Chapter 1: The Rewritten Bible

In his seminal work *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies,* Geza Vermes introduced the term "rewritten Bible" into the discussion of Second Temple Jewish literature as part of a larger project to trace the development of haggadic traditions from the late Second Temple period into the rabbinic period. Vermes used the term rewritten Bible to describe a number of texts which closely follow portions of the biblical narrative but also augment, elide, and emend the text in ways which produced new literary works in their own right. According to Vermes, through this exegetical process, "the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative" in order to "anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance."footnoteGeza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies,* StPB 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 95; See also Geza Vermes, "The Genesis of the Concept of 'Rewritten Bible'," in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes,* ed. József Zsengellér, JSJsup 166 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 3–9. Vermes traced these interpretive traditions historically and attempted to demonstrate sn interpretive continuity between the Second Temple and rabbinic periods. Although the formal characteristics of these narratives differed from later midrash, rewritten Bible texts displayed the same kinds of "midrashic" tendencies. In Vermes' conception, therefore, the authors of rewritten Bible texts *implicitly* made use of interpretive traditions that later works such as the Talmud and Mishnah

expressed *explicitly*.

Since the publication of *Scripture and Tradition,* Vermes's concept of rewritten Bible has taken on a life of its own and developed into its own discreet area of study as scholars from various related disciplines have reused, reinterpreted, and redefined the term.[1] The discussion of RwB has become especially fruitful within the field of Qumran studies where new texts from the Second Temple period continued to be published throughout the late 20th century and where new material discoveries continue to this day. However, the idea of biblical rewriting has also been fruitfully applied to texts that have long been known to scholars such as Jubilees, Deuteronomy, Chronicles, and even the Synoptic Gospels.[2]

Although the scope and nuance of of the term rewritten Bible has shifted in the

---

1. See especially the early discussions in Philip S. Alexander, "Retelling the Old Testament," in *It is Written—Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF,* ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 99–121), George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus,* ed. Michael E. Stone (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 89–156, and Daniel J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies I: The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters,* ed. Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, BMI 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 239–47.

2. On reading the Gospels as RwB, see Mogens Müller, "Luke — The Fourth Gospel? The 'Rewritten Bible' Concept as a Way to Understand the Nature of the Later Gospels," in *Voces Clamantium in Deserto: Essays in Honor of Kari Syreeni,* ed. Sven-Olav Back and Matti Kankaan-

intervening years, the trajectory set by Vermes nearly sixty years ago has remained reasonably consistent. By focusing on the relationships that exist between RwB texts and their scrptural *Vorlagen*, studies on RwB texts have tended to discuss the topic primarily through the lens of biblical or scriptural interpretation by focusing on how the authors or editors of RwB texts retained, emended, or excised material *from the biblical text.* While these treatments are often very good, this preoccupation with the "biblical" text (or a particular "scriptural" text, using the more common terminology) I think has impeded the study of these texts as participants in a broader cultural discourse that extends beyond "biblical interpretation."

In this chapter I will trace the emergence and evolution of the concept of rewritten Bible from Vermes's use in *Scripture and Tradition* to the present focusing on three key questions and ideas which have shaped the scholarly discourse around rewritten Bible studies: 1) the terminology surrounding rewritten Bible, 2) what works should fall under the rubric of rewritten Bible and 3) whether rewritten Bible constitutes a literary genre, a process, or some combination of the two. Taking these questions into account, I will then offer my own suggestions on how the RwB conversation can be augmented by the treatment of RwB texts as participants in a broader cultural discourse through the lens of cultural and social memory studies.

---

niemi, STÅA (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2012), 231–42; Gert J. Malan, "Is Rewritten Bible/Scripture the Solution to the Synoptic Problem?" *HTS* 70.1 1–10, and more recently Garrick V. Allen, "Rewriting and the Gospels," *JSNT* 41.1 (2018): 58–69

1.1 SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

The primary purpose of *Scripture and Tradition* was not to offer a clear definition of the term "rewritten Bible," but to lay the groundwork for the historical, diachronic, study of aggadic traditions, of which rewritten Bible makes only a small part.[3] As Vermes recounts, prior to the mid-twentieth century, the prevailing approach to the study of aggadic exegesis was to treat the aggadah as originating during the Tannaitic period. The aggadah were viewed as "the result of the adoption, and anonymous repetition, of popular interpretations by favourite preachers,"[4] the earliest of which were from the second century CE and were represented by Targums Onkelos and Jonathan. Furthermore, studies of ancient Jewish literature at this time focused on texts which modern Judaism considered authentic. As a result, a good number of earlier texts—for example, the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, and sectarian texts—were often categorically excluded from discussions of the origins of aggadic exegesis.[5]

A series of publications and discoveries beginning in the 1930's, however, began to undermine the notion that these early exegetical traditions began in the second century CE. Vermes credits this broadening of aggadic studies to a series of major studies and discoveries such as Rappaport's *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus*,[6] Paul Kahle's Schweich Lectures at

3. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 3.

4. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 3.

5. Ibid., 2.

6. Salomo Rappaport, *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus,* Veröffentlichungen der Oberrabbiner Dr. H.P. Chajes-Preisstiftung an der Israelitisch-theologischen Lehranstalt in

the British Academy on the Cairo Geniza (given in 1941, published 1947),[7] Kisch's new text edition of Ps. Philo's Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (1949),[8] the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1948) and Codex Neofiti (1956), as well as (and perhaps especially) Renée Bloch's work on midrash.[9] The overarching theme among these works was the evidence for continuity between biblical interpretive traditions prior to the second century, and later aggadah. For example, Vermes notes that Rappaport's work on Jewish Antiquities identified substantial overlaps between Josephus's text and Rabbinic aggadah and suggested, therefore, that Josephus had drawn from an already living tradition of interpretation. The implication of his suggestion is that the aggadah of the second century were not novel exegetical works, but were themselves products of earlier exegetical traditions.

Building on these recent advancements, the explicitly stated purpose of *Scripture and*

Wien 3 (Vienna: Alexander Kohnt Memorial Foundation, 1930).

7. Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza,* The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1947).

8. Guido Kisch, *Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum,* PMS 10 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1949).

9. Renée Bloch, "Écriture et tradition dans le Judaïsme: Aperçus sur l'origine du Midrash," *CaS,* 1954, 9–34; Renée Bloch, "Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice,* ed. William Scott Green, trans. William Scott Green, with William J. Sullivan, BJS 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 51–75, trans. of "Note méthodologique pour l'etude de la littérature rabbinique," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 43.2 (1955): 194–225; Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 3–7.

Tradition was to push the field beyond synchronic analysis of haggadah toward diachronic, historical analyses to trace the development of these exegetical traditions.[10] The book is eight chapters long and is divided into four parts.

The first section of *Scripture and Tadition*, entitled "The Symbolism of Words," is composed of three chapters which attempt to explain some of the proccesses by which localized symbolic interpretations were able to affect the interpretation of other, nominally related texts. In his first chapter, he notes the divergent treatment of Gen 44:18–19 among ancient commentators and proceeds through a synoptic study of this passage in the Fragmentary Targum, Targum Neofiti, and the Tosefta of Targum Yerushalmi in order to argue for a relative chronology based on their use of shared interpretive traditions. He concludes that the Fragmentary Targum represents the most primitive work, whose interpretive strategy is essentially inner-biblical. He then argues that the Tosefta of Targum Yerushalmi depends on the Fragmentary Targum but offers a distinct interpretive stance and that the Targum Neofiti represents a later combination of these two traditions. In his second chapter, Vermes examines the symbolic use of the term "Lebanon" in the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish literature as a reference to Jerusalem and the Temple and how those symbolic meanings came to be. He identifies the Song of Songs as the intermediary text which helped to establish this tradition within post-exilic Judaism and that it occupies a unique position as the only biblical text which clearly uses the name Lebanon symbolically for the Temple. Importantly, Vermes shows that the symbolic use of Lebanon to represent Jerusalem and the Temple is rooted in *biblical*

10. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 1; See also Bloch, "Methodological Note," 51–75.

exegesis. This is a key idea for Vermes because it establishes a continuity between the production of the biblical text and its later interpretation. In chapter three, Vermes builds on his earlier work on the term "Lebanon" and examines other words which take on symbolic meaning in later Jewish texts: "lion," "Damascus," "*Meḥoqeq*," and "Man" and attempts to show that a similar process took place among the Dead Sea Scrolls texts and the targumic and midrashic materials.

It is in the second part of *Scripture and Tradition*—entitled "The Rewritten Bible"—that the topic of Rewritten Bible is first addressed directly. The section is composed of two chapters (four and five), both of which focus on the figure Abraham and the aggadic traditions surrounding his life. The purpose of these two chapters is to demonstrate a continuity of interpretive traditions from the late Second Temple period through to the early rabbinic period and beyond.

In order to do this Vermes uses these two chapters to approach the topic from both ends of the chronological spectrum in what he refers to as "retrogressive" and "progressive" historical studies. In chapter four, Vermes embarks on what he calls a "retrogressive historical study" by which he means beginning with later, more developed traditions and working back toward their origins. In this case, Vermes begins with the 11th century CE text *Sefer ha-Yashar* and works backward to identify sections of the text which exhibit earlier traditions, most notably those in the Targums, Josephus, Jubilees, and (Ps.) Philo. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that even late texts can contain valuable information about earlier methods of exegesis. As Vermes puts it, "[Sefer ha-Yashar] manifests a direct continuity with the

corresponding tradition of the time of the second Temple, but reflects also the influence of the haggadah of the Tannaim and Amoraim."[11] On the other hand, in chapter five, Vermes proceeds with a "progressive historical study," beginning with the oldest materials and working forward. Still focusing on the figure Abraham, Vermes treats in detail the relationship between Gen 12:8–15:4 and cols. 19–22 of the Genesis Apocryphon. Notably, Vermes treats Genesis Apocryphon as "the most ancient midrash of all"[12] and, rather dramatically declares it to be the "lost link between the biblical and the Rabbinic midrash.".[13] For Vermes, the Genesis Apocryphon occupies a unique position just one step removed from inner-biblical exegesis. Accordingly, Vermes believed that the author of the Genesis Apocryphon was attemptingt "to make the biblical story more attractive, more real, more edifying, and above all more intelligible" and to "[reconcile] unexplained or apparently conflicting statements in the biblical text in order to allay doubt and worry."[14] According to Vermes, the Genesis Apocryphon's interpretation of Genesis was "organically bound" to the text of Genesis and the additions that *were* made sprung from the interpretation of the Bible itself and not whole-sale from the mind of the author. Where texts like Jubliees sought to systematically advance a theological vision, according to Vermes, the author of Genesis Apocryphon intended to simply "explain the biblical text," calling it illustrative of "the unbiased rewriting of the Bible."[15]

---

11. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 95.

12. Ibid., 124.

13. Ibid., 124.

14. Ibid., 126.

15. ibid., 126. I think this statement is demonstrably false, as I will argue in chapter three.

The third part of *Scripture and Tradition* is titled "Bible and Tradition" and is composed of a single chapter engaging in a lengthy analysis of the traditions surrounding the seer Balaam from Numbers 22–24. Vermes observes that while the majority of post-biblical texts treat Balaam as a villain, in *LAB* he is treated as a sort of tragic hero.[16] The more traditional portrayal of Balaam as a wicked prophet began within the nexus of biblical tradition itself. The various documentary strata of the Balaam story cast the prophet in differing lights, and it is the final stratum, the P layer, got the final say—within the biblical text—about him. Vermes points out, however, that ignoring the Preistly additions yields a story somewhat similar to that of *LAB*. Thus, Vermes concludes that the exegetical traditions found in the later Targums and rabbinic works are simply the continuation of the exegetical strategies employed within the Bible itself, which he calls "biblical midrash or haggadah."[17]

The last two chapters make up the final section of Vermes's study, titled "Theology and Exegesis," and push the discussion to include early Christianity. Chapter seven is entitled "Circumcision and Exodus 4:24–26" but offers a subtitle of "Prelude to the Theology of Baptism," which gives some hint at the ultimate, if tacit, goal of the chapter. Discussing the

---

The Genesis Apocryphon utilizes traditions tangential to Genesis which are not themselves contained within the biblical work. In fairness to Vermes, the early columns of Genesis Apocryphon were not available to him when he published *Scripture and Tradition* and it is in the earlier columns where this reliance on extra-biblical material is most easily seen.

16. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 173.

17. Ibid., 176.

topic of circumcision in Ex 4:24–26 and its treatment among the early exegetes, Vermes's primary observation is simply that the theology of circumcision and the exegetical traditions which surrounded it, were affected by historical forces and theological ideologies. For instance, he claims that Jubilees omitted the rather odd statement that God was going to kill Moses—who was saved by the circumcision of his son by Zipporah—because "[i]t was impossible for its author to accept that God tried to kill Moses as it was for him to believe that Moses neglected to circumcise his son on the eighth day after his birth."[18] Similarly, he notes that after the Bar Kokhba rebellion, the practice of circumcision was outlawed and so, "it is not surprising, therefore, to find the spiritual authorities of Palestinian Judaism emphasizing the greatness and necessity of this essential rite, and explaining away … every possible biblical excuse for delaying the circumcision of their children."[19] He ends the chapter by suggesting that the early Christian association of baptism with circumcision (citing Rom 4:3–4 and Col 2:11–12) was enabled by the traditional Jewish association of circumcision with blood sacrifice ("the Blood of the Covenant").[20] That Paul (to whom he attributes both Romans and Colossians) associated baptism with circumcision therefore, was "not due, therefore, to his own insight, but springs directly from the contemporary Jewish doctrine of circumcision which he adopted and adapted."[21]

Vermes makes a similar move in chapter eight, entitled "Redemption and Genesis XXII:

18. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 185.

19. Ibid., 189.

20. Ibid., 190.

21. Ibid., 191.

The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus." In it, he compares a number of ancient works' treatment of the Aqedah and demonstrates how the (near-)sacrifice of Isaac became a prototype for the entire sacrificial system in later Judaism. The sacrifice of animals in the Temple functioned as a "reminder" to God of the faithfulness of Abraham. [[TODO: Add some critique here?]] Furthermore, he shows the ways the tradition grew to focus on the willingness of Isaac to be sacrificed and his function as a proto-matryr. Thus, he ends the chapter by addressing the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus as a willing sacrifice to God and its putative relationship to the Aqedah. Vermes makes the case that the redemptive theology of the NT—typically attributed to Paul—was not original to him. He writes:

> For although [Paul] is undoubtedly the greatest theologian of the Redemption, he worked with inherited materials and among these was, by his own confession, the tradition that "Christ dies for us according to the Scriptures."[22]

He then proceeds to push the origin of this theology back further into the first century CE, and, in rather dramatic fashion, suggests that the introduction of the Aqedah motif into Christian theology—by means of the Suffering Servant—may have been by Jesus himself.[23]

Vermes concludes the chapter by discussing the Aqedah and the Eucharist. Just as the whole sacrificial system pointed back toward the binding of Isaac in targumic exegesis, the eucharistic rite likewise was intended—according to Vermes—to point back to Jesus's redemptive sacrifice. Thus he concludes:

---

22. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 221.

23. Ibid., 223.

> Although it would be inexact to hold that the Eucharistic doctrine of the New Testament, together with the whole Christian doctrine of Redemption, is nothing but a Christian version of the Jewish Akedah theology, it is nevertheless true that in the formation of this doctrine the targumic representation of the Binding of Isaac has played an essential role.
>
> Indeed, without the help of Jewish exegesis it is impossible to perceive any Christian teaching in its true perspective.[24]

The arc of Vermes's study, therefore, is meant to establish a continuity between the earliest traditions of biblical interpretation with the later traditions of both Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity and to trace the evolution of those traditions historically. Rather than viewing the early rabbinic interpretations as *sui generis*, Vermes's larger purpose is to establish *continuity* between the earliest examples of biblical interpretation—even innerbiblical interpretation—and the exegetical work of the rabbis. Rewritten Bible texts, therefore represent an intermediary phase between innerbiblical interpretation and later explicit commentaries, all of which can be viewed on a single interpretive continuum.

1.1.1 Vermes's Use of Rewritten Bible

The fact that Vermes spent so little time explaining precisely what he meant by the term RwB bears witness to the fact that Vermes thought the term was self-explanatory. Vermes makes this

24. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 227.

sentiment clear in his short retrospective on the origins of the term, expressing shock over the debate that his term prompted and the scholarly confusion surrounding it. He writes:

> The notion [of RwB], which over fifty years ago I thought was quite clear, seemed to the majority of the more recent practitioners nebulous and confused, and lacked methodological precision.[25]

Only a few scholars, according to Vermes, managed to remain true to his original vision.[26] Instead, many subsequent studies, according to Vermes, "moved the goalposts" to better "suit the interest of their inquiry."[27]

Yet, one cannot help but push back against Vermes here as scholars' desire to narrow the scope of the term is, I think, a reasonable impulse. After all, Vermes's use of RwB covers texts written in several languages, across centuries, in no particular geographical region, and, while all the texts are "narratives," the formal similarities between Genesis Apocryphon, Jewish Antiquities, Jubilees, and the Palestinian Targums stop there. Vermes specifically laments the narrowing of the term RwB to primarily focusing on the Dead Sea Scrolls texts. Of course, when *Scripture and Tradition* was first published in 1961 (Vermes notes that the manuscript, in fact, was submitted for publication in 1959), only a small portion of the scrolls were published

25. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 3.

26. He specifically references Alexander, "It is Written," 99–121 and Moshe J. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible: A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?" *Text* 22 (2005): 169–96.

27. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 4.

or accessible to more than a few specific scholars. But the field's subsequent preoccupation with the Qumran material, he suggests, is misguided.[28]

This sentiment is—it seems to me—a bit over-blown. On the one hand, Genesis Apocryphon and the Temple Scroll receive a lot of scholarly attention, but Jubilees and Jewish Antiquities do as well. Even so, whatever narrowing of the discussion of RwB has ocurred toward the Qumran scrolls is likely symptomatic of the "methodological [im]precision" attributed to *Scripture and Tradition* and the fact that Vermes did not clearly state what he meant when he used the term rewritten Bible. For example, Vermes's inclusion of the medieval Sefer ha-Yashar muddies the waters for those who wish to discuss RwB as a process of scriptural interpretation which can be situated historically. On the other hand, his inclusion of the Palestinian Targums makes sense diachronically, but formally, the Targums are translations and not "new compositions" in the same sense that Jubilees or Genesis Apocryphon are. Within *Scripture and Tradition,* of course, Vermes treats these texts with due care and nuance—in the case of Sefer ha-Yashar, he endeavors to show that traditions preserved in the

28. I am sympathetic to what Vermes perceived as "moving the goalposts"—I think the context and purpose of how he used the term RwB is often ignored—but it is worth pointing out that the reason the term RwB is so often applied to the Qumran texts likely has less to do with a conscious, scholarly effort, and more to do with the fragmentation of the various fields that deal with the texts in question. A scholar with a background primarily focused on the New Testament or Hebrew Bible may not be as familiar with the texts and traditions of rabbinic Judaism that Vermes discusses in *Scripture and Tradition.*

text can be traced back to the Second Temple period—but the fact that Vermes sought to situate haggadic developments diachronically while implementing a category that spanned such broad socio-religious (Qumran, Early Christian, Rabbinic, Medieval), chronological (1st – 12th centuries CE), and literary (translations, narrative, revelatory/apocalyptic, history?) horizons has given some scholars a reasonable challenge when attempting to use the term in their own work. Thus, simply because Vermes set the "goalposts" (to suit his *own* thesis, I might add), does not mean that others cannot or should not move them when appropriate, though hopefully along with a well-reasoned explanation for the change.

1.2 REWRITTEN BIBLE AND REWRITTEN SCRIPTURE

Since Vermes coined the term RwB a number of scholars have suggested that the term be modified to more accurately reflect the (now, well established) fact that there was no "Bible" in the late Second Temple period and that many of the works that would eventually make up the Hebrew Bible did not have stable textual witnesses that could be meaningfully "rewritten." Because of these difficulties, scholars have, in recent years, suggested alternate designations for the phenomenon under investigation, the most widely used of which is "rewritten *scripture*." Vermes's original term RwB was a product of its time. It took for granted the existence of a canonical "Bible" that more-or-less resembled the Bible used by the rabbis in the early centuries CE and term rewritten scripture was intended to correct what scholars perceived as an

anachronistic reference to this canon of scripture during the late Second Temple period.[29]

Apart from the anachronistic reference to a "Bible," one of the primary objections to the use of the term RwB is the implicit assertion that RwB texts necessarily fall outside the Bible.[30] The notion that a rewritten biblical text by definition, could not be considered "Bible" itself runs contrary to, on the one hand, texts such as Chronicles and Deuteronomy which—for all intents and purposes—"rewrite" their biblical *Vorlagen* but are themselves a part of "the Bible" and on the other hand texts such as Jubilees and the Temple Scroll which likely were considered "scripture" among certain groups in antiquity and, in the case of Jubilees, remains a part of the biblical canon of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the present. [[Nuance this see: R.W. Cowley "the ethiopina canon of today" and Baynes "Enoch and Jubilees…"]]

Yet, I am not at all convinced that substituting the term "scripture" for "Bible" meaningfully affects the way that scholars have continued to discuss the topic at hand. While I

29. Jonathan G. Campbell, "Rewritten Bible: A Terminological Reassessment," in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes,* ed. József Zsengellér, JSJsup 166 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 49–81; See also Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon," in *The Canon Debate,* ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 21–35; and Eugene Ulrich, "Crossing the Borders from 'Pre-Scripture' to Scripture (Rewritten) to 'Rewritten Scripture'," in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes,* ed. József Zsengellér, JSJsup 166 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 83–104.

30. Campbell, "Rewritten Bible," 61.

agree that "the Bible" as we know it from the early centuries CE did not exist during the late Second Temple period, I likewise find the strict reading of "Bible" to mean "the Hebrew Bible (as we know it)" unnecessarily rigid. To say that Jubilees was a part of the Qumran Community's "Bible" does not carry a vastly different nuance, it seems to me, than to say that the Qumran Community considered Jubilees to be "scripture." Insofar as a particular group—given a set of texts—can determine which it considers to be "scripture" it has, at least in common parlance, a "Bible." That said, I can appreciate the desire to fine-tune our terminology to better reflect the scholarly discourse.

It could, however, be argued that the term "scripture" is no more ancient a term than "Bible." Scholars such as James VanderKam have done important work in trying to discern which texts may have been considered "authoritative scripture" at Qumran,[31] but the fact remains that such endeavors start with the assumption that the ancients utilized a notion at all similar to what we consider "textual authority." While there is good reason to believe that some texts were more important than others during the Second Temple period (e.g., the Pentateuch, Isa et al.), the degree to which they considered them "scripture" is not at all clear, much less as a binary category. Thus, replacing the term RwB with Rewritten Scripture, it seems to me, may very well shift the semantic burden from a well defined modern category of text to an ill-defined ancient category.

For the sake of simplicity, I will follow Vermes in this study and simply use the term

31. James C. VanderKam, "Authoritative Literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *DSD* 5.3 (1998): 382–402.

"Rewritten Bible." In doing so, I realize that I am deviating from what has become the common scholarly terminology. Yet, I find some comfort in Vermes's own take on the matter, who writes, "Frankly, replacing 'Bible' by 'Scripture' strikes me as a mere quibble…I suggest therefore that we stick with the 'Rewritten *Bible*' and let the music of the argument begin."[32]

1.3 DEFINING THE BOUNDARIES OF REWRITTEN BIBLE

Early adopters of the Vermes's taxonomy experimented with applying the term RwB to a wide range of Second Temple Jewish literature and the discussion about which texts should fall under the rubric of RwB has continued into the present. Insofar as "rewritten" texts can be measured by how closely they resemble their *Vorlagen*, defining the boundaries of RwB focuses on which texts are *too far* from their *Vorlagen* to meaningfully be considered "rewritten," forming the "upper bound" and texts which are *too close* to their *Vorlagen* to be considered distinct literary works, forming the "lower bound." At the upper bound, for example, the *Book of the Watchers* and the *Book of Giants* clearly are rooted in the biblical text, yet most scholars do not consider them sufficiently dependent on the text of Genesis to be considered "rewritten." They take Genesis 6:1–4 as a point of departure, but do not return to the biblical text in a meaningful way. Conversely, at the lower bound, the Samaritan Pentateuch and the 4QReworkedPent, although they certainly modify their *Vorlagen* (and in that sense are "rewritten"), are more often considered examples of alternate textual "editions" rather than rewritten works. Likewise, the Targums and LXX, as translations, are frequently excluded from

32. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 3–9 (original emphasis).

discussions of RwB at the lower bound because they were meant to be perceived as the same literary work as their *Vorlagen*.

1.3.1 The Upper Bound

Vermes's use of the term RwB grew out of the concrete examples of texts that exhibited the sorts of exegetical practices relevant to later aggadic traditions. As others adopted the term, however, the question of how to abstract the concept to something meaningful that could be applied to other texts was explored by a number of scholars. These early applications of the term RwB, like Vermes's use, did not tend to carry a technical nuance and instead focused on the ways that numerous texts reappropriated biblical stories, figures and themes in their own works.

In his 1984 article "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," George Nickelsburg discusses a number of texts which are "very closely related to the biblical texts, expanding and paraphrasing them and implicitly commenting on them."[33] We should note that, although the article does deal with RwB, it includes a discussion of texts which even Nickelsburg does not consider "rewritten" (as the title indicates) discussing texts which introduce wholly new material into the traditions of the Bible.[34]

Nickelsburg does, however, provide a list of texts which he loosely describes as examples of biblical rewriting: *1 Enoch*, *Book of Giants*, Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Jewish Antiquities, the Books of Adam and Eve (*Apocalypse of Moses*, *Life of Adam and Eve*), and some

33. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten," 89.

34. Ibid., 89–90.

Hellenistic Jewish Poets including Philo's *On Jerusalem*, Theodotus's *On the Jews*, and the *Exagoge* by one "Ezekiel the Poet of Tragedies." Compared to Vermes's list, Nickelsburg's represents a maximalist understanding of the RwB phenomenon. The inclusion, especially, of *1 Enoch* illustrates his tendency to include works that build off of the biblical text (in this case, Genesis 6:1–4), but do track with the biblical narrative for long stretches.

One of the more interesting contributions that Nickelsburg makes to the conversation is his idea that biblical rewriting followed a trajectory from rewriting smaller units of the Bible—involving short stories that deal with particular events from the biblical text—to longer, more systematic, treatments which span multiple biblical books. His treatment of 1 Enoch (which is, at least in part, the earliest text that he deals with) is illustrative of this approach. Rather than dealing with 1 Enoch as a whole, Nickelsburg addresses the various rewritings of the flood narrative throughout 1 Enoch as well as in the Book of Giants (which is not formally a part of 1 Enoch, but has a clear connection to the work). Setting aside for the moment that 1 Enoch is a composite work, we can appreciate that the flood story from Gen 6–9 is retold and to varying degrees reinterpreted throughout 1 Enoch.[35]

Although Nickelsburg generally accepts that the rewritten texts "comment" on the Bible, he notes that the posture toward the biblical text is also not uniform even among the agreed upon RwB texts. For example, while the author of Jubilees's concerns are largely halakhic and the book makes explicit reference to the biblical text, the authority assumed by

35. By my count, there are six retellings of the flood in 1 Enoch: 6–11; 54:7; 64–69; 83–84; 86–89; and 106–107.

the author of Jubilees does not (at least rhetorically) originate in the exposition of the Torah, but in the "immutable heavenly tablets."[36] Nickelsburg thus states:

> This process of transmitting and revising the biblical text reflects a remarkable view of Scripture and tradition. The pseudepigraphic ascription of the book to an angel of the presence and the attribution of laws to the heavenly tablets invest the author's interpretation of Scripture with absolute divine authority."[37]

In contrast, Genesis Apocryphon seems to have very little interest in halakhic matters and instead seems to just elaborate on the story by giving detailed geographic information and providing the reader with more dramatic characters.[38] Finally, he observes that Liber antiquitatum biblicarum likewise differs with Jubilees in its omission of halakhic matters and its "highly selective reproduction of the text."[39] This selectivity also differs from the Genesis Apocryphon, which otherwise is "characterized by the addition of lengthy non-biblical incidence."[40]

Ultimately, Nickelsburg differs from Vermes mainly in the way he views the Bible during the late Second Temple period. Although Nickelsburg observes that the preoccupation with certain texts suggests that they were held in high regard, he does not have the same

---

36. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten," 100–1.

37. Ibid., 101.

38. Ibid., 106.

39. Ibid., 110.

40. Ibid., 110.

interest in tying the exegetical practices of, for example, Jubilees, with earlier inner-biblical or later haggadic traditions. Because Nickelsburg treats RwB as a process, he is able to highlight the fact that, e.g., 1 Enoch does indeed "rewrite" certain pericopae from Genesis despite the fact that the whole book (which, we should note, is a composite text to begin with) does not maintain a "centripetal" relationship with the biblical narrative.

Daniel Harrington's 1986 contribution entitled "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies I: The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," adopts the term RwB to talk about texts produced around the turn of the era by Palestinian Judaism that "take as their literary framework the flow of the biblical text itself and apparently have as their major purpose the clarification and actualization of the biblical story."[41] In this regard, he follows Vermes closely in how he imagines RwB to function. Yet, compared to Vermes, he operates with a slightly expanded list of rewritten texts. In addition to Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Ps. Philo's Liber antiquitatum biblicarum and Josephus's Jewish Antiquities, he also includes the *Assumption of Moses* and the Temple Scroll. Furthermore, he makes a point to suggest that a number of other texts may be able to be included in the list, including *Paralipomena of Jeremiah*, *Life of Adam and Eve/Apocalypse of Moses*, and *Ascension of Isaiah*. Harrington's major contribution is his explicit rejection of RwB as a category or literary genre (more on this, below) in favor of a process-oriented approach. Because of this fact, Harrington takes a broad view of rewriting and allows, to some degree, that this process be understood similar to a reception history (although, this is my term, and not his).

41. Harrington, "The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," 239.

[[TODO: Probably combine these paragraphs; I need to talk about how the TS had not been published when Vermes wrote STJ]]

Harrington's inclusion of the Temple Scroll marked a significant deviation from Vermes's use of the term by including non-narrative material under the rubric of RwB. While several of Harrington's other suggested text are not considered RwB by many scholars, the inclusion of other non-narrative texts, in particular the Temple Scroll, has gained wide acceptance.[42]

Building on the notion that RwB could also include non-narrative material, George Brooke, in a more recent treatment of the topic, defines RwB as "any representation of an authoritative scriptural text that implicitly incorporates interpretive elements, large or small, in the retelling itself."[43] Adopting a "loose" definition of the term Brooke includes in his discussion biblical texts that rewrite other biblical texts such as Deuteronomy and Chronicles in addition to examples of texts which "rewrite" portions of each of the major divisions of the Hebrew Bible, most of which were found at Qumran.[44]

---

42. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 169–96.

43. George Brooke, "Rewritten Bible," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls,* ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 777–81.

44. Brooke categorizes the texts as follows: Reworked Pentateuchs, Rewritten Pentateuchal narratives, Rewritten Pentateuchal laws, Rewritten Former Prophets, Rewritten Latter Prophets, and Rewritten Writings. ibid., 778–80; See also George Brooke, "The Rewritten Law, Prophets, and Psalms: Issues for Understanding the Text of the Bible," in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew*

The purposes of rewriting, according to Brooke, are manifold, but in each case the (re)writer augmented or repurposed an authoritative base text for some new context. He writes:

> The rewriting seems to have a variety of purposes, among which are the following: to improve an unintelligible base text, making it more comprehensible (11Q19); to improve a text by removing inconsistencies—often through internal harmonization (4QpaleoExod^{m}); to justify some particular content by providing explanations for certain features in the base text (1QapGen); to make an authoritative text serve a particular function, perhaps in a liturgical setting (4Q41); to encourage the practice of particular legal rulings (Jubilees); and to make an old text have contemporary appeal (Temple Scroll).[45]

While I am sympathetic to the more maximalist approaches of Nickelsburg, Harrington, and Brooke, none of these treatments offer any concrete criteria for delineating between RwB and texts that merely allude to biblical stories. Philip Alexander has suggested that certain works which are primarily "expansive" (the Book of Giants, the Book of Noah) should not be considered RwB because their relationship to the biblical text is "centrifugal"—that is, they take the biblical text as a point of departure while formally RwB texts show a "centripetal"

Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries, ed. Edward D. Herbert and Emanuel Tov (London: British Library; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2002), 31–40.

45. Brooke, "Rewritten Bible," 778.

relationship to the biblical text—that is, they expand beyond the biblical text, but remain tightly coupled to the text *as it exists in the Bible.* Alexander writes:

> Rewritten Bible texts are centripetal: they come back to the Bible again and again. The rewritten Bible texts make use of the legendary material, but by placing that material within an extended biblical narrative (in association with passages of more or less literal retelling of the Bible), they clamp the legends firmly to the biblical framework, and reintegrate them into the biblical history.[46]

This "centripetal" relationship to the biblical text, I believe, should form the upper bound of what is called RwB. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, works such as 1 Enoch, will not be treated because they do not exhibit this close centripetal relationship. On the other hand, I adopt a more expansive understanding of RwB than that of Vermes and include works within the Hebrew Bible itself (Deuteronomy and Chronicles), as well as non-narrative works such as the Temple Scroll which, I believe, do exhibit a centripetal relationship to the biblical text.

1.3.2 The Lower Bound: Between Bible and Rewritten Bible

Another recent avenue of investigation has been to explore the boundaries between the biblical text, editions, translations, and rewritten biblical texts. Vermes, of course, utilized the targums liberally in *Scripture and Tradition*, but his goal was to blur the line between post-biblical texts. Most scholars treating RwB, however, are not inclined to include the targums among RwB. But

46. Alexander, "It is Written," 117.

the targums—and for that matter the LXX and Samaritan Pentateuch—do uniquely represent interpretive traditions. Furthermore, the instability of the biblical text during the late Second Temple period, as exhibited by the varied editions of Jeremiah found at Qumran and other liminal texts, such as 4QReworkedPent, has problematized the question of what may have constituted "Bible" (or, more properly, "scripture") at the time.

Unsurprisingly, Emanuel Tov has been at the forefront of this investigation. In his 1998 article, "Rewritten Bible Compositions and Biblical Manuscripts, with Special Attention to the Samaritan Pentateuch," Tov's purpose is to specify the "fine line between biblical manuscripts and rewritten Bible texts."[47] By this, Tov means that he is concerned with what I have termed the "lower bound" of the definition of RwB, specifically, the distinction between a text *edition* and a distinct composition, which Tov considers "rewritten." The primary difference between these two categories of texts, according to Tov, is not how dramatically the daughter text diverges from its parent, but the *purpose* of the daughter text.[48] According to Tov, this purpose is mirrored in the putatively authoritative status of the "biblical" text vis-à-vis the rewritten text which, he says, is not authoritative (although, he seems to suggest that this is up for debate[49]). For example, he notes that the extant texts of Jeremiah, while widely divergent in length and order, still represent "biblical Jeremiah" which carries some authoritative weight.

47. Emanuel Tov, "Rewritten Bible Compositions and Biblical Manuscripts, with Special Attention to the Samaritan Pentateuch," *DSD* 5.3 (1998): 334–54.

48. Ibid., 334.

49. Ibid., 337.

Tov is, however, careful to point out that the nature of this authority is not clear and "the boundary between the biblical and non-biblical texts was probably not as fixed as we would have liked for the purpose of our scholarly analysis."[50]

Tov makes explicit that he understands the Samaritan Pentateuch as participating in this same sort of process as the rewritten texts from Qumran, making special mention of the Temple Scroll, Genesis Apocryphon, and Jubilees. Tov, therefore, is attempting to draw a parallel between the sorts of exegetical additions included in these three LXX texts and those included in the SP and the "classical" RwB texts from Qumran.

The more significant contribution to this area, however, is Michael Segal's 2005 article "Between Bible and Rewritten Bible," which, in the tradition of Alexander, attempts to enumerate a series of criteria by which scholars can distinguish between editions of biblical texts and so-called rewritten texts.

Segal's understanding of the role of RwB is rooted in the conviction that a rewritten text is a "new" work that derives its own authority by means of its association with a biblical text. The new composition carries with it the purpose and any theological or ideological *Tendenzen* of the new author, builds off of the authoritative status of the underlying text.[51] Segal writes:

> Even though these rewritten compositions sometimes contain material contradictory to their biblical sources, their inclusion within the existing

50. Tov, "Rewritten Bible Compositions," 335.

51. Michael Segal, "Between Bible and Rewritten Bible," in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran,* ed. Matthias Henze, SDSS (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 10–28.

framework of the biblical text bestows upon them legitimacy in the eyes of the intended audience … the inclusion of this material within the framework of the biblical passages under interpretation transforms the ideas of the later writer into authoritative and accepted beliefs.[52]

And further:

The nature of the relationship between rewritten biblical compositions and their sources constitutes a paradox. On the one hand, the rewritten composition relies upon biblical texts for authority and legitimacy. The author claims that any new information included in the later work already appears in earlier sources. But simultaneously, the insertion of new ideas into the biblical text, ideas that may even contradict the beliefs and concepts of the original biblical authors, undermines the very authority that the rewriter hopes to utilize"[53]

While I find Segal's characterization of RwB texts problematic, [[TODO: WHY?]] his main contribution to the discussion are his criteria for distinguishing between "biblical" and RwB texts. He distinguishes between "external" and "internal" characteristics.

External Characteristics

Segal's external characteristics are by far his weakest.[[TODO: Introduce them first, don't critque yet]] He notes two external characteristics of RwB texts: "language" and "relationship

52. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 11.

53. Ibid., 11–12.

between the source and its revision."

1. Language: While he offers little rationale for this criterion, Segal categorically dismisses the possibility that any RwB text could have been written in a language other than its *Vorlage*. Notably, this criterion excludes, Genesis Apocryphon, Josephus's Jewish Antiquities, and Ps. Philo's *LAB*.[54]

2. The Textual Relationship between the Source and Its Revision: The underlying text must be "visible" in the RwB text. He uses the book of Chronicles as the parade example of this relationship and notes the caveats necessary in dealing with *Vorlagen* from this period (i.e., it is difficult to say what is 'rewritten' versus what is just another variant in the *Vorlage*).

Segal notes that both of these criteria, in fact, apply to textual editions, as well as to RwB texts.[55] In other words, these are not "distinguishing" criteria, so much as the baseline for

54. Segal needlessly undercuts himself here. One might wonder that if a single criterion categorically excludes several texts which meet all the other criteria, perhaps the problem is with the criterion. In his discussions of other criteria, he begins by giving the principle by which the "edition" would assert itself as equal to its *Vorlage*, then contrast that with the RwB (see, esp. Expansion v. Abridgment). His reasoning is sound for a text edition (although I think the issue of textual authority and *translation* is, perhaps, too hastily ignored in this case), and could easily be contrasted with, for example the Genesis Apocryphon, which meets nearly all of his internal criteria.

55. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 20.

consideration.

Literary Criteria for Rewritten Bible

It is the "Literary Criteria" which Segal, ultimately, believes provide the *definition* of RwB texts.[56] Segal provides six internal criteria:

1. Scope of the Composition: "Editions" of texts cover the same material as their source. In other words, one expects an edition of Genesis to cover the same material as the book of Genesis; pluses and minuses do not stray into other works. On the other hand, rewritten texts "do not generally correspond to the scope of their sources".[57] For example, he observes that Jubilees covers Genesis and part of Exodus, and Chronicles covers parts of Samuel and Kings. Oddly, he also notes that Ps. Philo—which is not written in Hebrew—runs from Genesis into 1 Samuel. He writes: "In all these examples the change in the scope of the composition created a new literary unit."[58]

2. New Narrative Frame: Several of the RwB texts include a framing narrative. His examples include the Temple Scroll and Jubilees, both of which re-frame the "biblical" material. In the case of both works, the Torah is assumed and the new work presumed to be a reflection of a second, direct revelation of the law to Moses, albeit by different means (and fragmentary, in the case of the Temple Scroll). In Jubilees, the angel of the Presence

56. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 20.

57. Ibid., 20.

58. Ibid., 20–21.

revealed this "second Torah" during Moses's second ascent (Exod 24). On the other hand, the Temple scroll seems to begin in Exod 34.[59]

3. Voice: While biblical narratives are generally written in a "detached" third person style, Segal observes that both Jubilees and the Temple Scroll "change the voice of the narrator throughout".[60] As far as I can tell, what Segal means is that in these RwB texts, certain evens which are narrated in the third person in the biblical text are re-framed as, for instance, direct discourse in the first person by an angel, or even by God.[61]

4. Expansion versus Abridgment: By-and-large, text editions are *additive*. That is to say, when there is a discrepancy between the amount of content (as opposed to the order), typically the shorter text is considered older. Segal is here concerned with editorial changes, and not with scribal errors, which, of course could go in both directions (through parablepsis et al.). This property, he contends, is rooted in the conviction of the scribes that in order to reproduce a text, one must reproduce the *entire* text.[62] Rewritten bible texts, however, felt free to add *or remove* material because they understood

---

59. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 22.

60. Ibid., 22.

61. This may seem like a minor quibble, but the "narrator" has a distinct and technical meaning in narrative criticism which should be maintained. I would note, however, that this sort of reframing is not unique to RwB, since, e.g., Deuteronomy does something similar (perhaps Segal considerd Deuteronomy to be RwB?). This is a weak criteria, in my mind.[[TODO: WHY?]]

62. Ibid., 24.

themselves to be composing an entirely new work.[63]

5. Tendentious Editorial Layer: "Editions" do not change fundamental ideology of the work. For example, differing editions of Jeremiah may differ but those differences do not change the fundamental ideology of the work. Likewise, expansion and addition to the work (e.g. additions to Daniel) are in line with the theological *Tendenz* of the shorter book. On the other hand, RwB texts freely alter the ideologies of the text, for example, Jubilees.[64]

6. Explicit References to the Source Composition: "Editions" cannot (in a meta-discusive sense) reference its base text. RwB texts can.

In a more recent article, Tov returns to the topic of text editions and their relationship to the phenomenon of RwB.[65] Tov addresses three "strange" texts from the LXX which, for one reason or another, differ significantly from the preserved MT (3 Kingdoms, Esther, and Daniel). Evoking a number of Segal's criteria[66] for inclusion in the category (which he acknowledges to be well accepted, if not terribly well defined), Tov suggests that these LXX texts likewise may

63. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 24.

64. Ibid., 25.

65. Emanuel Tov, "Three Strange Books of the LXX: 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel Compared with Similar Rewritten Compositions from Qumran and Elsewhere," in *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten: Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006,* ed. Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus, WUNT 219 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 369–93.

66. Segal, "Biblical Interpretation at Qumran," 10–28.

exhibit 1) a new narrative frame, 2) expansion and abridgment, and 3) a tendentious editorial layer and therefore may be candidates for RwB.

It is important to think about what Tov and Segal are trying to accomplish in these articles: They are trying to connect scribal practices which allowed for exegetical additions and emendations to "authoritative texts"—dramatic examples of which are provided by SP and LXX (though one wonders why the Targums are not included here; perhaps because Tov is arguing for Hebrew *Vorlagen* of these texts, while the Targums represent a translation)—to the practices which produced the *new compositions* which scholars refer to as RwB texts. This is very similar to Vermes, albeit from a more "textual" perspective.

What Tov's articles in particular demonstrate, however, is that the issue of authorial *intent* and *purpose* may be at the heart of the distinction between text edition and RwB. Of course, this is not something that can be objectively proven, but it *must* factor into the conversation, even if we must settle for speculation. The result is that, e.g., 4QReworkedPent[[TODO: Maybeo some more context?]] should be understood as RwB insofar as we imagine the author attempting something *other* than creating a text edition of the Pentateuch. Presumably the author of GA did not imagine himself creating a new edition of Genesis; the same with Jubilees and Chronicles. The issue of whether the resultant text was used authoritatively after the fact is beside the point; what matters was whether the text was either intended to be (or from the reader's perspective, whether the text was treated as) a copy of the text's *Vorlage*. And in the case of SP and LXX (and the Targums, I'd say), this seems to have been the case. Thus, it seems like these should not be treated as RwB.

1.4 REWRITTEN BIBLE: A GENRE, PROCESS, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

One of the central issues with the term Rewritten Bible is whether it should be treated as a "genre" or as a "process" or "activity." Vermes, is not particularly helpful in clarifying the issue:

> The question has been raised whether the "Rewritten Bible" corresponds to a process or a genre? In my view, it verifies both. The person who combined the biblical test with its interpretation was engaged in a process, but when his activity was completed, it resulted in a literary genre.[67]

Within Vermes's schema of aggadic development, RwB occupied a liminal space outside the genres of classical Jewish texts. Because these texts eluded categorization within these established text groups (such as Targums, or midrash), Vermes's treatment of RwB as a discrete group was not unreasonable. A number of scholars have since upheld the categorical approach and argued for RwB as a literary genre.

The parade example of this perspective is Philip Alexander's 1988 article "Retelling the Old Testament," which, although dated, remains the most widely cited exemplar of the "genre" perspective.[68] Alexander takes up four rewritten Bible texts (Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Liber antiquitatum biblicarum, and Jewish Antiquities) to determine whether there exists a set of concrete criteria by which scholars can admit or exclude text from the category. Although I

67. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 8.

68. Alexander, "It is Written," 99–121; Vermes himself even put his stamp of approval on it, see Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 4.

ultimately disagree with his conclusion that RwB should be treated as a literary genre, his list of nine "principle characteristics" make a number of useful observations about the nature of RwB texts generally and are summarized as follows:

1. RwB texts are *narratives* which follow the order of the biblical text.

2. RwB texts are "free standing" literary works that take on the same form as the text they rewrite. They do not comment explicitly on their *Vorlagen*, but weave interpretation into their seamless retelling.

3. RwB texts are not meant to replace the biblical work.

4. RwB texts cover a large portion of the biblical narrative and exhibit a "centripetal" relationship to the biblical text.

5. RwB texts follow the biblical text's narrative ordering, but may omit certain, non-essential elements.

6. RwB texts offer an interpretive reading of scripture which, quoting Vermes offer, "a fuller, smoother and doctrinally more advanced form of the sacred narrative"[69] and implicitly comment on the biblical text.

---

69. Citing Vermes in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ: 175 BC – AD 135,* ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 305.

7. RwB texts are limited by their literary form which only allows a single interpretation of the biblical text that they rewrite.

8. RwB texts are limited by their literary form which does not allow them to explain their exegetical rationale.

9. RwB texts incorporate traditions and material not derived from the biblical text.

Despite Alexander's emphatic conclusion affirming the genre of Rewritten Bible, I find a number of these criteria to be unconvincing. [[TODO: Use this as template for SEgal above]]

First, his criterion that the text be a *narrative* strikes me as arbitrary. While Vermes focused on RwB as a narrative phenomenon, he has since noted that the reason for this was that his focus was on *aggadic* material, that is, non-halakhic interpretation, which by definition is non-legal. Coupled with the first half of his second observation—that RwB texts take on the same form as the text they rewrite—these observations seem self-fulfilling and suffering from a sort of selection bias.[70]

Second, several of his criteria are comments about the intention of the author or purpose of the work, which are both unverifiable. For example, the question of whether a RwB text was "meant" to replace its *Vorlage*, is not clear, particularly when discussing texts—as

70. Although, all of the texts he surveyed are narratives, this fact illustrates one of the major shortcomings in Alexander's method, specifically, that his conclusions were based on four texts "normally included in the genre."(Alexander, "It is Written," 99) Therefore the selection of these four texts was the result of a deductive selection, in part, based on their narrative form.

Vermes does—such as the Palestinian Targums, or (now) the so-called Reworked Pentateuch (4QReworkedPent)[71] Similarly, claiming that RwB texts "implicitly comment" on their *Vorlagen* speaks to the *intention* of the author, which in the edge cases is not clearly demonstrable. The fact that Alexander states that the author was "limited" by the genre of narrative to a single interpretation and could not provide his exegetical rationale illustrates the major, overarching assumption about Alexander's (and Vermes's) approach to these texts—that the essential function of the texts and the purposes of their authors are the same as the later exegetes.

Alexander insists that "Any text admitted to the genre must display *all* the characteristics,".[72] These characteristics were inductively identified, yet Alexander offers no formal rationale for selecting his sample. The texts that he selects, indeed, represent the *core* of what is generally accepted to be RwB, but texts on the periphery of a genre, almost by definition, will not display *every* characteristic of the core texts. From my perspective, however, Alexander's criteria should not be treated as prerequisites for inclusion to the category of RwB, if we are to treat it as such. Instead, they should be used to describe a sort of literary *Idealtypus* for RwB.

Moshe Bernstein, too, has upheld a Vermesian understanding of RwB as a literary category and has argued that for the category to be useful to scholars, the boundaries must be

71. In fairness, 4QRewrokedPent was not available to Alexander or Vermes. Yet, one still may wonder why the LXX or Samaritan Pentateuch are not included.

72. Alexander, "It is Written," 99–121 (119 n. 11).

clearly demarcated and reasonably narrow.[73] Notably, Bernstein never clearly articulates what it means for a category to be "useful." All the same, he writes that he set out to:

> "examine the definition and descriptions of"rewritten Bible" proffered by Vermes and several subsequent scholars, in order to delineate the variety of ways in which the term is currently employed and to make some suggestions for how we might use it more clearly and definitively in the future."[74]

[[TODO: DEQUOTIFY THIS]]

Bernstein begins by addressing the few small modifications that he makes to Vermes's list, namely that Bernstein does not understand the Targums to be examples of RwB. He excludes Targums from his discussion "*ab initio*," as well as "biblical" books, (by which he seems to mean "Chronicles"), and includes legal texts such as the Temple Scroll. Despite this second exclusion, Bernstein acknowledges that "One group's rewritten Bible could very well be another's biblical text!"[75] Thus, Bernstein concedes that "matters of canon and audience may play a role," but does not address the topic further.

---

73. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 169–96.

74. Ibid., 171–72.

75. Ibid., 169–96 (175. This seems particularly odd, since, and Ethiopian Christian may protest that Jubilees should be excluded as well.).

Bernstein critiques scholars such as Nicklesburg,[76] Harrington,[77] and Brooke[78] for excessively expanding the use of the term RwB at its "upper bound" (my term) to the point that they have weakened the term and have "not aided in focusing scholarly attention on the unifying vs. divergent traits of some of these early interpretive works."[79] Likewise, Bernstein critiques Tov for including reworked texts (e.g., 4QReworkedPent) and therefore expanding the "lower bound" of the category. While Bernstein avers that "Rearrangement with the goal of interpretation is probably an earlier stage in the development of biblical 'commentary' than supplementation with the goal of interpretation,"[80] he nevertheless distinguishes the former from the category RwB and declares that "the definitions of 'rewritten Bible' furnished by Tov and Vermes are [not] even remotely compatible, and we need to choose between them simply for the purposes of clarity."[81] Bernstein, ultimately, argues that Vermes's category is worth keeping around, and admonishes the reader to maintain a narrow definition of the category, because, in his own words, "the more specific the implications of the term, the more valuable it is as a measuring device,"[82] and conversely that "the looser the definition, the less precisely it

76. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten," 89–156.

77. Harrington, "The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," 239–47.

78. Brooke, "Rewritten Bible," 777–81.

79. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 179.

80. Ibid., 169–96 (PAGE).

81. Ibid., 185.

82. Ibid., 195.

classifies those items under its rubric."[83]

At the other end of the spectrum, a number of important scholars have treated RwB as a "process" or "activity" rather than as a genre or category. These scholars also have tended to be more "expansive" when it comes to which texts should be discussed as "rewritten." Harrington, as noted above, is the parade example of those who wish to treat RwB as a process. He states:

> Nevertheless, establishing that these books are not appropriately described as targums or midrashim is not the same as proving that they all represent a distinctive literary genre called "rewritten Bible." In fact, it seems better to view rewriting the Bible as a kind of activity or process than to see it as a distinctive literary genre of Palestinian Judaism"[84]

Instead, he observes that while texts such as Jubilees and *Assumption of Moses* both constitute a rewriting of the Bible, both "are formally revelations of apocalypses."[85] This is an important criticism of scholars who see RwB as a distinct genre. Unlike, for example, the Gospels, which arguably have the same basic "form," the texts typically described as "rewritten" come in a variety of "forms" such as narratives (Genesis Apocryphon), apocalypses (Jubilees), and, legal (Temple Scroll). In other words, a single *genre*—insofar as the word describes a literary *form*—is not sufficient to subsume the varied *forms* which all can be described as

83. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 195.

84. Harrington, "The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," 242–43.

85. Ibid., 243.

"rewritten." From my perspective, this observation is at the heart of the discussion.[[TODO: MORE]]

More recently, Molly Zahn has attempted to move the conversation forward by interacting with modern genre theory—which is conspicuously absent from most discussions of "genre" and RwB.[86] Zahn discusses the difficulty that Harrington addresses by noting that works may participate in multiple genres simultaneously. While older conceptions of genre "pigeonhole" texts to specific genres, modern genre theorists—she cites Fowler—now prefer to talk about texts "participating" in a genre. Citing Fowler, Zahn notes that "genres are less like pigeonholes and more like pigeons" and further augments the metaphor to suggest that genres are "more like flocks of pigeons." She writes:

> Just as a flock of pigeons might change shape, lose and add members, be absorbed into larger flocks of break apart into several smaller flocks, genres and their boundaries are not static.[87]

This is a solid post-structuralist understanding of genre,[[TODO: WHY?]] and one that

86. Molly M. Zahn, "Genre and Rewritten Scripture: A Reassessment," *JBL* 131.2 (2012): 271–88; Daniel Machiela noted the absence of genre theory in his 2010 article, as well, see Daniel A. Machiela, "Once More, with Feeling: Rewritten Scripture in Ancient Judaism—A Review of Recent Developments," *JJS* 61.2 (2010): 308–20; Notable exceptions include George Brooke, "Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Pesher," in "Rethinking Genre: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins," *DSD* 17.3 (2010): 332–57.

87. Zahn, "Genre and Rewritten Scripture," 277.

should be taken seriously. The implications for RwB is clear: although Jubilees is a revelatory text while the Temple Scroll is a legal text, they can both participate in their respective "formal" genres simultaneously with the supposed RwB genre.[88]

Yet, it is not at all clear to me what we have gained by upholding RwB as a genre by simply changing what we mean by "genre," however well rooted in theory.[89] If by "genre" we can no longer attribute any formal characteristics to RwB, what we are ultimately left with is a particular kind of relationship (rewriting) matched to a particular kind of biblical *Vorlage*

Based on the shortcomings of both traditional and more sophisticated treatments of RwB as a literary genre, I have adopted a process-oriented[[TODO: EXPLAIN WHT YOU

---

88. Zahn also explores the "functional" aspects of genre. She notes that genres are "not simply systems of classifications developed and used by literary critics, but are fundamental to all human communication." Zahn, "Genre and Rewritten Scripture," 280; Thus, genres manifest as common patterns recognized by both the author and the reader which aid communication and in this way, genre functions as a sort of "literary body language." ibid., 276; See also Carol Newsom, "Rhetorical Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods,* ed. Maxine L. Grossman (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 198–214 (199: TODO: ADD FOWLER).

89. Machiela critiques Zahn's approach for similar reasons. See Machiela, "Once More, with Feeling," 308–20.

MEAN HERE]] paradigm for my discussion of RwB texts.[90]

1.5 CONCLUSION

While each of these discussions has worked to expand and refine the study of RwB, the basic trajectory set by Vermes—the conviction that RwB reflects an effort by the writer to implicitly comment on the biblical (or some "scriptural") text—has remained surprisingly consistent. This tendency to focus first and foremost on the exegetical qualities of RwB reflects Vermes's original purpose for the term quite well, but given the current state of the discussion, I think it is worth reconsidering this central tenet. This is not to say, of course, that there is *no* exegetical purpose to *any* RwB text, rather that given a broader view of RwB, it is worth considering that the phenomenon of rewriting, as a literary process, was not primarily concerned with nor necessarily tied to the *explication* of a scriptural *Vorlage*.

Campbell, for example, has recently suggested that the practice of rewriting may have extended beyond works with scriptural *Vorlagen* and may better be understood as a more general literary phenomenon of the late Second Temple period.[91] In his article, Campbell observes that the rewriting of non-scriptural texts has by-and-large been ignored by scholars or RwB and offers a number compelling examples of Second Temple texts which rewrite non-scriptural material following the same basic process as RwB. In particular, Campbell notes

90. I am in broad agreement with Campbell's treatment of the matter. See Campbell, "Rewritten Bible," 64–67.

91. Ibid., 49–81.

that while Jewish Antiquities 1–11 focuses on biblical material, Jewish Antiquities 12–13 offers a rewriting of the *Letter of Aristeas* and portions of 1 Macc. These rewritings maintain the "structure and flow" of ther base texts, just like RwB, but it is generally agreed that neither 1 Macc nor the *Letter of Aristeas* were viewed as scripture by Josephus, who, notably, provides us with one of the earliest lists of sacred writings from the period.[92] According to Campbell, "Josephus handles these compositions in the same way that he treats scriptural material in *Ant.* 1–11."[93] Furthermore, 4 Macc 5–17 retells the story of the martyrdom of seven brothers along with their mother found in 2 Macc 3–7. As with Jewish Antiquities 12–13, 4 Maccabees follows the structure and ordering of the account in 2 Maccabees while augmenting the story and using it to advance the author's thesis as part of a philosophical treatise.

What these examples lack, as compared with Vermes's understanding of rewriting, is a tradition of *interpretation* (*aggadah* for Vermes) which can account for the changes between the *Vorlage* and the rewritten work. None of these examples is primarily concerned with clarifying their *Vorlage*. At best, we might speculate that the authors refined the stories to better suit their needs (making corrections, emendations, etc.), but we do not imagine that there was any expectation that these "interpretations" carry any kind of normative force in later understandings of the original account. In other words, there is no reason for us to assume that

92. Steve Mason, "Josephus and His Twenty-two Book Canon," in *The Canon Debate,* ed. Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 110–27.

93. Campbell, "Rewritten Bible," 70; See also Mason, "Josephus and His Twenty-two Book Canon," 126.

the author of 4 Maccabees intended his reworking of the story of seven brothers to affect the way that readers would understand 2 Maccabees.[94] On the other hand, this is precisely what Vermes was arguing for in *Scripture and Tradition:* that the activity of rewriting was meant not only to be descriptive of *how* the authors understood the biblical *Vorlagen*, but that the *purpose* of these rewritten texts in some way functioned *prescriptively* within the tradition of biblical interpretation, that is, according to Vermes, RwB texts were, by definition, *about* the texts that they rewrote.

This dissertation is meant to be an attempt to pivot away from reading RwB texts as primarily functioning "exegetically" (by which I mean, focused on the explanation—even if implicitly—of a particular text) toward reading rewritten texts as products of cultural transmission through the lenses of cultural and social memory theory. Biblical interpretation—to be sure—played a part in the production of these texts, but other social, cultural, and literary forces were at work behind these texts as well and I have chosen memory studies as a means to explore these additional dimensions of of the RwB phenomenon. [[TODO: Add more as a transition to the next chapter]]

---

94. I hasten to point out that the later account certainly *would have* affected readers' understanding of the story in 2 Maccabees, but here I am arguing that we do not imagine the *intent* of the author of 4 Maccabees to be affecting that change.

Bibliography

Alexander, Philip S. "Retelling the Old Testament." Pages 99–121 in *It is Written—Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF.* Edited by D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Allen, Garrick V. "Rewriting and the Gospels." *JSNT* 41.1 (2018): 58–69.

Bernstein, Moshe J. "Rewritten Bible: A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?" *Text* 22 (2005): 169–96.

Bloch, Renée. "Écriture et tradition dans le Judaïsme: Aperçus sur l'origine du Midrash." *CaS,* 1954, 9–34.

———. "Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature." Pages 51–75 in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice.* Edited by William Scott Green. Translated by William Scott Green, with William J. Sullivan. BJS 1. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978. Translation of "Note méthodologique pour l'etude de la littérature rabbinique." *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 43.2 (1955): 194–225.

Brooke, George. "Genre Theory, Rewritten Bible and Pesher." In "Rethinking Genre: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins." *DSD* 17.3 (2010): 332–57.

———. "Rewritten Bible." Pages 777–81 in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Edited by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

———. "The Rewritten Law, Prophets, and Psalms: Issues for Understanding the Text of the Bible." Pages 31–40 in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries.* Edited by Edward D. Herbert and Emanuel Tov. London: British Library; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2002.

Campbell, Jonathan G. "Rewritten Bible: A Terminological Reassessment." Pages 49–81 in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes.* Edited by József Zsengellér. JSJsup 166. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Harrington, Daniel J. "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies I: The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)." Pages 239–47 in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters.* Edited by Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg. BMI 2. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.

Kahle, Paul. *The Cairo Geniza.* The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1941. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Kisch, Guido. *Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum.* PMS 10. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1949.

Machiela, Daniel A. "Once More, with Feeling: Rewritten Scripture in Ancient Judaism—A Review of Recent Developments." *JJS* 61.2 (2010): 308–20.

Malan, Gert J. "Is Rewritten Bible/Scripture the Solution to the Synoptic Problem?" *HTS* 70.1 1–10.

Mason, Steve. "Josephus and His Twenty-two Book Canon." Pages 110–27 in *The Canon Debate.* Edited by Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002.

Müller, Mogens. "Luke — The Fourth Gospel? The 'Rewritten Bible' Concept as a Way to Understand the Nature of the Later Gospels." Pages 231–42 in *Voces Clamantium in Deserto: Essays in Honor of Kari Syreeni.* Edited by Sven-Olav Back and Matti Kankaanniemi. STÅA. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 2012.

Newsom, Carol. "Rhetorical Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls." Pages 198–214 in *Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods.* Edited by Maxine L. Grossman. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

Nickelsburg, George W. E. "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded." Pages 89–156 in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus.* Edited by Michael E. Stone. Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984.

Rappaport, Salomo. *Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus.* Veröffentlichungen der Oberrabbiner Dr. H.P. Chajes-Preisstiftung an der Israelitisch-theologischen Lehranstalt in Wien 3. Vienna: Alexander Kohnt Memorial Foundation, 1930.

Schürer, Emil. *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ: 175 BC – AD 135.* Edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar and Matthew Black. 3 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986.

Segal, Michael. "Between Bible and Rewritten Bible." Pages 10–28 in *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran.* Edited by Matthias Henze. SDSS. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005.

Tov, Emanuel. "Rewritten Bible Compositions and Biblical Manuscripts, with Special Attention to the Samaritan Pentateuch." *DSD* 5.3 (1998): 334–54.

———. "Three Strange Books of the LXX: 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel Compared with Similar Rewritten Compositions from Qumran and Elsewhere." Pages 369–93 in *Die Septuaginta – Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten: Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 20.–23. Juli 2006.* Edited by Martin Karrer and Wolfgang Kraus. WUNT 219. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998.

Ulrich, Eugene. "Crossing the Borders from 'Pre-Scripture' to Scripture (Rewritten) to 'Rewritten Scripture'." Pages 83–104 in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes.* Edited by József Zsengellér. JSJsup 166. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Ulrich, Eugene. “The Notion and Definition of Canon.” Pages 21–35 in *The Canon Debate.* Edited by Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002.

VanderKam, James C. “Authoritative Literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls.” *DSD* 5.3 (1998): 382–402.

Vermes, Geza. *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies.* StPB 4. Leiden: Brill, 1961.

———. “The Genesis of the Concept of ‘Rewritten Bible’.” Pages 3–9 in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes.* Edited by József Zsengellér. JSJsup 166. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Zahn, Molly M. “Genre and Rewritten Scripture: A Reassessment.” *JBL* 131.2 (2012): 271–88.