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Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature

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Editorial Introduction: Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature

Scholarly analysis of ancient Jewish texts is an extreme case of non-participant research. It is “extreme” because the original participants in the literature, its producers and receivers, are separated from modern academics by several barriers. The texts were produced in languages and cultures that are dead or have changed in profound ways. Many of the communities that produced them no longer exist. Those that do have evolved so dramatically that they are, for all intents and purposes, different communities. In many cases, even the identities of those communities are disputed. Their authors, almost without exception, are unknown. Even their original performative functions are elusive.

This little volume addresses one of these barriers. Put as a question: What constitutes literary (in)coherence for ancient Jewish writers and readers? Ancient texts often disappoint modern expectations. Instances of contradiction, infelicities of grammar, unnecessary repetition, and the like defy prevailing standards of textual unity. In modern scholarship, the perceived disunity of ancient Jewish texts has resulted in two principal approaches to account for them. From a historical point of view, disappointed expectations are attributed to diachronic forces. Texts are construed as stratified objects, comprised of separate documents or layers produced by different writers in different times and different places according to different interests. Features of disunity are understood as natural by-products of this process. Texts are construed as stratified objects, comprised of separate documents or layers produced by different writers in different times and different places according to different interests. Features of disunity are understood as natural by-products of this process. From a literary point of view, instances of perceived disunity are often construed as problems of scholarly perception. Incoherent and ambiguous elements are construed as products of deliberate, strategic choices by erudite writers. The conclusion that such elements are accidental or problematic is viewed as hasty. Each approach adopts a distinct plausibility-structure regarding the practices of ancient text-production, which largely excludes the perspectives of the alternate approach.1

1 Although we have cast the “historical” and “literary” as opposites, in practice, scholars...
For all their differences, these competing plausibility-structures are modern in outlook. The historical and literary perspectives both assume that ancient readers and writers share standards and tolerances of coherence and incoherence with modern critics, attributing contemporary standards of literary unity or disunity to ancient readers. At stake is a genuine understanding of the literature and thought forms of cultures in antiquity, cultures that differ profoundly from our own. This volume takes steps to overcome potential anachronisms and the theoretical divisions by reconsidering what constitutes incoherency and what standards of literary in / coherence might have been for ancient Jewish writers and readers themselves.

Admittedly, there is a third perspective on perceived disunity that we will not consider closely. From a religious point of view, disunity is rejected as a matter of principle. The words of the biblical writers are associated with the words of God, so closely in some communities as to be inseparable. In such cases, contradictions, errors, and empty repetitions are impossible. If there is any error, it is an error in the reader’s perceptions, not in God’s words. As such, the religious point of view requires no account of incoherency because incoherency does not exist. Of course, this perspective only obtains in those works of literature that faith declares “divine.” With respect to other ancient Jewish works, a historical or literary perspective is readily adopted, which returns us to our main question and the two principle approaches to it.

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typically adopt a mix-and-match approach, explaining some features of incoherence in historical terms and others in literary terms.

2 One claim of a “literary” approach is that traditional historical-critical scholars impose inappropriate coherence standards onto ancient literature. On the one hand, it argues for the need to unlearn intuitions that are modern in outlook and to recover those that are organic to the producers of the text. On the other hand, the gaps, ambiguities, tensions in perspective, and contradictions that are identified as strategic creations of ancient writers are assumed to correspond to the standards and tolerances of modern readers. The questions at stake are whether or not those incoherencies are deliberate or not and whether one should assume that they serve some greater coherence-plan or not.
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research project being conducted under the guidance of principal investigators D.A. Teeter and W.A. Tooman. The project, Texture, grew out of our ongoing dissatisfaction with both literary and historical accounts of the features of ancient Jewish literature. Texture works toward a new historical poetics of ancient Jewish literature, a grammar of composition. It is a quest to comprehend — on their own terms and according to their own cultural conventions — the full array of literary features that give shape and texture to the documents of ancient Judaism and that together constitute a compositional poetics. In time, Texture will offer comprehensive descriptions of the features of individual books of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature as texts. These descriptions will explain the techniques and means by which the ancient writers (and their readers) fashioned diverse literary elements into complex literary works. Put differently, Texture explores the means by which these texts encode information and the manner in which their arguments are conveyed by focusing on the intersection of the genetic and the poetic.
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Abstract: In this article, we sketch an anatomy of issues and decisions that must be navigated in any attempt to understand coherence and incoherence in ancient Jewish literature, including: the meaning of “coherence,” its relationship to “unity,” the suitability of modern standards of (in)coherence to ancient texts, and the availability of ancient standards of (in)coherence. We argue that modern perspectival representation and modern standards of literary (in)coherence are not necessarily appropriate to ancient Jewish literature, and we propose that these issues can only be properly approached after undertaking an inductive, comprehensive analysis of the ancient Jewish literature itself; in effect, learning the “ways of the text.”

Keywords: coherence, unity, criticism, aspect, empirical

Part 1. Coherence and Unity

1.1. What is coherence?

Whether understood narrowly as compatibility between constituents of a textual world, or quite broadly as a regulative principle applying to all areas of text production and reception, coherence is a constitutive feature of textuality. While there is much disagreement about the concept, all agree
that “coherence” is a fundamental ingredient of a “text” as such – or at least of meaningfully experiencing a text. It is an expectation brought to anything that might be considered a “text,” though it is not found in equal measure in every text. The degree and kind of coherence expected of a text (and the effort exerted to satisfy such expectations) depend on a variety of factors.

This article sketches an anatomy of issues representing key points of debate, differences in approach, and decisions that must be made in the attempt to understand coherence and incoherence in ancient Jewish literature. One of several key difficulties in assessing the problem of “coherence” (or its absence) in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Jewish literature concerns the fact, just mentioned, that the definition of “coherence” is itself contested, both in biblical studies and in other disciplines. Within text-linguistic research, for example, the concept of “coherence” has been understood in a wide variety of ways and with diverse applications, ranging from the very narrow (closely approximating the notion of grammatical and lexical cohesion) to the very broad (“coherence” as a comprehensive

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4 This includes, not least, the type of text under consideration. See, e.g., A. Samely with P. Alexander, R. Bernasconi, and R. Hayward, Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 23; M. Heath, Unity in Greek Poetics (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 1.


category of understanding that applies to all essential aspects of a text). Differences in the scope of the concept tend to yield quite different descriptions and conclusions.

On this question of definition also turns the debated issue of the locus of coherence: internal ("intra-," "inner-," and "inter-textual") and/or external ("extra-textual"). Put as a question, is coherence properly a feature inherent to texts, or is it a property granted to it by readers? Outside of linguistic research, the former conclusion is disputed. The latter is not. This dispute requires some clarification.

In the first place, there are limitations peculiar to written communication that require readers to participate in coherence construction. The principle of selection by which writers choose which events and things to pronounce and which to imply accounts for the fundamentally gapped quality of all writing. Rendering a complete account is impossible. One could describe,
in endless detail, the features of a character or object or the contours of an event or argument without achieving a complete description without gaps and blanks. The “involvement of the reader or spectator as accomplices or collaborators is essential in the curious situation of artistic communication.” Gap-filling is one of the ways that readers continually (often unconsciously) contribute to the coherence of the communications that they receive. It is the responsibility of readers to fill many of those gaps, a tacit responsibility neither offered nor demanded in any explicit way. Fulfilling that responsibility is a powerful act of coherence-building.

The contributions that readers make to a text’s coherence seem innumerable both in frequency and kind. For example, in Gen 12:4–5 we read: “Abram went, just as Yhwh told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, and all the stuff that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan.” Persons and things in the story (‘existents’) are assumed to persist. The “Lot” of verse 4 is the same person specified in verse 5 as “his brother’s son,” or so one naturally assumes. Absent such a revelation, the reader grants continuity of identity to the existent “Lot.” The same applies to “Abram,” “Sarai,” and “Haran”; all three they are also the basic inducement to communication (The Act of Reading, 166–67, 183–84). On all the issues discussed here see L. Doležel, “Possible Worlds and Literary Fictions,” in Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts, and Sciences (ed. A. Sture; Research in Text Theory 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 221–242 and, especially, Wolfgang Iser, “Indeterminacy and the Reader’s Response in Prose Fiction,” in Aspects of Narrative, English Institute Essays (ed. by J. Hillis Miller; New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 1–45.


11 S. Chatman describes a “story” as “the continuum of events presupposing the total set of all conceivable details” (Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film [Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1978], 28). Iser makes the same point about all texts: “By grouping together the written parts of the text, we enable them to interact, we observe the direction in which they are leading us, and we project onto them the consistency which we, as readers, require. This ‘gestalt’ must inevitably be colored by our own characteristic selection process. For it is not given by the text itself; it arises from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook” (“The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach,” New Literary History 3 [1972]: 289). In their conception, the “story” is a composite of written and imagined elements and therefore is never the same twice. This is one of the unique pleasures of rereading.
having been introduced at the end of chapter 11. Another common type of reader contribution is "event causality." Again, we read in Gen 16:6: “Abram said to Sarai, ‘Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please,’ so Sarai was cruel to her, and she ran away from her.” It is natural to assume that Hagar ran away because of Sarah’s treatment of her. The writers neither imply nor say as much. It is assumed that the juxtaposition of clauses is a sufficient indicator.12 This assumption is strengthened but still not made explicit when the messenger of Yhwh tells Hagar to “go back and submit” (v. 9). Of course, some readers are more aware of their own contributions to the reading process than others. Academic readers, in particular, are trained to observe gaps and blanks and to restrain the impulse to fill them too quickly.13 Good reading calls for such restraint, since good writers will exploit readerly impulses. Even good readers can stumble, though. A cultivated restraint can become a reading flaw if exercised stubbornly, erratically, or in a historically inappropriate way.14

12 Ingarden refers to any lack of identicality between the contours of a work and its realization by the reader as “places of indeterminacy” (The Literary Work of Art [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973], 29–30, 267, 332–336, etc.). Iser builds on Ingarden’s observation, exploring how gap-filling is not only an act of completion but of combination. “It is only when the schemata of the text are related to one another that the imaginary object can begin to be formed, and it is the blanks that get this connecting operation under way” (Act of Reading, 183–186 quote at 183).

13 This is one facet of Ingarden’s “aesthetic experience,” which is to be distinguished from “mere looking” or “mere reading” (“Artistic & Aesthetic Values,” British Journal of Aesthetics 4 [1964]: 198–213).

14 In one recent study on “Pentateuchal Coherence,” J. Stackert proposed that Exod 4:2 and 17 represent “contradictory narrative claims.” According to Stackert, in 4:2 “Moses possesses a rod that Yahweh then instructs him to use,” whereas in 4:17 “the deity gives such a rod to Moses, implying that Moses did not possess a rod previously.” Stackert assumes the persistence of the existents “Moses” and “Yhwh” but, in an act of restraint, does not do so for the staff. Then, eschewing restraint, he perceives and fills gaps in 4:17: “take in your hand this [brand new] staff [since you lack one].” (“Pentateuchal Coherence and the Science of Reading,” in The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America (ed. J. Gertz et al.; FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 253–268, at 257). Stackert’s broader goal is to “apply the findings of empirical research on reading comprehension, textual cohesion and coherence, and cognition especially in the fields of psychology, linguistics, and education to the question of how readers understand pentateuchal texts as unified and coherent” (ibid., 253–254). On the limitations of empirical reading-research for understanding bona fide literature as opposed to small “textoids,” see A. Grosser, M. Gernsbacher, and S. Goldman, “Cognition,” in Discourse as Structure and Process (ed. T. van Dijk; London: Sage, 1997), 1:292–319, esp. 312–313; A. Samely, “Jewish Studies and Reading,” in ‘Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning’. Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday (ed. G. Langer and C. Cordoni; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 767–771; J. Petöfi, “Towards an Empirically Motivated Grammatical Theory of Verbal Texts,” in Studies in Text Grammar (ed. J. Petöfi and H. Reiser; Dor-
Grating all this, an over-emphasis on coherence as a contribution of readers is liable to promote a serious misunderstanding. On the one hand, coherence clearly relates to mental processes impossible apart from the active involvement of readers. From this standpoint, a reader seeks out and thereby constitutes coherence. On the other hand, these mental processes are bound to the physical text as a functional whole that represents the embodiment of an intentional, situational, communicative act, a strategy of communication manifested in tightly related features (cohesion, structure, boundedness, referentiality, etc). From this standpoint, a reader finds or re-creates the coherence encoded within the text. A reader does not create it de novo.

Coherence, then, requires cooperation between text producers and consumers. It is a communicative transaction that assumes and requires the participation of writers and readers and is delivered in the form of an aural or physical object (the text). So, although coherence is a “text-notion,” it is
“not a mere feature of texts, but rather the outcome of cognitive processes among text users.”\(^\text{18}\) For the present purposes, we will take “coherence” in a limited sense as referring to the compatibility between constituents of a text.\(^\text{19}\) Within this framework, “coherence” may apply to conceptual connectivity at multiple levels or extents of text, from the proposition, clause, and sentence (microstructural coherence) up to the complete text (macrostructural coherence).\(^\text{20}\) While readers perform an indispensable role in constituting that coherence, coherence cannot be separated from the text as a communicative strategy.

At stake in this debate over the meaning of “coherence” and, in particular, the false dichotomy between inherent textual properties and the contribution of the reader within a communication-transaction is the degree to which the coherence-construal of an individual reader is subject to critical evaluation – i.e. how and to what extent the intuitions and underlying assumptions of readers may be determined by historical analysis to be correct or incorrect, appropriate or inappropriate, valid or invalid, successful or deficient. Given the competing understandings and applications of coherence as a concept, it comes as no surprise that a wide variety of

\(^\text{18}\) Ibid. 6–7; “The process of constituting meaning can be ... described as a continuously progressive selection – directed by the purpose of the speech – from the possibilities of effect and function relating to the given elements whose relevance is known to the speakers; this process results eventually in the individualization of the functions normatively or facultatively given, defined by appropriate categories, and formally determined by their position in the language system, which is directed toward the communicationally relevant, intentional and situational adequacy of what is to be conveyed in a linguistic transaction.” (S. J. Schmidt, Bedeutung und Begriff: Zur Fundierung einer sprachphilosophischen Semantik [Braunschweig: Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, 1969], 139 cited by Iser, *Act of Reading*, 183–184)


\(^\text{20}\) On coherence and structure, see Krause, *Textsorten*, 57–58 who notes that the concept of coherence stands in tight relationship to the “structuredness” (Strukturiertheit) of all texts, and thus that structure and coherence can be seen as two specific ways of looking at the same problem. On macrostructure in relation to coherence, see especially T. van Dijk, *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse* (London: Longman, 1997), 93–129; 130–163; idem, *Some Aspects of Text Grammars* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 34–129, 130–162, 273–309. See also Kintsch and van Dijk, *Strategies of Discourse Comprehension*, 79–80 and: “The themes or macrostructures ... define the global coherence of the discourse. Locally, coherence must be established by the interpretation of relations between sentences, the so-called connection relations” (id., 90).
heterogenous phenomena are associated with its establishment or rupture, as we will discuss below.

1.2. The Relationship to “Unity”

Notions of “unity” in Hebrew Bible scholarship in particular add a further layer of misunderstanding. “Unity” and “coherence” sometimes appear to be used interchangeably. Their conflation, however, can again lead to descriptive confusion and obscure fundamental differences in the claims, analytical procedures, methods, and assumptions attending different modes of scholarly reading. This confusion is complicated by the fact that, like the term “coherence,” “unity” is taken to mean quite different things in this discussion. As a consequence, one often observes a slippage or lack of conceptual clarity in the application of the term, especially in relation to the notion of “coherence.” Three uses of the term “unity” are common in scholarly parlance.

1. Unity as a claim about authorship. For many scholars, the term “unity” is definitionally tied to an historical judgment regarding authorship and production, though the specific model of authorship and, consequently, the specific features of unity may vary. 21 “Unity” can be used strictly to denote the product of singular authorship, i.e. an independent literary unit that is the product of one author, mind, or hand, to the exclusion of composite entities. A “composite text” may thus stand in definitional opposition to a “unified text.” 22 Alternatively, “unity” can be used to describe the additive or combinatory work of an author/redactor. By this definition, one might regard a composite text that appears to be the product of multiple authors or to attest to a long compositional development as a “unity” or “unified text,” in the sense of displaying a certain compatibility between constituent elements attributable to the intention of a later writer or writers. 23 Some speak of “secondary” as opposed to “primary” unity, “redactional unity.” 24 In such cases, one might meaningfully speak of the “unity” of a complex, multi-

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21 “Unity is a compositional, authorial notion; coherence [by contrast] depends on readers” (Brettler, “Coherence,” 418).
22 As it does, e.g., in Stackert, “Pentateuchal Coherence,” 253.
23 This “compatibility” might be understood in a number of ways: the whole being governed by an overall strategy or plan, for example, or the whole being well-formed, hanging together, or making sense as a whole, and so forth.
24 Regarding secondary unity versus primary unity, see L. Alonso Schökel, A Manual of Hebrew Poetics (SubBib 11; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988), 189. “A later writer could take already completed pieces and bring them together skilfully to form a
layered work, without a claim of unitary authorship. Regardless of the exact model of authorship, “unity” as an authorial notion is taken to be either supported or denied on the basis of the reader’s experience of in / coherence.

2. Unity as a judgment about textual features. For others, however, “unity” represents an analytic judgment about the internal semantic compatibility or consistency of a text, without expressing commitment to, and thus independent of, any particular conception of authorship or reconstruction of a text’s historical development. Such an authorially-agnostic claim of “unity” applied to a text is neither permanently nor necessarily ahistorical, even though deductions about historical production are procedurally bracketed. This understanding of “unity” can be very close to the notion of “coherence”; both may represent statements about the ultimate (“global” or “macrostructural”) compatibility of textual constituents. Often the two are hierarchically ordered, with unity representing the highest-level attribution of coherence.

3. Unity as a phenomenological postulate of all reading. There is a third sense of “unity” that stands in contrast to (1) and (2). In both (1) and (2) “unity” represents an a posteriori conclusion or judgment made after having read a text. Here in (3), “unity” is an a priori assumption or anticipation brought to a potential text (any de facto bounded literary unit). “Unity” in this sense is a phenomenological postulate of all reading. It is what motivates a process of discovery and (re)construction of meaning, enabling the eventual experience of a text as coherent. It is what makes it possible to experience any text meaningfully. It is not a judgment about or justification of “unity,” understood either as an historical claim about authorship or a claim about how a literary whole hangs together, but an expectation of the mutual compatibility of constituents; that the parts will relate meaningfully to the de facto whole. The quest for “unity” in this foundational, phenomenological sense is already presupposed to some extent in all the approaches discussed under (1) and (2). This expectation of unity can be disappointed, either temporarily or permanently, by the perception of incoherence. Intuitions

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25 “Unity is … only one of the many criteria which we expect an utterance to satisfy if it is to be accepted as well-formed” (Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics*, 1, for whom unity and coherence are basically interchangeable).

26 See esp. the contribution of A. Samely to this volume; cf. idem, “Jewish Studies and Reading,” 771–775.
about whether and how the expectation of unity can be disappointed permanently (motivating the conclusion that the text is not unified) determine basic distinctions in the varieties of approach to ancient Jewish literature, both critical and non-critical.

1.3. Differences in approach to Unity and Coherence

1. Uncritical and Critical Reading. On one side of the spectrum lies uncritical reading as an investment of faith, in which unity is permanently assured and coherence can never be disappointed permanently:

The investment of individuals or social groups in a text’s importance can be so high that any internal discontinuities or contradictions it may have are not perceived as such at all, or only experienced as a spur to read more closely and carefully, keeping the assumption of its coherence open ad infinitum. Such an attitude can be found in the hermeneutics of holy text cultures, including those of the Judaism that created the works of Midrash. In such cases the expectation of coherence is never abandoned for good, and therefore incapable of being disappointed. It functions as a dogma of reading. The labours of interpretation, and the expected complexity of devices of meaning, are raised to such heights that simple glaring inconsistencies, contradictions, or repetitions within a text are unlikely to be accepted as such.27

Within critical bible reading, on the other hand, the expectation of coherence is always capable of being frustrated permanently. 28 The license

27 Samely et al., Profiling, 23–24. 28 “If a reader assumes an attitude of ‘critical’ reading, then any initial projection of coherence is constantly kept under review and capable of being rescinded, should evidence to the contrary be encountered. And very importantly, in a critical reading the expectation that the text ‘hangs together’ is capable of being disappointed for good. The reader is critical because equipped with reasons for deciding to stop looking for unity, and therefore giving up the attempt of understanding the text. This option must always be available to the modern scholar reading ancient sources. This despite the risk of ‘missing’ the coherence which might have been experienced by ancient readers, or of applying a modern standard of expected coherence which is anachronistic for ancient texts” (Samely et al., Profiling, 23). W. Richter goes further and asserts that the extent of an ancient Israelite literary work can never be assumed as a given on the basis of de facto boundaries, but has to be proven through literary-critical methods. For this reason such methods are procedurally primary. Before anything else can be done, one must pose the question of authorial unity by compiling a list of features that speak against the unity of a text and applying that list to the text to determine what is “original.” “Eine als ein Werk überlieferte Größe kann also in sich verschiedene abgeschlossene Werke enthalten, die auf verschiedene Autoren zurückgehen und verschiedenen Zeiten angehören. Es sind somit nicht alle Werke israelitischen Literatur unmittelbar gegeben, sondern müssen zum Teil erst erschlossen werden. Diese Arbeit ist nicht in das Belieben jeden Einzelnen gestellt; man kann sie sich nicht ersparen, da sonst jede inhaltliche Exegese in der Luft hängt und historische Bezüge von Aussagen nicht erkannt werden können. Auch wenn wir nicht wüßten, daß es sich im AT so verhält, müßten wir die Frage nach
to declare the search for unity a failure and to evaluate further attempts to salvage coherence as historically inappropriate is an essential feature of the post-Enlightenment critical approach toward literature. The availability of this option is a necessary pre-condition for all critical inquiry that understands itself as contributing to the (critical) history and science of literature.

2. Varieties of critical scholarship: diachronic vs. synchronic orientation. Yet a dichotomy between critical and non-critical approaches does not yet suffice to capture the real contours of difference when it comes to coherence and/or unity in modern Hebrew Bible scholarship. For this, we must also recognize that the broader critical orientation toward the literatures of ancient Judaism includes within its purview diverse methods or approaches, with diverse inclinations toward questions of “unity” and “coherence.” Particularly important here are characteristic differences in the focus of engagement with the text between so-called “synchronic” (or “wholistic,” or “literary,” or “final form”) and “diachronic” (or “historical-critical” or “literary-critical”) approaches. To take the latter first, diachronic studies tend to be, from a methodological standpoint, oriented toward finding evidence of disunity.29 Within the framework of this approach, frustrated attempts at construction of coherence are frequently taken as straightforward evidence of historical disunity.30 Such disunity is accounted for historically by appeal der Einheit stellen; denn wir dürfen sie nicht als einzige Möglichkeit einfach voraussetzen, sondern müssen sie nachweisen” (Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft*, 49).

29 This is explicit in Richter, *Exegese*, 49 see note 28 above; cf. e.g., Stackert, “Pentateuchal Coherence,” 268.

30 “[C]lassical Literarkritik, with its methodological orientation toward doublets, tensions, textual unevenness, etc., is concentrated from the outset on the possible discovery of incoherence, which is interpreted, as a rule, as a sign of diachronic disunity” (Blum, “Synchronie,” 67). Blum rightly emphasizes, however, that incoherence and disunity do not have a one-to-one correspondence, since not every incoherence is due to diachronic disunity, but can represent formulations that turn out not to be contradictory in the end (ellipses, e.g.); divergent but nonetheless tolerated text disturbances; or a deliberate means of unified text formation. On the other hand, diachronically disunified texts are often brought together without notable coherence disturbances (ibid.; for an example see W. Tooman, “Literary Unity, Empirical Models, and the Compatibility of Synchronic and Diachronic Reading,” in *Ezekiel: Current Debates and Future Directions* [ed. W. Tooman and P. Barter; FAT I; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2017], 497–512; for additional bibliography see n. 79). “One must distinguish between synchronic ‘incoherence’ and diachronic ‘disunity’. The frequent synonymous use of the terms merely covers up and supports a widespread methodological short-circuiting of the process, in which the given incoherence phenomena are interpreted as symptoms of textual diachrony. This is doubtless a possibility; it is, however, only one among others (e.g., that a stylistic incoherence turns out, in a broader frame, not to be a sign of divergence; or to be a consciously introduced artistic device; or it is a feature simply
to various models of diachronic development. One cannot assume the comprehensibility of ancient works of literature as they presently stand, since any de facto whole may contain various self-contained works produced by diverse authors and belonging to different time periods.

“Synchronic” literary approaches, which are typically (though not necessarily) focused on the extant form(s) of the text, on the other hand, tend to be conceptually oriented toward finding coherence and unity in any particular text, i.e. toward discovering the coherence presumed to exist within the text as an historical object. Both approaches have their own liabilities and dangers. Those oriented toward unity risk inappropriate harmonization; those oriented toward disunity risk missing historically appropriate strategies of coherence construction that may differ from one’s own intuitive expectations. But they differ not on the question of whether expectations of coherence can be permanently disappointed or unity broken: both are allied in principle against non-critical approaches which would deny that possibility as a matter of faith. They differ instead in their view of what constitutes (in)coherence and what may be taken as evidence against unity.

overlooked by the primary author, etc. Equally to beware of is the reverse: a text that presents itself as coherent even under precise analysis is not yet proven thereby to be unified. That point of view would only be possible under the [easily disproved] premise that developmental processes which leave no traces of disruption behind are fundamentally excluded.” For this statement and further discussion, see E. Blum, “Zwischen Literarkritik und Stilkritik,” in Grundfragen der historischen Exegese (ed. W. Oswald and K. Weingart; FAT 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 108.

31 “Synchrone Analysen sind konzeptionell darauf ausgerichtet aufzuspüren, worin die spezifische Kohärenzbildung des spezifischen Textes im Horizont seines semantischen und kommunikativen Gesamtprogramms besteht” (Blum, “Synchronie,” 67).

32 Samely et al., Profiling, 23; cf. Blum, “Synchronie,” 68. “When incoherencies are assumed to be products of text evolution, this assumption will overwrite or ignore the creative possibilities of deliberate incoherence and close the door to reflection on the different standards of coherence and incoherence between ancient and modern readers. Likewise, when incoherence is assumed to be the deliberate product of literary creativity, it flattens texts into singular voices from singular times robbing them of the deliberate and dynamic exchanges that characterise Traditions-literatur” (Tooman, “Literary Unity,” 509).

33 Much also depends on the heuristic value, the relative weight, and the procedural ordering of synchronically and diachronically oriented analytic methods. On the methodological priority of synchronic reading, see esp. Samely et al., Profiling, 23–25; and Blum, “Synchronie,” 68: “Gerade für eine historische, auf den ‚Eigensinn‘ der Texte gerichtete Exegese müßte sich von daher die methodische Priorität eine synchronen Wahrnehmung, die sich vorbehaltlos und nachhaltig auf den (wie auch immer) gegebenen Text einlässt, von selbst verstehen – sollte man meinen. Freilich ist diese methodische Priorität der synchronen Frageinsicht nach den Vorstehenden nicht im Sinne eines starren Abfolgeschemas zu verstehen, sondern als methodische
The criteria that count as indications of coherence or its absence depend to some extent on the operative definition of “unity.” If “unity” means the product of unitary authorship, to the exclusion of composite entities, then any evidence of composite production or development (which might include not only propositional contradictions, e.g., but also such features as differences in style, language, genre, or outlook) would, as such, demonstrate disunity, regardless of the global compatibility of the constituents. If, on the other hand, “unity” is construed in such a manner as to include composite texts (“redactional” or “secondary unity”), then such texts will be expected to display some of those very features otherwise seen as demonstrating disunity (e.g., divergent style, language, unexplained repetition, redundancies, and other forms of textual unevenness), on analogy perhaps to documentary films today that incorporate archival footage from different eras. The degree to which the notion of “unity” can stretch to accommodate various phenomena of incoherence – whether, indeed, the text can be regarded as readable at all – will depend on prior assumptions about the nature and possibilities of coherence in connection with “unity.” Different conceptions of “unity” entail different tolerances for “incoherence.” The breaking point at which the search for “unity” must be given up therefore differs among scholars based on how they understand the nature of the “unity” in question and especially their usually implicit expectations regarding coherence.

Part 2. What Makes a Text “Incoherent”?  

2.1 Standards and their Availability

This leads to crucial questions about the availability of ancient standards of coherence. How do we know what should count as evidence of
“incoherence” or what constitutes “incompatibility” in the case of ancient literature? This question – the extent to which the standards of coherence appropriate to ancient literature are available or intuitive to modern critics – is a point of crucial difference among scholars. Some argue that ancient standards are readily accessible if not the same as modern standards. Others contend that standards differ across cultures and times and must be learned.

1. The standards are already known to critics. Some imply by their argumentation that standards are readily accessible, apparently on the basis of an assumption that standards of (in)coherence are “natural” or universal and remain constant across time – bound to conceptions of how human rationality and logic are supposed to function, and therefore available to critical thinking. These assumptions are often tacit and unacknowledged, but they form a fundamental premise of arguments that are put forward about the disunity or incoherence of works in the Hebrew Bible.

For example, according to Wolfgang Richter in his handbook on exegetical method, the first step in the literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible must be the compilation of criteria that speak against the unity of a text, followed by the application of those criteria to determine what is “original.” The reason for this is again that, in the Hebrew Bible, a traditionally received whole can be made up of a variety of self-contained works from diverse authors and belonging to various times. We therefore cannot presume the unity of a work on the basis of de facto boundaries, but must first work these out. Otherwise, he claims, exegesis remains unhistorical and “hangs in the air,” since the historical connection of utterances cannot be recognized. This procedure, of course, assumes from the outset that the critic has reliable knowledge of the historically appropriate standards of coherence and unity. This assumption prevails in most of the existing handbooks.

In biblical studies, exegetical handbooks itemize lengthy menus of incoherencies. In his Old Testament Exegesis, for example, Odil Hannes Steck

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35 As Samely (“Jewish Studies and Reading,” 766) points out, there are actually two options: either one assumes “a fundamental cultural resemblance” between the contexts of modern scholars and the ancient text producers, or one assumes that standards are universal; cf. idem, Profiling, 17.

36 Richter, Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft, 49 (see n. 28 above).


catalogues the following as types of “literary disunity”: doublets, multiple transmissions, secondary brackets, tensions in syntax or vocabulary, incomprehensible textual corruptions, differences in manner of speech and style, impossible parallelism, differences in historical background, theological assertions, phrases, and linguistic peculiarities that are not aligned with the (deduced) historical context, tensions and unevenness of content, and elements atypical of a genre. Richter lists the following criteria: doubling and repetition (on various text-levels: units, segments, sentences, clauses or word groups), tensions (incompatible tensions and contradictions, as well as tensions in personal and place names that differ, as well as syntactical breaks [e.g., unmotivated change in subject]). Other signs of “inauthenticity” are the appearance or absence of similarly constructed sentences within a segment, and the relative predominance of abstract versus concrete lexemes. Of course, these phenomena are not limited to biblical literature. Second Temple literature and Rabbinic literature are also replete with large and small-scale features that modern readers label “incoherency.”

Not all such criteria are to be given equal weight, as the authors of these handbooks emphasize. Some are more determinative than others. To take a particularly clear recent example, consider the following argumentation of J. Baden:

Diversity of language and style, of genre, theme, and theology – none of these reach the tipping point, the moment when it is necessary to search for a literary-historical solution to the problems of the text. None of these render the text unreadable. […] From the very

39 Steck, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 9, 39–43, 54–57, 67, 76, 139. Instances of incoherence, for Steck, are indicators of a scribe’s attempt to “expand, enlarge, and reorder” an older version of a text (48). It should be noted that Steck carefully considers the limitations inherent in the indicators listed above (esp. 55–57).

40 Note that, while repetition and redundancy figure prominently in lists of incoherence phenomena in biblical studies, other linguistic studies consider recurrence or redundancy a basic feature of coherence itself. Cf. I. Bellert, who argues for “a necessary (though obviously not sufficient) condition of the coherence of a text consists, roughly speaking, in repetitions” (“On a Condition of the Coherence of Texts,” *Semiotica* 2/4 (1970): 335–363 at 336). Cf. Beekman, Callow, and Kopesec: “In a semantic unit with coherence there will always be redundancy of referential information and/or the recurrence of information belonging to the same semantic or experiential domain. There may be obvious recurrences of referential information through such means as repetition, the use of synonyms …, anaphora and cataphora …, overlay structures …, referential parallels, sandwich structures or inclusio …, chiastic structures (abba, abcb, etc.) and other devices” (*The Semantic Structure of Written Communication*, 21).

beginning the impetus for source-critical analysis, the reason that the text was considered so unreadable as to require a literary-historical solution, was always and ever the fact that the narrative, on the level of plot – who, what, when, where, why, and how – is self-contradictory, repeatedly and incontrovertibly. It is not names for God that render the flood story unreadable, nor was that ever thought to be the case. It is the blatant contradictions in narrative claim at virtually every stage of the story.42

Here the breaking point at which the search for unity must be abandoned is considered clear and indisputable. In particular, it is asserted as an incontrovertible fact that the biblical narrative is permanently self-contradictory on the level of plot, and this fact renders the text unreadable, a problem requiring a literary-critical solution. Given genuine differences of competent scholarly opinion regarding most of the textual examples cited, a more cautious representation of the factual might be to state that many literary-critical scholars throughout history find various aspects of the text incompatible with their expectations of coherence on the level of narrative

42 Baden continues: “It is not the differing theological views related to God’s position vis-à-vis the world that render Gen 1 and 2 impossible to read as being from a single hand. It is the narratively untenable sequence of events. It is not the differing emphases on priestly and prophetic authority that eliminate the possibility of reading Num 16 as a unified text. It is the utter confusion on the basic level of plot, of who is doing what where and when.” […] “The issue that demands a resolution – that demands a literary resolution in particular – is the issue of plot consistency.” (250) […] “Even scholars who are inclined to isolate the smallest literary units in the Pentateuch inevitably find that those smallest units are narratively coherent – indeed that coherence is one of the defining features of the smallest literary unit. The plot is fundamental; it is irreducible.” […] “Our text is sick, and that illness is exclusively the literary contradictions on the level of plot. This is the level we are operating on.” […] (250) “If it is the contradictions in plot that drive us to the literary-historical analysis of the text – and that is the claim being put forward here – then it is only logical that our literary-historical solutions should also proceed on the basis of resolving those contradictions in plot. This is because, sensibly enough, if we try to divide the text on other grounds – terminological, stylistic, generic, thematic, theological – then we are not actually addressing the basic problem.” […] “Once the plot contradictions are resolved, if we are left with a narratively coherent text, that text can, like any text ancient or modern, accommodate stylistic and thematic and theological complexity. The reverse is not true: a stylistically or thematically or theologically uniform text cannot accommodate plot contradictions.” […] “What makes the Pentateuch unreadable is its thorough-going internally contradictory plot. The analysis that explains that unreadability is, by necessity, grounded in the resolution of those plot contradictions. That is why source criticism exists – that is why anyone ever thought to enter into this sort of analysis hundreds of years ago. And if one does not think the Pentateuch is fundamentally unreadable, then one ought to stop performing elective surgery on it.” (J. Baden, “Why is the Pentateuch Unreadable? – Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?” in *The Formation of the Pentateuch* [ed. J. Gertz et al.; FAT III; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016, 243–51 at 251).
logic. Such scholars therefore consider it necessary to abandon the attempt to read the text together as an impossible (i.e. historically inappropriate) endeavor. Indeed, the methodological priority granted to the modern scholar’s experience of incoherence through the perceived disruption of logical consistency or “narrative flow” is, according to Baden, the only way of “responding authentically” to the text and for the analysis “retaining any degree of objectivity.” These same intuitive expectations of coherence are then taken as both warrant and means to critically reconstruct more acceptable unities, texts that conform to expected coherence standards and therefore prove more satisfying and make better sense. That the textual data can be divided and reorganized into more acceptably coherent unities is seen as confirmation of the correctness of the method. It “works.”

A recent argument of Seth Sanders may also be categorized under this rubric, insofar as it assumes standards of coherence as given – though, he argues, not always maintained. In this piece, Sanders draws attention to the difference between the texts of the Pentateuch and ancient Near Eastern comparanda often seen as providing “empirical models.” He argues that the “interwoven” character of the pentateuchal text is distinctive not only by comparison with those texts, but also in comparison with its own underlying sources. This does not inspire doubt in documentary models. Rather,

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43 See the formulation of Stackert: “Source-critical analysis of the Pentateuch is a response to frustrated attempts to achieve an intelligible reading of this text as a single, unified work. The procedure of contemporary pentateuchal source criticism thus ever recapitulates its historical origins: stymied efforts to read pentateuchal texts as unified compositions motivate alternative explanations of the texts’ genesces and compositional histories, including the identification of sources, strata, redaction, and compilation” (“Pentateuchal Coherence,” 253). Such frustrations are not necessarily modern, since they have been found among diverse readers throughout history. See among the contributions of the present volume especially Lyons, “Standards of Cohesion and Coherence: Evidence from Early Readers.”

44 “The literary analysis of the Pentateuch is grounded in the basic inability to read the text as a whole, and that inability is not manifested in the variety of themes or style. […] Instead, what makes the reading of the Pentateuch problematic is its lack of narrative flow, and only by addressing this problem first and foremost can we be responding authentically to the text before us” (J. Baden, The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 30). “The separation of the literary analysis, on the grounds of narrative flow alone, from all other secondary considerations, be it theme, style, or potential historical setting, must be maintained if the analysis is to retain any degree of objectivity” (ibid., 31).


46 “What we never find in Mesopotamian scholarly text-making is what virtually defines the Pentateuch: the interweaving of variant versions of parallel events” (ibid., 295).
according to Sanders, it attests to a shift in the dominant “literary values” that took place over the course of the development of Hebrew literature. “For there to be highly coherent strands evident in the Pentateuch that have been interwoven, there needs to be one set of values that created the coherent strand, but a different later set of values that created the incoherent interwoven source.” 47 Whereas the present texts are “radically incoherent” (though, Sanders notes, “still strangely readable” 48) and exemplify the value of “comprehensiveness” by interweaving parallel accounts, their literary precursors (source documents) and successors (later harmonizations, rewritings, and commentaries) exemplify the value of “coherence.” Rather than taking the perceived differences as an indication that coherence expectations and the attendant notions of “unity” are themselves variable and contingent, changing along with time and culture, Sanders presents a model of historical development that traces the disappearance and subsequent re-emergence of “coherence” as a literary value. In this way, coherence standards are implicitly regarded as remaining more or less static across time, and therefore naturally available to scholarly intuition and judgment, 49 even while acknowledging that those standards were, for a time, ignored or suppressed in favor of other literary goals.

Critical procedures and judgments of the kinds represented by the array of scholars described here are predicated upon the assumption that what constitutes an intelligible, comprehensible, or readable whole in antiquity is somehow knowable (or already known) to the critic across historical and cultural distance. 50 These intuited standards form the basis for diachronic analysis, and they enable what is considered to be a genuine historical reading and objective reconstruction on the part of the critic, even while

47 Ibid., 299.
48 Ibid., 298; cf. 301.
49 Thus, Sanders argues, “critical scholars are not being really ‘anachronistic’ by ‘imposing their values’ on the biblical text – because the interweaving of two parallel variant plots was not a shared ancient Near Eastern literary value” (ibid., 294).
50 “The forensic diachronic methodology at work here must assume that the standards of coherence of the modern reader are the same as those of the ancient text maker. Otherwise incoherence phenomena could not be interpreted as inadvertent clues to a secondary interference with the original shape of the text. This assumption in turn must be based on one of two beliefs. Either one holds that there is a fundamental cultural resemblance, for example by way of an historical continuity of text expectations, between Jewish antiquity and modern Western scholarly culture; or one believes that the modern-scholarly standards of coherence are universal. Otherwise, that is, if Jewish text makers and readers had different assumptions or habits of text coherence, they may not have seen as incoherent phenomena which we read as incoherent, and thus created texts that contained them from the start” (Samely, “Jewish Studies and Reading,” 766).
acknowledging that traditional readers throughout history have behaved otherwise with respect to the Hebrew Bible. For many scholars working under these assumptions, traditional attempts at reading for unity are to be categorically distinguished from legitimate historical readings (i.e. readings authentic to the compositional process itself). They are quarantined either under such labels as “midrash” or by characterizing them as the mistaken readings of those prone to natural errors and sloppiness, much like those attested by modern empirical reading studies.

2. Coherence standards are culturally contingent and must be learned. Other critical scholars emphasize instead that conceptions of unity and standards of coherence are culturally contingent and change over time. To the outsider, therefore, the standards must be learned; scholars’ intuitions and coherence expectations must remain open to adjustment in accordance with the object of study, if they intend to understand it on its own terms, or to render an historically appropriate judgment. Among biblical scholars, perhaps the most outspoken proponent of this view in recent years has been Joshua Berman who frames the argument of his *Inconsistency in the Torah* as a foundational critique of source-critical method in particular. One may also mention

51 “Yet even if the Pentateuch’s incomprehensibility is well established, having been demonstrated repeatedly in its various parts, it is also the case that for much of its history the Pentateuch has been understood as a unified text” (Stackert, “Pentateuchal Coherence,” 253).

52 “Compositional analysis requires a cultivated resistance to the human impulse toward coherence, even as this drive was fundamental to the initial identification of sources and strata in the Pentateuch and continues to be so in contemporary compositional analysis” (Stackert, “Pentateuchal Coherence,” 268).

53 The danger is not strictly anachronism per se, since some coherence standards intuitive to modern scholars may closely align with those of some ancient authors or periods but not others. See below at § 2.2 (2).

54 Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah*. The following selections are representative: “The root of the problem ... is that scholars have rooted their compositional theories for growth of the biblical text entirely in their own intuition of what constitutes literary unity” (3). Considering “inconsistencies” such as disparity of divine names and the *Numeruswechsel*, Berman concludes: “These examples serve as a warning flag for scholars looking to parse the text on the basis of their own notions of literary unity. The ancient text is a minefield of literary phenomena that are culturally dependent. The diachronic scholar who treads there based solely on his own modern notions of literary unity risks serious interpretive missteps” (4). “[T]he poetics of the Kadesh Poem demonstrate that source critics read ancient texts employing anachronistic notions of consistency, which were not shared by ancient writers. Understanding ancient literary convention requires careful study. The conventions that guided the composition of ancient texts must be learned; they cannot be assumed” (54–55). “When biblicists hypothesize theories of textual development, they do so while situated in a distinctly modern textual culture, and thus are prone to project anachronistic attitudes and practices upon cultures at a
in a similar vein the collection of essays on empirical models by Person and Rezetko. Although not cited by any of these scholars, the historical-methodological implication of this claim had previously been voiced with great distance from them in time and place. Empirical models offer us methodological controls ...” (202). “The irony of this hermeneutic is that it counters the very historicist ethos it seeks to embody. For all historicists of this period, literature is a product of a specific culture situated in a particular and individuated time and place. Conventions of coherence, of communication, and of literary production are all profoundly human constructs, and are themselves historically bound. We might have expected theorists – then and now – to sound a note of caution in adding theories of textual composition. We might have expected investigators to be take [sic] cognizance of their own situatedness, and to be wary that their own cannons [sic] of coherence and of literary production could easily be anachronistically superimposed upon the cultures of yore. And yet we see virtually no awareness of these pitfalls in the scholarship of compositional theory of Hebrew scriptures up until quite recently” (222). “This raises the cardinal question: how do we know what constitutes an incongruity? Can we be certain that our notions of narrative consistency are equivalent to those of ancient writers?” (266) “There is no intuitive way to determine what constitutes a fissure in a text from another period and another locale. These sensitivities must be learned, and acquired by careful study. When claims for revision rely on perceived inconsistency or tension in the text and there is no external evidence to corroborate this perception, we may well be imposing modern canons of consistency on these ancient texts, effectively inventing the problem to which revision is the solution. A survey of six primers for source-critical methodology reveals a telling lacuna: all offer detailed examples of how to identify inconsistencies, tensions, and contradictions within the texts of the Torah as telltale signs of revision. But all assume that the modern exegete will be able to correctly flag these, on the basis of his or her own notion of consistency and literary unity. Not one of these primers suggests that competency in the writings of the ancient world is necessary in order to avoid anachronism. Not one cites an example of a seeming inconsistency, but one we know to overlook because of evidence from other ancient texts. I hope this volume has demonstrated the necessity of such controls on our work. Source critics will need to become aware of the situatedness of their own aesthetic sense of literary unity” (275). “Lacking a thorough knowledge of the ancient notions of literary unity, modern scholars perforce, perform their diachronic work in the dark, arriving at conclusions derived exclusively from their own notions of textual cohesion” (276).
particular acuity in the work of Alexander Samely. As Samely states clearly, “The modern scholar has to reckon with the possibility that standards of coherence are historically contingent and that those embodied in the text under consideration are not yet known.” Yet such assertions regarding the cultural and historical contingency of standards of coherence and unity are in no way unique to biblical scholarship, but find support in a wide range of recent studies of diverse cultures and literatures in the ancient world (e.g., Greece, Mesopotamia, in later rabbinic Judaism), in the medieval and

See also E. Greenstein’s recent review of Gertz et al., *The Formation of the Pentateuch* (in *RBL* 01/2019), summarizing his earlier articles.

56 *Profiling*, 25; see also his “Jewish Studies and Reading,” 766. “[W]e have no access to readerly intuitions that come from the period of the texts. Our strongest intuitions on what makes sense or what is coherent in a text come from our own time and place ...” (ibid., 17). See further the discussion in § 3.2 below.

57 For ancient Greece, see, e.g., Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics*: “If we are to make sense of texts from a remote culture, therefore, we cannot afford to take it for granted that our own expectations are applicable; we should try instead to reconstruct the assumptions, about unity or about any other aspect of a well-formed text, that are appropriate to a text of that kind in that culture. We must become conscious both of the content of our own systems of presupposition and preference, and of their contingent nature; and we must learn to recognize the distance between them and the presuppositions and preferences which determined the composition and original reception of the texts with which we are dealing” (2). “[T]he notion of ‘unity’ is, as we have stated, subject to historical and cultural change. It follows that if we wish to understand Greek texts we need to reconstruct, among other things, the constraints and ideals of coherence which informed their composition. This is an urgent task. Appeals to an ideal of unity or coherence frequently play a decisive role in exegetical reasoning about ancient literature, but there is little sign that any systematic reconstruction of the relevant aesthetic is being undertaken – or even that the need for such a reconstructive effort has been adequately grasped” (3). “Therefore an interpreter sensitive to the historical mutability of taste should wish to explore the possibility that Greek literary practice worked with a concept of unity somewhat different from that at work in modern criticism” (9). See also the classic essay of B. E. Perry, “The Early Greek Capacity for Viewing Things Separately,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 68 (1937): 403–427: “If modern habits of mind were the same as those of the pre–socratic Greeks, we should not often err in the interpretation of their literature and thought; but since the psychological differences between them and us are considerable, it frequently happens that modern critics, too much influenced by their own patterns of thought, either find something in early Greek literature that is not there, or else are puzzled and even disappointed by not finding there something which they feel ought to be there. Since this is so, it behoves us as interpreters to keep in view at all times, and in many different connections, those particular characteristics of the early Greek mind which can be recognized as such, and which stand in contrast to modern ways of thinking” (403). “What I have in mind might be further indicated by such captions as “the occasional disreg of logical, moral, or aesthetic sequence in early literature,” or “the triumph of parataxis over hypotaxis in thought as well as in grammar,” or “immediacy of interest in the early Greek mind,” or, more fully still, “the capacity for contemplating only one thing or one aspect of a thing or person at one time, purely for its own interest and
pre-modern world (e.g., in Islamic tradition\textsuperscript{60}), as well as in other modern academic fields, such as linguistics or philosophy.\textsuperscript{61} A particularly robust, without regard to the ulterior implications or associations that an early Greek narrator might indeed be concerned about, but often is not, and that a modern person with his more schematic habits of mind would almost inevitably bring in. I find abundant illustration of this in the language, mythology, religion, and life, as well as in the literature of early Greece” (404).

\textsuperscript{58} For just a few examples selected at random of the recent, deep and wide-ranging discussions of the cultural contingencies of cognition, epistemology, rationality, logic, the representation of reality, reasoning strategies, organizational frameworks, literary competence, empirical science (and much more) in ancient Mesopotamia, see M. Van De Mieroop, \textit{Philosophy before the Greeks: The Pursuit of Truth in Ancient Babylonia} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); A. Winitzer, \textit{Early Mesopotamian Divination Literature: Its Organizational Framework and Generative and Paradigmatic Characteristics} (AMD 12; Leiden: Brill, 2017); J. Borchhardt and E. Bleibtreu, “Aspektiv und Perspektiv in neussyrischen Flachbild,” in \textit{Empirische Dimension Altertumlicher Forschungen} (ed. G. Selz and K. Wagensonner; Berlin: Lit, 2011), 477–526; F. Rochberg, \textit{Before Nature: Cuneiform Knowledge and the History of Science} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016): “Indeed, our construal of cuneiform bodies of knowledge and their associated activities, as well as every aspect of the philosophy of such knowledge – epistemology, reasoning, causality, observation, explanation, and prediction – must be sensitive to its native conceptual grounds, the universe of cuneiform observation, interpretation, and prediction. In this regard, cuneiform knowledge tests our sensitivity to the limit” (14).

\textsuperscript{59} See, e.g., the reflections of K. Keim: “Textual coherence is a theoretically and culturally problematic concept, in that coherence is to a degree in the eye of the beholder, and different textual cultures may perceive it in different ways. A text which to a reader from one textual culture may appear troublingly lacking in order and completeness, may not bother a reader from another culture from that point of view. In general rabbinic textual culture seems less concerned about coherence according to modern expectations and canons. One can, however, over-stress cultural differences, and it remains legitimate to pose to an ancient text like PRE questions about its unity, orderliness, and boundedness” (Pirqa deRabbi Eliezer, 69). Cf. Samely, \textit{Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 4: “[R]abbinic hermeneutics is not a derivative form of our hermeneutics – neither ‘philology’ nor ‘historiography.’ The first step towards an adequate historical understanding of rabbinic interpretation is to offer some resistance to describing it as a variation of what we ourselves do when doing historical scholarship.”

\textsuperscript{60} T. Bauer, \textit{Die Kultur der Ambiguität. Eine andere Geschichte des Islams} (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen im Insel Verlag, 2011). Our thanks to Alexander Samely for bringing this work to our attention.

\textsuperscript{61} “… surface structure, style, coherence conditions, themes, discourse types, meanings, and pragmatic and interactional functions are influenced by cultural background. Understanding a discourse according to these cultural strategies hence means that we relate all these levels and dimensions with what we know about the communicative features of the culture of the speaker. Marked (i.e., different culture) cultural strategies typically involve partial understanding. Most hearers or readers will only have limited knowledge about the other culture, so that sometimes guesses must be made about precise word meanings, coherence conditions, implicit beliefs, and pragmatic or inter-
wide-ranging, and instructive argument of this general point on the basis of the evidence of ancient Egypt, but with relevance for many ancient cultures before the “axial age,” is to be found in the work of the Egyptologist Emma Brunner-Traut.

2.2 Perspectival and Aspectival Representation

1. Emma Brunner-Traut. In her brilliant study *Frühformen des Erkennens*, Emma Brunner-Traut draws a basic distinction between traditional Western modes of perception and representation, which she designates “perspectival,” and an “aspectival” mode characteristic of ancient cultures such as Egypt.62 Beginning with the striking example of the visual arts, Brunner-Traut brings forth an abundance of evidence illustrating a non-perspectival manner of aesthetic representation, arguing that “the method of observation used for Western art cannot be adopted at all for the study of Egyptian art … [W]e cannot understand Egyptian art from the outside, and must instead approach it through its own laws of thought.”63 Artistic representation in ancient Egypt is characterized by the sequential juxtaposition of relatively independent parts, or “aspects,” that must be mentally added together to form a whole.64 Brunner-Traut cites the formulation of Otto Friedrich Bollnow:

Aspects, particularly when used in the plural, are only individual glimpses, in which a thing is represented from a particular viewpoint. In aspect lies a basic principle of order. Aspect always contains the idea that it is but one among others. Within it lies an instance of needing to be completed. It makes reference to these other aspects. Each is one-sided. In each, certain things emerge in sharper focus than in others and particular connections become clear. None lays claim to completeness. Indeed, how the individual aspects are unified into an overarching whole – and whether they can be unified at all – remain open.

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64 Illustrated extensively in Schäfer, *Egyptian Art*. 
Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature

Brunner-Traut adds: "In the Aspective mode of apperception the respective results obtained from the various and diverse aspects remain openly juxtaposed; they are not harmonized in a closed system." To illustrate, consider the following representations:

1. A New Kingdom Egyptian drawing of a compartmented bowl; 2. A contemporary perspectival drawing of the bowl empty, as found; 3. A contemporary perspectival representation of the bowl as filled; 4. "Reconstruction on the assumption that there were bowls with high divisions between the compartments."  

65 From Schäfer, Egyptian Art, 355 fig. 329.  
66 O.F. Bollnow: "Aspekte, zumal in der Mehrzahl gebraucht, sind nur einzelne Anblicke, in denen sich die Sache jeweils von einem bestimmten Gesichtspunkt aus ... darstellt. Im Aspekt liegt ein Ordnungsprinzip ... Im Aspekt ist immer enthalten, daß er einer unter anderen ... ist. Es liegt in ihm ein Moment der Ergänzungsbedürftigkeit. Er verwies auf diese anderen Aspekte ... Jeder ist einseitig. In jedem treten bestimmte Dinge schärfer hervor als in anderen und werden bestimmte Zusammenhänge deutlich ... Keiner erhebt Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit. Ja, wie sich die einzelnen Aspekte zum übergreifenden Ganzen vereinigen und ob sie sich überhaupt vereinigen, bleibt offen." To which Brunner-Traut comments "Die unter verschiedenen Aspekten gewonnenen jeweiligen Ergebnisse bleiben bei aspektivischer Apperzeptionsweise offen nebeneinander stehen, werden nicht in einem geschlossenen System harmonisiert" (Frühformen des Erkennens, 5). "According to my definition aspective is exclusively a mode of seeing opposite and in the presence of the object, not forwards or backwards in time, and not moving outside its boundaries. In particular, it does not relate the object, which it has separated in this way in space and time, to the totality of elements that constitute its real existence, and it does not link it functionally to another object, even in a causal relationship. This delimiting mode of seeing is completely orientated towards its object, so that it does not place it in a framework of causality that extends beyond it. The percept seems to remain flat in the plane in which it exists, without reference to what is in front or behind, to past or future. The boundary is the first and last criterion of aspective. By observing each part on its own, separating it from its environment and closing it off, aspective accords it independence. So any change is a leap from one individual, independent form to another, and not, as in perspective, a transition with functional connections which are subject to a more general law [...]

In this context it is significant that aspective, as it has no general law that encompasses everything and is raised to the level of abstraction, remains bound to the concrete object and directs its entire attention to it. The delimited part acquires independent values and
The Egyptian drawing juxtaposes at least two aspects of this multi-part object: a pure side view of the bowl and a view of the bowl from straight above. These one-sided aspects are not harmonized, but must be combined – added together – mentally. It is similarly instructive to compare the two portrayals of a pond, seen from directly above, with the persons in profile; and seen from above, with its surrounding trees in profile.67

The paratactic juxtaposition of relatively independent parts which additively form *unharmonized* wholes and characterize Egyptian visual art, Brunner-Traut argues, is found repeatedly in other facets of Egyptian culture too: in the conception of the state and the ordering of society; in fields of science such as medicine and mathematics; in religion, language, history writing, and law. It is found “in short, in the forms of representation and thought of all branches of culture” (70). This leads Brunner-Traut to her central thesis that the artistic distinctives of the ancient Egyptians and related cultures allow one to recognize “with virtual certainty” a basic behavioral mode. Again, this basic mode is that of the step-by-step cognizing of individual, graspable parts of a whole that have only been brought into a bi- or multi-lateral relationship, and from which individual parts the whole is composed in an additive (not synthetic, harmonized, integrated, or amalgamated) manner.

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A fine example is the conception of the human body.\textsuperscript{68} Although the body as a singular organism would seem a natural given, it is not understood as such in ancient Egypt. Rather, it is portrayed as a composite of relatively independent parts in the very same manner that arises from the conventions of figural representation in visual art: \textit{“Just as a differentiated object is not primarily recognized as a unity from an aspectival view, but rather is construed in a successive manner – i.e., as a juxtaposition of relatively independent parts – so also is the human body not understood as an organism, but as a composite of its members.”}\textsuperscript{69} There is both connection and conflict among the parts.

As with the human body, so it is with conceptions of society as a whole. Society is the sum of individuals who are hierarchically oriented in relation to the king. But like the organs in the human body, people are not understood as a mutually dependent, functional unity, except in the narrow boundaries of immediate family, neighborhood, or village.\textsuperscript{70}

Similar deductions are made in the field of Egyptian jurisprudence, in which there was no effort to produce a unified code of conduct: a contradiction-free, abstract articulation of general legal principles. Instead, ancient Egyptian legal texts represent compilations of rules and instructions, wherein individual cases are brought together in an associative manner without ever articulating clear general principles, or even necessarily reasons that are comprehensible and foreseeable for future applications. In such \textit{“aspectival”} law, cases are juxtaposed even if they contradict one another. \textit{“In the place of the generally formulated and thus abstract law of today, among the ancients there was the analogical case, just as there was the paradigm in mathematics”} (96).

Egyptian mathematics also operated in an aspectival manner, whereby highly complex problems were reduced to their component parts, parts

\begin{enumerate}
\item[Ibid., 71–81.]
\item[Ibid., 71. Brunner-Traut considers a variety of evidence, ranging from vocabulary (the terminology that must stand in for the body, 72) to the treatment and handling of bodily parts in medicinal and burial practice, to the deification of the body, to love poetry, and beyond. This evidence demonstrates that such ideas as \textit{“that the body represents an anatomical–physiological functional unity,”} or \textit{“that the organs are mutually dependent upon one another”} are \textit{“far removed from the Egyptian conception”} (73), which instead regards the body as \textit{“a number of parts that have been tied up or bound together”} […] \textit{“a sum of individual parts that can dis-integrate, as they do in a corpse; that can be held together as they should be in mummification, and as they were already ‘in the egg’”} (72). A similar conception can be seen to underlie the conventions for aesthetic representation of multi-part objects in drawing (see the illustration of washing utensils on 23–24), allowing multiple options for expressing what is visible and invisible.
\item[Ibid., 82–93.]
\end{enumerate}
graspable on their own, and then calculated in the most basic manner of addition.\textsuperscript{71}

In the conception of history, too, one observes an aspectival orientation. Ancient Egyptians construe history as a series of successive unities, but decisively not as a single temporal sequence that includes and runs through all time periods.\textsuperscript{72} “In principle, graspable individual events are juxtaposed as independent wholes, without concern for their genesis or mutual interconnection.”\textsuperscript{73}

From all of these forms of cultural knowledge and production, and several others not mentioned here (religion, language, literature), Brunner-Traut concludes that ancient Egyptians (and their intellectual peers) were very capable of thinking logically. The logic associated with aspectival thinking, however, is not the same as Aristotelian logic.\textsuperscript{74} Even if the latter standards are considered superior, one cannot impose them on ancient Egyptian cultural production without serious distortion and misunderstanding. Brunner-Traut also emphasizes along the way that “aspectival” cultures possess different strengths and competencies in comparison with modern Western cultures, among these, e.g., extraordinarily advanced abilities to think in analogical terms. In some of these respects, modern Western thinkers are massively deficient by comparison.

Our purpose here is not to endorse or defend the correctness of Brunner-Traut’s description in all its details. We cite her argument here at some


\textsuperscript{72} “As day follows night ... so ancient ruler follows ancient ruler as executor of the same task” (99). “Geschichte war für den gesamten Alten Orient entscheidend Erfüllung von immerseienden mythischen Mustern. Für dieses Geschichtsbild war nicht die Einmaligkeit eines Ereignisses bestimmend, sondern das vorwiegend in der Natur erlebte Spiel der Wiederkehr, die rhythmische Wiederholung eines Typus, eines Modelfalles, orientiert an der Welt der Gestirne oder, wie gesagt, am täglichen Kreislauf der Sonne und wie im Wechsel von Tag und Nacht so an dem der Jahreszeiten, in Ägypten auch an der regelmäßigen Überschwemmung des Nils, allgemein am Werden und Vergehen der Vegetation und des Lebens überhaupt” (100). Here, Brunner-Traut describes Israel as a major outlier in its conception of history. “In Israel ist ... eine Geschichtsschreibung gelungen, die sich radikal von jener der damaligen Umwelt absetzt. Die anderen, Sumerer, Akkadier, Ägypter, die Phönizier und selbst die am weitesten vorgesprenchten Hethiter, sind am mythische Vorstellungsweisen gebunden, die ihnen zwar Annalen eingaben, kleinbogige Darstellungen von Einzelereignissen, Königschriften zumeist, doch keine Geschichte als ein die Zeiten umspannender, durchgehender Verlauf” (\textit{Frühformen des Erkennens}, 100).

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 156.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 158; cf. Reinecke, “Gedanken zur Herkunft der altägyptischen Mathematik,” 248 n. 4.
length as a powerful illustration of different coherence expectations in relation to the concept of “unity,” detailed across many branches of cultural production in ancient Egypt.\textsuperscript{75} It is precisely on the point of the expected relations between part and whole that aspectual and perspectival modes of perception and representation most profoundly differ. That we no longer have automatic access to the “laws” of Egyptian art, any more than we have intuitive access to their “laws” of history writing or their juridical theory, is an additional complicating factor. And yet, because there is a gulf between the aspective and the perspective orientation, the standards of aspective representation have to be recovered inductively as a prelude to a proper appreciation of Egyptian culture.

2. Modern Art. Granting all the differences between perspectival and aspective orientations, it is true that some facets of modern Western culture also adopt an aspective orientation that is not unlike Egyptian aspectual representation. This is perhaps most evident in certain movements within the visual arts.\textsuperscript{76} As early as the 1820s, impressionism was reacting against the subordination of painting to relief sculpture in neo-classical art. Over the next hundred years a new outlook asserted itself, developed by various movements and priorities, counter-movements and rejoinders, all of which rebelled in their own ways against the tyranny of perspective-from-the-artist’s-eye.\textsuperscript{77} The first to break with traditional modes of perception were the Fauvist painters like Matisse, but it was the Cubism of Braque and Picasso that finally shattered the connection between natural structures and perceptions and visual representation, initiating what some have labeled a “new cognitive order.”\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{75} For a similarly wide-ranging treatment, here under the conceptual rubric of “ambiguity” (by which is meant the tolerance for multiple, concurrent, and divergent conceptions within a culture) illustrated in the profoundly interrelated discourses of theology, law, literature, and love poetry within premodern Islam, see Bauer, \textit{Die Kultur der Ambiguität}. According to Bauer, the cultivation of tolerance toward, and even valorization of, “ambiguity” that can be seen within various forms of cultural expression in premodern Islam stands in strong contrast to the hostility toward ambiguity (\textit{Ambiguitätsfeindlichkeit}) characteristic of the European Enlightenment and its accompanying processes of rationalization.

\textsuperscript{76} Cf. Brunner-Traut, \textit{Frühformen des Erkennens}, 4 for a periodization that includes a kind of “neo-aspective” movement in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.


\textsuperscript{78} A. Ganteführer-Trier, \textit{Cubism} (Köln: Taschen, 2004), 6.
Picasso’s *Woman with Raised Arms* (1936), thought to have been inspired by the photographer Dora Maar and held currently at the Museo Picasso Málaga, offers a salient example of modern aspctival representation.

The many aspects of this painting – perspectives, lines, planes, colors, foci – cannot be overlaid or harmonized. Some contrast; some contradict; some are ambiguated. The various aspects of the woman’s form are viewed from different perspectives. Her eyes and nostrils are viewed square–on, and yet the oval of her face is in three-quarter profile. At the same time, the way her body disappears suggests a point of view from above as she bends over backward. The curved lines and waving hair suggest movement, but the background panels hint that she is prone. The relationship of her form to the background panels is unspecified, open to any number of interpretations. The curved and overlaid planes suggest depth, but the representation is also pressed flat by the spare, undetailed features and blocked solid colors. The color scheme, white hands and white crescent set within mainly blue and yellow color-panels creates an obvious analogy between the woman and the moon with stars set in the sky. That the implicit sky is both day and night wrenches the image out of time. The black lines define everything
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sharply, except the herbals which blur and blend with the background. All these divergent aspects – square and oblique, still and moving, flat and contoured, woman and sky, day and night, sharp and blurred – cannot be harmonized or amalgamated into a single, perspectival image. They can be added together, but they cannot be synthesized.

It would be inappropriate to judge cubist art from the standpoint of the logic and conventions of realist (perspectival) art, and yet many early 20th century critics did just that. A review from 1 May, 1911 in The Craftsman reads: “Picasso does not want to see nature, but how he feels about nature ... But if Picasso is sincerely revealing in his studies the way he feels about nature, it is hard to see why he is not a raving maniac, for anything more disjointed, disconnected, unrelated, unbeautiful than his presentation ... would be difficult to imagine.”

Readers of ancient Jewish literature will be familiar with similar criticisms of ancient texts, which are declared “unreadable” because they are disjointed, disconnected, and unrelated. And yet, without access to ancient standards of unity and coherence, this displays no more sensitivity or understanding than did Picasso’s unnamed critic. We contend that one could no more declare a non-unified, non-harmonized, additive storyline from the Hebrew Bible to be “unreadable” than one could reasonably declare Picasso's Woman with Upraised Arms “unviewable.” Before any judgement can be levied, ancient Jewish standards of (in)coherence must be recovered, in much the same way that Schäfer and Brunner-Traut have done for ancient Egyptian art. Once these standards are recovered, they will surely find analogues in modern culture, like aspectual representation does, but those analogues will always be partial and imperfect.

Part 3. How do we Discern Ancient Standards of (In)coherence?

If we accept the dual claim that one cannot assume coherence standards to be intuitive or universal nor can one assume the availability of perfect modern analogues to those standards, how can one arrive at appropriate standards in the case of ancient Jewish literature?

79 “Picasso has no adherents, and we have to endure the brazenness of those who publicly assert in manifestos to be his adherents, and lead other reckless souls astray.” A. Salmon, Paris–Journal, 20 December, 1910.
3.1 Empirical Models

One proposal is that represented by Joshua Berman, who argues that the way forward is to be found in more rigorous attention to ancient Near Eastern literature.\(^\text{80}\) Clearly the study of ancient Near Eastern literature is essential in multiple respects, and such comparisons are invaluable as far as they go. However, one wonders whether this material offers the kind of clear methodological controls and empirical validation that Berman asserts. On the one hand, it is questionable whether there are many genuine comparisons in the ancient world to what is most characteristic of the compositions of the Hebrew Bible in their received forms.\(^\text{81}\) The ancient Near East lacks prophetic books, to cite just one example. Moreover, when scholars read, say, ancient Egyptian texts (to take his example of the Kadesh inscriptions of Ramses II), they are in a similar position as when they read ancient Israelite texts. When confronted with incoherencies, there is no \textit{prima facie} reason to assume that such texts were written “in one go” or by one author. That similar incoherence phenomena may appear in the literatures of ancient Egypt and Israel (e.g., the so-called \textit{Numeruswechsel}) does not itself demonstrate that such phenomena were \textit{characteristic} of unitary authorship (regardless of whether Egyptologists have yet subjected the texts to redactional analysis) or even that they were considered unproblematic in antiquity. In point of fact, if we assume that ancient readers and writers had different standards of (in)coherence, why would we assume that they had

\(^{80}\) “The root of the problem heretofore, according to this movement, is that scholars have rooted their compositional theories for growth of the biblical text entirely in their own intuition of what constitutes literary unity” (\textit{Inconsistency in the Torah}, 3); “I seek to question our own notions of consistency and unity in a text, in light of what we discover from the writings of the ancient Near East ...” (4); “Canvassing the textual culture of the ancient Near East affords us an awareness of the limitations of our own situatedness: we become aware of authorial and editorial practices that, standing as they do at great remove from our own, sometimes seem to us counterintuitive” (202).

similar models of composition? As with any comparative enterprise, one must take into account both continuity and difference. In sum, properly evaluating the contribution that comparative material can make to the debate entails several layers of complexity.

3.2 Inductive Text Analysis

A different approach to the recovery of ancient literary conventions, including standards of (in)coherence, is represented by the TAPJLA project, the “Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity, c. 200 BCE to c. 700 CE,” conducted at the University of Manchester from 2007–2012. TAPJLA undertook to “describe the literary characteristics of a large number of ancient documents important for the development of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.” The object was to draft ‘Profiles’ of the literary features of 328 works of ancient Jewish literature, providing scholars with detailed descriptions of the texts “as they are.” One of the major issues raised by the configuration of the TAPJLA project was the issue of (in)coherence. “Problematic literary structures, like discontinuities, internal contradictions, changes of perspective, and unexplained repetitions, are taken as important features to be noted and defined” (16). TAPJLA, though, deliberately avoided making any judgment about the origins or functions of any literary features, including patterns of (in)coherence. Rather:

They [the individual Profiles] provide an explicit, systematic, and comparative description of a text’s literary constitution and nothing else. They furnish no historical context, detective work on authorship, diachronic separation of earlier sources, editorship, philological criticism, exploitation for historical information, aesthetic, cultural, or theological appreciation, or religious appropriation.

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82 Berman himself sees this (at least at moments): “There is no intuitive way to determine what constitutes a fissure in a text from another period and another locale. These sensitivities must be learned, and acquired by careful study. When claims for revision rely on perceived inconsistency or tension in the text and there is no external evidence to corroborate this perception, we may well be imposing modern canons of consistency on these ancient texts, effectively inventing the problem to which revision is the solution” (Inconsistency, 275).

83 Profiling, 25.

84 The criteria by which texts were selected for the study are described in Profiling, 7–11. As a generalization, texts had to be (arguably) Jewish, complete (or nearly so), anonymous or pseudepigraphic, from the period of ca. 200 B.C.E.–700 C.E., not canonical, and literary. The database of profiles can be found at: http://literarydatabase.humanities.manchester.ac.uk.


86 Ibid., 12
The reason for taking such a decision had to do with methodological integrity. Modern reading habits profoundly influence academic reading. “Our strongest intuitions on what makes sense or what is coherent in a text come from our own time and place, reader expectations that we learned before becoming scholars and which are reinforced by being scholars and writing academically.” And yet, there is no apparent reason to assume that modern reading and ancient reading are identical. Modern readers have no access to readerly intuitions from ancient periods and cultures. As such, “there is a prima facie need for supplementing or educating our intuitions of coherence.” The only way to acquire culturally appropriate intuitions, while simultaneously avoiding the historical questions that attend comparative, empirical research, is to “scrutinize the large amount of available evidence of what texts are actually like.” In this way, scholars can build up temporally and culturally appropriate intuitions, even if those intuitions are imperfect.

Samely, who was the principle investigator on TAPJLA, describes this as learning the “ways of the text”:

For the critical reader who is not familiar with the ways of the text by virtue of shared cultural intuitions, the text itself has to become the primary evidence for its ways and its methods of coherence. And for the text to be able to testify to its own manner of textuality, the evidence of its boundaries is indispensable. The modern scholar has to reckon with the possibility that standards of coherence are historically contingent and that those embodied in the text under consideration are not yet known.

What this requires, initially anyway, is an upfront investment in the coherence of the texts under consideration. To quote Samely again:

For a limited period all close reading, including that of ancient sources by the modern critical scholar, has to invest up front in the coherence of the text. For the reader, in particular the reader encountering a text across a historical and cultural depth yet to be plumbed, must first acquire sufficient experience in the ways of the text before she or he has the ‘right’, so to speak, to stop looking for a text’s unity. The ways of the text cannot even be explored adequately without first investing in the text’s unity ... So the ways of the text do not become visible without the expectation that it forms an internally complex but bounded whole, without investment in coherence. This is true in particular for texts whose ways are unfamiliar to the reader – the situation of the modern scholar reading ancient sources. The alternative, namely giving up on coherence too soon, is hard to remedy. Just as the expectation of coherence can be self-fulfilling for uncritical

87 Ibid., 17
88 Ibid., 28
89 Ibid.
90 Again, and crucially, this is the precise inversion of the methodological claim of W. Richter (see n. 28 above); cf. Blum, “Synchronie,” 67.
readers, so the expectation of incoherence can be self-fulfilling for readers who give up too early.\footnote{Ibid., 24–25. He continues: “The text’s boundaries must be allowed to define and limit the meaning options, in particular for the reader who is unfamiliar with the ways of the text. The factuality of boundaries is what permits the text to make sense in unexpected ways, but only if the reader takes them seriously … For the critical reader who is not familiar with the ways of the text by virtue of shared cultural intuitions, the text itself has to become the primary evidence for its ways and its methods of coherence. And for the text to be able to testify to its own manner of textuality, the evidence of its boundaries is indispensable. The modern scholar has to reckon with the possibility that standards of coherence are historically contingent and that those embodied in the text under consideration are not yet known.” […] “In the absence of reliable access to the text’s historical context, the factuality of what is inside it and what is absent from it, where it starts and where it ends, may be the text’s only defence against anachronistic expectations on the side of the modern scholarly reader” (ibid.).}

It is essential to say that the approach proposed here does not entail any commitment to the unity or coherence of any variety of ancient Jewish literature. That one must begin with an investment in a text’s coherence does not mean that one will conclude that the texts are coherent. Expecting texts to make sense does not mean that those expectations cannot be frustrated decisively. An upfront investment in the coherence of the texts is a necessary starting point, nothing more; but it remains methodologically necessary.

3.3. Proposal

A precondition of a better understanding of ancient Jewish literatures is the ability to transcend our intuitive and learned coherence assumptions when encountering texts from those other cultures and times. We propose that the approach which says or assumes that coherence standards are unchanging is untenable and unscientific. Further, so-called “empirical models” are not a cure-all because we are in the same position of ignorance when reading and evaluating comparative evidence from antiquity as we are when reading Hebrew Bible and other ancient Jewish literatures. We are not making any assertion about what the standards of (in)coherence might have been in Jewish antiquity. We are asserting that we cannot assume that we know them, and that the only way forward is investing up front in a text’s unity while undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the literature itself, learning the “ways of the text.” Only then will we be in a position to offer educated, culturally appropriate deductions about the standards of (in)coherence at play in ancient Jewish literature.
Part 4. Moving Forward

Obviously, we have offered nothing in this essay except an anatomy of issues and a proposal regarding the best way forward as we see it. Before the next steps can be taken, it is essential to establish the relevant questions, questions that require further exploration and research. Many but not all of these questions reflect our interest in establishing the “ways of the text.” Some are second-order questions that look further afield to raise comparative and diachronic issues, issues relevant to a wider historical understanding of ancient Jewish literature. These questions can only be properly approached, we would assert, after an inductive, comprehensive analysis of the ancient Jewish literature itself, unprejudiced by our own standards and expectations of coherence.

1. Methodological questions. What types of evidence might reveal something about ancient standards of literary (in)coherence? Is it fruitful to distinguish between expectations of coherence and tolerances of incoherence? That is, might certain types or occasions of incoherence be tolerated by ancient readers and writers while, simultaneously, being perceived to be incoherent? How might this be established? In what ways are the dominant methods of text-analysis practiced by modern scholars in alignment or nonalignment with ancient standards? When (if ever) is it reasonable to conclude that ancient Jewish writers had similar standards of textual (in)coherence to those of their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors in their own or neighboring cultures?

2. Diachronic / Temporal questions: What can be said about the historical development of conceptions of (in)coherence within ancient Jewish literature and traced across its various cultural contexts? What continuities and what differences can be observed over time and space? Perhaps differences are traceable through comparing different iterations of a single tradition, different texts with overlapping subject matter, diachronically distinct textual levels within a single composite document, the literatures of different language groups, or a work and its composition-external reception, including translation?

3. Content / Subject Matter: Do coherence expectations differ according to the topics or concepts handled or according to how ideas are configured or presented? For example, are there differences in standards of (in)coherence between different literary types (narrative versus sentence literature, versus prophetic oracles, versus prayers, versus treatises, etc.)?

4. Nature and Scope of Compositional Activity: Are there different coherence expectations or tolerances associated with different types of com-
positional activity (e.g., aggregation versus deliberate and planned composition, writing versus rewriting, source text versus translation, etc.)? Is it useful to distinguish between the coherence expectations appropriate to larger and smaller text-segments within a single work? If so, what precisely is the nature of such a hierarchy, and how does it relate to the concerns of questions 2 and 3 above?

Considering the differences in time, place, and circumstance in which these texts were produced, a perfectly consistent account that can be systematized will prove impossible (or would be false if it were possible). Our hope is that these questions can serve as a starting point, to help us move toward a flexible model for understanding better the standards of (in) coherence in Jewish antiquity.

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How Coherence Works: Reading, Re-Reading and Inner-Biblical Exegesis*

Abstract: In this article I sketch out a new theory of reading from a phenomenological point of view, and proceed to use it to explore underlying assumptions of certain types of biblical criticism. I argue that readers live through a non-deliberate synthesis of the way sentence meanings in a text relate to each other. This synthesis is best understood as a special case of the largely non-conscious synthesis that characterizes experience more generally. Such “passive” syntheses can become selectively transformed into explicit interpretations through the reader’s reflection on them, and they form the reader’s encounters with textual coherence and incoherence. The meaning contents of tacit syntheses, once partially articulated by readers, are linked to historically situated assumptions about the world and texts, including culturally prevalent or trained habits of reading. Trained habits can include the expectation of textual inconsistency, as in some branches of biblical studies, and the expectation of divine allusiveness, as in the case of rabbinic Midrash. Re-reading a text or memorizing it can influence what readers passively synthesize. I use these theoretical positions to explore my experience of reading Genesis 12, in the light of Genesis 20 as its “inner-biblical exegesis.”

Keywords: coherence, passive synthesis, inner-biblical exegesis, rabbinic Midrash, phenomenology, reading

* This paper, coming as it does from someone who is not a Hebrew Bible specialist, would not have been possible without opportunities to learn from colleagues who are. I would like to thank in particular Andy Teeter, Bill Tooman, Michael Lyons and Jake Stromberg for discussions at two wonderful workshops at Harvard and St Andrews in 2014 and 2016. They also took the trouble to respond in detail to an earlier version of this paper. The resulting changes were substantial; but, needless to say, none of the remaining flaws of this article can be blamed on them.
Introduction

In this paper I wish to renew the argument, made perhaps in most convincing detail previously by Wolfgang Iser,¹ that the construction of text meaning in reading must be understood as part of processes of synthesis which construct the self-continuity of the reader. Such syntheses of temporal difference cannot be thought of as being self-transparent at the moment they take place, although they are experienced as partially accessible to the reader’s reflection in hindsight. I will argue that one of the consequences of this is that ancient Jewish ways of reading and composing biblical texts – including the experiences of their in / coherence – cannot be directly inferred from the contemporary biblical scholar’s reading experience. I will argue for the following positions:²

- Understanding the meaning of a text (i.e. reading) involves the reader in an attempt to construct a coherent text-projected world
- This is accomplished by connecting acute, but temporally dispersed and multiple, experiences of single sentence meanings
- This connecting is largely non-deliberate and subconscious, producing syntheses of “meanings-designate” which reflection endows with a defined theme only in hindsight and selectively
- Increasing the degree of familiarity with the text’s themes and wording changes the results of this non-deliberate synthesis and thus of the experience of text in / coherence.

I will introduce and defend these various positions by posing phenomenological questions on how modern, Western, and academic readers – or perhaps just I – perform the construction of text coherence. I will then show how the theory interacts with one particular biblical studies methodology by presenting a hypothetical reading of Genesis 12 and Genesis 20 in terms of “inner-biblical exegesis.”

² I deal with these ideas in detail in my forthcoming book, Meanings. A Phenomenology of Reading.
I begin by presenting how some recent voices in biblical studies frame the problem of incoherence. In the Introduction to a recent book on empirical models for source and redaction criticism, Raymond F. Person and Robert Rezetko raise with admirable clarity the dangers of circularity involved in differentiating stages of (biblical) text production on internal grounds.\(^3\) The circularity arises because internal arguments depend on perceptions of coherence and incoherence in texts.\(^4\) Critical methodologies therefore have to show that contemporary intuitions of what constitutes a coherent or incoherent text are applicable to historical and non-Western texts. Does the present-day experience of incoherence in texts that originated in other times and places allow deductions on their text history? We cannot simply take for granted that this is so. But if readers in other historical circumstances have constructed the coherence of texts differently from modern scholars, how would we even notice it, given the circularities of constructing meaning from texts? One clue might be that not just a few, but most texts from a particular culture look incoherent to us.

Ancient Judaism is a case in point. Suspiciously many ancient Jewish texts, certainly from among those originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, have been viewed as incoherent in modern scholarship. Perhaps the authors of works from the Pentateuch to the Babylonian Talmud, did not strive for

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coherence at all. This, though, would imply again that they had a different practice of text reading, and so our modern intuitions do not apply. Or else, ancient writers produced these texts, but also other texts in which they did strive for coherence. If that is the case, where are those texts? John Barton has argued that a biblical book such as Isaiah might not have been read as a text that is a “literary work with beginning, middle, and end, and internal coherence” in antiquity. He asks: “If early Jewish interpreters (and this would include, say, St Paul as well as the early rabbis) read biblical books with so little attention to their themes, their overall shape, and their closure, is it possible that the books were actually written without attention to those features?”

And further on, he proposes the view that: “The compilers of the biblical books were not trying to produce “works” in the literary sense, with a clear theme or plot and high degree of closure, but rather anthologies of material which could be dipped into at any point.”

Marc Zvi Brettler, directly responding to Barton’s position, argues for the exact opposite view, namely that the makers of biblical texts were determined to produce coherence. This and related disagreements in biblical studies have fundamental character, because we do not know what the compilers of biblical books were trying to do except by looking at the result they produced. We possess the texts stripped of their contexts; we have almost no (other) evidence of their original settings and their methods of production. Observations on what kind of texts ancient authors wished to produce must therefore ultimately be grounded in modern scholarly intuitions on text coherence.

These intuitions are fundamental to methodologies and models of text composition. Often such intuitions on coherence are tacitly presupposed in the interpretation of specific passages; but at times they are frankly stated, as when P. Sumpter says of Psalm 24 that it is “a difficult psalm, for it seems to be incoherent.” But reading, re-reading and arguing with the wording of biblical texts alone cannot settle the question whether current scholarly

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5 J. Barton, “What is a Book? Modern Exegesis and the Literary Conventions of Ancient Israel,” in Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (ed. J. C. de Moor; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1–14, here at 4, 5 and 6, respectively.
intuitions on coherence are sufficiently independent of our own time and place to be transferrable to ancient readers and writers. General questions of meaning construction in texts are clearly involved, and so a more oblique approach appears to be called for. One might say that the contact between reading practices in biblical studies and the theoretical understanding of reading needs to be renewed. This is the goal of my paper. It will try to answer how intuitions on coherence contribute to the process of contemporary reading, within certain named contexts. I will attempt to clarify reading in the present, of which the current scholarly reading of any text must be an instance.

The apparently technical question of a biblical studies methodology therefore belongs to the still wider field of the possibility of experience more generally. In my view, reading a text is one expression of embodied consciousness alongside others. Parameters of reading are partially clarified in the study of or reflection on any experience that involves perception, memory and the continuities or discontinuities of a self of consciousness. Approaching a definition of coherence from this perspective, I understand the coherence of a text to be realized or subverted by a reader’s labour of projecting a text world, that is, the labour of projecting textual statements and themes as mutually compatible. Obstacles to such mutual compatibility constitute the most decisive experience of textual incoherence, although there are others which depend on further reader assumptions (e.g. stylistic discontinuities). I will adopt the phenomenological approach to everyday experience in embodied and temporal personhood for reading. I will approach reading a text – including the texts of the Hebrew Bible – as much as possible as a lived experience (initially, of verbal meaning); and to my mind philosophical phenomenology has developed the most successful techniques for exploring lived experience.

The notion of coherence, as provisionally defined above, cuts across the text linguistic distinction of coherence from cohesion. In the pair coherence-cohesion, coherence is largely a foil for well-defined phenomena of cohesion, but nevertheless relates to more limited aspects of reading than those I will be concerned with.⁸ I will accordingly avoid conceptualizing coherence as something that is capable of having a “grammar.”⁹ Ronald

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Langacker’s explanation of “cognitive grammar” illustrates well the different levels of conceptualization here involved. He explains:

Our topic is the linguistic theory known as Cognitive Grammar. This framework offers a comprehensive yet coherent view of language structure ...  

My theme is not what Langacker calls grammar, but what he has already presupposed in using the word ‘coherent’ to describe that grammar. I am interested in coherence as a feature of all experience, text meaning as a special case of experience, and reading the Hebrew Bible as an example of experiencing text meaning.

I will argue that text reading consists partly in the attempt to construct text coherence, through retention, anticipation and the open-ended build-up of a reader’s projection of a “world,” taken to be presented in the text. I thus interpret coherence as a possible experience readers can have of the text. I will explain this experience as arising from a reader’s largely non-deliberate endeavour to accommodate to each other the actualized meanings of a text’s sentences. I will claim that the reader cannot check the results of this endeavour of accommodation by actualizing those sentence meanings simultaneously. This will be the burden of sections 1 to 3 below. I will then address the effects of frequently re-reading the same text, a vital cultural mechanism in ancient Judaism and in contemporary biblical studies (section 4); and examine in more detail one potential case of incoherence, the recurrence of the sister-wife motif in Gen 12:10–20 and Gen 20:1–18, if read through the lens of inner-biblical exegesis (section 5).

The ideas I will use – retention, protention, passive synthesis, actuality – derive from analyses of everyday experience by Edmund Husserl and, less terminologically fixed, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I take into account also certain strands of the empirical study of reading in psychology, cog-

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nitive sciences and neuroscience,\textsuperscript{12} the use of these strands in the study of literature,\textsuperscript{13} and the dialogue of philosophical phenomenology with cognitive sciences.\textsuperscript{14} Monika Fludernik’s work on narrative attempts a synthesis between cognitive reading studies and concepts from Paul Ricoeur, but I cannot use her work as a starting point. Reading studies from an empirical point of view, and Fludernik’s work also, tend to reify the reading experience through such notions as “mental models,” “inferences” and “story grammars.” These terms are often used as if they named mechanisms which a reader applies in reading so as to obtain meaning from the text, and thus as if they were pre-existing, self-identical or universal mechanisms. But we do not experience reading as our making instrumental use of such fixed models or schemata. They thus constitute a separate level of description, from an outside interpreter of the reading process, or from scientifically reifying introspection. Whatever mechanisms for making sense of textuality may operate in reading, it is part of their operation to be unavailable to the reader as tools in the moment when they are effective. That unavailability-at-the-earlier-moment is included in how self-reflection shows them to us at the moment of reflection, and thus forms an ingredient of how we experience our own reading process.\textsuperscript{15} This puts into question academic methodologies of reading, as used in biblical studies and other fields, insofar as they postulate that the modern scholar’s reading processes are self-transparent and plannable.


\textsuperscript{15} This contrasts with the claim in M. Fludernik, \textit{Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology} (London: Routledge, 1996), 22: “Readers actively construct meanings and impose frames on their interpretations of texts just as people have to interpret real-life experience in terms of available schemata” (emphases mine). The use of “active” here seems to me mistaken. For the other terms mentioned above, see the literature cited in Samely, “Jewish Studies and Reading,” 768–769.
Of the phenomenologists working on texts, Wolfgang Iser and Roman Ingarden are closest to my outlook. But they too appear to suggest inappropriate reifications of the acts and affectivities of consciousness in reading. Or at least, they appear to merge the perspective of a reflection on the nature of reading with the perspective of a reader engaged in accomplishing reading, perhaps because their main purpose is literary criticism. By contrast, I will not assume that readers merely need to reflect on some earlier moment of their reading in order to gain immediate access to the way (and thus the justification with which) they created a synthesis of the discrete meaning experiences of single sentences. I furthermore differ from Iser, Ingarden and others by not making the reading of modern literary art the paradigm case of reading. And I do not aim to account for the textuality of narrative texts alone.

I take it that all humanities, and many social sciences, occasionally apply to texts such terms as coherence, incoherence, in /consistency, cohesion / lack of cohesion, internal contradiction / lack of internal contradiction and dis /continuity. Specific academic purposes and disciplinary perspectives will inflect their use, but in a number of subject areas concerned with historical cultures, including non-European cultures, the concern with the coherence of written sources has been prominent, if not as prominent as in Hebrew Bible studies. Literary studies, historiography, cultural studies,
deconstruction, text linguistics, empirical psychology and philosophy can be expected to take a special interest in such terms for divergent reasons. Phenomena of incoherence, and therefore of coherence, also become addressed in formal logic, as well as in approaches that see them as epiphenomena of conflicts between social groups, economic interests or ideologies. They surface as manifestations of self-awareness or the lack of it in psychoanalysis, religious studies and anthropology. Cultural studies and cultural history, as well as translation, gender and post-colonial studies, visual and material culture studies, studies in the history of the book, and many branches of literary studies, are apt to emphasize the role of reception in the discovery of in/coherence in texts. Texts then tend to be seen as not having a stable meaning, and so the discovery of in/coherence becomes assigned to the reader’s cultural situation.

The very concern with in/coherence may then be seen as marking a particular historically contingent culture of reading, one which favours “essentializing” or reflects “Western metaphysics.” Post-modern approaches therefore usually avoid engaging directly with phenomena of textual contradiction as such, which engagement Tzvetan Todorov referred to as the “cornerstone of all scholarly criticism.” Rather, these positions imply that it is historically unthinkable that instances of concrete scholarly intuitions on the meaning of a specific text, and thus on the coherence of that text, could legitimately claim universal validity.

The direct engagement with textual inconsistency has, however, long been crucial to the discussion in biblical studies and has remained so in recent times. Distinguishing diachronic layers within the extant biblical text


on internal grounds remains foundational to much contemporary research. Scholars also find external evidence of coherence-affecting variants between text forms in the mutual comparison of biblical Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint, Qumran manuscripts, and other sources. But a pervasive criterion for identifying diachrony remains internal, and this is that the text harbours phenomena of incoherence, “self-contradiction and formlessness,” in Barton’s words, delightfully echoing Gen 1:2.19

These phenomena do not only frustrate the effort of constructing coherence, but also indicate where in the text the historical seams are to be found. Phenomena of incoherence become boundary markers that stake out the newly discovered old text – that source or layer within whose limits the coherence expectation can be successfully reinstated. Whether scholars consider only stark self-contradiction or even the mere non-mention of a certain expected topic (e.g. a central sanctuary) sufficient to argue for diachronic development of the text, they have to treat their own expectations of coherence as probative for text history, in particular when those expectations are disappointed. Modern intuitions on text coherence are thus an integral part of many biblical studies methodologies, as well as other disciplinary methodologies in the humanities, and it is legitimate to ask what might be the anchor of these intuitions in the process of reading itself.

The key current battleground for competing theories of reading is the assumed or rejected subjectivity of the reader (as well as of the author).20 Subjectivity here refers to the potential self-awareness of the reader, the reader as the centre of their own experiences.21 In post-modern approaches the reader tends not to be considered as a subject in that sense. The corollary is that text coherence and meaning are seen as socially distributed happenings (or “murmur,” to use Foucault’s word); and the first-hand experience of in / coherence by readers is taken to be a socially constructed experience, there being no other kind.

For my part, I will also postulate that readers as subjects are only partially transparent to themselves. But I will treat reader experiences of meaning – really, my own – nevertheless as a valid starting point of the analysis, not as ultimately socially constructed. I present my account in the hope that

19 “What is a Book?,” 8.
21 I will speak of the “general” reader here envisaged either in the plural (readers), or in the singular but linked to plural pronouns (their, they), avoiding the gender binary ‘her / his.’
current and perhaps future readers of this article recognize in it their own experiences (without falling into the error of assuming that this would have probative value for deciding the self–society dichotomy). I will ask two phenomenological questions of the experience of reading: What is it that I have to assume – what is it that I find myself having already assumed – about the text and myself for it to be possible that I experience the text as meaningful? And: How can I articulate those assumptions in non-reductive terms that do not implicitly deny that very possibility of experience, e.g. by postulating as necessary mediators of reading either some reified schemata of understanding or society?

While I reject post-modern approaches as my starting point, my results nevertheless suggest that the modern reader’s production of text in / coherence is more complex, less static and less open to objective description than many scholarly methodologies are willing to countenance. This has consequences also for disciplinary methods of reconstructing the historical reader/author, which are in effect methods that circumscribe what the texts can mean. Ancient Jewish readers of biblical texts may have been significantly less constrained in their genuine responses to apparent biblical incoherence than is usually thought. If it is correct to say that the modern scholarly practice of reading is less rigid in its constructions of in / coherence than appears to its practitioners, then the options for hypothesizing the ancient readings must also become more open.

1. Passive synthesis of text meaning

The ability of readers to experience problems of coherence in a text arises from basic aspects of what we call a text. “Text” here implies: a text as read. These basic aspects can be best explained by contrasting the manner in which a single sentence has meaning with the manner in which a whole text, containing several or many such sentences, has meaning. The single sentence is often experienced as being intelligible “in one go.” The meaning of a text consisting of multiple sentences is arguably never experienced as available “in one go.” For texts in that sense involve the reader in assembling multiple meaning experiences, namely the meanings of the text’s individual sentences. Reading must then involve an assembly or synthesis that somehow bridges the temporal separation of moments of understanding. The nature of this synthesis will be my topic below. First let me develop five ideas on textuality that are implied in the need for postulating such a synthesis:
1. Text meaning is experienced as irreducibly *temporal*: not just as having a duration, but also as grounded in the experience of a dispersion, a multiplicity or a manifold.

2. The synthesis of the dispersed individual sentence meanings constitutes the dimension in which a text’s meaning can constitute itself for the reader. By contrast, the simultaneous presence of all ink marks on the pages of a codex or scroll, or as pixels on a screen, does not constitute a simultaneity of meanings. The meanings of these ink marks can only be understood one after the other, and never become available (not even in recollection) to simultaneous actualization: non-actualizing synthesis is necessary.

3. The units of meaning whose multiplicity reading synthesizes as constituting the text, can vary. I have so far spoken as if the sentence were the only such unit, but it is not. The sentence, together with its equivalents in English and other languages (e.g., complex sentences, elliptic sentences, copula-less nominal sentences in Hebrew) may be the most common unit. But readers are open to the text and to their own reading situation when determining what they see as the appropriate unit for a text, and units such as the poetic line (a very important case), the individual word, or a small multi-sentence unit, such as a certain kind of proverb, are often tacitly recognized; and there will be unpredictably many other possibilities. Some disciplinary discourses use the word “text” for one-sentence or even one-word utterances. By contrast, I will use the term text pre-eminently in the following sense: a verbal entity that contains a multiplicity of units of meaning, such that the reader has to live through multiple discrete moments of actualized unit meanings in order to experience the whole text’s meaning or meanings. This implies that mechanisms of retentive synthesis are involved in the constitution of text meaning/s that need to be conceptualized as passive or subconscious: they must be non-actualizing (of meanings) and non-deliberate. For readers never have simultaneous and active experience of the separate unit meanings they have successively actualized. Even constant re-reading or memorization, my topic in section 4 below, does not create simultaneous access to actualized unit meanings in the plural.

4. One cannot experience, in the sense of “live through,” a text’s meaning at second hand. The observable, measurable data on subjective reading

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23 Henceforth the latter dichotomy will be represented by the slash in “meaning/s.”
experiences used in cognitive psychology, empirical psychology and allied
disciplines arise when scientists record responses, processing times, eye
movements, brain images, word recognition rates, recollection accuracy, and
so on. But in the vast majority of cases, these data can only be interpreted if
the investigator compares them to their own – inalienably own – understand-
ing of the text used in the experiment. Indeed it is the scientist as reader who
constructs or selects a text for use in an experiment in the first place. And the
scientist as reader (or listener) will then also often assign empirical results to
certain meaning categories, such as that of a correct recollection of the text’s
meaning.24 These readings of the scientist remain outside and logically prior
the experimentally controlled situation and its instrumentalities.

5. The textual sequence in which the reader encounters the units of meaning (e.g., sentences) forms part of the experience of the text’s
meaning /s. Most written and oral texts have a unique linear unit sequence
that defines them. (Sequence in a conversation works differently.) Yet
readers of written texts are free to disregard that linearity; they can read the
text selectively or out of sequence. But whatever the scenario, the sequence,
or sequence plus selection, as actually experienced by the reader, contributes
one dimension to the experience of text meaning /s.

The upshot of these features of the modern experience of textuality is that
the constitution of a text’s in /coherence concerns the in-between of meaning
units or sentences. Readers constitute the units themselves partly by way of a
perceived formal feature, e.g. the grammar of a sentence, or the poetic line;
and for each unit, meaning is constituted in an initially isolated manner, be-
fore the reader moves on to the next such unit. Recognizing the unit goes
hand in hand with parcelling off its meaning from neighbouring units.

Now for the reader to be able to experience something like incoherence
or coherence in the transition between different units of the same text, they
must be able to retain a lingering awareness of earlier meanings as they
read a new unit. This lingering awareness of the earlier meanings cannot
consist of the full recollection or representation of those meanings, but
has to be latent or subliminal (in a sense to be problematized below). If an
earlier meaning were experienced again in its fully-fledged actuality while
the meaning of the new unit is actualized, readers would have to actualize
two discrete meanings “at the same time,” two meanings equally acute and
simultaneous with each other. But no such double occupation of the same
moment of experience by two defined contents appears to be detectable in
subjective introspection or reflection. Even empirical psychologists have

24 Cp. Samely, “Jewish Studies and Reading.”
long based their experiments upon this result of subjective introspection, in assuming that single moments of consciousness are occupied only by a single meaning.25

What reflection seems to show instead of two or more equally acute non-identical meanings, is that a single actualized meaning (or theme) is, as it were, surrounded by a horizon of latent other themes-designate. These not-yet themes, or not-anymore themes, can be partially and successively (re-) actualized in hindsight, and thereby made to take on a defined identity, a theme. Themes created from the latent horizon of an earlier actual meaning are marked, when unpacked and defined by reflection, as not having been actual (actively processed, defined) when the main theme was actual – thus the (Husserlian) term “horizon.” So also for the case of reading. Reflection appears to show that one actualizes two sentence/unit meanings at two different moments of understanding. A pair of two sentences such as, “John got into the car. He wrinkled his nose,” is not at first (or ever) experienced as two meanings equally actual (acute, defined) to consciousness. The meaning of the second sentence is not yet actualized when the meaning of the first sentence is, and the meaning of the first sentence is not actualized any more when the meaning of the second is. Yet the second sentence’s meaning is on the horizon of a vague, non-deliberate anticipation when the first one’s meaning is actualized; and the first one’s meaning lingers in retention when the second one’s meaning is actualized.

Even if the connection between two sentences is familiar and predictable – e.g. “John got into the car. He turned on the ignition” – and readers unify them in some sense, they seem not to experience the two meanings as simultaneous while distinct, but rather as a single thematic package (capable of being articulated as e.g., “the action of beginning a car journey”). Notwithstanding the much-studied ability of readers to have anticipatory peripheral vision of words not currently focused,26 a text consisting of a

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25 This includes recent neuropsychological research into consciousness. Cp. Baars, A Cognitive Theory of Consciousness, 83: “As Wundt observed in the 1880s, even two simultaneous conscious events are experienced either fused into a single experience or serially, one after the other. There is no such thing as true psychological simultaneity of two distinct events” (see also Baars, 145–148); Dehaene et al., “A Neuronal Network Model.”

number of sentences or other units will therefore have to produce in the reader the experience of a temporal succession of several meanings. This applies regardless of how close in time the two acts of actualization were, or how often the reader has jumped from one to the other. This experience of temporal distinctness of two neighbouring sentences / units replicates itself for each sentence / unit read or re-read in reading a whole text. So temporal distinctness, and thus also a merely latent retention of earlier meanings backing up a moving focus of actualized meanings, seems to be fundamental to the possibility of experiencing text in / coherence.

If the meanings of two adjacent sentences are experienced as contradictory, the demands made on such latent retention are modest, compared to the case where this happens across a larger distance. The reason is their close temporal succession. Yet temporal difference is still foundational. It consists of what one might speak of as greying out (that is, merely retaining) one meaning, while making bold (that is, actualizing) another. In other words, the current actualized sentence meaning has a “horizon” which includes the latent retention of an earlier sentence’s meaning. This makes it possible for readers to become conscious of an incompatibility of meanings. Neither incoherence nor coherence can be conceptualized without postulating a reader who can hold on to meanings that are not, at this very moment, actual. Husserl identified retention as a constitutive component of experience in general.

Together with protention (see below), retention creates what Husserl called the passive synthesis of experience. Passive synthesis is an accomplishment of pre-predicative consciousness, which means, for our case of reading, that in retaining a connection between neighbouring or distant sentence meanings, the reader does not create conscious thoughts, judgements or propositions articulating that connection. Passive synthesis cannot be directed by one-off volition, but it can be shaped by habit, and selective instances of it can be reflected upon, can be articulated or can underlie acts of attentive understanding. I will treat the Husserlian notion of passive synthesis as a way to capture how retention and non-deliberate anticipation (protention) together embed every actual experience of consciousness in a Now, i.e. the active construction of the meaning of a sentence in reading it, into a flow of latent synthesis, i.e. the retained and anticipated other meanings of the same text. The notion of passive synthesis thus integrates the possibility of experiencing a text as coherent or incoherent into the wider theme of experience in general. Passive synthesis is the name for a continuity which reflection cannot directly inspect at the moment when it is operative. Husserl’s extensive investigations into the specifics of passive syn-
thesis have been critiqued and supplemented by subsequent philosophical and psychological research, in ways that are also potentially relevant for the case of reading. But for my current purpose, Husserl’s basic idea forms the best starting point. Husserl contrasts passive synthesis with active synthesis, for which his prime example is actualizing (i.e. actively understanding) the meaning of a single comparatively short sentence qua predication or judgment, or understanding a mathematical equation, such as \(2 \times 2 = 4\).

Let us return to a specific example, this time using the following pair of sentences: “Virginia got into the car. She jumped into the pool.” Readers of this article will presumably have experienced a lack of continuity between the two sentence meanings, each of which they must therefore have actualized in its own right, even if in very quick succession. Each sentence is unproblematic in itself; it is their non-coherence across the sentence boundary that produces the tension. This illustrates how the experience of coherence or incoherence depends on the temporal synthesis of sentence meanings that become actualized in separate moments. Something bridges the gap: that something is what the term passive synthesis names. It includes retention of the one meaning while the other meaning is actual, present. Similarly, retention of the meanings encountered in Genesis 1 will provide part of the background against which a reader actualizes the meanings of Genesis 2, if read in that sequence.

Even if coherence is prima facie problematical, as it is in this particular case, phenomena of incoherence can only appear against a background of retained earlier meanings in the same text. Retention thus always constitutes continuities, even when it also constitutes discontinuities. Most texts have very substantial continuities of content, language, form, voice, etc., which provide a foil against which any discontinuities can appear. On the other hand, a close reader will also find numerous minor discontinuities, breaks, incongruities, tensions or conspicuous in any longer text, which call for tacit mutual accommodation (see below). The construction of coherence remains always somewhat in the balance; the coherent text is strictly speaking only provisionally coherent, even after re-reading. The same goes for the incoherent text. The appearance of discontinuity, as well as the inconspicuous experience of continuity, arises from a process by which

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28 I treat the case of meaning constitution of a text here as parallel to the manner in which Husserl sees object constitution in perception, *Analysen*, 29; *Analyses*, 67.
sentence meanings are actualized in relation to others and then recede into non-actuality, retention.

A second aspect of passive synthesis, in addition to retention, consists of anticipation that is non-deliberate and thematically exceedingly vague. Husserl postulated the operation of a continuous, non-deliberate and open forward-looking anticipation of the next moment of experience, an operation one is able to encounter upon reflection. He called it protention; I will use the more cumbersome expression non-deliberate anticipation. This is how a contemporary philosopher of perception summarises Husserl’s view:

Husserl speaks of the experienced present moment as being constituted in part by “retention” and “protention.” Retention is not recollection – the recuperation of a past that has slipped from our grasp – nor is it strictly perception. It is, rather, a quasi-perceptual awareness of the immediate past as slipping away behind us – a slippage that is correlative to the lived present pushing forwards into the future. Such a future is opened up phenomenologically by protention, which stands to anticipation as retention stands to recollection, and is a sheer openness to the new. Such retentions and protentions are not mere adjuncts to an otherwise integrally constituted present; for such a present, as a lived present, is possible only in virtue of such retentions and protentions, because of the necessity that any experience have temporal breadth.29

Thus non-deliberate holding on to meaning experienced in the past together with non-deliberate anticipation of meaning in the future, a framework of passive synthesis or a horizon of the Now, make meaningful any given actuality (Now) of experience. Among other things this means that any actuality can be experienced as the fulfilment or disappointment of an earlier non-deliberate anticipation. (The affective overtones of “fulfilment” and “disappointment” are not unimportant, but are not my topic in the present context.) Fulfilment is always partial, always capable of being built up and filled up – experienced further – through further moments of actuality, which can be actively sought out. That is why text coherence is ultimately provisional. A given sentence meaning, at the moment the reader actualizes it (= actuality), aligns itself with and adds to or corrects an inchoate configuration of retained experiences, that is, the retained configuration of sentence meanings up to that point. And actuality thus produces the continuation of that configuration into the future, i.e., fresh latency of anticipation arising from the present sentence meaning for subsequent sentence meanings.30

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30 Three phenomenological accounts of anticipation, of increasing fluidity, are, Husserl, Experience and Judgment, 92–95 (mannequin example); M. Heidegger, Being and Time (trans. J. Stambaugh; Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 310–316 (§ 65, and also the following
Perhaps one can find a spatial analogy to this temporality by the walk of a heavy bird on sand. At each moment the foot of the bird rests only on those grains of sand that it directly touches. These grains of sand get pushed down into sand that surrounds them; the bird is heavy enough for that. But the bird does not sink in because of the resistance of grains of sand which are not at this moment in direct contact with the bird’s foot. Let the grains of sand that the foot touches stand for the sentence that I am currently reading; let the grains which are not in direct contact with the foot stand for the sentences surrounding the sentence that I am currently reading, that is, the text. Let the slight movement of grains that the weight of the bird causes, and the resistance from the surrounding grains, stand for my non-deliberate adjustment of the sentence meaning I currently understand in light of my retention of earlier sentences, and my inchoate anticipation of the meaning of later sentences in the same text in light of the currently acute meaning. What holds my construction of the meaning of that sentence in place is the retention and anticipation of the other sentences surrounding it; while the contribution which this sentence meaning makes to the meanings of the sentences in the rest of the text, is like the movement of grains of sand that are not in direct contact with the bird’s foot by grains of sand that are. The mutual accommodation of sentence meanings within a text in the experience of the reader is like the compacting of a ground under a weight: it adds firmness to the interpretation of each sentence.

Like other models of temporality, Husserl’s understanding of lived-through temporality has its weaknesses. His work may also have created the impression – in my view incorrect – that because one can postulate latent meanings as part of the general presuppositions of consciousness, one might also be able to retrieve, as it were without loss of crucial ambiguity, indefiniteness and formlessness, the specific content of these latent meanings. My analysis of reading suggests otherwise, namely that the contents of retention must be considered undefined while still latent, that is, while still held in retention rather than being the defined object of a recollection or reflection. Retained contents only become defined in the first place in the act of reflection or recollection.

Take an example from perception. I hear, without paying any attention to it since I am concerned with something else, the noise of an airplane, flying overhead. Then I suddenly notice the absence of that noise, which has stopped as if cut off. In this situation, I wake up to the fact that I expected – in an entirely non-deliberate fashion – this kind of noise, an airplane or a train or a car, to be continuous and eventually to fade, but not to cease abruptly. Moreover, I discover only at the moment of its disappointment that I had such an expectation, indeed that I even heard the noise of an airplane in the first place. I suddenly reflect on the perception and its anticipated future, and it is only then that the noise becomes defined as an experience, assumes an identity as a theme (“airplane engine noise overhead”).

In reading a text, acts of reflection or recollection on what has been read can take place while the reader is still engaged in reading the same text, or later and away from the text. What I recall/reflect shows itself to me not as new content, present before my eyes now, but as known to me from earlier, from before the current occasion. But I also experience myself as only now truly giving that past content its definition (e.g. airplane noise, a meaning/theme encountered earlier in the text). In other words, my experience differentiates the occasion of reflection from the occasion in which I first encountered what I now reflect upon as part of some earlier moment’s horizon. In the analysis here proposed, and this perhaps distances me also from Iser, the ability to identify the passive mechanisms of reading does not afford me access to what arose for me in an inchoate manner before it became reflected. Passive synthesis between sentence meanings, that is, the ground of the experience of in/coherence of texts, produces unstable or ungraspable syntheses of meaning – horizons – which, crucial as their appearance to reflection is as something that is “already” known, are also inaccessible in their inchoate state. Of course, they can be selectively relied upon and given belated identity by articulated meanings: that is what all our explicit accounts of interpretation do. But then this identity may owe more to the occasion of articulation (reflection) than to the occasion at which a meaning-designate was first synthesized in a passive manner.

Turning to what Husserl calls protentions, or non-deliberate anticipations in my parlance, Husserl says that one cannot ascribe particular content to them before they become conscious in the process of being disappointed or confirmed. Whenever a protention is discovered and reflected upon, it is experienced as part of the horizon of latent meanings that belong to some past act of consciousness, such as the actualization of a sentence meaning that occurred a few lines earlier in the same text. But even though such non-deliberate anticipations have no definable content beforehand,
they can definitely become disappointed. In disappointment, such an anticipation can receive a sharply defined content by way of hindsight, because something specific (e.g. the current sentence meaning, the sudden silence after airplane noise) was not anticipated.

Readers become aware of the constant nature of non-deliberate anticipation mostly by its occasionally becoming disappointed, in that the unexpected reveals itself as the deviation from the subliminally expected. In the case of reading, this disappointment-in-waiting takes the form of encountering apparent or real incoherence, as well as other kinds of surprises, such as deviations from experience. Presumably there is also a constant stream of confirmations of facets of non-deliberate anticipations (protentions), which protentions remain in most situations entirely tacit and undiscovered, precisely because they are “confirmed.” Thus incoherence becomes a stimulus to attention in a way that coherence, qua tacit confirmation of tacit anticipations arising from the earlier text, does not. Seen in this light, the techniques of close and critical reading can be described as consisting in the reader’s striving as much as possible to transform by self-reflection non-deliberate anticipation into explicit prediction of how the text will continue. This can be accomplished, for instance, by pausing frequently before moving on to a new piece of text.

But even close and slow reading cannot spell out exhaustively the horizon of anticipation, not even for a single point in the text. In the above example of Virginia getting into the car (as the first of two sentences), my surprise at the specific content of the second sentence – “She jumped into the pool” – more than anything else shows me what it was that I latently anticipated. My surprise illuminates and gives definition to one particular facet of my non-deliberate anticipation, namely that I imagined the next sentence’s meaning to be compatible with “car-ness,” as a pool of water is not compatible with the inside of a car. The crucial fact that the anticipation is revealed by a disappointed compatibility of meanings shows that it is a mechanism of synthesis, of coherence construction. Latent anticipation anticipates the compatibility of a future meaning with a currently actualized meaning. What this means in a specific reading depends not just on the text, but also on reader expectations and contexts. Certain cultural contexts, genre labels

33 See Husserl, Analysen, 30; Analyses, 68, for the analogous case in perception; and see 26 (64–65): even disappointment is always partial fulfilment, that is, partial confirmation.
34 Also an experimental technique in psychology; see e.g. V. Clinton, S. E. Carlson, and B. Seipel, “Linguistic Markers of Inference Generation While Reading,” Journal of Psycholinguistic Research 45 (2016): 553–574; see also McHoul, Telling How Texts Talk.
or pieces of information preceding in the same text could have prepared me for, ‘She jumped into the pool’ as the next sentence. A heading that read, *Virginia and the Expanding Pool-Car*, might have so prepared me, as might have the knowledge that the text comes from a society in which people think of pools as popping up everywhere, etc.

Let me reuse my generic statements above (after note 29), and apply them step by step to this example. *Holding on to meaning experienced in the past* – sentence meaning 1 “Virginia got into the car” – *together with non-deliberate anticipation of meaning in the future* – sentence meaning 2 “She jumped into the pool” – *make meaningful any given actuality (Now) of experience*, namely my actual encounter with the meaning of sentence number 2. *Any actuality can be experienced as the fulfillment or disappointment of an earlier non-deliberate anticipation*, in this case disappointment of the anticipations that arose when reading “Virginia got into the car” (which anticipated car-compatibility, not a pool, in sentence 2). A *given sentence meaning, at the moment the reader actualizes it (= actuality)*, that is, sentence meaning 2 now being actualized, *corrects an inchoate configuration of retained experiences*, here “correcting” my earlier take on the sentence meaning of number 1 in showing that the car is not an ordinary car, or forcing me to rethink the meaning of that sentence or of the link. Or alternatively, *A given sentence meaning, at the moment the reader actualizes it (= actuality), aligns itself with and adds to or corrects an inchoate configuration of retained experiences*, namely by sentence number 2 confirming, say, what I had read earlier in the heading of the text, *Virginia and the Expanding Pool-Car*, thereby reinforcing earlier experiences in reading this text. Furthermore, *actuality* – the experience of sentence meaning 2 – *thus produces the continuation of that configuration into the future*, in that latent anticipation of the meaning of any sentence number 3 arises as part of the horizon of the actualization of sentence meaning number 2, producing *fresh latency of anticipation*. Sentence meanings 1 and 2 together, plus any headings, genre labels, etc., now create a latent horizon of anticipation for the meanings of sentences number 3–n, each of which in turn aligns itself with, adds to, or corrects the overall configuration.

This is how I see the apparatus of passive synthesis at work when reading a text. Text meanings depend on latent connections. Such passive synthesis connections can then be selectively targeted and articulated in reflection (and shaped by habit), but the situation of reflection guides the selection of, and contributes to fixing, the identity of the meaning one so discovers in one’s own past. It is therefore strictly speaking merely a postulate of experience to say that passive synthesis takes place constantly or is compre-
hensive in its scope. But it is certainly constant enough to make us encounter problems of meaning where none were anticipated.

2. The reader’s projection of a coherent text world

The reader also has the ability through retention to remember, as thematically “belonging together,” themes which the text may neither declare as belonging together nor mention next to each other on the page. This indicates that the construction of text meaning relies on some basic principles of an order for themes or objects. These principles of an order of that which can be thought (“themes” in this sense), are in certain respects ready-made, i.e. come from the culture of the reader and from universal structures of consciousness (if such exist), and in other respects are responsive to text meanings. Perhaps they are best conceptualized as abstract structures for a fluid network of associations. Some such network clearly allows topics to become connected with each other in retention, regardless of where and how they occur in the text. I will call this the underlying thematic architecture of a “world,” namely the world which the reader takes to be projected by the text’s sentence meanings.35

The world-underlying thematic architecture harbours potential slots for any item whatsoever, from physical locations to times, persons, utterances, abstract ideas, values, norms, emotions and anything else that can be thought. These components can include unmentioned items, when assumed by the reader as pertinent to the meaning. For example, a reader may file a character’s depicted behaviour as constituting anger, even though the word “anger” does not appear in the text and the reader does not verbalize it either, so that another character’s behaviour, or the same character’s behaviour at a

different point in the text, can become connected with it, independently of any verbal repetition in the text. This “filing,” “sorting” or “slotting” into an architectural structure appears to be a fundamental part of all text reading, and my use of the idea of a text-projected “world” is meant to sum this up. Reading a text means to understand components of meaning as not standing isolated from each other, or as not belonging to separate worlds. Reading a text amounts to an attempt to construct unit/sentence meanings in such a way that they can fit into one world.

Some aspects of a reader’s underlying principles of world architecture will reflect their experience prior to and outside reading the text, including their society and culture. Within the framework of such principles readers will, for as long as they feel that it is appropriate, take the sentence meanings of one and the same text as world components that belong to one and the same world. In this respect there is no difference between texts understood as factual and those understood as fictional, or any other conceivable relationship between the text and the world of experience. In all cases, if readers ascribe to the text responsibility for its own world projection, they will construct the text world on the terms of the text, by mutually adjusting sentence/unit meanings to the extent their wording allows. Otherwise readers could not learn from a text about an unknown dimension of their own world of experience – say, a student reading a text book on cell biology – because they would construe the mutual meaning relationships according to their ignorance of the subject matter. Readers could also not evaluate another person’s text, as when a lecturer in cell biology reads a student’s essay, because they would adjust the sentence meanings to what they knew to be correct, rather than to the other sentence meanings in the essay. And finally, readers could not conceive a text’s imaginary world, if they did not allow the sentence meanings to accommodate themselves to each other’s presence in the text.

So in principle reading a text rests on the capacity of readers to allow their construction of the text’s world to proceed independently from what they know to be the case in their own world of experience – even if they think the text is about that world, that is, not what modern parlance calls “fiction.” Whenever the reader invests the text-projected world with autonomy, coherence becomes a necessary source for the text world’s concrete architecture. If readers did not hold a text accountable for how it projects its world in coherence, they would never encounter incoherence or inaccuracy. They would overlook, ignore or automatically correct such phenomena. This routinely happens to some extent, e.g. with regard to typographic errors, and also for unexpected meanings. But readers are capable of “un-
correcting” the text upon re-reading it, for example when prompted to do so by encountering an inconsistency which disappears once they discover that they made a tacit and inappropriate “correction” to the earlier meaning, instead of taking the text at its word. Reading involves the attempt of fitting together the meanings of sentences/units of a text, and thereby to expose oneself to the possibility of discovering any non-fit – incoherence. The results of the reader being open to incoherence will speak to the text’s accuracy, consistency, sincerity, etc. But phenomena of incoherence are also experienced as provisional only. They can always lead to a re-reading of certain passages that leaves in its wake a clarification of meaning, a learning experience or a more accurate understanding of what the text wishes to convey.

The basic attitude of an initial reading of a text appears to be marked by non-deliberate anticipation that text meanings will fit to each other in one projected world, and by a seeking out of that possibility. As a corollary, sentences/units are seen as capable of holding their own, of exerting a counter-pressure, of delineating their own meaning possibilities by their boundedness. The grammatical sentence or subject-predicate entity is clearly somewhat determinant of its own meaning. It has a formal, grammatical bond, and internal syntactic relations that determine its meanings within a certain initial range. But a sentence always appears within a context (the other grains of sand in the above analogy), and thus does not yield an autonomous and final meaning just on the basis its internal linguistic constitution. One such context is the text; another is the conversation.

The argument up to this point has been that the sentence in a text requires extra-sentential (and inner-textual) relationships for its meaning and significance to become more determined. In other words, the meaning of the single sentence remains to some extent plastic, subject to a process of accommodation with all other sentence meanings within whatever a reader takes to be the boundaries of that text.36 How readers understand a sentence reflects their awareness of the meanings of the sentences surrounding it.

This process is obviously mutual and not limited to immediately adjacent sentences. But the early phases of reading a text will give a special role to the immediately surrounding sentences. And initially readers will also construct coherence “forward” into the as yet unread text, if reading the text in its linear sequence, thereby anticipating (protaining) later meanings in the light of a current meaning. In any later re-readings of the same text, familiarity with the text will both help to establish links between more distant

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36 On the question of text boundaries, see Samely et al., Profiling, 20–25.
sentences, and diminish the privilege of a direction of anticipation which follows the text’s linear sequence. I will return in section 4 to the effects of re-reading and memorization.

Here are some of the more formal adjustments of sentence meanings that readers routinely and passively make in the light of surrounding sentences: whether a meaning is formulated from the point of view of the narrator or of a character (is it part of some ongoing direct speech, free indirect discourse, etc.?); whether it is ironic or serious; and whether it is figurative or not (e.g. the verb “to whore” in the sentence in Hos 4:12). But these represent only a fraction of the constant adjustments and fine-tunings that the expectation of coherence produces. In the case of a complex and long text, readers have practically endless opportunities for such mutual accommodation, each producing knock-on effects that the reader cannot actualize simultaneously. (The coherence of an extended and complex text is thus incapable of being demonstrated, even to myself as its reader/author, once and for all.)

It seems that reading a text (with “understanding”) means to be open to possibilities of mutuality every time reading takes place. Such openness explains why, upon discovering that one has reached the bottom of a page but had ceased paying attention some time earlier, one re-reads the page, if sufficiently interested. The purpose of the re-reading is to be able to conduct whatever mutual adjustment of meanings is necessary, and so to regain the thread of which the sentence at the bottom is a part. Up to a point then, reading means being ready to renegotiate one’s initial understanding of any sentence/unit in the light of any other sentence/unit in the same text, that is, keeping that understanding provisional.

It is the expectation and construction of coherence that regulates this process, for as long as it is sustained. (Readers do get tired of texts, or find them contradictory beyond repair.) Where readers take the text to speak of a world which is the same as the one in which they live, or overlaps with it, they often fill in detail from their own knowledge.37 But even in such cases, reading always involves the 

mutual fit of the text world components also. When readers wish to remain receptive to the meaning/s of a text, or regain such receptiveness, the only path open to them is to adjust the sentence/unit meanings to each other’s presence instead of adjusting them to other information sources: only then can they either criticise the text or learn from it, even in the case of a factual text.

37 Cp. Sanford and Emmott, *Mind, Brain and Narrative*, 47 (the reader supplies the Eiffel Tower to a fictional Paris). They refer to Ryan’s “principle of minimal departure.”
Cultures have different signals to mark the text world’s closeness to or distance from the world of experience, and those signals can be part of the text or part of the context. They are tied to general educational background, linguistic markers (“Once upon a time”), genre labels, and many other manifestations. As for genre labels, contemporary English marks as distant the relationship between the two worlds by terms such as fiction, myth, story, fantasy, science fiction, fairy tale, satire and others. In texts taken to be marked by such distance, no single sentence meaning is then taken on trust as speaking the truth about the reader’s world of experience (even when the reader assumes that some sentences will do so). But the non-factual text as a whole can be and often is taken to convey a truth about the world of experience; the cultural power of fiction resides in this. Again, knowing what contribution the meaning of individual sentences/units in a text makes to this truth of fiction (via the meaning/s of the text), requires the labour of coherence, a labour that clarifies how a text means the meaning of any of its sentences/units.

But readers also pursue other priorities. Certain contexts and projects of reading weaken the reader’s up-front investment in the construction of coherence. Readers can search out and emphasize inconsistencies, as when reading the testimony of a hostile witness in a court of law; or can seek to discover further seams in a text known to be historically composite when earlier seams have already been discovered, as in the case of the critical reading of the Hebrew Bible. The tradition of critical scholarship as a context of reading weakens the up-front investment in coherence of the reader who is trained in the critical skills.

At the dawn of European critical scholarship, and perhaps still in the 19th century, the critical readers’ encounter with biblical inconsistency qua result of merely human composition, and therefore as signifying no implied divine messages, was presumably liberating and comparatively direct. Today’s critical scholar, by contrast, finds already established famous discoveries of the biblical seams of diachrony, discoveries which instigated a method and a canon of examples. Modern graduate students are trained as critical readers in the hope that this will enable them to see those famous seams with their own eyes.

Yet today’s scholarly readers of the Hebrew Bible have little chance of tasting the disappointment of non-deliberate anticipations of coherence when reading the text. Instead they experience the confirmation of an expectation of incoherence. Because of the historical situation and the tradition of scholarship, a book of the Hebrew Bible can in most cases no longer shake a scholarly reader’s initial confidence in its coherence, as if
it were just any as-yet unread text. Such a disappointment is built into the foundations of most branches of the critical study of the text. It is present in the methodologies in the form of an accepted tradition of hypothetical disappointment, without necessarily involving a personal experience of the disappointment of passive synthesis.

Once a reader has lost confidence in postulating the text’s coherence, the expectation of incoherence can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The reason for this is important to ponder. It is that numerous adjustments necessary for mutual coherence of unit meanings are also capable of being interpreted as phenomena of incoherence. All that needs to happen is that readers start to take a rigid attitude to rough edges, idiosyncratic word choices and potential tensions between passages that are extremely common in texts, much more common than is usually recognized. Phenomena of potential incoherence characterize probably every text of substantial length composed by a single author, including contemporary texts created for scholarly, literary, political, legal and everyday use. They include, to use an example that has biblical studies resonances, instances of a change of imagery between adjacent text parts, which readers who have confidence in the coherence of the text would simply integrate into the ongoing mutual adjustment of meaning, but which in the opposite scenario is experienced as patent evidence of different hands or diachronic layers, on the assumption that such changes would be impossible to make for a single author in a single situation of production. They certainly include instances of subtle inconsistencies of conceptualization, terminology and imagery in complex works of original philosophy and theory of science.

Deconstruction and other post-modern approaches to texts can emphasize such phenomena, but do not consider them strictly speaking as phenomena of incoherence. Rather they take them as symptoms of greater underlying tensions or of the nature of meaning in language as such. The factual and culturally underwritten unity of any given text is seen as all there is – that unity cannot be secured or ratified by insisting on a static, streamlined unity of meaning. Roland Barthes says, “if the text is subject to some form, this form is not unity.” For Geoffrey Hartman, literary criticism that reveals contradictions in texts makes “fiction interpretable by making it less readable.” Derrida speaks of a “force of rupture,” which makes signs escape their co-textual meaning.38 This is the inverse attitude to that of critical

scholarship, in which inconsistency in a text is treated as evidence for its production in stages.

The historical-critical approach effectively directs the scholar’s passive synthesis towards the confirmation of the expectation of inconsistency. This lack of coherence and consistency, thus discovered, also creates new, separate texts that emerge as sources, or as layers, that is, as cross-connected fragments of discontinuous wording. Within these new text boundaries, critical readers effectively reinstate the default construction of coherence by retention and anticipation. Put differently, when relying on internal evidence, the boundaries of sources or layers are constructed by testing out where coherence ends and incoherence begins. In the case of fragmented layers, scholars create coherence even between incomplete sentences separated by an expanse of verbal matter bracketed out. In such cases scholars replace a potentially coherent textual continuum that is in fact experienced as incoherent – the biblical text in its final form, say – with the thematic, ideological or stylistic homogeneity of discontinuous pieces, taken as the expression of a coherent (!) programme of redaction.

3. An example: accommodation and fluid orders of themes

Let me illustrate what happens when a reader discovers incoherence across a larger distance in the text. If the unit/sentence that the reader is engaged in actualizing disappoints a non-deliberate anticipation, whose content I have argued above will remain undefined until that moment, the reader’s attention may be drawn to that anticipation and to the question of what, if any, earlier text part was responsible for prompting it. They may try to remember on the basis of retention what that earlier unit was, or re-read the text until they find it. The occasion of recollection (here, the meaning of the

current sentence) will provide some focus on a particular component of the text-world as projected by the reader.

Let me introduce an illustrative scenario, showing how a reader’s subconscious synthesis becomes transformed into a conscious reflection on coherence. Let us envisage one text with two readers. The text envisaged is a written record of a speech made by a member of some political assembly just before a vote took place, in which she explains the reason for her vote. The third sentence of this speech reads, “There are issues with my voting in favour of this resolution.” Let us assume that this wording is potentially ambiguous with regard to the specific choice it indicates: is the speaker indicating a vote in favour of the resolution, against, or that she is undecided? Of our two imaginary readers, let the first see such an ambiguity in the sentence. That reader will anticipate, subconsciously or not, that the text will subsequently resolve the equivocation. Let the second reader, who perceives no such ambiguity, take the sentence to mean that the speaker will vote against the resolution. The second reader will thus anticipate (let us assume, in a non-deliberate manner) that the rest of the text will express meanings compatible with a vote against the resolution.

Now let us imagine both readers, progressing through the text in linear sequence, come upon the following sentence, as number 33: “I therefore vote in favour.” For the first reader this matches an anticipation, since it chimes with one of the meaning possibilities left open by their reading of sentence number 3. Should that reader moreover visit consciously the meaning of number 3, they may become interested in the fact of that ambiguity itself, as speaking to the author’s forthrightness, sincerity, expressive competence, rhetorical powers, wish to hold the audience in suspense, or similar. By contrast, our second reader experiences a conflict of meanings when actualizing sentence number 33, because they took number 3 to amount to “I will vote against.” That conflict may prompt them to re-read the speech upwards of 33 in search for clarification, perhaps reflecting as follows (I ventriloquize): “I am sure I read in an earlier passage that she would vote against? Ah, here it is [= number 3]. Oh, I now see that ‘I have issues’ is actually ambiguous: it does not have to mean a vote against, and clearly it doesn’t. I misconstrued the implications of this sentence. But really, she ought to have expressed herself more clearly ....” In the course of such a reflection, our second reader restores coherence to text by adjusting their understanding of one sentence (number 3) to that of another (number 33). The coherence of the text – really the construction of their subjective continuity of experience with regard to the text – was temporarily disturbed for them, and they restored it because they could.
This reflects a much wider tendency, in my own historical context at least. If the wording of a text allows constructing coherence, then reading the text demands constructing it. So in most cultural situations of this kind, our second reader will cease to find a contradiction in the text after revisiting the wording of sentences 3 and 33. They will not insist that sentence number 3 must mean voting against, and that the text is therefore self-contradictory, say, because the speaker made a mistake or because she changed her mind mid-way through her speech, or for some other reason. Without being able to draw on evidence in another dimension (e.g. coherence with what is known of the speaker’s state of mind, of her actual vote, etc.), such an insistence on incoherence would be considered unconvincing or perverse by the criterion of most reading habits of today. According to those habits, the expectation of coherence is not abandoned at the slightest provocation. Indeed, most texts contain such provocations, as I said above. So there is a tendency for readers to constitute coherence as long as reasonable mutual adjustments allow doing so.

This illustrates the following point. Reading a text as one text is (for many readers today, at least) not constituted by sticking rigidly to one particular interpretation of the wording of an individual sentence or unit, when this condemns the text to self-contradiction or incoherence, while another interpretation of the same wording is also possible which accommodates the rest of the text. Indeed, it seems that by rigidly constructing a sentence meaning as if it were in isolation, one would never understand any text. If by reading we mean seeking the experience of the text as meaningful – and what else could reading be? – that experience is accomplished by giving priority to the possibilities of constructing coherence over those of constructing incoherence whenever there is a choice. The need to make this choice can in principle arise at every sentence/unit boundary.

One can illustrate a further important aspect of passive synthesis with the help of the same scenario. The second reader, who reads sentence number 3 as indicating a vote against the resolution, discovers at number 33 that they had an expectation of how the text would continue and furthermore, in the light of unambiguous sentence number 33, that that expectation was mistaken. Why would the reader even connect these two particular sentence meanings with each other? Clearly, the anticipation that arose from the experience of understanding sentence number 3 must have been assigned a latent theme relevant to the theme of sentence number 33, before it could ever clash with it. Non-deliberate anticipation reflects some kind of relevance-designate, which presupposes in turn some network of identity, similarity, association, etc. This was my topic in the preceding section. It is
such a network that creates thematic links-designate between themes that are distant in the text (and therefore distant in their moment of understanding at first reading, as here sentences 3 and 33).

As I said above, the reader constructs the text world by subconsciously drawing at least partly on a pre-fabricated architecture of (any) world, arising in a non-deliberate manner from the reader’s experience and cultural situation. This provides possible “slots” for themes in many different dimensions, into which world components mentioned in the text’s sentences are tacitly fitted. Any specific slots discovered as having been supplied by passive synthesis will show themselves in reflection partly as ready-made, and partly as suggested by the text’s substance and form. It is within some such underlying structure of themes that the theme of sentence 33 can awaken recollection of the theme of sentence 3, because an association (passive synthesis) connects them. If the reader were to articulate the superordinate theme (‘slot’) that is common to them, it might be “the voting decision of the speaker.” That category would then be the reflected definition of the slot into which both prima facie incompatible meanings get placed, so that they are capable of clashing. It may be noted in passing that the recurrence of the word ‘vote’ in the text at sentences 3 and 33 alone could not account for the reader’s recognition of that substantive connection; the speaker might have referred to someone else’s vote or to a past vote of hers on a different resolution, that is, there could be thematically unconnected reasons for the word’s occurrence in the text.

The same effect of a tacit network of themes manifests itself when the reader constructs physical aspects of the text world. Imagine a crime novel which describes the scene of a murder on page 5, provides another detail of it on page 44, and another on 120. Sufficiently attentive readers are capable of building up progressively more detail of the theme I have just now already named and thereby determined as, “scene of a murder.” In order to be able to do this, readers must be able to establish associative links-designate as they actualize meanings. That is, they must be able to create a complex, dynamic and abstract assortment of themes within some fluid network of themes. The assumptions underpinning this network or architecture are sufficiently independent of the text’s own positioning of themes or adjacency, and potentially also of word choice, to allow information on pages 44 and 120 to come together with information on page 5 on the “same” topic, even if no common word recurs in those passages.

At the same time, this non-deliberate sorting also sets up the possibility of disappointment, the discovery of incoherence. If page 5 of the book mentions that the door through which the bullet went was varnished green,
while meanings on pages 44 and 120 indicate that that door was red, then the idea of an assumed thematic architecture explains how a reader can put these pieces of information together so that they can clash. Such an architecture must be assumed to be at work independently of any deliberation, because explicit expectation could never cater for all the possibilities (see the expanding pool-car above). It is this which allows encountering inconsistency when one did not expect any; often it is only such an encounter that prompts deliberation, reflection or articulation of a problem in the text. Once this stimulus occurs, readers can respond in very diverse ways. They may lose interest in the text, recall the conflicting passage on the basis of retention (here, page 5 of the imaginary text), re-read parts of the text, correct an earlier interpretation (e.g., an overlooked word like “seemed”), dismiss the problem as too small (very common), resolve to await further information on this theme rather than go back in the text (also very common), and many others. But unless one assumes that readers have a way to associate non-adjacent text themes with each other in a non-deliberate manner, one cannot explain how they could encounter incoherence in the first place where they did not expect it.

4. Familiarity with a text through re-reading and memorization: some ancient and modern situations of re-reading

Re-reading and memorization are two hallmarks of receiving sacred, classic and normative scriptures in a number of historical and contemporary reading communities. There is ample evidence to show that ancient Jewish readers treated biblical texts by re-reading and memorization. Frequent re-reading is also a hallmark of contemporary scholarly expertise in a text. How does familiarity affect passive synthesis and the expectation of coherence in current contexts of reading? Our analysis above suggests that familiarity with a text will mean increased retention of the meanings found at a distance from any passage currently in view or currently recalled. It can thereby pave the way for heightened sensitivity to the possibilities of mutual accommodation of sentence/unit meanings. As familiarity increases, the context and occasion within which any one passage is read and reflected

upon changes progressively. The re-reading itself changes the situation of reading, and thus the context for which a reader may transform the as-yet inchoate contents of retention and non-deliberate anticipation into explicit recollections of specific events, states of affairs, objects, persons and ideas in the text world.

Re-reading also enhances the reader’s readiness to recollect a specific wording, not only meanings experienced. This paves the way for learning a text by heart, if that learning is from a written text. (It seems to me that memorizing a text from inter-personal oral repetition, as perhaps practised for the Mishnah in Jewish antiquity, must be a significantly different mechanism.) The reader’s familiarity with a text may also lead to changes or confirmations of the principles of a thematic order or world architecture that underlie their reading. Re-reading thus facilitates the encounter with prima facie phenomena of incoherence, and underpins the hermeneutic labour of either harmonizing or criticising them. Knowing the text as a finite entity, and knowing it well, closes down options for resolving emergent coherence problems which during a first reading of the text, or in its less perfect retention, are still open. But it can also lead to acquiescence with regard to incoherence: readers can become used to the separate local existence of each of the passages that hold conflicting meanings.

More generally, familiarity may de-emphasize text meanings for which the reader has no ready slot in their architecture of the projected world, of which inconsistent meanings are a specific type. A cultural context that instils in readers the allegiance to a text in advance of ever having read it – the situation of much of ancient Judaism and many other traditions with regard to their sacred texts or literary canons – can thus make unexpected or unprepared meanings, including coherence problems, less visible in the very process of familiarization; or it can lead to a foregrounding of coherence issues, in particular if the culture favours explicit discourses on the meaning of the text.

Procedures of familiarization turn the text as text into the reader’s project in a way that single readings or casual re-readings may not. The purpose for and methods by which this familiarization is sought will influence how familiarization shapes meaning construction, for the reasons explained above. The reader may re-read the text with a view to articulating its overall goal, moral, result, or the significance of a fictional text world. Such a focus on

40 Empirical reading studies appear to show that recall of the content/meaning of a text is accomplished more easily and is more reliable than that of specific formulations. See, e.g. M.A. Gernsbacher, “Surface Information Loss in Comprehension,” *Cognitive Psychology* 17 (1985): 324–363.
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whole texts or substantial text parts is, however, not a universal priority, as the commentary genres of rabbinic Midrash illustrate.\textsuperscript{41} But even without pursuing an agenda of text summaries, ancient Jewish interpretations frequently link up the perceived themes of distant biblical locations. The ability to do this presumably arose from the readers’ retention of the text’s wording and themes, as heightened by familiarity.

As a reader encounters the text’s final sentence or unit for the first time, they reach a particular awareness of what the text contains by finally ascertaining what it definitely does not contain. This sets a limit on the meanings that require or allow mutual accommodation. As familiarity within retained finite text boundaries grows, the reader’s construction of the text world, as it is depicted by any particular sentence, becomes enriched not only by the meanings of the immediately surrounding sentences, but by those from anywhere in the text. As the reader retains through re-reading distantly located meanings, and increasingly perhaps also wordings, the default projection of the text world as coherent may be tacitly or explicitly confirmed.

Alternatively, unfulfilled anticipations, which now become narrowed down by the increasingly more detailed and comprehensive retention of what has already been seen of the text, may indicate incoherence. The above-mentioned case of the murder scene illustrates this: at first reading the reader may not remember that the door on page 5 was green, while encountering mention of a red door on page 44. But the more familiar the reader becomes with the text the more likely it is that the thematic link will be made and the inconsistency encountered. To use my architecture metaphor again, more and more slots of the architecture or nodes in the network of relations of the text-projected world (in this case, the setting of the murder) will be filled with retained specifics from the text’s sentence meanings (in this case, the conflicting colours of the door) and will thus confirm or clash with their thematic “neighbours.” There is no middle ground here: whatever does not clash, confirms. This effect of knowing the text well is not restricted to physical world components, but includes characters, utterances, events, emotions, moral values, abstract concepts, that is, anything that can be thought (thematized).

Indeed the reader’s assumed principles of thematic order might in turn become affected by increasing familiarity with a text. The more familiar a reader becomes with a text, the more capable they are of changing as-

\textsuperscript{41} The midrashic literary form Petichah, however, provides summary articulations of larger text meanings of a sort. See e.g. A. Samely, \textit{Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74–76, 178–199.
sumptions that underpin a previously existing network of associations, or architectural slots, in the direction of different assumptions which they see implied in concrete textual structures, including adjacency, sequence and proximity of themes, together with thematic relations indicated in the repetition of certain words or synonyms. In poetry the recurrence of sounds or rhythm can be added to the concrete textual structures that are able to create new types of links between as-yet undefined themes.

Some ancient rabbinic readings of the Bible appear to illustrate the scenario of readers receiving textual proximity or linguistic repetition as indicating connections for themes that their world architecture had not foreseen or favoured, and which the text also does not make explicit. Even where basic aspects of the assumed architecture of themes are not changed by the text, specifics of a reader’s associative network of themes can still be modified under the weight of an intimate familiarity with a particular text’s surface. From a certain angle, every text surface constitutes a network of mere associations in its own right. Any influence on readers’ own networks of associations from this text surface can be strengthened if the text is considered to have a divine origin.

Familiarity with the text may change in particular the extent to which the reader tacitly fills in details that their previous network of associations postulates as existing in the text world, but that the text does not explicitly mention. Thus a reader may supply the Eiffel Tower to a fictional Paris that is taken to overlap with the Paris of the reader’s world of experience (cp. note 37). But one may read texts in quite a different manner, in particular if one views them as containing supernatural knowledge and if they have become intimately familiar. It is as if a reader would infer from the fact that a text happens never to mention elbows in connection with persons, that the text wishes by this silence to project a world whose persons have no joint between shoulder and wrist. Familiarity makes it possible to take what is not mentioned in the text as not even having a slot in the text-projected architecture, even if that means having to modify assumptions about the world’s ontology. For example, targumic Bible interpretations from Jewish antiquity can identify unnamed biblical characters with named ones mentioned in entirely different narrative contexts, thereby reducing the overall cast of characters and lengthening that particular character’s lifespan. Something similar can be observed in relation to rabbinic interpretations of geographical locations (e.g. Mount Moriah identified with the Temple Mount).42

42 On the general issue, see D. Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutics in Palestine (SBL Dis-
But the most striking examples concern the world of biblical norms, which like all systems of norms is an ideally structured world. Some of the mechanisms of rabbinic hermeneutic discourse transform casuistic and “gapped” biblical laws into categories that configure a whole area of law without leaving gaps, effectively “shrink-wrapping” the world of norms around contours created from the biblical text surface. For instance, one rabbinic interpretation sees the terms ox, pit, crop-destroyer and fire, which appear in biblical norms that stand in textual proximity to each other between Exod 21:28 and 22:5, without the biblical text making any explicit logical or thematic links between them, as defining a conceptually complete and continuous field of law, the law of damages. The legal passages of the Pentateuch occur in direct speech, and are thus presented as a dimension of the text-projected world about which biblical characters, in particular God and Moses, speak. The rabbinic construction of the legal field of damages (“fathers” of damages) is drawn around what happens to be mentioned on the text surface in textual proximity. The Rabbis thus construe the field of damages as if it were exhaustively defined by the sub-topics “ox,” “pit,” “crop-destroyer,” “fire.” Other themes related to damages, expressed by more or equally general terms, but not mentioned in Scripture at this point, become assigned to these main categories in various ways. This happens even though the biblical terms are neither comprehensive nor presented as inter-related. This is what I mean when saying that the assumptions of thematic order become “shrink-wrapped” around textual markers or structures. In the process, new assumptions take the place of certain other, perhaps earlier or merely possible, assumptions of thematic architecture, for instance, a systematic subdivision of a notion of unintentional damage.

There are other examples of rabbinic constructions of the biblical text’s world (of norms in particular, but also of narrative) on the basis of material or formal textual constellations in Scripture, that is, in some independence from explicit biblical themes or semantics. Among them are constructions

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44 See Mishnah Mishnah Bava Qamma 5:7; Samely, Rabbinic Interpretation, 232–4.

45 For a tangentially related claim that the biblical narrative “seeks to overcome our
of substantive connections between two biblically adjacent normative topics on the basis that they are found to be adjacent, when modern critical readers, taking their cue from their thematically divergent contents, treat them as merely coincidentally adjacent or as dependent on earlier sources. The biblical adjacency of narrative reports is another case in point. Ancient Jewish readers can find causal or motivational interdependency indicated in the mere textual juxtaposition of events, even if acknowledged as such by the transition formula “And it was after these things ...” (as e.g. in Targum Neofiti /Genesis Rabbah 44:4 connecting Gen 15:1 to Genesis 14).46

What earlier or different sets of assumptions about possible world architectures might ancient Jewish readers have had, which those text-surface connections would have modified? I can think of three cultural matrixes for such assumptions in particular: (i) the world as experienced through readers’ sense perception; (ii) the world of experience as constructed by non-biblical cultural means, either before the creation of key biblical texts or beyond the sphere of influence of the biblical milieu (perhaps the Judaism of Elephantine illustrates this scarcely documented situation); and (iii) the world as constructed in engagement with biblical texts, but read in a different hermeneutic key from one that allows creating world structures from factual text surfaces alone. Philo’s oeuvre is perhaps the clearest extant example, structuring as it does the Pentateuch-projected world on the basis of underlying Platonic assumptions.

Critical scholarship will tend to exclude vast numbers of textual juxtapositions and echoes entirely from consideration in the construction of the text-projected world, seeing them as purely formal or contingent, or as the result of secondary text growth. And yet, echoes of the rabbinic hermeneutic moves described above can be discovered in everyday reading experiences today. Reading a verbal entity as a text means understanding it as a constant invitation, accepted in all reading to some extent, to take as thematically related what the linear sequence of sentences places into proximity. The invitation is accepted insofar as we constantly have to take on trust initially the substantive connection between neighbouring sentence

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46 In the context of Targums I have argued in regard to certain renderings that, “Where there was textual proximity in the Hebrew, there is an inner narrative nexus in the Aramaic.” Samely, Interpretation of Speech, 41; Targums on Gen 15:1 are discussed, 62–63.
meanings before we are able to ratify it. This is what it amounts to if one argues, as I have done, that passive synthesis has always already connected discrete moments of meaning. We invest ourselves up front in the thematic relevance of what is textually adjacent as we move across the linear text surface in reading, as the above examples of cars, wrinkled noses or pools illustrate. Certain kinds of poetry cannot be read at all if readers do not take coherence as a given far in advance of what they can actually ratify by recognizing substantial thematic links at any given point in the text, in particular before the poem has become thoroughly familiar.

But even in reading prosaic texts, a spectral link of substance arises from the textual togetherness of sentences alone. (Togetherness here can include the mere co-existence in the same text, in particular if it is highly familiar to the reader; it does not only refer to adjacency.) Passive synthesis has been my (Husserl’s) word for this and related phenomena: non-deliberate anticipation constantly involves the reader in postulating undefined thematic closeness for what is at first nothing more than textual juxtaposition, while retention endows with shadowy thematic substance that which has been encountered earlier as (merely) juxtaposed, keeping the possibility of a substantive thematic link open even if the reader has provisionally constructed the adjacent parts as changing the subject. This is the reason why “reading” the successive lines in a telephone book differs from reading a text: we do not normally invest with advance or latent thematic significance the relationship between units in alphabetical lists; in other words, we do not treat the units as parts of one text. Considered in this light, some aspects of the rabbinic fashioning of substantive thematic architecture out of apparently meaningless but familiar textual surface features (juxtapositions), shows itself as related to mechanisms of coherence construction which we can recognize in everyday reading today.

Ancient Judaism saw familiarity with and mastery of the biblical text as an educational ideal. The extant documents of ancient Jewish hermeneutics reflect the labour of re-reading or memorization, and appear to reflect that labour’s effect on passive synthesis in reading. They tend to dampen the acuteness of any perceived problems of incoherence, assimilate them to multiple other manifestations of linkages that are seen as crying out for coordination between biblical passages, or selectively turn them into themes

47 The skill to read Scripture out loud was one important aspect of that mastery. For some conceptual implications of this, see A. Samely, “The Bible as Talked About: Reflections on the Usage and Conceptual Implications of the Term Miqra in Early Rabbinic Literature,” in What is Bible? (ed. K. Finsterbusch and A. Lange; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 193–219.
of a discourse. Rabbinic Midrash, as it appears in the Palestinian works from the 3rd to the 5th century C.E., is frequently concerned with accomplishing a mutual accommodation of meanings within the biblical text, although the textual boundaries assumed are often unclear to us—except for the boundaries of the canon as a whole. Midrash may treat two or three discontinuous sentences (or other units) found at a great distance from each other, as if their mutual meaning adjustment was just as urgent, or indeed more urgent, than adjusting them each to their own immediate co-text (i.e., literary context). This is how the “atomistic” appearance of Midrash arises for the modern interpreter.⁴⁸

Rabbinic interpretations can resemble in this respect the modern critical scholar’s licence to establish coherence across scattered wordings because they are taken to belong to the same redactional layer. But while the rabbinic hermeneutic endeavour is clearly grounded in an intimate familiarity with the text, the biblical text’s overall coherence, or even that of any substantially unified part of it, rarely becomes a topic or is explicitly defended as such. The midrashic discovery of vast numbers of thematic links across distant biblical locations renders the hermeneutic project largely autonomous from obligations to read the biblical coherence of an episode, a legal or prophetic speech, a biblical book, etc. With regard to the narratives of the Hebrew Bible, midrashic hermeneutics achieves a freedom and creativity that is akin to the telling of worlds in the plural.

It may be useful to recap and develop somewhat further the results of the preceding three sections. Reading requires ways to assemble into some kind of togetherness the dispersed experience of text-constitutive units of meaning (e.g., sentences). These ways of gaining a sense of many sentence meanings together, or of the in-between of sentence meanings, clearly do not provide the acuity or re-presentation of those particular moments of sentence understanding. Acute consciousness—actuality of reflection, recollection, theme-defining thought, articulation—can retrieve from this latent or passive synthesis any particular meaning only by selectively imposing on it some thematic boundaries. The identity of these boundaries is at least partly shaped by the acute purpose and occasion of thinking about the (earlier or whole) text’s meaning. Retention is a convenient name for the faculty of holding on to non-actual meaning contents, and retention goes hand in hand with non-deliberate anticipation (protention). In the ongoing activity of reading a text, every new sentence can become an occasion for explicitly looking back to and imposing thematic boundaries on retained

meanings of what was read earlier. Thus actualizing the meaning of a sentence F in a text consisting of sentences A to Z, may help to impose a shape in explicit recollection on the retention of the meaning of sentence B (on whose horizon F appeared in an open anticipation, as for sentences 3 and 33 in the above example of voting), while also helping to configure the non-deliberate horizon of anticipation into which the meanings of sentences G to Z will eventually be welcomed. Through such dynamic passive synthesis, readers continuously but tacitly test the complementarity and compatibility of the meaning experiences they take to arise from the same text, and adjust and accommodate them to each other, to the extent they assume the unit wordings to allow this.

This is how text reading involves the construction of text coherence or incoherence, or to put more clearly, how reading a text consists in the construction of text coherence or incoherence. One word for this togetherness of meanings is that of a “world” projected by the text; and cultural or universal assumptions allow readers a certain independence from the text’s explication or surface structures when they recognize what belongs thematically together (e.g. the theme of the scene of the murder or the theme of the speaker’s vote in the above examples). Familiarity with a particular text can, if cultural circumstances allow (as they did in the case of rabbinic Midrash), emancipate the accommodation of sentence meanings from the privilege of their immediate co-texts, and connect them across distances. This is possible because on the basis of intimate familiarity the reader can experience many more connections as well as problems with connections between unit meanings, and can thus also create new plateaus for the experience of textual in/coherence. Of this, modern biblical studies are another example; biblical scholarship can be said to exist on a different plateau of familiarity, with regard to the experience of biblical in/coherence, than many other historical or contemporary experiences of reading the Hebrew Bible.

5. Genesis 12 and Genesis 20: illustrating a theory of coherence

Let me illustrate the theory of coherence sketched out so far by explaining how I experience and construct in/coherence for one particular text as one modern reader. Given the context of this paper, this sample text should be biblical. But that immediately draws the discussion into a very particular framework of the experience of coherence, namely that of a professional amount of re-reading and familiarity with the biblical text, that is, a habitually “trained” passive synthesis of text meaning. Modern scholars do not
just draw on this professional familiarity, they also ascribe it to the authors and intended audiences of biblical redactors. O. H. Steck illustrates this for the approach of inner-biblical exegesis:

It is characteristic that the [redactional] referring [to pre-existing text parts] tacitly presupposes as read and appropriated the whole text which is being referred to within its context, together with any further reference texts in their own respective contexts within the book – indicator of redactional statements that take into view the literary whole and which are only intelligible under the condition of a very precise knowledge of the whole book in its consecutive flow.\textsuperscript{49}

The ideal reader whom Steck thinks the ancient reader-redactors envisaged is close to a modern scholarly reader, someone whose passive and active processes of synthesizing the text are shaped by an intimate familiarity with it – even though in a “critical” vein. But this familiarity separates the professional’s experiences of coherence from those of the casual reader, and also from readers who read closely, but in the manner of the dilettante. I myself come close to being such an unprofessional reader of Bible. This is a reader whose un/familiarity with the text and biblical studies literature prevents them from hearing echoes across the whole of a biblical book and the whole of the biblical canon (or beyond). Yet biblical studies methodology presumably has to allow for varying degrees of familiarity – as well as the customarily addressed variation of textual limits – when imagining ancient Bible readers, thus redactors, and thus the ideal reader for which the reader-redactors wrote. It seems prudent to be able to try out ideas of how the biblical texts grew in their effect on different types of readers of the end product, if the calculation of such an effect is taken to be part of the reason the end product has the shape it has. Yet some biblical studies methodologies appear to define themselves in contrast to other methodologies in terms of how “sophisticated” their postulated reader is, as though one and the same plateau of coherence construction must have been consistently presupposed in the creation of all passages.

But imagining the effect of varied levels of familiarities in concreto is fraught with difficulty. It is certainly impossible for the modern scholar to unlearn their familiarity with the text, whether it is sedimented in the secondary literature they use or in their personal retention. This means that they cannot rely on their intuition to guess what passive or active connections readers less familiar with the text might make or might have made.

in a historical past. This requires explicit procedures. Thus biblical studies methodologies should incorporate, or at least make clear reference to and use of, explicit accounts of how the construction of textual coherence is actually envisaged to take place (which, of necessity, starts with current readers).

I will now impersonate a contemporary “lay” reader and see how the mechanisms of coherence construction which I have postulated above pan out for my reading of the similarities between Gen 12:10–20 and Gen 20:1–18 (henceforth Genesis 12 and Genesis 20, respectively). My qualifications for this role lie in my comparative (but still spectacular) ignorance of the Hebrew Bible and biblical studies, from a professional reader’s point of view.

Biblical studies scholarship itself can be described as being a repository of in/coherence connections within the biblical text, and as also providing competing but consistent protocols for making decisions on when it is legitimate to abandon the potentially infinite construction of text coherence, and come to the conclusion that the text is incoherent, because composite.

This requires the professional plateau of familiarity described above, because it circumscribes what kind of coherence to look for within and across biblical passages. These protocols can include the coherence of a historical/authorial/ideological context that becomes visible to the critical reader as the absence or presence in the text of certain themes (e.g., a central sanctuary), expressions and names (e.g. divine name forms), that is, as a phenomenon on the text surface which would, without such background assumptions on the text’s historical context, make no contribution to in/coherence. The protocols also circumscribe coherence by defining what are accidental causes in producing the text’s wording. Judgements on these issues are sometimes explicitly presented or contested, in particular in any dialogue across competing biblical studies methodologies, but more often they are tacitly presupposed and embedded into large numbers of specific interpretations.

In order to keep my proposed reading of Genesis 12 and Genesis 20 in its state of native ignorance and thus distant from the professional echo chamber of biblical meanings reverberating through the text, I have avoided boning up on the specific expert positions on Genesis 12; 20; and 26.50 I

have also passed up on the chance to modify my interpretation in the light of the peer reviewers’ responses to this paper, although they prompted the inclusion of the preceding reflections on professional versus dilettante passive synthesis. So here starts an unprofessional modern reader’s interpretation of Genesis 12 and 20.\textsuperscript{51}

(1) The repetitions between Genesis 12 and Genesis 20 are conspicuous to me, because (2) I judge the recurrence of the events in one and the same text-projected world to be implausible, taken as events. Loaning your wife to a ruler after asking her to pretend to be your sister is not the sort of event that this particular reader would expect to happen more than once to the same set of persons (Abraham, Sarah, God). In this respect it differs from other kinds of repeatable occurrences, for example, the same person having a quarrel with his brother repeatedly during his lifetime, as in the case of Jacob and Esau; there is nothing implausible to me about that. (3) The resulting conspicuity of Genesis 12 and 20 also pairs the two passages for me, across the distance of the intervening chapters or events; and it thereby foregrounds for me the existence of the very telling of those events, the existence of the text as text. (4) Yet it is not impossible for me to construct a world in which both events took place, as they are differentiated by time and place. (The events of Genesis 1–2 would be a counterexample here, since I understand them as partly contradictory accounts of the same event.)\textsuperscript{52} (5) Genesis 12 and 20 otherwise also provide, in the same manner as all passages within what is taken as the same text, mutual coherence and supplementation in a variety of ways; the world projected by the book of Genesis is richer and more interconnected because of their respective presence than it would be if one of the accounts were absent. (6) The textual conspicuity, however, allows me to separate the two accounts as belonging to two different authorial voices, partly because I find that more convincing than assuming one author composed a pair like this without making its purpose clearer.

\textsuperscript{51} The basic problem with these passages is summarized as follows by J. D. Levenson, “Introduction and Annotations on Genesis,” in \textit{The Jewish Study Bible} (ed. A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 31: “The wife-sister motif, in this instance ascribed to J, recurs with King Abimelech of Gerar in Pharaoh’s place in ch 20 (ascribed to E) and with Isaac and Rebekah, instead of Abraham and Sarah, confronting Abimelech in 26:6–11 (again attributed to J). Thus no one source repeats the story with the same couple and the same king.”

\textsuperscript{52} See, e.g. A. Rofé, \textit{Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible} (Jerusalem: Simor, 2009), 166–167, for a concise list of contradictions perceived by a modern reader.
(7) More specifically, I can see one of the passages as expressing a reader’s response to the pre-existing other passage. I have no clear sense of historical priority for the two passages. But I am inclined to see Genesis 20 as the result of a reader of Genesis 12 somehow commenting on Genesis 12. I imagine them doing this by composing a new narrative episode from scratch; or by placing a suitably redacted episode they had at their disposal into the text continuum of Genesis; or by modifying in certain ways such an account already in Genesis. In other words, I postulate at least two phases in the production of the text now before me, in order to accommodate an otherwise unnecessary and unhelpful (conspicuous) component of the text-projected world. (8) This means that while I understand Genesis 20 to be about Genesis 12, text-world continuity (point 4 above) also invites me to hear both passages as speaking about the same text-projected world, as containing separate episodes in Abraham’s life. I can handle this tension between the about-another-text-ness of Genesis 20, on the one hand, and its world-ness, on the other, by de-emphasizing but not actually cancelling the presence of Genesis 20 events in the text-projected world. This amounts to my accepting the contribution which the Genesis 20 events make to my understanding of reports in Genesis and the Tanakh, while opportunistically bracketing out certain other aspects arising from them, in order to maximize narrative coherence. (9) I also de-emphasize the events of Genesis 12 themselves in some measure, in the sense that I temporarily foreground its verbal constitution and textual form – the words of the telling – in order to understand exactly what Genesis 20 comments upon. Thus the reading of Genesis 12 by the author or redactor of Genesis 20 becomes my new framework for constructing coherence for both.

A number of assumptions about the biblical text are at work in this interpretation. I am obviously a reader who approaches the biblical text in a basically historical attitude. I thus consider it neither divine nor its production guided by divine providence. I have no problem with interpreting implausible text-world components in such a way that I need to assume historically differentiated origins for different parts of the text. I furthermore find plausible that additions or changes happened as expressions of the later author or redactor’s reading of the earlier, pre-existing text, so that in my reading Genesis 20 can become an example of inner-biblical exegesis or Fortschreibung in response to a pre-existing Genesis 12.53

53 For general accounts of this approach, see, e.g. R. G. Kratz, “Redaktionsgeschichte/Redaktionskritik I,” in Theologische Realenzyklopädie (ed. G. Müller; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 28:367–378; and B. Levinson, “The Phenomenon of Rewriting within the Hebrew Bible,” in Legal Revision and Religious Renewal in Ancient Israel (Cam-
One advantage of using this case as an example of inner-biblical exegesis is that it involves additional reporting of additional biblical events, rather than additional articulation of unspecific events of salvation, return, reward and suffering, or of abstract ideas, whose mutual relationship is capable of hovering between typological repetition and historical identity, as in the case of Isa 40:1–11 being interpreted by Isa 60:10–12.\(^{54}\) If one has concepts that make plausible in detail how the *clearly additional* physical action reported in Genesis 20 is capable of constituting an inner-biblical commentary on Genesis 12, then one has managed to clarify a type of *Fortschreibung* which offers the strongest resistance to being taken in a diachronic *and* synchronic meaning at the same time. That is useful for my purpose of testing the theory.

Finally, I also make the assumption that the creator of Genesis 20 expected the passage to be *recognized* as a response to Genesis 12 by at least some ancient Jewish readers of Genesis, so that my diachronic interpretation does not even constitute a forensic reading, a reading against the grain. This again makes for the most demanding scenario for any theory of coherence. This possibility of recognition by the end-user of Scripture hovers in the background of the very notion of inner-biblical exegesis or *Fortschreibung*. Perhaps ambiguously, Steck speaks of an invitation emanating from the secondary text to the reader of the redacted whole, “to move in reading along the relations within the book, and to perceive the explicating supplement or added precision within the flow of the subject matter in the text of Scripture.”\(^{55}\) D. Andrew Teeter’s *Scribal Laws* is less ambiguous; he suggests that ancient readers were capable of appreciating interpretation-facilitating biblical manuscripts, through recognizing secondary explications within the flow of the text for what they were, while yet integrating them into that flow.\(^ {56}\)

To understand such types of reading requires a sophisticated theory of coherence, because it assumes that a text can demand to be read as

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\(^{56}\) Teeter, *Scribal Laws*, “These manuscripts embody introductory steps toward the reading and construal of the scriptural text, even as they (re)present that text itself. In terms of readership, they appear to be oriented toward a highly attentive and textually sophisticated audience” (265).
meaningfully coherent while somehow drawing attention to an inner dia-
chronic difference, that is, while displaying a disunified historical origin or
a plurality of voices. The reading outlined above and explained in more
detail presently comes under the same category, and thus provides a further
important test for the explanatory capacity of the theory. I will now spell
out how my reading of Genesis 12 and 20 illustrates the general claims on
reading and coherence made in sections 1–4 of this paper. That I will as-
cribe to it a relationship of inner-biblical exegesis, and one that expects to be
recognized, has its reasons in the points just made, that is, in the usefulness
of such a hypothesis for testing out the limits of the theory. At the same time
my interpretation does not constitute a proper biblical studies argument for
the relationship between Genesis 20 and 12. I do not follow protocols that
reflect the biblical scholar’s professional familiarity with the text, but use the
hypothetical relationship of Genesis 20 to Genesis 12, as it were under the
radar of professional constraints, as an illustration of more general possibil-
ities of coherence catered for by the theory of coherence sketched out above.

The reader’s projection of a world that integrates Genesis 12 and Genesis 20

In the first instance, Genesis 20 simply adds another facet to the chrono-
logical development of events projected by Genesis. This new facet, the hap-
penings of Genesis 20, involves the characters Abraham, Sarah and God at a
later time and in a different place from Genesis 12. In this respect, Genesis 20
relates to Genesis 12 exactly like any other passage in Genesis that deals with
these characters, and with any thematically connected world components
such as related physical settings, related emotions or ideas, and so forth. Say-
ing that a set of events is added to the text-projected world then makes the
following type of claim. The reader, understanding the meaning of a cluster
of sentences as referring to events, coordinates those sentence meanings
with other sentence meanings, previously understood as also referring to
events. The reader adds them by shaping the text world in such a way that
there is “room” for all them, that all the events can co-exist and illuminate
each other. For instance the events may show how a life’s story continued,
so that the earlier events receive a continuation, and the new events have a
back-story; or they may show what constitutes dominant character traits in
a protagonist.

57 In a paper delivered a few years ago, I doubted that this precise possibility could be
satisfactorily explained by a theory of text meaning. See http://hds.harvard.edu/
news/2014/10/27/video-written-religion-some-new-avenues-analyzing-ancient-jewish-
texts. I have changed my mind, see presently.
To use the contribution of Gen 13:14–17 as another example, chosen almost at random from hundreds of other passages that have potential links to Genesis 12: a reader might see God’s promise in that passage as indicating that he took no exception, or at least no lasting exception, to Abraham’s behaviour in Gen 12:10–20. Alternatively, these lines might be taken to show that God was unaware of Abraham’s behaviour (although that would obviously stand in tension with other passages suggesting God’s synoptic knowledge), and further reflection on the passage would indicate additional possibilities of enrichment. This is the kind of enrichment that Genesis 20, too, contributes to an understanding of Genesis 12, whatever else Genesis 20 might do. A specific example of this is Abraham’s assertion that Sarah was his half-sister (Gen 20:12), which readers who retain the earlier events may think changes a basic aspect of their prior understanding of Genesis 12 (Abraham’s justification for what is otherwise simply a lie). But readers can probably reflect on every sentence in Genesis 20 in such a way that it spins out associations (components of its horizon) that illuminate or enrich some aspect of the text-world of Genesis 12, as well as of many other passages in Genesis and the Tanakh. In other words, the existence of Genesis 20 in the text continuum can place into perspective, or adjust as-yet undecided aspects of, the world components projected or mentioned in an unpredictable but large number of other biblical locations. Like the example of Gen 13:14–7 used above and every other passage within whatever is taken to be the same text, the sentences of Genesis 20 are grist to the mill of reading, that is, the incessant mutual accommodation of meanings. They complicate by existing the latent production by passive synthesis of a text world whose components are projected as co-existing. Furthermore, Genesis 12 is as much an illumination of Genesis 20 (and of Gen 13:14–7), as vice versa.

But as the reader adds the events of Genesis 20 to those of Genesis 12 in the text world, their co-existence in a unified world allows something else to emerge: the very specific similarity of those two sets of events. If retained by the reader, they meet in retention as thematically related world components, presupposing some underlying order of themes of the kind discussed in section 2 above, even though the text does not link them up by explicit reference or textual juxtaposition.

The reader’s projection of a text world in which events are duplicated

Thus I link the events of Genesis 20 to those of Genesis 12 passively, before reflection. But when I do reflect on them, I recognize (and thereby thematically define) my experience as one of a conspicuous repetition on the
level of the text world. Ventriloquizing my passive synthesis, I would unpack this as follows: The reported sets of events of Genesis 12 and Genesis 20 are each on their own already quite characteristic. They are somewhat improbable, in a good-story sense, if they happen once – an adventure, perhaps. They are very improbable, in a not-so-good-story sense, happening twice to the same set of people, if I see events through their eyes, as I must. In other words, when I first read Genesis 12, I am almost certain to have had a non-deliberate anticipation that the same thing would not happen again to Abraham. By contrast, when reading about a particular quarrel between two brothers, like Jacob and Esau, I am likely to have a non-deliberate anticipation that variations of this conflict could take place again between the same (!) brothers: that’s how the world (i.e. sibling rivalry) works, as I know it or as my culture has taught me to see it, unless and until the text instructs me otherwise.

My anticipations arising from Genesis 12 would of course be entirely different if that chapter contained a narrator’s comment along the lines of: “Now you may think, dear reader, that Abraham would never try such a stunt again. But as we shall see, he did!” The text contains no such acknowledgement of the relationship between Genesis 12 and Genesis 20, either by the narrator or by a character. And, again in my construction of the text-projected world, as I am not told otherwise by the text, Abraham and Sarah (and God) cannot simply be assumed to have forgotten the earlier events. One of the basic architectural assumptions of my reading is that narrative characters have the ability to remember what happened to them earlier, whether the text ascribes to them that ability in so many words or not (comparable to the example of characters having elbows, mentioned above).

So, overall, the unacknowledged recurrence of a very distinctive set of events affects their plausibility as “real,” even if the text is taken to present a “fictional” world (real in that world). Implausibility therefore prima facie weakens the coherence of the text, unless it contributes to the text’s coherence in another dimension altogether, as it might in the modern genre of satire. For a reader who considers Genesis on the whole to be a naturalistic narration, at least with regard to human events, but equally for a reader who finds all events in Genesis somehow fantastical or symbolic, this conspicuity by virtue of implausible repetition may suggest a certain deliberateness on the level of the telling of events. As a reader, I thus move from experiencing the conspicuity of events as events in the projected world, to giving consideration to the very existence of the text in which the events are told, the text as containing Genesis 12 and Genesis 20.
The reader’s assumption that the world of their experience once contained a different text of Genesis

This emergence of the text as a text changes the nature of the reading, because it interrupts the reader’s progress of constructing the text world. It brings into the horizon of the reading the situation of reading itself, which otherwise remains unconsidered. While reading, readers largely take for granted their setting, such as a particular place and time, a certain bodily posture assumed, and similar contextual parameters. This temporary blindness to the situation of reading usually extends to the text’s physical existence and constitution, and even its typeface, typographical errors, and other aspects of the mise-en-page. The situation of reading can, however, become selectively thematic as the target of inspection or reflection, that is, of thought. This amounts to an interruption of the activity of understanding – through constructing the world it projects – of what the text means. Reading for certain professional purposes actually involves a quite regular alternation between a perspective on the text world and a perspective on the text’s existence in the reader’s world of experience. The latter includes questions like: How did the text get here? How did the text become constituted in the past (that is, the past that belongs to my world of experience)? Is the world projected by the text meant to be also part of that past, that is, is the text meant to be “factual?” In the case of my reading of Genesis 12 and 20, once the conspicuous text-world constellation moves me to consider the text’s own existence, I can start to see it as having come into existence in stages: a first stage in which there was Genesis 12 (and surroundings), and a second stage in which Genesis 20 was added or modified.

Just to remind the reader of this paper: this illustration merely tries to give a consistent account of the preconditions of one (unprofessional) reading of one of the various diachronic possibilities for the biblical passages involved. Genesis 20 or Genesis 26 could instead be read as preceding diachronically Gen 12, or both could be seen as composed by the same author, and other possibilities here simply ignored for the sake of using one of them as an illustration.

I thus postulate a mini-story in my own world of experience, namely the development of this text by real historical persons, as authors and/or redactors. This is the perspective of all diachronic assumptions in modern scholarship. Scholarship’s basic diachronic move constructs certain events of the past of the scholar’s world of experience, as in the case of the making of Genesis 12 (and surroundings) and Genesis 20. The diachronic move does not appear as part of the scholar’s construction of the text-projected world.
But in this illustration at least, it is brought about by a prior construction of that text-projected world alone, not because Genesis 20 would appear to me as if it spoke explicitly about the events of Genesis 12 or about its wording, as commentaries do, or because I would know of a version of the book of Genesis in which Genesis 20 were lacking.

If the postulate of text growth is triggered by the conspicuity of events in the text world, as in this instance, then readerly assumptions are in play on what constitutes conspicuity in any world whatsoever, on the one hand, and in the world of this particular text, on the other. Assumptions on the latter partly depend on what (intuited) genre readers assign to the text, and so what readers consider as the ‘base line’ for ordinary events in that text world. For instance, if everything in the world projected in Genesis happened in patently obvious pairs, the pair of Genesis 12 and 20 would not be conspicuous in the way in which it is now. The text educates the reader to some extent about its character and genre by its own structures and regularities. So the threshold of conspicuity above which a reader is prompted to pay attention to the text as text can vary according to a number of factors, the text’s own character among them. Such attention to the text as text is, however, a precondition for interpreting the existence of one part of the text as a response to another, i.e. for the recognition of inner-biblical exegesis as for any other kind of diachrony.

Text-world events endowed with the deliberateness of commentary

Once readers consider the text in its textual production, and divide it into diachronically distinct layers or sources, their construction of the text world can be affected in various ways. They may find it impossible to accommodate the meanings of two passages as co-existing in the same text-projected world, because they provide varying accounts of what is clearly meant to be the same event in the text world. Thus Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala and R. B. ter Haar Romeny use the unique event of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar for comparing accounts that are almost, but not quite, repeated verbatim in different locations of the Hebrew Bible.58 Or readers may find it perfectly possible to accommodate events in the same text-projected world, as is the case in my current interpretation of Genesis 12 and 20. As I take the two passages to speak not about the same event, but about two separate happenings that are assigned to different points in the narrative chronology of Genesis, there is no question of them being log-

ically or ontologically incompatible in the text-world. Nevertheless, one effect of reading Genesis 20 as expressing an interpretation of Genesis 12 is to invite me to consider two versions of the text world, not just two versions of the text. In one version of the text world, everything happens apart from the events of Genesis 20; in the other, everything happens, including Genesis 20.

The two sets of events in Genesis 12 and 20 single each other out for such a comparison by sharing the same basic pattern of action – the reason they were conspicuous to me in the first place. They mirror each other. In the interpretation here displayed, they present themselves as potential alternatives to each other, and it is this which allows me to consider the text-projected world also as if in two versions. At the same time, I take the presence of the events of Genesis 20 as a counter-balance to the events of Genesis 12, as a way to restore to the whole story (of Abraham, of Sarah, of God, etc.) a meaning that contains a sincere Abraham alongside the brazen one, a well-disposed representative of a regional power alongside the hostile one, an interceding God alongside the apparently absent one, an enriched Abraham alongside the humiliated one – or whatever alternative interpretations of the pairing of the two sets of events might come to mind. Genesis 20 contributes to other potential themes, such as the resoluteness of God’s protection for Abraham, and the list of potential themes would probably get longer the longer the reader thought about it.

A precondition of my seeing Genesis 20 as a counter-weight or fly-wheel within the mechanism of larger text meaning is that I cash out its words as text-world events, as parts of the text-projected world. It is only as events that they can throw contrastive or complementary light on the events of Genesis 12, not as an explanation of the meaning of the words of Genesis 12 (as would happen in the format of commentary). Nevertheless, I de-emphasize the Genesis 20 events by making the most of their coherent connections with other text parts, first with Genesis 12 and then with other passages.

This selective emphasis is the other side of the coin of reading Genesis 20 as a commentary, as something that is tailor-made for coherence with the text it “comments” on. This selective emphasis excludes from urgent consideration, for example, the question why exactly Abraham should try to repeat a ruse that has already not worked once before, and possible coherence-challenging inferences from that repetition, such as that Abraham had a

59 I mention in passing that in some modern theories of text meaning, readers are seen as intuitively substituting contrastive alternatives to what the text actually contains, as part of the process of interpretation. See E. Coseriu, Textlinguistik. Eine Einführung (ed. J. Albrecht; 3rd ed.; Tübingen: Narr, 1994), 153–155.
stubborn, foolish or forgetful character, and so on. I feel not prompted to such reflections only because the conspicuous similarity of Genesis 20 events to those of Genesis 12 suggests to me that its whole raison d’être is to fit in with Genesis 12. This attitude of hanging on to the world-projection of Genesis 20 but de-emphasizing certain aspects of it, is patently not a “critical” reading of the biblical text. The critical attitude tries to draw out with the same vigour all possible links, coherent as well as incoherent, from a given biblical passage, and its protocols include rejecting any selective de-emphasis, in particular if confronted with phenomena like unexplained doublets.

In seeing the events of Genesis 20 as a counter-weight or fly-wheel within the construction of the text-projected world of Genesis (or the Abraham-cycle) as a whole, I configure their relationship to the events of Genesis 12 in a manner closely similar to the way I described above the contribution arising from Gen 13:14–7 for Genesis 12. This shows that my reading of Genesis 20, even though I assume it to be diachronically later than Genesis 12 and a commentary on it, is merely a special case of reading any part of the narrative as adding complementary, and thus mutually explanatory (i.e. “commenting”), world components, as Gen 13:14–7 does in my interpretation above.

The reading here sketched out assumes a real diachronic difference and a meta-textual perspective from Genesis 20 to Genesis 12, while not excluding Genesis 20 from making a contribution to the text’s projection of a single world. This combination of perspectives is a challenge for theories which take as fundamental the dichotomy between the diachronic and the synchronic. By contrast, the theory of coherence sketched out above, which does not rest on that dichotomy, is able to account for such a possibility of reading. Every time a modern scholar recognizes the shape of an overall biblical passage as the result of inner-biblical exegesis, they hold on to these two poles at the same time: an inner-textual diachronic difference, and the contribution of all passages concerned to the projection of a single text world or order of themes. Without a theoretical position that allows explaining in detail why such a reading is not inherently self-contradictory, the nature of the scholarly claims involved must remain confused, as they indeed appear to be in the work of some proponents of inner-biblical exegesis. My reading of Genesis 12 and 20 thus tests the theory expounded in sections 1–4 above, but also shows that working with a notion of inner-biblical exegesis requires a theory similar to it.

In sum, here is the argument of this paper. Textual meaning arises in the relationship between sentence/unit meanings that can each be momentarily
actualized but not kept in consciousness in a state of actuality. For connecting discrete moments of sentence meanings so as to form text meaning/s, and thus for the experience of in/coherence to take place, non-deliberate, passive processes of understanding must be postulated which invest the reader in the creation of coherence, rather than incoherence, on the basis of a trust in the textuality of the text (a trust that can be broken or be contextually unavailable). One crucial aspect of the non-deliberate striving for text coherence that makes reading possible is the latent reliance on networks of connectivity or association for the components of the text-projected world. Passive synthesis of coherence is not open to deliberate change, nor as a totality available to actualization, that is, active understanding; it is capable of being changed by habitual ways of reading, of which the academic discipline of biblical studies and Midrash are both examples; and it changes its character as the text becomes more familiar to the reader, making it difficult henceforth to reconstruct the experience of a reader unfamiliar or less familiar with the text. All these factors produce obstacles to the contemporary task of reconstructing the change and growth of the biblical text by way of understanding how its in/coherence might have been understood in antiquity, and thus by way of purely internal evidence of diachrony. But a model of coherence that works with passive synthesis also makes it possible to account for some sophisticated biblical studies claims (such as inner-biblical exegesis) that require reading a text simultaneously in diachronic and synchronic terms.

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Abstract: What can we know about the standards of cohesion and coherence held by the authors of ancient Israelite texts? If we recognize the fact that when we read we may be imposing our modern conventions on ancient literature, this becomes no small question. In this essay, I will consider the issue by examining evidence from early readers of biblical literature. I will begin with the earliest explicit reader statements about textual cohesion and coherence, then examine actual reading practices, moving back in time in order to determine whether responses to a perceived lack of cohesion and coherence change in various ways. I will conclude with reflections on what we can and cannot learn from this evidence.

Keywords: cohesion; coherence; literary conventions; interpretive standards; ancient literature

What can we know about the standards of cohesion and coherence held by the authors of ancient Israelite texts? If we recognize the fact that when we read we may be imposing our modern conventions on ancient literature, this becomes no small question. In this essay, I will consider the issue by examining evidence from early readers of biblical literature. I will begin with the earliest explicit reader statements about textual cohesion and coherence, then examine actual reading practices, moving back in time in order to determine whether responses to a perceived lack of cohesion and coherence change in various ways. I will conclude with reflections on what we can and cannot learn from this evidence.

I will use the term “biblical literature” below although it is anachronistic for some of the periods under investigation. For issues that must be considered when using the word “Bible,” see K. Finsterbusch and A. Lange, What is Bible? (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).
I will take the following premises as starting points: first, cohesion refers to formal connections at the surface structure of a text, and coherence refers to connections in one’s mental model formed during the reading process. Second, there are degrees of cohesion and coherence, and some texts are typically experienced by readers as more or less cohesive or coherent than other texts. Third, incoherence may be perceived either as a function of presence (i.e., the processing of the text seems to require multiple contradictory or mutually exclusive connections), or as a function of absence (i.e., something in one’s mental model cannot satisfactorily be connected to anything else). Fourth, incoherence can exist on a variety of levels of analysis – analysis of plot, analysis of character, and so on. Readers attempt to construe whether an event happened in one way or in another way; whether one event is causally related to another event; whether a character embodies one set of traits / goals / motives or another; whether one description can be correlated with another description. I should clarify here the relationship between gaps and incoherence: on the one hand, reading is

Standards of Cohesion and Coherence: Evidence from Early Readers

by definition a process of reducing indeterminacy and “filling gaps”; on the
other hand, all textual worlds are necessarily incomplete representations,
just as our perception of the real world is also incomplete.3 One’s con-
structed mental model is the result of an attempt to fill gaps, but will itself
always contain gaps. And while some gaps may not be perceived as a threat
to coherence, others may.4

2. Explicit Statements: Josephus and Philo

It might be possible to form an idea of ancient literary conventions by
looking at early readers’ explicit statements on the subject. After all, we pos-
sess treatises on grammar, poetics, and rhetoric that shed light on ancient
Greek and Roman standards of cohesion and coherence.5 Can we find
similar evidence with respect to biblical literature?

Our earliest extant reflective statements about cohesion and coherence
come from the Second Temple period authors Josephus and Philo. In some
cases, polemical or apologetic concerns seem to have elicited their state-
ments; in others, they are responding to the presence of difference or diver-

3 For descriptions of gaps, indeterminacies, and the reading process, see W. Iser, “The
279–299; idem, The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Baltimore: Johns
4 Or more precisely (as I will show below): different readers will have different
perceptions of what constitutes incoherence.
5 For statements about cohesion, see e.g. the treatments of conjunctions in the grammar
attributed to Dionysius Thrax, or the treatment of anaphoric pronouns in the syntax of
Apollonius Dyscolus, both of which speak about discourse linkages. For texts and trans-
lations, see G. Uhlig (ed.), Dionysii Thracis Ars Grammatica (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner,
1883), here 86–91; A. Kemp, “The TEKHNĒ GRAMMATIKĒ of Dionysius Thrax,” His-
Libri Quattuor (Peri Suntaxeōs) (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1910); F. Householder, The
Syntax of Apollonius Dyscolus. Translated, and with commentary (Amsterdam: John
Benjamins, 1981), here 90. For statements about coherence, see e.g. Aristotle, Poetics
1450b21–36, 1451a32–34; Plato, Phaedrus 264 C 2; Horace, Ars Poetica 1–9, 23. These
authors speak about the necessity of order (τάξει), organization (συνεστάναι), how
parts should be related and form a coherent whole (πρέποντ’ ἀλλήλοις καὶ τῷ ὅλῳ
gεγραμμένα), and how a poetic work should be “simple and uniform” (simplex et
unum). All compare artistic works to a properly formed living organism. See S. Halli-
well (trans.), Aristotle’s Poetics (LCL 199; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995);
H. North Fowler (trans.), Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus (LCL 36;
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914); H. Rushton Fairclough (trans.), Horace:
Satires, Epistles, The Art of Poetry (LCL 194; Cambridge: Harvard University Press,
1926).
sity in the text. For example, in his treatise *Against Apion*, Josephus claims that the lengthy composition process of some Greek literature resulted in “disagreement” (διαφωνίας), that Greek historiographers “say contradictory things concerning the same matters” (τάναντιώτατα περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγειν), and that they “disagree” (διαπεφωνήκασι). In contrast, he argues, there is no “disagreement” (διαφωνίας) in Jewish scripture; these books are not like those of the Greeks, “disagreeing with and contradicting each other” (ἀσυμφώνων καὶ μαχομένων).\(^6\)

Philo – trying to make sense of the Pentateuch’s diversity when it speaks of life in terms of both “breath” (LXX Gen 2:7) and “blood” (LXX Lev 17:11, 14) – likewise argues for the coherence of the Pentateuch: “Now we must notice that it is the writer’s [= Moses’] invariable habit never to forget for a moment the principles which he has laid down at the outset; he is scrupulously careful to let his later statements be such as follow from and agree with what he has said before.”\(^7\) This is in line with what Philo says elsewhere about the unity of the Pentateuch:\(^8\)

Accordingly, the Legislation is in some sense a unified creature, which one should view from all sides in its entirety with open eyes and examine the intention of the entire writing exactly, truly, and clearly, not cutting up its harmony or dividing its unity. For when things are deprived of their common element, they appear to be of somewhat different form and species.

These statements are valuable, but we should not overlook the fact that they are rare. Moreover, these authors do not explain at what point perceived dissimilarities in a text are enough to outweigh the perception of unity. What for Josephus and Philo would constitute incoherence in these texts? Here we must turn from what these authors say to what they actually do when they read.

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3. Implicit Responses: Repairing Incoherence and Strengthening Coherence

When motivated readers perceive a lack of (or a potential threat to) cohesion or coherence during the reading process, they will typically attempt to engage in “repair” or “strengthening” activities. A great deal of effort has gone into recognizing when reading comprehension breaks down due to lack of coherence, and into facilitating solutions to this problem. Publishers rely on proof-readers and copy-editors to ensure the readability of books, and teachers urge students to re-read and correct their essays. Software engineers have attempted to automate the process of repair by creating computerized spell- and grammar-checkers. Is it therefore possible to find examples of how early readers of biblical texts attempted to respond to a perceived lack of or threat to cohesion and coherence?

3.1 Josephus and Philo

As I noted above, both Josephus and Philo claimed that scripture was coherent: it did not contradict itself and was consistent with itself. But when we look at how these commentators actually handle the text, they certainly seem to be responding to incoherence or the possibility of incoherence. The following examples are representative:


10 Ironically, the use of such automated tools occasionally results in greater incohesion and incoherence: words that do not exist in the spell-checker database are replaced by the algorithm with what might be plausible substitutes, but which are actually erroneous. See “The word: Cupertino effect,” New Scientist 196, Issue 2632, 1 December 2007, p. 62; M. Moore, “The Clbuttic Mistake: When obscenity filters go wrong,” The Telegraph, 2 September 2008.

3.1.1 Lexical and syntactic incohesion.

*Genesis 1:5.* Why is the day designated with a cardinal number, while all other days in Gen 1 are designated with ordinal numbers? Josephus spots this lack of consistency and promises to explain it (*Ant.* 1.27, though in fact he does not provide the explanation in this work). What seems to have elicited his response is the heavily repetitive and patterned nature of *Genesis* 1, which has prompted an expectation of similarity and regularity. A breach in this similarity and regularity can be perceived as the breakdown of a pattern – a lack of cohesion.12

*Genesis 2:16–17 (LXX.*) Why the sudden shift from second person singular to plural address?13 Philo (*QG* 1.15) spots this shift and feels the need to account for it (here he “explains” it by means of a moral allegory). Philo notices other referent shifts as well: he spots differences in appellations for God (from “Lord” in LXX Gen 8:15 to “God” in v. 20, and to “Lord God” in v. 21) and attempts to explain them (*QG* 2.53). Both this example and the one cited above (*Det.* 81) may also indicate that Philo actually experiences diversity of description as incoherence.

3.1.2 Incoherence at the level of character analysis.

*Numbers 22:1–38* The biblical authors do not always explicitly describe a character’s motives, leaving readers to infer them from the contextual data and from their own experience. But when it is difficult to explain a character’s actions, readers may perceive this as a threat to coherence.14 For

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12 See the comments on the differences in MT and LXX of Genesis 1 below.
13 This could also be categorized under plot incoherence, since there is no one other than Adam to whom God could be speaking at this point in the story.
14 A good example is Exod 4:24–26 (which, unfortunately, neither Philo nor Josephus comment on). J. L. Kugel notes: “These verses seem completely mysterious. Why, having commissioned Moses to return to Egypt, should God then decide to kill him? And why should Zipporah’s circumcising her son and her mention of a “bridegroom of blood” have apparently led to God’s leaving “him” (Moses?) alone? Even today, most biblical commentators seem baffled by this brief passage.” See J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 517–519.
example: after God has told Balaam not to go with Balak’s messengers (Num 22:12–13), why does he suddenly change his mind and tell Balaam to go with them the second time they ask (Num 22:20) – but then become angry at him for going (Num 22:22)? According to Philo (Mos. 1.268), what God said in v. 20 was actually a dream recounted by Balaam to the messengers. According to Josephus (Ant. 4.107), God’s command in v. 20 was a deliberate plan to deceive Balaam. For both interpreters, then, the textual depiction of God requires explanation in order to produce coherence at the level of character analysis.

3.1.3 Incoherence at the level of plot analysis

Genesis 1–2 How should the similarities and differences in Gen 1–2 be explained? The threat to coherence in this case stems from the perception of redundancy or contradiction. Both authors respond to the same problem using different strategies: Philo explains the material as a single report of a two-stage creation process, whereas Josephus explains the material as two reports (using different kinds of discourse) of a single creation process.

Genesis 3–4 (in relation to Gen 2:17) Why did Adam and Eve not die “in the day” they ate from the tree? Philo resolves the problem by an allegorical understanding of the reference to death and by exploiting a formal feature in the text (the repetition of the verbal root in the expression θανάτῳ ἀποθανεῖσθε, Gen 2:17): “it is for this reason that God says not only “die” but “die the death,” indicating not the death common to us all,

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15 Philo’s explanation seems to have been triggered by the statement that “God came to Balaam at night” (v. 20); he uses this temporal reference to explain God’s speech as a dream imagined or fabricated by Balaam to justify his greedy desires.

16 Josephus may be drawing on the theme of prophetic deception in 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Ezek 14:7, 9–10.

17 Philo, QG 1.19 (Marcus, Philo, 12): “Why are beasts and birds now again created, when their creation was announced earlier in the six-day (creation story)?” He concludes that that the things created in Genesis 1 were “incorporeal” (ἀσώματα), “symbolically typical species” (δεικτιναὶ και τροπικαὶ ἰδέαι), while those created in Gen 2 were perceptible physical entities. See also Philo, Opif. 129–130, 134.

18 Josephus, Ant. 1.34; see H. St.-J. Thackery (trans.), Josephus: Jewish Antiquities. Books 1–3 (LCL 242; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 16–17: “And here, after the seventh day, Moses begins to interpret nature [φυσιολογεῖν].”

19 Philo, Leg. 1.105–107; see F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (eds.), Philo. Volume I (LCL 226; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 216–217: “And yet after they have eaten not merely do they not die, but they beget children and become authors of life to others.” This could be taken as a contradiction either on the level of plot analysis or character analysis, as an incoherence in the depiction of the character of God (who made a promise he did not keep).
but that special death properly so called which is that of the soul becoming entombed in passions and wickedness of all kinds.”  

**Genesis 4:14, 17** Who does Cain fear, and who does he marry, if the text presents Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel as the only humans present? Josephus (*Ant. 1.52*) fills this gap by arguing that Adam and Eve had daughters as well as sons (cf. Gen 5:4b), and in *Ant. 1.59* explains Cain’s fear of being killed by “all who find me” (Gen 4:14) as fear of wild animals.  

**Genesis 9:24–27** Why did Noah curse Canaan, if Ham was the offender? The incoherence here lies in the difference between the reader’s expectations and the story’s outcome (in the storyline so far, deed and consequence have been tightly linked). Actually, there are two issues here: why Noah did not curse Ham, and why Noah did curse Canaan. As to the first, Philo believes that a curse on one’s offspring is a suitable punishment for one’s own misdeeds; as to the second, Philo believes that Canaan must have somehow been involved in Ham’s actions (*QG* 2.77; cf. 2.70). Josephus resolves the incoherence differently: Noah did not curse Ham because they were immediate blood relatives (*Ant. 1.142*). With respect to the second issue, Josephus seems to recognize that there is a larger anti-Canaanite narrative strategy at work in the Pentateuch (*Ant. 1.142*; cf. 1.185).  

**Judges 1:8** Why does the text say that Judah successfully conquered Jerusalem and burned it, when according to Josh 15:63; Judg 1:21 the Israelite tribes were unable to capture the city of Jerusalem, and the Jebusite inhabitants remained there (cf. 2 Sam 5:6)? Josephus (*Ant. 5.124*) responds to this by arguing that Jerusalem had two levels or districts: the Judahites were able to conquer the lower city and kill its inhabitants, while the upper city remained unconquered.

What are we to make of these examples? On the one hand, it seems clear that both Josephus and Philo approach the text with expectations of cohesion and coherence on multiple levels of analysis (lexical semantics, syntax, character portrayal, plot). On the other hand, it could be argued that in some cases, their expectations are shaped by non-native conventions. They both live centuries after the period in which the texts were composed, and write from a Hellenistic Jewish literary milieu. Josephus states that he is writing for a wide, Greek-speaking audience (*Ant. 1.1–5*), and Philo clearly reads the biblical text with categories derived from Greek philosophical traditions, as evidenced by his sharp reaction to anthropomorphisms (*Leg.*

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20 Ibid.; see also Philo, *QG* 1.16.  
21 Note, however, that Josephus does not explicitly say Cain married his sister. See also Philo, *Post.* 33–34 (who denies that Cain married his sister), and *QG* 1.74 (where he, like Josephus, concludes that Cain was afraid of wild animals).
1.43–44; Post. 1–9), his interpretation of Gen 1–2 as a two-stage creation of incorporeal things and their perceptible counterparts (QG 1.19; Opif. 129–130, 134), and his pervasive allegorical explanations of the text (Opif. 157–158; Leg.).

3.2 Second Temple Period Interpretive Literature

Moving back in time, our next source of data is Second Temple period Jewish interpretive literature written in Hebrew or Aramaic. The authors of these works do not provide us with explicit reflective statements, but we might be able to infer something about expectations of cohesion and coherence by looking at their text-handling techniques.

3.2.1 Incoherence at the level of semantic analysis

*Genesis 49:4* What does it mean to say that Reuben “profaned the bed” of his father? The verb is typically used elsewhere (particularly in priestly literature) to refer to things that are understood as holy: God’s name is profaned by child sacrifice (Lev 18:21) or by false oaths (Lev 19:12); the land is profaned by idolatry (Jer 16:18); God’s sanctuary is profaned when approached or entered by those who do not belong there (Lev 21:23; Ezek 7:22; 23:39). What then does it mean for a bed to be “profaned,” and to what incident could this possibly refer? 4Q252 frg. 1, 4.3–7 explains it with reference to Gen 35:22: “its interpretation is that he rebuked him because he lay with Bilhah his concubine.”

3.2.2 Incoherence at the level of plot analysis

*Genesis 1–2* How should the two creation reports in Genesis be understood in relation to each other? The author of Jubilees attempted to fit all events into a chronological framework based on the seven-day schema found in Gen 1. For example, Jub 2:7 (cf. 4Q216 6.2–4) locates the planting of the garden (Gen 2:8) on the third day of creation (Gen 1:9–13). But what about

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22 See Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, 181: “Philo stresses problems in the literal text in order to make room for allegory on the one hand while assuming authorial intention and anchoring allegory within the literal text on the other. The literal dimension of Scripture thus is not dismissed but shown to be problematic to a degree that renders the allegorical meaning plausible, if not necessary.”

23 For attempts to explain the expression “profane her father” (Lev 21:9), see below.
the creation of humans and animals? According to Jub 2:13–14 (4Q216 7.1–3), land animals and humans were made on the sixth day of the first week (cf. Gen 1:24–27). The mention of animals in Gen 2:19–20a is not a creation account, but the bringing of animals already created in order to be named by Adam in the second week (Jub 3:1–2). So what does Jubilees do with the creation of the woman presented in Gen 2:22? According to the author, the woman was created on the sixth day of the first week, but only in the form of Adam’s rib – which was then fashioned into the woman and revealed to Adam in the second week (Jub 3:6, 8).

*Genesis 3–4 (in relation to Gen 2:17)* Why Adam and Eve not die “in the day” they ate from the tree? According to Jubilees 4:29–30, because Adam lived 930 years (Gen 5:5), and because “1000 years are like a day in [God’s] sight” (Psa 90:4), Adam did die in the “day” he ate.

*Genesis 4:17* Who did Cain marry, and how did humanity spread, if the story has mentioned only four people? According to Jubilees 4:9, 10, Adam and Eve had other children, and Cain married his sister.

*Genesis 9:18–19* Why does v. 18b only list the descendants of Ham, and what is the reader to do with this information?24 If on the one hand the notice is simply to prepare the reader for the curse of Canaan (Gen 9:24–27), it is redundant (see v. 22a); if on the other hand the notice is genealogical in nature, it is incomplete (see Gen 10:1–32). The Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen 12.9–13) rearranges the presentation of the story by taking details from chap. 10 and placing them between Gen 9:18 and 9:20. The result is a genealogy of all of Noah’s sons. The reader now understands how to integrate v. 18b into its context, resulting in a coherent reading.25

*Genesis 9:24–27* Why did Noah curse Canaan, if Ham was the offender? According to 4Q252 frg. 1, 2.5–7, Noah could not curse Ham because God had already blessed him (Gen 9:1). The author attempts to adjust the reader’s perception of incoherence by using details in the local context.

24 Philo (QG 2.65) also explicitly comments on this as a problem to be solved.

25 M. J. Bernstein, “Re-Arrangement, Anticipation and Harmonization as Exegetical Features in the Genesis Apocryphon,” *DSD* 3 (1996): 37–57. See his comments: “One of the means by which “Re-written Bible” “improves” on the Bible is by attempting to create a more seamless narrative than the biblical original through the removal of slight irregularities and inconsistencies in the story by the furnishing of useful details in advance of their occurrence in the biblical narrative. . . . The techniques which we call “anticipation,” “re-arrangement” and “constructive harmonization” are related devices whose goal is the production of the smoother narrative of which we speak” (38); “The rearrangement in this portion of the Apocryphon is thus conditioned by the desire to create a smoother and more coherent narrative” (42).

In these earlier examples taken from works composed in Hebrew or Aramaic, we are perhaps somewhat closer to the conventions of the authors of biblical texts. It is noteworthy that the repair of incoherence is typically accomplished by using material from the surrounding context. Still, the number of these interpretive works is small, and even here we occasionally see a foreign Tendenz creeping in (e.g., the sanitizing of Abraham in the Genesis Apocryphon – something that was not a concern for the authors / redactors of Genesis).

3.3 Scribal Transmission and Translation

It might be possible to get even closer to the conventions of the biblical authors and redactors by looking at scribal practice as attested in ancient textual witnesses to these compositions. The scribes who copied and translated them introduced changes that seem in some cases to be attempts at repairing a lack of cohesion or coherence.26

3.3.1 Asymmetry / lexical incoherence

Genesis 1:1–2:3 The material in the Hebrew text is highly repetitive and patterned – though in some cases, there appear to be gaps or asymmetries in the pattern which can be perceived as incohesion. The Hebrew Vorlage behind the Greek translation strengthened the pattern by moving “and it was so” from v. 7 to v. 6 (after the speech report, thus matching the pattern in vv. 9, 11, 14–15, etc.), inserting “and God saw that it was good” in v. 8 (to

match the notices on the other days), and inserting “and it was so” in v. 20 (again, after the speech report).  

3.3.2 Syntactic incohesion

*Isaiah 12:5* The expression זַמְּרוּ יְהוָה attested in MT Isa 12:5 is ambiguous: is Yhwh the recipient of song, or should the Divine Name be treated as a vocative? The scribe who copied 1QIsa eliminated the ambiguity by adding a preposition: זַמְּרוּ לָשָּׁם יְהוָה, “Sing to Yhwh” (in line with the syntax of v. 4, והודו). The function of the constituent has been clarified, and cohesion is thus restored.

*Ezekiel 11:16–18* The sudden shifts in the text (see MT) from third person plural forms (v. 16) to second person plural forms (v. 17) back to third person forms (v. 18) are levelled by the Greek translator, who changes the forms in v. 17 to third person.

3.3.3 Strengthening coherence by specifying a referent

*Genesis 29:21–25* This text is syntactically cohesive, but contains inflected forms whose referents are not consistently specified in an explicit manner. It is clear that the subject of some of the verbs in these verses can only be Laban, whereas the subject of other verbs – and the antecedent of the masculine suffixed form “to him” in v. 23 – can only be Jacob. But the reader of the Hebrew text must make these identifications on pragmatic grounds and by looking at the wider context. In contrast, the Greek translation inserts the name “Jacob” three times in vv. 23, 25 in order to facilitate the reader’s ability to track the referents more efficiently. We see the same phenomenon in the Greek translation of 1 Kgs 19:3, 6, 10, 14, which explicitly inserts the name “Elijah” where the Hebrew text contains only a masculine inflected form.

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28 See also Psa 47:7 זַמְּרוּ אֱלֹהִים, which some manuscripts clarify by changing to זַמְּרוּ לֵא לֹוהי.
29 See the recognition formulas in Ezek 13:9 (LXX changes second plural to third plural forms); Ezek 28:22 (LXX changes third plural to second singular forms); and the address in Deut 5:2–3 (LXX changes first plural to second plural forms).
3.3.4 Repair of incoherence by introducing a referent

Isaiah 40:2a In the Hebrew text, Yhwh urges someone to “speak to the heart of Jerusalem” (דָּבֶר על־לָבֶּן יְרוּשָׁלָיִם), but the identity of this person is not disclosed. The Greek translation fills the gap by inserting a plausible addressee – Israel’s priests (ιερεῖς, λαλήσατε εἰς τὴν καρδίαν Ἱερουσαλήμ), who would quite naturally be thought of as the ones who would proclaim that guilt had been atoned for (v. 2b).

3.3.5 Incoherence at the level of semantic analysis

Leviticus 21:9 (MT, SP) What does it mean for a woman to “profane her father” (את אביה היא מחלולה) by fornication? 4QLeve explained the expression as “profaning the house of her father” (using Deut 22:21 as a resource), and the Hebrew Vorlage behind the Greek translation explained it as “profaning the name of her father” (using Lev 20:3 as a resource).30

3.3.6 Incoherence at the level of character analysis

Ezekiel 6:1–7 This oracle is addressed to the “mountains of Israel” (v. 3). To some readers, the language in this oracle posed a problem: how could (obviously inanimate) mountains possess “bones” (v. 5b)? To other readers, the answer was obvious: by metonymy, the word “mountains” referred to the people on the mountains (cf. Ezek 22:9). To prevent misunderstanding, a scribe introduced a line from Lev 26:30 into Ezek 6:5a (present in MT, but absent in the Greek translation), clarifying that the “the sons of Israel” were being spoken of.31 Curiously, this strengthening of coherence created a lack of cohesion: the inserted material in Ezek 6:5a uses a third-person reference (“their idols”) that breaks up the surrounding flow of second-person forms in vv. 3–4, 5b–7.

Ezekiel 21:8b The Hebrew text states that God will “cut off from you [= Jerusalem] righteous and wicked” (והכרתי ממך צדיק ורשע). One way to read this expression is as a merism denoting complete destruction, in line with the earlier statement (v. 3) that God would start a fire in order to burn “every green tree and every dry tree.”32 Another way to read it is to take it lit-

31 This seems to have been motivated by existing verbal connections between Ezek 6:3–6 and Lev 26:25, 30–31.
32 Given the rhetoric of Ezekiel, the reader may wonder whether the author allowed for
erally, as the Greek translator did – which results in an incoherence in how Yhwh is portrayed in the corpus of scripture. How could a deity who was depicted elsewhere as committed to justice (e.g., Gen 18:23–26; Psa 33:5) treat righteous and wicked in the same way? To maintain coherence, the translator changed the text to read “I will cut off from you unrighteous and wicked” (ἐξολεθρεύσω ἐκ σοῦ ἁδικον καὶ ἄνομον). 33

3.3.7 Incoherence at the level of plot analysis

*Genesis 2:2* On what day did God “finish” (כלה) his creative work? The Hebrew text represented by the MT states that “God finished on the seventh day his work” (ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו), then consecrated that day, “because on it he rested from his work” (כי בו שבתי מכל מלאכתו, v. 3). But does the verb “finish” presume an inclusive or exclusive counting of days? The wording of v. 2 leaves open the possibility that God worked even on the seventh day, then stopped on that day. But such an understanding contradicts how the seventh day is treated by other texts (e.g., Exod 31:14–15, 17). Other textual witnesses (LXX, SP, Syr) clarify that the last creative actions took place on the *sixth* day; thus no work at all was performed on the seventh day.

*Genesis 2:19* (LXX, SP) As we have seen, early readers had to resolve the question of the relationship between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 so as to avoid contradiction or redundancy: Philo read the text as a single story of a two-stage creation procedure, Josephus read it as two accounts of a single creation procedure, and Jubilees had its own complex strategy based on the seven-day schema. Another strategy can be detected in the ancient textual witnesses, two of which depicted the creation of animals in Gen 2:19 as an additional (ἔτι, עוד) act of creation distinct from Gen 1:20–25.

*Exodus 7:18 and 27:19* At many points in the Pentateuch, the authors describe a divine command, then state that the command was carried out (e.g., Gen 6:13–21 → 6:22; Exod 24:12 → 24:15). In some cases, texts describe a command but not its performance, motivating a scribe to insert the performance (e.g., SP and 4QpalaeoExodusm insert the description of an action

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33 See also Exod 22:19 in the Samaritan Pentateuch and Masoretic Text. Either both are clarifying what is meant by אלהים (after all, shouldn’t one sacrifice to the God of Israel?), or else SP preserves the original text which then suffered haplography and was subsequently corrected by proto-MT.
in Exod 7:18b whose performance was commanded in 7:15–18a). Conversely, some texts describe an action without any mention of an explicit command to do so, motivating a scribe to supply the command (e.g., SP and 4QpalaeoExodus$^m$ insert a command at the end of Exod 27:19 to perform the action that is described in Exod 39:1). This linking of command to performance strengthens coherence.

LXX Joshua 2:15 If the gates of Jericho were shut, how could the Israelite spies escape the city via a window? The Hebrew text contains a scribal interpolation clarifying that Rahab “lowered them with a rope through the window” because “her house was on the face of the (city) wall, and she lived in the wall.” This clarification seems to be based on information provided in the following verses (vv. 18, 21).

LXX Joshua 11:19 The text states that Israel “took in battle” all the Canaanite cities (cf. vv. 16–17) after they entered the land. At this point a reader might protest: surely not all cities; what about the events related in chap. 9, in which the inhabitants of Gibeon survived by tricking Israel into making a peace treaty? The Hebrew text of Josh 11:19 is longer, and explicitly notes these events as an exception: “There was not a city that made peace with the sons of Israel (except the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon); they took all in battle.”

It is significant that in many of the examples listed above, the repair of perceived incohesion and incoherence was accomplished by the scribe’s use of material from either the wider textual context or from elsewhere in the scriptural corpus. This has the effect of simultaneously creating cohesion and coherence at both local and large-scale levels.

3.4 The Chronicler as Reader

We now come to the question of the standards of cohesion and coherence held by the composers and redactors of the texts themselves. We lack explicit statements about their literary conventions, and any repair of incohesion and incoherence will largely be invisible to us because for the most part we

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35 LXX Josh 11:19 καὶ οὐκ ἦν πόλις, ἥν οὐκ ἔλαβεν Ἰσραηλ, πάντα ἔλαβοσαν ἐν πολέμῳ.

36 MT Josh 11:19 לא חיה העיר איש מהשלמה אלא בני ישראל שראו את התיישב בעיון אמת העם לחקו 19 במלוהם.
lack the authors’ source material. However, we might examine how one text in the biblical corpus uses another – namely, how the book of Chronicles uses Samuel-Kings. This must be done cautiously, as we cannot assume that the source material Chronicles used was identical at all points to our version(s) of Samuel-Kings.

### 3.4.1 Repair of syntactic incohesion

*1 Kings 5:1a* The second half of the clause contains a noun phrase that is unconnected to the beginning of the clause: “And Solomon was ruling over all of the kingdoms, from the River . . . the land of the Philistines and as far as the border of Egypt.” 37 2 Chronicles 9:26 repairs the lack of cohesion by inserting a preposition: “And Solomon was ruling over all of the kingdoms, from the River as far as (ועד) the land of the Philistines and as far as the border of Egypt.” 38

### 3.4.2 Repair of syntactic and semantic ambiguity

*1 Kings 9:1–2* These verses state that “when Solomon finished building the house of Yhwh and the house of the king and all the desire of Solomon which he desired to do,” Yhwh appeared to him. 39 But is “desire” the object of “build” (and does it refer to e.g. the building projects listed in 9:15)? Or is “desire” to be taken (rather awkwardly) as the object of “finished”? And if so, what Solomonic desires are in view here? 2 Chronicles 7:11 clarifies the ambiguity by shaping the second half of the verse into a new clause: “and all that came into the mind of Solomon to do in the House of Yhwh and in his own house, he accomplished.” 40

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37 1 Kgs 5:1

וַשׁלמה היה מַשׁלֶל בְּכַל־המֶּמְלֶכֶתָּו מִדרֵי הַנָּהֶר אֲרֵץ פָּלָסְתִּים וּדָעַּן מִצְרַיִם

(so MT; TgJon, Syr, and Vg ignore the article on הַנָּהֶר and read “from the river of the land of the Philistines”).


39 1 Kgs 9:1

וַיָּכָלָה שָלֶם לְבָנָה אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה יְהוָה לְאַוְתִו יְהוָה וְאֵצְרִיתֵי יְהוָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יָכֹל שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם לְבָנָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה יְהוָה לְאַוְתִו יְהוָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר יָכֹל שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם לְבָנָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה לְבָנָה שָלֶם וַיַּכֹּל יְהוָה Lychau.

40 2 Chr 7:11b: זֶה כֹּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל הַבֶּל H. See Willi, *Die Chronik*, 171.
3.4.3 Incoherence at the level of character analysis

2 Samuel 5:21 This verse states that after the Philistines abandoned their idols, “David and his men carried them away” (וישׂאם דוד ואנשׁיו). But what was their motive for carrying the idols away, and what did they do with them? Does this imply that David and his men kept the idols for worship, like the idolatrous Danites (Judg 18:14–31)? But would this not create incoherence at the level of character analysis, given the narrator’s positive evaluations of David (2 Sam 5:10, 12, 25)? 1 Chronicles 14:12 rewords the text to avoid ambiguity and incoherence by stating that “David commanded, and they were burned with fire” (ויאמר דויד וישׂרפו באשׁ) – a repair based on the command in Deut 7:25, “the images of their gods you shall burn with fire” (פסילי אלהיהם תשׂרפון באשׁ).

2 Samuel 6:6–7 Why did God kill Uzzah for trying to catch the Ark when it was in danger of falling off the cart? 1 Chronicles 15:1–24 is a large block of material absent from Samuel (compare 2 Sam 6:10–12 vs. 1 Chr 13:13–14; 15:25) clarifying at numerous points that the Levites should have been carrying the ark – as they did in fact do the second time they moved it (1 Chr 15:2, 12–15, 26). But it appears that Chronicles already repaired the incoherence in the account of the first attempt: 1 Chr 13:10 states that God “struck him [Uzzah] because he stretched out his hand to the ark” (ויכהו על אשׁר־שׁלח ידו על־הארון) – an explanation for God’s actions that is absent in 2 Sam 6:7.41 Chronicles’ clarifications fit the practices described in Exod 25:14; Num 4:15; Deut 10:8.

1 Kings 9:11–14 Why did King Solomon give King Hiram twenty cities, which Hiram felt were of poor quality? The location of 1 Kgs 9:11b after vv. 10–11a suggests that Solomon gave these cities as payment to Hiram for timber and gold, which Solomon had used to build the temple. But why, if Solomon is depicted elsewhere as a glorious king who both gave generously and received gifts from others (e.g., 1 Kgs 10:1–2, 10, 13, 23–25 // 2 Chr 9:1, 12, 22–24), is he here depicted as a giver of less-than-desirable payments? And why is this followed by a reference to Hiram sending Solomon a payment of gold (v. 14) – particularly after receiving what he apparently thought was insufficient payment (vv. 12–13)?42 2 Chronicles 8:2 seems to have repaired this lack of coherence by replacing 1 Kgs 9:11–14 with a report

41 It looks as if MT 2 Sam 6:7 received a later attempted correction (lacking in the Greek translation) that was not completed: ויכהו שׁם האלהים על־השל “and God struck him there because of the st[etching out] (?)”.
42 Perhaps v. 14 could be taken as an oddly placed note clarifying the amount of gold referred to in v. 11a.
that Solomon received cities from Huram (= Hiram), and by omitting the reference to Hiram sending a payment of gold.\textsuperscript{43}

3.4.4 Incoherence at the level of plot analysis\textsuperscript{44}

2 Samuel 5:25 This verse reports that David did “just as Yhwh commanded him,” and “struck down the Philistines” (והיכו את־הפלשׁתים). 1 Chronicles 14:16 re-words the report as “and they struck down the camp of the Philistines” (והיכו את־מחנה פלשׁתים) to match the wording of Yhwh’s command in the previous verse (2 Sam 5:24 / 1 Chr 14:15); now David’s actions are indeed “just as” (כאשׁר) Yhwh commanded.\textsuperscript{45}

2 Kings 22:16 This verse relates how Huldah the prophetess proclaimed doom on Judah in accordance with “all the words of the book which the King of Judah read” (את כל־דברי הספר אשר קרם מלך יהודה). But the sharp-eyed reader knows that the King of Judah did not actually read the book; rather, Shaphan the scribe read it to the king (v. 10). To repair this contradiction,\textsuperscript{46} 2 Chr 34:24 states that the doom consists of curses written “on the book which they read before the king of Judah” (על־הספר אשר קרם לפני מלך יהודה).

Even these examples, however, only give us a partial picture. First, the compositional techniques of the Chronicler are not precisely the same as those of the author/redactors of other genres and books. Second, the study of repair mechanisms to inform our understanding of ancient coherence standards is problematic in that it is one-sided; it does not account for the vast majority of readers’ experiences (both ancient and modern) in which no repair is needed. It seems to be the case that when readers expect cohesion and coherence, they tend to comment on their absence and not their presence.

\textsuperscript{43} So Kalimi, Reshaping, 40–42. For a different analysis, see Willi, Die Chronik, 75–78; H. G. M. Williamson, 1 and 2 Chronicles (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 228–229.

\textsuperscript{44} Kalimi, Reshaping, 38–46, offers a list of examples where the Chronicler “remov[ed] internal contradictions.” Most of these involve details that are present in Samuel-Kings but absent in Chronicles, a phenomenon which by itself could be explained in various ways. Nevertheless, the repeated absences in Chronicles of certain details present in the parallel passages of Samuel-Kings seems to amount to a fairly consistent strategy of preventing incoherence.

\textsuperscript{45} For this and other examples, see Kalimi, Reshaping, 159–65.

\textsuperscript{46} Would the author of Kings have recognized this as a contradiction?

\textsuperscript{47} Kalimi, Reshaping, 156. For other examples, see Willi, Die Chronik, 111–175; Kalimi, Reshaping, 108–165.
4. Summary and Reflections

The evidence listed above offers an ambiguous, complex, and deficient picture of standards for cohesion and coherence in antiquity. It is deficient in that the examples above are by no means comprehensive, and most are based on narrative to the exclusion of other genres. Nor do the examples above represent the full state of affairs: a focus on repair mechanisms does not account for instances where no repair was thought necessary – and this was most of the time. Furthermore, it seems that some reader repairs of perceived incohesion and incoherence were based on non-native standards and cannot therefore help us reconstruct the conventions of the biblical authors. Finally, we are still left wondering why things that both early and modern readers have perceived as incoherent were tolerated by the authors and redactors of the compositions themselves. Still, it seems that we can arrive at some conclusions.

First, while perceptions, tolerance, and explanations of incohesion and incoherence may vary, the expectation of cohesion and coherence seems to be universal. This is likely due to the nature of human language, to human cognitive processes (particularly those involving the recognition of similarity, patterns, and symmetry), and to shared human experience. However, this is not to say that the standards of coherence readers bring to texts, or form in the process of reading texts, are identical. Philo perceives some things as incoherent that do not trouble Josephus, and vice versa. Similarly, Malcolm Heath has investigated notions of unity in ancient Greek poetics, and has demonstrated both that ancient conventions of coherence do not neatly match modern conventions, and that even within the Greek tradition

48 Some may object to my use of the word “repair” as historically inappropriate: did early readers really feel that the text was “broken,” and then attempt to “fix” it? For the most part, I think this is unlikely to be the case, and my use of the term simply reflects an attempt to describe (in a rather mechanistic way) the cognitive processes undertaken by readers. Still, in at least one instance (QG 2.37) Philo speaks of the author’s language as problematic.

there is variation in the extent to which incoherence is tolerated. Nevertheless, some of the examples above show that readers separated in time perceived the same things as problems to be addressed: both Philo and the author of Jubilees attempt to explain why Adam did not die “in the day” he ate the fruit; both Josephus and the author of Jubilees attempt to explain where Cain’s wife came from; not only SP and 4QpalaeoExodus but also the author of Chronicles are concerned that divine commands are closely linked to reports of their performance; not only Josephus but also the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint respond to asymmetries and breaks in the patterned structure of Gen 1.

Second, it is not difficult to detect features in the biblical text that exhibit cohesion and promote coherence. We can identify the presence of syntactic cohesion in the texts under consideration. We can also successfully identify elements of lexical cohesion, such as patterned repetition, inclusio, refrain, and Leitwort. In addition, we can observe authors and redactors providing explanations that can be understood as attempts to create coherence at both small and large text-segment levels. We are also are able to trace how narrative coherence is created by plot and characterization: we can identify plot complication and resolution; we see authors supplying motives for characters’ actions (e.g., 1 Sam 18:8–9) and creating large-scale plot patterns that shape characterization and link actions with consequences (e.g., Judges); characters’ statements are employed to point forward to later events (e.g., Gen 15:13–16) or back to previous events (e.g., Josh 24:32); there is a pervasive use of narrative analogy in which events and characters

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50 M. Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Heath (Unity, 3–10, 12–27) notes modern readers’ frustrations when searching for a single “unified thematic structure” in e.g. Euripides’ *Supplicants* or Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and suggests that these modern readers are bringing expectations of “centripetal” unity to the text rather than recognizing ancient conventions of “centrifugal” unity. He further notes differences among Greek authors in how “embellishment” (ποικιλία) or “digressions” (ἐπεισόδια, ἐκτροπαὶ τῶν λόγων) are treated as acceptable or unacceptable, and under what circumstances they are justified (Unity, 28–37, 45–55, 127–28).

51 See in particular A. Berlin, “Lexical Cohesion and Biblical Interpretation,” *Hebrew Studies* 30 (1989): 29–40. For patterned repetition, see e.g. Gen 1:1–2:3. For inclusio, see e.g. Psa 103; 118; 146–150. For refrain, see e.g. Psa 42–43, 46, 57, 80, 107, 136. For Leitwort, see e.g. references to vision and forms of the word ראה in Gen 16, 21–22; the use of the word זרק in Gen 17–18, 21, 26; the repetition of ירח האתנים in Deut 2:10–12, 20–23. For explanations at smaller levels, see e.g. Gen 35:6 (הוא בית-אל;) 36:1, 8, 19, 43 (הוא עשַו אדום;) or the explanatory digressions in Deut 2:10–12, 20–23. For explanations at larger levels, see e.g. 2 Kings 17:7–23.
are modelled on earlier events and characters. Individual episodes (which likely originated from different sources or traditions) are linked together by repeated words and plays on words, by recurring motifs, and by continuity in character and plot. In some cases, we can observe early readers responding to the same kind of lexical and thematic features. For example, 4Q504 juxtaposes and conflates allusions to a variety of texts on the basis of shared locutions and themes, and 4Q176 collects and juxtaposes text extracts on the basis of the shared word נחמ and the theme of consolation. Similarly, 4Q252 frg 1, 4.1–2 juxtaposes allusions to and quotations of Gen 36:12, Exod 17:14, and Deut 25:19 (all passages dealing with Amalek).

Third, things that modern readers identify as conventions of ancient authors and redactors were in some cases perceived by early readers as incohesive or incoherent. An example: Philo thinks it odd that the author presents first Abel’s then Cain’s occupations in Gen 4:2b, and God’s response to first Abel’s then Cain’s offerings in Gen 4:4b–5. He is responding to the fact that these orderings of the Abel before Cain are an inversion of the brothers’ birth order (Gen 4:1–2a). But chiastic inversion is a widely-used technique in ancient Hebrew literature. What Philo perceives as an aberration is part of a larger pattern of alternation that is designed to create cohesion across verses: Gen 4:1–2a (Cain, Abel), v. 2b (Abel, Cain), vv. 3–4a (Cain, Abel), vv. 4b–5 (Abel, Cain). Another example: the gap-filling that is so characteristic of Second Temple period literature is in a great many cases a response to details that are not explained in or supplied by the bib-

53 In e.g. Genesis, repeated words and plays on words include ברכה, ברך, בכרה, בכור, זרע, and recurring motifs include sibling rivalry, barren women, and threats to offspring. Even in prophetic literature – arguably some of the most difficult texts to read because of their composite nature, denseness of imagery, and poetic genre – we see features that can be understood as editorial strategies to create coherence: repetition of locutions (Isa 5:25; 9:11, 16, 21; 10:4; 12:1; 14:26–27), the linkage of problems to solutions via placement of material (Isa 1:2–23 → 1:24–31), collection and juxtaposition of originally independent units on the basis of similar content (Ezek 12:21–14:11, dealing with the nature of prophecy; Ezek 25–32, oracles against the nations), and inner/inter-textual referencing (Isa 65:25 → Gen 3:14 + Isa 11:6–7, 9).

54 See Philo, Sacr. II.15 and QG I.61 (he explains the presentation of the younger followed by the older by means of a moral allegory).


56 See also Conf. 142–144, where Philo tries to account for the apparently superfluous statement “which the sons of men built” (Gen II:5), and QG 2.57, where he tries to account for the statement “the water dried up from the earth” (Gen 8:7, which he thinks is incorrect, and wants to rephrase as “the earth dried up from the water”).
lical text. Yet such reticence is typically described as one of the most distinctive features of Hebrew narrative.57

Fourth, cohesion and coherence exist on a continuum, and different kinds of cohesion and coherence can be present or absent on different levels of analysis.58 As I noted above, the insertion of material in MT Ezek 6:5a in order to strengthen coherence simultaneously created a lack of cohesion.59 The converse effect may also be observed: authors can attempt to strengthen cohesion across material whose diversity makes it difficult to process in a coherent matter. A good example is the use of Wiederaufnahme, where interpolated material is framed by lexical repetition.60 It seems likely that texts which were difficult to process in a coherent manner (due to their complex content and composite shape) were given linkages at various levels to promote readability.

57 See e.g. M. Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 190–191: “He [the narrator] presents external occurrences alone, deeds and words, leaving his agents’ inner lives opaque – even though in a dramatic narrative of this type it is precisely the motives and thoughts of the characters that interest the reader most. . . . Biblical narratives are notorious for their sparsity of detail.” See also R. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 114–115: “Biblical narrative offers us, after all, nothing in the way of minute analysis of motive or detailed rendering of mental processes . . . and we are given only the barest hints about the physical appearance, the tics and gestures, the dress and implements of the characters, the material milieu in which they enact their destinies. In short, all the indicators of nuanced individuality . . . would appear to be absent from the Bible.”

58 As J. Stackert notes, “in addition to the inconsistencies among them, there are many instances of consistency – i.e., cohesive ties – among and across the sources combined in the Pentateuch”; see his “Pentateuchal Coherence and the Science of Reading,” in The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Israel, Europe, and North America (ed. J. C. Gertz et al.; FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 253–268, here 259.

59 Something similar occurs at the editorial level in Ezekiel 1 and Ezekiel 10. Zimmerli argues that the odd mix of masculine and feminine forms for the feminine חיות in Ezekiel 1 is a side effect of the redactional attempt to bring chap. 1 into closer connection with chap. 10 and its masculine צורבים (see the comment in Ezek 10:20, which explicitly links the two vision accounts and equates the חיות with צורבים). See W. Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1 (Hermeneia; trans. R. E. Clements; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 102–105.

60 See e.g. Exod 6:14–25 (framed by lexical repetition in vv. 10–13, 26–30); Ezek 28:25–26a (framed by lexical repetition in vv. 24, 26b), and Genesis 38 (a lengthy digression, which is framed by lexical repetition in Gen 37:36; 39:1). This last example is also instructive for the way the content of a digression can be linked to the surrounding narrative by repeated locutions and motifs; see D. M. Gunn and D. Nolan Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 34–45; E. Salm, Juda und Tamar: Eine exegetische Studie zu Gen 38, Forschung zur Bibel 76 (Würzburg: Echter, 1996); E. Marie Menn, Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 73–82.
Fifth, things that are perceived as incohesive or incoherent can be accounted for in very different ways. We have already seen this to be true for early readers when comparing Josephus and Philo on the differences between Gen 1 and Gen 2. But this is also true for modern readers: Anthony Grafton shows how editors of Petronius initially proposed emendations for “mistakes” before realizing that the syntactic irregularities were intentional literary devices.\(^{61}\) And in biblical texts, unexpected lack of cohesion in person, gender, or number can be explained in some cases syntactically,\(^{62}\) in other cases stylistically or rhetorically,\(^{63}\) and in still other cases as instances of redactional interpolation.\(^{64}\) In some texts, the frustration of a coherent reading experience (at least initially) seems to be quite deliberate; certain wisdom compositions, such as the book of Job, are arguably examples.\(^{65}\) Ambiguity can, after all, be a deliberate compositional strategy.\(^{66}\)

5. The Significance of this Study

How might the findings of this essay impact the discipline of Hebrew Bible studies? It seems to me that there are clear implications for how we study and describe scribal practice in antiquity and how we approach the experience of reading ancient texts.

First, this survey of responses to incoherence corresponds to some extent with the historical judgment of textual critics that the lectio difficilior is generally to be preferred (assuming, of course, that the more difficult reading is not nonsense).\(^{67}\) The findings above show that “difficulty” may

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62 See GKC § 145.

63 This is one way to explain the shifts between second person plural and singular in Deuteronomy. See T.A. Lenchak, “Choose Life!” *A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Deuteronomy* 28,69–30,20 (AnBib 129; Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1993), 12–16.

64 See e.g., Isa 5:15 and Ezek 34:23–24, both of which lack antecedents, and can be plausibly explained as secondary insertions into their respective contexts.


67 See P. Kyle McCarter, *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 17: “The ‘more difficult reading’ is not to be preferred when it is garbage.”
exist on a wide variety of levels of analysis: lexical semantics, syntax, plot, and characterization. The study of individual manuscripts and the scribal techniques associated with them should therefore be performed with an eye to discovering whether scribes display patterns of cohesion- or coherence-strengthening activity.

Second, the broad use of the word “harmonization” can be misleading or blur categories when thinking about cohesion and coherence. We should distinguish between e.g. the insertion of one text in another as evidence of their perceived coherence (e.g., 4QDeut\textsuperscript{n} = Deut 5:12–15 + Exod 20:11) versus the insertion of one text in another to strengthen coherence (e.g., the flashback in 4QNum\textsuperscript{b} = Num 36:1–2, 27:2–11, 36:3–4, 36:1–2, 36:5–12) versus the insertion of one text in another to repair a perceived lack of cohesion or coherence (e.g., the plus in SP Exod 27:19 to correspond to the actions in Exod 39:1) versus the modification of one text in light of another text to remove a perceived contradiction (e.g., SP’s movement of the command to sprinkle Aaron from the beginning of Exod 29:20–28 to the end in light of the order of events in Lev 8:23–30).

Third, it seems clear that early readers’ perceptions of incoherence were not shared at all points by the biblical authors and redactors: we see early readers responding to features that apparently were simply unproblematic for the authors of the text. This strongly suggests that we cannot assume that our perceptions of incoherence were shared by the text’s authors and redactors. It is instructive to note how some modern readers respond to repetition in ancient Hebrew texts: for Gottwald, the style of the book of Ezekiel is “woefully dull and repetitive,” “awkward in expression,” “turgid and prolix.” For Gray, the repetition of the divine name in Num 6:24–26 is “solemn,” but the repetition in the list of offerings in Num 7:12–83 is “wearisome.” For Von Rad, the repetition in 1 Kgs 19:9b–10, 13b–14 is a

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69 For these examples, see Zahn, “Samaritan Pentateuch”; see esp. her comment, 288: “The most important issue here is diversity of function. Although all the major changes in pre-SP can appropriately be characterized as in some way meant to increase the internal consistency of the Torah, this happens in different ways.”


“maladroit anticipation.” Yet many handbooks of poetics demonstrate that repetition is one of the most important ancient Israelite literary conventions, and that it serves a wide variety of strategic functions.

Similarly, some modern readers perceive certain sections of the Pentateuch as so incoherent that they claim it is unreadable, while other readers are more sanguine about the possibility that the text’s authors thought otherwise. Who is correct? It seems to me that the only way to find out is to let the text itself be our guide, allowing its structure and features to inform us as to what constitutes tolerability or readability. We should at least consider the possibility that our initial impressions of incoherence may be based on incomplete information; the things that we perceive as incohesive or incoherent on a local level may actually play an important role on a global level. For example, readers are likely to be confused by the lack of cohesion in Aaron’s statement, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the

72 “It is perfectly obvious that vss. 9–14 are not a unity. But the whole thing falls into place if vss. 9b–11a are taken as a maladroit anticipation and struck out”; see G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel’s Historical Traditions* (trans D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 2:19.


75 J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 43–44: “However, the fact remains that the finished text of a work as complex, ‘incomprehensible’, genre-less as the Pentateuch does now exist and must presumably have been assembled by someone: it is not a natural phenomenon. And the person who assembled it (like the people who collected the Psalms or edited the books of the prophets) no doubt intended to produce a comprehensible work, and had some notion of its genre.”
land of Egypt” (Exod 32:4b). If Aaron made a single golden calf (vv. 4a, 5a), why is he represented as referring to it in the plural (v. 4b)? It is only when we encounter 1 Kgs 12:28–29 that we connect the two texts as part of a larger intertextual argument about apostasy. Another example: the incoherence in Gen 37:27–28, 36 may be deliberate – not simply because it is an artifact due to the combination of pre-existing source material, but also because the contradictory references to Ishmaelites, Midianites, and Medanites are intertextual references back to Gen 21:9–21; 25:1–6, and are part of a larger argument structure in Genesis about enmity and reconciliation.76

What we need, then, is to acquire the conventions for reading composite tradition-literature. One way to further explore the nature of cohesion and coherence in ancient Israelite texts would be to construct a database of features along the lines of the “Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity, c.200 BCE to c.700 CE.” The benefits of this project are described as follows:77

[The modular structure of the inventory] allows treating features which cause us to doubt the text’s “coherence” in exactly the same way as features which do not. Each feature is recorded independently of the others, even though it is defined in terms that respect the togetherness of text parts in a whole text. The mutual independence of features allows exploring what may have constituted, for ancient readers, the experience of a coherent text – the “tolerances” for incoherent may have been quite different from those we take for granted in our own reading. The database of Profiles makes visible how frequently a particular feature occurs, and where exactly it occurs in the corpus. It thus assembles, for the first time, the large-scale empirical data that modern scholars need to make judgements also about the frequency and distribution of a particular feature of “incoherence”. And the database may also show that features which produce ‘incoherence’ can, and usually do, occur alongside other features that produce ‘coherence’ in the same text.

Such a database for Israelite literature composed before 200 BCE remains a desideratum.

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Abstract: The following article categorizes and describes certain phenomena of “editing” and paves the way from empirical data toward hypothetically reconstructing the literary- and redaction-history of biblical compositions. Following some general remarks on coherence and incoherence in “emic” and “etic” perspectives, the article deals with the genre of ancient commentaries from Qumran (pesharim) and their techniques of interpretation, citation and rewriting, transmission and translation, and finally redaction of biblical texts. Largely the same hermeneutics underlie the different kinds of formation, transmission, and re-use of biblical and parabiblical texts.

Keywords: Biblical interpretation, pesharim, rewritten bible, redaction history, biblical hermeneutics

The following article is the revised version and English translation of a German paper presented together with a paper by Michael Fishbane on biblical interpretation at the 2001 symposium in Heidelberg celebrating the hundredth birthday of Gerhard von Rad. In view of the recent debate on empirical evidence for literary and redaction criticism it might be


welcomed that this translation gives access to an earlier contribution that tried to categorize and describe certain phenomena of “editing” and pave the way from the empirical data to the hypothetical reconstruction of the literary and redaction history of biblical compositions. The volume on “Coherence and Incoherence” is an excellent setting to re-publish this article, in which the various modes of “editing,” i.e. of textual and literary history, are interpreted as processes of biblical interpretation.

1. Coherence and Incoherence in “Emic” and “Etic” Perspectives

What constitutes “coherence” and “incoherence” is a matter of standpoint and definition. What is coherent to one (writer or reader) is incoherent to the other. In scholarship, many discussions on the explanation of biblical and para-biblical texts could be avoided, or at least be more factual, if we were aware that the question of coherence and incoherence is a matter of definition, and if we differentiate and declare clearly whether or not we are speaking from the understanding of ancient scribes or readers, or from our own expectations and criteria.

The ideas of ancient scribes and readers on coherence and incoherence were certainly not the same as ours. Therefore, we should not simply express our ideas as being those of ancient scribes and readers, whether that involves asserting the unity of a highly complex text or dividing a text into several literary strata. On the other hand, our ideas of coherence and incoherence can be a heuristic aid in recognizing and understanding the ideas of the ancient scribes and readers, even if they did not share our ideas.

In short, I would like to plead the case of not treating the question of coherence and incoherence according to absolute criteria, but in an interplay of “emic” perspective (the ancient scribe and reader) and “etic” perspective (the modern exegete), where it is clear that the “emic” perspective of the ancient scribe and reader can only be a hypothetical assumption or a construct of the modern exegete. But it is the task of the modern exegete to reconstruct the thinking of the ancient scribes and readers on the basis of available sources and the understanding of his or her own time.

(ed.), The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America (FAT 111; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 9–195; and in the same volume, see M. Zahn’s essay “Scribal Revision and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Methodological Issues” (pages 491–500) and R. G. Kratz, “Reworked Pentateuch and Pentateuchal Theory,” (pages 501–524).
A suitable starting point to reconstruct the thinking of ancient scribes and readers seems to me to be a phenomenon we have known for a long time from parallels in the Hebrew Bible and from different text versions, and to which the Dead Sea Scrolls have provided abundant new material. It is the phenomenon of biblical interpretation, also known as inner-biblical exegesis, which encounters intertextual relationships and variants of the same material or writing in different recensions (or rewritings) of the text. Since the seminal work of Michael Fishbane an almost unmanageable wealth of literature on the phenomenon of biblical interpretation and the rewritten bible (or rewritten scripture) has been published. However, receiving little attention in the discussion is the meaning that the relevant material has for how the ancient scribes and readers understood themselves, i.e. the “emic” perspective, and also for the scholarly explanation of how biblical and para-biblical texts evolved, i.e. the “etic” perspective.

In this respect, two points seem to be decisive. On the one hand, the material reveals a special kind of tradition culture, which not only shows many similarities to the common conventions of ancient Near Eastern scribal culture, but also significant differences. The main difference appears to me to be the high degree of self-referentiality in the biblical and para-biblical literature, which cannot be substantiated anywhere else. Whether we are always dealing with direct literary dependencies in the many linguistic and conceptual points of contact, allusions, and references within biblical and para-biblical literature, is frequently a matter of controversy in scholarship, but it cannot be completely ignored. In particular, the para-biblical (explicit and implicit) citations and rewritings clearly bear witness to it, which is also significant in retrospect for biblical writings themselves.

3 The problematic nature of the terms “Bible, biblical,” “scripture, scriptural,” “canon, canonical,” etc. is well known. In the absence of a convincing alternative, however, I will adhere to these terms and use them purely pragmatically to designate those writings which later entered into the canon of the Hebrew Bible as well as the para-biblical writings inspired by them. See R. G. Kratz, Historisches und biblisches Israel: Drei Überblicke zum Alten Testament (2nd. ed.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), XXIX–XXXVII.


On the other hand, the material, especially the different versions of a text and the Dead Sea Scrolls, gives an insight into the special production methods and processes of textual and literary growth in biblical and para-biblical literature. By comparing different versions of a text or an entire scripture from our historically critical perspective (i.e. “etic”), we can observe coherences as well as incoherencies, due to the self-referentiality of tradition and given the phenomenon of biblical interpretation. At the same time, perceptions of what is coherent or incoherent vary naturally with individual exegtes. In turn, parallel versions and para-biblical rewritings provide abundant material here, which gives an intuition of what is to be expected in biblical writings. Another question is to what extent did the ancient scribes and readers themselves perceive a difference between coherence and incoherence.

From an “etic” perspective, coherences and incoherences thus show a dynamic process or discourse of interpretation in the interplay of *traditum* and *traditio*, which took place in the growth of a text in biblical and para-biblical writings. In the language of exegetical methodology, this process is called “textual and literary history” or, in a broader meaning of the term, “redaction history.” This means that biblical interpretation and redaction history (in the broader sense) are the same. In both cases, we are dealing with relations: the relation of text and interpretation, *Vorlage* and recension, writing and rewriting, or, in methodological terms, tradition and redaction in the process of text formation and transmission. Biblical and para-biblical writings are themselves tradition, in a double sense of the word, in that a tradition (*traditum*) is being transmitted, and the transmission (*traditio*) has become tradition. Both took place first within the biblical and para-biblical writings themselves in the process of their formation and composition and then, after conclusion of the Hebrew canon, in the interplay between scripture and tradition.

6 For my understanding of “redaction history,” see R. G. Kratz, “Redaktionsgeschichte/Redaktionskritik I. Altes Testament,” *TRE* 28 (1997): 367–378. In the following, I presuppose this broader meaning of the term, which covers the activities of scribes in general including writing (authorship), copying, and editing.

7 See M. Fishbane, “The Hebrew Bible and Exegetical Tradition,” in *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel* (ed. J. C. de Moor; OTS 40; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15–30, 18: “That conviction has only increased over the years, and I would now stress that the Bible is only tradition, in form and content, and that a proper analysis of its materials must take note of its composite character. ... As we now have them, we have tradition producing tradition through the mediation of a silent redaction. This silent hand of culture-formation and its anthological product is of the essence of biblical and postbiblical tradition.” For the prophetic literature, see O. H. Steck, *Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis: Wege der Nachfrage und Fährten zur Antwort* (Tübingen:
In the following, I would like to give an overview of the different types of biblical interpretation, paying particular attention to two aspects: firstly, to the techniques and forms of interpretation, which are also indicators of text genesis and growth, i.e., the literary and the redaction history of the biblical and para-biblical writings; secondly, to the underlying hermeneutics, which provide information on what the ancient scribes and readers might have regarded as coherence or incoherence. In this overview, I will be moving from the certain to the less certain as I take as a starting point the external or empirical evidence of manuscripts, progressing towards cases which can be ascertained by critical analysis only on the basis of an analogy to external evidence, with the aid of internal criteria.8

The extensive material involves examples from the Jewish and Christian interpretative traditions.9 It will not be discussed in toto, but consulted specifically according to how it deals with the relationship of biblical interpretation and redaction history. The most productive source proves to be the Dead Sea Scrolls. They do not presuppose the finished canon of the Hebrew Bible, but the completion of the writings, which entered into the later canon. The distinction between internal and external biblical interpretation, or more precisely between internal and external evidence, therefore, does not refer to the written corpus of the bible as a whole, but primarily to the internal and external interpretation of individual books.

In Fishbane’s classic study Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel, the manifold phenomena of internal exegesis are classified partly by external and partly by internal criteria. The first part is “Scribal Comments and Corrections,” which deals with the entries that ensure an understanding of the text as part of the textual tradition; the following parts go through examples in the statutory (“Legal Exegesis”), narrative (“Aggadic Exegesis”), and most broadly the prophetic literature (“Mantological Exegesis”). I will keep to external criteria, texts and types of textual transmission, and only

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8 For this approach, see also Carr, Formation, who, however, is a bit anxious to apply the insights from external evidence to the critical analysis of the biblical text.

consider those phenomena that are also empirically evidenced. I will deal in turn with the following: commentary; citation and rewriting; transmission and translation; and finally, redaction.

2. The Commentary

In addition to homilies, commentaries on the biblical books even today remain the most common form of scriptural interpretation, and show the hermeneutical principles most clearly. As far as we can see, the genre was first developed systematically in Qumran, although not devised there. Commentary has ancient Near Eastern models, perhaps alongside the model of Hellenistic commentary.¹⁰ In the context of the diverse exegetical literature of Qumran, commentaries on the prophetic books (including the Psalms), known as pesharim, occupied a prominent position.¹¹ Practised sporadically in other works, the prevailing principle here is an annotated interpretation of scriptural quotations using specific formulas of citation and interpretation. Characteristic is the strict separation of text (lemma) and interpretation using the formula pšrw, “its interpretation [is],” or similar, which was borrowed from Mesopotamian divination.¹² The formula gives the genre its name. Differences in the use of formulas and texts permit an element of classification and relative dating, while historical allusions and palaeography


¹² See AHw, 842f s. v. pašārum(m) and cf. ptr in Gen 40–41, pšr in Daniel 2–7.
allow the absolute dating of the *pesharim* which, insofar as they have been preserved, were all produced in the 1st century B.C.E.\(^\text{13}\)

The object of scriptural interpretation in the *pesharim* is selected quotations from individual prophetic books, which are often combined with other writings and interpreted. Over time, the *pesharim* become devoted to whole books, which are commented verse by verse. To what extent the whole book or only details of an individual passage were considered is difficult to judge due to the poor state of preservation. A certain tendency towards atomising the text cannot be denied, but the tendency to *lectio continua* indicates that the interpreters were not indifferent to the meaning of a larger text corpus.

The exegetical techniques are diverse and not dissimilar to later rabbinical exegesis, but are already found much earlier in the ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible.\(^\text{14}\) The complexity of the combinations that lead from text to interpretation either directly or indirectly, stretches our imaginative power to the limit. The reason why this effort was necessary lies in the fundamental hermeneutical problem, which confronts anyone who applies a transmitted text to their own present day. Where prophecies are concerned, the question is to whom do they refer and when they will be fulfilled. This became an increasingly urgent question for the Qumran community, because it was conscious of living close to the end times proclaimed by these prophets.

Calculations of the end are also based on prophetic prophecies. Thus, the 390 years of anger from Ezek 4:5 were interpreted as being the time from the destruction of the temple in 587 to the beginnings of the community and the appearance of the master, the “Teacher of Righteousness,” after another 20 years (CD I 5–11). In scholarship, these and other numbers such as the 40 years in CD XX I3–15 (see also XIX 33–XX I) were combined, and attempts were made to correlate them with the hypothetically reconstructed history, i.e., the foundation of the Qumran community, the appearance of the “Teacher of Righteousness” and his death.\(^\text{15}\) These historical combinations are rather doubtful. What the numbers say in detail frequently remains a riddle to us, but they show that the community of Qumran not only had the anxious question of whether and when the expected end would finally come,

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but also faced the exegetical problem that the course of events did not always correspond to the calculations and expectations derived from the scriptures. The problem and the hermeneutical approach to solving this problem are stated specifically in Pesher Habakkuk, 1QpHab, the most frequently discussed specimen of this genre.\(^\text{16}\) In the interpretation of Hab 2:1–3, at the transition from Col. VI to Col. VII, the relationship between text and interpretation is considered first. Both the text and interpretation refer to the final generation (VII 2), the end (VII 7, 12). This is the time when the Qumran community lives as the final generation of the end time, guided by the “Teacher of Righteousness” and surrounded by hostile groups in their own people, in the people and land of God, to which the words of the prophets refer (I 16–II 9). But the prophetic text contains a mystery which God has not made known to Habakkuk and which requires interpretation: the “completion of time” (VII 2). Not that the text did not contain this knowledge. Indeed, it is only through the text that scribal interpretation brings this knowledge to light. But in order to extract knowledge from the wording of the text according to all the rules of interpretation, additional revelation is necessary. This was given to the “Teacher of Righteousness,” to whom God had revealed the secrets of the words of his servants, the prophets (VII 4f; in I 8f to the “priest”; in Sir 39:1–3, 6 to the learned sage).

What is the meaning of this revelation of God’s mysteries? It is not simply identical to the interpretation of the prophetic words in the pesharim. The “Teacher of Righteousness” is not the author of the pesharim, and so there is no contradiction between the special revelation and the methods of text interpretation. We are in fact dealing with a hermeneutical principle, which reveals the deeper meaning of prophetical sayings and enables interpreters to elicit this hidden knowledge, the “completion of time,” through their interpretative methods. The hermeneutical principle is simple, but successful: the end of time stretches out far beyond what the prophets have said (IQPhab VII 7f). This means that all calculations subject to the regulation of divine times (IQPhab VII 12–14) have to be repeatedly recalculated and temporally stretched, and that all the words of the prophets have to be rewritten time and again to suit contemporary events and persons. And this is exactly what happens in the pesharim.

Thus, we see an inspired and also scribal culture of interpretation in the pesharim of Qumran. The interpretation regards the text of prophetic books as authoritative. Hence, the interpreter confronts this text with the experi-

ences of his own time and extracts newly formulated answers for questions of the present. Quoting accurately and fully, the interpretation retains the wording of the transmitted text, apart from a few variations which in some cases are very meaningful and adapted to suit the interpretation. On the basis of this authoritative text, whose essence has been transmitted unchanged and according those divine hermeneutics mediated by the “Teacher of Righteousness,” the interpretation at the same time goes beyond the text in that it updates time and addressees. Thus, unconditional textual fidelity and the greatest freedom with respect to the text’s literal sense go hand in hand. For as the pesher puts it, the texts of the prophets inspired by God are inexhaustible and his mysteries are astounding (1QpHab VII 8).

The pesher was not canonised. It already presupposes a more or less fixed stock of writings and, even though the interpretation is inspired and explicates the prophetic words’ deeper meaning, it does not itself count as scripture. The genre is defined by a strict distinction between the transmitted text as lemma and its interpretation, while at the same time this distinction is reinforced by the genre, which in this way is contributing to the canonisation of the prophetic books. Nevertheless, pesher interpretation can be found also in the biblical writings themselves.

The name and the method of pesher interpretation are encountered in the interpretation of dreams and riddles in Genesis 40–41 and Daniel 2; 4–5; and 7. However, as the forerunner of the technique of interpretation and with precedent in the ancient Near East, this method is not a real parallel to the pesharim of Qumran. The interpretation known as pesher (ptr, pšr) does not deal with written documents but with dreams or other divine signs. One of the striking differences to the ancient Near Eastern divination and omen science is the fact that, in the Qumran pesharim, the specialists for dream and omen interpretation – i.e. the prophets, including dream interpreter and visionary Daniel – are not the interpreters, but are themselves the subject of the interpretation. Only Daniel 7 marks a transition; unlike Dan 2:19–23, Daniel himself does not understand the night vision sent by God, but receives an explanation from a third party, God himself in the form of the angelus interpres.

However, in another chapter of the book of Daniel, namely Dan 9, we are much closer to the hermeneutic principles of pesher interpretation.18

17 In Qumran, he was regarded as being one of the prophets. See 4Q174 (4QFlor) II 3; 11Q13 (11QMelch) II 18.

18 See Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation, 482–489; Steck, Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis, 131–133; R. G. Kratz, Translatio imperii: Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Danielerzählungen und ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld (WMANT
Although the word “pesher” is not used here, the nature of scripture use and interpretation are the same.

The “scriptural” starting point is the 70-year prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 25:11f; 29:10), which Daniel is thinking about (Dan 9:2). It is the only case in the Hebrew Bible, where, as in the pesharim, a particular passage is quoted and explicitly exposed as being an exegetical problem. Daniel turns to God in prayer (9:3, 4–19), to confess the sins of his people, and thereupon receives clarification on the meaning of the previously mentioned passage: the announcement of the interpretation is 9:20, 21–23, the interpretation itself is 9:24–27.

The problem is also laid out in a similar manner as in the pesharim. It is the number of the seventy years “for Babel” which is taken to be the deadline for the coming of the end. The problem of this number is that – according to the (fictional) chronological framework of the book of Daniel, the time between the Babylonian kings and the Persian king Cyrus (1:21; 6:29; 10:1, cf. 2 Chr 36:20f) – the seventy years have almost or already expired both in the first year of the ominous Median king Darius in which Dan 9 is dated and in the author’s own lifetime in the 2nd century B.C.E. Thus, the end should already have taken place but did not come yet, and this is what provokes the question of when the end will come and who is concerned.

The solution of this exegetical problem is based on two sources of revelation. On the one hand, the text itself is regarded as authoritative and is quoted and comprehensively interpreted; on the other hand, an angel mediates additional divine revelation, which determines the interpretation. How closely the interpretation is related to scripture is shown by the other passages in the Hebrew Bible referring to the issue of 70 years, which, alongside Jer 25:11f and 29:10, are quoted or alluded to: Zech 1:12 and 7:5 for the “ruins of Jerusalem” instead of the time “for Babel” in Jeremiah 25 and 29; also 2 Chr 36:20 f., 22 f. and Ezra 1, which refers to Leviticus 26, for the “completion” (cf. Jer 29:10) of the Sabbath years up to the first year of the reign of Cyrus (II) and the rebuilding of the temple. Both the dating in Dan 9:1 and the interpretation of the seventy years in Dan 9:24–27 refer to these events. However, even on the basis of these (inner-biblical) scriptural references, the passage in Jeremiah is evidently not yet – or rather, no longer – sufficiently understood. A special revelation is required, which reveals the deeper understanding of this mysterious prophecy.

Finally, we have the exegetical solution to the problem itself, which already follows the same path as the Qumran *pesharim* later. Time is stretched and the deadline is prolonged: the seventy years are understood as seventy “year weeks,” that is, 7 x 70 = 490 years (or 10 jubilees as in 11QMelch), and they extend far beyond the time of the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel into the lifetime of the author and readers of the book of Daniel around the middle of the 2nd century B.C.E. Also the point of reference of the prophecy is extended: the 70 years or 70 “year weeks” are not only a time limit “for Babel” and the Babylonian Gola nor for the “ruins of Jerusalem” and the temple alone (thus Zech 1:12 and 2 Chronicles 36). Rather, they have also to do with the people as a whole who are burdened by sin and face judgment (Dan 9:24, cf. 8:19, 23 and the prayer of repentance 9:4–19). Also, the chronological order is made more concrete with events and persons in contemporary time, here the desecration of the temple under Antioch IV, which also relates past and future.

Daniel 9 is an astounding parallel that makes the book of Daniel appear as a “canonised pesher.” But the *pesharim* strictly separate text and interpretation from one another, whereas the interpretation in Daniel 9 is in a book that is not a commentary on the book of Jeremiah, though even here the textual basis and interpretation are explicitly distinguished. For its part, Daniel ranks in Qumran as scripture, specifically as a prophetic book. Whether the author of the book of Daniel understood himself as being an inspired interpreter of the authoritative “canonical” books from which he quotes, or as the author of such a book, is hard to say and probably not an appropriate question. He does not yet make the distinction between text and interpretation, as do the Qumran *pesharim*. He is at once an interpreter and author. This teaches us that it is not important whether or when a book became classified and was understood as “canonical,” but whether or not it involves the principle of interpreting other texts. This is clearly the case in Daniel 9, as well as in other books, which were later not classified as canonical. The literary development of a (biblical) writing to which a (non-biblical) interpretation refers already flows in the stream of the same tradition.

Incidentally, this stream of tradition can be seen not only in the relationship of Daniel to Jeremiah and other passages in Daniel 9, but also in the relationship of Daniel 9 to its own literary context, to which the chapter displays numerous literary and conceptual connections. As a closer analysis...
Reinhard G. Kratz shows, Daniel 9 is a literary supplement in the book of Daniel. Following the example of all the visions in Dan 7–12, which already reinterpret the collection of narratives in Daniel 1–6 and its chronological framework, especially the timeframe of seventy years in 1:1, 21; 6:29, Dan 9, in addition, reinterprets also the eschatological perspective of the visions in Daniel 7–8 and 10–12 in the spirit of a Deuteronomistic view of history. The chapter is not a sporadic, separate addition, but fits in a carefully considered manner into the whole composition of the book of Daniel. Both the interpretation of the “scriptures” and the productive self-interpretation of the book of Daniel in Daniel 9 demonstrate inner-biblical exegesis in the composition and literary growth of biblical books, the prophetic books in particular.

One might object against this far reaching conclusions of the comparison between the formation of biblical books and the *pesharim* from Qumran that, with the book of Daniel, we already find ourselves in the time of the formation of canon and the beginning of interpretive literature, not long before Qumran, and these findings thus have little significance for older biblical literature. But like the Qumran *pesharim*, the example of the book of Daniel only makes explicit the hermeneutical principles that must have been a governing factor in the books of the prophets from the beginning, provided that the written tradition was of any importance to the scribes who transmitted the biblical books. Shortly after the death of a prophet, at the latest from the 7th century B.C.E. onwards, questions must have arisen about to what time period and to whom the oracles of Amos, Hosea, or Isaiah from the eighth century refer. The constant appeal to the seventy years in Jeremiah, Zechariah, 2 Chronicles 36 / Ezra 1 as well as Daniel 1 and 9 speaks for itself, and this detail reveals the basic conviction that triggered the entire tradition of the prophets and kept the ball rolling from the first collections up to the final shape of the books and the beginning of their external interpretation.21

The fundamental conviction was the long-term effect of God’s word in the words of his prophets. Without this conviction, we would not have a single biblical prophetic book, not even a prophetic word as offered in the biblical books, and the chance discoveries of archaeology have so far not brought such a book to light. Only this conviction allowed an application to other times and other circumstances. It permeates both the transmission and the

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20 See Kratz, “Visions.”
supplementation (*Fortschreibung*) of the books of the prophets. Interpretation begins with the first writing of an oracle, which has or has not come to fulfilment, presumably in the literary context of a small collection. The process of inner-biblical exegesis begins as soon as the first written fixation of a prophetic saying becomes the matrix for further supplementations up to the present book. Besides the genre and the various interests involved, this applies more or less to the other traditions, such as law, wisdom, psalms and narrative literature.\(^{22}\)

It goes without saying that both the differences in the transmitted text, as well as the relationship between biblical text and interpretation in the *pesharim* were regarded as “coherent” by ancient scribes and recipients. What they perceived as “incoherence” refers to the relationship of the text to historical reality. This “incoherence” is balanced by a divine revelation as the hermeneutical key and by the interpretation in the *pesharim*, and is declared “coherent.” The modern scholar, however, notices both the incoherences between text and reality, and between text and interpretation. This allows us to question critically and deconstruct the relationship between text and interpretation, and by so doing, explain it historically.

### 3. Citation and Rewriting

The biblical books are cited and commented upon not only in commentaries, but also in other works. Allusions, quotations, and excerpts up to reformulations of entire books are what dominate Jewish literature between Mikra and Talmud. They are found in non-biblical (or para-biblical) writings from Qumran, in the so-called Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, which are in part also attested within the Dead Sea Scrolls, alongside Hellenistic poets and historians such as Philo and Josephus, in the New Testament, as well as in rabbinic and early Christian literature. In contrast to the *pesharim*, the text usually is not cited specifically so that it can then be interpreted, but inserted into the new text. Today, this type of text use is increasingly discussed in terms of interpretation and reception history and summarised under the title of rewritten bible or rewritten scripture.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{23}\) See M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRI 2/2; Philadel-
In order to forge a pathway through the thicket of this literary mass, it is advisable to reduce the phenomena to the main categories and to limit ourselves to a few examples. Referring mainly to the non-biblical texts of Qumran and the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, I will focus, on the one hand, on explicit or implicit citations and allusions to biblical texts and content and, on the other hand, on excerpts or paraphrases of biblical books. The transitions between various types of text use are fluid, but the different categories can be distinguished from one another.

The explicit text citation (quotation) is closest to the pesher method, but it performs a different function. In Qumran, apart from the pesharim, we encounter explicit citations with and without interpretation, but in the Apocrypha they are without explicit interpretation. As far as thematic midrashim (e.g. 4QMidrEschat = 4Q174 + 4Q177) or excerpts (e.g. 4QTest = 4Q175) are concerned, citations are similar to those in the pesharim. They


26 Steudel, Midrasch, 170–187.
27 Dimant, “Use and Interpretation of Mikra.”
are cited in order to be interpreted, although here it is the theme, not the biblical book, that directs the selection of citation and the character of the work.

Otherwise, citations are explained entirely in the context of the work in which they are written (1QS V 15, 17; VII 13f; 1QM X 6–8; XI 5–7, 11f; CD I 13f, etc.; Tob 2:6, 8:6, etc.). The text is not cited in order to be interpreted, but to interpret a new context, to reaffirm or explain the statement with a biblical (divine) word. This is also the case where an explicit interpretation with corresponding interpretation formula follows (CD IV 14, see also VII 13–VIII 1 in manuscript A1). The interpretation here has the function of explaining the contribution of the citation to the context. On the other hand, it is clear that the commentary on the context using text citation without interpretation also assumes a corresponding understanding of the quoted passage and its interpretation. Citation and context are mutually interpretive.

Regarding the text form of explicit citation, we find, as in the pesharim, slight, sometimes more serious, deviations from the Masoretic text, possibly caused by textual, mnemotechnical, or content issues. Particularly interesting are cases where deviations occur in manuscripts of the same work. Even formulations that are not given in the biblical text in that particular form, can be set forth as being citations without further ado. Incidentally, the category of explicit citation also includes reminiscences of biblical characters and stories.

Even more than explicit allusions, implicit allusions to biblical texts or motives are embedded in the context of a new composition, and it is not always easy to identify them. This is owing to the fact that, apart from citations that are (almost) literal but not declared as such, the possibilities include quotation from memory, allusions, and free formulation of a particular text passage, of an entire text, or of a genre after a biblical model. We can frequently observe it in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha and Ben Sira.

It is primarily the implicit quotations, coupled with a propensity for the biblical language, which give the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and the

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29 See 4QMMT and CD IV 15.
30 See Sir 16:6–10; 44–49; 1 Macc 2:49–69 or individual cases as in Isaiah 36–37 // 2 Kings 18 f. in 1 Macc 7,41; Genesis 34 in Judith 9:2–4; Jubilees 30 and TestLevi 2:1f.; 5–7; furthermore, the historical reminiscences in Tobit, Judith, the explicit reference to biblical books in Bar, Epler, Add Dan and Add Esth, PrMan, 1 Enoch; 4 Ezra and the parabiblical material from Qumran (see Brooke, "Parabiblical Prophetic Narratives").
31 See e.g. Isa 11:2, 4f in 1QSb V 21, 24–26; Prov 10:2 or 11:4 in Tob 4:10; Num 23:19 in Judith 8:16; Psa 146:4 in 1 Macc 2:63.
Dead Sea Scrolls their biblical veneer. This is undoubtedly deliberate. The cited books (which later became “biblical”) are already so highly regarded that they give authority to the new literary productions, and vice versa literary references to the biblical books increases their prestige and promotes the process of authorisation and canonisation. Moreover, like the explicit citations yet even more so, implicit citations control the understanding of the new text formulated with them. At the same time, they reveal how the underlying biblical text should be read, and this reading is literarily productive in the citations. Usually, reception, reworking, and supplementation of the biblical material is done outside their biblical Vorlage (with and without explicit reference to them), but it sometimes occurs within it (Additions to Daniel and Esther); it may also occur as a kind of external Fortschreibung, being a separate composition which places itself within the narrative framework of its biblical Vorlage (Baruch, Epistula Iermiae).

The literary horizon of explicit and implicit citations is usually not very broad. The selection of the citation is mostly motivated by the immediate context of the receiver text, regardless of the context of the donor text. It is different with allusions to wider biblical contexts, imitations of biblical role models, or updates of biblical tradition. Here too, the wider contexts of receiver and donor text are taken into account, such as the story of Genesis 24 in Tobit;\(^{32}\) the literary framework of Jeremiah in Baruch and Epistula Ieremiae;\(^ {33}\) the book of Daniel and the book of Esther in the Greek supplements; and the sequence of books forming the biblical canon in Ben Sira 44–49. The more the new compositions move closer to the biblical sources, the closer they approach the next category, that of rewriting whole books.

Although rewriting is related to citation, it is another category. Citations, allusions, imitations and supplementation (Fortschreibung) are related to one or more Vorlagen, to which they make either explicit or implicit reference, but they create a new work. In contrast, rewriting usually has only one main Vorlage. It refers back to this Vorlage, reproduces it, sometimes cites other texts, and interprets the Vorlage. The rewritten text moves between text transmission (including translation) and literary supplementation (Fortschreibung) and revision directed by interpretation. The

\(^{32}\) See P. Deselaers, Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie (OBO 43; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1982), 293–304.

examples, such as the *Reworked Pentateuch* 4Q364–367 (with a flowing transition from biblical manuscript to rewriting), the Book of Jubilees, Genesis-Apocryphon 1QapGen (aram.), 1 Enoch 6–11, Temple Scroll 11Q 19–20, various versions of the Psalter, in particular 11QPs, 3 Ezra (1 Ezra), as well as Josephus, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, and other Jewish historians and tragedians, therefore range from excerpts to complete reformulations and revisions of a Vorlage.

Unlike the *pesher* and the citations, in rewritings the use of scriptures is neither eclectic nor atomistic. The rewriting of whole books has the entire composition in mind, which it takes over or rearranges by deleting, changing, or adding text. Rewriting occurs *per se* outside the Vorlage. But by reproducing it, no matter how close to the original text, the interpretation is simultaneously operating within the Vorlage. Is the rewriting therefore a new edition of the biblical book, equal to or even superior in canonical status? Is it supposed to replace the biblical Vorlage or be transmitted alongside and in conjunction with it? Is it indeed a different work, or simply a different version of the biblical book, that is, a “biblical” manuscript (as for example in the case of *Reworked Pentateuch*)?

These questions are not easy to answer because the rewritings remain silent about it. Only in one place, in Jubilees 1, do we find a reflection on how a rewriting conceives of itself. According to this passage Moses is on Mount Sinai (Exod 19–24) and receives from God himself (Jub 1:5, 7, 26), or from the angel of the presence, who represents God’s word (1:27; 2:1) the written divisions of the times, the earlier and coming things, dictated for Moses by either God (1:1 and in some manuscripts 1:26) or the angel (1:27), combined with the task of writing these things in a book (1:5, 7, 26; 2:1). It is ostensibly the story of how the *Book of Jubilees* came into being, which recapitulates the story of Genesis 1–Exodus 14, taking into account the ensuing giving of the law on Mount Sinai in the Pentateuch. What Moses writes down, then, is

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34 Examples are also to be found among the parabiblical texts from Qumran, provided that the excerpts and paraphrases of biblical texts and scenes are not in a completely different context.

nothing more than the sum of the Pentateuch in the sense of the “earlier and
the later history of the division of all the days of the law and of the testimony”
(Jub 1:4; for the time afterwards see the historical preview in 1:5, 6ff).

The Book of Jubilees tells about how this very composition came into
being, and is thus at the same time a story of how the Pentateuch came
into being. Jubilees wants to provide evidence for “the heavenly prototype
of the qualified chronology of the ‘law’ and the qualified course of time of
‘testimony,’”36 i.e., as the “heavenly prototype” for history and law in the
Pentateuch, which is valid for all ages. It is also a Sinaitic model for the tran-
script made by Moses in the land of Moab (Deut 31:9). The fact that the story
of Genesis 1–Exodus 14 is not simply reproduced, but embedded in the scene
of Exodus 19–24 which acts as a hermeneutical framework, contradicts the
assumption that the “heavenly prototype” is meant to replace the biblical
model. Rather, the Book of Jubilees directs the reader to read the transmitted
Pentateuch through the hermeneutic framework of Sinai in such a way as
the “prototype” intends, showing how, when guided by the Book of Jubilees,
the prototype is to be found also in the Pentateuch. In short: according to
Jubilees 1, the rewriting is not supposed to suppress the original, but owing
to the rewriting presented as being a “heavenly prototype,” the original is
put into the proper perspective.

We cannot simply apply the hermeneutical construction from the Book
of Jubilees to all rewritings of biblical texts. Nevertheless, it makes clear
that rewriting does not diminish the authority of a biblical source, but on
the contrary, reinforces it, even or especially when it claims for itself the
divine copyright. Other evidence points in the same direction, such as the
interpretation of the law in 4QMMT and the Damascus Document (CD),
which use scripture to justify laws which are not found in scripture as
such;37 the thematic foci in the interpretation of the Pentateuch, as pointed
out by Moshe Bernstein,38 which suggest that the biblical texts should not
be revised or replaced, but only worked out in more detail and updated
at certain points, especially with Noah and Abraham. To some extent,
rewritings are inner-biblical exegesis outside the Bible. Since the literary
processing associated with rewriting takes place outside at the same time as
within the biblical Vorlage, rewritings lend themselves in particular to com-

36 See O. H. Steck, “Die getöneten »Zeugen« und die verfolgten »Tora-Sucher« in Jub 1,12:
38 Ibid. 137.
comparison with literary and redactional historical reconstructions within the
biblical books.39

The closest parallel for citation and paraphrase within the Hebrew Bible
is the book of Chronicles, in which interpretation and literary reworking of
the original (Genesis–Judges, Samuel–Kings) also go hand in hand.40 Since
the Vorlage is preserved, it can be regarded as a test case for literary and
redactional critical reconstruction.41 But having said this, we cannot expect
too much. The fact that the two versions are transmitted here within the He-
brew canon, and in other cases either within the Greek canon or distributed
over canonical and non-canonical writings, makes no difference. The book
of Chronicles is a further instance of external evidence, but no more than
that. The same applies to the doublets within the biblical canon,42 which we
shall discuss below.

As with the extra-biblical evidence, Chronicles also shows all possible
ways of using scripture. On the one hand, it is an almost literal excerpt with
unintended and intended variants and with explicit or implicit citations
from sources other than the main Vorlage. On the other hand, it is a free
arrangement of the material streamlining or further working out of the
original. Furthermore, it shows omission of text or addition of special ma-
terial. All of this happened presumably not in one but in several consecutive
phases, though we lack empirical evidence for this claim.43

The hermeneutics in the relationship between the original and the
rewriting, which directs the literary adaptation, confirms the considerations
set out above concerning Jubilees 1.44 Chronicles itself is also based on a
certain theory of sources, which is modelled on the references to certain
sources in Samuel–Kings, but which develops these further. In its references,
Chronicles refers back to a “book of the kings of Judah and Israel,” in which
the records of prophets are collected together, where it is believed that each
time period had its own prophets who were writing down the events. This
theory has the purpose of ascribing the Vorlage of Genesis–Kings, the occa-

29–43.
40 T. Willi, Die Chronik als Auslegung: Untersuchungen zur literarischen Gestaltung der
historischen Überlieferung Israels (FRLANT 106; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,
1972).
41 W. Johnstone, “Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with
42 See below n. 60.
43 See R.G. Kratz, The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament (London:
44 See Kratz, “Die Suche nach Identität.”
sionally cited prophetic books and psalms, and their “reproduction” in the book of Chronicles itself to an underlying prophetically inspired common source. This gives both the Vorlage and the book of Chronicles authority, neither replacing nor supplementing the Vorlage nor simply interpreting or commenting it, but wanting to “re-present” it in a proper way.

This theory of sources in Chronicles wants to suggest that in its “re-pre-
sentation,” which is in fact a literary reworking and Fortschreibung, the spirit of the beginning prevails, and in it the text of the Vorlage is “re-presented” in the formulation that Chronicles offers – a formulation that correlates the time of the First Temple with that of the Second Temple. The “re-presenta-
tion” directs the reader to the original, and the updating controls understanding. The book of Chronicles, like all rewritings of biblical books, is also a guide for reading precisely these books of the nascent canon. The fact that in the case of Chronicles the reading guide has itself entered into the canon is probably due to the fact that it overviews the entire tradition, Torah and (Former and Latter) Prophets, including the book of Psalms.

Again, one could raise objections that the book of Chronicles is a rather recent work, which, like the para-biblical analogies, already presupposes a virtually completed canon or at least the completed composition of the bib-
lical books used, and that the example therefore adds little to the discussion. But the phenomenon of rewritten bible has already been documented earlier in the writings of the Hebrew Bible. For this reason, we will now turn to the cases in which the empirically demonstrable phenomena of citation and re-
formulation are encountered in the same literary context as in the biblical books. The examples are legion, so just a few will be mentioned.

The best example of the category of citation are the literal restatements, i.e. quotations, literary allusions, imitations, and variations of formulations which are found not only in the relationship between Trito- and Deutero-
Isaiah, but also within the two literary blocks of Isaiah 40–55 and 56–66. And if we draw Isaiah 12 or 35 (// 40 // 49 // 60–62) into the calculation, such citations are found throughout the entire book. In addition to the citation of passages within the same literary context we also find citations from other sources, especially those from the book of Jeremiah in Deutero-
Isaiah (from Isaiah 40 onwards). The book of Isaiah, on the other hand, is

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46 Kratz, Prophetenstudien, 198–232; B. D. Sommer, “Allusions and Illusions: The Unity
cited in other biblical books, such as in 2 Chr 20:20 (Isa 7:9), or in Daniel (9:27; 10:10, 22, 26, 40 / Isa 8: 8; 28: 2; Dan 11:36 / Isa 10: 22–27).

The phenomenon is not confined to Isaiah. Apart from the peculiarities of individual books, it can be observed in the entire corpus propheticum. We need think only of the doublets and the “Deuteronomistic” formulations in the book of Jeremiah, the redundancies and the many allusions to the symbolic acts of other prophets in the book of Ezekiel, or the literary interconnections of the books comprising the book of the Twelve. The historical books and the writings, especially Psalms and Proverbs, are also full of self-citations and citations of other sources. Examples in Genesis include the promises; the many variants of the wife-sister-narrative (Genesis 12; 20; and 26); in the book of Deuteronomy, examples are the Decalogue (Exodus 20; 34; and Deuteronomy 5); the summarised recapitulations of the revelations on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19–Numbers 10) and the wandering in the wilderness (Numbers 10–36); in Joshua–Kings, examples are the speeches and other Deuteronomistic pledges; and in the Psalms, examples are the combinations of citations (e.g., Psalm 1; 100; 105–106; cf. Nehemiah 9; Psalm 135; 145–150). These cases are only the tip of the iceberg.

However, because the identification and demarcation of citations is not always clear-cut, it remains a matter of controversy in scholarship. Explicit citation is rare in the Hebrew Bible, and in prophetic literature it is almost non-existent. As a rule we find implicit citation and more or less verbatim allusions to formulations, persons, and content. This certainly has something to do with the fact that the biblical writings were not yet completed and canonical. Explicit citation begins, not without reason, with the collection of books that first acquired canonical validity, i.e., the Torah of Moses. This does not mean, however, that the early books, during the

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47 The quote of Micah of Moresheth in Jer 26:18 (Mic 3:12) is an exception; the book of Jeremiah quotes itself in Jer 25:13 and also 30:2; 36: 45:1; 51:60; cf. Isa 8:16; 30:8; Ezek 2:8ff; 24:2; 43:11; Hab 2:2. In the remaining literature reference is often made to books which are unknown to us, lost or invented, and quoted (Josh 10:12f); the formula “as is written in,” however, refers to the Torah only (cf. the evidence in ThWAT 4:390 f., 393f). If we include the allusions to biblical persons and stories, it is a quite different situation. The following prophets are mentioned by name: Isaiah (in 2 Kings 18–19 // Isaiah 36–39 and also 2 Chr 26:22; 32:20, 32), Jeremiah (in 2 Chr 36:12 and v. 21–22 // Ezra 1:1 and also Daniel 9), Haggai and Zechariah (in Ezra 5:1; 6:14), other prophets are mentioned in the prophetic narratives of the historical books, as well as in the sources of the book of Chronicles. Conversely, in the prophetic literature the sacred history is recalled every so often, to a great extent in e.g. Hosea 9–13.
process of their formation and growth, were not really worth citing. There was no difference between citations (explicit and implicit) and verbal sayings of God, the prophets or other persons in the biblical texts, or explicit references to any other books (actually existing or fictitious). Rather, it seems to be the speeches and deeds of the sacred history, and the reference to ancient sources, which gave the texts a special status from the very outset and made them citable.

This conclusion is confirmed by external evidence. Explicit citation is also the exception in Chronicles, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and in the Qumran writings apart from the pesharim and similar works. As is clearly documented by the pesharim, the other uses of scripture, the manuscripts, and the evidence of the two- or perhaps three-part canon in 4QMMT, a pre-canonical collection of biblical books, especially Torah, Prophets, and Psalms (David), had long been established. Yet other writings still preferred implicit citations and continued to refer to ancient books that no longer or never existed. Thus, it is not the canonical status of a book that makes the citations, but the citations which make the canon. And this applies not only to the writings of the late period, but to the biblical books in general, which, like Chronicles and the other rewritings, in substance consists of literary citations of themselves and other biblical sources.

Rewriting a biblical book within the same book is rare, but it does occur. It is immediately recognisable in at least two cases: first, the repetition in Exodus 32–34 of the Sinaitic law from Exodus 19–24; and second, the recapitulation of the Sinai-pericope and the wandering in the wilderness (Exodus + Numbers) in the farewell speech of Moses in the land of Moab (Deut). In Deuteronomy, we can distinguish between two further strata: one is the corpus of law (Exodus 20–23 // Deuteronomy 12–30; cf. also Leviticus 17–27) and another is the historical scene at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19–24 + 32–34 // Deuteronomy 4–11 including the Decalogue in Exodus 20; 34; and Deuteronomy 5) and in the desert (Num 10ff // Deut 1–3; 31–34). In both cases, the scenic fiction provides the motive for the repetition in the same literary narrative context: the fall of man and the broken tablets in Exodus 19–24 and 32–34, the imminent death of Moses (Numbers 27 and

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48 4Q394–399, the canonical books (Moses, Prophets and, if the reading is correct, David) in 4Q397 Fr. 14–21 l. 10 = 4Q398 Fr. 14–17 l. 5; see R.G. Kratz, “Mose und die Propheten: Zur Interpretation von 4QMMT C,” in From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumraniens en hommage à Émile Puech (ed. F. García Martínez et al.; STDJ 61; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 151–176. The designation corresponds roughly to the inventory assumed by the “Hymn in Honour of Our Ancestors” in Sirach 44–49 and mentioned by the grandson in his Greek foreword.
Deuteronomy 31–34), and the promulgation and literary fixation of the law of Sinai in Deuteronomy.

Other examples are less evident, or require a literary critical analysis, which not everyone recognises as being possible or necessary. However, I would mention the relationship between the texts of Priestly and non-Priestly writings in the books of Genesis–Numbers, whose differentiation on literary-critical grounds is generally acknowledged even by critics of literary criticism. If we accept that the Priestly writing was originally independent, then we have to deal with the interesting case that the (non-priestly) Vorlage and the (priestly) rewriting evolved separately from each other and were secondarily combined.49

As in the case of the non-biblical examples and in Chronicles, the literary relationship of the various rewritings in the Pentateuch is likewise characterized by fidelity to the Vorlage and far-reaching changes. From literal citation to free formulation, from the adoption of the structure to confident (re-) arrangement of the material, all possibilities are represented. The literary reformulation of the Vorlage in a new context of the same work, such as the Pentateuch, has the entire Vorlage in view. When looking at the hermeneutics in relation to Vorlage and rewriting, however, the question arises whether it makes a difference that a rewriting took place as a Fortschreibung within the same literary context, or as a separate writing outside the Vorlage. One difference is undoubtedly that, in rewriting within the same work, the motive for the rewriting follows from the course of the action, whereas in the external rewritings it is either not mentioned, or has to be artificially manufactured by an elaborate theory of sources (Chronicles, Jubilees). In addition, the reworking in the work itself offers the possibility of completely preserving the original. As a result, and decisively for literary- and redaction-critical analysis, old and new texts exist alongside each other, and the new text cannot really be understood without the old text. With external rewriting, we only have the result of the reformulation, the new text, which can be read in its own right, but that requires the knowledge of the original for complete understanding.

Finally, the external difference in effect marks an authority gradient: book-internal rewriting became canonical together with its Vorlage, which was not usually the case with external rewriting. However, we should be clear that this does not really signify much because the book of Chronicles still found its way into the Hebrew canon, the Apocrypha into the Greek and Latin canons, and the Book of Jubilees (which among others was highly

49 See Kratz, Composition, 97–152 and 223–308.
valued at Qumran) into the Ethiopian canon. In terms of hermeneutic principles, or in other words, in the “emic” perspective, book-internal reworking and external rewriting are in any case in agreement. Whether or not it became canonical, the rewriting is supposed to interpret the original, but not replace it. It is precisely the rewrites within the Pentateuch, which preserve both versions in the same literary context, that make us realise that Vorlage and rewriting were regarded as complementary and mutually interpretive items.

This is the evidence. A separate question is how to explain this evidence genetically. Since citations and allusions are neither immediately nor with certitude identifiable, we often refer to the scribe’s special style, characteristic expressions or a distinctive tradition behind the texts rather than to literary dependency. The rewrites in the Pentateuch, the various sources, and Deuteronomy, among other similar phenomena are usually explained from the (oral or written) prehistory rather than from a history of continuous interpretation. Nevertheless, a very different picture is revealed by the evidence in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also in the writings from Qumran. The latter, although demonstrably dependent on biblical sources, could and did deal quite freely with them, irrespective of the attributed authority. Aspects such as the authority of the text and freedom in dealing with it, literary dependence and the integration of foreign material, preservation and updating of the text are not contradictions in the “emic” perspective, but are mutually dependent in how the books come into being.

Therefore, we have to explain explicit and implicit citations in and between the biblical books, as well as the phenomenon of rewriting, in the same way as with the extra- and post-biblical examples. They are the scribal interpretation and literary reformulation of a literary Vorlage, but here in the context of the Vorlage itself, i.e. as inner-biblical exegesis in the true sense of the term. Other questions are, What is the Vorlage and what is the interpretation? Did they come to be in one or multiple steps? This is where the methods of literary and redactional criticism come into play.

4. Transmission and Translation

Before we come to literary and redaction history, there is still another example of inner-biblical exegesis for which there is empirical evidence. It is a well-known phenomenon of textual criticism. Both the manuscripts of the Masoretes and the different versions of the biblical text, notably the Septuagint and the Targumim, show very clearly that the transmission of
the text in its original language as well as in translation means not only maintenance of the text (**Textpflege**) but also of the meaning (**Sinnpflege**).\(^50\)

The copying and translating of the biblical books always goes hand in hand with interpretation. This phenomenon is illustrated beautifully by the Dead Sea Scrolls, both the bible manuscripts and the manuscripts of non-biblical works.\(^51\) Here we can study quasi *in statu nascendi* the various scribal practices and multiple variants in an early period, sometimes immediately after and sometimes during the completion of biblical writings.

The first thing we notice is the diversity of the text traditions in the period from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 1st century C.E. Emanuel Tov has divided it into four different and partially overlapping categories:

1. M-like text;
2. pre-Samaritan texts;
3. texts close to the presumed Hebrew source of the Septuagint (G);
4. a cluster of non-aligned texts.

In addition, there are the text versions of citations in non-biblical writings and excerpts.\(^52\)

Eugene Ulrich believes that this classification is still too narrow, and he reckons with a wealth of “successive literary editions.” The diversity proves that at this time there was no standardised text and that the biblical text was still in the making, so that conceptions of its “correct” wording differ

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\(^52\) Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 107–110; this classification has slightly changed compared to the earlier editions of Tov’s monograph; see also idem, “Die biblischen Handschriften aus der Wüste Juda – Eine neue Synthese,” in *Die Textfunde vom Toten Meer und der Text der Hebräischen Bibel* (ed. U. Dahmen et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 1–34.
widely. In this respect, the various text witnesses as such are witnesses to exegesis within the bible in the process of textual formation.

In individual cases, however, it is not always easy to decide what the scribe and translator intended or whether text variants were random or conscious changes. It seems unclear where maintenance of the text (Textpflege) ends and maintenance of the meaning (Sinnpflege) begins. But from the “emic” perspective, an either/or or alternative is probably wrong. Even a slavish copy of a manuscript such as the proto-Masoretic (or proto-rabbinic) group of texts and Masoretic manuscripts, or a literal and concise translation, such as that of the Psalms, still intends to preserve the text strictly as found. Fidelity to the letter is the ruling principle of interpretation. Of course, scribal errors and other unintentional corruptions of the text do occur in the process. However, as the insertion of corrections in the manuscripts proves, scribes were aware of this and respected the “correctness” of the text. This presupposes a keen interest in the meaning of what is being copied and transmitted.

The same applies to the more formal practices of the scribes and the Masoretes, such as the script, orthography, word and sentence breaks, text division, structuring signs, and annotations to the text. These are found both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Masoretic manuscripts, and in some cases, were inserted secondarily. They are not always easy to understand and allow – intentionally or not – different interpretations. However, they also follow the exegetical principle of text preservation. They want to safe-


guard the text by structuring its presentation, making the grammatical and syntactic structure recognisable, and pointing out specific features, possible errors, uncertain or incomprehensible readings or variants.

An even clearer language is spoken by the different interpretations that appear in scribes’ marginal notes, or in the comparison of the manuscripts and versions: morphological and semantic variants, surpluses and minuses in the text, different textual arrangements. It is true that the readings which are offered are primarily used to safeguard the text, but the variants differ from mere copy and scribal practices because they document a different text, and thus, in some places, an intervention into the textual substance. The reasons for intervening are often hidden, making it almost impossible to decide which is the primary reading. Occasionally, for example in the Samaritan glosses, the direction of dependency and, with it, the interpretation process is obvious. The vast majority of cases lies between these two extremes.

Using the example of Hab 1:11–12, Arie van der Kooij has demonstrated the importance of variants in manuscripts and versions, including the evidence in non-biblical texts, for interpretation and reception history. How the biblical text is cited in the *pesharim*, as well as the citations and reformulations within other books, show that interpretation is often inserted into text reproduction. Therefore, we must assume that this is also the case for the choice of readings in the biblical text. This does not mean that the text

58 Recently, due to the findings from the Dead Sea, a frequently held view is that the original text never existed. This may be correct on the whole, but not for individual readings, nor for the synonyms. They cannot have been created at different places and in different versions independently of one another, but must have had their origin somewhere, in order that they be either adopted or altered. But then we have the unavoidable question of which reading is the more original (not necessarily the original) or older and in which direction do we have dependency? The same applies to deviations on a large scale, whether primarily in the arrangement (e.g. Psalter) or in the version of the text (Jeremiah, Daniel, etc.). On this problem, see Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 161–169.
was set forth and written down however one wished, but rather – from the “emic” perspective – the congruence of text and interpretation is an expression of the fact that the interpretation also wants nothing more than to safeguard and preserve the text. The interpretation – whether in the text itself, or separated from it – simply wants to make explicit what the interpreter has found in the text, occasionally owing to additional revelation. Seen through the history of interpretation and reception, the text-critical variants move between Fortschreibung and commentary.

This leads us to a further point which has long been recognized in textual criticism, but for which the manuscripts from the Dead Sea have provided the first pre-Christian evidence. The transitions from textual history to literary and redaction history are fluid, and the closer we look, the more blurred they become. In the different text types or “successive literary editions” of textual history continues what begins with the genesis and compositional history of the biblical books. This is true of many of the smaller variants with a narrow literary horizon, but even more so with regard to complex variants up to different versions of the text, which are connected with the genesis and composition of whole books (Psalter, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc.).

No matter how they are explained in detail, all these phenomena of textual history have their conceptual implications, such that the changes from one stage to another of the text can or must be viewed from the vantage point of the interpretation and reception of the biblical text. The processes of text formation that are evidenced by manuscripts and versions (those with a Hebrew or Aramaic original), are only one side of textual history. On the other side, text history comes to expression (here too with fluid transitions) in the transmission and translation of the text which produce further


variants on a larger or smaller scale, extending to Midrash-like explorations in the translations, especially the Targumim, and rewritings of whole biblical books. These processes also serve to preserve the biblical text, and, as an interpretive principle, permeate the entire textual history, not just to the letter, but also in spirit.

Text transmission and translation are not extra-biblical analogies in the strict sense, but rather examples of inner-biblical exegesis, albeit with external evidence. Irrespective of the manuscript tradition, there are examples within the Bible itself: the duplicate traditions in the Hebrew Bible. Here, too, we are dealing with two representatives (recensions) of the same text. The same text-critical regularities and hermeneutical principles apply as in the comparison of manuscripts and versions of the same text. Nevertheless, it is not only a text-critical phenomenon. That would be the case if the duplicate traditions represented independent recensions. But this is only possible with the duplicates Psalm 14 // 53 and Psa 57:8–12 + 60:7–14 // 108, that are preserved in various collections which had previously been independent of the Psalter, though even here it is highly unlikely. Supporting literary dependency, and thus suggesting rewriting, is in the first case the variation of Psa 14:5 in 53:6 (see ‘nh in 1 Sam 26:3, 5), which is motivated by the context of the biography of David (Psa 52:2 and 54:2 according to 1 Sam 22:9ff; 23:19 and 26:1). The second case is the anthological character of Psalm 108, which is composed of more than just traditional formulas.

Likewise, with all the other parallel traditions, including Ezra 2 // Nehemiah 7, it seems to me that there is a more or less direct literary dependency. The qualification “more or less” is used here because we cannot exclude that dependency may be based on a text other than the Masoretic Text and that some variants can therefore be explained on text-historical grounds. The greater the text deviation, however, the more the theological intentions come to light. The deviations come from the scribe’s interpretation of the original according to the new context. As is sometimes the case with citations in extra-biblical literature, this is responsible for text variants, surplus and minus, etc. We are able to observe this most clearly in Chronicles, where we can study how, by means of inner-biblical exegesis, a new literary version of the Vorlage emerges from the textual transmission to safeguard and preserve the text. This, in turn, opens up a new chapter in the history of the text.

When we compare the manuscripts and the parallel traditions we can therefore observe features also suggested by literary and redaction-critical reconstruction: changes in the text ranging from the individual gloss to Fortschreibung and new versions of entire works. Even if we never reach all the stages of textual history, the external evidence provides us with sufficient criteria to understand inner-biblical exegesis, not only in the late stages of books, but also from the very beginning, as driving texts’ evolution and development. Likewise, the external evidence explains how textual and literary critical evidence are clues to the history of interpretation and reception in the genesis of the biblical books and the development of the biblical text.

With certain restrictions, we can say the same even about the translation into another language. Although it is exceptional within the Hebrew Bible, it does occur; and like later versions, it contributes to the interpretation and the literary growth of the biblical text. The best example is the gloss in Gen 31:47, which anticipates v. 48 and renders the etymology of the location Gal-ed “stone heap of witness” literally as Aramaic גִּרְעַן שְׁהֵדֹת אָם. It seems to me that the reason for this is not so much the idea that Laban and Jacob would have spoken different languages, but more as a means of locating the scene on the border for the Aramean Laban and the east-Jordanian Hebrew Jacob. This prompted the scribe to record bilingual names for the location only.

Another example of literarily productive translation within the Hebrew Bible is the reproduction and Midrash-like implementation of several pieces of information from the Aramaic chronology of the building of the temple in Ezra 5–6 in the Hebrew pre-history of Ezra 1–4 (see also 6:16–18, 19–22), along with multiple attempts at translating and interpreting the Aramaic title “the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven” from Ezra 7:12, 21 in 7:(1–)6, 10, 11 (cf. Neh 8:1ff ). To an extent, one is a Targum, but in the opposite direction; the other shows the semantic difficulties and implications of translating law terminology, with which the Septuagint also had problems. Finally, I would like to point out Dan 1:1–2:4a (followed by the gloss ארמית as transition to the further narrative) which is often suspected to be a translation from the Aramaic in the course of addition of the Hebrew visions in Daniel 8–12, and the Hebrew explanation of the

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63 In the Septuagint, the gloss is to be found between v. 46, 48a (= v. 46 LXX) and v. 51, 52a (= v. 48a LXX), to which v. 48b–50, 52b (= v. 48b, 49–50 LXX) forms a link.
64 See Kratz, Composition, 58–62.
65 See Kratz, Translatio imperii, 236–239.
66 Ibid. 42.
Aramaic vision Daniel 7 in Daniel 8.\textsuperscript{67} One seems to be primarily a translation, the other is again a kind of Targum.

Thus, it appears that the principles of interpretation both of textual transmission and translation are already to be found in the biblical text itself, and are involved here in the formation of biblical scripture.

5. Redaction

Having approached matters from the aspect of the empirically proven phenomena of inner-biblical exegesis, and having drawn conclusions about the literary formation of the biblical text, we now turn to the origins of the text itself and its reconstruction. The identification of inner-biblical exegesis presupposes that within the biblical books we can distinguish Vorlage from interpretation, and therefore older from younger material. The distinction is made by applying the methods and techniques of literary and redaction criticism, and it is precisely this which makes things difficult, if not implausible, for many scholars.

The methods of literary and redaction criticism\textsuperscript{68} have nowadays somewhat fallen into disrepute, not only among those who have always rejected them on religious grounds, but also among those who apply them to a certain degree yet believe them impracticable in detail and so replace them with more or less successful paraphrases, structural analysis, or relief descriptions of the traditional biblical text (usually in the version of the Masoretic canon). Inner-biblical allusions are therefore not discussed as inner-biblical exegesis, but simply as inner-biblical allusions or biblical intertextuality, i.e. they are stated but not explained.\textsuperscript{69} Questions of text genesis, i.e. decisions on the direction of the dependency of inner-biblical references, are no longer required. Not only is historical curiosity disappointed, but also diverse theological profiles are lost.

But external evidence is available even for the literary and redaction history of the Hebrew Bible. Based on empirical data, analogies permit conclusions to be made about the formation and transmission of ancient texts in general and the biblical and para-biblical books in particular.\textsuperscript{70}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Kratz} See Kratz, “Redaktionsgeschichte”; Schmid, “Schriftauslegung.”
\end{thebibliography}
that are closest to the Bible itself are those where the biblical text is the subject, and which we have already discussed: the various versions of the biblical text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Samaritan Pentateuch, and the Septuagint, as well as the rewriting of biblical books within (Samuel–Kings // Chronicles) and outside the Hebrew Bible. A close second are the analogies from the ancient Near East, where primarily the Epic of Gilgamesh\(^{71}\) and Assyrian royal inscriptions\(^{72}\) have been studied and more recently the works of the writer Ilimilku of Ugarit.\(^{73}\) In addition, occasionally examples from the Talmud and Midrash, from the early Christian and Arabic literature, the Homeric epics, and even more recent literature, have been consulted as analogies. The writings of Qumran were previously more or less neglected under this aspect. At least for the War Scroll (QM) and the community rules *Serekh ha-Yachad* (QS) we can demonstrate text development in the manuscript transmission, and in the manuscripts of Hodayot (QH) we find evidence of variations in the number and organization of hymns, which are also evidenced in the tradition of the Psalms of Qumran.\(^{74}\)

What is the significance of external evidence? Basically, empirical data verifies the hypothesis that ancient texts, and thus also the biblical books, did not fall from the sky, but have a history. Although this is a commonplace to which everyone would subscribe, it still needs recalling from time to time, as well as the fact that we can verify it empirically. What the various textual witnesses of biblical books and the various versions of the canon already suggest is confirmed by ancient Near Eastern analogies. The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible is one version among many and, moreover, the late product of a long, complicated literary history of the individual biblical books.

Whoever calls on the “final form” of the Bible must, therefore, give an account of the “final form” to which he or she is referring, and why it is that particular form and not any other. He or she has to be aware that fixation on


\(^{72}\) Tertel, *Text and Transmission*, 67 ff., 171 ff. The available material is, however, much more extensive and has barely been examined under redaction historical aspects.


one of the many “final forms” might be accommodating a certain theological or homiletical interest, but not providing a scholarly explanation. The latter involves historical questions concerning the formation and understanding of the many relevant “final forms” in their times. Some people may consider this question to be irrelevant, in which case it would be better to ignore it completely than to polemicize against it and the attempts to answer the question using historical-critical means, and surreptitiously set a description of the “final form” of a text as identical to a historical explanation. One is the theological, and also homiletic understanding of a text in its time, which is the endeavour of historical-critical research; the other is the understanding of the same text in our time, which is the endeavour of theological hermeneutics on the basis of historical research. If we look at the big picture, we can see that empirical data lead to a clear conclusion: just as elsewhere in the ancient Near East and ancient Jewish tradition, we can expect a gradual growth of the texts in the biblical books.

When we go into detail, things are much more complicated. All conceivable cases of text development are empirically verified. The formation of a larger composition from individual pieces which were previously either independent or in a different context and which underwent a complete or extensive transformation and reformulation of the Vorlage (Gilgamesh, Temple Scroll); the later supplementation of a given context by pieces, which have been more or less cited literally (12th. tablet of Gilgamesh, scroll 1QS with 1QSa and 1QSb); and a copy of a Vorlage from a literal reproduction up to complete reworking with more or less pronounced changes, such as additions, omissions, word replacement, shortening or expanding reformulations, and restructuring of the material (Gilgamesh, Assyrian inscriptions, various versions of the biblical text, Chronicles, and the other examples of the rewritten bible, QM, QS, and QH).

If we compare the empirical data with the methods and results of literary and redaction criticism in the writings of the Hebrew Bible, the result is by no means clear. Jeffrey Tigay wants to prove the accuracy of the documentary hypothesis in the Pentateuch using the tradition history of Gilgamesh. Hans Jürgen Tertel, on the other hand, attempts to prove the impossibility of reconstructing Vorlage from traditional biblical text versions by referring to Assyrian inscriptions, and, where there is doubt, to prove the originality of the complex final composition.

Disagreement is not only based on the differences of the material, but also on a different line of questioning. Tigay seeks an analogy for the process of evolution. He therefore studies the evolution and transmission of the epic from the Vorlage and multiple intermediate stages, and applies this
model to the biblical stories and hypothetical documentary sources in the Pentateuch. Tertel, on the other hand, seeks a (mostly formal) analogy for the present biblical text in the evolutionary process of extra-biblical material. He does not regard the redactional tendency in the Akkadian epics to harmonise parallel sections by addition as being evidence of textual growth, but compares their contents with available biblical texts, where such things are rarely found. Similarly, Tertel also does not want to concede a heuristic significance to the book of Chronicles, but only an illustrative or corroborative significance like the Akkadian epics. In doing so, he unnecessarily strains the problems of the literary relationship to Samuel and Kings, and in Chronicles only regards meaningful that what has emerged from the Assyrian inscriptions after applying his criteria.

Tertel examined the Assyrian inscriptions in turn according to a predetermined, highly formalistic grid of plots. He then compares them with present biblical texts to find out which version of the inscriptions corresponds to most closely to the biblical text. He is not so interested in the literary phenomena, but only in the degree of complexity at the beginning of textual history, which represents the decisive criterion for the comparison. However, if we consider the full range of redaction-historical possibilities, then, with the Assyrian inscriptions, we must also make the same qualification that Tertel made with the Akkadian epics and Chronicles: “It reminds us that the application of any analogy necessarily implies some inaccuracy. An empirical model can only give a broad picture.”

Nevertheless, the external evidence helps us to survey the vast field a little better, and to mark out more clearly the possibilities and limits of both the empirical models and of literary and redaction history. The empirically proven possibilities of text genesis make us realise the limits of literary and redaction-historical reconstruction.

Only those processes of text evolution can be reconstructed where the Vorlage has entered the transmitted text more or less entirely, i.e. where its essence remains untouched, but is copied down and at most expanded to include supplements of whatever kind. We cannot, however, reconstruct a Vorlage which has been completely reworked, reformulated or undergone text omission, unless traces are left in the final text. For example, if we only had the book of Chronicles at our disposal, it would be difficult to isolate from it the text of Samuel and Kings as Vorlage. And where it is possible to

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75 Tertel, *Text and Transmission*, 54 f.
76 Ibid., 67, 156, 171.
77 Ibid., 186, 221, 231, 233 f.
78 Ibid., 233
elicit a *Vorlage* as such in the transmitted text, we could be dealing with a verbatim copy or a reformulated version. And at least theoretically, that can no longer be determined.

Supplementations of all kinds are empirically evidenced. However, there is no known case in which we are able to track in the manuscripts the details of gradual textual growth without substantial changes to the text as it was at that particular stage, from the beginnings of a meagre document to a full writing or collection of writings – as we tend to assume with the literary and redaction-historical reconstruction of the biblical books. Only the relationship of the Masoretic Text and the Septuagint (Jeremiah, Daniel, etc.), and the manuscripts of the War Scroll (QM) and the Community Rule (QS) of Qumran point in this direction in some passages.

Does this evidence empirically prove the unsuitability of literary and redaction criticism?79 I do not think so, since it is clear that even empirical models have their limits. The data are derived from a variety of text types, each with its own specific conditions for evolution and transmission. An ancient Babylonian epic put together from Sumerian originals is not a Neo-Assyrian royal inscription, and both are worlds away again from biblical narratives, the books of the prophets, psalms, and wisdom literature. Each medium and each genre follows its own rules of tradition, and the nature of tradition in the ancient Near East is not necessarily identical with the culture of Jewish tradition encountered in the biblical and para-biblical writings, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Qumran and rabbinic tradition.

To explore the possibilities and limits of applying empirical data in literary and redaction criticism, we, therefore, must be clear about the peculiarity of this tradition culture.80 What we have before us in biblical and para-biblical literature, when also compared with the ancient Near Eastern literature, is a mixture of tradition and redaction. There is hardly a text that does not reveal that it is deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern world in some way. This is due to the fact that Israel and Judah, like all other cultures in the Northwest Semitic region, were part of the ancient Near Eastern world. Relevant studies81 have shown that the literature production and reception in ancient Israel (including pre-exilic Judah on a much smaller scale) at the onset of

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79 Carr, *Formation*, 147 f., tends in this direction, and so suggests a “middle way” between “reconstructing everything” and “rejecting the enterprise altogether” and reconstructs the formation of the Hebrew Bible according to his own, somewhat idiosyncratic, criteria.

80 For the following, see Kratz, *Historical and Biblical Israel*, especially parts B and C.

the monarchy and limited to the inner circles largely complies with common practices of ancient Near Eastern scribal culture. This similarity concerns not only the official archives, but also the literature production and librarianship. The findings at Al-Yahudu, Elephantine, Samaria (Mt Gerizim) and Qumran each prove in their own way that conditions in and after exile had changed little.82

On the other hand, the material from Qumran also shows something else. In Judaism, with, in, and alongside the usual administrative and school activities, a new and distinctive culture of scribal tradition developed. And it was not only that here, as in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, a collection of classical or authoritative, so-called “canonical” works of reference had emerged that were carefully copied, learned and interpreted in schools.83 Beyond that, the study, copy, and composition of holy books came to embody a pious life (Deut 6:4–9; Psalm 1; Sir 38:34–39:11) and a Jewish identity, replacing the lost national identity. The Israelite or Jewish scribe (Schreiber) became the Jewish scribal scholar (Schriftgelehrter) who lives and passes on the ideal of the biblical “Israel”.

The phenomenon of the scribal culture in the Dead Sea Scrolls was certainly not first invented in Qumran. Its development neither starts nor stops here in Qumran. Qumran is more of an intermediate link, which, in spite of differences in opinion, is placed between the beginnings in the biblical writings and what follows in the rabbinical writings. The biblical texts themselves differ markedly from the remnants of ancient Israelite or Judean scribal culture still preserved within them or proven by archaeology, in both form and content. These books are the best witness of Jewish biblical scribalism (Schriftgelehrsamkeit) and its corresponding, idiosyncratic tradition culture. This development is sparsely documented in the external evidence, with the exception of Qumran. While ancient Near Eastern analogies remain within the usual framework of scribal culture as far as form and content are concerned (e.g. epic fiction, official annals, etc.), biblical scriptures go their own way along traditional and theological paths. In this respect, literary and redaction-historical reconstruction is superior to the

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82 See Kratz, Historical and Biblical Israel.
empirical models, since it alone takes account of the genre, the content and the particular culture of tradition in the biblical and para-biblical literature.

A further point is that we have clearly shown above the limits that empirical data impose on literary and redaction criticism. In particular omissions and reformulations, as we have seen, can barely be recognised without knowledge of the *Vorlage*. The best example of this is given by the genre of rewritten bible, even if the representatives of this genre (Chronicles, Book of Jubilees, Temple Scroll, etc.; also Deuteronomy in relation to the Covenant Code or the Priestly writing in relation to non-Priestly texts) do not replace the previous texts. Instead of being replaced, they continue to be transmitted and interpreted. Thus, at first glance, it seems difficult if not impossible to decide whether we are really dealing with the *Vorlage* or with a reformulation; with altered *Vorlage* to fit the context or with supplementations in the different branches of the text in the main and secondary lines; or with deletions in the event of text disturbance or secondary amendments of the scribe (redactor or author).

But the difficulties are theoretical. In practice, the different text components usually show different theological profiles as well, which allow various hands or literary layers to be differentiated. This also has to do with the particular Jewish tradition culture, which, unlike the ancient Near Eastern analogies, produced a great diversity of theological opinions and preserved these in the Hebrew Bible. The decisive criterion is the tendency criticism (*Tendenzkritik*), which, based on literary and redaction critical evidence from empirical data, tips the scales for decision-making and differentiation of literary levels. As a result, hypothetical reconstructions that go beyond empirically proven cases of text growth are possible.

This does not mean, however, that by means of literary and redaction criticism we can, in every case, reach the oldest, original text, recognise each layer of growth, and be able to understand each redactional intervention. We can only penetrate as far into the history of a text as it itself reveals, on some occasions more, on others less. We will only be permitted to go as far as the surviving sources and the text in question allow, and we must live with the proviso that some stages of text and literary history will elude us. But still, it is possible to relate the various ideological or theological profiles of the text, distributed over different literary layers, in order to recognise a relative chronology and explain texts historically.

Whoever proceeds along these lines will be aware of the ongoing interpretive process in the formation of the text, inner-biblical exegesis as the driving factor of biblical texts’ evolution. Just as the empirically demonstrable rules of inner-biblical exegesis lead to the successive growth of the texts, so also
the process of text evolution (reconstructed according to the empirically validated rules of literary and redaction criticism, esp. tendency criticism), uncovers the process of inner-biblical interpretation. In this sense, inner-biblical interpretation and redaction history are the same.

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Abstract: This essay examines a peripheral phenomenon of explanatory notes that were integrated in the biblical text, focusing on two types of notes: a) those that, due to a variety of motivations, added something new to the text; and b) those that sought to exchange specific words with others in order to solve some kind of textual difficulty. Regarding the first type, it is not clear whether the note-writer truly desired that his words be included in the text or whether he was simply satisfied to jot down a note for himself in the margins of the scroll or between its lines. Be that as it may, the result was that a scribe – whether the one who wrote the note or a later copyist – did insert it into the text. As for the second type, it is obvious that the author of the note wanted his version to replace the original words, and not that both versions, the original and his own explanation, would be incorporated in the text. However, a later copyist caused this duplication.

Keywords: inner-biblical interpretation; coherence; explanatory notes

1. Introduction

Biblical literature is intentionally designed to be persuasive and convincing in all its various genres (e.g., historiography, prophecy, wisdom). Even distinct psalms were created in order to inspire and influence, if not the human listener or reader, then God Himself, to whose ears the great majority of the prayers are directed.

This determination does not only apply to the isolated literary unit like a proverb, poem, story, or psalm, but also to comprehensive literary mosaics such as the collected prophecies of a particular prophet, a specific historiographic work, or even the entire historiographic complex of Genesis–Kings. A literature written with a purpose must focus on its target and must constantly keep it in view. Such literature must therefore be coherent.¹

¹ Merriam-Webster defines “coherent” as follows: “1 a: logically or aesthetically ordered or integrated: consistent. coherent style … b: having clarity or intelligibility: understandable … a coherent passage … 2: having the quality of holding together or cohering;
Nonetheless, despite the heroic effort to produce a coherent literature, it is well known that the Bible contains blatant inconsistencies. Thus, the question arises, “What causes these incongruities?” A further question concerns important contributors to the biblical oeuvre, such as authors and editors alike (between whom differentiation is, to a great extent, artificial), and those who inserted notations: Why were they all prepared to pay the price for damaging the literature’s coherence?

This brief article seeks to investigate these issues from a limited perspective: the harm done to the biblical literature’s coherency that was caused by the addition of explanatory notes to the text.

Frequently, it cannot be ascertained whether the explanatory notes that were initially written on the margins of a scroll or between the lines were intended to be integrated into the text, or whether the author of these comments was just doing it for his own sake without knowing that later copyists would copy from his scroll and weave these remarks into the fabric of the texts of the newer scrolls. While this latter possibility will be dealt with first, the distinction is of no significance in reality. It is enough to say that, at some stage of the text’s transmission, somebody saw it as worthwhile to integrate these notes without any suspicion that they might detract from the composition’s coherency.

Aside from the explanatory notes that were added to the text without the intention of the author, a second category of comments is found: a phrase or sentence which explicates words or a sentence in the text, and which were written to replace the original language, but were ultimately placed next to that language. In other words, the original source and its explanatory note now appear together, side-by-side in the Masoretic Text. Apparently, this phenomenon occurred due to one of two motivations: (a) either a lack of desire to decide between the two written versions or (b) the sense that both versions are holy and, therefore, both deserve to be preserved. However, the fact that the two versions are retained results in true damage to the

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2 This effort is recognized, for instance, in the coherent juxtaposition of literary units; see, e.g., A. Shinan and Y. Zakovitch, “Why is ‘A’ Placed Next ‘B’? Juxtaposition in the Bible and Beyond,” Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity (ed. M. Kister et al), Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah (Studies on the Texts of the Judean Desert 113; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 322–342. Similarly, concerning attempts to harmonize different biblical texts and resolve discrepancies between them, see Y. Zakovitch, Inner-biblical and Extra-biblical Midrash and the Relationship between Them (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009), 145–166 (Hebrew).
coherence of the text. This type of explanatory note will be dealt with toward the end of the article.

The present article will not consider explanatory notes which have been well interwoven into the text’s tapestry and do not disturb its coherence. Neither shall this article discuss the widespread accidental insertion of explanatory notes in places where they were not initially intended, on the condition that the places for which they were designed would not have harmed the text’s coherence. Nor is it the objective of this article to highlight an abundance of explanatory notes that damage the text’s coherence. Rather, we will be satisfied with a limited number of examples.

Our analysis will begin with instances of notes from the first type, which will be classified according to the reasons for their recording and their incorporation in the text, as a consequence of which those who were conscious of what was happening were prepared to turn a blind eye to the harm that was done to the text’s coherence.

2. The Honor of God and the Purity of Belief in One God

1. At the time of the making of the covenant between them, Laban said to Jacob, “May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us” (Gen 31:53). These words were immediately followed by a short note, “the God of their father,” an assertion that the God of each was actually the same deity, the only God. He is also the God in whose name Jacob will swear in the verse’s continuation, “by the Fear of his father Isaac,” already identified in Jacob’s words beforehand as the God of Abraham, “Had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, been with me” (verse 42, there). Proof that this note is a secondary addition is the fact that

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3 For example, Gen 6:4; Num 26:11 (the words “the sons of Korah, however, did not die”); 2 Sam 9:12a (“Mephiboseth had a young son named Mica”); see Y. Zakovitch, An Introduction to Inner-biblical Interpretation (Hebrew; Even Yehuda: Reches, 1992), 23–24. Note that all translations here are based upon the New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) translation, JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh (Philadelphia: JPS, 1999), with adjustments when deemed necessary by the author.

4 As with the words “that is the great city” (Gen 10:12), which should have been placed after the name “Nineveh,” and “whence the Philistines came forth” (vs. 14, there), which should have appeared after the name “Caphtorim”; see, for example, J. Skinner, Genesis, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 212–213. Further, see the note, “and the Lord wrought a great victory that day” (2 Sam 23:10), which should have been inserted at the end of the verse. See I. L. Seeligman, “Menschliches Heldentum und göttliche Hilfe,” Gesammelte Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel, Forschungen zum Alten Testament 41 (ed. E. Blum; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 152.
it is missing in two Hebrew manuscripts and in the Septuagint. Both the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch have an easier way of solving this difficulty: instead of the plural form of the MT’s ישפטו “they [that is, the gods] will judge,” they have before them the singular ישפט, which prevents harm to the text’s coherency. Interestingly, the Samaritan version maintains the words, “the God of their father אביהם,” but with a tiny change, “the God of Abraham אברם” (switching the letter resh for the yod)\(^5\), repeating the phrase “the God of Abraham” which has appeared earlier in the verse.

2. During his speech in Shechem on the eve of his death, Joshua states at the beginning of his historical survey that “In olden times, lived your forefathers – Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor – beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods” (Josh 24:2). The words “Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor” interrupt the natural continuity between “In olden times, lived your forefathers” and “beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods.”\(^6\) They were added by somebody who wished to remove any doubt that the forefathers of the nation, particularly Abraham, were polytheists. The interpolator presented Abraham’s father Terah as the last of the ancestors who worshipped idols.

3. The story of the Queen of Sheba’s visit to Solomon’s palace opens with her journey’s pragmatic goal, “The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon’s fame,\(^7\) through the name of the Lord,\(^8\) and she came to test him with hard questions” (1 Kgs 10:1). The words, “through the name of the Lord,” are not recorded in the Aramaic Targum or in the parallel story of 2 Chr 9:1. Unquestionably, the person who added these words, which disrupt the sequence, was concerned about the Lord’s honor. After all, it was not due to Solomon’s fame that the queen undertook such a long journey, but due to the Lord’s, for it was He who had endowed Solomon with wisdom, wealth, and honor (1 Kgs 3:5–15).\(^9\) It is possible that the interpolator also knew of the reading reflected in the Septuagint: “The Queen of Sheba had heard of Solomon’s

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5 For exchanges of resh and yod, see F. Delitzsch, Die Lese-und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1920), § 109b, 111.
6 See, for example, G. A. Cooke, The Book of Joshua in the Revised Version (CBSC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), 214.
7 For the combination – x ישן את שם “heard the name of x,” see Gen 29:13.
8 For the combination ‘בוא לשם ה “coming through / by the name of the Lord,” see Josh 9:9; Isa 60:9; cp. Jer 3:17.
9 See Kimchi’s commentary here, “Solomon’s wisdom was by the name of God, therefore she came to speak with him to investigate his wisdom …,” as well as Gersonides, “… for she had heard the fame of Solomon’s wisdom by the name of God; and He desired him,
name [not “fame”]...”; in other words, the reason for her visit is not the name of Solomon, but the name of the Lord.

3. Agreement with the Accepted Tradition

As is recognized, certain prophetic speeches exhibit a deviation from the acknowledged historical process, and explanatory notes sometimes come in to reconcile the opposing perspectives by creating a harmonization.

4. The central ideological stream that transmits the history of the Israelites in the desert relates the difficulties and trials by which the Lord tested His people, and the miracles He did for them, such as the tales of bitter water (Exod 15:22–26) or of the manna (Exod 16:1–36). A different concept of the travails during the years of desert wandering is conveyed in portions of Deuteronomy, prior to the insertions of explanatory additions: God made life troublesome for the Israelites in the desert in order to test their faith in Him and to educate them, and He did not pamper them with miracles. That is the original message of Deuteronomy 8:2–4,

Remember the long way that the Lord your God has made you travel in the wilderness these past forty years, that He might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts: whether you would keep His commandments or not. He subjected you to the hardship of hunger [and gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known] in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the Lord decrees. [The clothes upon you did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years.]

The bracketed words are explanatory notes that articulate an altered perspective from the source in Deuteronomy. These notes both contradict the original words and complement the central ideological stream, affirming that in conjunction with the trials came the miracles, the revelation of God’s kindness. This intermingling of ideas also appears in the continuation of the chapter, in verses 15–16:

who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its seraph serpents and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it [who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers had never known] in order to test you by hardships only to benefit you in the end.10

for his wisdom came from God, as He has previously said, ‘Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart unlike any person who has lived before you” (1 Kgs 3:12).

10 To the best of my knowledge, the modern critical commentators on Deuteronomy did not consider the composite nature of these verses in Deuteronomy 8, nor the reason for the interlacing of the traditions of the desert miracles there.
Another example of such intermingling occurs in Deuteronomy 29:4–5, which states, “I led you through the wilderness forty years; [the clothes on your back did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet] you had no bread to eat and no wine or other intoxicant to drink that you might know that I the Lord am your God.” The concept of God’s exclusive kind-ness, without any inkling of suffering or hardship, is found in the historical survey in the book of Nehemiah, which utilizes only the explanatory notes of Deuteronomy 8, “Forty years You sustained them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing; their clothes did not wear out, and their feet did not swell” (Neh 9:21).

5. In Joshua’s farewell speech mentioned above (Joshua 24), he is depicted as a prophet who delivers the Lord’s word in the first person:

Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel ... And I took your father Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his off-spring. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir as his possession, while Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. [Then I sent Moses and Aaron] And I plagued Egypt ... (verses 2–5).

The bracketed words, which are not attested to in the Septuagint, are an ex-planatory note that aims to assert that it is impossible to relate the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt and the Exodus without mentioning the decisive contribution of Moses and Aaron, who were God’s partners in saving Israel! It is necessary to point out that this note disrupts the narrative which em-phasizes that the Lord is acting by Himself, without recourse to liberators of flesh and blood. The words “and I sent Moses and Aaron” are taken from the historical survey of the farewell speech of a different prophet, Samuel, “and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt” (1 Sam 12:8; see also Mic 6:4; Psa 105:26).11

6. Following the king’s affair with Bathsheba and the killing of Uriah, the prophet Nathan rebukes David in God’s name and states, “Why then have you flouted the command of the Lord and done what displeases Him? You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword; you took his wife and made her your wife and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites” (2 Sam 12:9). The words “and had him killed by the sword of the Ammonites” are a seemingly needless repetition of “You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword.” Their

objective is to correct the statement of Uriah’s death by reference to the text in the previous chapter, chapter 11. In other words, David himself did not wield the sword that killed Uriah; rather, the Ammonites are the ones who killed him, as David had planned (11:16–17).12

Sometimes, editors themselves inserted notes that accorded with tradition, but at the price of harming the text’s coherency.

7. The editor of the Book of Kings denigrates Abijam the son of Rehoboam, King of Judah, and contrasts him with the founder of the dynasty, David:

... he was not wholehearted with the Lord his God, like his father David. Yet, for the sake of David, the Lord his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by raising up his descendant after him and by preserving Jerusalem. For David had done what was pleasing to the Lord and never turned throughout his life from all that He had commanded him [except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite] (1 Kings 15:3–5).

The bracketed note, absent in the Septuagint, detracts from the goal of the disparity between Abijam and David, between black and white,13 between the sinful Abijam and the “perfect” David – the yardstick against which all his royal descendants are measured in the editing of the book (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:11; 2 Kgs 14:3; 16:2).

8. A similar example of a note that affirms the rule is inserted in the summary of the section on Joshua’s conquest of Canaan: “Joshua waged war with all those kings over a long period; [apart from the Hivites who dwelt in Gibeon] not a single city made terms with the Israelites; all were taken in battle” (Josh 11:18–19). The bracketed words interrupt the ideological sequence and contradict that which is immediately before and after. Their intent is to have the text conform to the episode in Joshua 9 concerning the Gibeonites’ trickery and the establishment of a peace treaty with them.14

9. In his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses continuously mentions the episode of the Golden Calf (9:8–21). The story as it appears in Deuteronomy does not refer to Aaron’s initiative or behavior, for these hardly bestow honor

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12 This explanatory note was not written in order to serve as a substitute for “You have put Uriah the Hittite to the sword,” and therefore this discussion is placed in this part of the article, and not later on.
13 For explanatory notes that begin with the Hebrew word יְרוּם “except (for),” see Gen 47:22; Exod 8:6; Josh 6:17; Judg 3:2).
14 This note on the Hivites (see Josh 9:7) does not appear in the Septuagint. On the Septuagint for this verse, see T.B. Dozeman, Joshua I–12 (AB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 469.
on one who is not only Moses’ brother but the founder of the people’s priesthood. However, in Deuteronomy’s version, after Moses tells of his prayer on behalf of the people (verses 18–19), and before he states what he did with the idol of the calf (verse 21), the following words are placed in his mouth: “Moreover, the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to have destroyed him; so I also prayed for Aaron at that time” (verse 20). This note, which does not fit in with the aim of the chapter does, however, serve two purposes. First, it provides a specific correspondence to the story of the Golden Calf as found in Exodus 32, which allocates a prominent role to Aaron’s collaboration with the sinners (there, verses 1–5, 21–25). Second, it fills in a palpable gap in the story of Exodus 32: the Lord does not react there to Aaron’s cooperation with the idolaters, but only vents His anger against the people.\(^{15}\) The Samaritan Pentateuch which tends toward harmonization strengthens the connection between Exodus 32 and Deuteronomy 9, harmonizes them,\(^ {16}\) and inserts Deuteronomy 9:20 in Exodus 32 between verses 10 and 11 (while changing Moses’ prayer to the 3rd person). This insertion occurs after the reference to God’s anger against the people: “Now, let Me be, that My anger may blaze forth against them and that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation” (verse 10). [Moreover, the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to have destroyed him; so Moses prayed for Aaron] and Moses implored the Lord his God, saying, “Let not Your anger, O Lord, blaze forth against Your people ...” (verse 11).

4. Clarifications

10. On occasion, the proper noun “the Amorites” is a designation for one of the Canaanite peoples, as in, “When My angel goes before you and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I annihilate them” (Exodus 23:23). Elsewhere, it is a general appellation for all the inhabitants of Canaan, for example, when God explains to Abraham why he and his descendants cannot acquire Canaan

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during his lifetime, but only after the long sojourn in Egypt: “And they shall return here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Genesis 15:16). The land is even referred to as “the land of the Amorites” (as in Amos 2:10). Further, in the people’s response to Joshua that articulates their preparedness to cleave to the Lord and not worship other gods, they enumerate His kindnesses toward them: “And then the LORD drove out before us [all the peoples] the Amorites that inhabited the country ...” (Josh 24:18).\(^\text{17}\) In the original version of this verse, “the Amorites” was a general name for the nations of the land. However, someone thought that “the Amorites” might be understood as only one of the land’s peoples, as it is seven verses earlier, in verse 11, “the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Gergashites, Hivites, and Jebusites.”\(^\text{18}\) Therefore, he added “all the peoples,” giving “the Amorites” the secondary meaning. The verse as it presently stands is thus incoherent. If it generally refers to “all the peoples,” what is the reason to recognize only one of them, “the Amorites?”

II. Sometimes, the clarifying note is a lexicographic explanation. One case reads as follows: “Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he would say, ‘Come, let us go to the seer,’ for the prophet of today was formerly called a seer” (1 Sam 9:9).\(^\text{19}\) This note is not in its proper place. Rather, it precedes its need, for only from verse 11 onward is Samuel called by the title “seer” (see further, there, verses 18–19), a very rare designation.\(^\text{20}\) The note also disrupts the continuity of the conversation between Saul and his servant. The introduction to this article stated that examples will not be brought of notes that damaged the coherency of the text only due to their insertion in incorrect places. However, in this case, the placement of the note after the first mention of the label “seer” in verse 11 would still have interrupted a conversation, by placing a barrier between the question asked by

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\(^\text{17}\) The placement of the addition in the verse in the Septuagint is after “the Amorites,” as is the manner of additions which are found in diverse positions in different versions. See, S. Holmes, *Joshua – The Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 79.

\(^\text{18}\) The listing of the Canaanite nations is also a secondary element in Deut 20:17 and Josh 9:1.

\(^\text{19}\) The expression, “formerly in Israel,” later on was utilized by the author of the book of Ruth in 4:7. That verse also disrupts the continuity of the plot: the beginning of verse 8 is a repetitive resumption which will mend the thread of the plot that was torn due to the insertion of the note. The fact that the plot sequence was disrupted is not an indication that the note in v. 7 is secondary. It is quite possible that the author of the book wrote both v. 7 and the repetitive resumption in v. 8.

\(^\text{20}\) Aside from 1 Samuel 9, this designation appears in Isa 30:10 and in Chronicles, which seeks to put on a pretext of antiquity (1 Chr 9:22; 26:28; 29:29; 2 Chr 16:10).
Saul and his servant of the young women who had gone out to draw water, “Is the seer in town?” (verse 11), and their responses, “‘Yes,’ they replied. ‘He is up there ahead of you ...’” (verse 12).21

5. Midrashic-type Notes

12. Midrashic literature frequently identifies people with each other on the basis of similar names,22 like the identification of Job with Jobab of the early kings of Edom (Genesis 36:33–34)23 or the identification of Joseph’s master Potiphar (e.g., Gen. 39:1) with Poti-pherah, the priest of On (there, 41:45).24 This type of identification is already found in the Masoretic Text immediately after the decree of calamity by the prophet Micaiah the son of Imlah to Ahab, “If you ever come home safe, the Lord has not spoken through me” (1 Kgs 22:28). The text again has Micaiah beginning to speak, even though he has not stopped: “He said further, ‘Listen all you peoples’ שמעו עמים כלם.” These words, which are not attested to by either Codex Vaticanus or the Lucian Recension of the Septuagint, are the beginning of the prophecies of Micah, שמעו עמים כלם “Listen all you peoples, give heed, O earth, and all it holds” (Micah 1:2). The interpolator, who inserted this note in the Masoretic version of Kings, wished to identify the two prophets as one due to their similar names, Micaiah מיכה יהו and Micah מיכה.25

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23 The suggestion of this identification already appears at the end of the Septuagint of Job, “and formerly his name was Jobab,” as well as at the beginning of the pseudepigraphal Testament of Job, “The book of the testament of Job who was called Jobab” (see also, there, 2:1); S. D. Luzatto in his letters (*Igrot Shadal*, Vols. 1–2 [ed. E. Graeber; Cracow: Druk Zupnik et Knoller, 1882–1894], 741–742, Hebrew), notes that at the close of the Aramaic translation of Job he found the words “the Book of Jobab is ended.”
25 See Zakovitch, n. 22 above, 455.
6. Explanatory Notes Designed to Replace the Original Language, but Resulted in Additions to the Original Language

This article will now present the second type of explanatory notes. Most of these notes were designed to clarify and smoothen the text via corrective and clarifying language substituted for the original words. Unfortunately, these notes ended up increasing the damage done to the text’s coherency because the person responsible (see the conclusion below) decided to keep both versions – the original and its corrective. When the preservation of the text with both readings is viewed as the determining value, coherency becomes the victim.

13. After his second dream, Joseph again hurried to relate it, “He dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers” (Gen. 37:9). These words proved detrimental, for even his father rebukes him on this dream (verse 10), which indicates that he was among Joseph’s listeners. Therefore, at the beginning of the verse, the following words were added, “and he told it to his father and his brothers,” in order to replace the words “and told it to his brothers” in verse 9. The interpolator of the explanatory-corrective version in its place wished to avoid serious harm to the text’s coherency, and to create the impression that Joseph related the dream a second time, at which time his father joined his listeners, as Rashi comments, “After he had told it to his brothers, he again told it to his father in their presence.” The Septuagint reflects a more elegant correction, which is done in the midst of the original text: “and he told it to his father and to his brothers,” thereby making the substitution of the corrective version superfluous. Therefore, it is not included in the Septuagint’s version.

14. The report on the collective punishment of Achan and his household states, “And all Israel pelted him with stones. They put them to the fire and stoned them” (Josh 7:25). The problem is the switch from singular, “and all Israel pelted him,” to plural, “they put them to the fire,” as if he alone was stoned even if all his household (enumerated in verse 24) were burned with him. The explanatory-corrective note at the end of the verse, “and stoned them,” was written to replace the words at the beginning, “and all Israel pelted him with stones.” However, in the final text the preservation and inclusion of both options created an extremely rough version – as if two sep-

arate stonings occurred. The corrective language is not recorded in either the Peshitta or the Vulgate.

15. Gideon overhears a Midianite narrating his dream to his fellow: “There was a sound of a loaf of barley bread whirling through the Midianite camp. It came to a tent and struck it, and it fell, and it turned it upside down, and the tent fell” (Judg 7:13). Prior to the last two Hebrew words, נפל האהל, it is impossible to know what fell. That which fell could be the “sound of the bread,” which is the subject of the verbs “came ... and struck,” or it could be the tent. Therefore, a substitute version was designed for “and it fell,” stating, “and the tent fell,” which is now placed at the end of the verse. Some versions of the Septuagint contain the first reading, “and it fell,” and others preserve the second, “and the tent fell.”

16. Jeremiah 22 contains a well-known doublet consisting of the words in v. 15, אז טוב לו, “then it went well with him,” which cuts off the natural continuity between “and dispensed justice and equity” and, “He upheld the rights of the poor and needy” (v. 16). The assertion in verse 16, אז טוב, “then it went well,” is in its proper place, but something is amiss. It is not clear for whom it went well. For the one who dispensed justice? For the one who received justice? The substitute version, “then it went well with him,” which was shunted off to the wrong location, was intended to explain that the benefit goes to the king.

17. Eli, the Priest at Shiloh, reprimands his sons, “... Why do you do such things? I hear about your evil things from all the people about these” (1 Sam 2:23). The words דבריכם רעים, “such things,” are not necessarily understood as a negative perspective on the deeds of Hophni and Phineas. On the other hand, a value judgment is pronounced by the words, אז טוב, “about your evil things,” because their purpose is to correct and substitute

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27 The English “pelted” translates the Hebrew root סקל, which is characteristic of Deuteronomy (13:11; 17:5; 22:21, 24), while the English “stoned” translates the verb רגם, which appears, for example in Lev 24:16 and 1 Kgs 12:18.

28 The Aramaic translation here solves the problem as follows: “And all Israel stoned him with stones and burned them by fire after they had stoned them with stones.” The Septuagint does not mention the burning by fire (despite verse 15), and it only mentions stoning in the earlier version (see Holmes, Joshua, 41).

for “such things.” Nevertheless, at the end of the process, they were accepted together with the original version, which they were supposed to replace.\footnote{30}{See S. Talmon, “Double Readings in the Masoretic Text,” Text and Canon of the Hebrew Bible: Collected Studies (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 262.}

18. When Samuel in 1 Samuel 12 finishes his historical survey, he mentions the people’s demand for a king, “you said to me, ‘No, we must have a king reigning over us.’” He then responds, “though the Lord your God is your King” (v. 12). In the next verse, he gives them God’s reaction to their demand, “Here now is the king that you have chosen, that you have requested. The Lord has now set a king over you!” Verse 13 exhibits a replication: “that you have chosen” and “that you have requested.” The words, “that you have chosen,” are in line with Samuel’s earlier statement, “The day will come when you cry out because of the king whom you yourselves have chosen; and the Lord will not answer you on that day” (1 Sam 8:18). However, those words of Samuel concerning the custom of the king are nothing more than a pessimistic depiction of a hypothetical situation that has not yet come to pass. The people had not \textit{chosen} a king; rather, they had \textit{requested} one, as is related in the introduction to the law of the king, “Samuel reported all the words of the Lord to the people, who were asking for a king” (8:10). He who chose the king was God, as Samuel himself affirms concerning Saul, “And Samuel said to the people, ‘Do you see the one whom the Lord has chosen? There is none like him among all the people’” (10:24). Consequently, the version in our verse, “that you have chosen,” is surprising and is corrected by the words, “that you have requested.” The difficulty is that both versions appear side-by-side in the text. The correction, “that you have requested,” is not recorded in several manuscripts of the Septuagint.\footnote{31}{See also Driver, Books of Samuel, 94.}

19. The following last two examples of the creation of a substitute, explanatory note are not motivated by the need to clarify something in the original text. Daniel 1:2 states concerning Nebuchadnezzar, “The Lord delivered King Jehoiakim of Judah into his power, together with some of the vessels of the House of God, and he brought them to the land of Shinar to the house of his god; he deposited the vessels in the treasury of his god.” It appears that the original version of the verse ended with, “and he brought them to the land of Shinar to the house of his god,” which is the reading recorded in the Septuagint. However, the additional words in the verse seek to prevent an affront to the Lord and the vessels of His House; that is, the vessels were not brought into a pagan temple, but only to the storeroom of
that temple, “the treasury of his god.” This explanatory correction is the type of commentary that appears in examples 1–3, above.

20. The passage that ends 2 Kings (25:27–30) narrates the release of King Jehoiachin from prison and the favorable treatment that he receives from Evil-merodach, king of Babylon. These verses wish to give at least something of an optimistic closure to the entire historiographic collection from Genesis through Kings, and to the book of Kings in particular, which culminates in destruction and exile. Since the book of Kings was edited during the Babylonian Exile, the final editor has nothing more positive to relate than the release and elevation of Jehoiachin, which slightly opens the door to a better future. The last verse of this passage states, “A regular allotment of food was given him at the instance of the king – an allotment for each day – all the days of his life” (2 Kgs 25:30). Jeremiah 52 concludes the book of Jeremiah in a manner nearly identical to 2 Kings 25. Its final words are “to the day of his death – all the days of his life” (Jer 52:34). Apparently, the original ending of this verse was “to the day of his death” (as it is in the Septuagint), a common biblical phrase (as in Judg 13:7 and 1 Sam 15:35). However, someone wanted to ensure that this passage, and indeed the entire book of Jeremiah, would conclude on a more positive note, and therefore added “all the days of his life,” also frequent biblical phraseology (for example, Deut 17:19 and 1 Kgs 5:1). Further, this phrase appears in the previous verse, “and he ate regularly in his presence all the days of his life” (verse 33, which, outside of the transposition of two words, is identical to 2 Kgs 25:29). So, the final edition of the book of Kings ends with a positive version, as do several Hebrew manuscripts of the book of Jeremiah. The Masoretic version of Jeremiah unites both versions – the original and its intended substitute.32

6. Conclusion

This short essay examined a peripheral phenomenon of explanatory notes that were integrated in the biblical text, focusing on two types of notes: (a) those that, due to a variety of motivations, added something new to the text; and (b) those that sought to exchange specific words with others in order to solve some kind of textual difficulty. In regards to the first type, it is not clear if the note-writer truly desired that his words be included in the text, or that he was simply satisfied to jot down a note for himself in the

margins of the scroll or between its lines. Be that as it may, the result was that a scribe – whether the one who wrote the note or a later copyist – did insert it into the text. As to the second type, it is obvious that the author of the note wanted his version to replace the original words, and not that both versions, the original and his own explanation, would be incorporated in the text. However, a later copyist caused this duplication.

The text with all its attendant notes, whatever type they were, testifies to a readiness to sacrifice coherency, whether on the altar of the reasons listed in the first part of this article, or on the altar of the need to maintain different versions of the verses, so that holy words would not be lost.

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