

**Philip Suciadi Chia**

University of Pretoria  
ORCID 0000-0003-2453-7497

## Resolving the Ambiguity in Nahum 1:12: **אם שלמים** [ʾm šlmm] or **משל מים** [mšl mym]

**Abstract:** Is the phrase **אם שלמים** [ʾm šlmm] or **משל מים** [mšl mym] found in Nahum 1:12? The textual tradition is divided. The Septuagint (LXX) and the Peshitta support the reading **משל מים** [mšl mym] in Nahum 1:12, whereas the Masoretic text, the Targum, and the Vulgate preserve **אם שלמים** [ʾm šlmm] ('though they are at full strength' or 'though they are complete'). This disagreement prompts significant inquiries regarding the verse's initial phrasing, its interpretation, and the origins of the differing readings that arose during the transmission process. This article utilizes textual criticism as its main approach – analyzing manuscript evidence, assessing the likelihood of transcription and translation variations, and considering contextual and linguistic elements – to identify the most probable original text and to explore the potential explanations for the discrepancies among these ancient sources.

**Keywords:** Ancient Texts, Old Testament, Textual Criticism, Nahum, ʾm šlmm, mšl mym

---

### 1. Introduction

Ancient texts of Nahum 1:12 are categorized into two primary interpretations: **אם שלמים** and **משל מים**. The Greek Septuagint (Rahlfs 2006) translates this as *κατάρχων ὑδάτων*, meaning 'the one who rules over waters (NETS).' Similarly, the Syriac Peshitta (the Leiden Peshitta Edition, 2012) renders it as *ܐܢܝܢܐ ܥܠ ܡܝܢ ܗܝܘܢܐ*, which translates to 'on (against) the rulers of waters.' Notably, both the LXX and the Peshitta adopt the reading **משל מים** rather than **אם שלמים** in this verse.

Three ancient texts, on the other hand, present the phrase **אם שלמים** in their translations. The Aramaic Targum, for instance, renders it as *אם יהון שלמין*, meaning as 'though they are perfect.'

The Latin Vulgate (Fisher and Weber 1994) offers the translation *si perfecti fuerint*, which translates to ‘if they were perfect.’ The Masoretic text (Elliger and Rudolph 1997) clearly conveys the reading אִם־שָׁלְמִים. This variation highlights the problem among ancient texts. This article aims to resolve this disagreement through the application of textual criticism as its primary method.

## 2. BHS, BHQ, and the Evaluations

BHS apparatus conveys the reading of both the LXX and the Peshitta. It illustrates the LXX’s phrase *κατάρχων ὑδάτων πολλῶν*, which is derived from מִשַׁל מִיָּם רַבִּים. In the case of the Peshitta, BHS notes that it is based on the Hebrew text אֵל מְשַׁלֵּי מִיָּם רַבִּים (Elliger and Rudolph 1997, 1045). One criticism directed at the BHS apparatus is its failure to include the entirety of ancient texts, such as those from the Targum and the Vulgate. Another point of criticism is that the BHS apparatus does not offer a recommendation for the original reading. Instead, BHS apparatus suggests an emendation to the text: אִם שְׁלָמִים (inundationes, imbres) (Elliger and Rudolph 1997, 1045).

In BHQ’s commentary, Gelston provides an insight regarding the Peshitta’s translation. According to Gelston (2010, 110), the Peshitta’s translation aligns with the LXX, resulting in the initial word being split into two separate words: *κατ’* and *ἄρχων* (Gelston 2010, 26).

Thus, this research aims to enhance the BHS by integrating readings from Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll (8Hev XII gr = Rahlfs 943), the Targum, Murabba’at 88 (the Mur 88), the Hexapla, 4QXII<sup>e</sup>, and the Vulgate. In addition to BHQ’s commentary, this article endeavors to ascertain the original reading of Nahum 1:2 by employing textual criticism as its methodological approach.

## 3. Methodology

Textual criticism is often characterized as a seamless integration of artistic expression and scientific investigation. It is classified as a science due to its dependence on data analysis, the examination of genealogical relationships among manuscripts, and a thorough

understanding of copying techniques. However, it is also viewed as an art form, as it requires a keen sense of judgment and critical assessment throughout the process (Boltzman and Tuly 2016, 138). This field has one primary aim. The main purpose is to reconstruct the most accurate and authentic version of the biblical texts as they were originally written. As Tov states that textual criticism is the study of the text, its transmission, and its variants, with the aim of establishing the most authentic text possible (Tov 2012, 9). This endeavor involves comparing and analyzing multiple manuscripts, versions, and textual evidence to identify errors, discrepancies, and alterations that have occurred over time (Barthélemy 2012, 92).

There are three distinct approaches to textual criticism: rigorous eclecticism, reasoned eclecticism, and the majority text approach.<sup>1</sup> Rigorous eclecticism has the potential to offer new perspectives on the Old Testament text; however, its excessive reliance on internal criteria and neglect of manuscript evidence render it a contentious and frequently unreliable approach. Although the Majority Text approach offers a more straightforward method of textual criticism, it frequently faces criticism for prioritizing later, revised manuscripts at the expense of earlier, more varied witnesses. Thus, this article adopts reasoned eclecticism, as it considers both external and internal evidence. The evaluation of external evidence includes a detailed analysis of the manuscripts' age, reliability, and geographical distribution. Generally, older manuscripts are regarded as more authoritative. In contrast, internal evidence involves transcriptional probability, which assesses the likelihood of what a scribe would have written or copied, as well as intrinsic probability, which contemplates what the original author might have produced, considering factors such as context, stylistic preferences, and theological considerations. This internal analysis often follows principles such as *lectio*

---

<sup>1</sup> Rigorous eclecticism approach represents a methodology in the field of textual criticism that emphasizes internal evidence – such as linguistic, stylistic, and contextual elements – more than external evidence, which includes factors like manuscript age and geographical distribution, while the Majority Text approach is a method of textual criticism that prioritizes readings found in the majority of surviving ancient manuscripts.

*difficilior, lectio brevior*, and harmonization (Tov 2012, 271–79; cf. Chia 2025, 5–16).

### 3.1. The Origin of the Textual Problem

The textual variants in Nahum 1:12 can be attributed to two primary reasons. The first reason is the division of words. The ancient manuscripts lack both vowel markings and clear word separations (Tov 2015, 27–30; Cross 1995, 121–23; VanderKam and Flint 2002, 137–38). These characteristics allow the Hebrew words אֲשֶׁלִּמִים to be divided into two distinct ways: either אֲשֶׁלִּמִים or מִשֶׁל מִים. The second reason is the omission of the letter א for מִשֶׁל מִים. In other words, if the ancient translators divide the Hebrew words אֲשֶׁלִּמִים as אֲשֶׁלִּמִים, then the translation will be “though (they are) complete” (cf. the Masoretic text, the Mur 88, the Targum, and the Vulgate). On the other hand, if the ancient translators divide the Hebrew words אֲשֶׁלִּמִים as מִשֶׁל מִים and omit the letter א, then the translation will be ‘the rulers over waters’ (cf. the LXX and the Peshitta).

### 3.2. External Evidence

This external evidence involves evaluating the age, reliability, and geographical distribution of the manuscripts. Generally, older manuscripts are regarded as having more authority. The table below displays the ancient texts, including their estimated *Vorlage* and dates.

The table presented above indicates that the Hebrew term אֲשֶׁלִּמִים is not referenced in the Origen hexapla (Field 1875, 1001) and Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll (8Hev XII gr = Rahlfs 943) since it is so fragmentary (Tov, Kraft, and Parsons 1990, 44–45). On the other hand, the Mur 88, also referred to as MurXII or the Wadi Murabbaʿat Minor Prophets Scroll, contains similar reading with the Masoretic text. Nahum 1:12 is absent from 4QXII<sup>g</sup>, which is highly fragmented and includes only Nahum 1:7–9, 2:9–11 and 3:1–3, 17 (Ulrich 1997, 272, 315, 321). The lack of this information will render Nahum 1:12 unexaminable.

Table 1.

Source	Text	Translation	<i>Vorlage</i>	Dates
Masoretic Text	אֲמַלְמִים	though (they are) complete	אם שלמים	Aleppo Codex: 930 C.E. Leningrad Codex: 1008–1010 C.E. Codex Cairensis: 895 C.E.
Septuagint	κατάρχων ὑδάτων	the one who rules over waters	משל מים	Around 2nd Century B.C.E.
Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll (8Hev XII gr = Rahlfs 943)	(lacunae)	(no translation)	(unknown)	Late 1st century B.C.E or early 1st century C.E. Around 50 B.C.E. – 50 C.E.
Peshitta	ܐܡܫܠܡܝܡ	On the rulers of waters	משל מים	Around 2 <sup>nd</sup> Century C.E.
Vulgate	<i>si perfecti fuerint</i>	Though they were perfect	אם שלמים	Late 4 <sup>th</sup> Century C.E.
Targum	אם יהון שלמין	Though they are perfect	אם שלמים	Around 13 <sup>th</sup> –14 <sup>th</sup> Century C.E.
Hexapla	(no available information)	(no translation)	(unknown)	230–245 C.E.
Murabba'at 88 (the Mur 88)	ים[מ]של	Perfect	אם שלמים or משל מים	Around 132–135 C.E.
4QXII <sup>g</sup>	(lacunae)	(no translation)	(unknown)	The last third of the first century B.C.E. (Late Hasmonean or Early Herodian period)

External evidence excludes both the hexapla and 4QXII<sup>g</sup> due to insufficient information regarding Nahum 1:12. On the other hand, external evidence reveals that both the LXX and the Peshitta used the same *Vorlage* for their translations. Despite employing the same *Vorlage*, their translations exhibit minor variations. The LXX, for instance, translates the Hebrew words אֲמַלְמִים as κατάρχων ὑδάτων, utilizing a participle present active nominative singular from κατάρχω. The Peshitta, on the other hand, adds the preposition ܐܠ. The textual variation found in the Peshitta may arise from one of two potential sources. The first possibility suggests that the Peshitta translation is based on אם משל מים as its *Vorlage*. While it is conceivable that the Peshitta interprets the letter ‘mem’ as appearing twice, this is the sole source among ancient translations. The second possibility posits that the Peshitta directly replicated

the LXX, which contains the phrase *κατάρχων ὑδάτων*. Given that ancient Greek manuscripts do not include accentuation or clear word divisions, it is plausible that the Peshitta misread the single Greek term *κατάρχων* as two separate words: *κατ'* and *ἄρχων* (cf. Barthélemy 1992, 796; Gelston 2010, 110). Consequently, Peshitta's translation differs slightly from that of the LXX (cf. Grütter 2016). Three Masoretic texts (the Aleppo Codex, Codex Cairensis, and the Leningrad Codex), the Vulgate, and the Targum share the same *Vorlage*: אַם שְׁלֵמִים.

Due to the fragmented nature of Mur 88 in Nahum 1:12, the Hebrew word *שְׁלֵמִים* found in Mur 88 may correspond to either of *Vorlage*: אַם שְׁלֵמִים or מִשְׁלֵמִים. This research, therefore, will document the reading of Mur 88 as אַם שְׁלֵמִים or מִשְׁלֵמִים as its *Vorlage*.

External evidence supports the reading *מִשְׁלֵמִים* as the original text, as it is confirmed by the earliest known source: the LXX, which dates to around the 2nd century B.C.E.

### 3.3. Internal Evidence

This internal evidence often relies on principles such as *lectio difficilior*, *lectio brevior*, and harmonization (cf. Chia 2025, 5–16). *Lectio difficilior*, a Latin term meaning ‘the more difficult reading,’ is a key concept in textual criticism (Tov 2015, 307–310). *Lectio brevior*, which translates to ‘the shorter reading.’ Shorter readings are frequently viewed as more authentic, as they are less vulnerable to alterations made by scribes (Tov 2015, 307–10). Harmonization in textual criticism refers to the practice of scribes or copyists modifying a text to ensure its consistency with another related passage or to resolve perceived discrepancies (Tov 2015, 307–310).

#### 3.3.1. *Lectio Difficilior*

In the context of Nahum 1:12, the LXX's translation offers an easier reading for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the LXX employs the participle of *κατάρχων ὑδάτων* to elucidate the subject, which is directly associated with YHWH because this participle matches the number, gender, case of κύριος. Secondly, the translation of LXX omits the first וְכֵן in the clause. The Hebrew term וְכֵן poses challenges, as it

complicates the syntax of the line, making it more difficult to translate effectively (cf. NET Bible notes: Nahum 1:12, footnote 56, version 1.0). Therefore, the principle of *lectio difficilior* does not suggest that the LXX retain the original reading.

While the Peshitta aligns with the translation of the LXX (cf. Barthélemy 1992, 796; Gelston 2010, 110), it exhibits three distinct translation choices that diverge from the LXX: ܠܗܘܢ ܕܡܢ ܡܢܗܘܢ. Firstly, the Peshitta incorporates the preposition ܠܗܘܢ which has a disadvantage function. Secondly, the Syriac term ܡܢܗܘܢ is rendered in the plural form, contrasting with the singular form found in the LXX. Thirdly, the inclusion of the preposition ܠܗܘܢ alters the grammatical role of ܡܢܗܘܢ, preventing it from functioning as the subject (or nominative subject) and instead designating it as the object of the preposition ܠܗܘܢ. Consequently, the translation conveys that the Lord is against the rulers of many waters. In this context, the rulers of many waters are treated as objects, in contrast to the LXX, which presents them as the subject. The Peshitta interprets Nineveh as the rulers of many waters, whereas the LXX depicts God as the ruler of many waters. The principle of *lectio difficilior* also does not indicate that the Peshitta preserves the original reading for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the Peshitta omits the particle ܘܐܝܢ, which raises challenges regarding the presence of this protasis in the opening clause. Secondly, similar to the LXX, the Peshitta excludes the first instance of ܘܚܢ in the clause. The Hebrew word ܘܚܢ presents challenges, as it complicates the syntax of the sentence, thereby hindering an easier translation.

Although the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum share the same *Vorlage*, the Masoretic text presents the more challenging reading, as both the Vulgate and the Targum include the words  *fuerint* and יהוה respectively specify the subject as the people of Nineveh rather than the Lord. The constructed reading of Mur 88 (see table 2 reveals that it exhibits a reading comparable to that of the Masoretic text. Thus, Mur 88 meets the principle of *lectio difficilior*. Consequently, the principle of *lectio difficilior* suggests that the Masoretic text contains the original reading.

3.3.2. *Lectio Brevior*

In the realm of the Old Testament textual criticism, the original reading supports the principle *lectio brevior*. The initial clause in the Septuagint (LXX) presents a more concise version, comprising nine words, whereas the Masoretic text contains ten words and thirteen words respectively (including the conjunction and the particle). The Syriac Peshitta offers ten words in the first clause (including the conjunction), while the Latin Vulgate has fourteen words. The Aramaic Targum expands this first clause up to thirty-one words. Therefore, the translation in the LXX aligns with the principle of *lectio brevior*.

Table 2.

Ancient Translation	Text in the First Clause	Word Count
LXX	τάδε λέγει κύριος κατάρχων ὑδάτων πολλῶν καὶ οὕτως διασταλήσονται	9
Masoretic Text	כה אמר יהוה אם שלמים וכן רבים וכן נגזו ועבר	13
Peshitta	ܡܚܒܘܫ ܥܡܘܪ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܐܡܝܢ ܕܝܫܠܡܝܢ ܘܚܝܢ ܕܪܒܝܢ ܘܚܝܢ ܕܢܓܘܘ ܘܥܒܪ	10
Vulgate	<i>haec dicit Dominus si perfecti fuerint et ita plures sic quoque adtendentur et pertransibit</i>	14
Mur 88	כה אמר יהוה שלמים שלמי מי רבים וכן נגזו ועבר	10
Targum	כדנן אמר יי אה יהון שלמין בעיצא וסגיאין באתמניותא עממיה דמתכנשין לאעקא ליד ירושלם יגוזון על ית דגלת ויעברון על ית פרת ווייתון לעניויתך	31

## 3.3.3. Lexical, Contextual, and Historical analysis

This section outlines two criteria for evaluating the original text. The first criterion involves examining the key terms from the *Vorlage*, specifically *אם שלמים* and *משל מים*, which correspond to *שלם* and *מים*. This part will analyze both Hebrew words, *שלם* and *מים*, as they appear in the book of Nahum. The second criterion focuses on the portrayal of the Lord and Nineveh within the same text. For instance, the LXX interprets the beginning of Nahum 1:12 as referring to the status of the Lord, while other translations attribute this to Nineveh.

The first criterion in determining whether the original text contains the *Vorlage* *אם שלמים* or *משל מים* lies in the examination of the terms *מים* and *שלם* in the book of Nahum. The Hebrew noun

מים appears three times throughout the book of Nahum. Nahum consistently points מים to Nineveh, while the Hebrew verb שלם is found only in Nahum 2:1, where it pertains to Judah (cf. Table 3). The use of שלם in the text with a specific subject does not imply that it is exclusively associated with that subject. Conversely, the occurrence of the verb שלם suggests that Nahum was familiar with it and employed it, thereby reinforcing the Masoretic version rather than undermining it.

Table 3.

מים (Water)		שלם (perfect)	
Verse	Reference	Verse	Reference
2:9	Nineveh	2:1	Judah (Noun)
3:8	Nineveh (cf. 3:7)		
3:14	Nineveh		

Conversely, the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, the Targum, and the Syriac Peshitta fit the criteria of lexical, contextual, and historical analysis. While the Syriac Peshitta utilizes the LXX as its source text, the Peshitta modifies its translations derived from the LXX. In terms of lexical analysis, the Peshitta attributes the Hebrew word מים to Nineveh. The Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum also attribute אום-שלמים to Nineveh. Regarding contextual analysis, the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, the Targum, and the Syriac Peshitta concur that Nahum 1:12–14 pertains to the destruction of Nineveh, while the references to the river gates in Nahum 2:6 and the sea in Nahum 3:8 highlight Nineveh's water defenses. Historically, Nineveh utilized a network of dams and sluice gates to manage the waters of the Tebiltu and Khoser Rivers that traversed the city (Thompson and Hutchinson 1982, 120–32). In addition to Nineveh's water defenses, Nahum 2:8 illustrates that Nineveh resembled a pool of water during its days.<sup>2</sup> However, the Tebiltu River often exceeded

<sup>2</sup> Nahum 2:8 fitting as Nineveh was renowned for its man-made pools, several of which catered to the royal gardens. Additionally, the city was traversed by two rivers: the Tebiltu and the Khoser. The Hebrew noun בריכה typically denotes a man-made water reservoir that is supplied by aqueducts, as opposed to a natural body of water (HALOT 161 s.v.). For instance, it is applied to artificial water reservoirs associated with royal gardens (Eccl 2:6; Neh 2:14) and to those in Jerusalem, some

its banks within the city, threatening the stability of palaces and other buildings. To address this flooding problem, Sennacherib altered the river's path within the city boundaries. Furthermore, he built a dam on the Khoser River outside the city, establishing a reservoir that regulated the water supply to Nineveh through an advanced system of double sluice gate (Luckenbill 1927, 99–100; Reade 1978a, 47–72; 1978b, 157–80).<sup>3</sup>

The second aspect to consider in assessing the original reading is the evaluation of YHWH's status during his speech and the status of Nineveh. The phrase **יהוה נאם** occurs in Nahum 2:14 and 3:5. Both of which affirm YHWH's status as the Lord of host or **יהוה צבאות**. However, these instances do not refer to the Lord as the ruler over waters. Therefore, this analysis concludes that the reading of the LXX does not reflect the original text. In addition, it is necessary to analyze the portrayal of Nineveh by the narrator in the book of Nahum to determine the original reading.

Table 4.

Nineveh		
	Status	Possession
1	The Lord's enemies (1:2, 8)	His yoke bar (1:13)
2	Like tangled thorns (1:10)	Your shackles (1:13)
3	Like drink of drunkards (1:10)	Gods (1:14)

of which were sourced from aqueducts (2 Kgs 18:17; 20:20; Isa 7:3; 22:9, 11; 36:2; Neh 3:15, 16). Additionally, it refers to the pool of Gibeon (2 Sam 2:13), the pool of Hebron (2 Sam 4:12), the pool of Samaria (1 Kgs 22:38), and the pools of Heshbon (Song 7:5). The pool of Siloam, constructed by Hezekiah and supplied by the underground aqueduct known as Hezekiah's Tunnel, is referred to as **בְּרִיקָה** in 2 Kgs 20:20 and in the Siloam Inscription (line 5).

<sup>3</sup> According to classical sources (Diodorus and Xenophon), just prior to the fall of Nineveh, a series of intense rainfalls inundated the region. The Khoser River overflowed, leading to the breach of the reservoir. The resulting surge overwhelmed the canal system, creating a gap in the city wall that measured twenty stades (approximately 2.3 miles or 3.7 km) wide, which allowed water to flood the city. Once the waters receded, the Babylonians invaded and captured Nineveh (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 2.26–27, particularly 27.1–3; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 3.4.12; P. Haupt, "Xenophon's Account of the Fall of Nineveh," *JAOS* 28 [1907]: 65–83). This account appears to be supported by archaeological findings (Olmstead 1923, 637).

Nineveh		
	Status	Possession
4	Very dry stubble (1:10)	Graven image (1:14)
5	A wicked counselor (1:11)	The house of your gods (1:14)
6	You are contemptible (1:14)	Grave (1:14)
7	He is cut off completely (2:1)	Your strength (2:2)
8	Pool of water (2:9)	His nobles (2:6; 3:18)
9	Empty (2:11)	Their work (2:6)
10	Void (2:11)	Wall (2:6)
11	Waste (2:11)	The mantelet (2:6)
12	Bloody city (3:1)	The gates of the rivers (2:7)
13	Full of lies and robbery (3:1)	The palace (2:7)
14	Drunk (3:11)	Maids (2:8)
15	Hidden (3:11)	Silver (2:9)
16	Creeping locust strips (3:16)	Gold (2:9)
17	Creeping locust flies away (3:16)	Vessels of desire (2:10)
18	Swarming locusts (3:17)	Den of the lions (2:12)
19	Great grasshoppers (3:17)	The Feeding place of the young lions (2:12)
20		Lion (2:12)
21		Lioness (2:12)
22		Lion's cub prowled (2:12)
23		Chariots (2:14)
24		Young lions (2:14)
25		Prey (2:14; 3:1)
26		Skirts (3:5)
27		Strongholds (3:12, 14)
28		People (3:13, 18)
29		Land (3:13)
30		Gate bars (3:13)
31		Water (3:14)
32		Merchants (3:16)
33		Courtiers (3:17)
34		Marshals (3:17)
35		Shepherds (3:18)
36		Bruise (3:19)
37		Wound (3:19)

Table 4 illustrates the status and characteristics of Nineveh as presented in the book of Nahum. While the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, the Targum, and the Syriac Peshitta align with the criteria outlined in Table 4 – particularly regarding Nineveh's designation as perfect and the kings of many waters – the LXX does not conform to this classification, as its translation emphasizes the status of the Lord instead. A pertinent question arises: does

the narrator refer to Nineveh as the perfect entity or the kings of many waters? Nahum 3:8 poses the rhetorical question, “Are you better than Thebes? which was located by the waters of the Nile, surrounded by water, with the sea serving as its rampart and wall?” The use of the interrogative particle  $\eta$  indicates a rhetorical question that anticipates a negative response. Consequently, this suggests that Nineveh cannot be considered the kings of many waters, as Thebes exists. If the narrator intended to affirm Nineveh’s status in this way, the rhetorical question would be contradictory. It would be inconsistent for the Lord to designate Nineveh as the kings of many waters while simultaneously questioning this designation in Nahum 3:8. Thus, the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum fit to the second aspect of lexical, contextual, and historical analysis.

#### 4. **משל מים or אם שלמים in Nahum 1:12**

Textual criticism involves analyzing manuscripts to identify the most trustworthy version of a written work, especially when various versions are available. This process primarily utilizes two types of evidence: internal and external. The phrase **אם שלמים or משל מים** found in Nahum 1:12, however, serves as an illustration of the discrepancy between external and internal evidence. External evidence supports the interpretations found in LXX, which is considered as the earliest known source, dating back to around the early 2nd century B.C.E. In addition, internal evidence tends to favor the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, internal evidence is frequently regarded as more precise in specific situations, as it examines the text itself, whereas external evidence depends on external factors, including historical context or the age of the manuscripts. Initially, internal evidence scrutinizes

<sup>4</sup> This research omits internal evidence analysis of Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll (8Hev XII gr = Rahlfs 943) since the text is so fragmentary (cf. Tov, Kraft, and Parsons 1990: 44–51). Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll has a similar reading with the LXX. Nahum 1:13–14 are ones of the examples. The differences are in the lacunae. In other words, the differences appear in the *constructed* text:  $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho$  σοῦ (the LXX) vs  $\epsilon\pi\iota$  σοῖ (Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll) and  $\tau\acute{\alpha}$   $\gamma\lambda\upsilon\pi\tau\acute{\alpha}$  (the LXX) vs  $\gamma\lambda\upsilon\pi\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu$  (Nahal Hever XII Greek scroll) in Nahum 1:14.

the text's content, style, and linguistic characteristics. This analysis encompasses grammar, vocabulary, and literary patterns that are inherent to the author's work. Since internal evidence originates from the text itself, it circumvents the potential biases or uncertainties linked to external elements such as manuscript dating or provenance. Furthermore, internal evidence aids in identifying inconsistencies or irregularities that may suggest scribal mistakes, interpolations, or later modifications (Parker 2008). For instance, if a section employs vocabulary or syntax that deviates from the rest of the text, it may be identified as non-original. Scholars such as E.J. Epp and Gordon Fee assert that internal evidence is vital for grasping the author's intent and style, which are essential for reconstructing the original text (Epp and Fee 1993). Additionally, internal evidence assesses how well a reading corresponds with the immediate context of the passage and the overall work. A reading that resonates with the author's thematic and theological concerns is typically favored. This methodology is emphasized in Bruce Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (2005), where he contends that internal evidence aids in resolving textual variants by considering the author's probable meaning. Consequently, external evidence, such as the age or geographical distribution of manuscripts, can occasionally be misleading. In contrast, internal evidence is less prone to such biases since it concentrates on the text's inherent qualities rather than external influences.

A further issue identified in Nahum 1:12 lies in the internal evidence, where there is a notable absence of agreement. For instance, the principles of *lectio difficilior*, along with lexical, contextual, and historical analyses, lead to the conclusion that the Masoretic text reflects the original reading. In contrast, the principle of *lectio brevior* supports the readings of the LXX.

The principle of harmonization, derived from lexical, contextual, and historical analysis, is the foremost focus of this research. This principle is crucial as it assesses what the author likely intended to convey, considering style, vocabulary, context, and literary coherence. Following this principle, the next priority in the analysis is *lectio difficilior*. This principle posits that readings which are more challenging are often the original versions, as scribes typically

tended to simplify, clarify, or smooth out difficult passages rather than complicate them or alter their length by adding or reducing the text. The final principle related to internal evidence is *lectio brevior*. While this principle indicates that shorter readings are generally favored – since scribes frequently added explanatory content – this guideline is not infallible. There are instances where scribes may have inadvertently left out words or phrases, particularly due to homoioteleuton, where similar endings lead to line omissions. In addition, this principle typically pertains to texts written in the same language – translations into a different language system will usually vary in word count (sentence length), which does not necessarily reflect the original version. Nonetheless, they were more inclined to insert glosses or harmonize texts, which makes *lectio difficilior* a more dependable criterion overall. In conclusion, when external evidence conflicts with internal evidence, the latter is deemed more reliable. In cases where there are inconsistencies within the internal evidence itself, the research should prioritize lexical, contextual, and historical analysis. Following this, the principle of *lectior difficilior* should be applied, with *lectio brevior* being considered last.

Table 5.

אם-שלמים or מים-משל in Nahum 1:12		
Internal Evidence		Sources
1	Lexical, contextual, and historical analysis	The Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum
2	<i>Lectio difficilior</i>	The Masoretic text
3	<i>Lectio brevior</i>	The LXX
External Evidence		
1	The age of manuscript	The LXX

Table 5 indicates that the original reading is אם-שלמים that is found in the Masoretic version. Consequently, the literary structure of Nahum 1:12 juxtaposes a positive present with a negative future. This contrasting language is similarly found in Nahum 2:8, which states that while Nineveh resembles a pool of water during its days, the inhabitants will flee: ‘stand (stop), stand (stop),’ yet none will return. Nahum 2:8 illustrates Nineveh’s favorable present condition, characterized by the presence of a pool of water. However, the author

also communicates a bleak future for Nineveh, where people will abandon the city. Likewise, Nahum 1:12 highlights Nineveh's current state of completeness אִם־שְׁלֵמִים and abundance רַב־יָם, yet it foreshadows a future where they will be cut off נִגְזָוּ.

## Conclusion

The examination of ancient translations and texts in the original language (such as the Aleppo Codex, Codex Cairensis, and the Leningrad Codex אִם־שְׁלֵמִים and מִשַׁל־מִים in Nahum 1:12 presents a complex challenge due to the conflicting external and internal evidence. External evidence aligns with interpretations found in the LXX, which is regarded as the oldest text from approximately the 2nd century B.C.E. In contrast, internal evidence prefers the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum. Nevertheless, this research contends that internal evidence is more advantageous than external evidence.

Another complication in Nahum 1:12 is the lack of consensus within the internal evidence. For example, the application of the *lectio difficilior* principle, along with lexical, contextual, and historical evaluations, suggests that the Masoretic text, the Vulgate, and the Targum are more reflective of the original reading. On the other hand, the *lectio brevior* principle favors the readings of the LXX. This study contends that when inconsistencies arise within internal evidence, priority should be given to lexical, contextual, and historical analysis. Subsequently, the principle of *lectio difficilior* should be utilized, with *lectio brevior* considered only as a last resort. As a result, this research reveals that the original reading is reflected in the Masoretic text אִם־שְׁלֵמִים. This terminology highlights the present condition of Nineveh, characterized by completeness אִם־שְׁלֵמִים and abundance רַב־יָם, while also hinting at a future scenario in which they will face destruction נִגְזָוּ, as indicated in Nahum 1:12.

## Rozwiązanie dwuznaczności w Księdze Nahuma 1,12: אַם שְׁלָמִים [ʾm šlmm] czy מִשַׁל מִים [mšl mym]

**Abstrakt:** Która fraza: אַם שְׁלָמִים czy też מִשַׁל מִים znajduje się w Księdze Nahuma 1,12? Tradycja tekstowa jest w tym względzie podzielona. Septuaginta (LXX) i Peszitta popierają lekcję מִשַׁל מִים w Na 1,12, podczas gdy Tekst Masorecki, Targum i Wulgata zachowują אַם שְׁלָמִים („choć są w pełni sił” lub „choć są kompletne”). Ta rozbieżność wywołuje istotne pytania dotyczące początkowego sformułowania wersetu, jego interpretacji i pochodzenia różnych lekcji, które pojawiły się w procesie transmisji. Aby zidentyfikować najbardziej prawdopodobny tekst oryginalny i zbadać potencjalne wyjaśnienia rozbieżności między tymi starożytnymi źródłami, w artykule wykorzystano krytykę tekstu jako główne podejście – przeanalizowano dowody rękopisowe, oceniono prawdopodobieństwo zmian transkrypcji i tłumaczenia oraz wzięto pod uwagę elementy kontekstowe i językowe.

**Słowa kluczowe:** starożytne teksty, Stary Testament, krytyka tekstu, Księga Nahuma, ʾm šlmm, mšl mym

### Bibliography

- Benoit, Pierre, Józef Tadeusz Milik, and Roland de Vaux. 1961. *Les grottes de Murabbaʿat*. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Boltzman, Ellis R., and Eric J. Tully. 2016. *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Brown, Francis, Samuel R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. 1996. *The Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix on Biblical Aramaic, Coded with the Numbering System from Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Chia, Philip. 2025. “Analysis of אַמְצִים [ʾmšim] in the Hexapla.” *Collectanea Theologica* 95 (1): 5–16. <https://doi.org/10.21697/ct.2025.95.1.01>.
- Cross, Frank Moore. 1995. *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*. Revised ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Ehrman, Bart D. 1993. *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Elliger, Karl, Wilhelm Rudolph, Hans Peter Rüger, and Adrian Schenker. 1997. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Quae Antea Cooperantibus A. Alt, O. Eissfeldt, P. Kahle Ediderat R. Kittel. Editio funditus renovata adjuvantibus H. Bardtke [und weitere], cooperantibus H.P. Rüger et J. Ziegler, ediderunt K. Elliger et W. Rudolph; Textum Masoreticum curavit H.P. Rüger; Masoram elaboravit G.E. Weil; ed. quinta emendata opera*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Epp, Eldon Jay, and Gordon D. Fee. 1993. *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Field, F. 1875. *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt, sive Veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta; post Flaminium Nobilium, Drusium et Montefalconium, adhibita etiam versione syro-hexaplari*,

- concinnavit, emendavit, et multis partibus auxit Fridericus Field.* 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fischer, Bonifatius, and Robert Weber. 1994. *Biblia Sacra: iuxta vulgatam versionem.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Gelston, Anthony. 2010. *Biblia Hebraica Quinta: Twelve Prophets.* Durham: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. (= *BHQ*).
- Grütter, N. 2016. *Das Buch Nahum: eine vergleichende Untersuchung des masoretischen Texts und der Septuagintaübersetzung.* Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft.
- Haar Romeny, Robert B. ter, W. Th. van Peursen, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden. Peshitta-Instituut, and International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, eds. 1972. *The Old Testament in Syriac: according to the Peshitta Version.* Leiden: Brill.
- Haupt, Paul. 1907. "Xenophon's Account of the Fall of Nineveh." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 28:99–107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/592761>.
- Koehler, Ludwig, and Walter Baumgartner, eds. 2000. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Translated by Mervyn Edwin J. Richardson. Accordance electronic ed., v. 3.0. Leiden: Brill.
- Luckenbill, Daniel David. 1927. *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Metzger, Bruce M. 2005. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Moshe ben Asher, and David Samuel Löwinger. 1971. *Codex Cairo of the Bible: From the Karaite Synagogue at Abbasiya – The earliest extant Hebrew manuscript written in 895 by Moshe Ben Asher* [Limited facsimile edition of 160 copies]. Jerusalem: Makor Publishing Ltd.
- NET Bible (New English Translation).* 2005. Spokane, WA: Biblical Studies Press.
- Olmstead, A.T. 1923. *History of Assyria.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Parker, David C. 2008. *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rahlfs, Alfred, and Robert Hanhart. 2006. *Septuaginta: Id Est Vetus Testamentum Graece Iuxta LXX Interpretes.* 2nd ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.
- Reade, Julian. 1978a. "Studies in Assyrian Geography: Part I: Sennacherib and the Waters of Nineveh." *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 72 (1): 47–72.
- Reade, Julian. 1978b. "Studies in Assyrian Geography, Part II: The Northern Canal System." *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 72 (1): 157–80.
- Thompson, R. Campbell, and R.W. Hutchinson. 1982. *A Century of Exploration at Nineveh.* Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International.
- Tov, Emanuel. 2012. *Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible.* 3rd revised and expanded ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Tov, Emanuel. 2015. *Textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint.* Leiden: Brill.

- Tov, Emanuel, Robert A. Kraft, and P.J. Parsons, eds. 1990. *The Greek Minor Prophets Scroll from Nahal Hever: 8 HEV XII Gr. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert*. Oxford – New York: Clarendon Press – Oxford University Press.
- Ulrich, Eugene. 1997. *Qumran Cave 4. X: The Prophets*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- VanderKam, James C., and Peter Flint. 2002. *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco.

**Received:** 24.03.2025.

**Accepted:** 16.06.2025.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.