

A. THE TANAK AS THE FOUNDATION OF JUDAISM

THE TANAK, OR THE JEWISH BIBLE, stands as the quintessential foundation for Jewish life, identity, practice, and thought from antiquity through contemporary times. The five books of the Torah, or the Instruction of G-d to the Jewish people and the world at large, constitute the foundation of the Tanak. According to Jewish tradition (Exod 19—Num 10), the Torah was revealed to the nation Israel at Mount Sinai while the people were journeying from Egypt through the wilderness of Sinai on their way to return to the land of Israel to take up residence in the land promised by G-d to their ancestors, Abraham and Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca; Jacob, Rachel and Leah; and the twelve sons of Jacob. The four books of the *Nevi'im Rishonim*, or the Former Prophets, provide an account of Israel's life in the land from the time of the conquest under Joshua until the time of the Babylonian exile, when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and Jews were exiled to Babylonia and elsewhere in the world. The four books of the *Nevi'im Ahronim*, or the Latter Prophets, provide an assessment of the reasons why G-d chose to exile Jews from the land of Israel and the scenarios by which G-d would choose to restore Jews to the land of Israel once the exile was completed. The eleven books of the *Ketuvim*, or the Writings, include a variety of books of different form and purpose that address various aspects of Jewish worship, critical thought, future expectations, history, and life in the world, both in the land of Israel and beyond.

The Torah and the other books of the Tanak hardly stand as the exclusive foundation for Judaism. The Torah is read in continuous conversation with the other books of the Prophets and the Writings, and the Tanak as a whole is read in continuous conversation with the other writings of Judaism, such as the Rabbinic literature of the Talmuds, the Midrashim, the Targums, and the speculative or mystical literature; the medieval and modern works of Jewish liturgy, halakhah, commentary, philosophy, Kabbalah, and Hasidism. With regard to the books of the Tanak, it is not clear that all of them were intentionally composed for the

purpose of intertextual dialogue among them, but their inclusion in the Tanak requires that they be read as such in Jewish tradition. With regard to the Tanak and the rest of Jewish tradition, it is not clear that the Tanak was composed to be in intentional dialogue with the later works, but it is clear that most of the later writings were intentionally composed to be in dialogue with the Torah and the rest of the Tanak to some degree. In order to understand that dialogue fully, it is essential to understand the literature of the Torah and the rest of the Tanak in and of itself, recognizing that the Tanak cannot function as a complete and self-contained revelation analogous to the manner in which the Old and New Testaments are read in much of Protestant Christianity. The Torah and the rest of the Tanak are the foundation of Jewish tradition, but the Tanak cannot be viewed as complete in Judaism without ongoing dialogue with the rest of the tradition that constitutes Judaism throughout its history and into the future.

In an effort to interpret the Tanak as the foundational sacred scriptures of Judaism, this volume proposes a systematic critical and theological study of the Jewish Bible. It draws upon the Christian discipline of biblical or Old Testament theology, although its aims and presuppositions are very different, in large measure due to the different aims and presuppositions of Judaism and Christianity. It is critical insofar as it draws heavily on modern critical study of the Bible, although throughout the volume it will be clear that the critical foundations must themselves be self-critically examined at every point in order to provide a secure basis for theological assessment of the biblical works. The reason for such self-critical analysis lies in the fact that modern interpreters are so frequently influenced by their own religious and cultural traditions in reading the Bible and making claims for what the Bible has to say. It is theological insofar as it attempts to discern the theological viewpoints articulated by the biblical texts by close attention to its formal linguistic features and modes of expression, its historical and cultural contexts, and its willingness to grapple with the major theological, hermeneutical, and historical questions of its time. At the same time, this work recognizes that the process of reading biblical literature necessarily entails construction of the biblical text by readers who bring their own worldviews and presuppositions to the interpretative task. It is also theological insofar as it includes dialogue with the Jewish tradition at large. Such an interpretative stance recognizes that the interpretations offered in this work are nothing more than that. They are interpretations of the Bible that may or may not withstand the test of critical scrutiny and that may or may not be accepted as correct, useful, insightful, or even complete. As such, they are part of the ongoing dialogue that has taken place among the Jewish people—and among all interpreters of the Tanak at large—from the time that the books of the Tanak were first written and read. On that basis, a systematic critical and theological assessment of the Tanak provides foundations for dialogue with the rest of the Jewish tradition and perhaps also for dialogue with other Jewish and non-Jewish interpreters of the Bible.

B. CHRISTIAN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Jon Levenson argues that Jews are not interested in biblical theology because the field is inherently Christian and because so much of its teaching is antithetical to that of Judaism if not outright anti-Jewish.¹ To a certain degree, he is correct. Biblical and Old Testament theology are quintessentially Christian theological disciplines designed to address questions of Christian theological thought, particularly the interrelationship between the biblical text as read in Christianity and the formulation of dogmatic or systematic Christian theological teachings that play such an important role in Christian life and thought. Judaism does not rely on systematic theology or doctrines in quite the way that Christianity does. Instead, Jewish interpreters pay close attention to the details of the biblical text in an effort to discern the various aspects of its meaning and its impact on Jewish life and thought. Nevertheless, Christian biblical and Old Testament theology provide a model of systematic interpretation of the Bible from which Jewish biblical interpretation may benefit. Although Christian efforts at such systematic interpretation of the whole of the Christian Bible or the Old Testament are not always successful, the question raised by the field—viz., to what degree can the Old Testament as a whole be interpreted?—is a valid question that may be asked by Jews of the Tanak. Biblical theology provides a synthetic overview of the interpretation of the Bible that aids interpreters in understanding the Bible at its most general and overarching levels. That is not to say that detailed exegesis of individual passages is no longer necessary; rather, biblical theology is ideally based on the detailed exegesis of individual passages that contribute to the overall interpretation of the biblical text. For Jews, biblical theology provides the means to incorporate the interpretation of the individual passages of the Tanak into an overarching scheme that will facilitate fuller understanding of the interpretation of the Tanak at large. Such an effort has the potential to provide Judaism with a fuller reading of its foundational scriptures. It also has the potential to provide similar insight to non-Jewish readers via a Jewish reading of the biblical text that is frequently quite distinct from Christian (or Muslim) readings of the same.

A brief and selective survey of the field of Christian biblical or Old Testament theology illustrates both Levenson's concerns about the field and the possibilities that a Jewish biblical theology might offer.²

The origins of biblical theology appear in the 1787 inaugural lecture of Johan P. Gabler, "An Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each," which celebrated Gabler's

appointment to the faculty of the University of Altdorf.³ Gabler took up a problem faced by Protestant theologians concerning the interrelationship between interpretation of the biblical text and dogmatic theology as the foundations for Christian thought and practice. Although the Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther in the early sixteenth century, asserted the principle of *sola scriptura*, “scripture alone,” as the foundation for Christian thought, dogmatic theology, derived from a combination of scriptural interpretation and human reason, actually governed the formation of Protestant theology, often confusing the boundaries between the two fields and giving ascendancy to dogmatic theology. The issue was exacerbated by the question of the interrelationship between the New Testament and the Old Testament, particularly because the New Testament so frequently overrode the Old Testament in Christian thought, thereby undermining the status of the Old Testament as sacred scripture. Gabler argued that interpreters must distinguish between historical and universal concerns or between human and divine concerns. In Gabler’s understanding, the Bible provided a combination of historical/human and universal/divine concerns that must be considered in the development of Christian dogmatic theology. That is, the Bible would have to be analyzed to determine which of its elements were historical/human and which were universal/divine and therefore fit for the development of dogmatic theology. Of course, Christian doctrines concerning G-d, Christ, sin, and salvation would be considered universal/divine in Gabler’s reckoning; other aspects, such as Esther’s portrayal of divine absence at a time of threat to the Jewish people, would be considered historical or human and therefore less influential in the development of Christian doctrine. Gabler did not offer further writings on the field of biblical theology, but his essay nevertheless inaugurated the field and defined its basic parameters for well over a century.

Throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the field of biblical theology focused especially on Gabler’s distinction between the historical and the universal, as well as the interrelationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament was generally given theological priority since it spoke directly of Christ as the foundation for Christianity, and the Old Testament tended to be treated as a historical document that paved the way forward for the New Testament. The historically oriented source-critical research of the time, identified especially with Julius Wellhausen, and the prevailing anti-Semitism of the period played important roles delegitimizing major portions of the Old Testament as historical.⁴ Wellhausen’s schema for the formation of the Pentateuch and the development of Israelite religion posited a progressive decline in which the early J source of the Pentateuch presented face-to-face encounters between human beings and G-d, much like the Prophets, whereas the later E, D, and P sources displayed increasing distance between G-d and humanity, culminating in the Priestly source which, in Wellhausen’s view, focused on issues of ritual, law, and the self-interests of the priesthood at the expense of an authentic relationship between G-d and human beings. Thus, the priesthood represented

the particularism of Judaism, which ultimately produced Rabbinic Judaism, while works such as Deutero-Isaiah represented the universalism of Judaism, which would culminate in the development of Christianity as the true fulfillment of the Old Testament. Wellhausen viewed himself as a historian, but his work and that of his followers had tremendous impact on the field of biblical theology, which increasingly set aside historical elements of the particularistic Old Testament in favor of the so-called universal elements that would be found in the New Testament. Many biblical theologians would therefore focus on “universal” categories, such as “G-d, Man, and Salvation” or the like, which of course are central to the New Testament, to organize their theologies.⁵ Such efforts highlight the universal elements that tied the Old and New Testaments together and that showed how the Old Testament paved the way for the New Testament.

Nevertheless, such efforts also played a role in raising questions concerning the revelatory character or authority of scripture within Christianity. If some aspects of the Old Testament and perhaps also the New were only historical, they could not be viewed as authoritative sacred scripture, and yet such texts and perspectives were part of the Christian Bible. This led, in the early twentieth century, to intense discussion concerning the interrelationship between the history of Israelite religion and the field of Old Testament theology in an effort to clarify the status of historical material in the Bible and to justify the enterprise of Old Testament theology in principle. As an advocate of the field of Old Testament theology who also recognized the historical character of the Bible, Walter Eichrodt published a three-volume Old Testament theology in 1933–39 which attempted to interpret the entire Hebrew Bible around the theme of covenant, while recognizing the historical nature of the conceptualization of covenant throughout.⁶ Eichrodt’s work is still in print today and remains highly influential. It has the advantage of attempting to account for the entirety of the Hebrew Bible, but it also displays major problems. One is Eichrodt’s own anti-Semitism, which comes to expression in his characterization of Judaism’s “torso-like appearance . . . in separation from Christianity.”⁷ A second is the fact that not all of the Hebrew Bible can be interpreted in relation to the theological concept of covenant: for example, Esther and Song of Songs do not even mention G-d, and the wisdom literature frequently expresses skepticism about such notions. Neither is successfully incorporated into Eichrodt’s schema. A third is the disintegration of the notion of covenant in the Pentateuch and beyond. Because of the prevailing source-critical models of the time, texts in the Pentateuch that mention covenant were frequently relegated to different historical sources and considered as different covenants, viz., the Noachic covenant (Gen 9), the J account of the covenant with Abram (Gen 15), the P account of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17), and so on. The use of historical perspective thereby undermined the crucial role played by covenant texts in tying the Pentateuch together and in providing the foundations for a literary-theological history of G-d’s covenant with Israel. A final issue is the selection of the theme, “covenant,” which was intended to facilitate

discussion of the interrelationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, insofar as the term “testament” is a classical English term for the word covenant, which of course would facilitate tracing the evolution of Israelite notions of covenant into the new covenant of Christianity.

With the end of World War II, the recognition of Nazi atrocities during the war, and the failure of the churches to speak out effectively against the German government, German Protestant theologians began to rethink Christianity’s theological perspectives and moral worldview. Karl Barth focused on a theology of the divine word in which Jesus Christ as divine word embodies both G-d’s election of humanity at large for salvation and G-d’s rejection of human sin.⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was murdered by the Nazis late in the war, argued that Jesus Christ represented G-d’s suffering in the world and served as a call for human beings to act within the world at large to bring about justice. Although both were influenced by the Shoah or Holocaust, neither developed a major theological reassessment of the church’s relationship with Judaism and both continued to view Judaism in classical supersessionist terms. Nevertheless, both influenced the field of Old Testament theology by viewing scripture as an expression of the divine word that called for human moral and religious response.

Perhaps the most important Old Testament theology written after the war was that of Gerhard von Rad.⁹ Heavily influenced by Barthian hermeneutics and his own pre-war attempts to trace the literary and theological coherence of the J stratum of the Pentateuch, von Rad argues that the Old Testament is based on the concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, or “sacred history,” in which the Bible proclaims G-d’s acts of salvation on behalf of Israel and the world throughout history. Although von Rad’s work was heavily influenced by contemporary historical and source-critical research, his tradition-historical approach went a long way in overcoming the very fragmented readings of the Bible prompted by Wellhausenian source analysis. Basically, von Rad’s analysis emphasized the tradents of the Bible who collected and wrote down the oral traditions of ancient Israel to form the literary works of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History, Prophets, and so on. These works presented theological constructions of historical events that would serve as the foundations for ancient Israel’s understanding of G-d as Israel’s saving agent throughout history, from creation through the eschatological realization of YHWH’s saving grace. Von Rad’s scheme, of course, culminated in the New Testament and had little to say about post-biblical Judaism. Furthermore, his work did not account adequately for non-historical works such as the wisdom books, prompting him to write a third volume on wisdom literature after the initial publication of his Old Testament theology. Nevertheless, his focus on the theological and literary coherence of the Old Testament constituted an important step forward.

Von Rad’s work pointed out the discrepancies between the historical events that informed biblical literature and the Bible portrayal of those events: for example, the portrayal of the conquest of the land of Israel in the book of Joshua

did not actually take place; Israel emerged in the land over a long period of time from the earlier Canaanite population and from tribal groups who settled amongst the Canaanite population. But Christianity (and Judaism) did not depend upon reconstructed history as a basis for theology; rather, the Bible's portrayal of events stood as the foundation for later Christian (and Jewish) theology and perceptions of G-d and the world. Consequently, Brevard Childs began to call for a biblical theology that was based on the final or canonical form of the biblical text, rather than on a historical reconstruction of the events presented in the Bible or even on a reconstructed biblical text.¹⁰ Neither the pentateuchal sources nor the reconstructed First, Second, or Third Isaiah could form the foundation for a biblical theology. Instead, the final forms of the books of Genesis or Isaiah must stand as the foundation for biblical theology. Furthermore, biblical theology did not have the luxury of concentrating only on the historical or the prophetic books, as von Rad's theology had done—it must take up all of the biblical books, including the priestly literature of the Pentateuch, such as Leviticus, the wisdom literature, such as Proverbs and Job, and previously overlooked narrative works, such as Esther and Song of Songs. Yet Childs's concept of canon was not limited only to the Hebrew Bible. The Christian Bible included the New Testament as well, and so his understanding of a proper biblical theology called for a canonical theology of both the Old and New Testaments in which the respective testaments would be put into dialogue with each other. In this way, Genesis, for example, might be read in relation to Matthew and Matthew in relation to Genesis. Childs did not eschew the historical work of his time and incorporated historical perspective into his overall analysis of each biblical book. His view of canon proved to be very limited insofar as he simply presumed the final form of the Hebrew Bible to be the definitive form of the biblical text, while the Christian Bible must account for a variety of canonical forms, such as the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Peshitta, and others. Nevertheless, Childs' work laid the foundations for holistic readings of those texts and dialogic readings of biblical texts in conversation with each other.

Although Christian biblical theology was relatively slow in recognizing the problem of the Shoah or Holocaust and the role that Christianity had played over the course of nearly two millennia in laying the foundations for modern anti-Semitism, theologians of various types raised the issue and ultimately began to influence biblical theology. Jules Isaac's penetrating study of the New Testament and early church demonstrated how early Christianity had fomented anti-Jewish attitudes.¹¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether provided a similar perspective based on her study of early patristic literature.¹² Paul Van Buren argued that Christians must learn to recognize the Old Testament as Jewish literature that is also read in the context of Christianity.¹³ Clark Williamson called upon Christian thinkers to rethink classic supersessionist and anti-Jewish readings in the biblical interpretation and systematic theology.¹⁴ Katharina von Kellenbach pointed to the emergence of anti-Semitism in modern feminist theology, where Judaism frequently

emerges as a paradigm for patriarchy.¹⁵ Erich Zenger called upon Christian interpreters to read the Bible differently in the aftermath of the Shoah.¹⁶

The theological discussion of the impact of the Shoah on modern biblical exegesis and theology had a major impact on the field of Old Testament Theology in the later twentieth century and beyond. Influenced also by rhetorical criticism, which studies the means of communication and persuasion in the Bible, Walter Brueggemann produced a magisterial study that focused on the Hebrew Bible's discourse and dialogue about G-d.¹⁷ He recognized the challenges posed by the Shoah, particularly the role that the vilification of Judaism had played in Christian theology throughout the centuries. Although he argued that the Shoah could not stand as the center of an Old Testament theology, Old Testament theology cannot proceed without recognition of the continuing problem of evil in the world represented by the Shoah. Biblical theology was not simply an ivory tower occupation of academics and clerics; rather, it was a field that had extraordinary influence in shaping attitudes, meaning that it must be pursued with an appropriate eye to the practical impact that theological statements might have in the world in which we live. The Shoah constitutes a major and unanswerable challenge to claims about YHWH's sovereignty and fidelity. Such a challenge likewise has implications for Christian claims about Jesus Christ and his relationship to the world at large. Furthermore, Brueggemann's interests in the discursive and dialogical aspects of the Bible prompted him to recognize how the Bible's various perspectives enter into an intertextual dialogue about G-d, Israel, and other issues that appear among the various books of the Bible.

Recognition of the problems posed by the Shoah and Christianity's vilification of Judaism had a major impact on German Old Testament theology as well. Rolf Rendtorff's massive theology of the Old Testament calls for a common Jewish and Christian reading of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁸ Rendtorff's work is informed by his interaction with Jewish scholars, particularly Moshe Greenberg, who calls for a holistic reading of the Bible. Consequently, Rendtorff is very interested in reading the final forms of biblical books, although like Childs he does not take full account of the various versions in which the Bible appears in Christianity. Rendtorff's call is based on the recognition that Judaism and Christianity share the same basic scriptures, but it is also based on the historical paradigms regnant in the field throughout much of the twentieth century that posit one dimension of meaning in the interpretation of biblical literature. Although well-motivated by an appropriate concern to rectify the wrongs of Christian anti-Jewish attitudes in exegesis, Rendtorff's work suffers from the presupposition that a shared or common reading of scripture is necessary to mend the rifts between Judaism and Christianity. Ultimately, Rendtorff's model collapses the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity into a common theological perspective. But it is precisely the notion that Judaism must conform to the beliefs and perspectives of Christianity that created the problem of Christian anti-Semitism in the first place.

In order to promote a constructive relationship between the two traditions, they must learn to accept the differences between them and nevertheless view each other as a valid form of theological perspective and practice, even though they do not share in the same perspectives and practices. Acceptance of the other—and of the right of the other to hold differing views—is the true key for a harmonious relationship between the two traditions.

Levenson is correct to observe that the field of biblical theology is a Christian field that addresses Christian concerns, but the above survey also demonstrates that Christian Old Testament theology has learned to take up Jewish concerns as well, particularly in the aftermath of the Shoah, and that Christians are very interested in dialogue with Jews, especially concerning the interpretation of the Bible. Furthermore, although the field is constructed to address the interrelationship between biblical exegesis and systematic theology in Christian thought, it has also produced some important advances, such as the capacity to address the interpretation of entire biblical books, the interrelationship between historical events and the different presentation of the same events in the Bible, the inability to reduce the Hebrew Bible to a single theme or concern, the communicative and dialogical functions of scripture, and the need to read the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament as sacred scripture in its own right apart from the concerns of the New Testament.

C. JEWISH BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Although biblical theology has been a Christian theological discipline throughout its history, Jews have participated in the field in various capacities from the Age of Enlightenment on.¹⁹ One may trace the beginnings of Jewish participation in the field to the work of Moses Mendelssohn, who argued in his 1783 volume, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, that Judaism must be regarded alongside Christianity as a valid religion of reason insofar as it held to three basic points: (1) the existence of one G-d, (2) divine providence, and (3) immortality of the soul.²⁰ In Mendelssohn's understanding, Torah constituted the particular dogma of Judaism that gave it a distinctive identity and enabled it to carry out its mission to bring teachings of divine justice and holiness to the nations. His Torah translation and commentary was designed to teach Jews how to participate as Jews in modern German society as well as to provide access to the Jewish tradition. Leopold Zunz's 1832 volume, *Die Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden*, employed historical scholarship in an attempt to demonstrate that the practice of preaching sermons (Hebrew, *divrê tôrâ*) was a central act of Rabbinic Judaism

that had foundations in the biblical period.²¹ The work was instigated by the attempt of the Prussian government to deny clerical licensing to Rabbis, but it also proved to be a ground-breaking study in the theological worldview and practices of Judaism from the biblical period on.

The early twentieth century saw a number of works that would have an impact on the conceptualization of a Jewish biblical theology. Among the earliest were works by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, who collaborated in their efforts to reconnect modern Jews with the Jewish tradition by means of a university-level educational program known as the *Jüdische Lehrhaus*, as well as their unique translation of the Bible that was designed to acquaint German-speaking Jews with the dynamics and meaning of the Hebrew text.

Rosenzweig's 1921 book, *Der Stern der Erlösung*, examined Jewish liturgical life and its sense of encounter with G-d as a basis for demonstrating that Judaism embodies a life of religious faith in which Jews encounter the sacred in the world of creation.²² In contrast to the largely historical or linear paradigms of eschatologically oriented religious life that were so common in Christian thought, Rosenzweig argued that Jewish prayer is fundamentally cyclical in which Jews encounter a recurring pattern of liturgical celebration as part of their efforts to recognize the holy presence of G-d in the world and its impact on human life. Such a meta-historical life of holiness embodies eschatological promise during the course of history and not at its end, and so Judaism serves as a source of inspiration to Gentiles, whose historically oriented models of eschatology strive to achieve such encounter with the holy.

Buber's 1923 book, *Ich und Du*, builds upon his experience with Hasidic Judaism to develop a model of encounter and dialogue between human beings and G-d in the world.²³ G-d, the eternal "Thou" (German, *Du*), addresses human beings through the various experiences of life in the world. It then becomes the human task to recognize the divine address in the larger world of creation and to respond to that address, recognizing the presence of the divine that permeates all of creation and experience in keeping with the teachings of Hasidism and earlier Lurianic Kabbalah. Because Jews had been exiled from the land of Israel, Jews living in the diaspora had lost the foundational dialogical dimensions of recognizing G-d in the world of creation. For Buber, the model of dialogue, in which each participant recognizes the quintessential integrity of the other, whether G-d, human, text, nature, or others, constitutes the core of Jewish experience and knowledge. Buber's later writings probed Hasidic tradition in an attempt to provide a fuller background for the model initially laid out in *Ich und Du* as well as the question of the absence of G-d in the aftermath of the Shoah or Holocaust.²⁴

Abraham Joshua Heschel's writings began with his 1936 Ph.D. dissertation, *Die Prophetie*, in which he examined the notion of divine pathos in a study that focused especially on eighth- and seventh-century prophets, such as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.²⁵ Heschel had been born into a Hasidic dynasty and was educated to become a Rebbe, but sought out secular learning as a young man and ultimately earned a Ph.D. in Bible and esthetics at the University of Berlin

under Max Dessoir, Alfred Bertholet, and others.²⁶ Heschel's work was hardly the typical source-critical dissertation of the time. Heavily influenced by Hasidic and Lurianic notions of the interrelationship between the divine and the human, Heschel focused instead on the prophet's experience of G-d and G-d's experience of the human in times of crisis. Heschel's theory of divine pathos was an attempt to describe the impact that human beings had upon G-d, particularly when they acted in a manner that brought about divine punishment and death. Heschel's study demonstrated the degree to which G-d is vulnerable to pain and pathos as well as G-d's need for relationship with human beings. His later writings continued to focus on the divine need for encounter with humans as well as explorations of the holiness of Jewish tradition, such as Shabbat observance, the revelatory character of Rabbinic literature, and the central importance of the land of Israel to Judaism.²⁷

Yehezkel Kaufmann was one of the first modern Jewish Bible scholars to write systematically on ancient Israelite religion. His eight-volume Hebrew work on the history of Israelite religion, published from 1937 through 1956 (and abridged in English in 1970 and 1972), was an attempt to study the emergence and development of universal monotheism from its earliest expressions in ancient Israelite society.²⁸ Contrary to the Wellhausenian-based scholarship of his time, Kaufmann argued that the Temple and priesthood were the central religious institutions of ancient Israel from the beginning, and that both articulated universal divine monotheism from the beginning of Israel's history. Kaufmann was heavily influenced by modern Zionist thought, particularly the work of Ahad Ha-Am, and posited that the national spirit of biblical Israel provided the foundations for Israel's unique concept of monotheism as the hallmark of its religious worldview.

The experience of the Holocaust, or Shoah as it is more properly known, in which some six million Jews were deliberately murdered by the German government and its supporters during World War II, provided a particularly important stimulus to Jewish theology in general as well as in relation to theological discussion concerning the Jewish Bible in particular. Biblical scholars were generally not involved in the discussion, as contemporary Jewish Bible scholars tended to be very historically and philologically oriented, but Jewish philosophers and theologians began a far-ranging discussion with important consequences for the theological interpretation of the Bible, particularly the questions concerning divine power, presence, and justice, which are generally articulated in the Bible. Already in the 1950s, the above-mentioned works by Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel had broached the question of the absence of G-d. Ignaz Maybaum, a German Reform scholar who escaped the Shoah, argued in 1965 that the murder of six million Jews must be viewed as a vicarious sacrifice meant to provoke the revulsion of humankind and therefore to instigate efforts to bring an end to such injustice.²⁹ His work was met with widespread criticism, especially since its implicit sanction of the murder of so many people as an act of G-d could not be defended morally.

Richard Rubenstein's 1966 study, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism*, shook the foundations of Jewish (and Christian!) thought with its claim that the experience of the Shoah demonstrated that G-d was dead and that Judaism would have to rethink and reject the fundamental theological foundations of its identity.³⁰ Rubenstein, a Conservative Rabbi and academic, argued that the deliberate murder of six million Jews completely undermined the moral foundations of Judaism and any claim of divine justice, morality, or even existence. In Rubenstein's view, a moral, omniscient, and omnipotent G-d could not allow the Shoah to take place; the fact that it had taken place demonstrated that the classical notions of a just, all-powerful, and active G-d who rewarded the righteous and punished the sinful were not true. There was no divine covenant at Sinai; the Jewish people was not the chosen people of G-d; and human beings were left to themselves to devise systems of moral order and practice in the world. The consequences also extended to Christianity (and Islam) insofar as Christianity was dependent upon Judaism for its theological claims to represent the new or true Israel. Rubenstein's later works have focused on the themes of the absence of G-d in modern secular society.

Emil Fackenheim, a German Reform Rabbi who escaped the Shoah to become a Jewish philosopher in Toronto, responded to Rubenstein with his 1970 volume, *G-d's Presence in History*, with its calls to affirm divine presence in the world despite the experience of evil.³¹ Fackenheim argued that modern Jews are called to believe in G-d as the 614th commandment (note, Rabbinic Judaism holds that 613 commandments are required for full Jewish observance): that is, to deny Hitler a posthumous victory by allowing Judaism to die out because of the Shoah. Fackenheim looked back in history to argue that previous disasters that might be seen as analogous to the Shoah, such as the destructions of the First and Second Temples respectively by the Babylonians in 587–586 BCE and by the Romans in 70 CE, prompted Jews to reaffirm their faith in G-d and to reconstitute Judaism in the aftermath of the disaster. Following the Babylonian exile, Judaism emerged as a religious movement under foreign rule, and following the Roman destruction, Rabbinic Judaism emerged as the classical form of Jewish observance. Fackenheim's later work focused on the theme of *Tikkun Olam*, "repair of the world," or the human obligation to work as partners with G-d to complete the creation and sanctification of the world, and on his efforts to probe the theological ramifications of the Shoah in biblical tradition.³² Fackenheim studies the implications of the deaths of Job's ten children as well as the theme of the absence of G-d in the book of Esther as unanswered questions from the Bible that continue to demand our attention.

Eliezer Berkovits, an Orthodox Rabbi and scholar, examined the theme of the hidden face of G-d (Hebrew, *hestēr pānīm*) in both the Bible and Rabbinic literature in an effort to highlight the question of human responsibility in the aftermath of the Shoah.³³ The Shoah is devoid of moral explanation or justification, but it points to the realities of human existence in the aftermath of

disaster, viz., the need to accept responsibility for the future rather than allowing the evils of the past to overwhelm human life. In this respect, Berkovits builds on Fackenheim's earlier arguments that Jews are partners with G-d in creation and that our task is to help to complete and sanctify creation at large. In his view, such an approach that calls for the acceptance of responsibility even in the face of evil is a means by which human beings strive to reach moral maturity in the world. Berkovits's earlier 1969 work, *Man and G-d: Studies in Biblical Theology*, laid the foundations for his discussion of theology after the Shoah by focusing on the knowledge, spirit, and name of G-d, as well as dealing with concerns of divine holiness, justice, truth, and Sedaqah, "charity" (or "righteousness"), that human beings must emulate in order to lead a righteous and holy life.³⁴

Discussion concerning the theological significance of the Shoah by these scholars and others has continued unabated through the present, but it also had an impact on the field of biblical studies as Jewish biblical scholars began to ask theological questions of the Bible itself. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein was an early advocate of Jewish biblical theology. Although he was especially well-known for his philological work in Syriac and other Semitic languages, Goshen-Gottstein was well-versed in the fields of Old Testament Theology and Israelite Religion and began to call for a Tanak Theology that would give expression to the religious ideas of ancient Israel.³⁵ Mattitiah Tsevat likewise called for the development of a Jewish biblical theology based on careful philological, grammatical, and historical analysis of biblical texts that gave expression to Israel's religious ideas.³⁶ Moshe Weinfeld had already begun such work with his study of the Deuteronomistic school that focused on the religious ideas of Deuteronomy and the so-called Deuteronomistic History, with a special emphasis on the understanding of covenant in relation to the ideas of national identity and social justice.³⁷ Harry Orlinsky likewise took up the understanding of covenant throughout the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible as the foundation for Israelite national and religious identity, focused on G-d's grant of the land of Israel as the foundational aspect of the covenant between G-d and the nation of Israel.³⁸ David Blumenthal examined the book of Psalms in an effort to study the problem of divine responsibility for the Shoah.³⁹ As in the case of an abusive parent, Blumenthal argued, Jews must both acknowledge divine complicity in the Shoah and learn to forgive G-d's evil, much as the victims of child abuse must learn to forgive the abusive parent so that they may go on to lead meaningful and productive lives.

One of the most influential figures in the field of Jewish biblical theology is Jon Levenson, who argues that Jews should not be interested in biblical theology because of its inherently Protestant Christian character and its anti-Jewish bias.⁴⁰ Levenson has nevertheless gone on to make substantive contributions to the field, despite the fact that he views his work as the history of Israelite religion, not biblical theology.⁴¹ Levenson's Ph.D. dissertation on Ezekiel 40–48 challenged the reigning Wellhausenian view that Ezekiel and his vision of the restored Temple in Ezekiel 40–48 must be viewed as late priestly expressions of the decline of Israelite

religion.⁴² Instead, his work employed the standard tools of historical-critical scholarship to probe the dimensions of holiness in Ezekiel's vision in an effort to demonstrate that the vision was central to Ezekiel's religious worldview. Throughout the study, Levenson focused on the role of the Temple as the holy center of creation, the locus of the Garden of Eden, and the institutional foundation for the revelation of G-d to Israel and creation at large. A later monograph employed a comparative study of Sinai and Zion to demonstrate that the Pentateuch's portrayal of divine revelation at Mt. Sinai was based on the understanding of the role of the Jerusalem Temple on Mt. Zion as the locus for divine revelation to Israel and the world at large.⁴³

A third study took up the question of theodicy, insofar as the Temple, as the holy center of creation, served as the foundation for order in the world.⁴⁴ Levenson demonstrated that YHWH's defeat of chaos, expressed throughout liturgical texts as YHWH's defeat of chaos monsters identified with the sea, such as Leviathan and Behemoth, takes place at every morning service in the Temple, when light illumines the interior of the Temple and drives away the darkness (which symbolizes chaos) to form a new order in creation for the day at hand. The Temple thereby symbolizes divine order in the world, which comes to expression in the natural world of agriculture and life, the human world of politics and protection from enemies, and the moral world of human ethical and ritual action that renders the world of creation as holy. Key to his argument is a rereading of Gen 1:1—2:3 in which Levenson employs Rashi's exegesis of the passage to show that it does not present the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, "creation out of nothing." Instead, he demonstrates that in Genesis, G-d brings a pre-existing chaos into order. This notion is consistent with other texts, such as Ps 74 or Job 38, which portray G-d's defeat of sea-based chaos monsters as part of the divine effort to bring order to the world. A fourth study on *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* provides a basis for distinguishing fundamental differences in the theological worldviews of Judaism and Christianity.⁴⁵ Levenson focuses on the understanding of child sacrifice in the Bible, particularly in Gen 22, which presents the binding of Isaac. Judaism employs the narrative as a basis for its own identity as the chosen people of G-d: that is, just as G-d redeemed Isaac from death as a sacrifice, so G-d redeemed Israel from death in Egyptian bondage and other threats. Christianity employs the narrative as a foundation for its understanding of the crucifixion or sacrifice of Christ, which then functions in Christianity as a means to assert its claims to be recognized as the true people of G-d.

Levenson's 1997 commentary on the book of Esther enables him to examine a text that has frequently been labeled as a non-theological work and largely excluded from discussions of biblical theology.⁴⁶ The book of Esther does not mention the name of G-d, but it portrays the problem of divine absence at a time when a foreign government threatens to destroy the entire Jewish people. No better biblical analog to the modern experience of the Shoah can be found. Again,

Levenson employs the tools of modern historical-critical research to counter claims that Esther is fundamentally interested in fomenting violence against gentiles and to demonstrate its religious importance as a book fundamentally concerned with the question of the absence of G-d in a time of crisis. His 2006 study, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel*, revisits his earlier concern with biblical conceptions of resurrection and death in an effort to demonstrate that these themes point to a larger concern with the restoration of the nation of Israel in the aftermath of crisis.⁴⁷ Of course, such a concern is also relevant for the modern world in which Judaism must rebuild the Jewish people, both in the diaspora and in the modern state of Israel, in the aftermath of the Shoah.

Another major figure in the field is Michael Fishbane, who focuses especially on the hermeneutics of reading the biblical text in the context of Jewish tradition. Fishbane's work presents a challenge to the historical-critical models that have dominated modern scholarship. Ironically, such models have served a modern Protestant theological agenda by emphasizing the Bible and its historical context alone as a source for divine revelation, rather than the context of either the Jewish or Roman Catholic traditions in which the Bible has been read. Fishbane's early work, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, focused on tracing the lines of inner-biblical exegesis in an effort to show that the reading of scripture and reflection on its meaning in relation to the needs of the present is a quintessentially Jewish model that begins in the Bible itself and continues through the Rabbinic midrashic tradition and beyond.⁴⁸ He distinguishes the *tradtum*, "tradition," and the *tradtio*, "traditioning," of the exegetical process, and identifies four major exegetical categories: (1) scribal exegesis, which focuses on how scribes reworked and corrected earlier biblical texts; (2) legal exegesis, which focuses on law as a living tradition that adapts to meet the needs of ancient Israelite society; (3) aggadic exegesis, which takes up moral, didactic, and non-halakhic issues as a means to affirm the past, present, and future in the Jewish imagination; and (4) mantological exegesis, which focuses on the interpretation of prophetic oracles, dreams, visions, omens, and so on.

Fishbane's later writings attempt to trace the exegetical process from its origins in the Bible into the Rabbinic, Kabbalistic, Hasidic, and other movements in the history of Judaism. His 1994 study, *The Kiss of G-d*, traces the interpretation of Song 1:2, "let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth," in Kabbalistic and Hasidic tradition as a means to develop an understanding of the depths of the divine-human relationship.⁴⁹ Fishbane's 1998 study, *The Exegetical Imagination*, rejects the notion that Judaism gave up mythological thinking in its reading of texts, and instead emphasizes the *poesis* of midrashic exegesis in the Bible's mythological portrayal of the dimensions of G-d, Israel, creation, the Exodus, messianic ideals, and so on, in the literature of the Midrashim and the Zohar.⁵⁰ His 2002 commentary on the *Haftarot*, the prophetic texts read as part of the weekly and holiday liturgy of the synagogue, provides a modern commentary on the prophetic readings that places them in their ancient contexts as well as their

contexts throughout the course of Jewish tradition.⁵¹ His 2003 study, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, presents a comprehensive treatment of mythopoeic thought from the Bible through the Midrash and the Zohar.⁵²

A number of Fishbane's students have made significant contributions to the field as well. Bernard Levinson focuses on the hermeneutics of reading legal texts in an effort to demonstrate the process by which ancient Israel reflects upon its law codes and rewrites them to address the problems faced by a living society interested in doing justice for its constituents.⁵³ The continual rethinking and updating of law anticipates Rabbinic halakhic exegesis and discussion. Marc Brettler focuses especially on the interpretation of historical narratives.⁵⁴ With a background in modern Hebrew literature as well as in Bible, Brettler emphasizes the literary and theological issues prompted by historical literature in which readers must understand the hermeneutical principles and perspectives by which such texts depict the past. Benjamin Sommer focuses especially on the dynamics of intertextual reading, both within the Bible and between the Bible and other elements of Jewish tradition. His 1998 monograph, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, examines the dynamics of Second Isaiah's reading of earlier prophetic tradition in anticipation of the period of restoration that would follow the end of the Babylonian exile.⁵⁵ His 1999 study, "Revelation at Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish Theology," examines the dialogical give and take between Exod 19–24 and other biblical texts and their later readers, such as the Talmud, Maimonides, modern Jewish scholars, and others.⁵⁶ His 2009 essay, "Dialogical Biblical Theology," presents a very useful survey of the field that moves Jewish readings of the Bible from a view that the Bible constitutes artifacts by which we may reconstruct the past to a view in which the Bible constitutes scriptures by which we may draw upon the past to address the present and future.⁵⁷

My own work has addressed the field of Jewish biblical theology for a decade and a half. My 2000 and 2008 surveys of the field provide essential overviews of issues pertaining to Jewish biblical theology.⁵⁸ My 1996 commentary on Isa 1–39 focused especially on the ideological influence of the Davidic/Zion tradition on the works of Isaiah ben Amoz and his tradents.⁵⁹ My 1997 study, "Tanak versus Old Testament," lays out an understanding of the distinctive perspectives inherent in the differing organizations of the Jewish and Christian Bibles: that is, while the Christian Bible presents a linear understanding of history from creation through the ultimate revelation of Christ, the Tanak presents a cyclical understanding of history from the ideals of the Torah, the disruption of those ideals in the Prophets, and through the attempt to reconstruct and realize those ideals in the Writings.⁶⁰ My 1998/2000 paper on "Reconceiving the Paradigms of Old Testament Theology in the Post-Shoah Period" argues that modern biblical theology must take account of the realities of the Shoah and the national character of the Jewish people as an ongoing theological reality from ancient through modern times.⁶¹ My 2000 study, "Isaiah and Theodicy after the Shoah," challenges Isaiah's theology of teleological redemption for the people of Israel in Babylonian

exile by asking about the justice rendered to those who suffered the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Israel and Judah.⁶² My 2000 study, “Absence of G-d and Human Responsibility in the Book of Esther,” examines a text which presents the problem of divine absence at a time when a foreign government has determined to murder the entire Jewish people, arguing that the most unlikely human being, in this case Esther, must be prepared to rise to the occasion because she is the only one who can do so.⁶³ My 2000 commentary on the Twelve Prophets examines the distinctive theological worldviews of each of the Twelve as well as the two major versions of the Book of the Twelve.⁶⁴ My 2001 study, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel*, examines the historical, literary, and theological dimensions of King Josiah’s attempt to restore the Jewish nation in the aftermath of Assyrian invasion and conquest.⁶⁵ My 2003 commentary on Zephaniah provides a detailed study of the theological foundations of the prophet and of King Josiah’s reforms.⁶⁶ My 2005 survey of the Prophetic Literature focuses on the various theological dimensions of reading the prophetic books, such as Isaiah’s adherence to Davidic/Zion tradition, Jeremiah’s identity as a priest from Anathoth who teaches Mosaic Torah, or Ezekiel’s identity as a Zadokite priest in exile.⁶⁷ My 2005 study, “The Democratization of Messianism in Modern Jewish Thought,” reads the reconceptualization of the Davidic promise in Isa 55 in relation to later Jewish thinkers, such as Moses Mendelssohn, Isaac Luria, and Ahad Ha-Am.⁶⁸ My 2007 commentary on Kings focuses especially on the theological dimensions of that work’s reading of Israel’s and Judah’s histories.⁶⁹ My 2008 study, *Reading the Hebrew Bible after the Shoah*, examines the impact of the Shoah on modern readings of the Bible and particularly emphasizes the debate that takes place among the biblical books on questions of theodicy.⁷⁰

A variety of scholars take up various important issues relevant to Jewish biblical theology. Sara Japhet examines the theological worldview of Chronicles, which portrays the interrelationship between a just and holy deity and the nation Israel, with its moral and ritual obligations to sanctify itself before G-d.⁷¹ Moshe Greenberg takes up the theological problems of the book of Job, recognizing that Job ends up a wiser man by better seeing G-d’s work in the world.⁷² Jacob Milgrom examines the spatial, ritual, and ethical dimensions of holiness in his three-volume commentary on Leviticus.⁷³ Benjamin Uffenheimer takes up the differing theologies of the prophets Isaiah and Micah, pointing to the diversity of viewpoints expressed by the prophets.⁷⁴ Israel Knohl studies the interrelationship between ritual and ethical action in the Holiness Code of Lev 16–27, and later argues that the many voices evident in the Bible indicate that it is a pluralistic work in which the many voices engage in debate with one another if only by virtue of their inclusion in the Bible.⁷⁵ Isaac Kalimi maintains that the Bible cannot be reduced to a single theme, arguing that theology must take account of the Bible’s authors, redactors, and later tradents.⁷⁶ Tikva Frymer-Kensky argues that the Bible presents an alternative voice by which to engage in dialogue with Rabbinic and subsequent Jewish tradition. Esther Fuchs calls for a fundamental

rethinking of patriarchal authority and assumptions, both within the Bible and among its interpreters.⁷⁷ Yair Hoffman takes up the question of theodicy in a study of Jeremiah's oracle against Babylon insofar as Jer 50–51 views the downfall of Babylon as an expression of divine justice.⁷⁸ Dalit Rom Shiloni focuses on the intertextual relationship between biblical works in an effort to demonstrate how exilic prophets, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel, reflect on earlier tradition in an effort to address the theological questions posed by the exile.⁷⁹ Edward Greenstein argues that Lamentations charges G-d with going too far in destroying Jerusalem.⁸⁰ Ziony Zevit's survey of the field of Jewish Bible theology raises problems such as the relationship between the Bible and later tradition, the Christian character of the field of biblical theology, and the prescriptive versus the descriptive nature of the field.⁸¹ Frederick Greenspahn traces the history of Jewish ambivalence towards the Bible as he prepares a larger study on the reception of the Bible in Judaism from antiquity to the present.⁸² Joel Kaminsky examines the concept of election in the Bible, rejecting calls to give up the notion of election and instead calling upon Jews and Christians to recognize their distinctive self-understandings as a basis for dialogue.⁸³ And most recently, Benjamin Sommer investigates the notion of G-d's body in the Bible as a basis for developing notions of divine fluidity of representation in the Kabbalistic literature and other streams of Jewish (and Christian) thought.⁸⁴

Altogether, Jewish biblical scholars demonstrate a lively interest in the field that promises to provide a foundation for thinking about the theological worldview of the Bible itself and its importance for contemporary Judaism.

D. THE TASK OF JEWISH BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

The task of a Jewish biblical theology cannot be the same as that of a Christian Old Testament theology or a Christian biblical theology.⁸⁵ Fundamentally, Judaism is committed to a relationship with G-d as defined through divine Torah whereas Christianity is committed to the notion that its relationship with G-d is defined through Jesus Christ. Because of their differing characters, the Bible is formed and read differently within the respective contexts of Judaism and Christianity, and those differences must be taken into account when undertaking Jewish (or Christian) biblical theology. There are of course a number of major dimensions in which these differences must be recognized in order to lay the foundations for a Jewish biblical theology.

One major dimension is the distinctive forms of the Jewish Tanak and the Christian Old Testament.⁸⁶ Although the Tanak and the Old Testament share

largely the same books, they appear in fundamentally different forms that are shaped by the cultural background, the theological viewpoints, the literary contexts, and the interpretative perspectives of their respective communities and traditions. Because the Tanak is situated among the Jewish people, it appears exclusively in Hebrew and Aramaic, the primary languages spoken by the Jewish people in antiquity and adopted for sacred use. Furthermore, the Tanak is ordered according to a standard three-part structure that includes the Torah or Instruction of YHWH, the *Nevi'im* or Prophets, including both the Former and the Latter Prophets, and the *Ketuvim* or Writings. This order presupposes the Jewish commitment to divine Torah as the ideal foundation of Jewish tradition, accounts of the disruption of that ideal in the *Nevi'im* or Prophets, and expressions of attempts to restore that ideal in the *Ketuvim* or Writings. Because the Christian Bible is situated among Gentiles, it appears in a variety of languages and versions, such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, Ethiopic, and others. Its overall structure invariably includes both the Old Testament and the New Testament, which expresses the fundamental Christian belief that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. Within this framework, the structure of the Christian Old Testament differs widely, depending on a variety of factors, such as the cultural context, the manuscript tradition, the historical context, the canonical context, and others. Nevertheless, the advent of modern printing has resulted in a relatively standardized order, including the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, the Wisdom and Poetic Books, and the Prophets.

The first segment of the Jewish Bible is the Torah, which includes the books of Genesis or *Bereshit* (*běrešît*), Exodus or *Shemot* (*šēmôt*), Leviticus or *Vayiqra'* (*wayyiqrā'*), Numbers or *Bamidbar* (*bammidbār*), and Deuteronomy or *Devarim* (*dēbārîm*). Although the Hebrew term *tôrâ* is frequently translated as "law," this is incorrect since the term is derived philologically from the verb root, *yrh*, which in Hiphil conjugation means "to guide" or "to instruct," rendering the proper translation of *tôrâ* as "guidance" or "instruction." A brief survey of the books of the Torah indicates that although they do contain elements of law, they contain much else as well. Indeed, the Torah recounts the ideals of Israel and its relationship with G-d, including recognition of YHWH as the one G-d, author of creation and partner in covenant with the nation Israel; Israelite identity and history as a living nation and society in relation to G-d; the divine promises of the land of Israel and protection from enemies; the legal instructions revealed to Israel by G-d so that the nation might form a living and just society in the land of Israel; and Israel's pledge to observe those instructions. Thus Genesis recounts the history of the world from creation through G-d's selection of Abraham and Sarah and their descendants through Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah, and Rachel, and the twelve sons of Jacob, as partners in a divine covenant to complete the creation of the world. Exodus includes the narrative of G-d's redemption of the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage, divine guidance of the people from Egypt into the wilderness, and the revelation of divine Torah as the foundations by which Israel might construct a just and living society in the land of Israel in keeping with

divine expectations. Leviticus recounts instruction in holy matters of the Temple and Temple service that pertains especially to the priesthood. Numbers recounts Israel's journey through the wilderness from Sinai to the promised land together with a great deal of legal instruction pertaining to life in the land. Finally, Deuteronomy presents Moses' last speeches to the people of Israel immediately prior to their crossing the Jordan River to take possession of the land of Israel in which he reiterates the legal instruction of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Close attention to the laws of Deuteronomy, however, indicates that Deuteronomy frequently revises older laws or presents new ones that give greater rights to the poor and women in Israelite society, demonstrating the principle that the law in the Torah is not an absolute category but a living legal system that is subject to change or modification in order to ensure that justice is done and that the needs of Israelite society are met.⁸⁷

The second segment of the Tanak is the Prophets or *Nevi'im*, so named because the authors of the books of the Prophets are believed to be prophets. *Nevi'im* comprises two major portions, the Former Prophets or *Nevi'im Rishonim*, which includes the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and the Latter Prophets or *Nevi'im Aḥronim*, which includes the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve Prophets, although the Babylonian Talmud notes the order, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve. The two segments differ in genre, the *Nevi'im Rishonim* are largely narrative-historical works whereas the *Nevi'im Aḥronim* are largely prophetic literature including a combination of oracular material and narrative. The two sections are largely concerned with interpreting the failure of Israel and Judah to achieve the ideals laid out in the Torah. Both segments of the Prophets are fundamentally concerned with the question of the Babylonian Exile, in which Israel and Judah were exiled from the land promised to them in the Torah, and both are fundamentally committed to the principle that the cause of the exile was Israel's and Judah's failure to live in accordance with divine Torah. Thus, the Prophets are fundamentally concerned with the question of theodicy, viz., defending the righteousness and power of G-d against claims that G-d was somehow unjust or powerless in allowing Israel and Judah to be cast into exile. Instead, both segments of the Prophets maintain that G-d judged Israel and Judah for failure to live by divine Torah and decreed exile as the punishment for that failure.

The Former Prophets recount Israel's history in the land of Israel from the time of Israel's entry into the land under the leadership of Joshua through the Babylonian Exile.⁸⁸ The book of Joshua recounts how G-d fulfilled the covenant with Israel by enabling the people to conquer the land of Israel in a series of three swift campaigns characterized by divine miracles that resulted in the complete collapse of the Canaanites and the loss of relatively few Israelite lives. The book of Judges recounts the early history of Israel under the leadership of the Judges which posits a repetitive cycle in which the people would turn to foreign gods, YHWH would bring an enemy to punish the people, the people would return to

G-d and cry out for help, and then G-d would send a Judge to deliver the people. Overall, the book shows a steady decline in which the people become increasingly Canaanite and unruly, culminating in the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine in the Benjaminite city of Gibeah and the near destruction of the tribe of Benjamin. The book of Samuel recounts the origins of kingship in Israel, beginning with the failed kingship of Saul ben Kish and focusing especially on the rise of David ben Jesse as the founder of the royal house of David that would rule Israel and Judah for some four hundred years. Finally, the book of Kings recounts the history of the kings of Israel and Judah from the time of Solomon ben David through that of Jehoiachin ben Jehoiakim who was exiled to Babylonia. The narrative recounts Solomon's building of the Temple, the division of the kingdom into northern Israel and southern Judah, the destruction of northern Israel by the Assyrians, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians, and the exile of Judah to Babylonia. At all points, the history maintains that the suffering of the people was due to their failure to observe divine Torah.

The Latter Prophets present the books of the Prophets of Israel, each of which is concerned with explaining the suffering of the people of Israel and Judah, culminating in the Babylonian Exile and the divine plans for the restoration of the nation once the exile was completed.⁸⁹ Each of the Latter Prophets is rooted in a distinctive institutional identity that influences his understanding of Israel's or Judah's relationship with G-d and the nature of the prophetic message. Isaiah ben Amoz is a royal counselor heavily influenced by the Davidic/Zion tradition, which posits an eternal covenant between YHWH, the sovereign deity of all creation, and Israel. In the Davidic/Zion tradition YHWH will defend David and Jerusalem/Zion, and Israel will maintain faith in YHWH. The book of Isaiah presents the punishment of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians and Babylonians as the result of the people's and monarch's failure to have faith in YHWH during the times of crisis, but it also projects YHWH's actions to return the exiled people to Jerusalem once the Babylonian Exile is over. Jeremiah is a priest of the line of Ithamar ben Aaron heavily influenced by the Mosaic ideal of observance of divine Torah as the basis for the relationship between YHWH and Israel/Judah. The book of Jeremiah recounts Jeremiah's struggles in Jerusalem with the house of David, the Temple, and the people. The prophet charges that the failure to observe Mosaic Torah, including Jerusalem's alliance with Egypt, the villain of the Torah narrative concerning the Exodus, is the fundamental cause of Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians. Once the Exile is completed, Jeremiah posits a return to Jerusalem. Ezekiel is a Zadokite priest exiled to Babylonia who holds that the sanctity of the Jerusalem Temple, recognized as the holy center of creation, is key to Israel's and creation's welfare and stability in the world. The book of Ezekiel therefore interprets the Babylonian Exile as the result of the desecration of the Jerusalem Temple. The prophet calls for a purge of Jerusalem and creation at large that will result in the construction of a new Temple in Jerusalem together with the restoration of Israel at the center of a new creation. Finally, the Book of

the Twelve Prophets includes the works of twelve individual prophetic figures, each of whom has a distinctive viewpoint and set of concerns. When read as a whole, the Twelve interprets Israel's history from the time of the northern kingdom of Israel through the Babylonian Exile and the Persian-period restoration. Overall, the Book of the Twelve takes issue with the book of Isaiah, which posits punishment for Israel and the nations by G-d, positing that both G-d and a Davidic messiah will lead Israel against the aggressor nations in an ultimately successful effort to force them to submit to G-d at the restored Jerusalem Temple.

The Ketuvim or Writings include the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Five Megillot/Scrolls, including Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Qoheleth/Ecclesiastes, and Esther, Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles.⁹⁰ The Babylonian Talmud (*b. Baba Batra* 14b) employs a roughly historical order in stipulating that the order is Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra–Nehemiah, and Chronicles. The Ketuvim collectively anticipate the restoration of the ideals of Israel that were earlier articulated in the Torah. Psalms presents the address of Israel's worshippers to G-d, asking for deliverance from enemies and anticipating the time when G-d will respond to those pleas. Proverbs articulates an ideal world of creation in which wisdom may be learned by observing the patterns of creation and society insofar as G-d consulted Wisdom in creating the world. Job argues that the attainment of wisdom is not so easy since G-d may act in ways that humans find difficult to understand, but it calls upon humans nevertheless to adhere to G-d while continuing to ask critical questions of G-d. The Five Megillot are each read in relation to one of the holidays of Judaism to illustrate its teachings, viz., Song of Songs is read on Passover to portray the intimate relationship between G-d and Israel, Ruth is read on Shavuot insofar as Ruth's conversion to Judaism represents revelation of divine Torah, Lamentations is read on Tisha b'Av to lament over the loss of the Temples and other tragedies in Jewish history, Qoheleth is read on Sukkot to explore the transitory nature of human life while affirming commitment to G-d, and Esther is read on Purim to remember how Esther and Mordecai acted to protect Jews from annihilation by Haman's decree. Daniel is read as a projection of the time when G-d will act to deliver Israel from its mortal enemies. Ezra–Nehemiah recounts the reconstruction of Jewish life in Jerusalem and the land of Israel as well as the reconstruction of the Temple. Chronicles presents a history of the world from the time of creation through Cyrus's decree enabling Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple in an effort to recount the Temple's role as the holy center of creation and of Jewish life.

Whereas the Tanak is structured according to a cyclical pattern of the institution of ideal Jewish life, the disruption of Jewish life, and the restoration of that ideal, the Christian Old Testament is structured according to a linear principle that posits the revelation of Christ as the culmination of human history. Thus, the Pentateuch recounts the early history of the world from the time of

creation through the time of Israel's ancestors. The Historical Books recount Israel's later history in the land and in exile from the time of Joshua through the time of Esther and the Persian empire. The Wisdom and Poetic Books address an eternal present in which the questions of the meaning of life and worship of the divine are addressed. Finally, the Prophets recount the punishment of Israel and look forward to the time of redemption. Insofar as the Old Testament is read in relation to the New Testament, the time of redemption is of course inaugurated with the revelation of Jesus Christ. The New Testament exhibits a similar structure. The Gospels recount the earliest history of the lifetime and crucifixion of Jesus. The book of Acts recounts the later history of the early Christian movement that begins in Jerusalem but moves on to Rome as the center for divine action in the world. The Epistles again address the timeless issues of Christian theology, organization, and practice. And finally, the book of Revelation anticipates the second coming of Christ as the culmination of world history.

A second dimension is the context of Jewish tradition, which of course differs markedly from Christian tradition. Whereas the Christian Old Testament is read first in relation to the New Testament and then in relation to subsequent Christian tradition with an eye to defining the dogmatic or systematic theological principles that define Christian faith and practice, the Tanak is read in relation to the entirety of Jewish tradition with an eye to defining both the identity of Jews as a distinctive and holy people and the halakhic practices and religious perspectives that are pertinent to Judaism. Because of the overwhelming role of the New Testament in defining Christian faith and practice, the New Testament's well-recognized dependence upon the Old Testament frequently results in readings in which the Old Testament is subordinated to the New and in which the Old Testament is read piecemeal in an effort to bring Christ or the Gentiles to the forefront of Old Testament interpretation. Insofar as Christ as portrayed in the New Testament results from a combination of perspectives from the Old Testament and from Greco-Roman culture and religion, Christ represents a foreign element that is not directly mentioned in the Old Testament and yet is read back into it. Although the nations are mentioned throughout the Old Testament, Christianity identifies with the Gentiles and places them at center stage in its understanding of the relationship between G-d and humankind so that the people of Israel are ultimately displaced in Christianity as the people of G-d. Although Jewish readings of the Tanak show a similar tendency to allow later tradition to control the reading of the Tanak, later Jewish tradition grows primarily out of the Tanak itself and does not introduce such a markedly foreign element, such as Christ, nor does it give emphasis over the people of Israel to a secondary group, such as the Gentiles, from the outset of the reading process. Rather, the relationship between the Tanak and subsequent Jewish tradition represents an organic and integrated process of development from the Tanak in which biblical concepts of G-d and the Jewish people stand as the bases for the development of Jewish thought in post-biblical Jewish tradition. New and foreign elements do appear in

subsequent Jewish tradition, but they do not fundamentally alter the understanding of G-d or the depiction of the Jewish people as the central divine and human characters in Jewish thought.

The term biblical theology denotes properly a concern with the construction of G-d as presented in the Bible. In this respect, biblical theology is differentiated from biblical anthropology, which is fundamentally concerned with the construction of human beings in the Bible. Biblical theology and biblical anthropology are generally considered to be two distinct fields of concern, but they are intimately related in a Jewish biblical theology. Although Judaism is concerned with G-d as the one true creator and sovereign divinity of the universe, it discourages attempts to delimit or define G-d in any way. Such delimitation or definition of G-d is considered as idolatry in Judaism insofar as it suggests that G-d is somehow limited or finite and thereby subject to outside control by human beings or perhaps other entities or factors. Although G-d is beyond human definition and comprehension, human beings nevertheless stand in relation to G-d by means of the covenant made between G-d and Judaism, within the context of all creation, and therefore Jews must come to some understanding of G-d and attempt to engage G-d within the context of that relationship. The Bible is read as G-d's address to the Jewish people, here defined as Israel and Judah, but it also portrays the attempts by the Jewish people to understand and engage G-d.

When reading the Bible in relation to the larger context of Judaism, Jewish biblical theology must consider the relationship between the Bible and post-biblical Jewish tradition and literature. Like Christianity, Judaism tends to read later literature and tradition back into the Bible. Although such a reading strategy is legitimate insofar as it promotes full integration of the Bible into the tradition as a whole and recognizes the role of readers in the construction of literature, it blurs the distinctive character of the Torah and the rest of the Bible as the foundation of Jewish tradition and compromises a full understanding of the historical development of Judaism. Such a strategy was employed in Christianity to weaken the connection between the Jewish people and the Bible and thereby to open the way for Christianity to be viewed as the true Israel, the true heirs of the Hebrew Bible, and even as the true addressees of the Hebrew Bible. Although such displacement is hardly a concern within Judaism, a full understanding the historical development of Judaism calls for an understanding of the Bible in and of itself in a manner that each of the major branches of Judaism can affirm. The various branches of Orthodox Judaism maintain that all of the Torah, both written and oral, was revealed at Mt. Sinai and that the task of Jews is to learn progressively the entirety of Torah that then comes to expression in post-biblical Jewish literature and practice. Conservative Judaism maintains that Torah is revealed throughout history as the Jewish people collectively determine the understanding of Judaism in each generation. Reform Judaism maintains that all Torah was revealed at Mt. Sinai, but that the revelation included the principles of change or evolution that would take place in relation to the needs of later times. Each

branch of Judaism in its own way therefore sees the Torah and Bible as foundational stages in a continually evolving Judaism, whether that evolution takes place as part of a process of learning the whole or adapting to the needs of later time. In all cases, the Torah and the rest of the Bible function as the foundations of Judaism and need to be read in their own right as sacred scripture that can then enter into dialog with the rest of the Jewish tradition. By reading the Bible as a foundational and distinctive expression of Jewish thought, Jewish biblical theology points both to the change or evolution in Jewish thought and practice that has taken place in the past and to the change and evolution that may take place in the future, whether such change is understood as the continued learning of Torah, the consensus of the Jewish people in each generation, or a deliberate change or evolution in keeping with the needs of modern times.

Jewish biblical theology must therefore assert that the Bible be read as the foundational sacred scriptures of Judaism. In considering such a proposition, interpreters must recognize the nature of Judaism, viz., it is a synthesis of two essential elements, religion and nationhood. On the one hand, Judaism is a religious tradition that is characterized by a distinctive set of beliefs and practices. On the other hand, Judaism is a distinctive people or nation that has lived in its own land and which also lives in the larger Gentile world. Judaism is a nation that is bound by a religious relationship with YHWH. Judaism maintains adherence to YHWH, the one true G-d of the universe, the one true creator of the universe, and the one true sovereign of the universe who enters into an eternal covenant with the Jewish people. That covenant entails obligations on the part of both parties. G-d is enjoined to show *hesed* or “fidelity” to the Jewish people, to protect them from threats, to ensure their life in the land of Israel and the world, and to serve as the source of justice, righteousness, and mercy in the world. The Jewish people for their part are enjoined to show *hesed* or fidelity to YHWH, to live in accordance with the will of YHWH, acknowledging YHWH as the one true G-d of the universe and observing the sacred teachings of divine Torah or instruction that YHWH has revealed to the Jewish people.

YHWH’s relationship with the Jewish people is set within the larger context of YHWH’s relationship with creation and the nations at large, so that the Jewish people function as a distinctive, priestly, or chosen people within that larger relationship. As a result of its distinctive relationship with YHWH, Judaism also has a distinctive relationship with the rest of the world as a holy people that is enjoined with the task of teaching or demonstrating to the world knowledge of G-d and knowledge of practices of holiness, justice, and mercy that G-d expects of the world at large. That does not mean converting the rest of the world to Judaism. But it does mean that Judaism serves as a catalyst to the nations of the world who must come to their own understandings of G-d, holiness, justice, and mercy in the world. Such a task calls for the Jewish people to develop its own sacred and national traditions to maintain its distinctive sense of identity in the world and not to collapse that identity into that of the nations and world at large. Within the

Jewish tradition, the Bible serves as the foundation. As such, it enters into dialog with the other elements of Jewish tradition, viz., the subsequent sacred literature, practices, and socio-political and cultural expressions of the Jewish people throughout history, including Jewish life in the land of Israel and in the Diaspora.

A third dimension is close attention to the entirety of the biblical text in Jewish interpretation.⁹¹ Whereas Christian Old Testament theology can be selective in its treatment of the Old Testament, Jewish biblical theology must take into account the entirety of the Tanak and the Hebrew or Aramaic text which stands as its basis. To a degree, this issue is a product of Christianity's penchant for reading the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament and thereby giving privilege to those books or texts that support Christological readings of the Bible. The result has been the phenomenon of "a Bible within the Bible" in Christianity's reading of the Old Testament in which books such as Genesis, Samuel, Psalms, or Isaiah are privileged whereas books such as Leviticus, Joshua, Esther, or Ezekiel are neglected or even vilified. To be fair, Christian biblical theology has recognized this issue and has begun to address it by promoting canonical models for doing biblical theology. And certainly Judaism has its own issues with the privileging of books, such as the Torah, Prophets, and Megillot that are regularly read in the context of Jewish worship whereas books from the Writings and many elements of the Prophets are not. Nevertheless, Jewish exegetical tradition has consistently called for close attention to the biblical text, and it has seen its task as the interpretation of the entirety of the biblical text, focusing especially on a detailed analysis of the Hebrew text through the Targums or the work of the medieval Bible commentators rather than the piecemeal or typological interpretations offered by Christian commentators. Rabbi Akiva, for example, was known for calling for the interpretation of every feature of the Torah text no matter how insignificant because, as a basis for the revelation of the divine will at Sinai, every feature of the Torah text is significant and subject to interpretation.

The first element in a Jewish reading of the Tanak is adherence to the Masoretic text. Although scholarship has recognized significant and differing versions of the text of the Hebrew Bible, such as the biblical texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Peshitta, the Vulgate, and others,⁹² the Masoretic Hebrew and Aramaic text of the Bible functions as the foundational sacred scriptures of Judaism. This is not to say that the Masoretic text is the earliest or even the most coherent text of the Bible currently known, but it is the text that has served as the basis for Jewish Bibles for at least eleven hundred years and probably more.⁹³ There are, of course, complications. For one, extant manuscripts of the Masoretic text date only to the mid-ninth century or so and not earlier. Modern scholarship has no clear idea as to the shape or form of the Masoretic text prior to this period because no copies of the Masoretic Bible are extant. It is known that the Ben Asher family of scribes played the major role in defining and supplying the vowel pointing and accents of the Masoretic text, but scholars have little idea as to the shape or form of that text prior to the work of the Masoretes, principally the Ben

Asher family, who shaped the Masoretic text into its final form. Given the Masoretic traditions of the *qērē'/kētīb*, marginal notes in which the Masoretes note textual emendations and alternative readings by providing an alternative vowel pointing to the consonantal text, and the tradition of the *tiqqûnê sôpërim*, the emendations of the scribes, generally for theological reasons, it is clear that Masoretic text contains disputed readings which likely go back to alternative versions of the proto-Masoretic Hebrew text or to differences of viewpoint as to how the proto-Masoretic text should be read. Indeed, the Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that alternative versions of the Hebrew Bible were extant in the late Second Temple period. Jeremiah, for example, appears in two different versions at Qumran, most of which represent a proto-Masoretic text not that different from the text in use today and one which represents a shorter and differently arranged text of Jeremiah that appears to underlie the Greek Septuagint version of the book.⁹⁴ Despite the textual variety evident in the Hebrew biblical manuscripts at Qumran, there is evidence of a proto-Masoretic text, such as the Murabba'at Scroll of the Twelve Prophets or the Naḥal Hever Greek Twelve Prophets scroll which appears to have been translated from a proto-Masoretic text.⁹⁵

Scholars have generally recognized that the Masoretic text may not be the earliest known text form of the Bible. Many argue that the Greek Septuagint provides a primary witness to the Old Greek version of the text which may represent the oldest known version of the Hebrew Bible. In the case of the above-mentioned Jeremiah, the shorter text included in the Septuagint and extant in a Hebrew version at Qumran may well represent the earliest known version of Jeremiah. Others, however, such as the Septuagint versions of Daniel and Esther, display an expanded text; Daniel includes the apocryphal works, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Prayer of the Three Young Jews, that are not found in the Masoretic version of the text, and Esther includes references to G-d that are also not found in the Masoretic version.

Apart from the question of the priority of Septuagint or Masoretic forms of biblical books, modern scholarship has become accustomed to emending the Masoretic text based on readings from the Septuagint and other versions that are deemed to be original. In general, such decisions are based in favor of readings that make more sense, presupposing that the scribes who transmitted the proto-Masoretic text made errors that introduced corruptions into the Hebrew text. There are indeed examples of textual corruption—1 Sam 13:1 is a primary case in point—but such a principle of textual corruption misses some important points. Scribes tend to correct their work in an effort to produce a coherent reading; indeed, the Septuagint text displays an interest in creating an esthetically pleasing and meaningful text designed to make sense to an educated Hellenistic reader. It makes more sense to posit that the difficult text is earlier and that the smoother text is the result of an effort to render a text that is meaningful to the reading audience, particularly when it is a text translated from an original language to a second language. Furthermore, the various text traditions demonstrate an interest

in introducing midrashic or interpretative elements into their texts, such as the alternative versions of the Jeroboam narratives in the Septuagint version of 1 Kgs 12:24; the Qumran sect's modification of Isa 2:2-4 in 1QIsaiah^a to refer to themselves as the transmitters of divine Torah to the nations; or Jerome's introduction of a reference to the resurrection of Jesus in Zeph 3:8. Although the case may be made that selected books or readings in the Septuagint, Qumran scrolls, or the other versions may be original, the case for the priority of other textual witnesses is not always clear. Alternative readings in the other textual traditions may indicate the history of the development of the Hebrew text and the hermeneutics by which it was read, but in the end the question of textual priority is irrelevant in a Jewish biblical theology. The Masoretic text is accepted as sacred scripture in Judaism, and it must therefore stand as the subject of interpretation in a Jewish biblical theology.

The exegetical method by which the Masoretic text of the Bible is read must also be considered. Traditional Jewish scholarship identified four basic levels of interpretation expressed through the Hebrew term *pardēs*, "garden (of Eden)," which serves as an acronym for the four exegetical strategies.⁹⁶ The first is *pěšāṭ*, the "simple" or "plain" meaning of the text. The second is *remez*, the "allegorical" or "alluded" meaning of the text, often involving Gematria or Notarikon or other allusionary techniques. The third is *děṛāšā*, the homiletical or midrashic interpretation of texts, sometimes in relation to other biblical texts, sometimes in relation to other Jewish texts, and sometimes in relation to other issues. And the fourth is *sōd*, the "secret" or "mystical" meaning of the text, generally related to Kabbalah. The last three techniques are classically Jewish forms of textual interpretation that are designed to relate the biblical text to later forms of Jewish literature and thought and thereby to impose later meanings on texts that were not written for such purpose. The first technique, *pěšāṭ*, however, is designed to interpret the plain meaning of the text and to enable it to speak on its own terms without reference to later forms of Jewish literature. Insofar as the purpose of Jewish biblical theology is to interpret the Bible in its own right as sacred literature designed to give expression to concerns contemporary with its composition and then to put the Bible in dialog with later Jewish tradition, *pěšāṭ* emerges as the basis for exegetical method in Jewish biblical theology. The use of *pěšāṭ* enables the Bible to speak on its own terms as the foundational dialog partner of Jewish tradition.

The development of *pěšāṭ* exegetical method is evident within the Bible itself in comments that are designed to explain a statement or term to the reader, such as 1 Sam 9:9, which explains the use of the Hebrew term, *rō'eh*, "seer," with the comment, "Formerly in Israel when a man would go to inquire of G-d, he would say, 'Come, let us go to the seer,' for in former times a prophet (*nābî*) was called a seer." The *pěšāṭ* method is also extensively employed in the early translations of the Bible, including both the earliest forms of the Septuagint and the Targums, insofar as translation is a form of interpretation. The Old Greek of the Septuagint,

Targum Onkelos to the Torah, and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets demonstrate interests in rendering the Hebrew text as accurately as possible, although a certain element of translation is inevitable when translating from one language to another. Later manifestations of *pěšāt* exegesis appear in the early halakhic midrashim, such as the Mekhilta' de-Rabbi Ishmael or Siphre Devarim, both of which are intended to explain the meaning of the legal codes in Exod 20–23 and Deut 12–26 respectively. The *pěšāt* technique comes to full expression in the medieval commentators, such as Rashi, Radaq, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and others who sought to interpret the plain meaning of the biblical text as a result of challenges to Judaism by both Islam and Christianity that Jews had misinterpreted their scriptures, thereby failing to see the truth of Islam or Christianity. By focusing on the plain meaning of the text, particularly through the use of philology and grammar, the medieval interpreters demonstrated that the biblical text had a coherent message of its own that did not need the recognition of non-Jewish movements of Islam and Christianity to demonstrate a foreign meaning beyond that expressed by the text itself.

Although modern historical-critical exegesis was developed in Protestant scholarly circles beginning in the period of the Enlightenment, it is the successor to a certain degree of the medieval Jewish interpreters. The use of philological and grammatical principles for interpretation was honed by the medieval Jewish biblical scholars and developed further in modern times by source-, text-, redaction-, form-, and tradition-criticism as well as by archeology and the comparative study of ancient Near Eastern literature. Although early critical exegesis was often designed to serve the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*, or “scripture alone,” as the basis of Christian thought—and frequently with an eye to undercutting Jewish and Roman Catholic claims to the text—critical exegesis is designed like *pěšāt* to enable the Bible to speak on its own terms. Like their medieval forebears, modern Jewish biblical scholars have learned to employ methods introduced by non-Jews—and to reject the excesses of those methods—to elucidate the meaning of biblical texts. Many of the excesses of source-, text-, redaction-, and tradition-criticism have been tempered by the introduction of literary-, rhetorical-, linguistic-, and even reader-response criticism that calls for recognition of textual coherence, elements of plot and character development, the persuasive and communicative aspects of a text, and even the role of the reader instead of exclusively the author in constructing the meaning of a text. This is not to deny the historical dimensions of texts that early historical critics emphasized. Rather, it is a recognition that a text must be read in both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions. Synchronic refers to the purely literary and expressive character of the full or final form of a text apart from factors of composition, such as authorship, authorial intention, and the historical settings of composition. Diachronic refers to the historical character of a text, such as the postulated authorship of a text, its historical setting and development, and its reception in defined historical contexts. Analysis of both aspects of a text is necessary for its full interpretation.

A fourth dimension is the dialogical character of the Jewish Bible. Prior work in Christian biblical theology has demonstrated that there is no theological center to the Old Testament, viz., no single thematic or theological principle has been identified that binds the entirety of the Bible together. Early attempts to organize a theology around G-d, Man, and Salvation fail because not all of the books are concerned with G-d (i.e. Esther, Song of Songs) or salvation, a foreign concept brought in by the New Testament. Von Rad's efforts to make *Heilsgeschichte* the unifying theme of the Old Testament fail due to its overemphasis on historical narrative and its inability to account adequately for wisdom and other books that are not primarily concerned with history. Eichrodt's emphasis on covenant fails because the theme of covenant does not come to expression in every book of the Bible. Childs' focus on canonical criticism fails because he is unable to account for the variety of texts and canonical forms that appear within Christianity. Rendtorff's theology fails because it does not account for the contexts of Judaism and Christianity in which the Bible is read, thereby giving it a distinctive function in each tradition. Gerstenberger's theology fails because it is based on the premise that there is no theological unity in the Old Testament, which means that only individual themes are treated in isolation. Brueggemann's theology is very intriguing, but ultimately, it cannot account for the entire Bible.

But in fact, the diversity of concerns raised within the various books of the Bible provides a basis for thinking about the Tanak as a whole, not as a work concerned with a single theme, but as a canonical work in which the full variety of books, concerns, and viewpoints are represented therein. Indeed, many books differ markedly from each other and sometimes even flatly contradict each other. Deuteronomy updates the laws of Exodus with greater concern for the rights of the poor and women. Chronicles gives an alternative account of Israelite and Judean history from that presented in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings with a distinctive theological viewpoint. Jeremiah frequently challenges the views of his senior colleague, Isaiah, and Ezekiel in turn challenges Jeremiah. Job directly challenges the theological worldview of Proverbs; Lamentations challenges the worldview of the Prophets; and Daniel draws upon Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in an effort to work out a new and different understanding of divine purpose in world events. When readers observe that the books of the Tanak differ so markedly among themselves, the task becomes not one of attempting to reconcile the differences as past interpreters have unsuccessfully attempted to do, but one of recognizing that the differing viewpoints in the Bible is intentional and therefore a subject of concern in a Jewish (or a Christian) biblical theology.

The variety of viewpoints expressed in the Bible represents a dialog on major issues that takes place both among the books of the Bible and with the readers of those books, in whatever historical and cultural context in which they might reside. Such a model of dialog is a classic Jewish form. It is well represented in the Rabbinic Kallah, the meetings of the Rabbis in Talmudic times to discuss points of halakhah and to make their decisions.⁹⁷ Because of the dialogical nature of the

Rabbinic Kallah and commitment to the notion that the study of Torah is an ongoing process of revelation, the Rabbis preserved both the majority opinions on points of discussion in the Talmud as well as the minority positions in case future discussion might indicate defects in the reasoning of the majority or important insights in the decisions of the minority. Thus Judaism does not find itself based in dogmatic or systematic theological principles as Christianity attempts to do; instead, Judaism emerges as a religion of continuous dialog, both with the traditions and among contemporaries through time, as it seeks to understand the divine will as expressed in Torah and subsequent Jewish tradition.

Recognition of the dialogical character of the Bible calls for a methodological approach based in intertextuality that complements the concern with *pěšāt* or the plain meaning of the text outlined above. The purpose of such an approach is to recognize the interrelationships among the biblical books, whether intentional or not, as well as efforts to expound upon them, both by other biblical books and by the readers or interpreters of biblical books, as a fundamental aspect of the interpretation of biblical literature. Indeed, such an approach echoes the Rabbinic concern with *děrašā*, the homiletical approach noted above that employs mid-rashic intertextual dialog as an essential foundation for its homiletical exposition. Such an approach is well-rooted in the Bible itself as the above-noted examples of inner biblical exegesis among the biblical books, either to disagree with them or to elaborate, expound upon, and extend the meaning of the earlier text, so clearly represent. It is also well represented by later interpreters of biblical books who likewise seek to elaborate, expound upon, and extend the meaning of biblical texts and sometimes to disagree with them as well. Such an approach appears in the Targums, such as Targum Jonathan on the Torah in Exod 19 which notes how G-d held Mt. Sinai over the heads of the people of Israel, threatening to drop it on them if they declined to observe divine Torah. It is also well represented in the various midrashim and Talmudic texts that expound upon the books of the Bible, as exemplified by the discussion of the *Lex Talionis* in Exod 21:22-25; Lev 24:10-22; and Deut 19:15-21 (see *m. Baba Kamma* 8:1; *b. Baba Kamma* 83b–84a).

Recent advances in intertextual methodology or reading strategies come into play, particularly the work of Mikhail Bakhtin who explores the intertextual character of literary texts. Intertextuality includes a number of dimensions.⁹⁸ One is the overriding role of the reader of a text who constructs its meaning or interpretation based not on the intentions of the author but on the perceptions of the reader in relation to textual world that the reader inhabits. Here, the intentions of the author are irrelevant, both because the author may not be known or alive any longer to explain his or her work, and because a literary work takes on a life of its own once it leaves the hand of its author. In such an instance, the reader becomes the arbiter of textual construction and meaning, not the author who is no longer present. Indeed, biblical literature is perhaps the foremost example of such reading strategy, insofar as the authors of biblical texts are rarely known. But the lack of an author has not deterred later readers from interpreting biblical

literature in relation to their own respective religious traditions and worldviews. Does the Bible point to modern diaspora Jewish life or to the modern state of Israel? Does it point to Jesus or even to the establishment of the Christian church in all of its various forms? Probably not in both instances, but one can trace the thread of interpretation through the traditions of Judaism and Christianity to arrive at phenomena noted. Indeed, such adaptability enables scripture to address unforeseen developments and nevertheless stand as the foundation for later forms of religious expression.

A second dimension is the inherent coherence of literature, whether it is deliberately written as a coherent text or not. Placement in a literary context demands that a text be read in relation to that literary context in an effort to construct how the various elements of the text function together in the mind of the reader. It does not matter if a text was written to be coherent or if it was composed in stages, edited, or even placed randomly together. Again, texts take on a life of their own once they leave the hands of their authors, and they are then able to address unforeseen circumstances and realities, as indicated above. At this point, the interpreter must ask how a unit of text fits in or relates to the preceding and following material or material that is grouped together with the text under consideration in a larger literary or canonical framework. Simply by being placed together with other text, a text under consideration enters a literary context and that context then becomes an element of its interpretation. It does not matter, for example, if Isa 1–39 was written to give expression to the words and activities of the eighth-century prophet Isaiah ben Amoz, if Isa 40–55 was written by an anonymous exilic prophet at the end of the Babylonian exile, and if Isa 56–66 was written by one or more anonymous prophets working in the early Persian period. Isaiah 1–66 functions as a single book that gives expression to the words of Isaiah ben Amoz even if the eighth-century prophet did not write the book in its entirety or even one word of it. Interpreters must account for both the unity of its expression as well as the disunity of its composition to come to a full understanding of a book which is in dialog with its readers and whose segments are in dialog with each other.

A third dimension is the inherent intertextual interrelationship between texts, whether they are placed together within the same immediate literary context or not. In the case of biblical texts, their placement together within a biblical canon establishes an intertextual relationship among all of the texts of that canon and thereby calls for reading each of the texts within that biblical canon, however defined, in relation to the other texts of that canon. In such an instance, the books within a canon must be considered to be in dialog with each other insofar as they each articulate a set of ideas within the framework of their literary context. Thus, the book of Jeremiah is in dialog with all of the books of the Torah, insofar as Jeremiah calls for observance of divine Torah as a fundamental principle of his worldview. But Jeremiah is also in dialog with Job, not because Jeremiah cites Job or Job cites Jeremiah, but because both take up the question of suffering, warranted or not, imposed by G-d. Likewise, Jeremiah is in dialog with the

Psalms, in part because he employs the psalmic genre of lament to give expression to his suffering, and Jeremiah is in dialog with Kings and Chronicles because of the book's construction of the history of the last years of the kingdom of Judah much as Kings and Chronicles undertake the same task with differing results. But interpreters must also consider the larger literary world of texts beyond the immediate context of a defined literary canon, such as the Bible. When read in relation to the larger literary framework of Judaism, the intertextuality of the Bible includes the entire body of literature included in Judaism, such as the Targum, Midrashim, Talmuds, commentaries, mystical literature, Zionist literature, and so on. And when read in relation to the worlds of Christianity, Islam, and the cultures of America, the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia, and beyond, the circle of intertextual relations within which the Bible functions widens accordingly in relation to the literary world of the reader.

A final dimension is the deliberate intertextual relationship between works of literature, most commonly referring to those cases when one work deliberately cites or alludes to another. The Bible is filled with such examples of inner-biblical exegesis, in which later writers attempt to explain, elaborate upon, disagree with, or otherwise interpret and react to other biblical texts. Instances occur within biblical books, as indicated by the redactional expansion and reworking of biblical texts. The placement of superscriptions at the head of prophetic books is a case in point, insofar as the superscription identifies the following material as the word of the prophet in question or pertaining to the prophet, and thereby contextualizes the book. The placement of Deuteronomy following Genesis—Numbers is another case in point, insofar as Deuteronomy revises the laws of the earlier books, as exemplified by the slave law in Deut 15 which gives greater rights to the poor and to women than Exod 21. Another example is the citation of Proverbs' maxim, "the fear of YHWH is wisdom," in Job 28:28 as part of a text that challenges the contention in Proverbs that wisdom is readily discerned by observing nature. A further example is Chronicles' recasting of the historical texts of Samuel and Kings in an effort to challenge Kings' principle that disaster occurs as a result of the sins of the ancestors, and to argue instead that it comes as a result of the sins of the current generation. And Esther enters the dialog to assert that G-d does not enter into history in the way that either Kings or Chronicles asserts, but that human beings must fend for themselves.

Fundamentally, the Tanak is an intertextual and dialogical book. It enters into dialog with its readers, it engages dialog among its constituent texts, and it engages dialog beyond its own confines with the larger bodies of literature in Judaism and the world beyond. All of these dimensions of intertextuality enter into the exegetical discussion of the Tanak and play their roles in defining the interrelationships among the various texts that comprise the Tanak.

In sum, a Jewish biblical theology must engage the text of the Bible firsthand, grappling with the interpretation of the Hebrew and Aramaic text; discerning the diachronic dimensions of its literary form, compositional history, generic and linguistic features, communicative features, socio-historical setting, and the

potential intentions of its authors; and grappling with the synchronic dimensions again of its literary coherence, plot and character development, and its intertextual relationships. A Jewish biblical theology therefore points to the foundations for an ongoing dialog concerning the identity and character of G-d, the Jewish people, the world of creation, the nations at large, and their interrelations with each other. It is on the basis of this dialog begun in the Bible that Judaism is formed.

NOTES

¹ Jon D. Levenson, "Why Jews Are Not Interested in Biblical Theology," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. J. Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress 1987), 287–307, reprinted in Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 33–61, 165–70. See my "Why Jews Should Be Interested in Biblical Theology," *CCAR Journal* 44, no. 1 (1997): 67–75.

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