



The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction

By David M. Carr

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In *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible* David Carr rethinks both the methods and historical orientation points for research into the growth of the Hebrew Bible into its present form. Building on his prior work, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart* (Oxford, 2005), he explores both the possibilities and limits of reconstruction of pre-stages of the Bible. The method he advocates is a "methodologically modest" investigation of those pre-stages, utilizing criteria and models derived from his survey of documented examples of textual revision in the Ancient Near East. The result is a new picture of the formation of the Hebrew Bible, with insights on the initial emergence of Hebrew literary textuality, the development of the first Hexateuch, and the final formation of the Hebrew Bible.

Where some have advocated dating the bulk of the Hebrew Bible in a single period, whether relatively early (Neo-Assyrian) or late (Persian or Hellenistic), Carr uncovers specific evidence that the Hebrew Bible contains texts dating across Israelite history, even the early pre-exilic period (10th-9th centuries). He traces the impact of Neo-Assyrian imperialism on eighth and seventh century Israelite textuality. He uses studies of collective trauma to identify marks of the reshaping and collection of traditions in response to the destruction of Jerusalem and Babylonian exile. He develops a picture of varied Priestly reshaping of narrative and prophetic traditions in the Second Temple period, including the move toward eschatological and apocalyptic themes and genres. And he uses manuscript evidence from Qumran and the Septuagint to find clues to the final literary shaping of the proto-Masoretic text, likely under the Hasmonean monarchy.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Carr's bold attempt to challenge one of the most practiced methodologies in biblical studies is very welcome." --*Marginalia*

"David Carr lays out a highly original method for reconstructing the literary history of the Hebrew Bible. On the one hand, he sets forth a paradigm of oral transmission assisted by writing in which memorization plays a central role. On the other, he looks for signs of early literature in such unconventional places as Psalms and the Song of Songs. Refreshingly, Carr bases his proposals on comparative and historical evidence. A major challenge to current trends on both right and left and a remarkable contribution, sure to make a strong and lasting impact."

--Edward L. Greenstein, Professor of Biblical Studies and Straus Distinguished Scholar, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

"David M. Carr offers an exciting new overview of the historical development of the Hebrew Bible. Based upon his extensive knowledge of the biblical texts, scholarship, and the process of writing in the ancient world, Carr posits a model that traces the composition of the Hebrew Bible from monarchic times through the Hasmonean period. Carr's volume will be essential reading for all concerned with Hebrew Bible studies."

--Marvin A. Sweeney, Professor of Hebrew Bible, Claremont School of Theology

"David Carr's new book is a fresh approach to a highly debated problem, the formation of the Hebrew Bible. His prudent methodology is founded in observations on ancient Israel's and Judah's cultural history and bases its reconstructions on documented cases of transmission history. The result is an innovative and intriguing picture of how the Hebrew Bible came about, a discussion embedded in the most recent debates of global scholarship."

-- Konrad Schmid, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Judaism, University of Zurich, Switzerland

"David Carr's Formation of the Hebrew Bible is a fascinating synthesis of his former studies on this topic. Starting with an elaborate and well-documented methodological prologue, his reconstruction of the history of the formation of the Hebrew Bible creates a paradigm for accurate excavation in text archaeology. Moreover, his book provides a well-informed overview of American, European, and Israelite scholarship. Mature students and colleagues will profit richly."

--Jan Christian Gertz, Professor of Old Testament, University of Heidelberg, Germany

"Carr does not brand his work as an *Einleitung*, but it certainly could and should be used as such...Carr

successfully provides us with a well-illustrated foundation suited to the state of biblical scholarship in the early twenty-first century."--*H-Judaic*

About the Author

David M. Carr is Professor of Hebrew Bible at Union Theological Seminary.

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