Recently several readers have asked me about the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible; I talk a lot about the New Testament on the blog, but what about the Old Testament? Are there problems there too?

Short answer, yes indeed. I’d say! Here’s how I dealt with this in a post long ago, back in the days of my youth. Only one thing is different. I don’t read from the Hebrew Bible every morning any more. I’ve gotten obsessed with classical Latin! Apart from that, everything here is still spot-on. Or at least what I would continue to say, which admittedly is not the same thing….

**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…..

I think it’s fair to say that the problems I have talked about in my publications about the New Testament are even more pronounced for the Hebrew Bible. Here 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.

The rest of this post is reserved, alas, for blog members. But you too can belong to that elite corps of informed individuals, armed with knowledge to confront our dangerous world. Join! It costs little, gives lots, and provides funds for charity. All geared to make the universe a better and happier place.

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