



## Inner-Biblical Exegesis as a Form of Reception: A Clarification of Methodology

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### **Abstract**

*There are certain assumptions with inner-biblical exegesis which, in light of reception theory, can not be maintained. Reception theory stresses the social context and function of the act of reading which is also present in inner-biblical exegesis and must be analyzed. Hence, a proper methodology is needed to study inner-biblical exegesis. Through comparative analysis between reception theory and inner-biblical exegesis, in this article, I argue that inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception. Two distinctive features of inner-biblical exegesis—directionality and intentionality—fit nicely with the concept in reception theory—the first- and second-degree texts. Furthermore, seeing inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception necessitates an understanding of its social function as it is influenced by and seeks to influence its social-historical context. Therefore, studying inner-biblical exegesis is not only limited to identifying strategies of interpretation but also its social-historical context and, hence, its social function.*

**Keywords:** *inner-biblical exegesis, reception theory, methodology*

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## INTRODUCTION

The study of inner-biblical exegesis has been done for a long time. However, there are certain assumptions with inner-biblical exegesis which, in light of the recent development of literary theory—in this case, reception theory—can not be maintained. First, it is assumed that the author who exegetes earlier text employs a certain method to produce the meaning from the text. Second, related to the first, it is assumed that the author gets the meaning purely from his technique of interpretation. These assumptions, in turn, make the research on inner-biblical exegesis primarily describe the author's method of exegesis while neglecting the social-historical context of exegesis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William M. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16.

Meanwhile, reception theory stresses the social context and function of the act of reading. In this paper, I argue that reception theory can be implemented in studying inner-biblical exegesis to clarify the methodology of studying inner-biblical exegesis; that is, inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception. First, I will describe the reception theory. Second, I will describe inner-biblical exegesis. Third, I will show that inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception and some benefits of doing so. Last, I will suggest a method for studying inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception and conclude this paper.

The method of this study is comparative analysis. First, i will review relevant primary and secondary sources on reception theory and inner-biblical exegesis to analyze the essential characteristics of each of them. Second, I will compare both practices to argue for seeing inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception. Third, I will propose a method to analyze inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Reception Theory**

Reception theory is a theory that explains the act of reception of a text by a reader—that is, the reader’s reactions when reading a text.<sup>2</sup> It is concerned with the texts’ effect on the readers.<sup>3</sup> Ika Willis says,

Reception involves looking at texts from the point of view of the readers, viewers, listeners, spectators and audiences who read, watch or listen to cultural productions, interpret them, and respond to them in a myriad of different ways.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jan van Luxemburg, Mieke Bal, and Willem G. Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, trans. Dick Hartoko (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1986), 79; Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory: Studies in the Rezeptionsgeschichte of Romans 13.1-7* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2012), 70. Ika Willis offers three areas in which the word “reception” is employed: “reception study, which analyses how readers and audiences interpret and use texts; reception history, which tracks the afterlives of texts and/or investigates the history of reading and the history of books; and reception theory, which explores the nature of interpretation, language and meaning itself.” Ika Willis, *Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 5th ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 333.

<sup>4</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 1. So, the first reaction in the reception of a text is interpretation. Reception theory, as a part of reader-oriented criticism, shares a similar concern with the reading process: “What is the reading process—that is, how does the reader construct meaning or make sense of a text?” Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2011), 75.

It was first formulated at the University of Constance (hence the Konstanz School) with Hans Robert Jauss, a student of Hans-Georg Gadamer,<sup>5</sup> as one of its major proponents during the late 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Its emergence was driven by complex dynamics between political, social, and academic life<sup>7</sup> and triggered by Jauss' inaugural lecture titled "What is and for what purpose does one study literary history?"—later revised to "Literary history as a provocation to literary scholarship"<sup>8</sup>—in April 1967. At that time, Jauss was concerned with the decline and weakness of the study of literature, namely the disregard for the historical nature of literature.<sup>9</sup> He sought to solve this problem by shifting the focus of literary study from authors and texts to reception and reading—hence, reception theory.<sup>10</sup>

Nowadays, reception theory is categorized under reader-oriented criticism for its inclusion of the reader in discovering the meaning of a text rather than relying solely on

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<sup>5</sup> Jauss' reception theory is influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer who is influenced by Martin Heidegger, namely, on the historicity/situatedness of the reader. Jauss' reception theory can be conceived as the methodological implementation of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics in literary studies. Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 5th ed. (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 50; Víctor Manuel Morales Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory: Studies in the Rezeptionsgeschichte of Romans 13.1-7* (Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2012), 26, 34.

<sup>6</sup> David Paul Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants: How 2000 Years of Biblical Interpretation Can Shed New Light on Old Texts*, 2nd ed., 2015, 3; Robert Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Methuen, 1984), xi, xiii; Ika Willis, *Reception* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 4; Paul de Man, "Introduction," in Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xi.

<sup>7</sup> Holub, "Reception Theory: School of Constance," 319-320. Holub says, "The reevaluation of the canon, the demand for a critical approach which had relevance beyond the walls of academia, and the politicization of literature itself . . . seemed to evoke an altered view of literary theory. On the other hand, scholars themselves, . . . started to recognize the inadequacy of the dominant practices in their discipline, especially close reading and 'practical criticism'" (Holub, "Reception Theory: School of Constance," 320).

<sup>8</sup> See Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 3-45. Robert Holub argues that this essay was the most important document for reception theory movement. Robert Holub, "Reception Theory: School of Constance," in *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden, vol. 8 of *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 321. However, Jauss' reception theory itself changed. One of the key ideas in his lecture in 1967, the horizon of expectations, is removed from the center of his theory as early as 1972 (Holub, *Reception Theory*, 73).

<sup>9</sup> Wlad Godzich, "Introduction," in Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Holub, *Reception Theory*, 53; Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Holub, "Reception Theory: School of Constance," 321. This shift of focus may be associated with reader-response criticism but Holub argues that reception theory is different from reader-response criticism (Holub, *Reception Theory*, xii-xiii). Their difference is mainly in the concept of the reader and the importance of historical consciousness. Renate Lachmann, "Poetics and Hermeneutics (Poetik Und Hermeneutik)," in *Theoretical Schools and Circles in the Twentieth-Century Humanities: Literary Theory, History, Philosophy*, ed. Marina Grishakova and Silvi Salupere (New York: Routledge, 2015), 231; Robert Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation: Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice* (London: T & T Clark, 2014), 9.

the text.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, reception theory itself is used in many disciplines (e.g. media studies and biblical studies) with different methodologies and objects.<sup>12</sup> Given these complexities, it is beyond the scope of this section to fully elucidate either the uniqueness of reception theory compared to other strands of reader-oriented criticism or the many methodologies of reception theory when applied in many disciplines to different objects. This section will only elaborate on several interrelated key factors in text-to-text reception theory: the text, the reader, and the meaning.<sup>13</sup>

## **The Text**

Reception theory highlights the historical aspect of the text. This aspect can be understood in two main dimensions. First, the text is bound by history. The production of the text is never done in a vacuum. The text is born out of previous texts and discourses—that is, within a tradition.<sup>14</sup> The production of the text is also affected by its social context.<sup>15</sup> This means that the text has its concerns and follows certain conventions, formed and informed by its tradition and social context. This dimension of the historical aspect of the text reflects the past life of the text.

With that in mind, texts can be classified into first- and second-degree texts. The text which comes later is the second-degree text while the text that the latter text receives

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<sup>11</sup> Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 75. Bressler divides reader-oriented criticism into three main divisions: structuralism, phenomenology, and subjective criticism. He creates these divisions based on the reader's influences on the interpretation. He places Jauss, along with Wolfgang Iser, under "phenomenology" with both the text and the reader somewhat having equal influence on the interpretation process. Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 76-80. See also Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 49-54.

<sup>12</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 3. Willis says there are four objects of critical attention in reception study which are interrelated: "rewritings and textual afterlives; readers; reading systems and practices; and meaning itself." Willis, *Reception*, 31-33. Meanwhile, research on reception can be divided into two major branches: reception history and research on contemporary receptors. Reception history can be further divided into text-focused or reader-focused. Text-focused reception history analyzes the reception of a text down the history while reader-focused reception history analyzes the changes in attitudes of homogenous readers. Van Luxemburg, Bal, and Weststeijn, *Pengantar Ilmu Sastra*, 80-82.

<sup>13</sup> Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 40. Willis says, "'Tradition' can be understood, then, as a name for the organized system of texts, genres, models and modes against which we read individual texts. . . . We necessarily write and read within a tradition, a series of texts which form the matrix of possibilities against which we understand new texts as repeating and transforming earlier texts and conventions." Willis, *Reception*, 60. Thus, a tradition contains both form (literary structure/genre) and idea. Therefore, a text may inherit form and/or ideas from previous texts within a tradition.

<sup>15</sup> The tradition itself is affected by social factors. It is a selective tradition. Willis says, "Traditions are produced not just by intertextual relations, but by social, institutional, and economic factors working in a complex relationship with the textual." Willis, *Reception*, 65.

is called the first-degree text.<sup>16</sup> However, the second-degree text can be a first-degree text if it becomes the soil out of which another text is born. Thus, in this sequence of texts, a text is never alone: it has predecessors and progenitors.

Second, the text affects history. However, it is not purely the text itself that affects history. This is because the text has the potential for the creation of meaning only through its interaction with the reader which unfolds over time.<sup>17</sup> The text with its concerns and horizon engages in a dialectical conversation with the reader in bringing out its impact on the reader.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the impact of a text is brought through the activity of the reader who receives the text and gives birth to a new text.<sup>19</sup> This dimension of the historical aspect of the text reflects the future life of the text.

To conclude, in reception theory, the historical aspect of the text is highlighted. The text is bound by history and has its concern and follows certain conventions. The text also affects history through a dialectical conversation with the readers. This future life of the text opens the inquiry of the reader by whom the text is made alive and present.

## The Reader

Reception theory highlights the role of the reader in the act of reading.<sup>20</sup> It maintains that the reader plays an active-subjective role instead of a passive-objective role. There are three reasons for this. First, it is an active-subjective reading because it is the reader who reads the text. The reader, same with the text, also belongs to a particular social-historical situation with its particular concerns.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, when reading, the reader brings along his/her question to which the text is an answer.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the text and the reader engage in a dialectical conversation of question and answer with both standing together as participants in this dialogue.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants*, 9; Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 9-10.

<sup>18</sup> John Riches, "Reception History as a Challenge to Biblical Theology," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (2013): 180-1.

<sup>19</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 12. If a text fails to engage in a dialectical conversation with the readers then it will not generate second-degree texts and thus dead. However, latter generations of readers may find the text to be meaningful to be engaged and thus the text becomes alive again.

<sup>20</sup> Jauss even asserts that the reader plays an essential role. Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ann B. Dobie, *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2012), 131.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory*, 23-24.

Second, it is an active-subjective reading because the reader is interpreting the text in the very act of reading/reception.<sup>24</sup> The reader does not discover an objective meaning of the text because the reader is situated within history—a principle from Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics called *Wirkungsgeschichte*.<sup>25</sup> This principle maintains that the reader can not have an unbiased knowledge of the meaning of the text: the meaning discovered by the reader is always bracketed by his/her social-historical context. Thus, every reading is an act of interpretation and, therefore, subjective.

Third, it is an active-subjective reading because, in the act of reception, the reader may produce new texts—progenitors of first-degree texts—based on his/her reading of the text.<sup>26</sup> The reader may “adapt, appropriate, allude to, continue, critique, comment on, translate, revise or reframe”—that is, rewriting the text.<sup>27</sup> The resulting texts called second-degree texts are loci of reception that contain the reader’s interpretation of the first-degree text.<sup>28</sup> They may come as transformation (difference) and/or continuity (similarity) with the first-degree text.<sup>29</sup> These characteristics of second-degree texts reflect the interpretative strategy/concern of the reader.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, as William M. Schniedewind says:

Interpretation primarily reflects the audience, not the author. It is [*sic*] underscores *reception*, not *intention*. Reception theory looks at literature as a barometer of society rather than of just an individual. Although literature is the creation of authors, these authors are framed as readers within a social and historical context and as part of the ongoing dialectic of reading texts.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in producing second-degree texts based on his/her interpretation, the reader becomes an active author who has his/her particular social-historical context.<sup>32</sup>

To conclude, reception theory argues that the reader plays an active-subjective role in the act of reception. This is because the reader is bringing his/her questions to which the text is an answer, is interpreting the text based on his/her social-historical situation and may produce new texts based on his/her interpretation. If the reader is

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<sup>24</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 2-3; Vásquez, *Contours of a Biblical Reception Theory*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 39.

<sup>30</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 46-47.

<sup>31</sup> Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 5. This means that an author is, first and foremost, a reader of texts.

<sup>32</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 44.

active in reading a text, then where is the meaning of a text located: in the text or the interpretation of the reader? This question leads to the inquiry of meaning.

## The Meaning

Reception theory argues that the meaning of a text is created in the act of reception.<sup>33</sup> The reader and the text contribute together to the creation of meaning.<sup>34</sup> Through the act of reception, the text is made present and meaningful. In reading the text, the reader simultaneously interprets it according to his/her interpretative strategy.<sup>35</sup> First, the reader decodes the alphabet, words, sentences, paragraphs, sections, and the whole text. Second, the reader enters into a dialectical conversation with the text. In this conversation, the horizon of the reader fuses with the horizon of the text. Thus, meaning is dependent on the context of the reader and lies in the consciousness of the reader, not in the text.<sup>36</sup> It is the result of a dialectical conversation between the text and the reader.<sup>37</sup>

This understanding of the production of meaning brings about several implications. First, a first-degree text may have multiple meanings. These meanings are created through the act of reception by unique readers across history. As the readers' horizons differ across history, so is the meaning created.<sup>38</sup> Then, on each reading, the readers may produce second-degree texts based on the meaning created through the reception of the first-degree text.<sup>39</sup> Thus there are second-degree texts spread across history as the actualizations of first-degree text. Therefore, to understand the meaning of first-degree text, it is necessary to read second-degree texts.

Second, besides studying second-degree texts, it is necessary to identify the readers' horizon/context who produce them.<sup>40</sup> In the process of interpretation and

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<sup>33</sup> Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 47; Willis, *Reception*, 1, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 48. Because meaning is the result of interpretation, meaning is not necessarily equal to author's intended meaning. Meaning is understood as the answer to the question which the readers bring when reading the text. Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 77.

<sup>37</sup> Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation*, 3, 41; Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 73-4.

<sup>38</sup> Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 59; Willis, *Reception*, 35. Willis says, "Authors do not create out of nothing, but 'realize, transform or transpose'—that is, actively receive and rework—material which already exists within the system in which they write." Therefore, "Reception is creative [and] active ...." Willis, *Reception*, 41, 44.

<sup>40</sup> Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 10-1.

production of second-degree texts, readers may emphasize, downplay, transform, or dismiss certain elements from the first-degree texts.<sup>41</sup> By identifying the readers' context, the readers' interpretation strategy can be seen as it is influenced by and also influences their context. This is because the readers' interpretation strategies in second-degree texts are reflections of their context.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, to understand the meaning of first-degree text through second-degree texts, it is necessary to identify the readers' context who produce second-degree texts.

To conclude, in reception theory, meaning is understood as the result of a dialectical conversation between the text and the reader. In text-to-text reception, this meaning is codified in second-degree texts as the actualizations of first-degree texts. In text-to-text reception, meaning is "authorial" insofar as readers of first-degree texts produce second-degree texts. It is dependent on the context of the readers as authors of second-degree texts. Thus, the discovery of the first-degree text's meaning is achieved through an investigation of second-degree texts and their context.

These three interrelated key factors of reception theory (the text, the reader, and the meaning) make it unique. The quest is still to understand the meaning of first-degree texts but reception theory is unique in that it seeks to understand the meaning of first-degree texts by its actualizations in second-degree texts created by the readers. Reception theory may shed a different perspective on inner-biblical exegesis which is the subject of the next section.

### **Inner-Biblical Exegesis**

The phrase "inner-biblical exegesis" can be understood as the phenomenon in which earlier biblical texts are appropriated in later biblical texts,<sup>43</sup> as the method employed in the phenomenon,<sup>44</sup> or as the methodology for analyzing that phenomenon.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 39.

<sup>42</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 46.

<sup>43</sup> Sheri L. Klouda, "Applying Fishbane's Hermeneutical Strategies: Aggadic Exegesis in Matthew's Use of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:21-48)," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 46, no. 3 (2004): 20; Lyle M. Eslinger, "Hosea 12:5a and Genesis 32:29: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 5, no. 18 (November 1980): 91; Cody Edds, "The Law, the Fathers, and the Former Prophets: Zechariah and the Search for Deeper Meaning through Old Testament Inner-Biblical Interpretation," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 13, no. 1 (January 2021): 8.

<sup>44</sup> Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Facing Destruction and Exile: Inner-Biblical Exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117, no. 2 (2005): 189.

<sup>45</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, "Inner Biblical Exegesis as a Model for Bridging the 'Then' and 'Now' Gap: Hos 12:1-6," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28, no. 1 (March 1985): 34; Russell L. Meek,

This section understands “inner-biblical exegesis” in the first sense and describes the development of its methodology.

The major work that deals with inner-biblical exegesis is done by Michael Fishbane.<sup>46</sup> In his book, Fishbane seeks to discover the traces of Jewish exegetical tradition by looking at inner-biblical exegesis instances in the Hebrew bible.<sup>47</sup> He classifies them into four categories which are (1) scribal comments and corrections, (2) legal exegesis, (3) aggadic exegesis, and (4) mantological exegesis. He maintains that each category reflects a particular group, motive, and context which altogether affect its characteristics.<sup>48</sup> Scribal comments and corrections are done by the ancient Israelite scribes who seek to reinforce traditional texts by adding explanations to obscure texts or altering them to suit contemporary theological tastes.<sup>49</sup> Legal exegesis is done by legists and schoolmen to apply legal traditions in concrete cases.<sup>50</sup> Aggadic exegesis is done by rabbis as the theological, reflective, moral, and practical textual interpretation that covers many genres such as narrative, historiography, and oratory.<sup>51</sup> Mantological exegesis is the interpretation of dreams and the interpretation and reinterpretation of oracles.<sup>52</sup>

However, inner-biblical exegesis undergoes refinement in interaction with literary theory. Benjamin D. Sommer differs from Fishbane in differentiating inner-biblical exegesis from inner-biblical allusion.<sup>53</sup> He argues that what Fishbane calls inner-biblical exegesis is an inner-biblical allusion. This arises from an understanding of allusion and exegesis. In the case of allusion, the alluding text refers not only to earlier text but also to its literary world. Thus, an allusion also involves a certain degree of interpretation. Meanwhile, Sommer defines exegesis as “an attempt to analyze, explain, or give meaning to (or uncover meaning in) a text.” While exegesis is also an interpretation, it is different from allusion because, in exegesis, the reference goes only

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“Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology,” *Biblica* 95, no. 2 (2014): 285.

<sup>46</sup> Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 284; Klouda, “Applying Fishbane’s Hermeneutical Strategies,” 20. His major work is Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

<sup>47</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 3.

<sup>48</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 2, 13, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 27, 37, 67, 81, 87.

<sup>50</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 231.

<sup>51</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 281, 408.

<sup>52</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 506.

<sup>53</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 23.

to the interpreted text and not to its literary world. Therefore, according to Sommer, inner-biblical allusion and exegesis both interpret the earlier text.<sup>54</sup>

Karl William Weyde interacts with Sommer and argues that while inner-biblical exegesis is different from inner-biblical allusion, the difference lies in the act of interpretation. According to Weyde, inner-biblical allusion “does not include the notion of interpretation but evokes only the memory of an older text” while inner-biblical exegesis “intends to apply the meaning of an earlier text to a latter setting, in some cases also to modify its meaning.”<sup>55</sup> Weyde also comments on the difference between inner-biblical allusion and exegesis on one hand and intertextuality on the other:

The former focus on the intention of the author(s) and have a diachronic approach (the relationship between early and later texts), whereas the latter is oriented towards the reader(s) and is synchronic in its approach (the relationship between texts, above all on the basis of common vocabulary, without considering their age) ...<sup>56</sup>

Russell L. Meek also argues that inner-biblical exegesis is different from intertextuality and inner-biblical allusion. According to Meek, inner-biblical exegesis is an instance of interpretation<sup>57</sup> of earlier texts in the latter texts. Meanwhile, intertextuality merely refers to the relationship between texts in their final form without indicating the direction of influence and inner-biblical allusion refers to the allusion to earlier texts in later texts without modification.<sup>58</sup>

This refinement marks two distinctive features of inner-biblical exegesis which are directionality and intentionality.<sup>59</sup> In a critique of Fishbane’s methodology, Lyle Eslinger points out that the study of inner-biblical exegesis requires a demonstration of the direction of dependence (which text modifies the other text).<sup>60</sup> The dependence can

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<sup>54</sup> Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 11–8. However, Sommer admits that “the line dividing exegesis from allusion is permeable, and individual cases may straddle the distinction or challenge it.” Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Karl William Weyde, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation: Methodological Reflections on the Relationship between Texts in the Hebrew Bible,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 70 (2005): 300.

<sup>56</sup> Weyde, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation,” 300. However, Weyde does not recommend a clear distinction between them because scholars may employ these two approaches in the same project. Meanwhile, there is a suggestion to include inner-biblical exegesis and allusion under the name “inner-biblical interpretation.” Edds, “The Law, the Fathers, and the Former Prophets,” 10.

<sup>57</sup> Lyle M. Eslinger says, “The noun “exegesis” implies an authorial intent at exposition or interpretation.” Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 48n2.

<sup>58</sup> Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 291. In this article, Meek refers to intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis, and inner-biblical allusion as terms of methodology. Nonetheless, the terms themselves can represent the objects of study.

<sup>59</sup> Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 288.

<sup>60</sup> Eslinger, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 53. Eslinger says, “When we look at Fishbane’s discussions of literary connections what we get, most often, is an assumed vector of influence.” See also Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion,” 287.

be demonstrated by analyzing the literary connection between the texts. The direction of dependence indicates the author's intentionality in reminding the reader about earlier texts.<sup>61</sup> This intentionality may be seen as strategies for interpreting the earlier texts. Scholars have identified several strategies employed in inner-biblical exegesis.<sup>62</sup> Several examples of such strategies are inversion, lemmatic deduction, and correlation. In an inversion, words from the earlier text appear in reverse order in the latter text.<sup>63</sup> In lemmatic deduction, the earlier text is first cited then a conclusion is inferred from it.<sup>64</sup> In correlation, the latter text refers to the earlier text either by way of analogy or polarity.<sup>65</sup> These strategies serve as marks of the author's intentionality in interpreting earlier texts in his/her texts.

A sample of works on inner-biblical exegesis may illustrate the objective of studying inner-biblical exegesis. Lyle Eslinger analyzes inner-biblical exegesis in Hosea 12:5a to support Brevard Childs on the process of canon formation.<sup>66</sup> Dalit Rom-Shiloni analyzes inner-biblical exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to elucidate the process of interpretation.<sup>67</sup> Cody Edds analyzes inner-biblical exegesis (and allusion) in Zechariah 1:8-17 of Isaiah 13-14 (and Isaiah 40-55) to uncover the fuller meaning of the text.<sup>68</sup> Thus, studying inner-biblical exegesis contributes to various fields such as bible interpretation, "tradition-history, literary criticism, ideological criticism, and redactional criticism."<sup>69</sup>

To conclude, this section describes inner-biblical exegesis and its methodology. Inner-biblical exegesis is the phenomenon in which earlier biblical texts are appropriated by interpretation in later biblical texts. Two features of inner-biblical exegesis are directionality and intentionality. Analysis of inner-biblical exegesis contributes to several fields of study such as bible interpretation and redactional criticism. This leads us to consider whether inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception and the benefits of doing so.

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<sup>61</sup> Meek, "Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion," 288.

<sup>62</sup> See also Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 9-10.

<sup>63</sup> Weyde, "Inner-Biblical Interpretation," 299.

<sup>64</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 419.

<sup>65</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 421.

<sup>66</sup> Eslinger, "Hosea 12," 95-6.

<sup>67</sup> Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Facing Destruction and Exile: Inner-Biblical Exegesis in Jeremiah and Ezekiel," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117, no. 2 (2005): 203.

<sup>68</sup> Edds, "The Law, the Fathers, and the Former Prophets," 18.

<sup>69</sup> Rom-Shiloni, "Facing Destruction and Exile," 189.

## **Inner-Biblical Exegesis as a Form of Reception**

From the previous elaboration on reception theory and inner-biblical exegesis, I argue that inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception.<sup>70</sup> First, inner-biblical exegesis' directionality fits nicely with reception theory with the concept of first- and second-degree texts. With reception theory, the earlier text is termed the first-degree text while the later text is termed the second-degree text. Consistent with inner-biblical exegesis, reception theory maintains that there is a dependence of later texts (second-degree texts) on earlier texts (first-degree texts).

Second, related to the first, this dependence is not accidental but intentional. In inner-biblical exegesis, the author of later texts intentionally interprets earlier texts. It is precisely this issue that is the concern of reception theory. With reception theory, the author of second-degree texts is an active-subjective reader who simultaneously interprets first-degree texts while reading them. Thus, inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception.

However, reception theory may go further in its understanding of intentionality in inner-biblical exegesis. While in inner-biblical exegesis intentionality is mainly demonstrated by discovering certain hermeneutical strategies, reception theory seeks to understand it in the socio-historical context of the text. As Schniedewind says, "One shortcoming of recent studies in inner-biblical interpretation is its inattention to the role of social and political contexts in shaping interpretation."<sup>71</sup> With reception theory, discovering second-degree texts intentionally interpreting first-degree texts is not enough.<sup>72</sup> Reception theory seeks not only how second-degree texts interpret first-degree texts but also why they do so in relation to social-historical context. In reception theory, the author of second-degree texts does not merely employ certain strategies to mine the meaning of first-degree texts as if the meaning is waiting to be discovered but dialectically engages them in his/her context to produce new meaning.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Schniedewind says, "The approach of inner-biblical exegesis, however, envisions an ongoing dialogue in a manner not unlike Reception theory's emphasis on the process of reception". Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 16. Consistent with inner-biblical exegesis, reception theory maintains that the author may produce new meaning based on his/her reading of earlier texts and catalyzed by his/her context (or crisis in the case of inner-biblical exegesis).

<sup>72</sup> See also Willis, *Reception*, 65.

<sup>73</sup> This is also the case with inner-biblical allusion. While in inner-biblical allusion the author is said to merely allude to earlier texts, with reception theory this allusion also happened in a certain socio-historical context and with a certain purpose. This idea may further blur the distinction between inner-

Reception theory also brings a focus to the study of inner-biblical exegesis. Reception theory is mainly concerned with the interaction between readers and texts in the production of new meaning.<sup>74</sup> But, it is not only the meaning in the interpreting texts as in inner-biblical exegesis<sup>75</sup> but also, or primarily, the meaning of the interpreted texts in a new context because second-degree texts are actualizations of first-degree texts. Thus, with reception theory, the study of inner-biblical exegesis is brought to focus on the meaning as readers interact with texts.<sup>76</sup>

There are a few implications of the model of meaning as proposed by reception theory to the study of inner-biblical exegesis. First, reception theory may be used to support Childs' theory on the formation of the canon. The author of second-degree texts does not necessarily contradict first-degree texts (in this case, the earlier canon) even in the case of polarity but understands, elaborates, interprets, and expands it to address a particular context.<sup>77</sup> Reception theory even goes further and argues that traditions are formed not only by intertextual relations but also by social factors.<sup>78</sup> Second, as with Fishbane's project, the study of inner-biblical exegesis enriched by reception theory may shed new light on the interpretative strategies of biblical authors, especially in understanding and applying first-degree texts to a new context. This in turn will benefit preachers as they preach and apply the biblical text from ancient times to the present.

### **Suggested Method**

Seeing inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception necessitates a new method for studying inner-biblical exegesis, especially on the social function of the text. In this section, I suggest steps in analyzing inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception. First,

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biblical exegesis and allusion in terms of their functions. Thus, an inquiry into the socio-historical context of the writing is necessary to understand the social function of the alluding text.

<sup>74</sup> Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker, *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*, 333; Bressler, *Literary Criticism*, 78.

<sup>75</sup> For example, see Edds, "The Law, the Fathers, and the Former Prophets."

<sup>76</sup> There are few implications of the model of meaning as proposed by reception theory. First, reception theory may be used to support Childs' theory on the formation of canon. The author of second-degree texts does not necessarily contradict first-degree texts (in this case, the earlier canon) even in the case of polarity but understands, elaborates, and expands it to address a particular context. Second, as with Fishbane's project, the study of inner-biblical exegesis done from reception theory may shed a new light on the interpretative strategies of biblical authors, especially in understanding and applying first-degree texts to a new context. This in turn will benefit preachers as they preach and apply biblical text in present era.

<sup>77</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 48.

<sup>78</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 65.

establish the direction of dependence. Chelcent Fuad proposes four steps to examine the literary connection between the texts to establish the direction of dependence. First, the analysis of common materials in both texts such as verbal parallels. While this may not indicate the direction of dependence, it can establish a literary connection between texts. Second, the analysis of divergent materials in both texts in the forms of polemical modification and interpretation. Third, the analysis of possible incongruous elements. Fourth, the analysis of conceptual connection: “a borrowing text may be harder to understand without prior knowledge of the source text”.<sup>79</sup>

Second, analyze the social context of the second-degree text. This is done by determining the dating of the text and its social context through historical criticism and also by consulting archaeology and other Ancient Near Eastern literature.<sup>80</sup> After that, highlight the characteristics, issues, or crises which arise from the social context.

Third, analyze the inner-biblical exegesis and its social function. In this last step, identify the transformation or continuity that happened in the second-degree text compared to the first-degree text.<sup>81</sup> After that, evaluate it as it is influenced by and also influences its social context. Thus, the meaning of the first-degree text in the second-degree text’s context may be understood.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this paper, I argue that inner-biblical exegesis can be seen as a form of reception. Two distinctive features of inner-biblical exegesis—directionality and intentionality—fit nicely with the concept in reception theory—the first and second-degree texts. Furthermore, seeing inner-biblical exegesis as a form of reception necessitates an understanding of its social function as it is influenced by and seeks to influence its social-historical context. Therefore, studying inner-biblical exegesis is not only limited to identifying strategies of interpretation but also its social-historical context and, hence, its social function.

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<sup>79</sup> Chelcent Fuad, “What Has Leviticus 17 to Do with Deuteronomy 12.20-27?: The Literary Relationship between the Deuteronomistic and Holiness Codes on Cult Centralization and Animal Slaughter,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 45, no. 1 (September 2020): 22-4.

<sup>80</sup> Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 10. Schniedewind warns the circularity of the attempt to construct social contexts only from the texts. He says, “Some attempt to reconstruct the historical moments of ancient Palestine should precede the study of texts, redactions, and sources.” Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, 14.

<sup>81</sup> Willis, *Reception*, 39.

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