

A Workshop
On
"Authorships and Textual Adaptations: the Juggling of Spoken Words and Written
Letters in the Studies of the Bible and the Homer"

Good afternoon, greetings to everyone, and especially I extend my warm welcome to Prof. Alexander Rofe from Jerusalem and to Prof. Jeffrey Tigay from Philadelphia, and I feel very honored to have the two distinguished scholars as our guests to the research project called, The Modernity and the Studies of Ancient Texts: the Collapse of the Traditions and their Remaking.

Perhaps, the title may provoke many questions from you and yet my time and ability is too short to answer them. So I pray that the workshop as a whole may reveal a reason for us to be here together beyond the initial plan and thought; I think the casual talks and chats over a cup of coffee or over a dish with a knife and folk are as important as the papers and the discussions themselves. For Kohelet 2:24 says, "**There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God**". Therefore, we will eat and drink later together; perhaps I should listen to the Homeric verse in the Odyssey 1:150, "Greetings, stranger! Welcome to our feast! There will be time to tell your errand later." Yet, I ask you a big favor, and ~~let me tell my~~ errand at first. *forgive me for telling you*

Indeed, our time is not the time in which the people enjoy quoting from the ancient texts such as the Homer or the Bible in the casual talk. Today is the age of modernity in which more appreciated are the technological achievements of cellar phones and the theories of stock markets and the scientific discoveries of the space and the human gene. Yet, does this mean that people finally come to realize the classical texts obsolete, no longer needed for mankind's wellness and goodness? I ask myself since when we have become such forgetful of ourselves? How did this situation come about? And why? These questions are ~~about~~ all that I would like you to remember in this research project minimally.

In my opinion, modern biblical scholarship has been a little too confident on the ground of inferences and analogies with the modern theories of the development of human society in order to claim its historical knowledge of the bible and the ancient times. Understandably, the importance of the bible is diminishing from today's intellectual scenes—particularly speaking of Japan—as much as biblical studies ~~were~~ ^{are} oversimplifying the details of the Bible as mere mediocre instances of ancient near eastern civilization. By such a scholarship, the impressions of the historical realities of the bible are made ~~as~~ self-evident as the law of gravity. Today, I am hardly surprised by "new" ideas of the biblical studies, since ~~conclusions~~ ^{their} are imaginable from the frontlines of social science, anthropology, contemporary philosophies, etc.

Rather, I say, my astonishment comes upon discovering myself as the one who assumes many things for reading the bible in the name of historical criticism.

Names of Israel 1

I have been aware of this fact since I am exposed to the works of early Israeli scholars or Jewish thinkers such as M.Z. Segal, U. Cassuto, D.Z. Hoffmann, S. Bernfeld, H. Graetz, S. Schechter, Mordecai Solieli, Shneur Zalman Shazar, and of course, Y. Kaufman. All of those provide me with fresh perspectives to the development of biblical scholarship and strong reasons to doubt the logical base of the documentary hypothesis, and I realize how much great and yet not fully recognized by the Japanese were the impacts of Christian theologies and modern presumptions upon our historical understanding of the Bible.

The spirit of modernism, that is to doubt the established knowledge by the previous generations and to reflect upon their conceptual and methodological shortcomings, is also the spirit of our project. Therefore, let us exercise the spirit to learn ourselves anew and hope to touch the truth to renew our historical approaches and perspectives to the ancient texts. Saying thus, I realize, I am approaching to a whole issue from the interest of history of interpretation as developed by my teacher James Kugel at Harvard.

Here, I would like to share with you briefly my views on the last two centuries of biblical scholarship. Please see the screen.

The tremendous changes happen just in about two centuries in the understandings of the Bible as well as the Homer. I summarize the development with a catch phrase saying "from conjecture to prolegomena." See the middle of the eighteenth century in chart, where you find the conjectures of Jan Astruc who proposed a systematic view of a conflation of two stories in Genesis for the first time in history. This practically started a whole new field of higher criticism (the term coined later by Eichhorn). Within one hundred years or so—from Astruc—the development reaches a summit by the prolegomena of J. Wellhausen, (see the last half of the 19th century,) and by his article in the Encyclopedia Britannica 9th edition, which publicly propagated authority to understanding the four sources JEDP as the process of the emergence of the Pentateuch.

As a footnote, please also attend to an interesting parallel in the Homeric studies; F. Hedelin wrote a conjecture of doubting the traditional authorship of the Homeric text in the seventeenth century, and his doubt was followed by the famous prolegomena of August Wolf in the eighteenth century; and the spirit of science which asks whether or not the Homeric text is one unified text reaches a peak with the presence of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff who attacks against those who oppose to the analytical theory of Homer and against those who treat the Greek classics unscientifically in his eyes, including Nietzsche and Rohde. By the way, it is well known that Wilamowitz was closely associated with J. Wellhausen in academic interest and career.

As a result, we find that no dictionary or encyclopedia of the bible positively ascribes the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses; likewise, Homer is no longer seen as the author of Iliad and Odyssey in the textbooks of universities. But I must ask myself if this state of scholarship warrants the historical truth or not, meaning to ask if the basics of Astruc's conjecture or the fundamentals of the documentary hypothesis (JEDP) are truly proven or not? While I am persuaded at conjecturing the conflation of sources for the composition at the ancient times, yet true scientists may not be satisfied with

the state of possibility, but ask more positive/direct evidence which truly makes the conjecture a fact, or demand a more solid ground on which one can defend the hypothesis to contradicting facts and phenomena observed otherwise in the Pentateuch.

The present situation of the biblical studies I see is somewhat analogous to a stage in the history of science, i. e., the transitional period between the conjecture of Copernicus about the moving earth and the theory of Newton about the gravity. Indeed, without Newton's physics, the Copernican system does not make a sense scientifically. Nonetheless, the intellectuals of Europe from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century did let the Copernican system prevail without a solid explanation of physics; they took it for granted to develop further thinking along the system, not waiting for the emergence of the unifying explanation of physics which Newton finally provided. This is a fact of our scientific activities.

My point is this; the present state of the historical understanding of the Pentateuch and the composition process looks like a physics of pre-Newtonian age, since the majority of scholars follow the fundamentals of J. Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis without a logically proven ground. The biblical studies regarding the Pentateuch and the Hebrew bible as a whole has no Newton nor Einstein, while Spinoza, Richard Simon, Jan Astruc may or may not be the Copernicus of higher criticism. In other words, while the phenomena of the conflation of stories in ancient times are documented as Prof. Tigay showed with Gilgamesh epic, yet there is no conclusive source theory about the emergence of the Torah as one scroll—simply the present solution is up to his or her preference of one imagination over another.

To be sure, Wellhausen was aware of the chaos of knowledge in higher criticism, while he was too theologically oriented, thus, to connect the issue of the composition of the Pentateuch with the spiritual gaps he saw between the laws and the prophets. Therefore, viewing Alt Israel/Ancient Israel as the true origin of Christianity as different from the late legalism of Judaism (Judentum), he reached the conclusion that the five books of the laws (Torah) emerged later as a legalistic scheme given to formalize the inspiration of the prophets; yet, the emergence of the Pentateuch diminished the original spirit of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and many who laid the basis of monotheism before the exiles.

In this plan, Wellhausen sees the Priestly (legalistic) source as responsible for structuring the Pentateuch, meaning that the P ought to involve in the composition at the last stage of all, namely, after the JED sources were laid out. Today, the majority of bible scholars follow the fundamentals of Wellhausen to regard the chronological order of JEDP as the historical truth except for some Jewish scholars. Indeed, it is the fact that Jewish or Israeli scholars opposed to the documentary hypothesis of J. Wellhausen from the very beginning, particularly to his view of chronology which places the prophecy prior to the laws. Therefore, one who researches for the truth must reckon with the fact and with the reasons why Jewish scholars insisted that the law (Torah) must come prior to the emergence of the prophets, or argued that the P source should precede to the prophetic sources (Deuteronomy) in the chronological

order.

No doubt, the Jewish objection to Wellhausen reflects the tension between the protestant theology and the tradition of Judaism. In recent, Rolf Rendtroff and Erhard Blum claim the D source as the earliest of all four; in my view, this is another example of the Christian aspiration to find the prophetic spirit at the origin of the biblical faith.

But, again, I think, what matters to them is not theology alone, but a fair reasoning by critical manner. Indeed, those who object to the Documentary hypothesis are not only yeshiva students who may close their eyes to the happenings of modern world, but also those modern Jewish scholars who clearly committed to the spirit of secular science and who undoubtedly had good trainings in the discipline of historical criticism by the universities in Europe. Thus, they can agree upon the conjecture of the involvement of sources in the composition of the Pentateuch, but also the basic concepts of the documentary hypothesis namely the four sources JEPD. Simply, with different assumptions, they operated their critical mind and found many serious contradictions in the claims of Wellhausen and others. I save those for later discussions.

Anyway, among those critics, I think of U. Cassuto highly since he was the one who tried to bridge between the two different perspectives of Jewish traditions and modern critical thinking which polarized the understanding of the Pentateuch in the early twentieth century. Whereas Cassuto rejects the documentary hypothesis of Wellhausen for reason, yet he recognizes the importance of Ugaritic evidence for the historical understanding of the Bible in the very beginning for reason. Clearly, Cassuto tries to build a different model of sources involving the composition of the Pentateuch on the solid ground of fact.

In short, a reason of my willing to re-examine the past scholarship, particularly the higher criticism of the Bible is because today's scholarship seems to have an enormous confusion or conglomerate of facts themselves with hypothetical knowledge which is initially based on facts and phenomena. The historical claims accumulated in the last two or three centuries regarding the Pentateuch and other biblical literatures need to be differentiated in validities and legitimacies by telling at least the differences between the conclusions based on facts and those merely based on someone else's inferences which look like facts. I think, the hypothetical arguments like telling "if A is true, B should be true" are different in credibility from those which have roots in facts and phenomena.

I think the critics of higher criticism in the 19th and the 20th centuries imagined themselves as if they were engaging in a kind of natural science so that the history of higher criticism should be written in the same sense as the history of physics. But the truth is that the chains of arguments or studies from the time of Astruc to that of Wellhausen in higher criticism do not appear to be the logical sequence like the one I see in physics but it seems to be a history of preference or choice of interpretation, at least, in the sense that the fair criticism by Jewish scholarship is not reckoned mostly in higher

criticism.

Therefore, once questioning on the history of higher criticism told everywhere, I cannot help asking whether or not we can conceive that it progresses in the line of necessary/inevitable thinking like the one in natural science. At least I am confident in the logical truth that every interpretation of higher criticism has to reject its alternative which is equally good and reasoned from another perspective.

For instance, Spinoza's conjecture from the sequence of Genesis 38 should be differentiated from those of Richard Simon or Jan Astruc in validity, since the arguments of Jan Astruc and Richard Simon already take Spinoza's conjecture for the truth and build their own claims upon Spinoza's conclusion that the present narrative order of the Pentateuch is not coherent and ad hoc. Yet, Spinoza himself had an obligation to prove his point in the case of Genesis 38 where Spinoza pointed out the contradiction to which Ibn Ezra (Spinoza's source of knowledge) had a different solution. Does Spinoza prove his case enough to reject Ibn Ezra's alternative? I don't think that he does prove it. For Spinoza already made his assumption that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, and on that assumption, he can make the judgment about Genesis 38. In contrast, even though Ibn Ezra doubts the traditional view of authorship, he does not choose his position at the issue but keeps his doubt as a possibility and prefers to leave every interpretive option open to the readers.

Richard Simon forges a theory of the public writers who arrange the perfect sequence of narrative sequence whereas Spinoza thought of no real plot or narrative sequence in the Pentateuch as Ezra simply gathered different stories without consideration; accordingly, Jan Astruc following Richard Simon, not Spinoza, refuses to view the Pentateuch as an ad hoc text of stories whose sequence has no sense; instead, he does his best to justify the narrative sequence of Genesis by conjectures.

I think that the chains of hypotheses regarding the Bible began with Jan Astruc or Richard Simon who make their conjectures on the conclusion of Spinoza which is nothing but another conjecture perhaps in the eyes of Ibn Ezra. In short, the more things a critic assumes a priori for his interpretation, the smaller is the validity of his conclusion.

This is what Spinoza believes. For he says; "I deliberately resolved to examine scripture afresh, conscientiously and freely, and to admit nothing as its teaching which I did not most clearly derive from it" (TTP Preface). The more hypothetical a critic becomes in his interpretation, the more dogmatic he becomes and ignores his alternatives in consideration. Because in search for the historical truth, a critic of higher criticism must believe that his interpretation is only answer like the one in mathematics.

In result, we have now a pile of assumptions such as the JEDP sources, conflation, supplementation etc. for reading the Bible historically; I feel as if these assumptions and inferences of higher criticism were another oral Torah for the written Torah in modernism. But now is the time to separate the grain from the chaff in the higher criticism of the Bible. I believe in the fairness

and the pragmatism of modern biblical criticism for that purpose.

Speaking of pragmatism, by the way, the archeologists never touch the site without understanding the surface; they cautiously proceed in the dig from the shallow layers to the deeper ones, namely, from the present time to the ancient times. Why not? We should do the same in the tackle of the issue of the composition of the Pentateuch. It makes a sense since the ground we stand now is the most solid of all. When we know ourselves namely the assumptions of thinking and interpreting in our time, we will read the ancient text better namely coming close to the ways of writing and reading in ancient times.

So let us begin the workshop by reviewing our time through the contributions of U. Cassuto and let us reconsider the significance of higher criticism from fresh and fair viewpoints. For that purpose, we have two excellent teachers from abroad. "Leku na we Nivakeha" (Isaiah 1:18). We have much to learn from them and also much to discuss with them. Thank you for everyone coming to participate in the workshop.