

The Folio

Bulletin of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, a research center of the Claremont School of Theology

Volume 29, Number 2

Fall 2012

THE PSALTER AND THE MODERN BIBLE IN THE MAKING

William Yarchin,
Ph.D.
Dean's Endowed
Professor of Biblical
Studies
Azusa Pacific
University
Azusa, CA



In the summer of 2011, I visited the ABMC to study about 60 medieval Hebrew manuscripts of the Book of Psalms. Although the *content* of the Psalter does not change, the *configuration* of the content—through divisions and conjoinments of chapters—can differ considerably, depending on which manuscript one is reading. My project aims to profile the different ways in which various manuscripts configure the Psalms. The summer of 2012 found me in Jerusalem doing more of the same work at the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, expanding the database to over 400 manuscripts—essentially all the Hebrew Psalter manuscripts in the world.¹ Here I would like to show how an examination of a select portion of the Book of Psalms as it appeared in key late 15th and early 16th printings can help illuminate defining features of the modern biblical text. Our focus will begin in Italy, move on to Germany, and conclude at Antwerp.

Students of the Hebrew Bible usually recognize the name Felix Pratensis for its association with the First Rabbinic Bible² published in Venice by Daniel Bomberg in 1517. The 1517 Rabbinic Bible was the first eclectic edition of the Hebrew Scriptures, and in that sense we may regard it as a product of the Renaissance. Prior to the develop-

ment of the printing press in 1455, copies of the Hebrew Scriptures (and Latin, and Greek, for that matter) were produced by hand, replicating a single model manuscript. The earliest printed forms of the Hebrew Scriptures, beginning in 1477, continued the practice of reproducing a single model manuscript.³ The decade of 1510-20 saw several efforts to refine the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew texts of the Bible by printing *editions* (rather than simply duplications) drawn from collected manuscripts.⁴ Since it was not the practice of these early printers (1477-1510) and editors (1511-1520) to identify the manuscripts upon which they relied, we usually don't know what they were.

Another legacy of the Renaissance was the move to make the Bible more accessible for study by supplementing the Vulgate's older Latin with more contemporary Latin rendered directly from the ancient biblical languages. A famous example is the 1516 Latin New Testament (with the Greek text on facing pages) from Desiderus Erasmus published by Johannes Froben in Basel as *Novum Instrumentum omne*. The volume that interests us, however, is a 1515 Latin translation of the Psalms by Pratensis published in Venice by Peter Liechtenstein and paid for by Bomberg.⁵ Whereas the 1517 Rabbinic Bible presents a Hebrew text that Pratensis edited from multiple Hebrew manuscripts, the 1515 *Psalterium* presents a Latin version that he rendered from a single Hebrew source.

Thanks to certain idiosyncrasies in the way the Book of Psalms is configured in medieval and early modern sources, we may be able to identify the Hebrew source(s) underlying Pratensis' *Psalterium*. My research at the ABMC and in Jerusalem shows that, depending on which manuscript or early printed text is under review, any one of dozens of different configurations of the Hebrew Psalter might present itself. When I examined the 1515 *Psalterium*, I recognized a peculiar arrangement of the text in one portion of the Psalter:

- 115:1-11 [as a discrete psalm, numbered 115]
- 115:12-18 [as a discrete psalm, numbered 116]
- 116 + 117 [as a single psalm, numbered 117].

Continued on page 3

The Folio

shedding light

The Newsletter of
The Ancient Biblical
Manuscript Center

Table of Contents

on the

The Psalter and the Modern Bible in the Making
Dr. William Yarchin 1

*documentary
history of*

Creating the Creation Text 5
Dr. Marvin A. Sweeney

Publications and Upcoming Events 6

*Judaism and
Christianity*

General Editor Dr. Marvin A. Sweeney

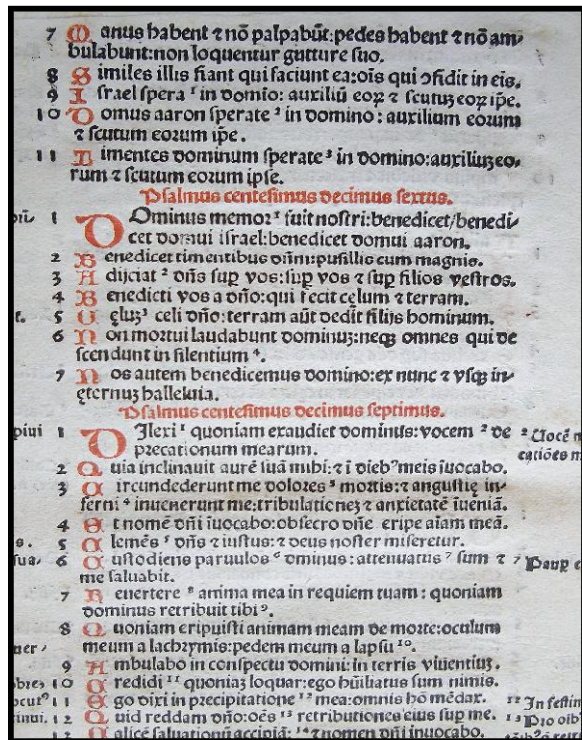
Managing Editor Shelley L. Long

Published by The ABMC 1325 N. College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711
909.447.6354

For More Information www.abmc.org

Continued from page 1

Psalms 118 is numbered 118, and so the total number of psalms remains 150, albeit in a different configuration than we might expect. For convenience let us call this a non-TR (*textus receptus*) psalter configuration.



Pratensis' Latin *Psalterium*, 1515. Photograph provided by William Yarchin and used with the permission of the National Library in Israel.

Among the hundreds of medieval Hebrew manuscripts that I have examined, along with all the biblical Hebrew incunabules,⁶ only two copies show this particular arrangement at this particular portion of the psalter. One is an early printed Hebrew Psalter published in Brescia by Gershom Soncino in December 1493.⁷ The other is a manuscript Hebrew Psalter written in Italian semi-cursive script—without Masoretic vowels or accents—by an anonymous scribe active in the early 16th century.⁸ We do not know with certainty which one of these sources Pratensis used, or both. We do know, however, that Soncino's Brescia Hebrew Psalter and Pratensis' Venice Latin Psalter were used as the basis for subsequent translations, and that in the process they were adjusted to align with the modern "standard" (TR) psalm-configuration. Further 16th-century printings of the Psalter in Hebrew and in translation reflected this non-TR psalm-configuration in unexpected ways, as we shall see.

In 1522 the Protestant reformer Martin Luther began producing German translations of portions from the Christian Bible, beginning with the New

Testament based on the revised 1519 Greek edition by Erasmus. In the fall of 1524 Luther's translation of the entire Psalter appeared,⁹ and at Psalms 115-118 Luther operates as much more than a translator; he serves as a modern editor, drawing upon various Hebrew and Latin sources to produce a wholly new German edition. His primary Hebrew text was the one found in the 1494 Brescia printing.¹⁰ Luther also seems to have considered the Psalms text in the light of parallel ancient and revised Latin versions printed in the *Quincuplex Psalterium* produced by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples.¹¹ The 1515 Latin version by Pratensis provided Luther with more contemporary humanistic insight into the Hebrew.¹² In fact, the Hebrew text that Luther had before him has Ps. 115:12 formatted as a psalm incipit and bearing the Hebrew number 115 (see image on the next page).¹³ Similarly in the 1515 Pratensis Latin Psalter Ps. 115:12 begins a new psalm (116), as we have seen. Luther had his printers give this verse the appearance of a psalm incipit with an enlarged first letter, yet without its own chapter number. Much of the same appears at Ps. 116:10; there Luther presents the complete psalm but with an enlarged 1st letter at that verse, where most Latin and Greek manuscripts (but no Hebrew sources) show a psalm incipit. Departing from his Hebrew source (Brescia 1494) in favor of other authorities (*Quincuplex*), Luther presented Psalm 117 as a discrete composition. In this way Luther's earliest German edition exhibits a key characteristic of modern Bibles, which are newly created editorial entities drawn from multiple primary and supplemental textual sources.

In 1525 the Flemish printer Martin Lempereur established a shop in Bomberg's hometown Antwerp where his output included Latin, Dutch, English, and French Bible translations. Lempereur printed a complete Bible in 1530 rendered from the Vulgate into French, probably by the hand of Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (although he goes unnamed in this edition).¹⁴ The very next year Lempereur published a French translation of the Latin Psalms, this time, however, based not on the Vulgate but instead rendered from the 1515 *Psalterium* by Pratensis.¹⁵ True to its Latin source, this 1531 French Psalter shows our peculiar non-TR psalm-configuration. Yet unlike the 1515 *Psalterium*, Lempereur's French Psalter contains none of the philological annotation that Pratensis had offered. Instead there is added to the head of most psalms a summary of the contents or teaching to be found in each discrete psalm. The summary introducing the psalm numbered 117 in Lempereur's

Continued on next page

1531 Psalter is an overview of Pss 116 + 117 as a single composition. In this way the plurality in the composition of the Psalter evidenced among the medieval Hebrew manuscripts can be seen continuing briefly among the early modern printed editions. The plurality did not endure, however, as this non-TR psalter configuration never again appears after the 1541 Antwerp reprinting of *Le livre des Pseaulmes de David* by Antoine des Gois. As for Luther: he kept revising his German Psalter, and as early as 1531 Luther's psalm-configuration layout aligned with TR.

These various psalter printings from the late 15th and early 16th centuries reflect the emergence of characteristics that were to become definitive for the modern Bible relative to its medieval forebear. First, we see Gershom Soncino, following standard humanistic protocol, reproduce in print a specific Hebrew manuscript (Brescia 1493/94) that was selected after obtaining and critically reviewing a number of them.¹⁶ That same Hebrew text—either in manuscript form (MS Cod. Parma 1876) or in Soncino's Brescia printing—served as the textual basis for Pratensis to offer a refined Latin text of the Psalter (Venice 1515). Luther then made use of both of these sources, as well as others (*Quincuplex*, Paris 1509) to produce an edited, eclectic text in the vernacular—a distinctly modern form of the Bible.¹⁷ Further editorial variations on our non-TR psalms-configuration appeared in form of the chapter summaries added to the 1531 French rendering of the 1515 *Psalterium*. But it was not only in the vernacular that edited texts of the Bible began to appear. After publishing the 1515 Latin Psalter, Bomberg and Pratensis assembled numerous manuscripts from which they crafted what was arguably the first truly modern (i.e., edited, eclectic) Hebrew Bible, the *Biblia Rabbinica*.¹⁸ The psalter-configuration that Bomberg presented in this First Rabbinic Bible and later in the 1525 Second Rabbinic Bible would ultimately dominate as the *textus receptus* format found in all printed Psalters in the west to the present day.

Endnotes

¹ Partial funding for the research in Jerusalem was provided by a grant from the Azusa Pacific University Faculty Research Council.
² Bomberg published this Bible with the Hebrew title *Arba'ah Ve-esrim* (*Twenty-Four*) designating the 24 books comprising the Hebrew Bible. At some later point the term *Biblia Rabbinica* came into use, probably by Christian Hebraists. Bomberg's second Rabbinic Bible of

1525, edited by Jacob ben Chayyim ibn Adoniyahu, remained the standard text of the Hebrew Bible until the late 20th century.

³ See Menachem Cohen, "Ledmutam Hakonsanontit shel Defusei Hamiqra Harishonim," *Bar Ilan* 18-19 (1981), 47-67.

⁴ The most ambitious of these editions was the Complutensian Polyglot of the entire Christian Bible, supervised by Cardinal Ximenes Cisneros, completed in 1517 and published at Alcalá de Henares, Spain, in 1522.

⁵ *Psalterium ex Hebreo diligentissime ad verbum fere tralatum*.

⁶ An incunable is a book of any sort printed between 1455 and 1500.

⁷ This Psalter is actually an advance off-print from the complete Hebrew Bible Soncino published in 1494.

⁸ Biblioteca Palatina MS Cod. Parma 1876. Originally this Psalter likely formed part of a larger volume with the five scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther). See Benjamin Richler, ed., *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem/Jewish National and University Library, 2001), 75.



Gershom Soncino's Incunable Hebrew Bible. Brescia, 1494. Image used with the permission of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, Inc.c.a. 181, folio 471v.

CREATING THE CREATION TEXT

Marvin A. Sweeney

CEO and Director

Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center

Professor of Hebrew Bible

Claremont Lincoln University

Perhaps one of the best known English texts of the Bible is the traditional King James translation of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." This understanding of Genesis 1:1 provides the basis for the doctrine of *Creatio ex Nihilo*, "Creation out of Nothing," which presupposes that G-d was the only existing reality prior to creation and that G-d made creation quite literally out of nothing. But many modern English translations employ a different understanding of the text, reading "When G-d began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep..." This understanding presupposes that something, here defined as formless and void, existed prior to creation. G-d's task in creation was therefore not to create out of nothing, but to make order out of a pre-existing chaos.

The traditional understanding of Genesis 1:1 is well attested in ancient texts. The Septuagint version of Genesis 1:1, believed to date to the mid-third century B.C.E. and represented in Codex Vaticanus (ca. 400 C.E.) reads the text in Greek as, 'En 'archēi 'epoiēsen ho theos ton 'ouranon kai ten gēn, "In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth." Likewise, the Aramaic Targums present a similar reading. The literal Targum Onkelos, the standard Rabbinic Targum from the third-sixth century C.E., reads, *bēqadmīn bē'rā' yēyā yat šēmayā' wēyat 'ar 'ā'*, "In the beginning, haShem created the heavens and the earth." The more adventuresome Targum Jonathan on the Pentateuch, also dated to the third-sixth centuries C.E., reads, *min 'awwēlā' bārā' yēyā yat šēmayā' wēyat 'ar 'ā'*, "From the beginning, haShem created the heavens and the earth." The fragmentary Targum Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Targum), perhaps represented by the sixteenth century Codex Neophyti, takes some liberties in reading, *bēhūkmā' bē'rā' yēyā*, "[From the earliest times] with wisdom, haShem created [the heavens and the earth]," apparently in reference to the role played by Lady Wisdom

in creation according to Proverbs 8 (see esp. vv. 22-31).

Apparently, Rabbinic Judaism was concerned to portray G-d as the only reality prior to creation; to do otherwise would be to accept the pagan world view of Babylonian mythology and Platonic philosophy that the gods had to fight and struggle to bring order out of a pre-existing chaos. Indeed, Rabban Gamaliel rebukes a philosopher who suggests such an idea in Genesis Rabbah 1:9. Medieval Jewish philosophers such as Saadia Gaon (892-942; Book of Beliefs and Opinions, 1:1-2) and Maimonides (1135-1204; Guide for the Perplexed, 2:25) support the traditional understanding.

But Rashi's (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 1040-1105) commentary on Genesis 1:1 challenges the traditional reading of the verse. Rashi notes that the Hebrew phrase of Gen 1:1, *bērē'sīt*, cannot mean "in the beginning," because it lacks the definite article (*bārē'sīt*) and because the noun *rē'sīt* only appears as a construct noun elsewhere in the Bible. The traditional reading would require Hebrew, *bārī'sōnā*, "in the beginning." Consequently, the verse reads, "In (the) beginning of G-d's creating the heavens and the earth, the earth was formless and void..." Such a reading treats the verb *bārā'*, "he created," as an infinitive, "creating," and matches other texts that presuppose that G-d had to bring chaos monsters, such as Leviathan (Psalm 74) or Behemoth (Job 40), under control at the outset of creation.

Modern scholarship has noted the significance of Rashi's observation. Jon Levenson posits that creation takes place every day as G-d overcomes the chaos of darkness to bring order into the world every morning at sunrise as celebrated in the morning worship service of the Temple and post-Temple Judaism. Indeed, Rashi's observation provides a paradigm that we human beings all face, viz., the need to make order out of chaos in our world and bring it that much closer to completion and sanctification.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Impotence* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

Harry M. Orlinsky, *Notes on the New Translation of the Torah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 49-52.

Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 55-56.

PUBLICATIONS AND UPCOMING EVENTS



Marvin A. Sweeney

Director, ABMC
Professor of
Hebrew Bible,
Claremont Lincoln
University

Publications

“Ezekiel’s Conceptualization of the Exile in Intertextual Perspective.” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 1 (2012): 154-172.

“Unfinished Tasks in the Book of Isaiah (with Korean Translation).” *Korea Journal of the Old Testament* (2012): 206-240.

“Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets.” Pages 21-33 in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*. Edited by R. Albertz et al.; BZAW 433; Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2012.

“Book of the Twelve Prophets.” Pages 788-806 in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets*. Edited by M. J. Boda and J. G. McConville; Downer’s Grove, IL. and Nottingham, U.K.; InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Lectures, Courses, and Presentations

“Seventh Century Judean Historiography.” Maxwell Institute Symposium on Writing in the Seventh Century Levant, Brigham Young University. August 31, 2012.

“Jacob: The Eponymous Ancestor of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.” Taus Lecture Series, Temple Beth El, San Pedro, CA. September 9, 2012.

Torah Reader. Yom Kippur Morning Service, Claremont Colleges Hillel. September 26, 2012.

“Jewish Biblical Theology.” Pepperdine University. October 11, 2012.

“Jewish Biblical Theology.” Fuller Theological Seminary. November 5, 2012.

“The Ezekiel that G-d Creates.” Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, IL. November 19, 2012.

Response to Panel Review of Marvin Sweeney’s *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible*. Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, IL. November 19, 2012.



Carleen Mandolfo

Associate Professor
of Hebrew Bible,
Claremont Lincoln
University



Publications

“The Language of Lament,” in *The Oxford Handbook to the Psalms*. Edited by William Brown; Oxford University Press. Forthcoming.

“The Silent God in Lamentations” with Beau Harris. *Interpretation*. Forthcoming.

Lectures, Courses, and Presentations

“Biblical Lament Literature.” The Institute on Sacred Scripture, Dallas, PA. August 2012.

Correction:

In our Honor Roll for 2011, we listed Chris Mancini under the Scroll Club (\$1000 and above). This should have read John E. Mancini.



James A. Sanders

*Professor Emeritus,
Claremont School of
Theology/Claremont
Graduate University*

Publications

“The Art and Science of Textual Criticism.” A Review of Emanuel Tov’s *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. Third Revised Edition. *Biblical Archaeology Review* 83/3 (2012): pp. 61 ff.

“The Betrayal of Evangelicalism.” *The Bulletin of the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School*, Summer 2012, pp. 8-13, 18-22.

“Introduction.” Pages xv-xxviii in *Studies in the Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Hebrew Old Testament Text Project* by Dominique Barthélemy. English Translation of the Introductions to Volumes 1, 2, and 3 of *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament*. Translated by Stephen Pisano, Peter A. Pettit, Joan E. Cook and Sarah Lind; Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 2012.

Lectures, Courses, and Presentations

“Introduction to the First Testament.” Episcopal Theological School at Claremont/Bloy House. Claremont, CA. Fall 2012.

“The Function of Scripture in Luke/Acts.” Episcopal Theological School at Claremont/Bloy House. Claremont, CA. Fall 2012.

Shelley Long

*Research Associate
for Scholarly
Services,
ABMC*

**Lectures, Courses, and Presentations**

“Introduction to Biblical Literature: Exodus-Deuteronomy.” Azusa Pacific University, Azusa CA. Fall 2012.



The ABMC Needs Your Help For the Future!

Scholars and students around the world depend on the ABMC’s unique collection of film and digital images of biblical manuscripts. The ABMC is committed to keeping the fees it charges researchers low, so that financial barriers will never make biblical manuscripts inaccessible. This is only possible with your generous donations.

The ABMC accepts donations by Visa and MasterCard! You can give right now by filling out the envelope enclosed in this issue of *The Folio* or by contacting us at 909.447.6354.

If you would like to become a pledge member and have your monthly gift automatically deducted from your credit card, please indicate this wish on the envelope.

Continued from page 4

⁹ *Der Psalter deutsch* (Wittenberg: Christian Döring and Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1524).

¹⁰ The copy of the 1494 *Biblia Hebraica* bearing Luther's own notes is described by Johannes Bachmann in *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen I* (Berlin: Calvary, 1894), pp. 101-109.

¹¹ Paris: Henry Stephanus, 1509 (2nd ed. 1513). Here again Luther's own copy with his notes has been preserved.

¹² See Theodor Pahl, *Quellenstudien zu Luthers Psalmenübersetzung* (Weimar: H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1931), 65. According to Pahl the edition of the Pratenis *Psalterium* that Luther used was printed as a quarto in Hagenau by Thomas Anshelm in 1522 (128).

¹³ The number 115 appears here rather than 116 because in the Brescia 1494 text Psalms 90 and 91 are both erroneously given the number 90; thus every psalm afterwards bears a number lower than the standard by one: Psalm 114 is numbered 113, 115:1 is numbered 114, and so 115:12 is numbered 115. My research suggests that this particular counting error derives from differing views among medieval scribes and annotators over whether Psalms 90 and 91 comprise a single composition or two separate ones.

¹⁴ *La Sainte Bible en Francoyse, translatee selon la pure et entiere traduction de sainte Hierome*. See Pierre Maurice Bogaert and Jean-François Gilmont, *Les Bibles en français: Histoire, illustrée du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991), 57-58.

¹⁵ *Le livre des Pseaulmes de David, traduites selon la pure verite Hebraique ensuyvant principalement l'interpretation de Felix previlegee*. (Antwerpen, Merten de Keyser, 1531). The identity of the person who produced this French version is unknown. We do know that Lefèvre d'Étaples made use of the Latin version by Pratensis to correct the Vulgate upon which he made his own Latin edition of the Psalms beginning in 1524 (see A. Laune, "Des Secours dont Lefèvre d'Étaples s'est servi pour sa traduction française de l'Ancient Testament," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire Protestantisme français* 50 [1901], 605). There is little semantic resemblance, however, between the French version by Lefèvre d'Étaples and the one found in Lempereur's 1531 Psalter.

¹⁶ Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text: The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century* (trans. J. Feldman; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 97.

¹⁷ See Emanuel Tov, "The Textual Basis of Modern Translations of the Hebrew Bible," in *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 92-94.

¹⁸ John Van Seters provides an overview of this late Renaissance cultural development in his *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 18-21; 113-121.

ANCIENT BIBLICAL
MANUSCRIPT
CENTER

1325 North College Avenue
Claremont, CA 91711

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE

PAID

CLAREMONT, CA
PERMIT NO. 176