# *Chapter 1: The Rewritten Bible*

In his seminal work *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, Geza Vermes introduced the term "rewritten Bible" to the discussion of Second Temple Jewish literature as part of a larger project to trace the development of certain 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 follow closely certain portions of the biblical narrative but also augment, elide, and emend the text in ways which produced something entirely new. As such, Vermes used the term rewritten Bible to describe an exegetical process by which "the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative" in order to "anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance."[1] In other words, according to Vermes, 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 it. The scope and nuance of of the term rewritten Bible has shifted a great deal in the intervening years, yet, the trajectory set by Vermes nearly sixty years ago has remained reasonably consistent by

1. Geza 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.

focusing on the relationships that exist between these unique works and the scriptural texts that inspired them.

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) what works should fall under the rubric of rewritten Bible? 2) the terminology surrounding rewritten Bible, and 3) whether rewritten Bible constitutes a literary genre, a process, or some combination of the two. **Then I'm gong to say something else about what I think**

## 1.1 EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF RWB

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.[2] 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,"[3] 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

2. Ibid., 3.
3. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition,* 3.

categorically excluded from discussions of the origins of aggadic exegesis.[4]

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*,[5] Paul Kahle's Schweich Lectures at the British Academy on the Cairo Geniza (given in 1941, published 1947),[6] Kisch's new text edition of Ps. Philo's Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (1949),[7] the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1948) and Codex Neofiti (1956), as well as (and perhaps especially) Renée Bloch's work on midrash.[8] 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*

4. Ibid., 2.

5. Salomo Rappaport, *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).

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

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

8. 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," trans. and ed. William Scott Green, 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.[9] The book is eight chapters long and is divided into four parts.

The first three chapters of *Scripture and Tadition* make up the first part of Vermes's study and is entitled " The Symbolism of Words." In this section, Vermes focuses on the way that individual words and ideas take on localized symbolic meanings which are then applied globally to the interpretation of the Bible. 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. He concludes that the Fragmentary Targum represents the most primitive work, whose interpretive strategy is essentially inner-biblical (by harmonizing Gen 44 and 49 with Exod 7–9), followed by the Tosefta, which seems to depend on the Fragmentary Targum but takes a different interpretive stance, and finally Targum Neofiti, which combines the two. In this second chapter, Vermes examines the way that the word "Lebanon" came to be used symbolically in the Hebrew Bible and other jewish literature and how those symbolic meanings developed, particularly the association of Lebanon with Jerusalem and the Temple. He identifies the Song of Songs as the intermediary text which helped to establish this tradition within post-exilic Judaism, noting that the book occupies the 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* exegesis. This is a key idea for Vermes because it establishes a

9. Ibid., 1; See also Bloch, "Methodological Note," 51–75.

continuity between the production of the biblical text and its later interpretation. In chapter three, Vermes examines other words which take on symbolic meaning in later Jewish texts ("lion," "Damascus," "*Meḥoqeq*," and "Man"), and shows the relative similarity of the process between the DSS texts and the targumic and midrashic materials.

It is in the second part of *Scripture and Tradition* that the topic of Rewritten Bible is addressed most directly. This section—titled "The Rewritten Bible"—covers two chapters (chapters four and five), both focusing on the figure Abraham and the aggadic traditions surrounding his life.

In chapter four, Vermes embarks on what he calls a "retrogressive historical study" by which he means beginning with the traditions in their later, more developed forms, and working back toward their origins. In this case, Vermes begins with the 11th century CE text *Sefer ha-Yashar* (and the varied extra-biblical traditions contained therein) then works backward to identify sections of the text which exhibit earlier traditions, for example, in Targums, Josephus, Jubilees, (Ps.) Philo, and others. 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."[10]

In chapter five, Vermes proceeds with a "progressive historical study," by which he means a 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

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

cols. 19–22 of the Genesis Apocryphon. Vermes treats Genesis Apocryphon as "the most ancient midrash of all"[11] and views it as the "lost link between the biblical and the Rabbinic midrash".[12] As I understand it, the Genesis Apocryphon, for Vermes, occupies a unique position just one step removed from inner-biblical exegesis. The task of Genesis Apocryphon's author was "to make the biblical story more attractive, more real, more edifying, and above all more intelligible" and he accomplishes this through a variety of means.[13] The work of Genesis Apocryphon's author, therefore, was to "[reconcile] unexplained or apparently conflicting statements in the biblical text in order to allay doubt and worry."[14] According to Vermes, the interpretation of Genesis is "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.[15] 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."[16]

The final two chapters make up the final section, 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 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,

11. Ibid., 124.
12. Ibid., 124.
13. Ibid., 125.
14. Ibid., 125.
15. Ibid., 126.
16. Ibid., 126.

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 "It 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."[17] 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."[18] 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 withe blood sacrifice ("the Blood of the Covenant").[19] 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."[20]

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

17. Ibid., 185.
18. Ibid., 189.
19. Ibid., 190.
20. Ibid., 191.

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."[21]

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.[22]

He 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:

> 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

21. Ibid., 221.
22. Ibid., 223.

> 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.[23]

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.

### 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 rather self-explanatory. Vermes makes this 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.[24]

Only a few scholars, according to Vermes, managed to remain true to his original vi-

23. Ibid., 227.
24. Vermes, "Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years," 3.

sion.[25] Instead, many subsequent studies, according to Vermes, "moved the goalposts" to better "suit the interest of their inquiry."[26] Yet, one cannot help but push back against Vermes here, and 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 focus 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 or accessible to more than a few specific scholars. But the field's subsequent preoccupation with the Qumran material, he suggests, is misguided.[27]

This perception is—it seems to me–a bit over-blown. On the one hand, Genesis Apocryphon and the Temple Scroll get a lot of scholarly attention, but Jubilees and Jewish Antiquities do as well. Even so, whatever narrowing of the discussion of RwB toward the Qumran scrolls has occurred is likely symptomatic of the "methodological [im]precision" attributed to

25. He specifically references Alexander (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) and Bernstein. (Moshe J. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible: A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?" *Text* 22 [2005]: 169–96)

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

27. 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*.

*Scripture and Tradition* and Vermes's use of 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, they are translations and not "new compositions." 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 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 WHICH TEXTS ARE REWRITTEN BIBLE?

## 1.3 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 via the haggadah. Most scholars treating RwB, however, are not inclined to include the targums among RwB. But 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 4QReworkedP, 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."[28] 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.[29] According to Tov, this purpose is mirrored in the putatively authoritative status of the "biblical" text vis-a-vis the rewritten text which, he says, is not authoritative (although, he seems to suggest that this is up for debate[30]). 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. Tov is, however, careful to point out that the nature of this authority is not

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

29. Ibid., 334.

30. Ibid., 337.

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."[31]

Tov makes explicit that he understands the SP as participating in this same sort of process as the rewritten texts from Qumran, making special mention of the 11QT^a (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, but keeps piggy-backs off of the status of the underlying text.[32] Segal writes:

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

31. Ibid., 335.

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

under interpretation transforms the ideas of the later writer into authoritative and accepted beliefs.[33]

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"[34]

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

### 1.3.1 External Characteristics

Segal's external characteristics are by far his weakest. He notes two external characteristics of RwB texts: "language" and "relationship 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

33. Ibid., 11.
34. Ibid., 11–12.

than its *Vorlage*. Notably, this criterion excludes, Genesis Apocryphon, Josephus's Antiquities, and Ps. Philo's *LAB*.[35]

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.[36] In other words, these are not "distinguishing" criteria, so much as the baseline for consideration.

### 1.3.2 Literary (Internal) Criteria for "Rewritten Bible"Literary (Internal) Criteria for Rewritten Bible

It is the "Literary Criteria" which Segal, ultimately, believes provide the *definition* of RwB texts.[37] 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

35. 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.

36. Ibid., 20.

37. Ibid., 20.

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".[38] 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."[39]

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 revealed this "second Torah" during Moses' second ascent (Exod 24). On the other hand, the Temple scroll seems to begin in Exod 34.[40]

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".[41] 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.[42]

38. Ibid., 20.
39. Ibid., 20–21.
40. Ibid., 22.
41. Ibid., 22.
42. This may seem like a minor quibble, but the "narrator" has a distinct and technical meaning in narrative

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.[43] Rewritten bible texts, however, felt free to add *or remove* material because they understood themselves to be composing an entirely new work.[44]

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.[45]

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.[46] Tov addresses three "strange" texts from the LXX which,

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.

43. Ibid., 24.
44. Ibid., 24.
45. Ibid., 25.
46. Emanuel Tov, "Three Strange Books of the LXX: 1 Kings, Esther, and Daniel Compared with Similar

for one reason or another, differ significantly from the preserved MT (3 Kingdoms, Esther, and Daniel). Evoking a number of Segal's criteria[47] 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 exhibit 1) a new narrative frame, 2) expansion and abridgment, and 3) a tendentious editorial layer and therefore may be candidates for RwB.

### 1.3.3 Scribalism and 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 aren't 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., 4QReworked Pent. 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

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.

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

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 ~RWB: 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.[48]

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.

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

### 1.4.1 RwB as a 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.[49] 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 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

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

fuller, smoother and doctrinally more advanced form of the sacred narrative"[50] and implicitly comment on the biblical text.

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.

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.[51]

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

50. 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.

51. 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)[52] Similarly, claiming that RwB texts "implicitly comment" on their *Vorlagen* speaks to the *intention* of the author, which one should be wary of doing. 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 does, however, make a some other important contributions. First, he notes that the RwB texts generally follow the *ordering* of the biblical text. This observation is important because it helps to illustrate what I think is his most significant contribution, introducing the notions of centripetal and centrifugal relationships with the Bible. In fact, Alexander's criteria of a "centripetal" relationship to the biblical text is his only meaningfully formal criterion. A "centripetal" relationship to the biblical text is one that constantly turns and returns to the biblical text over the course of the work. This relationship is contrasted with a "centrifugal" relationship which takes the biblical text as a point of departure for some narrative expansion. Contrast, for example, the Book of the Watchers, which (arguably) takes as its point of departure Gen 6:1-4 and expands it, with Jubilees, which, while including similar sorts of apocalyptic elements, returns to the narrative sequence of Genesis repeatedly.

Alexander insists that "Any text admitted to the genre must display *all* the characteristics,"[53] but he offers no formal rationale for selecting his sample. The texts that he selects,

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

53. Ibid., 99–121 (119 n. 11).

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 clearly demarcated and reasonably narrow.[54] Notably, Bernstein never clearly articulates what it means for a category to be "useful." All the same, he sets 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."[55]

Bernstein begins by addressing the few small modifications that he makes to Vermes' 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!" [Bernstein,[56] 175; This seems particularly odd, since, and

54. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 169–96.
55. Ibid., 171–72.
56. Ibid., 169–96.

Ethiopian Christian may protest that Jubilees should be excluded as well.]. Thus, Bernstein concedes that "matters of canon and audience may play a role," but doesn't address the topic further.

Bernstein critiques scholars such as Nicklesburg,[57] Harrington,[58] and Brooke[59] 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."[60] Likewise, Bernstein critiques Tov for including reworked texts (e.g., 4QRP) and therefor 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," 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."[61] Bernstein, ultimately, argues that Vermes' 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,"[62] and conversely that "the looser the definition, the less precisely

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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.

60. Bernstein, "Rewritten Bible," 179.

61. Ibid., 185.

62. Ibid., 195.

it classifies those items under its rubric."[63]

### 1.4.2 RwB as a "Process"RwB as a Process

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."

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."[64] Thus Nickelsburg did not treat RwB as a discrete category of texts. Moreover, Nickelsburg's article involves more than just "rewritten" texts (as the title indicates), and also discusses texts which introduce wholly new material into the traditions of the Bible.[65] However, he does provide a list of texts which he loosely describes as examples of biblical rewriting: 1 Enoch, Book of Giants, Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Biblical Antiquities, the Books of Adam and Eve (Apocalypse of Moses, Life of Adam and Eve), and some Hellenistic Jewish Poets. Notably, the inclusion of 1 Enoch is novel, compared to Vermes's original list, and illustrates the more expansive view that Nickelsburg has toward RwB.[66]

One of the key contributions that Nickelsburg makes is his idea that rewriting followed a trajectory from smaller units of rewriting—involving short stories that deal with par-

63. Ibid., 195.
64. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten," 89.
65. Ibid., 89–90.
66. Nickelsburg also includes in his discussion a few works by hellenistic Jewish poets. These works include Philo's *On Jerusalem*, Theodotus's *On the Jews*, and the *Exagoge* by one "Ezekiel the Poet of Tragedies."

ticular 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). This interaction of 1 Enoch with the biblical text revolves around a single event, the flood, and its causes.

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 among even the agreed upon RwB texts. He notes, for example, that while the author of Jubilees's concerns are largely halakhic and the book makes explicit reference to the biblical text, the authority assumed by the author of Jubilees does not (at least rhetorically) originate in the exposition of the Torah, but in the "immutable heavenly tablets."[67] 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."[68]

In contrast, the Genesis Apocryphon seems to have very little interest in halakhic matters and instead seems to just elaborate on the story by giving detailed geographic details

67. Ibid., 100–1.
68. Ibid., 101.

and more dramatic characters.[69] Finally, he observes that *LAB* likewise differs with Jubilees in its omission of halakhic matters and its "highly selective reproduction of the text."[70] This selectivity also differs from the Genesis Apocryphon, which otherwise is "characterized by the addition of lengthy non-biblical incidence."[71]

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 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 "Rewritten Bible" 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."[72] Compared to Vermes, he operates with a slightly expanded list of rewritten texts. In addition to Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Ps. Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*, he also includes the Assumption of Moses and 11QTemple (Temple Scroll). Furthermore, he makes

69. Ibid., 106.
70. Ibid., 110.
71. Ibid., 110.
72. Harrington, "The Bible Rewritten (Narratives)," 239.

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 in favor of a process-oriented approach. In this respect, 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). 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"[73]

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."[74] 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

73. Ibid., 242–43.
74. Ibid., 243.