of the volume are to be warmly thanked for their work in bringing together such a stimulating and worthwhile volume.

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HORNKOHL, AARON D. *Diachronic Diversity in Classical Biblical Hebrew.* Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024. Pp. xiv + 255. Open access: https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0433.

Aaron Hornkohl is a leading exponent of that diachronic approach to Biblical Hebrew (BH) which considers that the textual evidence of the Hebrew Bible allows us to construct a chronology of the development of the language. Its major exponent in the previous scholarly generation was of course Avi Hurvitz, a generous scholar and Hornkohl's Doktorvater, who, sadly, passed away recently. In this volume Hornkohl attempts to refine that scholarly paradigm, which typically makes a major division between pre-exilic Classical Biblical Hebrew (CBH) and post-exilic Late Biblical Hebrew (LBH), by making "a linguistic distinction between the CBH of the Pentateuch and the CBH of the relevant Prophets and Writings" (xii).

In his Introduction, Hornkohl notes that due to challenges even to the basic theory of a discernible difference between CBH and LBH (mentioning our work[1]), confidence in more finely tuned divisions (e.g., Archaic BH) has eroded even further. Yet, even though linguistic differences in CBH compositions from 1000–600 BCE seem to have been levelled (2–3), Hornkohl's argument is that some traces of diachronic variation in the CBH books have survived and can be recognised. After discussing his methodology, Hornkohl outlines his main claim, of a distinction between the language of the Pentateuch and the rest of CBH, and discusses whether this is plausibly a chronological distinction. He honestly entertains what to many, including myself, might appear to be the more obvious interpretation, that the different corpora simply had different scribal histories. However, he argues that some of his case studies lead him to believe a chronological interpretation is warranted.

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[1] See, *inter alia*, Ian Young, Robert Rezetko and Martin Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*, 2 vols.; Bible World (London: Equinox, 2008); Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, *Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew: Steps Toward an Integrated Approach*, SBLANEM 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014; download at: https://www.sbl-site.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/9781628370461_OA.pdf); Ian Young, "Ancient Hebrew Without Authors," *Journal for Semitics* 25 (2016): 972–1003; Robert Rezetko and Ian Young, "Currents in the Historical Linguistics and Linguistic Dating of the Hebrew Bible," *HIPHIL Novum* vol 5 (2019), issue 1 (https://tidsskrift.dk/hiphilnovum/article/view/142167), 3–95.

The bulk of the book, chapters 1–12, consists of chapter length case studies of specific linguistic forms. In the first part, "Variation Perceptible in the Combined Tiberian Biblical Reading-Written Tradition," Hornkohl studies: "The Onomasticon With and Without Yahu Names" discussing the near absence of Yahwistic names in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges and Samuel; then case studies more in line with his distinction of Pentateuch vs other CBH: "1st-person *Wayyiqṭol* Morphology," specifically III-*Yod* and II-*Waw*/*Yod* verbs; "*Qal* versus *hifʿil* Forms of יס"ף"; "Construct מְאַת versus Absolute מֵאָה" on the number 100 before nouns; "*Qal* Internal Passive versus *nifʿal* Morphology"; "צע"ק versus יז"ע"; "1Cpl נַחְנוּ versus אֲנַחְנוּ." The second part, "Variation Limited to the Written Component of the Tiberian Biblical Tradition," meaning cases where the consonantal text of the MT differs from the reading tradition, contains the case studies: "FS הוא Versus הִיא" discussing the peculiarity in the MT Torah that the third person feminine singular independent pronoun is written with the consonants of the masculine, albeit vocalised as the standard feminine form; the defective writing of "FPL ן- Versus נָה-" in verbal forms; "נער Versus נערה With Feminine singular Referent"; "Abstract Nouns Ending in -ŪT"; and "Orthography." The short Conclusion points out that the study may challenge the Documentary Hypothesis as well as the dichotomous paradigm of pre-exilic and post-exilic BH, so that "one can further divide CBH into CBH1, substantially representative of the period 1000–800 BCE, albeit possibly preserving some earlier features of pre-monarchic traditions, and CBH2, reflecting 800–600 BCE" (207). The book finishes with References, Passage Index, and Subject Index.

Hornkohl has conducted careful research to assemble his data both from within the Bible and outside it. He has thus made a useful collection of some interesting patterns of distribution of linguistic forms. Despite saying that he has learned from recent debate about "The problematic nature of the evidence—limited, fragmentary, ambiguous, multivalent, textually fluid, etc." (1), he describes his approach thus: "As to the broader questions of BH diachrony and linguistic periodisation, it will be clear from this study that the author is far more optimistic than many regarding what may be reasonably argued on the basis of the data" (207). As someone who has quite a different understanding of this data, the challenge for me is how to encapsulate my disagreements in a short review.

I need not dwell on Hornkohl's basic methodology, since it is not new and we have pointed to its strengths and weaknesses in various places. He continues to use this methodology, even while he admits to basic problems with the nature of the evidence, such as the virtual absence of dated and localised evidence of ancient Hebrew, and his consequent reliance on late, scribally-transmitted manuscripts of literary compositions, which are the sort of sources avoided by scholars studying other languages more fortunate in their available sources.

It is often difficult for readers to perceive how works like this are highly selective in the evidence presented. In fact, there is a very large number of

linguistic forms which exhibit variation with a parallel form in the Hebrew Bible. However, as is usual in scholarship in Hornkohl's paradigm, the many other patterns of linguistic variation found in the Hebrew Bible that do not fit either with the CBH vs LBH distinction or his inner CBH distinction are ignored. One could suggest that Hornkohl's small collection of linguistic evidence selectively emphasises forms that align with his hypothesis, while overlooking potential counterexamples. Hornkohl has rightly shown that the Pentateuch has some forms not common in other books (although it is noticeable that he does not interact with our contrary presentation and analysis of some of the same forms, e.g., זעק//צעק). However, much other data that does not fit the argument is ignored. As just one simple example out of many, Deuteronomy (and Leviticus), Joshua and Kings strongly prefer לֵבָב for "heart," while Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Judges and Samuel just as strongly prefer לֵב. What does that mean?

Hornkohl is quite open that his patterns regularly only work in the traditional Tiberian Masoretic Text (MT). The privileging of the MT over other types of biblical texts (and the implicit claim that it has not significantly changed, even in minor details, since 800 BCE) is directly opposed to the scholarly consensus that the transmission of biblical texts was characterised by fluidity. Hornkohl is aware that: "If secondary interventions are so pervasive as to have obfuscated the original linguistic profile of biblical compositions, then diachronic linguistics is out of the question" (10), but he implies this is still an open question that has not been investigated. However, we have demonstrated that even within the MT tradition itself, parallel passages show that less common (not just unusual) linguistic forms are not copied carefully, e.g., in the parallel texts 2 Kings 25//Jer 39//Jer 52 not one of the 29 less common and rare linguistic forms is found in all three texts. This seems to be strong evidence that patterns of linguistic forms in the MT or elsewhere are not evidence of the language of earlier strata of biblical compositions, but rather are dependent on the more recent textual history of the manuscript under consideration.

Hornkohl is likely right to point to some forms in the Pentateuch that are typologically older. (Counter examples can be found, e.g., the absence of the more archaic form of second person feminine singular *Qatal* verbs (־תִּי) in the MT (not Samaritan!) Pentateuch, but found elsewhere in the MT.) However, because of the near lack of dated and localised sources for Hebrew, it is difficult to find a chronological peg for dating exactly how old these forms might be. The evidence from inscriptions (actual, but unfortunately not abundant, dated and localised sources) cited by Hornkohl does not help to back up his case for a very early date for the linguistic forms he identifies in the Pentateuch, since they are generally later than his proposed date for the Pentateuch. I note that he makes something of the fact that the inscriptions more often use the theophoric ending *-yahu* not *-yah* (31–32), but he does not mention the complete absence from the Bible of the theophoric ending *-yaw*, well attested in pre-exilic inscriptions,

which would seem to be strong evidence of heavy editing of the language of the current biblical texts.

To me, it seems that the analogy with orthography is most suggestive. Based on the evidence of pre-exilic inscriptions, the orthography of the MT Pentateuch in many ways looks relatively more archaic than other Hebrew in the MT. But the inscriptions show that this means relatively earlier in the post-exilic period. There are a small number of survivals from the pre-exilic period, such as some 55 cases of the third person masculine singular suffix spelled with *He* not *Waw*, but mostly we are seeing a typologically later spelling than anything found in the pre-exilic inscriptions. So too, if Hornkohl has discovered anything related to chronology, it seems more likely to be evidence of a slightly more archaic form of language, in a small number of linguistic features, of a MT Pentateuch whose current form is still post-exilic.

For these and other reasons, I cannot share Hornkohl's optimism that the patterns he has discovered reveal any clear evidence of the various chronological contexts of the authors of the Pentateuch and Former Prophets. To highlight our quite different understanding of the nature of the evidence, I summarise my previously published views (which, unlike Hornkohl's conclusions, are not in conflict with mainstream biblical scholarship): The compositions comprising the Hebrew Bible were certainly produced over a period of several centuries. However, according to general scholarly consensus, none of these compositions was just written once, at one time, but all exhibit an ongoing process of editorial and scribal development. The data indicates that it was not usual for less common linguistic features to be retained in scribal transmission. Therefore, the language of all the manuscripts in our possession is a mixture reflecting multiple chronological periods (and likely: multiple geographical locations, registers, etc.). Until we have sufficient dated and localised non-literary evidence, we will not be able to disentangle the chronology in the case of most individual linguistic forms. We certainly cannot argue based on any of our current, late, literary texts that their linguistic profile indicates composition in one specific chronological period, or that the linguistic profile of the MT version of any book gives us meaningful evidence of the language and hence date of the authors of that book.

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LAU, PETER H. W. *The Book of Ruth*. NICOT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023. Pp. xxxiv + 342. Hardcover US $48.00.

Peter H. W. Lau's commentary on the book of Ruth is shaped by both his theological training and by his deeply personal experience of navigating cultural boundaries and religious commitments. Born in Hong Kong and raised in