Scripture Reading Scripture: Can the Chronicler Teach Us How to Interpret and Apply the Bible?

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Abstract

Why is the book of Chronicles included in the Bible? How should we teach and preach from it? Though in the Old Testament we find many texts that are difficult to interpret and to translate into our own contexts, biblical authors (including the Chronicler) have already provided their own interpretations of earlier scripture, which can be not merely instructive for us, but authoritative. This presentation will briefly survey the history of interpretation of Chronicles, and why it has been problematic for modern and pre-modern interpreters. We will examine some of the unique obstacles *and* opportunities for biblical interpretation that are presented by Chronicles. We will also consider strategies for teaching and preaching from Chronicles, and "reading backwards" from Chronicles to more faithfully interpret its source texts.

Outline

- Introduction
    - Problems 1 and 2: Interpretive pluralism, and ethically problematic texts
    - Problem 3: Historical and synoptic problems in Chronicles
    - Answer to the first problem: inner-biblical interpretation
        - Example: Genocide/violence texts. Deuteronomy and Joshua → Ezra–Nehemiah → Hebrews 3–4 and 1 Cor 10. Points us to a solution: Whatever else Deut 7 and Josh 11 might mean, it can't mean that God wants mostly a pile of dead Canaanites. Scripture teaches us how to read Scripture
        - Example: Weak protections for slaves in Exodus 21:2–11. Exod → Deut 15 → Lev 25 → Ruth. A process of progressive revelation that improves the treatment of vulnerable people.
    - Proposal: instead of presenting believing readers of scripture with a basket of synoptic and historical problems, Chronicles actually gives us a resource: inner-biblical interpretation as a guide for reading the Former Prophets *and* the whole Pentateuch. The Chronicler does not overwrite his sources or abrogate their authority, but provides an authoritative interpretation as a model for

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subsequent readers of scripture. **Samuel–Kings is authoritative, and the Chronicler's narrative is authoritative, *and* the Chronicler's interpretive moves have authority for us, as well.**

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    - Jonker: Chronicles as Re-forming History
- Chronicler's aims and methods: examples
  - The Chronicler does not overwrite his sources or abrogate their authority, but provides an authoritative interpretation as a model for subsequent readers of scripture. In Chronicles, this works both diachronically, as the Chronicler revises and re-presents the actual source texts, and also synchronically, as the Chronicler provides an overall reinterpretation of the grand story of the Hebrew Bible, from Adam to Cyrus, adding to it his own inspired perspective.
  - Methods
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- Preaching ideas from Chronicles
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Introduction

Well, it's a great honor to be speaking with you today, though I wish we could be doing this in person. Back in the Fall, when Dr. Schwab very kindly invited me to participate in the seminar, I had hoped that a visit to London might be possible, as I've also spoken to Dr. Searle about in the past. And I do hope that someday I'll be able to actually visit your campus and have you show me around!

My teaching is primarily in the area of the Old Testament—though I do get to teach New Testament from time to time—and my research is in the area of Chronicles and the narrative literature. Of course, some of the best-known stories in the Bible are from the Narrative Literature, and I love preaching and teaching those stories. But I've come to see that the narrative books are also an incredible resource for how we think about the outworking of God's commands in actual situations. This involves moving beyond simple "exemplarist," moralizing interpretations of stories, to complex investigation of the relationship between laws and stories, and moving between small stories and the grand story of redemption.

First thing I'm going to do is to pose for us three problems, or bundles of problems, and then offer a very quick solution to two of them. Then we'll spend the rest of the time seeing how the difficulties of the third problem are actually part of the solution to the first two, so that the complexities are a feature rather than a bug.

The first two problems are 1) *interpretive pluralism*, when good-faith readers interpret the biblical texts differently, and 2) *ethically problematic texts*, which seem to give us an imperative that is at odds with common-sense or modern moralities (not the same thing), and/or in conflict with other teachings of Scripture. The third set of problems is 3) the historiographical and synoptic issues that we find in the Book of Chronicles, which will be the main subject of our discussion today.

When we think about the first two sets of problems, interpretive pluralism and ethically problematic texts, we find that *inner-biblical interpretation* (IBI) is a resource for moving beyond naïve readings of law or narrative toward satisfactory and faithful readings. We will pick just two examples: the mandate for Canaanite genocide in Deut 7:1–6 and 20:16; and the very basic laws that protect only male slaves in Exodus 21:2–11.

For Canaanite genocide, it is easy for us to recoil at such a mandate to "kill everything that breathes," including women and children, and even livestock. I'm sure that if you've ever had a thoughtful conversation with a non-believer about the Old Testament, they have brought this up as an obstacle to accepting the Bible as a source of truth and ethics. It also seems to be at odds with Jesus's command to love our enemies (Matt 5:43–48). Yet here is

where inner-biblical interpretation, along with other interpretive keys, can help us explain this command:

- In Joshua 2, the Israelite spies encounter a Canaanite prostitute, Rahab, who puts her faith in YHWH the God of Israel and is spared along with her family. She becomes part of Israel.
- In Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13, the postexilic Yehudian community interprets and applies Deuteronomy 7:1–6, in their "Bible," as first and foremost a command against intermarriage with Canaanites and idolatry. The solution offered for Yehudian men intermarrying with people (who are here called Canaanites but are in all likelihood not descended from Canaanites of centuries past) is not killing their wives and children, but divorce and separation. (We might critically ask whether this was indeed the right decision, as God hates divorce! But at least killing "Canaanites" is not even considered as a right reading of their Scripture.)
- In the New Testament, we find several interpretations of the wilderness wanderings and the conquest of the land that treat these Old Testament stories as typologized examples, not literal examples or commands. In 1 Corinthians 10:1–13, Paul interprets the wanderings as examples of how to resist temptation; the author of Hebrews interprets the Canaanite conquest as a quest to achieve the "rest" that God promised, and that since the rest was not achieved through Joshua, the "promise of rest still stands" for us today (4:1)—in other words, the real goal was and *still is* eternal life spent with God.
- Thinking back to Deuteronomy, we now see that whatever else Deut 7 might mean, it can't mean that God wants mostly a pile of dead Canaanites.

The second example, weak protections for male slaves in Exodus 21:2–11, is the subject of a paper that I'm working on right now with a co-author, but it's well-known in the academic literature. Exodus 21 only allows that male Hebrew slaves go free, not female slaves, after seven years of slavery, which is probably better termed indentured servitude. A male slave who marries during his service can go free, but his family will not go out with him—so he will probably be forced to choose permanent indenture—not really a choice at all.

Here the inner-biblical interpretation that helps us with this problem is not just narrative application, but actual re-interpretation within the Pentateuch as it develops:

- Deuteronomy 15 clarifies and expands the law about indenture in several ways. First, instead of a fixed seven-year term for each individual slave, it applies a universal seventh-year release of slaves. Second, it clarifies that male and female slaves both go out free, and must receive a parting gift from their master. This means that families need never be separated, and that the choice to stay on with a favorable master is a true choice. Third, the universal year eliminates the need for a record of when this or that slave began his term, and puts all newly freed slaves on the market at the same time. All of these "interpretations" and expansions of Exodus 21 are favorable to slaves.
- Leviticus 25, the jubilee, may or may not have been composed after Deuteronomy 15—scholars disagree on this point. I can't elaborate on this now, but our argument is that Leviticus 25 corrects some perverse incentives created by the Deuteronomy 15 law, and thereby makes it more likely for Israelites who have fallen into poverty to find favorable indenture arrangements.
- In the book of Ruth, the character Boaz combines these provisions in the law, which appear on the surface to be incompatible practices, with ethical and legal principles

from the Levirate marriage law (Deut 25:5–10), land redemption law (Lev 25:23–28), and women's inheritance law (Num 27). Boaz's behavior is exemplary, but his legal reasoning and creative interpretation of biblical tradition are also well-regarded by the elders and the people (Ruth 4:1–12).

- Looking back now to Exodus 21 through these subsequent layers of legal development, we would not conclude that the Covenant Code provides the last word on the treatment of slaves or women, but the first word in a process of progressive revelation that improves the treatment of slaves.

Both of these examples, Canaanite genocide and Covenant Code slave protections, demonstrate that *the way that scriptures revise, interpret, and expand* earlier scripture can also be authoritative for us. This works both synchronically (taking the text as a grand narrative whole in its final form, as with the Canaanite genocide example) and diachronically (seeing the development of texts and traditions through stages of editing and revision, as in the slavery example).

Now we may come back to Chronicles. Most scholars agree that the Chronicler wrote with the books of Samuel and Kings as a main source, in something like their final form.[1] He supplements, changes and omits elements of these sources, or *Vorlagen*, to adapt the monarchic narratives of united Israel and the kingdom of Judah for different purposes. As you may know or imagine, this creates some tensions and contradictions in the Bible. I suggest that instead of presenting believing readers of scripture with a basket of synoptic and historical problems, Chronicles actually gives us a resource: inner-biblical interpretation as a guide for reading the Former Prophets *and* the whole Pentateuch. The Chronicler does not overwrite his sources or abrogate their authority, but provides an authoritative interpretation as a model for subsequent readers of scripture. **In short, Samuel–Kings is authoritative, and the Chronicler's narrative is authoritative, *and* the Chronicler's interpretive moves have authority for us, as well.**

Chronicles: The Cinderella of Biblical Scholarship

What I'd like to do now is to provide a very brief overview of developments in broader scholarship on Chronicles, which has seen a revolution in the last 50 years. The overall observation is that the focus has shifted away from the *events* the Chronicler purports to describe and their historical reliability, towards the Chronicler's own setting in the late Persian or early Hellenistic period.

Pre-19th-Century

Prior to the 19th century, traditional Jewish and Christian interpreters regarded Chronicles as authoritative scripture, and written mostly by Ezra. But there was not a lot of

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[1] My view is that the Deuteronomistic History developed in several stages between the late monarchy and the early Persian period, and that Chronicles is the product of a single author or school in the middle to late fourth century b.c.e. The present thesis is not dependent to any significant degree on the precise dating of either the Deuteronomistic History or Chronicles, but rather on the consensus position that the Chronicles is later than Samuel and Kings and uses those books as its source. We must acknowledge, of course, the very important "scholarly heresy": the theory of a common source for Samuel–Kings and Chronicles. This view is championed notably by Raymond F. Person, Jr., *The Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral World* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), and A. Graeme Auld, *Life in Kings: Reshaping the Royal Story in the Hebrew Bible* (AIL, 30; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

special attention paid to Chronicles, since it was regarded mainly as a source of stories and speeches that were not found in Samuel–Kings. In fact, the name of the book in the LXX is "Book of the Things Left Over," as in, left out of Samuel–Kings.

19th- and early 20th-century developments

The 19th century saw at least two currents in biblical research that led to a diminishment of Chronicles in critical interpreters' estimations. First, there was a desire to get back to "the history behind the text," to establish what really happened behind the presentations of miracles and divine causation in narratives. Second, there was the move to place the moral teachings of the Prophets *earlier* than the Law, and to relegate the Law as found in the Pentateuch to a later, morally stagnant stage in the development of Israel's religion. While many scholars are part of these moves, one easy way to see this is through the work of Julius Wellhausen on Chronicles, and how he maps Chronicles onto his well-known Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP theory of Pentateuchal development). (And we'll do this with the aid of Isaac Kalimi's excellent 1997 article, "Was the Chronicler a Historian?")[2]

Kalimi[3] writes about Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (1878, 1883): "Wellhausen defined the nature of the Book of Chronicles as midrash, arguing, '...whether one says Chronicles or Midrash of the Book of Kings is on the whole a matter of perfect indifference; they are children of the same mother, and indistinguishable in spirit and language, while on the other hand the portions which have been retained verbatim from the canonical Book of Kings at once betray themselves in both respects.'"

Wellhausen further writes: "'Midrash is the consequence of the conservation of all the relics of antiquity, a wholly peculiar artificial reawakening of dry bones, artificial especially by literary means, as is shown by the preference for lists of names and numbers….Like ivy it overspreads the dead trunk with extraneous life, blending old and new in a strange combination.'"[4]

Kalimi explains (76): "The purpose of Wellhausen and his school is clear: to destroy the credibility of Chronicles as a historical source for pre-exilic Israelite history. They tried to show that Chr was dependent only on the earlier canonical books and treated them in a midrashic way, especially against the background of the priestly code's (P) appearance in the postexilic era. Chr also fabricated stories about the Israelite monarchy based on his fantasy."

Kalimi (76): Wellhausen and those who followed him were operating with a conception of the historian's task set forth by Ranke in the 1830s: to show "wie es eigentlich gewesen" ("how it really was"). For this end, Chronicles was considered worthless. For example, C.C. Torrey (1863–1956) — "No fact of Old Testament criticism is more firmly established than this; that the Chronicler as a historian is thoroughly untrustworthy. He distorts facts deliberately and habitually; invents chapter after chapter with the greatest freedom, and what is most dangerous of all, his history is not written for its own sake, but in the interest of an extremely one-sided theory."[5]

Wellhausen's association of Chronicles with the Priestly author in his Documentary Hypothesis carries with it the assumption that earlier Israelite religions, reflected in the J and

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[2] Isaac Kalimi, "Was the Chronicler a Historian?" in *The Chronicler as Historian* (ed. M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund and Steven L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 73–89.

[3] Kalimi, "Was the Chronicler a Historian," 74.

[4] Kalimi "Was the Chronicler a Historian," 75.

[5] Sara Japhet, "The Historical Reliability of Chronicles: The History of the Problem and its Place in Biblical Research." *JSOT* 3 (1985): 83–107 [88].

E sources of the Pentateuch, and also in sayings in the Prophets that were considered "authentic" by critical scholars, was more natural and connected to God ("romanticism"). As religion became more centralized in the late monarchic, exilic and post-exilic periods, the religion of the Israelites became more degenerate, stagnant, less personal, more text-based, more elite, and—this is the key—more legalistic. The "degeneracy" of post-exilic Judaism, which is governed by the religious leaders, becomes a foil for Jesus, who liberated us from Judaism and the curse of the Law. Christianity, and specifically liberal German Lutheranism, becomes the final element in a progression of religious development (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*), which leads us to the core religious and ethical principles that are reflected in the ancient, faith-based, personal family religion of Abraham.

One can see the weaknesses in each of these presuppositions, and the mistaken views of how God spoke in the Old Testament, how Jesus fulfilled the Law, and the relationship of Christians to the Law. We can also see seeds of antisemitism (legalistic Judaism as a foil for a de-Judaized "Jesus" and Lutheran Christianity), which took root in Germany with disastrous results in the 20th century. The story of the Western biblical scholarship before and after the Holocaust is another discussion for another time; it has implications for just about every area of OT and NT scholarship.

The point for now is: Chronicles was minimized in its importance, because it was thought to hold very little value for reconstructing the history of pre-exilic Israel, and because it was closely associated with the late, degenerate Priestly author.

Post-WWII (1950s-1970s): Several Developments

A few post-War developments should be noted. Based on archaeology, scholars became less convinced that Genesis through Kings could be relied upon to reconstruct Israel's history in detail. At the same time, some key discoveries seemed to confirm details that are found only in Chronicles. Thus, the "Primary History" comes down a few notches, and Chronicles is bumped up one or two notches.[6]

Also, the "linguistic turn"[7] in literature and philosophy made its way into biblical studies. Looking back to the quotation from Torrey (above), who is critical of the Chronicler because "his history is not written for its own sake, but in the interest of an extremely one-sided theory"[8]—Western scholarship was coming to grips with the notion that *no* history is written "for its own sake," but with some purpose in mind.

The focus therefore shifted from the reality of the events described in the texts, to what the authors may have tried to *accomplish through producing the texts*. The text of Chronicles itself, then, becomes a new object of study, but with respect to what it can tell us about the post-exilic period when it was produced, rather than the period of the monarchy that it purports to describe.

The archaeological developments and this new understanding of historiography put Chronicles on something more of an equal footing with Samuel and Kings: we have one ideological "history" reworking another "history."

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[6] Japhet, "Historical Reliability of Chronicles," 94.

[7] See Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[8] Japhet, "Historical Reliability of Chronicles," 88.

Finally, there was the uncoupling of the authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah, which set the stage for Chronicles to be considered as an independent work.[9]

Chronicles Scholarship: 1970s to the present

As we come to the 1970s to the present, there is an explosion of academic discussion of Chronicles. Here I will highlight just a few key developments, with the aid of some works by Louis Jonker, who happens to be my *Doktorvater*. [10]

Jonker writes: "The primary interest is therefore no longer the positivistic one to establish the 'hard facts' of history by means of this book, but rather to determine the rhetorical thrust of this work, which creatively made use of earlier sources within the socio-political and socio-religious conditions in Jerusalem during the late Persian period. Many scholars therefore indicate that the 'Cinderella' of biblical scholarship has emerged from her neglected status to become a shining princess."[11]

If the Chronicler is not a positivistic historian, then what is he, and how should we characterize his work? Here are a few sorts of proposals that are debated.

First, we have Thomas Willi, in 1972, suggesting that we regard the Chronicler as **Exegete**.[12] Willi "understands the Chronicles to be a commentary on or exegesis of the older sources, the Deuteronomistic History in particular. The origin of the Chronicles, according to Willi, was prompted by the late post-exilic demand of the old sources to be interpreted, especially since the final proclamation of the Persian province Yehud. A new phase was then entered where the preservation of the older sources no longer took place by means of expansion and continuation ('... durch Fortführen und Fortschreiben ...'), but rather by means of retelling, exposition and studying of Scriptures ('... durch nacherzählen, Auslegen, Forschen in der Sennit') (Willi 1995, p. 35)."[13] What should we make of Willi's proposal? Hugh Williamson rightly observes that Chronicles must be *more than* Exegesis, because it contains a great deal of *Sondergut* material (unique, not drawn from Samuel–Kings).[14]

Other debates have placed the Chronicler somewhere on a spectrum of emphasis between "**Theologian**" and "**Historian**," though of course he should be regarded as both. On the "Theologian" side, scholars such as Ackroyd, Coggins, and Johnstone "see in these books an attempt at presenting a comprehensive understanding of the Jewish religious community, of its theology, and of the meaning of its varied traditions. These books understand history not merely as human activity, but as the realm where God becomes involved with human activity. The Chronicler's ideological presuppositions therefore guided his description of history."[15] On the "Historian" side, Kalimi and Hoglund emphasize the fact that even though Chronicles doesn't necessarily fit all the criteria of "modern historiography," nevertheless

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[9] Sara Japhet, "The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah Investigated Anew," *VT* 18 (1968): 330–71. Since then, Talshir (1988), Polzin (1976) and Blenkinsopp (1988) have held to common authorship, whereas Williamson (1977), Throntveit (1982), Knoppers and Klein have argued against it.

[10] Louis C. Jonker, "Reforming History: The Hermeneutical Significance of Chronicles," *VT* 57 (2007): 21-44.

[11] Louis C. Jonker, "From Paraleipomenon to Early Reader: The Implications of Recent Chronicles Studies for Pentateuchal Criticism," in Christl M. Maier, ed., *Congress Volume Munich 2013* (VTSupp 163; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 217–54.

[12] Thomas Willi, *Die Chronik als Auslegung: Undersuchungen zur literarischen Gestaltung der historischen Überlieferung Israels* (FRLANT 106; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972).

[13] Jonker, "Reforming History," 22.

[14] Williamson, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, New Century Bible Commentary, 21-22.

[15] Jonker, "Reforming History," 23.

"history" is what the Chronicler thought of himself as doing. Hoglund makes comparisons to comprehensive, over-arching *historiai* from the Greek world.[16]

A very important characterization of Chronicles, which I think is quite apt, is given by Gary Knoppers (who has just passed away in 2018, sadly). Knoppers suggests that Chronicles can be understood, among other things, as **Re-written Bible**, not unlike *Jubilees* or other Second Temple works: "Such works take as a point of departure an earlier biblical book or collection of books. They select from, interpret, comment on, and expand portions of a particular biblical book (or group of books), addressing obscurities, contradictions, and other perceived problems with the source text. Rewritten Bible texts normally emulate the form of the source text and follow it sequentially. The major intention of such works seems to be to provide a coherent interpretive reading of the biblical text."[17]

When we account for the canonical bounds that include Chronicles and exclude Jubilees from the authoritative scriptures, then whether we regard Chronicles as "Exegesis" or as "Rewritten Bible" (or both), what we have is Chronicles as inner-biblical interpretation, an authoritative interpretation of earlier scripture. But beyond just the narrative literature, Knoppers shows just how comprehensive is the Chronicler's command of earlier scripture: "…The Chronicler's dependence upon older writings is not confined to his selective reuse of Joshua and Samuel-Kings. His work is also informed by a variety of earlier biblical texts. Citations from or allusions to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the Psalms appear in Chronicles. Moreover, what are apparently discrete sources in the Pentateuch—'D' (the Deuteronomic document) and 'P' (the Priestly texts found in portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers)—are occasionally harmonized in Chronicles. The author's control over a wide variety of earlier biblical writings is impressive and was recognized already in antiquity. The author's erudition led St. Jerome to comment, 'The book of Chronicles, the epitome [ἐπιτομή] of the old dispensation, is of such quality and importance that if anyone wishes to claim knowledge of the Scriptures apart from it, he should laugh at himself' (*Epist.* 53.8)."[18]

The Chronicler's Inspired Interpretation: Aims and Methods

This takes us back to our earlier idea: *the way that scriptures revise, interpret, and expand* earlier scripture can also be authoritative for us. Here is where the Chronicler's method of interpretation gives us a resource: inner-biblical interpretation as a guide for reading the Former Prophets *and* the whole Pentateuch. Again, the Chronicler does not overwrite his sources or abrogate their authority, but provides an authoritative interpretation as a model for subsequent readers of scripture. In Chronicles, this works both diachronically, as the Chronicler revises and re-presents the actual source texts, and also synchronically, as the Chronicler provides an overall reinterpretation of the grand story of the Hebrew Bible, from Adam to Cyrus, adding to it his own inspired perspective.

So now let's turn to examples of what the Chronicler is doing, and how he does it—his aims and his methods.

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[16] Jonker, "Reforming History," 23.

[17] Gary N. Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1-9: A New Translation and Commentary* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 130.

[18] Knoppers, *1 Chronicles 1–9*, 68.

Methods

The Chronicler is working with a fixed story, and, generally speaking, a grand story that his audience already knows. He has a few options when it comes to his re-presentation:

- On the one hand, he sometimes copies verbatim from his sources (*Vorlagen*).
- On the other hand, he composes his own material, or adopts from sources we do not possess (*Sondergut*).

  In between those ends of the spectrum:
- He supplements and reworks material from his sources, typically for the purpose of providing historical or theological explanations. In a few places, he summarizes material that he expects his audience to know from elsewhere. One example is the truncated account of the words of Hezekiah and Isaiah in the Sennacherib crisis (2 Chr 32 compared to 2 Kgs 18–19 and Isa 36–37).
- The Chronicler also consciously excludes material from the sources. A perfect example is how he jumps in 1 Chronicles 20 from 2 Sam 11:1, completely over the Bathsheba incident, to 2 Sam 12:26–31, and then jumps again completely past all of David's troubles in 2 Samuel 13 to 21:17, up to the account of David's mighty men—in the span of just four verses in Chronicles! These stories are excluded so that David is presented in a more positive light.

Aims: Reforming History for "All Israel"

Now we'll think about the Chronicler's aims in his own time. Jonker (2007 and 2016[19]) has aptly termed Chronicles, **Reforming History**. The double meaning is "*history* that is itself re-formed," that is, revised and re-presented, and "history that *re-forms* the community." "The Chronicler rephrases and reinterprets his *Vorlage*….I have shown that this mode of dealing with traditions of the past stood in the service of identity construction in the changed and changing circumstances of the late Persian province of Yehud."[20] The sort of scholarship in this vein, including my own, tends to see the Chronicler as negotiating Jerusalem's place in its region and in the Persian empire, and as balancing various competing interests in its sphere of influence—though appealing to Israel's distant past.

We are going to move through a few examples very quickly, but I will provide a bibliography for you if you wish to read more—and I'm putting my own stamp on this section by including some examples from my own research. I can unpack any of these for us in the Q&A, depending on what stands out to you.

First, we see that the Chronicler appears to be balancing various tribal identities in his sphere, and the memory of the kings from the tribe of Judah, following David. If you look back over the stories of Samuel and Kings, we see that the relationships between the tribes, especially between the Northern Israelite tribes, the largest Southern tribe of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin in the middle, there is a lot of bad blood between David and Saul, and between David's descendants and the other tribes. The Chronicler was also facing the fact that he believed in 4th century that Jerusalem was the proper place for sacrifice, but people of other tribal identities were worshiping YHWH in other locations, like Gibeon, Bethel, and Mount Gerizim.

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[19] Louis C. Jonker, Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-Levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud (FAT 106; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[20] Jonker, "Reforming History," 41.

He therefore has to frame these two symbols, the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem cult, as belonging equally to Benjamin and the Northern tribes, not just to Judah and the Levites. He tries to make peace rhetorically in several ways:

- He adds nine chapters of genealogical prologue that define "All Israel" in relation to one another. Note that Judah is first, Levi is right in the middle, and Benjamin is last. These are the three main constituent tribal identities residing in and around Jerusalem in the Persian period.
- Even though the Chronicler regards the Northern Israelite kings as illegitimate, he adds stories about good Israelites, including the "Good Samaritans" in 2 Chr 28, and those who came to Hezekiah's Passover in 2 Chr 30. [21]
- As noted, the Chronicler excludes a lot of bad stuff about David, especially his conflicts with Saul's house (remember Saul is from the tribe of Benjamin).
- Very important: the Chronicler supplements and re-writes 2 Samuel 24, the sin of the census, to present this story as the discovery of the future site of the Temple (no such association is found in Samuel–Kings). The Temple will sit on the border between Judah and Benjamin, and so it belongs equally to these tribes.
- Finally, we see that the Chronicler presents the Davidic kings as successful when they support the Jerusalem cult. In essence, they are a means to an end. This means that faithful Yehudians who wish to follow the Chronicler's message need not be super excited about memories of the Davidic kings, but can support the cult. [22]
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So, the Chronicler is mediating between the tribal identities, for the sake of the Jerusalem cult.

Second, some scholars have observed that the Chronicler is mediating between the Zadoqite priests and the non-priestly Levites. Other texts, such as Ezek 44:10–31, give evidence of conflicts within the temple hierarchy, between the priests who had direct oversight of the altar, and the Levites who controlled the tithes, distribution of sacrificial meats, and access to the sanctuary. While some try to place the Chronicler on one side or the other of this conflict, I see his approach as balancing these two interests. In the genealogical prologue, 1 Chr 6 traces the lineage of the priests from Levi down to the exile, with Zadoq as the center of the chiasm. On the other hand, 2 Chr 29:34 and 30:3 contain a seemingly unnecessary "dig" at the priests in Hezekiah's day, who are said to be not as conscientious as the Levites in ritually purifying themselves. In the final assessment, 1 Chr 23–26 provides in David's preparations for the temple a detailed duty roster, outlining the essential services of the clans of both priests and other Levites.[23]

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[21] See, for example, Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 71–101.

[22] Benjamin D. Giffone, *'Sit At My Right Hand': The Chronicler's Portrait of the Tribe of Benjamin in the Social Context of Yehud*, LHBOTS 628. (London/New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), especially 207–228.

[23] Gary N. Knoppers, "Hierodules, Priests, or Janitors? The Levites in Chronicles and the History of the Israelite Priesthood," *JBL* 118 (1999): 49–72; John W. Wright, "'Those Doing the Work for the Service in the House of the Lord': 1 Chronicles 23:6–24:31 and the Socio-Historical Context for the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem in the Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Period," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, eds. Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 361–84. See also the discussion in Louis C. Jonker, *Defining All-Israel in Chronicles: Multi-levelled Identity Negotiation in Late Persian-Period Yehud*, FAT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 106–113; Jaeyoung Jeon, "The Priestly Tent of Meeting in Chronicles: Pro-Priestly or Anti-Priestly?" *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 18.7: 1–15 (DOI:10.5508/jhs.2018.v18.a7); Benjamin D. Giffone, "Atonement, Sacred Space and Ritual Time: The

Third, we can point to the Chronicler's attempt at mediating between both so-called Deuteronomistic and Priestly flavors of *torah* that had now come together in something close to the received Pentateuch.[24] This is the subject of two articles and my current book project, so I could say a lot about this! But here is the essential idea. Joshua–Kings seem to be composed with the supposition that the "Law of Moses" by which the characters' actions can be judged is contained in the book of Deuteronomy; thus these books with Deuteronomy are sometimes called the "Deuteronomistic History." As we noted when we saw Wellhausen, the Chronicler is very keen to rework the characters' actions with the presumption that the so-called Priestly material of the Pentateuch, not just Deuteronomy, is also Law. Here are just a few examples of this:

- For the Deuteronomistic Historian, the key central location for sacrifice is Jerusalem; unlike the Priestly writer, he is not so concerned about the tent of meeting. The Chronicler is both Deuteronomistic and Priestly. When David brings the ark to Jerusalem, the Chronicler is careful to add to the 2 Samuel 6 story the detail that the tent of meeting remained at Gibeon during this time, and David made provisions for it (1 Chr 16). This also explains why the Chronicler is not ashamed that Solomon sacrificed at Gibeon (2 Chr 1 compared to 1 Kgs 3).
- In the Deuteronomistic accounts of David's sin of the census (2 Sam 24) and Solomon's consecration of the temple (2 Chr 6–7), there is no mention made of fire from heaven coming down to consume the sacrifice and validate the location. This is a detail found in the Priestly material of the Pentateuch: fire from heaven consumes Aaron's first sacrifice and validates him has priest (Lev 9:24). The Chronicler adds the detail of "fire from heaven" consuming both the sacrifice of David on Ornan's threshing floor (1 Chr 21:26), and the sacrifice of Solomon in the new temple (2 Chr 7:1).
- Finally, we can note that 2 Chronicles 36:14–23, the conclusion to the book, adds to the exilic conclusion of Kings the hopeful proclamation by Cyrus that the exiles are to return. The Chronicler frames this conclusion as part of YHWH's plan all along, by appealing to the threat/promise in Leviticus 26 that the exile would last as long as the number of sabbath years that the people had failed to observe in the land. Thus the Chronicler layers a "Priestly" interpretation onto a "Deuteronomistic" presentation of Israel's story.

Thus, we see, as Knoppers noted before, that the Chronicler is providing a comprehensive interpretation of Israel's story that is based in *his Bible*, that is, the authoritative texts that are available to him. We can learn from the Chronicler's biblical interpretation, which we would call "inner-biblical interpretation."

Chronicler as Reader of Priestly Pentateuchal Narrative." In Louis Jonker and Jaeyoung Jeon, eds., *Chronicles and the Priestly Literature* (BZAW series; de Gruyter), forthcoming.

[24] Ehud Ben Zvi, "Are There Any Bridges Out There? How Wide Was the Conceptual Gap Between the Deuteronomistic History and Chronicles?" in *Community Identity in Judean Historiography: Biblical and Comparative Perspectives,* eds. Gary N. Knoppers and Kenneth A Ristau (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 59–86; Gary N. Knoppers, "The Relationship of the Deuteronomistic History to Chronicles: Was the Chronicler a Deuteronomist?" in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010,* VTSup 148, ed. Martti Nissinen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 307–341; Louis C. Jonker, "Was the Chronicler More Deuteronomic Than the Deuteronomist? Explorations into the Chronicler's Relationship with Deuteronomic Legal Traditions," *SJOT* 27 (2013): 191–203; Benjamin D. Giffone, "According to Which 'Law of Moses'? Cult Centralization in Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles," *VT* 67 (2017): 432–447.

Doing Theology and Exegesis with the Chronicler

Now I'd like to give you just a basic map for how we can do theology and exegesis with the Chronicler, and how to even incorporate the Chronicler's unique perspective into teaching and preaching (and these are examples that I've used myself!).

Aside from any number of other interpretive tools we would apply to the Old Testament more generally, with Chronicles we have an additional dimension. First, we can exegete the story itself: what does the text of Chronicles say, apart from any rewriting of its sources? Second, we can *preach the differences and the Chronicler's interpretive move*, which can in fact be exemplary for us!

First example: 2 Chronicles 28 and the story of the Good Samarians. Wicked King Ahaz is punished for his faithlessness to God, and the Judahites lose a major battle to the Northern Israelites. But the Israelites respond to the word of a prophet who tells them that they are no better than these sinful Judahites, and they themselves need to repent, and to show compassion to their separated Judahite brethren. This is a story that is not at all found in Kings, but includes allusions to the book of Isaiah and other biblical texts, and represents the Chronicler's outreach in hope to the Northern Israelites of his day. If the story of compassionate Samarians dressing victims' wounds, putting them on donkeys, and taking them home as far as Jericho sounds familiar, that's because Jesus's parable alludes to this story! In the Old Testament, the unity of Judahites, Israelites and eventually Gentiles corresponds to the inclusion of Samaritans (descendants of Israelites) and Gentiles in the New Testament people of God.

A second example would be 1 Chronicles 21, which, as we've already seen, reworks and supplements 2 Samuel 24. In this passage, you we can highlight the message of repentance. In "preaching the Chronicler's interpretive move," you can show how God in his sovereignty is connecting David's repentance to the future temple, which is not part of the Samuel–Kings story. This is the only sin of David that is recorded in Chronicles, because the future temple site must be a place of repentance—and so its founding father needs to sin and repent!

A third example would be 2 Chronicles 13, King Abijah (or Abijam) of Judah does battle with Jeroboam of Israel. Here the story is unique to Chronicles, and the presentation of Abijah as a faithful king is at odds with the negative presentation in 1 Kings 15. In addition to preaching the core message of the Chronicler's text, the gap between the Kings and Chronicles presentations of Abijah shows us that God can use anybody, even relatively faithless leaders, for his purposes.

Finally, we can look at the Chronicler's complete re-writing of the details of Hezekiah's temple reforms and acts of repentance (2 Chr 29–31). In an article that I have coming out later this year examining the Chronicler's conception of atonement, I argue that the Chronicler is elaborating on the story of national repentance, and applying specific provisions of Lev 8–10; 16; and Numbers 9, the "delayed Passover" provisions, in a rather creative way. The payoff is that, even though God cares very much how he is worshiped, he wants his people to come to him in repentance sooner rather than later, and that his rules should always be interpreted in the way that is most favorable to people coming before him in worship without delays. I actually preached on this last year in the early stages of the lockdowns, as (I hope) a form of assurance that wants us to honor and come before him, even in exceptional circumstances (such as worshipping together "online") in the midst of uncertainty.

Conclusion

Well, I've definitely put a lot of things on the table, and I'm interested in your questions and comments. Thanks so much for your attention!

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