Avenues of Approach

edited by

Louise J. Lawrence & Mario I. Aguilar
ANTHROPOLOGY and
BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Parallel Literary Editions of Joshua and the Israelite Mythologization of Ritual

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This paper flows from a fundamental problem with "applying" anthropological theory to biblical texts.¹ The problem is that modern social and cultural anthropology do not work with ancient texts but with living people. When Bronislaw Malinowski initiated modern ethnographic method, he dethroned the armchair eclecticism of the philologist James G. Frazier by successfully arguing that fieldwork was the only path to a properly anthropological understanding of culture.² It was only by seeing cultural texts in context, in observing the real-time human social practices that gave life to the exotic myths and beliefs of other societies that a full, meaningful view of a culture could be gained. Thus social and cultural anthropology's claim to authority came to stem from the practice of fieldwork rather than reading. Without ethnography, these branches of anthropology lose their claim to have something distinctive to say about the human condition, in much the same way as without philology, biblical studies loses its own claim to distinctiveness.

¹ I wish to apologize in advance for the density of this paper, made necessary by space considerations. The analysis was developed in the third chapter of my Johns Hopkins University dissertation (Sanders 1999). An earlier version was delivered as “Ritual and Textual Variants of the Jordan Crossing” at the University of California, Berkeley, Near Eastern Studies Department in 1997 and an expanded journal version is in preparation.

² At the conference, Mario Aguilar delivered an incisive critique of the "culture" concept in New Testament studies, which seems to resemble the non-academic notion of "national culture" (see Herzfeld 2001:147). One hopes this will lead to more historically specific and theoretically explicit work on ancient cultures (as already manifested in Timothy Ling's paper in this volume) rather than mere "taboo avoidance" of the word "culture".
Hence the irony of applying social and cultural anthropology to biblical texts. To gain the power of the anthropologist to unpack the construction of a culture we may lose the power of the biblical scholar to unpack the construction of a textual artefact, treating the redacted and multiform myths and rituals as direct and authoritative reports of Israelite practices and beliefs. The distinctive view of the text that biblical scholars developed at the hands of Spinoza, Hobbes, de Wette and Wellhausen, as a polyphonic, chronologically and authorial artefact, is bracketed. The biblical text thus runs the danger of losing precisely those qualities we have fought to discover as proper to it as a text, a redacted literary product, and becomes a newly innocent document. Like a trip to Hades, the price of entry is forgetting what you know.3

Must biblical studies be a poor man’s anthropology, or is there a properly anthropological methodology that biblical studies can use while retaining its distinctiveness as a discipline? This talk will suggest one by example, through exploring evidence of the process of traditional authorship of a biblical text. The goal is to refine our understanding of what it meant for a “tradition”, specifically the Deuteronomistic tradition of ancient Israel, to produce a text. What would be the theoretical consequences for anthropology of rethinking “tradition” and “authorship” in terms of biblical modes of text production?

In his *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (1981), the cultural anthropologist Marshall Sahlins sets out a theory of the relationship between cultural structure and historical change by interpreting an archive from the eighteenth century concerning the ritual killing of Captain Cook. In response to the crisis of 60’s structuralism, that its hermetically sealed systems left no place for human agency or events, he argues that history is really always structure in action: culture is nothing but the locally specific way that people make history.

Linguistic anthropologists, Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban (1996) develop a complementary approach. Their project is to develop a way for anthropologists to deal with the making and use of the reified objects of culture — texts. They argue that it is a serious misunderstanding for anthropologists, without reference to native processes of text production and reception, just to re-describe native

3 As some suggestion of what can be lost in translation, it may be enough to indicate that since the brilliant work of William Robertson Smith (see Aguilar in this volume) biblical work has been of little interest to anthropology. The biblical contributions of anthropologists like Edmund Leach and Mary Douglas may be more noted in biblical studies than in their own fields, and the comparative work of eminent biblicalists such as Robert R. Wilson seems to have little affected the mainstream of biblical studies.
actions as "texts" that anthropologists are empowered to "read" the true meanings of, as Clifford Geertz brilliantly did in his *Interpretation of Cultures*. This approach neglects the crucial fact that natives themselves are also constantly turning discourse into texts of their own, and then applying them back to reality. The cultural critics James Clifford and Richard Marcus explored the ultimate incoherence of this position of anthropologist as master-reader in detail.

Both groups of scholars want to find rigorous ways of getting at the mechanisms of human agency and creativity in history. As Sahlin argues that culture is the specific way a group of people make their history, so Silverstein and Urban propose to study the specific ways that other people read and write their culture. Their linguistic anthropology focuses on the movement back and forth between living real-time discourse to more or less fixed "texts" (meaning not necessarily written text-artefacts but relatively thing-like identity-bearing objects including stories, proverbs, songs and books), which Silverstein and Urban term processes of "entextualization" and "contextualization". It is worth looking at how they articulate this goal:

The text-artefact does ... have a physical-temporal structure, precisely because it was originally laid down in the course of a social process, unfolding in real time; on reading, it is perceived and understood in real time ... what we are looking for is not the denotational text directly or simply, but rather indications of more originary interactional text(s) of inscription. *We seek the residue of past social interaction carried along with the sign vehicle encoding the semantic, or denotational, meaning in denotational text* (Silverstein & Urban 1996:5).

I think that it is in studying the techniques by which cultures produce their own history as text that biblical studies and anthropology may have the most to say to each other. The methodology of "seeking the residue of past social interaction" in the way the meanings are encoded in text-artefacts, is this not precisely the biblical scholar's greatest area of expertise? As the inheritors of centuries-old traditions of linguistic dating, redaction analysis, and textual criticism, biblical scholars have amassed literally lifetimes' worth of the most fascinating data about the encoding of social interaction. The crucial difference between the linguistic anthropologist and the biblical critic lies in the conceptual framework in which the evidence is placed.

The next step, then, is not to apply a socio-cultural theory to biblical text-artefacts but to understand and theorize the culturally specific ways that ancient Israelites went from discourse to texts and back again. If we would become anthropologists and not lose our souls, or
are empowered to "read" the
sensibilities and imaginations brilliantly did in his *Interpretation of
the Bible*. This is a crucial fact that natives themselves
reproduce into texts of their own, and then
from the point of view of cultural critics James Clifford and
Michael Taussig, the incoherence of this position is
absurd.

The term "text" referred to the rigorous ways of getting at
the "creative" part of creativity in history. As Sahlin
argues, "texts" are "texts" that are not quite like identity-bearing objects (or "texts"), which Silverstein and
Lakoff "contextualization" and other... It's a matter of this goal:

Any text, whatever its historical-temporal structure, precisely because of the way in which it is perceived and understood in reality, is an entity that is not the denotational text directly or indirectly, or any previous interaction carried along with the sign and its denotational meaning, meaning in denotational text form.

... Because of this, cultural practices by which cultures produce collective and communal knowledge and anthropology may have to adopt a methodology of "seeking the past in the present" in the biblical scholar's greatest area of expertise. However, the bibliographic tradition of linguistic and literary critics, biblical scholars have been shown to have a particular type of data about the Bible. The most fascinating data about the Bible is that the biblical critic lies in the conceptual use of texts.

This is why we need a socio-cultural theory to bibli-
ography and theorize the culturally specific nature of discourse to texts and back to... to linguists and not lose our souls, or

at least retain our distinctiveness, I suggest it be as linguistic anthropologists first. I now turn to some recent discoveries about how the Bible was being made into a text during the Persian and Hellenistic periods, specifically what Emanuel Tov describes as parallel literary editions of the book of Joshua. I will then take a further step, attempting to theorize what the differences between the early editions of this text tell us about that native Israelite mode of making texts and history we call the Deuteronomistic tradition.

Those less familiar with biblical text criticism may tend to think of it as studying the deviation of texts from pure and unitary original archetypes. This is sometimes true: the Masoretic text of many books was fixed at a relatively early stage, and the untiring work of both Masoretes and conventional text critics is to eliminate corruption and transmit the pristine form. But surprisingly, just the opposite situation held at an earlier stage: after study of the manuscript evidence from Qumran, Shemaryahu Talmon formulated "Talmon's Law," stating that the earlier one goes back in the history of the text, the greater the diversity one encounters (Talmon 1975:325).

One of the main text-critical explanations of this surprising situation, Tov explains, is the old hypothesis that multiple editions of certain biblical books such as Jeremiah and Joshua circulated at the same time, later ones never completely superseding the earlier. He continues,

When this approach was developed for the Hebrew Bible, it was generally agreed that such considerations must remain hypothetical since they could not be based on evidence, extant in manuscripts. In the meantime, however, the situation has been changed, for ancient texts, which fit the description ... have been recognized and found. Some of this new evidence has been available for a long time but was not recognized as relevant ... while other data have become available in excavations, especially at Qumran ... In ancient Israel, the new edition that was later to become [the Masoretic text] ... replaced the earlier texts but could not replace them completely. Thus, the early editions remained in use in places that were not central from a geographical and sociological point of view, such as the Qumran repository of texts and the various manuscripts from which the Greek translation was prepared in Egypt. These early editions were thus preserved for posterity, by mere chance, in the Septuagint translation and through the discoveries in Qumran (Tov 2001:316)."
I now hope to show that those well-worn tools of the biblical scholar—text- and redaction-criticism, allow a revealingly empirical view of Israelite culture-making if we are alive to both the manuscript evidence and its theoretical significance.

1. The Problem: Joshua as a Textual Citation and a Ritual Enactment of Deuteronomy

The events commanded in Deuteronomy and narrated in Joshua are a key part of the Deuteronomic History. The book of Joshua narrates the foundation of the land of Israel through ritual and conquest. But as a text what is most striking about Joshua is that it is always more than a narrative of events, it also always narrates a complicated act of obedience to the text that preceded it. As a narrative about ritual, the task of the book is to narrate the performance of commandments made in the book of Deuteronomy. But its very qualities as a narrative drastically complicate and call into question its status as a description of a correct ritual performance. Joshua is a story of problems, solutions and surprises, and the narrative outcomes in Joshua fall into tension with the legal commands that have been given in the book of Deuteronomy immediately before it. The reader waits to see how or if the law is fulfilled.

While scholars do not agree on when the core texts were composed, they agree that the commands of Deuteronomy and their fulfillment in Joshua are part of a unified history of the rise and fall of the Israelite state that stretches from Deuteronomy through Kings. This history is structured by the Deuteronomic theory of historical cause and effect, showing the consequences of national loyalty to God’s law and disloyalty to God’s law; its dramatic themes are punishment by God and repentance before God, and the problem of kingship: being ruled by a man rather than by God. This history shows unity in its language and beliefs, but because it speaks from more than one point of view in time. It is apparent that the Deuteronomic his-

mitted texts which were not transmitted in the mainstream of later Judaism. This has theoretical implications to which I intend to return.

For example, the Deuteronomic history speaks from the point of view of Josiah’s reform and attempts to carry forth his political agenda, but also describes his death and contains reflections on the exile. The thesis of the editorial unity of this material was cast in its classic form by Martin Noth and developed in greatest depth by Moshe Weinfeld. For up-to-date bibliography see Levinson 1997. In more recent years, literary studies such as those of Robert Polzin (1980) have enriched our view by showing how the narrative is bound together by a web of tropes and analogies that reflect on
well-worn tools of the biblical system, allow a revealingly empirical text that is alive to both the manuscript and the

**Editions and a Ritual Enactment of Deuteronomy and narrated in Joshua are a mystery. The book of Joshua narrates its rituals through ritual and conquest. But as Joshua is that it is always more than a narrative about ritual, the task of the book of commandments made in the qualities as a narrative drastically altered. But the narrative tactics to see how or if the law is,

when the core texts were composed of Deuteronomy and their history of the rise and fall of Deuteronomy through Kings. Deuteronomistic theory of historical sequences of national loyalty to their dramatic themes are put before God, and the problem of more than by God. This history shows because it speaks from more than parent that the Deuteronomistic his-

the mainstream of later Judaism. This has

speaks from the point of view of Josiah's agenda, but also describes his death and the editorial unity of this material was developed in greatest depth by Moshe 1997. In more recent years, literature (1980) have enriched our view by showing sin of tropes and analogies that reflect on

tory as we have it is the product of a distinct social process of entextualization, which we name *tradition* rather than *author*, to reflect the lack of both individual responsibility for the spatio-temporal limits that authorship entails.

In precisely this way the problem of the nature of Deuteronomic authorship is paradigmatic of the problems of the Bible as a text. While the study of collective authorship of written texts over the long term has been the special task of biblical studies, it is here that the fine-grained analysis of difference within texts developed by biblicalists may be seen in the light of recent interest in linguistic anthropology on how culture is made into texts, and vice-versa. Familiar textual features of the Bible, when re-described in the terms of this other discipline may take on a new aspect that illuminates both biblical and anthropological questions.

In the Deuteronomic narrative sequence, the rituals prescribed in Deuteronomy 27 serve as a fulcrum, instructing the Israelites how to enter and consecrate the land of Israel. Yet they present a disturbingly complex and overworked surface. This is probably not a coincidence.

As Jeffrey Tigay notes:

The multiplicity of ceremonies that Deuteronomy 27 prescribes for Mounts Ebal and Gerezim may be due to the momentous nature of the event these ceremonies mark: Israel’s long-awaited arrival in the promised land. In its importance, this event is comparable to the Exodus, which is also accompanied and commemorated by ceremonies that are described with seemingly redundant and overlapping details (Exodus 12–13). It seems that momentous events were felt to require various ceremonies to express their significance, that there were different traditions about what was required, that these variations required editorial skill to harmonize them, and that continuing reflection in the light of later experience attracted revisions of earlier writings about them (Tigay 1996:488–489).

In Silverstein and Urban’s terms, Tigay is proposing a theory of the laying-down process that has left its traces here. A distinctive feature of this process is that it is one in which social conflict, not just the holding of conflicting traditions but the need to inscribe conflicting traditions, is carried out by writing in the text. The thing to see here is how the text might be iconic of a trans-temporal whole, the imagined community of ancient Israel, formed by the different groups who wrote in it. This whole would be achieved in the way the text engulfs the fragmentary variety of their views under the dominant each other: commandments given in Deuteronomy may be fulfilled in Joshua, while events further on in Samuel will in turn make us question statements in Deuteronomy.
fiction of unity and coherence, the ideological claim that, despite the
text's internal diversity, there is a single story being told.

There is a single constitutive act around which the text and its
problems will revolve a (literally) legal fiction on which all of the re-
dactors agree. The specific law to be fulfilled on entry into the land is
given in Deuteronomy 27; the fulfilment is narrated in Joshua 3–5.
The bond between this command and its performance, which stretches
between Deuteronomy and Joshua, the Torah and the Prophets, serves
metaphorically as a bridge uniting two texts. The crossing between
Wilderness and Israel is a crossing from Torah into the rest of the Bi-
ble and a figure for that larger structuring tension in the Tanakh
between law and obedience.

Because of its nature as a constitutive ritual commandment, the
framing devices of Deuteronomy 27 deserve special attention. The
commandment is framed thus (27:1a): “Moses and the elders of Israel
charged the people, saying …” What is extremely unusual – indeed,
unique within Deuteronomy – about this phrase is its grammatical
subjects. The heart of Deuteronomy is a long speech by Moses alone,
the “covenant of Moab” which has at this point run continuously for
22 chapters. Deuteronomy 27 now interrupts this massive speech that
Moses began back in Deuteronomy 5. For the first time since Moses
began speaking, the voice of the speaker switches from the first to the
anonymous third person. The narrator announces that “Moses and the
elders of Israel charged the people, saying …” From the point of view
of authority, this command is unlike every other commandment in
Deuteronomy because it is not transmitted by Moses alone but by
Moses and the elders of Israel.

[1b–3a] Observe all the Instruction that I enjoin upon you this day. As
soon as you have crossed the Jordan in to the land that the LORD your
God is giving you, you shall set up large stones. Coat them with plaster
and inscribe upon them all the words of this Teaching when you cross, so
that when you enter the land which the LORD your God is giving you, a
land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD the God of your ancestors
commanded you …

Then the text seems to repeat itself, with a significant addition,
thus, verse 4:

then upon crossing the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I
charge you this day, on Mount Ebal, and coat them with plaster.

Beneath this worried surface, this statement offers a simple textual
problem and a complex ritual problem. The Samaritan version of
Deuteronomy reads here not Ebal but Gerezim. This may seem predictable, considering the Samaritan theological position that Mount Gerezim, in their territory, rather than Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, was the true chosen place of God prescribed in the Torah (Samaritan version of Deut 12:5). Yet the variant is not tendentious but probably original. This is suggested by the Old Latin, which reads here Garzin. Since it is difficult to imagine that the Samaritans in Israel influenced this translation, originally done into Latin by Christians in Africa, using old and independent versions of the Septuagint, it is likely that the Samaritan version is actually more primitive here, and that it was the prestige of the Masoretic Text that caused the other versions’ tradents to correct to “Ebal”.

There you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not wield an iron tool over them; you must build the altar of the LORD your God of unhewn stones. You shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God and you shall offer sacrifices of well-being and you shall eat there and rejoice before the LORD your God, and on those stones you shall inscribe every word of this Teaching most distinctly (Deut 27:5–8).

Thus the Torah is to be re-inscribed on entry into the land, unifying the acts of conquest and writing, the creation of territory and text. But there is something wrong with this ritual: Joshua did not cross the Jordan anywhere near Mount Ebal. Gilgal, the point of crossing in Joshua, is thirty miles from Ebal and Gerezim and over 4,000 feet downhill. That the Israelites travelled from Shittim, East of the Jordan, to Gilgal, then 30 miles north and 4,000 feet uphill in a single day has long been recognized as a singular claim. In the Babylonian Talmud the stam (the anonymous editorial voice) comments at Sotah 36a:

Come and see how many miracles were performed on that day. Israel crossed the Jordan, came to mount Gerezim and Mount Ebal, (a distance of) more than 60 mil, no creature was able to withstand them.

The contradiction is played out more sharply in the Jerusalem Talmud:

This refers to Mount Gerezim and Mount Ebal in Samaria, the words of R. Judah. R. Eliezer says, “This does not refer to Mount Gerezim and

6 Other relevant Samaritan beliefs include that Gerezim is the center of the universe, which existed before creation, that it alone escaped the Flood, and that it alone will survive Doomsday. It will be recalled that the Samaritans reject the Prophets and Writings and have their own, problematic but textually significant version of the Torah. On the textual nature of the Samaritan Torah see Tov 2001:80–99.

7 This problem generated a spectrum of responses in the history of exegesis; the analysis is limited to two paradigmatic Jewish responses.
Mount Ebal in Samaria" ... In the view of R. Judah, they traversed 120
mil on that day. In the opinion of R. Eliezer they did not move from
where they were (y. Sotah 7.3).

In fact the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds offer us mutually
contradictory explanations here. The Babylonian Talmud (33b) ex-
plains that the Gilgal of the crossing was not our Gilgal but a northern
Gilgal near Shechem. The Jerusalem Talmud (7:3) depicts R. Eliezer
as saying that it was not our Ebal and Gerezim, but two mounds of dirt
that the Israelites piled up and designated Ebal and Gerezim. Of the
two, the sheer extremity of the Yerushalmi’s solution suggests an un-
usually urgent exegetical problem. The Jerusalem Talmud seems to
want to deny that such an important event was actually performed in
the north, and it wants so much to deny it that it is willing to imagine
that the Israelites made replicas of Ebal and Gerezim, ritual substitutes. 8

The urgency of this denial is explained by the location of the Jeru-
alem Talmud’s redactors: in the land of Israel, which is shared with
those very Samaritans who believe that Mount Gerezim, rather than
Jerusalem, is the center of the universe. But its roots go back to before
the beginning of the Deuteronomic school itself: to the division be-
tween Israel and Judah that structure the politics of the Hebrew Bible
as a whole. In Braudel’s terms, this truly is a structure of the long term.
The Rabbis were full inheritors of this long-term structure and paid
close attention to their enemies’ belief in the centrality of Gerezim.
This is made clear by the fact that Gerezim is claimed to be the single
taxonomic issue that divides Samaritan from Jew in the post-Talmudic
tractate Kuttim (“On the Samaritans”). This asks: “At what point can
the Samaritans be accepted into Judaism? When they reject their belief
in Mount Gerezim” (Kut., end). We have to deal here with a conflict
over sacred space that began well before Deuteronomy itself and ex-
tends until after the completion of the Talmud.

2. Deuteronomy 27 as a Colonization Ritual and a Geopolitical Conflict
The commandment of Deuteronomy 27 exhibits a powerful reflexiv-
ity, commanding its own inscription at Ebal and Gerezim as a
condition of entry into the land, indeed of the land of Israel becoming
Israel. More evidence of this reflexivity emerges now as Moses’ and
the Elders’ command about how to cross, and how to ritually design-
ate the crossing of the Jordan, is itself then interrupted by a command
ritually designating the very moment of the command. This interrup-

8Ritual substitutes, which strikingly echo the archaeologically attested ritual substi-
tute for the Jerusalem temple, built by the Samaritans on Mt. Gerezim.
tion, pointing to the moment of its utterance, is cast in yet a third type of speaking authorship: in the imperative voice of Moses and the Levites, a group newly assuming the mantle of authority within the Covenant of Moab. Thus Deuteronomy 27:9–10:

Moses and the levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying; Silence! Hear, O Israel! Today you have become the people of the LORD your God: Heed the LORD your God and observe His commandments and His laws, which I enjoin upon you this day!

The command adds a further layer of conflict: it cannot come to tell us that Israel has just become God’s people, an event described as happening forty years prior (Exod 6:6–7; 19:5–6; Deut 4:20). Yet this is exactly what the command appears to be doing. In the text as it stands this re-designation of Israel as the people of the Lord contests the authority of Moses by calling all the previous performances of the commandment into question. Moses does now, for the first time, not transmit the order alone, but by a composite authority. If the speakers have become multiple, the commandments to become God’s people have too, and the text has made it unclear which time, if any, the commandment really took effect.

Deuteronomy 27’s cumulative reworking and redundancies all add cumulatively to the picture of the ritual: that the Israelites are to cross, pile stones, plaster them, write the Torah, and finally pronounce blessings and curses at Ebal and Gerezim. They are given each of these commands twice (the last which is given once in ch. 27 and once in 11:30). It is clear that this is intended as one ritual, to be performed at one time. As was first recognized by George Mendenhall and most coherently connected to the Deuteronomistic project by Moshe Weinfeld, the actions have the shape of a treaty-curse, where the inscription of the Teaching serves as the text of the treaty and the blessings and curses as the sanctions.

Deuteronomy 27 follows a well-attested pattern in the Pentateuch wherein the construction of an altar, sacrifice, and the direct invocation of God’s name or word is connected to the cult of the dead and claims on the land (Cooper & Goldstein 1993). “The first time this happens is in Genesis 12, when the Lord appears to Abram at Shechem, promising him offspring and land, and Abram responds by constructing an altar. On his way toward the Negev from Shechem,

As Polzin (1980) has pointed out.
Abram encamps between Bethel and Ai, building another altar and invoking the name of the Lord.\textsuperscript{10}

A second instance occurs at Exodus 24. In Exodus 23, the Lord has promised to send an angel with the peculiar quality that “my Name is in him.” The angel is to go before the Israelites, leading them into the land and destroying their enemies. This angel corresponds to the Ark, leading the Israelites into the land and ensuring their victory on condition of obedience. And both the Ark and the angel correspond to the Lord himself, as Moses reveals in his last testament, stating that “the Lord himself” will lead the Israelites over the Jordan (Deut 31:3). In the ritual of Exodus 24, just as in Deuteronomy 27, Moses sets up an altar with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes; sacrifices are offered, Moses reads the record of the covenant and the people consent to its blessings and curses. But here the people are anointed with the blood of the covenant, whereupon Moses and the elders of Israel ascend Mount Sinai to heaven. The first instruction Moses receives during the following forty days and nights is for the construction of the Ark, which is the angel, which is the Lord.

We have already seen that the command of Deuteronomy 27 is discursively marked off as a special and intrusive kind of speech, interrupting the largest and most important Mosaic speech of Deuteronomy. Not only is the command discursively marked but also its ritual features themselves are intertextual, referring both backward to Exodus and forward to the entry in Joshua.

As the Ark laminates three mythical entities into one narrative space, so the command of Deuteronomy 27 laminates multiple ritual forms into one legal command. On top of the form of the treaty curses and the claims to land through ancestor cult, Weinfeld (1993) has demonstrated that the ritual’s very reflexive text-making, its self-inscription and allusions to its own history, evokes a more broadly distributed form of ancient Mediterranean political ritual. For Deuteronomy 27 is also an act of colonization in the ancient Greek sense of founding new territory. The typology involves a divine promise of land under conditional laws, priestly guidance, the setting up of stelae and altars, and the inscription of a self-referential narrative.\textsuperscript{11} In Moses’ command to colonize, stones are to be set up to mark out a com-

\textsuperscript{10} Summary from Cooper & Goldstein 1993:289.

\textsuperscript{11} For example, all of these features are attested in the stela at Cyrene “which opens with the words of the god Apollo, saying that the laws which he commanded were given so that they would be fulfilled in the new settlement of Libya” (Weinfeld 1993:36–37).
memorative place, a topographic sign, but are then plastered over into a literal blank slate so that the first ritual action in the land of Israel can re-enact the inscription of the Torah. The territorial claim is staked twice: once by placing a mound of rocks, and then by re-writing the law.

The ritual purpose of Deuteronomy 27 is nothing less than allowing the giving of the Torah to take place a second time, in Israel, by invoking a surprisingly wide range of ritual forms. The ritual is itself an argument for this second revelation of Israel’s constitutive text. But the worried text around the ritual returns us to the buried controversy about where events of commemoration and inscription are actually to take place.

How is this momentous command narrated in Joshua’s voice and enacted? The people march to the bank of the Jordan. They camp for three days, waiting. After the waiting period, officials go through the camp and instruct the people to “Follow [the Ark], but keep a distance of some two thousand cubits from it, never coming any closer to it, so that you may know by what route to march” (Josh 3:4).

The Ark is dangerous because of what it contains: a written copy of the covenant (1 Kgs 8:21; 2 Chron 6:11; Exod 25:16, 21), and the physical presence of God. We have already seen it analogized to the angel of God’s name, and in fact the text-critical evidence forces a bolder theological conclusion. As noted, at the conclusion of Deuteronomy (31:3) and elsewhere (e.g. Num 10:35–36) the MT explicitly identifies the entire Ark with the Lord, but the Septuagint of the Jordan crossing narratives often simply reads “the Lord” for the MT’s expansionist “the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God.” The reading is most likely original: Israel crossed not before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, but before the Lord himself.

Now Joshua instructs the people that a miracle is about to occur, and what to do when it happens. As soon as the priests’ feet touch the Jordan’s waters, the river piles up “in a single heap (ned)” (thus evoking the language of Exod 15:8) and the people cross over. During the course of the miraculous crossing, the Lord transmits an important new detail:

Select twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and instruct them as follows: Pick up twelve stones from the spot exactly in the middle of the Jordan, where the priests’ feet are standing; take them along with you and deposit them in the place where you will spend the night (4:2–3).
But when the twelve men, one from each tribe, are actually instructed by Joshua, immediately after the Lord’s command, Joshua does not give a command to the men but rather a commemorative gloss, implicitly to the future reader:

Walk up to the Ark of the Lord your God, in the middle of the Jordan, and each of you lift a stone on his shoulder, corresponding to the number of the tribes of Israel. This shall serve as a symbol among you: in time to come, when your children ask, “What is the meaning of these stones for you?” you shall tell them, “The waters of the Jordan were cut off because of the Ark of the Lord’s Covenant...” And so these stones shall serve the people of Israel as a memorial for all time.

As instructions for a ritual performance Joshua’s statement is inadequate. He does not tell the men what to do with the stones; rather, his command breaks out of the frames of the narrative to tell the reader what to do with these stones at the time of reading: see them and remember the Jordan crossing, a further act of commemoration. Ritual again is an act of text-making.

3. Joshua’s Commands as Failed Ritual
A principle recently established by biblical scholarship is that the Bible’s traditions characteristically “interpreted” the material they had inherited by writing in it and over it. Bernard Levinson has described “the extent to which exegesis may make itself independent of the source text, challenging and even attempting to revise or abrogate its ... content, all the while under the hermeneutical mantle of consistency with or dependency upon its source” (Levinson 1997:15).

Within one story, and with a single editorial style, the command to make a sanctuary at Ebal, which was earlier a command to make a sanctuary at Gerezim, becomes a command to make a sanctuary at Gilgal. These commands are then given and reinterpreted within Joshua itself, a command from God to Joshua within the story becomes a command from Joshua to the readers outside the story through an extra stage in the chain of command. Hence, Levinson’s point about ritual law in the Bible: it is typically applied and reinterpreted within the text itself.

In the MT, the next set of events serves to interpret this version of the crossing, implying that it has been successfully completed. What follows (5:2–9) is the ritual of circumcision, which begins with a new toponym, Gibeath-haaraloth (“the Hill of Foreskins”), and ends with a second toponym, Gilgal. It is this act that is represented as finally concluding the Israelites’ period of wandering in the wilderness, a liminal
period when they were "neither here nor there." Not only were they in neither freedom nor slavery, neither Israel nor Egypt, but the men, and the men only, were subject to the peculiar condition of being physically neither Jew nor Gentile. Upon the entry into Israel, it emerges that the males born during the wandering had not been circumcised, and it is circumcision that along with the proper ancestry constitutes the category of male Israelite. By being initiated into a new stage of existence, the males were made what they already really were, but what slavery and wandering in the wilderness had prevented them from being. When the circumcision is complete, God speaks to Joshua: "Today I have rolled (gēlātī) away from you the disgrace of Egypt" (5:9). The anonymous voice of the redactor informs the reader: "So that place was called Gilgal, as it still is." This ritual concludes with the Passover, a Deuteronomic sign of completion.

With the Israelite men's initiation, the Jordan crossing is complete in the edition reflected by the MT. But something is missing. Upon examining the texts of the command and its fulfillment in Joshua 3–5, it becomes apparent that the crossing, altar building and sacrifice have been narrated with care for ritually significant detail. Correct performance was stressed, understandably so in a narrative where one ritual misstep can bring doom: it is relevant here to emphasize the text's own repeated calls for correct performance and to recall that Moses was barred from entering Israel for a single transgression.

Yet in fulfilling the law, the narrative reflects back on the law and flagrantly violates it. If the reader takes seriously the ritual caution with which the whole story is flagged, it becomes apparent that the ritual crux, the writing of the Torah and pronouncement of the twelve tribes, is entirely lacking. Therefore, the crossing has not yet been performed as commanded, and it is open to question whether it has been performed at all. This is due to the remarkable resolutions, or lack thereof, of the geographical problem we noted from the Talmuds.

In fact the Masoretic Text's ancestor places the ritual of writing, blessing and cursing weeks later, in 8:30–35, with strenuous insistence that the Deuteronomic command is being fulfilled to the letter, "as is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses" (8:31) "just as is written in the Book of the Teaching. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel ..." (8:34b–35a). An explanation for this material's location in the Masoretic Text is near at hand: Ai is the closest spot on Joshua's military itinerary to Gerezim and Ebal. The period of rest right after the battle of Ai thus suggests itself as a likely point for insertion. The tradition in the Masoretic Text seems to have decided
on a geographic solution that pays attention to logistics at the expense of ritual.

The classic historical-critical response to this problem is that the Deuteronomistic tradition is working with an older independent source in the case of Joshua, one that did not know of a ritual at Ebal but rather one at Gilgal. Because Deuteronomistic tradition's hermeneutic mode is not harmonization but incorporation, we have the opportunity to watch the tradition at work both ritually and exegetically. But the Deuteronomistic traditions thereby emerge as ritually inept, oblivious to the fulfillment of the commandments they are transmitting.

By taking the fulfillment of Deuteronomistic ritual in Joshua seriously, source criticism raises a question that it is unable to handle. Is there any empirical way to tell if those writers and readers hiding under the mask of the "Deuteronomistic tradition" cared about the command's fulfillment and noticed the problems so glaring to the authors of the Talmuds? Typically, major contemporary scholarship on Deuteronomy such as that of Weinfeld and Levinson dismisses Deuteronomy 27 as late and marginal. The text as we have it is sanguine; insisting that everything was done "just as is written in the Book of the Teaching." To see behind this claim would require the ability to read the concerns of the text that are not actually written in it but lying repressed, in its past and under its surface.

4. Parallel Literary Editions: the Return of the Repressed in the LXX and at Qumran

With the publication of the Qumran Joshua fragments, precisely this sort of reading is possible. Comparison of the Cave 4 material with long-known variants in the Septuagint allow us to track the command's fulfillment outside of the Masoretic Text relying strictly on manuscript evidence.

The Septuagint puts the same material in a significantly different order. After the Israelites' total devastation of Ai (8:29), it depicts the inhabitants of the land reacting in terror: "When all the kings west of the Jordan ... learned of this, they gathered with one accord to fight against Joshua and Israel." The Masoretic Text, on the other hand, places this material at the beginning of chapter 9. It thus describes the exact same behavior as a reaction to the inscription of the law. In the Masoretic Text, the kings react to a colonization ritual, in the Septua-

A recent treatment of this, integrated with the Qumran evidence, can be found in Ahituv 1995.
gint to a battle of conquest. What is implied by the existence of these two options?

It has long been recognized that the Hebrew text of Joshua from which the Septuagint translators worked was meaningfully different from the version preserved in the Masoretic Text.\(^\text{13}\) This is not an isolated instance, but is also true for the biblical books of Samuel, Jeremiah, Proverbs, Psalms, Esther and Daniel. Scholars have shown that at many points in Joshua there are systematic and ritually significant differences between the Septuagint and Masoretic Text.\(^\text{14}\) We find such things as an extended Greek, and at the end of the book, after 24:33, in which we read inter alia about the flint knives buried in Joshua’s grave, a tradition which looks like the preservation of religious relics at a pilgrimage site.\(^\text{15}\)

In another striking ritual variant, the conquest of Jericho in Greek does not include the famous seven-day ritual procession around the city and has no role for the priests and trumpets that entered tradition through the Masoretic Text.\(^\text{16}\) The ensemble suggests that there were multiple literary editions, one of which was the basis of the Septuagint translation, one of which is preserved in the Masoretic Text, both at the hands of Deuteronomistic tradition. While some of these differences are genetic, as in the Joshua-Judges fusion, where the Greek may preserve a text that “came first,” one cannot get from one of these editions to the other by the usual processes of revision. This is why we speak here, with Tov, of parallel literary editions.

And here the new textual evidence from Qumran, 4QJoshua (ed. Ulrich 1995), provides us with a third witness. An independent and often reliable source of readings, it places the writing and reading not in Joshua 8 or 9 but at the end of 4, precisely where one would expect them to be from the Deuteronomistic commandment alone.

Beginning with the second preserved word of line 1, we recognize the distinctive closing lines of the ceremony of curses and blessings: “there was not one word of all that Moses commanded ...” After one and a half lines of otherwise unknown transitional material in good

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\(^{13}\) Holmes 1914, with references there to the earlier work of Hollenberg.


\(^{15}\) This small detail affects Joshua’s image in the book: if a warrior is buried with his weapons in the ancient Mediterranean and Joshua is entombed with the knives of circumcision, this recasts him as a kind of heroic circumciser, an unexpected ritual role. The variant also may attest to the early presence of a form of popular piety, veneration of the dead, clearly important among Hellenistic Jews. See the comments of Hare in his preface to the Lives of the Prophets in Charlesworth, ed. 1983–85 II:379–84

\(^{16}\) See the analysis of Mazor 1995.
Deuteronomistic style, the text goes into the beginning, not of ch. 9 but of ch. 5, a direct fulfillment of the Deuteronomic commandment, and a geographic impossibility. In contrast to the MT, 4QJoshua represents an edition of Joshua which fulfils ritual at the expense of geography.

We now have not one but three variants concerning the ritual enactment of a Deuteronomic command. When we take into account other ritual variants, such as those concerning the conquest of Jericho and the burial of Joshua, we can derive another principle about ritual in the Bible, which is that it is interpreted and fulfilled differently between editions of the “same” text.17

Conclusion: How Israelite Tradition Mythologizes Ritual by Arguing about it, or, Plus c’est la même chose, plus ça change.
The foregoing considerations suggest that far from being marginal, the texts we have considered provide an unusually explicit view of the forces that generated the Bible as we have it. Because it must retain certain essential ideological and linguistic features to achieve minimal coherence (the “Deuteronomic” ideology), yet its process can continue productively over centuries and encompass radically conflicting views of its central concerns, writing by “tradition” is a special sort of cultural activity: entextualization as historical action. What is important about the textual variance we have seen is that it is, in every case, also ritual variance with political significance. The culture that produced the different Deuteronomistic redaction of Joshua defines its unity through the way it returns to and interprets the textual tradition it has received: by the practice of rewriting and producing its own version of the received tradition.18 “Traditional authorship” can thus be characterized as the sedimentation of a text by a diachronic subset of a culture, which manifests its identity through performing this practice of text production on a single corpus over time.

This is true on the level of religious-historical “content” as well as that of textual “form.” In the reconstruction of ancient Israelite religion in the tradition of Albright, a central point is the importation of Canaanite cosmic topoi into Israelite national space, whose textual expression was formulated memorably by Cross as a move from “Canaanite myth to Hebrew epic.” The Lord as a divine warrior marching

17 A principle assumed in Mazor 1995.
18 Here I draw on Michael Fishbane’s paradigm of native Israelite textual interpretation as text production (Fishbane1985), placing it in light of certain other broad features of Israelite religion and an anthropological view of texts.
forth from his mountain on Zion assumes older traits of the divine warrior Baal marching forth from his holy mount Zaphon. A strange feature of this Mt. Zaphon is its ability to reproduce itself: not only does the original Zaphon, north of Israel, appear in altered form as Sinai and Zion, but there is also a Mt. Zaphon in Egypt which has the same myth of cosmic combat attached to it. When trying to comprehend the multiplication of cosmic mountains in Canaanite myth, the Jesuit scholar Richard J. Clifford (1972) imported a concept from medieval Catholic sacred geography, conveyed by the Latin ecclesiastical term *translatio*. *Translatio* refers to the transfer of the features of a saint or shrine to another person or place.

The sacred geography of the Jordan crossing is a series of acts of *translatio*. The features of Sinai are translated by means of the planting of stelae and the inscription of the Torah to Gilgal and Gerezim, and then to Ebal. Deuteronomistic reform represses the excess of cosmic centers that this process produces because the various centers are in competition with the Jerusalem temple. But a later stage of the Deuteronomistic writing culture moves to reproduce cosmic centers in response to new cultural-political conditions: the conquest of Judah and Jerusalem and the death of native kingship.

Though the translation of Sinai across the Jordan, we can see the Deuteronomistic creation of scripture and nation through its creation of sacred space in the Jordan crossing narrative. Each new instance of claiming land and inscribing the law, is both a constitutive act that extends the authority of divine revelation to earth and a reworking that potentially dilutes it. Similarly, each citation of a divine commandment leads toward both its fulfillment and its distortion.

It was Gerhard von Rad who first demonstrated that “the focal point of Deuteronomistic historiography is the prophetic word of God fulfilled in Israelite history” (Weinfeld 1972:15). Thus, as Weinfeld...
elaborates, “Unlike the pre-Deuteronomic concept of the word of God reflected in the popular prophetic narratives and relating only to present and actual events, the Deuteronomic word of God relates to all periods and generations and blends with the long-range historical scheme.” The Deuteronomic concept is at once a theory of history and a theory of divine language. The distinctively Israelite preoccupation with writing divine text in, and as history, leads to the characteristic Deuteronomistic entextualization of divine law: ritual as myth, that is, law in narrative, the paradoxical genre of the Torah as a whole, as itself a mythic model.22 The presentation of law and its fulfillment within a temporal structure of events, the biblical history of Israel, allows the law to be both perpetually undercut and threatened, and perpetually renewed and reinscribed.

While apparently subverting the text’s authority as history, the three Deuteronomistic editions of the Jordan crossing actually reveal an essential mode by which Israelite culture made history, through the translation (in the word’s etymological sense) of both texts and topoi. The power of this mode to replicate itself across time can be measured by a peculiar “lack” in Jewish culture noted by Yosef Haim Yerushalmi in his classic study *Zakah: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982). Here he noticed the massive failure of post-biblical Judaism to produce any significant historical writing before the nineteenth century. The problem, Yerushalmi concluded, was the sheer structuring power of Jewish tradition; once entextualized, the narrative of the Hebrew Bible was recursively reinterpreted as law, constantly available for fulfillment by recontextualization in new situations. Indeed, this power began to ebb only during the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, with its recognition that modern knowledge had irrevocably undermined the foundations of the Bible as a revealed document.

*Bibliography*


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The edifying concept of the word of God in the ancient narrative and relating only to the word of God relates to all narrative with the long-range historical result that it is once a theory of history and as history, leads to the ritualization of divine law: ritual as the genre of the Torah as a presentation of law and its fulfillment of events, the biblical history of eventually undercut and threatened, unfolded.

But the text’s authority as history, the three biblically crossing actually reveal an event (made history, through the sense of both texts and topoi) itself. Across time can be measured culture noted by Yosef Haim 1980. In Jewish History and Jewish Memory failure of post-biblical Judaism to writing before the nineteenth century included, was the sheer structuring textualized, the narrative of the interpreted as law, constantly available in new situations. Indeed, this Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment knowledge had irrevocably changed as a revealed document.

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