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Writing Sample

ANCIENT JEWISH EXEGETICAL TRADITIONS AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC PRACTICES

Methodological Reflections and Implications for Faith Communities

[This writing sample is an adaptation of the thesis I presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Divinity degree at Harvard Divinity School]

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INTRODUCTION

For many religious people, the words of the Bible are considered divine, and thus, the chances that contradictions and errors exist in the biblical text are slim, if not impossible. If there is an error, it is an error in the interpretation or the interpreter's assumptions, not in the Bible. In many Christian and Jewish circles, including the Egyptian Presbyterian community to which I belong, the situation is even more complicated. Many believers are overly concerned with a biblical hermeneutic that ardently presupposes the scientific historicity of whatever is in the Bible. This presupposition depends on the belief that historians and biblical scholars have proved the factuality of the biblical words. To be fair, some scholars have indeed tried, at times successfully, to confirm the historicity of biblical events. However, to a greater extent, the conclusions of most historical-critical studies contradict this biblical factuality presupposed by many religious believers. This conflict is the foundation for the tension between the faith of religious communities and historical-critical scholarship. Many faithful Christians and Jews believe the Bible to be trustworthy because it is historically accurate, whereas historical-critical studies strongly contest this latter statement. This present study aims to make a modest contribution to the many attempts to resolve this tension.

The essay argues that some biblical evidence suggests that ancient biblical authors[1] have had different perceptions of history and historiography. In addition, the evidence pushes against claims for the universality of the standards for examining ancient literature—its historicity and coherence, for example.[2] The main priority of biblical authors seems to have been to offer stories that function as exhortations for readers who are approaching the text "in submission, with a desire to learn its lessons."[3] Therefore, it was vital for these authors to decide on the best method to transmit their historical events in ways that meet this desire. "We see

[1] This essay does not depend on a particular theory of authorship or redaction. Nor does it make any claims regarding this complex topic. Throughout the paper, we use, inter alia, the terms "author" and "Chronicler" as shorthand for the complicated stages of authorship and redaction behind the extant texts at our disposal.
[2] See D. Andrew Teeter and William A Tooman, "Standards of (in)Coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature," *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 9, no. 2 (2020): 94–129; Joshua Berman, *Ani Maamin: Biblical Criticism, Historical Truth, and the Thirteen Principles of Faith* (Jerusalem: Maggid, 2020).
[3] Berman, *Ani Maamin*, 24.

that that author … had two choices: He could present the truest version of the bare facts, at the risk of losing the true message of the story. Or he could ensure that we come away with the true lesson … at the expense of factual accuracy."[4] The Dead Sea Scrolls and other writings of early Jewish communities show us examples of communities that seem to have realized in their sacred scripture what historians would delineate as historical inaccuracies and still sanctified these texts in their own ways.[5] Early Jewish communities noticed the assumed historical differences or contradictions yet approached them differently from historical critics and modern faithful believers. "It is not the historical David and Saul, or Leah and Dinah which occupied the center of the Rabbis' interest. These had already died—what happened, happened—and their judgment is given over to Heaven … It is much more important to the Rabbis to describe the characters in a way which would be instructive, and it makes no difference who or what really was."[6] Extrabiblical evidence asserts then that there could be a way to delineate a text as true and trustworthy even if it does not accord strictly to modern historical-critical standards for factuality. If that is true of these communities, one may also imagine it being true of biblical times. Biblical authors perhaps have a distinctive perception of history and historiography, more similar to the one we see in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic texts.[7] If our reading of the evidence in Chronicles and its *Vorlagen* is correct, we invite bible scholars and believers to rethink their equation of historicity with linear factuality and begin approaching and evaluating biblical historical claims more in line with the cultural intuitions of biblical authors that are derived from the text itself.[8] To do this, one must

[4] Berman, 24.
[5] For a discussion on how the Qumran sect treated these literary features, see Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008); Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, vol. 77, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2003); Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Judith H. Newman, *Before the Bible: The Liturgical Body and the Formation of Scriptures in Early Judaism* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[6] M.D. Herr, "The Conception of History among the Sages," in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1973), 139; cited in Yair Zakovitch, "Story Versus History," *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 8, no. Panel Sessions: Bible Studies and Hebrew Language (1981): 49.
[7] See Zakovitch, "Story Versus History;" Yosef H. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Samuel & Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies (Seattle, Washington; London, England: University of Washington Press, 1996).
[8] See Alexander Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

adopt the rigor of historical and literary criticism *and simultaneously* respect biblical authors' cultural perceptions, faithfulness, and the sacredness of the biblical text. Arguably, this approach could present hope for a reconciliation between the two poles: faith and historical-critical scholarship.

This study is divided into two parts. The first will be concerned with delineating some of the compositional strategies of biblical authors in writing their histories. We will focus on the book of Chronicles because it "provides clear examples of how at least one biblical historian worked and may shed light on the work of earlier historians."[9] Firstly, we will show that, unlike the conjectures of many scholars, the exegetical practices often associated with the book of Chronicles and other so-called rewritten scripture texts[10] are not exclusive to them but are continuing the literary inner workings that are already in place within other books of the Hebrew Bible, including the Chronicler's *Vorlagen*: Samuel-Kings. By focusing mainly on the primary evidence to discern how ancient authors wrote their histories, we highlight the incongruency between ancient and historical-critical understandings of historiography. Still, this section emphasizes the inevitability of historical-critical tools for describing ancient historiographic standards.[11]

The second part of this essay will tackle some implications of the conclusions reached in the first section on the tension between faith and historical-critical studies. We will converse with some ideas posited by Jon D. Levenson and Joshua Berman, who tackle this tension. We contend that this tension might begin to resolve if believers and historical-critical scholars reexamine their preoccupation with historicity and

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[9] Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 20.

[10] Discussions over the definition, nature, and nomenclature of rewritten scripture texts have persisted over the years and are by no means settled. These discussions have been well documented by others. See Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*, Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008); Molly M. Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism: Scribal Composition and Transmission* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Moshe J Bernstein, "'Rewritten Bible': A Generic Category Which Has Outlived Its Usefulness?," *Textus*, no. 22 (2005): 169–96; Daniel K. Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Extending the Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls 8 (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

[11] Historical-critical thinking should not be replaced with ancient concepts and criteria of history and historiography. Rather, modern historians should be aware of the foreignness of and the divergence between their definitions and standards from ancient times. One analogy could be helpful here. Ancient Hebrew speakers and writers did not conceive language in accord with our modern notions of linguistics and grammar. Grammar textbooks describe, rather than evaluate and judge, how the ancients used their language. The tools of linguistics and the absence of anachronistic judgements bring us closer to the ancient practices. The tools of historical criticism do the same, but their evaluations often alienate us from adequately understanding ancient historiographic compositions.

maintain a type of approach to the Bible that is more nuanced and dependent on the ways ancient understood and wrote their histories.

THE COMPOSITIONAL NATURE OF THE BOOK OF CHRONICLES: A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

[*This section is an adaptation of a more extended history of scholarship in my thesis. There, I also survey the work of many scholars, including Julius Wellhausen, Pancratius Bornelis Beentjes, Simone De Vries, W. M. L. De Wette, Peter Ackroyd, Isaac Kalimi, Hugh Williamson, Sara Japhet, Michael Fishbane, Gray Knoppers, Ralph w. Klein, Thomas Willi, and Steven L. McKenzie.*]

Ever since Julius Wellhausen's *Prolegomena*, no agreement has arisen among scholars regarding the nature of the composition of the book of Chronicles.[12] Some have classified it as a midrash,[13] while others have taken it as a history book (both in Leopold Ranke's definition and otherwise),[14] exegesis,[15] or a theological reinterpretation of its *Vorlagen.*[16] While some of these qualifications—such as exegesis—are not far off the

[12] For a comprehensive survey on Jewish interpretations of the Book of Chronicles, see Isaac Kalimi, "History of Interpretation: The Book of Chronicles in Jewish Tradition," *Revue Biblique* 105, no. 1 (1998): 5–41.

[13] See especially Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, trans. John Sutherland and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: A&C Black, 1885). For a critical summary of Wellhausen's definition, see Isaac Kalimi, *An Ancient Israelite Historian: Studies in the Chronicler, His Time, Place and Writing*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 46 (Assen: Royal Van Gorcum, 2005) where it is argued that Wellhausen's understanding of History erroneously follows that of Leopard Ranke: the task of the historian is to represent history "wie es eigentlich gewesen;" compare also Pancratius Cornelis Beentjes, *Tradition and Transformation in the Book of Chronicles*, Studia Semitica Neerlandica 52 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 4 where he has rejected any exclusive identification of the book of Chronicles as midrash because, unlike the Midrash, which is "literature commenting upon literature," "the Chronicler does not comment upon existing literature, but is creating an entirely new composition of his own; Simone De Vries makes the case that Chronicles has multiple genres including midrash, history, genealogy Simon J. De Vries, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, vol. 11, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1989), 17–20.

[14] See Isaac Kalimi, *The Reshaping of Ancient Israelite History in Chronicles* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), where he mentioned the example of the Conservative-Orthodox school of the nineteenth century, which aimed at defending the historical reliability of Chronicles as a source for the monarchical period against the campaign of W. M. L. De Wette and his followers. Kalimi himself takes the Chronicler to be "a creative artist, a historian who selected the material he desired out of his sources and edited it in the order, the context, and the form he found fitting, thus creating a literary composition comprising part of the late biblical historiography" (7). Lastly, for Kalimi, the Chronicler, as a historian, was not merely writing a reliable history, in Ranke's notion of the term, but was intending to create a composition that reflects the exegesis and interpretation of his ideological-theological outlook; cf. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*; see also the discussions in Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, 1st American ed., Old Testament Library (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 31–34; and Sara Japhet, "The Historical Reliability of Chronicles," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 33 (1985): 83–107.

[15] Michael Fishbane, "Aggadic Exegesis in the Historiographical Literature," in *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 380–407; Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Chronicler as Exegete," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 1, no. 2 (1976): 2–32; Brevard S Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979).

[16] M. Patrick Graham, Steven L. McKenzie, and Gary N. Knoppers, eds., *The Chronicler as Theologian: Essays in Honor of Ralph W. Klein*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 371 (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2003); M. Patrick Graham and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *The Chronicler as Author: Studies in Text and Texture*, Journal for the

mark, their exclusive designation to the book of Chronicles is. This limitation in Chronicles research reflects scholars' inability to take into consideration the totality of the literary evidence found in Qumran, which, as some have argued, reflects that rewriting presents a literary continuum—comprising the book of Chronicles and many other Second Temple texts, including major parts of the Hebrew Bible—from earlier sources. [17]

In her monograph, *Genres of Rewriting in Second Temple Judaism*, Molly Zahn identifies rewriting not as a distinct genre of texts but as a literary method that has taken two forms: *revision and reuse*.[18] The difference between those two forms depends on the context. *Revision* texts rewrite the source to produce a new copy, while *reuse* utilizes a source text to create new work. Therefore, while Zahn has perceived the book of Chronicles as a new work, she has shown that the book should still be classified as a clear example of rewriting, even if its processes are broader than mere copying or paraphrasing. Christophe Nihan discusses the impact of the discoveries of Samuel manuscripts in Cave 4 of Khirbet Qumran on our understanding of the composition and nature of the book of Chronicles as rewritten scripture.[19] He notes that the revisional and rewriting activities many scholars see in Chronicles are not exclusive to it and are present—perhaps to lesser extents—in other traditions of Samuel (i.e., MT Samuel or LXX Samuel). Nihan sees that these rewriting traditions in both Chronicles and other ancient versions of Samuel—as well as in other Qumran texts—"[represent] … a larger scribal trend in the Second Temple period."[20] Nihan's argument discloses the limited impact rewritten scripture scholarship had on the study of Chronicles—its inability to observe the

Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series 263 (Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999) for a variety of contributions on this topic, see also Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Chronicler in His Age*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 101 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

[17] Cf. Teeter, *Scribal Laws: Exegetical Variation in the Textual Transmission of Biblical Law in the Late Second Temple Period*; D. Andrew Teeter, "On 'Exegetical Function' in Rewritten Scripture: Inner-Biblical Exegesis and the Abram/Ravens Narrative in Jubilees," *The Harvard Theological Review* 106, no. 4 (2013): 373–402; Nihan, "Textual Fluidity and Rewriting in Parallel Traditions;" Reinhard G. Kratz, "Rewriting Torah in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of "Torah" in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. D. Andrew Teeter and Brend U. Schipper, vol. 163, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 273–92.

[18] Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting*, 38–39.

[19] Christophe Nihan, "Textual Fluidity and Rewriting in Parallel Traditions," 186–209.

[20] Nihan, 204.

similarities between the literary techniques employed in the book of Chronicles, other rewritten scripture texts, and putatively "non-rewritten scripture" writings.

A similar argument is also posited by D. Andrew Teeter, who says that the texts at Qumran, including the writings scholars designate as rewritten scripture, incorporate similar literary techniques and redactional activity to the ones we find in numerous other "non-rewritten scripture" texts to the extent that "one can frequently trace virtually seamless connections between the internal process of redaction and inner-biblical interpretation and the continuation of these processes within other texts of the period."[21] These similarities, for Teeter, show that rewritten scripture texts—in this case, the book of Jubilees was the case at hand—are "continuation or further extension of traditionary processes at work in the compositional development of the scriptural books themselves."[22]

Next, we present a case study from Chronicles (21:18–27) that further advances these arguments. In a more focused fashion, we show that the Chronicler utilizes similar compositional strategies as the ones found in the Chronicles' assumed *Vorlagen*: Samuel-Kings, particularly 2 Samuel 24:18–25.[23]

[21] D. Andrew Teeter, "The Hebrew Bible and/as Second Temple Literature: Methodological Reflections," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 20, no. 3 (2013): 353.

[22] Teeter, "On 'Exegetical Function,'" 402.

[23] The discovery of texts like 4QSam has led scholars to challenge the scholarly consensus associated with the name of de Wette, which posits that the book of Chronicles depends on the former prophets in their MT form. Accordingly, as stated, many scholars have worked diligently to explain the difference between Chronicles and its *Vorlagen* in the ways mentioned above. The discoveries at Qumran have confirmed the possibility that the sources used by the Chronicles differ in their MT form, which explains the variations in Chronicles' account. As Knoppers writes, "If the Chronicler's Vorlage of Genesis [or Samuel] was, for example, closer to the LXX's [or 4QSam's] version of Genesis [or Samuel] than to the MT's (the Hebrew version as it appears in our Bible), we would be guilty of basic misinterpretation of the Chronicler's craft if we assumed he was rewriting Genesis [or Samuel] whenever his quotations of Genesis differ from the MT." Gary N Knoppers, *I Chronicles, 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1st ed., vol. 12, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 69; This hypothesis, however, did not add much to the discussion of the nature of composition because it does not lead to any constructive realizations. If true, the books of Chronicles would be just a copy of their sources. Therefore, this study adopts the scholarly consensus that the book of Chronicles depended on many biblical books and that his major sources were Samuel and Kings (though in a somewhat different form from the MT). We also agree with Williamson that "overall the Chronicler shows himself as the master, not the servant, of his sources." Hugh Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: London: Eerdmans Pub Co, 1982), 23.

CASE STUDY: 2 CHRONICLES 21:18–27 // 2 SAMUEL 24:18–25

Explaining the Differences

Thomas Willi, in his book *Die Chronik Als Auslegung*, attempts to explain the differences between the two accounts, or rather the Chronicler's additions to, emissions from, and alterations to his source. In agreement with others, Willi thinks this pericope in Chronicles should cause confusion for every attentive reader. Yet, he writes,

> Er bekommt aber schlagartig Sinn, wenn man ihn weniger als für sich durchkonstruierte Einheit denn als Typologisierung nach der Begegnung Gideons mit dem Engel Jahwes erkennt [cf. Judge 6] … Es kann nicht verwundern, daß dem Chronisten eine Transaktion von solcher Tragweite wie jene des zukünftigen Tempelgrundstücks gar im Lichte einer Abrahamtypologie [cf. Gen 23].[24]

Willi holds that the tension between 1 Chr. 21:18–27 and 2 Sam. 24:18–25 is resolved when one notices the allusions of the story in Chronicles to Gideon's narrative in Judges 6 and the Machpelah episode in Genesis 23.[25]

Unlike the case in 2 Samuel 24, where we are told that Gad came on his own with the instruction to build an altar for the LORD to avert the fatal plague (v. 18), 1 Chronicles 21 maintains that *an angel of the LORD* מלאך יהוה sent Gad to David (v. 18). This addition alludes to the story of Gideon in Judges 6:11, where *an angel of the LORD* מלאך יהוה appeared to Gideon. Another addition, namely v. 20, strengthens this allusion. First, the Chronicler, unlike the author of Samuel, writes that Ornan was *threshing wheat* דש חטים when he saw the angel. This parallels Judges 6:11, where Gideon also met the angel while he was *threshing wheat* דשׁ חטים. Secondly, in 1 Chr. 21:20, Ornan *turned* וישב to see the angel, just like Gideon in Judg. 6:18, for whom

[24] Thomas Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung: Untersuchungen zur literarischen Gestaltung der historischen Überlieferung Israels*. Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments (FRLANT) 106 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 157.

[25] Some of the allusions that Willi discusses in his book have been recognized by other scholars before Willi. See, for example, Yair Zakovitch, "Assimilation in Biblical Narratives," *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism*, 1985, 175–96; Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*. But, to my knowledge, Willi was the first to offer a complete account of them.

his angelic visitor waited to return שוב. Lastly, both Ornan (1 Chr. 21:20) and Gideon (Judg. 6:22) *saw* ראה *the angel* המלאך. As noted by Willi, the allusions do not cease at v. 20. Ornan and Gideon showed features of generosity; the former to David (1 Chr. 21:23) and the latter to the angel of the LORD. Both David and Gideon built altars and offered sacrifices to the LORD (1 Chr. 21:26; Judg. 6:24–27). Further, the addition of the *consuming fire* באש מן השמים in 1 Chr. 21:26 clearly parallels Judg. 6:21, where *the fire* האש that consumed Gideon's sacrifice appeared. Finally, Willi observes that the negotiation section (1 Chr. 21:23–25) seems to be portrayed in light of Abraham's negotiations with Ephron at the cave of Machpelah in Genesis 23. Both stories have a Canaanite[26] landowner offering, free of charge, a piece of land for an Israelite who insists on paying the full price כסף מלא (1 Chr. 21:24; Gen 23:12).

In Willi's view, the Chronicler is utilizing his mastery over the Law and the Prophets as well as his belief that the word of God is one and unchanging to write his account.[27] The Chronicler is rewriting his sources to show the knowledgeable reader the hidden links between one story and the other. Still, though we agree with Willi, we must add that his study needed to pay closer attention to the fact that the Chronicler is presenting a text that demands of its readers the same requisites as those required to decipher the links in the Chronicler's *Vorlagen*. The process, however, is made less challenging by the Chronicler by making the allusions more explicit. This mode of interpretation can be traced throughout Chronicles.[28] The literary tactics the Chronicler uses are extensions of the exegetical traditions already at play in his sources. It is possible, therefore, to perceive the Chronicler's composition as a *reading and interpretive guide* for the Law

[26] *A Jebusite* יבוסי in the case of David (1 Chr. 21:15, 18, 28; cf. 2 Chr. 3:1), and *a Hittite* חתי in Abraham's case (Gen 23:23; cf. Gen 10:15).
[27] Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung,* 132-133.
[28] "The pluriform shape of the scriptural text is in significant measure a consequence of this interpenetration of oral and written interpretive processes. The variation produced, though relatively limited in scope, reflects a strong orientation toward comprehension of meaning, toward making explicit what (understood to be) implicit, and similar impulses." Teeter, *Scribal Laws*, 19.

and the Prophets.[29] In the next section, I will show that the David-Gideon and David-Abraham allusions we just saw at play in Chronicles are also present in the book of Samuel.

1 Chr. 21:18–27: An Extension of Existing Redactional Development[30]

David-Gideon's Allusions in the book of Samuel

To begin with, both Gideon and David were mighty warriors called by God to act as saviors for the people of Israel against their enemies. The former led the people against the Midianites, and the latter against the Philistines. Whereas this similarity might seem general, for the Bible contains many characters occupying similar roles, the stark verbal resemblance within their stories suggests otherwise. In Judg. 6, when *the angel of the* LORD מלאך יהיה appeared to Gideon, he told him, "The LORD is with you, valiant warrior (יהוה עמך גבור החיל)" (v. 12). In parallel, we see in 1 Samuel 16 that when Saul asked for a man to relieve him from the torments caused by the spirit of the LORD, one of the attendees said, "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play [the lyre], and a valiant warrior (גבור חיל), a man of war, discerning, handsome, and the LORD is with him (יהוה עמו)" (v. 18). *Only* David and Gideon in the Hebrew Bible are described as both being valiant warriors and having God with them.

Though they are described as valiant warriors, their biblical text represents them as unexpected biblical heroes. In Judg. 6, after Gideon heard about his mission from the angel of the LORD, he was

[29] While many scholars realize the textual pluriformity at Qumran and, thus, agree that no canon of scripture existed in the Second Temple period, these discussions still need to be settled. See the discussions in Sanders James A and McDonald Lee M, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002); James C. VanderKam, "Questions of Canon Viewed Through the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. L. M. McDonald and J. A. Sanders (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 91–109. Some, nonetheless, have convincingly argued that despite the lack of a canon at the time, there was an accepted body of sacred literature that Jews considered to be uniquely authoritative, ancient in origin, and binding on the community for doctrine and practice. Teeter, for example, writes that "the majority of the literature of Second Temple Judaism would be inconceivable apart from the generative force of a corpus composition at its center roughly comparable in shape and scope to the received Hebrew Bible." He describes the presence of textual pluriformity that is prevalent in the Second Temple period as "not merely the result of careless copying, but also of active interpretive engagement within the process of transmission" (374). Teeter, "The Hebrew Bible and/as Second Temple Literature: Methodological Reflections." Similarly, Falk thinks that the data we have from Qumran supports the existence of what he calls "Scripture consciousness." Falk, *The Parabiblical Texts: Strategies for Extending the Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2. He further argued for a more "open" approach to our understanding of scripture in the Second Temple period, which better accounts for the environment of textual pluriformity and fluidity of the time. It is sensible to have both a high level of pluriformity and an accepted—not necessarily fixed—form of a canonized body of texts.

[30] This section's approach has been largely influenced by Teeter's work on Jubilees; cf. Teeter, "On 'Exegetical Function.'"

astonished that God had chosen him. He asked, "But LORD, how can I save Israel, for my clan is the smallest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house (ואנכי הצעיר בבית אבי)" (v. 15)? Though not as explicit, we know that David is also the youngest in his father's house. In 1 Sam. 16, Jesse told Samuel, in reference to David, that "the youngest (הקטן) is remaining still, but he is shepherding the flock" (vv. 10–11), and therefore, no one expected his anointing. His father did not even think bringing him before Samuel and his brothers was necessary.

David-Abraham Allusions in the book of Samuel

The penultimate chapter of 1 Samuel, chapter 30, is full of David-Abraham allusions. Firstly, Abraham and David had relatives who were taken prisoners, and their property was plundered. In Genesis 14, Abraham's nephew, Lot, was taken as a prisoner by the four victorious kings (vv. 11–12). Likewise, in Samuel 30, while David was in battle, his wives were taken captive by the Amalekites (v. 5). As a result of these horrible incidents, Abraham and David decided to set out against their enemies. Both defeated the large enemies of their adversaries with only a small band of soldiers and brought back the captives (cf. Gen. 14 and 1 Sam. 30:9–20).

More intriguingly, in both stories, David and Abraham insisted that everyone should receive their share in the plunder, *even those who did not fight*. Abraham refused to take anything from the King of Sodom that did not belong to him; he only required compensation for the food of the men who fought with him in addition to the share of Aner, Eschol, and Mamre, who do not seem to have joined the fight (Gen. 14:22–24). In 1 Sam. 30, after defeating the Amalekites and taking the plunder, David ensured that not only the 400 combatants had received their share but also the other fatigued 200 who did not partake in the fight. (vv. 21–24).[31]

[31] Early Jewish interpreters have also noted this allusion. In his comment on David's decision to give equal portions, Rabbi Yudan said, והלאה אין כתיב כאן אלא, וממי למד מאברהם זקנו, שאמר בלעדי רק אשר אכלו הנערים וחלק האנשים וגוי (Genesis Rabbah 43:9; cf. Gen 14:24).

It is also worth demonstrating that in the Hebrew Bible—apart from Chronicles—only Abraham and Gideo are described as dying in a good old age בשיבה טובה. Only in Chronicles do we learn that also David died in a good old age בשיבה טובה. One could thus postulate that besides the explicit allusions to Abraham and Gideon in the episode at the threshing floor (1 Chr. 21:18–27), this additional two-in-one allusion is another manifestation by the Chronicler of the allusions that already exist between David and Abraham and between David and Gideon in his *Vorlagen*. It seems that the Chronicler both realized the David-Abraham and the David-Gideon allusions and decided to bring them all together in his own composition by adding the phrase בשיבה טובה in David's eulogy.

The Chronicler has composed a text that continues the literary tactics found in earlier source texts, guiding the readers through the tectonics of the *Vorlagen*'s historiography. In light of this evidence, it is fair to say that the kind of historiography we see in Chronicles and Samuel, among other biblical—and extrabiblical texts—differs from modern understandings and practices of history writing. The priorities of biblical historians, such as the Chronicler and the author of the book of Samuel, are providing exhortations based on the interpretation of their stories and comparing their heroes rather than accurately recording their history on the basis of the scientific method. The book of Chronicles should be understood as one of the earliest *textbooks* for ancient Jewish literary practices used in writing Israel's history. This exegetical approach to writing and rewriting history we see in Chronicles and its *Vorlagen* calls for evaluating scholarly standards of biblical historiography—primarily focused on factuality and ideology—through a close analysis of the literary strategies and techniques used by the biblical authors in their historiographic writings.[32]

[32] See fn. 11.

FAITH AND HISTORICAL CRITICISM: A DISCUSSION WITH JON D. LEVENSON AND JOSHUA BERMAN

[*This is an adaptation of a more extended section of my thesis where I also converse Van A. Harvey and Yair Zakovitch.*]

In *Genres of Rewriting*, Molly Zahn posits, in line with other scholars, that the rise of rewriting of Jewish texts in antiquity accompanied the Jewish textual turn, beginning in the late pre-exilic period and arguably ending with the canonization of the Hebrew Bible. In contrast, the Mesopotamian textual turn was accompanied by a turn *away* from rewiring.[33] On the one hand, the Mesopotamian textual turn led to higher conceptions of textual stabilization. On the other hand, the Jewish textual turn was characterized by a greater tolerance for pluriformity. The Mesopotamians seem to have shown explicit discomfort with this proliferating literary phenomenon.[34] Their discomfort reminded me of my reaction when I first learned about rewritten scripture texts. How could communities perceive a text as authoritative and yet produce another composition that sometimes changes, contradicts, and adds to the authoritative one? I have thus decided to dedicate a part of my study to converse with one of the available examinations of this perturbing question by Jon D. Levenson. I also attempt to show how the conclusions of the first part of this paper could contribute to the ongoing deliberations.

The main argument of Levenson's third chapter of his book *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* is that the unity of the Torah should remain a vital component of theological and scholarly discussions about the text despite the fact that Mosaic authorship is dismissed in historical-critical scholarship.[35] While I agree with this argument, I should add that, in my view, the biblical presentation of Moses as the author of the Torah and the obvious historical-critical evidence for this claim's historical

[33] Zahn, *Genres of Rewriting*, 214–22.
[34] Zahn, 218.
[35] Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 65.

improbability should not necessarily be understood as a contradiction.[36] Instead, it is possible that whoever inserted these authorial remarks had a literary, theological, or artistic reason for this decision. It is one of the central tasks of the historical-critical tool to examine the various literary functions, poetic devices, and probable compositional aims of ancient times, which could provide a newer view into ancient literary tectonics. This view could perhaps constitute an acceptable compromise for both the believer and the critic. The pivotal question is thus: *is there an ancient literary function or poetic device that could explain the presence of contradictory claims in a literary unit?*

Should we assume that we can crack open the literary signifiers of authorial intentions, the text would not then be one with meanings that "no one ever meant,"[37] but rather a composition that utilizes various literary tactics to create texts with particular meanings. This approach, influenced by the work of Brevard Childs[38] and D. Andrew Teeter, could satisfy the two halves of the paradox Levenson mentions: the authority of the Torah and the faithfulness of the biblical exegete.[39] If the historical-critical tool is utilized to investigate ancient literary poetics, we might find ourselves closer to the minds of the biblical authors or redactors.

Later in his book, while discussing the problems of the Protestant contradistinction between scripture and tradition, Levenson says that "without attention to postbiblical tradition, scripture vanishes before our eyes, for the basis of religion in biblical times was not a Bible: the religion *in* the Book is not the religion *of* the Book."[40] While Levenson's stance is convincing, a few remarks are in order. It is indeed historically probable that the books of the Hebrew Bible reflect earlier literary and religious traditions that are not necessarily similar to those of the Bible that are less concerned with *the Book*. However, given the exclusive

[36] Prof. Levenson has clarified to me that one of his intentions in this chapter was to illuminate the contradiction *in mindsets* between the modern historian and the believer (Personal communication, May 2023). I agree with Prof. Levenson that this contradiction exists; however, the notion here is that this contradiction could be tackled when both the historian and the believer adjust their literary and historical presuppositions to meet those of the biblical text and its culture.
[37] Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*, 78.
[38] Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*.
[39] Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism*, 80.
[40] Levenson, 107.

textual—contra oral—access to *the Book* and its existence in some physical canon, it is not easy to differentiate between the religion(s) *in* the Book and that *of* the Book. In its physical—admittedly fluid and pluriform—canon, the Book is our only source for religion *in* and *out of* the Book. It is also the composition out of which postbiblical traditions have arisen. That said, I strongly agree with Levenson's point on the significance of postbiblical traditions. In his view,

> historical criticism does not afford us uninterpreted facts … 'It too is a tradition, with its own values and assumptions, derived from the Enlightenment and western humanism …' [U]nless one holds that the Bible does not deserve to have survived its matrix—that the history of interpretation is only a history of misinterpretation—historical criticism alone cannot suffice. For were the meaning of the text *only* a function of the particular historical circumstances of its composition, recontextualization would never have occurred, and no Bible would have come into existence … historical criticism must learn to interact more creatively with those other [postbiblical] traditions, neither surrendering to them nor demanding that they surrender to historical criticism.[41]

With this cogent treatment in mind, we want to make one positional remark. When it comes to researching the literary poetics of the Bible, we should prioritize the literary strategies employed in the latest books of the Bible, the postbiblical traditions at Qumran—especially the so-called rewritten scripture texts—and early rabbinic interpretations, such as the expansionistic Targumim, over others. The reason for this, as this paper tried to show with the example of Chronicles, is that their faithful extension of the redaction development of their authoritative texts gets us as close as possible to the literary traditions of the Book.

The richness and the literary genius in biblical writings should be navigated in their own right. By tracing the mechanism of scribal compositions, which has been made more explicit in Chronicles, we have a good chance of adequately understanding and evaluating the biblical corpus. From a pragmatic point of view, the burden of making these discoveries falls on biblical scholars and researchers, who, in due course with a certain level of preparedness, can produce accessible literature for the layperson and the scholar that will train them, on the one hand, to think accurately about biblical conceptions of

[41] Levenson, 119, 123.

history, historiography, and myth and, on the other hand, by accurately describing the grammar of biblical composition, teach them how to read the biblical texts.

Recently, Joshua Berman published his semi-popular book *Ani Maamin: Biblical Criticism, Historical Truth, and the Thirteen Principles of Faith*, which deals with the tension between historical criticism and faith. This book constitutes an excellent culmination of our proposed resolution for this tension. Berman argues that in order to understand and properly evaluate the events in the Bible, "we need to understand how the Torah reports … [events] …, we need to understand how the cultures of the ancient world reported historical events generally."[42] Berman untangles the strategies of historiography in the Bible by analyzing them within their ancient Near Eastern context. Furthermore, Berman emphasizes the function of the events narrated in the Tanakh. He believes that the authors of the Tanakh were not so much concerned with providing their readers with factual events. Rather, their main priority seems to have been to offer stories that function as exhortations for readers who are approaching the text "in submission, with a desire to learn its lessons."[43] Therefore, it was vital for these authors to decide on the best method to transmit their historical events in ways that meet this desire. "We see that that author … had two choices: He could present the truest version of the bare facts, at the risk of losing the true message of the story. Or he could ensure that we come away with the true lesson … at the expense of factual accuracy."[44]

It should be clear that this present study agrees with Berman's conclusion. His approach and main ideas are vital for resolving the tension between historical criticism and faith. Historical-critical scholarship must revise its evaluative standards for the biblical events and not rush into discrediting the historical claims of the text on the basis of anachronistic views of the notions of historiography, history,

[42] Berman, *Ani Maamin*, xix.
[43] Berman, 24.
[44] Berman, 28.

and myth. Instead, Berman suggests it should seek to understand and evaluate the text according to the ancient criteria of these concepts. Nonetheless, Berman's method gives more attention to the ancient Near Eastern context of the Bible than the biblical text itself. This attention shows Berman's preference for the comparative method. Consequently, his book does not adequately describe the fullness and richness of the biblical literary tactics and grammar of composition for the modern reader. In other words, Berman's arguments convincingly highlight the methodological fallacies present in the modern historical study of the Bible. They also teach us the importance of the ancient Near Eastern background for understanding the biblical notions of history and historiography. However, it does not describe to modern readers *how to read* the Bible after adjusting these anachronistic notions.

CONCLUSION

In the first part of the present study, we tried to show that evidence from the book of Chronicles suggests that some of the exegetical methods employed in Chronicles, such as typology and narrative analogy, are not distinct to a literary genre or a group of texts, such as rewritten scripture, but are instead a continuation of a scribal literary trend at work in earlier biblical texts, such as the book of Samuel. We have argued that what we have in Chronicles is a different kind of historiography with an exegetical function that aims to disclose the more implicit narrative analogies and hidden interpretive links in its sources. Moreover, the historiographical techniques in Chronicles are not very different from the ones in its *Vorlagen*. Although the biblical authors of Chronicles and Samuel must have understood and cared about factual historiography, this practice does not seem to be their main priority. They were more interested in the exegetical and exhortatory functions of historiography. In light of this discussion, we think that more attention should be given to the similarities of compositional strategies between the later books of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., the book of Chronicles) as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls and their earlier sources (e.g., Samuel). We also presented and reviewed two attempts at solving the tension between historical criticism and faith. We have argued that one

step towards attending to this tension is for scholars to be aware of the dangers behind scholarly anachronistic conceptions of historiography in the study of the Bible. A more extensive study of the historiographic grammar and techniques in the Bible should offer both the scholar and the believer a more sophisticated framework for understanding the historical claims found within the biblical corpus.

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