

Editorial Techniques in Light of Textual Variants between Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras

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Abstract: Textual variants between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah show a consistent picture of editorial processes. Scribal changes were mostly small and isolated additions, which implies a shared scribal milieu where texts could be slightly expanded but where older textual segments were only rarely omitted. The revision that created 1 Esdras is an exception: omissions, replacements, transpositions, and large additions were much more widely used.

For literary criticism (*Literarkritik*) the documented evidence in 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah provides an ambiguous result. Most additions and all replacements remain undetected. The creation of 1 Esdras is a particular challenge for the method, since it included major omissions and transpositions. On the other hand, changes other than additions were infrequent in the development of the texts. Critics probably notice a considerable number of additions that significantly changed the meaning of the text. This shows that the literary-critical method has its merits but needs to explore the documented evidence in much more detail and accept its limits.

Introduction

This article seeks to investigate editorial processes between 1 Esdras (also called First Esdras and Esdras α) and Ezra-Nehemiah¹ by looking at textual variants that bear witness to intentional scribal interventions. Building on previous studies on textual variants and their relationship in these textual witnesses, the focus here is on secondary readings, their content and relationship with the older text, which provide us with documented evidence for scribal changes. In particular, the observations and results gained by Zipora Talshir on 1 Esdras function as the springboard for analyzing the

1. Variants between 2 Chr 35–36 and 1 Esd 1:1–58 will not be considered in this paper, since the textual history of Chronicles has undergone a different development and its relationship with 1 Esd 1:1–58 should be studied separately.

scribal processes in this material.² The main goal and new contribution of this article is to advance our understanding of editorial changes before the texts of the Hebrew Bible were frozen from intentional changes sometime in the first two centuries CE. This is connected to a wider methodological discussion about scribal processes and models of transmission in the Hebrew Bible, as well as to the methodological foundation of literary criticism (*Literarkritik*), which seeks to reconstruct scribal changes without textual evidence.³

2. Zipora Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, SCS 47 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999) and *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, SCS 50 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), has categorized the variants between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah and provided a reconstructed Hebrew *Vorlage* of 1 Esdras. Her studies are very helpful tools for all future research on this material. Dieter Böhler's studies, *1 Esdras* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), *1 Esdras*, IECOT (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2015), and *Die heilige Stadt in Esdras α und Esra-Nehemia: Zwei Konzeptionen zur Wiederherstellung Israels*, OBO 158 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), are also helpful, and since he interprets some of the variants differently, in part due to his different understanding of the general relationship between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah, he is an important discussion partner. In this article the references to his commentary relate to the English version published in 2016.

3. *Literary criticism* (German *Literarkritik*) here refers to the historical-critical method or historical criticism that seeks to reconstruct the history of the texts beyond textual criticism. The term *higher criticism* is also used to refer to literary and redaction criticism. Note that there is some terminological confusion in the literature, since the German term *Historisch-kritische Methode* usually includes text criticism. For contributions to this discussion, see Benjamin Ziemer, *Kritik des Wachstumsmodells: Die Grenzen alttestamentlicher Redaktionsgeschichte im Lichte empirischer Evidenz*, VTSup 182 (Leiden: Brill, 2020); Raymond F. Person, "Harmonization in the Pentateuch and Synoptic Gospels: Repetition and Category-Triggering within Scribal Memory," in *Repetition, Communication, and Meaning in the Ancient World*, ed. Deborah Beck, OLAW 13 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 318–57, and "Text Criticism as a Lens for Understanding the Transmission of Ancient Texts in Their Oral Environments," in *Contextualizing Israel's Sacred Writings: Ancient Literacy, Orality, and Literary Production*, ed. Brian B. Schmidt, AIL 22 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 197–215; David Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Frank Ueberschaer, *Vom Gründungsmythos zur Untergangssymphonie: Eine text- und literaturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1Kön 11–14*, BZAW 481 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Orality and Literacy in Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 1996). For a methodological discussion and sample texts in different parts of the Hebrew Bible, see Reinhard Müller and Juha Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible: Toward a Refined Literary Criticism*, RBS 97 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022). There is a clear desideratum to widen the perspective and include more documented evidence about the processes of scribal change.

The basic goal of classic literary criticism has been to detect scribal changes made to a text.⁴ The method consists of using different criteria to detect scribal changes, but the focus is on additions. Omissions and rewritings as possible techniques of editing are mostly ignored, neglected, or rejected as a possible editorial technique. The reason for this is the implicit or explicit assumption that the later editors did not replace any segment of the older text. For example, in his methodology of Old Testament exegesis, Odil Hannes Steck writes about the literary process of the Hebrew Bible as follows: “The most significant thing about the process is that the more recent editions of a literary work do not replace the formulated material of the older version. Rather, they maintain it, but they expand, enlarge, and reorder it.”⁵ The reason for this assumption is the perceived holiness of the transmitted text. Christoph Levin writes: “Because it counted as normative, it was strictly unalterable.... nothing was taken away. The given text remained unchanged; at least it was not abridged. Nevertheless, it was continually added to, and extensively so.”⁶

Not all literary critics are explicit about these presuppositions, but literary-critical reconstructions almost completely consist of assumed additions and accumulated redactional layers. For example, in Timo Veijola’s commentary on Deuteronomy, the reconstructed literary development consists of only expansions, and no rewritten or omitted sections are assumed. A similar result can be found in other books that use literary criticism to reconstruct the development of the text.⁷ The history of multi-

4. For example, Ville Riekkinen and Timo Veijola, *Johdatus eksegetiikkaan: Metodiotopi*, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 37 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1983), 80.

5. Odil Hannes Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology*, 2nd ed. trans. James D. Nogalski, RBS 39 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 48. Similar basic assumptions can be found in other books of methodology that discuss literary criticism, such as Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 169–70; Uwe Becker, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 84–86; Christoph Levin, *The Old Testament: A Brief Introduction*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 25–28; Reinhard Kratz, “Redaktionsgeschichte/Redaktionskritik: I. Altes Testament,” in *TRE* 28 (1997) 367–78, here 370.

6. Levin, *Old Testament*, 27. For a further discussion of the basic assumptions of literary criticism, see Juha Pakkala, *God’s Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible*, FRLANT 251 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 16–25.

7. See Ernst Würthwein, *1.Kön 17–2.Kön 25*, ATD 11.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), and *Die Bücher der Könige 1 Kön. 1–16*, ATD 11.1 (Göttingen: Van-

layered texts can be reconstructed only if rewritings and omissions have not significantly impacted the process. Recent studies have shown that the dogmatic assumption that older texts were only expanded is unfounded.⁸ A crucial question for literary criticism is how extensively segments of older texts were rearranged, rewritten, and omitted. A few omissions, rewritings, and replacements of textual segments are not fatal to the method. Therefore, it is important to gather statistical data on the frequency of these editorial techniques.

While documented evidence of scribal changes have been investigated in previous studies,⁹ the new contribution of this article is to systematically investigate changes in one book preserved in two versions. This endeavor holds the potential to yield significant statistical insights into scribal processes. Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras are especially interesting in this respect, since we can date the changes relatively well and thereby gain a glimpse of scribal processes over specific centuries. The textual variants in this material have also the advantage that we can reach the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Greek translation in most cases (see below). We can usually also determine which variant reading is more original and which is secondary. To be sure, additional statistical insights about scribal changes may be gleaned from other books within the Hebrew Bible as well, and the work should be continued in this respect.¹⁰ As for the historical-critical method, key questions in this study will be: How were the texts and their content

denhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), *passim*; Thilo Alexander Rudnig, *Heilig und Profan: Redaktionskritische Studien zu Ez 40–48*, BZAW 287 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 343–74; Reinhard Müller, *Königtum und Gottesherrschaft: Untersuchungen zur alttestamentlichen Monarchiekritik*, FAT 2/3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 236–65.

8. Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 384–85; Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*.

9. E.g., Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*; 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?*, CBET 84 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017); Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible*, RBS 75 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014); Juha Pakkala, "Historical Criticism in Light of Documented Evidence: What Does Text-Critical and Other Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Early Transmission of the Hebrew Bible?," *SEÁ* 85 (2020): 22–46.

10. Specifically, the books of Jeremiah, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings may warrant significant data in this respect, since the MT and LXX contain many variants and the Greek translation follows the Hebrew faithfully enough to reach the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

changed? What are typical changes? Can scribal changes be detected? Can the older literary stages of biblical texts be reconstructed without textual evidence?

After a summary and discussion of Talshir's results, I will discuss the most significant secondary additions that altered the text's meaning. Major variants central to the larger compositional issues and to the debate about the relationship between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah will be discussed separately, since they are part of a more comprehensive revision of the text and thus a distinct phenomenon. Minor and stylistic changes will be discussed only as far as they bear witness to typical scribal processes. Translational changes and accidental mistakes will not be discussed here.

This article is based on the following assumptions regarding 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. The Greek version of 1 Esdras was translated from a Hebrew-Aramaic version that already differed from Ezra-Nehemiah in the main compositional elements. The author of the Semitic version of 1 Esdras was dependent on and used a version of Ezra-Nehemiah that already included the Nehemiah story.¹¹ The question of priority and relationship has been widely debated in scholarship and cannot be readdressed here.¹² Nonetheless, it is generally recognized that both 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah contain old readings not preserved in the other version, which implies that both continued to be edited after their textual traditions diverged.¹³ The majority of variants are unrelated to the compositional revision in 1 Esdras, and therefore most of the results of this article are relevant

11. See Juha Pakkala, "Why 1 Esdras Is Probably Not an Early Version of the Ezra-Nehemiah Tradition," in *Was 1 Esdras First? An Investigation into the Priority and Nature of 1 Esdras*, ed. Lisbeth S. Fried, AIL 7 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 93-107; and Pakkala, "The Rebuilding and Settlement of Jerusalem in Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras," *TC* 28 (2023): 1-18.

12. For a review of the discussion, see the essays in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?* Whereas earlier scholarship was more inclined to assume the priority of 1 Esdras, now most scholars assume that 1 Esdras is not earlier than Ezra-Nehemiah. A prominent advocate for an alternative development is Böhler, *Die heilige Stadt*, passim. This question is not crucial for the current article, since it focuses on each variant separately and assumes that both versions contain older and secondary readings. Nonetheless, some of the results, especially concerning the revision that created 1 Esdras as a separate composition, are dependent on a position about the priority of the two versions.

13. Despite being transmitted as separate traditions, the possibility of later harmonization and influence also needs to be taken into consideration in the evaluation of each reading.

regardless of one's position on the general relationship between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah.¹⁴

It is generally acknowledged that the translation of 1 Esdras is written in excellent Greek.¹⁵ Although the translation is nonliteral in its pursuit of good Greek, it is sufficiently faithful for reconstructing the Semitic *Vorlage* for the purposes of a text-critical comparison with Ezra-Nehemiah. It may give the impression of a free translation, since lexical consistency, word order, or Semitic expression was not a goal, and the equivalents were mostly textual segments larger than individual words.¹⁶ Since the Masoretic Text is available for comparison, one can nonetheless mostly determine what the Semitic *Vorlage* of the Greek translation was, especially when it differed from the MT.¹⁷ The exact Semitic text may remain uncertain when

14. Similarly, Zipora Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 113. The evaluation of each case should not be based on one's position about the general priority of the witnesses, and all variant readings must be understood free of preconceptions on their own terms and in their own context. A focal question in each case is: Which theory best explains the variants? For a methodological discussion on this, see Anneli Aejmelaesus, "What Can We Know about the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint?," in *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators: Collected Essays*, CBET 50 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 71–106, here especially 106.

15. Thus Hector M. Patmore, "1 Esdras," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James K. Aitken (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 177–94, here 184–87, and many others.

16. Charles Cutler Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), 18, already noted that many scholars mistakenly assume the translation to be free, when in fact it is quite faithful to the Semitic *Vorlage*. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 113–16, has argued against skeptical positions on using the translation to gain a good understanding of the Semitic *Vorlage*. See also Talshir, "19.3.1 Septuagint," in *The Hebrew Bible: Writings*, ed. Armin Lange and Emanuel Tov, THB 1C (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 615–19. Similarly, Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 39, 52. However, some other scholars have been more skeptical about the possibilities of reaching the *Vorlage*, e.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia samt 3. Esra* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949), iv–xix; Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *3. Esra-Buch* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1980), 378; Kristin De Troyer, "Zerubbabel and Ezra: a Revived and Revised Solomon and Josiah? A Survey of Current 1 Esdras Research," *CBR* 10 (2002): 30–60, here 34; Patmore, "1 Esdras," 180; Michael F. Bird, *1 Esdras: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Vaticanus* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 9–11.

17. Ziemer, *Kritik des Wachstumsmodells*, 448–49, uses the Greek translation as evidence in a problematic way. He disregards the translation technique and mixes changes made in the translation with changes made in the transmission. Without methodological clarity on these issues, the results are misleading.

it differs from the MT, but for the purposes of this article it is not necessary to reconstruct it or to assume a certain wording.¹⁸

Dating of Witnesses

Rough dating of the textual witnesses in question is necessary for giving a chronological context for the scribal processes studied here. The Semitic textual tradition behind 1 Esdras may have diverged from the proto-Masoretic transmission in the late third or early second century BCE. Dirk Schwiderski has convincingly shown that the Aramaic documents in Ezra differ from conventions used in imperial Aramaic documents, such as their expressions, form, and structure. The documents in Ezra contain elements more typical of Greco-Roman letters, and therefore Schwiderski has concluded that all the letters are fictional and written for their current context in the third century BCE at the earliest.¹⁹ Since both Ezra-Nehemiah

18. The helpful retroversion of the variants by Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 113-16, does not need to be challenged for the purposes of this article, and she also acknowledges the uncertainties in reaching the exact text of the *Vorlage*. As for the Old Greek of 1 Esdras used in this article, the Göttingen edition will be the starting point: Robert Hanhart, *Esdrae liber I*, SVTG 8.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991). The LXX translation of Ezra-Nehemiah (2 Esdras or Esdras β) has been considered in some variants. Since it follows the Hebrew text very literally and often word for word, the *Vorlage* can fairly reliably be assumed. It is commonly acknowledged that the Semitic *Vorlage* of the LXX was quite close to the proto-MT, and thus its added value for the current article is limited, but some variants, especially in Neh 11-12, could contribute to the discussion about scribal processes. For example, R. Glenn Wooden, "2 Esdras," in Aitken, *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, 195-202, here 196; and Alison G. Salvesen, "Deuterocanonical and Apocryphal Books," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Septuagint*, ed. Alison G. Salvesen and Timothy Michael Law (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 385-402, here 389, characterize 2 Esdras as a "slavish" translation that follows the *Vorlage* rather strictly. The Old Greek of 2 Esdras may still need additional investigation. The Göttingen reconstruction of the Old Greek by Robert Hanhart, *Esdrae liber II*, SVTG 8.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), may contain a number of late readings influenced by the MT. See in particular Deirdre N. Fulton, *Reconsidering Nehemiah's Judah: The Case of MT and LXX Nehemiah 11-12*, FAT 2/80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; 2015), who has shown that in Neh 11-12 the differences between the Old Greek and the MT are much greater than what Hanhart assumed.

19. Dirk Schwiderski, *Handbuch des nordwestsemitischen Briefformulars: Ein Beitrag zur Echtheitsfrage der aramäischen Briefe des Esrabuches*, BZAW 295 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000), 381-82. Some scholars have challenged Schwiderski's dating, e.g., Hugh G. M. Williamson, "The Aramaic Documents in Ezra Revisited," *JTS* 59 (2008): 41-62,

and 1 Esdras are dependent on the same earlier form of the letters and also on some later additions to them, their textual traditions could not have diverged much earlier than the late third century BCE.

The second century BCE is the most probable context for the creation of the Semitic version of 1 Esdras as a separate composition from Ezra-Nehemiah.²⁰ The most fitting political setting for the large compositional changes is in the mid-second century BCE, when the non-Davidic Hasmoneans rose to power.²¹ Zerubbabel has an important role in the building of the altar (Ezra 3:2) and the temple (Ezra 3:8; 4:2; 5:2) in Ezra-Nehemiah, but in 1 Esdras he is made a governor (1 Esd 6:26, 28) who has a wider and more prominent role than the one he has in Ezra-Nehemiah: in addition to an elevated role as a builder, he becomes the leader and savior of the nation.²² That he is presented as an almost royal figure in 1 Esdras should be associated with the anti-Hasmonean standpoint of 1 Esdras: as a Davidic ruler, Zerubbabel sets the ideal for future political leaders, which can be seen as criticism of non-Davidic leaders and rulers such as the Hasmoneans. The omission of the Nehemiah story fits well with this goal, since the Nehemiah story could be read as a legitimation of the Hasmoneans: Nehemiah is a non-Davidic ruler who is also called a governor in Neh 5:14. The elevation of Zerubbabel and the omission of the Nehemiah story in 1 Esdras are thus very likely linked. Most scholars assume that the translation of 1 Esdras into Greek was also made in the mid- to late second century BCE, thus relatively soon after the Semitic version was created and

who argues that the evidence discussed by Schwiderski is “not strong enough to oblige us to conclude that the documents as a whole must have been fabricated in the Hellenistic period out of whole cloth” (61–62).

20. Thus many, for example, Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, xvi–xix; Bird, *1 Esdras*, 6. Many scholars, such as Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1989), 70–71, regard a first-century BCE dating as a possibility as well. Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 14, and “Esdras 1 / 1 Esdras / 3 Ezra,” *Introduction to the LXX*, ed. Siegfried Kreuzer (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 223–27, here 226, assumes that proto-Ezra was created already between 250 and 200 BCE and the “Hebrew-Aramaic 1 Esdras around 130” BCE.

21. The controversy over the rule of the non-Davidic Hasmoneans continued after this century, so one cannot completely rule out a dating in the first century BCE. However, the Greek translation is often dated on linguistic grounds to the second century BCE, which would exclude a first-century BCE dating of the Semitic *Vorlage*.

22. Cf. De Troyer, “Zerubbabel and Ezra,” 30–60, who has noted how Zerubbabel is implicitly likened to Solomon, the builder of the First Temple.

during the time when the debate and controversy over the Hasmonean rule was relevant.²³

First Esdras was made from a now-lost Semitic version of Ezra-Nehemiah that was not identical with the proto-Masoretic version. There are thus different possible contexts for the scribal changes observable between Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras: (1) after the textual traditions diverged but before the composition of 1 Esdras was made; (2) when the composition of 1 Esdras was created; (3) in the later Semitic transmission of 1 Esdras but before translation; (4) during the process of translating 1 Esdras; and (5) in the Greek transmission of 1 Esdras. The documented scribal changes made in its Semitic transmission were mostly made between the late third century and the late second century BCE, while later changes in the Greek transmission may have been more limited.²⁴ The variants in the proto-Masoretic transmission may also go back to changes after the translation of 1 Esdras was made. Scribal changes witnessed by textual variants can be dated to a time between the divergence of the textual traditions in the late third century BCE and the effective freezing of the texts from intentional changes by the first century CE.²⁵

23. For example, Patmore, "1 Esdras," 183-84; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 20, and "Esdras 1," 226; Bird, *1 Esdras*, 6. Patmore mentions that they may have been "more or less contemporary."

24. Changes in the Greek transmission certainly also took place, but by the first century BCE a tendency to harmonize the Greek toward the Hebrew texts became common, and therefore nonharmonizing changes to the Greek text became less probable. However, it is possible and even probable that the Hebrew text of 1 Esdras continued to be edited and that the translation that has been preserved to us was later revised toward this text. Robert Hanhart, *Text und Textgeschichte des 1. Esrabuches* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 18, notes that the main manuscripts largely witness a prehexaplaric text, since Origen did not show interest in the text of 1 Esdras. The other recensions can also mostly be detected; see Dieter Böhler, "7.1.2 Greek," in *The Deuterocanonical Scriptures: Baruch/Jeremiah, Daniel (Additions), Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira, Enoch, Esther (Additions), Ezra*, ed. Frank Feder and Matthias Henze, THB 2B (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 433-39. It can thus be assumed that the Greek translation by and large bears witness to a textual form of 1 Esdras when it was translated.

25. The freezing of the witnesses for changes was a gradual process, but it is unlikely that substantial changes to these witnesses could have taken place much after the first century CE, when Ezra-Nehemiah had already been included among the twenty-two holy books (see Josephus, *C. Ap.* 1.8; ca. 100 CE). The dating of the LXX translation of 2 Esdras does not give us conclusive help here, since its dating is debated, with suggestions ranging from the second century BCE to the second century CE. Timothy Janz, *Deuxième Livre d'Esdras: Traduction du texte grec de la Septante; Introduction*

Review of Results Gained by Zipora Talshir

Talshir has categorized all variant readings between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah as belonging to three main phases: (1) those related to the creation of 1 Esdras as a composition; (2) those that occurred in the Semitic transmission; and (3) those related to the translation of 1 Esdras. She further defines the variants according to their syntactical categories, which is mostly uncontroversial and thus practical. Since I will focus on the evidence from a slightly different perspective, size and content will also be considered. Size is important for literary criticism because there is an evident correlation between the size of scribal changes and their detectability. Most small additions are difficult to detect unless textual variants were preserved to show the addition.²⁶ Size can also give statistical information about the extent of scribal processes when we compare it to the number of words in total (ca. 3,700 words in the parallel sections between 1 Esdras and Ezra + Neh 8). For literary criticism, it is crucial to understand added content that introduces new ideas or where the text's meaning was otherwise substantially changed. Detecting additions that arise out of the older text by repeating its elements or deducing its information directly from the older text are less critical for the method, since their impact on the text's meaning and conceptions was mostly limited.

Although many variant readings are debatable as to which one is original, Talshir's observations and results are generally convincing and can be used as a basis for further study of the material. The following discussion and statistics exclude translational variants, accidental mistakes, and variants in parallels between 2 Chr 35-36 and 1 Esd 1. The development of proto-MT in Chronicles may differ from that of Ezra-Nehemiah, and therefore these parallels should be discussed separately. The large compositional changes are not included in the following statistics and will only be

et notes (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 150-64; and Talshir, "19.3.1 Septuagint," suggest that the translation was made in the second or first century BCE. A later dating is assumed by Wooden, "1 Esdras," 196 (second century CE), and Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 20 (first century CE). Since the Septuagint translations are assumed to have been completed already by the beginning of the first century BCE, a later date is possible only if one assumes that the translation of 1 Esdras is the original Old Greek translation and that it was later replaced by 2 Esdras. Nonetheless, linguistic comparisons point toward a date before the turn of the eras; see especially Janz, *Deuxième Livre d'Esdras*, 150-64.

26. See Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*, 322-24.

discussed on a general level in conjunction with the revision that created 1 Esdras (see below).

The analysis of the variants led Talshir to conclude that scribal changes in 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah follow similar processes of transmission. Both were expanded at the same time, and both versions were inflated about 7 percent after their textual traditions diverged.²⁷ The nature of scribal changes was also very similar, and she notes that “only rarely is there an unbalanced development in the texts”²⁸ and that “in the main body of minuses / pluses ... it is an almost symmetrical two-way movement.” Although the similarities in transmission and scribal change are striking, her conclusions primarily relate to the syntactic categories, and therefore further discussion, especially concerning the size and content, is necessary.

The variants show that the processes were quite conservative. Apart from accidental mistakes, more than 90 percent of the scribal changes were additions, while omissions, replacements, and transpositions were uncommon. First looking at the pluses, nearly all of which are unquestionably additions, the following chart summarizes Talshir’s results according to her syntactic categories, but the size of the plus is also included here:²⁹

27. This percentage thus excludes the large variants: the addition of 1 Esd 1, the addition of the Story of the Youth in 1 Esd 3-4 and the omission of most of Nehemiah.

28. Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 175. As for the differences between the two transmissions, she mentions the MT having more added demonstratives than 1 Esdras and 1 Esdras having more added function words.

29. Probable accidental or translational omissions have been taken out of this statistic: 1 Esd 2:19, 23; 6:9; 5:40; 7:3; 8:9, 17, 23, 50, 90; Ezra 1:10; 3:1; 6:3. Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 167-68, discusses added sentences, but she notes that some of them may be accidental omissions instead. These have also been excluded from the statistic. Although in some further cases the minus reading could be an omission, they are at most a few cases with limited statistical impact. The chart also excludes names in name lists, which notoriously contain many variant readings. Both contain pluses, and in the case of many names it is unclear whether the variant is the result of an intentional or unintentional change. Larger additions in the MT missing in the LXX can be found in the name lists of Neh 11-12. See the discussion by Fulton, *Reconsidering Nehemiah’s Judah*. Variants in divine names have also been excluded, since it is unclear whether the change was made in the translation or Semitic transmission; see Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 164. Systematic changes, such as those of divine names, also distort the statistics.

	Plus in MT Ezra-Nehemiah	Plus in 1 Esdras	
<i>One word</i>	6	13	Function words
	11	7	Quantifiers
	8	1	Demonstratives
	8	22	Appositions
	13	7	Construct (<i>nomen rectum</i>)
	4	3	Construct (genitival attribute)
	1		Relative clause
	2	1	Varia
	7	2	Objects
	8	4	Adverbs
	5	6	Subjects and predicates
	2		Independent components
	4	6	Multiple parts
		1	Double readings
		79	73
	74%	69%	% of all intentional additions
<i>Two words</i>	4	1	Appositions
	1	2	Construct
		2	Relative clause
	2	2	Objects
	2	1	Adverbs
	1		Subjects and predicates
		2	Multiple parts
	4	2	Phrases and sentences
		3	Double readings
	14	15	Total number
	13%	14%	% of all intentional additions
<i>Three words</i>		1	Construct
	2	3	Relative clause
		1	Objects
	2	1	Adverbs
	1		Multiple parts
	1	1	Phrases and sentences
		1	Double readings
	6	8	Total number
6%	8%	% of all intentional additions	
<i>Four or five words</i>	1		Multiple parts
	6	6	Phrases and sentences
	1	3	Double readings
	8	9	Total number
	7%	9%	% of all intentional additions
Total number	107	105	

The statistics of the size corroborate Talshir's conclusion about the parallel development of both textual traditions. The sizes of the additions are evenly distributed, and the small differences are well within normal variation. The small size of additions in both textual traditions is noteworthy. Additions larger than three words are limited to individual cases. The longest intentional addition contains only five words. There are some longer pluses, but they are more likely to be accidental omissions through a homoioteleuton than intentional additions (1 Esd 5:55; 6:8; 7:11; cf. Ezra 3:8; 5:8; 6:20).³⁰ The lack of large additions in the general transmission or gradual evolution of the text contrasts with the large additions when the composition of 1 Esdras was created.

Significant Intentional Additions

This section discusses most of the intentional and unambiguous additions that introduced a new idea or conception into the text. It will also be asked whether critics could detect the scribal change if the older text, as preserved in the text-critical variant, had not been preserved. This hypothetical question provides information about the possibilities and limits of literary criticism that seeks to detect and reconstruct additions without and beyond text-critical evidence.

Most intentional additions were small and consisted of only one to two words that had little or no impact on the text's meaning. Apart from stylistic or linguistic changes, typical additions take their information directly from the immediate context or another part of the story. For example, in reference to the temple of God, 1 Esd 8:17 adds "who is in Jerusalem," while the parallel in Ezra 7:19 refers only to the temple of God: $\eta\beta\iota\tau\alpha\ \alpha\lambda\eta\mu$ versus $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \iota\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \textit{\text{I}}\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu$. The addition and the reference to Jerusalem may have been taken from the following sentence: $\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \iota\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \textit{\text{I}}\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu$ $\theta\eta\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\nu\tau\iota\omicron\nu\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon\ \sigma\omicron\upsilon\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \textit{\text{I}}\epsilon\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha\lambda\eta\mu$ (cf. MT: $\text{בית אלהם קדם אלה ירושלים}$).³¹ The repeated reference to Jerusalem adds no information to the passage.

30. These have been excluded from the statistics, since Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 168-70, also assumes they could be accidental omissions in the MT rather than intentional additions in 1 Esdras.

31. Following Hanhart's reconstruction in the verse. Note that Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 171, disagrees with the reconstruction and Hanhart's assumption that the longer reading was accidentally omitted due to a homoioteleuton.

Added appositions, such as titles mentioned elsewhere in the text, are also typical noninformative additions. For example, Ezra 4:3 adds Cyrus's title *המלך*, which is missing in 1 Esd 5:69, but it is obvious from the context that Cyrus was king, and his title has been provided a number of times already (Ezra 1:1, 2, 7; 3:7, etc.). Added function words, quantifiers, and pronouns also rarely changed meaning. The word "all," *כל/πᾶς* is a common addition in both versions (seven in the MT and eight in 1 Esdras), but its added information is limited. For example, MT Ezra 10:8 reads "all his property should be destroyed," *יהרם כל-רכושו*, while the parallel in 1 Esd 9:4 lacks the equivalent for *כל*. The idea of all property is implied without the word *כל*.³² First Esdras adds the word *φυλή* (< שבט) in connection with references to Judah and Benjamin (1 Esd 2:7; 5:63; 9:5), although the context clearly implies that the tribes were meant. Added relative clauses that specify something obvious or otherwise implied are also common. For example, Ezra 3:7 reads *עליהם ... ברשיון כורש* "according to the decree they had from Cyrus," while the parallel in 1 Esd 5:53 reads: *κατὰ τὸ πρόσταγμα τὸ γραφὲν αὐτοῖς παρὰ Κύρου*, "according to the decree **that was written** to them by Cyrus." The written decree of Cyrus mentioned in Ezra 1:1 was clearly meant (see esp. *וגם-במכתב*), and the addition merely makes it explicit in 1 Esd 5:53 as well. Many of the small additions that have little impact on the text would go undetected because they are well in line with the text and would not stand out from their contexts. For literary criticism, it is not crucial to detect additions that add no substance or information.

Although most added titles are insignificant, some are important and connected to wider changes in the content. Titles related to Ezra belong to the latter category. The main differences between Ezra's titles can be seen in this chart:

Passage	Ezra-Nehemiah	1 Esdras
Ezra 7:11 / 1 Esd 8:3	הכהן הספר, the priest (and) the scribe	γραμματεὺς, scribe
Ezra 10:10 / 1 Esd 9:7	הכהן, the priest	(no title)
Neh 8:1 / 1 Esd 9:39	הספר, the scribe	ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς, high priest ³³
Neh 8:3 / 1 Esd 9:40	הכהן, the priest	ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς, high priest

32. In this case one cannot exclude the possibility of a translational omission in 1 Esdras.

33. When 1 Esdras refers to the high priest, it is likely that the Hebrew *Vorlage* had *הכהן* rather than *הגדול*. The change thus probably took place in the process of translation, but it is also an intentional elevation of Ezra's role.

Neh 8:4 / 1 Esd 9:42	הספר, the scribe	ὁ ἱερεὺς καὶ ἀναγνώστης τοῦ νόμου, the priest and reader/scribe
Neh 8:9 / 1 Esd 9:49	הכהן הספר, the priest (and) the scribe	τῷ ἀρχιερεὶ καὶ ἀναγνώστη, the high priest and reader/scribe

It is likely that most, if not all, the pluses related to Ezra's profession are later additions. Added titles are typically insignificant variants, but in the case of Ezra there is more to it. There were differing notions about the character of Ezra mission and role in the society. The roots of his two professions and the irregularity of the references also go back to the composition's earlier development. Ezra was probably only a scribe in the oldest Ezra story, but he was later made a priest (and eventually a high priest-scribe in 1 Esdras) who brought offerings and vessels to the temple.³⁴

Ezra's added titles are not syntactically problematic in their contexts, and therefore none of the above-mentioned cases of added titles would give enough reason to assume an addition. However, the double title without a conjunction הכהן הספר ("priest-scribe" or "priest and scribe"?) is unusual. It would also suffice to mention the title when the person is introduced for the first time. Without documented evidence, critics would certainly ask why Ezra has different titles and why the title is repeated so often. Consequently, a broader analysis of the whole Ezra story would need to explain these irregularities, and one would likely conjecture that some or most of the titles may not be original. This would have to be connected to a wider discussion about Ezra's role in the story: Was he a scribe, priest, or priest-scribe?

Another area of documented additions that change meaning is related to the Gola and its role in the described events. After the temple had been completed, the returning exiles kept the Passover. Ezra 6:19 refers to the Gola (or בני-הגולה, "sons of the Gola") as celebrants, while 1 Esd 7:10 contains an added reference to the Israelites: "the sons of Israel, of those from the captivity," οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ τῶν ἐκ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας. First Esdras defines the core community as "the sons of Israel" who have come from the exile, while in the MT the Gola is the core community. The use of the term in the MT excludes all others. Ezra 8:35 refers to the returnees from exile as the "sons of the Gola," הבאים מהשבי בני-הגולה, while the parallel in 1 Esd 8:63 only refers to the returnees (οἱ δὲ παραγενόμενοι ἐκ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας).

34. For a further discussion of Ezra becoming a priest, see Juha Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe: The Development of Ezra 7–10 and Nehemia 8*, BZAW 347 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 73–75.

The MT implies that the returnees are a specific group called “sons of the Gola,” which in other passages is implied to equate to Israel. The added term highlights their position.

The most significant Gola-related plus is found in Ezra 9:4, where the MT refers to “the sin of the Gola,” מעל הגולה, while the parallel in 1 Esd 8:69 refers only to “the sin,” τῆς ἀνομίας.³⁵ By referring to the sin of the Gola, the MT implies that the Gola is the only actor here and that it equals Israel. The MT reading is probably the result of an expansion: מעל > מעל הגולה. A possible replacement to the same effect can also be found in Ezra 10:6 / 1 Esd 9:2. The MT refers to “the sin of the Gola,” מעל הגולה, while 1 Esdras refers to “the great sin/lawlessness of the multitude,” τῶν ἀνομιῶν τῶν μεγάλων τοῦ πλῆθους (< מעל הקהל?). The idea of returnees being the only sinners is well in line with the theological conception that Israel is restricted to the exiles, but it fits poorly with the story where Ezra reintroduces the torah to the people who had lived in the land in ignorance of the torah. The whole idea of intermarriage in Ezra 9–10 implies cohabitation of the Israelites with the people of the land and ignorance of the law before it was (re) introduced by those who returned from exile.³⁶ The added reference to “the sons of Israel” in 1 Esd 7:10 could be an attempt to develop the text in the opposite direction by making the Israelites the main actors again.³⁷

If the variant readings concerning the Gola had not been preserved, it would have been difficult to detect any of the individual changes on the basis of their immediate contexts or sentences. A single added word הגולה in Ezra 9:4 does not disturb the syntax in any way. However, the critic would be puzzled by the sudden reference to the Gola, since Ezra 9:1–2, which first describes the sin, refers to the people of Israel (העם ישראל) having married foreigners, and the idea of the story is that those who had remained in the land lived in sin. In Ezra 10:6, the reference to מעל הגולה is well integrated into the sentence, and it would not occasion any reason to assume a scribal intervention. However, the text implies that Israel or Judah and Benjamin are the actors, and one can see a constant tension throughout the story about who forms the community and what the community

35. Loring W. Batten, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1913), 332; Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 156, and many others also assume that the MT is secondary here. It is theoretically possible that 1 Esd 8:69 omitted a reference to the sins of the Gola, but there is no evidence that 1 Esdras would have secondarily sought to generalize the sin.

36. See the discussion in Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 128–29.

37. Alternatively, the MT reading in Ezra 8:35 is the result of a replacement.

is called. The terminology concerning the community is too irregular to derive from one author. Of the text-critical variants related to the Gola, only Ezra 8:35 is slightly repetitive, for בני-הגולה roughly refers to the same thing as מהשביי הבאים, but this alone would not be enough to conclude that something was added. Consequently, the additions related to the Gola are too well integrated into their sentences to indicate addition on the basis of syntax, but tensions in the story and inconsistencies of terminology would demand an explanation. The assumption that the Gola was added would be a probable hypothesis.³⁸

The documented evidence shows a number of added actors who impacted the reader's understanding of the text.³⁹ According to Ezra 9:1, "the people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites" committed the sin of intermarriage (העם ישראל והכהנים והלויים), but the parallel in 1 Esd 8:65 adds the leaders to the list (τὸ ἔθνος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ Λευῖται). Although one cannot completely rule out an accidental omission by homoioarchton, the plus in 1 Esd 8:65 is likely to be a later addition that seeks to include the responsibility of the leaders.⁴⁰ The story begins with the leaders (השרים / 2 Esd: οἱ ἄρχοντες / 1 Esd: οἱ ἡγούμενοι) reporting the sin, which does not fit well with the idea that they themselves had committed the sin. The translator probably noted the contradiction and used two different Greek words for the leaders (ἡγούμενοι in 1 Esd 8:65 and ἄρχοντες in v. 66), but this does not change the tension. Therefore, the critic could have suspected a later addition here. On the other hand, it is quite possible that not just the leaders were added, for "people of Israel" already refers to the entire nation, and an added reference to the priests, Levites, and leaders is thus unnecessary. A reference to them may be understood to imply that they are not part of the people of Israel. However, there is no documented evidence for this.

Another addition to a list is found in Ezra 2:70, which recounts people who settled in Jerusalem and its vicinity. The MT mentions "the priests, the

38. Many commentators note the text-critical variations concerning the Gola but draw no conclusions on their basis, e.g., Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra: A Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2017), 377-79; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 196. For a summary of the Gola revisions in Ezra-Nehemiah, see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 263-67.

39. It is a different case when an implicit actor is made explicit by a later editor.

40. Thus many: e.g., Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 86; and Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 337, who assume further changes and possible corruptions in the verse; however, this does not change the fact that the leaders are a clear plus and probable addition in 1 Esdras.

Levites, and from the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants,” הכהנים והלויים ומנהגים והמשררים והשוערים והנתינים, but the parallel in 1 Esd 5:45 lacks the temple servants/הנתינים: ἱερεῖς καὶ οἱ Λευῖται καὶ οἱ ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ τῆς χώρας, οἳ τε ἱεροψάλται καὶ οἱ θυρωροί.⁴¹ One can see variation in the references to the temple personnel throughout Ezra-Nehemiah. The priests are found as a plus in Ezra 7:16, and it is likely that they were added later.⁴² The older text as preserved in 1 Esd 8:13 refers only to the freewill offering of the people, while the MT also mentions priests participating in the offering. The temple servants are also missing in a similar list in Neh 10:39, and the doorkeepers were added to 1 Esd 7:9.⁴³ Since the added references are met as members in lists, they are often challenging to detect without documented evidence. This is especially the case in longer lists such as Ezra 2:70. In Ezra 7:16, the reference to the priests is unnecessary because the people already include the priests, and it is also untypical that priests make an offering to the temple, since they are its personnel. However, no single instance could be used to build a case, but a comprehensive view of all references to the priests and temple personnel could lead to a theory that explains how the references to the priestly classes developed.⁴⁴ For literary criticism, the detection of actors is

41. Although an accidental omission by homoioarchton or homoioteleuton is a possibility, it should not be regarded as the primary explanation. There are many variants throughout the Hebrew Bible in lists concerning temple personnel, and many of these variants more likely go back to intentional changes due to hierarchical and other changes of temple personnel. Changes in the temple personnel are also seen in Ezra-Nehemiah; see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 266–74. According to Rudolph, *Ezra und Nehemia*, 26, the temple servants were original in the list, but his implicit reason for assuming this is that they are usually part of the list, which is a problematic argument here.

42. Most commentators make no reference to the absence of the priests in 1 Esd 8:13, but Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 401, notes that the “syntactically awkward sentence is absent in 1 Esd.”

43. According to Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 160, the MT is secondary in omitting the gatekeepers in Ezra 6:18 because “Ezra-Neh has no place for gates before Neh 7:1.” This view is based on his general theory on the relationship between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. However, even in Ezra-Nehemiah the temple had already been completed before Nehemiah, and the Nehemiah story also refers only to gates being restored. It is more likely that 1 Esdras seeks to build a story where Zerubbabel already restored the whole temple, which occasioned references that highlight the completion of the temple. In Ezra 6:18, there is no reason to omit a reference to the completed temple because they are celebrating its completion in this very passage.

44. For a comprehensive discussion on the added involvement of priests from the perspective of literary criticism, see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 266–74.

important, especially if their role impacts the way we understand the story, which is the case, for example, in 1 Esd 8:65, where the leaders were added.

A number of variants concern the book of the Torah, and especially many variants are found between Neh 8 and its parallel 1 Esd 9:38-55. The variants, some of which go back to replacements, are as follows:

Passage	Ezra-Nehemiah	1 Esdras
Ezra 3:2 / 1 Esd 5:48	ככתוב בתורת משה as it is written in the law of Moses	ἀκολουθῶς τοῖς ἐν τῇ Μωυσέως βίβλῳ, in accordance with (what is) in the book of Moses
Ezra 3:4 / 1 Esd 5:50	in accordance with the commandment	ὡς ἐπιτέτακται (<ככתוב>) ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, as it is commanded/written ⁴⁵ in the law
Ezra 7:10 / 1 Esd 8:7	יהוה את־תורת יהוה the law of the Lord	τοῦ νόμου κυρίου καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐντολῶν , the law of the Lord and the commandments
Ezra 7:11 / 1 Esd 8:8	דברי מצות־יהוה וחקיו על־ ישראל the words of the com- mandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel	τοῦ νόμου κυρίου, the law of the Lord
Ezra 9:14 / 1 Esd 8:84	מצותיך your commandments	τὸν νόμον σου, your law
Ezra 10:3 / 1 Esd 8:90	במצות אלהינו וכתורה יעשה the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the law	τοῦ νόμου τοῦ κυρίου, the law of the Lord
Neh 8:1 / 1 Esd 9:39	ספר תורת משה the book of the law of Moses	τὸν νόμον Μωυσῆ, the law of Moses
Neh 8:3 / 1 Esd 9:40	ספר התורה to the book of the law	τὸν νόμον, to the law
Neh 8:4 / 1 Esd 9:42	הסֵפֶר the scribe	ἀναγνώστης ⁴⁶ τοῦ νόμου , reader/scribe of the law
Neh 8:5 / 1 Esd 9:45	הסֵפֶר the book	τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ νόμου , the book of the law
Neh 8:5 / 1 Esd 9:45	וכפתחו when he opened it	καὶ ἐν τῷ λῦσαι τὸν νόμον , when he opened the law

45. It is likely that the Greek goes back to the Hebrew *Vorlage* ככתוב.

46. It is likely that the Greek goes back to the Hebrew *Vorlage* הסֵפֶר.

Neh 8:7 /		לתורה τὸν νόμον κυρίου,
1 Esd 9:48	the law	the law of the Lord

The LXX translation contains further variants related to the law/torah: Ezra 7:10: τὸν νόμον, the law (cf. MT אֶת־תּוֹרַת יְהוָה); Ezra 7:11: βιβλίου λόγων ἐντολῶν κυρίου καὶ προσταγμάτων αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰσραήλ, **the book** of words of the commandments of the Lord and his ordinances for Israel (cf. MT דְּבַר־יְהוָה וְחֻקֵי עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל). The high number of variant readings related to the law/torah is not surprising, since similar torah-related additions can be found in other parts of the Hebrew Bible as well.⁴⁷ Although some of the variants may go back to the Greek translator of 1 Esdras (especially Ezra 7:11 / 1 Esd 8:8, possibly also Ezra 9:14 / 1 Esd 8:84), most of the pluses are very likely to be additions in the Semitic transmissions. The torah's rising importance occasioned later scribes to specify an older reference or to add new references to the law. In the passage where the lawbook is read (Neh 8:1-12 / 1 Esd 9:39-48), later scribes sought to define more clearly what the book was and what it should be called.

As for the hypothetical case that the older readings had not been preserved as textual variants, it is unlikely that a critic would have been able to detect the additions on the basis of syntax or immediate context. However, the book's irregular name⁴⁸ would draw the critic's attention and lead to the conclusion that a single writer probably would not refer to the law in so many different ways. Without textual evidence, it would be challenging to conclude what exactly had happened, but it would become probable that there were many later additions of a reference to the book and/or torah.

Ezra 2:64 (and its parallel in Neh 7:66) mentions the total number of Israelites: "The whole assembly together was forty-two thousand three hundred sixty," בְּלִי־הִקְהָל כְּאַחַד אַרְבַּע רְבֹוא אַלְפִים שְׁלֹשׁ־מֵאוֹת שָׁשִׁים. The parallel in 1 Esd 5:41 contains the same number but has a notable plus that mentions the age of the people who were included in this number, "twelve or more years of age," ἀπὸ δωδεκαετοῦς. This is very likely a later addition that is also connected with a replacement (בְּלִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל > בְּלִי־הִקְהָל כְּאַחַד).

47. E.g., Deut 26:17; Josh 1:7; 1 Kgs 11:33-34; 18:18 See Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*, 59-68, 71-75, 153-58.

48. In the variants: the book of the law of Moses, the book of the law, the law of Moses, the book of Moses, and the law of the Lord. Further names: the book of the law of God in Neh 8:18; the book of the law of the Lord in Neh 9:3.

Since a census would probably exclude minors,⁴⁹ it can be seen as a clarifying addition that makes explicit what the scribe assumed the text to imply. If we follow Talshir's reconstructed *Vorlage*, כֹּהֵנִים עֹשְׂרֵה כְּאֶחָד, אַרְבַּע רְבוּא אֲלֵפִים, it would be nearly impossible to detect the addition without the older reading preserved in the MT. Although the addition may not impact the story significantly, it is nonetheless historically important, since its conception of adulthood age is not shared by Ezra 3:8 and other biblical texts (see, e.g., Exod 30:14; 38:26; Lev 27:3-5; Num 1:3, 18; 14:29; 26:2, 4; 1 Chr 23:24, 27; 27:23, which imply twenty years to be the age of adulthood). Talshir notes that twelve years "is a post-biblical designation" of adulthood.⁵⁰ The problem for research is that the reading in 1 Esd 5:41 could be used as evidence for twelve years being the age limit. Without recognizing that the reference is an addition, the critic would be led to assume that the original text already shared this conception. This case is clearly a challenge for literary criticism in terms of detectability and potential importance if used as historical evidence for the age of adulthood.

Ezra 6:9 refers to the payments from the Achaemenid administration for the building of the temple and its priests. The MT refers to daily payments: "whatever is needed ... let that be given to them day by day without fail," וְמָה חֲשׁוֹן ... לְהוֹא מִתְּיָהֵב לָהֶם יוֹם בְּיוֹם דִּי-לֵאל שְׁלוֹ. The Greek translator rearranged the sentence, which makes comparison difficult, but a significant addition is apparent in the parallel 1 Esd 6:29: The administration should give the payments "**perpetually, on a yearly basis**, without quibbling, for daily use as the priests in Jerusalem may indicate," ἐνδεδελεχῶς κατ' ἐνιαυτόν, καθὼς ἂν οἱ ἱερεῖς οἱ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ ὑπαγορευέσων ἀναλίσκεσθαι καθ' ἡμέραν ἀναμφισβητήτως. Talshir assumes that the added section goes back to תמיד שנה בשנה in the *Vorlage*. Because of the dynamic translation, the exact *Vorlage* is uncertain, but the added idea is unlikely to be from the translator, for it essentially changes the nature of the payments from those related to the rebuilding to a permanent payment. Assuming that the added words were placed immediately after the word לָהֶם, it would be difficult to conclude on the basis of the syntax that something had been added: לָהֶם תמיד שנה בשנה יום ביום דִּי-לֵאל שְׁלוֹ. The word pairs יום ביום and שנה בשנה are logical and would not give reason to assume a scribal

49. Some passages define the age of being counted in a census, while in other texts only men are counted (e.g., Num 1:2).

50. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 127. However, there is not much information on the conceptions of adulthood age, and we do not know when twelve years came to be regarded as the age of adulthood.

intervention. However, the critic would be puzzled about why gifts meant for the rebuilding (see especially Ezra 6:8) are perpetual. The reference to daily gifts is logical if related to the time of building, while perpetual and annual gifts have a different perspective and temporal horizon from what the decree implies. The critic would perhaps be led to assume an addition, but it would be difficult to conclude that only these words were added. A more probable conclusion would be that the entire reference to the gifts for the priests is a later addition, since it is thematically digressive in the passage. On the other hand, the gifts to the priests may be an earlier addition, which then occasioned a further addition in 1 Esd 6:29, thus: “Whatever is needed (**young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests in Jerusalem require**) let that be given to them [**perpetually year by year**], day by day without fail.” The original text would refer only to what is needed for constructing the temple, while the additions focus on temple sacrifices, first during the time of building and then later making them perpetual gifts.

Additions Dealing with Zerubbabel/Zorobabel

Some added words had a crucial impact on the entire story, and the addition of Zerubbabel in three verses is perhaps the best example of this. These additions could be associated with the creation of 1 Esdras as a composition, but it is more probable that they were added in a later transmission after the large compositional changes had been made.⁵¹ Ezra 5:14 reads “the gold and silver vessels of the house of God ... were given to a man named Sheshbazzar, whom he [Cyrus] had made governor,” וַאֲף מַאֲנִיא דִּי־בֵיתָּ וַאֲף מֶלֶךְ שֶׁשְׁבַזָּר, while the parallel in 1 Esd 6:17 reads: “the sacred vessels of gold and silver ... were given to **Zorobabel and** Sabanassaros the governor,” τὰ ἱερά σκεύη τὰ χρυσᾶ καὶ τὰ ἀργυρᾶ ... παρεδόθη **Ζοροβαβέλ καὶ** Σαβανασσάρω τῷ ἐπάρχῳ. The added reference to Zerubbabel elevates him to the center of power, as he is mentioned before Sheshbazzar the governor. Without the text-critical evidence, the sentence itself would give no reason to suspect an addition. However, the following text implies that only one person was originally meant. Verse 18 continues with a reference to Cyrus’s order: “he ordered

51. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 164, has categorized these as changes in the *Vorlage*, but in theory they could also be connected to the creation of 1 Esdras as a separate work.

him to return all these vessels and put them in the shrine in Jerusalem,” και ἐπετάγη αὐτῷ ἀπενέγκαντι πάντα τὰ σκεύη ταῦτα ἀποθεῖναι ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῷ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ. The Greek words και ἐπετάγη αὐτῷ correspond to לְהַמְרִיב in verse 15 of the MT. Moreover, verse 16 of the MT and its parallel in 1 Esd 5:19 refers to “this Sheshbazzar,” דָּן שֶׁשְׁבַצָּר / τότε ὁ Σαναβάσσαρος ἐκεῖνος. Only Sheshbazzar is mentioned here, and the use of the adjective/pronoun דָּן/ἐκεῖνος implies that only one actor was mentioned in the preceding text. The text continues with the verbs in the singular (אתא יהב and παραγενόμενος ἐνεβάλετο), which confirms the assumption that Zerubbabel was added later. In this case, it is highly likely that a critic would be able to detect the addition without the textual variant preserved in the MT. This is an exception, since small additions typically do not leave so many grammatical or syntactical traces of a scribal intervention. In this case, the scribe behind the addition disregarded the context or was unable or unwilling to make a more comprehensive intervention. This could indicate an addition between the lines or in the margin.

A related addition that also elevates Zerubbabel can be found in 1 Esd 6:26.⁵² The verse is part of Darius’s decree to the Persian governors to allow the building of the temple. Ezra 6:7 / 1 Esd 6:26 mentions the governor of the Jews responsible for the construction. The MT reads “let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God on its site,” פתח יהודיא ולשבי יהודיא בית־אלהא דך יבנון על־אתרה, while 1 Esdras reads “let **Zorobabel the servant of the Lord**, governor of the Jews, and the elders of the Jews build that house of the Lord at the site,” ἔασαι δὲ τὸν **παῖδα τοῦ κυρίου Ζοροβαβέλ**, ἑπαρχὸν δὲ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους τῶν Ἰουδαίων τὸν οἶκον τοῦ κυρίου ἐκεῖνον οἰκοδομεῖν ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου. The reading in 1 Esd 6:26 is very likely the result of an expansion that makes Zerubbabel the governor. Although the text could also be read as a list where Zerubbabel and the governor were different people, a similar expansion in 1 Esd 6:28 shows that this was probably not intended. The missing conjunction καὶ also suggests that they were meant to be understood as the same person.⁵³ The change is crucial for understanding Zerubbabel as a historical person, and it also has wide impact on how we understand his role in the story. The addition would have been difficult to

52. This addition may be associated with a small replacement (see Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 124), but the role of the translator is unclear here. The reference to Zerubbabel is clearly an addition.

53. 1 Esdras usually has the conjunction between all members of a list (e.g., 1 Esd 6:28–29; 7:6).

detect alone, since it is well integrated into the sentence syntax. The immediate content also gives no reason to assume an addition (but see below concerning 1 Esd 6:28).

Ezra 6:8-9 / 1 Esd 6:28 refers to the funds given for the construction of the temple. The parallel texts contain other variants, and the translator has partly rearranged the text, but the most significant addition is found in 1 Esd 6:28, according to which the funds should be “given to these people, to Zerobabel the governor,” *τούτοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ... Ζοροβαβέλ ἐπάρχῳ*. The parallel in the MT reads only “to these people,” *לְגַבְרִיא אֵלֶךְ*. With this change, Zerubbabel becomes not only the governor and temple builder but also financial overlord of the temple. Without textual evidence for the older text, one could have suspected an addition here, since the reference to Zerubbabel interrupts the sentence in a very awkward way: “given to these people for sacrifices to the Lord, to Zerubbabel the governor, for bulls and rams and lambs,” *δίδοσθαι τούτοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς θυσίαν τῷ κυρίῳ, Ζοροβαβέλ ἐπάρχῳ, εἰς ταύρους καὶ κριοὺς καὶ ἄρνας*. The list of animals clearly defines what the sacrifices should be. It is highly unlikely that the sentence’s original author would have made such an awkward or disjointed sentence. One also must ask whether the editor who created 1 Esdras as a separate composition would have made such a poorly integrated addition. It is likely that the addition was made between the lines or in the margin after the large compositional changes had been made. As part of the compositional change in 1 Esdras, the role of Zerubbabel was elevated, and that would have given later scribes a reason to further highlight his role in the events. Consequently, it is likely that the addition was made in the transmission of the Semitic *Vorlage* or in the later Greek transmission.⁵⁴ The latter alternative is also possible, since the translator often rearranged the text for improved Greek style, and one would thus expect that the awkwardness would have been removed by the translator. One could theorize that the preservation of the exceptional word order was pursued to separate Zerubbabel from “these people” or the translator understood the sentence in such a way that the sacrifices and the list of sacrifices were different things. Nonetheless, the most probable explanation is that the addition was made in the Semitic transmission after the translation had

54. Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 155-56, also assumes that the pluses in 1 Esd 6:17, 26, and 28 are later additions in 1 Esdras made after the addition of the Story of the Youth and other compositional changes. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 54, regards it possible that these references to Zerubbabel were made in the later transmission and even in the Greek transmission after translation.

already been made, and the Greek text was later harmonized toward the Hebrew text, which then occasioned the addition to the Greek text as well. This would also explain why the translation, which usually is written in good Greek, contains such an awkward sentence. Later recensions were focused primarily on bringing translations closer to the Hebrew, while fluent Greek was of lesser importance. In any case, the addition was so poorly made that it would have been detected without the MT variant. Moreover, if one concluded that Zerubbabel was added in 1 Esd 6:28, it is very likely that the critic would also be led to suspect a similar addition in verse 26. Since a similar addition in 1 Esd 6:17 also left clear traces, one would have an additional argument to assume that Zerubbabel may have been added in verse 26 as well. Consequently, it is very likely that, even without the MT readings, later critics would conclude that Zerubbabel was added to these three verses in 1 Esdras.

Documented Evidence for Replacements and Omissions

Talshir lists sixty-one readings where the parallels have a different text. Unless both versions were independently expanded in the same place (which is possible for the variant in Ezra 6:16 / 1 Esd 7:6),⁵⁵ these cases most likely go back to a replacement of textual segments in one of the witnesses. She has categorized these cases as reading variants, phonetic variants, graphic variants, combined graphic and contextual variants, contextual variants, and stylistic variants. The last two categories interest us here because they contain intentional changes, while others are mainly accidental changes. The category “combined graphic and contextual variant” includes cases where an accidental graphic mistake may be associated with an intentional change, and this category contains one notable case with a significant change in content: an added reference to Zerubbabel in 1 Esd 6:26 (cf. Ezra 6:7), which was discussed above.⁵⁶ Of the sixty-one

55. See Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 127 (case 6), and Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 375-77. The plus in 1 Esd 7:6 ἀκολούθως τοῖς ἐν τῇ Μωσαίῳ βίβλῳ is the same sentence that is also found in 1 Esd 7:9 (and its parallel Ezra 6:18), and it may have been accidentally or intentionally duplicated here. Ezra 6:16 is also repetitive, since its plus, חֲנֻכַּת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי דָנָה בַּחֲדוּדָה, is found in the following verse: לחֲנֻכַּת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵי דָנָה. The only difference is בַּחֲדוּדָה in v. 16.

56. Although the variant reading between 1 Esd 6:26 and Ezra 6:7 may also be connected with a graphic variant, 1 Esd 6:26 refers to Zerubbabel, which is connected

cases, thirty-three can be regarded as intentional replacements.⁵⁷ Of the thirty-three cases, fourteen had only a minor impact on the text and its meaning, and therefore the term *stylistic* is appropriate, but some of the changes in the category “stylistic variants” could be characterized as linguistic or even translational (e.g., 1 Esd 8:52 ὄτι / Ezra 8:22 לְאָמַר; 1 Esd 8:79 προστάγματά σου ἃ ἔδωκας / Ezra 9:11 מִצֻּוֹתַיִךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָ; 1 Esd 6:27 μέχρι τοῦ ἐπιτελεσθῆναι / Ezra 6:8 לְמַבְנֵא; 1 Esd 6:10 λέγοντες / Ezra 5:9 אֲלֶךְ הֵם כְּנִמְא אֲמַרְנָא לְהֵם).⁵⁸ The following is an example that may be stylistic, but it may also be translational: Ezra 3:11 / 1 Esd 5:58: הריעו תרועה גדולה, “they shouted with a great shout” versus ἐβόησαν φωνῆ μεγάλης, “they shouted with a great voice” (< הריעו קול גדול?).⁵⁹

Many variants in the category “stylistic variants” relate to the temple (הַיְכָל or οἶκος < בית; Ezra 5:14; 6:5 / 1 Esd 6:17, 25) and the people (הַקְהָל or Ἰσραῆλ < ישראל; Ezra 2:64 / 1 Esd 5:41; > ישראל or Ἰουδαίωv; Ezra 7:13 / 1 Esd 8:10), and in these cases the term stylistic is not always justified. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that many of these variants concern key theological concepts such as the temple, nation, law, and land. The difference between τοῦ πλῆθους, multitude < הַקְהָל, community in 1 Esd 9:2 and הַגּוֹלָה, Gola in Ezra 10:6 was discussed above with other changes related to the Gola, and it is likely to be caused by a different conception of what the role of the returning exiles was. This is a theological change regardless of which version preserves the older text.⁶⁰

Of the thirty-three cases where part of the older text was intentionally replaced, seven may be associated with the compositional change connected with the creation of 1 Esdras:⁶¹ locations in Jerusalem and concerning Jerusalem were changed, for example, 1 Esd 5:45, ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ τῆς χώρᾳ / Ezra 2:70, בְּעִרְיָהם; 1 Esd 8:88, ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ / Ezra 10:1, מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל;

with a central motif in 1 Esdras, and therefore it is certainly an intentional change that is not merely triggered by a mistake.

57. The following cases in Talshir’s, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 120–32: all cases in (e) and (f) except no. 6 in (f), which is most likely a translational change. This also excludes all cases with a parallel in 2 Chr 35–36. Case 25 in (d) may be an accidental replacement that also included a significant addition. It is unlikely that the addition was triggered only by an accidental mistake.

58. Cases (e) 7–8 and (f) 3–7, 9, 26–28, 29–31.

59. That this change is translational is suggested by the LXX version of Ezra 3:11, which also translates φωνῆ μεγάλης.

60. For further discussion, see Pakkala, *Ezra the Scribe*, 96–98.

61. Cases (e) 10–12, (f) 20, 22, 23–24. Case (d) 25 could be included here, but its compositional element is primarily an addition rather than a replacement.

1 Esd 9:37, ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ / Neh 7:72, בערייהם; 1 Esd 5:46, εἰς τὸ εὐρύχωρον τοῦ πρώτου πυλῶνος τοῦ πρὸς τῇ ἀνατολῇ / Ezra 3:1 (par. in Neh 7:72), אֶל יְרוּשָׁלַם / בערייהם (see also 1 Esd 9:38, 41).⁶² Talshir placed these cases under contextual and stylistic variants, but they are likely to be important changes related to the composition, as also suggested by Böhler.⁶³

Eight intentional replacements can be characterized as theological changes: the law/torah (1 Esd 5:48 / Ezra 3:2; 1 Esd 7:6 / Ezra 6:16; and 1 Esd 8:84 / Ezra 9:14), the role of the priests (1 Esd 9:40 / Neh 8:2), God's presence in the temple (1 Esd 2:5 / Ezra 1:3), and the nature of the people's sin (1 Esd 8:84 / Ezra 9:14). In these cases, it is not always clear in which version the change took place. There is no apparent link with other changes, and thus they were probably isolated scribal changes. Although there are a number of additions and replacements connected with the law/torah, they may still be isolated changes, for there is no apparent attempt to harmonize the terminology concerning the book of the law/torah, and in part the additions introduce more variation in the terminology. They were most likely made in a scribal milieu where the torah had become more important than what the older text implied, and therefore many scribes were tempted to change the terminology to accord with the understanding in their social context.

On the whole, intentional replacements were uncommon, and when they took place, it was mostly in key compositional or theological issues.

62. Although the perception of Jerusalem is not entirely systematic, Ezra-Nehemiah implies that Jerusalem was more in ruins before Nehemiah restored it, while in 1 Esdras specific locations in Jerusalem are mentioned and the composition does not refer to Jerusalem being in ruins. Thus, 1 Esd 5:46 (47) versus 3:1 and 1 Esd 9:38, 41 and Neh 8:1, 3 are variants related to locations in Jerusalem. Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 16, and *Die heilige Stadt*, 143-308, assumes that these changes were made in Ezra-Nehemiah, since existing gates would be problematic before Nehemiah's activity. It is also apparent that the Nehemiah story is hardly harmonized with the book of Ezra, and there are only some vague attempts to link the stories (such as the addition of Nehemiah in Neh 8:9). Changes concerning the gates would therefore not be logical, and, in any case, it is questionable whether existing gates even contradict the Nehemiah story, since it implies the existence of gates and walls. Many of them are merely repaired. Moreover, one can reverse Böhler's argument: if an editor removed the Nehemiah memoir, there would have been a motive to show that the city was not in ruins. First Esdras seems to be a more coherent story than Ezra-Nehemiah, which contains a number of tensions among the three originally independent stories.

63. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 128, 130-31; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 121-22, and more extensively in *Die heilige Stadt*, 143-308. Although Böhler is certainly right that the changes are planned and intentional, they were likely made in 1 Esdras and not in the proto-MT transmission, as he has suggested.

Unequivocal stylistic variants that do not go back to the translator are rare, isolated, or debatable cases.⁶⁴ This implies that replacements were not done lightly, but at the same time it also shows that replacements could be done in some cases, especially involving key issues.⁶⁵ The documented evidence also shows that the overwhelming majority of intentional replacements were very small: all thirty-three cases consist of one or two words. Of the replacements, the distribution is as follows: one word: 76 percent (25 of 33) and two words 24 percent (8 of 33). The small number and size of replacements implies a high respect for the text-form and avoidance of replacing the older text.

If we compare the number of intentional replacements (33) with additions (212 = 107 in Ezra-Nehemiah and 105 in 1 Esdras), the following percentages can be reached: circa 13 percent are replacements (33 of 245), while circa 87 percent are additions (212 of 245). This number excludes the large compositional changes (addition of 1 Esd 1; the Story of the Youth and the omission of the Nehemiah story) and transpositions. If we exclude the seven replacements that may be linked with the compositional issues, the preference for additions in the textual development is even higher. Of the pure additions, just a few (e.g., 1 Esd 5:40; 6:17, 26, 28) could be linked with the same compositional issues, but many of them may, in fact, be additions made later, as we have seen above. This underscores the use of replacements when 1 Esdras was created as a separate composition and a reluctance to use them in the gradual evolution of the text.

The category of replacements also includes an omission of a textual segment, but sheer omissions without any new text were infrequent. A possible case can be found in Ezra 3:3, which describes the building of the altar after the exile. The parallel in 1 Esd 5:49 reads: “And some joined them from the other peoples of the land,” *καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν τῆς γῆς*, which may go back to Hebrew *ויבאו עליהם מעמי הארץ*

64. The variant between 1 Esd 8:25 and Ezra 7:27 may be one them (*ברוך יהוה אלהי אבותינו*; cf. *Εὐλογητὸς μόνος ὁ κύριος*), but even here one could conjecture that the oldest text merely referred to Yahweh and that both versions later expanded this reference.

65. For example, of the eight replacements that Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 126–28, has categorized under contextual variants “with no formal connection between the variants” (126) at least three are connected with each other (cases 10, 11, and 12) and very likely also with the creation of 1 Esdras as a composition. In the category stylistic variants, cases 20, 22, 23, and 24 (130–31) can also be connected with the same scribal reorientation of 1 Esdras.

צות.⁶⁶ This reference is missing in the MT version, but the text mentions later in the sentence that they were “in fear of the people of the land(s),” באימה עליהם מעמי הארצות. Since a number of passages present the people of the land as opponents of the temple building (in Ezra 4-5, for example, Ezra 4:4 which uses the term עַם הָאָרֶץ in this connection), the idea that some of them participated in the building of the altar would have been contradictory and problematic. The idea of separation from the people of the land is central in many passages, and it becomes particularly prominent in the Ezra story (Ezra 9-10).⁶⁷ The late addition of the idea that some of the people of the land participated in the construction of the altar would be difficult to explain, because it goes against the story, especially after the Aramaic documents were added and the Ezra story in Ezra 7-10 and Neh 8 had become part of the same composition. An omission would be theologically motivated, and a compositional reason to omit is also apparent. However, in its current position in 1 Esd 5:49, the sentence καὶ ἐπισυνηχθησαν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων ἔθνῶν τῆς γῆς is peculiar, since the same verse also refers to the fear caused by the people of the land in 1 Esdras: ὅτι ἐν ἔχθρᾳ ἦσαν αὐτοῖς καὶ κατίσχυσαν αὐτοὺς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. Since early research it has been—probably rightly—proposed that the contradictory 1 Esd 5:49 is a conflation of an original reading and its later revision in the proto-MT transmission.⁶⁸ In the proto-MT transmission the idea of the people of the land joining the building process was changed to the fear of the people of the land: ויבאו עליהם מעמי הארצות > באימה עליהם מעמי הארצות. In addition to transposing the sentence to a location later in the verse, this necessitated the omission of two ו-letters, adding מ and ה, and relocating a י: ויבאו > באימה. Although three of the letters were preserved, the sentence’s original meaning was omitted, and the idea of participation and cooperation was reversed to hostility. This change was in harmony with the antagonism between the builders and the people of the land in Ezra 4-5. The original reading is preserved in 1 Esd 5:49, but it was later harmonized with a text similar to the MT, which resulted in a confusing and contradictory text but which also preserves a

66. Following the retroversion by Talshir, *I Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 296-97. The preposition may also be אליהם, and the land could be in the singular, i.e., הארץ.

67. The term עמי הארצות is used in Ezra 9:1, 11, while Ezra 10:2, 22 use the singular עַם הָאָרֶץ, but both refer to the same group of people from whom the Israelites should strictly separate themselves.

68. For example, Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 159.

vestige from an earlier stage of the text.⁶⁹ Clearly, uncertainties remain, and an accidental omission or textual corruption is also possible, but in view of a clear motivation for the changes presented above, this is less likely.⁷⁰ The sheer omission of the entire offensive sentence would have made a much clearer text, but since the sentence was transformed and transposed, which caused a confusing text, it is apparent that the scribe in the proto-MT transmission sought to avoid omitting any textual segments of the older text as far as possible. If we accept that ויבאו was changed to באימה, only two ו-letters had to be omitted. The other changes in the verse were transpositions and the additions of letters מ and ה.

Apart from the cases discussed here, clear intentional omissions that impacted the text's meaning are not witnessed in the textual variants that bear witness to the gradual evolution of the text. A number of condensed sentences can be found in the translation, but they do not give a reason to assume that anything essential in content was omitted from the Hebrew *Vorlage*. The main motive of these omissions was to give a better Greek equivalent for the Hebrew text.⁷¹ For example, two synonymous words could be rendered with a single Greek word (1 Esd 8:10), or the translator did not fully understand the *Vorlage* (1 Esd 8:56). The avoidance of omissions matches up well with the conclusion that replacements were uncommon and limited. On the other hand, the lack of omissions in this documented evidence should be contrasted with the omission of most of Nehemiah when 1 Esdras was created as a composition (see below).

69. Partly similarly, Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 113-14, but Hugh G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 41, assumes that the MT is original and that 1 Esdras does not support an emendation. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 172, also assumes that the reading in 1 Esdras is the result of a conflation. Böhler, *1 Esdras*, understands the Greek ἐπισυνήχθησαν αὐτοῖς to refer to the people of the land "gathering against them," but this interpretation may not be correct in Greek. The Greek verb refers to gathering against someone with the preposition ἐπί (Ps 30:14; Mic 4:11; Hab 2:5; Zech 12:3; 1 Mac 3:58; 5:9, 15, etc.) but not with the dative. Böhler's theory also does not explain why the MT needed to be revised. According to Julius A. Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922), 37-38, the reading in 1 Esdras is the result of three translations of the same sentence in the *Vorlage*, and it does not further help us reach the oldest text. He also discusses a number of emendations.

70. Talshir, *1 Esdras: A Text Critical Commentary*, 296-97; Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 123; and many others assume that the verse is corrupted.

71. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 234-37.

Documented Evidence for Transpositions

Transpositions are cases where a textual segment was relocated. In all the investigated material, which includes the parallel with Chronicles, Talshir identifies 165 transpositions, of which roughly two-thirds go back to the translator.⁷² To put this into perspective, in the 285 parallel verses, one in five contains a possible transposition in the Semitic transmission. Most transpositions are inconsequential and relate to changed word order for linguistic and stylistic reasons. According to Talshir, only twelve cases in all of the material “do not fall into the realm of syntax” and “probably occurred already in the *Vorlage*.” Only six of them are found in the parallels between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah. Most of these six cases are inconsequential, unclear, or may go back to scribal mistakes. For example, it is difficult to see a clear motive behind the following change, regardless of which version is original. According to Ezra 8:22, “the hand/power of our God is good to all who seek him,” יד-אלהינו על-כל-מבקשיו לטובה, while the parallel in 1 Esd 8:52 reads “the power of our Lord God is with those who seek him for all restoration” ἡ ἰσχύς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν ἔσται μετὰ τῶν ἐπιζητούντων αὐτὸν εἰς πᾶσαν ἐπανόρθωσιν (possibly from Hebrew בלי-טובה על-מבקשיו לטובה). Accidental transposition is also possible here. A limited change in content can be found in 1 Esd 8:81 / Ezra 9:12, although the change is not undoubtedly intentional: בנותיכם אל-תתנו לבניהם ובנותיהם אל-תשאו לבניכם, “do not give your daughters to their sons, neither take their daughters for your sons,” compared to ἀς θυγατέρας αὐτῶν μὴ συνοικίσητε τοῖς υἱοῖς ὑμῶν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας ὑμῶν μὴ δῶτε τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτῶν, “do not take their daughters in marriage to your sons, and do not give your daughters for their sons.”

More consequential scribal changes with a transposition and a replacement can be found in Ezra 8:15 / 1 Esd 8:41:

Ezra 8:15	1 Esd 8:41-42
<p>ואקבצם אליהנהר הבא אלי-אהוא ונחנה שם ימים שלשה ואבינה בעם ובכהנים ומבני לוי לא-מצאתי שם</p>	<p>⁴¹ Καὶ συνήγαγον αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὸν λεγόμενον Θεράν ποταμόν, καὶ παρενεβάλομεν αὐτόθι ἡμέρας τρεῖς, καὶ κατέμαθον αὐτούς. ⁴² καὶ ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν τῶν ἱερέων καὶ ἐκ τῶν Λευιτῶν οὐχ εὐρών ἐκεῖ</p>

72. Talshir, *I Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 233.

I gathered them by the river that runs to Ahava, and we camped there three days. And I reviewed **the people and the priests**, and I found there none of the sons of Levi.

⁴¹ I gathered them at the river called Theras, and we camped there three days, and I reviewed **them**.

⁴² And I found there none of the sons of **the priests** or of the Leuites

The texts run parallel nearly word for word (the name of the river is different), but references to the people differ. Both texts begin the passage with a reference to “them,” who in the present context are the family heads and their families mentioned in the preceding passage Ezra 8:1-14 / 1 Esd 8:28-40. First Esdras refers to the same group as the one that is being reviewed for priests and Levites, whereas in the MT the people and the priests are reviewed for Levites. The cause of the textual differences here is not clear, nor is it clear which version is more original.⁷³ The ensuing passage in Ezra 8:16-20 / 1 Esd 8:43-48, which describes the search for the missing personnel, also contains a connected variant. According to Ezra 8:17, Iddo the leader of Casiphia should send “ministers,” משרתים to serve in the temple (להביא־לנו משרתים לבית אלהינו). This term is neutral and can refer to priests ministering in the temple (e.g., Neh 10:36, 39) as well as to the ministry of the Levites (e.g., 1 Chr 15:2; 16:4). However, the parallel in 1 Esd 8:45 uses the root *ἱερατεύω*, which more clearly refers to priestly ministry: τοὺς ἱερατεύσαντας ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν. Since the Ezra-Nehemiah parallels with 1 Esdras do not use the root שרת, it is not clear whether this is a conscious change or merely a difference in connotation introduced in the translation.⁷⁴ It is challenging to determine which reading is original, and many scholars leave the question open.⁷⁵ Regardless of which one is

73. Bewer, *Der Text des Buches Ezra*, 75, regards the readings in 1 Esd 8:41-42 to be secondary, while Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 325, assumes that 1 Esdras “has a better text.”

74. The LXX translates ᾄδοντας, “singers,” which appears to be an interpretation.

75. Thus also Böhler, *1 Esdras*, 185-86, who notes that “both readings are possible.” Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 417, notes that “there is an internal contradiction” when we read 1 Esd 8:41-42 with the following passage, which mainly deals with the Levites. An internal contradiction could speak for originality, but it is not clear that only Levites were meant in 1 Esd 8:43-48, especially since the word *ἱερατεύσαντας* is used in v. 45. According to Batten, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, 320-21, the reading in 1 Esdras is more logical and therefore original. He notes: “it would be strange for him to say that he looked among the laity and priests and found no Levites there, as if one were to say ‘I searched among the privates and found no officers there.’” Batten may be right as far as the priests are concerned, but this is not necessarily the case if the author refers to the people in general.

original, there appears to be a transposition of the word for priest, which was accompanied by a replacement (“them” to “the people and the priests” or vice versa). These scribal changes caused a substantial change in the text’s meaning.

The last example is an exception in showing a transposition that had considerable impact on the text but also necessitated a replacement. Otherwise, documented evidence from Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras shows that transpositions were an uncommon phenomenon in the gradual evolution of these textual traditions. Most of the transpositions were insignificant linguistic or stylistic changes. This contrasts with the larger transpositions that took place in the creation of 1 Esdras as a separate composition. Transpositions are challenging to detect, and it is even more difficult to determine the original location of a transposed textual segment. Some transpositions may be ill-placed, but in none of the documented cases would it have been possible to reconstruct exactly which changes were made in which texts.

The Gradual Evolution of Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras

The documented evidence implies that scribal processes were quite similar after the textual traditions behind Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras diverged. The changes in both traditions were mostly small and isolated additions that cannot be linked with other changes.⁷⁶ They derive from different scribes who worked at different times, and, apart from the creation of 1 Esdras as a composition, there is no evidence for a planned revision of the entire text from a certain theological, ideological, political, or other perspective. Some scribal changes were made when the text was copied, while other changes may have been made as comments and clarifications between the lines and in the margin (e.g., 1 Esd 6:28). The general stability of the text and the similar nature of the changes implies a stable milieu of scribal transmission. Small changes appear to have been accepted or at least tolerated, but there were also limits. The evidence implies a high respect for the transmitted text and its exact text-form, since replacements, omissions, and transpositions were rare, and only a few uncontroversial examples that do not go back to the translator can be shown. The near complete lack of clear omissions is noteworthy. Since the evidence covers a long period and the same conventional practices were used in two different textual tradi-

76. This has been noted by many scholars, e.g., Patmore, “1 Esdras,” 180, who writes: “No clear pattern is discernible in the variants.”

tions, it is fair to assume that the gradual evolution of the text took place in a scribal milieu with unwritten and stable rules of textual change.

We may compare the stability of this evolution and its rules to the stability of rules in the later Masoretic transmission except that the rules were different. In the material analyzed here, some intentional changes were acceptable and common, but in the later transmission all intentional changes became exceptions and were limited to corrections of unambiguous scribal mistakes, but eventually all intentional changes became unacceptable. We do not know when the change took place, and it was certainly a gradual process that did not occur simultaneously for all books in the Hebrew Bible, but around the turn of the eras the gradual evolution and its conventional practices came to an end for most books of the Hebrew Bible—for the Torah the change probably happened somewhat earlier. Very literal translations, such as the LXX of Ezra-Nehemiah, imply that the preservation of the exact words of the Hebrew text had become important by the first century BCE. The same change is seen in the recensional activity of Greek translations, where the exact Hebrew text becomes so important that translations were later revised toward it.⁷⁷ This can be associated with and is a prelude to the freezing of the texts for intentional changes in the first centuries CE. The documented evidence discussed here bears evidence to the gradual evolution of the texts and their scribal milieu from the late third century BCE to the first century BCE, and soon after this the scribal milieu and its rules changed.

Scribal Techniques in the Revision that Created 1 Esdras

After they diverged, the gradual evolution of the two textual traditions was only interrupted once, and this took place in the transmission of 1 Esdras around the mid-second century BCE. The creation of 1 Esdras necessitated a large revision of the text, which partly included scribal techniques that differed from those used in the gradual evolution of the texts: large additions, large omissions, replacements/rewritings, and significant trans-

77. The kaige revision is often dated to the first century BCE or CE, and it implies a careful preservation of the text. See Anneli Aejmelaeus, “The Origins of the Kaige Revision,” in *Scriptures in the Making: Texts and Their Transmission in Late Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Raimo Hakola et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 285–311, here 290–91, who notes that even “the smallest details of the Hebrew text were important.” She further notes that for books other than the Torah this recensional activity is “a phenomenon of the first century BCE and the turn of the era.”

positions. An adapted version of 2 Chr 35-36 was added at the beginning of the composition in 1 Esd 1 and the Story of the Youth was added in 1 Esd 3:1-4:63. The Nehemiah story in Neh 7:1:1-72 and the book's final chapters in Neh 8:13*-13:30 were omitted. First Esdras 2:15-30a was transposed to come immediately after Cyrus's edict (1 Esd 2:1-14; the parallel in Ezra 4:7-24 is located later in the story). The older text had to be accommodated to these large changes, and this necessitated other additions, replacements, and transpositions especially around the large additions (especially 1 Esd 2:15-30; 5:56⁷⁸). In the rest of the composition, locations (especially gates) had to be changed or added (e.g., 1 Esd 5:46; 7:9; 9:38, 41). Most importantly for the present article, typical rules of the text's gradual evolution were not followed when these changes were made. The scribe's attitude toward the older text and its preservation was markedly different from what we have seen in the gradual evolution.

It is notable that not many small changes can be linked to the revision.⁷⁹ The additions are a few individual sentences scattered in different parts of the composition, but there was no attempt to revise the text more extensively except in the immediate surroundings of the large additions (e.g., 1 Esd 2:15-30; 5:1-6, 56, 66-73). This leads us to another interesting aspect of the revision. Although large parts were omitted and textual segments were rearranged, the rest of text was preserved faithfully and without any changes. This contrasts with a free rendering of the older text seen in some rewritten texts (such as Jubilees or the Genesis Apocryphon). The use of Kings in Chronicles or the use of Deuteronomy in the Temple Scroll is also much less faithful than what we can see in the revision when 1 Esdras was created. First Esdras is more a revision of the same literary work than the creation of a new composition like the Temple Scroll or Chronicles.

Literary Criticism and Documented Evidence

An important goal of this article is to compare the documented evidence for scribal changes in Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras with scribal changes

78. See Juha Pakkala, "Why 1 Esdras Is Probably Not an Early Version of the Ezra-Nehemiah Tradition," 96-100.

79. The additions concerning Zerubbabel in 1 Esd 6:17, 27, 29 could also be associated with this revision, but they were so awkwardly added (see above) that they more probably derive from a later scribe who made the addition between the lines or in the margin in the later transmission of the text after 1 Esdras had been created as a composition.

assumed or implied in literary criticism. The gradual growth or evolution of texts in our material largely corresponds to the assumption that the texts were mainly expanded and that the preservation of the older text had a high priority. The occasional use of replacements for important reasons shows that the older text was not completely untouchable by omissions, which challenges a dogmatic position by some historical critics.⁸⁰

There is also a contradiction between the documented evidence and commonly assumed additions in literary- and redaction-critical studies. The documented additions were smaller than these methods commonly assume and reconstruct,⁸¹ and they were also isolated and unconnected with other additions. Added sentence clusters that would relate to other similar additions are missing in the documented evidence, while they are typically found in redaction-critical reconstructions.⁸² There is only meager evidence for a redactional layer that would encompass the entire literary work and that would seek to revise several passages from a particular theological or ideological perspective.

The creation of 1 Esdras as a separate composition provides the only clear evidence for a comprehensive revision from a certain theological or ideological perspective, but it is technically very different from commonly assumed redactions. Instead of forming a redactional layer spread throughout the composition, the revision is unevenly distributed. Most of the changes are found in and around the beginning up to 1 Esd 5:1–6,⁸³ while

80. Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, 169–70; Becker, *Exegese des Alten Testaments*, 84–86; Levin, *The Old Testament*, 25–28; Kratz, “Redaktionsgeschichte/Redaktionskritik: I. Altes Testament,” 370; Odil Hannes Steck, *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Leitfaden der Methodik*, 12th ed. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 46.

81. A notable exception to this is Christoph Levin, whose reconstructions of textual histories often consist of small and isolated additions that arise out of the immediate context or as harmonizations between passages. See, for example, Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt*, FRLANT 137 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 65, where he notes that Jeremiah was not written by one hand but by one hundred scribes in one hundred years. For an evaluation of this model, see Juha Pakkala, “Reflections on Levin’s Model of Fortschreibung,” in *Fortgeschriebenenes Gotteswort: Studien zu Geschichte, Theologie und Auslegung des Alten Testaments; Festschrift für Christoph Levin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Reinhard Müller et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 497–508.

82. See, for example, Timo Veijola, *Das fünfte Buch Mose (Deuteronomium) Kapitel 1,1–16,17* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004).

83. The technique of revising the beginning is known in other documented evidence: for example, Addition A in the Greek versions of Esther and 5 Ezra at the beginning of 4 Ezra/2 Esdras. This technique sought to guide the reader to under-

in the rest of the story scribal interventions by the same scribe are limited to a few sentences mainly related to locations in Jerusalem. There are few middle-sized additions between the addition of entire passages (1 Esd 1 and 3-4) and the addition of individual words or short sentences. Moreover, conventional redaction-critical models neglect omissions, replacements, and transpositions of textual segments as significant scribal techniques, but there appear to have been significant techniques when 1 Esdras was created as a separate composition. Consequently, the closest documented evidence for a redaction in our material is quite different from the assumed redactions. It is a matter of definition as to whether the documented revision in 1 Esdras should be called a redaction.

Similar revisions (or redactions) as documented in 1 Esdras may also have taken place in stages of textual transmission of other biblical books that left no documented evidence for the changes. This means that the reconstruction of multilayered texts by literary and redaction criticism should be conducted with caution. If revisions such as the one we can observe in the creation of 1 Esdras took place, reconstructions would only partially be able to reach the older literary layer. It would certainly miss the omission of the Nehemiah story and Neh 8:13-13:29. The rewritten locations in different parts of the composition would also be a clear problem. A literary-critical analysis would probably be able to detect the large additions in 1 Esd 1 and 3-4, since they differ formally and partly in their use of language from the rest of the text, but transpositions and replacements around 1 Esd 3-4 would be challenging. Uncertainties about the reliability of the reconstruction would grow with every round of assumed redactions.⁸⁴ This obviously does not exclude the possibility that there could be many literary layers, but the question is how many such layers of revision can be reconstructed before the constructions become too hypothetical to have any scientific

stand the following text from a certain perspective. Adding the last two chapters of 2 Chronicles to the beginning of 1 Esdras links the Judean monarchy, King Josiah, and the Davidic kingship with Zerubbabel's activity. See also Sara J. Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), passim, who discusses this phenomenon in biblical and Mesopotamian literature.

84. Cf. the methodological discussion by Erhard Blum, "Von der Notwendigkeit einer disziplinären Selbstverständigung in der Exegese des Alten Testaments," in *Exegetik des Alten Testaments: Bausteine für eine Theorie der Exegese*, ed. Joachim J. Krause and Kristin Weingart (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 239-73, here especially 266-69.

relevance and reliability. According to Reinhard Kratz, we should not stop at the first reconstructed layers, because the literary problem of the text in question would then remain unsolved.⁸⁵ This is certainly true, but it implies that critics can fully reconstruct the literary development of biblical texts. In view of the evidence analyzed here, this seems overly optimistic.

Most of the documented additions would not have been detected without text-critical variants. Many are too small and too well integrated into their contexts to have left traces of a scribal intervention. In a few cases, the addition left signs of a scribal intervention. The three additions of Zerubbabel (1 Esd 6:17, 26, 28) belong to the detectable additions, and it would have been possible to reconstruct what exactly was added. In the case of other significant additions (Gola, book, law/torah, added actors, Ezra's titles), one would often notice that the text cannot derive from one author. However, one would rarely notice additions made on the basis of a contradiction or tension with the immediate context or on the basis of a syntactical problem in the sentence. The reasons for assuming that a given text is an addition mostly arise from the broader story with which the addition does not fit in some way (e.g., the involvement of the Gola). The erratic terminology caused by additions (Ezra's titles, name of the law book/law) would become apparent only against the backdrop of the whole story. The critic's ability to understand the whole text in depth is often crucial, while technical or mechanical reasons or signs (such as a syntactical problem or *Wiederaufnahme*) for detecting an addition are rare in this material. It is unlikely that one would be able to reconstruct exactly what was added (e.g., in the case of Ezra's titles or Gola additions), but in many of the cases where the addition made a substantial change in context, critics would be able to develop a good theory about what happened to the text.

In summary, the result for literary criticism is ambiguous. Quantitatively, most of the additions and other scribal changes would have remained undetected. Some, perhaps even most, of the *significant* additions in the gradual evolution of the two texts could be detected or suspected, but some significant changes, and especially replacements, would remain undetected.

85. Reinhard Kratz, "The Analysis of the Pentateuch: An Attempt to Overcome Barriers of Thinking," *ZAW* 128 (2016): 529–59, here 542–44. He writes: "It does not make sense, though, why in such cases the normal criteria of analysis that are used for differentiating the three or four sources, compositions, or redactional layers are not also applied to the subsequent analysis" (542). Many other scholars have a similarly optimistic or even idealistic conception of our abilities to reconstruct the development of biblical texts in cases when text-critical evidence is lacking.

One can thus agree with Erhard Blum that the practice of conventional historical-critical method will no longer be enough.⁸⁶ The reconstructions of multiple layers become hypothetical after the first two or three layers,⁸⁷ and at most such reconstructions can function as rough abstractions of a more complicated development. Since the risk of an erroneous reconstruction is high, one cannot build on any single assumed addition. Future use of this method also needs to have an argued methodological position that takes all the documented scribal changes into consideration.⁸⁸ How does the fact that many additions stay unnoticed impact our possibilities of reconstructing multilayered texts? How can the reconstructions take omissions, replacements, and transpositions into consideration? How should the method be refined to assume revisions as shown by 1 Esdras? Is there documented evidence for redactions that use similar techniques as those redactions that have been assumed and reconstructed in redaction-critical studies?

Documented Evidence and Assumed Models of Transmission

Many models of transmission of the Hebrew Bible have been argued, assumed, and/or implied. Although the documented evidence in Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras cannot be applied as a general model for all other books of the Hebrew Bible, it nonetheless provides a significant piece in the puzzle for understanding scribal processes that led to the formation of texts in the Hebrew Bible. Its evidence especially relates to the time from the third to the first century BCE.

Some scholars have characterized 1 Esdras as a rewritten text,⁸⁹ but this is misleading and even problematic if it leads us to disregard the evidence for the Hebrew Bible. We have seen that the scribal processes in

86. Blum, "Von der Notwendigkeit," 269.

87. Pace Kratz, "The Analysis of the Pentateuch," 524.

88. As noted by Blum, "Von der Notwendigkeit," 266-69, the question should be not only whether or not we use the method but how we use it: "Dabei kann es zudem nicht nur darum gehen, sich innerdisziplinär darüber zu verständigen, *ob* es möglich ist, zielführend literargeschichtlich am Alten Testament zu arbeiten, vielmehr gilt es differenzierend zu klären, *wie, unter welchen Konditionen, mit welchen* methodisch geleiteten *Fragestellungen* etc. diese Arbeit geleistet werden kann."

89. Hugh G. M. Williamson, "1 Esdras as Rewritten Bible," in Fried, *Was 1 Esdras First?*, 237-49; Kristin De Troyer, *Rewriting the Sacred Text: What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible*, TCS 4 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 91-126; Bird, *1 Esdras*, 7-8, use the term *rewritten* to characterize 1 Esdras.

1 Esdras were strikingly like those of the proto-MT transmission, and this speaks against assuming 1 Esdras as a representative of a different genre than Ezra-Nehemiah. First Esdras is one branch in the development of the same textual tradition as Ezra-Nehemiah, and they are both equally relevant for the transmission processes in the Hebrew Bible. How we use the term *rewritten* is a matter of definition, but the only potential examples of rewriting are very short textual segments, which are mostly restricted to key compositional issues dealing with the locations and gates and with the large additions (see 1 Esd 2:15 / Ezra 4:6-8). Rewritten sentences are exceptions in the whole material, and the term rewritten may not be appropriate even in these cases, since just a few key words were typically replaced. In most of the sections parallel with Ezra-Nehemiah, the older text was preserved; therefore, the term rewritten should not be used for 1 Esdras.⁹⁰

Raymond Person assumes a model of transmission where parts of the text could be left out or replaced according to the function of each manuscript. An oral performance would be a potential context for a manuscript. Since the audience would have been familiar with the whole tradition, a manuscript would not have to contain everything. This model does not receive support from the documented evidence investigated here. The documented scribal changes imply an essentially written (as opposed to oral) and careful transmission. Expansion was the rule, while replacements and omissions were rare and small. The variation between the two versions is much smaller than what Person's model assumes. The exception to this is the creation of 1 Esdras, but this was also a scribal phenomenon that cannot be explained by an oral or other performance. Compositional textual functions and ideological goals provide a better explanation for the observable changes than performances and oral processes. The only documented changes in this material that may have an oral aspect are the phonetic and reading variants, as discussed by Talshir,⁹¹ but these are better explained as accidental mistakes in the copying process. It is unlikely that the model proposed by Person is relevant as an explanation for the transmission investigated here from the third to first century BCE.⁹²

90. To some extent the translation may give the impression of rewriting, but as Talshir has demonstrated, the translator tried to give good Greek equivalents for larger blocks rather than words.

91. Talshir, *1 Esdras: From Origin to Translation*, 116-19.

92. See Person, "Harmonization in the Pentateuch," 318-57, and "Text Criticism as a Lens," 197-215. See the more extensive criticism of Person's model in Müller and Pakkala, *Editorial Techniques in the Hebrew Bible*, 24-27.

Frank Ueberschaer has suggested that some textual variants, especially in 1 Kgs 11-14, imply a fluctuation of transmission. For example, he associates textual segments found in different locations in different witnesses with an oral aspect of transmission. These segments would relate to the text in question, but their location was not fixed.⁹³ Julio Treballe Barrera has also observed that some textual segments were “moveable units.”⁹⁴ Such movable units are certainly possible for some additions placed in the manuscript margin without a clear location. Copyists of the manuscript would have later fixed them in different locations, which created variant readings. None of the material investigated here can be explained by assuming such a movable unit or an oral aspect that allowed the location to fluctuate. The documented intentional transpositions in this material are much better explained as textual changes. The most significant transpositions took place in the creation of 1 Esdras, and they were carefully planned scribal changes associated with compositional goals. The other transpositions are on a sentence level and mostly relate to changes in word or sentence order. Fluctuation of transmission may explain some variants in other biblical books, but there is so far no evidence that it was a significant phenomenon.

By using analogies from ancient Near Eastern literature, Benjamin Ziemer argues that the model of growth by additions does not correspond to documented evidence. He assumes that omissions, replacements, and transpositions were as common in the transmission of the Hebrew Bible as in other ancient Near Eastern literature.⁹⁵ He has subsequently reacted to my earlier criticism of his model.⁹⁶ Ziemer is certainly right that the

93. Ueberschaer, *Vom Gründungsmythos zur Untergangssymphonie*, 28–36.

94. Julio Treballe Barrera, “Textual Criticism and the Composition History of Samuel: Connections between Pericopes in 1 Samuel 1–4,” in *Archaeology of the Books of Samuel*, ed. Philippe Hugo and Adrian Schenker (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 261–64.

95. Ziemer, *Kritik des Wachstumsmodells*.

96. For my review, see Juha Pakkala, review of *Kritik des Wachstumsmodells: Die Grenzen alttestamentlicher Redaktionsgeschichte im Lichte empirischer Evidenz*, by Benjamin Ziemer, *Bib* 102 (2021): 463–68. For criticism of my proposed models by Benjamin Ziemer, “Radical Versus Conservative? How Scribes Conventionally Used Books While Writing Books,” in *Inscribe It in a Book: Scribal Practice, Cultural Memory, and the Making of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro and Benjamin D. Giffone (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 301–28. It is somewhat surprising that, according to Ziemer, “Radical Versus Conservative?” 308, my categories of editors neglect the possibility of a source compilation, since category 1 explicitly refers to this: “Author editor, who collected the composition rather freely (sources of the Pentateuch, for example the Yahwist).” He also assumes that the possibility of shortening an edition

transmission of the Hebrew Bible did not consist just of additions, and this is confirmed by the material discussed here.⁹⁷ Other biblical books provide further evidence that scribes used different techniques of editing, such as omissions, replacements, and transpositions. However, documented evidence also shows that additions were the most common technique, while other techniques were used only infrequently in the gradual evolution of the texts. The evidence, which thus covers two textual traditions in two centuries, implies that most of its editors were copyist editors and/or conservative editors who changed the texts mainly by minor additions.⁹⁸ According to Ziemer, the assumption that such editors existed is “strongly influenced by wishful thinking.” He further notes that editors “who primarily liked to copy the text, usually include the whole arsenal of changes that must be reckoned with in the history of text always and everywhere.”⁹⁹

is not covered by my categories, but my categories 1, 4, and 5 assume shortening. For the categories, see Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 379. At least the following scribe-editors can be identified in the Hebrew Bible: (1) Author editor: free collection of sources combined with new material (pentateuchal sources); (2) Copyist editor: mainly small, interpretative, and clarifying additions (most expansions in the gradual evolution of 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah); (3) Conservative editor: expansions are more extensive, but the older text is rarely challenged by omissions (MT expansions in Jeremiah are a typical example); (4) Radical editor: creates a new version of a literary work (the creation of 1 Esdras); (5) Rewriter editor: creation of new composition that is extensively dependent on another literary work (Chronicles in relation to Kings); (6) Censor editor: a text is purged of theologically problematic and offensive details (Samuel and Kings have been partly but not systematically censored); (7) An editor inserts a new section in a literary work from another literary work; this could be a harmonization, quotation, or allusion (for example, the Decalogue in Deuteronomy may have been adopted from Exodus or vice versa).

97. For my analysis of omissions in the transmission of the Hebrew Bible, see Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*.

98. Categories 2 and 3 in Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 379.

99. Ziemer, “Radical Versus Conservative?,” 308-9. In contrast to Ziemer's assumption, the scribal changes in the Samaritan Pentateuch and MT Jeremiah were overwhelmingly additions. It is difficult to find any documented evidence for rewriting and omissions in this material. However, there are some transpositions. Ziemer mentions “harmonising and homogenising supplementation of texts that were already contained elsewhere in the Vorlage” as an example that would be something other than additions, but from a technical point of view they are additions. A transposition, which was not particularly common, can be seen as a middle way between radical techniques such as omissions and replacements and the more conservative additions. The evidence from Jeremiah, the Samaritan Pentateuch, 1 Esdras, and Ezra-Nehemiah shows that there were indeed many scribes who confined their techniques to additions. The

The evidence from the gradual evolution of Ezra-Nehemiah and 1 Esdras not only contradicts Ziemer's claim, but it also shows that this type of conservative editing was particularly common.

The assumption that "the whole arsenal of changes" would have been used is misleading for most of the editors whose work is documented in textual evidence. Some replacements and transpositions could be made in the gradual evolution, which shows that one should not be dogmatic about the principle of additions, but replacements were used cautiously, while sheer omissions are rare exceptions in the gradual evolutions of the texts. We have seen that there is only one possible minor omission (of two γ -letters, which were omitted in conjunction of an addition and transposition of letters) in the gradual evolution, but even that is a controversial case (Ezra 3:3; see discussion above). The evidence thus implies a special scribal milieu where the older text could not be challenged lightly. Additions appear to have been much more acceptable than omissions and replacements. This contradicts Ziemer's assumption that the scribes could "choose what to adopt and what to leave out."¹⁰⁰ The reasons for limitations on changing the text freely should be sought in the social context and the scribal milieu. It is also likely that the scribes themselves assumed that the text could not be changed freely. The history of literary works knows many examples of texts and genres that could be changed only in particular circumstances and by societal authorization. For example, legal texts that define the rules of the community are conventionally difficult and slow to change, and the changes are limited. The United States Constitution has been regarded as so unchangeable that any changes are made as amendments, and the process of making amendments is slow and complicated and requires wide acceptance.¹⁰¹ One cannot compare textual changes made to the Constitution with changes made to a script for a theater play or for a sitcom. With broad strokes, Ziemer essentially lumps all different genres in ancient literature together and assumes that it would be up to each scribe to decide what to leave out and what to include. This may be possible for some literature in the ancient Near East, but it is highly unlikely for the texts in the Hebrew

evidence from 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah also covers two centuries of scribes in two textual traditions. In the case of Jeremiah and the Samaritan Pentateuch, the evidence witnesses an even longer transmission by more scribes.

100. According to Ziemer, "Radical Versus Conservative?" 315.

101. For the multistage amendment process, see <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/constitution>; <https://www.ncsl.org/about-state-legislatures/amending-the-us-constitution>.

Bible. A key reason for the careful transmission is the religious and authoritative value that the transmitting communities assumed the texts that later became part of the Hebrew Bible to have.¹⁰²

The revision that created 1 Esdras as a separate composition implies more radical processes that also included major omissions.¹⁰³ This is an exception to the empirical rule, for it shows that one scribe in the chain of scribes used different scribal techniques.¹⁰⁴ This exception needs to be understood on its own terms and in relation to the gradual evolution that is the most common type of transmission. The revision that created 1 Esdras has similarities with some of Ziemer's analogies, but there are also differences. Apart from the major omissions in 1 Esdras, those sections that were taken as part of the new composition were preserved faithfully. This is a distinctive phenomenon that calls for further investigation of the Hebrew Bible and its documented evidence. By discussing a number of empirical cases,¹⁰⁵ Ziemer concludes:

102. Most of the texts in the Hebrew Bible became authoritative and normative by the first centuries BCE, but the chronology of the development is still poorly known. It is probable that legal texts in the Pentateuch in particular gained an authoritative and normative status rather early in their development, while narratives such as Samuel or Esther gained such a status much later.

103. Category 4 in Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 379.

104. Ziemer, "Radical Versus Conservative?," 310, criticizes my assumption that only some editors were radical. He writes: "If the differences between Chronicles and Samuel, or between the two extant editions of the book of Jeremiah are distributed along such a 'chain of editors,' it is easy to attribute the omissions and text changes to the one, 'radical' editor, and everything else to the other editors who would only have added. This sounds like arbitrary circularity, but it is common practice in many cases where text comparison is possible." Ziemer's assumption that this is arbitrary is not based on documented evidence. First Esdras clearly demonstrates and confirms the assumption that most of the transmission was conservative, and it was only occasionally and rarely interrupted by a more radical revision. For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon, see Juha Pakkala, "Textual Development within Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts," *HBAI* 3 (2014): 327–42.

105. Ziemer "Radical Versus Conservative?," 313, refers to the following cases: "The Gilgamesh epic, the Book of the Dead, Chronicles against Samuel/Kings, MT versus LXX in Jeremiah, Daniel and Esther, 1 Esdras against Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah, Jubilees, the Genesis Apocryphon and the LAB against Genesis, compositions discovered at Qumran like 4Q174, 4Q175, 11QPsa, 11QTemple, the different versions of the Community Rule, the Damascus Document and the War Scroll, the Enoch literature, the Synoptic Gospels and Gospel harmonies."

The examination of this comprehensive list of empirical examples has led to a sobering conclusion. Not in a single case the original text was preserved completely in the new book or version. Pakkala's "conservative editor" whose toolbox consisted solely of additions was not found among the examples enumerated by Kratz.¹⁰⁶

With the exception of MT versus LXX Jeremiah, Ziemer's examples are a problematic selection that creates an illusion of considerable editorial freedom. Ziemer neglects all the faithful transmissions in centuries witnessed by the variant textual editions. MT Jeremiah clearly shows that the older text was almost exclusively expanded in this version by successive scribes in the proto-MT transmission. Text-critical evidence between the LXX and MT of further biblical books would show that the separate transmission of the two textual traditions overwhelmingly expanded the texts. Despite witnessing transmission and changes over centuries, omissions in the Hebrew transmission are difficult to find when we compare the LXX and MT of most books in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰⁷

Ziemer's list of examples for scribal processes gives a misleading picture of the transmission of the Hebrew Bible, since many of them are from other literature (e.g., the Gilgamesh Epic, the Book of the Dead), witness the creation of new compositions (e.g., Chronicles, Jubilees), or are problematic as evidence (free translations such as Esther or Daniel).¹⁰⁸ Ziemer's evidence is only remotely relevant for understanding processes in the Hebrew Bible. A model should be built essentially by using documented evidence in the Hebrew Bible itself, and the textual evidence in 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah further underscores that similarity of processes with other texts from the ancient Near East should not be implied a priori. Even within the Hebrew Bible one must distinguish between different processes and stages of transmission.¹⁰⁹

106. Ziemer, "Radical Versus Conservative?," 313.

107. In some books, the Greek translator has made a number of omissions, but this is a different phenomenon that must be distinguished from the transmission of the Hebrew text.

108. Free translations are difficult to use for understanding scribal processes. For example, in Esther it is often difficult to know what the *Vorlage* was, which is essential for the question. In many passages, it is difficult to determine whether we are dealing with a paraphrase or a very free translation.

109. See the discussion in Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 379.

Discussion and Summary

Textual variants between 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah show a consistent picture of scribal changes. Despite having diverged at some point in the late third century BCE, the processes and intentional scribal changes remained similar in both traditions. The changes were mostly small and isolated additions, which gradually inflated both texts. The changes imply a shared scribal milieu in which texts could be slightly altered but older textual segments were only rarely omitted. The transmitting scribes can be characterized as conservative copyist editors. Some of the additions were made in the margin by readers with a pen. The revision that created 1 Esdras is an exception in the documented evolution of the text: omissions, replacements, transpositions, and large additions were much more widely used. This revision appears to be a singular intervention, deviating noticeably from the gradual evolution and the customary alterations made in both texts.

For literary criticism, the documented evidence in 1 Esdras and Ezra-Nehemiah provides an ambiguous result. Quantitatively, most additions would remain undetected, or at least there would not be enough arguments to assume and convince other scholars of a scribal intervention. Replacements, omissions, and transpositions are also a major challenge for the method, and these were especially significant when 1 Esdras was created as a separate version. On the positive side for the method, changes other than additions were infrequent in the gradual evolution of the text. Significant replacements and omissions are limited to just a few. Moreover, the critics would probably notice a considerable number or perhaps even most of the additions that significantly changed the meaning of the text. This shows that the historical-critical method has its merits and should not be abandoned. However, it needs to explore the documented evidence in much more detail and accept its limits.