

# From a Smoking Canon to Burning Hearts: The Making of the Hebrew Bible<sup>1</sup>

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I begin with three quotes which reflect a crying need for a colloquium on the Bible like this one.<sup>2</sup> The first is from a biblical scholar who wrote a text for students of the Bible, published at the end of the last millennium. After four chapters of setting the stage for her book she concludes this major section as follows:

... we have proposed that that there is no such thing as a “Bible,” in terms of there being one coherent book; no such thing as a “biblical theology” in any uniform sense; no such thing as a “biblical canon” in the sense of one universally acknowledged collection of biblical books, and finally no such thing as one standard “biblical text.”<sup>3</sup>

Then she writes what is perhaps the understatement of the millennium: “It may be that the conclusions of these first four chapters appear to be unduly pessimistic about the nature of the Bible.”<sup>4</sup>

The next quote is the conclusion of a study on Scripture by two biblical scholars:

... The discipline of biblical studies lives and thrives today as never before. That is so even though “the Bible” does not exist, if by that we mean a canonically and textually defined entity held in common by all interpreters throughout the ages. There are only Bibles, and they all include texts which exhibit a great deal of diversity in their family history.<sup>5</sup>

Now it is important to note that rarefied studies in the academy have a way of filtering down to the popular culture. The comedian David Cross makes a point rather humorously but nonetheless insidiously. I know because I dared to criticize his quote on Facebook and received considerable “pushback.”

Back when the Bible was written, then edited, then rewritten, then rewritten, then re-edited, then translated from dead languages, then re-translated, then edited, then re-written, then given to kings for them to take their favourite parts, then re-written, then rewritten, then translated again to give to the pope for him to approve, then rewritten, then translated, then rere-rere written again ... all based on stories that were told 30-90 years AFTER they happened, to people who didn't know how to write ... so.<sup>6</sup>

Well these quotes stretch credulity, given the fact that millions of people down through the centuries to the present time have ordered their lives by something that is non-existent. One should not expect complete and utter unanimity about anything never mind the contents of the Bible. But for that reason one does not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Roger Beckwith has warned about expecting a Bible agreed upon by everyone:

If it means a situation where such unanimity about the identity of the books has been achieved that no individual ever again questions the right of any of them to its place in the Bible, the canon of neither Testament has never been closed, either among Jews or Christians.<sup>7</sup>

If it is true that the original manuscripts of the Bible no longer exist, what does exist is better than a “smoking gun.” This phrase derives from police investigations and it refers to incontrovertible evidence for a crime despite the absence of direct eye-witness support. Recently a United States senator changed the metaphor to a “smoking saw” after being informed of evidence of the murder of an Arab journalist working for the Washington Post. Everybody knew what he meant.<sup>8</sup>

As Peter Gentry and others have shown, the transmission of the text of the Old Testament (OT) does not necessarily have to result in distortion as it is clear that there has been one important text type that has been preserved for all intents and purposes from pre-Christian times.<sup>9</sup> He argues cogently that the apparent diversity does not mean a lack of consensus or lack of fidelity. There was a concern for both repetition and resignification and it is important to distinguish between the two. It is extremely telling that resignification concerned mainly the texts that were being repeated. The texts that were being repeated were viewed as unique.

### **THE NATURE OF CANON/BIBLE**

What is the nature of the Bible, or as theologians often call these books, the “canon”? This term points to a body of literature that was regarded as uniquely important, indispensable for living and learning, because it had divine authority. This is in fact what the word “Bible” comes to mean and it is frequently used today to describe secular books. People speak of the Bible for Chefs, the Bible for Sports Enthusiasts, the Bible for Educators, a Birdwatcher’s Bible, etc. This shows the pervasive influence of the term, and it clearly means here the Authoritative Guide for a particular subject. This usage has stemmed from the original use of the term to describe a collection of divinely inspired documents.

The word “Bible” is simply derived from the word *Biblia* in Greek, which means books, and it was first applied as a title to the books of the Torah, the Pentateuch, which were translated from Hebrew into Greek in Alexandria in the third century BC. These were called *the books* in a letter which described the translation of the Septuagint, about a century after the translation.

When they entered with the gifts which had been sent with them and the valuable parchments, on which the law was inscribed in gold in Jewish characters, for the

parchment was wonderfully prepared and the connexion between the pages had been so effected as to be invisible, the king as soon as he saw them began to ask them about *the books*. And when they had taken the rolls out of their coverings and unfolded the pages, the king stood still for a long time and then making obeisance about seven times, he said: "I thank you, my friends, and I thank him that sent you still more, and most of all God, *whose oracles these are*."<sup>10</sup>

These books became known as the first edition of the Septuagint,<sup>11</sup> the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, or our OT. These were not just books, they were *the books*. It was the Christian preacher John Chrysostom who first used the term to describe the combination of the OT and New Testament (NT) together in his Homilies on Matthew around 388 AD.<sup>12</sup> Shortly thereafter in medieval times the Latin word *biblia* which can be both plural and singular was used. By that time all the books of the Bible could be contained in one volume, a so-called Pandect, and it became logical to view the word as a singular.

But there should be no mistake; this literature was unique. It was regarded as divine revelation. But it was not dropped from the sky and written by the finger of God—that happened only in the first instance<sup>13</sup>—but it was first proclaimed by people who had divine inspiration and who faithfully transferred that oral proclamation into writing. Most of these people at a later time could be called prophets. God inspired them so that they could see or hear what he revealed and their inspiration extended also to the communication of their message to others. God gave them the revelation and they presented it faithfully in their words. They did not always understand it but they faithfully communicated it. Later their words were recorded *and* the literature was regarded as inspired. It was not made any different by some council or group of powerbrokers who decided for themselves what books were in and what books were out of the collection, "granting the imprimatur of canonicity in a single shining moment of beatitude."<sup>14</sup> The term designating this divinely inspired literature was "canon." The word was first used in 367 AD in a famous letter of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in which he describes books that are canonical as divinely inspired:

... Inasmuch as some have taken in hand to draw up for themselves an arrangement of the so-called apocryphal books, and to intersperse them with divinely

inspired scripture ... it has seemed good to me also to set forth in order the books which are included in the *canon* and have been delivered to us with accreditation that they are divine.<sup>15</sup>

Many scholars think that because the label is not used until this period, the concept of an authoritative collection of such documents must also be late.<sup>16</sup> But this is hardly the case. For example, there was no word for “religion” in the ancient world, but it would be foolhardy to argue that the concept was also absent. It is similarly the case with the term canon.

### **THE FACT OF CANON AND ITS EXTENT**

That there was an authoritative collection of literature from pre-Christian times can be shown by considering a number of strands of evidence in addition to the textual witnesses to these authoritative documents.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the idea of an absolutely authoritative written communication from God demands a community to which it is addressed, and this further demands an infrastructure that supports it, that is, a center that is devoted to storing, producing, and copying texts.<sup>18</sup> Canon implies the importance of faithful textual transmission.

The first strand of evidence to be considered is the Mishna, a compilation of rabbinical tradition about how to apply these documents to the daily life of Jews. It is a collection of the oral traditions of the rabbis from the first century AD to around 200 AD and it was written down shortly thereafter by the famous Rabbi Judah. It largely consists of rabbinical oral tradition, what is called in the NT “the traditions of the elders.”<sup>19</sup> Its entire reason for existence is to seek to apply a collection of authoritative writings to faithful Jews living in much later times. It is sometimes called the Oral Torah, and for Jews it was viewed as equal to the written Torah, but having said that, it bears witness just the same to a body of authoritative literature that was so holy that paradoxically it defiled the hands, which probably was a backhanded way of imparting sanctity to these books. If people had to wash their hands every time they touched this body of literature they would definitely not treat the documents casually.<sup>20</sup> The simple formula in the Mishna for indicating this authoritative literature which defiled the hands was “As it is said.” When the Rabbis wanted to support their words with absolute authority, they would

use this formula and then cite a text from a distinct collection of ancient texts. As Peter Pettit has remarked—and he did his doctoral thesis on the use of such quotations in the Mishna—such a statement is a lightning rod for “explicitly alerting the reader to their [the rabbis] reliance on a prior discourse to advance their own.”<sup>21</sup> That prior discourse is a collection of authoritative texts, and it remarkably squares with what later comes to be known as the Hebrew Bible. *There are no citations of any other literature under this formula.* The book of Daniel is not cited with this formula but it is clear that it is regarded as canonical. The statistics are as follows:

Scriptures	Torah	Prophets	Writings
Number of Citations	381	85	90
Percentage	68.5	15.2	16.3

There is even a citation from Mishnaic times that was not found in the Mishnah but was preserved in the Talmud. This is called a *baraita*, and it means “that which is external.” This particular *baraita* is thus dated to the time of the Mishna from sometime in the first or second century AD. It even provides not only the number of the books but also an order for these authoritative books. It assumes the Torah, the first five books, and then adds: Our Rabbis taught:

The order of the Prophets (Nevi'im) is—Joshua and Judges, Samuel and Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets ... The order of the Writings (Ketuvim) is—Ruth and the Book of Psalms, and Job, and Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations, Daniel, and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles.<sup>22</sup>

Here the “canon” is tripartite and the number is twenty-four.

One could say that the evidence from the Mishnaic period supplies not only a smoking gun but a smoking canon!

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

The second strand of evidence for the existence of an authoritative collection of literature viewed as divinely inspired is the writings of Jews from the first

century AD, the first one being the NT. It is impossible to understand the early Christian Church without an understanding of a body of literature to which it ascribed absolute authority. This is why it is so difficult to understand ancient as well as modern forms of Christianity that seek “to unhitch” themselves from the OT.<sup>23</sup> Of course this is not just foolhardy; it is impossible.

As Jack Miles has said about the relation of the NT to the OT, it is not just that the NT relies on the OT to ground its authority but that the NT itself is:

... like a skin upon which every square inch of the Old Testament is tattooed. The Gospel writers particularly cannot move a muscle without bringing some portion of the Hebrew Scriptures into view.<sup>24</sup>

The assumption everywhere is that there is a settled collection of literature to which the Messiah, Jesus, supplies the key for interpretation. His whole life from beginning to end is saturated with OT scripture. His Messianic birth is verified by him being born in Bethlehem, which was predicted by the prophet Micah.<sup>25</sup> His name is called Immanuel based on the word of the prophet Isaiah.<sup>26</sup> When he is baptized at the Jordan, he gets his identity card from the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.<sup>27</sup> “Beloved” comes from Genesis 22 when Abraham was called to sacrifice his beloved son,<sup>28</sup> and “This is my son” derives from Psalm 2:7 where God speaks to the Davidic king: “You are my son, Today I have begotten you.” And Isaiah 42:1 identifies the Servant of God who will bring his Torah to the nations this way: You are my chosen one in whom I am well pleased. And then Jesus is driven to the desert for forty days where he succeeds against the Tempter by citing to him the words of holy scripture repeatedly. The only extra-biblical words he uses in his defense is the canonical formula, “It is written.”<sup>29</sup> To Satan who tells him to use miraculous powers to feed himself he says, “It is written, ‘Human beings don’t live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from God’s mouth.’”<sup>30</sup> When Satan urges him to test God’s willingness to save him by jumping down from the temple mount, he says, “It is written, ‘You shall not test the Lord your God.’”<sup>31</sup> Finally, when Satan offers him all the kingdoms of the world, he says to him, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only you shall serve.’”<sup>32</sup>

Then when he begins his mission and announces his mission statement in his hometown at Nazareth, he reads from Isaiah 61 and states, “Today this

scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”<sup>33</sup> Throughout his ministry there is a conscious usage of Scripture repeatedly. He is either fulfilling it, teaching it or arguing from it. In debates with opponents Jesus and the early Christian missionaries cite this literature usually with the formula, “It is written” or its equivalent,<sup>34</sup> and it settles the matter. There is nothing more to say. Debates with opponents are never about the extent of the canon but the interpretation of its content. Early Christianity was born with a Bible in its hands, and like the Mishna here are some of the statistics:

Scriptures	Torah	Prophets	Writings
Number of Citations	98	81	74
Percentage	38.7 %	32%	29.3%

The only books not cited are respectively from the Former Prophets, Joshua and Judges, and from the Writings, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Song of Songs, Esther, and Ezra-Nehemiah. Moreover the only books in the NT that do not cite the Tanakh are Philemon, 2-3 John and Revelation, but in the latter’s defense it contains allusions to the OT in virtually every paragraph.

Having said this, it is important to point out, that the NT in one case does appear to cite authoritatively a book not included in Israel’s Scriptures. The book of Jude seems to cite the apocryphal book of Enoch in this way. Jude refers to the wicked about whom Enoch prophesied,

...They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones <sup>15</sup>to judge everyone, and to convict all of them of all the ungodly acts they have committed in their ungodliness, and of all the defiant words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”<sup>35</sup>

The question needs to be asked whether Jude is citing the book as authoritative, a book which never was accepted as canonical in any ancient collection of writings, or was he citing a source in this book who spoke prophetically—Enoch?<sup>36</sup> In my judgment if one wishes to see this as an exception, it proves the rule. It is also the case that sometimes the quotation formula is used for

a text and there is uncertainty where the text is found in the OT. But these are isolated and very marginal cases.<sup>37</sup>

The third and fourth strands of evidence can be grouped together as they are two traditions dealing with the enumerations of the books of the Scriptures and thus the extent of the canon and they both derive from the end of the first century AD. The book of 4 Ezra contains a statement that Ezra the scribe dictated ninety-four books to scribes by divine inspiration, of which seventy were to be read in private and twenty-four were to be read in public.<sup>38</sup> The author makes it clear that the venerable Ezra is responsible for all ninety-four books. This shows that an argument is being made for a wider and more inclusive collection of authoritative books. However, the argument shows what the author is up against during his time: a default, exclusionary canon of twenty-four volumes.<sup>39</sup>

In the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, there is a similar statement about the extent of this authoritative collection. In his defense of Judaism to the Greeks, he states that unlike the Greeks the Jews do not have myriads of books but only twenty-two which have been given for all time because they have been given by God. He further remarks that the time of divine revelation has ceased since the Persian period up to his present (about 400 BC-90 AD) because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets. Josephus even arranges the books in a unique order according to generic categories.

Before dealing with the question of the number of books in Josephus' canon, it is important to stop and reflect on what Josephus does say about this group of texts. The texts have divine authority and none can be added to them because the period of canonical, prophetic activity has come to an end. The age of divine revelation is over.<sup>40</sup> In Josephus's full statement there are a number of factors at work stressing this closed collection of divinely authoritative books: a specific listing of books, a clear organization, a specific text form, a particular epoch (now over) and a clear consensus among Jews. This is what one noted scholar has called "a clear and coherent theological doctrine of canon."<sup>41</sup>

But what about the number twenty-two? This seems an obvious contradiction with the previously mentioned number of twenty-four mentioned, but the following points should be taken into consideration: (1) Both Origen (184-253 AD), Epiphanius (315-403 AD) and Jerome (347-420 AD) mention that there was a tradition among the Jews of a twenty-two book canon by combining Judges with Ruth and Lamentations with Jeremiah.<sup>42</sup> (2)

Probably the order is artificial, as the number is obtained by having the number of the books tally with the Hebrew alphabet which has twenty-two letters.<sup>43</sup> Also it is telling that there has never been found these particular books combined on one ancient Hebrew scroll (Judges with Ruth, Jeremiah with Lamentations).

Another strand of evidence for the smoking canon is the plethora of pseudonymous literature during the so-called intertestamental period (400 BC-100 AD). There was a vast variety of literature written during this period which was not included in this authoritative collection. "A myriad of books were written under pseudonyms: Apocalypse of Adam, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Elijah, Testament of Moses, 4 Ezra, Joseph and Asenath, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, etc. While there may be many reasons for the use of pseudonyms, the most reasonable explanation is to secure canonical authority for the literature by dating it to a period during the exact succession of the prophets."<sup>44</sup> This obviously demonstrates that the "canonical" collection had to have been established earlier. Many of the authors of these books were using the names of people who lived during the period of divine revelation when prophecy was alive and well. This was their way of trying to gain canonical prestige, since such people would have been inspired. It is telling that the only book that fooled everyone was Daniel!<sup>45</sup>

A final strand of evidence dates to the early second century BC where there is a passage in a book which is a profound meditation on the Hebrew Scriptures through a rehearsal of many of the heroes in biblical times. What is striking though in Ben Sira's "In Praise of the Fathers" is a list of spiritual forbears starting with Adam and proceeding to the end of the biblical period before it returns to Adam again.<sup>46</sup> He cites figures associated with the biblical books *as if they were household names*, and he describes the twelve Minor Prophets not as individuals but as a booked entity: The Twelve Prophets.<sup>47</sup> Any reasonable conclusion of this evidence is that Ben Sira is someone for whom there is a defined collection of writings that are absolutely authoritative for him and his readers. In fact two generations later his grandson translated his book into Greek and described his grandfather's treatise three times as a fruitful meditation on the biblical revelation subdivided into three parts: The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.<sup>48</sup>

## THE REASON FOR CANON AND CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION

If it has been demonstrated that there is a clear body of literature which is defined as inspired by God and it is evident that it had to derive from a certain epoch, when God inspired people with his words, it is not unreasonable to describe this text in the later terminology coined by Athanasius—canon. What is the reason for canon—what is the rationale for divine revelation written down in permanent form?

It is obvious that communication does not require writing and written texts. The primary way to communicate is with speech—oral forms of discourse, but there are other ways to communicate such as non-verbal signs, etc. and in the biblical text prophets often used non-verbal signs to communicate. One only has to think of Jeremiah smashing pots,<sup>49</sup> or Ezekiel burrowing a hole through a wall.<sup>50</sup> But one important distinctive of both Judaism and Christianity is that God is a speaking God. Thus it is fitting that the Bible which is the record of God's communication begins with a speaking God. God speaks and the chaos and darkness are banished.<sup>51</sup> Researchers on narrative style in Hebrew literature show the importance of speech and dialogue, and when characters first enter a story, their first speech is revelatory of their character.<sup>52</sup> Thus it is no accident that God's first word creates light!<sup>53</sup> And as the Bible continues it is clear that God's speech is absolutely central to the flourishing of human life.<sup>54</sup> His speech is found in non-verbal ways through the surrounding creation but it is absolutely necessary to have a verbal revelation to make sense of it all. The failure to live by this interpretation results in humanity living in death and darkness. But the God of grace continues to speak, calling out in auditions, dreams, visions to special people in order to bring light again into human lives and to teach them that humanity does not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.<sup>55</sup>

Throughout Genesis this happens. There is no concern for revelation in written form at this point.<sup>56</sup> God does not communicate to Abraham or the patriarchs in clay tablets, or on papyrus but in other forms: auditions<sup>57</sup> or visions<sup>58</sup> or through angelic visitants.<sup>59</sup>

But as the family of Israel, with whom God has made a covenant, grows into a nation, significant changes occur. There is a clear development. For the first time God actually begins to live with his people in a tabernacle, and this visible structure of his divine presence is accompanied by a document

which inscribes his will and is a sign of the covenant. This, of course, is the “marriage certificate” of the Sinai covenant when God addresses the people from the top of the mountain in direct speech. But with the building of the tabernacle, a home for the deity, and the recording of his speech on two documents carved in stone, there is a copy for each of the covenant partners. These documents are deposited in a receptacle which serves as the footstool of the invisible throne of God in the inner sanctum of the tabernacle.<sup>60</sup> Here God takes up residence in Israel as their divine king. Thus, the tabernacle complete with the documents is a portable Mount Sinai. God’s presence was marked by God’s word written in permanent form.

Why was the divine will written down by the very finger of God? Why could it not be just given orally? This was to ensure for all time the permanence of covenant, a record of the covenant, and the accuracy of God’s will for future generations. In addition, Moses presented the people with a book, comprised of a number of additional stipulations, which was called the Book of the Covenant.<sup>61</sup> It is significant that the Ten Words were placed in a receptacle representing the visible footstool of the invisible throne of Yahweh, in the innermost sanctum of the Tabernacle. The Book of the Covenant was most surely placed nearby.<sup>62</sup> Here was Israel’s first Bible, and it was written by God himself, and his divine messenger Moses. Its canonical stature is shown by its conspicuous presence at the heart of sacred space.

At the heart of covenant, then, is God’s presence with his people in the tabernacle. At the heart of the tabernacle is the invisible divine throne resting above the visible footstool the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Words, and nearby the Book of the Covenant. Presence and Text go hand in hand and God rules through the obedience of his people to his divine will. It is a common view among scholarship that written texts become paramount after the destruction of the temple but both divine presence and divine word are important from the beginning.<sup>63</sup>

By God’s word being written down for not only the present generation but for future ones, God would not need to “reinvent the wheel” of Sinai for every generation. It was there as a permanent record for Israel through time. Thus Exodus—Sinai—is the real Genesis of the Bible as a written document. Meredith Kline has aptly called this first written revelation a seminal or nuclear canon.<sup>64</sup>

## THE CANON, THE ALPHABET AND LITERACY

At this stage it is helpful to consider the context of ancient history in which this theological revolution is made possible. First of all, the later Hebrew Bible consists of written language, mostly in Hebrew. It is worth noting the importance of the invention of the alphabet without which the Bible would not be in the form it is in today. The invention of the alphabet which preceded this revelation resulted in an intellectual and social revolution of stupendous consequences.<sup>65</sup> Writing had been around since the end of the fourth millennium BC in Sumer, and shortly thereafter in Egypt. But it consisted of hundreds of symbols that only a small class of elites could memorize and utilize with proficiency. But with the invention of the alphabet over 1000 years later probably in the area of Sinai by Semitic slaves, all the sounds of speech could be reduced to a few dozen symbols.<sup>66</sup> This means a much greater access to literacy. While some scholars like William Foxwell Albright might exaggerate the proliferation of literacy and its ramifications with his statement that even a mere schoolboy can learn twenty-two letters in a few days, the point is to be made, that the invention of the alphabet makes the democratization of literacy at least possible.<sup>67</sup> And with the recent discovery of an abedary—an alphabet written on a stone found *in situ* in a house in a small village in southwestern Israel dating to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC in Tell Zayit suggests that people even in the countryside were learning to write and read.<sup>68</sup>

The alphabet and its dissemination means also that more written texts can be potentially be produced, which also means communication's transcendence of space and time. One does not have to be personally present in time or space for someone to receive a message. A text can be sent to a destination one thousand miles away without necessitating the presence of the communicator, and it can address someone a millennium later, long after the original author is dead. Oral messages can obviously be unreliable and subject to change and distortion which is minimized by written texts.

The genesis of the Bible then takes place in the midst of an epistemological and social revolution as well as a religious one—the God of the Universe begins to make himself known in texts. As one of my esteemed mentors once remarked, “The gods of all the other nations revealed themselves in images, but Israel found her God in the Text.”<sup>69</sup> This surely provided an additional theological motivation for literacy in Israel.

## THE DEUTERONOMIC REVOLUTION

A generation after Sinai, Moses and the people are on the verge of entering the Promised Land so Moses gives Israel his “swan song,” before they enter the land. This takes the form of a covenant renewal speech which he presents to them on the plains of Moab, and after which he commits it to writing, probably on a papyrus scroll. In this document, which is largely the core of the book of Deuteronomy, he summarizes the Sinai covenant, adapts it for life in Canaan, revises it and tries to capture its essence, which is to love God with all one’s heart, soul and mind.<sup>70</sup> It is the equivalent of the OT Sermon on the Mount, or perhaps Jesus’ Upper Room Discourse before his death.

Moses makes provision for the people so that they will not forget this document by urging them to have a public proclamation of its content to the entire nation every seven years, in order not to forget their identity and vocation. To that end, the document is entrusted to Levitical priests who will safeguard it near the ark in the sanctuary, along with other documents which would be there.<sup>71</sup>

Moreover, it is not just the people as a whole who are to listen to this document being read for a few hours every sabbatical year. It would be easy to forget the contents of a document if it was dusted off every seven years and read once; thus this ritual action must have been regarded as a covenant renewal ceremony, much like the renewing of wedding vows.<sup>72</sup> But it is also expected that each family and its members will so commit the contents of this document to memory so that by internalizing its content, they will externalize its ethic. Thus in the Shema’ (Deut 6:4-9) there is the call for every Israelite to affirm God’s uniqueness, devote their affection, will and heart to God’s service, internalize the words of the Torah, repeat them to the next generation, throughout space and throughout time. The whole point is to take the words from the text and write them on the tablets of the heart.<sup>73</sup> Ritual measures must ensure that this happens. They must bind them as a sign on their hands in order to motivate action, and place them as a band between their eyes to inspire vision. But moreover, they are to keep their memory alive, by writing the words on the doorposts of their home and on their gates. This is probably no more than a functional literacy at this time, but it is meaningless, if people in the home cannot read and write in at least a rudimentary way,<sup>74</sup> and it is meaningless if there

is not some exemplar copy from which these words are taken. Such rudimentary literacy and rudimentary infrastructure are demanded because of the importance of the written word. It is not any word but the word of the Living God.

This all receives poignant embodiment in the striking example of the law for an Israelite king.<sup>75</sup> In addition to being restricted in a number of behaviors, he must take his orders from the real King of Israel, and go to the Levitical priests and in their presence write out for himself a copy of this Torah. Why? For general knowledge? No! Rather, as the nation's leader he must personally incarnate the Torah as a model for his people.

The law is to permeate the king's behavior in every sphere, whether political, administrative, judicial, or military. He should be a model of what was required of every Israelite.<sup>76</sup>

Where each Israelite home must have some Torah written in their homes, the king must write out a complete copy of the Torah for his personal use so that he might read it daily in order to conform his life to its values, and thus rule his people wisely under the rule of Yahweh. The king must be more than functionally literate, and he writes his own copy from an exemplar of the Torah in the possession of the priests, who are probably responsible for safeguarding it, preserving it and transmitting it.<sup>77</sup>

These examples show that alongside a hearing, oral culture there is developing a writing culture, and it is not extrinsic to the faith of Israel but intrinsic to it.

## **EXPANDING THE CANON**

Before Moses dies, he establishes a prophetic institution that will carry on the proclamation of the divine will so that Sinai can be continued, as there will need to be a further revelation of the divine will for Israel.<sup>78</sup> Criteria for distinguishing true from false prophets are mainly twofold: the prophets' words must conform to the Covenant; their predictions must come true.<sup>79</sup> So here is a provision for future revelation from God through this institution, which therefore implies an expanded canon.

Indeed a generation after Moses, Joshua, a type of new Moses, renews the covenant with the people in the land. He writes the words of the Torah

on an altar,<sup>80</sup> and then records the renewal in the book of the Torah of God, which is placed in or near the sanctuary in Shechem.<sup>81</sup> The authoritative literature is expanding.

In the historical accounts which follow Joshua—Judges, Samuel and Kings—Israel is constantly forgetting the covenant. There are numerous accounts of prophets arising and seeking to steer Israel on a course correction because of its covenant amnesia. They are constantly calling Israel back to the covenant. There are about twenty-five predictions and fulfillments in this literature which show the importance and power of prophecy.<sup>82</sup> Later entire collections of prophetic speeches are gathered and recorded because these people were regarded as speaking a word of God in line with Moses. To each of these prophetic collections titles were added: “The words of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw.”<sup>83</sup> “The Words of Amos, the shepherd of Tekoa, two years before the earthquake.”<sup>84</sup> “The vision of Nahum of Elqosh.”<sup>85</sup>

Gene Tucker writes about these superscriptions which have been added to the prophetic speeches to confirm their divine authority:

The specific intentions of the prophetic superscriptions are reflected above all in the particular vocabulary used to classify the books. The basic concern behind this language is the theological problem of authority and revelation. Thus the fundamental intention of the superscriptions is to identify the prophetic books as the word of God. What had originally been claimed by the prophets for their individual oral addresses is now claimed for words written down to be copied, read, and therefore to live for future generations.<sup>86</sup>

Thus we have another collection being added to the Mosaic Torah which has prophetic authority, four historical books which stress the importance of the prophetic word in the life of the nation emphasizing that this word changes “the gears of history”<sup>87</sup> with its predictive power, followed by four collections of oracles of prophets who spoke to Israel.<sup>88</sup>

But what about documents such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job? Some of these contain writings that are very early and even earlier than material in the Prophets. In Israelite epistemology it needs to be remembered that there was not only the idea of revelation through intuitive prophetic insight such as God speaking to a person through a dream or vision or audition; there was also the concept of God speaking through creation in a clear way so that one could

use reason to draw conclusions and consequently order one's life accordingly. This is the gift of wisdom. When Yahweh was choosing a king for Israel, he told Samuel to go to Jesse's house to anoint the next king.<sup>89</sup> How did the prophet know which of Jesse's sons was Yahweh's choice? He did not listen to the voice of reason, but instead listened to the voice of Yahweh speaking in his head indicating the choice of David, the youngest son. In a similar situation when Solomon was confronted with the choice of determining the correct mother of a child, he devised a test which enabled him to make the right selection. His decision was made with all the certainty of a prophet but he did not listen to the voice of God speaking in his head; he listened to his reason which heard the word of God reflected in the voice of the real mother.<sup>90</sup>

This is a different epistemology than that of the prophet but it is no less valid. Thus for example, the Torah reveals the command directly from the divine voice at Sinai: Do not commit adultery.<sup>91</sup> The Prophets would complement this with a direct word to an adulterer "Thus says Yahweh . . . because you have despised the word of Yahweh, the sword will never depart from your house."<sup>92</sup> The sages would simply reflect on life and offer examples that show the results of adultery in graphic ways.<sup>93</sup> As Derek Kidner observes,

The blunt "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" of the Law and the urgent "Thus saith the LORD" of the Prophets are joined now by the cooler comments of the teacher and the often anguished questions of the learner. Where the bulk of the Old Testament tells us simply to obey and believe, this part of it summons us to think hard as well as humbly; to keep our eyes open, to use our conscience and common sense, and not to shirk the most disturbing questions.<sup>94</sup>

Thus there is provision for another collection of written texts which gives divine insight through the gift of extraordinary wisdom. This wisdom reinforces the Prophets and the Torah and sometime expands on their meaning. Thus Daniel in exile is reflecting on the prophetic books and wondering what has happened to Jeremiah's prediction that the exile will last seventy years.<sup>95</sup> He is given revelatory insight that the seventy years really means seventy weeks of years. Many of the Psalms are thus addressing God because of what he has said in the Torah and the Prophets. Psalm 119, in which there are eight different terms for the Word of God, urges a profound exercise in meditation on the Torah, in a "rosary" of 176 verses. Chronicles, one of the last books

written is nothing but an extended theological reflection on the books of the Torah and the Prophets, and the Chronicler has been called the Bible's first theologian.<sup>96</sup> In fact as Georg Steins has recently written, "the exposed position of Chronicles at the end of the Writings as well as the synthesizing and integrating character of the work . . . are appropriately explained as being due to the concluding character of Chronicles."<sup>97</sup>

### UPDATING AND EDITING OF CANON

There is not much information about the transmission of these texts, their editing and revision, as well as their preservation during the biblical period, and yet there must have been in place the necessary infrastructure for this process to occur: scribal activity, scribal training, and the ingredients necessary for textual production: ink, papyrus, desks, etc.<sup>98</sup>

Information can be gleaned through incidental means. For example, there are references here and there to scribal activity such as the following: "Here are some more of Solomon's proverbs, transcribed at the court of Hezekiah king of Judah:" (Prov 25:1). This is evidence of royal scribes during Hezekiah's time transcribing a collection of proverbs and adding them to a pre-existing collection. Thus one scholar can write: "It is just this type of *disinterested* statement that can be the key to historical research."<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately such evidence is meagre.<sup>100</sup>

It is known that texts were edited and supplemented for later audiences within the biblical period, and this shows their prestige and authority. It was important that the texts be understood if the faith they were communicating was to be transmitted to future generations! For example, when Abram enters the land of Canaan for the first time, an editor adds, "The Canaanites were then in the land."<sup>101</sup> If Moses was the author of Genesis, he would not have written this parenthetical statement because the land was teeming with Canaanites when he was alive. But from a later perspective there were no Canaanites left, thus the need for an editor to "update" the text for a later audience. Another good example is found in 1 Samuel 9. In this case a later editor clarifies a word in his source which is no longer understood by his audience. In the context Saul and his servant are searching for lost donkeys. They are about to give up when the servant reminds Saul that in a nearby town there is someone who has the gift of supernatural knowledge and can

tell them the location of the lost animals. They decide to go to find this person and get the information they need. In the source the individual is called a “seer” but a later audience no longer understands what this word means, so an editor “updates” his source with a more recognizable term:

In Israel, in olden days, when anyone used to go to consult God, he would say, “Come on, let us go to the seer,” for a man who is now called a “prophet” used to be called a “seer” in olden days.<sup>102</sup>

Two points need to be emphasized: (1) the fact that an editor is updating the source shows that the source has been written down and it is being read or heard, and this must mean that it is important. It needs to be updated because people need to know the meaning of its content. This is one of the important distinctives of canonical material. (2) The editor does not change the source but leaves it intact while updating it. The source is regarded as too important to change. But it needs explanation. Again, the respect of the editor to the source shows the importance of the text.

Such editing took place in other ways too. At the end of Ecclesiastes, an editor supplies a statement which helps explain the book while emphasizing the authority of the document:

Furthermore, while being a sage, Qoheleth taught the people what he himself knew, having weighed, studied and emended many proverbs. <sup>10</sup>Qoheleth took pains to write in an attractive style and by it to convey truths. <sup>11</sup>The sayings of a sage are like goads, like pegs positioned by shepherds: the one shepherd finds a use for both. <sup>12</sup>Furthermore, my child, you must realise that there are many books to which there seems no end, and much study exhausts the body. <sup>13</sup>To sum up the whole matter: fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the duty of everyone. <sup>14</sup>For God will call all our deeds to judgement, all that is hidden, be it good or bad.<sup>103</sup>

Here the editor, clearly distinguished from the author (Qoheleth), is ensuring that the audience does not mistake the meaning of the author’s words.<sup>104</sup> This can only be the case if there are other documents which contain control beliefs to which Qoheleth’s words align, and another set of documents (“of many books to which there is no end”) to which they do not. Thus the clarification of the editor is necessary.

In other examples editors organize books such as has already been seen with Proverbs. Proverbs consists of collections of Proverbs, mainly from Solomon 970-930 BC. But there existed at one time a number of separate collections of Proverbs. One of them was added to another collection during the time of Hezekiah (715-687 BC) as is evident from Proverbs 25 “These are more Proverbs of Solomon transcribed by the scribes of Hezekiah king of Judah.” In this case the editor added another independent collection of Solomonic Proverbs to a first collection at least 200 years later. The same could be said for the book of Psalms which existed in different stages but is produced in a final form so that the worshipping community might have one book at their disposal as a source for worship. An editor organized the psalms into five separate collections and added “doxologies” at the end of each.<sup>105</sup>

### **CANONICAL CLOSURE**

According to Jewish tradition there came a time when the biblical books were completed because prophecy ceased.<sup>106</sup> For example the author of 1 Maccabees knew that revelation had ceased, as noted by Jonathan Goldstein:

For our author [1 Maccabees], it was an article of faith that prophecy had ceased after Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and had not reappeared during the event covered by his history. The return of prophecy would come shortly before God’s ultimate victory.<sup>107</sup>

When this happened no more books could be added nor could editing continue. This would be a prime opportunity for canonical editors to ensure the importance of all the texts, and draw attention to their importance as the Word of God. Thus it is not without accident that if we look at one of the oldest arrangements of the canon, there are signals of closure.<sup>108</sup> Thus at or near the beginning of each major section of these books there is an extraordinary importance assigned to the word of God. At the beginning of the Torah, in Genesis 1:1-5 God created the world by his Word and established the rhythm of the day and night with that word. At the beginning of the Prophets, in Joshua 1:8-9 the new leader of Israel is told to meditate on the Torah day and night in order to be successful in leading his people to inherit the Promised Land. Near the beginning of the Writings, in Psalm

1:2-3, the same instruction is given to every Israelite in order to be successful and prosperous. The Word of God is life-giving.

Also at the end of each of the major sections, there is an extraordinary emphasis on the Word. Thus at the end of the Torah in Deuteronomy 34:10-12 there is the reminder of the unique contribution of Moses' words. They are incomparable. Then at the end of the Prophets in Malachi 4:5-6,<sup>109</sup> Moses representing the Torah, and Elijah representing the second division of the collection, the Prophets, are combined: Remember the Torah of Moses ... and prepare for the coming of Elijah. Finally, at the end of the Writings in 2 Chronicles 36:21-23, there are clear references to all three collections: The Torah, the Prophets and the Writings. The reason for Israel's exile of seventy years was to give the land a sabbatical for all the years that Israel had not kept the law of sabbatical years. Jeremiah in the Prophets had predicted seventy years of exile, and he was just referencing the Levitical curse in the Torah for an exile of seventy years for sabbatical violation.<sup>110</sup> This mention of seventy years directly connects with the Writings where Daniel in chapter 9 reinterprets the seventy years of exile prophesied in the Prophets to be seventy weeks of years before Israel's exile is finally over and the Messiah comes. Such an arrangement is hardly arbitrary but emphasizes the importance of the Word of God. Meditation on these Scriptures gives life until the Messiah comes.

## **THE CLOSED CANON**

In the meantime Israel was to study and wait for the new act of God. But this was not to be a passive waiting. It is interesting that when Moses described the importance of what happened on Sinai to the next generation, he took pains to emphasize that the people did not see an image in the fire on the mountain representing any creature but rather they heard a voice speaking!<sup>111</sup> The words of this voice were then to be transcribed.

Repeatedly in the text Moses stresses that Israel should never stray from these words but keep them, and communicate them to their children: indeed the real point of the history lesson is to respond in love and make the invisible God visible by embodying his will, expressed in a text, in a community through time. Thus Moses tells them not to leave the words on the tablet or scroll:

<sup>6</sup>Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” <sup>7</sup>What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? <sup>8</sup>And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?<sup>112</sup>

Thus in a sense the people of Israel would be in a sense the smoke from the fire of Sinai. When this failed, Yahweh made the promise that he would one day himself write the Words of the Torah into the hearts of his people and forgive their sins.<sup>113</sup> They would be the smoke of the fiery canon.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The Hebrew Scriptures are not just the *raison d'être* for Israel but also for Judaism and Christianity. Without the Hebrew Scriptures it is not just possible to understand Judaism or Christianity, and this is one of the most important points to be made about the importance of the OT for the Christian faith. Christianity without the OT is like the last quarter of a story without the first three quarters.<sup>114</sup> But it is most appropriate in the light of what has been said already that the story climaxes in the life of someone who was the living word of God—Jesus Christ and in a sense terminates in the complete embodiment of the Word of God—the Messiah of Israel, whose goal was to establish a new covenant in which the Torah would finally be written on human hearts. He is the *raison d'être* of Scripture, its goal and *telos*.

It is interesting that after his crucifixion, when the resurrected Messiah walked with his dejected disciples on the Emmaus Road and opened up the Scriptures to them, they felt something different.<sup>115</sup> Those Scriptures were clearly the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, the traditional three-fold division of the Jewish Tanak.<sup>116</sup> When Jesus departed and they finally recognized his identity, they exclaimed, “Did not our hearts burn within us as he walked with us on the road and opened unto us the Scriptures.” It became the intent of these disciples not just to let the Scriptures remain on the page, but to be transcribed onto the lives of the followers of Jesus, so that they could be read and known by all.<sup>117</sup>

It does not seem like rocket science to figure out that these texts would

be written down precisely because they were so extremely important and would function as part of any core curriculum for Israelite education. These are not just any words. They are the words of the living God, which are to be translated into people's lives. Educational philosopher Ted Newell remarks perceptively about the revelation of the name Yahweh:

The name Yahweh was itself revealed knowledge: God himself was thought to have given it to Moses, a founding prophet and leader. But it meant, "I am that I am." The personal God who called Israel into existence underpins the existence of the universe. In such a view of the world, education is supremely about passing on the secret that makes sense of all else ... The descendants of Abraham thus believed themselves to bear the only reliable knowledge of the true God.<sup>118</sup>

The educational implications of this are staggering, but for these implications to become a reality there must be the development of a particular infrastructure: an alphabet, written texts, literacy both professional and functional, both oral and scribal, locations and materials for the production, transmission and preservation of texts, a class of individuals to meet this demand, as well as another class to interpret, instruct and explain the texts. These documents are not just any old texts. Israel had to get them right and it was the desire of the Living God that they be translated into human lives. These are the words of the only true God, the creator and sustainer of all reality, the words that bear the only reliable knowledge of the true God, "the words that make sense of all else."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Peter Gentry for his helpful comments on this essay.

<sup>2</sup> "Sacred Words: History of the Bible Conference." Phoenix Seminary: February 21-22, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Susan E. Gillingham, *One Bible, Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Studies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> John C. Reeves and James E. Bowley, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible:' Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoah XXV* (2003): 17. For similar sentiments in a recent book see John Barton, *A History of the Bible: The Book and Its Faiths* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.google.com/search?q=david+cross+bible&client=firefox-b-d&channel=trow2&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=g543zS8TYcr7iM%252CzJdVpUeRVD2LnM%252C\\_&vet=1&usg=AI4\\_-kTr4ulx-VmKqRCBR1GXGM-uvQPLSBA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPkNnr2P3tAhUCTN8KHczqAVoQ9QF-6BAgQEAE&biw=1696&bih=757](https://www.google.com/search?q=david+cross+bible&client=firefox-b-d&channel=trow2&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=g543zS8TYcr7iM%252CzJdVpUeRVD2LnM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kTr4ulx-VmKqRCBR1GXGM-uvQPLSBA&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjPkNnr2P3tAhUCTN8KHczqAVoQ9QF-6BAgQEAE&biw=1696&bih=757)

<sup>7</sup> Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: And Its Background in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 275.

8. This refers to the means by which the body of Jamal Kashyoggi was dismembered after he was murdered in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey. <https://www.bloomber.com/news/articles/2018-12-04/cia-evidence-tying-saudi-prince-to-murder-called-a-smoking-saw>.
9. See his opening lecture for the conference, included in this issue of *SBJT*.
10. Letter of Aristaeus, 177-178, 310, 317. Emphasis mine.
11. See e.g., Jennifer Mary Dines, *The Septuagint* (New York: A&C Black, 2004). 2004 Karen H. Jobs and Moisés Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015). For an older study see Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993).
12. See e.g. Homily 16, and 72.
13. This is of course a reference to the Ten Words in Exodus 20, which were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone (Ex 31:18, cf. 24:12). Of course they were not literally dropped from the sky, as they were inscribed on rock from the earth.
14. The quote is from Andrew Plaks who specifically summarizes a conclusion of scholars studying the concept of canon in the ancient world that a late extrinsic imprimatur of canonicity being placed on a collection of books is a myth not only for biblical canons but for extra-biblical ones as well. "Afterword. Canonization in the Ancient World: The View from Farther East," in *Homer, the Bible and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World* (ed., M. Finkelberg and G. G. Stroumsa; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 270. In the popular literature this view is pervasive. See, e.g. Dan Brown, *The DaVinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).
15. Emphasis mine. For the Greek text, translation and commentary of Athanasius's 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter see Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 118–29.
16. So e.g., among many Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (ed., Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 21–30.
17. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2001); Armin Lange, "'They Confirmed the Reading' (y. Ta' an 4.68a): The Textual Standardization of the Jewish Scriptures in the Second Temple Period," in *From Qumran to Aleppo: A Discussion with Emanuel Tov about the Textual History of Jewish Scriptures in Honor of His 65th Birthday* (ed., Armin Lange, Matthias Weigold, and József Zsengellér; Forschungen Zur Religion Und Literatur 230; Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 29–80.
18. Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).
19. E.g., Matt 15:2.
20. F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 34. "And why did the Rabbis impose uncleanness upon a Book? Said R. Mesharsheya: Because originally food of *terumah* was stored near the Scroll of the Law, with the argument, This is holy and that is holy [It was therefore appropriate since the food and the scriptures were holy]. But when it was seen that they [the Sacred Books] came to harm, [i.e. they would be eaten by rodents attracted by the food] the Rabbis imposed uncleanness upon them." *Babylonian Talmud: Shabbat XIV a*. For a contrasting view which sees the concept like the dangerous holiness of the ark of the covenant see Timothy H. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 61 (2010): 501–15. Regardless, the phrase indicated the holy sanctity of the books. For further study see Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 278-283; McDonald, *The Biblical Canon*, 58-63. As McDonald points out, the expression was probably first used in a debate that Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai (50 C.E.) had with the Sadducees about texts which defiled the hands. Evidently the Sadducees thought it was ironical to impute contamination to sacred texts. They wondered how it could be that the Scriptures defiled the hands while the writings of Homer did not. They were answered, "As is our love for them so is their uncleanness—that no man makes spoons from the bones of his father or mother" in contrast to the bones of an ass [because the bones of an ass are clean but the bones of a parent are unclean and thus in a completely different "untouchably reverent" category (*Mishna Yadaim* 4:6)].
21. Peter Acker Pettit, *Shene'amar: The Place of Scripture Citation in the Mishna* (Claremont Graduate School: Ph.D. Dissertation, 1993), 1.
22. *Baba Bathra* 14b.
23. See e.g., Iain Provan's response to Andy Stanley's contemporary counsel for the Christian Church. <https://www.christianpost.com/voices/on-rightly-hitching-our-wagons-a-response-to-andy-stanley.html>. But this was of course the counsel of the ancient heretic, Marcion of Sinope, in the middle of the second century AD but certainly in a much more drastic form.
24. Jack Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (London/New York: Vintage, 2002), 65.

25. Micah 5:2 (Heb 5:1); Matt 2:5.
26. Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23.
27. Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22.
28. Gen 22:2.
29. E.g., Matt 4:4, 7, 10. It is true that he adds “again” in verse 7 and also “Depart Satan” and “for” in verse 10 but these words just add to the authority of the words of Deuteronomy, the book from which he is citing. In Luke’s version no words are added to the citation formula, although the third time Jesus uses a variant of the citation formula. See Luke 4:4, 8, 12.
30. Deut 8:3.
31. Deut 6:16.
32. Deut 6:13.
33. Luke 4:17-21.
34. E.g., see Matt 1:22, 2:5, 9:13; Mark 2:25. See further the discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, “The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the NT and the Mishnah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 (1951): 297–307.
35. Jude 13-15. Cf. 1 Enoch 1:9.
36. Peter J. Gentry and Andrew M. Fountain, “Reassessing Jude’s Use of Enochic Traditions (With Notes on Their Later Reception History),” *Tyndale Bulletin* 68 (2017): 261–86. The authors point out that Jude uses canonical sources first in his literary structure, followed by non-canonical ones. Enochic traditions are used against those false teachers who are misusing them. In their judgment there is no concrete evidence for a book of Enoch at this point.
37. E.g., John 7:38; James 4:5. Also other authorities are cited but their words are not regarded as canonical. E.g. Paul cites other authors to make a point without giving them scriptural authority. See Acts 17:28 where a Greek poet is cited (Aratus).
38. 4 Ezra 14:19-48.
39. In this early context books read in public had much more authority than those consulted in private.
40. Against Apion 8:37-43. For further reflection on Josephus and the canon see Stephen G. Dempster, “The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (ed., D. A Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 2016), 321–61.
41. F. M. Cross, “The Text Behind the Text of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed., H. Shanks; New York: Vintage, 1993), 139–55, esp. 152.
42. For the relevant texts and discussion see Gallagher and Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis: Origen* (pp. 83-98); Epiphanius (pp. 156-170); Jerome (pp. 197-215).
43. As is explicitly mentioned by church fathers.
44. Dempster, “The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment,” 344.
45. This is of course the view of John Van Seters and many scholars would have to accept his conclusions. See John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 373, cf. 79. For a discussion see Dempster, “The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment,” 345.
46. Ben Sira 44-50. For discussion see S. G. Dempster, “From Many Texts to One: The Formation of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The World of the Aramaeans I: Biblical Studies in Honour of Paul-Eugene Dion* (ed., P. Michèle Daviau, John William Wevers, and Michael Weigl, vol. I; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 24–29.
47. 49:10.
48. The three divisions are actually called first, “The law, the prophets, and the other books that followed them,” “the law, the prophets, and the other books of the fathers,” and “the law, the prophecies, and the rest of the books.” For further discussion see Dempster, “The World of the Aramaeans I,” 29–30.
49. Jer 19.
50. Ezek 12.
51. Gen 1:1-3.
52. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 2nd edition (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 79–110.
53. Gen 1:3.
54. Gen 2:16-17, cf. 3:1-2, Deut 8:3, and Ps 119.
55. E.g. Gen 12:1-3, 7, 13:14-15, 15:4, 7, 22:1-2.
56. One exception may be the “book of Adam” in Gen 5:1.
57. Gen 12:1-3.
58. Gen 15:1-6.

59. Gen 18.
60. Ex 40:20.
61. Ex 24:1-8.
62. This can be gathered by the placement of later documents in close proximity: Cf. Deut 31:26; Josh 24:26.
63. After the destruction of the temple the Word becomes more important but it had a crucial status before the destruction as well. Cf. Donald Harman Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2001); Konrad Schmid, "The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131 (2012): 289–305.
64. Meredith Kline, "The Correlation of the Concepts of Canon and Covenant," in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament* (ed., J. Barton Payne; Waco, TX: Word Books Publishers, 1970), 265–79.
65. Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982).
66. Albert Carl Sundberg et al., *The Proto-Sinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1964).
67. To be sure there are problems with assuming that literacy became widespread in ancient Israelite culture, and that literacy means the ability to both read and write at a high level. On some of the problems see Sean M. Warner, "The Alphabet: An Innovation and Its Diffusion," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 1 (January 1980): 81–90. If there was not a widespread literacy, there was probably a broader more functional literacy for non-elites (other than priests, officials, and sages). On the distinction see William M. Schniedewind, "Orality and Literacy in Israel," *Religious Studies Review* 26 (2000): 327–32.
68. And not just at government centers of administration. See Ron E. Tappy and P.Kyle McCarter Jr., eds., *Literate Culture and Tenth-Century Canaan: The Tel Zayit Abecedary in Context* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008).
69. Paul Dion (personal communication).
70. Deut 6:4-5.
71. Deut 31:26.
72. Peter J. Gentry, "The Relationship of Deuteronomy to the Covenant at Sinai," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 18 (2014): 35–57.
73. See e.g., Prov 3:3. For an elaboration of this truth see David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); David M Carr, "Torah on the Heart: Literary Jewish Textuality Within Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Oral Tradition* 25 (2010): 17–39.
74. "...the commandment of Deut 6:9, 11:20 presumed that every head of a family could write": Roland De Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), Vol 1:49. But cf. Young who argues that it is correctly within the semantic range of the Hebrew verb (to write) to include "to have someone write for you." "These verses need imply nothing more than a scribe, priest or government official was expected to be within reach of every Israelite at need." Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 250. Even so the words were probably more than decoration or symbol. While Young is probably accurate to conclude that as Israelite society developed in the first millennium BC, it "was a literate society in that the use of writing was widespread and for many a day-to-day part of life, the majority probably had access to this world only through intermediaries," Deuteronomy would suggest that the ideal at least was a functional literacy. See Ian Young, "Israelite Literacy: Interpreting the Evidence," *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998): 420.
75. Deut 17:14-20.
76. Christopher Wright cited in Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 209.
77. For the pervasive influence of this text on Israelite society see Grant, *The King as Exemplar*.
78. Deut 18:9-22.
79. Deut 13:1-6, 18:15-22.
80. Jos 8:31-35.
81. Jos 24:26.
82. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions* (trans. David Stalker, vol. 1; New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 334–46.
83. Isa 1:1.
84. Amos 1:1.
85. Nahum 1:1.
86. Gene M. Tucker, "Prophetic Superscriptions and the Growth of the Canon," in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 68.

87. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, 1:344.
88. Thus the Hebrew Bible terms the first four 'historical' books, Former Prophets, and the latter collections, Latter Prophets.
89. 1 Sam 16.
90. 1 Kgs 3:16-28.
91. Ex 20:14.
92. 2 Sam 12:7-10.
93. Prov 7.
94. Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 11.
95. Dan 9.
96. Peter R. Ackroyd, "The Theology of the Chronicler," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 8 (1973): 101–16.
97. Georg Steins, "Torah Binding and Canon Closure," in *The Shape of the Writings* (ed., Julius Steinberg and Timothy J. Stone; Siphrut: Literature and Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures 16; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 275. Steins, of course, dates Chronicles late, but his arguments for a later dating are unnecessary. This is also not to deny that there are other sequences of the Writings that conclude differently but Chronicles is unique in this regard. It is interesting that Jesus may have viewed Chronicles as the conclusion to the canon in Luke 11:50-51 in which he summarizes the sin of Israel calling down God's justice for the shedding of innocent blood from the first book (Abel in Genesis 4:8-10) to the last (Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:21-22). The entire canonical history necessitates judgment. For a different view which disagrees with this echo of the canon see H. G. L. Peels, "The Blood from Abel to Zechariah and the Canon of the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentlicher Wissenschaft* 113 (2001): 583–601.
98. On the importance of infrastructure necessary for the production of texts see William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); see also Philip Zhakevich, *Scribal Tools in Ancient Israel: A Study of Biblical Hebrew Terms for Writing Materials and Implements* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2020). I am indebted to Peter Gentry for this last reference.
99. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book*, 76.
100. But for the available evidence see texts like Jer 36, Isa 8, and Ps 45. For an assessment of all the evidence see Schneidewind.
101. Gen 12:6b.
102. 1 Sam 9:9.
103. Eccl 12:9-14.
104. "If there is any consensus among modern interpreters of Ecclesiastes, it is that the conclusion of the book does *not* comprise Qoheleth's own words ... This epilogue serves to confirm the sapiential character of the putative author and to bring his message into the biblical mainstream." William P. Brown, *Ecclesiastes* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 2011), 116. Some scholars "resent" the heavy hand of the editor and argue that the editing represents a baptism of an essentially secular document into orthodoxy. But in my judgment the editor is ensuring a canonical reading, i.e. a reading in line with other documents.
105. Pss 41:14, 72:18-20, 89:53, 106:48, 145:21. Five concluding psalms each beginning and ending with praise conclude the entire book: 146-150.
106. See 1 Macc 4:45b-46, 9:27, 14:41.
107. Jonathan A. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* (Anchor Bible 41; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), 12–13. For more evidence and discussion of different views of the implication of these texts see: Dempster, "The Old Testament Canon, Josephus, and Cognitive Environment," 342ff.
108. Baba Bathra 14b.
109. Mal 3:22-24 (Hebrew).
110. Lev 26:33-35. Note G. Steins comments, "That the end of Chronicles in 2 Chr 26:22-23 contains references to the Torah and the Prophets is easy to see." Steins, "Torah Binding and Canon Closure," 275.
111. Deut 4:6-8.
112. Deut 4:6-8.
113. Jer 31:31-34.
114. I have often made the point that reading the NT without the OT would be like reading *The Return of the King*, without reading *The Hobbit*, *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers*.
115. Luke 24:13-31.
116. Luke 24:25, 27, 32, 44.
117. Matt 28: 20; Cor 3:1-3.

118. T. Newell, *Five Paradigms for Education: Foundational Views and Key Issues* (New York: Palgrave/ Macmillan, 2014), 36.
119. Ibid.