steck (2000: 159–62), and Klein (2010) have all noted ways in which prophetic texts were linked by repeated keywords, allusions, and inner-biblical interpretation at both compositional and redactional levels; these connections resulted in the formation of a 'Book of the Twelve' and a *Corpus Propheticum*. Additionally, Chapman (2000: 131–149, 163–64, 219, 225–28) has examined the ways in which 'the Law' was editorially coordinated with 'the Prophets' through allusion and redactional development.

The examples of assimilation that I have described above fall into this latter category of coordination and allusion. Stromberg has argued that the plusses in proto-MT Ezekiel provide evidence that this textform 'is in at least some instances directly related to the conception of a collective group of Scriptures' (Stromberg 2008: 85), and it seems to me that we can widen Stromberg's argument to include many more examples, including the ones above. These instances of assimilation are part of a complex two-way process that both *reflects awareness of* and *makes further contributions to* the connectedness of texts. These connections played a significant role in the development of a scripture collection.

I close with a quote from Michael Shepherd (2014: 1), who has eloquently described the interconnectedness of the Hebrew Bible:

‘The Hebrew Bible is a text composed of other texts, and those “other texts” are within the Bible itself. The elite class of ancient scribes who produced the biblical texts did so on the basis of an intricate web of learned citations (Ezra 7:6, 10; 9:10–11; Neh 8–9). They in effect created a text for scholars (i.e., those who could read and study the text and thereby come to appreciate the intertextual fabric that holds the Bible together and enables it to function in a meaningful way). While it is true that many parts of the Bible were composed independently in different times and places, it is also true that those many parts were brought together in the late post-exilic period and reshaped in light of one another. The Hebrew Bible was thus built to interpret itself, and early post-biblical interpreters—such as the authors of the New Testament and the rabbinic Midrash—understood this phenomenon and were greatly influenced by it.’

As I have demonstrated in this essay: the *scribes who copied* these texts understood this phenomenon, and *contributed to* it.

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