Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: A Reader's Edition. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014 / Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2014. Pp. xxv + 1765. ISBN 978-3-438-05225-4 hardcover (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft) 978-1-59856-342-9 hardcover (Hendrickson). $59.95 hardcover.

Students of the Bible owe a debt of gratitude to Donald R. Vance, George Athas, and Yael Avrahami for compiling this wonderful volume. Jointly published with the German Bible Society, the *Reader's Edition* is based upon the fifth edition of BHS edited by Adrian Schenker (1997). In their introduction, the editors make clear their intention to provide a resource for more effectively learning Classical Hebrew, assisting its students amid the "catch-22" of learning vocabulary to read Hebrew and reading Hebrew to learn vocabulary. To this end, the *Reader's Edition* is aimed at "students with one year or more" of training in the language (p. vii).

The book offers many features that make it valuable to both students and more advanced scholars. To start with, the text is nicely laid out, with a pleasant font in a good size and weight. The paper is heavy enough to resist bleed-through, and the binding is sturdy enough to support this large volume. Due to the in-text notes, the editors could not precisely replicate the layout of BHS, and they have occasionally adjusted colometry "for the sake of clarity" (p. xv). They also decided to alter the presentation of *ketiv/qere* variants, such that the *ketiv* appears unpointed in the text, but is presented along with the *qere* in the apparatus with vocalization. This certainly improves the readability of the text.

Every word occurring seventy times or fewer is glossed on the page where it appears, with words occurring more frequently provided in a glossary at the back, including proper nouns. For reference, Zondervan's 2008 *A Reader's Hebrew Bible* glosses words occurring one hundred times or fewer. In addition, the *Reader's Edition* parses all verb forms with weak roots regardless of frequency, except for some "very common" forms such as אָמַר, יִתֵּן, or עֲשׂוֹת (p. viii). Those forms are listed alphabetically and parsed in the back. Glosses are contextual and drawn from the standard reference works. Where there is room for question the editors claim to have chosen a gloss that most closely reflects the "base meaning of the word" in a given context (p. viii).

The in-text notes are keyed by verse number to the apparatus using lower case, superscripted lettering. For example, the three noted words in Judges 9:4 appear as follows: ᶜוַיִּשְׂכֹּר ... ᵇבַּעַל בְּרִית͏ᵇ ᵃוַיִּתְּנוּ. In the apparatus under "4" you find "ᵃGr25 נתן. ᵇ-ᵇ *Baal-berith*. ᶜPN *Abimelech*." (p. 446). In this manner certain phrases are glossed between two replicated letters (here ᵇ). Wherever a glossed word occurs multiple times in a single verse, its letter is repeated in the text and where necessary multiple parsings appear consecutively in the corresponding apparatus note.

Learning the parsing system employed in the *Reader's Edition* takes time. Based on William Sanford La Sor's work in Esther, the editors have devised a compact system to denote all necessary morphology. The prose description of the system in the introduction is required reading, and suffers from an explanatory chart that is inconveniently divided between two pages (pp. ix-x) that are "backwards" in the Hebrew order. Nevertheless, to demonstrate the system here, in the Judges 9:4 example given above (Gr25), G = "Qal" (*Grundstamm*), r = "retentive" (*wāw* conjunction, cf. p. xi), 25 = third masculine/common plural. While the efficiency of the system is to be admired, parsings can become nearly inscrutable without extended page flipping to check the

parsing key (e.g. "card.78s0"). In this sense the parsing system may be somewhat more "pleasing to the eye" than it is "good for food," so to speak. Allow a few weeks of regular use to acclimate to the system. Also, apparently some of the first volumes to be printed did not receive the bookmark with the parsing key conveniently printed on it. However, it can be found online and printed out via George Athas's blog (search "BHS Reader's Edition Insert").

A few slight drawbacks accompany this excellent volume. Most significantly, the alphabetical in-text notation is not convenient. While locating the correct corresponding letter in the apparatus is simple, you must also know the verse number to find it. It can be quite distracting while reading to check a gloss, only to realize that you have to return to the body of the text, trace backwards or forwards to find the nearest verse number, then return to the apparatus to find the corresponding letter and gloss. Also, depending on reading conditions, you may also find [c] and [e] difficult to distinguish, even with younger eyes.

I found a few minor issues while reading Judges and 1 Samuel. In 1 Sam 2:4b the note provides two glosses that are different parts of speech for the participle נִכְשָׁלִים, "stumbler, feeble" (p. 477). At Judges 20:4b and 20:16b verbal glosses are given in the past tense, inconsistent with the practice elsewhere. Certain contextual glosses seem unhelpfully vague or broad. For example, at in 1 Sam2:8g, נָדִיב is glossed "willing," although "nobles" is more fitting. Likewise, in 1 Sam 6:9e, מִקְרֶה is glossed "occurrence," although in context it refers to "chance" (p. 484). In 1 Sam 1:5c the editors provide an interpretive paraphrase in the gloss that, helpful though it is, seems superfluous. Finally, in the apparatus for 1 Sam 15:3 the verse number is printed twice.

Such inconsistencies are to be expected in a project of this size. In the face of the magnitude of the editors' accomplishment, however, these issues are trivial and in the end detract very little from the whole. The *Reader's Edition* is well worth the purchase price. After adjusting to the parsing system, it offers a wonderful resource that will certainly benefit students and scholars for many years.

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