12 Assessment and Conclusion

In the previous chapters, we have examined how later OT biblical writers read and interpreted an antecedent Scriptural text, and likewise, how the author of Hebrews read and interpreted the OT. In this chapter, we will discuss the hermeneutics of the inner- and inter-biblical interpretation. What kind of exegetical principle or method did the author of Hebrews apply to his use of the OT? Was the use of OT Scripture skewed? Or the meaning not found in the text was superimposed by the author, as some scholars argue? This logically leads us to ask a similar question about the use of the OT by the OT writers.

Bearing this in mind, we will treat this issue in four sections: first, we will make some concluding remarks in terms of the methodology applied to the study of inner- and inter-biblical interpretation. Next we will review the hermeneutical issue of the NT use of the OT, particularly in our case, the use of the OT in Hebrews as germane to the extensive study of Hebrews just completed in the previous two chapters of this project. Third, against the backdrop of how the OT is used by Hebrews, we will proceed to see how another OT writer uses the OT. As a result, we will propose a hermeneutical principle that the OT and NT writers may have applied to their interpretations of antecedent Scriptures. Finally, we will reflect on the contribution of this study and its implication for future or further study.

12.1 The Methodologies Applied to the Study of Inner-Biblical and Inter-Biblical Interpretation

In terms of the methodology for studying inner- and inter-biblical interpretation, we have approached the texts using a sampling of contemporary techniques, primarily rhetorical criticism and discourse analysis. As we have demonstrated, both rhetorical criticism and discourse analysis respect the nature of how a text is composed. Though these methods are viewed as contemporary, in every aspect an ancient text is treated fairly and literarily by both methods.

There are, however, some adaptations to these two methodological approaches apparent in the work we presented in chapters four through eleven. For example, being sensitive to the poetic nature of Psalm 110, we applied a poetic analysis to the psalm in addition to rhetorical criticism; in our poetic study of this psalm, we identified that vv. 3-4 are crucial for the interpretation of this poem. In our study of several key texts, we widely applied an aspect of discourse analysis, namely, the syntagmatic study of several key lexemes. For example, the syntagmatic study of הַבָּלָה led us to three key passages in Genesis (12, 14 and 22) and also helped us to draw the conclusion that there is a shift of focus pertaining to the divine promise from Abraham to his seed.
Furthermore, our adaptation also employs these two approaches in a complementary way. On the one hand, unnecessary redundancy in the study of a text is avoided, while, on the other hand, various aspects of a text are explored for clearer understanding and interpretation. For instance, the rhetorical study of \( \text{γῆ} \) in Genesis 14 helps us dissect the chapter while the discourse analysis of the same word reveals that the promise of kingship ties Genesis 17 (where the kingship promise first given to Abraham and Sarah) to Genesis 14 and 35 (a reiteration of the kingship promise to Jacob). In summary, both methodological approaches, with some adaptations, are suitable for inner- and inter-biblical interpretation.

### 12.2 Inter-Biblical Interpretation: The Issue of Hermeneutics as Illustrated by Hebrews

To help our delineation of the OT use of the OT and the NT use of the OT, we will highlight a few key thematic/semantic connections between Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews (figure 15).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \text{γῆ} )</th>
<th>King-ship</th>
<th>Priest-hood</th>
<th>Promise: Overcome enemy</th>
<th>Oath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 14</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Numbers 22-24</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Samuel 7</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psalm 110</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. Correlation of Thematic Notions and Keywords in Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews, Including Their Cotexts

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805 See chapter 4.
806 The word appears multiple times within two to three verses.
807 Though the word \( \text{γῆ}/\text{ἱοίς} \) is absent in Genesis 14, the notion is supplemented by its cotexts.
808 If viewed in the subsequent narrative, i.e., Genesis 22.
809 The "seed/son" notion is implied in the word \( \text{υγ} \) (Gen 12:2).
810 The oath in 2 Samuel 7 is detected in Psalm 132:11.
811 Viewing Psalm 110 within the \( \text{γῆ} \)–frame of the Psalter and with Pss 1:1 and 2:12 (\( \text{υγ} \)).
812 By reading Psalm 110 in light of Ps 2:6-7.
One can observe several things in this figure. First, the γς-theme (the lexeme itself) encompasses most of the texts (except Genesis 17); second, the priesthood notion is absent in the contexts of Genesis 14, including Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7; third, apart from the divine promise of victory over the enemy, Hebrews basically reiterates all the semantic/thematic notions of Psalm 110 and Genesis 14; fourth, both the kingship and priesthood notions are detected only in Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews (5-7).

A study of the use of the OT in Hebrews is a most suitable starting point to understand how the NT interprets the OT simply because of its extensive use of the OT in Hebrews, as indicated in the last two chapters. Through this study, one can detect the kind of hermeneutical methodology the author of Hebrews employs. In scholarly studies of the hermeneutical principles used by Hebrews, the understanding of the use of the OT in Hebrews can be categorized according to three orientations: Jewish-oriented,813 which includes Qumran pesher814, rabbinic815 and midrash interpretations;816 (2) Greek-oriented (Hellenistic);817 and, for lack of a comprehensive term, we label it theologically-oriented, which includes christological,818 typological,

815 Guthrie, “Old Testament in Hebrews,” in NLNTD, 843; Kistemaker, Psalm Citations, 133; Schröger, Der Verfasser, 269-76.
817 See the dissertation by Seid, Rhetorical Form, in which he denies placing Hebrews in any Jewish interpretative category. Rather he places Hebrews (especially chap. 7) in Greco-Roman rhetoric, specifically, synkrisis. Lindars, “The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews,” NTS 35 (1989): 382-406; Übelacker, Der Hebräerbrief, 63-65; Schröger, Der Verfasser, 282-87.
818 Koester comments: “Hebrews interprets Christ in light of the OT and the OT in light of Christ.” Hebrews, 117, cf. 118; Burns delineates three hermeneutical principles used by Hebrews and one of them is the “christological principle,” “Hermeneutical Issues,” 595-601; Barth (“Old Testament in Hebrews,” 77) remarks that the exegesis of Hebrews as “dialogical, Christological, and homiletical (or pastoral).” France argues that the exposition of biblical texts by Hebrews is unique among NT writings. Nonetheless, the exegetical principle applied by Hebrews is christological (“Biblical Expositor,” 272-74).
allegorical, and fulfillment-to-prophecy interpretations. Some overlap among categories cannot be avoided, but taken as a whole, they represent the comprehensive spectrum of how biblical scholarship understands the use of the OT in Hebrews.

From a review of all these scholarly studies, we can conclude that there is no consensus as to what kind of exegetical method(s) the author of Hebrews employs. Be it Hellenistic, Jewish, or most likely a mixture of both, it is clear that the cultural influence or factor in its composition and the ways in which the OT is handled in Hebrews seems present in the letter. This is the understanding of a variety of scholars, such as Seid and Bateman. Nonetheless, one can safely conclude that OT Scripture exerts considerable influence upon the author of Hebrews – like on most of his NT counterparts – in his composition and motif of the book, as detected in chapters ten and eleven of this project. Furthermore, one can conclude, to a rather convincing degree, that the author of Hebrews has a christocentric presupposition in his interpretation of OT Scripture. These two conclusions deserve further elaboration.

First, the OT influence upon Hebrews is evident in several ways. We have witnessed the extensive use of the OT in Hebrews both by quotations and allusions, and as Hanson comments, the use of the OT Scripture “is more central in this work than in any other book of the NT, except the Apocalypse.” Furthermore, as we have delineated in chapters ten and eleven, the author of Hebrews, through a juxtaposition of two OT texts (like Psalms 2 and 110 in Hebrews 1 and 5 or Genesis 22 and 14 in Hebrews 6-7), deliberately allows them to shape the structure and the message of the book.

Second, the christological orientation of Hebrews in the interpretation of the OT has been noted in chapters ten and eleven. This is not to deny any other uses of OT

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819 See Dale Leschert who leans more to a typological interpretation used by Hebrews while refusing Philo’s allegorization and rabbinic midrash (“Hermeneutical Foundations,” 326-27; Isaacs, placing Hebrews within the tradition of the NT interpretation in which Jesus Christ becomes the “touchstone” of all biblical interpretation, delineates three principles NT writers use: (1) the fulfillment of prophecy; (2) allegorization; and (3) type or typology. See Isaacs, Sacred Space, 69-70.

820 See Weiss, Der Brief, 176-81 for a discussion of the above categories. All of the above bibliographical data is not exhaustive but representative.

821 Schröger (Der Verfasser, 269) remarks that the author of Hebrews “hat keine einheitliche Methode in seiner Schriftauslegung.” Cf. the debate of the Hellenistic vs. Jewish exegetical principles by Seid, Rhetorical Form and Bateman, Early Jewish Hermeneutics.

822 A. T. Hanson, “Hebrews,” chap. in It is Written, 300. Hanson, after a comparative study of Hebrews with Philo and Qumran, concludes that Hebrews shares little in common with Philo and differs from Qumran mainly because the exegetical orientation in Hebrews is more christocentric than both Philo and Qumran. Hanson, “Hebrews,” 292-97. Cf. Hurst, The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chap. 1 and 2 with similar conclusions, 41-42 and 65-66.
Scripture in Hebrews, as Guthrie asserts and Lane affirms. Nonetheless, the author of Hebrews consistently applies a christological interpretation to several psalm passages, especially in our case, Psalms 2 and 110 in Hebrews 1-7, to structuring the major thematic notion of sonship.

The christological interpretation by the author of Hebrews is carried out by a juxtaposition of one text with another, for example, Psalm 110 with 2. Most scholars understand the juxtaposition of two scriptural texts as part of the Jewish method of interpretation or a combination that originated from the same tradition source. A case in point that illustrates this scholarly understanding is the juxtaposition of Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14 in Heb 1:5. Kistemaker sums it up well:

> We would be tempted to suppose that he is applying one of Hillel’s hermeneutical rules, e.g., *gezerah shewah* [sic] (analogy of expressions [“son”]). Perhaps this is true; but there is a greater possibility that this combination stems from a common tradition.

Another example of a classical application of *gezerah shawah* is Ps 2:7 and 110:4 cited in Heb 5:5-6 because of οὗ “you” in both psalms. According to Lane:

> No other Christian writer of this period drew attention to Ps 110:4, but in Hebrews there are more references to Ps 110:4 than to any other biblical text.

Therefore, based on Lane’s comment above, it is not feasible to argue that the juxtaposition of Ps 2:7 and 110:4 is originated in the same tradition. Rather their juxtaposition is a result of an application of certain (Jewish) exegesis.

Kistemaker and Lane may be right to propose the reason – either the shared exegetical method or tradition or both – behind such juxtaposition of two OT texts; nonetheless, based on our study in this project, the author of Hebrews may juxtapose these two texts based on his reading of one text as well as its “cotext.” For example, the author of Hebrews may have read and interpreted Genesis 14, taking Genesis 12-22, 49, Numbers 22-24 and 2 Samuel 7 (perhaps some other OT texts) as its cotexts. The author detected how the thematic notion from Melchizedek’s blessing upon Abraham

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823 Guthrie, “Old Testament in Hebrews,” in NLNTD, 842-45; cf. Lane modifies Guthrie’s list in Hebrews 1-8, cxix-cxxiv: (1) dispensing confusion; (2) reinforcement; (3) implications; (4) the literal sense of a word or phrase; (5) other early rabbinic principles of interpretation; (6) chain quotation; (7) example lists; (8) typology; and (9) homiletical midrash. Cf. the categories first developed by Dan Cohn-Sherbok, “Paul and Rabbinic Exegesis,” SJT 35 (1982): 117-32.


825 Kistemaker, Psalm Citations, 76.

826 Lane, Hebrews 1-8, 118.
narrowed that blessing to Abraham’s seed (cotexts in Genesis), that is, in view of Genesis 49 and Numbers 22-24, a royal seed. This royal seed is reiterated as the “son” in Nathan’s oracle (the divine promise), who will build an eternal dynasty. Then, the author of Hebrews considers Psalm 2 – possibly the word יֶהָֽנָּה יִתְנַשֵּׁק (hence “son”) may play a significant exegetical role there – as the cotext of Psalm 110 (or vice versa), delineating that the royal seed is not merely the messianic son (Psalm 2) but also a priest (Psalm 110). Thus, the link of Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 for the author of Hebrews is not simply the word יֶהָֽנָּה יִתְנַשֵּׁק “son”; rather, he sees the dynamic thematic and interpretative tie, and recognizes the development or interaction within these texts. In other words, we suggest that the author of Hebrews does not simply quote a text, say Genesis 14, to make his point (in Hebrews 7:1-10), but rather takes into consideration other texts serving as cotexts of Genesis 14 (Genesis 22 in Hebrews 6:13-20). For lack of a better term, we thus label this a “cotextual” approach. Our suggestion, however, is based on one study and may not be conclusive at all, especially in light of the unmistakable complexity of the use of the OT in the NT.

When suggesting that our study seems to indicate that the author of Hebrews approaches one OT text with its cotext(s) in mind, some may immediately associate the result of our study with intertextuality, discussed only in appendix 1. It must be noted that our study differs from intertextuality in two clear aspects: first, when analyzing two texts, our study is keenly aware of the synchronic factor existing between two texts whereas intertextuality does not. There is an unspoken assumption that the text of Genesis 14 or Psalm 110 precedes Hebrews, chronologically speaking. For intertextuality, however, it does not matter; it is legitimate for a practitioner of intertextuality to remark that the intertext of Psalm 110 (or Genesis 14) contains Hebrews (and some other NT texts) or vice versa. Second, we are concerned with the literary and historical context of one text (the OT text) and how it is used in

827 What we suggest here resembles what modern biblical scholars have come to call the “contextual” principle and canonical approach. What is involved in the “contextual” principle is examining the text from a rhetorical point of view – that is, the situation of the reader/listener (see Burns, “Hermeneutical Issues,” 601-603) – and considering the social milieu from which the text is generated (see Cotterell, “Semantics, and Discourse Analysis,” in NIDOTTE, 1:136). In the “canonical” approach, the interpreter, called to exegete the biblical text in its received (final) form, must then critically discern its function in a community of faith within a boundary set by the canonical shaping of that biblical text. See Childs, Old Testament as Scripture, chap. 3 and his The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2733 and chap. 4. The term used by the Reformers that may closely describe what we have suggested here is called scriptura scripturam interpretatur (“scripture interprets scripture”). Cf. Kaiser, Uses of the Old, 69.

828 The complexity of the application of intertextuality to the NT use of the OT is beyond the scope of this project. Nonetheless, we have provided an evaluation in our appendix 1, which should not be regarded as definitive.

another text (the NT text),\textsuperscript{830} often measuring whether the NT text respects the OT text or not. Intertextuality, however, usually does not check on whether the NT text respects the OT text in terms of context or meaning because the newly created text (the NT text) has its own distinctive meaning.\textsuperscript{831} With these distinctions, we conclude our assessment of inter-biblical interpretation.

Our next assessment is in the area of inner-biblical interpretation. Did the later OT writers use a similar approach when they interpreted an antecedent Scripture? This is the substance of the following discussion.

### 12.3 Inner-Biblical Interpretation: A Continued Discussion of the Issue of Hermeneutics

The answer to the above question is affirmative since in various places, particularly in chapters six and nine, we have noted the influence of Genesis 14 and its contexts – Genesis 12-15, 17, 22, 49 and Numbers 22-24 – upon 2 Samuel 7,\textsuperscript{832} and how all of the above texts influence Psalm 110 and the shape of the Psalter (Psalm 2, 132, etc.).\textsuperscript{833} A single example is enough to refresh, illustrate, and restate our contention that a later biblical writer read and interpreted an antecedent text with another text(s) as its cotext(s). In Ps 110:4, the poet describes the priesthood in the order of Melchizedek inaugurated by a divine oath (אָשֶׁר יִשָּׂאוּ לְעַל הָבָרָךְ מִלַּחְדַּרְךָ נִשְׁפְּטַ וּלְאַל נִיָּם) possibly because the text of Gen 14:18-20 (וּכְלֵי יִרְדֵּם נִשְׁפָּט וּלְאַל נִיָּמ), with Gen 22:16 (בְּנֵי תְבִלָּת אֹסֵר חָקִית) and Numbers 22-24 – especially 23:19 (לֹא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֲוֹרַיָּם וְיִרְדֵּם) – as its cotexts, shapes the understanding and the interpretation of the poet. As a result, the first part of Ps 110:4, נֶפֶשׂ וּלְאַל נִיָּם, resembles Gen 22:17 and Num 23:19. Can one find this cotextual approach to the antecedent OT Scripture continued into the NT? Our answer is to look next at Heb 6:13-20.

As the author of Hebrews interprets the text of Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 and Genesis 14 in Hebrews 5-7, the author takes Gen 22:16-17 and Num 23:19 as the cotexts in Heb 6:13-14 and 18 respectively. By the following comparison, one can detect the literary shaping of the cotexts of Gen 14:18-20 to Heb 6:13-20: κατ’ ἐμαυτοῦ ὄμοσα (Gen 22:16, LXX) to Heb 6:13, ὄμοσεν καθ’ ἐναυτό, ἡ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσῳ σε (Gen 22:17, LXX) to Heb 6:14, Εἰ μὴν εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσῃ σε, and καὶ ἐὰν λογίζῃ σε (Numb 23:19) to Heb 6:18, ἀδύνατον ψεύδομαι τὸν θεόν. Therefore, we have demonstrated how this interpretative phenomenon, namely, the reading of a text with its cotext(s) together, may exist in the NT use of the OT as well as in the OT use of the OT.

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\textsuperscript{830} In the terminology of intertextuality, the former is precursor text and the latter is successor text.

\textsuperscript{831} Brawley, \textit{Text to Text}, 6.

\textsuperscript{832} See chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{833} See chapter 9.
12.4 Some Final Remarks

As we close, we reflect on what this project can add to the discussion of inner- and inter-biblical interpretation. First, our investigation suggests that later biblical writers were influenced primarily by antecedent Scripture. This does not deny the influence of the biblical writers’ current literary milieu, of their culture, and of other extrabiblical materials, which scholars have been enthusiastically studying with obvious results. Nonetheless, this study looks into the manner in which the antecedent Scripture exerts its influence on the OT or the NT text. When studying a biblical text, an exegete should be keenly aware that any antecedent Scripture text is capable of influencing the text being studied. For instance, in reference to our particular case, when we examine Psalm 110:4, the direct OT influence—based on the name Melchizedek—obviously comes from Genesis 14. Most likely, many will return only to Genesis 14, study it, and draw some conclusions to see how Genesis 14 exerts an influence on Psalm 110. We believe one should take this approach one step further: to examine the surrounding texts of Genesis 14 (in our study that is Genesis 12-22) and also through semantic-thematic links, to examine other texts as cotexts of Genesis 14 as well (Numbers 22-24, 2 Samuel 7).

Second, this study also addresses the hermeneutical issue related to how the OT uses the OT and how the NT uses the OT. Admittedly, our study was limited to one case, which hardly qualifies us to draw any definitive conclusions. Rather, we can only suggest a possibility that a biblical writer was influenced not only by a biblical text but also by its cotext(s) when reading, interpreting, and citing that text.

Third, and last, this project has attempted to complete what we set out to do: focus on the three Melchizedek texts and their cotexts. We began our study with the Melchizedek passages looked at from the OT point of view, and then we moved into and considered the NT point of view. We gave each of the three Melchizedek texts

834 Koester’s comment is noteworthy: “It may be helpful to think of various source materials as concentric: the Old Testament occupies a focal position in the study of Hebrews, with various Jewish writings in the next circle and other sources around the periphery.” Koester, “The Epistle to the Hebrews in Recent Study,” CRBS 2 (1994): 131.

835 Our suggestion fits well in Childs’ model of exegesis, which—comprised three parts—is summarized by VanGemerden as follows: (1) the context of the single text is the whole Old Testament, and the whole Old Testament must be understood in the light of the single text; (2) the Old is interpreted in the light of the New and the New in the light of the Old; and (3) the exegete moves from the Old and the New Testament to the theological reality itself. Childs, “Interpretation in Faith,” Int 18 (1964): 438-44; summarized in VanGemerden, Progress of Redemption, 22. Note: our study fits into the first two parts of Childs’ model.

836 Compare to Kurianal, Our High Priest and Anderson, the King-Priest. They approach the texts from the NT perspective. Their treatments on the OT text (Psalm 110) are relatively brief.
(Genesis 14, Psalm 110 and Hebrews 5-7) nearly equal amounts of effort and attention, and carefully attended to correlating them together at various places.

Finally, this study encounters one major challenge. That is when talking about a cotext for a text (e.g., the cotexts for Genesis 14), it is challenging to determine how to set its “boundary.” While we are constrained from lengthy discussion on this point, we are able to offer two answers. First, any biblical text should be viewed within the structure of the book; then it should be viewed within the major section of the canon; and ultimately, it should be viewed in terms of the entire canon. For example, Genesis 14 is under review in the book of Genesis, then the Pentateuch, then the OT canon. Second, through the presence of quotation and allusion, an exegete will be able to set a “cotextual” boundary for his study of a particular text. Since these two answers may seem elementary, further research is needed that will seek to establish more guidelines for setting “cotextual” boundaries.

Besides the already stated challenge, our project has barely touched the surface of treating inner- and inter-biblical interpretation as one enterprise. We expect this project to begin stimulating further dialogue in biblical scholarship on this enterprise.

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837 Compare to Gammie, “Melchizedek”; Del Medico, “Melchisedech”; Baylis, “The Author of Hebrews’,” and Leschert, “Hermeneutical Foundations”; all of these authors only devote their attention to two of the three texts. Compare to McCullough, “Melchizedek’s Varied Role,” Nel, “Psalm 110,” and Kruijif, “The Priest-King Melchizedek”; all of these articles treat the three texts but often the examination of one of the texts is insufficient.

838 Compare to Klein, "An Exegetical Study." In the task of tying together all three texts he is disappointingly inadequate.