Genesis, Wellhausen and the Computer

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In the past ten years, a number of homogeneous and cognate enquiries were performed and published by us in the framework of our CASTLOTS (Computer-Assisted Statistical Linguistic Old Testament Studies) laboratory[1]. Dealing in the main with cases of interest to Biblical scholars only, they may be seen as preliminary studies, gradually increasing in sophistication, designed to lead, ultimately, to testing the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis in the Pentateuch. That this issue is a matter that concerns not a small coterie like the former, but millions of Jews and Christians and therefore more than another academic exercise surely needs no elaboration. Neither is it necessary to expound here the origin and subsequent history of this hypothesis nor the arguments which it rests upon. As well known, it is dominant to date in Biblical scholarship and only lately have some rumblings in opposition been heard. Dissent has of course been voiced before, but it was rejected, disregarded or even ridiculed as obscurantist. Both camps, though of rather unequal strength, are united, it is only fair to state, in their genuine pursuit of truth, but also, as inevitable when it comes to religious matters, alike in so far as they are heavily influenced by the initial subjective stances of their followers. What separates them is that they are almost not on speaking terms. A fully objective approach is therefore an urgent *desideratum*.

Such a new approach has become available with the advent of the computer, and has been tried by us. It combines four disciplines: the problem is Biblical, the angle investigated is the linguistic, the method is supplied by statistics, and computer science is instrumental. So we banded together to assess the validity of Wellhausen's theory of *Quellenscheidung* first in Genesis (Exodus is being processed). When embarking upon this project we felt encouraged by the experience gained in our previous inves-

[1] To name only a few of those available in English: Y. T. Radday, The Unity of Isaiah in the Light of Statistical Linguistics with a contribution by D. Wickmann (Hildesheim: Verlag Gerstenberg, 1973); Y. T. Radday and H. Shore, »*And* in Isaiah,« Revue de l'organisation internationale pour l'étude des langues anciennes par l'ordinateur 2 (1974), 25–41; Y. T. Radday and D. Wickmann, »The Unity of Zechariah in the Light of Statistical Linguistics,« ZAW 87 (1975), 30–55; Y. T. Radday, D. Wickmann and S. Talmon, »The Book of Judges Examined by Statistical Linguistics,« Biblica 58 (1977), 469–99; Y. T. Radday and M. A. Pollatschek, »Vocabulary Richness and Concentration in Hebrew Biblical Literature,« Bulletin of the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing 8 (1980), 3, 217–31.