BENJAMIN D. GIFFONE

Storymaking, Textual Development, and Varying Cultic Centralizations

Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 142

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Storymaking, Textual Development, and Varying Cultic Centralizations

Gathering and Fitting Unhewn Stones

Mohr Siebeck

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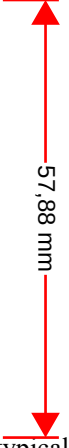
For Gary E. Schnittjer and Louis C. Jonker:

Οὐκ ἔστιν μαθητὴς ὑπὲρ τοὺς διδασκάλους,
κατηρτισμένος δὲ πᾶς ἔσται ὡς οἱ διδάσκαλοι αὐτοῦ.



Preface

I am that atypical person who reads the Acknowledgements sections in monographs of interest. While not every author feels the need or desire to contextualize his or her study by describing relationships or other experiences that contributed to the writing of a book, I think it a useful contribution – even for the author's own sake – to recognize how much of one's scholarship is inspired and sustained by others.

As for this book, while the research had been several years in the making, the bulk of the writing was completed in 2021, in the midst of the restrictive measures taken in response to COVID-19. Conditions in Lithuania, where I was living at the time, made travel to research libraries impossible – and also made all other tasks (teaching and administration) very difficult. Moreover, revisions for this book were made in 2022, during the (still ongoing as of early 2023) Russian invasion of Ukraine. With my students from Ukraine and Russia in crisis, and refugees coming to live among us in Klaipėda, I often questioned in my heart the morality of continuing in academic parsing of ancient texts in the face of such pressing need. Participating in the modest relief efforts of our local church and university family kept my thinking grounded in reality during the writing process. At the risk of overstating the challenges I myself faced, I hope that the mere existence of this book can be a testimony to the importance of continuing to do *humanities* in a time when humanity is in crisis.

I am grateful for the encouragement of my family and the local church of which I was a part during this time, Klaipėdos Laisvųjų Krikščionių Bažnyčia (Klaipėda Free Christian Church). Scholars who are active in their local religious communities know the struggle of connecting academic study of the Bible to the beliefs and practices of ordinary people. I am grateful for the continuing experience of that struggle, and for the patience of those in the church who were subjected to my preaching and teaching.

My family played a crucial role throughout the writing of this book, saving me from many *incurvatus in se* moments. My children, Daniel and Elizabeth, were always a welcome distraction from the isolation of writing and the frustration of online teaching. We spent many happy hours learning to cook new foods, playing music, throwing frisbees (and various other projectiles) in the field between the lake and the Lidl, walking and cycling in the woods by the Baltic Sea, and playing board games. I am thankful to see blossoming in each of them a love for the Bible.

My wife, Corrie, continues to be my partner through life's joys and difficulties, and the source of nearly every blessing I receive from God. Too often, the partners of academics receive the dregs of everything, as academic pursuits can consume one's whole life if allowed to do so. Partners' names are not included on the list of authors, though perhaps they should be. For me and Corrie, the period of this book's gestation represents more "life lived" together than that of my previous book; she has sacrificed even more for this project – sacrifice that only the two of us will ever fully know or understand. The project's completion comes at a moment of transition for our family away from full-time academic life into parish ministry, and from Eastern Europe to our native Pennsylvania. I honor her at the completion of this book, with all my love and gratitude; and I offer a prayer for even more fruitful and joyful seasons of life together.

I am grateful to my undergraduate students at LCC International University since 2014, for asking such insightful questions inside and outside the classroom, and for being a continual encouragement to me and Corrie. I would like to acknowledge the following students who were subjected to my courses numerous times, and/or wrote theses under my supervision: Nastia Chernous, Yeying Dai, Lukas Feil, Sage Gibson, Kotryna Guobytė, Diana Havrylyuk, Stanford Saukire Phiri, Nora Popova, Edgar Rac, Olha Sakharchuk, Timur Trikolich, and Eden Anna Waits. Sage's brilliant questions helped me think about the worship of the Patriarchs and the names of the deity in Genesis and Exodus; we are now coauthors on another project together.

I am grateful to colleagues at LCC, for support in writing, and for our fascinating conversations about all sorts of subjects beyond the Hebrew Bible and theology. I am especially thankful for the Fellows and guests of the Center for Faith and Human Flourishing while I was director, including Hans Leaman, Matthew Kaemingk, Jonathan Warner, and Markku Ruotsila. I was blessed to serve in a small institution in which interdisciplinary conversation was a welcome inevitability. Other friends and colleagues abroad have offered consistent support and encouragement through writing process, especially Scott Callaham, Brian Tvenstrup, and Father John Boddecker.

Several publishers kindly granted permission for me to adapt excerpts from my earlier works into this book. Portions of chapters 3 and 4 were previously published by Bloomsbury in Benjamin D. Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand": The Chronicler's Portrait of the Tribe of Benjamin in the Social Context of Yehud*, LHBOTS 628 (London: T&T Clark, 2016). A portion of chapter 3 was previously published by the Canadian-American Theological Association as: Benjamin D. Giffone, "Review: Sara J. Milstein, Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature," *Canadian-American Theological Review* 9.1 (2020): 78–82. Portions of chapter 8 were previously published by Brill in Benjamin D. Giffone, "According to

Which 'Law of Moses'? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles," *Vetus Testamentum* 67 (2017): 432–447.

I thank the series editors of FAT II for accepting my manuscript into this series. It was a great pleasure to work with the publishing team of Mohr Siebeck. Rebecca Armstrong of Armstrong Editing and Consulting, copyedited the manuscript and saved it from many of my errors and awkward constructions. The costs of preparing the manuscript were generously covered by a grant from LCC International University. Additionally, I acknowledge with gratitude the continuing support given to me as a Research Associate of Stellenbosch University's Faculty of Theology. This support includes online access to library resources, and funding to travel to conferences where I presented some of the ideas put forth in this book. Though my center of work was in Lithuania throughout this project, I depended upon the library resources of Westminster Theological Seminary and Princeton Theological Seminary in the United States. The staff provided guest access to resources, and occasional scanning of articles and chapters.

In the late stages of my graduate research on the tribe of Benjamin, I discovered Dan Fleming's (then new) book, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible*, and found it fascinating. Dan was kind enough to correspond with me about his book and my research, and has continued to be interested in my work. The questions that he asked in his study were a significant inspiration for this book. I was honored when he agreed to read and comment on a draft of this manuscript. His insightful questions and observations helped me to clarify my arguments, and saved me from many errors of fact and reasoning. Johannes Unsok Ro, likewise, has performed the most thoughtful and helpful service as a colleague and a friend: reviewing a draft of the entire manuscript. His comments and insights likewise helped me to make the book clearer and more focused. It was a tremendous blessing to be working simultaneously with Johannes on an edited collection of essays on the topic of scribal practice and cultural memory (also published by Mohr Siebeck), as this book was able to benefit from other contributions to that volume. Of course, neither Johannes nor Dan may be held responsible for any shortcomings that remain in this book. I am grateful for their continuing support of my career, and for their friendship.

Finally, I offer special thanks to two mentors, Gary E. Schnittjer and Louis C. Jonker. Gary was one of the teachers during my undergraduate and seminary years at Cairn University who inspired me to continue on in academic study of the Bible. Gary introduced me (and hundreds of other undergraduates) to the many dimensions of biblical study. Of all that I learned from Gary, what stands out most are the importance of careful study in the original languages; the need to remain aware of one's own theological and ideological suppositions; and the absolute imperative of following the biblical text wherever it may lead regardless of preconception, prejudice, or theological system. Gary continues to serve as thoughtful conversation partner, and I'm blessed to consider him a friend.

Louis served as my supervisor for graduate studies at Stellenbosch. I was most fortunate to benefit from his careful scholarship on the Persian period, redaction criticism, and identity negotiation. I found Louis to be not only an excellent scholar, but an attentive supervisor and a thoughtful mentor. He invests time in his students and their work, and he goes the extra mile in promoting their careers and continued growth as scholars. Now it is my honor and joy to have Louis as a colleague and a friend, and we have worked on several projects together.

It is because of Louis's support – and prodding – that this book has reached its completion. In the middle of a particularly difficult season, I seriously considered abandoning the project altogether – but a conversation with Louis convinced me of the value of continuing. Louis generously nominated my previous book for an award, and thus I was a recipient of the Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological Promise in 2021. I felt honored to receive this award, and also a tad embarrassed to receive it five years after the book's publication, with no completed second book to live up to my supposed "theological promise." For whatever this book is worth, I thank Louis for his encouragement, and for conspiring to leave me no alternative than to finish it.

Throughout the writing of this book, I heard the voices of Gary and Louis over each shoulder as I wrote, even though I deliberately did not ask them to comment on this particular project (so they cannot be held liable for anything I have written here!). Each of them will recognize in the book elements of his own thinking and scholarship, even though the final product is, I imagine, rather different from what either of them would have written. A student is never greater than his teachers, but I aspired at least to produce a contribution worthy of their investment in me. I dedicate this book to Gary and to Louis, with gratitude and admiration.

Grove City, March 2023 Benjamin D. Giffone

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List of Abbreviations

AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs/Monografias sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente
APSR	*American Political Science Review*
ArBib	Aramaic Bible
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BBRSup	Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
Bib	*Biblica*
BJPS	*British Journal of Political Science*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BVB	Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift fur altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CATR	*Canadian-American Theological Review*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
EuroJTh	*European Journal of Theology*
ErIsr	*Eretz-Israel*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FAT II	Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HeBAI	*Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
Int	Interpretation
ISQ	*International Studies Quarterly*
JANER	*Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTS	*Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JS	*Journal for Semitics*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PaP	*Party Politics*
PolSt	*Political Studies*
PoP	*Perspectives on Politics*
PRQ	*Political Research Quarterly*
PS	*Political Science*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
SBLStBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SCW	*Social Choice and Welfare*
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
Siph	Siphrut
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
STH	Studia Theologica Holmiensia
StSa	Studia Samaritana
TA	*Tel Aviv*
Transeu	*Transeuphratène*
UBCS	Understanding the Bible Commentary Series
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*

Chapter 1

The Unhewn Stones

There is little need, at the present stage of scholarship, to attempt a justification of the principle that the dogma of unitary authorship for works of literature must be totally abandoned.[1]

1.1 Unevenness and the Origins of the Hebrew Bible: The Truth Is Stranger than Fiction

What might be said confidently and precisely concerning the origins of the Hebrew Bible? We possess a collection of texts, themselves consisting of diverse strands of content from different originating contexts, brought together in many times and in various ways. One appropriate metaphor is the prescription found in the "altar law" of Exodus 20:22–26 that YHWH altars be made with "unhewn stones." The diverse literary elements of the Hebrew Bible are like these stones: piled together at one time to form something more substantial than each individual component – but apparently less stable, coherent, and permanent than if the stones were smoothed and fitted to one another by a single hand.

That the majority of biblical texts are composite products with a history of development is beyond question. Yet very little in the way of consensus has developed with regard to the diachronic development of the various sections of the Hebrew Bible. One may only look to the "gentlemen's agreement" between von Rad and Noth, and to the aftermath of the breakdown of the uneasy "truce" between the ideas of a Deuteronomistic History and a Hexateuch. As thoroughgoing models of development for the nine-part series existing in the Torah and the Former Prophets, these ideas are mutually incompatible, as Schmid has pointed out.[2] The result has been fragmentation – of the texts themselves into

[1] David J. A. Clines, "New Directions in Pooh Studies: *Überlieferungs- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Pu-Buch*," in *On the Way to the Postmodern: Old Testament Essays, 1967–1998, Volume II*, JSOTSup 293 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 830–839 (830).

[2] "To exaggerate for a moment, please forgive me if I describe the 'separation model' as a success only because of an explicit, but misguided, compromise between Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad. To be sure, Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad were among the most talented and gifted scholars of their time, but it was precisely their high reputation that allowed

ever-proliferating sources and layers, and of scholarly communities, evidenced by recent notable (and laudable) attempts to bridge the gap between European, North American, and Israeli scholarly communities.

Beyond the basic reality of the diversity within the texts, our discipline itself has become increasingly fragmented. Is it possible to move forward amid this fragmentation – to say something meaningful about the origins of the biblical text and to explain its received form?

1.1.1 Which "Unevenness" to Analyze? How to Move Forward

The Hebrew Bible exhibits unevenness in many respects. In this study, two kinds of unevenness will be primarily in view. First, the Hebrew Bible texts represent diverse patterns of religious sacrifice with respect to centralization and priestly oversight. Second, the Hebrew Bible presents (Northern) Israelite stories and sites as meaningful to its intended communities of reception, but it does so with diverse attitudes toward those sites. One can think of other sorts of unevenness in the Hebrew Bible on which to focus: contradictions/overlaps between legal texts, conceptions of wisdom, et cetera.

On the surface, it is easy to see the relationship of these two kinds of unevenness in the Hebrew Bible – centralization of sacrifice, and Israelite traditions. Even though some texts reflect strong judgments concerning the centralization of sacrifice in a Judahite center (Jerusalem) under the oversight of the Levitical priests, other texts appear to reflect contexts in which centralization was not a priority. These texts often speak positively concerning the ritual activities of Israel's ancestors conducted at sites later identified as *Northern*, particularly Bethel and Shechem (Mount Gerizim).

Moreover, these two related subjects demonstrate well the unevenness of perspective reflected in the Hebrew Bible. If a main priority of the final editors of Hebrew Bible texts had been to present a consistent message in favor of centralization in Jerusalem, they could have done a much better job at suppressing or modifying elements that could have been understood as supporting Northern sites (including Bethel and Shechem) or non-centralization. This assertion cuts against a traditionalistic approach to exegesis that attempts to harmonize or explain away all unevenness. But it also militates against an extreme form of biblical minimalism that would explain biblical traditions as mere tendentious fiction – more suitable fictions are easily imaginable.

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them to establish together – though ironically also to a certain extent against each other – a redactional model for the Enneateuch (Genesis–Kings) that was mainly based on a gentleman's agreement rather than on good arguments." Konrad Schmid, "The Emergence and Disappearance of the Separation between the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History in Biblical Studies," in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch: Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, AIL 8 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 11–24 (15).

1.1.2 Fresh Insights from Social-Scientific Analysis

The field of biblical studies is necessarily interdisciplinary, and a fresh infusion of insights from social-scientific methodology is needed. Most studies of scribal culture and redactional history are contextually sensitive, incorporating insights from anthropology and other disciplines. Somewhat more contestable are the applications of modern economic models to the seventh- through fourth-century (or beyond) historical contexts that produced the Hebrew Bible texts.

A few studies have attempted to make use of what might be called political economy, or the study of politics as exchange.[3] In my previous book, I argued that two concepts from the rational choice school of political economy – *selectorate* and *heresthetic* – might be useful in describing the rhetorical strategy of the Chronicler in Persian-era Yehud. One weakness in that study was my inability to account for a plausible process by which the Chronicler's strategy might have been implemented by means of the text(s) we have. Political economy and studies of scribal practice in oral culture must be viewed as *interlocking structural explanations of textual phenomena*.

In the present study, I start from modest premises concerning diachronic development that would hopefully be accepted by most of these fragmented schools of analysis. I begin with the observation that the texts of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets are composite, which is to say that they exhibit literary and theological unevenness. However, we must exercise caution and be hesitant to excavate any deeper than one layer of textual development. Some postulated community of authorizers, or *storymakers*, incorporated the earlier texts for some end – often with regard for interlocking theological, political, and economic concerns. Whenever a text in its final form might be dated, we must seek a historically plausible rationale for the authorizing community's decision to incorporate texts that create unevenness – that is, that are somehow at odds with the apparent perspective of the received text as a whole. The key innovation of this study is the linking of structural concerns at both the textual and social levels through the use of scribal culture studies and political economy.

1.1.3 Analyzing Unevenness: Starting from Somewhere

In order to test this proposed structural link between scribal culture and political economy, this book will examine specifically the portrayal of Northern Israelite cultic centers in the narrative literature of the Hebrew Bible. While this is a somewhat arbitrary starting point and scope, it is suitable for testing the

[3] Usually what is meant by *economic* analysis of ancient Israel/Judah/Yehud/Palestine is a focus on production, trade, agriculture, currency, etc. *Political economy*, while encompassing economic considerations in the colloquial sense, focuses on political processes and institutions and the resulting individual and collective decisions.

hypothesis. My assessments of specific passages and my approach to various blocks/sections within the Bible will no doubt be contested. Yet even readers who disagree with the individual assessments offered should acknowledge several points from which an analysis can begin.

First, it seems fair to contend that different patterns of religious centralization are plausible within the Yahwistic tradition as represented in the Hebrew Bible, despite the Jerusalem-centered perspective that dominates the received form. Indeed, one can find support in the Hebrew Bible for continuing sacrifices at Bethel, Shechem, Beersheba, Mizpah, and other sites.

Second, scholars have recognized that by the time of the texts' latest stages of redaction, Israel as a polity no longer existed. This means that even though the Hebrew Bible in its received form is the product of individuals and communities with primarily pro-Judah, pro-Levi points of view, Judahite/Yehudian speakers and authors in some measure adopted for their own community the greater use of the term *Israel* as a legacy of the older union. Some also maintained the hope that this smaller "Israel," the Northern tribes, would be reunited with the Southern faction.

Third, across several periods, competing Yahwistic cultic centers existed at sites that had historically been considered Northern Israelite or Benjaminite, often with ancient aetiologies and stories that justified their existence. We know many of these because they were retained in Judah's Bible, despite likely opposition to these sites from the Yehudian finalizers of the texts. The question why has only begun to be explored, and it presents a fascinating challenge for scholars seeking to explain the developmental history of the biblical texts.

Therefore, for the purpose of analysis, we are situating the substance of these texts in a context in which the Kingdom of Judah, or Yehudian, identities of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi are the main constituency of the Jerusalem-centered scribes – the main point being that the Northern tribes, along with their cultic sites and origin traditions, have been alienated. The Persian period could be considered this key period of finalization for many of the narrative texts in view. However, some scholars would prefer to date this or that text earlier (the Babylonian period) or later (the Hellenistic period). I do not think that such differences substantially alter the argument in most cases. The relevant points are that there were alternate sites (other than Jerusalem) available for Yahweh worship with historic pedigree, and that the common-origin or Northern-origin Israelite traditions were relevant and retained in the texts' final forms despite those identities being alienated or lost. I acknowledge that both the alienation of Northern Israel from Judah and the existence of alternate Yahwistic sites began earlier than the Persian period and continued later than the Persian period. My overall argument is not strictly dependent on Persian-period dating of specific texts but on these relevant features of the Persian period that are not exclusive to that period.

An important thesis of this book is that many of the biblical narrative texts are rooted in the desire of the authors/editors to present past events as they perceived them to have happened. Sometimes a biblical author retained material that could have been perceived as supporting a point of view contrary to his own, simply because he believed the events described in those materials had actually occurred. This is one compelling explanation – indeed, the most plausible explanation – for the presence of common-origin and Northern Israel traditions in the Judah-centered Hebrew Bible and for the pattern of non-centralized aniconic YHWH worship found in various texts.

However, the counterbalancing thesis is that the editors of biblical texts still wished to promulgate a Jerusalem-centered ideology and that they successfully incorporated contrary texts into their framework through *narrativity*. Narrativity allowed the biblical editors to present their perceived version of the past while also steering their audience into the desired destination of Jerusalem-centered centralization.

1.2 Proposed Contribution

On the one hand, several recent studies have delved into the history of Northern Israel behind the text of the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, many diachronic studies attempt to conduct literary excavation of the texts, pulling apart the various Israelite, Benjaminite, Judahite, Deuteronomistic, Priestly, and Holiness strands in the texts and stratifying them according to elaborate predetermined criteria.

In dialogue with these studies, my study is fundamentally textual and rhetorical in nature. I begin with a few general premises concerning the historical backgrounds of the texts and their production. I then seek to illumine the inner logic of the texts and to postulate a historical setting in which those texts might have been useful to propagate certain perspectives within various communities of reception. To my knowledge the appropriation of the concepts of selectorate theory and heresthetic (as an extension of rhetoric) from the field of political economy has not yet been attempted (except in my previous book). These analytical tools will model the Persian-era scribal communities' appropriation of the stories and places of "Israel" within Judah's Bible, as Fleming has aptly put it.[4]

In this study I attempt to push back against some excesses in application of source critical methods. Methodological modesty is sorely needed in the field of source and redaction criticism, and reconstructions of the developmental history of Hebrew Bible texts must be calibrated to our best understandings of

[4] Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

what the scribes did and did not do with the traditions they received. In pushing back, I hope to refocus attention on the traditions and meanings of the texts themselves by illumining the contexts in which these books were formed and initially received.

1.2.1 Key Premises for the Study

The goal of this project is to bring a fresh perspective – informed by political economy, tribal dynamics, cultic practice, and synoptic comparisons – to the questions of the composition and rhetorical aims of the Pentateuch, the Former Prophets (perhaps included within a so-called Deuteronomistic History), and Chronicles.

This project explores the editorial approaches of the authors/editors/redactors vis-à-vis Northern and Benjaminite cultic sites, cultic centralization, and Torah observance. The cultic content and Northern/Benjaminite content are often used as isolated data in diachronic studies for determining sources or layers of redaction in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. But these data are not always considered alongside one another. The problems of the presence of non-Judahite, non-Levite, non-Jerusalemite material (political and cultic) in the final form of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets must be evaluated together against the backdrop of the Persian period. Furthermore, the use of these texts in the book of Chronicles alerts us to the key issues and concerns of the final authors/editors/redactors. The complex textual histories of these books, particularly the Former Prophets, must also be considered as a window into their redaction and early reception.

The following premises have formed the basis for several of my previous articles in this line of inquiry and also are the basis of this book:

1) Babylonian-era and Persian-era Yahwistic communities sought to retain (or co-opt) the identity *Israel*, alongside (and not to the exclusion of) the identities of *Yehudi(m)* and tribal affiliations (Levi, Benjamin, Judah). Fleming has written an important account of this intriguing phenomenon, but much more exploration is warranted based on the evolving portrait of archaeology and on the availability of a wide range of social-scientific methods.

2) The identity of Benjamin is complex, sometimes being closely associated with Northern Israel but at other times quite distinct from Israel and associated with Judah. I have argued that Benjaminite identity is a *tertium quid*, incorporating aspects of Northern Israelite and Judahite identities while retaining its own unique features (including traditional stories and cultic sites) and serving as the tangible representation of all Israel for the pro-Levi, pro-Judah authors/editors/redactors in the Babylonian and Persian periods.[5]

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[5] Benjamin D. Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand": The Chronicler's Portrait of the Tribe of Benjamin in the Social Context of Yehud*, LHBOTS 628 (London: T&T Clark, 2016); also,

3) The Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), which in its final form is the product of a Judah- and Levi-oriented community, incorporates Northern Israelite and Benjaminite traditions. The precise boundaries of these materials in the received texts are difficult to discern in places, given the editors' own literary artistry and tendenzen. Nevertheless, the Israelite and Benjaminite traditions were retained and sometimes even stand uncontroverted by the final editor(s).

4) Though it is challenging to distinguish between pre- and post-Deuteronomistic elements in the Former Prophets, the final form of the text is clearly Deuteronomistic in some ideological sense (as set forth in Noth's original idea). Yet there are elements that the editors/redactors retained which are at odds with that ideology. The purpose for these retentions remains an open question.[6]

5) The book of Chronicles is an important data point in the development of Hebrew Bible texts. Chronicles retains very little of the Northern Israelite traditions found in the Deuteronomistic History. For the Chronicler, *Northern Israel* belongs to the distant past, whereas *all Israel* is an ideal for the present that includes primarily Yehudians of Judahite, Levite, and Benjaminite tribal identities. The Chronicler provides one approach to Northern Israel that must be contrasted with other treatments of Northern material that we find in the Hebrew Bible.[7]

From these starting points, I have published three essays that examine the legal basis (or lack thereof) for the cultic actions performed by characters in Samuel–Kings and Chronicles. In an article which forms the basis of a portion of chapter 8, I examined the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles to determine which forms of centralization laws were presumed in the texts.[8] In another essay, I examined Elijah's sacrifice at Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), which would be deemed illicit within a Deuteronomistic framework but which is nevertheless included approvingly within the book of Kings.[9] Finally, a third essay suggested that the Chronicler balanced several concerns when incorporating both Deuteronomistic and *Sondergut* material into his narrative, including the

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Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud*, FAT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 102–104.

[6] I use the term *Deuteronomist(s)* to refer to the final substantial editorial/redactional hand in these books, allowing for the possibility of some lesser post-Deuteronomistic editing.

[7] Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand,"* 73, 186–189.

[8] Benjamin D. Giffone, "According to Which 'Law of Moses'? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles," *VT* 67 (2017): 432–447.

[9] Benjamin D. Giffone, "Regathering Too Many Stones? Scribal Constraints, Community Memory, and the 'Problem' of Elijah's Sacrifice for Deuteronomism in Kings," in *Inscribe It in a Book: Scribal Practice, Cultural Memory, and the Making of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Johannes Unsok Ro and Benjamin D. Giffone, FAT II 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 213–233.

parameters of Priestly law, which were not presumed behind Samuel–Kings narratives.[10] The resulting conclusions can be asserted as further premises in this book:

6) The DtrH presumes that Jerusalem is presently the proper place for worship and that cultic activity outside Jerusalem in the monarchic period was one of the causes of the exile. However, the diverse materials at the Deuteronomistic editors' disposal contained depictions of many cultic activities that did not conform to the Deuteronomistic vision of cultic centralization or practice (priestly activity, sacrifice-eating, location). Sometimes the stories are adopted into DtrH unaltered (*retaining* without qualification or judgment). Sometimes the stories are adopted into DtrH with some sort of explanation or qualification to help the reader understand what should and should not be emulated (*tolerating*). Sometimes the stories appear to endorse these ostensibly anti-Deuteronomistic activities (*endorsing*). These editorial decisions, and the hypothetical reception of these Deuteronomistic treatments by Benjaminite or Northern Israelite audiences, demand exploration.

7) In some instances, the reception history of DtrH (including the book of Chronicles and the array of textual traditions) alerts us to these editorial decisions that are considered unorthodox according to our understanding of Deuteronomism. The Chronicler also presumes centralization at the Jerusalem temple in his own period,[11] though his rationale is somewhat different.[12] The Chronicler's apparent use of his sources – DtrH in some form, and an authoritative Torah that contains so-called Priestly elements – can provide us a partial window into the formation of the Deuteronomistic History, i.e., what the final author/editor/redactor community did with its sources.

8) The Chronicler's approach to the cultic activity in the source text covered by his narrative (roughly 1 Samuel 31 to 2 Kings 25) is more uniform and orthodox, and it conforms to both Deuteronomistic and Priestly cultic visions. The Chronicler makes a fresh case for Jerusalem as the cultic center for both Judahites and Benjaminites.[13]

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[10] Benjamin D. Giffone, "Atonement, Sacred Space and Ritual Time: The Chronicler as Reader of Priestly Pentateuchal Narrative," in *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Louis Jonker and Jaeyoung Jeon, BZAW 528 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 221–243.

[11] I presume a late-Babylonian or early-Persian period date for DtrH, and a late-Persian or early-Hellenistic period date for Chronicles.

[12] Giffone, "According to Which 'Law of Moses'?".

[13] See the discussion in Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand,"* 207–235; Louis C. Jonker, "Of Jebus, Jerusalem and Benjamin: The Chronicler's *Sondergut* in 1 Chronicles 21 against the Background of the Late Persian Era in Yehud," in *Chronicling the Chronicler: The Book of Chronicles and Early Second Temple Historiography*, ed. Tyler F. Williams and Paul S. Evans (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 81–102; Yairah Amit, "Araunah's Threshing

Building on Points 1, 2, and 5 above, I have also pursued several studies related to the tribal identities that are incorporated into the Hebrew Bible texts, particularly the narrative texts. In my 2016 monograph and an article published in the same year, I argued that the Chronicler takes a conciliatory attitude toward Benjamin in promulgating a revisionary history concerning the relationship of Judah, Levi, Benjamin, and the Northern Israelite tribes.[14] In a 2019 article, I took a similar approach to Genesis 35–50, seeing tribal identities (Judah, Joseph, Benjamin) embedded within the texts.[15] These studies lead to two further premises for this book's analysis:

9) Political and cultic centralization overlap and intertwine in the narratives of Israel and Judah,[16] and also in the contexts in which the DtrH and Chronicles were finalized. Cultic activity brings along with it economic resources and political power,[17] and Jerusalem's key cultic competitors in the Persian era were also its political competitors.

10) Composite biblical texts (and even more so, multi-scroll works) were most likely products of political and religious compromise between competing factions. The Pentateuch balances Deuteronomistic and Priestly interests,[18] as does Chronicles. The DtrH and Chronicles balance Judahite and Northern/Benjaminite political interests in different ways,[19] and Chronicles balances Levitical and Priestly interests.[20]

Floor: A Lesson in Shaping Historical Memory," in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?,* ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Edelman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 133–144.

[14] Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand"*; Benjamin D. Giffone, "'Special Forces': A Stereotype of Benjaminite Soldiers in the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles," *SJOT* 30.1 (2016): 16–29.

[15] Benjamin D. Giffone, "'Israel's' Only Son? The Complexity of Benjaminite Identity between Judah and Joseph," *OTE* 32.3 (2019): 956–972.

[16] Examples of the link between political and cultic centralization may be found throughout the Deuteronomistic History: Joshua 22:9–34 (Transjordan tribes set up an altar); 1 Samuel 7:16–17 (Samuel judges Israel on a circuit and performs cultic activity in all those places); 2 Samuel 6 (David brings the ark to Jerusalem, his new capital); 1 Kings 12:25–33 (Jeroboam erects golden calves at Bethel and Dan for fear of losing political control to Jerusalemite cult/king); etc.

[17] Melody D. Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 117.

[18] David A. Glatt-Gilad, "Chronicles as Consensus Literature," in Ben Zvi and Edelman, *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, 67–75.

[19] Giffone, *"Sit at My Right Hand,"* 208.

[20] Gary N. Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood," *JBL* 118 (1999): 49–72. See also Jonker's discussion of the broader context of 1 Chronicles 23–27 that builds on Knoppers' work: "David's Officials according to the Chronicler (1 Chronicles 23–27): A Reflection of Second Temple Self-Categorization?" in *Historiography and Identity (Re)formulation in Second Temple*

1.2.2 Central Thesis

The varying portraits of Northern Israelite cultic centers, particularly Bethel and Shechem, in the narrative books of the Hebrew Bible demonstrate the shortcomings of textual development models that suggest tendentious layering of later material on top of identifiable earlier material. These portraits also demonstrate that the tendency to view the majority of biblical narrative as late tendentious fiction is not sufficient to explain the texts we have.

The Hebrew Bible as we possess it contains both an ultimately negative answer to the question whether its adherents in the Persian period (or later) should worship at Bethel or Shechem, and also a great deal of positive material about cultic activities purported to have been conducted at Bethel and Shechem. If the Hebrew Bible is seen mainly as tendentiously pro-Jerusalem in this regard, then it contains a rather surprising amount of material in support of Bethel and Shechem (not to mention other places).

A model of textual development must be sought, then, which explains precisely the amount of positive material concerning Bethel, Shechem, and other Northern places of memory that exists in the Hebrew Bible's received form. The central claims of this book are as follows:

1) The scribes who brought the biblical texts into their final form, while free to make certain kinds of changes to their traditions in support of their ideologies, were nevertheless constrained by the memories that were widespread in their communities of reception. It is not possible – nor is it necessary – for us to determine whether those community memories of past events at Israelite sites have any correspondence to flesh-and-blood realities. All that is relevant is that the scribes and their communities believed that certain historical events – however inconvenient to the beliefs of the editors – actually happened and should have been recorded as having happened.

2) The *narrativity* of the biblical texts, including the use of framing and light-touch editing of earlier traditions, accomplishes the marginalization of Bethel and Shechem to the satisfaction of the final editors of the Hebrew Bible. This allows for a form of compromise: Northern Israelite traditions and earlier patterns of YHWH worship are given voice within the texts and are not completely drowned out by the final perspectives of the editors. Reception history demonstrates that narrativity was a feature used by early biblical interpreters to read uneven texts toward coherent results.

3) Social-scientific models from the field of political economy can provide more satisfying structural explanations for the balancing act of identities and viewpoints we can detect within the texts.

Historiographical Literature, ed. Louis C. Jonker, LHBOTS 534 (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 65–91.

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