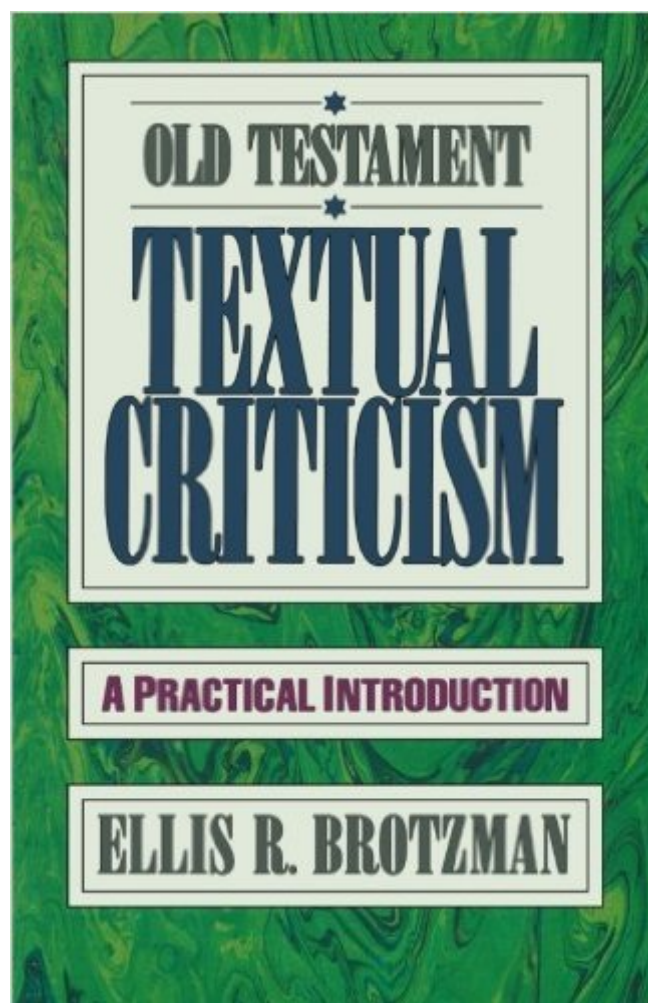


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# Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction



## Synopsis

Old Testament Textual Criticism provides the basic knowledge for students to get the most from Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS). Ellis R. Brotzman explains the significance of scripts and writings of the ancient Near East, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Hebrew manuscripts for students of Hebrew exegesis.

## Book Information

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How did the Old Testament get to us in such good shape and what are the apologetics for such a claim? Can someone who is not a student of Hebrew get some basic information on this subject? The answer is `Yes', with some effort, since the book is geared to an intermediate student of Hebrew, as stated near the end of the book. Author Ellis Brotzman says that it is a "miracle" that Old Testament even exists, and a "double miracle" that it is highly accurate after its transmission from ancient times! I am very impressed with the care of the Old Testament by the Jewish custodians of the scriptures for such a long period of time. We have them to thank (through God's Providence) for what we have today. To explain how, Brotzman stayed fairly high-level, taking us from the creation of the original manuscripts to the present day, through different text styles, different language translations, and through the different gyrations of textual criticisms. Textual criticism, I found out, is a very organized, scholarly methodology of condensing the various texts into one that is as accurate as possible for our use today. To this end, Brotzman patiently goes through enough of the Hebrew language characteristics to allow us to understand what textual criticism is about. For example, I found that for hundreds of years early on, the Hebrew text was originally entirely consonantal, with

the vowels being transmitted only through oral tradition. Later, the oral tradition was changed to written, and the vowels were indicated by adding the appropriate number of dots below the appropriate consonants. He lets us know in a general way how that works and the affect it has on the transmission accuracy of the text.

This book will serve as an excellent, though brief, introduction to the field of Old Testament Textual Criticism. Required reading at most seminaries, Brotzman's work provides the reader with the foundational knowledge necessary to understand both the historical transmission as well as the modern discipline of interpreting the text of the Hebrew Scriptures. Brotzman opens his work with a brief, but thorough history of the transmission of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures up to the present, with particular emphasis on the derivation of the Masoretic Text as found in "Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia" (from the Leningrad Codex). Brotzman then provides the reader with a concise overview of the process of evaluating textual variants as found in the apparatus of BHS. Also in this section is a helpful introduction to BHS and its manifold notational idiosyncrasies. A helpful appendix will serve as a welcome reference to the beginning user of BHS. In the last chapter of the work, Brotzman provides an example of the task of textual criticism through via a walk-through of the textual variants found in the Book of Ruth. Though not meant to be an exhaustive commentary on Ruth, Brotzman interacts with various notable commentators (Hubbard, Sasson, etc) on the book and with the ancient Versions as well (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate and Medieval MSS). I personally have given the book four stars out of five as I feel that while an adequate introduction to the discipline of Hebrew Textual criticism, as an introductory text, it assumes some knowledge many readers (particularly at an undergraduate level) may not yet have.

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