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ANYTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN?! EXPLORING FURTHER AVENUES FOR WRITING ANOTHER COMMENTARY ON CHRONICLES

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, there has been an explosion of new commentaries on Chronicles. Scholars may justifiably ask whether there is anything new under the sun to investigate in another commentary on this book. Having been contracted to produce a commentary for the *Old Testament Library* series (as follow-up to Japhet's majestic commentary), I am investigating some new avenues for this endeavour. Three potential areas are discussed: utilizing Achaemenid royal inscriptions and written records for the interpretation of Chronicles; revisiting theories on the composition of Chronicles, and bringing Chronicles and Pentateuchal studies into conversation with one another.¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing a commentary on a biblical book is simultaneously a daunting and rewarding task. Depending on the requirements of the specific series in which the commentary appears, the task challenges the author to reflect on intricate textual detail as well as overarching themes, strands, and theologies. Attention to detail, and an eye for form and the “bigger picture”, are, therefore, indispensable qualities of a commentary author. However, the task is also rewarding for exactly

¹ I thank Gary Knoppers for his valuable comments on a first draft of this article. All deficiencies in the contribution remain my own responsibility.

the same reasons: it affords the author the opportunity to systematically work through a biblical book, while integrating more detailed observations on texts and forms with overarching perspectives.

The laureate of this volume, colleague Fanie Snyman, is one of the few South African Old Testament scholars who have completed such a task successfully. His commentary on Malachi in the *Historical commentary on the Old Testament* series, published in Belgium (2015), has been the culmination of years of research on this biblical book and the prophetic *corpus*. I honour him for this task and for his valuable contributions to Old Testament studies in South Africa.²

Over the past two decades, we have seen an explosion of new commentaries on Chronicles. Since 2001, a total of at least fifty-four new commentaries have been published, with another fifteen in preparation at the moment.³ Although these commentaries are not all targeted at the same audiences, and would obviously feed into different markets and interest groups,⁴ these figures are nevertheless remarkable. The proliferation of commentaries on Chronicles is probably related to the booming interest in Persian period biblical literature over the past decades. This is due not only to an interest in books such as Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah from this period, but also to the debates in Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic studies that have moved the finalization of these *corpora* well into the postexilic era.⁵ However, it might also be a function of the new and exciting directions of studies on Chronicles that were introduced, since the 1980s, in commentaries and further publications. The work of Hugh Williamson,

2 I find it very ironic that Fanie Snyman's commentary and mine have been mentioned only as an afterthought in a recent article that gives an overview of South African Old Testament scholarship since 1994. See Bosman (2015:649 fn. 40). The work done in the mentioned commentaries apparently does not fit any of the categories of "ants, spiders, bees ... and ticks" used in the mentioned article to characterize South African Old Testament scholarship since 1994. Whether it is significant that these commentaries are mentioned in a footnote about laughter and comedians (such as Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Trevor Noah), only the author of that article will know.

3 The count of fifty-four includes single volume commentaries on 1 and 2 Chronicles, separate commentaries on 1 and 2 Chronicles, shorter commentaries included in one volume commentaries of the Bible, as well as reprints or translations of earlier commentaries.

4 The minority are technical commentaries aimed at a scholarly readership.

5 See, for example, Knoppers & Levinson (2007); Dozeman (2011); Römer (2000; 2007).

Sara Japhet, and Thomas Willi, who jointly introduced a new phase in Chronicles studies, should be mentioned in this regard.⁶

A broad range of consensus points about Chronicles has developed over the past decades since the publication of these influential works. Scholars may thus justifiably ask whether there is anything new under the sun to investigate in another commentary on this book. As I was contracted to produce a commentary for the *Old Testament Library* series (as follow-up to Sara Japhet's majestic commentary – in itself a daunting task!), I was also confronted with this question at the start of this project. With such a wealth of commentaries and literature available on Chronicles, and with so many and strong areas of consensus that have developed over the past two to three decades, what unique perspective(s) can the envisioned commentary in *Old Testament Library* bring to our scholarly discussions?

In this contribution, I would like to highlight three areas that could potentially take studies on Chronicles somewhat further with the new commentary. These are not necessarily new areas, but rather the re-opening of some of the earlier and present consensus areas in light of new evidence at our disposal. In the next section, I will briefly introduce each of these areas.

2. POTENTIAL NEW CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDIES ON CHRONICLES

2.1 Engaging with Achaemenid royal inscriptions and written records

This neglected area of research on Chronicles may be due to the fact that past studies on Persian period biblical literature have not sufficiently engaged with ancient Persian literary studies on the royal inscriptions and other written records. On the one hand, many of the Persian inscriptions and administrative texts have remained inaccessible for biblical scholars, due to a lack of good publications on them,⁷ and the fact that the field of

6 See Willi (1972); Williamson (1982); Japhet (1989; 1993). For a collection of earlier articles, see Williamson (2004); Japhet (2006). See also the first volume of Willi's commentary on Chronicle (2009).

7 In the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, some publications on the Persian inscriptions were first attempts to disseminate the discoveries made in Persia. However, the critical methodologies of these early publications were not well developed. Schmitt introduced a new phase of publications on these inscriptions in the past two decades of the 20th century. For example, some of Schmitt's (1991; 2000; 2001; 2009) publications

Persian (and specifically Achaemenid) historiography – as an independent specialization area in general historiography – only started gaining prominence from the end of the 20th century. It is a fairly recent trend in Persian historiography to work from Persian primary texts, and not only from ideologically biased Greek versions of Persian history, as attested in the vast number of classical works.

On the other hand, biblical scholars of earlier generations were mainly interested in reconstructing the “biblical” history. Often, these “reconstructions” happened simply by taking the biblical witnesses about the Persian period on face value. It is, therefore, no surprise that the “historicity” of the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles stood so high on the research agendas of biblical scholars in the first half of the 20th century.⁸

This situation has changed for both biblical scholarship and Persian historiography. In terms of biblical scholarship, scholars have now realized that all biblical historiographies are also infused by the theologies, ideologies, as well as the historical and cultural values of their time of origin and composition. In studies on Chronicles, Japhet, in particular, emphasized this aspect, and took that into account in her work (including her commentary) on Chronicles.⁹ In terms of Persian historiography, attention for the ideological aspects of Persian literature increasingly started emerging in the latter half of the 20th century. In their work, Persian historiographers realized and considered that the Persian literature and the Achaemenid royal inscriptions, in particular, also breathe the ideologies of their time. Thus, a focal area in Persian historiography that emerged lately is research into the royal ideology, or ideology of kingship, that emerges from the Achaemenid inscriptions.¹⁰

The developments in biblical scholarship and Persian historiography have to be brought into closer proximity to one another. Although not on a widespread basis, this is starting to happen in studies on both Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles.¹¹ Could one assume contact and reciprocal influence in the literature of the Persian empire and of one of the outlying provinces, Yehud?

have become standard reference works in this regard. Many of the recent publications appeared in the series “Corpus inscriptionum Iranicarum”.

8 For an overview of scholarship, see Japhet (1985).

9 See, for example, Japhet (1989; 2009).

10 See, for example Kuhrt & Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1988); Briant (2002); Henkelman & Kuhrt (2003); Wiesehöfer (2007); Henkelman *et al.* (2011); Rollinger *et al.* (2011); Kuhrt (2013; 2014); Rollinger (2014).

11 See, for example, Mitchell (2015); Baultch (2007); Polaski (2007).

One way to answer this question will be to investigate whether any intertextuality can be observed between textual *corpora* in both contexts. However, the issue of “intertextuality” in itself has become a very fluid and much-disputed one in literary scholarship, in general, and in biblical scholarship, in particular. It is very common that scholars now find “traces”, “allusions”, or “nuances” of one text in almost any other text. These are often very vaguely defined and can often amount to a subjective interpretation of one set of texts in light of another.¹² The lack of criteria is, therefore, problematic, and the “parallelomania” resulting from this tendency is rightly criticized in scholarship.

In this context, four issues should be considered in particular.

2.1.1 Understanding “intertextuality”

An often-quoted classic definition of intertextuality in biblical studies is that of Miscal (1995:247): “Intertextuality is reading two or more texts together and in light of each other”. However, in his survey of models describing intertextuality in the Persian period, Bautch (2007:25) rightly remarks that

[t]o state that intertextuality is the connection between texts does not explain everything of how those texts relate, and the explanations of how texts connect have been various.

He surveys a number of studies on Persian period biblical literature that use a variety of models of intertextuality (including those views influenced by the theorists Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva). He does so, particularly with reference to texts from the Persian period, because he observes that

the Persian period has not been dominant in the collections of intertextual studies by biblical scholars; in many ways, Persian-period texts remain underrepresented There is as yet no systematic investigation of Persian-period intertextuality, and intertextual studies that touch on the Persian period have done so with a wide variety of theoretical approaches and interests (Bautch 2007:26).

12 Bautch (2007:35) summarizes this problem as follows:

“[T]he ‘trace’ used in some intertextual analyses may appear to be a figment to colleagues who require that data be read directly from the biblical text. There is an ephemeral quality to concepts such as the trace, and at least some will ask if the intertextualist is not working with data that is not really there or at best advancing an argument from silence”.

2.1.2 Understanding “textuality” in Persian imperial contexts

When investigating Persian period intertextuality, one should bear an important factor in mind. Polaski’s (2004, 2007) work emphasizes that textuality, in that time period, had a very different function to textuality in modern-day understanding. Currently, textuality is mostly understood as verbal, printed/written communication with the intention of conveying information. Polaski reminds us that, in Persian times, textuality rather had the function of expressing (imperial) power, or undermining (imperial) power. He refers to the Bisitun inscription of Darius I, which was chiselled in the rock face of a mountain, high above the valley, and which travellers passed by on their way between Babylon and Susa. Polaski (2004:657) indicates that

the Behistun inscription was carefully inscribed on a cliff in such a way that it could be seen but not read from the base. ... [!]nscriptions served to guarantee the decision they record; they do not merely record it.¹³

Or, to put it differently, the actual wording and contents of inscriptions were not as important as the fact that they were written. The Babylonian and Aramaic copies of the Bisitun inscription underline this aspect. Not so much what Darius I stated in this inscription was considered central, but rather that it was written down as an expression of power.

The importance of writing and textuality as ideological expressions of power should not be ignored when studying Persian period inscriptions, as well as Persian period biblical writings. Influence of texts on one another, or connections between texts (sometimes referred to as “intertextuality”), should, therefore, not only be sought on the level of similar terminology or wording – that aspect could rather be discussed under the rubric of “quotation”. However, in a world where only few could read and write, and where textuality had an ideological function, one should rather be seeking similar themes in texts that possibly reflect some ideological views, and

13 Polaski uses this understanding of textuality in Behistun to interpret the narrative in Daniel 5 and 6. The value of his study is that he emphasizes the symbolic and ideological importance of inscriptions and of scribal activity. He never argues that there is any direct literary link between the Bisitun inscription and the narratives in Daniel, but rather avers that the use of the inscription-against-the-wall motif might reflect the common practice in Persia and in the Hellenistic empire of expressing imperial power through monumental inscriptions. In the Daniel text, the same motif is then used polemically to undermine the imperial authority. See also Polaski’s (2007) study of Joshua 8 where he employs similar views.

that establish some dialogic relation with other texts. In this respect, I lean towards a Bakhtinian understanding of intertextuality.¹⁴ This implies that later texts often relate to earlier texts, not only to confirm them, but also to develop, criticize or even alter them. A dialogic understanding of intertextuality, therefore, includes the aspect of polemic, where continuity with earlier texts does not exclude discontinuity.

2.1.3 Do inscriptions “travel”?

One of the best examples of Persian royal inscriptions “travelling” to other imperial contexts is the Bisitun inscription. We know that a copy in Babylonian cuneiform was available in Babylon (with the substitution of the mentioning of Ahuaramazda with the Babylonian god Bel), and that an Aramaic translation was discovered in Elephantine in Egypt. We may, therefore, safely assume that this text (whether in some written form, or in the memories of officials travelling from the imperial heartland to Egypt) travelled through the Levantine land bridge where Yehud and Jerusalem were situated. With Yehud (particularly through its administrative centre at Ramat Raḥel) playing an important role during the time when Egypt broke the yoke from Persia and this province formed the southern frontier to Egypt of the Persian empire, one may expect that there must have been knowledge of this royal inscription of Darius I in Jerusalem where Chronicles was composed.¹⁵

A further example is the so-called “Darius Testament” (DNa and DNb) from Naqš i-Ruštām. It was re-used by Darius I’s son, Xerxes I, in the latter’s inscription at nearby Persepolis (in XPh and XPI, but without the last paragraphs of DNb included). The last part of DNb was also found in Aramaic translation inserted into the copy of the Bisitun inscription at Elephantine in Egypt. The same situation of mobility can, therefore, be assumed for DNa and DNb.

2.1.4 Understanding “innerbiblical exegesis”

The issue of dialogic engagement with earlier texts is also fundamental to many scholars’ understanding of what has been termed “innerbiblical exegesis”.¹⁶ Zahn (2016:108, 115) indicated that there are particularly

14 See Mitchell’s work (1999; 2010; 2015) on Chronicles for her practising of a “model of dialogic intertextuality”, which takes its major theoretical cue from Bakhtin.

15 See, for example, Granerød (2013).

16 For a reflection of scholarship in this field, see Fishbane (1985); Jonker (2011); Levinson (1997); Schmid (2000); Zahn (2016).

two major issues in the use of the term and the practising of this type of exegesis:

The first pertains to the variety of ways scriptural exegesis can be presented textually and the various textual contexts in which it occurs. More specifically, I will argue that speaking of innerbiblical exegesis as a broad category obscures the difference between exegesis that takes place in the course of production of a new copy or edition of a work and that which stems from the reuse of earlier materials in a new composition. The second difficulty concerns the distinction the term implies between *innerbiblical* and *extrabiblical* interpretation – a distinction that is not meaningful for the period in which the Pentateuch was formed. ... Simply put, there was no Bible, no fixed list of scriptural texts, at that time.

These issues related to innerbiblical exegesis should, therefore, also be considered when working with Chronicles. Chronicles did not only engage with text from *within* the own environment of authority, but also with text from *outside* this environment, for example, the Persian imperial context.

2.1.5 Synthesis

The above discussions indicate that the following should be borne in mind when investigating the possible relationship between processes of textual formation in Chronicles and Achaemenid royal inscriptions and administrative texts:

- Relationships between texts should not be limited to literary and terminological similarities.
- Texts engaging with one another do so in a dialogical, even polemic way, and influence of different *corpora* of literature on one another can be observed in how they engage with similar themes.
- The understanding of textuality in the Persian period should be considered, namely texts were often written as ideological expressions of power, and not so much for the sake of their contents.¹⁷
- We are aware of the fact that Persian royal inscriptions were indeed “mobile” in the sense that adapted or translated copies were available in other parts of the empire, and that these inscriptions contributed towards the intellectual context during which the Chronicler wrote his work.

17 This is, of course, also true for earlier periods, but this point wants to emphasize this aspect specifically for the Persian period.

- It should also be expected that biblical texts came into contact with texts from outside the canonical biblical *corpus*.

2.2 Revisiting theories on the composition of Chronicles

Since approximately two to three decades ago, a scholarly consensus emerged that Chronicles made use of older (mainly biblical) sources, but that it was written *in toto* by a single author or a school of authors. In the next paragraphs, I will give an overview of the scholarship preceding this consensus, as well as of new positions that have emerged in recent years.¹⁸

2.2.1 Layers of growth in Chronicles?

Japhet (1993:5) summarized the problematic nature of Chronicles as follows:

The strongest motive for this question [i.e., whether Chronicles is a composite piece of literature – LCJ] comes from one of the book's most conspicuous features, its heterogeneity, which attracts the reader's attention on first reading. ... This diversity, and in particular the combination of historical records on the one hand and lists of every kind and form on the other, is found by some scholars to be irreconcilable in one author and to suggest different author-personalities from the outset.

Part of the problematic nature of Chronicles is the fact that it seems to contain material from both the Priestly and the Deuteronomic traditions. Some earlier commentators suggested that a Priestly original was later edited by scribes from Deuteronomic circles, or that there was a Deuteronomic original edited by Priestly editors. Under the influence of the four sources theory in Pentateuchal studies, some commentators suggested that two to four sources were used in the composition of Chronicles, with the possibility of some post-Chronistic additions.¹⁹

Some sections in Chronicles posed special challenges to earlier commentators, such as the genealogical lists in the first nine chapters, as well as the organization of priestly duties in 1 Chronicles 23-27, which are not reflected in the Deuteronomistic version of David's history. Some older scholars, such as Welch,²⁰ but also more recent scholars such as Schniedewind²¹ dispute that these sections were part of the "original"

18 For a good overview of scholarship in this regard, see Auld (2017:ch. 1).

19 See the summary in Japhet (1993:5).

20 See the reprint in Welch (1980).

21 See Schniedewind (1995).

Chronicles, and opined that they must have been added in a later revision process, probably through priestly hands.

Later scholars did not attempt to identify any layers in, or different hands behind the text. However, they tried to identify an “original” Chronicles that mainly made use of the Deuteronomistic history and distinguished that from materials that resulted from further post-Chronicist additions. In this theory, almost everything that is nowadays considered to be the Chronicler’s own material (*Sondergut*) was regarded as post-Chronicist growth.

Still another attempt to account for the diversity in Chronicles came from scholars such as Frank Moore Cross and Kurt Galling. They proposed that different stages of growth should be distinguished, in which the complex work of Chronicles through Ezra-Nehemiah (in the case of Galling) or including 1 Esdras (in the case of Cross) came into being.

2.2.2 A common source for the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles?

Auld’s proposal is another attempt to explain the origin and composition of Chronicles that should be discussed separately.²² Auld hypothesizes that the Chronicler did not make use of the Deuteronomistic History as main source, but that both these literary works rather made use of a common source, which they appropriated, each in their own unique way, in the late Persian/early Hellenistic period. He attempts a theoretical reconstruction of such an earlier common source from the literary material shared by Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

Auld found support for his work in that of Carr who proposes that many of the differences observed between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles might be the result of memory variants.²³ While these processes of textual growth mainly happened in ancient educational contexts, one may expect that differences between textual traditions might be the result of quotation from memory, and not necessarily from deliberate alteration of the underlying traditions. In light of this hypothesis and of the trend in ANE literature that later texts normally expand on earlier oral traditions, Carr investigates the different textual versions such as 4QSam^a, the Old Greek, and Josephus related to Samuel-Kings and Chronicles. He draws the conclusion that Chronicles shows a form of dependence on Samuel-Kings, but not in the form of any of the extant textual variants. This leads him to propose – together with Auld – the likelihood of a common, unknown source for both Samuel-Kings and Chronicles.

22 See, in particular, Auld (1994; 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2017).

23 See Carr (2011a; 2011b).

The strongest support for Auld's position came from Person.²⁴ Auld (2017:16) explains how Person's work latches onto his own:

[H]e has set my proposals in a fresh intellectual environment. While I had conceived the separate development of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles as (simply?) the efforts of scholar-scribes at their desks, Person insists on setting the work of these scribes in the wider intellectual context of a predominantly oral world.

2.2.3 An emerging consensus about the unity of Chronicles

Scholars such as Williamson, Japhet, and Willi introduced a new phase in their work.²⁵ Although in different ways, these scholars all emphasized the unity of Chronicles; their views have emerged as the consensus view at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries. They do not deny the complex nature of Chronicles, but rather provide other explanations for the heterogeneity in the literature than the diachronic theories of earlier studies. Japhet (1993:7), for example, summarizes her position as follows in her commentary:

In the commentary I have examined the most influential of these propositions, and could not concur with any. Even the most severe forms of literary criticism did not achieve meticulous harmony of the details, and the problems they raised were sometimes greater than those they solved. ... It seemed that a better explanation of the book's variety and composition is the view that it is one work, composed essentially by a single author, with a very distinct and peculiar literary method. The author's penchant for citing existing texts, for expressing his own views through elaboration and change of such texts, and his being influenced by both the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomistic historiography and a plethora of earlier sources, yet going his own way, account best for the varieties of the book. It is doubtful whether a rational, meticulous harmony of all the possible details was ever aimed at by the Chronicler.

The core of Japhet's argument is, therefore, that it is possible that one author (or school of authors) could have made use of different literary styles and techniques. One is not obliged to attribute different styles to different authors. She emphasizes that the Chronicler attempted to mediate between the authoritative traditions of the past and the changed

24 See particularly Person (2007; 2010).

25 Their position is supported in the more recent commentaries of McKenzie (2004); Knoppers (2004a; 2004b); Dirksen (2005); Klein (2006; 2012).

socio-historic conditions of his time, by using such a variety of styles and techniques.

2.2.4 New direction?

The trend to seek unity in the diversity of the Chronicler's work also formed the basis of my own recent attempt to explain the heterogeneity.²⁶ I approached the matter differently to that of the consensus position, introduced by Japhet and others, by emphasizing that the Chronicler communicated in at least four socio-historic contexts of existence. These were the Persian imperial context (which formed the overarching context within which all the others were embedded); the provincial context (particularly in relation to Samaria); the tribal context (focussed on the relationship between Judah and Benjamin), and the cultic context in Jerusalem (where different priestly factions were working and writing). On all four these levels, a unique dynamic of identity negotiation took place, and the Chronicler's rhetorical strategies are participating on all four of these levels of existence simultaneously. It, therefore, even results into the same piece of literature reflecting more than one of these levels of rhetorical engagement (such as the ambiguous position over and against Samaria, which is sometimes portrayed as "enemy", but also simultaneously as "part of the family").²⁷ This leads to a very complex literature formation process in Chronicles that should not necessarily be related to different circles of authorship, but rather to different levels of rhetorical engagement as part of a process of identity negotiation.

2.2.5 Synthesis

The heterogeneity of the material in Chronicles remains problematic, and no commentator can escape providing some theory about this aspect. As noted earlier, at least four sets of answers were given in the past to explain the diverse materials in the book. A new commentary on Chronicles provides the opportunity to bring these sets of answers into discussion with one another. Could one, for example, observe any similarities in the layers and/or sources that were identified in earlier scholarship, the literary techniques as identified by the present consensus view (as introduced by Japhet and others), and the rhetorical strategies of identity negotiation in different socio-historical contexts, as exposed in my most recent book? Although it is unlikely that one would return to a phase of identifying

²⁶ See Jonker (2016).

²⁷ To get an impression of this feature of the Chronicler's rhetoric, see the more detailed discussion of 2 Chron. 13:1-20; 15:8-9; 21:1-22:1; 28:5b-15 in Jonker (2016:167-177).

“sources” behind Chronicles, it will be useful to at least examine the end results of all these approaches to see whether that sheds any light on the heterogeneity of material in Chronicles.

2.3 Bringing Chronicles and Pentateuchal scholarship closer to one another

Since the Chronicler was one of the earliest readers of the Pentateuch (in whatever form), recent scholarship emphasises that features in Chronicles can shed light on the composition of the Pentateuch, particularly in its later stages of formation during the Persian period.²⁸ However, theories on the composition of the Pentateuch and on its emerging status as Torah in the Persian period can also shed light on the ways in which the Chronicler engages with Pentateuchal material. The following aspects seem important, in this instance.

2.3.1 Chronicles and D?

Past scholarship assumed that the Chronicler’s engagement with Deuteronomy had been through his use of great parts of the so-called Deuteronomistic History. The so-called deuteronomistic aspects observable in Chronicles were, therefore, associated with his reworking of materials from Samuel-Kings; no direct engagement with the older deuteronomistic legislation had been supposed. However, recent studies have shown that the Chronicler sometimes engages on his own terms, and in his own material, with aspects of deuteronomistic legislation which is not present in the *Vorlage* of Samuel-Kings.²⁹ Knoppers (2012:331) observes in this regard:

We have seen that the Chronicler employs his *Vorlagen* of Samuel-Kings as a base text from which to construct his own distinctive history of the monarchy. On a variety of occasions, he even corrects his Deuteronomistic source toward the standards of Deuteronomy.

Some scholars have started asking the question as to whether the Chronicler could indeed be viewed as a deuteronomist, in similar fashion to those

28 For a summary, see, for example, Jonker (2014a; 2014b). See also the earlier study of Johnstone (1998). However, his study rather tried to indicate that the Chronicler’s methodology of reworking earlier material can provide an analogy which can be used to trace the composition history of sections in Exodus. He, therefore, did not bring reflections on the heterogeneous contents of Chronicles into conversation with Pentateuchal scholarship.

29 See, for example, a discussion of the Chronicler’s Jehoshaphat account in Jonker (2013).

who were responsible for composing the final Deuteronomistic History, but also in subtle opposition to the version of history in Samuel-Kings.³⁰

The following questions emerge: What are the unique qualities of the Chronicler's engagement with deuteronomic legislation? What would that imply for its relationship with the Pentateuch's contents and its process of final composition?

2.3.2 Chronicles and P?

Apart from the fact that it is generally acknowledged that the Chronicler relied on the priestly material's genealogies to compile many of the lists in his introductory nine chapters,³¹ some scholars are also starting to ask which priestly laws are reflected in Chronicles.³² Some now assume that a "hermeneutics of legal innovation" was also at work in the Chronicler's reworking and reinterpretation of older legal traditions.³³

However, this question about the relationship between Chronicles and the priestly pentateuchal materials also goes deeper. Since the finalization of the Pentateuch, most probably through the final editing by priestly scribes, happened in close temporal proximity to the Chronicler's era, one may also ask whether any so-called Chronistic influences might be detected in the latest sections of the Pentateuch. One focal area in present research is the role of the book of Numbers in the final stages of composition of the Pentateuch. Some observe in this book an attempt to build a bridge between the priestly composition of the Pentateuch (ending in Lev. 9) and the deuteronomic-deuteronomistic materials.³⁴ The complex contents and structure of Numbers creates the impression that it was specially created to merge these two blocks of pre-pentateuchal materials. Within this field of scholarship, one thus also starts asking whether the Chronicler played any role in these processes of uniting different pre-pentateuchal traditions, and whether there are any specific connections between Numbers and Chronicles.³⁵

2.3.3 Chronicles and H?

In recent scholarship, a consensus has developed that the so-called Holiness Legislation (Lev. 17-26) is a post-priestly addition to the

30 See, for example, Ben Zvi (2009); Knoppers (2012).

31 See, for example, Jonker (2012).

32 See, for example, Jonker (2017).

33 See, for example, Levinson (1997; 2008a; 2008b); Jonker (2017).

34 See Römer (2002). This source is not mentioned in the bibliography.

35 See Mathys (2008) and my forthcoming article in *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*.

priestly legal *corpus*, which tries to merge priestly and deuteronomic-deuteronomistic materials into one tradition.³⁶ Although some scholars still suggest a pre-exilic date for the priestly materials and H, the majority of scholars nowadays accept the thesis that the priestly material should be dated much later – in the early postexilic period – and that H, therefore, also originated only by the second half of the 5th century BCE. That means that the Chronicler’s work – commonly dated at approximately the middle of the 4th century – originated in temporal proximity to these last stages of pentateuchal formation. As indicated earlier, the same tendency of merging the priestly and deuteronomic-deuteronomistic traditions also occurs in Chronicles. This common feature of Chronicles and H could stimulate interesting further research.

Further aspects of scholarship on H might also provide interesting avenues for investigation, namely studies on the so-called “ethical turn” made in H, as well as on the prominence of the concept of “holiness”.³⁷ Scholars indicate that the Holiness Legislation widens the application of holiness in such a way that it becomes clear that this is not only a requirement of the cult and a characteristic of Yahweh, but should also be reflected in the conduct of the people of Israel and individual lives. In this regard, Leviticus 19 plays a central role. Whereas the focus in the earlier part of the book of Numbers is more on cultic regulations, the focus shifts in H to address ethical values, thus an “ethical turn”, in which “holiness” is viewed as the central value.

It would be interesting to observe how these developments in the latest phases of pentateuchal formation resonate in the Chronicler’s work. It is worth noting that there is much greater emphasis in Chronicles, compared to Samuel-Kings, on the king and the people who should “rely” (*ma’al*) on Yahweh and “seek” (*daraš* and *biqqeš*) Him. Then they might expect prosperity, military victories, good health, and success. Whereas *ma’al* is closely associated with priestly literature, *daraš* and *biqqeš* rather link back to the deuteronomic values. Initial observations indicate that there is also some kind of an “ethical turn” in Chronicles in his re-use of the kings’ accounts of Samuel-Kings.³⁸

36 See particularly the work of Otto (1999); Nihan (2004; 2007).

37 See Nihan (2004; 2007); Meyer (2012; 2013; 2015; 2016); Bibb (2009).

38 For a discussion of the mentioned terminology in Chronicles, see Jonker (2017). Human conduct such as seeking help from a doctor (and not from Yahweh – see the Asa narrative in 2 Chron. 16), was, for example, regarded as violation. This was not limited to cultic matters only.

Another interesting terminological statistic that warrants further research is the fact that the verb “to be holy” (*qds*) occurs most frequently in the Hebrew Bible in Chronicles (thirty-two times) and Leviticus (thirty-one times).³⁹ The majority of the occurrences in Leviticus are in H. Although holiness was also a quality mentioned in other pentateuchal traditions such as Deuteronomy, it remains interesting to note that there is such a prominence of the concept in Leviticus and Chronicles. An investigation into this aspect can potentially shed light on the Chronicler’s relationship with H.

2.3.4 Chronicles and Torah formation?

The theory of a supposed Persian imperial authorization of the Torah sparked off a lively debate among biblical scholars on the influence of the imperial context in the emerging authority of the finalized Pentateuch. Although the majority of scholars nowadays agree that one should not necessarily examine an external imperial process that “forced” the Judeans to come up with a unified version of their legal and cultic traditions, there is also consensus that the Persian socio-historical context did play an important role in the processes within the Judean society that produced the Torah.⁴⁰ Hagedorn (2007:58), for example, indicates that the aim of his work is

to provide an appropriate theoretical framework to demonstrate that the Persian context actually did shape the codification of biblical legal material ... but ... that this shaping was done by the biblical authors themselves, who created a legal corpus that functioned in a wider imperial context by maintaining local order, ... an order that allowed postexilic Israel to operate as part of the Persian Empire without entering into conflict with it.

Ska (2006:226) draws a similar conclusion:

The primary purpose of the Pentateuch, for whoever reads it as a whole, is not to regulate life within a province of the Persian Empire but to define the conditions of membership in a specific community called “Israel.” ... The internal justifications are therefore dominant. ... Instead of letting itself be assimilated or become just another province in the vast Empire, Postexilic Israel wanted to safeguard its identity. Persian politics gave it the opportunity to do this.

39 Count according to Logos 7 in the Stuttgart Electronic Study Bible version of the Hebrew text.

40 For discussions on this topic, see Watts (2001); Knoppers & Levinson (2007).

The same tendency can also be observed in the Chronicler's engagement with the Persian imperial context.⁴¹ The merging of traditions, the subtle polemical engagement with the Persian imperial centre, and the processes of negotiating a new all-Israelite identity are also prominent features of Chronicles. It would, therefore, be important to investigate whether there are any relationships between the Chronicler's engagement with the Persian context and the processes that led to an authoritative Torah in the same context.

2.3.5 Synthesis

The previous subsections showed that there are exciting recent developments in research on the relationship between the Pentateuch and other Persian period biblical literature, such as Chronicles. Now that scholars perceive the finalization of these textual *corpora* in closer temporal proximity to one another, the engagement with the imperial context and with one another becomes a more prominent point of interest. This trend can be fruitfully explored in a new commentary on Chronicles.

3. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this contribution, I indicated that it is no easy task to write another commentary on Chronicles. However, the body of my article offered a discussion of at least three areas in which new developments have taken place recently, that are not yet adequately accounted for in previous commentaries on Chronicles. I consider it my task to contribute to these aspects of Chronicles scholarship through the new *Old Testament Library* commentary.

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41 See, for example, Jonker (2016).

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