Les délimitations éditoriales des Écritures
des bibles anciennes aux lectures modernes

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Editorial Delimitations of the Scriptures
from Ancient Bibles to Modern Readings

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PEETERS
LEUVEN – PARIS – BRISTOL, CT
2020

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Résumé

Cet article traite de l'importance des marques de délimitation dans le texte de la Bible. Depuis l'Antiquité, les espaces vides ont été utilisés par les scribes comme un principe directeur de l'interprétation des textes. Des espaces de division entre des sections et même une colométrie apparaissent déjá sur d'anciennes tablettes d'argile, mais elles semblent également présentes dans le Rouleau d'Isaïe de Qumran, et beaucoup de ces espaces semblent coïncider avec les *setumot* et *petuḥot* ainsi qu'avec les accents massorétiques dans les manuscrits hébreux médiévaux plus tardifs, et avec les divisions textuelles et la colométrie dans les traductions anciennes de la Bible hébraïque. Apparemment, non seulement le texte consonantique importait aux copistes ultérieurs, mais également la division textuelle qui se trouvait dans leur modèle. Plusieurs exemples sont présentés pour montrer comment cette division textuelle peut guider (ou induire en erreur) le lecteur dans la compréhension des textes.

Abstract

This paper deals with the importance of delimitation markings in the text of the Bible. From antiquity on empty spaces were used by scribes as a guiding principle to the interpretation of texts. Spaces dividing sections and even marking colometry already appeared on ancient clay tablets but they also appear to be present in the ancient Isaiah scroll of Qumran, and lots of those spaces appeared to coincide with *setumot* and *petuḥot* as well as with masoretic accents in later medieval Hebrew manuscripts and with the text divisions and colometry in ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible. Apparently not only the consonantal text was important to later copyists, but also the text division they found in their master text. Several examples are presented to show how this text division may guide (or misguide) the reader in understanding texts.

1 Introduction

When we read a modern text our interpretation of what we read is powerfully steered by the layout of the page. The relative size of the font, the size of letters, the style (for example **bold** or *Italics*),

punctuation marks, colours, illustrations – all these elements are guiding us to the interpretation favoured by the author(s).

What we do not always realize is that blank spaces are an at least as important steering mechanism. Small spaces separate words, larger blank spaces and blank lines delimit sections, large spaces separate headlines from the main text. Between chapters of a book often a whole blank page is inserted. In november 2016 Guillaume Bady organized a colloquium on the ancient divisions of the Old Testament (Les divisions anciennes du Premier Testament) and asked me to give an overview of recent research on textual divisions in manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible. In particular I was asked to report about the work of the Pericope group. This was the incentive to write this *status quaestionis*.

The Pericope group was founded in 1999, during the first meeting of the European Association for Biblical Studies (EABS) in Utrecht, by four people, Josef M. Oesch (Innsbruck University), Marjo C.A. Korpel (Utrecht University, and since 2013 Protestant Theological University, Groningen), Konrad D. Jenner (Leiden University) and Johannes C. de Moor (Theological University, Kampen). The group organized several sessions in the margin of big conferences[1] and started a new series called *Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity*. In 2017 the scopus of the series was broadened and the subtitle changed to *Pericope: Unit Delimitation as a Guide to Interpretation*. The volumes thus far published were received favourably by many colleagues in the world.[2] A first evaluation of the whole Pericope project written by Wilfred Watson concludes,

> In general terms, the Delimitation Criticism approach is not only valid and justified but also indispensable. However, the data cannot simply be noted down and used uncritically.[3]

As far as I know, nobody has ever made use of these ancient data without realizing one should use them with caution. Of course the founders of Pericope were not the first and only ones who paid special attention to unit division in manuscripts and translations of the Bible. To mention only one pioneer in this field: Josef Oesch from

[1] See: http://www.pericope.net/pericope_3.htm.

[2] For an overview, see: http://www.pericope.net/pericope_8.htm.

[3] Watson 2007, 175. See also Oesch 2000, 227. It should be noted that we deliberately adopted the term 'criticism' in our presentation of the method.

the University of Innsbruck, student of Father Dominique Barthélemy, wrote his dissertation on the spaces *petuḥah* and *setumah* in manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, including those from the Judean Desert (Oesch 1979).

Many more scholars could be mentioned[4] and in some commentaries exegetes had already started to pay explicit attention to delimiters of sense units in Hebrew manuscripts, e.g. in the *Anchor Bible* in the commentaries by Andersen and Freedman on Micah[5] and Jack Lundbom on Jeremiah. They recognize the importance of *petuḥot* and *setumot* as delimiters of sense units, but display a wise restraint in making use of them, as Lundbom states,

> These [*parashot*] can be of real help, although by no means should be taken as infallible guides. The medieval codices, e.g., the Aleppo Codex, Codex Cairo, Codex Leningrad, and Codex St. Petersburg, do not always agree in their placement, i.e., one will have a *setumah* where the other has a *petuḥah*, or vice versa, or one willl have a *setumah* or *petuḥah* where the other has nothing.[6]

This verdict has been confirmed by numerous other studies. The Tiberian Masoretic text having achieved dominance over all other text types renders the rare manuscripts that have preserved partly different traditions all the more interesting, not only those from Qumran but also witnesses of the Palestinian tradition.[7] The first attempt to reckon with all delimiters, big and small, in all channels of transmission, including the Septuagint, the Peshiṭta and the Vulgate, was undertaken by Johannes de Moor and myself in our book on the structure of Second Isaiah (1998). A partial predecessor was on Deuteronomy 32 (Sanders 1996). A similar, though far more detailed study was devoted to Isaiah 1–12 by Wim de Bruin (2013).[8] Thus, the following list of studies have been published thus far, containing analyses of several biblical books and chapters,

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[4] Overviews and attempts to systematize the results were undertaken by Korpel 2000; Oesch 2000; 2003; Tov 2000; Ulrich 2003, 288-297; Tatu 2007.

[5] Andersen and Freedman 2000, 14-16.

[6] Lundbom 1999, 74. He combines his delimitation criticism with rhetorical criticism, Lundbom 2009.

[7] See e.g. Korpel and De Moor 2007. The Babylonian manuscripts have less to offer because the Tiberian Masoretes followed their lead.

[8] Earlier studies on the structure of Hebrew poetry according to the method developed by the so-called 'Kampen School' which started with the dissertation

- Genesis 12–25 (Tatu 2009)
- Genesis 49 (De Hoop 2003a)
- Deuteronomy 32 (Sanders 1996)
- Isaiah 1–12 (De Bruin 2013)
- Isaiah 40-55 (Korpel and De Moor 1998)
- Isaiah 56 (De Hoop 2009b)
- Jeremiah 27–29 (De Hoop 2007; 2009c)
- Jeremiah 30–31 (Becking 2002)
- Hosea (Korpel 2009; Schütte 2017)
- Amos (Dijkstra 2005)
- Obadiah (Renkema 2000; 2003)
- Micah (De Moor 2000; 2002a; 2002b; 2005, 2016)
- Nahum 1 (Spronk 2009)
- Habakkuk (Prinsloo 2009)
- Haggai (Van Amerongen 2000; Koopmans 2017)
- Zechariah 4 (Van Amerongen 2005)
- Ruth (Korpel 2002; 2003)
- Song of Songs (Korpel 2003b; 2017)
- The 'prose' sections of Job (De Hoop 2005)

In these studies it was demonstrated that despite all kinds of divergencies the tradition of the biblical text as a whole has remained stable over many centuries. Not only on the Hebrew side, but also among Christian scribes. Of course this does not mean that this kind of research can help us to come closer to the 'original' text of the Bible. That goal remains unattainable for the time being. However, much can be learned about the transmission and reception of the biblical text in the course of the first centuries BCE. Moreover, with

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of P. van der Lugt (1980) did not yet make use of data provided by ancient manuscripts.

The division into various liturgical units (*sedarim*) differed from unit delimitation by *petuḥah* and *setumah*. Cf. Oesch 1979, 32-33; Tov 2012, 50; for Greek Byzantine manuscripts of Ezra-Nehemiah, Janz 2002; for Syriac manuscripts of Daniel, Jenner 2000; for Ben Sira, Jenner and Van Peursen 2002; for the New Testament, Porter 2007; 2009. In this article the widely diverging liturgical text divisions will not be documented. From a modern point of view they rest on too diverse hermeneutical principles.

regard to the poetic books of the Bible delimitation criticism appeared to be a valuable help to understand the structure of biblical poetry better than ever before.

Because it has become impossible to review all studies on unit delimitation that have been published since our first attempts to use this material for the understanding of the Bible and its reception, only a few striking examples will be discussed, showing that neglecting this kind of evidence will hamper progress in the field of biblical studies. To start with, one major question has to be answered: Did unit delimiters actually belong to the earliest stages of scribal transmission? If they were absent from the oldest manuscripts we have, their later use would only inform us about the reception history.

2 The Age of Unit Delimiters

In oral communication silences are important elements. When we hear a so-called 'rapper' delivering his text, the lack of natural pauses between words contributes to a feeling of uneasiness which some will appreciate, others will abhor. Somewhat longer silences are necessary for breathing and subconsciously we make use of the end of phrases to draw a breath when we are speaking. At the end of the recitation of a poem or singing a song it is the custom to remain silent for a few moments. A change of speaker or an important turn in a story is usually marked by a silence in oral communication.

Moreover there are the eloquent silences – silences expressing sorrow, despair, ignorance, embarrasment, indignation, contentment. It depends on the context or situation how we interpret such silences. Some years ago an interesting volume of studies appeared in Israel, called *Shetiqot* ('Silences'), as well as a study entitled *When Silence Speaks*.[9] Both studies illustrate abundantly how important silences are in cultural and interpersonal relations.

In his masterful book *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* Emanuel Tov states,

> Among all the Hebrew and Aramaic texts from antiquity and more particularly from the Judean Desert, the division into smaller units than the larger section divisions (open and closed sections), though not the smallest units possible, is evidenced only in Hebrew Scripture.[10]

[9] Ephratt 2007 as well as Ephratt 2014.

Unfortunately, this claim to exclusiveness is mistaken. Though it is true that Tov limits the group to Hebrew and Aramaic texts, even within that group division into smaller units does occur, for example in the two Aramaic Deir ʿAlla texts (probably dating to the 8th century BCE) words are divided from each other by thick dots[11] as is also the case in the almost contemporaneous Hebrew Siloam inscription. Furthermore, division into smaller units does occur in Babylonian, Egyptian, Hittite, Hurrian, Moabite and Ugaritic literary texts that are much older than the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts we have.[12] Initially words were separated by dots. Lines were sometimes delimited by vertical strokes (e.g. in the Moabite Mesha inscription).

Normally the scribes of Ugarit (13th century BCE) tried to fill out every physical line on their tablets, even if this involved breaking off cola in the middle of a word. However, they knew the colometric recitation of their literary texts by heart and sometimes wrote – inadvertantly or not – large portions of their compositions in colometric form, leaving empty space at the end of every line.[13] Why the scribe sometimes followed the mode of recitation he knew by heart, but mostly ignored it when he was writing, remains a mystery, unless it was simply a matter of sparing expensive writing materials.[14] In a number of cases it is evident that the scribe wanted to indicate a tense silence by such a space.

An example of the latter occurs in the Ugaritic tablet KTU 1.5:I at line 25. Here the space indicates a dramatic silence. The god of Death, Môtu, has just observed that Baʿlu, the god of life, was celebrating the completion of his new palace, happily dining and wining with all the other gods, when he lets fall a meaningful silence and continues, 'but I was forgotten, Oh Baʿlu!' On the tablet, the scribe has left open the line before this accusation, suggesting a dramatic silence.

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[10] Tov 2004, 135-136. Not repeated in Tov 2012, 48-49, 199-200, but also not supplemented by reference to the extra-biblical evidence that meanwhile had become available.

[11] Korpel 2000, 26.

[12] Korpel 2000, 25-43; Korpel 2005.

[13] E.g. KTU 1.4:III.35-39; 1.4:V.49-65; 1.6:I.22-31; 1.10; 1.14:I.10-17, 24-32, 42-50, 53-60; II.29-44; IV.44-52; 1.15:III.6-24. See also Watson 2007, 163-165.

[14] Clay had to be washed out several times to remove impurities.

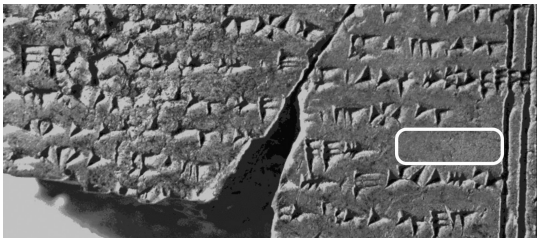

Fig. 1: A space indicating a dramatic silence on a Ugaritic tablet of the 13th century BCE. (KTU 1.5:I.25) (Courtesy Inscriptifact Database)

The importance of such findings is that we now know that spaces in written texts marked moments of silence in the live recitation of texts.[15] Mostly only to mark a new speaker or a new turn in the story, but also to alert the cantor that he should keep silent for a moment in order to achieve a rhetorical effect.

In the 8th century BCE both *petuḥah*- and *setumah*-like spaces were already in use. For example in texts from Karatepe, dating around 720 BCE.[16]

In passages of the Hebrew Bible we observe the same phenomena as in the texts of Ugarit. Sometimes the scribes wrote their texts colometrically and to an amazing degree their divisions marked by spaces coincide with the Masoretic dividing accents.[17]

We may conclude that it is indeed likely that also in very ancient Hebrew texts dots, lines and spaces were used as delimiters. Obviously, then, one cannot ignore this kind of evidence since it helps to understand the meaning of the text.

3 Differences of Opinion with Regard to Unit Delimitation

In various studies published in the series *Pericope* it was demonstrated that among those who transmitted the text of the Bible in antiquity differences of opinion with regard to text division occurred. This happens on every structural level: feet, cola, verse-lines, strophes, canticles, sub-cantos and cantos.[18] Does this justify the con-

[15] For more examples see Korpel and De Moor 2011, Subject Index under 'space (blank)'.

[16] Kottsieper 2003.

[17] See e.g. Steck 1991, 119-166; De Moor 1997; Sanders 1996; 2000; 2002; De Hoop 2003a; 2005.

[18] See for descriptions of these units e.g. Korpel 2000, 23-46; De Bruin 2013, 289-

clusion that text division was a haphazard, impressionistic process? Both in antiquity and modern times? If so, it would be justified to ignore them in biblical interpretation.

To counter this cheap excuse[19] it suffices to point out that there is an amazing amount of agreement between various channels of tradition in antiquity.[20] The agreements outnumber the disagreements by far. However, especially unit delimitation in the ancient versions should be handled with caution. They are often the product of centuries of interpretation in various, often untraceable communities. Although they are not very frequent, different colometric divisions in antiquity have been documented by several researchers.[21] Yet it appears to be advisable to start with trusting the Masoretic text division. Yet it may not be superfluous to recall a number of interesting cases dealt with in *Pericope*.

In the first volume of the series *Pericope*, published in the year 2000, it was demonstrated that Hermann Gunkel had erred when he asserted in 1924 that Micah 7 is a prophetic liturgy in which the speaking 'I' would have been Jerusalem.[22] Gunkel had simply ignored the major divider before Micah 7:9. However, if verse 8 belongs to the preceding unit, as the Masoretic paragraphing indicates, Gunkel's interpretation becomes impossible. More than a third of all medieval manuscripts do not vocalize אֱלֹהָיִךְ, as the Tiberian Masoretes did, but אֱלֹהַיִךְ, thus making the prophet the person addressed. This testifies to a wholly different interpretation of the entire chapter. The 'male' interpretation appears to be the oldest (Septuagint, Qumran, 2nd–1st century BCE), the 'female' interpretation is attested only later (after 70 CE). Inexplicably this important information was omitted from the volume devoted to the Twelve Minor Prophets in the *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* prepared by Anthony Gelston which appeared ten years later, in 2010.[23]

292, with further bibliography. Some scholars believe to have found evidence for the counting of *stichoi* of 15-16 syllables in Greek texts. Cf. Lang 2017. In Hebrew compositions this is definitely excluded.

[19] Cheap, because it allows scholars to obviate the need to study unit delimitation seriously.

[20] See e.g. Sanders 1996; 2000; Korpel and De Moor 1998, 633-665; Van Amerongen 2000; Jenner 2000; Cook 2002, 63; De Bruin 2002; Korpel 2009, 125, 132.

[21] See e.g. Cook 2002; De Moor 2002a, esp. 94-96; 2005; Ulrich 2003.

[22] Gunkel 1924, cf. De Moor 2000, 166-171; De Moor 2015, 209-211.

[23] *BHQ*, 13, 81, 108*.

A second example of the value of paying attention to unit delimitation comes from the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran. In this very old manuscript the colometry of Isaiah 61:10–62:9 has been indicated by somewhat wider spaces. As in many other cases the scribe indicated beginning and end of the paragraph by *paragraphoi*: short horizontal lines in the margin. Why the scribe chose to mark the colometric division only here and in a few other cases remains a mystery. Nevertheless it is necessary to study his colometry carefully. In 61:11b, for example, the colometry of the Qumran manuscript is clearly preferable over that of the Leningrad Codex. Moreover, this colometric arrangement in 1QIsa[a] implies that the scribe regarded Isaiah 61:10–62:9 as a poetical unit that should not be split up. Yet all modern Bible translations start a new chapter with Isaiah 62:1.

In an earlier article I demonstrated that this division has a Christian background (Korpel 2017a). It is present in the Greek codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus as well as in many manuscripts of the Vulgate. In none of the Hebrew manuscripts, neither from Qumran nor from later times, we find a break at this point. The colometric arrangement in Qumran argues strongly against dividing the chapters at this point. Obviously the frequent use of Isaiah 62:1 in the New Testament inspired the Christian scribes to make a major break at this point.[24]

A similar case is found at the transition of what we are accustomed to call Isaiah 63 and 64. Not a single Hebrew manuscript, including the pre-Christian scrolls from Qumran, makes a break in the middle of Isaiah 63:19. Neither its syntax nor the poetic structure of the Hebrew text necessitates a break at this point. Yet numerous commentaries and Bible translations follow the Vulgate in connecting verse 19a with Chapter 63 and verse 19b with Chapter 64.[25] Where did this illogical break originate? The earliest attestation of the division of Isaiah 63:19 into two halves seems to be found in the commentary on Isaiah by Eusebius of Caesarea (*c.* 263-339),

> We [i.e. the Jews] have become as in the beginning when you did not yet rule over us and your name was not called over us [. . .] as

[24] See Matt. 5:3; 11:5; Luke 6:20; 7:22; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Rev. 5:10.

[25] As anyone who has studied the Bible seriously will know there are many annoying differences between the numbering of verses and chapters in various translations of the Bible. These differences arose as a result of their numbering in the Vulgate. Cf. Van Banning 2007; Tov 2012, 49-50, 198-199.

> in the time when we had no prophets, no priests, no kings, nor your acts of grace, so we find ourselves in a state of deprivation now. All this seems to refer to the time of the advent of our Saviour when they were utterly deprived because of the crimes they committed against our Saviour.[26]

This is clearly an anti-Jewish interpretation of the passage. Other Greek patres did not follow suit and also Codex Sinaiticus originally did not cut verse 19 in half.

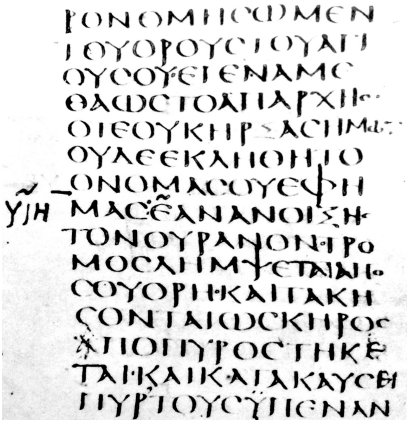

Fig. 2: No separation in the middle of Isa. 63:19[27]
(own photo and editing, after Lake 1922, Plate 88b).

However, Jerome evidently made use of the commentary by Eusebius and even elaborated on it in his own Isaiah commentary,[28]

> On them who were saying *his blood be over us, and over our children* rests an eternal curse, and God does not rule over them, nor is his name called over them, since they are in no way called the people of God anymore.[29]

This blatantly anti-Jewish exegesis raises the question whether it is still defensible to interpret the Hebrew Bible in an exclusive Christian way. In my opinion all Bible translations and commentaries

[26] PG 24, 505-507, as translated by De Moor 2017a, 85.
[27] The horizontal line (paragraphos) and vertical dots in the manuscript were added later on with different ink.
[28] Earlier De Bruin 2005 dicussed some examples of unit delimitation in Jerome's commentaries on Isaiah and Ezekiel (De Bruin 2005).
[29] Adriaen 1963, 733, as translated by De Moor 2017a, 86.

should document differences in unit division. Fortunately Jerome himself already points in this direction by adding the opinion of his Jewish interlocutors,

> The Hebrews explain this passage as follows: Thus fire will burn down the adversaries just as the waters were (burnt) by the heat of the fire.[30]

This explanation presupposes no division of the Hebrew text between Chapters 63 and 64 and is in accordance with the rendering of Targum Jonathan. Of course it is inevitable that Jews and Christians interpret some texts of the Bible differently, but it would be good practice to follow Jerome's lead and document such differences explicitly.

Another case is Isaiah 50 where the scribe of the great Isaiah scroll not only separated words from each other by means of narrow blanks, but also cola by somewhat wider spaces and strophes by still wider spaces and finally whole sections or paragraphs by the widest kind of spaces.

Fig. 3: Blanks between words, cola and strophes in Isaiah 50 of the Qumran scroll (own editing, photo after Burrows)

Yet one cannot say that the scribe worked in a totally haphazard, impressionistic way. Most of the division points coincide with what we find in the admirable codices of the Tiberian Masoretes almost a thousand years later.[31] In other words, inconsistency in applying the

[30] Adriaen 1963, 734, as translated by De Moor 2017a, 86.

[31] A similar case is Isa. 61:10–62:9, spaces in the Isaiah scroll are in agreement with the Masoretic accents, cf. De Moor 1997.

rules does not automatically justify the conclusion that no tradition with regard to the division of the text existed. On the contrary, such a tradition did exist, but it was mostly oral.

All the more reason to pay attention to blanks where they have been preserved in manuscripts. The significance of these spaces is twofold. First, they prove beyond any doubt that the colon was an important concept to the scribes. In the second place, their colometric spacing teaches us to be aware of the fact that our ideas about correct colometry do not always concur with what the ancients had in mind. Anybody acquainted with the frequent disagreement between scholars about the colometry of biblical poetry will realise that we cannot afford to ignore this kind of evidence. Also the later Masoretic accents were not primarily intended to indicate colometry, but were meant to assist the cantor in chanting the Hebrew text.[32] Manuscripts and early audio recordings by Idelsohn 1914–1932 reveal that various ways of reciting were in use. So one should refrain from using any of them rigidly to establish versification.[33] Differences of opinion with regard to colometry have been demonstrated to exist in Hebrew manuscripts and the pausal forms sometimes point to a colometry different from the Tiberian one.[34] Moreover, one should be aware of the fact that the Masoretic distinction between prose accents and poetic accents is artificial and does not take into account the phenomenon of narrative poetry.[35] Small wonder that differences of opinion with regard to the delimitation of cola and verse-lines will probably continue to crop up in biblical scholarship. Yet, if accentuation is taken into account it will help to reduce dissent.

Before the invention of the accents, however, small blanks marked the colometry. What did these blanks mean? Since verse-lines consisting of three or more cola do occur, it is unlikely that the person reciting drew a fresh breath only after having completed a whole verse-line. Breathing must have occurred after each colon. As a result every colon or clause ended in a brief silence.[36] Because often the

[32] See e.g. Revell 2007.

[33] Important insights in the way the accents can be used profitably in modern research are due to Sanders 2000; 2002; De Hoop 2000; 2000a-c; 2014; Revell 2007; 2015. Cf. Watson 2007, 166-167.

[34] Revell 1977; 2015; Sanders 2003, with earlier literature.

[35] See e.g. Korpel 2002; De Hoop 2005, both with earlier literature.

[36] De Hoop 2014, 21 speaks of 'pauzes' (pauses) at appropriate places.

statement to be made became complete only when the next colon had been read, this short silence momentarily gave the cantor an opportunity to breathe. It also heightened the tension in the audience and gave people the time to reflect on the phrase just said or sung.

4 Spaces Marking Sense Units

It has long been known that horizontal lines on Babylonian and Ugaritic clay tablets were used to demarcate logical sections in literary religious texts.[37] For us it is confusing that the ancient scribes used this kind of ruling for various purposes, e.g. to demarcate strophes *and* paragraphs.[38] Moreover, duplicate copies of the same text demonstrate that the scribes inserted the horizontal lines inconsistently, omitting them at will.[39] Where they employed them, however, it seems likely that they often wanted to mark a silence, for example when a priest had to establish whether a sacrificial victim was without blemish. Because if it was not, there was no need to recite the rest of the text anymore.[40] It is useful to observe that Ugaritic tablets divided into sections by rulings are also divided by empty spaces because the last line of each section is often left blank (e.g. KTU 1.23). In Ugaritic literary texts blanks at the end of lines often seem to fulfil the function to mark a pause when the text was recited. A few examples may suffice.

When the divine craftsman Kotharu urges the god Baʿlu to slay his opponent the sea god Yammu and to reestablish his kingship, wide spaces after the crucial lines mark this exciting turn of the story (KTU 1.2:IV.9-10, see next page, Fig. 4).

A moment of tension also occurs when it is narrated that Baʿlu is afraid of the god of death Môtu. Will he give in to the latter's demand to surrender? Remarkably, there is a blank at the beginning of Baʿlu's unintroduced reply just after KTU 1.5:II.7 where the narrator relates that Baʿlu was afraid of Motu. A second blank occurs after lines 9 and 12 when Baʿlu actually announces his surrender in a message to Môtu: 'I am your slave, yes, yours for ever!'

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[37] Cf. Korpel 2000; 2005; Mabie 2004.
[38] Korpel 2000, 40-43.
[39] Korpel 2005, 148.
[40] Korpel 2005, 146.

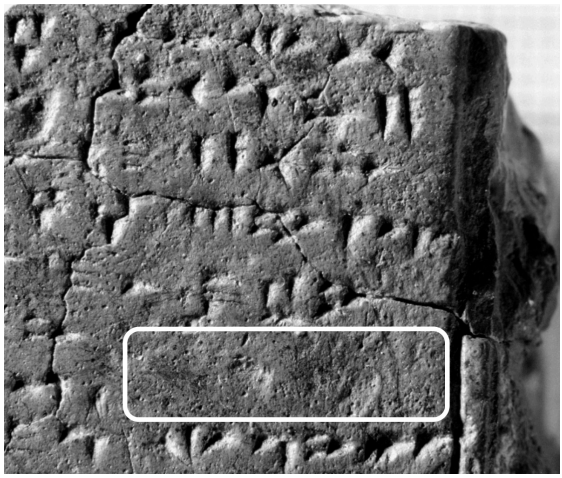

Fig. 4: Wide spaces after the crucial lines of KTU 1.2:IV.9-10
(Courtesy Inscriptifact Database)

More examples could be given, but there is no need for that now. As far as I know, all Ugaritologists, including myself, have overlooked that meaningful spaces seem to occur on the tablets of Ugarit. The reason for this oversight is obvious. It could easily be demonstrated that in comparable passages such extra spaces did *not* occur and that often extra blank space at the end of lines does *not* seem to have a rhetoric function. However, this argument is not convincing anymore now that it has been demonstrated that the horizontal lines occurring rather frequently on Ugaritic tablets do indicate logical sections, but that the scribes were not consistent in marking their sections in this way. This lack of consistency continued to plague all early attempts at structuring the layout of texts. However, we should not forget that written texts were subservient to their oral delivery. Especially in Ugarit this was clearly their purpose, as can be shown by the example of KTU 1.4:V.42-43,

KTU 1.4:V.42-43

wtb lmspr . . ktl'akn ġlmm	And return to the recital of how were sent the lads.

The beginning of this interlinear gloss was marked by a double horizontal line and its end by a single horizontal line. The scribe became impatient with the elaborate style of the narrative and omits

a portion of standard text relating how the messengers were sent out, how they delivered their message and what the god Kotharu answered. All in all a substantial part of text was left to the improvisation of the reciting priest who apparently knew the text more or less by heart. See also KTU 1:100:77-79 where a scribe refers to a strophe he had inadvertantly skipped. He notes where the strophe should be inserted, quotes the first colon, but leaves it to the cantor to supply the rest.

Finally it is remarkable that thus far no cases of spaces in the middle of lines occur in the literary texts of Ugarit. This seems to mean that the *petuḥah* was an older invention than the *setumah*.

The use of spaces to divide sections is also attested in other Northwest Semitic literature, as has been indicated by Ingo Kottsieper (Kottsieper 2003). In the Phoenician Karatepe inscriptions, for example, sense units are clearly marked by spaces. Mostly this happens at the end of lines, as in Ugarit, but sometimes also in the middle of lines, what we would call a *setumah*. Also in the Aḥiqar papyri from Elephantine (ca. 430 BCE) and in some Punic texts (for example the Punic Marseille Tarif inscription, 3rd century BCE) spaces are used to delimit paragraphs.

Also in Hebrew such silences occur, for example after the tormented cry 'Wilt thou keep silent, and afflict us sorely?' in Isa. 64:11(12) where all witnesses have major division markers, indicating the tense wait for a divine answer.

If we now look at the overall Hebrew evidence, it appears that several of the earliest manuscripts from the Judean Desert exhibit many more spaces than the later Masoretic manuscripts. Emanuel Tov and Eugene Ulrich have called such deviating spacing 'impressionistic'.[41] Such a term seems to presuppose that there existed some kind of standard from which imaginative scribes deviated at will. It is true that the rabbis have strived after uniformity with regard to spacing, but in reality the use of spaces remained inconsistent up till the late Middle Ages.

Unfortunately manuscripts with Palestinian punctuation and vocalization are rare. As a result of the efforts to promulgate the Tiberian system as the only correct one they are often fragmentary.[42]

[41] Tov 2000, 314, 339; Ulrich 2003, 304.
[42] See e.g. Kahle 1959; Dietrich 1968; Revell 1977.

Several years ago Johannes de Moor and I have described spacing in the Hebrew manuscript 80 of the French National Library.[43] The codex contains the Prophets and Writings. Unfortunately it is undated, but it is a rare and hitherto unnoticed example of a so-called Tibero-*Palestinian* manuscript, a manuscript setting forth the Palestinian tradition in Tiberian form.

First we compared the Paris manuscript with eight other Masoretic codices. Next we compared the results with Ginsburg's Masoretic edition (1911). The question is if the great Qumran scroll is 'impressionistic' as compared to the Masoretic manuscripts. Our results seem to indicate otherwise. Finally we compared the paragraphing with those of a number of respectable codices of the Septuagint.

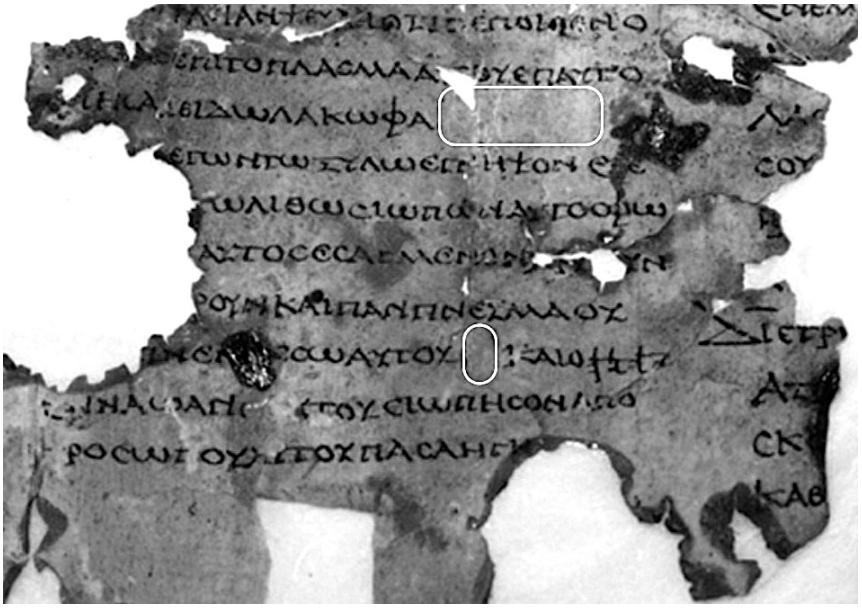

Fig. 5: Grayscale reproduction of a fragment of the Greek scroll of the Minor Prophets found at Naḥal Ḥever, with large space after Habakkuk 2:18 and a small one before 2:20 (after Tov 1990, Plate XII)

One might ask whether it is justified to lump manuscripts of the Septuagint together with Hebrew manuscripts. Some have reproached us for doing so, but I think it is justified. A fragment of the oldest extant manuscript of the Greek Bible, the καί γε-version from

[43] De Moor and Korpel 2007.

Naḥal Ḥever (1st century CE), exhibits spaces not only to demarcate paragraphs, but also to delimit 'verses' by small spaces and capitalization. For example in Habakkuk 2:17–3:1 at exactly the same places as the Masoretic Bible according to the Codex Leningradensis, with the exception of the space before v. 20 which is only extant in 8ḤevXIIgr (see Fig. 5).[44]

This correspondence between the Masoretic and the Greek paragraphing is also seen in early papyri, be it that there too complete agreement is lacking.[45] The correspondence with the Greek uncials has been undertaken for Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel.[46]

5 Benefits for Interpretation

Now one may ask whether it is really worth all the trouble, all this hunting for spaces and other markings in ancient manuscripts. What are the benefits for exegesis? However, the gain may be considerable. Editions of the Hebrew Bible should have included data on spacing already long ago, if only to allow scholars to weigh the evidence themselves.[47] One of the main reasons for disagreement among scholars about the meaning of biblical passages is different paragraphing. In my study on the structure of the Book of Ruth I showed an enormous variety in the division of the Book of Ruth in several commentaries (Korpel 2001). Johannes de Moor did the same for a passage from the Book of Micah[48] and listed 40 commentaries with 20 different divisions of chapter 7 of the Book of Micah. He also showed that none of the commentators paid attention to the *setumah* after Micah 7:8, which appears to be crucial for the maintainability of Gunkel's argumentation for a liturgical form in Micah 7 (see above).

Raymond de Hoop demonstrated that the prevailing delimitation of Isaiah 56:1-8 in modern translations and commentaries is not in accordance with the testimony of MT and the ancient versions. The concluding verse must be v. 9 which means that the pericope is not solely universalistic but also polemical.[49]

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[44] See Tov 1990, esp. 9-11; Prinsloo 2009; Ego 2005, 134.
[45] Olley 2002; 2003; De Troyer 2007.
[46] Korpel and De Moor 1998; Olley 2003.
[47] Several researchers have argued for this, e.g. Olley 1998; Dijkstra 2005, 132.
[48] De Moor 2017b.
[49] De Hoop 2009a.

In my opinion such examples demonstrate the desirability of documenting spaces in ancient manuscripts, even though we know that the scribes applied them inconsistently.

Paying attention to unit delimitation has led to justified doubts about long-cherished concepts like the *qinah*-metre (De Hoop 2000) and the coherence of Psalms 113–118, especially Psalms 114 and 115 (Prinsloo 2003).

Fig. 6: Grayscale reproduction of a column from the Lisbon Bible containing Exodus 33:12-21. Ten times introduction of direct speech, but only once a wide space (*petuḥah*).

It has long been established that a space often marks the introduction of direct speech.[50] What has baffled researchers is that this happens so inconsistently. In the preceding column from the Lisbon Bible of 1482[51] (see Fig. 6) it is difficult to see why the direct speech is marked only once by a *setumah*.

Of Exodus 33:21 only the two first words are written at the end of the column, reading ויאמר יהוה. Remarkable is that in this column the introduction of direct speech occurs no less than 10 times (see Fig. 6) but only once a *petuḥah* is used, namely after Exodus 33:16.

I venture a hypothesis.[52] Exodus 33:12-16 is a rather rebellious speech by Moses. After this speech it is as if a rhetorical silence falls before the LORD answers. One expects a rebuke, a thunderclap even. The fact that all other introductions to the direct speech of either Moses or God are not preceded by a space support the idea that a space in the text is not just a reading help, a narrative divider or a theological indication[53] but has the meaning of a rhetorical silence. A prolonged anxious silence seems to be the meaning of the space at this point. In numerous modern commentaries and translations of the Bible it is simply ignored.

Is this just a wild hypothesis? Maybe a few comparable cases might suffice to support my argument. In the Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic we find a similar clash with a deity. After Gilgamesh's rude response to Ishtar's proposal of marriage (Gilg. VI.22-79) two tablets mark the end of his speech by a horizontal line (see Fig. 7, on next page) before the narrator starts to describe Ishtar's rage.[54]

The reader expects immediate divine retaliation, but the goddess has to remain silent because she first has to obtain her father's permission to punish her reviler.

So the open spaces in Hebrew manuscripts may also indicate silences in the oral chanting of the text. They seem to mark rhetorical silences after Moses' bitter complaints in Numbers 11:16 and 11:23.

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[50] E.g. Olley 1993; 2003, 210-216; Clark 2005, 10-11; Dijkstra 2005; Korpel 2005, 155-156; De Moor 2005, 87; De Regt 2017, 23, n.4; Van Staalduine-Sulman 2017, 41-42, 51, n. 64.

[51] Now in the British Library (Or. 2626).

[52] We already suggested this idea briefly in Korpel and De Moor 2011, 250.

[53] The latter was suggested by Clark 2005, 10-13; Van Staalduine-Sulman 2017, 51. See also Goswell 2009.

[54] Cf. George 2003, 622 and Plates 79 and 90.

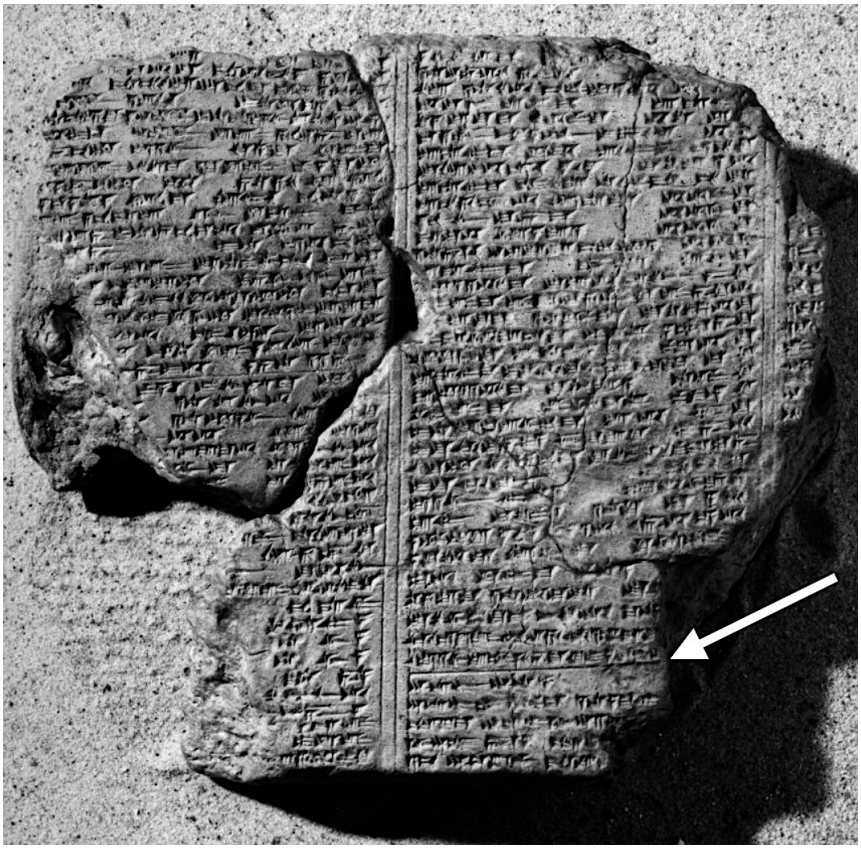

Fig. 7: Gilgamesh Epic SB Tablet VI.ii
(A_1 K 231, Courtesy The Trustees of the British Museum)

And after Elijah's complaints in 1 Kings 19, 'I alone am left, and they are out to take my life' (1 Kgs 19:10). The first time Elijah laments in this way God answers him in the form of a 'thin' silence (v. 12), but when Elijah repeats his complaint there falls an even deeper silence, again marked by a *setumah* (1 Kgs 19:14).

In the Masoretic text of the book of Ruth no spaces occur, except before the male genealogy Ruth 4:18-22. This curious phenomenon has been noted by several scholars.[55] However, in quite a number

[55] E.g. by Tov 2012, 200. In Tov 2000, 331 he expressed himself even stronger: 'the story of Ruth has no sense divisions at all', making an exception for the space after 4:17.

of medieval manuscripts I did find an extra space after Ruth 3:7, 'Then she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and lay down.' The next verse describes how in the middle of the night Boaz awakes and is startled to discover a woman laying at his feet. Apparently hours have passed between the two verses, 'but readers and hearers are deliberately left in the dark about the extent of their intimacy'.[56] In this case the space expresses the tense silence of the narrator at the height of the story.

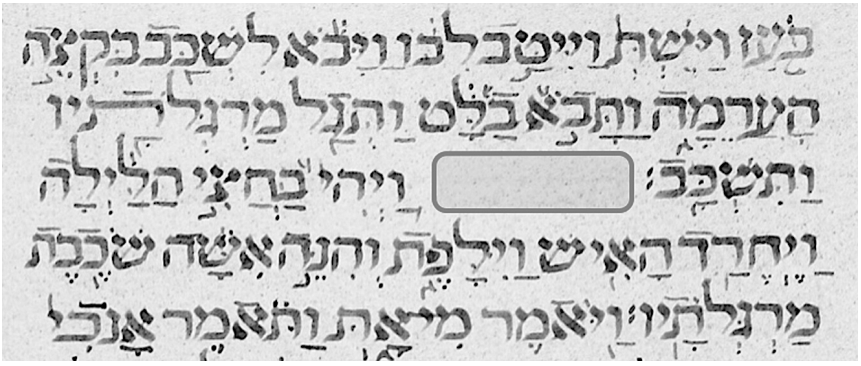

Fig. 8: Wide inline space after Ruth 3:7 in manuscript Bodleian Library, Oxford, Canonici Or. 40, Fol. 51v.

Of course later scribes discovered this extra space that was not allowed by the leading Tiberian Masoretes. To mend the 'damage' they wrote חצי הספר, 'the middle of the book', in the blank, but this is neither true with regard to the number of verses nor with regard to the number of words.[57]

As a final example of the rhetorical function of spaces I show you an interesting passage in the Aleppo Codex. It is the text from 2 Samuel 12:1-14, the discussion between the prophet Nathan and king David about David having killed Uriah, husband of Bathsheba. Nathan tells the story of a rich man, who takes the only lamb of a poor man to prepare it for a traveller passing by, because he was unwilling to take a lamb from his own flock. When Davids anger was kindled about the rich man in the story, the prophet Nathan pauses, and apparently with emphasis says, 'You are that man!' (2 Sam. 12:7). In the Aleppo codex this short line is fully singled out by two

[56] Korpel 2001, 165, see also 170-171.
[57] Korpel 2001, 145, note 16; 2002, 141, 145, n. 11.

dramatic spaces,[58] no doubt expressing the silences Nathan insert here, before taking a deep breath and speaking out his verdict on David.

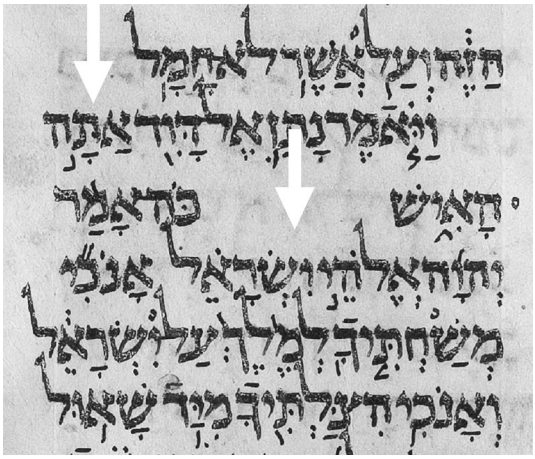

Fig. 9: The passage 2 Sam. 12:7
enclosed by two *setumot* in the Aleppo Codex.

If silence is the overarching principle of the spaces, narrow or wide, there is no need anymore for the assumption of many different and often conflicting motives for inserting space. The spaces always indicate pauses in the reading or chanting of texts, from very short pauses to pronounce distinguishable words and phrases, to somewhat longer pauses to take a breath and finally to long rhetorical pauses.

6 Spacing and Redactional Criticism

It has been demonstrated that the textual transmission is also relevant to literary and redactional criticism. Emanuel Tov has assembled an impressive collection of cases, mostly based on comparisons of the predecessors of MT and LXX.[59] Also sectioning forms a hardly explored source of evidence of redactional processes. Texts were open to the future. Parallel texts from Mesopotamia, Ugarit and

[58] Also some other manuscripts contain a blank after this utterance, as indicated by the critical apparatus of *BHS* at this point which, however, is neglecting the space at the beginning of v. 7.

[59] Tov 2012, Ch. 7. Another example (Jer. 29) was discussed by De Hoop 2009c.

Israel have proved that later editors enjoyed considerable freedom to contract or expand the work of their predecessors.[60]

Some examples may elucidate what I mean. Josef Oesch pointed out that the translations and commentaries that take Genesis 2:4(a) with the preceding first creation story neglect the *petuḥah* before v. 4.[61] The redactional processs behind this problematic case was an attempt to mask the Canaanite background that still glimmers through in v. 4.[62]

Bob Becking showed that *petuḥah* and *setumah* in Jeremiah 30–31 elucidate the structure of these chapters and reveal that in three subcantos two transformations are implied, one looking back to the past and one looking forward to the future.[63]

The closing section of the book of Ruth is also such a case. The genealogy is widely regarded as a later addition to the book[64] and it is separated from the main narrative by a section marking.

It is interesting to see that some medieval manuscripts also delimit Micah 2:12-13 which is universally seen as a later addition, as a unit. The break after v. 12 is attested in almost all Masoretic manuscripts, but that before v. 11 is rare.[65] In this case the Targum and one manuscript of the Peshiṭta support a break at this point. So they treat Micah 2:12-13 as an independent unit.

The later addition of Ezekiel 36:37-38, which also in a thematic sense is similar to Micah 2:12-13, is demarcated by *setumot* both at the beginning and end. Often delimitation of such a mini-unit in ancient manuscripts betrays knowledge that it is a later addition.[66] This kind of small portions of text delimited by major division markers definitely deserves further study.

Important as such observations may be it should be emphasized once again that the long history of text production in Israel makes it only rarely possible to reach any particular stage in the redaction history of the Bible with absolute certainty.

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[60] Korpel 1998; 2003; Sanders 2000.
[61] Oesch 2000, 227-228, n. 58.
[62] Korpel and De Moor 2015, 133-134.
[63] Becking 2002.
[64] Which, however, may certainly rest on reliable historical information. See e.g. Korpel 2001, 216-217.
[65] Cambridge, University Library, Mm. 5.27 (10); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, hebr. 80. Cf. De Moor 2002a, 105; Korpel and De Moor 2007, 11.
[66] See Korpel 2011, 154, n. 32 for some additional examples.

7 Unit Delimitation and Modern Translations and Commentaries

In the above discussion of examples that demonstrate the usefulness of research in unit delimitation several cases of astonishing diversity of opinion among translators and commentators of the Bible were described. Many more came to the fore in later *Pericope*-volumes.[67] David Clark was one of the first to recognize the importance of sectioning to Bible translators. He elaborated this for the Book of Numbers.[68] In 2012 special *Pericope*-sessions were devoted to the necessity for Bible translators to pay attention to sectioning in ancient sources.

8 Fresh Opportunities for Further Research

When I started doing research into the role of blank spaces in the transmission of Northwest Semitic manuscripts it was hard to obtain facsimiles or photographs of the originals. Mostly one had to travel to the libraries themselves to collate the documents at the sites. Although autopsy of manuscripts remains a desideratum[69] a growing number of libraries, especially those in Europe, provide digitized copies of their treasures on the Internet. This opens up fresh opportunities for students all over the world to consult these manuscripts of the Bible and other artifacts on their computer screens at home. With regard to the Hebrew Bible it should be added that not only many variant spaces wait to be discovered, but also highly interesting variant voweling and accentuation which directly affect the understanding of the text.[70]

On the next page some sites where digitized Hebrew manuscripts can be consulted have been listed (sites last accessed: 11 May 2020).

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[67] E.g. De Moor 2002b; Schütte 2017.

[68] Clark 2004; 2005.

[69] See e.g. Porter 2005, 162.

[70] It should be noted that in contrast to the Masoretic codices Torah scrolls for liturgical purposes are unvocalized. In the rabbinical literature discussions on the vocalization of this or that word do occur and in the medieval manuscripts hitherto undocumented interesting variants with regard to vocalization have been found. There is no reason to believe that the punctuation with accents and vowels ever reached complete uniformity.

London, British Library
https://www.bl.uk/hebrew-manuscripts

Oxford, Bodleian Library
https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk (Oriental Collections)

Cambridge, University Library
http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/,
among others the New Testament Codex Bezae, see:
http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/1
and the Samaritan manuscript MS Add.1846, see:
http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01846/1

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek
https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de (Hebräische Handschriften)

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale
https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ (Département des Manuscrits)
https://gallica.bnf.fr

Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/
among others the New Testament Codex Vaticanus B, see:
https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209

Jerusalem, National Library of Israel
https://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLIS/en/ManuScript/
A search for 'Hebrew Bible Psalms', for example, results in a splendid overview of Hebrew manuscripts all over the world containing the Book of Psalms.

Münster, Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung
For the New Testament most of the above libraries also offer digitized versions of important manuscripts. Comprehensive information can be obtained from the New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room at:
http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/

Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts
http://csntm.org/Manuscript

Research related to the Pericope-research is the paratext project at Munich:
http://www.paratexbib.eu/

A general website on manuscripts is that of Hill Museum and Manuscript library:
https://www.vhmml.org/

It would be helpful if the data with regard to unit delimitation were available in the form of an electronic database or a polyglot Bible. Several initiatives in this direction have been announced,[71] but hitherto none was successful.

[71] Cf. http://www.pericope.net/pericope_9.htm; De Hoop 2007.

9 Conclusions

The Pericope effort has booked significant results, but much remains to be done. Especially with regard to the New Testament the Editorial Board deplores that so few contributions were submitted for publication[72] although it would seem obvious that researchers of both Testaments might profit from each others' findings. Features like spacing, punctuation, paragraphoi, colometric arrangement are all testified in both channels of transmission.

Yet a few tentative conclusions may be drawn,

- Dots and narrow spaces have been used to separate words as early as the 13th century BCE.
- Spaces and horizontal lines have been used to divide texts into meaningful sections as early as the second millennium BCE.
- *Petuḥah*-like blanks are older than *setumah*-like blanks.
- Blank spaces have a structuring and rhetorical function, mostly marking shorter or longer pauses in the oral recitation of a text.
- Spaces should not be disposed of as impressionistic scribal whims. Their seemingly inconsistent use may be attributed to the oral delivery of written texts which the speaker or singer knew by heart.
- Spaces should be treated as an integral part of the text and be included in critical editions.
- Next to spaces other markings intended to steer interpretation (vowels, dividing lines, accents, marginal notes, etc.) deserve further study.
- Delimitation criticism is also a useful tool for literary and redaction critical analyses.
- The digitization of manuscripts renders research into textual delimitation markers attainable for students of Scripture all over the world.

[72] Notable exceptions were Porter 2005; 2009; Trobisch 2005; Lang 2017.

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