

Current Jewish Questions

Biblical Criticism and Orthodox Judaism

Introduction – The Documentary Hypothesis

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis

Julius Wellhausen's (May 17, 1844 – January 7, 1918) contribution was to order these sources chronologically as JEDP, giving them a coherent setting in the evolving religious history of Israel, which he saw as one of ever-increasing priestly power. Wellhausen's formulation was:

- the Yahwist source (J) : written c. 950 BC in the southern Kingdom of Judah.
- the Elohist source (E) : written c. 850 BC in the northern Kingdom of Israel.
- the Deuteronomist (D) : written c. 600 BC in Jerusalem during a period of religious reform.
- the Priestly source (P) : written c. 500 BC by Kohanim (Jewish priests) in exile in Babylon.

I. One Recent Controversy

1. Martin Lockshin – A book for the thoughtful, ‘skeptical’ Orthodox

Canadian Jewish News Monday, January 7, 2013

<http://www.cjnews.com/columnists/book-thoughtful-%E2%80%98skeptical%E2%80%99-orthodox>

Orthodox Jews commonly believe that “Torah from heaven” is the central tenet of the Jewish religion. But what precisely does that belief entail? A courageous new book by Rabbi Norman Solomon, *Torah from Heaven: The Reconstruction of Faith*, tries to answer that question. The book has an impressive range, from scholarship about biblical times to 21st-century theology and almost all periods in between.

Rabbi Solomon worked as an Orthodox congregational rabbi in England for 22 years before joining academia. He is now retired, but is still affiliated with Oxford University. He describes himself as part of the “skeptical” Orthodox, a group that he claims is larger than most people realize.

Usually “Torah from heaven” in Orthodox circles is understood to mean that God dictated the entire text of the first five books of the Bible (with the possible exception of the last eight verses of Deuteronomy) to Moses, who then wrote it down. Furthermore, the text of the Torah scroll that we have in our synagogues today is precisely what Moses wrote. Rabbi Solomon quotes Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the leader of neo-Orthodox Judaism in the 19th century: “When we raise aloft this Torah... we jubilantly proclaim *Vezot Hatorah* [‘This is the Torah which Moses set before the Israelites,’ Deuteronomy 4:43]... that it is still the same Torah which Moses brought to Israel ‘through the mouth of God through the hand of Moses,’ the same Torah, pure and unadulterated.”

But Rabbi Solomon notes that the Hebrew word “torah” in the Bible just means “teaching” or “instruction.” Even Rashi (1040-1105), the greatest Jewish Bible commentator and surely unskeptically Orthodox, explained that the verse in Deuteronomy simply means that Moses’ speech containing his teachings (torah) is about to begin – i.e. “This,” what follows in the following chapters, “is the torah [teaching] which Moses set [i.e. spoke] before the Israelites.” Only many centuries after Moses did people begin to use the word Torah to refer to the first five books of the Bible and did anyone write down the claim that Moses was the author of the so-called Five Books of Moses. (The word “torah” in the verse in Deuteronomy 31:9, “Moses wrote this torah,” is not a reference to the Five Books of Moses but to the recording of a specific “teaching,” or at most a set of teachings, as was recognized even by a number of traditionalist Bible commentators such as Rabbi Ovadya Seforno [c. 1475-1550].)

Rabbi Solomon argues further that historical scholarship makes it impossible to believe that Moses was the author of Genesis to Deuteronomy, or that our text of the Torah today is identical to the original one. The Talmud often quotes biblical verses whose wording or spelling differs from our own (as do Rashi and basically every other Bible commentator who lived before the days of the printing press).

Not satisfied with tackling this formidable set of problems, Rabbi Solomon goes on to note how rabbis in later centuries greatly expanded the range of the word “torah.” By considering most (or all) of rabbinic teachings (and sometimes also works of Jewish mysticism) as Torah or Oral Torah, they made those teachings authoritative and inviolable. For example, because of this expanded definition of God’s Torah, Rabbi Ben-Zion Uzziel (1880-1953), a Sephardi chief rabbi of Israel, apparently considered the talmudic statement that a newborn baby gets its blood specifically from its mother (Babylonian Talmud Niddah 31a) as legally binding. He therefore ruled that blood typing could not be used as a means of ascertaining paternity, since “any scientific examination is nullified by this trustworthy tradition [that a baby’s blood comes from its mother, not its father] of our sages, all of whose words were spoken by divine inspiration.”

Other Orthodox rabbis disagreed with Rabbi Uzziel, finding ways to accept even those medical conclusions that appeared to contradict a “Torah” teaching. Rabbi Solomon shows that rabbis or Jewish thinkers over many generations tried to develop what he calls a “reconciling hermeneutic” – they used different strategies for dealing with perceived contradictions between what “Torah” teaches us and what we learn from science, archeology, ethics or history. While he never says this openly, it seems that he sees these harmonizing efforts as a waste of time.

Few contemporary thinkers who identify as Orthodox or are commonly perceived to be Orthodox address these issues with such candour. Toward the end of this book, Rabbi Solomon summarizes a few who do, including Menachem Kellner, Tamar Ross and David Halivni. He examines their theological suggestions, criticizes them and then presents his own theology.

Rabbi Solomon’s thesis is straightforward: “The classical doctrine of ‘Torah from heaven’... with its erroneous historical claims and occasionally questionable moral consequences, cannot be upheld by the serious historian, scientist or philosopher.” And yet the claims that “Torah is from heaven” and that Moses wrote the Torah are, in a certain sense “true,” as they are Judaism’s “foundational myth.”

Rabbi Solomon rushes to explain that he uses the word “myth” not in the sense of something untrue. “Myths are among the most important symbols of our life; they say what cannot be reduced to nameable facts.” Furthermore, “a story can be at one and the same time both myth and history, and it is certainly more persuasive if it is both; but even without the support of history it can function effectively as myth.”

Rabbi Solomon’s radical thesis is unlikely to win the open support of Orthodox leaders. In fact, I’m guessing that many of them will dismiss this devout Jew out of hand. Of course, it will appeal to the thoughtful, skeptical Orthodox. And despite all the detail in the book, it is very readable and comprehensible even for a beginner. It should be required reading for any modern woman or man who thinks seriously about Jewish theology in general, and the question of Torah from heaven in particular.

2. Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin – When Orthodox scholarship is neither

Canadian Jewish News Wednesday, January 30, 2013

<http://www.cjnews.com/index.php?q=node/101489>

When first referred to Prof. Martin Lockshin's book review ("A book for the thoughtful, 'skeptical' Orthodox," Jan. 10), I was curious. Works by Orthodox authors that tackle difficult theological issues, ask tough questions, and reconcile differences between Orthodoxy and modern scholarship are always of interest to Jews who straddle both worlds. Such works are often a kiddush HaShem, because they demonstrate how Orthodoxy and scholarship are compatible. Orthodox scholars such as Rabbi David Berger, Rabbi Lawrence Schiffman, Prof. Menachem Kellner, and yes, Rabbi Martin Lockshin, admirably synthesize devout personal religiosity with academic rigour. With a title touting a book that would be helpful to such a "skeptical" Orthodox Jew, I read on.

But about halfway through the article, something was seriously wrong. The book, *Torah from Heaven*, by former Orthodox rabbi Norman Solomon, was ostensibly about how to reconcile traditional Judaism's claim that the Torah scroll we read in synagogue contains the same text given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, in light of scholarship of the last two centuries that argues the text has been altered over time.

But the article began to stray off topic. Rabbi Lockshin quoted a passage from the book citing a 20th-century Israeli chief rabbi who had interpreted a talmudic passage literally and as a result rejected modern medicine. But wait: the Talmud is a rabbinic commentary to the Torah, written centuries after it was canonized. What in the world did a modern rabbi's fundamentalist interpretation of the Talmud have to do with Bible criticism?

I quickly realized that Rabbi Solomon's work was much broader than the subject of Bible criticism. And 150 pages into the book (the reader is left guessing for some time what it's actually about), I discovered that the author actually has three problems with Orthodox theology: (a) the integrity of the written Torah text; (b) the claim that the rabbinic oral tradition is an accurate explanation of the written biblical text (hence the passage about the Talmud); and (c) the Bible contains certain values and teachings that run counter to modern morality, such as the command to wage war with idolatrous nations and the ban on homosexuality. This flawed morality, argues the author, proves that the Bible is not the real word of God.

Rabbi Solomon is a product of both traditional Orthodox yeshivot and the university. After spending years as an Orthodox pulpit rabbi, he retired and went into academia. (I know all this because the author first presents his autobiographical "orientation." He wants the reader to sympathize with his conflicts, and, I suspect, he wants to impress Orthodox skeptics that he's one of the guys.)

Rabbi Solomon then spends the bulk of the book regurgitating what he's learned of Bible criticism from the university, as well as what he remembers of traditional Torah commentary from the yeshiva. Along the way, he takes swipes at much of traditional Torah literature, from rejecting the entire corpus of Kabbalah as being fanciful and outlandish to attacking one of the greatest rabbinic minds of the 20th-century, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, for overemphasizing the halachic nature of the Torah. Clearly, a man with "issues."

Reading page after page of this disputation with tradition, I was hoping that at some point he would find a way to neatly reconcile his Orthodox faith with all the presented challenges. He had, after all, raised many valid questions that deserved careful and methodical analysis.

But alas, this was not to be. In the last section of the book, where the great "reconciliation" is offered, an entire chapter is titled, "What is Truth?" Rabbi Solomon therein suggests that despite the utter falsehood of

the Bible's historical and moral claims, despite his contention that it isn't really the word of God dictated to Moses, the Bible could still be "true" in some other sense. Now, this may pass as profundity in some circles, but for me it brought back memories of former U.S. president Bill Clinton's attempt to define what "is" is. The Bible's claim to be the word of God, presented to real Jews at a real Mount Sinai three millennia ago, is either true or false. Make up your mind.

But Rabbi Solomon feels that there's a way to parse the gap between truth and falsehood by suggesting that the Bible, when read as a "myth," (i.e., "tangible formulations of abstract ideas") is true, even though its "historical claims" are false. To arrive at the end of a book claiming serious biblical scholarship and have it end with poetic esotericism and philosophical waxing was not only anti-climatic, it was downright frustrating. Scholarship this isn't.

I am left confused by Rabbi Lockshin's review. To his credit, nowhere does Rabbi Solomon claim to reconcile his Orthodoxy with his newfound belief in the Torah as myth. Indeed, after examining the stated creed of the movement for Reform Judaism, one concludes that Rabbi Solomon has become a Reform Jew. And that's fine; people change all the time, and he wouldn't be the first Orthodox Jew to leave the fold and become "enlightened" (although he is about two centuries late). But why Rabbi Lockshin feels this book is appropriate for Orthodox Jews with questions is utterly perplexing. This is not a book that will reconcile your Orthodoxy with modern scholarship. It rather tells you to reject everything you learned in yeshiva or seminary as utter drivel, and to reject those Orthodox rabbis whose lack of wisdom prevents them from seeing the truth.

Fortunately, there is a plethora of real scholarship, written by Orthodox scholars, that proves Rabbi Solomon wrong. It is quite possible and laudable to reconcile one's Orthodoxy with one's intellectual skepticism, and it is a project to which I and other rabbis and scholars have dedicated our lives. As my colleague in this endeavour, I hope that Rabbi Lockshin will reconsider his unqualified endorsement of Rabbi Solomon's book.

Rabbi Korobkin is senior rabbi at Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation.



ועד הרבנים דטאראנטא
VAAD HARABONIM OF TORONTO



בניהוסי"ח

Vaad Harabonim
 Telephone: (416) 841-7318 Fax: (416) 789-1728
 e-mail beis_din@hotmail.com

חדש שבט התשע"ג

בס"ד

להסיר מכשול

A fundamental principle of our faith is that the *Torah*, "as we possess it today," "in its entirety," was given to us by *Moshe Rabbeinu*, as it was transmitted to him from G-d ("as a scribe taking dictation").

Halacha rules, unequivocally, that the denial of the G-dly origin of "even a single word" in the *Torah*, or its interpretation as transmitted by tradition (in "*Torah shebaal peh*"), contravenes this principle and constitutes "*kefiroh baTorah*." The practical *Halachic* implications of this ruling are far reaching.

The suggestion (in a recently published article) that denial of the aforementioned, fundamental principle would not estrange the dissenter from the pale of Orthodox Judaism - is fallacious and counterfactual.

וישם בלבנו אהבתו ויראתו ולעשות רצונו ולעבדו בלבב שלם

Harav M. Ochs
 ראב"ד בד"צ טאראנטא

Harav D. Schochet
 ראב"ד בד"צ שע"י ועד הרבנים

Harav S. Miller
 ראב"ד בד"צ שע"י כולל אברכים

ל"ד

Via: <http://dovbear.blogspot.com/2013/02/breaking-toronto-vaad-excommunicates.html>

II. Requirements of Faith: Rambam vs. Rambam

<p>4. Rambam Intro to Mishnah Sanhedrin 10 It is appropriate to mention here – and this is the most appropriate place [in this text] to mention the following points – <u>the essential [beliefs] of our sacred Torah and its fundamental principles of faith...</u></p> <p>The eighth fundamental principle is that the Torah is from heaven, <u>that we should believe that the entire Torah that we possess today is the Torah that was given to Moses</u>, and that it is of Godly origin in its entirety. [The Torah as a comprehensive whole] was granted [to Moses] by God. The manner in which it was granted to him we call – by analogy – speech. The only one who knows the nature of this process of communication is Moses, the one to whom it was granted. Nevertheless, metaphorically he can be compared to a scribe taking dictation, writing down all the events that took place, the stories and the mitzvot. For this reason he is referred to as "the scribe." (Translated by Touger)</p>	<p>4. פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם מסכת סנהדרין פרק י וממה שראוי שאזכיר כאן וזהו המקום היותר ראוי להזכיר בו, <u>שעיקרי תורתנו הטהורה ויסודותיה שלש עשרה יסודות...</u></p> <p>והיסוד השמיני הוא תורה מן השמים. והוא, שנאמין שכל התורה הזו <u>הנמצאת בידינו</u> היום הזה היא התורה שניתנה למשה, ושהיא כולה מפי הגבורה, כלומר שהגיעה עליו כולה מאת ה' הגעה שקורים אותה על דרך ההשאלה דבור, ואין יודע איכות אותה ההגעה אלא הוא עליו השלום אשר הגיעה אליו, ושהוא במעלת לבלר שקורין לפניו והוא כותב כולה תאריכיה וספוריה ומצותיה, וכך נקרא מחוקק.</p>
<p>5. Rambam Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:8 Three are called "Apikores:" 1. One who says there is on prophecy at all and that no knowledge comes from God to the hearts of man. 2. One who denies the prophecy of Moses, our teacher. 3. And the one who says that God does not know the actions of man.</p> <p>Three are called "Koferim" (deniers): 1. <u>The one who says that the Torah is not from God, even one verse, even one letter – if one says Moses himself had written it on his own, he is a denier of the Torah.</u> 2. The one who denies [the Torah's] interpretation and one denies [the authority] of its teachers like Zadok and Baitus 3. And the who says God substituted one commandment for another and the previous Torah is now invalid – even if it is from God like the "hagrim" (likely Christians, possibly Muslims) – all these three types of people deny Torah.</p>	<p>5. רמב"ם תשובה ג הלכה ח שלשה הן הנקראים אפיקורסין: האומר שאין שם נבואה כלל ואין שם מדע שמגיע מהבורא ללב בני האדם, והמכחיש נבואתו של משה רבינו, והאומר שאין הבורא יודע מעשה בני האדם כל אחד משלשה אלו הן אפיקורוסים, שלשה הן הכופרים בתורה: האומר שאין התורה מעם ה' אפילו פסוק אחד אפילו תיבה אחת אם אמר משה אמרו מפי עצמו הרי זה כופר בתורה, וכן הכופר בפרושה והוא תורה שבעל פה והמכחיש מגידיה כגון צדוק ובייתוס, והאומר שהבורא החליף מצוה זו במצוה אחרת וכבר בטלה תורה זו אף על פי שהיא היתה מעם ה' כגון ההגרים כל אחד משלשה אלו כופר בתורה.</p>

III. Was the Torah Fully Given at Sinai? No.

<p>6. Deuteronomy 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on <u>the side of the Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain[a] opposite Suph,[b] between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.</u></p>	<p>6. דברים א, א אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר הירדן במדבר בערבה מול סוף בני פארן ובין תפל ולבן וחצרת ודי זהב:</p>
<p>7. Deuteronomy 29:69 These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel <u>in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.</u></p>	<p>7. דברים כח, סט אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה יקוק את משה לכרות את בני ישראל בארץ מואב מלבד הברית אשר פרת אתם בחרב:</p>

IV. "Difficult" Verses

<p>8. Genesis 12:6 Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. <u>And the Canaanites were then in the land.</u></p>	<p>8. בראשית יב, ו וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכֵם עַד אֵלוֹן מוֹרָה וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי אָז בְּאֶרֶץ:</p>
<p>9. Numbers 12:3 Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth</p>	<p>9. במדבר יב, ג וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עֲנוּי עֲנִיו מֵאֵד מִכָּל הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:</p>
<p>10a. Deuteronomy 34:5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord</p> <p>10b. B. Bava Batra 15a The Master has said: Joshua wrote the book which bears his name <u>and the last eight verses of the Pentateuch</u>. This statement is in agreement with the authority who says that eight verses in the Torah were written by Joshua, as it has been taught: [It is written], So Moses the servant of the Lord died there. <u>Now is it possible that Moses being dead could have written the words, 'Moses died there'?</u> <u>The truth is, however, that up to this point Moses wrote, from this point Joshua wrote. This is the opinion of R. Judah, or, according to others, of R. Nehemiah.</u> Said R. Simeon to him: Can [we imagine the] scroll of the Law being short of one word, and is it not written, Take this book of the Law? <u>No; what we must say is that up to this point the Holy One, blessed be He, dictated and Moses repeated and wrote, and from this point God dictated and Moses wrote with tears,</u> as it says of another occasion, Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words to me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.[Jer 36:18]</p>	<p>10. דברים לד, ה (ה) וימת שם משה עבד יקוק בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב על פי יקוק:</p> <p>תלמוד בבלי בבא בתרא טו:א אמר מר: יהושע כתב ספרו ושמונה פסוקים שבתורה. תניא כמאן דאמר: שמונה פסוקים שבתורה יהושע כתבן, דתני: +דברים ל"ד+ וימת שם משה עבד ה' - אפשר משה (מת) +מסורת השי"ס: [חי]+ וכתב וימת שם משה? אלא, עד כאן כתב משה, מכאן ואילך כתב יהושע, דברי ר"י, ואמרי לה ר' נחמיה; אמר לו ר"ש: אפשר ס"ית חסר אות אחת; וכתב: +דברים ל"א+ לקוח את ספר התורה הזה! אלא, עד כאן הקדוש ברוך הוא אומר ומשה אומר וכותב, מכאן ואילך הקדוש ברוך הוא אומר ומשה כותב בדמע, כמו שנאמר להלן: +ירמיהו לו+ ויאמר להם ברוך מפיו יקרא אלי את כל הדברים האלה ואני כותב על הספר בדיו.</p>
<p>11a. Deuteronomy 34:1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan</p> <p>11b. Ibn Ezra Deut 34:1 And Moshe went up – according to my view this verse was written by Joshua because after Moses went up he did not write, and this was written prophetically</p>	<p>11. דברים לד, א (א) ויעל משה מערבת מואב אל הר נבו ראש הפסגה אשר על פני ירחו ויראהו יקוק את כל הארץ את הגלעד עד דן:</p> <p>אבן עזרא דברים לד:א (א) ויעל משה - לפי דעתי, כי מזה הפסוק כתב יהושע, כי אחר שעלה משה לא כתב, ובדרך נבואה כתבו.</p>

V. Textual Variants in the Torah

<p>12. B. Kiddushin 30a R. Joseph propounded: Does the waw of gahon belong to the first half or the second? Said they [the scholars] to him, Let a Scroll of the Torah be brought and we will count them! Did not Rabbah b. Bar Hanah say, They did not stir from there until a Scroll of the Torah was brought and they counted them? — <u>They were thoroughly versed in the defective and full readings, but we are not.</u></p>	<p>12. תלמוד בבלי קידושין ל:א בעי רב יוסף: וא"י דגחון מהאי גיסא, או מהאי גיסא? א"ל: ניתי ס"ת ואימנינהו! מי לא אמר רבה בר בר חנה: לא זזו משם עד שהביאו ספר תורה ומנאום: א"ל: אינהו בקיאי בחסירות ויתרות, אגן לא בקיאינן.</p>
<p>13. Y. Ta'anit 4:2 68a Three scrolls did they find in the Temple courtyard. These were the Maon-scroll ["Dwelling"], the Zaatuti -scroll ["Little ones"], and the He- scroll. In one of these scrolls they found it written, "The eternal God is our dwelling place (maon)" (Deut. 33:27: "The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you, and said, 'Destroy'"). And in two of the scrolls it was written, "The eternal God is your dwelling place" (meonah). They confirmed the reading found in the two and abrogated the other. In one of them they found written, "They sent the little ones of the people of Israel" (Ex. 24:5: "And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord"). And in the two it was written, "They sent young men...." They confirmed the two and abrogated the other. In one of them they found written, "He [he written in the feminine spelling] nine times, and in two, they found it written that way eleven times." They confirmed the reading found in the two and abrogated the other.</p>	<p>13. ירושלמי תענית ד:ב דף סח טור א שלשה ספרים מצאו בעזרה ספר מעוני וספר זעטוטי וספר היא באחד מצאו כתוב מעון אלהי קדם ובשנים כתוב מעונה אלהי קדם וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד באחד מצאו כתוב וישלח את זעטוטי בני ישראל וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד באחד מצאו כתוב תשע היא ובשנים כתוב אחת עשרה היא וקיימו שנים וביטלו אחד</p>
<p>14a. Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, <u>and indeed it was very good</u>. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.</p> <p>14b. Genesis Rabbah 1:5 In the Torah of R. Meir it was found to be written, "And indeed it was very good, <u>and indeed it was death</u>."</p> <p>14c. Genesis 3:21 Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of <u>skin</u>, and clothed them.</p> <p>14d. Genesis Rabba 20:12 In the Torah of R. Meir it was found to be written, "tunics of <u>light</u>"</p> <p>14e. Genesis 46:23 The <u>children</u> of Dan were "Hushim"</p> <p>14f. Genesis Rabba 94:9 In the Torah of R. Meir it was found to be written, "the <u>child</u> of Dan was Hushim."</p>	<p>14. בראשית א, לא וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַהֲנֵה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי:</p> <p>בראשית רבה בראשית פרשה ט:ה בתורתו של רבי מאיר מצאו כתוב, והנה טוב מאד <u>והנה טוב מות</u></p> <p>בראשית ג, כא וַיַּעַשׂ יְקֹוֹק אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתָנֹת עוֹר וַיִּלְבָּשֵׂם:</p> <p>בראשית רבה בראשית פרשה כ:יב בתורתו של ר"מ מצאו כתוב כתנות <u>אור</u></p> <p>בראשית מו, כג וַבְּנֵי דָן חֻשִׁים:</p> <p>בראשית רבה פרשת ויגש צד:ט בתורתו/בתורתו של רבי מאיר מצאו כתוב <u>בן דן חושים</u></p>

15. Igrot Moshe YD 3:114

30 March 1976

And thus no person – not even a prophet – may remove even one letter [from the Torah], and if one letter is missing or one letter is added [to the Torah], it is invalid as explained in Rambam's Hilkhhot Sefer Torah 10:1. But since we are not experts in the "defective" or "full" writings as we find in B. Kiddushin 30, the validity of our Torah scrolls is not so certain.

15. אגרות משה יורה דעה חלק ג:קיד
וכן אי אפשר לשום אדם אף לא לנביא
להחסיר אפילו אות אחת ואם חסר אות
אחת או יתר אות אחת פסולה כמפורש
ברמב"ם פ"י מס"ת ה"א ומחמת שאין אנן
בקיאים בחסירות ויתירות כדאיתא
בקידושין דף ל', אין כשרות ס"ת שלנו
ברורה כל כך

VI. Two Approaches for Reconciliation

16. Baruch J. Schwartz "The Pentateuch as Scripture and the Challenge of Biblical Criticism "

Only in very recent periods have some more serious attempts been made. The Israeli Orthodox philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903 – 1994) argued that the commitment to Jewish belief and practice was independent of any theory with regard to the origin of the written Torah. Since the former depends entirely on the acceptance of the authority of the classical rabbinic Sages, the Torah text that they canonized is religiously relevant only as implemented by them. Earlier stages in Israel's religious development, evidenced in the Bible, are irrelevant and can be either studied or ignored without influencing traditional piety. Leibowitz's approach was part of his philosophy of Judaism, which posited that Jewish belief consists only of the conviction that the observance of commands as defined by the Sages is compliance with the will of God, irrespective of any belief regarding how that will became known to man.

Another attempt to admit Pentateuchal criticism without embracing Reform or denying revelation was made by David Halivni (1927 –), a European-born scholar who spent most of his career in the United States. He suggested that a written Torah was in fact dictated to Moses but that it — as is amply evident from biblical history and rabbinic tradition — was not accepted as binding by the Jews until the early Second Temple period, under Ezra. In the time intervening, postulated Halivni, the text had become flawed, so that the Torah that Ezra inherited, and that he and his successors (the early Sages) were to implement, was not identical to the one given to Moses. Thus, Halivni was able to take seriously not only the critical method of studying the Pentateuch but also its historical implications: that the biblical period and the literature it generated were dynamic, humanly conditioned, "time-bound" phenomena, not identical to the revealed word of God. The divine will is manifest rather in the Oral Torah, the beginnings of which in Ezra's time constituted a restoration of what God had originally commanded; thus, the Jew is required to comply with it and not with any literal meaning of the Written Torah. The latter is preserved for the purpose of midrash — determining, or artificially "deriving," from the sanctified document what was really commanded. Though Halivni's proposal was not without difficulties, its appeal was that it allowed both the text of the Torah and the history of Israel's religion to be studied critically, without denying either the verbal revelation of a "Torah" to Moses or the divine mandate for preserving traditional law. (212-213)

VII. Appendix – Example of Comparative Scholarship

<p>17. Deuteronomy 14:1-2 You are the children of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth</p>	<p>17. דברים יד, א-ב בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגַּדְדוּ וְלֹא תִשְׂמֹו קַרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לְמֵת: (ב) כִּי עִם קְדוּשַׁת אֲתָה לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּבְדָבָר יִקְוֶה לְהֵיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:</p>
<p>18. Coogan p. 143-144 "We arrived at the lovely place, the desert pasture, at the beautiful fields on Death's shore. We came upon Baal: he had fallen to the ground. Baal the Conqueror has died the Prince, the Lord of the Earth, has perished." Then El the Kind, the Compassionate, came down from his throne, sat on his stool, came down from his stool, sat on the ground. He poured dirt on his head in mourning, dust on his skull in lamentation; he covered his loins with sackcloth. <u>He cut his skin with a stone, made incisions with a razor; he cut his cheeks and chin, raked the length of his arms; he plowed his chest like a garden, he raked his back like a valley.</u></p>	

Bibliography / Suggested Reading

Coogan, Michael David, Mark S. Smith. *Stories from Ancient Canaan Second Edition*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 2012.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987.

Halivni, David Weiss. *Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses*. Westview Press: Boulder, 1997.

Shapiro, Marc B. *The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised*. Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004.

Schwartz, Baruch J. "The Pentateuch as Scripture and the Challenge of Biblical Criticism: Responses of Modern Thinkers and Scholars." *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* ed. Benjamin D. Sommer. NYU Press: New York, 2012.