

A reader has perspicaciously pointed out to me that a particularly relevant post from three years ago (June 7, 2013) makes an important contribution to the topic I've been discussing about the Pentateuch. This post is not about whether the events described in the Hebrew Bible are accurate, but whether we have accurate manuscripts of these accounts. I talk a lot on the blog about manuscripts of the New Testament. What about manuscripts of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible? My post back then was in response to a question. Here it is in full:

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**QUESTION:**

Bart, these issues you've found in the New Testament, have you studied and found similar issues in the Old Testament?"

**RESPONSE:**

Yes indeed! Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament) was my secondary field in my PhD program, and I taught Introduction to Hebrew Bible at both Rutgers and UNC. A few years ago when I decided to write my Introduction to the Bible I decided that to do it right I had to re-tool in Hebrew Bible. I'm by no means an expert, but I have caught up on a good deal of scholarship and re-learned Hebrew (I hadn't read it in years). I try to read some Hebrew Bible every morning; I'm not great at it, but I can slog through with a dictionary.....

So, I think it's fair to say that the problems that I have talked about in my publications about the New Testament are even more pronounced for the Hebrew Bible. I think I will take three of the big issues (I'm happy to address others if there are any questions people have - that I can answer!) and devote a brief post to each one.

In this post: The textual situation. My book Misquoting Jesus was about how we do not have the originals of any of the books of the New Testament, but only copies made later - in most cases many centuries later, so that there are some places where specialists cannot agree on what the text originally said, and there are some places where we'll probably never know. The situation is much worse for the Hebrew Bible. Much much worse.

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