

LIANE M. FELDMAN

The Story of Sacrifice

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament
141*

Mohr Siebeck

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Edited by

Konrad Schmid (Zürich) · Mark S. Smith (Princeton)
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141



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Ritual and Narrative in the Priestly Source

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-159636-0 / eISBN 978-3-16-159637-7
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-159637-7

ISSN 0940-4155 / eISSN 2568-8359 (Forschungen zum Alten Testament)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset by epline in Böblingen using Minion typeface, printed on non-aging paper by Gulde Druck in Tübingen, and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

*For my mother, Debra Marquis
and in memory of my father, Peter Marquis*

Acknowledgments

My first Hebrew-language graduate seminar as a master's student was on the book of Leviticus in 2011. From the moment I started reading this text, I was captivated by its language, patterns, and, quite frankly, the oddity of the world it described. I told my advisors and mentors that I would write my dissertation on Leviticus and seven years later at the University of Chicago I did just that. That dissertation resembles this book in the way that a purification offering resembles a well-being offering: structurally they may look largely the same, but their substance varies quite a bit. I am grateful to my dissertation advisor, Jeffrey Stackert, and to my dissertation committee, Mira Balberg, Simeon Chavel, and Jonathan Klawans, for their guidance and feedback on that earlier version.

I am grateful to Samuel Boyd and Joel Baden who read early drafts of each of the chapters and provided detailed notes and challenges that ultimately strengthened my arguments in this book. I would like to thank several other friends and colleagues who talked through arguments or read parts of the book: Ashleigh Elser, Annette Reed, Isabel Cranz, Jeffrey Stackert, Catherine Bonesho, and Sarah Wolf. Additionally, I am grateful to my wonderfully supportive colleagues and the outstanding administrators at the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University for their support in the completion of this book.

Many parts of this book were used as the basis for a graduate seminar I taught in Spring 2019 at New York University, and I am grateful to the graduate students in that class for asking incisive questions that sharpened my thinking on a number of issues. In the final stages of writing this book, I received the help of two excellent editors. Sarah Sheckman provided developmental edits on the manuscript and Liz Lundberg did the copy edits. To both, I am grateful. Any remaining errors, of course, are my own. My thanks are due also to Nazeer Bacchus for preparing the biblical and author indexes for this book. I am also grateful to Elena Müller and Tobias Stähler at Mohr Siebeck for helping to guide this book through the publication process.

The process of writing this book was made infinitely more enjoyable by an unparalleled group of friends and colleagues. Known amongst ourselves as the Bible Slackers, Jessie DeGrado, Madadh Richey, and Charles Huff were (virtually) present with me day in and day out for the writing of both the dissertation and the book. Their constant friendship, good humor, endless patience, and

generosity were put to the test as I talked through half-baked ideas, sought resources, lamented frequent moments of writer's block, and celebrated the less-frequent moments of a triumphant breakthrough. I could not have finished this book without them.

I would be remiss if I did not single out one particular friend and colleague who has served as a source of motivation, a constant sounding board for ideas, and an unflagging editor. Candida Moss has been a continuous, irreplaceable presence in my writing routine and in my post-writing breaks. For both, I am deeply grateful.

My husband, Ariel Feldman, is one of the major reasons this book exists today. He has been a willing participant in more conversations about sacrifice and the Priestly Narrative than I can count. His questions always cut right to the point, and he has an uncanny way of pushing me to find the clearest possible explanation for any problem. He has found more lost files than I care to remember and solved more formatting and technical problems than I should admit. This book has benefitted immensely from his intelligence and insight. I remain grateful to him for his unyielding patience at every stage of this project, and for his constant love and encouragement.

For me this book will always be framed by my father's cancer diagnosis and his death just shy of nine months later. Always one to work overtime in the face of a crisis (a trait I inherited from both him and my mother), I began rewriting in earnest the week after his diagnosis. Two weeks before he died, this book was accepted for publication. For as long as I could remember, my father would always make fun of my tendency to tell long-winded, meandering stories. "Get to the point, Liane!" he would say to me time and time again. As I rewrote this book, I kept a post-it note with that advice on my desk. It is my hope that this book honors my Dad's most frequent request and that for once in my life I managed to get to the point. Both of my parents enabled my love of books and never failed to support my dream of one day writing my own. For that reason, and so many others, this book is dedicated to my mother, and written in memory of my father.

New York, May 2020

Liane Feldman

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Abbreviations

Titles of biblical books are abbreviated according to *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). Unless otherwise stated, all translations of biblical texts in this book are my own.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In March 2019, the podcast *On Script* interviewed prominent biblical scholar Robert Alter about his recent translation of the entire Hebrew Bible and its companion volume *The Art of Bible Translation*. The week before, the hosts had asked their guest, Jon Levenson, if he had any questions that he wanted relayed to Robert Alter the next week. Levenson left one question, and near the end of the interview, one of the hosts, Matthew Lynch, posed it to Alter.¹ Alter's response was initially short and to the point:

LYNCH: Here was his question: what made you want to translate the supposedly non-literary portions of the text? The lists, descriptions of sacrifice, the laws? Did you find anything surprisingly literarily of value in those things that you translated?

ALTER: [laughing] To be honest, no.

Alter and Lynch are not unusual in their assumption that sacrificial laws and lists lack literary value. This interaction is quite representative of both scholarly and popular attitudes toward “the supposedly nonliterary portions” of the Hebrew Bible. In the late twentieth century, biblical studies underwent something of a paradigm shift with the introduction of literary criticism and the explicit focus on the rhetoric, style, and “artfulness” of biblical texts instead of their historical context or compositional histories.² This literary turn in biblical studies, however, largely jettisoned the laws and discarded the sacrificial instructions. These texts have often been seen as nonliterary, and thus not as deserving of attention and analysis. They may supplement or complement biblical narrative, but they are not themselves part of the narrative; they are never themselves literary.³

¹ Robert Alter, (Robert Alter – The Art of Bible Translation), Interview with Dru Johnson and Matthew Lynch, *On Script*, Podcast audio, March 26, 2019, <https://onscript.study/podcast/robert-alter-the-art-of-bible-translation/>. (This exchange begins at 35:49.)

² For a more thorough discussion of the literary turn in biblical studies, see Steven Weitzman, “Before and After The Art of Biblical Narrative,” *Prooftexts* 27 (2007): 191–210.

³ More recently literary approaches have been extended to legal texts, and a school of law as/and literature scholarship has arisen such as Adele Berlin, “Numinous Nomos: On the Relationship between Narrative and Law,” in *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, eds. Saul Olyan and Robert C. Culley (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 25–31; Chaya Halberstam, “The Art of Biblical Law,” *Prooftexts* 27 (2007): 345–364; Assnat Bartor, *Reading Law as Narrative: A Study in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010); Simeon Chavel, *Oracular Law and Priestly Historiography in the Torah*, FAT II 71 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). Such treatments of the

Alter's dismissal of the literary value of lists, laws, and sacrifice is an example of a bigger problem in literary approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible. A pronouncement of literary value (or lack thereof) often has more to do with a particular interpreter's sensibilities or theological convictions than with any aspect of the text itself. Leviticus can be ignored, set aside, or skimmed over because it is perceived as boring and thus labeled as nonliterary. In the case of Alter, he goes on to explain why he does not find Leviticus in particular to have literary value, noting

I'm not a vegetarian, but I'm not that big a meat-eater, and I don't even particularly care to go into butcher shops, so all these instructions about how you slice up the animal for sacrifice and so forth, it did not speak to my heart.⁴

Alter's explanation for his distaste with Leviticus echoes another prominent literary scholar, Julius Wellhausen, writing more than a century before.

But it was in vain that I looked for the light which was to be shed from this source on the historical and prophetic books. On the contrary, my enjoyment of the latter was marred by the Law; it did not bring them any nearer me, but intruded itself uneasily, like a ghost that makes a noise indeed, but is not visible and really effects nothing.⁵

Both of these statements express a similar concern: that the legal (or ritual) portions of the Pentateuch obstruct the scholar's experience of the real story being told.

Both Julius Wellhausen in 1899 and Robert Alter in 2019 assume that these texts were composed to speak to their heart or for their enjoyment. One scholar's squeamishness with slaughter and another's boredom with legal discourse becomes the basis for the wholesale dismissal of these writings as nonliterary, and thus as nonvaluable. Alter's interview reveals the persistence of the premise that descriptions of sacrifice are boring, irrelevant, and without any value. As has been well documented, Wellhausen's distaste of law was a symptom of his German Protestantism, and his belief that legalism represents a degradation of true religion.⁶ This view has been rightly decried as anti-Semitic (not to mention

sacrificial materials are still largely lacking in biblical studies, with the exception of the work done by scholars such as Watts and Bibb, though these studies still deploy literary methods to answer historical questions. See James W. Watts, *Ritual and Rhetoric in Leviticus: From Sacrifice to Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Bryan D. Bibb, *Ritual Words and Narrative Worlds in the Book of Leviticus* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2009). More recently in the field of rabbinic literature, Mira Balberg has offered a compelling approach to understanding descriptions and discussions of sacrifice as literature. See Mira Balberg, *Blood for Thought: The Reinvention of Sacrifice in Early Rabbinic Literature* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017).

⁴ Alter, "On Script Interview."

⁵ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York, NY: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 3.

⁶ See the discussion of the legacy of Wellhausen in Jeffrey Stackert, *A Prophet Like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 194–208.

anti-Catholic) in the past century.⁷ Yet Alter's view is accepted, and received with a sympathetic chuckle from the hosts of this podcast. Is this because he speaks in terms of "literary value" rather than Wellhausen's construct of theological value? Perhaps. Yet Alter's statement is no less problematic than Wellhausen's. The assumption that literary value is something that must be determined by a modern critic betrays the underlying belief that we, as moderns, know what counts as literature. It asserts that we, as twenty-first century readers of a mid-first millennium BCE text, know better than its authors and its implied audience what counts as literary and what deserves to be read as literature.

What Alter and Wellhausen (and dozens of scholars between them) share in common is the expectation that literature produces an affectual response; it makes the reader feel something. Yet what they ignore is that the implied reader of these texts is not them, nor is it us. It is not our affectual response that should matter, but rather the affectual response that is being constructed for the implied reader of a story. In the case of the various texts that make up the Hebrew Bible, that implied reader is a mid-first-millennium ancient Israelite. We know that first millennium readers did find value in these texts precisely because they continued to read, interpret, and rewrite them. The acknowledgment of the temporal and physical separation between us and them and the importance of the socio-historical context of ancient literature is the work of historical criticism. In the case of pentateuchal scholarship especially, the work of historical criticism has also meant determining the compositional history of the text(s) in question.

Even though historical criticism and literary criticism are understood as separate methodological approaches today, this is a relatively recent development. Earlier generations of historical critics, most of whom were almost entirely focused on identifying strata within the Pentateuch, were seen as literary critics.⁸ This iteration of the historical-critical approach has been rightly criticized for its hyper-focus on the reconstruction of an original textual stratum of a text and its frequent ignorance of literary devices and rhetorical structure.⁹ Indeed, more recent literary analyses of the Pentateuch have eschewed concerns with stratification and compositional history and instead perform a final-form reading of the text, thus denying any need for historical-critical methods.¹⁰ While the critiques of compositional history-focused analyses raised by literary critics are

⁷ For example, see the discussion in Susanne Scholz, "Lederhosen Hermeneutics: Toward a Feminist Sociology of German White Male Old Testament Interpretations," in *The Bible as Political Artifact*; (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2017), 126–134.

⁸ See, for example, the discussion in John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament, Revised and Expanded: Method in Biblical Study* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 20–29.

⁹ See especially Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 13–21.

¹⁰ Jean Louis Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told Us": *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 1–3; J. Andrew Dearman, *Reading*

valid, the answer to this problem cannot be to ignore the sociohistorical context of these compositions entirely. Literary norms and even referents within a story are conditioned by the sociohistorical context in which a text was written. While an ahistorical reading of a piece of literature is certainly possible, such a reading threatens to reveal more about the reader and their world than the text and its world.

As modern readers and interpreters of an ancient text, we cannot help but import our own ideals and sensibilities. Cognizance of these ideals is essential, and a recognition of their divergence from ancient literary constructs is necessary. Analysis of ancient literature must begin with the self-identified literary categories within a text. How is the text presented? What claims are made by its structure? Jacqueline Vayntrub has argued with respect to poetic forms in the Hebrew Bible that “the inclusion and configuration of literary categories in a hierarchy or taxonomy are not natural facts of ancient Israelite literary culture, they are specific claims the authors make.”¹¹ The same can, and must, be said of legal and ritual forms. The fact that these ritual texts exist within a narrative composition and are, like much of biblical poetry, framed as direct speech of a character within the story, marks them as literary whether we (as modern interpreters) like it or not.

This book addresses the question of the literary value of the supposedly nonliterary sacrificial texts. The vast majority of sacrificial instructions in the Hebrew Bible are found in one specific stratum of the Pentateuch, conventionally referred to as “P,” an abbreviation for “priestly.” While there is fierce debate about compositional issues in the field of pentateuchal studies, one point of general agreement is the identification of this particular stratum.¹² Its exact nature is still debated, with some scholars arguing that it is an independent source, others suggesting it is a redactional layer, and still others arguing that it is somewhere in between a source and a redaction.¹³ This book takes as its

Hebrew Bible Narratives, Essentials of Biblical Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 13–15.

¹¹ Jacqueline E. Vayntrub, *Beyond Orality: Biblical Poetry on Its Own Terms* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 5.

¹² See the discussion of this conclusion in Reinhard G. Kratz, “The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, eds. Thomas Dozeman, et al. FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 34.

¹³ For the argument that this is an independent source, see, for example, Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 169–192; Stackert, *A Prophet Like Moses*, 19–26. For the argument that it is a redactional layer, see, for example, Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 293–325; Rolf Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, JSOT Supplement Series 89 (Berlin, New York: DeGruyter, 1977), 136–170; Antony F. Campbell, “The Priestly Text: Redaction or Source?” in *Biblische Theologie und Gesellschaftlicher Wandel*, eds. Georg Braulik, et al. (Freiburg: Herder,

starting point the idea that this stratum is an independent literary composition that begins with the creation of the world in Gen 1 and continues through the death of Moses in Deut 34. Rather than referring to it by the siglum “P,” I will describe this work as the “Priestly Narrative” throughout this book, both in deference to the tradition of describing this stratum as priestly and as a regular signal of my underlying assumption that this stratum is best understood as an independent narrative.

While the Priestly Narrative itself is made up of roughly equal parts narrative and ritual material, the focus of this book is on the literary function of its ritual materials. At the core of this book is the assertion that there is literary value in these supposedly “nonliterary” texts; that the descriptions of sacrifice in Leviticus along with its laws are as much a part of the story as the poetic-sounding tale of the creation of the world. In many ways, this book is a rejoinder to those scholars who would say that instructions about how to slice up an animal for sacrifice cannot be literature. Furthermore, this book is an attempt to chart a path between traditional historical-critical approaches to the study of pentateuchal priestly literature that focus on the recovery of the earliest stratum of a priestly document and literary approaches to the Bible that focus on a final-form text stripped of that which is foreign to our modern context. The central thesis of this book is not only that the legal and ritual materials in the Priestly Narrative are thoroughly literary, but that they were composed as literature. They are not simply repurposed older materials; they are essential components of the story and its various elements. To separate the narrative and the ritual components of the Priestly Narrative is to destroy the internal structure and logic of the story.

This is not to say that the Priestly Narrative does not have its own literary history or that the identification of strata within this text is unimportant. On the contrary, this book is deeply concerned with the diachronic development of the Priestly Narrative. It takes as its starting point, however, the final form of the source-critically recovered Priestly Narrative and rejects the idea that changes in genre are indicative of changes in authorship.¹⁴ By starting with the

1993), 35–45; Bénédicte Lemmelijn, “The So-Called ‘Priestly’ Layer in Exod 7,14–11,10: ‘Source’ and/or/nor ‘Redaction’?,” *Revue Biblique* 109 (2002): 486–492. For the argument that it is between a source and a redaction see especially Erhard Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (Berlin; New York, NY: DeGruyter, 1990), 229–232; Erhard Blum, “Issues and Problems in the Contemporary Debate Regarding the Priestly Writings,” in *The Strata of the Priestly Writings: Contemporary Debate and Future Directions*, eds. Sarah Shectman and Joel S. Baden (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2009), 31–44.

¹⁴ This book takes the entirety of the Priestly Narrative as its starting point in large part because there is a broad consensus among pentateuchal scholars as to the general borders of this material. Debates continue among scholars as to the compositional history of this source, and this book certainly participates in those debates. For more on the agreement and debate about the pentateuchal priestly materials, see Kratz, “The Pentateuch,” 33–38.

broad literary genre of the Priestly Narrative – prose narrative history – questions of literary coherence are framed first and foremost in narratological terms.¹⁵ This is to say that the defining elements of narrative such as plot, characterization, narrator, space, and chronology become the primary means of analyzing this text for literary coherence. However, because so much of the Priestly Narrative is concerned with ritual and cultic matters, questions of the internal consistency of ritual logic and cultic categories also act as important indicators of broader literary coherence. Lexical and stylistic criteria will be set aside entirely.¹⁶

While questions of compositional history will be a part of the discourse of this book, they are not its central focus. This book is concerned, first and foremost, with the relationship between ritual and narrative. More than half of the priestly pentateuchal writings are made up of ritual instructions and narrated ritual performance. The ritual instructions are framed as divine speech and the characters described in the narrated ritual performances are the same characters found in non-cultic scenes in the Priestly Narrative. Nearly all of the ritual materials in the Priestly Narrative are found in a single extended episode about the inauguration of the tabernacle – a wilderness tent shrine that serves as Yahweh’s home.¹⁷ The story of this inauguration, which happens over the course of eight days, comprises nearly fifty percent of the entire Priestly Narrative.¹⁸ The passage of time in the world of the story slows to a crawl from Exod 40–Num 8 as the divine home takes shape in the midst of the community. But what is the purpose of this ritual instruction? What relationship do they have to the rest of the Priestly Narrative? What role, if any, does ritual instruction play in the development of the plot of the story? And how does our understanding of the Priestly Narrative change by reading its ritual and narrative components together? Taking the majority of the inauguration of the tabernacle as its central case study, these are the central questions that animate this study.

¹⁵ For an argument that the Priestly Narrative should be understood as a prose narrative history, see Simeon Chavel, “Oracular Novellae and Biblical Historiography: Through the Lens of Law and Narrative,” *Clio* 39 (2009): 1–2.

¹⁶ This is precisely the opposite of the approach taken by Israel Knohl in his influential study of the stratification of the priestly materials (*The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007]).

¹⁷ The contents of Leviticus are, for the most part, instructions given by Yahweh about how to perform sacrifices and how to maintain the tabernacle’s ritual purity. They are not law in the way that Exod 20–23 are law, governing the behaviors and social relationships between individuals. Rather, these ritual instructions are designed to govern the relationship between the individual and Yahweh or in some cases between the entire Israelite community and Yahweh. For further discussion of the relationship between ritual and law, see Mira Balberg, “Ritual Studies and the Study of Rabbinic Literature,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 16 (2017): 73, 75.

¹⁸ See Chart 1: Plot Pacing in the Priestly Narrative on page 203.

1.1 Ritual (Law) and Narrative in Pentateuchal Scholarship

The separation of law and narrative has been the cornerstone of more than a century of scholarship. For much of the twentieth and twenty-first century, the work of Martin Noth was deeply influential for scholars of the pentateuchal priestly materials. Noth's ideas were built on those of scholars in the generations preceding him, especially those of Graf, whose entire thesis of pentateuchal composition was built on the separation of the legal and the narrative in the priestly stratum.¹⁹ Noth's conclusions have been so widely adopted that they are worth quoting in full.

It can hardly be disputed that in its total structure P is a *narrative work*. This judgment holds true even more exclusively, however, than is commonly assumed. For, mistakenly or at least misleadingly, P has been used in general as a kind of collective term under which the actual P narrative, whose emphasis falls on the portrayal of the establishment of the legitimate cult at Sinai (Ex. *25–31, *35–40, Lev. 8–9) and on the constitution of the community of the twelve tribes (Num. *1–9), has been lumped together with those legal parts which are loosely connected with the Sinai situation only by introductory formulas. To be sure, the P legal sections share with the P narrative a marked cultic and ritual interest and hence also a certain language and terminology native to the Jerusalem priestly circles; but literarily these sections have nothing to do with the P narrative originally ... it so obviously breaks the narrative connection which unquestionably exists between Ex.*25–31 and *35–40 on the one hand, and Lev 8–9 on the other, that it is in general justifiably excluded from the original P narrative and may have had no particular literary relation to the P narrative at all.²⁰

Noth is adamant that the pentateuchal priestly materials do constitute a narrative, but he is insistent that such a narrative must absolutely exclude the legal portions of the text (what I have called its ritual instructions), which he labels as a secondary addition to the narrative. This basic framework was largely followed for much of the twentieth century.²¹

¹⁹ Karl Heinrich Graf, *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig, 1866).

²⁰ Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1981), 8–9, emphasis original.

²¹ Often this adoption of Noth's schema is implicit. Discussions of the ritual materials in Leviticus are simply glossed over or ignored entirely, especially in discussions of compositional history of the priestly materials. One exception to this is the Holiness Code, which is occasionally treated explicitly, but always to note its secondary nature. See, for example, Reinhard G. Kratz, *The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament* (London; New York, NY: T&T Clark International, 2000), 99–100; Suzanne Boorer, *The Vision of the Priestly Narrative: Its Genre and Hermeneutics of Time* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 67; Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006); Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994); Cross, *Canaanite Myth*. A recent analysis by Gaines similarly ignores the ritual materials in Leviticus, but explicitly claims that this should not be understood as making claims for the secondary nature of the legal texts (Jason M. H. Gaines, *The Poetic Priestly Source* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015], 11).

The study of the ritual materials took something of a backseat to analyses of compositional history and discussions about whether the narrative parts of the priestly writings were an independent source or a redactional layer until the late twentieth century when a series of in-depth studies were done of the ritual and legal elements of the priestly writings.²² This ritual turn reached its apex in Jacob Milgrom's three-volume commentary on Leviticus.²³ Over the course of 3,000 pages, Milgrom's commentaries delve into the minutia of ritual, sacrifice, purity laws, and the Holiness Code. While Milgrom is superficially interested in compositional history in these volumes, his most brilliant and insightful moments are found in his analyses of the fine details of ritual. In his review of the first volume of Milgrom's commentary, Rolf Rendtorff offered an apt description of the state of the study of priestly literature when he identified essentially two different approaches to the analysis of priestly literature. The first approach he identified is concerned only with the narrative elements of the story and their parallels to non-priestly materials. The second approach, on the other hand, is concerned solely with the ritual and legal materials and their broader cultic context.²⁴ Milgrom's commentary, of course, is best understood as part of the second group, along with the work of a number of scholars after him.²⁵

In the midst of the publication of Milgrom's commentaries and Rendtorff's analysis of the state of the field, a handful of scholars began to reject this implicit bifurcation of the priestly source into its ritual and narrative components and instead argued that they must be read together. While this push to read ritual and narrative together marks a significant advance in the study of priestly literature, many of these works only cursorily treat the interaction of ritual and narrative elements and privilege the analysis of one mode of discourse over the other. For example, Christophe Nihan was among the first scholars to do a sus-

²² See, for example, Rolf Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers im Alten Israel*, WMANT 24 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen, 1967); Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1985); David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1987); N. Kiuchi, *Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature Its Meaning and Function*, JSOT Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987).

²³ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 3 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, 3A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

²⁴ Rolf Rendtorff, "Two Kinds of P? Some Reflections on the Occasion of the Publishing of Jacob Milgrom's Commentary on Leviticus 1–16," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 18 (1993): 75.

²⁵ Roy E. Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005); Naphtali S. Meshel, *The 'Grammar' of Sacrifice: A Generativist Study of the Israelite Sacrificial System in the Priestly Writings with The 'Grammar' of *Σ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

tained analysis of Leviticus that gave attention to both its compositional history and the logic of its ritual materials while also situating the book in its broader narrative context.²⁶ Yet even though he is more attentive to the broader narrative context than many previous scholars, Nihan's work still focuses primarily on the internal consistency of the ritual instructions in order to make compositional arguments. Similarly, Baruch Schwartz, who has clearly argued that priestly "law and narrative are inseparably interdependent," tends to focus his work on the exposition of the logic of individual legal elements or on the literary features of priestly legal discourse.²⁷ In Joel Baden's work, the opposite tendency appears: the ritual elements are subsumed into the broader narrative and details of sacrificial procedure are glossed over in favor of broader readings about the narrative whole.²⁸ The interdependence of law and narrative, then, is a strong theoretical position for this school of scholars, but the implications or details of this interdependence are not typically in the foreground of their treatments of particular passages or problems.²⁹

In the last ten years, there have been at least three recent studies that have engaged more fully with the relationship between ritual and narrative in specific priestly texts. In all three cases, these studies have sought to understand how particular aspects of legal materials serve characterization and plot development within the Priestly Narrative.³⁰ Hanna Liss has approached Lev 11–15 from a

²⁶ Christophe Nihan, *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study in the Composition of the Book of Leviticus*, FAT II 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

²⁷ Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Priestly Account of the Theophany on Sinai," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, eds. Michael V. Fox, et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 108. See, for example, Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Prohibitions Concerning the 'Eating' of Blood," in *Priesthood and Cult in Ancient Israel*, eds. Gary Anderson and Saul Olyan, vol. 125 of *JSOT Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Bearing of Sin in Priestly Literature," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom*, eds. David P. Wright, et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995); Baruch J. Schwartz, "'Profane' Slaughter and the Integrity of the Priestly Code," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67 (1996); Baruch J. Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, eds. M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Baruch J. Schwartz, "Miqrā' Qodesh and the Structure of Leviticus 23," in *Purity, Holiness, and Identity in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Memory of Susan Haber*, eds. Carl S. Ehrlich, et al. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 305 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013).

²⁸ See, for example, Baden, *Composition*, 169–192.

²⁹ Indeed, in most of these approaches, narrative-oriented readings are at the core of their arguments, but substantive engagement with narratological concepts such as plot structure, pacing, focalization, and characterization are surprisingly undertheorized or even absent. For a more detailed critique of this shortcoming of recent neo-documentary approaches, see Angela Roskop Erisman, "Roskop Erisman om Baden, 'The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis,'" *H-Net Reviews* (2012).

³⁰ In all three cases, it is the specifically legal materials (primarily purity laws and sabbath laws) that these scholars have chosen to address, and not the sacrificial instructions in Lev 1–7 or 16–17.

literary perspective and sought to explain how these detailed purity laws serve to construct the character of the Israelites within the story.³¹ Similarly, Jeffrey Stackert and Jeremy Schipper have argued that certain laws shape and are shaped by the construction of characters in the priestly narrative, while Simeon Chavel has taken a broader theoretical approach to the relationship of law and narrative in literature and developed an argument about the mutual generativity of the two modes of discourse.³² While Schwartz, Baden, Nihan, and Milgrom successfully pushed for a shift in the conceptualization of the relationship between priestly ritual and narrative, Liss, Stackert, Schipper, and Chavel represent some of the first efforts to think seriously about the specific ways in which the interdependence of law and narrative must change our understanding of the texts in question.³³

While the strict separation of ritual and narrative has begun to break down in some more recent treatments of the pentateuchal priestly materials, the tendency still remains to treat the two as separate genres or to focus analysis primarily on one or the other. The fact of the matter is that unless one wishes to argue that all ritual and legal materials are a late and secondary addition to the text, an argument that has largely been avoided in recent scholarship, the question of the relationship between ritual and narrative must be central to any analysis of the pentateuchal priestly writings. This is the central question of this book: what does a narratological analysis of the pentateuchal priestly writings look like if it takes into account the ritual instructions in Lev 1–17? How does one read sacrificial instructions as literature and what does it mean to do so? This book builds on the post-Milgrom turn in the study of priestly literature but does so while pushing in a new direction that centers the literary nature of these ritual materials and continually interrogates the relationship between ritual instructions and narrative discourse in the Priestly Narrative.

1.2 Literary Ritual

The question at the heart of this book is not only how ritual and narrative interact, but also what it means to analyze written ritual instructions that are part of a narrative composition. In other words, what is literary ritual and how should

³¹ Hanna Liss, “Ritual Purity and the Construction of Identity: The Literary Function of the Laws of Purity in the Book of Leviticus,” in *The Books of Leviticus and Numbers*, ed. Thomas Römer (Leuven: Peeters, 2008).

³² Jeremy Schipper and Jeffrey Stackert, “Blemishes, Camouflage, and Sanctuary Service: The Priestly Deity and His Attendants,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 2 (2013). Chavel, “Oracular Novellae,” 1–2.

³³ While not dealing explicitly with law or ritual, Angela Roskop has made a compelling case for the literary use of other “nonnarrative” priestly texts, in this case the geographical itineraries in Exodus and Numbers. See Angela R. Roskop, *The Wilderness Itineraries: Genre, Geography, and the Growth of Torah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

it be interpreted? A lot of work has been done on the idea of the textualization of ritual in other fields.³⁴ Much of this work, however, has been focused on the relationship between performed rituals and written ritual instructions and has argued (rightly) that performed rituals are not the same as descriptions or instructions of rituals found in texts. Indeed, many theories of ritual have been developed based on ethnographic studies carried out by scholars who observed communities perform their ritual practices.³⁵ While this recent work is helpful in some ways, it falls short in addressing the issue of ritual instruction in the Priestly Narrative. The discussion of textualized ritual assumes some kind of direct relationship between actual performed ritual and written ritual. The nature of that relationship can vary, but the existence of a performed ritual remains an important part of the analysis. The question then becomes how the process of writing, textualizing, ritual practice changes it or makes it distinct from that actual ritual practice.

Textualized ritual materials should not be analyzed in the same way as ethnographic data gathered from observing practiced ritual, though this has often been the case, especially with ritual theorists interested in the Bible.³⁶ Mira Balberg has recently highlighted two particular problems with the conflation of practiced ritual and textualized ritual: 1) assumptions underlying the study of ritual as symbolic, and 2) the long-standing assumption that ancient ritual texts are reliable historical witnesses.³⁷ Both of these issues are worth treating in more detail as one or both of these assumptions are found in much of the work done on biblical ritual in the last century.

The first, and perhaps more pervasive, issue is with the rise of the study of ritual as symbolic.³⁸ Those scholars who make an argument for the symbolic

³⁴ For the treatment of textualized ritual in other corpora, see in classics Alessandro Barchiesi, et al., eds., *Rituals in Ink: A Conference on Religion and Literary Production in Ancient Rome Held at Stanford University in February 2002* (München: Franz Steiner, 2004). In Islamic studies, see A. Kevin Reinhart, "What to Do with Ritual Texts: Islamic Fiqh Texts and the Study of Islamic Ritual," in *Islamic Studies in the Twenty-First Century: Transformations and Continuities*, eds. Léon Buskens and Annemarie van Sandwijk. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016. In biblical studies more broadly, Grimes has approached the issue of writing and ritual in an essay in his book *The Craft of Ritual Studies*, but he is more concerned with writing about ritual than written ritual itself. See Ronald L. Grimes, *The Craft of Ritual Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 55–94.

³⁵ See, for example, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer, A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940); Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

³⁶ See, for example, William Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Moshe Halbertal, *On Sacrifice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

³⁷ Balberg, "Ritual Studies."

³⁸ Recent symbolic approaches to the study of biblical ritual include Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism*