

RBL 06/2021



Walter Bührer, ed.

Schriftgelehrte Fortschreibungs- und Auslegungsprozesse: Textarbeit im Pentateuch, in Qumran, Ägypten und Mesopotamien

Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2/108

Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019. Pp. viii + 287. Paper.
\$104.00. ISBN 9783161567384.

Markus Zehnder

Ansgar Teologiske Høgskole; ETF Leuven; Talbot School of Theology

This volume contains papers presented at a conference held at the “Bochumer Autorenkonferenz” in February 2018. Eight papers are written in German, two in English. Two deal with extrabiblical material *stricto sensu* (Mesopotamian and Egyptian), three with various kinds of *Fortschreibungen* in the Second Temple Period, and four with possible cases of *Fortschreibungen* in the Pentateuch.

The first paper is Walter Bührer’s “Schriftgelehrte Fortschreibungs- und Auslegungsprozesse: Ein Vorschlag und zugleich eine Einführung in den vorliegenden Band.” The second half of this paper provides a helpful summary of the remaining contributions. In the first half, Bührer presents his own view of the topics under discussion. He clarifies the terms *Fortschreibung* and *Auslegung* and explains how they are related to but also different from what is generally called *innerbiblische Schriftauslegung* (“innerbiblical exegesis”). He defines *Fortschreibung* as covering the whole spectrum from copying, isolated changes (glosses or punctual additions), rewriting, redactional layers added to whole books or larger book collections, commentaries detached from the original text, rewritten Bible texts, and even translations. These phenomena need to be analyzed in terms of their exegetical techniques, hermeneutical presuppositions, and theological intentions. In particular, one must pay attention to how the hypertexts deal with the hypotext, addressing the following set of questions: Is the new text placed alongside the hypotext, inscribed into it, or transmitted in isolation from it? Is the hypotext quoted or merely alluded to? Is the hypotext treated as an authority that the hypertext wants to participate in, or shall it be abrogated, updated,

or interpreted by the hypertext? Does the focus lie on the hypotext or the hypertext? Does the modification relate to the near context only, to a larger section of the book, to a whole book, or even to a series of books?

These are, in my view, useful categories that may help to further the analysis of both biblical and extrabiblical texts. Also positive is the attempt to include discussions of Mesopotamian and Egyptian literature in order to provide a critical corrective to source-critical and redaction-critical hypotheses prevalent in Old Testament scholarship. Unfortunately, as we shall see below, this goal is achieved only very tangentially. Further, some of the propositions stated by Bühner seem open to criticism. Among these is the claim that, since the analysis of the Qumran texts, the separation between textual criticism and literary (or source) criticism has become obsolete. While the two endeavors do partially overlap, the differences in methods, criteria, and goals do not suggest a blurring of the lines between the two disciplines to the degree that Bühner proposes.

The second paper is by Eckart Frahm: “Textual Traditions in First Millennium BCE Mesopotamia between Faithful Reproduction, Commentary, and New Creation.” In contradistinction to the other contributions, one of Frahm’s guiding focuses is the “canon question.” He observes that around the turn of the first millennium there was the notion of a “corpus of serialized, somewhat fixed, and authoritative texts” in Mesopotamia, with the concomitant emergence of commentaries that refer to but are clearly separate from these texts. However, he also observes that such a canon only existed in some very restricted genres. Overall, the situation looks complex, with literary (re)production covering “a spectrum ranging from faithful reproduction to translation, glossing, commentary, the production of extracts, compilation, adaptation, abandonment, forgery, and the creation of largely new texts.” Frahm rightly points out that, as opposed to the situation in biblical studies, Assyriologists and Egyptologists have the advantage of having “access to significant numbers of manuscripts representing different stages of a work and originating from different points in time and different places,” which enables them not to rely on “purely theoretical considerations,” with the latter being, unfortunately, still characteristic of much of what is done in the field of biblical studies (especially in the domain of higher criticism).

The main body of Frahm’s article is devoted to a survey of the various genres of Mesopotamian literature. He begins with “literary texts.” Some of these texts were transmitted without any changes over long periods of time, for example, *Enuma Elish*, which became a quasi-canonical text. The same can be said for some wisdom texts, among them the Babylonian Theodicy, which also generated the production of commentaries. In other instances, however, there were greater degrees of variability in the transmission of the texts, as in the case of the Epic of Gilgamesh or the Dialogue of Pessimism. The second genre is “literary prophecies,” *vaticinia ex eventu* from different periods. At least in one case, the so-called Dynastic Chronicle, there are clear signs of *Fortschreibung*, with *literati* in the early Hellenistic period adding “historical events that were relevant for their own times.” The third group is “liturgical texts,” used in the temple cult to address gods and goddesses.

Some of them are transmitted in a stable form, while others are more fluid. The fourth group is “rituals and incantations.” Some of them, such as Maqlu and Shurpu, “were faithfully copied in largely identical version throughout Babylonia and Assyria,” while in other cases the textual tradition was much more fluid. The fifth genre is “divinatory texts,” most of them belonging to lengthy series. In many cases, “scribes would produce ‘extracts’ ... of the serialized compendia.” In this area, one can, according to Frahm, again identify a “canon”; on the other hand, it can also be observed that not all series were stable and unchangeable. The next genres are “medical texts” and “cultic texts and cultic commentaries,” with the description of parts of the Akitu ritual being the most famous example for the latter. After a look at “astronomical and mathematical texts” and “lexical texts,” Frahm moves on to “law collections.” Only the Laws of Hammurabi were broadly received and replicated in the first millennium. There was also the production of numerous international and succession treaties, but they were “as a rule, not meant for long-term scribal transmission and scholarly study.” Frahm rightly points to a major difference between biblical and Mesopotamian law collections: the former are presented as divine in origin; this is not the case with the latter. The final genre is “royal inscriptions and historiographical texts.” Frahm points out that in many cases scribes would routinely produce several texts “celebrating the king’s achievements, normally adding reports of his later deeds to accounts of earlier ones, with the latter often shortened or otherwise modified in the process.” Earlier texts with historical significance were faithfully copied but in some cases also adjusted to the new intellectual environment. In his concluding remarks, Frahm stresses the diversity of ways in which older textual traditions were handled, but also the fact that some kind of a notion of canon did in fact exist.

The wide spectrum of literature covered in Frahm’s paper and his attempts to relate his observations to the study of the Bible are commendable. However, there is nothing more provided in this regard than what could be called “mapping the field.” The bulk of his observations point to the enormous differences between Mesopotamian and biblical literature. There are, nevertheless, a number of findings presented that are worth exploring further in the context of biblical studies, for example the lack of *Fortschreibung* in the case of such a revered text as the Laws of Hammurabi, which stands in stark contrast to the ways in which many biblical scholars conceive of the relationship between the various biblical law collections.

In the first part of “Intertextualität, Interferenz und Kommentar als Parameter einer dynamischen Textüberlieferung im Alten Ägypten,” Andreas Henning Pries outlines some general tendencies characteristic of ancient Egyptian textual transmission. As in the case of the Mesopotamian material, Pries introduces the reader to a complex variety of how *Fortschreibung* took place in ancient Egypt. Reworkings of various types were frequent, including the combination of pieces of different traditional texts into new compilations, sometimes even across the boundaries of different genres. Pries also mentions that verbatim quotations were all but nonexistent. The same goes for detached commentaries; rather, comments were inserted as glosses into the received text. The ways in which Egyptian literature was composed and transmitted do usually not allow

distinguishing between original author, compiler, commentator, and *auctor*. The authority of a text is related to its age and the authority of the person who transmits it. Authoritative texts were claimed to be transmitted faithfully in their original wording, which would suggest that *Fortschreibungen* needed to be made transparent as such; this was, however, not the case. According to Pries, even in instances where a larger number of copies of a text are available, the specific circumstances of its transmission remain still in the dark. The situation is even worse if there is only one or a handful of extant copies; as opposed to the situation in critical biblical scholarship, there is ongoing dissent among Egyptologists about the usefulness of the methods and criteria normally used in textual criticism and literary criticism. Pries's comments on *Interferenz*, a phenomenon that is related to the overlap of two or more variants of a tradition, seem to be relevant for the interpretation of narrative material in the Bible. He does, however, not pursue this topic further.

The second part of Pries's piece consists of two case studies. The first two looks at the Story of Sinuhe. The story is attested in a good number of copies from about eight centuries. The transmission process is rather complex: in the Middle Kingdom, the text is still quite fluid; in the New Kingdom, there is more stability on the one hand, but on the other hand new readings and linguistic reworking finally result in a new text. Intertextual relations with the Teaching of Amenemhet play an important role in the process. The second case study looks at *wissensbezogene Literatur*, to be found in the cultic-religious domain. Glosses, corrections, additions, and alternative readings can all be found here, as well as explicit quotations. Interpolations are frequent, while *Fortschreibungen* in the guise of para- and metatexts are not. Also the creation of abbreviated versions and the use of parts of a text in other contexts are attested. Modifications caused by text-external factors and others caused by text-internal factors can go hand in hand. There is no evaluation of the observations adduced, nor is there any link between them and the biblical material that might help to further its understanding. As in the case of the Mesopotamian material, a number of the observations collected in this paper are worth further investigation for their potential to elucidate possible processes of *Fortschreibung* in the Bible, whether by way of parallel or—in many cases more likely—contrast.

In Peter Porzig's "Textgeleitete und gruppenbezogene Auslegungsprozesse in den Handschriften von Qumran," After a short introduction Porzig presents a study of four different types of Qumranic texts. He begins with an example of Reworked Pentateuch, 4Q158. The passage that is investigated contains an extended reference to Gen 32, in the context of an interpretation of Exod 4. The changes to the Masoretic version of Gen 32 are minimal and consist mainly of applying a somewhat comprehensive blessing to Jacob already in the context of the encounter at the River Jabbok, using standard biblical blessing formulas. There are some claims here that may be seen as problematic. One is Porzig's assertion that the assumptions of literary criticism and redaction criticism can be splendidly verified in such texts. Specific evidence would need to be adduced to make this sweeping claim more plausible. Porzig repeats his assertion in the context of the next

section, dealing with biblical manuscripts, choosing 4Q51 as an example. Fragment X, containing a variant of 1 Sam 10–11, shows how a small story about the evil intentions and deeds of Nahash were inserted into the report, probably as a consequence of exegetical processes. The following section deals with pseudo-prophetic texts, focusing on Pseudo-Ezekiel. Porzig convincingly shows that Ezek 37 functions as the hypotext, which is abbreviated and given an interpreting frame in the hypertext. The latter narrows the perspective on a pious circle to which the text is now applied. It would be very interesting to pursue this analysis further and investigate in what ways it might help to understand supposed cases of inner-biblical “rewriting” or other literary critical issues. Porzig does offer some methodological reflections about this transfer; however, they are not developed in any detail, and more investigation is needed. Why he concludes that omissions and changes should be considered only in absolute exceptional circumstances when processes of rewriting are studied, is not clear. The last category investigated are sectarian documents. Porzig offers a lengthy and overall convincing comparison of 1QS and 4QS^d, demonstrating that the overflow passages in 1QS are secondary additions, rather than the shorter version of 4QS being the result of secondary omissions. On the way, he makes valuable general observations: historical arguments must be developed from the texts themselves and cannot be imposed on them externally without sufficient evidence; the contrast between an ingenious, sophisticated author versus a rather boorish redactor is a gross oversimplification. Porzig ends with some important summary observations. First, the more a text was seen as authoritative, the narrower is the width of textual modifications. Second, redactors who added material did not intend to add something new but only to bring to the fore what was already implicit (or hidden) in the text.

In “Die prä-samaritanischen Fortschreibungen,” Stefan Schorch investigates the *Fortschreibungen* in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the pre-Samaritan *Fortschreibungen* in biblical manuscripts from Qumran. He distinguishes between the categories of harmonization and expansion. Focusing on the latter, he observes that pre-Samaritan additions normally repeat other pentateuchal passages without inserting formulations of their own. Schorch further distinguishes between three types of *Fortschreibungen*: addition of inner-textual elements in the same passage (e.g., the plague narratives in Exod 7–11); addition of elements found in parallel texts (e.g., elements taken from Deuteronomy inserted into the parallel reports in Exodus and Numbers); addition of text-compilations, again taken from Deuteronomy (but in this case from more than one passage) and inserted into reports in Exodus. One example of the latter is the *Garizimgebot*, a compilation of Deut 11:29; 27:2–7; and 11:30, which is inserted both after Exod 20:17 and Deut 5:21. He demonstrates that this text is a pre-Samaritan *Fortschreibung* rather than a text representing Samaritan ideology. In all three categories, according to Schorch, the main function of the pre-Samaritan *Fortschreibungen* lies in the filling of gaps on the surface of the respective texts; they thus express a certain reading of the Pentateuch rather than an attempt at interpreting it exegetically. The main propositions stressed by the revisions are the reliability and authority of the divine word; the reliability and authority of Moses as prophet; and the role of Mount Gerizim as the central sanctuary of Israel.

Carsten Ziegert's begins "Das Wortfeld von Gnade, Barmherzigkeit, Güte und Treue: Auslegung theologischer Kernlexeme in den Narrativtexten der Pentateuch-Septuaginta" by pointing out that it is indisputable that the translations of the Septuagint contain interpreting elements, including updating/*Aktualisierung* and harmonization. While this is evident, the claim that these translations intended to replace the Hebrew pretexts is disputable and needs to be supported by additional, specific evidence. Ziegert also mentions the well-known fact that problems in the translation process arise because the semantic structures of the original language and the target language are different. In a subsequent section he explains the phenomenon of standard equivalents. Once such an equivalent (in the present case, between a Hebrew lexeme and a Greek lexeme) has been established, deviations attract special attention and can be explained as the result of a specific exegetical interpretation of the Hebrew *Vorlage* by a Greek translator, unless deviations can be ascribed to a different *Vorlage*—a scenario that is likely when several Hebrew variants point to such a difference. In the case of the Pentateuch, one must reckon with the possibility that standard equivalents are not yet established because these texts are the first in which a specific lexeme appears. Ziegert then offers a survey of the lexemes of the semantic field of mercy, compassion, kindness, and faithfulness. The general results are in no way new: to some degree, the Septuagint offers an interpretation of the Hebrew *Vorlage* that amounts to an "implicit commentary," rather than a mechanical and strict word-for-word translation. Overall, while there is little to criticize in this essay, it is difficult to see how it advances the understanding of possible processes of *Fortschreibung* within the Hebrew Bible itself.

The remaining four essays deal with specific cases of assumed *Fortschreibungen* in the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch. This section is opened by Konrad Schmid's "Moses Geburt und ihr literarisches Nachleben: Die innerbiblische Rezeptionsgeschichte von Ex 2,1–10 in Ex 1 und Gen 6–9." Schmid first asserts that the story of the birth of Moses in Exod 2:1–10 was originally not related to the previous chapter but is, at least partially, dependent on the legend of the birth and salvation of Sargon. Within this passage, the verses mentioning Moses's sister are seen by Schmid as secondary expansions. A further case of *Fortschreibung* can be found in Exod 1: the motif of the endangerment of the life of Moses was enlarged by the invention/insertion of the motif of a genocidal threat to the Hebrew people at large. This expansion served to disclaim the implicit offense that Moses's mother could have exposed her son by her own initiative. In addition, the reception of Deuteronomistic material contributed to the negative depiction of the Egyptian pharaoh, especially Jer 19:5 and 2 Kgs 23:10. It looks, then, as if a whole people (the Egyptians) are blackened merely to justify one mother's actions and merely on literary grounds. Schmid also asserts that the salvation of the boy Moses in a basket (Hebrew *tebah*) has led to another *Fortschreibung*, the salvation of humanity in an ark (Hebrew *tebah*) in Gen 6–9, though this story is at the same time heavily influenced by Babylonian traditions. According to Schmid, in the broader biblical context this expansion served to demonstrate that the prophecy of judgment (a notion that is introduced here somewhat out of the blue) can be kept at bay by the remembrance

of Moses's protohistorical salvation, which is expanded in Gen 6–9 to the protection of humanity at large. This contribution may perhaps appear speculative in the eyes of many readers, marked by presuppositions of various kinds for which the author (understandably) did not find space to adduce evidence.

The first part of “Die didaktische und geschichtstheologische Funktion des Mannas: Textextern und textintern motivierte Fortschreibungen in Ex 16,” by Walter Bühner, deals with taxonomic questions, in partial overlap with Bühner's introduction to the volume. In the main body of this essay Bühner presents a source-critical and redaction-critical analysis of Exod 16. The goal is to demonstrate the complex connection between text-internal and text-external factors that generate *Fortschreibung*. Bühner identifies a priestly quail-and-manna narrative in verses 1 (partial), 2–3, 9–10, 11–15, 21, 31 as the core of the chapter. This narrative was reworked into a narrative about the finding and trespassing of the Sabbath by the addition of the Sabbath passages in verses 4–5, 16–20, 22–30; in this way the core narrative was set in a didactic relationship with the life circumstances of the readers. A third layer is motivated by text-internal factors: verses 6–7, 8, 32–34, 35, 36 relate the quail-and-manna narrative to the larger context of the Hexateuch. Some of the problems mentioned in relation to the previous paper can be seen here as well, though for many readers Bühner's article might appear less speculative. One of the basic questions is how far modern Western rules of logic and literary structure should dictate the interpretation of an ancient Israelite text.

In “Narrative and Exegesis in Leviticus: On Leviticus 10 and 24,10–23,” Christophe Nihan examines two passages in Leviticus that stand out from the rest by their narrative form. According to Nihan, “both Lev 10 and 24,10–23 are late additions to Leviticus, corresponding to the final stages in the composition of this book, ... characterized by significant engagement with both priestly and non-priestly traditions inside the Pentateuch.” In his analysis of Lev 24:10–23, Nihan begins with the assertion that the passage is likely a later addition, based on the similarities with material found in Numbers, its loose connection with the immediate literary context, and a general perception that the Holiness legislation itself “postdates and supplements a substantial portion of the priestly traditions.” Nihan continues by detecting a chiasmic structure in verses 17–21, which puts the talionic formula in verse 20a at the center. He then observes how Lev 24:10–23 interacts with Exod 21:12, 22–25. He posits that Lev 24 corrects the Covenant Code and “provides a new interpretation of talion, ... in favor of a strictly literal understanding” and including also homicide. Both results, however, seem open to criticism. Does Lev 24 really replace (pecuniary) compensation with a “literal understanding”? What would be inner-biblical or extrabiblical pieces of evidence for such an understanding? In sum, according to Nihan, “Lev 24,10–23 can arguably be described as a ‘narrative legal exegesis’, which rewrites CC's talionic law in Ex 21,22–25 alongside other passages from the same legal collection.” One of the innovations presented by Lev 24 in addition to the ones concerning the talion consists in combining offenses against God and against fellow members of

the community into one unified system and at the same time in indexing “a clear hierarchy between these offenses.”

As far as Lev 10 is concerned, Nihan identifies verses 1–7 as the core, while verses 8–20 comprise various later additions. However, also verses 1–7 do not belong to early stages of the priestly traditions, and therefore “the whole account in Lev 10 should be viewed as a late composition, which presumably represents one of the latest supplements to the book of Leviticus.” Interaction with other late texts such as Ezek 44 and Num 16–17 are mentioned as supporting evidence. As the main topic of Lev 10, Nihan identifies “the narrative construction of ritual authority, on the one hand, and the interaction with other biblical traditions, on the other.” These traditions can be found in particular in Lev 9:24; Num 16:18, 35; Lev 21:10–12; Ezek 44:21, 23. In this analysis, Lev 10:8–11 revises and expands Ezek 44—a direction of dependence that a good number of scholars dispute. The bottom line of Lev 10 is described in the following way: “while recognizing Moses’ exegetical legal authority, the account clearly states that ultimate interpretive competence should belong to the Aaronite priests, especially (but not exclusively) in ritual matters;” “the narrative of Lev 10 creates a foundational account on the nature of priestly authority.” Interestingly, it remains unclear whom Moses would represent in the power struggles of the Second Temple period that are supposedly reflected in this text.

Both texts, according to Nihan, are examples of legal revision, “expressed through narrative exegesis,” making “abundant use of the legal traditions they seek to revise.” The fact that this kind of literary technique was used is explained by the assumption that “it was no longer possible to simply update or supplement the existing legal collections.” Why? Further, where is the dividing line between a situation when such updating was still possible and when this was no longer the case? Apart from the questions noted, Nihan’s article is well-argued within the framework of his premises. It seems, however, that the underlying concept of “legal revision,” in which one “code” “replaces” the other, has become increasingly questionable (as argued most recently by Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah*, 107–98).

The first major part of Katharina Pyschny’s “Rewriting History: Phänomene textgeleiteter Fortschreibungs- und Auslegungsprozesse am Beispiel von Dtn 1–3” identifies the areas of overlap between Deut 1–3 and various passages in Numbers. She lists four major possible explanations of the parallels: Deut 1–3 is dependent on Numbers; Numbers is dependent on Deut 1–3; both are dependent on pre-Deuteronomistic traditions; there is mutual dependence in a complex history of composition. Pyschny rejects the first two options in favor of the last two, although the analyses presented in the latter part of the study seem generally quite compatible with the first explanation. As part of the source-critical and redaction-critical presuppositions, she mentions that Deut 1–3 must not be understood as a literary unity and that also the oldest parts of this passage presuppose connections to Numbers and Joshua, as well as to the so-called Ur-Deuteronomium.

The second major part looks at the details of how the rewriting of history is done in Deut 1–3, classifying it as a case of textually induced *Fortschreibung*. According to Pyschny, Deut 1:1–5 makes Deut 1–3 and Deuteronomy as a whole to function as an exegesis/interpretation of previous traditions. Specifically, Deut 1:9–18 is seen as combining Exod 18 and Num 11 with the aim to reconceptualize the concept of leadership in accordance with Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic ideas. Similarly, Deut 2:24–27 takes up Num 21:21–24 and aligns the latter text with Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic war ideology. Overall, Deut 1–3 transforms the traditions of Israel wandering in the desert found in Exodus and Numbers with a new focus on the promise of the land and the importance of the leadership and authority of Moses.

Overall, Pyschny's textual analysis is coherent and clear but might not be seen as adding any substantial new insights to the debate. Somewhat unfortunately, there is no interaction with Berman's refreshing alternative treatment of the relationship between the retelling of history in Deut 1–3 and the pretexts in Exodus and Numbers (see Berman, *Inconsistencies in the Torah*, 63–103).

It is not easy to offer an evaluation of the volume as a whole, among other things because the quality of the contributions is somewhat uneven. On the positive side one may note that most of the papers are formulated in a way that makes their reading and understanding easy. The arguments are logical within the framework of the individual authors' scholarly presuppositions. There is also a clear and commendable attempt in most papers to refine the analysis of various processes of *Fortschreibung* by following the distinctions proposed by Bühner in his opening essay. This further clarifies what is in view when scholars talk about *Fortschreibung* or innerbiblical exegesis. Also positive is the interdisciplinary character of the project. Those involved obviously recognize that it is necessary to enhance the control of criteria and procedures used in the literary analysis of the Bible, especially as far as source-critical and redaction-critical approaches are concerned, by considering the broader context of the ancient Near East and literary phenomena of the Second Temple Period. On the other hand, the volume also demonstrates that much needs to be done in this respect. By and large, the contributions dealing with perceived cases of *Fortschreibung* in the Pentateuch remain untouched by empirical control, such as criteria related to the literary phenomena attested in the ancient Near East. The discussion concerning analytical methodology has moved on, and we are all well-advised to address it. At this point, it is especially Joshua Berman's comprehensive monograph on *Inconsistency in the Torah* that should be taken into account when source-critical and redaction-critical questions in the Pentateuch are investigated. Also, interactions with more synchronically oriented approaches will help to broaden the horizon in future studies. This volume is valuable particularly insofar as the contributions offered by Frahm and Pries, and in other ways also Porzig and Schorch, provide the wider research community with doors into textual worlds that await further exploration, which has the potential to be fruitful for the study of the Hebrew Bible.