

# Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches in the Study of the Hebrew Bible: Text Criticism within the Frame of Biblical Philology

Zipora Talshir

## *Introduction: Expanding the Range of Synchrony and Diachrony*

Recent scholarship has witnessed ongoing debates regarding the allegedly adverse synchronic and diachronic approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible. Thus, in 1995 a volume appeared under the title: *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis*.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, another volume appeared, focused on similar dialectics, as its subtitle indicates: *Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit*.<sup>2</sup> These and other studies are mainly concerned with synchrony in reference to the *Endtext*.<sup>3</sup> The issue addressed is whether our point of departure should be the text 'as is' or rather a reconstructed, assumedly original, form of the text. Interest in these adverse approaches to biblical studies increased after the establishment of the literary, presently defined as synchronic, method, that developed in the nineteen-eighties.

It seems to me that modern synchronic approaches in biblical studies extend far beyond the mere problem of the given versus the restored 'text'. Biblical research has taken a big step forward, or should I say backward, toward a synchronic view of the Bible on a variety of issues. Translations

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. de Moor, ed., *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (Oudtestamentische Studien 34; Leiden-New York-Köln, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> W. Dietrich, ed., *David und Saul im Widerstreit: Diachronie und Synchronie im Wettstreit* (OBO 206; Fribourg, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> E. Blum, "Von Sinn und Nutzen der Kategorie 'Synchronie' in der Exegese", *ibid*, 1–15.

are treated as if they were original works, biblical Hebrew is perceived as a uniform language, levels of transmission, redaction and composition are completely confused, complex biblical texts are treated as modern literature, perfect structures and uniform themes are contrived for composite texts and books, intertextuality blurs the borders between works of distinctive provenance, works whose diachronic interrelationship has long been established are considered contemporary, and the library of Qumran is adduced as the precedent that proves that all this is justifiable, since it allows for no chronological leeway between phases of composition, redaction and transmission. These advances (sometimes rather retrogressions) toward the synchronic, seem to emerge from the post-modern approaches that defy 'one truth', 'one interpretation', or 'one story', but rather center on the present 'text' and, even more, on the present 'reader'.

I will now elaborate on the mentioned topics in an attempt to illustrate the prevailing synchronic trends that, in some respects may have indeed furthered our understanding of the Bible, or at least made us reconsider some long established conventions, but, unfortunately, tend to operate in a vacuum, renouncing by definition and assumption the inherent diachronic nature of the Bible and the well established achievements of diachronic research.

### *I. The Hebrew Bible in Translation*

I begin with the use of translations, modern and ancient, in the study of the Hebrew Bible, or, sometimes, instead of the Hebrew Bible.

#### 1. Modern Translations

In reference to modern translations, let me offer an amusing—though rather sad—example. It is taken from Thompson's article on 4QTestimonia,<sup>4</sup> a short piece composed of a series of citations. One of them includes Joshua's

<sup>4</sup> T.L. Thompson, "4QTestimonia and Bible Composition: A Copenhagen Lego Hypothesis", in *Qumran between the Old and New Testament* (ed. F.H. Cryer and T.L. Thompson; JSOTSup 290; Sheffield, 1998) 261–276 (citations below 264–265).

curse on Jericho (Josh 6:26), concerning which Thompson comments that “Instead of Joshua’s ‘youngest’, the Qumran text reads ‘your Benjaminite’, which is a referent to the well-known story of Joseph”. The fact is that both Hebrew texts read **ובצעירו**, even the spelling is precisely the same. There is no Benjaminite in the Qumran text and hence no referent to the Joseph story. One should pursue the translations Thompson was using in order to comprehend his misunderstanding.<sup>5</sup> 4QTest also quotes Balaam’s words, and Thompson again remarks on an imaginary difference between the texts regarding the introductory clause **וישא משלו ויאמר** (Num 24:15a), concluding that the authors must have had a common source and changed it arbitrarily.<sup>6</sup> Thompson is entitled to analyze the translations he is using, but may not draw from them diachronic conclusions regarding the parent texts.

## 2. Ancient Translations

More seriously, I would like to comment on current attitudes towards the ancient translations, specifically the Septuagint. Recent scholarship has placed an increasing emphasis on understanding the Septuagint in its own right, aside from its function as a translation.<sup>7</sup> This trend may indeed represent a corrective to previous scholarship that used the Septuagint mainly as a tool for textual criticism while neglecting the self-evident need to discern the actual meaning of the Greek text as intended by the translator. Nevertheless, the constant juxtaposition of *Vorlage* and translation remains the core of the matter. Thus, Seeligmann’s exemplary work on Isaiah-LXX, whose main goal was to study the world of the translator, insistently kept in mind the dialogue between the translator and

<sup>5</sup> E.g., the RSV for the MT: “and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates”, compared with, e.g., Garcia-Martinez for the Qumran text: “and upon his benjamin will he erect its gates”; F. Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden, 1994) 137.

<sup>6</sup> In this case, even the translations are not that different, e.g., RSV: “And he took up his discourse, and said”; Garcia-Martinez: “And he uttered his poem and said”.

<sup>7</sup> See M. Harl, “La Bible d’Alexandrie dans les débats actuels sur la Septante”, in *La double transmission du texte biblique* (ed. Y. Goldman and Ch. Uehlinger; OBO 179; Fribourg-Göttingen, 2001) 7–24.

the Hebrew text he was addressing.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, the tendency to focus on the meaning of the Greek text alone has overstepped its bounds, upsetting the natural balance of text and translation.

Generally speaking, it is misleading to credit the translator with the author's achievements or blame him for the shortcomings of the parent text. Beyond that, the fundamental assumption that the translation necessarily has a logical meaning does not always prove correct. Why force a learned meaning on a text that originated in a misreading or misunderstanding of the *Vorlage*, or attribute far-reaching intentions to the translator, when he mainly strives to render his source in a reasonably understandable form? Finally, once the meaning of the Greek text has been discerned, the translator's interpretation should not be imported offhand into the Hebrew text.<sup>9</sup> This last procedure involves a contradiction in terms, since if, as argued, the Greek has its own inherent and thematic literary truth, this truth belongs within the Greek and should not be forced into another literary work whose meaning derives from its own internal makeup.

The need to offer a reasonable Greek text may affect decisions made in eclectic editions of the LXX, such as the Göttingen edition, or, naturally, in projects such as the translated and annotated *Bible d'Alexandrie* focused on the meaning of the Greek.

Two examples follow, both from First Esdras (I Esd).

<sup>8</sup> I.L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah* (Leiden 1948); repr. in id., *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 40; Tübingen, 2004). In the introduction he states: "Our chief source of knowledge regarding the translator's opinions is surely the discrepancies found between his work and the[...] Hebrew text[...]" (p. 4/129).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., J. Cook, "אִשָּׁה זָרָה (Proverbs 1–9 Septuagint): A Metaphor for Foreign Wisdom?", *ZAW* 106 (1994) 458–476. He states his approach at the beginning: "I shall concentrate here on the Septuagint version of Proverbs..., for it may... prove enlightening to our understanding of the Hebrew version" (p. 459). Cook overstated the translator's original contribution to the understanding of these speeches, and applied the alleged meaning of the speeches in their Greek version to the *Vorlage*.

## (a) Establishing the Text of the Translation

The first is an outstanding example of a translation variant chosen irrespective of its *Vorlage*. Ezr 3:7 reads **ויתנו כסף לחצבים ולחרשים ומאכל ומשתה** “They paid the hewers and craftsmen with money, and the Sidonians and Tyrians with food, drink, and oil”. I Esd 5:53 has an exact parallel except for one word, **ושמן**, to which corresponds a variety of terms in the Mss, none of which means ‘oil’. The majority of MSS read **κάρρα** ‘carts’. The Lucianic text has **κάρυα** ‘nuts’. MS 58 prefers **καρπούς** ‘fruit’. Finally, MS Vaticanus offers **χαρά** ‘joy’, reflected also in the Latin, Syriac and Ethiopian daughter translations—all offer variations of ‘joy’—and by Josephus’ paraphrase: **ἡδὺ καὶ κοῦφον ἦν** “they were pleased and comfortable”.<sup>10</sup> Hanhart, who prepared the meticulous Göttingen edition for I Esd, chose the well attested and reasonable **κάρρα** ‘carts’. However, in so choosing, he neglected the relationship between the translation and its *Vorlage*. Rather, it would appear that ‘carts’, as well as ‘nuts’ or ‘fruit’, being totally unrelated to a possible *Vorlage*, are all attempts to provide an item that might make sense in the context, replacing a difficult original Greek reading. On the other hand, the reading **χαρά** ‘joy’ of MS B not only enjoys the privilege of a *lectio difficilior* but is also more likely to be related to a possible Hebrew reading. **Χαρά** is either an internal Greek corruption of **χρῆμα** ‘oil’, for Ezr’s **ושמן**,<sup>11</sup> or reflects a different Hebrew word such as **שמחה** ‘joy’.<sup>12</sup> Supposing that the original Greek read **χαρά**, the meaning of the Greek text becomes quite awkward, and there is nothing much a scholar can do to ameliorate it without imposing on the text a meaning that is not there.

## (b) Interpreting the Greek Text ‘As Is’

Van der Kooij’s insightful analysis of the conclusion of I Esd 9:55 (Neh 8:12–13), is an example of the increasing attempts to understand the Greek text

<sup>10</sup> *Antiquities* 9.78.

<sup>11</sup> W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia* (HAT; Tübingen, 1949) ad loc.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. I Esd 5:61 (Ezr 3:12) **שמחה=χαρά**; see Z. Talshir, *I Esdras—A Text Critical Commentary* (SCS 50; Atlanta, 2001) 302–303.

‘as is’.<sup>13</sup> The book ends abruptly with καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν ‘and they gathered’, usually understood as an indication that the book was damaged and its end lost.<sup>14</sup> Van der Kooij argues that this is not the beginning of a lost section but a perfectly logical ending meant indeed to conclude the book: “Then all the people went to... make great merriment not only because the teaching given them had been instilled to their mind, but also because they had been gathered together”. While van der Kooij is right in highlighting the deliberate formulation ὅτι καὶ... καὶ... ‘both... and...’, the result is nonetheless a spurious artificial text. Moreover, the fact is that the subsequent paragraph in the MT indeed starts with a gathering: **וביום השני נאספו** ‘On the second day (the heads of the clans...) gathered’ (Neh 8:13).<sup>15</sup> Thus it seems somewhat forced to credit the translator with an irregular but allegedly meaningful ending when the *Vorlage* is there to prove otherwise.<sup>16</sup>

## II. Biblical Hebrew

Biblical Hebrew has been perceived in classical research as a first-class tool to assert the diachronic character of the Hebrew Bible, moving from classical biblical Hebrew in the first Temple period, to late biblical Hebrew in the second Temple period.

<sup>13</sup> A. van der Kooij, “On the Ending of the Book of 1 Esdras”, in *Proceedings of the XVII Congress of the IOSCS 1989* (Atlanta, 1991) 37–49.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the technical solution provided by the Göttingen edition for the ending of the book: ὅτι καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν ἐν τοῖς ῥήμασιν οἷς ἐδιδάχθησαν.—καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν.

<sup>15</sup> In Neh the verb is preceded by the temporal adverb **וביום השני נאספו** (cf. the L-text: καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ δευτέρᾳ). This is one of several cases in which the verb precedes its complements in I Esd, unlike the MT; e.g., Ezr 9:4 (I Esd 8:69) **ואלי נאספו** = καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν πρὸς με; see Z. Talshir, *I Esdras—From Origin and Translation* (SCS 47; Winona Lake, 1999) 226–229.

<sup>16</sup> Even if the Greek is meaningful, which is hardly the case, it does not affect the history of the *Vorlage*, supposing that a Hebrew-Aramaic version of I Esd did exist. It should be emphasized that van der Kooij never argues that this ending is original, in comparison with the MT.

A major attack was launched on biblical Hebrew in an attempt to discredit its relevance as a major diachronic tool. Knauf (1990),<sup>17</sup> misusing Ullendorff's qualifications,<sup>18</sup> posited that biblical Hebrew is not a language at all but an artificial composite of various earlier dialects. Davies (1992)<sup>19</sup> proclaimed war against the established perception of biblical Hebrew in terms of early and late, since in his view it was merely an artificial product of the scribal elite in the Persian-Hellenistic period. Alternatively, forced to confront the incontrovertible evidence to the variegated nature of biblical Hebrew, he came up with different socio-linguistic explanations. Any explanation was deemed legitimate as long as it did not require a chronological (i.e., diachronic) continuum.

In a 2003 volume on biblical Hebrew, several studies were presented that tended to continue these trends.<sup>20</sup> They would seem to agree that the late biblical books, par excellence, Daniel, Ezr-Neh, Chr and Esther, were written toward the end of the Persian period. This concession to classical studies is not, however, generated by recognition of the achievements of diachronic linguistics. Quite the opposite, they rather aim at compressing the entire biblical literature within the late Persian period. The rather perplexing argumentation progresses as follows: (1) The borderline between classical and late biblical Hebrew is at the beginning of the Persian period. (2) The books written during this borderline period, such as Haggai, Zechariah, and Second Isaiah, are actually written in classical biblical Hebrew and do not betray late features. (3) The gap between the beginning of the Persian period and the days of Ezra and Nehemiah is no more than some eighty years. (4) Therefore, there is nothing to prevent the conclusion that all of biblical literature—excluding only the latest books—was written at the beginning of the Persian period. (5) However, since the time span is

<sup>17</sup> E.A. Knauf, "War 'Biblisch-Hebräisch' eine Sprache?", *ZAH* 3 (1990) 11–23.

<sup>18</sup> E. Ullendorff, 'Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?' in id., *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?; Studies in Semitic Languages and Civilizations* (Wiesbaden, 1977) 3–17.

<sup>19</sup> P.R. Davies, *In Search of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield, 1992).

<sup>20</sup> I. Young, ed., *Biblical Hebrew—Studies in Chronology and Typology* (JSOTSup 369; London, 2003).

so short, there is no reason to perceive the differences between the books as chronological; all may have been written at the end of the Persian period. (6) The differences should be explained on different grounds, such as different synchronic dialects or differences between written and vernacular language (diglossia). (7) The writers, all contemporary, had the capacity and could choose the sort of language they wanted to use. (8) All biblical texts are composite, and early texts that may have survived are in any case late in their final form. (9) Language is hereby disqualified as a valid tool for determining the relative and absolute chronology of biblical texts. (10) In conclusion, there is no way of telling early from late in the Hebrew Bible.

This presentation totally invalidates language as a tool in philological studies. It ignores differences in grammar, syntax and vocabulary that are firmly supported by diachronic evidence from external sources. It provides no explanation for a mass of features that characterize only late biblical Hebrew and survive in later post-biblical Hebrew sources. And why do Persian loan-words occur only in the latest books? If the entire biblical corpus is from the late Persian period, where is the Persian influence on authors, redactors and scribes? Even the 'earlier Persian books' such as Second Isaiah, Haggai and Zechariah, or books like Ezekiel and Jonah that betray their late provenance in many ways, have not yet been infiltrated by Persian loan-words. How are the substantial linguistic differences within Chr to be explained? As one of the writers in this volume promises,<sup>21</sup> we are in danger of a future linguistic study that will "prove" that the language of Chr is not later than that of Sam-Kgs. The study is still under way but its consequences are well-known in advance, notwithstanding the work of Kropat, Hurvitz, Polzin, Talshir and many others.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> R. Rezetko, "Dating Biblical Hebrew: Evidence from Samuel-Kings and Chronicles", *ibid*, 215–250. See Hurvitz' solid response; A. Hurvitz, "The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Experts' Opinions, and Inconclusive Arguments", *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006) 191–210.

<sup>22</sup> A. Kropat, *Die Syntax des Autors der Chronik* (Giessen, 1909); A. Hurvitz, *The Transition Period in Biblical Hebrew* (Jerusalem, 1972) (Heb.); R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew* (Missoula, 1976); D. Talshir, "A Reinvestigation of the Linguistic Relationship between Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah", *VT* 38 (1988) 165–193.



### *III. Levels of Transmission, Redaction, and Composition*

Textual transmission is often presented as an amorphous process that took place over a long period of time involving an unspecified number of unknown scribes or copyists. This applies only to certain levels of transmission. However, the more consequential levels of transmission should be associated with defined tradents who left their personal mark on the text they were handling. For example, divine names could have undergone changes by different hands during the ages, but it was one specific scribe that decided to replace יהוה with אלהים in the Elohistic Psalter (Pss 42–83). Similarly, different scribes in different times may have harmonized differing texts in one way or another, but it was one particular reviser who was responsible for the large-scale harmonizations characteristic of such scrolls as 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup> and the Samaritan Pentateuch, turning them into distinctive revisions. These different levels of transmission may testify to different kinds of relationships between the texts. Thus, 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup> and the Samaritan Pentateuch may preserve many individual readings that are older than the ones preserved in the MT, but with respect to their inherent layer of harmonizing expansions, they are later than the shorter text that survived in the MT and the LXX. Even the relationship between 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup> and the Samaritan Pentateuch is not one-dimensional. The latter went one step further introducing a few sectarian features, specifically the Samaritan tenth commandment, instituting the altar on mount Gerizim, an expansion that is not shared by the Qumranic scroll.<sup>23</sup>

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Talshir argues that the substantial change did not occur before the middle of the fifth century BCE, with the return of a large and culturally dominant group led by Ezra and Nehemiah; id., “The Habitat and History of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period”, in *Biblical Hebrew* (above, note 20) 251–275.

<sup>23</sup> Assuming that the reconstruction of the columns is correct; see P.W. Skehan, E. Ulrich, and J.E. Sanderson, *Qumran Cave 4. IV* (DJD IX; Oxford, 1992) 101–102. See also 4Q158, fr. 7–8, where the citation of the ten commandments ends with ‘You shall not covet the wife of your neighbour’.

Another telling case is the book of Samuel. 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, often supported by the LXX, preserves many original variants in comparison with the corrupt MT, mainly in terms of textual transmission, but it nevertheless preserves a later revision in other respects. Let me adduce one specific well-known example to illustrate this intricate relationship. According to the MT to 1 Sam 1:24, Hannah arrives at Shiloh: **בפרים שלשה ואיפה אחת קמה ונבל יין** 'Along with three bulls, one ephah of flour, and a jar of wine'. According to the LXX it is ἐν μόσχῳ τριετίζοντι καὶ ἄρτοις καὶ οἶφι σεμιδάλεως καὶ νεβελ οἴνου, i.e., 'with a calf of three years old, and loaves, and an ephah of fine flour, and a bottle of wine'. Finally, 4QSam<sup>a</sup> reads **בפר בן בקר משלש ולחם ואיפה קמה ונבל יין**, i.e., 'with a three-year-old bull of the herd, and loaves, [and an ephah of fine flour, and a bottle of wine]'. The changes in these texts probably occurred on different levels: (1) Scribal error. The difference between MT **בפרים שלשה** and the text reflected in the LXX **בפר משלש** is best described as a scribal error caused by different word division (**בפר/משלש** / **בפרמשלש**). The original reading is probably preserved in the LXX, i.e. **בפר משלש** 'a calf of three years old', since the following verse specifies: **וישחטו את הפר** "Then they slew the bull" (v. 25), i.e. one bull, not three. (2) Stylistic borrowing. The scroll's reading **בפר בן בקר משלש** preserves the original **בפר משלש**. In this respect the scroll is preferable compared with the MT. However, the additional **בן בקר** is most probably a later addition compared with both the MT and the LXX. This addition is stylistically characteristic of the priestly material in Lev, Num, as well as Ezek, and does not reflect the regular vocabulary of the book of Samuel. Is this just a random stylistic borrowing? (3) Adaptation to the Law. Both the LXX and Qumran add 'bread' to the sacrifice, in harmony with the priestly thanksgiving sacrifice (Lev 7:13). As established by Rofé, this is not an isolated change, but rather joins a series of similar changes in other verses. Together they provide clear evidence that the text preserved in Qumran has undergone a nomistic revision. In this respect, the scroll—and to some extent the LXX as well—represent a later version than the text preserved in the MT.<sup>24</sup> Other Midrashic additions such as the case of

<sup>24</sup> A. Rofé, "The Nomistic Correction in Biblical Manuscripts and Its Occurrence

Nahash the Ammonite further characterize the secondary nature of the Qumranic scroll.<sup>25</sup>

Such levels of transmission and redaction should not be confused. Self-evidently, matters that belong solely to the level of transmission should not be taken to bear on the level of composition. The fact that an opinionated tradent of the book of Samuel replaced the theophoric element **בעל** in private names by **בשת** 'shame', while the original names are preserved in Chr, does not indicate that Chr was composed earlier than Sam.<sup>26</sup> If Kgs features occasional plene spellings or late verbal forms, it still does not lose its precedence vis-à-vis Chr in terms of their relative diachronic relationship.<sup>27</sup> The transmission of Sam-Kgs must have continued, to a certain extent, beyond the stage reflected in Chr.

#### IV. *The Bible as Modern Literature*

The synchronic approach to the Hebrew Bible is most frequently associated with its perception as literature. The treatment of Biblical literature as literature was practiced throughout the ages, e.g., by the medieval commentator Abarbanel. Nevertheless, in modern times, after two hundred years of research immersed in literary criticism, emphasizing the 'criticism', while largely neglecting the 'literary', a literary approach seems something new and fresh. Zakovitch spoke of diachronic versus synchronic readings of the Bible back in 1982, in a review of the study of the Bible as literature in

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in 4QSam<sup>a</sup>, RQ 54 (1989) 247–254.

<sup>25</sup> A. Rofé, "The Acts of Nahash according to 4QSam<sup>a</sup>", *IEJ* 32 (1982) 129–133; idem, "4QMidrash Samuel?—Observations concerning the Character of 4QSam<sup>a</sup>", *Textus* 19 (1998) 63–74.

<sup>26</sup> See Judg 9:1 // 2 Sam 11:21; 1 Chr 8:33–34; 9:39–40 // 2 Sam 4:4–5; also 1 Chr 14:7 // 2 Sam 5:16.

<sup>27</sup> This argument is advanced by A.G. Auld, *Kings without Privilege* (Edinburgh, 1994); see below. Similarly, in regard to the parallel name forms in Genesis and Chronicles, as posited by G. Gerleman, *Synoptic Studies in the Old Testament* (Lund, 1948).

Israel.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, he associates the tendency of certain Israeli scholars to take the synchronic route with their religious belief that inhibited them from participating in the critical analysis of the Holy Bible. He mentions some outstanding scholars such as Buber,<sup>29</sup> Cassuto,<sup>30</sup> Weiss,<sup>31</sup> and Simon.<sup>32</sup> Other scholars who chose the literary path came from the field of modern literature. Such are Perry and Sternberg whose ironic look at the King in the story of David and Bathsheba caused a wave of reaction in the style of 'Caution, a Biblical Story!', matched by their comprehensive response under the title 'Caution, Literature!'. They argue ardently in favor of a pure literary approach: "The point of view of the science of literature is the only relevant angle to the discussion of the Bible as literature, and any other discipline, existent or imaginary, takes the risk of Midrashic interpretation based on false conjectures, as well as of losing touch with the literary intensity of the biblical story as it is".<sup>33</sup> Of course, since then we encounter a wealth of literary studies by a variety of scholars, such as Alter, Fokkelmann, Zakovitch and Polak.<sup>34</sup> Fokkelmann describes his literary

<sup>28</sup> Y. Zakovitch, "The Literary Study of the Bible in Israel", *Newsletter of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 20 (1982) 17–29 (Heb.).

<sup>29</sup> Buber argued for a holistic interpretation that does not separate between meaning and form; e.g., M. Buber, "The Language of Scripture" (1926), in *Darkho shel Miqra* (Jerusalem, 1964) 272–283 (Heb.).

<sup>30</sup> U. Cassuto, *La Questione della Genesi*, Firenze 1934; translated into Hebrew and English.

<sup>31</sup> M. Weiss wrote his Hebrew book back in 1962, which was published in English some twenty years later, under the telling title *The Bible from Within—The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem, 1984). A third revised and enlarged Hebrew edition followed: M. Weiss, *The Bible and Modern Literary Theory* (Jerusalem, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> Some of his studies mainly from the seventies and eighties were revised and included in: U. Simon, *Reading Prophetic Narratives* (Indiana, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> M. Perry and M. Sternberg, "The King in an Ironic view", *HaSifrut* 1 (1968–1969) 263–292; *HaSifrut* 2 (1970) 608–663; the citation concludes the article (Heb.).

<sup>34</sup> E.g., R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, 1981); id., *The David Story* (New York-London 1999); J.P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel* (3 vols.; Assen, 1981/1986/1990); Y. Zakovitch, *The Life of Samson* (Jerusalem 1982) (Heb.); id., *David: From Shepherd to Messiah* (Jerusalem, 1995)

work in the early seventies as “traveling a lonely path of discovery”, and adds: “There seemed to be no one around who was willing to believe that a synchronic reading made sense”.<sup>35</sup>

The problem, in my view, does not lie in approaching the Bible as literature, but in treating it as if it were modern literature. It is impossible to brush away the fact or possibility that a passage or story or book is a result of a long process of development, that it underwent changes until it obtained its present form, that it may include later additions that blur or even distort its original course of events and world of ideas. Many efforts are invested in finding an integral explanation to a text, establishing its perfect structure, and exploring the relationships between its parts. However, what if the text in its present form has no integrated meaning, what if there is no perfect structure, what if the different parts do not inherently relate to one another?

One of the main arguments posed by scholars who advocate the study of the biblical text ‘as is’, is that this is the only text available; any other reconstructed text is dubious as proven by the differences of opinion characteristic of the circles of literary criticism. This argumentation is equivocal since the given text is as uncertain a point of departure as any reconstructed text. If this is a too harsh assertion, let me at least say that the disagreements over the results of critical analysis do not come close to the wealth of different literary diagnoses applicable to a text, especially complex texts that may involve explaining the inexplicable, filling gaps that were not premeditated by an original author, or settling present contradictions that were surely originally unintended.

For example, how can one possibly explain away the contradiction inherent in the stories of the first encounters between Saul and David? In 1 Sam 16, David is introduced as Saul's personal musical therapist. In 1 Sam 17, he first appears on the scene to challenge the frightful Goliath. During the latter scene, he has a quite detailed meeting with Saul, but at the end of

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(Heb.); F. Polak, *Biblical Narrative—Aspects of Art and Design* (Jerusalem, 1994) (Heb.).

<sup>35</sup> J.P. Fokkelmann, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (2nd ed.; Sheffield, 1991) vii.

the story both Saul and Abner do not seem to have known him, either when he took off to fight Goliath (17:55–56) or on his victorious return (17:57–58). As is well-known, the disturbing parts are conveniently absent in the much shorter version preserved in the LXX.

How do pure synchronists attempt to resolve this glaring contradiction in the MT? Some logical reason must be found. The gap must be filled. Why not have Saul struck with amnesia? He is after all mentally ill. And what about Abner? He must have played along. This is, of course, pure Midrash since if one takes the trouble to delve into the text, there is not a shred of evidence to support such an understanding. What do those who read the text as literature, but still are open to critical analysis do about this contradiction? They still have to explain the present text 'as is', as does Alter: "The prevalent scholarly view that chapters 16 and 17 represent two different traditions about David's beginnings is persuasive. What we need to ask, however, is why the redactor set these two stories in immediate sequence, despite the contradictions that must have been as evident to him as to us. A reasonable conclusion is that for the ancient audience, and for the redactor, these contradictions would have been inconsequential in comparison with the advantage gained in providing a double perspective on David".<sup>36</sup> This would be the ultimate answer for all the contradictions in the Bible. If I may, I rather prefer the twelfth century commentator Joseph Kara who comments on 1 Sam 17:55 as follows:<sup>37</sup>

איפשר אתמול הוא שולח אל ישי אבי דוד ואומר לו יעמוד נא דוד לפני, והוא בא ויעמוד לפניו... ויהי לו נושא כליו, ועכשיו שואל עליו בן מי זה הנער. אתמהא.

Is it possible that yesterday he sent to Jesse the father of David and said to him: 'Let David remain in my service', and he stayed with him... and he became his arms-bearer, and now he asks: 'Whose son is that boy?'. I wonder.

Joseph Kara then refers to an explanation cited in *Midrash Shmuel*, highlighting the fact that Saul does not here inquire concerning the identity of David but is rather interested in his pedigree, but is reluctant to accept this obviously homiletic explanation. He concludes:

<sup>36</sup> R. Alter, *The David Story* (New York-London, 1999) 110.

<sup>37</sup> I thank Dr. Orly Keren for this reference.

אבל על יישוב המקרא בלא מדרש איני יכול לעמוד, ואין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו.

But settling the problem without Midrash is out of my reach, and, (on the other hand), a text cannot be carried beyond its simple meaning (*Peshat*).

This is a marvelous conclusion coming from a medieval commentator whose self-evident point of departure is that the text is a coherent composition. The fact is, however, as he realizes, that in this case it is impossible to explain the text 'as is'.

In present research, we find more and more artificial expositions that do not stand to reason, alongside ingenious solutions that were hardly intended by the author, and of course, on the other hand, some fine literary studies that add an important facet to biblical studies.<sup>38</sup>

#### *V. Literary Structures, Redactional Structures, and Non-Structures*

There is a fundamental difference between literary structures and redactional structures. Naturally, redactors as well as authors, may build their materials into structures that give them the appearance of a carefully planned composition. However, the coherence and structure of a literary unit is inherently different from that of a redactional unit, the former emerging from within, the latter from without.

##### 1. Literary Structures

If we take as an example David's succession story (2 Sam 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2), a work famous for its literary quality, it presents itself as a fine embroidery of characters, scenes and structures, whose different parts—small or large—are masterfully intertwined from within.

The main plot deals with David's potential heirs:

<sup>38</sup> Besides modern literary methods, other new concepts are applied to biblical literature that seem totally inappropriate for this ancient literature. For example, Clines devotes to the book of Job "a feminist reading" (why should an attempt to outline the role and standing of Job's wife in the story be described as a feminist reading?), as well as "a vegetarian reading"; for some reason in this case an 'environmental reading' is missing; D.J.A. Clines, *Job 1–20* (WBC; Dallas, 1989).

2 Sam 10–12	David and Bathsheba
13–14	Amnon and Tamar
15–19	Absalom's Rebellion
20	Sheba son of Bichri
1 Kgs 1–2	Adonijah and Solomon

Chapters 13–20 are inseparable, presenting a continuous, well-structured and breathtaking sequence of events. This fluent account is introduced by the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam 10–12) that concludes with Solomon's birth, and builds up expectations that are eventually fulfilled, as Bathsheba sees to it that it is Solomon who becomes David's successor (1 Kgs 1–2). The long interval between these two scenes should not encourage the assumption of a redactional process, since this author demands his readers' patience on other occasions during his novel.<sup>39</sup> One outstanding case regards the House of Saul, a sub-plot he interweaves within his story. It begins with the story of Mephibosheth in chapter 9. In due time the reader discovers that it continues in two minor scenes during Absalom's rebellion, one when David is on the run (chap. 16), the other on his way back (chap. 19). Moreover, these scenes are interlaced—in chiastic order—with a pair of scenes that deal with another member of Saul's clan, Shimei son of Gera, who curses the fugitive king, but is all sweet talk when the king returns:

- |                                  |                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (a) 16:1–4 Ziba and Mephibosheth | (b) 16:5–13 Shimei son of Gera     |
| (b) 19:17–24 Shimei son of Gera  | (a) 19:25–31 Mephibosheth and Ziba |

The reader is required to show a great deal of patience as the author builds up the tension from chapters 9 to 16 to 19. He also has to be sufficiently attentive to notice the long distance chiastic structure.<sup>40</sup>

We may ask in passing: how could we possibly conduct an appropriate literary reading of the succession story without having first posited the diachronic distinction that 2 Sam 21–24 should be set apart as an appendix?

<sup>39</sup> See e.g., the theme of David's ten concubines (2 Sam 15:16; 16:21–22; 20:3). This theme is of course not isolated in the wider context in which women like Bathsheba, Tamar and Abishag play a major part.

<sup>40</sup> In chapter 20 yet another story of a Benjaminite, Sheba son of Bichri, rounds off the story of Absalom's rebellion.



## 2. Redactional Structures

A redactor probably worked hard to create a reasonable framework for the materials he appended at the end of the book of Samuel. It has a clear chiastic structure:<sup>41</sup>

2 Sam 21–24

- (a) 21:1–14 Famine and the Revenge of the Gibeonites
- (b) 21:15–22 Wars with the Philistines
- (c) 22 David's Song
- (c') 23:1–7 David's Last Words
- (b') 23:8–39 David's Warriors
- (a') 24 The Census and the Plague

The structure is crystal clear, but its constituent materials are not connected from within: one does not prepare for the other; they do not form a logical or chronological sequence; they are of different genres and different provenance; and, they do not show genuine internal links.<sup>42</sup> If the redactor is responsible mainly for the arrangement rather than for the composition, it is unlikely to find real clues that connect the different sections from within. Therefore, we will do justice to this complex only if we take it for what it is: an appendix arranged by a redactor.

Redactors may have similarly planned other complexes such as the kingdom of Solomon, 1 Kgs 3–11, or the prehistory recounted in Gen 1–11. While these structures are not quite as artificial since some sort of overall sequence of events governs these units, they are nevertheless composed of materials that pertain to different genres, abound in repetitions and contradictions, and, mainly are connected by a plan meditated for them from without, rather than exhibiting connections from within.

<sup>41</sup> S.R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh, 1891) 183.

<sup>42</sup> See the artificial link—ויסך אף ה' לחרות בישראל (24:1)—between the stories of the census and the Gibeonites, also linked by the ending ויעתר אלהים/ה' לארץ (21:14; 24:25).

In sum, inherent structures are different from structures created by redactors, and both are a far cry from virtual structures imposed by scholars.

### 3. Non-Structures—The Book of Ezra-Nehemiah

Ezr-Neh was designed by its redactor as one continuous book. The story of the first return (Ezr 1–6), that awkwardly accommodates the complaint sent to Artaxerxes (Ezr 4:6–23), is linked to the story of Ezr-Neh by a redactional formula that skips over some sixty years. Ezra's career (Ezr 7–10) stops abruptly to allow the incorporation of Nehemiah's memoirs (Neh 1–7), but Ezra reappears on the scene, as if he never left it, in Neh 8, for the reading of the Torah, interrupting, together with other ceremonial activities, Nehemiah's initiative to repopulate Jerusalem (Neh 7 continued in chap. 1). In the eyes of the redactor, then, Ezra and Nehemiah mark a period, as he explicitly says: 'in the time of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe' (Neh 12:26). Does this mean that this manufactured work necessarily has a coherent structure?

In his reading of Ezr-Neh, Grabbe posits structures for different parts of the book as well as correlations between them.<sup>43</sup> For Ezr 1–10 a chart is provided, according to which the account of the first return (Ezr 1–6) is supposedly constructed as parallel to the Ezra story (Ezr 7–10; Neh 8):

<b>Ezr 1–6</b>	<b>Ezr 7–10; Neh 8</b>
1 decree of Cyrus	Ezr 7 decree of Artaxerxes
1 delivery of wealth/temple vessels	8 delivery of wealth/temple vessels
2 list of immigrants	8 list of immigrants
3 sacrifices offered	8 sacrifices offered
4 foreigners raise opposition	9 problem because of foreigners
6 opposition overcome	10 problem resolved
6 temple completed	Neh 8 mission completed (law read)
6 Tabernacles celebrated	Neh 8 Tabernacles celebrated

<sup>43</sup> L.L. Grabbe, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Old Testament Readings; London-New York, 1998); charts cited from pages 37, 67–68.

This externally attractive construction has several weak points: (1) Cover-ups. In a chart, there is always room for cover-ups. Thus, Chapters 1–6 do indeed begin with Cyrus' edict (1:1–4), but Chapters 7–10 do not start with Artaxerxes' edict, as presented in the chart, but with a long introduction of Ezra (7:1–10). In order to be parallel in structure, the first unit should also have begun with the introduction of the leaders of the first return. (2) The art of styling titles. The practice of providing 'suitable' titles to allegedly parallel sections is most conspicuous as regards the artificial parallelism created between Ezr 4, entitled 'foreigners raise opposition', and in the allegedly parallel section of Ezr 9, entitled 'problem because of foreigners'; what possible genuine connection could there be between the interference of local authorities with the building activities, and the intermarriage with foreign women? (3) Creating non-existent compositions. The parallelism between 'temple completed' in Ezr 6 and 'mission completed (law read)' in Neh 8, apart from the simple fact that these two units have nothing in common, does not exist in the Hebrew Bible, since Neh 8 does not immediately follow Ezr 10. This sequence is borrowed from I Esd!

Grabbe's conclusions for Neh again present a chart of parallel sections, this time between the entire 'book' of Ezr and the entire 'book' of Neh:

<b>The book of Ezra</b>	<b>The book of Nehemiah</b>
1 royal commission (Cyrus edict)	1:1–2:9 royal commission (by Artaxerxes)
3 task of rebuilding (altar/temple)	2–3 task of rebuilding (rebuild of wall)
4–6 hindrance by 'enemies'	4; 6 hindrance by 'enemies'
6 work completed with God's help	6 work completed with God's help
7–8 Ezra and the law	8 Ezra and the law
9–10 threat from intermarriage	9–10 threat from intermarriage
10 resolution by public pledge	10 resolution by public pledge

This setting seems unlikely even before going into detail, since no redactor ever designed the 'book' of Ezra and the 'book' of Nehemiah as separate units. Characteristically, the same chapters mentioned in the previous chart are provided with different titles to meet the needs of the new chart. Actually, aside from the fact that there are some general common issues like

building activities and interference of adversaries, the allegedly parallel sections have little in common; e.g., (1) If a 'structure' exists it should cover all the parts of the structured literary work; however, Neh 5 is totally absent from the chart. (2) How does the same title 'Ezra and the Law' possibly fit both Neh 8 (the reading of the Torah) and Ezr 7–8, which presents a whole range of issues (introduction of Ezra; decree of Artaxerxes; list of returnees; Ezra's journey)? In my opinion, Ezr-Neh hardly presents an overall structure. The compiler strived to create a reasonable sequence of events, and this he accomplished with only meager success.

#### VI. Intertextuality

The totality that accompanies the introduction of new trends into scholarship is characteristic also of intertextuality.<sup>44</sup> The term intertextuality serves in scholarship since the 1980's;<sup>45</sup> still, scholars to this day do not feel comfortable enough to use it or exercise it without explaining what it actually means and without mentioning the overtones in the debates over its definition and application.<sup>46</sup> Doubtlessly, intertextuality may contribute to previously unseen relationships between texts and open new perspectives. The problem is when intertextuality turns into a branch of synchronic approaches and operates as an illegal offspring of ancient Midrash that links between texts that have nothing to do with one another, just because they share a certain feature. Intertextuality, like Midrash, is liable to neglect the world of the text, its author and milieu, and invest it with the world of its occasional reader. Readers associate a text with texts of

<sup>44</sup> See Tull's sharp description of the volume *Exegesis, Eisegesis, Intergesis—Intertextuality and the Bible* (ed. G. Aichele and G.A. Phillips), *Semeia* 69/70 (1995); Patricia Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures", *Currents in Research* 8 (2000) 74.

<sup>45</sup> Ascribed to Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (ed. L.S. Roudiez; New York, 1980).

<sup>46</sup> E.g., Tull, whose first discussion deals with "The Problem of Definitions", *ibid*, 59–66; also Kirsten Nielsen, "Intertextuality and Hebrew Bible", *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (ed. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbo; VTSup 80; Leiden, 2000) 17–31, who begins with "What does intertextuality mean?".

different times and provenance: texts older than the text concerned, such that were or were not part of the author's cultural inheritance; contemporary texts with which the author may or may not have conducted a dialogue; and, naturally, also later texts that did not exist when the discussed text was created and whose setting may be completely divergent. This practice is apt for Midrash where the dialectics of early and late do not apply.<sup>47</sup> In research, however, intertextuality, like other sorts of inner-biblical interpretation, should be "unapologetically diachronic".<sup>48</sup> Intertextuality should beware from immersing in the synchronic swamp where there is no early and late, origin and quotation, directions and developments. One example regards the **אשה זרה** speeches in Prov 1–9. It is not enough to open the concordance, find all the occurrences of women with or without the epithets **זר(ה)** or **נכרי(ה)** and import all their contexts into these speeches; one must first make some distinctions, lest some completely irrelevant texts are brought into the discussion. What justification is there to introduce into the wisdom teacher's repeated warnings against forbidden liaisons with another man's wife the bitter struggle of Ezra and Nehemiah against intermarriage with foreign women? The book of Proverbs never uses **זר(ה)** and **נכרי(ה)** in reference to foreign nationality or provenance. It is even more disdaining to find diachronic conclusions based on the assumed affinity between these texts, arguing that the **אשה זרה** speeches must have been written in the days of Ezr-Neh since both share the interest in foreign women and the objection to intermarriage. The canonical overtones of intertextuality are apparent in the subtitle of Claudia Camp's book-long treatment of the subject: *The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible*.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> This midrashic practice lives on in Saturday synagogue Derashot and Sunday church sermons where it belongs.

<sup>48</sup> This is Tull's enlightening definition of Fishbane's work; *ibid*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Claudia V. Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy; the Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup 320; Sheffield 2000).

### VII. *Synchronic Reading of Complex Books*

Only a few remarks follow concerning the question: Is it possible to read synchronically complex books such as the Minor Prophets or the book of Isaiah?

#### 1. The Book of Isaiah—Combined Prophets/Prophecies

The book of Isaiah in its entirety is attested in the Septuagint and among the Qumran scrolls. The concept that the entire book originated with the eighth century prophet is well rooted in ancient traditions, such as the Praise of the Fathers, that concludes the Wisdom of Ben Sira (48:24–25), and Josephus who has Cyrus read the words of the ancient prophet.<sup>50</sup> The unity of Isaiah is beyond question among the medieval commentators, except for Ibn Ezra, and is not without support in later times, e.g., Shmuel David Luzzatto (Shadal), who fiercely debated the issue with Nahman Krochmal (Ranak) on the pages of the Hebrew journal *Kerem Hemed* back in 1841.

A different unity and hence a different synchronic reading is based on the supposition that Second Isaiah perceived himself as the disciple of the ancient prophet, continued his work and echoed his words and ideas.<sup>51</sup> The relationship in this case is not reciprocal but rather flows only from the later writer back to the older work.

Modern classical research on Isaiah did not initially concern itself with interrelationships between First and Second Isaiah and the different parts of the book were treated separately, usually in different volumes and by different scholars. This attitude changed over the years and more and more studies now tend to find correlations, real or imaginary, between the different parts of the book. These studies are usually based on the perception that parts of Isa 1–39 rather belong to later writers who might relate to the initiators of the book in its entirety. In this case, as Williamson puts it, “a properly synchronic reading depends on a prior, rigorous

<sup>50</sup> *Antiquities* 11.5–6.

<sup>51</sup> M. Buber, “The Unity of Isaiah—In What way?” (above, n. 29) 321–323 (Heb.).

diachronic analysis".<sup>52</sup> After all, it makes a difference, for example, whether Isaiah chapter 1 was composed with chapters 63–66 in mind, or chapters 63–66 were composed with chapter 1 in mind, or both have been composed by the same author, or if one of these units was merely adapted to suit the other. Moreover, it makes a difference whether the correlations originated with the author or with a redactor. A redactor puts together materials already existent in a set literary and conceptual form. He usually intervenes mainly at the borders of the various constituent components; the body of the materials he more or less quotes so that they do not take on a different form or meaning.<sup>53</sup> The character of the relationship would be different if the writer or writers that created the later parts of the book, also wrote or rewrote and rearranged parts of Isa 1–39.<sup>54</sup> These options call for different types of synchronic readings.

In all, I find that the endeavors to reveal the unity of Isaiah,<sup>55</sup> by far exceed the reality of this complex book. I find it difficult to accept synchronic readings that acknowledge the fact of multiple writers but decide to neglect its consequences, under the pretext that the only dependable form available is the book 'as is'. Such approaches can only lead to the kind of reading that in turn is liable to distort the character and meaning of the entire book as well as its individual layers.

## 2. The Book of the Twelve—Combined 'Books'

The Minor Prophets have also become the subject of unitary studies. A title such as 'Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve', given to a

<sup>52</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, "Synchronic and Diachronic in Isaian Perspective", in *Synchronic or Diachronic?* (above, n. 1) 214.

<sup>53</sup> See D. Carr, "Reaching for Unity in Isaiah", *JSOT* 57 (1993) 61–80.

<sup>54</sup> H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> See R.F. Melugin and M.A. Sweeney, eds., *New Visions of Isaiah* (JSOTSup 214; Sheffield, 1996). Also, M.A. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Forschungen zum AT 45; Tübingen, 2005).

symposium, as well as the publication that followed,<sup>56</sup> says it all. The reference to 'the Book of the Twelve' as one composition that carries a common message, completely confuses different levels of the creation of this so-called book.

The book of the Twelve was created on the level of transmission and especially preservation, rather than on the level of composition or even redaction. Truly, this is a quite ancient formation, known as early as Ben Sira's Praise of the Fathers, where the Twelve (שנים עשר הנביאים) are briefly mentioned after Jeremiah and Ezekiel (49:10). The author mentions the twelve prophets together because in his day they are already perceived as one entity. Otherwise, he would have treated them separately since his survey is obviously chronological.

Nevertheless, the reason the words of the Twelve were joined together is a technical matter, rightly enunciated by the Sages in a debate over the order of the prophets, specifically in regard to Hosea:

וליקדמיה להושע ברישא? כיון דכתיב נבואתיה גבי חגי זכריה ומלאכי, וחגי זכריה ומלאכי סוף נביאים הוו, חשיב ליה בהדייהו. וליכתביה לחודיה וליקדמיה? אידי דזוטר מירכס.  
Should not Hosea come first?—Since his prophecy is written along with those of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and...[they] came at the end of the prophets, he is reckoned with them. But why should he not be written separately and placed first? Since his book is so small, it might be lost (*b. Bab. Bat. 14b*).

This is probably the actual reason why the twelve prophets were written on one scroll and hence became, technically, one book.

The book of the Twelve is surely not one composition, despite some external editorial interventions.<sup>57</sup> It has no unified structure or message. It is disrupted first of all by the book of Jonah that belongs to a different genre altogether. It originated with different authors, from within different times and situations. Allegedly shared topics, such as the call for renewal of the

<sup>56</sup> J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney, eds., *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta, 2000).

<sup>57</sup> E.g., the heading shared by the last three units of the Twelve: 'משא דבר ה' 'An oracle. The word of the Lord' (Zech 9:1; 12:1; Mal 1:1).



covenant between the people and God, similarly unite all the prophets, not only the twelve, and other books as well.

It is difficult to understand how these completely different works that ended up in one scroll for a purely technical reason can be read synchronically.

The case of the Twelve may be expanded to other complexes, e.g., the wisdom literature, or, in principle, to the entire canon. Circles close. The ancient self-evident unitarian view of the entire Tanakh as one Torah, i.e., Teaching, returns in the garb of modern synchronic reading of the Bible, as carrying one message, as conceived by the creators of the canon.

#### *VIII. Parallel Works—Synchronic Approaches with Diachronic Results*

Since comparison lies at the heart of diachronic research, it is interesting to investigate what synchronic approaches make of parallel works and the interrelationship between them.

Our two examples for synchronic attitudes towards redactions whose interrelationships are basically diachronic concern Chr created mainly on the basis of Sam-Kgs, and I Esd based primarily on Chr-Ezr-Neh. Let me just note in passing that the beginning and conclusion of Chr and I Esd demonstrate more than any other evidence to what extent these two compositions are founded on extracts from other works. The Chronicler begins the running history of the House of David with the full account of the last battle on Mount Gilboa, the closing chapter in the story of Saul (1 Sam 31 // 1 Chr 10). A modern redactor would hardly have thought of such a beginning. The redactor who created I Esd may have worked according to the same standards when he began his account with Josiah's Passover. On a different level, the last verses of Chr are not a conclusion but rather the beginning of the story of the return as recounted in the book of Ezr-Neh. Similarly, one may say, I Esd abruptly ends in the middle of a sentence, where the book was damaged, or, interrupted on purpose leaving a marker saying that the story continues elsewhere.

### 1. The Case of Samuel-Kings versus Chronicles

Two hundred years of diachronic research—if we start counting with de Wette's monumental work of 1806—have taught us that in almost every possible way, excluding only matters of textual transmission, the books of Sam-Kgs precede Chr.<sup>58</sup> There is nothing new about this, except the need to halt the research-wagon rolling down the slippery slope of synchronic concepts.

Let me comment here on two different, in fact opposite, attempts, to place Chr and Sam-Kgs on the same level. In 1994, Graeme Auld published a study carrying the intriguing title *Kings without Privilege*.<sup>59</sup> The meaning is far more prosaic; in his view, Kgs simply has no advantage over Chr. Auld introduces his study as follows: “This book proposes a very simple solution to what is widely held to be a very controverted problem. Its argument, therefore is either creatively radical or absurdly naive”. The solution offered is that the relatively early material is composed of the parts that both books share, while the rest of the material in both books consists of Hellenistic additions. This is indeed “absurdly naive”, another result of the one-dimensional simplistic ideas that do not recognize the achievements of diachronic analysis.<sup>60</sup> It is enough to mention that the bulk of materials from Kgs that remain without counterpart in Chr nevertheless have left clear traces in Chr; thus, chapters from the history of the northern kingdom, usually without counterpart in Chr, nevertheless appear when relevant for the history of Judah. Even the synchronic dates correlating the kings of Judah and Israel—meaningless in Chr—survived on two occasions (2 Chr 13:1; 25:25). Other remnants as well of rejected materials exist in Chr, such

<sup>58</sup> W.M.L. de Wette, “Historisch-kritische Untersuchung über die Bücher der Chronik”, in *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806) 1–132.

<sup>59</sup> A.G. Auld, *Kings without Privilege* (Edinburgh, 1994).

<sup>60</sup> Auld gives some undeserved credit to Chr, while discrediting Kgs, misusing alleged affinities between Chr and 3 Kgdms; Z. Talshir, “The Reign of Solomon in the Making: Pseudo-Connections between 3 Kingdoms and Chronicles”, *VT* 50 (2000) 233–249

as the Michal episode (1 Chr 15:29), the story of David and Bathsheba (1 Chr 20:1), the prophecy of Ahijah (2 Chr 10:15) and others.

Another equation between Kgs and Chr, from an opposite angle, was offered by Anson Rainey in a 1997 comprehensive article.<sup>61</sup> In his opinion the extra materials in Chr stem from the very same sources used by the author of Kgs. The Chronicler chose to include them while the Deuteronomist preferred to leave them out. Rainey comes to this conclusion on the basis of the closing formulae to each and every kingdom that refers to the sources of the Chronicler. However, Rainey makes a fundamental mistake that undermines his entire study: the Chronicler does not refer to the sources used by the author of Kgs but rather to his own sources. He quotes a synchronic source that deals with both Israel and Judah, probably meaning the book of Kings, better Sam-Kgs, and this source, the Chronicler believes, was written by contemporary prophets,<sup>62</sup> as passages such as 2 Chr 20:34 and 32:32 indeed prove beyond doubt.<sup>63</sup> This concept may be his own; alternatively he is the first to attest an existing tradition, later adopted by Josephus and the Sages.

Both Auld and Rainey do not take into consideration the deep and fundamental difference between the material borrowed by the Chronicler from Sam-Kgs and those parts in his book that are labeled in diachronic circles as his *Eigenegeschichtschreibung*. These additional materials are designed differently in every respect, linguistically, literarily and, self-

<sup>61</sup> A. Rainey, "The Chronicler and his Sources—Historical and Geographical", in *The Chronicler as Historian* (ed. M.P. Graham et al; Sheffield, 1997) 30–72.

<sup>62</sup> These include Iddo, whose name was not found in the ancient records used by the Chronicler, as argued by Rainey, but rather a name applied to the anonymous prophet of 1 Kgs 13, as implied by Josephus and the Sages.

<sup>63</sup> 2 Chr 20:34 ויתר דברי יהושפט... הנם כתובים בדברי יהוא בן חנני אשר העלה על ספר מלכי ישראל 'Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat... are written in the chronicles of Jehu the son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel'; 32:32 ויתר דברי יחזקיהו... הנם כתובים בחזון ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא על ספר מלכי יהודה וישראל 'Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah... behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel'; see also 33:18–19.

evidently, ideologically. They cannot be equated with Sam-Kgs materials as either early, according to Rainey, or very late, according to Auld. In sum, these two scholars approached Kgs and Chr synchronically and came up with two completely opposite ideas, both logical, were they suggested in a vacuum. They neglected, however, the results of a long series of classical diachronic studies that refute their conclusions completely.

As it happens, these scholars are followed by their students. A comprehensive 1999 dissertation by Rainey's student "proves" that there is nothing in Chr that is not from pre-exilic sources,<sup>64</sup> and Auld's student is in the course of "proving" that Sam-Kgs is not earlier than Chr.<sup>65</sup>

## 2. The Case of Chr-Ezr-Neh versus I Esd

I will refer to this case briefly, since I have presented my views on the matter quite extensively on other occasions.<sup>66</sup> To begin with, I Esd is not an independent literary work. Its major part is a rather consistent Greek translation of a text that runs parallel to 2 Chr 35–36, Ezr 1–10 and Neh 8. Only the additional Hellenistic Story of the Three Youths (Chapters 3–4) gave the book its apocryphal position. This story belongs to an entirely different genre and completely disrupts the sequence of events by actually presenting an alternative version of Zerubbabel's appearance on the scene. Together with the interpolation of this story the redactor also reshuffled the sequence of events: he had to postpone all the events starring Zerubbabel (Ezr 2:1–4:5) until after he first makes his appearance as the third youth in the added apocryphal story.

Many attempts were made to find a reasonable structure or one theme that governs I Esd 'as is'. In my opinion, they have all ended with poor

<sup>64</sup> Y. Levin, "התפישה הגיאוגרפית-היסטורית של מחבר ספר דברי הימים" (Ph.D. diss. supervised by A. Rainey and A. Demsky; Bar-Ilan University, 1999) (Heb.).

<sup>65</sup> Rezetko (above, n. 21).

<sup>66</sup> Z. Talshir, "Ezra-Nehemiah and First Esdras: Diagnosis of a Relationship between Two Recensions (review article in reference to: D. Böhler, *Die Heilige Stadt in Esdras a und Esra-Nehemia*, Göttingen, 1997)", *Biblica* 81 (2000) 566–573; id., "Synchronic Approaches with Diachronic Consequences in: the Study of Parallel Redactions", in *Yahwism after the Exile* (ed. R. Alberz and B. Becking; Utrecht, 2002) 199–218

results, some of them quite perplexing.<sup>67</sup> One such attempt was advanced by Canessa whose insights take the synchronic approach *ad absurdum*, since he completely confuses levels of composition, redaction, and, notably, translation.<sup>68</sup> Others, most notably Schenker,<sup>69</sup> recognizing the secondary nature of the Story of the Youths, excerpted it from the book and crowned the rest of the book as the original version Ezr-Neh, awkwardly highlighting its structures and themes.<sup>70</sup> However, there is no I Esd without this story. The Story of the Youths is the *raison d'être* of I Esd, and, at the same time, the reason for its confused meaning and form.

#### IX. *The Minimalists and the Juxtaposition of the Hebrew Bible and the Library of Qumran*

The synchronic approaches reach the peak with the minimalists, led by Thompson, Lemche, Davies and others. They have inflicted chaos on all classical, inherently diachronic, disciplines, arrogantly discarding the achievements of former scholarship, as bluntly put by Lemche:

The conclusion that historical-critical scholarship is based on a false methodology and leads to false conclusions simply means that we can disregard 200 years of bible scholarship and commit it to the dustbin. It is hardly worth the paper on which it is printed.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> See H.G.M. Williamson, "The Problem with I Esd", in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (ed. J. Barton and D.J. Reimer; Macon, 1996) 201, 213, 216, and his appealing conclusion: "it is (perhaps) a mistake to look for a purpose at all".

<sup>68</sup> A. Canessa, "De l'originalité d'Esdras A'", in: *KATA TOUS O' Selon Les Septante, Hommage à Marguerite Harl* (ed. G. Dorival and O. Munnich; Paris, 1995) 79–101.

<sup>69</sup> A. Schenker, "La Relation d'Esdras A' au texte massorétique d'Esdras-Néhémie", in *Tradition of the Text. Festschrift D. Barthélemy* (OBO 109; Fribourg-Göttingen, 1991) 218–249, followed by Böhler, *Heilige Stadt*.

<sup>70</sup> See also A.E. Gardner, "The Purpose and Date of I Esdras", *JJS* 37 (1986) 18–27.

<sup>71</sup> N.P. Lemche, "On the Problems of Reconstructing Pre-Hellenistic Israelite (Palestinian) History", *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 3 (2000) 1–12 (citation page 5). How easy and convenient it is to disregard two hundred years of previous scholarship!

In my view, they pose overwhelming radical ideas that artificially challenge the classical views and methods, but do not offer serious, let alone philological, alternative treatment of the problems.<sup>72</sup> In this context, I would like to comment on their misuse of the library of Qumran, completely distorting its outstanding contribution to our understanding of processes of composition, redaction and transmission of the Hebrew Bible.

If we come to think about it, the library of Qumran is a synchronic testimony *par excellence*. We are talking about one confined place, a very short period of time, and a wealth of texts of variegated character and provenance that may relate to each other in a multitude of different ways. But does the library of Qumran support synchronic solutions to problems treated over the years by classical textual and literary criticism?

Textual criticism of the Bible suffers from the lack of Hebrew MSS that attest its transmission during the ages. The biblical scrolls from Qumran have partly filled that void. For the minimalists, there is no text transmission preceding Qumran worth discussing since in their view it is not scientifically-correct to deal with texts that are not actually extant. Literary criticism is self-evidently a fragile art of reconstructing ancient phases in the growth of biblical literature. Here too the biblical scrolls from Qumran have provided important evidence for certain suppositions such as the coexistence of different redactions of the Torah or of the book of Jeremiah. Literary criticism is naturally rejected by the minimalists, since it constantly searches for diachronic developments and results in reconstructed histories of texts.

The diachronic approach inherent in classical biblical studies has thus been replaced by a simplistic one-dimensional synchronic approach that treats the Hebrew Bible as a product of a short and very late period, without taking into consideration that it is far too complex—linguistically, literarily and conceptually—to be uniform, to have been created in a short period.

<sup>72</sup> Z. Talshir, "Textual and Literary Criticism of the Bible in Post-Modern Times: The Untimely Demise of Classical Biblical Philology", *Henoch* 21 (1999) 235–252.

Their approach surely undermines classical philology of ancient literatures in general, not only the study of the Hebrew Bible.

For a specific example of the minimalists' use of Qumran literature, I return to Thompson's article on 4QTestimonia and Bible Composition.<sup>73</sup> In this article he actually refuses to recognize the built-in distinction between the time of a work and the time of the scrolls in which it was preserved. Qumran is all there is, composition and transmission compressed into one, short-term, esoteric time and location. Hence, 4QTest, by genre a collection of originally unrelated citations, becomes the original work, while the biblical books from which these citations are excerpted, are conceived as much later compositions. Scholarship is being turned upside down. In the beginning God created Qumran!<sup>74</sup>

In my view, Qumran is, logically and empirically, nothing more than a crystallization of a certain stage in the transmission of biblical literature. It did not emerge *deus ex machina*. Qumran is indisputably proto-biblical only in one sense: the scrolls are physically the earliest evidence we have. Otherwise, the fact is that the biblical texts in their biblical contexts are attested at Qumran. As, e.g., the scroll of Isaiah proves, Qumran already enjoyed the final products. In addition, Qumran attests revisions of the biblical texts. 4QpaleoExod<sup>m</sup>, for which we have the substantial remainders of 44 columns that run parallel to Exod 6 to 37, not only attests the Exodus story in its biblical context, but actually a later, expanded version of it.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the fact is that the sectarian literature dwells on the biblical texts. The Pesharim literature—including a full pesher on Habakuk 1–2—draws its power from the biblicity of biblical texts. Otherwise, where is the

<sup>73</sup> Above, n. 4.

<sup>74</sup> See Z. Talshir, "Are the Biblical Texts from Qumran Biblical? 4QTestimonia and the Minimalists", *Meghillot* V–VI (2007) 119\*–140\*.

<sup>75</sup> As argued regarding its matching edition preserved in the Samaritan Pentateuch in the middle of the 19th century by Gesenius (1837) and more accurately by Geiger—who seems to have foretold the findings of Qumran—and accepted since; A. Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* (1857; Hebrew translation, Jerusalem, 1949) 64–65.

authority inspiring span of time? Finally, Qumran does more than testify to the existence of the single biblical books. *Miqsat Maase ha-Torah*, Col. III, line 10—assuming that the reconstruction of the fragments as suggested by the editors is tenable—refers to “the book of Moses”, “the books of the prophets” and, possibly, also to a collection named “David”, referring at least to the Psalter: [כתב]נו אליה שחבין בספר משה [ו] בספרני הנביאים ובדוין [ד].<sup>76</sup> In sum, Qumran must have had a substantial ‘biblical’ past.

#### *Conclusion—A Quest for Borderlines*

This paper is a quest for borderlines, or rather for re-instating long established borderlines. Postmodern trends that infiltrated the field are, sometimes, the result of lofty learnedness that refuses to carry the burden of former scholarship and defies its achievements. I believe we should be on guard lest synchronic approaches gain ground and overshadow, or worse replace, historical-literary-critical research. The diachronic nature of biblical literature should remain a cornerstone in biblical studies.

<sup>76</sup> E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4, V: Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah* (DJD X; Oxford 1994) 27, 58–59. Similarly, in 2 Macc 2:13 Nehemiah is said to have founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and (the writings) of David: καὶ ὥς καταβαλλόμενος βιβλιοθήκην ἐπισυνήγαγεν τὰ περὶ τῶν βασιλέων βιβλία καὶ προφητῶν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Δαυιδ.