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Introduction

STEPHEN B. CHAPMAN AND MARVIN A. SWEENEY

A remarkable diversification of religious scholarship occurred in the course of the twentieth century, uniquely affecting research on the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Once a relatively staid field framed within largely Protestant assumptions and expectations,[1] Hebrew Bible/Old Testament scholarship has become a lively academic terrain of robust activity by Protestants, Catholics, Jews, secularists, and others.[2] Although still underrepresented, women and racial or ethnic minorities are thankfully now increasingly part of the scholarly conversation.

Moreover, the institutional context of this activity has also broadened significantly, with most of the work in the field currently being done at research universities (which might have religious studies departments and/or denominationally affiliated schools of religion or theology) rather than in free-standing theological schools. University religion departments routinely now include Jewish and Catholic biblical scholars, as well as scholars without any religious affiliation, and their students range across an extremely broad spectrum of religious backgrounds and commitments:

> There has been a major shift of the locus of biblical scholarship from Christian and Jewish theological faculties to the "secular" universities. University scholars in the field of biblical studies have not ceased universally to be Christians or Jews in their personal profession. Religious identity as Christian or Jewish still informs in many ways the views of biblical interpretation by such scholars. Now, however, these views must be expressed in an arena of scholars who represent various shades of Christian and Jewish life.[3]

Indeed, the diversification of the field has gone hand in hand with the dizzying institutional complexification of the modern university.

As this diversification has continued, the object of study in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament research has become increasingly challenging to define. Because alternative conceptions of the biblical canon exist, which

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books are to be included for investigation? Because different text traditions are variously valued, is the field's interpretive goal the elucidation of the Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, or some combination of the two? Or is "Bible" itself a problematic category?[4] Even the name of the field has become unstable. "Old Testament" suggests a network of Christian hermeneutical presuppositions, a possible bias that has led to the increasing use of "Hebrew Bible," especially (but not exclusively) on the part of Jewish scholars. Numerous other titles also have been proposed.[5] In all these ways, there presently exists more vigorous debate about fundamental questions in the field than ever before. This debate is to be welcomed rather than regretted. Any time a field as traditional as this one can become truly interesting again, it must be doing something right.

The goal of this *Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament* is twofold. The first goal is to exhibit in detail how the increasing diversity in biblical scholarship is no accident but results in part from the nature of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament itself. A completely "neutral" point of standing is not possible with respect to this textual collection, because its very identification and character are intrinsically connected to specific communities of interpretation.

> Rather than having eliminated the religious influence on biblical interpretation, modernity has driven it underground, providing a blanket of secularism which permits scholars from diverse backgrounds to use common methods and a common language to communicate with each other in a world where Jewish and Christian exegetes often find their work evaluated by individuals with different beliefs.[6]

In other words, while the history-of-religions approach has successfully facilitated an "ecumenical" form of biblical scholarship, it has also done so to an extent by glossing over unresolved religious differences. Many of the current textbooks and handbooks in biblical studies neglect or dismiss the Bible's traditional religious contexts, giving the impression that the link between text and community can be bracketed out.[7] So the first purpose of this *Companion* is instead to illustrate how the designations "Hebrew Bible," "Old Testament," and so on imply different things to different people depending on their religious and social locations.

But awareness and recognition of genuine differences do not by any means eliminate the possibility for successful common work. The second goal of this *Companion* is thus to showcase the way in which

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respected scholars from a variety of religious and scholarly traditions can mutually participate in fruitful collaboration, even though some of their operational presuppositions about the field may not actually match. Precisely because of the striking diversity of perspectives, methods, and goals within the field at present, this *Companion* provides a notable service by modeling how scholars with differing religious affiliations and commitments can engage productively in biblical scholarship together – without pretending to relinquish those affiliations and commitments from the outset.

In fact, we regret that this volume is not even more diverse than it is, although we also recognize that a single volume can no longer do justice to the diversity existing within our field. We hope, therefore, that this volume will be read alongside other introductory textbooks and guides, and that its publication will further enhance a developing conversation not only about the history of Israel and the character of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, but also about the nature of our field itself: its scope and its aims. In particular, this volume needs to be read together with other handbooks and resources that describe even newer methodological vantage points, especially with regard to contextual or "advocacy" approaches (e.g., feminist, African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino/a, Asian) and interdisciplinary perspectives (e.g., postcolonial hermeneutics, disability studies, cultural criticism).[8] Our volume does not represent an effort to "define the field" and certainly does not intend to marginalize or exclude perspectives and topics that are left untreated – but only to offer one substantial, coherent exploration of various subfields of study relating to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament.

Even though we could not fit everything between two covers, we hope this volume will provide a useful introduction to students and a helpful overview for colleagues, who may find (as we do) that it is more and more challenging, in these days of hyperspecialization, to look up from one's own furrow to the rest of the field in which we all are jointly laboring. Two other closely related *Cambridge Companions* appeared not long ago, and they continue to be well worth consulting.[9] This volume, however, is the first *Companion* to be focused exclusively on the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. It has been in preparation for several years. During this period, we have done all we could to keep it current with the rapidly evolving secondary literature, but inevitably there will be certain omissions and oversights. Yet we remain confident that the volume represents a timely snapshot of significant contemporary

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scholarship on the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. We have tried not to presume prior knowledge in the volume's treatment of various topics, but at the same time to introduce this complex body of scholarship at an advanced level.

We wish to thank Judith Heyhoe for her editorial assistance. Our thanks also go to the staff of Cambridge University Press for their patience, support, and expertise.

NOTES

1 See Ernest W. Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature, 1880–1980* (Biblical Scholarship in North America 8; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

2 See M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, "Christianity, Judaism and Modern Bible Study," *VTSup* 28 (1975): 83; Jacques Berlinerblau, "'Poor Bird, Not Knowing Which Way to Fly': Biblical Scholarship's Marginality, Secular Humanism, and the Laudable Occident," *Biblical Interpretation* 10 (2002): 289; S. David Sperling, ed., *Students of the Covenant: A History of Jewish Biblical Scholarship in North America* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

3 Ernest Frerichs, "Point, Counterpoint: The Interdependence of Jewish and Christian Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible," *Eretz Israel* 26 (1999): 42. Cf. John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 9.

4 See further James E. Bowley and John C. Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* 25 (2003): 3–18; Robert A. Kraft, "Para-mania: Beside, Before and Beyond Bible Studies," *JBL* 126 (2007): 5–27.

5 As a reflection of this discussion, the compound title "Hebrew Bible/Old Testament" is used for this volume rather than a single title such as "Hebrew Bible," "Old Testament," "Jewish Scripture," or "Tanak." E.g., Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2012). Each of these single titles implies particular prior assumptions about the object under study and the reasons for that study to be pursued. The compound title is intended to indicate a readiness to leave such questions open so that they are themselves part of what will be investigated. Since "Hebrew Bible" and "Old Testament" are the most widely used titles at present, they are the ones adopted in the combination. A combined form with a slash (i.e., "Hebrew Bible/Old Testament") is currently employed as a name for the field in several university graduate programs and a few other publishing ventures. E.g., *The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. by Magne Sæbø (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996–2015). The debate over an appropriate title has also achieved a measure of wider cultural awareness; see William Safire, "On Language: The New Old Testament," *New York Times Magazine* (May 25, 1997): 20.

6 Frederick Greenspahn, "How Modern are Biblical Studies?" in *Minḥah le-Nahum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in*

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Honour of his 70th Birthday, ed. by M. Brettler and M. Fishbane (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 179.

7 For an elaboration of this critique, see Jon Levenson, "Theological Consensus or Historicist Evasion? Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies," in Roger Brooks and John J. Collins, eds., *Hebrew Bible or Old Testament? Studying the Bible in Judaism and Christianity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 133.

8 For this purpose, we recommend the following publications: Steven L. McKenzie and Steven R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, rev'd. and expanded ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999); Steven L. McKenzie and John Kaltner, eds., *New Meanings for Ancient Texts: Recent Approaches to Biblical Criticism and Their Applications* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013); Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds., *Women's Bible Commentary*, 3d ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012); Hugh R. Page, Jr., ed., *The Africana Bible: Reading Israel's Scriptures from Africa and the African Diaspora* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010).

9 John Barton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Bruce Chilton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, 2d ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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Part I

Text and canon

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1 Texts, titles, and translations

JAMES C. VANDERKAM

The twenty-four books that now constitute the Hebrew (and Aramaic) Bible or Protestant Old Testament (in which they are counted as thirty-nine books) were written at various times during the last millennium BCE. Scholars debate when certain parts of the Hebrew Bible were written or compiled, but there is general agreement that the last book to be completed was Daniel in c. 165 BCE. No original manuscript of any scriptural book has survived to the present. The first section of this chapter will survey the extant textual evidence for the Hebrew Bible.

I. TEXTS

This first section will describe the witnesses that have been available and studied for centuries, while the second section will treat the evidence discovered during the twentieth century in the Judean wilderness.

A. The traditional witnesses. The texts of all the books in the Hebrew Bible have long been known through two witnesses: the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX); the Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) has offered another ancient witness to the first five books. In addition, some other early versions that were at least in part based on Hebrew models have also been considered of value for the preservation and study of the text.

1. *The Masoretic Text (MT).* The traditional text of the Hebrew Bible is named the Masoretic Text because of the *masora*, or body of notes regarding its copying and reading, that was compiled to assist in transmitting it accurately. The MT consists of two parts: the consonantal component, which was the only element at first and which rests on much earlier manuscripts, and the vowels, accents, cantillation marks, and other notes that were added to the consonants by medieval Jewish experts called the *Masoretes*. The earliest copies of the MT or parts of it date from

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the ninth and tenth centuries CE or shortly after: the Cairo Codex of the Prophets was copied in 896 CE, the Aleppo Codex (about three-quarters of the Hebrew Bible is preserved in the damaged copy) in c. 925 CE, and the Leningrad Codex (the entire Bible) in 1009 CE. In other words, the very earliest manuscripts are a full 1000 years and more distant in time from when the last book of the Bible reached completion.

The MT, which has been the Bible of Jews the world over since the Middle Ages, is a truly admirable production, the fruit of the labors of remarkable experts who went to extraordinary lengths to ensure the accuracy of the transmission of the text and to record its many special features. There are differences in readings between the copies, but these discrepancies are minor, though the Masoretes themselves preserved some variant readings through various devices. While there is no question about the impressive nature of the MT and the precision that characterized the copying of it, a different question is whether the wording of text so carefully preserved in it is the best Hebrew text attainable for these books. Experts agree that the question of the quality of the text must be examined book by book; in some cases, the MT preserves a careful, ancient form of the text (e.g., in Exodus); in others, it does not (e.g., the books of Samuel). Since it is in the original language of the books and is complete, the MT has enjoyed pride of place in the modern study and translation of the Hebrew Bible.

2. *The Septuagint (LXX).* The books of the Hebrew Bible were translated into the Greek language by Jewish scholars in the last three centuries BCE. There is no reliable information regarding when translating work began. A work entitled, The Letter of Aristeas, offers a story about the project for translating the books of the Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy) in the time of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE); it claims that seventy-two bilingual Jews from Palestine traveled at royal invitation and expense to Alexandria, Egypt, for the purpose of translating the books of the Law into Greek – a task they completed in seventy-two days. The story explains the name traditionally given to the Greek translation – the Septuagint (= the [translation of] the seventy, rounding off the number seventy-two for convenience) – but the amount of history preserved in it may be slight. There are citations from a Greek translation of parts of the Bible beginning around 200 BCE; consequently, translating work of some sort began before that time. The earliest form of

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the LXX is called the Old Greek, and that Old Greek translation was later to be subjected to various kinds of revisions, often to bring it into closer conformity with a Hebrew text. Greek texts of the books became widely used not only by Jews who resided in primarily Greek speaking areas but also by Christians, for whom the Greek version became the Old Testament. As a result, readings from the LXX are found in the New Testament and other early Christian texts.

The Greek versions of the Bible exist in many copies. The oldest preserved ones are fragmentary papyri, some of which date from the second and first centuries BCE (found in Egypt and Palestine). For example, John Rylands' Papyrus 458 was inscribed in the second century BCE (on it, some verses from Deuteronomy 23–26, 28 survive) and Papyrus Fouad in approximately 100 BCE (containing a couple of fragments of Genesis and bits of Deuteronomy). The great codices (written with uncials), which contain Greek renderings of all books in the Hebrew Bible and more (the so-called apocryphal books and others, with the New Testament), date from the fourth and fifth centuries CE. The finest examples are Codex Vaticanus (= B; fourth century, generally regarded as the best guide to the Old Greek in almost all books), Codex Sinaiticus (= S; fourth century), and Codex Alexandrinus (=A; fifth century). There are also many minuscules of varying textual value. As will be noted later, caves 4 and 7 from Qumran contain copies of scriptural texts in Greek (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) dating from the second century BCE to about the turn of the eras.

Some extant witnesses of the Greek translation are therefore much older than the earliest manuscripts of the MT. Nevertheless, the Greek has typically played a lesser role in modern translations of the Old Testament, perhaps mostly because it does not offer the text in its original language.

The Old Greek was rendered from Hebrew sources, but it is not always possible to retrovert that Hebrew source with confidence. Nevertheless, the translators often produced quite literal renderings of their base text and thus regularly offer a clear reflection of it. If the LXX faithfully represents its Hebrew base, that base differed in many instances from the readings found in the MT. At times, that presumed Hebrew model preserves better readings; at other times, poorer ones. To give just one example, the LXX differs from the MT in Genesis 4:8.

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MT: Cain said to his brother Abel. And when they were in the field …

LXX: Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field." And when they were in the field …

Here the LXX (with the Samaritan Pentateuch and some MT copies) has the words of Cain that are implied by but not present in the MT.

Greek copies served as the basis for other ancient translations of the Scriptures. Prominent examples are the Old Latin, the Armenian, and the Ethiopic versions.

3. *The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP).* This name is given to the text of the Hebrew Bible used and preserved through the centuries by the Samaritan community. It contains, as the name indicates, only the first five books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and only the consonantal text, written in the special Samaritan form of paleo-Hebrew. The SP, though the text rests on a much older foundation, survives exclusively in copies made in the Middle Ages or later. The earliest surviving copy may be Add. 1846, University Library Cambridge, which comes from early in the twelfth century CE.

The SP agrees with the MT in the vast majority of its readings. There are reported to be, however, about 6000 differences between the two – differences that from a textual standpoint frequently involve very minor matters such as spelling practices. A series of differences arises in Genesis 5, where in the SP the ages of the patriarchs are systematically lower than in either the MT or LXX – both of which have their own chronologies. Of the c. 6000 differences with the readings of the MT, the SP shares more than 1600 with the LXX. The SP is based on but expanded from a text like the MT. Among the expansions are instances in which the SP brings together into one place parallel material appearing in other places in the Pentateuch. There are also a few cases in which specifically Samaritan interests have made their way into the text. For example, an order identifying Mt. Gerizim as the chosen site for the temple is listed as the tenth commandment; the extra commandment was made possible by combining the first two into one. In such instances, it is most likely that they have been added to an older text form by Samaritan tradents.

These three witnesses, direct or indirect, to the text of the Hebrew Bible (or parts of it) have been used not only by their

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