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Can we reconstruct the textual history of the Hebrew Bible?

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Abstract

Variant readings in manuscripts and other documented evidence show that the Hebrew Bible was the focus of intensive scribal activity in its early transmission. Text criticism, which evaluates variant readings, is recognized as an important method, but biblical scholarship uses its results only haphazardly. Historical criticism, which can be divided into literary and redaction criticism, reconstructs the history based on inconsistencies in the text itself. Although dominant especially in continental Europe until the 1980s, historical criticism never received universal recognition, and its influence has diminished in recent decades. This paper presents the rationale of historical criticism and discusses recent challenges to it.

1 | INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Because of its assumed divine origins, Jewish and Christian communities sought to transmit the Hebrew Bible very faithfully. The conception that nothing should be altered has its roots in the Pentateuch. According to Deut 4:2 and 13:1, one may not add or take away anything from what God has commanded, which was eventually understood to include the whole collection of books. Despite the biblical instruction, variant readings in manuscripts imply changes throughout the Hebrew Bible. Thousands of biblical manuscripts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and other translations were in circulation in the ancient world, and hardly any two of the known ones are identical in all respects. For some books, there are two or more variant versions that differ considerably. Regarding the book of Jeremiah, for example, notable differences between the Greek and Hebrew versions can be found in nearly every passage.¹ Even much before the birth of critical research, the learned in both Jewish and Christian traditions sought to identify later corruptions and thus determine the original text which would preserve God's original words. However, critical analysis and evaluation of variant readings were very limited.² The Masoretic text, the main Hebrew text transmitted by Jewish scribes, was regarded as the preferred text,³ and it continues to be the basis of nearly all modern translations.

In 19th-century scholarship, the scientific significance of the variant readings and different versions was understood, as it became evident that later scribes not only made accidental mistakes in copying the manuscripts but also changed the texts intentionally, for example, in order to interpret or clarify the older text. Many theologically motivated changes, which substantially altered the text's meaning, have been identified as well. For example, in the Masoretic text in Deut 27:4, the Israelites are instructed to erect an altar on Mount Ebal, while in the Samaritan Pentateuch—which is a variant Hebrew version of the Pentateuch—and an old Latin witness (Codex Lugdunensis) read

Mount Gerizim instead. These variants are significant because the Temple of the Samaritan community was located on Mount Gerizim. Scholars have concluded that the Samaritan reading is original, while the Masoretic text secondarily seeks to undermine the legitimacy of Mount Gerizim as a place of sacrifice.

As in this example, early scholarship also established that the Masoretic text did not always preserve the best reading, and therefore, one had to evaluate variants in manuscripts and determine which reading is the most original.⁴ This gave birth to text criticism (also called textual criticism).⁵ Although there continues to be a clear preference for the Masoretic text, all biblical scholars, at least in principle, accept the method as indispensable.⁶

It is apparent that only a fraction of ancient biblical manuscripts is preserved, while the early transmission of texts is largely not documented in the manuscript evidence. Since text criticism mainly deals with the comparison of preserved variants in manuscripts, 19th-century scholarship already felt the need for a complementary method. With manuscript evidence, one could only observe editorial processes in the final stages in the transmission of texts, in the last centuries BCE and first centuries CE. The early transmission could provide crucial information about ancient Israel and early Judaism predating the manuscript evidence. Historical criticism, which is commonly divided into literary criticism (also called source criticism) and redaction criticism, investigates early textual changes that are not preserved in textual evidence. Literary criticism seeks to detect later additions and different authors on the basis of internal considerations and criteria such as contradictions, grammatical inconsistencies, disturbing doublets, unexpected digressions, and other irregularities.⁷ If a text contains several such features that would not be expected from a single author, the critic might propose a later addition. Second Samuel 2:18–27 is an illustrative example:

18 Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? ... 21 Because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have wrought all this greatness, so that your servant may know 22 Therefore you are great, O Lord God; for there is no one like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23 Who is like your people, like Israel? Is there another nation on earth whose God went to redeem it as a people, and to make a name for himself, doing great and awesome things for them, by driving out before his people nations and their gods?... 26 Thus your name will be magnified forever in the saying, "The Lord of hosts is God over Israel"; and the house of your servant David will be established before you. 27 For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servant, saying that "I will build you a house"; therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you.

It is noteworthy that 2 Sam 7:21 ends with a sentence that lacks an object. The text reads "So that your servant may know" (לְהוֹדִיעַ אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ), but the text does not say *what* he may know. The original continuation of v. 21 is found in v. 27aβ, which refers to the promise that God will build him a dynasty, and this is also the topic of the prayer in verses 18–21, 27aβb. That verses 22–27aα were added later is corroborated by its digressive topic. The assumed original prayer that begins in v. 18 is about David's thankfulness to God because He has promised David a dynasty, but verses 22–27aα discuss Israel as God's redeemed nation and the expulsion of other nations from the land. It is also peculiar that v. 22–27aα use the first person plural (v. 22) and refer to David in the third person (v. 26), although David is the supposed speaker. Such text-internal observations would lead one to assume that v. 22–27aα (written in cursive) may not be part of the original text.

After literary criticism has detected possible additions within a text and thus different authors, redaction criticism seeks to understand the whole editorial history of the text and the social and historical context of different literary layers. As a theoretical example, see the following text from 2 Kgs 18:1–4. Verse 2 is the oldest text, while v. 1 (cursive) and 3–4 (bold) derive from two later redactors:

¹In the third year of King Hoshea son of Elah of Israel Hezekiah son of King Ahaz of Judah began to reign.

²He was twenty-five years old at the beginning of the reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem.

His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. ³He did what was right in the sight of Yahweh just as his ancestor David had done. ⁴He removed the places of sacrifice ...

In this passage, the standard text derives from the royal annals and the cursive from a synchronistic editor who combined the annals of Israel and Judah. In the latest stage, written in bold, a further editor interpreted Israel's history from a theological perspective and evaluated the piety of each king. When the redaction critical reconstruction is accepted, we can start discussing the historical value of the information preserved in this fragment from the royal annals. For historians of ancient Israel, it is important to know that the theological evaluation is a later addition and that the information in it was probably added much later than the actual events. In other words, the historical value for the monarchic times, which the text describes, is very different in the layer that critics ascribe to the annals than the layer that was added as a theological redaction. On the other hand, for understanding the development of theological conceptions, it is important to recognize when such theological redactions took place in the development of texts. Redaction-critical investigations have concluded that most of the text in the Hebrew Bible is composite and the result of repeated additions and redactions.

In contrast with the more commonly accepted text criticism, biblical scholarship has appreciated redaction-critical reconstructions variably. Although literary and redaction criticism dominated scholarship in continental Europe until the 1980s, they never achieved universal recognition. Many considered or implied that their results were too unreliable. Although these methods are still practiced to some extent, they have become less central,⁸ and some scholars have even actively challenged their methodological basis. Biblical studies are in a quandary: what should be done with the Hebrew Bible? The method that seeks to understand the textual history predating manuscript variants is only practiced by a small minority of biblical scholars. In this article, I seek to portray key issues in the current scholarly discussion concerning later revisions or editing in the Hebrew Bible and the potential of scholarship to detect and reconstruct them. After discussing the relevance of historical criticism, I will present some of the recent challenges to these methods.

2 | DOMINANCE OF THE MASORETIC TEXT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE TEXTS

Partly due to the history of confessional conceptions, the Masoretic text is widely used as the main source for scientific reconstructions of the society, religion, and history of ancient Israel and of early Judaism. The preference for the Masoretic text, in part, obstructs the full use of textual evidence and can lead to a neglect of a historical approach to the texts. This is despite indisputable evidence that the Masoretic reading can also be the result of a later editorial intervention and that another textual witness often preserves the oldest text-form. For some biblical books, such as Jeremiah and Samuel, the Greek translation more often than not reflects an older textual stage than the Masoretic text. For example, in 1 Kgs 11:33–34, King Solomon is accused of not doing what is right in God's sight. The Masoretic texts add in both verses that Solomon did not follow God's commandments like King David had, while the more original Greek text lacks these references. The Masoretic text is, regardless of such examples, often preferred.⁹ Clearly, this does not apply to text-critical and text-oriented detailed analyses, but wider biblical scholarship is yet to fully appreciate text-critical evidence and tends to be predisposed towards the Masoretic text.

The sole use of the Masoretic text as a historical source is not inconsequential. For example, in 2 Kgs 25:10, it describes that the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem's walls, but Codex Vaticanus, a central Greek manuscript, lacks this reference.¹⁰ The difference is very significant for a historical reconstruction of Jerusalem's destruction in 587 BCE. Notably, histories of Israel and commentaries of Kings make no mention of the Greek variant, although it is probably the original reading. The destruction is portrayed as a historical event, although the source value of the Masoretic reading is significantly weakened by the variant reading.¹¹

Text-critical examples such as these are only the tip of the iceberg. It is fair to assume that later additions and other editorial interventions observed in text-critical evidence are representative of the earlier textual history as well.

If texts were expanded in the last centuries BCE when there is manuscript evidence for it, similar changes probably took place in earlier transmission as well. Some glimpses of the long-term history of a text have been preserved. By historical accident, there are three variant editions and thereby literary stages of a brief story about the murder of Gedaliah, a Governor of Judah: in 2 Kgs 25:25–26 and in the Hebrew and Greek versions of Jer 41:1–3 (Greek verse numbers: Jer 48:1–3). In the following translation, 2 Kgs 25:25–26 is written in normal characters. The bold text represents the second editorial phase, which are the additions found in the Greek version of Jer 41:1–3 (48:1–3). The latest additions, which are found in the Masoretic text of Jer 41:1–3, are underlined¹²:

*In the seventh month Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal seed **and one of the king's high officers**, came with ten men to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, to Mizpah. When they were eating a meal together at Mizpah, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, and the ten men who were with him, stood up and struck down Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword so that he died and thus killing him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed as governor over the land, and all the Judeans and Chaldeans who were with him, with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans who were found there, the soldiers, Ishmael struck down.*

This example shows that numerous small additions were made to an originally brief report about Gedaliah's murder, which eventually more than doubled the length of the text.¹³ These three variant versions were accidentally preserved, while the rest of its textual development remains undocumented. Examples such as this strongly suggest that continuous revision of the Hebrew Bible was the rule before the texts were frozen for changes sometime in the first centuries CE.¹⁴ The actual development of many texts may thus be much more complicated than what is here accidentally revealed. The long history of intensive editing distinguishes the Hebrew Bible from most other ancient sources and makes its use as a historical document different.¹⁵ The reason for intensive editing was its importance as an authoritative, defining and religious document for emerging Judaism. Despite similar examples from different parts of the Hebrew Bible, a number of biblical scholars assume that later editing was limited in scope and/or that it does not essentially impact the use of the Masoretic text as a source. Many scholars assume or imply that other textual traditions are inferior in some way,¹⁶ whereas the Masoretic tradition would have been transmitted rather faithfully. The variant readings would have emerged in the other textual traditions as secondary editorial interventions. This is a problematic assumption. While methodological discussion about this is often missing and it may only be implied,¹⁷ it nevertheless affects scholarly views on the history of ancient Israel and early Judaism. Because the Hebrew Bible was probably edited from a strongly theological perspective in later times, our perception of Israel's monarchic society and religion easily accords with later conceptions; historical reality may have been very different. For example, without much source-critical discussion, many scholars use the book of Hosea as a fairly reliable source for the social and religious circumstances of Israel in the 8th century BCE.¹⁸ However, detailed textual studies have shown that the book was so heavily edited in later times that it may not contain much, if any, reliable information about the 8th century BCE.¹⁹ There have been occasional attempts to raise the importance of this issue,²⁰ but the Hebrew Bible, and especially the Masoretic text, is widely used too uncritically and without problematizing its textual history.

3 | CHALLENGES TO CONVENTIONAL LITERARY AND REDACTION CRITICISM

In acknowledging the exceptionally complicated textual history of the Hebrew Bible, a number of scholars have spoken against the possibility of reconstructing the literary history of the Hebrew Bible. Because literary criticism would be an uncertain method, biblical scholars cannot use the book as a source for the monarchic period. At most, we could gain information about the later periods. This view has been represented by Niels Peter Lemche and Ehud Ben Zvi, for example. According to Ben Zvi, "reconstructed texts ... are hypothetical and unverifiable, and rarely command any consensus."²¹ Their use of the Hebrew Bible as a historical source is thus limited to the Persian (Ben Zvi) or

Hellenistic/Roman periods (Lemche), whereas the earlier periods should primarily be investigated by using non-biblical evidence.²² This position would effectively mean that our knowledge of monarchic Israel remains limited. However, if one assumes that we cannot distinguish between literary layers of different times, one may ask, to what extent can we use the Hebrew Bible for Persian, Hellenistic, or Roman periods? Without a historical approach to composite texts, it is difficult to use them as reliable witnesses for any period. To be fully consistent, one would have to abandon the Hebrew Bible altogether as a historical source. Such a pessimistic view is hardly warranted, for it lies beyond doubt that despite its difficulties as a source the Hebrew Bible contains much important information.

Another challenge to historical criticism is the introduction of the so-called New philology to biblical studies in recent years. Its challenge stems from a similar skepticism about our possibilities to reconstruct textual history, but here, the criticism is even more encompassing. In their 2017 volume, Liv Lied and Hugo Lundhaug refer to the change “from a focus on origins to a focus on practice,” which mainly denotes a change of focus to the manuscripts and their contexts in the Roman and Medieval periods. They criticize text-critical attempts to determine the early or earliest forms of texts, and instead claim we should accept fluidity and variety of traditions.²³ This approach can be characterized as a reaction and criticism of historical-critical perspectives.²⁴ It is certainly a fair enterprise to try to understand the historical context and media culture behind each manuscript, and it is relevant for understanding many aspects of the Hebrew Bible as well. The comparison of manuscripts, for example, provides new information about textual transmission, and this can only be welcomed.²⁵ Nevertheless, many of the questions of New philology do not relate to the editorial history of the Hebrew Bible but are questions raised in manuscript studies. The proposed change of focus away from the early forms and “origins” challenges a historical approach to the content of texts and thus effectively implies that the Hebrew Bible is rejected as a historical source, at least for the early periods. Without really engaging historical criticism, New philology seeks to change the questions and focus of research. However, there is no need to see historical criticism and New philology as mutually exclusive.

In his book, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction*, published in 2011, David M. Carr presents several examples of documented cases that show the limits of literary criticism.²⁶ His example texts show such a complexity of literary development that literary critics could not detect, let alone reconstruct, them without textual evidence. Despite his criticism, Carr accepts the conventional method in principle, and he therefore proposes a methodological “middle way,” which accepts that the prehistory of biblical texts can only be reconstructed partially. Carr's suggestion is a fruitful step forward, but methodologically, there is still much to do.²⁷ For example, in reconstructing the history and society of Israel in the same volume, Carr uses the texts of many prophets in the Hebrew Bible to portray the history of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE, although the textual sources are the result of a very complex development.²⁸ Skepticism about our ability to reconstruct the history of the texts should lead to increased uncertainty about such texts as historical sources and not vice versa.

In their edited volume, *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism*, published in 2016, Ray Person and Robert Rezetko pose a direct challenge to historical criticism.²⁹ Like Carr, the editors and some of the volume's authors rightly draw attention to examples where literary critics would hardly be able to reconstruct the textual history. Person and Rezetko also criticize the conventional indicators used in literary criticism, especially the *Wiederaufnahme* or resumptive repetition; literary critics generally regard an unnecessary or disturbing repetition as a possible sign of an editorial intervention.³⁰ Person and Rezetko accept that grammatical irregularities are better signs for later editing, but this idea is not developed further.³¹ Pointing out the method's problems, they maintain that its results are too unreliable to be usable. However, literary critics generally assume that several indicators are necessary to presume later editing, and it would be unconvincing to use only one indicator.³² Although the critics use the indicators in their arguments, it is more important that the critic has a deep understanding of the text to recognize what happened to it. It is not clear what the general skepticism of Person and Rezetko leads to, and what their proposed alternative is. Although their book is very welcome in turning our attention to the documented evidence, we are left with the question of what should be done with the text in the Hebrew Bible.

Carr and Person/Rezetko show some of the problems of historical criticism. Sometimes, later editors rewrote parts of the older text or simply omitted embarrassing or theologically offensive details.³³ It would be impossible to

reconstruct what was left out unless the older text was accidentally preserved, such as in 2 Sam 15:8. The Masoretic text may be the result of a significant omission, while the Old Greek, only found in some manuscripts, probably preserves the original reading.³⁴ In the Greek text, King David makes a vow: "If Yahweh brings me back to Jerusalem, I will worship Yahweh in Hebron." The Hebrew text leaves out the reference to Hebron because the original text implies a temple of Yahweh in Hebron in David's time. This would contradict other passages (such as 2 Sam 7:11–16; 1 Chr 17:4) according to which there was no temple in his time. Had the Greek text not been preserved, it would have been nearly impossible to know that the original text referred to a temple in Hebron.

Cases such as 2 Sam 15:8 run counter to a basic assumption in literary criticism that nothing could be omitted, because the Hebrew Bible was too holy.³⁵ For example, Christoph Levin writes: "Because it counted as normative, it was strictly unalterable ... nothing was taken away. The given text remained unchanged; at least it was not abridged."³⁶ In view of clear evidence to the contrary, a dogmatic position on omission seems untenable.³⁷ On the other hand, the extent of omissions should not be exaggerated. Omissions were only made for weighty reasons (as in 2 Sam 15:8), and the scribes clearly preferred additions when altering the text.³⁸ Many scribes only omitted if the text contained something theologically offensive or otherwise unacceptable. For example, in the text-critical evidence of Jeremiah, the overwhelming majority of editorial changes are additions, and it is very difficult to find unambiguous omissions.³⁹

There are challenges, such as omission, that limit the potential of historical criticism, but scholarship also needs to consider factors speaking in its favor. The lack of consensus applies to many questions of ancient history, and historical criticism is not an extraordinary exception. It is certainly true that considerable uncertainties pertain to single passages, but a redaction-critical reconstruction hardly ever builds on a single text. If a critic concludes that a certain topic, perspective, or conception was added to a number of passages, the theory increases in probability, regardless of whether the literary-critical reconstructions are entirely correct in each passage. Using historical criticism, Timo Veijola showed that the negative attitude towards kingship in the historical books from Joshua to Kings was added later and that the older text was more positive towards kingship.⁴⁰ Although his literary-critical conclusions are debatable, his general theory about the lateness of a negative stand on kingship is widely accepted among biblical scholars, and it has had an enduring impact on our understanding of these books and their social context.

Moreover, the possibilities of the method in individual passages are not as unreliable as scholars challenging the method imply. One should also take into consideration cases where it would have been possible to detect later additions without documented evidence.⁴¹ There are cases where critics reconstructed the older text that textual evidence later corroborated. On the basis of text-internal considerations, Julius Wellhausen argued in the 19th century that Judg 6:7–10 must be a later addition.⁴² Lacking exactly these verses, the discovery of the Qumran manuscript 4QJudg^a later confirmed this theory. Similarly, some scholars suggested in the early 20th century that 2 Sam 5:4–5 was added later,⁴³ and 4QSam^a later substantiated this. A similar case can also be found in Deut 32:8 (cf. 4QDeut^b).⁴⁴

Although historical criticism should take the challenges into consideration, so far, there is no methodologically coherent alternative for how to use the information contained in the Hebrew Bible for the early periods.⁴⁵ The full rejection of the book collection as a source for the history of ancient Israel and early Judaism is a possibility, but it is unclear that this would bring any advantages. Despite its exceptionally complicated textual history, the Hebrew Bible contains much information about early Judaism and the history of Israel that cannot be recovered otherwise. There is very little hope that future textual finds could provide much of this information, and archaeological data can only cover some areas and aspects of history and society. Judah and Israel are the best known small kingdoms in the entire Near East, and this is mainly due to the information preserved in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew Bible is a unique source for understanding the development of religious and other conceptions, and in many cases, historical criticism has gathered important information that would otherwise be lost. In addition to the above-mentioned theory by Veijola, many other examples can be mentioned. For example, the background and early history of Israel's God Yhwh as a storm God can only be understood when the complicated editorial history of the vestiges in the Hebrew Bible are understood.⁴⁶ Similarly, historical criticism can show how monotheism emerged in Israel's religion, and this

information would otherwise be lost.⁴⁷ The roots and development of many theological conceptions, such as covenant theology, becomes clear only if scholars distinguish between different editorial layers in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁸

4 | SUMMARY

It lies beyond reasonable doubt that later scribes edited the Hebrew Bible intensively, and therefore, most of its texts are composite. Because intensive editing continued for centuries, the Hebrew Bible is an exceptionally difficult textual source. There is no consensus in scholarship on how one should relate to its complicated editorial history, and thus, a major problem in biblical studies is how to deal with its text. Historical criticism, which seeks to reconstruct the history of texts by using text, literary, and redaction criticism, can never reconstruct the textual history with absolute certainty, but they nevertheless remain core to biblical studies, as some of their results and information could not be retrieved by other means. As in other areas of the humanities, theories are abstractions and can never reach objectivity or certainty like natural sciences can. The proposed alternative to these methods do not provide apparent advantages. Many questions in the history of ancient Israel and early Judaism can only be understood by a historical approach to the Hebrew Bible.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Other examples of significantly different versions of the same book are Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Samuel, and Kings. Nevertheless, significant text-critical variants can be found in all books of the Hebrew Bible.

² Perhaps the best attempt in antiquity was by Origen in the 3rd century CE.

³ This is the case for the Jewish tradition, although the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, was significant for Jews in the last centuries BCE and first century CE. Moreover, the Septuagint has been regarded as the preferred text in many Christian traditions during some periods as well.

⁴ For example, Wellhausen, 1871 and many others.

⁵ Although text-critical methods were already used in antiquity, the methodology as it is practiced today is modern.

⁶ Many scholars have called for “deprivileging” the Masoretic text; for example, Clines, 2002: 82–84.

⁷ See, for example, Becker, 2005: 53–57, and Steck, 1999: 47–59.

⁸ Recent decades have seen a new development, where some scholarly traditions disregard attempts to reach the older text, and in their place are new approaches and methods, such as social scientific models or models using advances in cognitive sciences. It is assumed that new approaches could give new perspectives to unsolved questions.

⁹ With the risk of generalizing, the burden of proof often lies on any challenge to the Masoretic text. As noted by Aejmelaeus, 2007: 106, “the original reading must show its originality by its own force and that one should always weigh the variants ‘against one another.’”

¹⁰ The MT of 2 Kgs 25:10 reads וְהָיוּ כָּל־חֳמֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם סָבִיב נְתָצוּ כְּלִי־חַיִל אֲשֶׁר בְּיַד־טַבָּחִים, “the walls of Jerusalem were torn down by all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard,” whereas Codex Vaticanus only has the word ὁ ἀρχιμάγειρος, “the captain of the guard.” The latter is the natural subject of the sentence in verse 9.

¹¹ There is a discussion about what the destruction of the city walls meant and how this information should be coordinated with the archaeological data. Thus, for example, Jones, 1984: 645–655; Fritz, 2003: 420–421; Miller & Hayes, 2006: 478; Sweeney, 2007: 461–462.

¹² For arguments and detailed discussion of this passage, see Pakkala, 2008: 401–411.

¹³ The oldest witness contained 124 Hebrew characters, while the youngest has grown to 308 characters.

¹⁴ Thus many literary critics, for example, Levin, 2005: 27–28.

¹⁵ Clearly, many other ancient texts were edited and revised, and there is much documented evidence for this (e.g., Milstein, 2016: 81–97), but the Hebrew Bible appears to be different in some respects because it was the focus of intensive editing for centuries.

- ¹⁶ The Samaritan Pentateuch has largely been regarded as an inferior text. Only in recent discussions have its readings received new attention; in some important cases, it probably preserves the oldest reading, while the MT may be secondary. For example, in Deut 27:4, the Masoretic reading, Ebal, is a later ideological correction, while the Samaritan reading Gerizim seems original.
- ¹⁷ Without a detailed methodological discussion, some recent commentaries, such as Fischer, 2015: 43, 46, assume that the Masoretic text is nearly always to be preferred. This position is more common in histories of Israel and its religion; see, for example, Zwickel & Tilly, 2011: *passim*.
- ¹⁸ For example, Miller & Hayes, 2006: 361; Albertz, 1994: 159–179; Soggin, 1980: 252.
- ¹⁹ See, for example, Nissinen, 1991: 166.
- ²⁰ For example, Tigay, 1985, and Müller, Pakkala, and ter Haar Romeny, 2014, among others.
- ²¹ Ben Zvi, 2005: 6.
- ²² See Lemche, 2008: 397–92, and Ben Zvi, 2009: 73–95.
- ²³ Lied & Lundhaug, 2017: 2–6.
- ²⁴ Thus Liv Lied, a promoter of this method, at https://www.academia.edu/12026818/_New_Philology_-_in_a_Nutshell_.
- ²⁵ The perspective of many of the contributions in Lied & Lundhaug (eds.), 2017, is on the differences between manuscript traditions and manuscripts, which is related to some questions in the study of documented evidence in the Hebrew Bible. Processes in other texts of antiquity, which are mainly discussed in the volume, are certainly interesting for the development of the Hebrew Bible as well.
- ²⁶ Carr, 2011.
- ²⁷ For example, Carr, 2011: 144–149, proposes that the “more datable texts” are given a key role in understanding the formation of the Hebrew Bible, but it is unclear how these texts should be selected, as there is little consensus on them especially concerning the monarchic period. The methodological danger here is the increased influence of the scholar's preconceptions on perceiving and analyzing the texts.
- ²⁸ For criticism of Carr's (2011: 144–149) method, see Pakkala, 2014.
- ²⁹ Person & Rezetko, 2016.
- ³⁰ According to Person & Rezetko, 2016: 25–27, 29, the *Wiederaufnahme* “cannot be used as a reliable discernible trace” for a later editorial intervention (p. 27). It is certainly true that *Wiederaufnahme* alone is not a guaranteed indicator. It has been used as one *possible* indicator that should be used in conjunction with other signs for later editing, such as grammatical problems, tensions in the narrative, or anachronistic language.
- ³¹ Instead of elaborating on the significance of grammatical problems, their discussion is centered on the problems with linguistic dating (Person & Rezetko, 2016: 28–29), which has never been a significant criterion for detecting or assuming later additions. Later editors often imitated older language, which essentially complicates linguistic dating of biblical texts.
- ³² Accordingly, books on the method often stress many indicators are necessary and that their cumulative occurrence increases a theory of multiple authorship (see, for example, Becker, 2005: 53–57). Many critics also note that a possible sign (such as a doublet) is uncertain unless other signs are also present. For example, Steck, 1999: 54–57, lists a variety of limitations concerning the possible signs for later editing.
- ³³ See Pakkala, 2013: 351–385.
- ³⁴ For a discussion of the verse, see Hugo, 2008.
- ³⁵ Levin, 2005: 22–23, 26–27, and Becker, 2005: 84.
- ³⁶ Levin, 2005: 27.
- ³⁷ See Pakkala, 2013: 351–385.
- ³⁸ See Pakkala, 2013: 351–352.
- ³⁹ For discussion, see Pakkala, 2013: 103–116. Another example of radical revisions to an older source is the creation of new compositions. For example, Chronicles used Kings and other older sources selectively leaving out many details and even entire passages. Although this is a different phenomenon than the transmission of a text that remains the same composition, it needs to be taken into consideration in literary criticism.
- ⁴⁰ Veijola, 1977.
- ⁴¹ See examples in Müller et al., 2014, e.g., Lev 17:4; Lev 23:5–7/Num 28:16–25; Num 13–14; 1 Kgs 16:11–14; 2 Kgs 25:10; Jer 52:12; and the large additions in Esther.
- ⁴² Wellhausen, 1899: 214.
- ⁴³ Thus, for example, Steuernagel, 1912: 324.

- ⁴⁴ Cf. Steuernagel, 1900: 116 and 4QDeut^l found half a century later. In this case, some Greek manuscripts share the Qumran reading.
- ⁴⁵ For criticism of Carr, 2011, see Pakkala, 2014.
- ⁴⁶ See Müller, 2008.
- ⁴⁷ See Pakkala, 1999.
- ⁴⁸ For example, the emergence of the covenant theology (*Bundestheologie*) can only be appreciated by a literary- and redaction-critical analysis of Deuteronomy and Jeremiah; see Levin, 1985; Veijola, 1996. The redaction history of many books has shown how theological conceptions evolved in early Judaism. For example, a literary- and redaction-critical approach can reconstruct the development of conceptions in Ezekiel; see Rudnig, 2000. Many other examples from other books could be mentioned.

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