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MORDECHAI ERAN

The Hebrew Bible Reborn:
From Holy Scripture
to the Book of Books

A History of Biblical Culture and the Battles
over the Bible in Modern Judaism



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THE HEBREW BIBLE REBORN: FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE
TO THE BOOK OF BOOKS



STUDIA JUDAICA
FORSCHUNGEN ZUR WISSENSCHAFT
DES JUDENTUMS

HERAUSGEGEBEN VON
E. L. EHRLICH UND G. STEMBERGER

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A HISTORY OF BIBLICAL CULTURE
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IN MODERN JUDAISM

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The Holy Scriptures are not immanently holy. It is the content that sanctifies the book, transforming it into the primary element and making its content secondary. The book exists forever, but its content is changed by life and learning. What have men not found in the Holy Scriptures from the time of Philo until the present day? ... In the Holy Scriptures they all sought only the truth, each his own truth, and they all found what they sought, found it because *they were compelled to*, for if not, the truth would not be the truth and the Holy Scriptures would not be holy.

Ahad Ha'am, "Perurim" ("Crumbs") (1892), "The Sacred and the Profane," In: *Al Parashat Derakhim* (At the Crossroads), Vol. I (Berlin, 1930), p. 138.

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”לומר לך: מה אש אינו דולקת יהדי אף דברי תורה אין מתקיימין ביהדי“
(בבלי תענית, ז)

[“In order to indicate that just as fire does not burn when isolated, so will the words of the Torah not be preserved when studied by oneself, alone”, *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Ta'anit*, Henry Malter edn., Philadelphia, 1928, p. 43.]

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Introduction

Our objective in this book is to try to describe the presence and role of the Hebrew Bible in Jewish culture in the last two hundred years (particularly in Germany and Palestine). By its ‘presence’, we refer to the various manners in which the 24 books were read, studied, understood, interpreted, “rewritten,” and used for various purposes in literature and art, sermons, public and political polemics, and the like. In other words, we will deal here with the various “intermediaries” between the Bible and the general public, in particular biblical scholars in all branches of Bible study. We regard Bible study as an inseparable part of the Bible’s presence as a living text in the society and culture, and as a key expression of this presence.

“The Bible is the wellspring of our lives, our sacred Torah,” the Jewish neo-Orthodox German weekly *Der Israelit* proclaimed in 1861.¹ But, it added, “most Jewish homes do not have a complete Bible, at the most the Pentateuch and a Book of Psalms, and most of our young people are not familiar with the Bible.” Two years earlier, the weekly of the rival movement, liberal Judaism, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (*AZdJ*) had written in a similar vein: “The Bible is lost to the modern Jew – he must get it back.”² Similar sentiments, some even more radical in tone, were also voiced during the nineteenth century by enlightened Jews in Eastern Europe. The Reform movement, the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment) and the modern nationalist movement regarded a ‘return to the Bible’ as a prerequisite for the modernization of Judaism or the national revival of the Jewish people.

Hence, various, often rival camps in modern Jewish society in Europe appealed to the Jews “to return to the Bible” or “to possess the Bible,” although each of these interpreted this call, and of course its

¹ “Die Bibelanstalt für die Anhänger des traditionellen (orthodoxen) Judenthums,” *DIsr*, 2 (23), 1861, pp. 213–274.

² “Die Bibel ist dem neueren Juden abhanden gekommen – sie müssen sie wieder haben.” L. Philippson, “Die Herstellung und Verbreitung wohlfeiler Bibeln,” *AZdJ*, 23 (13), 1859, pp. 183–185. On the context in which these words were written, see Chapter One.

value and significance for modern Jewish society, differently. The appeal bore results. The change in the status of the Bible, which began with the Haskalah movement at the end of the eighteenth century, took on momentum mainly in the second half of the nineteenth century, reached its height during the twentieth century, and was attended by a new understanding of its content, value and significance for the life of the modern Jew. While in the first half of the nineteenth, it still seemed that the Bible had not gained the place it merited in Jewish life, in the twentieth century its key position was assured. In bringing about this change, neo-orthodoxy, the Reform movement in Germany, the secular nationalist movement and the religious national movement – each in its own way and for its own reasons – were descendants of the Haskalah and at the same time, to some extent, had common aspirations.

The call “to return to the Bible” referred to a return to the Book, but over time, it also took on the meaning of a return to the “biblical period,” namely to call for the revival or reconstruction of at least some of the characteristics of the historical reality of that period. In other words, it was call to return to the period of the Bible, as the Bible itself described it or as it was thought to have existed in the minds of later generations.

In the nineteenth century, then, the Hebrew Bible (the *Tanach*)³ enjoyed a rebirth, and during the twentieth it became, for many Jews, the formative book of their identity and culture, the book that shaped at least part of their *Weltanschauung*, and for many it was no longer a Holy Scripture, but instead “the Book of Books” (*sefer ha’sfarim*).⁴

³ *Tanach* is an acronym for Torah, Nevi’im and Ketuvim. It appeared only in the Middle Ages (apparently among the writers of the Massorah in the 9th or 10th century). The name *Mikra*, which first appears in the Mishnah (and not as some claim in Nehemiah 8:8, where the word denotes ‘assembly’) is a synonym for *Tanach*. (See: E. Kutsch, ZAW: *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 65, 1953, pp. 247–253). In the Middle Ages, Jews began to use the term “twenty-four,” based on the number of books in the Bible. It is still used today by Yiddish speakers in the word *svar’be*. In the Christian context, when the Bible or Holy Scripture is mentioned, the reference may only be to the New Testament. See: Julio Trebolle Barrera, *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible: An Introduction to the History of the Bible*, trans. from the Spanish by Wilfred G. E. Watson, Leiden and Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998; Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, New York, 2003, pp. ix–xvi; John K. Riches, *The Bible: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2000, pp. 31–34.

⁴ This term (in German, *Buch der Bücher*, and in Hebrew *sefer ha’sfarim*) apparently appeared in European literature from the seventeenth century. In modern Hebrew literature it appears only from the end of the nineteenth, and was given an “official” status in the opening statement of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, “that the

A new understanding of the value and significance of the Bible developed, and it became the subject of various new interpretations, gained a key status in both public and private life and consequently began to fill new functions in the various branches of culture and public discourse. One can say, then, that the Jews began to regard the Bible as their most important asset and heritage, as a shared foundation of values and world view, and as their great contribution to humankind.

We will term the process that produced the new formative status of the Bible in Jewish society and its results the *Biblical Revolution*, a revolution that left its mark on all the streams in Judaism, but particularly on the national secular movement and on the national religious movement, as well as on the new Jewish society in Palestine from the 1880s. It is important to emphasize that this revolution was an important part of the overall modern Jewish revolution, namely, a part of the processes of modernization and religious reform, secularization and nationalism. These were processes that altered the face of both Judaism and Jewry and were largely a result of the influence exerted on Jewish society by the profound changes that took place in European society over two centuries.⁵ The biblical revolution played an important role in creating a new Jewish people or perhaps, to qualify this far-reaching formulation, we ought to say it had a role in turning at least part of the Jews into the people of the Bible instead of the people of the Torah (and the *halakhah*), a people whose Judaism became biblical Judaism.

From the Haskalah period onward, the Bible began to be perceived as a book that gives expression to the Jewish culture – of which religion is only one part – of the biblical period, and as a book that shaped all levels and aspects of Jewish culture in the following generations. When the Bible was divested of its theocentric dimension, this imbued it with new authority and turned it into a profane or worldly document, a book in which one could find a complete stock of arche-

Jewish people in Eretz Israel gave to the entire world the eternal Book of Books.” The term designating the Jewish people as the “people of the book” or “people of the Scripture,” *ahl al-kitab* (“book” in this case refers to the Pentateuch) in Surah 3:33 in the Quran (“The Family of ‘Imrān”) glosses over the fact that the Bible is a collection that was canonized over a long period and relates to it as one book.

⁵ See Benjamin Harshav, “The Revival of the Land of Israel and the Modern Jewish Revolution: Thoughts about the Situation,” in Nurit Gertz (ed.), *Nekudat Tatzpit: Perspectives on Culture and Society in Israel*, Tel Aviv, 1988, pp. 7–31 (Hebrew). By revolution, the reference is not only to changes in various traits of life, but rather in changes in the content of the majority of traits and in the importance attributed to them.

types of human existence and human behavior in all spheres of life, or of philosophical ideas. Our main argument will be that in the context of cultural creation – literature, art, public sermons and polemics – a high level of importance was attributed to the issue of how the Bible was read according to a thematic division, rather than to the issue of its composition, namely to the question of when and by whom the various literary units were written. In fact, we will argue, there is here a continuation of sorts of the techniques and approach of the *midrash* in order to endow the Bible with ideological and topical interpretation and relevance. Events and figures took on an archetypal status and ideas received an atemporal dimension while no importance was ascribed to the specific historical context of their appearance in the Bible. Only in this manner could the Bible serve as a formative text in modern Jewish culture.⁶ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then, at least part of the Jewish people became Bible-believers and members of a biblically-oriented society. This segment of Jewry drew from the Bible legitimacy for its existence, a basis for a consciousness of its continuity with the historical past, and its vision of the future. For it, the Bible became a repository of historical paradigms, inspiration and exemplary rules of political, moral and legal conduct, on both the collective and the personal level, and a repository of modes of expression, metaphors and images. With some measure of hyperbole, one could perhaps say that this part of the Jewish people began to see and interpret the world through biblical glasses.

Was this truly a revolution? Did not the Bible, from the Second Temple period onward, have a formative status in Jewish conscious-

⁶ Jonathan Sheehan's book, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*, Princeton, NJ, 2005, came to our attention after we had finished writing this book. What he writes about the Enlightenment in England and Germany closely resembles our perception of the Jewish Enlightenment and the circumstances in which the Bible gained its status in modern Jewish culture. Unquestionably the development of the non-theocentric reading of the Bible in German culture had an enormous influence on the appearance of a Jewish non-theocentric reading and on the perception of the Bible as both a Jewish heritage and asset, and an "historical Bible" as well (*ibid.*, p. 217). He writes that the Bible became a book in which one could now find new answers with the aid of a "variety of humanistic and historical disciplines" and a variety of genres (p. 91). As a result, Jewish culture also witnessed the phenomenon of a panoply of Bibles. The need to maintain the historical cultural continuity in an age of profound changes in Jewish identity endowed the Bible with more significant value than it had in previous generations and made it the foundation of a part of the new Jewish culture. However, the Jews found it far more difficult to de-theocentrise the Hebrew Bible than the Christians did, since for them the Bible was also the Torah, namely, a book that contains the laws and commandments that underpin their lives.

ness and in the life of the Jews? The answer is a two-fold one: First, all the books of the Bible were in fact known as Holy Scripture (*kitvei hakodesh*),⁷ but until the nineteenth century the Bible in Judaism meant primarily the Pentateuch. In other words, *kitvei hakodesh* referred to the Torah of Moses, namely the laws, or at the most, the five books of the Pentateuch (or as Christians refer to the books from Genesis to Deuteronomy, the Five Books of Moses).⁸ Second, some of the 24 books of the Bible – and not only the five books of the Pentateuch – (in

⁷ The term Holy Scripture or the Sacred Writings (*kitvei hakodesh*) appears in the New Testament in the Second Letter to Timothy: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scripture ... All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Timothy 3:15–16). In Judaism, the term *kitvei hakodesh* first appears in the Mishnah (Shabbat 16:1; Yadaim 3:2). There is a view that at first the reference was only to the *Ketuvim* (see Shamma Friedman, “The Primacy of Tosefta in Mishnah – Tosefta Parallel – Shabbat 16:1: *Kol kitvei hakodesh*, *Tarbiz*, 62 (3), April–June, 1993, pp. 316–322 (Hebrew)). A similar process also occurred in an earlier period in relation to the tradition that held that Moses had “written” the entire Pentateuch. In rabbinic literature (in particular Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 14b–15a), there are references to the issue of the authorship of the books of the Bible, which show that the Sages believed the Pentateuch, but not only that portion of the Bible, was a product of divine authorship, and they gave the order of the written transmission of the books. In any event, there is no way of knowing when the five books of the Pentateuch were first attributed to Moses and what came first – whether their attribution to Moses endowed them with their status, or because of their status they were attributed to Moses. Jack R. Lundbom suggested that at first only Moses’ song (*Ha’azinu* [“Give ear”]) was attributed to him, and over time the attribution was extended to all five books. See: Jack R. Lundbom, “Scribal Colophons and Scribal Rhetoric in Deuteronomy 31–34,” in Joshua J. Adler (ed.), *Haim M. I. Gevaryahu Memorial Volume*, Vol. II, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 53–63. Recently, the talmudic sources on the question of the authorship, copying and transmission of the books of the Bible are discussed in Jed Wyrick’s book, *The Ascension of Authorship: Attribution and Canon Formation in Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian Traditions*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004. See also: William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge, 2004. We will parenthetically remark here that it is not clear what the “logic” is in the claim that the divine authorship had, for example, to dictate to Moses the story of the Israelites wandering in the desert, a story at which Moses was present and was also its main hero.

⁸ See: Frederick E. Greenspahn, “Does Judaism Have a Bible?” in Leonard J. Greenspoon and Byran F. LeBeau (eds.), *Sacred Text, Secular Times: The Hebrew Bible in the Modern World*, Omaha, Nebraska, 2000, pp. 1–12. In most cases, the Torah or the Torah of Moses referred only to the collection of laws in the Leviticus and Deuteronomy (“Every scroll of the law that was found was torn up and consigned to the flames”, I Maccabees 1:56; “and anyone discovered in possession of the Book of the Covenant or conforming to the law was by sentence of the king condemned to die”, ibid., 57). Over time, the name “Torah” was expanded and referred to the entire Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy) and was perceived as having been written in its entirety by Moses under divine inspiration, although this expansion has no basis either in the Bible or the Talmud. In the modern public discourse, there is often a blurring of the boundaries between the five books of the Pentateuch and the Bible as a whole, so that the Torah and the Bible become synonymous.

particular the Prophets, Psalms and the five Scrolls) were, in one way or another, through the liturgy, the festivals, and biblical commentary, an important part of Jewish religious and cultural life throughout the centuries,⁹ but they were read only in part. In any event, the status of the Bible – as we will point out in the first chapter – was gradually diminished over time in the traditional Jewish society in Europe, until claims were voiced that it was being entirely neglected. If this is indeed the case, then the Hebrew Bible (in its translation into European languages as well) was reborn.

In the first chapter we will trace the process that led to this rebirth from the time of the Haskalah until the end of the nineteenth century. Later, in the third part of this book, we will describe the status it gained in the Jewish society in Palestine and in the State of Israel in the twentieth century.

Why was the Bible – the most ancient book in Jewish literature – chosen as the formative book of modern Jewish society? There were several reasons for this. Some of them were internal, first and foremost the need and desire to anchor modern Jewish identity and essence in a formative book that would replace the rabbinical literature (the Talmud). The Bible was the only book that could fill this function, and hence various streams and camps in modern Judaism found in it legitimization for a variety of immanent cultural processes or for adaptation to processes that were the result of outside influences. Although quite a few movements and streams in history have called for reforms, or even revolutions, under the banner of a return to “ancient, authentic sources” or to the “tradition of the forefathers,” as part of a combined process of restoration and modernization, the call for a “return to the Bible,”¹⁰ as we shall try to show in this book, bore a special character and produced unique results.

Some of the causes came from without, such as processes of secularization that European society and culture underwent, modern philosophies and Protestant biblical criticism that exerted a strong influence on modern Judaism and on the way in which various streams attempted to redefine the content of Judaism. Or, in some cases, they

⁹ On the status assigned to the Books of the Bible (22 according to his version), see in Josephus' *Against Apion* 1:8 as well as in Numbers Rabbah 14:4: “Anyone reading a verse that is not in one of the 24 books is regarded as reading from external books,” and Ecclesiastes Rabbah 12:12: “Anyone placing in his home more than 24 books is bringing confusion into his home.”

¹⁰ See: Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, 1988 edn., pp. 191–200.

obliged the various streams to respond to them in new ways, including a new perception of the essence of the Bible, its significance, and the messages it contained.

As a result, the “return to the Bible” and the “biblical revolution” were attended by unceasing internal struggles within the Jewish public, which were a central part of the *Kulturkampf* waged in Jewry in the modern era, as well as external struggles, with the Christian environment. The character and content of these struggles, in both arenas, reflect the various positions formulated by the different streams in Judaism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in regard to the desirable relations between Jewish culture and the surrounding cultures in Europe. These battles centered on the correct way to understand and interpret the Bible.

A large part of this book is devoted to the battles, internal and external, over the Bible. In our view, the intensity of these battles throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflects the new key status that the Bible acquired in the world of the Jews and the great importance accorded it. Although in earlier generations too, polemics over the Bible, within Jewry and between it and Christianity (and to some extent, Islam too) existed and functioned as a mirror reflecting profound disagreements not only in matters of religious doctrine, the modern biblical revolution posed totally new challenges to the Jews, which all of the streams in Jewry had to grapple with and respond to. As we will see, a part of the conceptual system used by the Jews in this modern struggle over the Bible differed from that used in polemics in earlier generations. From now on, Bible-believers from all the camps no longer sought confirmation of the “biblical truth” only in the Bible itself, but also attempted to find it in extra-biblical evidence. The nature of this reading, in particular that which ascribes much importance to the historical narrative of the Bible and attempts to make it conform to the evidence of extra-biblical sources, we shall call historical fundamentalism, or perhaps more aptly, historical scripturalism, which means placing complete faith in the testimony of the Bible with the total confidence that the extra-biblical evidence confirms the testimony of the Bible in each and every case. As a result, there are also secular Jews who believe that Scripture is *ex hypothesi* and that the Bible is essentially unlike any other book.

The nineteenth century, then, presents us with a dialectic process, which gave rise to great tension as well as a creative outburst in the form of proposals for resolving the dilemma, an inexhaustible well-spring that endured throughout the twentieth century with growing

intensity. The process can be described as follows: in the period during which the new formative status of the Bible took shape and gathered impetus in the modern Jewish culture, and in the period in which the Jews began to interpret the entire Bible, in particular the Torah, but not only it, in a new light, the Bible, at first mainly the Pentateuch and later the entire Bible, and through it Judaism (later, mainly Zionism) came under attack from several quarters. A new school of biblical scholarship, based on both a new world view and new scientific disciplines, began to challenge the sanctity, the authority, the values and the literary unity of the Bible, as well as its reliability and originality. As a result of this attack, the Jews were obliged to respond to a number of fundamental and substantive questions.

The second and third chapters will be devoted to a description of the Jewish responses to modern biblical criticism and to the archaeological-historical research on the ancient Near East throughout the nineteenth century.

The scholarly (philological-historical) discipline known as higher criticism, and in particular the theory called documentary hypothesis (*Quellenscheidung* in German), on the one hand, and the study of ancient cultures of the Near East, on the other, created a new school based on both a new reading of the history of the biblical text and on extra-biblical historical documents. These two new, prestigious disciplines were predicated on an evolutionary approach to faith and religion, and some of them rejected the theocentric world view and the tradition which regarded the Torah as a unique, original book that had a divine source, namely, as words of the living God. Both of these branches of research posed, among others, the following questions: Does the historicist-evolutionary view (namely, that which regards it [the attitude to the Bible] as an expression of different religious views held by different circles, at different times) also apply to the biblical text, and in particular to the Pentateuch, and hence to the development of biblical faith, or should the Bible be seen as a unified, whole book, sanctified by tradition, one that transcends any historicist test that is liable to question its validity? Does the fact that the Pentateuch is a human creation invalidate the status and value of its eternal, atemporal truths? Does the historical dimension of the Bible have a value in and of itself, or is it a book of divine commandments and not a book of history? It is no wonder, then, that all those who held the Book of Books dear for whatever reason enlisted in defending the Bible against the higher criticism represented primarily by liberal Protestant biblical scholars and the theory that the Pentateuch was dependent on the ancient cultures of Mesopo-

tamia. They felt compelled to battle against “the army of the enemies of the Bible,” because they saw the new criticism as a challenge to its status. If they had failed to come up with the right answers, perhaps the Bible would not have been able to take on its new formative status. To defend the Bible – from now on also employing the new tools of research – became a need shared by a large segment of the educated Jewish public. This defensive posture was part of the discourse conducted by the modern Jewish public, to a large extent a discourse conducted only in one direction, with certain groups in Christian society, in particular with Protestant theologians and biblical scholars who were attempting to refute Wellhausen’s or Delitzsch’s theories, some of them out of an inner conviction, others very reluctantly, and only a few out of a sense of friendship towards Judaism.¹¹ At the same time, the defense was part of the processes of modernization of Jewish culture and an expression of the revolutionary nature of the content of this modernization.

In the second chapter we will describe the Jewish response to the higher criticism of the nineteenth century, a response in which some top-ranking scholars also took part, as well as autodidactic *maskilim* (enlightened Jews), and whose corpus, motives and content have not yet been the subject of a comprehensive study. In the third chapter we will discuss the Jewish interest during that period in the archaeology of the ancient Near East, an interest which also has not been the subject of an exhaustive historical depiction, and is described here in great part for the first time.¹² In that chapter, we discuss the ambivalent role – both constructive and destructive – of archaeology (namely, research on the history and culture of the ancient Near East) in providing an understanding of the Bible.

A key question we shall attempt to answer is: What was the contribution of modern Bible studies (*Bibelwissenschaft*) – whose various branches we expound in Chapter Two – to the emergence of secular Judaism? As we shall see, the answer is by no means a simple one, since

¹¹ S. Samuel, “Wissenschaft und Judentum am Ende des Bibelstreits,” *AZdJ*, 67 (28), 1909, pp. 330–332. See Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland – Ein Schrei ins Leere?*, Tübingen, 1999. This book came out in an English translation entitled *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany*, trans. B. Harshaw and C. Wiese, Leiden, Boston, 2005. We cannot help commenting that the new title in English was undoubtedly intended to fit a certain trend in contemporary research, but in our view, the original name of the book was more fitting and correct.

¹² See: Yaacov Shavit, “Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth, The Development of Jewish Popular Interest in Archaeology in Eretz Israel,” *Cathedra*, 44, June 1987, pp. 27–44 (Hebrew).

in the secular camp too – in Europe and in Palestine – there was sharp opposition to modern biblical criticism, and first and foremost the documentary hypothesis, a theory that was a dominant research dogma in modern Bible studies and was thought to be representative of these studies. This opposition stemmed primarily from what was perceived as the destructive nature of the theory (and also from what was thought to be its anti-Jewish orientation). Hence, an enduring battle was conducted in Jewish society between those opposed to the documentary hypothesis and those who accepted its principles, and this battle was waged in Palestine as well. We will therefore attempt to clarify whether the acceptance of biblical criticism contributed to the “secularization” of the Bible or there were other causes for it. We will preface this discussion by stating that in our view, modern biblical research, and to no less a degree the philosophy and history of religion (*Religionsgeschichte*) and the processes of secularization of the society,¹³ contributed greatly to the fact that the Bible was able to become the formative book of new Jewish culture in general and of secular national Jewish culture in particular. As we have suggested, if modern biblical studies had not wrought a revolution in relation to the Bible, many Jews would have found it difficult to apply the “secular” world-view to the Bible as well, and it could not have functioned as a formative book and as the fundamental book of Jewish secularism in general, and of national secular Judaism in particular.

To a certain extent, the second part of this book forms a separate unit. It is devoted to the polemic that took place at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to be more precise, in the early twentieth century. It was an intensive, stormy polemic known as the *Babel-Bibel Streit* (Babel-Bibel controversy). It struck the world of German Jewry like a bolt from the blue, although many of its elements were not new. This time the attack on the Bible was sharp and concentrated, and developed into a theological and scientific controversy, a public event that resonated worldwide. As a result, the Jewish response to it (an intensive involvement which scholarly literature has generally ignored, or has known little about) contained all the elements that became an

¹³ Secularization in Jewish society differs from that in Christianity. In Judaism, it means, first of all, living without the compulsory system of norms of the Jewish religion. However, secularism, or “free Judaism” (i.e., free of the burden of the commandments), has various levels and various manifestations: a secular Jew can continue to observe some of the commandments and believe in some parts of the Jewish world-view; he is free to choose which commandments to observe and which tenets to believe in. From a secular point of view, the concept of Jewish tradition means that the religious system is part of the national-cultural heritage.

inseparable part of every future polemic over the Bible: theology and philosophy; textual analysis; the issue of the Bible's borrowing from ancient contemporary cultures; the question of its reliability as an historical source, and others. Although these subjects had been on the agenda long before 1902 – the year in which the Babel-Bibel controversy began – it was during that polemic that they were at their most intense.

The reason we saw fit to devote a lengthy, detailed discussion to this controversy, as well as to relate to it in its Christian, and particularly its German context, is because we regard it, on the one hand, as a direct continuation of the subjects covered in the previous chapters, and on the other, as an introduction to the subjects dealt with in the chapters that follow. The Babel-Bibel controversy was, in our view, a typological event in which arguments concerning the history, nature and meaning of the Bible emerged and were given expression, and then remained at the center of the discourse on the Bible in the coming generations. The questions and answers that arose during the controversy continued to be an indivisible part of the intellectual world of the Jews in future years.

A scientific controversy that becomes a public event, as the Babel-Bibel Streit did, as well as others we will discuss, is important in another sense. It transforms a debate conducted in a professional milieu into one that is held in the public arena. As a result, a wide public, which has not been following a long-lasting debate, becomes knowledgeable about theories, interpretations and conclusions on the subject, learns about disagreements that erupt on to the surface, and sometimes also expresses its position, thus giving expression to “public opinion” and to a *Zeitgeist*. It is interesting, therefore, to see whether new findings and conclusions change the public’s positions, or whether it reacts by entrenching itself behind the generally accepted views.

The time period under discussion in the first two parts of the book is the nineteenth century, in fact up to World War I, although on several occasions we deviated from this time frame. In the third part, we deal with the century that was the period par excellence of the biblical revolution. In it, we describe how the Jews in Germany, and particularly in Palestine, continued to grapple with higher criticism and with archaeological finds. We also deal with the attempt to create an original Hebrew Bible science. We describe the development of public interest in biblical archaeology and the status it gained in the new national historical consciousness. In addition, in it we will discuss what we term historical fundamentalism – both the secular and the religious.

In the context of Palestine, much importance was attached to the Bible’s value as an historical document that relates national history. On

the other hand, the Jewish-Christian controversy became far less intense, and in fact, this polemic and the rejection of the Christological interpretation of the Bible were largely replaced by another common denominator, that of Jewish nationalism and the various streams of Protestant Christianity, in particular the millenarism and fundamentalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the polemic over the Bible was conducted primarily in the internal Jewish arena as a part of the battles over the character of the society and culture in the Jewish state (but also as part of the ongoing struggle between Jewish nationalism and Arab nationalism).

In the fourth part, we discuss the status acquired by the new Hebrew Bible in Jewish society in Palestine from the 1880s, where it took on a key role in the restructuring of Judaism, in determining the identity of Jewish society, in shaping the character and patterns of its affinity to Palestine, and in determining the content (and the forms) of major layers of all branches of the new Hebrew culture. Unlike the situation in the Diaspora, in Palestine the Bible gained the status of a formative book in nearly all spheres of life. In the Zionist ideology and the national historical consciousness of the new Jewish society in Palestine from the 1880s, it filled a decisive role in two spheres that both opposed and complemented one another. It was an element in the romantic, restorative and messianic layer, on one hand, and an element of modernization and secularization on the other.

This fourth part also describes the status of the biblical culture in the new Jewish-Hebrew culture in Palestine from the 1880s until the present day, and the key role it played in it. It includes a discussion of the attempt to biblicize various aspects of Jewish life and the use made of the Bible as a source of legitimacy and as a normative and symbolic system. In this part, we make the claim that biblical literature, in the sense of literature that uses the Bible as “raw material,” functioned as an important mediator between the Bible and the society, and this function gave it added value and immense influence. Neither literature [nor art] nor the public and political discourse, assigned importance to questions regarding the composition of the Bible, or its reliability as an historical document. In general, they accepted the accuracy of the biblical text and its historical narrative, but they contributed to the relativization and secularization of the Bible no less, and perhaps even more, than higher criticism did.

In the concluding chapter, we examine the questions: was the twentieth century in Eretz Israel really “the century of the Bible”? And did the Bible really succeed in functioning as a basis for a world-view and

a shared system of national values? And did the “age of the Bible” in Jewish history really come to an end at the close of the twentieth century, and if so, why? In summary, the four parts of the book deal with the new status of the Bible in modern Jewish culture, with the way the Jews confronted modern biblical research, and with the insights, the conceptual system and the newly created and evolved modes of interpretation that were employed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All these were both a result of the modern character of Jewish culture and a key expression of this character, and they reflect the different ways in which Jews coped in the two last centuries with their past, present and future.

Three major types of research relate to the Bible and its world: 1) studies dealing with the interpretation of the biblical text, both as a world in itself and in relation to other texts and evidence; 2) studies dealing with the history of biblical research; and 3) studies dealing with the place of the Bible in the various cultures. This book belongs to the third category. Although part of it deals with Jewish biblical research, it is not a comprehensive history of the Jewish study of the Bible in modern times. Rather it deals with the history of this study primarily as part of the biblical revolution in Jewish culture, and its main objective is to understand the scholarly texts and the polemics in their historical and cultural context. Basically, it is a history of the development of the Bible’s status in the new Jewish culture. The survey of the development of modern Jewish Bible study is based on many hundreds of books, pamphlets and articles published over a period of about 150 years. Many of them are forgotten, or unknown works, which at the most have earned a mention in a brief bibliography. The vast size of the corpus surprised us, in particular because it was not only a product of institutionalized academic-scientific research or articles in professional journals. This scope is one of the key expressions of the biblical revolution in modern Jewish culture. It would be no mistake to state that the book raises many works from the abyss of oblivion. There are, however, unquestionably many works that we have overlooked, and yet others whose existence we have merely noted (in order to give the reader as broad a picture as possible of the intellectual and research endeavor of Jews on this subject). The idea that guided us in this description was not necessarily to review the works and sum up their content, but rather to see them as an expression of several central, permanent paradigms that have created the options and the scope of the interpretation, explanation, interest in and use of the Bible in the said period. We have focused mainly on writings that

represent a view or a method, and which reached the public at large and were able to influence it.

Anyone undertaking to write a book about the history of biblical research soon discovers that it would take more than a lifetime to read not only the innumerable studies on the Bible and its world, but also the books written on the history of this research. The place of the Bible in culture and the many, various uses made of it also constitute a broad field that cannot be covered in its entirety, certainly not in a single book. We need hardly say, then, that many subjects and matters have remained outside this book, and that it is also possible to greatly expand the discussion of the subjects covered in the book. Thus, for example, we have focused on Germany and the Land of Israel, because of the central status of these two arenas, and have not dealt with the status of the Bible and Jewish biblical research in other countries.

A large part of the book is based on primary sources, many of which have not been studied until now. We could not have written it, however, without referring to a large number of excellent studies, some of them monumental, which merit the gratitude and appreciation of anyone joining the ranks of those writing about the Bible.

This book is in part a supplemental and expanded version of the original Hebrew work. All the chapters included in the Hebrew version have been expanded, while the whole of the third and fourth parts have been rewritten.

In the book, we use the term Bible to denote what the Christians call the Hebrew Bible, with its 24 books, and not the Bible (*biblia*) in the Christian sense, which denotes both the Old Testament (in the Catholic and Protestant versions) and the New Testament.

Two terms appear interchangeably in this book: the Hebrew name Eretz Israel is the name traditionally used by Jews, and Palestine is the name in common use in English.

Part One

The Biblical Revolution in Modern Jewish History and the Struggle over the Bible in the Nineteenth Century

The Bible; that's the Book. The Book indeed,
the Book of Books.

Christopher Harvey, 1640
(*Complete Poems*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart, pp. 19–21).

... this book of books was composed in one spirit
(‘dieses Buch der Bücher in einem Geiste verfasst’)

J. W. von Goethe, *Poetry and Truth (Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 1765–1768),
II:7, trans. Minna Steele Smith.

Es ist das Buch der Bücher (It is the Book of Books).

Heinrich Heine, *Ludwig Börne*, 1840.

Chapter 1

“Back to the Bible”: The Biblical Revolution in the Nineteenth Century

Our Holy Books are eternal pillars.
With fortitude they sustained the House of Israel.
The Books of Almighty God, they guard our souls,
Had the House of Jacob trusted them he would not have fallen.
Arise and take hold of the pillars of heaven,
Pillars of light, are they horns of safety.

Avraham Dov Hacohen Levinsohn, *Beurim chadashim*
(New Commentaries) Part One (Vilna, 1858), p. XIX.

The study of the holy tongue brings a great many benefits ...
however the greatest is that it enables one to understand the
twenty-four books written in it, which we, the Jewish people, in
general, and he who is known as a talmudic scholar in particular,
are commanded to constantly have on the tip of our tongues.

Isaac Baer Levinsohn (Ribal) *Te'udah BeYisrael* (A Testimony in Israel)
(Vilna, 1828) Section 1, Chapter 1.

Once, after a long debate about the Diaspora, the Land of Israel
and Yiddishismus, I said to Bialik:
You know what the difference between us is? I'll try to explain it in a parable: Let us suppose that today someone like the emperor Hadrian were to issue a harsh order decreeing that either the Bible or the Talmud be destroyed, you would weep over the destruction of the Bible and chose to keep the Talmud, as the lesser of two great evils. And I would weep over the destruction of the Talmud, and chose as the lesser of these two enormous evils, to have the Bible remain. Bialik thought for several minutes and then said: “You are right!”

Joseph Klausner, *Darky lekrat hatechi'yah vehage'ulah* (My Path to Revival and Redemption), Part I, Tel Aviv, 1955 (2), p. 139.

The Biblical Revolution in Jewish Culture

The first buds of the biblical revolution, namely the profound change in the status of the Bible in Jewish society, appeared with the emergence of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) movement at the end of the eighteenth century,¹ and left its strongest imprint on Jewish intellectual and cultural life primarily from the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This revolution had an effect on every one of the streams that emerged, took shape and became institutionalized in modern Jewish society in Western and Eastern Europe, in the United States and in Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It had an effect on shaping the spiritual-cultural world of religious Zionism, and a particularly strong influence in shaping the spiritual-cultural world of Jewish secular nationalism. The biblical revolution reached the height of its influence on Jewish society in Palestine and later in Israel from the 1880s, when the Bible changed from the Holy Scriptures into the “Book of Books”; the Land of Israel became known as the “land of the Bible,” and the Jewish people as “the people of the Bible.” Biblicalism became the major layer in the spiritual and cultural life of the modern Jew, who became, to a great extent, a “Bible believer,” even a “biblical man.”²

This return to the Bible was attended by a process that can only be regarded as a turn of the wheel of history. Christianity had created a division between the Old Testament and the Jews, whom it described as having distorted or even betrayed their biblical tradition and replacing it with the rabbinical Talmud. Hence, rabbinical Judaism was perceived as different than Old Testament Judaism, in effect as heresy, while Christianity was regarded as having correctly understood the “Hebrew truth” (*hebraica veritas*) of the Bible. In brief, in Christian eyes, the Old Testament was a *Christian* book.³

From a different vantage point, the Jews’ return to the Bible, or as Richard I. Cohen terms it, the “process of repossessing” the Bible,⁴

¹ A vast literature exists on the Haskalah movement and its writings and ideas. The most comprehensive book on its early stages is Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor, Philadelphia, 2004.

² “Biblical Jew” is a similar construction to “Talmudic Jew” (*Talmudjude*) and serves as its opposite.

³ See: Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, Berkeley- Los Angeles, 1999.

⁴ Richard I. Cohen, “Urban Visibility and Biblical Visions: Jewish Culture in Western and Central Europe in the Modern Age,” in David Biale (ed.), *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, New York, 2002, pp. 762–784.

which made it the foundation of the Jews' modern existence, during which they “relinquished” the post-biblical literature, was perceived by Jewish orthodoxy as heresy, or as a modern Jewish Karaism.⁵ According to this view, this process was actually an imitation of Protestant Christianity and the adoption of its principle of *sola scriptura*; a “biblical Jewish people” is more an ancient Christian people than an “historical Jewish people.”⁶

These arguments, as we shall see, were put forward in the polemic between the neo-orthodox and the reform movement in Germany. They not only ignored the fact that all the streams in Judaism rejected the Christological interpretation that the Bible was a book about Christ and that the OT was interpreted from the NT, but they also overlooked the fact that the return to the Bible of the secular “biblical Jew” was not a return only to the written Torah (as in Karaism) but to the Bible as a system of ethical principles, history and literature. Moreover, unlike the Christian approach, the return to the Bible as the history of the Jewish people was part of the trend that viewed that people as a living historical entity with a mission in the world, and as a national-territorial (and sovereign) entity undergoing a revival.

Obviously, the biblical revolution was not a one-time event, but rather a gradual process, with many delays and obstacles, during which the Bible received a different status in modern Jewish society than it had occupied until then in the traditional society, in particular the Ashkenazi.⁷ This change was mainly expressed in the fact that, unlike the traditional and orthodox view that the Bible is not a creation in itself, it was now regarded as an independent, sovereign creation, whose status and interpretation are not necessarily dependent on the Oral Law, and which could be most correctly be understood not on the basis of midrashic exegesis but on the basis of an historical and literary approach.

⁵ A Jewish sect, founded in Persia in the second half of the 9th century A.D., that rejected the Talmud and the teachings of the rabbis in favor of strict adherence to the Bible as the only source of Jewish law and practice. One moderate group, the “Mourners of Zion,” that preached abandonment of the Diaspora and immigration to Palestine, settled in Jerusalem. Its members called the rabbinical Jews “galuti’im” (Diaspora-minded), their leaders, “teachers of the Diaspora,” and their teaching a “Torah of the Diaspora.” See: Yoram Erder, *The Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Qumran Scrolls: On the History of an Alternative to Rabbinic Judaism*, Tel Aviv, 2004, pp. 419–429 (Hebrew).

⁶ Avraham Burg, “Restoring its Old Glory,” *Ha’Aretz/Sefarim* (literary supplement), July 30, 2002, p. 2. He repeated this argument in his book *God Is Back*, Tel Aviv, 2004 (Hebrew).

⁷ Jews of Central and Eastern Europe or their descendants.

The expression of this new approach took different forms:

1. In various circles, the Bible replaced the Mishnah and the Talmud as the book that expresses the spirit of “authentic Judaism” (the “Mosaic” or “biblical”);
2. All 24 books of the Bible – the “Book of Books” – not only the Torah of Moses (namely, the Pentateuch – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy), or the liturgical books, were perceived as representing the spiritual-literary creation of the Jewish people. In this framework, the books of prophecy and wisdom were endowed with particularly important value and status as an expression of the universal message of Judaism;
3. The presence, status and weight of the Bible in Jewish culture in general, and in Jewish education in particular, were strengthened;
4. There was a growing interest in the Bible as literature and as a document that depicts an historical period, i.e., the biblical period;
5. Greater importance and value were ascribed to the veracity and reliability of the biblical historical narrative – not only to the traditions about the genesis of the nation, but also to the history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel;
6. Jewish scholars and men-of-letters began to engage in biblical study and research on the biblical period employing modern tools, through a growing familiarity with European biblical studies and extra-biblical sources discovered by the archaeology of the ancient Near East;
7. The Jewish public gradually began to take a greater interest in issues connected to Bible study and the history of the ancient Near East and the Land of Israel during the biblical period.

The replacement of rabbinical literature with the Bible also led to a profound revolution in the historical consciousness of the modern Jew. “History” supplanted “Torah” as the center of Jewish life, and hence the return to the Bible meant a return to the biblical historical world-view. For, while rabbinical literature expressed an ahistorical view, the Bible expressed a consummately historical world-view in which historical events from both the distant and the more recent past were evidence of God’s active involvement in history and a basis for the demands He makes of His people, and also served as a warning, a lesson and promise for the future.⁸ However, the return to the Bible was not a return to a theo-historical approach. The secular Jew rejected the theocentric

⁸ See: Yairah Amit, *History and Ideology in the Bible*, Tel Aviv, 1997 (Hebrew), pp. 7–10 (English trans: *History and Ideology: Introduction to Historiography in the Hebrew Bible*, trans. Yael Lotan, Sheffield, 1999); David Hartman, *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition: An Ancient People Debating its Future*, New Haven, Conn., 2000.

perception of Jewish history, the belief that God intervened in it, as well as the link assumed by the Bible between the observance of the Torah and the national existence of the people in the Land of Israel. The secular historical world-view is clearly expressed in the secularization of the Bible and its historical approach. In this sense, the secular national approach was a continuation of the historical view expressed in the books of the Prophets and the Hagiographa or Writings, in which God only rarely intervened in earthly history.⁹ In the eyes of the secular national Jew, the history of the Jewish people in its land justified the aspiration to revive national-territorial Jewish life in Palestine. The Bible's value lay in the evidence it provided of this national existence in the past, and hence the secular Jew attributed so much importance to the Bible's veracity as an historical document.

The biblical revolution that took place during the nineteenth century was part of the processes of change and modernization of Ashkenazi Jewish society in Europe. It was one component of what is termed the return of the Jews to history, an inseparable part of the processes of modernization and secularization undergone by Jewish society and its culture, and of the emergence of modern Jewish nationalism. As a result, throughout the nineteenth century, the Jews were called upon to defend the Bible far more than they had in the past. The new tools they employed in this defense were an integral element of the biblical revolution. This was, then, a dialectical process.

During the period when the Bible became a formative book in modern Jewish culture and was perceived by many Jews as the book that expresses the essence and values of Judaism more than any other creation and as an historical book that reliably describes the history of the Jews in the time of the Bible, the challenge to the traditional approach to it, to its sanctity and its literary unity as well as to its historical reliability, grew more intense. So that while the modern and secular historicist reading of the Bible, without the mediation of the midrash and traditional commentary, paved the way for the Bible to become a formative book of broad circles in Jewish society that no longer regarded it as Holy Scripture, modern secular commentary intensified skepticism and criticism in relation to it. As we shall see, this process was neither simple

⁹ Jacob Licht, “Biblical Historicism”, in H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (eds.), *History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 107–120. In contrast to Licht, Miller emphasizes the centrality of the biblical view regarding God's intervention – direct or indirect – in the history of the Jewish people. See: J. Maxwell Miller, *The Old Testament and the Historian*, Philadelphia, 1976 edn., pp. 15–19.

nor short. Some hold that the national revival movement distanced itself from Protestant theology and the evolutionary explanation of Wellhausen's school because it desired to make the Bible an active factor in the process of national revival – which, in fact, it did become – and drew upon the Bible too.¹⁰ Indeed, as we shall also see, the call for Hebrew Bible study encountered many obstacles. This criticism was directed not only at the articles of faith that originated in the Bible, and at the moral values it expresses, but also against its authenticity and its reliability as an historical document. It was directed against both the Torah and the Bible as a whole. This skepticism and criticism appeared in the name of "science" and "academia," armed with the authoritative, prestigious weapons of philology and research on the ancient East (Egyptology and Assyriology), as well as extra-biblical sources on the history of the biblical world discovered by these disciplines. All this was backdropped by the historicistic-evolutionary view, which gained hegemony in the intellectual western world during the nineteenth century.¹¹ According to this view, the Bible is a book that has a history and a book that relates history, and since it has a history one can entertain doubts about the reliability of the history it recounts.

The modern Jew's problem was that he found it difficult or was reluctant to reject outright the application of the new tools of research and criticism to the entire biblical text, including the Pentateuch. Hence, in many cases, he found he was obliged to defend the Bible using the tools of modern research. Thus, a dialectical process opened which attended the modern Jew's attitude to the Bible in the twentieth century. Later, we will attempt to describe how the Jew, who accepted the principle that the Bible is not invulnerable to philological-historical criticism, defended its status, and regarded it, despite the scientific criticism, as a formative book.

The Biblical Revolution in the Christian World

The biblical revolution in Jewish culture was influenced and inspired by the biblical revolution in Protestant society, and to a great extent was a reaction to it. This was a process that can be termed the "Prot-

¹⁰ See: Benjamin Uffenheimer, "Buber and Modern Jewish Bible Research," in Jo-chanan Bloch, Haim Gordon, & Menachem Dorman (eds.), *Martin Buber: A Centenary Volume*, Beersheba, 1982, pp. 157–196 (Hebrew). In any event, Uffenheimer makes no distinction between the role of Bible study in the Hebrew culture and the role of the Bible in itself and in its own right.

¹¹ On this matter, see Chapter 2.

estantization of Judaism,” and it was expressed in the perception of the Bible as *sola scriptura* (Latin for “by scripture alone,” namely, the principle that the only source of religious truth is the word of God as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures). The author and nationalist *maskil*, Peretz Smolenskin (1840–1885) attested to this. Although he did not overlook Martin Luther’s anti-Jewish views, he noted that it was Luther who had removed the “mask” placed over the Holy Books by the Catholic church, and had placed the books “in the mouths of the entire people.” In this sense, Smolenskin believed, “Luther’s curse was a blessing.” And, he added, “for this we Jews too ought to bless his name,” since under his influence many Christians learned to esteem the Bible – and the Jews learned from them.¹²

Since the changes in the status of the Bible in modern Christian society and the various struggles connected with them are described at length in the research literature, we shall only relate to them briefly as background for our discussion.¹³

¹² Peretz Smolenskin, “Et lata’at,” *Hashachar*, 1875–1878 (printed in Peretz Smolenskin, *Articles*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1925, pp. 48–49, 88. In his introduction to the 1873 translation of Shakespeare’s *Othello* by the Jewish convert and missionary Edward Isaac Salkinson (1820–1833) (printed in Vienna), Smolenskin wrote that the English “took our Holy Scriptures and did with them as they wished, translated them and distributed them to all corners of the land, as if they belonged to them.” The translation of Shakespeare – the “holy scriptures” of the English – into the “treasure house of our holy tongue, Hebrew” is, therefore, in Smolenskin’s view, “sweet vengeance.” Salkinson, a native of England, served from 1876 in the Presbyterian mission in Vienna and also translated Milton and the New Testament into Hebrew. See: Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History, The Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness*, Oxford – Portland, Or., trans. Chaya Naor, 2002, pp. 322–324.

¹³ A vast literature exists on the place and function of the Bible in various European cultures at various times, and about the use made of the situations and figures described in it as models of identification, belonging, self-definition, and inspiration. We will only cite two examples here: 1) that of the Russian Orthodox church; see: Joel Raba, *The Contribution and the Recompense: The Land and the People of Israel in Medieval Russian Thought*, Tel Aviv, 2003 (Hebrew). 2) that of the Merovingian and Carolingian kingdoms, see: Yitzhak Chen, “The Uses of the Bible and the Perception of Kingship in Merovingian Gaul,” *Early Medieval Europe*, 7, 1998, pp. 227–289; Bat-Sheva Albert, “The Impact of Jerusalem on Liturgy and Architecture in the Carolingian Empire,” *Cathedra*, 108, July 2003, pp. 51–74 (Hebrew); Raymund Kottje, *Studien zum Einfluss des Alten Testamentes auf Recht und Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters* (2nd ed.), Bonn, 1970. Aston writes that “Kings [in Europe] read Kings and pondered and perhaps acted accordingly”: Margaret Aston, *The King’s Bedpost*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 38. At the same time, the kings of Israel and Judah were also a model for tyrannical rule and for rulers with disgraceful traits. See, for example, on the figure of King David in the historical and critical dictionary (1695/97) of Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), see: Walter E. Rex, *Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy*, The Hague, 1965, pp. 197–255, and in Peter Annet’s *The Life of David, The History of the Man after God’s Own Heart*, London, 1759. Later, among others, Alphonse de Tousenel (1803–1885) and Jules

The term *biblical culture* was borrowed from Christopher Hill's book, which describes the status of the Hebrew Bible in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and its strong presence in the life of the time. In these centuries, the Bible was given a central and formative status in English society. The English people became a "people of the book," and their culture, to a large extent, became a "biblical culture."¹⁴ The Bible played an important role in shaping nationalism¹⁵ and all levels of culture, as well as religious thought and politics in England.¹⁶ The history of the various translations of the Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments) and the commentaries appended to them reflect this status and demonstrate the various ways in which it was understood and made topical. These began with the translation by William Tyndale (1494?–1536) of the Pentateuch and the Book of

Michelet (1798–1874), the liberal historian, who for a time served as Toussenel's secretary, wrote in a similar vein, in his book *Bible de l'humanité* (1866). See: Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933*, Cambridge, Mass., 1982 (2nd edn.), pp. 380–383. See also: Richard Gameson (ed.), *The Early Medieval Bible, Its Production, Decoration and Use*, Cambridge, 1994.

¹⁴ See: Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, Penguin Books, 1994; Benson Bobrick, *Wide as the Waters: The Story of the English Bible and the Revolution it Inspired*, New York, 2002; David Daniell: *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*, New Haven & London, 2003; B.F. Westcott, *History of the English Bible*, rev. edn. New York, 1916; H.J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 2nd. edn., 1969, pp. 4–6; Emil G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, New York, 1965 edn., pp. 4–6. Barbara W. Tuchman, *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, New York, 1968; J. Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 1–25; 240–258.

¹⁵ Hastings writes that the Bible was "Europe's primary textbook," and that it "provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation." Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood, Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 3–4. On the major role played by the English Bible in forming the English national consciousness, see also: Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge, Mass., 2003 (7th printing), pp. 51–54. She writes: "The Old Testament provided them [the Englishmen] with the language in which they could express the novel consciousness of nationality, for which no language existed before. This language reached all levels of society ..." In the Authorized Version, the word "nation" appears 454 times as a translation of the Hebrew words *am*, *le'om*, *goi*, *uma*. The modern Hebrew use of the biblical words *uma* and *le'om* was most probably influenced by their new meaning that originated in the English translation.

¹⁶ The claim that political Hebraism declined in British culture as a result of the rise of political economics and liberalism appears in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Karl Marx wrote that the world of Cromwell and of the British people was borrowed from the Bible, but with the growth of the bourgeoisie, John Locke replaced the prophet Habbakuk. See also: Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism through Christian Eyes*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, pp. 108–141. In contrast to the literature that regards Hebrew law as a fit model for a political form of government, there is a counter literature that claims it was this law that led to the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Jonah, and continued through the 1586 *Bishop’s Bible*, the Geneva Bible, printed in Calvinist Geneva in 1560,¹⁷ and other translations, in particular the authorized version, the King James Bible in 1611, which gained this status only after the Restoration in 1660. In the strife-torn society of England, the Bible became a battlefield of commentaries and various topical uses. Miles Smith, one of the translators of the King James version, wrote that the Bible “is not only an armor, but a whole armory of weapons, both offensive and defensive, whereby we may save our lives and put the enemy to flight.”¹⁸ In the eighteenth century, the Methodist (Evangelist) movement helped to reinforce this status, and one sect within this movement was even known as “biblical Christianity.” The Methodists distributed Bibles in England and outside it and were the most virulent opponents of biblical criticism.¹⁹ The status of the Bible in Germany, where Luther translated it into German in 1523–1534 (he used the 1494 Soncino edition), was no less important and central.²⁰ In the first half of the sixteenth century, this translation, “which tried to make Moses so German that no one would suspect he was a Jew,” and by 1546, the year of Luther’s death, had appeared in 430 editions (complete and abridged) and was distributed in about half a million copies, had an important role in the emergence of the Refor-

¹⁷ On translations of the Bible into English that preceded the King James (Authorized) version in 1611, see: S. L. Greenslade, “English Versions of the Bible, 1525–1611”, in S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present Day*, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, pp. 141–174; David S. Katz, “The Prehistoric Bible”, in A. P. Coudert, S. Hitton, R. H. Popkin and G. M. Weiner (eds.), *Judaean-Christian Intellectual Culture in the Seventeenth Century*, Dordrecht, 1999, pp. 71–89; F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A History of Translations*, New York, 1961; Gerald Hammond, *The Making of the English Bible*, New York, 1983; Cameron A. MacKenzie, *The Battle for the Bible in England 1557–1582*, New York, 2002; John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700*, Oxford, 1985; David Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature, vol. One: From Antiquity to 1700*, Cambridge, 1993; Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe, I–II*, Cambridge, Mass., rep. 1993, pp. 303–350, and recently: David S. Katz, *God’s Last Words: Reading the English Bible from the Reformation to Fundamentalism*, New Haven, Conn., 2004, pp. 1–39; Adam Nicolson, *God’s Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*, New York, 2003 (published in Britain under the title *Power and Glory*), and David Daniell, *The Bible in English: Its History and Influence*.

¹⁸ Quoted in Alister MacGrath, *In the Beginning*, p. 190.

¹⁹ See: W. Reginald Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, Cambridge, 1992; Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, Nashville, 1992 (2nd ed.)

²⁰ The complete Protestant Bible in German (in 6 volumes) was printed in Zurich between 1524–1529 by the printer Christoph Froschauer. It was preceded by 17 abridged translations.

mation in Germany, in its struggle against the Papacy and the Catholic church, and in shaping German language, culture and nationalism.²¹ Moreover, the Bible was translated into other European languages, and these translations also greatly influenced the development of national languages and of other national cultures in Europe.²² From the beginning of the seventeenth century, it also played a key role in shaping the new society in the United States.²³

Several explanations have been offered for the fact that the Bible became a key book in the culture of the “northern” Protestant countries, and far less in the “southern” Catholic countries. Some of these were the sectarian character that Christianity took on in England (and in the United States)²⁴ on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that

²¹ See: H. Bluhm, “Luther’s German Bible,” in Peter N. Brooks (ed.), *Seven-headed Luther*, Oxford, 1983, pp. 177–194; I. W. Kosa, “The Bible and the Formation of the German Language,” in E. Osborn and L. McIntosh (eds.), *The Bible and European Literature: History and Hermeneutics*, Melbourne, 1987, pp. 56–64. Abridged translations into French also appeared as early as the twelfth century. And see: Ronald H. Bainton, “The Bible in the Reformation”, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ibid., pp. 1–38; Skyes, “The Religion of the Protestants”, ibid., pp. 175–198; F.J. Crehan, “The Bible in the Roman Catholic Church from Trent to Present Day,” ibid., pp. 137–199; G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985. On the principle of *sola scriptura* see Evans, ibid., pp. 31–33. It is also important to note that this principle was not intended to provide legitimacy for a liberal interpretation of the Bible. It is important to note that modern Bible criticism is not an original outcome of the Reformation. However, the Reformation did create an atmosphere conducive to the humanistic impetus that enabled the appearance of modern criticism. See: Henning Graf Reventlow, “Protestant Understanding of the Bible,” in Benjamin Uffenheimer & H.G. Reventlow (eds.), *Creative Biblical Exegesis: Christian and Jewish Hermeneutics through the Centuries*, Sheffield, 1988, pp. 213–215. See also: Jaroslav J. Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Bible/The Bible of the Reformation*, New Haven, Conn., 1996; Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 54–92, 223–240.

²² Hans Kohn, *Nationalism, Its Meaning and History*, New York, 1965, p. 14.

²³ See: Joseph Gaer and Ben Siegel, *The Puritan Heritage: America’s Roots in the Bible*, New York, 1964; Ernest S. Frerichs, *The Bible and Bibles in America*, Atlanta, 1988; Nathan O. Hatch, and Mark A. Noll (eds.), *The Bible in America: Essays in Cultural History*, Oxford, 1992; Paris Marion Simms, *The Bible in America: Versions That Have Played Their Part in the Making of the Republic*, New York, 1936; Shalom Goldman, *Hebrew and the Bible in America: The First Two Centuries*, Hanover, NH., 1993; Peter Johannes Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles Over Translating the Bible*, Oxford, 1999. On the Bible – complete or abridged – in the culture of the child in New England in the colonial era, see: Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, Stockbridge, Mass, 1993 (orig. 1899), pp. 227–263.

²⁴ Herbert Schöffler, *Abendland und Altes Testament*, 2nd ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1943 (orig. 1937). On this, H. Graetz wrote: “Whereas the Latin race is more permeated with the spirit of Hellenism, the Anglo-Saxon race is penetrated with the Biblico-Judaic spirit because its mind is more directed to truth than to beauty,” “The Significance of Judaism for the Present and the Future,” *Jewish Quarter-*

every reader, even the uneducated, could find in the biblical stories what he could not find in the New Testament: a wealth of parallels to both public and personal events.²⁵ In the Catholic countries the translation of the Bible from Latin into the vernacular was forbidden, in order to prevent the spread of heresy and any challenge to the authority of the Church.²⁶ After the Council of Trent, held in three stages from 1545–1563, the Clementine Vulgate (1592) was accorded unchallenged authority as the official Roman Catholic Bible, and the Church ruled that the reading of the Bible would encourage heresy and atheism.²⁷ The believer was obliged to read the biblical text of the Old and New Testaments based on the interpretation of the dogma and not to understand the dogma only on the basis of the biblical text. Both the Old and the New Testaments are the sources of revelation. In any event, all attempts were to no avail, and the struggle waged by the Catholic church against translations of the Bible and their distribution, because of the – justified – fear that a free reading of the Bible would challenge the authority of the Church and its priests, lead to doctrinal chaos and undermine social and political stability, because the simple reader was incapable of understanding the text and because the translations

ly Review, 2, 1890, p. 269. The French utopian and socialist, Alphonse Toussenel (1803–1885) had a totally different point of view on the Bible's influence on Protestant societies. He wrote in his *Histoire de la féodalité financière* (The Jewish Kings of the Age: A History of Financial Feudalism, Paris, 1845) that “the wickedness of the Jews is portrayed for all to read in the Bible from which they themselves draw nourishment.” There is nothing new in an anti-Jewish claim of this sort in itself. What is novel is the mix of a Catholic view and an anti-Semitic view coming from the “Left,” according to which not only the Jews are products of the messianic Bible, but also the peoples motivated by the “capitalistic spirit”: “To say Jew is to say Protestant … the Englishman, the Dutchman and the Genevan who learned to read the will of God in the same book as the Jewish profess the same contempt for the laws of equity and the rights of the workers.” In other words, the Calvinists in Geneva, the Methodists in England and the Pietists in Germany all have a common father – the Bible. David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789–1939*, Oxford, 1999, p. 203.

²⁵ Before he became a Christian, the young Augustine had a negative opinion of the Holy Scriptures because they were accessible to everyone and full of story tales. See: Anne-Marie La Bonnardière, “Augustine's Biblical Intuition”, in Pamela Bright (ed. and trans.), *Augustine and the Bible*, Notre Dame, Ind., 1999, pp. 5–25.

²⁶ J. A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church and its Enemies, 1660–1730*, Cambridge, 1992; “Continental Versions from c. 1600 to the Present day”, in Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 339–360; Robert E. McNally, *The Bible in the Early Middle-Ages*, Westminster, Maryland, 1959.

²⁷ F. G. Crehan, “The Bible in the Catholic Church: From Trent to the Present Day”, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 199–237; Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah: Renaissance Rationalism in Art, Science, and Letters*, Urbana, Ill., 1963, pp. 43–46.

would open a Pandora's box of heresy, ended in failure.²⁸ In fact, by the end of the sixteenth century, the Inquisition had lost the power to prevent translations of the Bible and to impede their distribution, particularly in those countries that had cut their ties with Rome. The Reformation and the invention of printing made the Bible "a book in every home," one that was becoming increasingly accessible to large sectors of the population.²⁹ The battle was shifted then, no longer against the translation, but on the question of who would determine which translations and interpretations were correct and authoritative (also compelling the Catholics to offer their own translations). This development of the personal reading of the Bible created a situation in which a Bible "was found in every God-fearing home",³⁰ and every reader became a king and bishop in his fortress-home. The British poet John Dryden (1631–1700) described this development in his 1681 *Religio Laici* (The Layman's Religion): "The book thus put in every vulgar hand/which each presume he best could understand/the common rule was made the common prey/and at the mercy of the rabble lay."

From then on, it was possible to know the Bible not only through the mediation of popular preaching, stained glass windows in churches, murals, church portals, miracle plays, and the like,³¹ but also by reading from it in the family circle. From a tradition it became a text. The Bible Society (*Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft*) founded by Carl

²⁸ On the emergence of this claim, see: Cameron A. MacKenzie, *The Battle for the Bible in England 1557–1582*, pp. 77–109. See: George H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church? The Crisis of the Protestant Reformation*, New York, 1959, pp. 89–93, 195–209.

²⁹ M.H. Black, "The Printed Bible", in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 408–475.

³⁰ The invention of printing made possible: "Putting Bibles in Everyman's hand...placing the Bible in the hands of every God-fearing householder", in E.L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution*, pp. 366–367, 425. Between 1457–1500, a hundred editions of the Bible in English translation were published. See: Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, p. 24. Norton describes the influence of printing on the status of the Bible as a transition from lore to text. See: David Norton, *A History of the Bible as Literature*, I., p. 53; and on the circulation of the Bible, see *ibid.*, pp. 476–479. In this context, two matters are important: 1. The Reformation and the Anti-Reformation gave rise to a "flood" of theological writings dealing with questions of doctrine; 2. Only a small percentage of the West European population was literate, and hence the majority continued to require the mediation of the clergy and priests. See Jean-Francois Gilmont, "Protestant Reformations and Reading", in Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, Amherst, Mass., 1999, pp. 213–237.

³¹ We should mention, for example, the theologian Petrus Comestor's (?–1178) book, *Historia Scholastica*, that is a kind of sacred history composed for students, which met with great success.

Hildebrand, Freiherr von Canstein (1667–1719) in the city of Halle in Saxony in 1711,³² printed Bibles at a price affordable to all, and for thirty years after it was established, distributed about half a million copies.³³ Illustrated newspapers, such as *Daily Bible Illustration*, and adaptations intended for young readers also helped to make the Bible more widely familiar and to turn it into a basis of human life and a treasure of its symbols and paradigms.³⁴

At the same time, Christian Hebraism enhanced the educated Christian's first-hand knowledge of the book, namely, in Hebrew,³⁵ and gave rise, as we shall see, to a philo-Jewish branch and a counter anti-Jewish branch, and a controversy pro and con the authority of the Massorah version (a body of traditions regarding the correct spelling, writing and reading of the Hebrew Bible).³⁶ The Hebrew Bible became the subject of “sacred criticism,” which posed two questions: 1. Whether the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura* was actually based on their flawed Jewish version; 2. Whether it was possible, by means of textual criticism and by comparison with other versions (as Benjamin Kennicott [1718–1783]³⁷ and Isaac Vossius [1618–1689] claimed) to arrive at the original text of the Bible. These questions,

³² From 1775 known as Cansteinische Bibelanstalt. Von Canstein wrote *Harmonie und Auslegung der heiligen vier Evangelisten*, 1718.

³³ The British Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1804; the American Bible Society in 1916. See: Stephen K. Batalden, Kathleen Cann & John Dean (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, Sheffield, 2004. Heine wrote (in *Geständnisse* [Confessions]) that “this extensive circulation of the Bible has produced the most beneficent fruits, and continues to do so to this very day. The propaganda of the Bible society has fulfilled a providential mission, which will bring forth quite different results from those anticipated by the pious gentlemen of the British Christian Missionary Society. They expect to elevate a petty, narrow dogma to supremacy, and to monopolize heaven as they do the sea, making it a British domain – and, lo, without knowing it, they are demanding the overthrow of all Protestant sects: for as they draw their life from the Bible, when the knowledge of the Bible becomes universal, all sectarian distinctions will be obliterated.” in H. Heine: *Prose and Poetry*, London – New York, 1934, p. 336.

³⁴ S.H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, London, rep. 1979, pp. 337–338; Eric Fenn, “The Bible and the Missionary”, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 383–407. On adaptations of the Bible for the young reader, see below.

³⁵ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, pp. 66–107. And see: Stephen G. Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies: Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629) and Hebrew Learning in the Seventeenth Century*, Leiden, 1996.

³⁶ A rich literature exists on the history of the version of the bible and the research on this issue. Here we will only mention Emanuel Tov's book: *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd rev. ed., Assen/Maastricht: Minneapolis, Minn, 2001.

³⁷ In his 1753 book, *State of the Printed Hebrew Text Considered*, 1–11. And see: W. McKane, “Benjamin Kennicott: An Eighteenth Century Researcher”, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 27, 1997, pp. 445–464.

which aroused a controversy within Protestant Christianity,³⁸ and the search for the authentic version³⁹ spurred the appearance of new translations of the Bible, and constituted an important chapter in the history of modern biblical criticism.⁴⁰

The internal controversies in no way impaired the decisive status of the Bible in Protestant Christianity. For example, Heinrich Heine (1797–1856) wrote in his *Confessions* in 1854:

Now I chiefly honor Protestantism for its services in the rediscovery and propagation of the Holy Book. I say “rediscovery”; for the Jews who rescued it from the great conflagration of the Second Temple, and trudged around with it all through the Middle Ages as with a portable fatherland (*ein portatives Vaterland*), kept their treasure carefully concealed in their ghettos. Here German scholars, the forerunners and initiators of the Reformation, came by stealth to study the Hebrew tongue, and thus acquire the key to the casket (*den Schlüssel zu der Truhe*) in which the precious treasure was enclosed ... Yes, to the Jews, the world is indebted for its God and His word – the Bible. They rescued it from the bankruptcy of the Roman Empire, and they preserved the cherished volume intact during all the wild tumults of the migrations ... To the clear-eyed thinker it is a marvelous spectacle to view the countries on whose inhabitants the Bible has been exerting a formative influence since the Reformation, and on whom it has impressed the customs, modes of thought and feelings which prevailed in Palestine, and are manifested in the Old and in the New Testament.⁴¹

³⁸ This subject had already been at the center of Augustine's polemic against the Manichees who described the Catholics as semi-Christians. See: Ronald J. Teske, “Augustine, the Manichees and the Bible”, in Bright, *Augustine and the Bible*, pp. 208–221.

³⁹ See, as one example: William Whiston, *Essay Towards Restoring the True Text of the Old Testament.*, 1726. On him, see: Henning Graf Reventlow, “Computing Time Ages and the Millennium: An Astronomer Defends the Bible: William Whiston (1667–1752) and Biblical Chronology”, in M. Daniel Carroll *et al.*(eds.), *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, Sheffield, 1995, pp. 411–421. See also: Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 93–117.

⁴⁰ David S. Katz, “‘Moses's Principia’: Hutchinsonianism and Newton's Critics”, in J.E. Force and R. Popkin,(eds.), *The Books and the Nature of Scripture*, Dordrecht, 1994, pp. 201–211; idem, “The Hutchinsonians and the Hebraic Fundamentalism in Eighteenth-Century England”, in D.S. Katz and J.I. Israel (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, Leiden, 1990, pp. 237–255; idem, “Issac Vossius and the English Biblical Critics 1670–1689”, in R.H. Popkin and A. Vanderjagt (eds.), *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Leiden, 1993, pp. 142–184.

⁴¹ In H. Heine, *The Poetry and Prose of Heinrich Heine*, trans. by Frederic Ewen, New York, 1948, pp. 663–665. Heine's words show an unjustified tendency to minimize the status of the Bible outside of Protestantism. Ernest Renan wrote that the Christians of the Middle Ages did not know Hebrew (with the exception of Origen and Hieronymus) and it was the Jews (the Synagogue) that preserved the original. See: Elvin Irving Kose, *Ernest Renan and the Jewish World*, New York, 1977, pp. 89–94. Heine also believed that there was a profound spiritual affinity between the Jews and the Germans; ancient Palestine is “a kind of Germany of

The enormously widespread distribution of the Bible resulted not only in a variety of scholarly interpretations of it and various adaptations of its books, but it also led to the internalization of formative stories, symbols and biblical idiomatics by western civilization. Victor Guérin (1821–1891), the French scholar who went on eight study tours to Palestine, wrote the following in the introduction to the first volume of his *Description Géographique, Historique et Archéologique de la Palestine*:

When you first set eyes on the Holy Land, it is immediately engraved in your soul with the same power as the land in which you were born and spent your childhood. It is indeed one of the first lands we heard of; from an early age we all learned the eternal words of memory connected with it, and thus it became like a mysterious common homeland of our childhood.⁴²

The “words of memory” that created that “common homeland” came, of course, from the Old and New Testaments. In the nineteenth century, this central status of the Bible made journeys and tours to the “Holy Land” popular, particularly within Protestant society. Biblical dictionaries, atlases, maps, drawings and travel books, as well as many studies on the historical geography (scriptural geography) of Palestine imbued the world of the Bible with a realistic, concrete character. The aim of many of the travel books and geographical-historical studies was to present tangible evidence of the realism and historicity of the Bible stories.⁴³

the East, just as one can regard present-day Germany as the birthplace of the Holy Word, the soil from which prophecy has sprung, the fortress of pure spirituality.” See: Heine, *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* (Shakespeare’s Girls and Women), 1839. On Heine’s attitude toward the Bible, see: Israel Tabak, *Judaic Lore in Heine: The Heritage of a Poet*, Baltimore, MD 1948, pp. 93–115.

⁴² Victor Guérin, *Description Géographique, Historique et Archéologique de la Palestine*, I, Paris, 1865 edn.

⁴³ See: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, “Perceptions and Images of the Land of Israel in the Writings of Nineteenth-Century Travelers,” In idem, *A Land Reflected in its Past: Studies in the Historical Geography of Palestine*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 114–213 (Hebrew); idem, “The Landscape of Eretz Israel in Biblical Sketches of the Nineteenth Century,” ibid., pp. 255–279. Many books were written in the eighteenth and nineteenth century on the interest in the ethnography of the biblical period in the context of the cultures of the ancient East. See, for example: Samuel Burder, *Oriental Customs*, Philadelphia, 1804, as well as the dictionary edited by W. Smith (ed.), *A Dictionary of the Bible Comprising its Antiquities, Biography and Natural History*, I–III, London, 1860–1863. On Smith and the dictionary, see: Hayim Goren, “Sacred but not Surveyed: Why was the Survey of Western Palestine Put off until the 1870s?”, *Cathedra*, 106, December 2002, pp. 108–109 (Hebrew). On the close link between the ethnographic research of nineteenth-century Palestine and the study of the Bible, see: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, “Manners and Customs in Palestine as Perceived and Studied in the Nineteenth Century and until 1948,” in

This formative status of the Bible was the object of criticism and it came under attack from various quarters. This subject will be discussed at length in the following chapter, and we will only comment here that as far back as the seventeenth century, disciples of the “lower criticism,” also known as textual criticism,⁴⁴ had claimed there were many inaccuracies as well as deliberate errors in the Massorah version of the Bible, with the objective of concealing the tidings about the coming of Jesus.⁴⁵ The eighteenth-century neologists⁴⁶ described the Bible as a collection of books written in different periods; the radical Enlightenment and modern biblical criticism cast serious doubt on the veracity of the biblical story; English deism, which came into being, among other reasons, as a counter-reaction to Hebraism,⁴⁷ and its successors cast doubt on its originality, and some of its spokesmen also depicted the biblical figures and their values as immoral.⁴⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century the attack on the Bible as an authoritative source and a source of spiritual inspiration intensified from several other directions: skepticism, the tendency to prefer the classical Greek heritage (Hellenism) to the Hebrew heritage (Hebraism),⁴⁹ and towards the end of the century also the neo-pagan anti-Christian trend. Throughout this century, in addition to biblical criticism, much ideological, theological and philosophical literature was written, fostering a negative image of biblical Judaism, of Moses’ law and of the man himself.⁵⁰ The Bible was spared none of

Y. Ben-Arieh and Elhanan Reiner (ed.) *Studies in the History of Eretz Yisrael, presented to Yehudah Ben Porat*, Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 451–493 (Hebrew). On the encounter between the “Orientalist” topoi and the images of Eretz Israel as the “land of the Bible,” see recently: Eitan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture, 1799–1917*, Oxford, 2005.

⁴⁴ Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Bible*, pp. 17–20.

⁴⁵ A. Agus, *French Enlightenment and the Rabbinic Tradition*, Frankfurt am Main, 1970; J.K.S. Reed, *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible*, London, 1957; H.G. Reventlow, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne*, Göttingen, 1980. And see: Edward Breuer, “Haskalah and Scripture in the Early Writings of Moses Mendelsohn,” *Zion*, 59 (4), 1994, p. 453 (Hebrew).

⁴⁶ John W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*, London, 1984, New York, 1955, pp. 16–18.

⁴⁷ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 81.

⁴⁸ W. Neil, “The Criticism and Theological Use of the Bible”, and Alan Richardson, “The Rise of Modern Biblical Scholarship and Recent Discussion of the Authority of the Bible”, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, pp. 238–338. An example of a seventeenth-century attack on the moral content of the Bible is a book by Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1695–1697.

⁴⁹ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York and London, 1977 edn., pp. 72–94.

⁵⁰ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 167.

the often virulent attacks that were a component of Judeophobia. In its anti-biblical form, this Judeophobia was given expression in philosophical literature in an acerbic criticism of the values of the Bible,⁵¹ written by a long list of philosophers (for example, Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel⁵²) as well as in many vulgar books.⁵³ In this literature, the Bible is generally described as a “Semitic,” “Oriental” or “Asiatic” book, marked by inhumane fanaticism, negative, objectionable values, and primitive customs. This modern anti-Semitic literature was not content to assail the Talmud and the rabbinical literature; instead it focused on the Bible, both because it was far more familiar to the Christian reader and because it was regarded as the formative book of Judaism and the authentic manifestation of the “Jewish spirit” and world-view.⁵⁴ Quite a few of the views and images created by this anti-biblical and anti-Jewish literature resonated in the Babel-Bibel controversy in the early twentieth century, which we describe in Part Two.

⁵¹ Yaakov Goren, *The Image of Jews and Judaism in Protestant Old Testament Criticism from the Mid-18th Century to the 1830s*, Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974 (Hebrew); Ze’ev Levy, *Judaism in the World View of J. G. Hamann, J. G. Herder and W. von Goethe*, Jerusalem, 1994 (Hebrew).

⁵² See: Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Jews*, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1998; Robert S. Wistrich, “Radical Anti-Semitism in France and Germany,” in Shmuel Almog et al. (ed.) *Israel and the Nations*, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 157–185 (Hebrew).

⁵³ See, inter alia: G. F. Daumer, *The Fire and Moloch Worship of the Ancient Hebrews as the Original, the Legal and the Orthodox Cult of the Nation Historically and Critically Proved* 1842; F. W. Ghillany, *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer: Eine geschichtliche Untersuchung* (Human Sacrifice and the Ancient Hebrews: An Historical Investigation, Dürnberg, 1842), and others. A blasphemous anti-biblical stance was expressed by secular atheistic circles from the Socialist camp in England in the nineteenth century. For example, in November 1841, Charles Southwell (1814–1860) published in the fourth issue of a periodical he founded called *Oracle of Reason*, an article entitled “The Jew Book.” In it, he wrote, among other things, that the Bible is “a history of lust, sodomies, wholesale slaughtering, and horrible depravity ... To our minds, the Bible is one of the most contemptible and brutalizing books that ever was penned!” in Edward Royle, *Radical Politics 1790–1900: Religion and Unbelief*, London, 1971, pp. 116–117. Jacob Katz believed that the “rationalist” approach to the Bible had paved the way to secular anti-Semitism, by challenging the sanctity of the Bible. It had made the Bible lose its immunity, and had placed a “mighty tool in the hands of those opposed to Judaism” in the form of moral criticism of the heroes and values of the Bible, and “provided a new weapon to the opponents of the Jews by casting aspersions on their religious heritage.” This criticism found support in the anti-Jewish writings from the Hellenist-Roman period. See: J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700–1933*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, p. 380.

⁵⁴ In the coming generations, the anti-biblical trend was an inseparable part of anti-Christian anti-Semitism, directed, among other things, against the idea of monotheism.

The Bible was not left defenseless. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the counter-Enlightenment and Protestant orthodoxy led a campaign against the radical anti-biblical views that wanted to oust the Bible from western culture. At the same time, the Romantic movement in Germany, which was permeated with anti-Semitic ingredients, nonetheless defended the Bible against the attacks upon it from the rationalist camp. In its eyes, the Bible was not an expression of the Jews as a primitive and backward Oriental people, but rather lofty poetics, created by the most excellent people on earth. However, the Romantics also drew a distinction between ancient Jewry and post-biblical Judaism.⁵⁵ They regarded the Bible and its doctrine of revelation – not Greek philosophy – as the *prisca sapientia*, man's eternal spiritual foundation,⁵⁶ and the biblical stories as the ancient history of both the Jewish people and humankind as a whole. Although the conservative historical writings of the eighteenth-century *Aufklärung* cast doubt on the authority of the Bible (in particular of the first chapters of Genesis) as universal history, it did generally believe in the historical veracity of the biblical stories from the period of the Patriarchs and thereafter.⁵⁷ In fact, most of the harshest critics of the “religion of the Bible,” or of the “spirit of the Bible,” did not question the reliability of the biblical historical story. It was described as an “oriental” or “primitive” creation, possessed of literary value, that reflects the spirit of Israel in the initial period of its development, but not as an invented or fictional historical story that does not represent the historical and

⁵⁵ See: Alfred D. Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans: From the Enlightenment to Imperial Germany*, Philadelphia, 1979, pp. 54–63. See also in Chapter 2.

⁵⁶ Ze'ev Levy, *Judaism in the World View of J. G. Hamann, J. G. Herder and W. von Goethe*. On Hamann and the Bible, see: Moshe Scwarcz, “Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* and Hamann's *Golgotha and Scheblimini*,” in idem, *Language, Myth, Art*, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1966 (Hebrew), pp. 54–88. Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: “In the Jewish ‘Old Testament,’ the book of divine justice, there are human beings, things and speeches in so grand a style that Greek and Indian literature have nothing to compare with it. With terror and reverence one stands before these tremendous remnants of what man once was and will have sad thoughts about ancient Asia and its protruding little peninsula of Europe which wants by all means to signify as against Asia.” In regard to the comparison between the Bible and the New Testament, he wrote: “... to have glued this New Testament, a kind of rococo of taste in every respect, to the Old Testament to make one book as the ‘Bible,’ as the book par excellence, that is perhaps the greatest audacity and sin against the spirit that literary Europe has on its conscience.” F. W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, 1989, pp. 65–66.

⁵⁷ See: Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1975, pp. 75–99. Reill writes that only a few of the German intellectuals lost their faith and they believed that one could dismiss the biblical chronology without challenging the fundamentals of Christianity (p. 77).

spiritual reality of the period.⁵⁸ Biblical cosmology and the biblical historical story continued to be the cornerstone of the Christian world picture, and the allegorical and topical reading regarded it primarily as a book that heralds the coming of Jesus the messiah.⁵⁹ Nineteenth-century Protestant society continued to cling to its unshaken faith in the veracity of the Bible and in the distinction between the Jews and their holy books. Despite the attacks upon it from various quarters, the status of the Bible as a universal history and as a book of tidings remained strong and unchallenged, and the processes of secularization and the rise of positivistic and materialistic views did not impair the faith of the majority of the West European public.⁶⁰ The critical trends engendered a counter-reaction, in the form of organized fundamentalist scriptualist movements.

The New Status of the Bible: From Haskalah to Nationalism

Moshe Pelli's statement that “the Hebrew Enlightenment played a key role in restoring the Bible to the Jewish people,”⁶¹ and Richard Cohen's opinion that the Jews repossessed the Bible,⁶² express a partial historical truth. The Haskalah did not “restore the Bible” to the Jewish people, but to traditional Ashkenazi Jewry, and in that society, it gave it a new status. The Jewish Enlightenment movement at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century began a process that in

⁵⁸ Thus, for example, in Hegel's description and characterization of ancient Judaism, the biblical story of the Patriarchs, the enslavement in Egypt and the exodus from there are self-evident. See in Yovel, *Dark Riddle*, pp. 54–56.

⁵⁹ Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 14.

⁶⁰ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1985 edn., p. 179.

⁶¹ Moshe Pelli, *Struggle for Change: Studies in the Hebrew Enlightenment in Germany at the end of the 18th Century*, Tel Aviv, 1988, p. 29 (Hebrew). In his book on the generation of *Hame'asef* writers, he adds that the early *maskilim* only intended to educate the Jewish public to understand the biblical text literally with an emphasis on the value of the biblical language and poetry, and certainly not to suggest a new interpretation; but they did shift the stress of Jewish study from the Talmud to the Bible. See: Moshe Pelli, *The Circle of the Hame'asef Writers at the Dawn of Haskalah: The Literary Contribution of the Hame'asef Writers to the Hebrew Haskalah*, Tel Aviv, 2001 (Hebrew), p. 188–190. Edward Breuer writes that “one of the major characteristics of the cultural and spiritual aspirations of Jewish *maskilim* in eighteenth-century Germany was interest in the Bible. This attraction to the Bible was part of the all-embracing effort to alter the life of the Jews in Central Europe.” Breuer, “Haskalah and Scripture in the Early Writings of Moses Mendelssohn,” p. 445.

⁶² Richard I. Cohen, “Urban Visibility and Biblical Visions”.

West European Jewish society endowed the Bible with the status of a formative book of Jewish culture, at first along with the Mishnah and the Talmud and their commentators, and later replacing and countering them. It also regarded it, under the influence of the winds of Romanticism and nationalism, as a distinctive manifestation of the authentic spirit of Judaism. The Jewish Enlightenment movement turned the most ancient book in the Jewish literary corpus into the most precious cultural asset as well as into a tool in the hands of modernity. In contrast to the situation in Christian society, Jewish society did not have to cope with the issue of translation, but rather with the ways of understanding and interpreting the Bible, in particular the question of what status it should be granted in the religious and intellectual world of Judaism.

Although many parts of the Bible had always been an inseparable element of the world of the Jew, it was only in the nineteenth century that it emerged from the synagogue, the house of study and the commentary, and entered the gates of the school, then reaching the pages of belles lettres, the stage of the theatre and plastic art. From then on, the Bible was read for itself, not only as a subject of midrash and traditional commentary; it became fine literature, “secular” national history, and a book of universal ethics, as well as one that faithfully reflects the reality of the Land of Israel in the time of the Bible,⁶³ and serves as a guide to it. It inspired innumerable works of literature and art, provided legitimacy to a variety of ideologies, and shaped various pictures of an imagined future. In the nineteenth century, the different streams in Judaism began to read the Bible in a variety of ways, and used it for different needs to legitimize their own perception of Judaism. The possibility of understanding and interpreting the Bible in various ways, all of them legitimate, became a major guiding idea.⁶⁴

From this standpoint, the new status of the Bible was part of the process in which the historical perception of Jewish faith and culture gained currency. According to this approach, Jewish faith and culture underwent substantive changes and shifts throughout the generations and various spiritual and cultural creations were produced in them. Hence, the holders of various views could draw upon the broad Jewish heritage, according to their views, and could prefer the Bible to the

⁶³ The first Hebrew work that dealt with the real life of the Bible was a book by Shlomo Lewisohn (1789–1821), *Mechkerei eretz* (Studies of the Land, Vienna, 1819), which was enlarged and readapted by Jacob Kaplan under the title *Eretz kedumim* (*Das Land des Alterthums*, Vilna 1839). See: Tovah Cohen, *From Dream to Reality: The Land of Israel in Haskalah Literature*, Ramat Gan, 1982 (Hebrew).

⁶⁴ This idea was coherently formulated by Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit*, Breslau, 1857, p. 423.

Talmud, at the same time, selecting from the Bible only those beliefs and values they deemed appropriate – the laws and commandments of Moses, or the ethical world-view of the Prophets.⁶⁵

The *maskilic* scholar Abraham Baer Gottlober (1810–1899) described the purpose of the translations of the Bible into Yiddish by the *maskil* Menachem Mendel Lefin (1749–1826) as follows:

To open blind eyes, and more than dealing with the Bible, they cast out superstition and vain beliefs, for a light shines forth from the Holy Books, a brightness that drives away the darkness. This is the path that has been walked by all the seekers of light and the uplifting of the people; they have turned their faces to the Bible, opened this locked garden and dispersed the waters of its springs. And the people come to drink from the wells of flowing water, and their eyes are opened.⁶⁶

The “return to the Bible” (or “the return of the Bible”) is depicted by Gottlober as one of the elements in the emergence of a new world. In other words, the return to the ancient book is described as an entrance into the gates of the future. The Bible is perceived by him as an important asset on the road to this future, among other reasons, because it was an important, vital means of creating a new tradition. If it had not been for the Bible, *maskilim*, after abandoning the Talmud and rabbinical literature, would have remained without a spiritual-cultural asset from the ancient past. Without a return to the Bible, the Zionist nationalist movement of revival could not have awakened. The return to the Bible and the historical past it describes (the biblical period) was one of the important means in shaping the image of the new future and the new mode of existence, based, among others, on the authority of an ancient tradition and past, while ignoring the Jewish legacy of the long period of exile from the end of the Second Temple period (in some radical views – from the destruction of the First Temple). This return was intended to be a revival that would lead, as in the title of Heinrich Graetz’s (1817–1891) 1864 article, to “the rejuvenation of the Jewish race,” and to the resurrection of the national organism.⁶⁷ It was, at one and the same time, a key element in the romantic-restorative layer of Zionism, as well as in its modern-revolutionary layer.

⁶⁵ Simon Dubnow, “The Jewish Theory of Nationalism,” in *Letters about Old and New Judaism*, Hebrew trans. by Abraham Levinson, Tel Aviv, 1937 (new revised edition), pp. 18–19.

⁶⁶ Abraham Baer Gottlober, *Zikhronot umasa’ot* (Memoirs and Journeys), ed. R. Goldberg, 2 vols., Jerusalem, 1976, p. 206. On him, see the introduction to vol. 1, pp. 7–52.

⁶⁷ Heinrich (Zvi) Graetz, “The Rejuvenation of the Jewish Race,” in idem, *The Structure of Jewish History*, edited by Ismar Schorsch, New York, 1975, pp. 141–150.

The main revolutionary expression of the biblical revolution during the Haskalah period was, then, that the Bible – not the Talmud – was perceived as the formative book of Judaism and as its representative. In the nineteenth century, the Bible gained not only the status of an alternative to the Talmud, but also as its opposition. In a ballad entitled “Abba Glosk from Leczeka” written in 1832, describing the bitter fate of the East European *maskil* who at the age of 60 knocks on the door of Mendelssohn’s home in Berlin, the German poet Adalbert von Chamisso (1781–1838) says in the name of the tragic hero: “The Talmud and the Talmud! They knew nothing else!”⁶⁸ The exclusive study of the Talmud was depicted as distancing the Jews from the surrounding society and raising a wall that separated them from it, restricting their world. “I hated the Talmud. To me it was like a Sisyphean rock, tormenting body and soul,” the *maskil* Judah Leib Levin (1844–1925) wrote resentfully.⁶⁹ Although not all the *maskilim* rejected the Talmud, and some described the Sages as men well-versed in the life of their time and found some openness to external knowledge in their words, most of them regarded the Talmud’s exclusive status in Jewish culture, in particular the method of *pilpul*⁷⁰ and the rabbinical literature based on the Talmud, as the greatest obstacle to the reform of Jewish religion and society. In contrast, the return to the Bible was perceived as a return to a text that deals with life itself. Heine wrote, with much hyperbole, that just “as Luther had overthrown the papacy, Mendelssohn overthrew the Talmud, and in the same way, for he rejected tradition and proclaimed the Bible to be the fountainhead of religion.”⁷¹ At the same time, Heine wrote that the Bible is:

... their [the Jews’] fatherland, their possession, their ruler, their fortune and misfortune. They live within its peaceful precincts. Here they exercise their inalienable civil rights ... Nations rose and fell; states flourished and decayed; revolutions shook the land, but the Jews were bowed over

⁶⁸ “Der Talmud und der Talmud! Sie wussten andres nicht.” See: Chaim Shoham, *Inspired by the Berlin Enlightenment and Other Essays*, Tel Aviv, 1996, p. 107 (Hebrew). Not all of the *maskilim* harshly criticized the Talmud; some thought it was not an obstacle to the Enlightenment that was perpetuating economic and culture backwardness, but the majority gave it an historicist reading. See: Christoph Schulte, *Die jüdische Aufklärung*, München, 2002, pp. 81–118.

⁶⁹ Judah Leib Levin, *Zikhronot vehegyonot*, ed. Y. Slutzky, Jerusalem 1968, p. 45.

⁷⁰ “A collective term denoting various methods of talmudic study and exposition, especially by the use of suitable legal, conceptual, and casuistic differentiation” (*Encyclopedie Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 524).

⁷¹ “Wie Luther das Papsttum, so stürzte Mendelssohn den Talmud”. In Heine, “Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland”, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9, (München, 1964), p. 230.

their book and scarcely marked the turmoil of the times which swept over their heads!⁷²

And he wrote with great admiration about the qualities of the Bible:

What a book it is! Even more wonderful than its content is its style. Every word is as natural as a tree, a flower, the sea, the stars – as man himself ... The Bible is the word of God.⁷³

There was a general consensus regarding the status of the Bible in modern Jewish society, which was reflected in a long list of statements. Here are several of them:

The Jewish-German scholar, Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), a leader of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the Reform movement, wrote:

[The Bible] is and has always been eternal living speech and not a dead book. It spoke to all generations ... The eternal word does not belong in a certain age, it could not depend on the age of its composition ... Hence, every generation, every movement, every individuality carried into it their own views; hence the extensions, interpretations, the typological and symbolic attempts of exegesis ... This may produce a great measure of uncertainty in the exegesis, but at the same time it augments the significance of the Bible as embodying everything to everyone.⁷⁴

Moses Hess (1812–1875), a Socialist proto-Zionist thinker, wrote in his book, *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) that the Bible is an expression of the special creative force of the Jewish people.⁷⁵ The liberal rabbi and biblical scholar Dr. Benno Jacob (1862–1945) wrote that questions related to an understanding of the Bible as an ethical system, as a theological world-view, and as reliable history have become a “question of life” in modern Jewry.⁷⁶ The scholar Solomon Z. Schechter (1847–1915), who served as President of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York from 1901–1915,⁷⁷ believed that Judaism without the Bible is Judaism without a head; Judaism is a revealed religion with Holy Scriptures that relate the history of the past.⁷⁸ He wrote that “The Bible is our patent of nobility granted to us by the Almighty God, and if we disown

⁷² Heine, “Ludwig Börne,” in *The Poetry and Prose of Heinrich Heine*, edited by Frederic Ewen, New York, 1959, p. 657. This description by Heine contradicts what he wrote about the centrality of the Talmud in the life of the Jews.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 659.

⁷⁴ Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen*, p. 72.

⁷⁵ Moses Hess, “Ein characteristischer Psalm,” in Moses Hess, *Jüdische Schriften*, edit. T. Zlocisti, Berlin, 1905, pp. 124–127.

⁷⁶ B. Jacob, “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie”, *AZdJ*, 66 (16), 1902, p. 187.

⁷⁷ On him, see: Louis Ginzberg, *Students, Scholars and Saints*, Boston, 1985, pp. 241–251.

⁷⁸ Solomon Schechter, “The Emancipation of Jewish Sciences”, in *Seminary Addresses and other Papers*, New York, 1959, p. 3.

the Bible, leaving it to the tender mercies of a Wellhausen, Stade and Duhm,⁷⁹ and other beautiful souls working away at diminishing the ‘nimbus’ of the Chosen People,⁸⁰ the world will disown us.” The intent of the best biblical scholars, and not only of Delitzsch, was to harm the Bible, and in doing so, to deprive the Jews of the possession of their past, and to leave them without any hope for the future.⁸¹ The injury to the Bible was perceived as a deliberate, malicious attempt to deprive Judaism and the Jews of the most precious asset they had granted to humanity as well as the foundation of their national spirit.

Claude Montefiore (1858–1938), the founder of the liberal Jewish movement in England, stated in his *Bible for Home Reading* (1896):

It is the Jews who have been the great world teachers about goodness and God ... Most of what men know and believe about goodness was written by Jews and is found in the Bible. It is the Bible, and through the Bible it is the Jews who have taught men not only to love God and to love goodness, but to see that the love of goodness is part and parcel of the love of God.⁸²

In this gospel, the Bible belongs to the Jews, but they made its message the possession of all humankind.

Dr. Hirsch Perez Chajes (1876–1927), the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, issued a strong idealistic statement in 1918,⁸³ in reaction to Christian claims of ownership of the Bible. In his first speech (*Synagogenreden*) as Chief Rabbi he said:

They often say: You have given the book of books to the world, and now you may leave. It was not you, but the Christians, who translated the Holy Scriptures into all languages and disseminated them to all the peoples of the earth. But, my friends, it is not enough to read and study the Holy Scriptures, to speak and sing the Psalms. You have to live and experience the Holy Scriptures. No nation in the world lives the Holy Scriptures, nor do they live in any nation, except within our people. From a certain standpoint, the Book of Books is the soul that built its body for us as a temple.⁸⁴

And in his second speech in 1919 he stated:

⁷⁹ Bernhard Stade (1848–1906), a professor of theology in Gießen and a leader of the historical-critical school. Bernhard Duhm (1847–1928), a biblical scholar and the author of *Die Theologie der Propheten als Grundlage für die innere Entwicklungsgeschichte der israelitischen Religion dargestellt*, Bonn, 1875.

⁸⁰ Schechter is referring to the words of Emperor Wilhelm II in his February 1903 letter. See in Chapter 6.

⁸¹ Schechter, “Higher Criticism – Higher Anti-Semitism”, in *Seminary Addresses*, pp. 35–39.

⁸² *Bible for Home Reading*, p. 5.

⁸³ On him, see in Chapter 12.

⁸⁴ Hirsh Tsevi Perez Chajes, *Reden und Vorträge*, ed. Moritz Rosenfeld, Wien 1933, p. 95.

Only the Jew knows the soul of the Bible, and no else [emphasis in original]. Anyone who is not a Jew – not even the English people who are so intimately linked – after the Jewish people – to the Bible. Any other people, the son of any other nation, who is not from the seed of Israel, must first overcome the sense of alienness before entering the gates of the Bible, because the Bible is not flesh of his flesh or blood of his blood ... And if it is true, that we live thanks to the Bible, it is also true that the Bible lives solely thanks to us ... We are the living meaning of the Holy Scriptures. (“Kein Volk lebt in der Bibel, in keinem Volke lebt die Bibel, als nur in dem unsern. Die Bibel ist gewissermaßen die Seele, die sich in uns ihren Körper gebaut.”)⁸⁵

Ahad Ha’am (Asher Zvi Ginzburg, 1856–1927), the Zionist ideologue, stated that the Bible is the formative element of the “national self” of the Jewish people. The Bible connects the national Jew to his historical past with thousands of fine capillaries.⁸⁶ Itzhak Tabenkin (1887–1971), one of the leaders of the labor movement in Palestine, writing in 1937 (with much hyperbole) about the status of the Bible in the pioneering society in Palestine in the early twentieth century, stated that:

We cannot speak about the spiritual world of the members of the Second Aliya⁸⁷ in Palestine without mentioning the special influence of the Bible ... the Bible is the spiritual reflection of agricultural and military life, the image of a conquering people, a working people, a people of “this world” ... The Land of Israel lives in the memory of the Jews as a homeland, and this memory was stored in the Bible. Throughout all the generations, no other Bible was created, because the Jewish people had no other land ... The influence of the Bible on the members of the Second Aliya served as a link to and a hold on the entire land ... The Bible served as a kind of birth certificate; it helped tear down the barrier between the people and the land and nurtured a “sense of homeland” ... all of this was expressed in the close touch maintained with this Book, and in the fact, so unusual in a working environment, that there was a copy of the Bible in nearly every worker’s room.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ “Die Seele der Bibel kennt doch kein anderer als der Jude,” Chajes, *Die Bibel und die Jugend*, pp. 150–154, quotation 152–153.

⁸⁶ Ahad Ha’am, “Yalkut katan: Torah MiTzion,” in *Al parashat derakhim*, Part 4, Berlin 1930 (new edition), pp. 122–132.

⁸⁷ A wave of immigration to Palestine between 1904–1914, characterized by the immigration of pioneers, members of the Zionist labor parties.

⁸⁸ Yitzhak Tabenkin, “HaMekorot”(The Sources) in Bracha Chabas (ed.), *Book of the Second Aliya*, Tel Aviv, 1946. p. 27 (Hebrew). The claim that there was a Bible in the tent of nearly every pioneer in the Second Aliya, “which they would read by the light of a kerosene lamp before going to sleep” seems a gross exaggeration. See also: Uriel Simon, *The Status of the Bible in Israeli Society from National Midrash to Existential Peshat*, Jerusalem, 1999 (Hebrew). And see in Part Three. The fact that the Bible was a formative book in the new Hebrew culture is attested to, among other things, by the fact that, prior to World War I, the Committee on the Hebrew Language and leading teachers in Palestine conducted a debate concern-

We could refer the reader to similar statements, since much has been written in this vein (and we shall return to this subject in the context of Hebrew culture in Palestine in Part Four), but those we have cited will undoubtedly suffice to show that this was indeed a phenomenon of a “return to the Bible,” one that was a vital element in the process of creating a new Jewish identity with a new consciousness of the past and of the future, and one that turned religion into “the holy book of secular Zionism.”

In view of the statements cited above, and many others, it is no wonder that many Jews in Europe – Eastern and Western – publicly voiced their fears that a return to the Bible also meant the historical restoration of the biblical period, namely, a call for a return to Zion, to emigration from Europe to Palestine and for the renewal of Jewish territorial nationalism, although the *maskilim* aspired to see a modern cultural Jewish revival in the diaspora. Judah Leib (Leon) Pinsker (1821–1891) also stated in his 1881 book *Autoemancipation* – one of the formative texts of modern Jewish nationalism – that the Jews ought not to dream of a return to ancient Judea and the renewal of political life in Palestine. Rather, in his view, the aim was to obtain a large piece of land for the poor Jews of Eastern Europe, to which the Jews would bring “the God-idea and the Bible. It is only these that have made our old fatherland the Holy Land, and not Jerusalem or the Jordan.”⁸⁹

In modern Judaism, there were movements and personalities who regarded the Bible as an archaic, even reactionary book, whose contents are totally contradictory to modernity and progress. In this context, we mention Dr. Nathan Birnbaum (1865–1937), who in 1890 coined the term “Zionism.” He rejected the view that a Jewish renaissance is linked to the Bible and stated that the ancient character of Judaism, which is embodied in the Bible, is dead and will never be reborn.⁹⁰ Unsurprisingly, the criticism of the Bund movement⁹¹ was particularly negative. However, some people leveled unexpected criticism. One of these was Dr. Max Nordau (1849–1923), Herzl’s right-hand man, who

ing the choice between biblical grammar and the grammar of the Mishnah as an element in structuring the new Hebrew. See: Gideon Goldenberg, “Hebrew as a Living Semitic Language,” *Evolution and Renewal: Trends in the Development of the Hebrew Language*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 161–162 (Hebrew).

⁸⁹ J. L. Pinsker, *Auto-emancipation/An Appeal to His People*, vii, trans. D. S. Blondheim, New York, 1916.

⁹⁰ Joachim Doron, *The Zionist Thinking of Nathan Birnbaum*, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 141–142 (Hebrew).

⁹¹ A Jewish socialist party founded in Vilna in 1897, supporting Jewish national rights, Yiddishist and anti-Zionist.

in his book *Conventional Lies*⁹² described the Bible as a book that contains echoes of Indian and Persian legends, and stated that it is not reliable from an historical standpoint, is childlike in its world-view, and expresses negative moral values. Certainly, Nordau stated, it is not a book worthy of being included in the repertoire of the spiritual assets of the Jew on his way to the world of tomorrow. A Jewish renaissance, which means a return to the reality of the biblical period, seems like a reactionary fantasy in the eyes of Orthodox, liberal and Bundist Jews too. An article published by the writer, Joseph Chaim Brenner (1881–1921) in *Hapoel Hatzair* on October 24, 1911, in which he called upon the Jews to free themselves of “the hypnosis of the 24 books of the Bible,” and stated that in his eyes, those of the new Hebrew, the Bible does not have the same value as it does for those who regard it as “Holy Scripture,” “the book of books,” “the eternal book,” aroused enraged reactions in the Hebrew press in Palestine.⁹³

Nonetheless, the need for a return to the Bible was clearly demonstrated in the fact that the Reform movement, which perceived the messianic idea of a return to Zion in Palestine as having symbolic value, but no tangible value in the age of emancipation, also could not avoid regarding the Bible as a formative book of Judaism. One could even say that that movement’s critical attitude towards the Talmud obliged it to return to the Bible – the more ancient book – although this was fundamentally counter to its historicist-evolutionary approach. From the vantage point of the Reform movement, a return to the Bible could have undercut its major argument that the laws of change, development and historical betterment also apply to the Jewish religion. Indeed, Samuel Holdheim (1806–1860), one of the more radical rabbis in the reform community, stated at the 1846 conference of rabbis in Breslau that the return to the Bible is not a return “to the dead letter of the Bible.”⁹⁴ Moses Hess pointed to this internal contradiction in the world-view of the Reform movement when he wrote that it was “imitating Christian reformers of an earlier age, by setting up the Bible, in contradiction to the Talmud, as the positive content of regenerated Judaism, and by this

⁹² Max Nordau, *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*, Leipzig, 1883.

⁹³ The intellectual level of the claims made in this fiery polemic was far lower than that of the Babel-Bibel controversy. In any event, even those who came to Brenner’s defense (and to the defense of the freedom of opinion) were very far from accepting his view in relation to the value and importance of the Bible. The polemic is described in detail in Nurit Govrin’s book, *The Brenner Affair: The Fight for Free Speech (1910–1913)*, Jerusalem, 1985 (Hebrew).

⁹⁴ See: *Protokolle der dritten Versammlung deutscher Rabbiner*, Breslau, 1847, pp. 59–73, and Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation*, Berlin, 1933, pp. 107–110.

anachronism, which was merely an imitation of a foreign movement, they only made themselves ridiculous.”⁹⁵ Others also accused the movement of an attempt to imitate liberal German Protestantism,⁹⁶ and even to become a Jewish-Protestant version of it.

As far as the Jewish neo-orthodoxy in Germany, which also did not believe in the actualization of the return-to-Zion idea, was concerned, the return to the Bible was an expression and manifestation of its modern character and its special way of coping – from within and without – with the challenges of modernity. That movement returned to the Bible, even without the mediation of the *midrash* and the traditional commentary (although it claimed that the Talmud was an unparalleled vital tool for an understanding of the Bible), and was at the forefront of the struggle against modern biblical criticism. Apologetic writing about the Bible and scientific research on it became a part of the world of the neo-Orthodox Jews. As we shall see later, they understood that neither “naïve faith” nor “sanctification of the tradition” would suffice to cope with what they saw as heresy, and in particular would not suffice to prove there was no fundamental contradiction between a religious credo and a scientific credo.⁹⁷ In light of the criticism against the Reform movement cited above, it is ironic that Reform circles claimed that Jewish neo-orthodoxy was defending the Bible using arguments similar to those used by the vulgar Christian-Orthodox doctrine.

In any event, the fact that neo-Orthodoxy, the Reform movement in Germany and radical *maskilim*, as well as socialist Jews in Eastern Europe (and not only nationalistic Jews) regarded the Bible as a formative book and the source of inspiration shows that the return to the Bible in the modern era was not a return to “the ancient religion” or to an ancient utopian way of life, nor was it part of a conservative intellectual-cultural or even a reactionary movement. At the same time, neo-Orthodox Jews and liberal Jews shared the belief that the Bible was a spiritual-cultural asset common to Jews and to (Protestant) Germans.

The picture we have just drawn would not be complete unless we noted that early in the twentieth century (and later as well) the claim was made that the biblical revolution was not a complete revolution. In 1911, Ahad Ha'am compared Brenner's call upon the Jews to free

⁹⁵ Moses Hess, *The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem, The Last Nationalist Question*, Lincoln, Nebraska and London, 1995, p. 102.

⁹⁶ P. Smolenskin, “Am Olam,” in *Ma’amarim*, Jerusalem, 1925–1927, vol. 1, pp. 26, 127–135.

⁹⁷ Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany*, trans. Elizabeth Petuchowski, New York, 1992, pp. 175–184.

themselves of the “hypnosis of the Bible”⁹⁸ with the favored status of the Book of Books in English culture, and concluded, naturally, that the English esteem the Bible more than the Jews do. Ahad Ha’am described the celebrations marking the three-hundredth anniversary of the King James translation of the Bible, and commented sarcastically:

And you need to read what the English write, even the free-thinkers among them, about this celebration to see what a strong hold the “hypnosis” of the Bible has on the heart of this foolish nation, which cannot forget – despite the wealth of books it has produced – that this translated book has become the greatest historical force in its national life, and its deep imprint is evident in those “great books” as well.

Ahad Ha’am added that the English acknowledge the influence of the Bible on the shaping of their national spirit.⁹⁹ On the occasion of that celebration, the prolific scholar and rabbi Dr. Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940) wrote in the *Hatzevira* newspaper that it was the reading of translations of the Bible into European languages that had led to the collapse of the authority of the Pope and the Catholic church, laying the foundation of the national culture of the German-Anglo race. “The time has come,” Bernfeld urged, “for the status of the Bible to be revived among the Jewish people, in particular the common Jew.” The author of the article in the *Moledet* periodical, who quoted Bernfeld, wrote:

In a museum in Europe, I saw this picture: a small fisherman is sitting in a remote hut on a desolate island in Finland. In the hut there is a straw mattress, a three-legged wooden chair, and a simple log table. On the table in front of the old man lie a loaf of bread, a pitcher of water – and a Bible, that he is holding in his hand and reading ... And indeed, bread and water are the body’s most essential needs, and the “book” for the soul, and what about the Jewish soul ...¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ See note 90. J. L. Gordon also commented on the place of the Bible in English culture: “For you ought to know that the English are closer to the road of faith than the other nations of the world: their soul is strongly tied to the Holy Scriptures, they have the highest respect for the history of the Jews in ancient times and their hearts sense what the future holds for them more than others.” In J. L. Gordon, *Tzeluchit shel pleiton* (A Vial of Perfume), II, *Hamelitz*, 1880, p. 123. (In *Collected Works of J. L. Gordon: Prose*, Tel Aviv, 1960, p. 187 [Hebrew]).

⁹⁹ Ahad Ha’am, “Yalkut katan: Torah mitzion,” pp. 128.

¹⁰⁰ Bernfeld, *Hatzevira*, No. 76; the article is quoted in “Chag haBiblia.” *Moledet: Yarchon livnei bane’urim* (Jaffa), 1, 1910, pp. 156–158 (signed “Moreh”). On him, see Chapter 2. In the third volume (2nd year: 1912), an excerpt from Heine’s words on the Bible in *Confessions* is printed, pp. 146–148. The status of the Bible in Britain was a frequent topic in the Jewish press. In a review of the translation of Benjamin Disraeli’s book *Tancred* (entitled *Nes lagoyim*) by the *maskil* J. L. Levin published in *Hashahar* in 1883, the critic noted that in Britain one could praise the ancient Jewish people, since there “it is a great honor to study the Holy Scriptures and to understand Hebrew.” See: *Hashahar*, 11, Vienna, 1883, pp. 352–355.

Men-of-letters and Zionist public figures did stress, particularly after the Balfour Declaration in November 1917, that the status of the Bible in English culture obliged the English to adopt a pro-Zionist policy. Some of them regarded the Jewish people and the British people as “the two peoples of the Bible.”¹⁰¹ The Bible was described as the greatest contribution made by the Jews to Western civilization; an asset that formed the foundation for this civilization. The writer and essayist Jacob Rabinowitz (1875–1948) wrote, for example, that it is a fact that the Bible did not “travel” East – but rather to the West, and that Protestantism is a “religion of the mind, and the closest to Judaism in its refined sense; it was [that religion] that embraced the Bible ... all the persecutions in the West were to no avail; the Jew remained there and his Bible made its home there ... both the Jews and the Bible thus tend to be Western.”¹⁰²

The Bible in the Traditional Ashkenazi Society

Let us go back to the initial point. Has not the Bible always been the formative book of Jewish identity and existence? From what forgotten condition, from what marginal status did it need to be redeemed? What is behind the statement that it was the Haskalah movement that began to return the Bible to the Jews and the Jews to the Bible? To answer this question we have to take note of the difference between the status of the Bible in the traditional Ashkenazi society and the status the Haskalah gave it in modern Jewish culture in Europe.

In actual fact, it was not the “book” but rather the Torah that for generations determined the identity of the Jewish people and shaped their way of life.¹⁰³ In the traditional Jewish society the *halakhah* and the *midrash* were thought to be superior to the Bible. Nonetheless, not only the five books of the Torah but also the other books of the Bible enjoyed an honorable status, and the formative chapters of the biblical historical story shaped the consciousness and experience of the Jews throughout the generations. In each period of Jewish history, however, the Bible had a different status or different statuses; it was read, understood and in-

¹⁰¹ Ze'ev Jabotinsky, “Shnei amei haTanakh” (The Two Peoples of the Bible), *Ha-Yarden*, 9 May 1934.

¹⁰² Jacob Rabinowitz, “Al mizrah uma’arav” (On East and West [Light Conversations]), *Hatekufah*, 16, 1922, pp. 453–454.

¹⁰³ Philip R. Davies, “Judaism and the Hebrew Scripture”, in Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism*, Oxford, 2000, p. 42.

terpreted in different ways and used for different purposes. Kugel writes that the traditional understanding of the Bible became the meaning of the Bible.¹⁰⁴ The Bible, in particular the Pentateuch, chapters from the books of the Prophets and the books used in the synagogue liturgy (Psalms, the five scrolls),¹⁰⁵ were part of the spiritual-cultural world and the historical consciousness of the Jew from the time of the Second Temple, and the reading of these texts in the synagogue enabled the ordinary Jew to become familiar with the spiritual and historical tradition embodied in the Bible. The reading of the Bible in synagogues outside of Palestine led to a need to translate it into Aramaic and Greek.¹⁰⁶ Writers and commentators were creative; they added new elements, expanded the narrative framework of the Bible,¹⁰⁷ and rewrote and reworked vari-

¹⁰⁴ James L. Kugel, *The Bible as it Was*, Cambridge, Mass., 1997. See also: George J. Brooke (ed.), *Jewish Ways of Reading the Bible*, JSS Supplement 11, Oxford, 2000. It is important to note that the Sages regarded the Bible as one book and tried to prove its unity, with an emphasis on the preeminent status of the five books of the Torah. The intellectual-elitist nature of the Talmud Torah is expressed in the following words: “It is the way of the world that a thousand people undertake [the study of] Scripture – a hundred come out [knowing something]. A hundred [undertake the study of] Mishnah – ten come out [knowing something]. Ten [begin the study] of Talmud – one comes out [who is truly learned]. Concerning this it is written, “One man among a thousand have I found” [Eccles 7:28]. (Midrash Leviticus Rabah, Chapter 2). On the interpretation of the Bible in the Middle Ages, see: Moshe Greenberg (ed.), *Jewish Bible Exegesis: An Introduction*, Jerusalem, 1983 (Hebrew); J.L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden (Sermons in Israel and their Historical Development)*, trans. M.A. Zack, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 1–6 (Hebrew)]. On the reading of the Bible and its study in the synagogue in ancient times, see: Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, I-II, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1940. On the triennial reading of the Torah in Palestine, see: Shlomo Naeh, “The Torah Reading Cycle in Early Palestine: A New Look,” *Tarbiz*, 67 (2), January-March, 1998, pp. 167–187 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁵ Charles Perrot, “The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue, in Martin Jan Mulder (ed.), *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Assen, 1988, pp. 137–159; S.Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrasthic Evidence*, Hamden, Conn., 1976. See also: Edward Breuer, “The Haskalah and the Bible,” pp. 448–450; Tovah Cohen, “Simultaneous Reading: A Key Technique for the Understanding of the Confrontation with the Bible in the Poetry of Adam HaKohen,” *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature*, 7, Jerusalem, 1985, pp. 71–89 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁶ Isaiah Teshima, “Biblical Interpretation and Historiography in the Second Temple Period”, in *The Bible and its World: Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*; Division A, Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 209–217 (Hebrew). On the re-writing of the biblical chronology, see: Chaim Milikowsky, “‘Seder Olam’ and Jewish Chronography in the Roman Period,” in J. Salmon, M. Stern, M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Studies in Historiography*, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 59–71 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁷ William S. Green, “Writing with Scripture: The Rabbinic uses of the Hebrew Bible”, in J. Neusner, *Writing with Scripture: The Authority and Uses of the Hebrew Bible in the Torah of Formative Judaism*, Minneapolis, 1989, pp. 7–23.

ous layers.¹⁰⁸ The biblical stories were a basis for education, a source for *halakhic* and *aggadic midrashim*, which assumed that the biblical source was familiar to their audience, and for moral lessons (*exempla*).¹⁰⁹ There were many manuscripts of the Massoretic version, particularly from the twelfth century, numbering as many as thousands (some complete Bibles and others manuscripts of parts of the Bible), but the number of copies grew immensely after the invention of printing. The first printed edition of the complete Bible, vowelized, but without a translation or commentary, appeared in 1488 in Soncino near Milan. The third printing was in Brescia in 1495. The printer, Gershon Soncino, stated that his intention was to print the Bible “in a small quantity to enable every man to study it by day and by night.”¹¹⁰ The most important development in this sphere began when the Christian printer Daniel Bomberg (?–1549) printed the first (1516–1517) and the second edition (1524–1525) of the *Biblica Rabbinica* in Venice. The second edition, which was edited by Jacob Ben Hayyim Ben Isaac Adonijah, contained the division into chapters determined in the thirteenth century by Stephen Langton, later the Archbishop of Canterbury; and the Bible and the various commentaries written in the Middle Ages, particularly the commentary by Rashi, “in which the Bible was dressed in the classic Jewish garb,” placed on the very same page.¹¹¹ This edition became the formative text of the *Massorah* version (*textus receptus*) that determined the way in which the Bible was studied in the various communities, and also marked the transition from manuscripts to printed books, which gave the Ashkenazi reader access to the extensive biblical exegesis of the commentators in Spain and Provence too, some of whom (mainly Samuel ben Meir [Rashbam, 1080–1160]) aspired to cast off the influence of the tradition of the Sages.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ One example of such creative writing is the Book of Jubilees. See: Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai. The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, Leiden 2003.

¹⁰⁹ M.D. Herr, “The Conception of History among the Sages,” *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, iii, Jerusalem, 1977, pp. 129–142 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁰ On the printings of the Bible see: *Biblical Encyclopedia*, vol. 5, Jerusalem, 1968, pp. 368–386 (Hebrew). For the purpose of his translation Martin Luther used the third edition printed in Brescia in 1494. See also: Burnett, *From Christian Hebraism to Jewish Studies*; Jordan S. Penkower, *Yaakov Ben Haim and the Rise of the Biblia Rabbinica*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1982 (Hebrew); J. Mehlmann, “Daniel Bomberg, the Printer of Venice,” *Areshet: Yearbook on the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 3, Jerusalem, 1961, pp. 93–99 (Hebrew); L. Goldschmidt, *The Earliest Editions of the Hebrew Bible*, New York, 1950.

¹¹¹ E. Tov, *The Textual Criticism of the Bible*, pp. 59–62; Moshe Greenberg, *Medieval Jewish Exegesis*, p. 74; Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, Oxford, 1952.

¹¹² M. Greenberg, *Jewish Bible Exegesis*, pp. 77–79.

As for the Bible as history, Judaism was not only a religion, but, among other things, a knowledge and consciousness of the past, and the self-evident historical traditions (such as the exodus from Egypt, the giving of the Torah, the destruction of the First Temple) functioned as both myth and history. Until the modern era, the Bible was the only book that recounted the ancient past of the Jewish people. The biblical historical tradition created and shaped the picture of the Jewish people's ancient past, as well as its myths and historical symbols (with the mediation of the *midrash* as well). In public sermons, the stories of the Bible were used as moral lessons, and not as historical narrative.¹¹³ In the rabbinical society, the history recounted in the Bible was regarded as self-evident factual truth; the Sages (in contrast to Josephus) were not called upon to defend the Bible against claims that the historical story it tells is not reliable, or is even falsified. They were not called upon to defend themselves against what the Muslim historian Ibn Haldūn (1332–1406) called “criticism of the reliability of the traditionalists.”¹¹⁴ Since Christianity (unlike pagan writers, and in a different sense, unlike Islam¹¹⁵) did not challenge the reliability of the

¹¹³ Elchanan Reiner, “The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book”, in G.D. Hundert (ed.), *Jews in Early Modern Poland*, London, 1997, pp. 85–98; Iris Parush, *Reading Women: The Benefit of Marginality in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Society in Eastern Europe*, Tel Aviv, 2001, pp. 68–69 (Hebrew). When the teacher Yosef Vitkin (1876–1912) introduced the study of the complete Bible, without skipping any chapters, in the (Hebrew) school in Rishon-le-Zion, he encountered fierce opposition by ultra-orthodox circles. See: Shulamit Laskov, *A Call from Zion: The Life and Times of Yosef Vitkin*, Tel Aviv 1986, pp. 31–32 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, London, 1958, I, pp. 6–14.

¹¹⁵ The Muslim writers claimed that the Jewish editors of the Bible damaged the Holy Scriptures through deliberate distortion (*tahrif*). On biblical criticism in Islam, see: Mark R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, N.J., 1994, pp. 145–154; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*, Princeton, N.J., 1992; Camilia Adang, *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible from Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*, Leiden, 1996; Norman Roth, “Forgery and Abrogation of the Torah: A Theme on Muslim and Christian Polemic in Spain”, in *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 54 (1987), pp. 203–206; Moshe Perelman, “The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism”, in S.D. Goitein (ed.), *Religion in a Religious Age*, Cambridge, Mass., 1974, pp. 103–138. On pagan Bible criticism, see: David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, Jerusalem-Leiden, 1982. We allow ourselves a brief digression in this note. The source of the Muslim claim that Ezra distorted the Torah may be the apocryphal book 4 Ezra or 2 Esdras (Chapter 12) which relates that Ezra complains to God that the Torah has been burned so that no one knows the deeds of God in the past and the future. God commands him to take five men quick at writing and tablets with him into the desert. There, for forty days, he dictates to them 94 books, including the 24 books of the Bible.

larger part of the biblical story, but regarded it as authentic, reliable historical evidence (although it argued against deliberate falsifications that had been introduced into it, in its view, insofar as the message about Jesus the messiah's coming was concerned), the Jews in the Christian west did not need to defend the historical truth of the Bible against challengers from the outside.¹¹⁶ This is one of the reasons why in the traditional Ashkenazi society, which regarded all 24 books as having been divinely given, the question of the Bible's reliability as an historical document could never have been raised, and certainly not

The intent of this chapter was to provide divine validity to the apocryphal books, but whoever wanted to could interpret it as evidence that the entire Bible was written by Ezra and differed from the original text. The Book of 4 Ezra was translated from the ninth century and thereafter several times into Arabic by Christian Arabs as a reaction to the allegation by Muslims that Ezra had distorted the Torah, that was passed on to the Jews after the Destruction. See: Adriana Drint (ed.), *The Mount Sinai Arabic Version of IV Ezra*, Louvain, 1997. On the claim of a deliberate forgery by Ezra and its influence on the biblical criticism of Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. 1164), and through him on Spinoza, see: H. Lazarus-Yafeh, "Ezea-Uzayr": The Metamorphosis of a Polemical Motif," in *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 50–74; I.M. Resnick, "The Falsification of Scripture and Medieval Christian and Jewish Polemics," in *Medieval Encounters*, 2, 1996, pp. 344–380. The idea that the Pentateuch had been edited by Ezra and his scribes was not new to the Sages. However, as David Weiss Halivni writes, throughout the generations, the tendency in Jewish thought has been to suppress the memory of canonization out of the concept of the Torah's holiness and perfection: "With each elevation, the memory of canonization itself became less palatable until, at last, the actual history of the text seemed impossible, or even absurd, when suggested to the religious mind. By the time several centuries had passed, it had become an article of faith that the Torah, self-evidently, came directly from God in exactly its present form." See in David Weiss Halivni, *Revelation Restored: Divine Writ and Critical Responses*, Boulder, Colorado, 1997, pp. 48, 52. On rabbinic antecedents to textual criticism preserved in the Talmud, see: J. Weingreen, *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible*, Oxford, 1982, pp. 11–26. On biblical commentators who lived in the Byzantine Empire, and predicated the idea about the role of the editor, from another source, or different sources, of some of the books of the Bible, and the transformations this idea underwent, see also: Richard C. Steiner, "A Jewish Theory of Biblical Redaction from Byzantium: Its Rabbinic Roots, its Diffusion and its Encounter with the Muslim Doctrine of Falsification," *JSIJ (Jewish Studies on Internet Journal)*, Ramat Gan, 2003, pp. 123–167. On Ibn Ezra's commentaries, see: Meira Poliack, "The Spanish Legacy in the Hebrew Bible Commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Profayt Duran," in Carlos Carrete Parrondo, et al. (eds.), *Encuentros and Desencuentros: Spanish Jewish Cultural Interaction Throughout History*, Tel Aviv, 2000, pp. 83–103.

¹¹⁶ A rich literature exists on the role of the Bible in the medieval Jewish-Christian polemic. See: William Adler, "The Jews as Falsifiers: Charges of Tendentious Emendation in Anti-Jewish Christian Polemic", in *Translation of Scripture. Proceedings of a Conference at the Annenberg Research Institute*, May 15–16, 1989 (*Jewish Quarterly Review*, 81, 1990, pp. 1–27); M. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross*, pp. 139–145.

questions such as whether the Bible accurately described the events in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel.

Familiarity with the complete Bible – without any exegetical mediation – was widespread in various Jewish communities prior to the eighteenth century, in particular in Spain and Italy, where an attempt was made to nurture a new cultural ideal, in which the Bible occupied a place alongside the Talmud, and knowledge of the 24 books was expressed in their widespread use in the writing of profane and sacred poetry.¹¹⁷ In contrast, in the traditional Ashkenazi society, the reading of the Pentateuch in the *cheder* (lit., room, a school for teaching children Jewish religious observance) was fragmentary and mechanical in nature, and in Eastern Europe, it was read in the Yiddish-Teitsch (ancient Yiddish) translation,¹¹⁸ and the books of *Nevi'im* (the Prophets, the second of the three divisions of the Bible) and *Ketuvim* (the Hagiographa, the third division) were accorded a marginal status. Some of the sages of Ashkenaz also interpreted the Talmudic statement, in the name of R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, “keep your children from meditation” (*Bavli, Berachot*, 28b) as referring to the Bible, and as preaching against the study of the Bible.¹¹⁹ The study of the Bible was perceived as distracting the Jew from the study of the Torah and the halakhah, and apt to lead to heresy. In the fifteenth century, Isaac ben Yehudah Abrabanel (1437–1508), in his book *Nachalat Avot* (Venice, 1545), criticized the way in which Ashkenazi Jews studied the Bible, and claimed that “at five years of age the study of Scripture” (*Avot*, 5:22) refers to the time when the study of Bible should begin, and not to its “end”: “It does not say that up to five years he will study the Bible and no further than that,

¹¹⁷ M. Greenberg, *Jewish Bible Exegesis*, p. 30. On the study of the Bible and on the books of the Bible in libraries of Italian Jews during the Renaissance, see: Shifra Baruchson, *Books and Readers: The Reading Interests of Italian Jews at the Close of the Renaissance*, Ramat Gan, 1993, pp. 125–129 (Hebrew). On the reading of the Bible by Marranos in the sixteenth century, see: Claude B. Stuczynk, “Between the Implicit and the Explicit: Books and Reading Techniques among the Maranos in Portugal during the XVI Century,” in Yosef Kaplan and Moshe Sluhovsky (eds.), *Libraries and Book Collections*, Jerusalem, 2006, pp. 161–200 (Hebrew). The Bible was the book most read among the Maranos, generally in its Latin translation, particularly because reading the Bible did not arouse any suspicion of heresy.

¹¹⁸ Iris Parush, *Reading Women*, pp. 67–70.

¹¹⁹ See: Mordechai Breuer, “Keep your Children from Meditation,” in Yitzhak Gilat and E. Stern (eds.) *Epigram to David: A Memorial Book to Rabbi David Ochs*, Ramat Gan, 1978, pp. 242–261 (Hebrew); F. Talmage, “Keep Your Sons from Scripture: The Bible in Medieval Jewish Scholarship and Spirituality”, in C. Thoma & M. Wyschogrod (eds.), *Understanding Scripture: Explorations of Jewish and Christian Traditions of Interpretation*, New York, 1987, pp. 81–101.

as the Ashkenazis do today.”¹²⁰ In the same century, the physician and philosopher R. Isaac Proflat Duran of Perpignan (?-1414) wrote in his book *Ma'asei efod*, that the neglect of the Bible was the cause of the troubles of the Jewish people: “And afterwards in France and Germany when they were lax about studying the Bible and were content merely one hour a week to read one or two chapters of Bible and one translation.” In the seventeenth century, R. Joseph Yuspa Hahn (1570–1637) of Frankfurt wrote in his book *Yosif Omez* (1723) that “in our generations there are several rabbis who have not seen a Bible in their lifetime.”¹²¹ There were even rabbis who compared the study of the Bible with the study of external *chokhmot* (philosophy).

This does mean that in the traditional society in Germany and Poland rabbis did not study the Bible and the commentaries on it. On the contrary, a vast literature of biblical exegesis and Rashi's commentaries was published, in particular those dealing with the Pentateuch, the Book of Psalms and the five scrolls.¹²² The commentators, however, were not interested in the actual text of the Bible, but rather “they dealt with it as a branch of ritual life, or as a tool for preparing the youth for what they regarded as the main subject of study – the *halakhah*.”¹²³

In speaking about the knowledge of the Bible in the traditional Ashkenazi society, one has to distinguish between the traditional study of the Pentateuch in the *cheder*, through the mediation of the post-biblical literature (in particular the commentaries of Rashi and Onkelos) and the reading of the Weekly Portion and the *haftaroth* in the synagogue, on the one hand, and first-hand knowledge of the whole of biblical literature as a result of reading the complete Bible, on the other. A brief period of time was devoted in the *cheder* to the study of the Pentateuch, accompanied by Rashi's commentaries, and

¹²⁰ Simcha Assaf, *Sources for the History of Jewish Education (from the Early Middle Ages to the Haskalah Period)*, vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1954, p. 65 (Hebrew).

¹²¹ The book was written between 1620–1630 and printed in 1893. See: Assaf, ibid., p. 80. Chaim Hillel Ben-Sasson believes that under the influence of the content with Protestant “biblicism,” the Gaon of Vilna (R. Yehudah Loew, 1525–1609) and sages were prompted to read and teach the Bible from beginning to end.”

¹²² Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Jewish Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz*, Jerusalem, 1990, pp. 82–96 (Hebrew). On Rashi's mode of commentary, not defined according to the categories of *peshat* and *derash*, see: Sarah Kamin, *Rashi's Exegetical Categorization in respect to the Distinction between Peshat and Derash*, Jerusalem, 1986, (Hebrew).

¹²³ Elbaum, ibid., p. 93. For a comprehensive article on the marginal status of Bible study and its reasons, see: Rivka Kneller, “The Neglect of Bible Study in Europe in the Middle Ages and the Latter Part of the Modern Era,” in Shaul Meizlisch (ed.), *Mas'at Moshe, A Collection of Philosophy, Religious Thought and Words of Commemoration to R. Moshe Kneller*, Tel Aviv, 1989, pp. 188–227 (Hebrew).

following it, the formal learning of the Bible was discontinued. The rabbinical leadership did their utmost to prevent the reading of the Bible without the mediation of the accepted commentaries.¹²⁴ In his novel, *The Fathers and Sons* (1868), Mendele Mocher Sefarim (Shalom Jacob Abramowitz 1835–1917) tells about an extraordinary Lithuanian teacher and *maskil*, who introduced, among his other innovations, the study of those parts of the books of Prophets, “which were not made into *haftaroth*.¹²⁵ In his autobiographical novel, *Bayamim hahem* (*In Those Days*), Mendele tells how Shlemele – the hero – unlike other boys of his age, began to study Bible “when he was still small.” While the other fathers kept their sons from Bible and were reluctant to teach it for fear of heresy, his father, Reb Chaim, wanted to change the method of study dictated by the rabbis “who are not well-versed in the Bible.” Hence as an experiment he taught his son the entire Bible, including the translations.¹²⁶

It is important, then, when referring to the broad Jewish public, to draw a distinction between familiarity with the formative stories of the Bible (such as the exodus from Egypt and the destruction of the Temple), which are an inseparable part of the historical memory and religious-cultural life, and knowledge of the entire biblical narrative. For example, the *Book of Josippon*, written in 953 (and first translated into Yiddish in 1546), which until the modern era was the major extra-biblical source of Jewish history, left out the biblical period.¹²⁷ The literature of the Haskalah period also tended to leave out biblical history and chose to briefly summarize only the formative events, preferring not to deal with Jewish history from the period of the settlement in Canaan until the destruction of the First Temple.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Iris Parush, “Another Look at the ‘Life of Dead Hebrew’: The Deliberate Ignorance of the Hebrew Language in East European Jewish Society in the Nineteenth Century and its Influence on Hebrew Literature and its Readers,” *Alpayim*, 13, 1996, pp. 65–106 (Hebrew).

¹²⁵ *Haftarah*, the portion from the prophetic books of the Bible recited after the synagogue reading from the Pentateuch on Sabbaths and holidays. Mendele Mocher Sefarim, “Fathers and Sons,” *Complete Works of Mendele Mocher Sefarim*, Tel Aviv, 1963 (11th edition), p. 13 (Hebrew).

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 263.

¹²⁷ From the eighteenth century, the Book of Josippon was primarily disseminated in its Yiddish translation. The historical works published in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries also preferred to concentrate on the Second Temple period. See: Abraham Melamed, “The Perception of Jewish History in Italian Jewish Thought of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries. A Re-Examination”, *Italia Judaica*, 6, 1986, pp. 139–170.

¹²⁸ The first book on the Jewish history in Yiddish, the first part of which was devoted to the period up to the destruction of the First Temple, is a book by Alexander ben

Haskalah and the Bible

How then did it happen that the most ancient book on the Jewish bookshelf became, in the nineteenth century, a means employed by proponents of modernization and ideas of progress? To answer this question, we need to briefly review the history of the biblical revolution in modern Jewish society.

The enormous transformations that occurred in Jewish culture and society in the 120 years between the appearance of the pamphlet *Divrei shalom ve'emet* (Words of Peace and Truth, 1–3, 1782–1785) by Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805)¹²⁹ and the Jewish response to the Babel-Bibel controversy are cogently reflected in the biblical revolution: at the end of the eighteenth century, the first buds of a moderate modern call appeared, a call that became more and more radical in the course of the nineteenth century. The moderate trend was expressed in many articles published on the pages of *Hame'asef*, the Hebrew periodical of the Haskalah in Germany (1783–1811), which dealt with the clarification of biblical verses,¹³⁰ and in several books written by early *maskilim*, for example: the book by the Frankfurt physician and *maskil*, Asher Anshel Worms, *Seyag laTorah* (1766), which dealt with the issue of the Massorah and the precise wording of the Torah¹³¹; Judah Leib Minden's book *Milon le'Eloahah* (1760), a Hebrew-German dictionary of the Bible, and *Divrei shalom ve'emet*, Wessely's pamphlet that heralded the early Haskalah, in which he suggested, among other things, a literal reading of the Bible. At the end of the eighteenth century, such statements were regarded as heresy that opened the gates to the historicization and secularization of the Bible, and the prominent representatives of Orthodoxy pronounced Wessely a heretic, even a deist.¹³²

Moses Ethausen, *Bet Yisrael*, published in Offenbach in 1719. See: K. Shmeruk and I. Bartal, “Contemporary Judaism” by Alexander Moses Ethausen,” in *Jerusalem Studies in the History of the Jews in Eretz Israel*, 4, Jerusalem, 1984, pp. 445–458 (Hebrew).

¹²⁹ See: Edward Breuer, “Naphtali Hertz Wessely and Cultural Dislocations of an Eighteenth Century *maskil*”, in S. Feiner and D. Sorkin (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, London, 2001, pp. 27–47.

¹³⁰ Moshe Pelli, *A Gate to Haskalah: An Annotated Index to Hame'asef, the First Hebrew Journal*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 134–136 (Hebrew).

¹³¹ Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 49–50.

¹³² On this affair, see in Feiner, ibid., pp. 88–104, and Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation 1770–1870*, Cambridge, Mass, 1973., pp. 66–69.

The *maskilim* themselves were divided in their views as to the legitimacy of studying the Bible literally. Wessely wrote:

Know, my readers, that there is a great impediment in our way because we do not pay any heed to the Bible, live according to the Mishnah and the Talmud, and have never veered to the right or the left from their words. So tell me, what have we benefited from the *mishna’ot* and the Talmud that tell us to study and teach our sons Scripture? ... The way the Bible is studied in our time, of what benefit is it? The rabbi does not understand the words of the pupil, nor does the pupil understand his rabbi, for he is incapable of properly translating the verses in a literal manner so the pupil may understand them ... And we have already heard it said that anyone who studies the *Gemara* needs not study the Bible ... that everything is contained in the *Gemara*.¹³³

Isaac (Itzik) Euchel (1756–1804), whom Feiner calls the founder of the Haskalah movement,¹³⁴ described the rabbis as those who “thought of excelling only in the Talmud,” and had forgotten that the source of the Talmud was the *Mishnah* and the Bible.¹³⁵ Some found the legitimization for a return to the Bible in the rabbinical literature. For example, the radical *maskil* Isaac Eisik Kovner (1840–1909) claimed there were statements in the Talmud supposedly forbidding the study of the Bible separately from the study of the literature of the Sages (“They who occupy themselves with the Bible [alone] are but of indifferent merit; with *Mishnah*, are indeed meritorious, and are rewarded for it; with *Gemara* — there can be nothing more meritorious” [*Baba Metzia* 33a] and Rashi interprets it as meaning “that the *Mishnah* and the Talmud are of greater worth than it ...”); Kovner, however, argues that in actual fact the Talmud does not show a negative attitude towards the study of the Bible. He relies on the words of Rabbenu Tam in the *Tosafot* (*Kiddushin* 3a) “that we rely in this matter on what is written in *Sanhedrin* (24a) that all is included in the Bible, the *Mishnah* and the Talmud.”¹³⁶ He refers to the fact that sages throughout the generations have tried to find pretexts for neglecting the Bible. Rabbenu Tam (Jacob Ben Meir, c. 1100–1171), one of the writers of the *tosafot* in France, for example, wrote that the Talmud included the Bible and the *Mishnah*, and hence anyone studying Talmud is fulfilling his obligation of studying those two. Unlike Kovner, Rabbi Saul Lewin-Berlin (1740–1794), the head of the rabbinical court of Frank-

¹³³ N.H. Wessely, *Divrei shalom ve’emet* (Words of Peace and Truth), Warsaw, 1886, p. 60.

¹³⁴ Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 221–237.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 227.

¹³⁶ I.E. Kovner, *Sefer hamatzref*, Jerusalem, 1998 edn., pp. 71–72.

furt on the Oder and a covert deist, believed that the rabbinical world regarded the study of Bible as a worthless activity, and claimed that “Why do we need the Bible, since the Talmud contains the Bible, the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara*, and we have already carried out our obligations by studying the Talmud alone!”¹³⁷ In other words, in his view, the legitimization for the study of the Bible cannot be found in the rabbinical tradition, and this opinion of his is representative of the biblical revolution that heralded the Haskalah: legitimization for the study of the Bible is not found in the Talmud, and the Bible is not studied as an essential background for an understanding of the Talmud. Moreover, 120 years later, Jews – including Orthodox Jews – were already discussing questions such as the time and circumstances in which the Pentateuch was written, or the possibility that the Jewish faith had alien sources. These questions were deliberated not in a small circle of *maskilim*, but in a public forum, on the pages of the press and periodicals. Nineteenth-century Haskalah literature is replete with descriptions of the discovery that orthodox scholars are not well-versed in the Bible, a discovery that was an important element in the *maskilim*’s decision to cut themselves off from the talmudic-rabbinical world. Abraham Baer Gottlober, for example, writes about the *melamed*’s method of teaching: “After I knew how to read in a book, the *melamed* began teaching me the divine Torah, in his own way, namely, in the order of the weekly portions, not in the order of the Torah, and many times we did not manage to complete this weekly portion and began the next, without any order or continuity, so that I never knew the stories of the Bible properly in their right order.”¹³⁸ Yehezkel Kotik (1847–1921) tells in his memoirs about his studies in the *cheder*: “The only subject taught in *cheder* was the Talmud and its commentaries ... We learned *Humash*, but only half of each weekly portion ...” and that “Bible learning was considered heresy, especially among the chasidim ... Only at Motke the *melamed*’s did I learn Joshua, Judges and Samuel. Scared of my father’s reaction, I did not dare look into the Bible at the study house. I had no notion of the significance of the prophets, of the poetry in their language.”¹³⁹ In his autobiography, *In Those Days*, Mendele also wrote about the study of Bible:

¹³⁷ *Hame’asef*, August-September, 1789, p. 369. On him see: Pelli, *Struggle for Change*, pp. 141–165, and Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 163–166; 278–283; 335–341.

¹³⁸ A.B. Gottlober, *Zibhronot u-masa’ot* (Memoirs and Journeys), vol. 1, p. 69.

¹³⁹ *Journey to a Nineteenth-Century Shtetl: The Memoirs of Yekhezkel Kotik*, edited with introduction and notes by David Assaf, Detroit, 2002, pp. 146–147, p. 378.

At that time, did anyone teach their sons Bible other than the first portion in the weekly order? Fathers did not keep their sons only from philosophy, but from Bible as well, fearing it might lead to heresy. This is very perplexing, and despite all the numerous pretexts given for it, none is sufficient to properly explain it ... many will not believe this at all, but this was what happened, and for all our sins, this is the case among many Jews in our own time too – in the past the rabbis were not well-versed in the Bible and now too our talmudic scholars know no Bible ... and is it truly possible to be an excellent scholar of the Talmud and a teacher without one verse from the Holy Scriptures? ... and R. Cohen wanted to digress from the ways of the sages in education and to teach his son, as an experiment, the entire Bible and even the translations ...¹⁴⁰

J.L. Gordon (1830–1892) testifies to the fact that the Bible was read primarily within the four walls of the home from a copy acquired from the English mission:

When I was eight years of age, my father bought me a Bible printed in London in one volume, for which he paid 70 Polish złoty ... it was the first time that books of the Bible printed in London began to come to our country. I was very glad to receive this present and I would become engrossed in its pages upon my return home from the cheder. And in particular I was pleased to read in new books that I had not read in front of my rabbi, even though I was not always able to understand what I read ...¹⁴¹

The *maskil* and author Judah Leib Levin also wrote in his memoirs:

I was never taught Bible or grammar, but only in my early childhood a bit of *Humash*, and after that only *Gemara* ... So that in the fourteenth year of my life I studied Bible myself with the *Metzudot* commentary [the reference is to the commentaries on *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* – *Metzudat David* and *Metzudat Zion*, written in the eighteenth century by David and his son Yehiel Hillel Altschuler from Galicia].¹⁴²

To what extent do these descriptions reflect the reality?

In the Middle Ages, in centers under the influence of the Babylonian *gaonim*, the study of Bible was never discontinued, and in fact occupied an important place in the educational system, while in Germany and France, it declined from the thirteenth century, and at the most, was read and studied in a private setting, between a teacher and his student. We have a variety of evidence about the minor place of Bible study in *yeshivot* (Jewish traditional academies devoted primarily to study of rabbinic literature) in Europe during and after the

¹⁴⁰ Mendele Mocher Sefarim, “Bayamim hahem,” in *Kol Kitvei Mendele Mocher Sefarim*, Tel Aviv, 1963, p. 263.

¹⁴¹ J.L. Gordon, “Al nehar Kevar” (On the Kevar River), in idem, *Collected Works, Prose*, Tel Aviv, 1960, pp. 272 (Hebrew).

¹⁴² Judah Leib Levin, *Zikhronot vehegyonot*, p. 41.

Middle Ages. I. Fishman, for example, writes, that in the *yeshivot* of Central Europe:

The general method adopted was for the teacher to teach a section of the *Sidra* one week, and instead of counting where he left off, to take a part of the next *Sidra* in the following week. By the end of the year, the pupil had completely forgotten the early part. This course might be repeated in second, third or even fourth year. The result was that very few pupils, if any, went through the whole Pentateuch from beginning to end, hence their knowledge of the Pentateuch was, as a rule, very defective, and they learned at most something of the Hebrew language.¹⁴³

In any event, the Bible was not a major subject of study; in many instances, its study was even forbidden. There were talmudic scholars who justified and explained the neglect of the Bible, while others protested the scant study of it. On the other hand, many *yeshivot* introduced the study of Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch instead of studying the Bible itself. In the Lithuanian *yeshivot*, the Bible was studied in the framework of a regular daily lesson on the weekly portion only at the Volozhin *yeshivah* (founded in 1803). However, in the nineteenth century, the study of Bible was generally perceived as leading to heresy, and hence the rabbis adopted strict measures against pupils caught reading the Bible, and always took care to use the commentary of the Sages and later scholars in their sermons, rather than the Bible itself. In only a very few *yeshivot*, was it the custom to read the Bible in one's leisure time.¹⁴⁴

Against this background, it is quite surprising to read the words of the historian Ben Zion Dinur (Dinaburg 1884–1975), Israel's Minister of Education and Culture from 1951–1955, complaining in 1958 about the decline of the Bible's influence in Israeli society: "Love and affection for the Book of Books decrease as the child grows older ... the decline in a knowledge of the Bible is an expression of its declining influence on our lives." And he compares this to what, in his view, was the situation in earlier generations:

Until the most recent generation, the Bible was an organic and important part of life. Each Sabbath the boy would hear the reading of the Torah in the synagogue; at the end of the week or on Friday evening, he would

¹⁴³ Isidore Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education in Central Europe*, London, 1944, p. 95.

¹⁴⁴ See: Mordechai Breuer, *Ohelei Torah (Tents of Torah): The Yeshivah, its Structure and History*, Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 116–130 (Hebrew); idem, "Keep your Children from Meditation," pp. 242–261; "The Bible in the Curriculum of the Yeshivah," in D. Rappel (ed.) *Studies in Bible and Education, Submitted to Prof. Moshe Arend*, Jerusalem, 1996, pp. 223–235; Shaul Stampfer, *The Lithuanian Yeshiva*, Jerusalem, 1995 (Hebrew).

“go over the *Sidra*” [Torah portion] at home before his father or at school before his rabbi, and was accustomed to reading the *haftorah* each and every week ... Hence, knowledge of the book was fed by its function in life, its place in life. The larger the area that the book occupied in our lives, the deeper the pupil’s knowledge of it, so the book became rooted in the soul and interwoven in all of its finest threads. In our days, however, these roots have been severed. The school itself can by no means fill in what is lacking in reality.”¹⁴⁵

Making the Bible a formative book in modern Ashkenazi society was one of the important endeavors of the Haskalah movement, carried out largely under the influence of its status in the Lutheran church and in its Pietist stream.¹⁴⁶ In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, several texts appeared through which Jewish readers could gain a familiarity with the biblical stories. Among these were adaptations to epic poetry in Yiddish based on several books of the Bible: *Yehoshua Buch*, *Shmuel Buch*, *Melachim Buch*, and others,¹⁴⁷ as well as *Tzena ure’ena*, the translation and commentary of the Torah, the *haftaroth*, and the five scrolls into spoken Yiddish, written by Yaakov ben Yitzchak Ashkenazi from Lithuania. In addition, two translations into Yiddish (by Yosef Witzenhoisen, Amsterdam, 1679, 1787 and by Yekutiel Blitz, Amsterdam, 1676–1679) were published.¹⁴⁸ However, the return of the complete Bible to the Jewish reader was, as we noted, part of the ideology of the Haskalah in both the West and the East; it strongly advocated changing the status of the Bible and fostering the ability to read it in Hebrew (and hence the need to learn Hebrew) and was active in many spheres in order to bring about this change. As part of this struggle, *maskilic* rhetoric drew a sharper image of the traditional society – in which all the *maskilim* had been raised – as a society that totally neglected the study of Bible, and stressed the distinction between the old ways of learning and the new.

The revolution was not expressed in the number of interpretive books on the Bible nor in the use of biblical motifs in *midrashic* literature or

¹⁴⁵ Ben Zion Dinur, *Values and Ways: Problems in Israeli Education and Culture*, Tel Aviv, 1958, pp. 98–99 (Hebrew).

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter Six.

¹⁴⁷ Chone Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature: Aspects of its History*, Tel Aviv, 1978, pp. 105–146 (Hebrew); idem, *Yiddish Biblical Plays, 1697–1750*, Jerusalem, 1979 (Hebrew); Chava Turiansky, “Old-Yiddish Biblical Epics on the Book of Joshua,” *Tarbiz*, 51, vol. 4 (1981–1982), pp. 590–632.

¹⁴⁸ Marion J. Aptroot, *Bible Translation as Cultural Reform: The Amsterdam Yiddish Bibles (1678–1679)*, Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford, 1989. On earlier translations into Yiddish, see: “Bibelübersetzungen,” in *Jüdisches Lexikon*, Berlin, 1927, Bd. I, pp. 1013–1014. On translations into other “Jewish languages”, see: *Pe’amim: Studies in Oriental Jewry*, 83, Spring 2000 (Hebrew).

belles letters, nor in adaptations of the books of the Bible, but primarily in the nature of the use of the Bible and the way it was understood. The nineteenth century was characterized, more than anything else, by the fact that the *midrash* and the traditional commentary were no longer called upon to mediate in the reading of the Bible and that it was related to as a book of ethics as well as one of poetry and beauty.¹⁴⁹

The translation of the Pentateuch (the *Bi'ur*) by Mendelssohn and his disciples into German, transliterated into Hebrew letters, first printed in Berlin in 1783 under the title *Netivot hashalom*,¹⁵⁰ was the harbinger of the revolution. The poet Abraham Dov Baer Hacohen/Lebinsohn (Adam Hacohen, 1794–1878) wrote that the *Bi'ur* was “eyes to the blind/lit up the dawn, illuminated the path of the scholar/and proved that man’s spirit rises to the heights.”¹⁵¹ Heinrich Graetz

¹⁴⁹ The translation of the Book of Psalms into German by Mendelssohn (who also translated the Pentateuch and the Song of Songs) was intended to prove to the German literary elite that Hebrew was capable of giving expression to poetry as well. See: Alexander Altman, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*, London, 1973, p. 88; Shimon Ravidowitz, “Translation of the Book of Psalms by M. Mendelssohn,” in Naphtali Herz Torczyner, et al. (eds.), *The Klausner Book*, Tel Aviv, 1937, p. 285 (Hebrew); Klaus-Werner Segreff, *Moses Mendelssohn und die Aufklärungssästhetik im 18. Jahrhundert*, Bonn, 1984, pp. 30–33. The first one to deal with the poetics of the Bible was Shlomo Levisohn (1789–1821) in his book *Melitzat Yeshurun* (Vienna, 1816). See: Tova Cohen, “*Melitzat Yeshurun*” by Shlomo Levisohn: *The Work and its Author*, Ramat Gan, 1988 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁰ Parts of this translation and articles about it were printed in *Hame'asef*, sometimes with a low-keyed criticism of it. See: Shmuel Wenses, “Awake my People”: *Hebrew Literature in the Age of Modernization*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 221–223 (Hebrew).

¹⁵¹ Adam Hacohen, “Sun, Moon and Star” in *Shirei sfat kodesh* (Poems in the Holy Tongue), I, Vilna, 1861, 2nd edition, p. 134 (Hebrew). Adam Hacohen published, together with Isaak Eizik ben Yaakov, the *Bi'ur* in Vilna (1849–1853), which was a great success. In the story “Enemy of the Jews in the City of Gralib,” by M. D. Brandstetter, the district governor guides the boy Shlomo into the world of Haskalah and tells him: “Read the Hebrew books by the new Jewish scholars and the Bible ... Learn it with its German translation. And all of this you will find in the book of the divine Torah with a commentary by Moses ben Menahem, of blessed memory. And diligently peruse his commentary and translation, and you will be enlightened by his words sweeter than honey.” (M. D. Brandstetter, *Stories*, B.A. Feingold’s edition, Jerusalem, 1974, p. 134 (Hebrew). Mendele Mocher Sefarim wrote in *Hashachar* (6, 1875), expressing a positive opinion of the *Bi'ur* in the spirit of Heine’s words: “He [Luther] began to translate the Holy Scriptures in German for all of the people so that they might read and understand the Bible and would no longer blindly follow those who mislead them. The same occurred in relation to the Holy Scriptures and the language [Hebrew] in the case of the Jews. In those days, many distorted biblical interpretations and sermons were current, which misconstrued the writings and confused the people, causing them much trouble and distress...and from the time of the *maskilim*, some began purifying God’s Torah, clarifying and expounding on it, and restored their former glory to the Torah, the language and the wisdom.” In contrast, the editor, Peretz Smolenskin, whose criticism of Mendelssohn is well-known, added his own words of

may have written the most enthusiastic description of the influence of the *Bi’ur*, in the popular edition of his historical work, at the end of the 1880s:

Youthful students of the Talmud seized upon the German translation behind the backs of their masters, who deprecated the new influence, and in secret learned at once the most elementary and the most sublime lessons – the German language and the philosophy of religion, Hebrew grammar and poetry. A new view of the world was opened to them. The Hebrew commentary served as a guide to a proper understanding of the translation. As if touched by a magic wand, the Talmud students, fossils of the musty schoolhouses, were transfigured, and upon the wings of the intellect they soared above the gloomy present, and took their flight heavenwards.¹⁵²

This translation, and its accompanying commentary, was not intended only as a counterweight to translations of the Torah into European languages, but also to serve as a platform for reforming Jewish culture, and it was perceived as one of the prerequisites for realizing the project of Enlightenment.¹⁵³

The seventeen editions of the *Bi’ur*, which were published by the end of the nineteenth century,¹⁵⁴ as well as translations of the other books of the Bible – a collective undertaking in which fifteen *maskilim* participated and which was first printed in its entirety in Prague (1833–1837)¹⁵⁵ – played an important role in the process of acculturation of German Jewry, but it also was instrumental in the revival of Hebrew culture, particularly in Eastern Europe,¹⁵⁶ despite the fact that

reservation to the article, claiming that Mendelssohn in his *Bi’ur* had turned the Torah into an overlapping excess of the German language”. On the history of the *Bi’ur*, its character and reception, see the pioneering, detailed book: Peretz Sandler, *Mendelssohn’s Edition of the Pentateuch*, Jerusalem, 1940 (new edition, 1984) (Hebrew), p. 222–223.

¹⁵² Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 5, Philadelphia, 1949, pp. 334–335.

¹⁵³ On the *Bi’ur* and its reception, see: Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 127–134; Mordechai Eliav, *Jewish Education in Germany during the Haskalah and the Emancipation*, Jerusalem, 1961, pp. 29–39 (Hebrew); Alexander Altmann, Moses Mendelssohn, pp. 368–383; Edward Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Jews, Germans, and the Eighteenth Century Study of the Scripture*, Cambridge, Mass., 1996; David Jan Sorkin, *Moses Mendelssohn*, London, 1996, pp. 53–89; Steven M. Lowenstein, “The Readership of Mendelssohn’s Bible Translation”, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 52, 1982, pp. 179–214.

¹⁵⁴ Among the editions: Vienna, 1845; Prague, 1833–1837; Warsaw, 1888. From 1838, the translation appeared in German gothic letters and without the Hebrew original. See: Sandler, *Mendelssohn’s Edition of the Pentateuch*.

¹⁵⁵ Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 265–267.

¹⁵⁶ Nils Römer, *Tradition und Akkulturation: Zum Sprachwandel der Juden in Deutschland zur Zeit der Haskalah*, Münster / New York, 1995, p. 176. Mordecai Aaron Guenzburg, for example, stated that his reading of the translation of Eccle-

the *Bi'ur* was conservative and adhered to the tradition. The reason for its influence was the fact that the *Bi'ur*, in contrast to the Sages and to Rashi, concentrated on the literal biblical text and stressed the moral and aesthetic aspects of the Bible. This was enough to lead some of the Orthodox to consider it heretic and assimilatory.¹⁵⁷ Rabbi Shlomo ben Yosef Aaron Kluger (1786–1869), rabbi of the Brody community from 1820, author of *Ha'alef lecha Shlomo*, stated that: “The Bible leads to a German translation, and the German translation leads to apostasy.”¹⁵⁸ The prospectus “*Alim leterufa*,” signed by Mendelssohn’s collaborator, Solomon Dubnow (1738–1813), which described the translation to prospective subscribers as an innovation that would contribute to the study of the state language and to greater familiarity with the surrounding (German) culture – as did the translation of the Bible (*tafsir*) by Saadia Gaon (882–942) – aroused a sharp counter-reaction. Nonetheless, the rabbis did not ban the *Bi'ur*, and some of them even purchased it. The major thrust of the rabbi’s opposition was directed at the commentary interlaced with the translation, which was not in keeping with the traditional commentary and aroused a suspicion of heresy.

It is not surprising therefore that the translation was read secretly at night. In his novel *The Fathers and Sons*, Mendele Mocher Sefarim writes about the *maskilic* teachers “who placed obstacles in the way of their pupils studying Torah, by teaching them the Bible with a commentary.”¹⁵⁹ When the parents of a son “who has strayed from the traditional path” find a copy of the Book of Genesis with the *Bi'ur* in his library, hidden there together with romantic novels, they throw the book down,

siastes led to a radical shift in his intellectual life (M. A. Ginzburg, *Avi'ezер*, Vilna, 1864, p. 117). The Jewish reader also had the option of reading the Bible in its translations into the local languages. The accepted and sanctified translation in the Polish Catholic church was that by the priest Jakob Wujeck in 1599. On attempts by Jews in the nineteenth century to translate the Bible into Polish, see: Alexander Guterman, “The First Attempts by Jews to Translate the Bible (in the Nineteenth Century),” in A. Guterman, *Chapters in the History of Modern Polish Jewry*, Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 101–111 (Hebrew).

¹⁵⁷ On the Orthodox rabbis’ reasoning and the fact that they were not all opposed to the *Bi'ur*, see: Meir Hildesheimer, “Moses Mendelssohn in Nineteenth-Century Rabbinical Literature”, in *American Academy for Jewish Research. Proceedings*, vol. 55, Jerusalem and New York, 1988, pp. 79–133. It is interesting to compare the position of the rabbis with the opposition of the Sages to the translation of the Torah into Greek. See: Ithamar Gruenwald, “Polemical Attitudes towards the Septuagint,” *Te'uda, IV: Studies in Judaica*, Tel Aviv, 1986, pp. 65–78 (Hebrew). See also a comprehensive study of the topic: Giuseppe Veltri, *Eine Tora für den König Talmai: Untersuchungen zum Übersetzungsverständnis in der jüdisch-hellenistischen und rabbinischen Literatur*, Tübingen.

¹⁵⁸ In Parush, “Another Look at the ‘Life of Dead Hebrew’,” p. 90.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

and as a result: “the floor of the room became enraged, and the frame of the doorway shuddered with the sound of its fall.”¹⁶⁰ Not only the orthodox, but even a nationalist *maskil* like Smolenskin, Mendelssohn’s harsh critic, believed the Jewish reader had no need of a translation, for he could read the Bible in the holy tongue, and the *Bi’ur*, in his view, served only to cause Jews to forget the Hebrew language.¹⁶¹

It turned out, however, that it was impossible to halt the penetration of the new attitude towards the Bible into Jewish culture. Jacob Katz writes about this:

Thus, by studying the Bible, the student was not automatically initiated into Oral Law as had been the case while the old system of education prevailed. Enlightened educators took, to put it mildly, a rather selective attitude toward talmudic tradition. By using the new commentary they were relieved from paying attention to many details of the tradition they preferred to ignore.¹⁶²

After the *Bi’ur*, additional translations of the Pentateuch and the entire Bible into German and other languages appeared, in the spirit of the Reform movement or of Orthodoxy.¹⁶³ A translation of the Bible by the Mincha Chadashah (New Offering) publishing house in Vienna (1792–1806) had a considerable impact on the German-reading Jewish public in Eastern Europe. The translation was by the *maskil*, Meir Obernik (1764–1805) in collaboration with Shmuel Detmold. They republished the Pentateuch in Mendelssohn’s translation but translated the other books of the Bible themselves.¹⁶⁴ In the course of 150 years after the appearance of the *Bi’ur*, about ten translations into German by Jewish translators were published.¹⁶⁵ Nearly every Reform scholar

¹⁶⁰ Mendele Mocher Sefarim, *The Fathers and Sons*, pp. 43–44.

¹⁶¹ Smolenskin, “Et lata’at,” in *Ketavim*, vol. 2, p. 84.

¹⁶² Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, pp. 129–130. And see: Mordechai Eliav, *Jewish Education in Germany in the Period of Enlightenment and Emancipation*, Jerusalem, 1960 (Hebrew). I.E. Kovner wrote in 1868 that until the appearance of the *Bi’ur*, the Holy Scriptures were replete with fallacious commentary, and that the *Bi’ur* made them into the book of “the history of the Jewish people in ancient times...from that time onward, the Holy Scriptures regained their vitality like all books of history. Many of the scholars of the nations are also now referring to them and deleting all the false and inconsequential material.” *Sefer hamatzref*, pp. 91–92.

¹⁶³ Michael A. Meyer, “Self Understanding as Jews,” in idem (ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 2, *Emancipation and Acculturation 1780–1871*, New York, 1997; Meyer Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 3, New York, 1960 edn., pp. 546–556. A translation of the Bible into French by Shmuel Cohen (1796–1862) was published in Paris in 1831–1839.

¹⁶⁴ See Ruben Fahn, *Pirkey Haskala II*, Stanislōw, 1937, pp. 168–169.

¹⁶⁵ Waxman, ibid., p. 548. From 1817–1836 a translation of the Pentateuch (*Das sind die fünf Bücher Moses*) by Joseph Johlson (1777–1851) of Frankfurt, appeared, as well as an 1838 translation by Yom Tov Lipmann (Leopold) Zunz (1794–1886),

saw fit to translate the Bible or some of its books.¹⁶⁶ In 1861, in reaction to the appearance of a biblical translation in the spirit of the Reform, an Orthodox Bible Institute (*Orthodoxe Israelitische Bibelanstalt*) was established, after stirring up much internal debate. Its purpose was to disseminate inexpensive Bibles with a German translation “in the spirit of God-fearing Jews” (*gottesfürchtiger deutscher Übersetzung*). In 1865, a translation based on the traditional commentary was published, and then printed in seven editions between 1873–1913; from 1867–1878 a translation of the Pentateuch (*Der Pentateuch übersetzt und erklärt*) by Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) was published, and later other translations appeared.¹⁶⁷ In 1899 the translation of J. Wohlgemuth and I. Bleichrode came out.

A similar activity, albeit on a smaller scale, was taking place in Eastern Europe, in translations of the Bible into Yiddish.¹⁶⁸ Translations into Yiddish of the complete Bible appeared in Amsterdam in the 1670s, and were, according to Chone Shmeruk, “A faithful testimony to the unceasing effort to maintain the strong link of Yiddish speakers to the Bible in keeping with the spiritual changes and the development of the language and its expressive capacity.”¹⁶⁹ These translations, however, soon became

in which the translation was in German letters without the Hebrew original, and a popular edition – *Deutsche Volks- und Schul-Bibel für israeliten* (Altona, 1837) by Ludwig Philippson, (1811–1889), the liberal rabbi of Hamburg and the editor of the *AZdj* from 1837, which was published in the sixties, distributed at a low price in about 25,000 copies, and very critically received by the Orthodox. In addition, translations into German of separate books of the Bible and various commentaries were published, such as the book by Arnold B. Ehrlich (1848–1919) *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel*, Leipzig, 1908–1914. See: Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, New Haven, Conn., 1996, pp. 103–111. See also: S. Billigheimer, “On Jewish Translations of the Bible in Germany, in *Abra-Nahrain*, Luvaïn, 1968, pp. 1–34.

¹⁶⁶ On the translations by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, see: Maren Ruth Niehoff, “The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible within Jewish-German Tradition”, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 44, 1993, pp. 258–279; Abigail E. Gullman, “Between Religion and Culture: Mendelssohn, Buber, Rosenzweig and the Enterprise of Biblical Translation in Context,” in Frederick W. Knobloch (ed.) *Biblical Translation in Context*, Bethesda, MD, 2002, pp. 93–144; M. Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, pp. 103–111. And see in Chapter 11. Illustrated books of the Bible were also published, for example: Bernhard Kuttner, *Biblische Lebensbilder von Adam bis Mose*, Frankfurt am Main, 1914.

¹⁶⁷ M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 185.

¹⁶⁸ On adaptations of the Bible into Yiddish, see: Chone Shmeruk, *Biblical Plays in Yiddish 1697–1750*, Jerusalem, 1979 (Hebrew).

¹⁶⁹ C. Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature in Poland*, pp. 165–183, and idem, *Yiddish Literature: Chapters on its History*, Tel Aviv, 1978, pp. 105–146 (Hebrew). At the Chernowitz conference for Yiddish (1908), the Yiddish writer Shalom Asch (1880–1957) stated that a modern translation of the Bible was needed so that Yiddish could serve as a “national language” (see: Shmeruk, *Yiddish Literature*, p. 106).

obsolete, so that a new translation was required. Menachem Mendel Lefin’s translation was intended to disseminate the Haskalah’s message among East European Jewry¹⁷⁰ (during his lifetime, only his translation of Proverbs [Tarnopol, 1814] appeared in print, and after his death his translation and commentary of Ecclesiastes [Odessa, 1873]). The modern complete translation of the Bible into Yiddish by Yehoash (Shlomo Blumgarten, 1872–1927) was published in New York in 1925. A Bible in Russian translation was also regarded by the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia as an important vehicle for disseminating the Russian language among the Jews. But such a translation was delayed because the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church refused to permit the publication of any version other than its own, which was published in 1868–1869, nor did it permit any omissions or changes in it.¹⁷¹ Hence, although the Pentateuch was translated into Russian in 1862 by the *maskil* Arye Leon Mandelstam (1819–1899), who was the government-appointed supervisor of the network of state schools for Jewish children from 1846–1847, its publication was approved only ten years later, on condition that the Hebrew version be appended to it. Lilienblum proposed that the translation be disseminated among Jewish youth “to divert them from the benighted studies in which they engage in the small towns.”¹⁷²

One can learn about the young East European Jewish reader’s knowledge of the Bible from the initiative taken by Simcha Alter Gutmann (S. Ben-Zion, 1870–1932), Chaim Nachman Bialik (1873–1934) and Y.H.

¹⁷⁰ On Lefin, see: Nancy B. Sinkoff, *Tradition and Transition: Mendel Lefin of Satanow and the Beginnings of the Jewish Enlightenment in Eastern Europe 1749–1862*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1996; Abraham Baer Gottlober writes that Lefin’s aim in his translations was to make Yiddish a literary language and that his translations of Proverbs and Psalms were like “a scent of incense.” See: Gottlober, *Memoirs and Journeys*, vol. 1, pp. 250–252. R. Abraham Cohen (1806–1848) of Lvov also published a book entitled *Biblische Geschichte*, which was an abridged version of the biblical stories.

¹⁷¹ See: Yehuda Slutsky, *The Jewish-Russian Press in the Nineteenth Century*, Jerusalem, 1970, pp. 61–62, 81–83 (Hebrew).

¹⁷² *Igrot M.L. Lilienblum*, p. 133. In schools founded in Czarist Russia during the “government-sponsored Haskalah” (as part of the Czarist government’s attempt to encourage the integration of Jews into Russian culture), in the 1840s and 1850s, the Hebrew Bible – not the Talmud – was included in the curriculum. See: Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 2002, p. 36. On translation of the Bible from old Slavonic to modern Russian, see: Stephen K. Batalden, “The BFBS Petersburg Agency and Russian Biblical Translation 1856–1875,” in Batalden et al., *Sowing the Word*, pp. 169–196. On English translations in the United States, see: B.J. Bamberger, “American Jewish Translations of the Bible,” *Jewish Book Annual*, 15, 1957–1958, pp. 33–40; J.D. Sarna and N.M. Sarna, “Jewish Bible Scholarship and Translations in the United States,” in E.S. Everichs (ed.), *The Bible and Bibles in America*, Atlanta, Ga., 1988, pp. 83–116.

Ravnitzky (1859–1944). In 1904, the three men published, at the Moriah publishing house in Odessa, the most popular Hebrew adaptation of *Bible Stories for Children* (by 1940, the book had been printed in 29 editions, and it was printed several times more in the following years). The writers' preface attests to the gap they believed existed between the call "to return to the Bible" and its actual status in the East European school system. On the one hand, they wrote, their book was intended for the "ultra-Orthodox" pupils, age seven and older, to serve them as a "corridor" to the Holy Scriptures, and on the other hand, it was intended for pupils in the "secular" schools – "those poor fellows who while in school do not even reach as far as the 'parlor' itself". For both these types of pupils, the adapted Bible stories were a "kind of abridged Bible." It is important to note that the adaptors chose to rewrite only the narrative layer of the Bible, which they described as "a complete national creation." They shortened the stories and divided each narrative unit into chapters and sub-chapters.

In the nineteenth century, the Bible was also an important source for catechisms¹⁷³ and a doctrine of ethics for both children and adults. Adapters and commentators tried to render it consistent with the various world-views.¹⁷⁴ The stories of the Bible were, to a great extent, the counterpart of the stories from Greek mythology in western culture, and its moral dicta were a counterpart to those in Greek philosophy. We should point out, however, that the Bible was taught in modern Jewish schools in Germany not in order to teach ancient Jewish history, but as a chapter in the teaching of religion as a system of dogmas, moral commandments and exempla, and the "correct" Judaism was presented as "the pure religion of Moses and the prophecy" (*Die Bahn der reinen mosaisch-prophetischen Religion*).¹⁷⁵ The Bible, then, was perceived mainly as a source of religious dogmas – belief in God and in divine providence – and as a source of moral and humanistic education of a universal nature. From the early twentieth century, the Bible was taught in modern Hebrew schools in Eastern Europe (at first in the reformed *cheder*) as a separate subject with an emphasis on the geography of Palestine as a basis for a better understanding of it.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Jacob J. Petuchowski, "Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of Emancipation", in Alexander Altmann (ed.), *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, Cambridge, Mass., 1964, pp. 47–64.

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, C. G. Montefiore, *The Bible for Home Reading*, London, 1896. On the book, see in Chapter Two.

¹⁷⁵ See: Shmuel Feiner, "Educational Agendas and Social Tales: Jüdische Freischule in Berlin, 1778–1825," *Zion*, 60 (4), 1995, p. 422 (Hebrew).

¹⁷⁶ Zvi Scharfstein, *The Jewish Primary School*, New York, 1951 (Hebrew).

Adaptations for the young reader appeared under the influence of adaptations of the Bible and biblical stories in Christian pictures like that by Christoph Heinrich Kratzenstein,¹⁷⁷ which became very popular, and many other books.¹⁷⁸ The first adaptations in Hebrew were: *Avtalyon* (Berlin, 1790) by Aaron Wolfsohn-Halle, and *Sefer nahar m'eden, kolel sippur hakorot asher karu livnei Israel ...* (Breslau, 1837) by David Zamosc (based on Johann Hübner's (1668–1731)¹⁷⁹ popular adaptation, which was printed in scores of editions, and which preached moralistic messages via the biblical stories).¹⁸⁰ The Hebrew adaptations of Bible

¹⁷⁷ Christoph Heinrich Kratzenstein, *Kinder und Bilder-Bibel Oder Auszug der biblischen Historien* (Erfurt, 1737).

¹⁷⁸ For example, Johann Jacob Hass, *Biblische Erzählungen für die Jugend. Altes und Neues Testament*, Zürich, 1774; Rudolf Christoph Lossius, *Die ältesten Geschichten der Bibel für Kinder in Erzählungen auf Spaziergängen*, Erfurt, 1784, and others. See: Anne Zisenwine, *Bequeathing the Reformation: The Scripture for English Children 1529–1660*, Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2001; Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present*, New Haven, Conn., 1996; Klaus Doderer (Hrsg.), *Lexikon der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Band I, Basel, 1977 (2nd edn.), pp. 149–154. The adaptations of the Bible for children also became an arena in the *Kulturkampf*. As an example, the competing biblical adaptations in English by William Godwin (with a deist influence), *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges, and Kings ...*, Phil., 1802, and of the writer and educator, Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810), *An Abridgement of Scripture History*, London, 1805, which was distributed in the eighty years after its publication in about 750,000 copies. See: Donelle Ruwe, “Guarding the British Bible from Rousseau: Sarah Trimmer, William Godwin and the Pedagogical Periodical,” *Children’s Literature*, 29, 2001, pp. 1–17. The French adaptation of biblical stories by Nicolas Fontains, published in 1670, was printed in innumerable editions.

¹⁷⁹ Johann Hübner, *Zweymahl zwey und fünfzig Auserlesene Biblische Historien, aus den Alten und Neuen Testament, der Jugend zum Besten abgefasset*, Leipzig, 1714.

¹⁸⁰ See: Christine Reents, *Die Bibel als Schul- und Hausbuch für Kinder*, Göttingen, 1984; Theodor Brüggemann, *Handbuch zur Kinder und Jugendliteratur von 1570 bis 1750*, Stuttgart, 1989, pp. 231–259. On the ways of adapting the biblical source and its German adaptation and the developments that occurred in them, see: Ran HaCohen, *Bible Stories for Jewish Children during the Haskalah in Germany: The Bible, History and Models of German Children’s Literature*, M.A. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1994 (Hebrew), as well as idem, in Annegret Volpel and Zohar Shavit, *Deutsch-jüdische Kinder- und Jugendliteratur: Ein Literaturgeschichtlicher Grundriss*, Stuttgart, 2002, pp. 72–84. See, for example, *Der Kinder-Pentateuch, Vollständiger Text mit leichtfasslichem Kommentar ...*, von C.P. Bergman und Rabinowitsch, Berditschew, 1913; *Die Geschichten der Bibel der jüdischen Jugend neu erzählt von Joachim Prinz, mit vielen Bildern von Heinz Wallenburg*, Berlin, 1934. Special adaptations for women also appeared over time. See: Bernhard Jacobsohn, *Biblische Frauengestalten. – Charakterschilderung für die reifere weibliche Jugend*, Leipzig, 1896. Zamosc also adapted into Hebrew the book by the French educator, Madame Stéphanie Félicité Genlis, *Les Bergères de Midian, ou La Jeunesse de Moïse. Poème en Prose en Six Chants*, Paris, 1812, under the title *Re’ut Midian o yaldut Moshe*, Breslau, 1843. See Zohar Shavit, *Ha’aretz* literary supplement, 22.4.2003.

stories were also moralistic in nature, but since they were re-adaptations, they clearly departed from tradition. Although the books in Hebrew did not have large circulations like the German biblical adaptations, they did pave the way for a new reading of the Bible. At the same time, the Bible served as an inspiration for poetry and plays (as it had in the past only in Jewish-Hellenist literature), among them: N. H. Wessely's epic on the life of Moses, *Shirei tif'eret* (Songs of Splendor) (Berlin, 1791–1802), and the plays: Joseph Ha-Efrati's *Meluchat Shaul* (Saul's Kingdom) (Vienna, 1794); Moshe Neymann's (1769–1831) *Bat Yiftach* (Daughter of Yiftach) (Vienna, 1805), Shalom Yaakov Hacohen's (1773–1845) *Hatzalah Avraham be'Ur Kasdim, mizmorim chadashim michayei David uma'asei Navot haYizraeli* (1807) (The Rescue of Abraham in Ur Of the Chaldees, New Melodies from the life of David ...), and others.¹⁸¹

In his introduction to *Shirei tif'eret*, Wessley apologetically noted that although his biblical epic might be regarded as profaning the sanctity of the Bible, it had a religious mission.¹⁸² These literary works, while offering an alternative text to the Bible, did not challenge or try to undermine the biblical story itself.¹⁸³ Haskalah literature and revival literature glorified and idealized the biblical past; in their view, it was “self-evident history.”

¹⁸¹ About 30 biblical plays were published between 1794–1876. See: Noah H. Rosenblum, *The Exodus Epos of the Enlightenment and Exegesis: Thought and Exegesis in Wessely's "Songs of Splendor"*, Jerusalem, 1983 (Hebrew); Chaim Shoham, *In the Shadow of the Berlin Haskalah*, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 42–48 (Hebrew); Naomi Zohar, *In a New Light: Studies in the Hebrew Biblical Play of the Haskalah Period*, Ramat Gan, 2001 (Hebrew); Shmuel Werses, “The French Revolution as Reflected in Hebrew Literature”; idem, *Awake my People: Hebrew Literature in the Age of Modernization*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 125–127 (Hebrew). See also: Chone Shmeruk, *Biblical Plays in Yiddish 1697–1750* (edited from manuscripts and printers versions, with an introduction, Jerusalem, 1979). Epic poetry in Yiddish and biblical plays in Yiddish and Hebrew used the *midrashic* tradition, adapted to new literary forms under the influence of contemporary European literature, in order to impart messages in the spirit of the time. For this purpose, scenes from the Bible were expanded, and dialogues and explanations were added. On biblical adaptations in *Hame'asef*, see: Moshe Pelli, *A Gate to Haskalah*, p. 158. On this matter, see also in Chapter 16.

¹⁸² Shoham, *In the Shadow of the Berlin Haskalah*, pp. 44–45. See also: Tovah Cohen, “Simultaneous Reading,” in Shoham, *ibid.*

¹⁸³ On early adaptations of biblical motifs, see: S. Shirman, “A Crowd Celebrates” An Ancient Hebrew Play on Isaac's Blessing,” in idem, *Studies in the History of Hebrew Poetry and Drama*, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1979, pp. 139–160 (Hebrew), and “The Plays of Moses Chaim Luzzatto,” *ibid.*, pp. 161–175. The Jewish historical novel in Germany refrained from dealing with biblical subjects and at the most dealt with the period from the Return to Zion. See: Nitsa Ben-Ari, *Romance with the Past*, Tel Aviv/Jerusalem, 1997 (Hebrew).

Needless to say, for the revival literature, the Bible was an important source of inspiration.¹⁸⁴ Here we will only mention the abridged biblical books by the writer A.Z. Rabinovitz (Azar, 1845–1945) in his book *History of Hebrew Literature*, published by C.N. Bialik and S. Barishkin’s Moriah press in Odessa in 1906. M.J. Berdyczewski harshly criticized the book, claiming that Rabinovitz was too faithful to the original and failed to distinguish between the history of literature and the history of religion.¹⁸⁵

Rabinovitz himself wrote in the introduction to the book:

As far as the history of the books of the Bible, our holiest of holy, is concerned, although I used the newest books of biblical criticism of Jews and non-Jews, I was not inclined to accept them, since I believe they are destroying our citadel with their vain speculations. The Bible is also today the source of our life and it is impossible to belittle it.

I did, however, accept the truly scientific conclusions, as we have been commanded, to “accept the truth from those who speak it,” and they do not impair the sanctity of the Bible nor do they demean its value, but rather they clarify it correctly in a rational manner.

Rabinovitz adopted Gunkel’s method of “form criticism,” namely, the view that many parts of Genesis were taken from folk tales and legends,¹⁸⁶ as well as the claim that the laws in the Mosaic code “were based largely on customs adopted by the people before the giving of the Torah.”¹⁸⁷ However, at the same time, he wrote that the Pentateuch is “the words of the living God,” handed down “at Sinai and coming from the mouth of the Almighty.”¹⁸⁸

The Return to the Hebrew Bible in Eastern Europe

Although a small circle of *maskilim* in Eastern Europe did have access to the new translations into German, the East European Haskalah, as a cultural, educational movement urgently needed a Hebrew Bible. The printing of books of the Bible and a knowledge of Hebrew were

¹⁸⁴ Gershon Shaked, *The Hebrew Historical Drama in the Twentieth Century*, Jerusalem, 1970 (Hebrew). On the Bible in modern Hebrew poetry, see: Ruth Kartun-Blum, *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry*, Cincinnati/Ohio, 1999.

¹⁸⁵ M.J. Berdyczewski, “Divrei bikoret,” in *Kitvei M.J. Bin-Gorion (Berdyczewski), Ma’amarim*, Tel Aviv, 1951, pp. 347–348.

¹⁸⁶ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Urgeschichte und die Patriarchen (Das Erste Buch Mosis)*, Göttingen, 1922 (5th edn.).

¹⁸⁷ A.Z. Rabinovitz, *History of Hebrew Literature*, Odessa, 1906, p. 6. (Hebrew).

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

necessary for the study of the Bible. Wessely asked: “Of what benefit will this study bring to our brethren in Germany and Poland, even if they were to study the Bible for twenty years, as long as their teachers are unable to translate it properly for their students ... ”¹⁸⁹

Until now, we have seen that in general the call for a return to the Bible did not mean a return to the Hebrew Bible, namely in Hebrew and not in translation. In Eastern Europe the call for a return to the Hebrew original was an inseparable part of the national awakening. In Czarist Russia, this call came forth from Isaac Baer Levinsohn (Ribal, 1788–1860), the most important member of the group of *maskilim* in Russia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In his book, *Te’udah beYisrael* (A Testimony in Israel, 1828), he described the knowledge of Bible “in its order” – Torah, Nevi’im and Ketuvim – among the sages and the schools during the Second Temple period as a role model for his own generation as to how the Bible should be studied in Hebrew, in its literal meaning.¹⁹⁰ And he added: “And how will anyone who is called a Hebrew not feel ashamed if he lacks any knowledge of the Hebrew tongue!” It is a disgrace, he wrote, that the Christian scholars are more fluent in Hebrew and in the Holy Scriptures than the Jewish scholars in the present generation. Levinsohn left contradictory evidence, which shows that he wanted to emphasize that Jews were well-versed in the Bible. In his book, *Efes damim* (Warsaw, 1837), he wrote that even uneducated Jews in Lithuania and Poland were knowledgeable about many books of the Bible. In another of his books, *Achiya hashiloni hachozeh* (Leipzig, 1839), he wrote that unlike the children of Christians, Jewish children study until the age of 15 and are “very fluent in the Bible which they have studied themselves *without a rabbi or teacher*” [our emphasis], and in his book *Bet Yehudah* (Warsaw, 1901, 4th printing) he wrote that the Jews can take pride in the fact that they, young and old, man and woman, “gather together from time to time on the Sabbath” and read from the Bible.¹⁹¹ *Dor vedorshav*, the autobiography of Samuel Joseph Fuenn (1818–1890), the teacher, writer, journalist (editor of the weekly and afterwards the Hebrew journal *Hacarmel* from 1859–1874¹⁹²), and a key figure in the Haskalah movement in Vilna and all of Russia, attests to the status of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁹⁰ I. B. Levinsohn, *Te’udah beYisrael*, frontispiece, Jerusalem edition, 1977, p. 1–15.

¹⁹¹ See: Menahem Zohari, *The National Conception of Isaac Baer Levinsohn*, Jerusalem, 2002 (Hebrew).

¹⁹² The journal existed until 1880.

Bible study in the bet midrash.¹⁹³ Fuenn, who compared the state of Bible study in the bet midrash to Bible study in Germany, where “they looked upon Bible study as a scientific study,” relates that he read the Bible secretly in the bet midrash for fear that someone might reveal his secret to the teacher: “I sat there hidden from all eyes before and after the prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures in a whisper, until the head of the bet midrash awakened ... to establish a society for the education of boys in Bible study in this house.” He also notes the immense impression left on him by “the narrative part of the Holy Scriptures,” and states that besides their religious aspect, “also in their literal sense, they are illuminated by a bright light to enlighten [the reader] and contain within them a burning fire to warm his heart.”¹⁹⁴

Fuenn also relates that “The whole of the Holy Scriptures without a commentary, in one volume, now known as the Bible, were not in existence then, because the missionary society in England had not yet sent its agents to our country,”¹⁹⁵ so that he did not have a complete Bible, and that adversely affected his ability to “study the very inner essence of the Bible.”

The *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* alone, printed with commentaries and translations, were mistakenly called the twenty-four [books]. And we will not be far wrong if we state that for fear that the Jews might be too eager to study the Bible if all the Holy Scriptures were in one volume, available to them at a low price, the leaders of the former generations did not permit the Jewish printers to print them, leaving this sacred task to Christian printers. Hence all the old printed Bibles were published by Christians.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ On him, see in S. Feiner’s introduction to *From Militant to Conservative Haskalah, A Selection of S.J. Fuenn’s Writings*, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 1–47 (Hebrew).

¹⁹⁴ Fuenn, in Feiner, ibid., pp. 54–55, 58–59. See also: Fuenn, *Safah lene’emanim*, Vilna, 1881, p. 143.

¹⁹⁵ The London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews was founded in 1818 and distributed the Old and the New Testaments in Hebrew and Yiddish translations (from 1831), free of charge. See: W.T. Gidney, *The History of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews from 1809 to 1908*, London, 1908, pp. 55–56. Also see: Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*, Ithaca/NY, 1994; Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British Foreign Bible Society*, Cambridge/Mass., 1991, and Stephen Batalden et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*. The first branch of the American Bible Society opened in Smyrna, Turkey in 1816, and from the second half of the nineteenth century, the Middle East became the center of its activity. In 1904, the British Foreign Bible Society distributed about 1.5 million copies and the American Bible Society about 290,000 copies.

¹⁹⁶ Fuenn, *Dor vedorshav*. See: Feiner, *From Militant to Conservative Haskalah*, p. 58.

As Fuenn himself stated, under the influence of “*Nevonei achenu be’Ashkenaz* (our wise brethren in Germany),” as a teacher, he encouraged the modern reading of the Bible.¹⁹⁷ In 1847, he published his book *Shnot dor vedor, lizkor yemot hakorot haketuvot bekivtei hakodesh bekholt dor vedor, leto’let batei hasefer livnei Israel*, in Koenigsberg, for the purpose of teaching the biblical chronology.

In the eyes of many East European *maskilim*, the return to the Hebrew Bible was not only a declaration that they were cutting themselves off from the religious authority or that its influence had grown weaker, nor did the return to Hebrew signify only that they were distancing themselves from the language identified with the Talmud and rabbinical literature; rather it was also an essential supplement to Jewish philosophical literature and foreign European literature. It was an anchor cast at the safe shore of the ancient Hebrew book and the Hebrew language to prevent a total severance from Judaism. In the eyes of nationalist Jews, the return to the Bible was a prerequisite for the revival of the Hebrew language and literature, as a counter-weight and replacement for assimilatory acculturation as well as for the religious-traditional culture and Yiddish culture, and later it became a prerequisite for making Hebrew the language of the modern culture and the national language.¹⁹⁸ At the same time, the return to the Bible was possible because the traditional education had prepared the Jewish reader to read Hebrew. Many of the *maskilim* took pride in their ability to read the Bible in Hebrew, in contrast to the ignorance that, in their view, was characteristic of the rabbis.¹⁹⁹ For many in the Haskalah movement in Galicia, Poland and Lithuania, “the language of the Bible in its *maskilic* transformation became a key element in Jewish identity.”²⁰⁰ The author, Abraham Mapu (1808–1867) attested to this in the introduction to his book *Chozei chizyonot* (The Visionaries):

Take note of this, all those who cherish what is sacred to the Jewish people, who yearn for the earth of the holy land and its stones. Every lump

¹⁹⁷ Fuenn, *ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁹⁸ Shmuel Werses, “The Inter-linguistic Tensions in the *maskilic* Journal *Hame’asef* and in its Environment,” in S. Werses, *Awake My People*, pp. 193–237; Yaacov Shavit, “A Duty too Heavy to Bear: Hebrew in Berlin Haskala, 1783–1819: Classics, Romantics and Modernity” in Lewis Glinert (ed.), *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile*, New York – Oxford, 1993, pp. 111–128.

¹⁹⁹ Naphtali Herz Wessely, *Gan Na’ul* (A Garden Enclosed), Amsterdam, 1765. On the nurturing of knowledge of Hebrew as a condition for reading the Bible in the program of the *Chevrat Dorshei Leshon Ever*, see: Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, pp. 194–195.

²⁰⁰ Israel Bartal, “From Traditional Bilingualism to National Monolingualism, *Shvut: Jewish Problems in the USSR and Eastern Europe*, 15, 1992, p. 127 (Hebrew).

of earth and all the stones of the Holy Land are dear to us and beloved by us, for we remember that on this earth and on these stones the feet of our forefathers may have stepped. Then how shall we not cherish their holy tongue, their thoughts and the phrases upon their lips, which contain all of their spiritual life? These are the Holy Scriptures that the former generation has neglected and has deprived the children of Israel of the delights of Israel. And even today, only three in a city and two in a family know them.²⁰¹

The return to the Hebrew Bible was linked not only to the revival of Hebrew as a language of culture, but also to legitimization of the “external wisdoms” or “natural wisdoms,” namely, the various spheres of science and knowledge. “The education of the Jews,” Mendele Mocher Sefarim wrote in *Fathers and Sons*, “will always develop from the Hebrew language; from it the spirit of knowledge will begin to gush forth, and many who slumber in folly will awaken to the life of the world.” The claim was made that it was impossible to understand the Bible (and in fact, the Talmud as well) without learning the geography and nature of the Land of Israel, just as it was impossible to understand it without general, universal spheres of knowledge, such as astronomy and medicine. Hence the Bible provided legitimacy for the study of both Hebrew and the sciences. And in fact, it had a greater impact: the world of the biblical Hebrews was depicted as a complete, perfect world, in marked contrast to the flawed and deficient world of the Jews in the diaspora. The intent was not to argue that the biblical past ought to be revived, but rather to prove through it that the Jews do not lack the abilities to maintain an ample, all-inclusive society and culture.

The fact that the new status of the Bible was a result of processes of acculturation, modernization and secularization was one of the reasons why the conservative orthodox were so strongly critical of it. A moderate *maskil* like Eliezer Zweifel (1815–1888) thought it necessary to apologetically write that reading the Bible is not a sin.²⁰² The fact that this was a process of the reshaping of the Jewish national identity,²⁰³ in which the status of the Bible played an important role, also did not make the modern return to the Bible more palatable to the ultra-orthodox in Eastern Europe. These circles understood very well that the new status of the Bible could lead to the creation of a new Judaism, and that the Bible was turning into secular literature. Consequently,

²⁰¹ A. Mapu, “Chozei Chezyonot,” in *Kol Kitvei Abraham Mapu*, Tel Aviv, 1939, p. 457 (Hebrew).

²⁰² Shmuel Feiner, “The Shift in the Assessment of Chasidism: Eliezer Zweifel and the Moderate Haskalah in Russia,” *Zion*, 51, 1985, pp. 167–210 (Hebrew).

²⁰³ Nils Römer, *Tradition und Akkulturation*.

East European orthodoxy waged an all-out war against the new status being given to the Bible in modern Jewish education,²⁰⁴ as well as against what it described as “the arrogant criticism.” They regarded the Talmud as the sole authoritative commentary on the Bible. From this standpoint, the positions adopted by the Jewish orthodoxy and the Catholic church were similar; they both were unable to accept the Bible as *sola scriptura*. Nor did the perception of the Bible as a book bearing a universal message common to Jews and Christians, unlike the Talmud with its particularistic and legalistic image, evoke an enthusiastic response by the conservative orthodoxy in Eastern Europe.

The Altercation over the Translations of the Bible

The numerous translations – complete and partial – of the Bible into German in the second half of the nineteenth century do not attest only to the place it was given in Jewish-German culture or to the fact that most of the Jews – Orthodox as well as Reform – were unable to read it in Hebrew. The *AZdJ* wrote that mainly youngsters in Western and Central Europe were not familiar with the Bible, and hence lacked the tools to refute those who were maligning it. Very few learned Hebrew, and even those who did found it difficult to understand the Bible. Since knowledge of the Bible is the foundation of Jewish faith and the source of its strength, a partial knowledge of it does not suffice, and hence a modern German translation should be provided to these young people.²⁰⁵

The issue of translations also rekindled, with even greater intensity, the controversy that revolved around Mendelssohn’s *Bi’ur* earlier in the century. In fact, the polemic over the nature of the translations was an inseparable part of the deep disagreements between the neo-orthodox and the Reform movement about the essence of Judaism. The major cause of the polemic was Ludwig Philippson’s translation, *Die Heilige Schrift der Israeliten*, which at first was distributed in small numbers, but by 1863 had been published in five editions and distributed even outside of Germany. Philippson wrote that his translation was intended to restore the Bible to the present generation of Jews who “had lost it”

²⁰⁴ An open letter against study of the Bible was printed in the *Hacarmel* periodical, 7, 1862: “Many talmudic scholars will not devote even a minute of their time – thank God – to the study of Bible.”

²⁰⁵ “Die israelitische Bibelanstalt,” 37 (5), 1873, p. 69; “Die Unkenntniss der heiligen Schrift unter den Juden der Gegenwart,” *ibid.*, 39 (25), 1875, pp. 392–393.

– “*Die Bibel ist dem neueren Juden abhanden gekommen – sie müssen sie wieder haben.*”²⁰⁶ His translation was meant to be a substitute for the missionaries’ biblical translations. The journal described the neo-Orthodox as “the enemies from within” of the Jews and of Judaism, who represent “spiritual obscurantism” and want to return the Jews to the ghetto. They, the *Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote, practice an “idolatrous religion,” a religion of the “written word.”²⁰⁷ For its part, the neo-Orthodox camp distributed pamphlets and wrote articles denouncing the translation, which *Der Israelit* labeled a “missionary Bible” (*Missionsbibel*), anti-Jewish in nature (*unjüdisch*), which expressed Protestant-Jewish views. Since the neo-orthodox also regarded the Bible (in actual fact, the five books of the Pentateuch) as the “source of life” of Judaism, it perceived Philippson’s Bible as disseminating heretic views that were not faithful to the biblical source or to the commentary of the Oral Law. One result of this approach was Hirsch’s translation of the Pentateuch (*Pentateuch-Commentar*), the fruit of twelve years of work, which *Der Israelit* described as “based on the commentary of the Oral Law and with reference to expressions of the commandments in the daily life of the Jews.”²⁰⁸

The Bible as History

We have seen that the return to the Bible was far more than an expression of the modernization of Jewish culture. It was also a major element in what has been called “the return of the Jews to history,”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ L. Philippson, “Die Herstellung und Verbreitung wohlfeiler Bibeln,” *AZdJ*, 23(13), 1859, pp. 183–185.

²⁰⁷ “Einige Pamphlete,” *AZdJ*, 24 (17), 1860, pp. 247–250; “Ein Résumé,” *ibid.*, 24 (26), 1860, pp. 383–386.

²⁰⁸ “Die inneren Feinde des Judenthums,” *Der Israelit*, 1 (1), 1860, pp. 2–4; “Die Bibelanstalt für die Anhänger des traditionellen (orthodoxen) Judenthums,” *ibid.*, 2 (23), pp. 273–274; “Hirsch’s Pentateuch-Commentar,” *ibid.*, 19 (40), 1878, pp. 992–994. See also: Rachel Menkin, “The Bible is Lost to the New Generation of Jews; They Must Receive it Again. On the Transformations of Sigmund Freud’s Book of the Bible,” *Ha’aretz, Culture and Literature Supplement*, April 6, 2004, p. 8E.

²⁰⁹ S.N. Eisenstadt and Moshe Lissak (eds.), *Zionism and the Return to History: A Reappraisal*, Jerusalem, 1999, (Hebrew). Against this background, the statement made by K. Stendahl twenty years ago that the Divine Spirit is lacking in the study of the Bible as history (geschichtlich und historisch) and for a long time has been found in its study as a story, is not clear: Krister Stendahl, “The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture,” *JBL (Journal of Biblical Literature)*, 103 (1), 1984, pp. 3–10. And for a glimpse into the intensive use of the Bible as history in African-American literature, see: Vincent L. Wimbush, *Biblical Historical Study*

in the sense of the emergence of a new historical consciousness and a new view of historical time, as well as in the sense that large parts of the Bible were being read as history, as books that describe the biblical era as a formative and key period in the history of the Jews, one that reflects its culture and political life. The Bible served the Haskalah as a tool in its struggle to achieve the modernization of Jewish culture, and for the nationalist movement it was a vital element of its romantic-restorative aspect. It viewed the world depicted in the Bible as a longed-for past, a repertoire of stories and historical analogies, a guide to the real life of the Land of Israel and as a mediator between the present and the distant past. The historical reliability of the Bible thus became an important issue on the Jewish agenda.

Until the nineteenth century the historical reliability of the Bible, in particular that of the Torah, was taken for granted. Judah Halevy wrote: “Is not our book full of stories of Moses and the children of Israel? No one can deny what He did to Pharaoh, how He divided the sea, saved those who enjoy His favour, but drowned those who had aroused His wrath ... is this not so well known that no suspicion of deceit and imagination is possible?”²¹⁰ In *Jerusalem* (1783), Moses Mendelssohn did not ascribe any importance to the issue of the Bible’s historical authenticity, namely whether the historical events related in it are factual. The believing Jew is obliged to accept their authenticity out of his recognition of the authority and reliability of the book and its narrator: “These historical records contain the foundation for national cohesion; and as historical truth they can, according to their nature, not be accepted in any other manner than on faith; authority alone gives them the required evidence. These records were also confirmed by miracles, and supported by an authority which was sufficient to place the faith beyond all doubts and hesitancy.”²¹¹ It is clear that Mendelssohn was referring, as was Judah Halevy, to formative events, such as the theophany on Mt. Sinai, and not to historical and political events. Mendelssohn stated that the Bible cannot be regarded as “a book of chronicles, in order to know the events of ancient times or to understand the ways of Providence and of the Almighty in each

as Liberation: Towards Afro-Christian Hermeneutic,” *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 42 (2), Fall-Winter, 1985, pp. 2–9.

²¹⁰ Judah Halevy, *The Kuzari* (*Kitab al Khazari*), trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld, 1964 edn. (orig. 1905), New York, pp. 9–10.

²¹¹ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, trans. Allan Arkush, Hanover, NH and London, 1983, p. 127.

and every generation.”²¹² For him, the Bible was not a book of history, but first and foremost, a book of divine commandments.²¹³

Even the more extreme *maskilim* did not dare cast doubt on the truth of historical tradition in the Pentateuch, and generally preferred not to deal with the issue, nor with the historical testimony of the later books. For example: Napthali Herz Homberg (1749–1841), who advocated a radical reform in Jewish education, wrote in his book *Imre shefer* (Vienna, 1806) that “All the stories of the Torah are true. All the miracles and wonders, which changed the laws of nature, that happened to our forefathers, by Moses and the Prophets.”²¹⁴ Graetz, whose ambivalent attitude towards biblical criticism will be discussed in the following chapter, wrote:

Besides the Pentateuch and the historical books it [the Bible] has others whose genuineness and authenticity no critic dares to impugn, the Prophets from the earliest of them, Amos to the latest Malachi, and besides these the Psalms, Proverbs, and other works. These contain references to the historic events of earlier times, and rightly understood, fully confirm the historical narratives in the Pentateuch and other books.. The deeper one penetrates into the spirit of the greater Prophets, the more confirmed becomes the historical truth of the remaining Scriptures. We have then a wide field for Biblical criticism which produces a richer harvest the more rigidly it is exercised. Such a criticism does not destroy, it builds afresh.²¹⁵

According to Graetz, the reliability of the testimony in the Pentateuch in relation to the antiquity of the Jewish people is confirmed by the fact that these events are mentioned in the later books of the Bible, so they need no confirmation from another source.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, German neo-Orthodoxy, as well as different circles within East European orthodoxy, began to change their attitude towards the Bible as history. For example, at the end of the 1880s, the ultra-Orthodox newspaper *Kol machzikei hadat*, which was published in Lvov (Galicia) printed part of Isaac ben Yehudah Ebner’s book, *Sefer divrei yemei Yisrael* (1895–1896) in installments. This book related the history of the Jews from the settlement in Canaan up to the destruction of the First Temple as a kind

²¹² Moses Mendelssohn, *Or lenetivah* (Berlin, 1883) in *Moses Mendelssohn, Hebrew Writings/Collected Works of Moses Mendelssohn*, Jubilee edition, vol. 14, Breslau 1938, p. 243 (Hebrew).

²¹³ E. Breuer, “Haskalah and Scripture”, pp. 445–463.

²¹⁴ N. H. Homberg, *Imre shefer, kolelim inyenei Torah umussar*, Vienna, 1816, Chapter 1, p. 17.

²¹⁵ H. Graetz, “Judaism and Biblical Criticism,” *Jewish Chronicle*, August 5, 1887. And see more on this issue in Chapter 2.

of counter-history to the secular books of history.²¹⁶ However, despite the increased value of “history,” it was in no case regarded as a substitute for faith, and Orthodoxy separated itself from the “free-thinking” nationalists, in that for the latter “a knowledge of what occurred to our people is merely an historical knowledge. The Torah and faith are but a straw in the wind, a vain fantasy in their eyes.”²¹⁷

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, only a small number of radical thinkers dared to write stories casting doubt on the historical reliability of the biblical stories in general, and of the Pentateuch in particular. It was possible to retell the stories of the Patriarchs or the exodus from Egypt, but there was no doubt at all that these were not legends or myths, but the history of the Jewish people and the events that occurred to the fathers of the nation. The innovations in regard to the Bible were primarily in the discussion of the esthetic aspect of the biblical composition, in the reconstruction of the reality of the Bible, and the like. But hardly any doubt was cast on the authenticity of the formative historical traditions; it was impossible to believe in the theophany without accepting the reliability of the tradition of the exodus from Egypt. In the following chapter, we shall see that one reason it was difficult to accept modern biblical criticism was that the idea that the writing of the Pentateuch was a product of an historical process undermined not only the belief that the five books were the fruit of Moses’ spirit, but also the authenticity of the historical story that they tell about the antiquities of the Jewish people. Over time, as we shall see, the authenticity of historical events that had no religious significance began to be viewed by many as no less important than the formative historical events that bore a theo-historical significance.

Thus, at a time when very few Jews dared question the historical truth of the Bible, one of the results of the biblical revolution was a challenge to its reliability as an historical document. This challenge was now based on archaeological finds and philological-historical research, unlike the case in the past, when it had been based on hypotheses and flights of imagination. In 1903, the German scholar, who wrote under the pseudonym Reimarus jun.,²¹⁸ summed up the results

²¹⁶ On *Chevrat machzikei hadat*, see: Rachel Manekin, *The Growth and Development of Jewish Orthodoxy in Galicia*, Ph.D. dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001 (Hebrew); Nahum Karlinsky, *Counter History: The Hasidic Epistles from Eretz-Israel, Text and Context*, Jerusalem, 1998, p. 102 (Hebrew).

²¹⁷ *Machzikei hadat*, 1, February 1889, p. 2.

²¹⁸ He may have taken this name from Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), a German philosopher and deist of the Enlightenment period, who in his book, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, cast doubt on

of the excavations, modern biblical criticism and historical research, and stated that they had completely undermined the status of the Old Testament and the dogma that it came from a divine source. It was no longer possible to accept the view, he opined, that the Bible was the fruit of divine inspiration; not a single book of the Bible was written by the man whose name it bears; the Mosaic Code was composed under the influence of the religious views of other peoples and of the Hammurabi Code; the Bible was written by the Jewish priests during the Babylonian Exile; the stories of the Bible are merely legends and poetry, lacking in any historical value. It now appeared that the first thirteen chapters of Genesis were copies of Babylonian legends, adapted by the priests who edited the more ancient sources. Moreover, there is no basis for the view that in the time of the mythological Abraham and thereafter, the Hebrews believed in one God. The historical truth is that the tribes of Israel worshiped the god Jahu, or the god of thunder, as a national god, sculpted him in stone and iron, and made sacrifices to him and to other gods. Idol worship also continued in the period of the monarchy, and only after the Babylonian exile did monotheism become the dominant religion, undoubtedly under the influence of Babylonian and Persian beliefs. The God of Israel was therefore a Babylonian god, the Torah of Moses was written under the influence of the Hammurabi Code, the Sabbath was an ancient Babylonian institution, and the stories of the creation and the flood were borrowed from Babylonian cosmogony.²¹⁹ According to this description, the traditional picture of the past of the Jews and the basis for their faith was utterly shattered. These were dreadful words of heresy, and it is no wonder that Ze’ev Jawitz (1847–1924) depicted the picture they drew as a “bad dream,” against which the Jews were compelled to wage an all-out war.²²⁰

The view expressed by Reimarus aroused acute dilemmas among “free-thinking” Jews, particularly the nationalists, who regarded the

the reliability of the Bible. See also: the excerpts from an earlier version, “Fragmente eines Ungeannten”, published by G.E. Lessing in 1774–78 (the *Apologie* was published in full only in 1972).

²¹⁹ Reimarus jun., *Babel und Bibel: Resultate der neuesten Bibelforschung als Widerlegung und Antwort auf den Brief des Kaiser Wilhelm II. an Admiral Hollman*, Leipzig, 1903.

²²⁰ Ze’ev Jawitz “Totz’ot hachatitot vehachakikot” (The Results of Archaeology), p. 21. Jawitz defined “chatitot” as “digging and searching in the ground to find something there and remove it.” The article was published as a pamphlet in Berlin in 1910, and was printed in the second edition of the third volume, 1927, pp. 1–27 of his book, *History of the Jews* (Hebrew).

Bible as the national history of the Jewish people.²²¹ The fact that the “free-thinking” or “secular” circles did not regard the Bible as “Holy Scripture,” did not believe in a divinely given Torah, did not accept the theo-historical world-view, and did not observe the commandments written in the Torah, in no way weakened its status in their eyes; rather, it reinforced this status, and hence also the need to defend it, in particular its authenticity and reliability as an historical document. Against this background, it is clear why any injury to the Bible as history was perceived as an attack on the foundation of Judaism as well as on the existence of the Jewish people. Nonetheless, the view that the “spirit of the Bible” and its message, as they were understood and internalized throughout the generations and as they shaped their world, were the essence, rather than its historical story or its historical accuracy, continued to be the accepted view. The pioneer of modern Jewish historiography, Issak Marcus Jost²²² made a similar claim earlier when he wrote that the biblical period as “history” (*res gestae*), namely, as a description of the concrete events that took place in it, and defined as “*historia rerum gestarum*”, namely the historical story that the Bible presents, is what shaped Judaism, without any connection to its degree of reliability or historical accuracy. It is the “story of the events” that gave Judaism its unhistorical and atemporal content. Hence, a reliable description of the biblical period is of no importance.²²³ As we shall see, this is a “strategy” that was adopted and became very useful in the discussion about the link between the Bible as “history” and as a formative book. However, at the same time, the claim that the historical reliability of the biblical story bears an important value in itself grew stronger. The inevitable result was the defense not only of the historical reliability of a formative story such as the theophany at Mt. Sinai, but of other parts of the biblical historical narrative as well.

²²¹ Jacob Neusner believes that Jewish historical writing about the ancient past (as in Genesis Rabah) was revived in the fourth century A.D., in response to ecclesiastical history. See: Neuser, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine. History, Messiah, Israel and the Initial Confrontation*, Chicago 1987. See also: Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories*, Macon, Ga., 1986 (2nd. edn.); M. D. Herr, “The Conception of History among the Sages,” *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. vii, Jerusalem, 1977, pp. 129–142 (Hebrew).

²²² On him, see Chapter Two.

²²³ These insights are by Ran Hacohen, *The Encounter of Wissenschaft des Judentums in Germany with Nineteenth-Century Biblical Criticism*, Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2002, pp. 61–62 (Hebrew).

Added to all this was the fact that the new criticism was perceived as one more manifestation of anti-Semitism in the guise of science.²²⁴ In the context of the political and cultural reality in Germany, in the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Wellhausen and Delitzsch's statements (which we will discuss later) were perceived as another wave in the flood of anti-Semitic literature. The Jews who reacted to them saw them as a disparagement of the Bible, with the aim of divesting the Jews of their honor and their historical rights. They felt they were confronted by an army of enemies of the Bible, who were representing it as a book full of distortions, and adding their depiction of it as a “Semitic creation,” contrary to the “Germanic spirit”; as a book, which on one hand was described by its new enemies as an immoral book, and on the other as a book that expresses the contemptible ethics of the weak. The liberal rabbi and scholar of the Talmud, Ludwig A. Rosenthal (1855–1928)²²⁵ argued that since the Bible was regarded by the majority of Germans as underpinning the Western moral world-view, then the defense of it was not only a defense of the Book of Books of the Jews, but also of universal basic values and ideals; and its relinquishment would be tantamount to spiritual suicide. Rosenthal closed with an emotional cry: “We, the warriors on the battlefield of the Bible, in the name of the spirit of the Bible and the divine demands made upon the people of Israel and humankind, must not permit the Book of Books to fall from *our* hands. We must not allow its value to be denied, thereby diminishing *our* value; it is *our* duty to restore the holy words to their rightful status and to cry out the magic, healing watchword: *Back to the Bible!*” [emphasis in original]²²⁶ He was extremely optimistic in his belief that devotion to the values of the Bible would keep Germany from declining into nationalistic Volkism.

In an article written on the occasion of the “Year of Luther” in 1917 (marking 400 years since the start of the Reformation), Albert Friedlander wrote an imaginary conversation between Luther and himself, taking place not in the “torture chamber” of the castle – a room that represents Luther's anti-Jewish views – but rather in the

²²⁴ About the same time, and not coincidentally, the anthropological journal *Politisch-anthropologische Monatsschrift (Revue)*, edited by Ludwig Woltmann, was first published in 1902. It disseminated the idea of Aryan superiority. See: John M. Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*, New Haven, Conn., 1994, p. 18.

²²⁵ On him, see in the Appendix.

²²⁶ L.A. Rosenthal, *Zurück zur Bibel!*, Berlin, 1903, p. 9.

“treasure room,” where the library was located, and first among its books, the Bible. In this room, he writes, they could conduct a dialogue based on the love and esteem the two religions have for the Bible (the two are “*Brüder in der Bibel*”).²²⁷ The poet Uri Zvi Greenberg (1894–1981) was very far from any optimism concerning the possibility of a dialogue based on the common biblical heritage. In his (Yiddish) poem “In Malkos fun Tselem” (In the Kingdom of the Cross), published in Berlin in 1923, he posed a rhetorical question: How can it be that those kneeling in Europe towards Bethlehem and sanctifying the books of the Bible are the same savages who dream of annihilating every last one of the Jews?²²⁸

The Beginning of Jewish Bible Research

The author, philosopher and Bible scholar, Micha Joseph Berdyczewski (Bin-Gorion, 1865–1921) wrote the following in his diary on February 27, 1906: “If there are any in Germany who are permeated by the spirit of the Bible and who take pleasure in the words of the Prophets – they are Christians and not Jews.” Berdyczewski praised Protestant-Christian scholars like Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), Paul de Lagarde (1827–1891), Bernhard Stade (1848–1906), Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) and others (he was not perturbed by the anti-Semitic views attributed to some of them).²²⁹ A few months earlier, on June 12, 1905, he wrote: “The literary market is flooded with books on the Old Testament; it is almost as though its study is beginning anew.”²³⁰ He was referring to the German-Christian book market, and to the fact that throughout the nineteenth century very few Jews had engaged in Bible research.

²²⁷ Albert Friedlander, “Martin Luther und wir Juden,” in Heinz Kremers (ed.), *Die Juden und Martin Luther – Martin Luther und die Juden: Geschichte, Wirkungsgeschichte, Herausforderung*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1985, pp. 297–299. We learned about the book and the article from Christian Wiese’s article “Protestant Theology in Luther’s Shadow? Thoughts about the Reception of Luther’s ‘Jewish Works’ in the Context of anti-Semitic Thought in the Decades prior to the Holocaust,” in Henry Wasserman (ed.), “The German-Jewish History We have Inherited”: *Young Germans Write Jewish History*, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 75–100 (Hebrew).

²²⁸ Printed in Albatros: *Zeitschrift für neue Dichtung und Graphik*, Berlin, 1923 (in Yiddish).

²²⁹ Mordechai E. Haushner, “Berdyczewski’s Attitude Towards Germany Jewry,” in Avner Holzman (ed.) *Archives of Micha Joseph*, Book 6, Holon, 1995, pp. 156–157 (Hebrew).

²³⁰ Holzman, *ibid.*, p. 66.

Is there really truth in Berdyczewski’s blatant view that the Bible was at the center of the world of Protestant Christians, but was at the sidelines of the spiritual-cultural world of German Jewry? As we have already noted, this was not the real situation. It was difficult to leave the Bible outside of Jewish scientific research – a consummate characteristic of the modern Enlightenment – and to raise a wall between the Bible and modern critical research.

It is true, however, that Jewish Bible research was meager compared to the Christian, and only towards the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, did the number of Bible studies by Jewish writers increase. Ismar Schorsch wrote that:

Unfortunately, by the last quarter of the century, the rising tide of German anti-Semitism also seeped into the halls of the university and retarded the acceptance of the documentary hypothesis by Jewish scholars for decades. In 1910, the rabbinical seminary in Breslau still excluded modern biblical criticism from its curriculum.²³¹

Max Wiener (1882–1950) wrote about this: “The keenest representatives of the People of the Book in the most dreadful century devoted relatively very little attention to the ancient source (*Urquelle*) of Judaism, the Bible.”²³² This was the accepted view. The Israeli Bible scholar, Moshe Goshen-Gottstein formulates it as follows:

For centuries Jews do not reappear on the scene of Bible studies ... The modern study of the Bible, both in its philological and theological implications, grew as an integral part of the development of modern European thought. Jews and Judaism as such had no place in it ... No nineteenth-century Jew could think of becoming a “Bible scholar” in the European sense, which almost of necessity entailed moving back and forth between the Testaments.²³³

However, the view that Jewish Bible research hardly existed in the nineteenth century overlooks the books written by *maskilim* and published during this period. As a matter of fact, in the nineteenth century, study of the Bible in the modern spirit – or coming to terms with the modern spirit of Bible research – became a challenge for both *maskilim* and for students in rabbinical seminaries. The spirit of the

²³¹ Ismar Schorsch, “Jewish Studies from 1818 to 1918,” in idem, *From Text to Context, The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*, Hanover, NH, 1994, p. 350. A year earlier, the Bible polemic had erupted in the Herzliya gymnasium in Tel Aviv. See Chapter 12.

²³² Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation*, Berlin, 1933, p. 25.

²³³ M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Christianity, Judaism, and Modern Bible Study,” In *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 24 (Congress volume, Edinburgh, 1974), Leiden, 1975, p. 74.

new research did not stop at the gates of the Jewish institutions of learning, nor was the educated public unaware of it. On the contrary, it seeped into the Jewish society and gave rise to apologetics, on the one hand, and to a renewed interest in the historical nature of Judaism and its history, on the other. The winds of skepticism and modern criticism were tardy in penetrating the Jewish world, but once the gate was opened, as we shall see in the next chapter, the philological-historical and historical-historicist reading of the Bible became part of that world. Jewish Bible research in the nineteenth century was, then, part of the biblical revolution as well as a reaction to it.

Chapter 2

Wellhausen and his School: The Jewish Response to Higher Criticism

“I don’t understand you,” said Robert, flashing “... Christian theology is a system of ideas, indeed, but of ideas realized, made manifest in facts.” Langhan looked at him for a moment, undecided ...“How do you know they are facts?” he said dryly.

Mrs. Humphry Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, 1888.²³⁴

Hitherto it had been accepted, as a matter of implicit faith, that this book of books was composed in one spirit; nay, more, that it was inspired, and, as it were, dictated by the Divine Spirit. But for a long time the discrepancies of the different parts had been now criticized, now defended, by believers and unbelievers. Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans had attacked the Bible with more or less violence, acumen, audacity, and maliciousness; and again and again it had been taken under the protection of earnest, high-minded men of each nation.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Poetry and Truth: From My Own Life*, vol. 1, p. 244. (Trans. by Minna Steele Smith, 1908).

... those of the German historians who carry their Jew-hatred even to the Bible ...

Moses Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 1862, Letter VI, p. 82.

When the books of criticism grew many in number, the Holy Books lost their sanctity, the wisdom of our Sages was blighted and the honor of our forefathers debased.

Mendele Mocher Sefarim, *The Fathers and the Sons*, 1868.

²³⁴ Quoted in David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, London, 1997, p. 203.

Science vs. Theology

The greatest enemy confronting the defenders of the Bible in the nineteenth century was higher Bible criticism, also known as the Wellhausen theory,²³⁵ or the documentary hypothesis. This criticism dealt primarily with the five books of the Pentateuch, which tradition attributed to Moses, but very soon they also began addressing the other books of the Bible (Prophets and Hagiographa). From the outset, Bible studies (*biblische Wissenschaft*) had two branches: the first, *literary criticism*, reads the Bible as the product of a process of composition, namely not as a unified and integrative work, and attempts to uncover the sources and various layers of this work, as well as the processes of its composition. The documentary hypothesis is the most influential theory in this branch. The second, *historical criticism*, deals with the Bible as an historical document that relates the history of the Jewish religion and the Jewish people, and it tests its reliability with the aid of both historical and philological research and external evidence.²³⁶ Modern biblical study has had such a strong impact because of the historical-philosophical view underpinning it and the idea that every religion is a religious phenomenon and faith is the fruit of man's spirit and that they undergo an historical evolution. Hence its historical method, namely, reliance on historical-philological research, which was perceived as objective research, is anchored in the text itself, and not in one or another assumption about the essence of transcendence, history or human nature. There was not necessarily always a connection between these subjects and the discussion of biblical theology or of the moral character of biblical Judaism, although the critical view of the history of the biblical text and its reliability was often linked to, and influenced by, criticism of the nature of biblical Judaism.

The Jewish reaction to the higher criticism of the 1880s was associated primarily with Julius Wellhausen, although there had been some responses as early as the seventeenth century. These, however,

²³⁵ Karl Heinrich Graf (1815–1869) in his book *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig, 1866, claimed that Leviticus was the earliest book in the Pentateuch. In a brief survey of the history of biblical criticism from the end of the eighteenth century, it is possible to mention only the “great names.” However, many scores of scholars contributed to the development of the discipline.

²³⁶ See: Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Jewish Biblical Theology and the Study of Biblical Religion,” *Tarbiz*, 50 (Jubilee Volume), Jerusalem, 1980–1981, pp. 37–64 (Hebrew). See also: the brief and coherent discussion in John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 2005, pp. 1–25.

were reactions to the works of several scholars, not part of a broad intellectual-scientific reaction, like the Jewish response to nineteenth-century higher criticism was. In this chapter, we will briefly describe this latter response, in particular to explain why higher Bible criticism aroused such sharp opposition.

The First Temple Period vs. The Second Temple Period

Before turning our attention to biblical criticism, we need to mention another type of criticism, which was strongly linked to it, and gained great popularity during the same period.

Biblical research and the writing of Jewish history in the biblical period were closely tied to the writing of Jewish history in the Second Temple period and the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud. The image of Judaism during the Second Temple was discussed at length by scholars, and many books dealt with the Jewish responses to this image.²³⁷ Christian historical writing (as well as the philosophical and theological discussion) dealt with Jewish history in this period primarily as a background for the appearance of Christianity.²³⁸ In the dominant historical paradigm in this literature, a clear separation was made between “Israel” or “Hebrews” (*Israeliten*) of the biblical period, and “Judaism” (*Judentum*) and the Jews (*Juden*) of the Second Temple period. The latter was generally described in this literature as Pharisaic, legalistic (*Gesetzreligion*), ritualistic, theocratic, national-particularis-

²³⁷ Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber*, Tübingen, 1967; Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jews and German Philosophy: The Polemics of Emancipation*, New York, 1984; Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Leiden, 1988; G. F. Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 14 (3) July, 1921, pp. 197–254.

²³⁸ Among the many books on this subject, published in the second half of the nineteenth century, the following are particularly noteworthy: Julius Wellhausen, *Die Pharisäer und Sadducäer: Eine Untersuchung zur inneren jüdischen Geschichte*, 1874; E. Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judenthums*, Halle a.S., 1896; Emil Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, Third Edition, I–III, Leipzig, 1901–1909, by Wilhelm Boussel, *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Berlin, 1903. And see: Hans-Günther Waubke, *Die Pharisäer in der protestantischen Bibelwissenschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen, 1998; Roland Deines, *Die Pharisäer: Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz*, Tübingen, 1997. See also: Daniel R. Schwartz, “Jews, Judeans and the Epoch that Disappeared: On H. Graetz’s Changing View on the Second Temple Period,” *Zion*, 70 (3), 2005, pp. 293–309 (Hebrew).

tic Judaism,²³⁹ different from the Judaism of the biblical period, particularly from the Prophecy, and regarded as having become a religion of “the written word.” In contrast, in this historical reconstruction, early Christianity was described as faithfully carrying on biblical prophecy and its humanistic universal messages, and the Old Testament as a *Vorstufe* (precursor) to the New Testament. This historical paradigm and its images were given public expression in a series of lectures delivered by the liberal theologian Adolph von Harnack in Berlin in the winter semester of 1899–1900 (about two years before Delitzsch’s lectures), and published in his book *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), which was very successful and was translated into fifteen languages.²⁴⁰ The reaction to Harnack’s lectures took place at the same time as the reaction to Delitzsch’s, but it was less intense.

Those who reacted were mainly liberal Jews, unable to remain complacent in view of the negative description of the Judaism of the Second Temple period and thereafter by the liberal Protestant camp. Among those reacting to Harnack’s theses were the liberal rabbis, Dr. Leo Baeck (1873–1956), in his book *Das Wesen des Judentums*, 1905,²⁴¹ Dr.

²³⁹ On the development of the distinction between Jews (*Juden*), Israelites (*Israeliten*) and Hebrews (*Hebräer*), namely between biblical Judaism and post-biblical Judaism, see: James Pasto, “W.M.L. De Wette and the Invention of Post-Exilic Judaism: Political Historiography and Christian Allegory in Nineteenth-Century German Biblical Scholarship,” in Hayim Lapin & Dale B. Martin (eds.), *Jews, Antiquity, and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, Bethesda, MD, 2003, pp. 33–52; Rolf Rendorff, “The Image of Postexilic Israel in German Bible Scholarship from Wellhausen to von Rad,” in Michael Fishbane & Emanuel Tov (eds.), *Sha’arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1992, pp. 165–173. See also: Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914*, trans. Noah Jonathan Jacobs, Ithaca, NY and London, 1975, pp. 191–222; Christhard Hoffmann, *ibid.*, 269–301; Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie im wilhelminischen Deutschland: Ein Schrei ins Leere?*, pp. 131–178.

²⁴⁰ On Harnack and the Jewish polemic with him, see: Martin Rumscheidt (ed.), *Adolf von Harnack: Liberal Theology at its Height*, London, 1988; Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 131–178; I. Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German anti-Semitism, 1870–1914*, New York and Philadelphia, 1972, pp. 173–174; U. Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, pp. 204–312. See also: idem, “The Controversy about the ‘Essence of Judaism’ according to Jewish and Christian sources of the Early Twentieth Century”, in Meir Gilon (ed.) *Perspectives of German-Jewish History in the 19th and 20th Century*, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 62–67; Moritz Güdemann, *Jüdische Apologetik*, Glogau, 1906; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York and Oxford, 1988, pp. 204–205; E.G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 147–163.

²⁴¹ See: Albert H. Friedlander, *Leo Baeck: Teacher of Theresienstadt*, London, 1973, pp. 51–60. Michael Meyer, “A Religious Philosophy for a Time of Misfortune,” In Avraham Barkai (ed.), *Leo Baeck: Leadership and Thought 1933–1945*, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 73–82 (Hebrew). Already in 1901, Baeck immediately responded to

Felix Perles (1874–1933),²⁴² Dr. Joseph Eschelbacher (1848–1916)²⁴³ and Dr. Benno Jacob.²⁴⁴ They rejected the negative image of Pharisaic Judaism and the claim that an abyss existed between it and Jesus' moral code.²⁴⁵ Some of the responses overturned the claims of the Christian scholars: where the latter tried to prove that the best parts of the New Testament were an original Christian creation, the Jewish apologizers tried to prove they had originated in Second Temple Judaism. In other words, they tried to prove that the Jewish heritage of the Second Temple period was consistent with the liberal Christian approach in Germany, which is progressive and rational in its essence, and that the prophetic mission and the ethical principles of the Prophets and the Book of Psalms are at its center.²⁴⁶ Some of them also tried to prove that Judaism was superior to Christianity, and claimed, for example,

Harnack's words Leo Baeck, "Harnack's Vorlesungen über das Wesen des Christentums", *MGWJ*, 45 (9), 1910, pp. 97–120. See also: Hans Liebeschutz, "Judaism and the History of Religion in Leo Baeck's Work," In *Leo Baeck Yearbook*, London, 1957, pp. 8–20.

²⁴² Felix Perles, "Was lehrt uns Harnack?", in *Jüdische Skizzen*, Leipzig, 1912, pp. 208–231; idem, *Bousset's Religion des Judentums*, Berlin, 1903. On Perles' polemic with Bousset, see: Wiese, *ibid.*, pp. 146–156; Henry Wassermann, *False Start: Jewish Studies at German Universities During the Weimar Republic*, New York, 2003. p. 13.

²⁴³ 256 Eschelbacher's book, *Das Judentum im Urteil der modernen protestantischen Theologie*, Leipzig, 1907, was translated into Hebrew by A.S. Hershberg (*HaYahadut umahut haNotzriyut*, published by "Hazman," Vilna, 1912). And see also: Uriel Tal, "Theologische Debatte um das 'Wesen' des Judentums", in Werner E. Mosse (ed.), *Juden im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, 1890–1914, Tübingen, 1976. Eschelbacher noted that the redefinition of modern Judaism compelled the Jew to see himself through the eyes of his historical and theological adversary: Christianity. See also: Steven Schwarzchild, "The Theological-Political Basis of Liberal Christian-Jewish Relations in Germany," in *Das deutsche Judentum und der Liberalismus – German Jewry and Liberalism*, Sankt Augustin, 1986, pp. 70–95.

²⁴⁴ B. Jacob, *Im Namen Gottes*, Berlin, 1903.

²⁴⁵ Paul Mendes-Flohr, "New Trends in Jewish Thought", in M.A. Meyer (ed.), *German Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 3: *Integration in Dispute, 1871–1918*, New York, 1997, pp. 336–359. Leo Baeck wrote that this description of the Pharisees was ahistorical, but some of the reform responders believed the Pharisees were responsible for the theocratization of Judaism and regarded them as the fathers of Orthodoxy, while they regarded the Sadducees as the fathers (and the model) of liberal Judaism.

²⁴⁶ At the same time, they rejected what they depicted as sub-streams in Judaism of that period. In this manner, E.E. Urbach wrote, they described the spiritual world of the period after the canonization of the Bible as one of a decline of creativity and thought. Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 6–8. Urbach directs his criticism at F. Perles and B. Jacob. See also: E. Rosenblüth, "Die geistigen und religiösen Strömungen der deutschen Judenheit", in W.E. Mosse (ed.), *Juden im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, 1890–1914, pp. 549–598.

that Christianity is based on Jesus' personality and on the miracles that happened to him, while Judaism is not based on Moses the man (who is the servant, not the son, of God).

Mordechai Breuer writes that the neo-Orthodox camp in Germany, which identified Judaism with the faithful observance of *Halakhah*, reacted with indifference to Harnack's words and the controversy they aroused. In contrast, liberal and Reform Jews attacked Harnack because they suspected that the "de-dogmatization" of Christianity and its depiction as merely a system of ethics would pave the way for the conversion of Reform Jews who were "estranged from tradition."²⁴⁷ It seems more correct to say that the main reason for their reaction was that the liberal and Reform Jews,²⁴⁸ even those who believed a common denominator existed between liberal Judaism and liberal Germanness, were not prepared to totally relinquish their identity, and hence were unable to reconcile themselves to a theory that cut the ground out from under the documentary hypothesis and denied that Judaism could be understood as a system of universal ethics, a view that presented Protestantism as the state religion and the highest rank of an ethical-religious system versus Judaism as an anachronistic, stagnant religion incapable of renewing itself and therefore should cease to exist. This theory was perceived as one that undercut the view that liberal Judaism and the liberal Protestant camp shared a common foundation, based on the rejection of the dogmatic aspect of both religions, on the one hand, and on an emphasis of their moral aspect, on the other. The comparison between Harnack, Wellhausen and Delitzsch, as we shall see later, was inevitable.

The indifference of the neo-Orthodox stream to Harnack's polemic was, indeed, markedly dissimilar to its great involvement in the Babel-Bibel controversy. This contradiction may be explained by the fact that the historical-critical discussion about the development of the Jewish faith in the Second Temple period did not touch upon any sacred texts or articles of faith, and hence was different in character from the discussion of the Pentateuch and biblical Judaism.²⁴⁹ None-

²⁴⁷ Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 210–211. Among the spokesmen of the liberal Jewish public, there were some who warned against the danger that liberal Christianity would "swallow up" liberal Judaism. See: U. Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, pp. 162–164. The entire fourth chapter ("Protestantism and Judaism in a Liberal Perspective," pp. 160–232) is important for the subject of this book.

²⁴⁸ On the distinction between them see, Tal, *ibid.*, pp. 164–166.

²⁴⁹ An historicistic reading of the evolution of *halakhah*, which held that various *halakhot* reflect the circumstances of their time, was perceived as heresy. That is why

theless, the issue of the nature of Second Temple period Judaism was important not only as part of the Jewish-Christian debate about the essence of Judaism, or about the New Testament's link to the Bible. It also played an important role in the context of the internal Jewish debate: the various streams in nineteenth-century Judaism described the streams in Second Temple Judaism based on their own self-image and their image of the opposing camp, and presented themselves as the successors of the Pharisees or the Sadducees.²⁵⁰

“Wellhausen and his School in Bible Criticism”: Major Themes in the History of Modern “Heresy”

The main source of “heresy” in relation to the Bible in the nineteenth century, which gave rise to the camp paradoxically known as the “critic believers,” was the modern biblical criticism that developed and gained momentum mainly in the liberal Protestant camp from the beginning of the century. In a M.A. Ward’s best selling novel, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), the wife of the protagonist (a young minister, so influenced by the ideas of Bible criticism that he has left his ministry and become a social worker), raises the question: “If the Gospels are not true, in fact, as history, I cannot see how they are true at all, or of any value.” This question was posed by Christians not only in relation to the New Testament, but the Bible as well. Although the fundamental ideas of higher criticism had been voiced many years earlier – in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries²⁵¹ – they were held by very few, and encountered extremely sharp reactions from the Church and theological establishment, both the Catholic and the Protestant, that were manifested in persecution, excommunication and the burning of books that continued even into the first half of the nineteenth century.

The fundamental basis for this heresy was the contraposition of reason against religious authority and belief in revelation. The legitimization of critical reading of the biblical text itself (in particular of the Pentateuch) and of its history was derived from this basis, as was

Samson Raphael Hirsch harshly criticized David Hoffmann’s Ph.D. dissertation, *Mar Samuel, Rector der jüdischen Akademie zu Nahardea in Babylonien*, Leipzig, 1873. See: Rivka Horwitz (introduction and notes), *Mosche Pinchas (Elchanan) Wechsler, Ein Wort der Mahnung an Israel*, Jerusalem, 1991 (Hebrew).

²⁵⁰ See: Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew*, London-Portland, Org., 1997, pp. 319–322.

²⁵¹ See, in brief, Don Cameron Allen, *The Legend of Noah*, pp. 41–65.

criticism of biblical chronology (in particular by comparing it with extra-biblical chronologies). The humanists of the Renaissance and leaders of the Reformation introduced textual criticism, based on a direct approach to the biblical text without the interpretive mechanism of the Church, and in doing so, introduced doubt about the unity of the Pentateuch.²⁵² As a matter of fact, criticism of the Bible (and the New Testament) began with the “pagan” authors, who applied the rules of Hellenistic philology to the holy books of the Jews and the Christians. Porphyrius of the 3rd century A.D., for example, wrote in his book *The Polemic against the Christians* that the Old and New Testaments were composed of many books with diverse contents, written by various writers under different circumstances. As a result, first Constantine the Great and later Theodosius II, in his 448 A.D. edict (Codex Justinianus I,1,3), ordered his books to be burned.²⁵³ While many carried on the long tradition of attempts to create a correspondence between biblical chronology and Hellenist chronology in relation to the time prior to and after the Flood,²⁵⁴ others also began to voice doubts about the Bible’s chronology. One example of this is the skepticism expressed, under the influence of deism, by Isaac Newton (1642–1727) in his book *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms, Amended* (London, 1728), insofar as the reliability of biblical chronology is concerned. Newton argued that the Pentateuch is only one of the historical sources of the history of the ancient world, not the sole or authoritative one.²⁵⁵ In *Tractatus*

²⁵² Elie Halévy writes that Bible criticism could not have developed in the Anglican church in the same way that it did in Germany, because many of the Anglican clergymen were not well-versed in the Bible, and not because they were not permeated with the spirit of zealous orthodoxy. See: Elie Halévy, *England in 1815*, trans. from the French by E.I. Watkin and D.A. Barker, London, 1970 edn., pp. 390–391, and also: R.N. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in 18th Century England*, London, 1954.

²⁵³ See Introduction to Giancarlo Rinaldi, *Biblia Gentium: A First Contribution towards an Index of Biblical Quotations, References and Allusions made by Greek and Latin Heathen Writers of the Roman Imperial Times*, Rome, 1989 (in Italian), p. 140, and David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 111–118.

²⁵⁴ See: Ben Zion Wacholder, “Biblical Chronology in the Hellenistic World Chronicles”, in: *Harvard Theological Review*, 61, 1968, pp. 451–81; William Adler, *Time Immemorial*, Washington, D.C., 1989; Anthony Grafton, “Joseph Scaliger and Historical Chronology: The Rise and Fall of a Discipline”, in idem, *Defenders of the Text*, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, pp. 104–144; David Katz, *God’s Last Words*, pp. 74–115; Paolo Rossi, *The Dark Abyss of Time: The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago, 1984, pp. 123–192.

²⁵⁵ James E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, pp. 137–44; Frank E. Manuel, *The Enlightenment Confronts the Gods: The Tra-*

Theologico-Politicus, 1670, Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) argued that biblical chronology is flawed and unreliable, and hence the Bible cannot be considered an historical authority. More importantly, Spinoza completely secularized the Pentateuch by his out-and-out rejection of the authority of both the revelation and of interpretive tradition. In his opinion, the Pentateuch has neither a divine source nor a supernatural inspiration, but rather is a human creation written under certain historical circumstances. Therefore, men have an absolute right to freely and unbiasedly examine the Holy Scriptures (*et libero animo examinare*). He believed that the Bible reflects the views of its various authors, and hence each book should be read separately and the aspirations and views of the later author and his time should be understood, and that the Bible need not be read any differently than other texts.²⁵⁶ Other

ditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1800, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, pp. 25–103. The chronologies of the pagan peoples were described by Maimonides and Judah Halevi as idle, worthless legends (*A Guide for the Perplexed*, Book 3, Chapter 92; Judah Halevy, *Book of Kuzari*, trans. Hartwig Hirschfeld, New York, 1964 edn., p. 61).

²⁵⁶ Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, *A Theological-Political Treatise*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes, New York, 1951, pp. 98–159. See: J. Samuel Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority*, Cambridge, 2001; Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 43–68, 89–99. Harrison writes that Spinoza's *Treatatus Theologico-Politicus* was the most significant contribution to the development of the discipline of modern Bible criticism. R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1969, p. 10. See also: P. Slymovics, "Spinoza and Biblical Criticism," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, II (2), 1982/3, pp. 232–254; Jacob Joshua Ross, "Spinoza and the Interpretation of the Bible in our Day," in Menachem Brinker, M. Dascal and D. Nesher (eds.), *Baruch Spinoza: A Collection of Papers on His Thought*, Tel Aviv, 1979, pp. 116–127 (Hebrew); Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, 1952, Chicago, 1988 edn., pp. 142–201. In the view of Richard Popkin, it was the application of "scientific" thought to Bible study that was behind the struggle between theology and "science" in the seventeenth century. Spinoza wrote: "The method of interpreting the Bible is no different than the method of explaining science, but rather agrees with it entirely ... to interpret the Bible it is also essential to conduct a true history of the Bible and from it, as well as from accurate data, to draw the correct conclusions about the intentions of the authors of the Bible"; P.C. Craige, "The Influence of Spinoza in the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 50, 1978, pp. 23–32; R.H. Popkin, "Scepticism, Theology, and the Scientific Revolution in the Seventeenth Century", in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.), *Problems in the Philosophy of Science*, Amsterdam, 1968, pp. 1–29. See there the reaction of Momigliano, "The Greater Danger: Science or Biblical Criticism," pp. 33–36, and Popkin's reply, pp. 36–39. Also see Popkin's article, Biblical Criticism and Social Science," *Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 13, 1974, pp. 339–360, about the fact that scholars of the Conversos community did not adopt the radical interpretive orientation of the new Bible study, but rather ignored or rejected it, sometimes in an attempt to reconcile the contradictions in the Bible that this study exposed. See: David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe*, New Haven, Conn., 1995, pp. 280–284.

skeptics in the nineteenth century included Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), David Hume, and the French priest Richard Simon (1638–1712), who in his book *Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament*, (Paris, 1680) stated that the Bible is a document that embodies divine revelation, but that revelation is recounted by humans. Hence, the understanding and interpretation of the text are subject to study according to scientific methods. He believed that the Pentateuch, in particular the Book of Genesis, was written by two different authors, while the books of Joshua and Kings were written on the basis of notes of authors at a later date, but nonetheless in “the holy spirit.” All of these skeptics rejected both the validity of Bible cosmology and the idea of revelation, and contrasted biblical chronology with earlier chronologies.

The first to write a universal history that did not accept the biblical chronology and described the ancient civilizations of Egypt and China as more venerable and more important than the history of the Jews was Voltaire (1694–1778) in his book *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (Essay on the Customs and Spirit of Nations, 1756).²⁵⁷ Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) played no less important a role in secularizing the Bible when he declared that every religion and every faith is a human creation that undergoes historical development; hence, that the commandments of the Torah are time and place dependent and can be changed. In a similar vein, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), in his book *Vom Geist der ebräischen Poesie* (The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, 1782), stated that “the Bible must be read humanly, like a book written by man for man.”

The most radical view was put forward by the English deists, who rejected the belief in revelation and depicted the Jewish religion as part of the universal natural religion; a few among them even discerned traces of Egyptian influence in it.²⁵⁸ There were deists who claimed

²⁵⁷ Guy G. Stroumsa, “Antiquitates Judaicae: Some Precursors of the Modern Study of Israelite Religion”, in H. Lapin & D.B. Martin, *Jews, Antiquity*, pp. 17–32; idem, “Richard Simon: From Philology to Comparison,” *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*, 3, Leipzig, 2000, pp. 89–107. Simon called Protestantism “Karaitism.”

²⁵⁸ A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*; H. Graf Reventlow, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne*, pp. 470–671; Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, pp. 175–191; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge/Mass., 1997, pp. 55–143; Shmuel Ettinger, “Judaism and the Jews in the Eyes of Eighteenth-century English Deists,” in S. Ettinger, *Modern Anti-Semitism: Studies and Essays*, Tel Aviv, 1979 (2nd edn.), pp. 57–87 (Hebrew); Joseph Klausner, “Deism and Bible Criticism,” in idem, *Philosophers and Thinkers*, II, pp. 4–67, Jerusalem, 1956 (Hebrew). See: J. Goren, *The Image of Jews and Judaism*, pp. 41–90, Jerusalem, 1975 (Hebrew).

that the books of the Torah were written by Ezra and his pupils – some under the influence of pagan traditions and some a product of their authors' imagination. One difference between the deists and the majority of biblical critics who were their contemporaries was that the deists stressed the influence, which in their view, the cultural environment had exerted on the Bible.²⁵⁹ Deism's doctrine of natural religion was created under the influence of the vast knowledge accumulated

²⁵⁹ Under the influence of deist views, the German scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) wrote in his book *Mosaiches Recht*, Frankfurt a.M. (1770–1775, I–VI) that Moses' concept of law developed under Egyptian influence, but that his genius turned them into the laws of a tribe. Michaelis preceded Delitzsch in expressing the hope to see Europe devoid of Jews and the Bible. See: Jonathan M. Hess, "Johann David Michaelis and the Colonial Imaginary: Orientalism and the Emergence of Racial Antisemitism in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Jewish Social Studies*, 8 (2), Winter 2000, pp. 56–101. See also: Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 148–183. On English deism and its influence in Germany, see: J. W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*, pp. 147–289. Deist ideas, which were disseminated from Amsterdam, had an influence on the Haskalah from Mendelssohn and thereafter. See: Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah: Studies in Hebrew Literature of the Enlightenment in Germany*, Leiden, 1979, pp. 7–32. No comprehensive study has as yet been conducted on the Jewish response to the deist claim of an Egyptian influence on the Mosaic code. The English *maskil* Jacob Eliakim ben Abraham Hart, in his book *Milchamot HaShem* (The Wars of God, London, 1794) rebuffed the claim that the Mosaic Code was borrowed from the ancient Egyptians. See: David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key: Anglo-Jewry's Construction of Modern Jewish Thought*, Princeton, NJ, 2000; A. Barnett and S. Brodetsky, "Eliakim Ben Abraham (Jacob Hart): An Anglo-Jewish Scholar of the Eighteenth Century", *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 14, 1940, pp. 207–223. Another reaction came from the Frankfurt doctor, Asher Anshel Worms in his *Seyag laTorah* (A Fence Around the Torah, Frankfurt a.M., 1766) in response to the German deist, Johann Christian Edelmann's book *Moses mit aufgedeckten Angesichten*, (1740). See: S. Feiner, "The Early Haskalah in the Eighteenth Century," *Tarbiz*, 67 (2), January–March, 1990, pp. 119–220 (Hebrew); Edward Breuer, *The Limits of Enlightenment: Jews, Germans, and the Eighteenth-Century Study of Scripture*, pp. 112–115. Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805) described the deists as "destructive demons" who do not believe in Providence or prophecy and assert that the Torah is a human creation (Wessely, *HaLevanon*, 1765–1766). See: M. Pelli, *Struggle for Change*, p. 51. In 1866, the *maskil* Eliahu ben Nechemia Levine published a booklet entitled *Devar emet* in Vilna (at Rashi Fuenn's press), the first part of which related the contents of Friedrich Schiller's book *Die Sendung Moses* (1790), which described the influence of the Egyptian religion on Moses. In the second part, Levine attempted to contradict this view, depicting Schiller as an "enemy of the Jews" and his views as slanderous (despite the fact that Schiller regarded Moses as the father of the three monotheistic religions). Levine said he had written the apologetic booklet because Schiller was so popular, but in the end it helped to disseminate the very views that Levine was trying to combat. See the sharp words written by I. E. Kovner in his *Sefer hamatsref* (pp. 102–104) against Levine's booklet. He wrote it was one more of those books that translate the writings of Gentiles into Hebrew "for no purpose."

about various pagan religions following geographical discoveries, so it is no wonder that deism was perceived as an early version of the Babel-Bibel theory, and as equally fallacious.²⁶⁰ Deism actually predated Delitzsch's major claims by about three hundred years, not only the claim that Jewish monotheism preceded Babylonian monotheism, but also the description of the Bible – including the books of prophecy – as representing a barbaric, uncivilized, cruel tribal world.

In the early eighteenth century, criticism of the Massoretic version (of the Bible) became an established discipline in the Christian world,²⁶¹ and a field of polemics among Christians, as well as between Christians and a small group of English *maskilim*, who published their own translations of books of the Bible, defended the authenticity of the Massoretic version and reacted to the anti-Jewish trend that underpinned its criticism.²⁶² Nonetheless, skepticism about faith in the revelation or the unity of the Mosaic Code was still limited to small circles, and it met with a fierce attack by the Christian establishment.²⁶³ Very few Christians cast doubt on the reliability of the

²⁶⁰ Cossmann Werner (on him, see in Appendix) wrote that in the previous century (the 19th) the supposition was raised that Moses learned the truths from a sect of Egyptian priests, and that Goethe ("the most noble of the German poets") also mistakenly believed that. Today no one accepts that supposition; the Egyptian religion of death and the biblical religion of life contradict one another. Cossman Werner, "Das Judentum im Lichte moderner Kritik", *AZdJ*, 70, 1906, pp. 67–70, 81–83, 93–95.

²⁶¹ David S. Katz, "Vossius and the English Biblical Critics", in R. H. Popkin and A. VanderJagt (eds.), *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Leiden, 1993, p. 170, and idem, *God's Last Words*, pp. 179–211.

²⁶² See David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Enlightenment in an English Key*.

²⁶³ From the vast corpus of research literature on the history of Bible criticism, see: T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, London, 1893 (rep., Jerusalem, 1971); John Drury (ed.), *Critics of the Bible 1724–1873*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989; G.R. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible: The Road to Reformation*, Cambridge, Mass., 1985; Gerald Reedy, *The Bible and Reason: Anglicans and Scripture in Late Seventeenth-Century England*, Philadelphia, Pa., 1985; J.K.S. Reid, *The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible*, London, 1957; H.G. Reventlow, *Bibelautorität und Geist der Moderne*; E.G.H. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*; John W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*; Ronald E. Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*, Guildford and London, 1976; Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics*, New Haven, Conn., 1974; F.E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff*; J.W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, II, New York, 1942, pp. 575–591; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*; Cees Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, Kampen, 1994; Herbert F. Hahn, *Old Testament in Modern Research*, London, 1956; R.J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism since Graf*, Leiden,

historical story of the Bible. One could claim that Moses borrowed his code from the Egyptian religion, but by doing so, one was in fact accepting that he was an historical figure. We also should recall in this context that the polemic focused largely on the value of the Bible's cosmology (the stories of Creation and the Flood), and that from the seventeenth century many books were printed that tried to find an absolute parallel between the new sciences (astronomy, geology and the like) and events related in the book of Genesis.²⁶⁴

The history of modern Bible study has been described more than once, and hence we will mention only that this most important development in an understanding of the Bible was a result of the emergence of the "hypothesis of sources," in a book by the French physician, Jean Astruc (1684–1766) *Conjectures sur les Mémoires Originaux*, published in Brussels in 1753. This hypothesis was further developed in the first half of the nineteenth century in books by Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1849) in 1806,²⁶⁵ Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875)²⁶⁶ in 1831, Karl Heinrich Graf (1815–1869), whose name was added to Wellhausen's as the father of the Wellhausen-Graf school, and by many others. From the mid-nineteenth century the documentary hypothesis became a respected academic discipline, which did not deal in philological criticism of the text, nor in traditional interpretation, in *midrash* and allegory, nor even in a theological and philosophical discussion of religion in the Bible, but rather with the five books of the Pentateuch as a human creation, as a collection that

1970; Joseph Estlin Carpenter, *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1903; Rudolf Smend, "Julius Wellhausen und seine Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels", in idem, *Epochen der Bibelkritik: Gesammelte Studien*, Bd. 3, München, 1991, pp. 168–185 ("J. W., and his Prolegomena to the History of Israel", *Semeia* 25 [83]); H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, Oxford, 1951; J. P. Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, London, 1966; Yair Hoffman, *Aspects of Modern Biblical Criticism*, Tel Aviv, 1997, (Hebrew); Alexander Rofé, *Introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy*, Jerusalem, 1988 (Hebrew); Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen*, Oxford, 1998; A. T. Chapman, *An Introduction to the Pentateuch*, Cambridge, 1911; Alexander Rofé, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch*, Jerusalem, 1994 (Hebrew).

²⁶⁴ Among these numerous works, we will mention only the following: Thomas Campanella, *Apologia pro Galileo* (1616), trans., with an Introduction and Notes by Richard J. Blackwell, Notre Dame, Ind., 1994; Joseph Townsend, *The Character of Moses Established*, 1813.

²⁶⁵ On de Wette, see: J. W. Rogerson, *W.M.L. de Wette: Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism*, Sheffield, 1992, idem, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 28–68, and J. Goren, *The Image of Jews and Judaism*, pp. 216–251.

²⁶⁶ T. W. Davies, *Heinrich Ewald: Orientalist and Theologian, 1803–1903: A Century of Appreciation*, London, 1903.

has an evolutionary history. In other words, the Bible is a text that underwent an evolution, until it was finally canonized, and hence there are layers in it from various times. According to this view, the Bible is a collection that is not uniform in its content, and the books in it were written over a long time period by different authors.²⁶⁷ The main objective of philological-historical Bible criticism was to try to reconstruct the process of the Bible's composition from the Bible itself by exposing the layers of its final structure, and it proposed a systematic philological method for doing so.²⁶⁸

In Jewish literature, Wellhausen was described as “the father of those who employ a writer’s razor to cut all our holy books into shreds.”²⁶⁹ The documentary hypothesis was described as “vandalism that has taken over the temple of Judaism.”²⁷⁰ Julius Wellhausen did, in fact, do more than all his predecessors to turn Bible criticism into a dominant scientific dogma. He carried on a long tradition of critical textual study, but he developed the theory of his predecessors into a sophisticated, dominant method that set the tone in Bible research for generations to come.²⁷¹ After the first version of Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* was published in 1878, and even more so after the updated version (*Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*)²⁷² was

²⁶⁷ Kraeling, *Old Testament Criticism since the Reformation*, pp. 43–56.

²⁶⁸ Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*, pp. 7–30; Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 57–58; M. Soloweitschik and S. Rubascheff, *The History of Bible Criticism*, pp. 65–99. In David Katz’ view, the opinion that the Pentateuch had a human author made a considerable contribution to a new understanding of the author as an individual personality, endowed with “authorial genius”, a person who works from the power of inspiration. As a result, it was possible to see the Book of Moses not as the result of divine revelation but as a part of the process of divine inspiration on a special individual. See Katz, *God’s Last Words*, pp. 178–211. Alexander Rofé also believed that it was the Romantic and ground-breaking concept of an author of creative genius that influenced the division into four sources, each of which had one author. See Rofé, *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch*, p. 80.

²⁶⁹ Y.E. Melamed, *Sefer shivtei Yisrael* (see Chapter Three) and Nahum M. Sarna, “From Wellhausen to Kaufman”, *Midstream*, 7, Summer 1961, pp. 64–74. Franz Rosenzweig described Wellhausen as the bête noire of Jewish orthodoxy, Rosenzweig, “Zum ersten Band der Encyclopaedia Judaica”, *Der Morgen*, 4 (3), 1928, p. 290.

²⁷⁰ L. Goldschmied, *Der Kampf um Babel-Bibel im Lichte des Judentums*, Frankfurt am Main, 1903, pp. 3.

²⁷¹ Clements, *A History of Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 7–12; Soloweitschik & Rubascheff, *The History of Bible Criticism*, pp. 93–100. They write: “And this theory of Graf-Wellhausen has founded an entire generation of scholars and builders who have become its advocates, and it has expanded and been perfected” (p. 98).

²⁷² In 1889 Wellhausen published his book *Die Compostion des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*. See: John L. Barton, “Wellhausen’s

published in 1883, the ideas of the documentary hypothesis held sway in Christian Bible study. The German Assyriologist, Fritz Hommel (1854–1936), one of its formidable critics, quoted the words of Carl Heinrich Cornill (1854–1920), a member of the school of Bible criticism, who wrote that “scarcely any branch of scientific study has, during the last few generations, undergone such a revolution as that dealing with the Old Testament. A rigidly critical attitude has taken the place of the traditional view of the history of the Hebrew religion.”²⁷³ In the early twentieth century, it seemed, as George Adam Smith (1856–1942) wrote in his *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (1901), that “criticism has won its war against the traditional theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity.”²⁷⁴ A. S. Palmer wrote that “the ‘Higher Criticism’, whatever mistakes it may have made in details, has at least obtained this clear result, that the human or subjective elements in the Bible are now more fully recognized than before.”²⁷⁵

Of course, the documentary hypothesis did not fail to arouse fierce opposition on the part of many of the Christian theologians and biblical scholars,²⁷⁶ but by the end of the nineteenth century it seemed that

‘Prolegomena to the History of Israel’: Influences and Effects”, in D. Smith-Christopher (ed.), *Text and Experience: Towards a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible*, Sheffield, 1995, pp. 316–329; Rogerson, *OT Criticism*, pp. 273–289. Goldwin Smith, a professor of history at Oxford, wrote in the early 1860s “I have lived into an age of express-trains, ocean greyhounds, electricity, bicycles, globetrotting evolution, the higher criticism, and general excitement and restlessness” quoted in David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, p. 9. Katz writes that: “The German conquest of the Bible was unstoppable and swept over England like a clergyman’s nightmare,” in David Katz, *God’s Last Words*, p. 217.

²⁷³ Fritz Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, London, 1897, p. 3. See also in Chapter 3.

²⁷⁴ Quoted in Nigel M. de S. Cameron, *Biblical Higher Criticism and the Defense of Infallibilism in 19th Century Britain*, Lewiston/Queenston, 1987. This book includes a detailed description of the sharp opposition to higher criticism in Britain and the process of its acceptance.

²⁷⁵ A. Smythe Palmer, *Babylonian Influence on the Bible and Popular Beliefs*, London, 1897, p. 1. See also: C.R. Nort, “Pentateuchal Criticism,” in H.H. Rowley (ed.) *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research*, Oxford, 1951, pp. 48–83. Harvey writes that “the application of the principles of historical criticism to the Bible in the nineteenth century was a traumatic event in the history of Protestantism.” See: Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief*, London, 1969 edn., p. 6; Menahem Haran, “The appearance of biblical critical research constituted somewhat of a sensational innovation, which had no place in the concepts or the imagination of the early exegetes,” idem, *Biblical Research in Hebrew: A Discussion of its Characters and Trends*, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 8.

²⁷⁶ See Kraeling, pp. 95–97, and Clements, pp. 1–2. The Jewish Encyclopedia summed up Wellhausen’s endeavor as follows: “His chief contribution to Biblical scholar-

“the representatives of the orthodox opponents of this school are being gradually reduced to a minority.”²⁷⁷ Hence, Hommel²⁷⁸ wrote regretfully, it was very hard to free the young German theologians who are “bewitched and confused by the daring of Wellhausen’s scientific demonstrations” and to restore the Bible to its firm position.²⁷⁹

Wellhausen’s theory dealt with the stages of development of the Jewish religion in accordance with the order in which the books of the Pentateuch were written. The order of writing and editing it proposed for the Pentateuch differed from the one that exists in the Bible, which it claimed did not reflect the true order of these stages. Wellhausen suggested an evolutionary view of the development of biblical faith and religion, based on Hegelian philosophy, on the one hand, and on a philological analysis of the biblical text, on the other. According to him, the Torah had four major sources: the E and J (Elohist and Jahwehist or Tetragrammaton), were described as popular sources and dated by him to an earlier time; these, according to his theory, were combined into a single document by an editor (Rje); the D source (short for Deuteronomist) was dated to the time of Josiah, who also combined D with the two earlier sources, while the P (short for Priestly document) source was dated to the time of the Second Temple,²⁸⁰ and added by the editor to the version edited by Rd.²⁸¹ In Wellhausen’s view, the last – Priestly – version reflects the theocratic Jewish approach, which was the basis for Pharisaic and “decadent”²⁸²

ship was the final resolution of the problem of the historical order of the main documents of the Pentateuch, which has, in its main outlines, been followed by all subsequent Bible critics,” *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York and London, vol. 10, 1943 (1948 edn.), p. 500.

²⁷⁷ Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ On him, see Chapter 3.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 317.

²⁸⁰ For a brief, cogent review of the method, see in Yair Hoffman, *Aspects of Modern Biblical Criticism*.

²⁸¹ Wellhausen used these symbols: “... the Jehovahistic history book is denoted by the symbol JE, the Jehovahistic part by J, and the Elohistic by E; the ‘main stock’ pure and simple, which is distinguished by its systematizing history and is seen unalloyed in Genesis, is called the Book of Four Covenants and is symbolised by Q; for the ‘main stock’ as a whole (as modified by an editorial process) the title of Priestly Code and the symbol RQ (Q and Revisers) are employed.” See Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (prefaced by Prof. W. Robertson Smith), Cleveland, 1957 edn., p. 8. According to Wellhausen, the order in which the parts of the Pentateuch were composed is: the Jehovahistic source in the 9th century; the Elohistic in the 8th century; the Deuteronomistic in the 7th century, and the Priestly Code in the 6th–5th centuries.

²⁸² In this sense, Wellhausen concurred with Christian scholars of the Second Temple period, who were mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, and on his part, he

rabbinical Judaism. He believed that while the oldest layer of Jewish religion was a “natural religion,”²⁸³ which later developed into the ethical monotheism of the Prophets, the religion – in a regressive process – after the Exilic period, became a theocratic priestly religion and lost its creative power (*Schöpferische Kraft*).²⁸⁴ Wellhausen concluded his book with the following words: “That heathenism in Israel against which the prophets vainly protested was inwardly overcome by the law on its own ground; and the cultus, after nature had been killed in it, became the shield of supernaturalistic monotheism.”²⁸⁵ Wellhausen’s theory, then, did not argue only against the unity of the Pentateuch and date its writing to a later time; it also questioned the story it tells about the history of the Jewish faith.²⁸⁶

In Wellhausen’s opinion, the stories of the Patriarchs were mythological and legendary, but he believed that Moses was an historical figure who shaped the tribes of Israel into a nation and gave it a national god. He drew a distinction between Moses the historical leader of a primitive tribe of nomads, and Moses the lawgiver. He had only praise for Moses the leader, but he did not attribute the writing of the Mosaic Code to him. He also discredited the historical core of the story of the exodus from Egypt, but argued that the tradition about this event was written later and bore a legendary, imaginary character.²⁸⁷ Moreover, Wellhausen did not negate the reliability of the tradition of the tribes’ settlement in the land of Canaan, but believed that the version of this tradition recounted in the Book of Judges is more reliable than the account in the Book of Joshua.²⁸⁸

influenced others. On the influence of Wellhausen’s theory on Friedrich Nietzsche, see: Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche and the Jews*, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 160–163.

²⁸³ Following Wellhausen, Nietzsche wrote: “At first, particularly during the monarchic period, the attitude of the Jewish people towards everything was a correct attitude, namely a natural attitude” (*Der Antichrist*, section 52).

²⁸⁴ And the Jewish people, from *das Volk des Wortes*, became the people of the Book (in the sense of a written code of law) created by the Sages (*Schriftgelehrten*).

²⁸⁵ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, p. 425.

²⁸⁶ See: Peter Slymovics, “Y. Kaufmann’s Critique of J. Wellhausen: A Philosophical-Historical Perspective,” in *Zion*, 49 (1), 1984, pp. 61–92 (Hebrew); on Kaufmann’s Critique of Wellhausen see also: Thomas Krapf, *Yehezkel Kaufmann: ein Lebens- und Erkenntnisweg zur Theologie der hebräischen Bibel*, Berlin 1990 (Studien zu Kirche und Israel, 11; Friedemann Philipp Boschwitz, *Julius Wellhausen*, Jerusalem, 1982 (Hebrew) (orig., Marburg, 1938)).

²⁸⁷ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, pp. 262, 295.

²⁸⁸ J.H. Hayes, “Wellhausen as a Historian of Israel”, *Semeia*, 25 (37), 1982, pp. 37–60.

Some scholars claim that Wellhausen ignored the rich literature discovered in Mesopotamia about twenty years before he wrote his book, and that if he had not, he might have changed his opinion about the time when the Pentateuch was compiled, and would not have dated it to a later time. In fact, Wellhausen was familiar with the initial results of the archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia and the various publications of the Assyrian-Babylonian documents,²⁸⁹ but he made scant use of them to gain an understanding of the Bible because he believed they did not contain sufficient evidence to serve as a basis for his arguments. When the number of deciphered documents from Mesopotamia grew in number, he was already occupied in research in other fields. In this context, it is important to note that according to Wellhausen's method, Jewish faith developed immanently, not as a result of outside influences. He did not draw any parallels between Babylonian and Israelite culture; on the contrary, the ancient sources discovered in Mesopotamia only confirmed what was already known: Babylonian culture was a pagan-polytheistic culture and the Jahwist-prophetic movement regarded it as an abomination and fought against it. Although that movement used Mesopotamian cosmogonic myths (in his view, this did not happen until the time of King Solomon), it reshaped them as a means of glorifying Jahweh.²⁹⁰ In his *Prolegomena*

²⁸⁹ See Wellhausen's review of George Smith's book *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, 1875, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1 (21), 14. October 1876, pp. 539–541, as well as his article, “Über den bisherigen Gang und gegenwärtigen Stand der Keilenzifferung”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 31, 1876, pp. 153–175. In the first article, Wellhausen wrote, contrary to Smith's opinion, that it was possible to look for connections between the two chronologies. See: Moshe Weinfeld, “The Roots of Julius Wellhausen's Theory,” *Hagut bamikra*, vol. 3, Tel Aviv, 1979, p. 140 (Hebrew). Weinfeld writes that Wellhausen was not familiar with the cultural background in which the Israelites developed, and that now “We know that the Jewish people came into being at the crossroads between two ancient cultures in the region (Egypt and Babylonia).” This is a puzzling comment, since Wellhausen was familiar with this cultural background, but did not think it as important as many others did in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Knowledge about this cultural background is not as new as Weinfeld suggests, and the Babel-Bibel controversy proves that. Also see: M. Weinfeld, “Julius Wellhausen's Understanding of the Law of Ancient Israel and its Fallacies,” in idem (ed.) *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, 4, Jerusalem, 1980, pp. 62–93 (Hebrew); Joel Sweek, “The Monuments, the Babel-Bibel Streit and Responses to Historical Criticism,” in S.W. Holloway and L.K. Handy (eds.), *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 190, 1995, pp. 413–414.

²⁹⁰ Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 308. On the question of whether there was a Deuteronomist movement, see: Norbert Lohfink, “Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?”, in W. Gross (ed.), *Jeremia und die 'deuteronomistische Bewegung'*, *Bonner Biblische Beiträge*, Bd. 98, Weinheim, 1995, pp. 313–382.

ena, Wellhausen relied on George Smith²⁹¹ in stating that the ancient biblical New Year, already a custom during the monarchic period, changed in the Exilic period under the influence of the Babylonian New Year, which took place in the spring, and that the Sabbath, first determined according to the moon, was fundamentally changed in the Priestly version to sever its ties with idolatry.²⁹²

Wellhausen's name became synonymous with radical heresy (the "false critique") in the sanctified tradition because his theory was the basis for the secular and historicist approach to the development of the Jewish faith and religion. The accusation that he held anti-Semitic views was generally linked to opinions he expressed in his book about Second Temple Judaism and the character of Pharisaic Judaism, and not necessarily to the documentary hypothesis. However, since his opinion of Pharisaic Judaism was based on the way in which he described the development of Judaism in the biblical period, those who accused him of anti-Semitism did not always distinguish between the documentary hypothesis and the historical and theological conclusions he drew from it in relation to the essence of Judaism.²⁹³

The Reaction in Germany to the "Wellhausen Heresy"

Jewish scholars and rabbis were not the only contesters on the front line of the polemic with Wellhausen and the documentary hypothesis. High Bible criticism, particularly as Wellhausen had formulated it, was perceived as one of the great innovations of the second half of the nineteenth century. It had many advocates outside of Germany,

²⁹¹ See Chapter 3.

²⁹² On Wellhausen's position regarding the lunar feast, that is, the new moon and Sabbath, see in Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, pp. 112–120. This was one of the subjects at the heart of the Babel-Bibel controversy (see Chapter 10).

²⁹³ Rudolf Smend, "Julius Wellhausen und seine Prolegomina zur Geschichte Israels," and "Wellhausen und das Judentum," in idem, *Gesammelte Studien*, Band 3, *Epochen der Bibelkritik*, pp. 168–83; 186–215; D. A. Knight (ed.), *Julius Wellhausen and his Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, Chico, California, 1983; L. H. Silberman, "Wellhausen and Judaism", *Semeia*, 25, 1982, pp. 75–82. Barton argues that Wellhausen's criticism of priestly and Pharisaic "legalism" stemmed from his criticism of the Protestant church and not from his attitude towards Judaism. See: J. Barton, "Wellhausen's Prolegomena," pp. 322–325. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* notes that "Although his works are monuments of marvelous scholarship, they may be said to be marred by an unmistakable anti-Jewish bias and a consequent ignoring of the labors of Jewish writers," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, New York and London, vol. 12, 1905 (1916 edn.), p. 501.

but its enemies and critics were no fewer in number. In England, for example, it sparked the dissatisfaction and criticism of various circles, that watched with horror as this ill wind threatened to undermine longstanding, deeply rooted beliefs. Although a Catholic thinker like John Henry Newman (1801–1890) claimed that the issue of the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures was a Protestant, not a Catholic²⁹⁴ problem, and hence Catholics need not fear modern Bible criticism, the prevailing view among Church circles and theologians, including Catholics, was that Bible criticism posed a thorny dilemma for them. Anyone opposed to the rules of modern interpretation could not veto it, Mark Pattison (1864–1943) wrote, adding that “to veto interpretation was to reduce scripture to silence.”²⁹⁵

Even to Protestant orthodoxy this was a destructive heresy. Hommel wrote that “the orthodox or conservative party naturally regarded an acceptance of the new theories as equivalent to admitting that the Old Testament is nothing more, from beginning to end, than a tissue of pious deceptions, an admission which, of course, was entirely opposed to their conception of its inspired character.”²⁹⁶ Other renowned biblical scholars, such as Ernest Sellin (1867–1945),²⁹⁷ Adam C. Welch (1864–1943), Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932),²⁹⁸ Gustav Hermann Dalman (1855–1941), Rudolph Kittel (1853–1929), and many others, criticized the documentary hypothesis, which was not only distinctly theological in nature, but also bore a historical-philosophical and historical-positivistic character.²⁹⁹ Critics of the theory objected mainly to the suggestion to date the writing of the Priestly (P) version to the end of the First Temple period, or even to the Exilic

²⁹⁴ See: D. Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*, pp. 220–223. John Newman, one of the heads of the “Oxford movement,” joined the community of Oratorian priests in Rome. Nonetheless, in the Roman Catholic church there was also a “liberal” stream and a “conservative” stream.

²⁹⁵ Pattison was the Rector of Lincoln College at Oxford. Quoted in Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture*. See: Katz, *God's Last Words*, p. 242.

²⁹⁶ Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Traditions*, p. 5.

²⁹⁷ Ernst Sellin, *Die alttestamentliche Religion im Rahmen der andern Altorientalischen*, Leipzig, 1908.

²⁹⁸ On Gunkel, see: Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*, pp. 12–16; Kraeling, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 46–126.

²⁹⁹ See: O. Naumann, *Wellhausen's Methode, kritisch beleuchtet*, Leipzig, 1886; Martin Kegel, *Away from Wellhausen: A Contribution to the New Orientation in Old Testament Study*, trans. M. Nolloth, London, 1924; H. E. Ryle, *The Holy Scripture and Criticism*, New York, 1904; G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of Old Testament*, London, 1901; R. Anderson, *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, London, 1902; W. Möller, *Are the Critics Right? Historical and Critical Considerations against Graf-Wellhausen's Hypothesis*, London, 1903.

period.³⁰⁰ Kittel, who accepted a large part of the documentary hypothesis, believed in the revelation to Moses and in the antiquity of Israelite monotheism,³⁰¹ and held that Moses had a highly-developed perception of God, although not an original monotheistic perception. In any event, it was a far more sublime perception of God than that which characterized his primitive environment.³⁰² Sellin believed that Moses' faith was proto-monotheism, which developed later into prophetic monotheism. Instead of a theory of the diachronic development of religious faith from one stage to another, Kittel and Sellin proposed a synchronic picture, according to which different layers of religious faith (popular, prophetic and priestly) existed alongside one another. As we shall see later, this theory was adopted by orthodox Jewish scholars as a reply to the idea of the evolution of the biblical religion.

Two strategies were adopted by those who opposed the documentary hypothesis. The first, criticism from within, rejected the historicization of the Pentateuch on the basis of a different reading of the biblical text and suggested explanations for contradictions, repetitions and various names of God. The second, criticism from without, rejected the historicization of the Pentateuch on the basis of extra-biblical evidence. According to this claim, this evidence proves that the Hebrews in the time of Moses were not semi-barbaric nomads, but actually had a developed culture, and that the historical tradition related in the Bible was based on authentic ancient traditions that had been written down in a very early period. From this standpoint, the assumption was that if it transpired that the extra-biblical documents confirmed the biblical story, then that showed that the "higher critics ... play the part of Balaam, however little they may have foreseen or desired the issue."³⁰³ Consequently, Hommel devoted an extensive discussion to the story of the war of the kings (Genesis 14), to prove by means of the relevant Babylonian documents that it is based on authentic historical traditions, and by no means is it a later invention.

³⁰⁰ Hahn, *The Old Testament*, pp. 103–109, and Kraeling, *Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 126–146. Among the many articles on the Wellhausen method and criticism of it, see: Douglas A. Knight, "Wellhausen and the Interpretation of Israel's Literature," *Semeia*, 25 (83), pp. 21–36; S. A. Geller, "Wellhausen and Kaufmann", *Midstream*, 31 (1), 1985, pp. 39–48; G. Larsson, "The Documentary Hypothesis and the Chronological Structure of the Old Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 97 (3), 1985, pp. 316–336.

³⁰¹ Kraeling, *Old Testament Criticism*, p. 132.

³⁰² Hahn, *The Old Testament*, p. 104.

³⁰³ Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition*, p. 27.

The theologians and Christian biblical scholars who criticized Wellhausen's theory provided support for the Jewish apologists. The latter followed the publications in this domain and frequently quoted from books and articles printed in professional journals. For example, in 1897, Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940), who wrote numerous studies on Jewish history in various periods,³⁰⁴ published a series of four articles in the *Hashiloah* periodical, in which he reviewed the development of Bible criticism and the views of the "Wellhausen school." He described Heinrich Ewald (1803–1875), Wellhausen's teacher in Göttingen, as "one of the finest writers of Jewish history among the Gentiles," and contrasted him with Wellhausen.³⁰⁵ Ze'ev Jawitz quoted, with satisfaction, Hommel's call for an end to the "sterile longwinded debates" of Bible criticism,³⁰⁶ as well as words of other Christian scholars, as evidence of what he described as the absolute worthlessness of the documentary hypothesis. Avraham Shmuel Hirschberg (1858–1943), the translator of Kittel's book into Hebrew, published in Vilna in 1911,³⁰⁷ explained that although Kittel was a "freethinking" critic who divided the five books of the Pentateuch into "various compilations and versions," he was not a heretic like Wellhausen. As a Christian, Kittel had no need of Jewish tradition, but "nonetheless, he did not denigrate it."³⁰⁸ His main purpose in translating Kittel's book (the major claims of which we will describe later) into Hebrew was the lack of a suitable book by a Jewish writer. However, it was probably also convenient

³⁰⁴ His major book is *A Literary-Historical Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*, 3 vol., 1923–1925 (Hebrew). Also see in Chapter 13.

³⁰⁵ Bernfeld, "Dorshei reshumot" (on Jewish Historiography), *Hashiloach*, 4, 1897, pp. 509–513. In addition to praising Ewald as an historian, Bernfeld denounced him as a "scholar of biblical literature," whose theory of sources was "murky water," which his students also imbibed, and which led to "a confusion in their understanding of the Holy Scriptures, and consequently also of the stories of history."

³⁰⁶ "Toledot hachatitot vebachakikot", p. 1. In his introduction, Jawitz wrote that it was unthinkable that he would have to write in Hebrew, but since it turned out that some Jews believe in "the narrow-mindedness of the Gentiles," he was forced to do so. He wrote that the European Bible critics "need to be treated by psychiatrists," *ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁰⁷ Hirschberg was a textile manufacturer, an Orthodox Zionist and scholar. Among other works, he wrote a book on the biblical period and a critical study of modern Bible criticism. Bialik, who read the manuscript, wanted to publish it, but as far as we know, the manuscript was lost.

³⁰⁸ Rudolph Kittel, *Hachakirah bekitvei hakodesh al pi maskanoteiba hayoter chashuvot* (The Most Important Conclusions of Research on the Holy Scriptures), published by *Biblioteka*, Vilna, 1911 (second edition 1913), p. 164. This is an adaptation of Kittel's book *Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft in ihren wichtigsten Ergebnissen*, Leipzig 1910. Also see Chapter 3 and Chapter 11.

for him to use a work by a renowned Christian German scholar in the struggle against Wellhausen and his school of “Protestant nihilism”:

The Bible criticism adhered to by Christian scholars, and in which they hold nearly sole sway, has in recent times, since hatred of Israel has dressed itself in scientific guise, become one of the most dangerous weapons against Israel employed by scientific anti-Semites, to deny it the honor of its past origin, to muddy its fountainhead, and to shockingly degrade its Torah and laws, and all this supposedly on the basis of science. May our ears be deaf to all the fallacious hypotheses based on false analogies and vain imaginings all intended to destroy the foundations of Judaism, in religion, ethics and history. The means they use for this purpose are to compile the abominations of all the idol worshippers in Egypt, Arabia, Babylonia, Assyria, Persia and Media, along with their absurd customs, and to attribute them all to the Israelites, in the ancient times of the Holy Scriptures, and to make them the source and the foundation for all the laws of our Torah, as well as to claim that the largest part of the five books of the Torah, its most prominent laws and a large part of the other holy writings, were written in later times, after the Babylonian Exile, in order to divest them of their authenticity and their ancient origin.³⁰⁹

Jawitz averred that, in his view, at the very time when destructive Bible criticism was dwindling in the Christian world, its obsolete ideas were finding their way into the Jewish world, and hence it is so important to show those who doubt the sanctity and unity of the Bible, as well as those educated, pious believers (who need no outside corroboration) that their faith also prevails against scientific criticism, and that in actual fact, the research is consistent with the tradition. Thus, in parallel to his efforts to expose the ignorance of the Christian critics of the Bible, who do not know how to read Hebrew properly and hence make serious errors, Jawitz also found some among them worthy of being defenders of the Bible.

The dilemma that confronted the Jews, particularly from the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but in an earlier version from the period of the early Haskalah, was whether to ignore the documentary hypothesis or to react to it, and if so, how and with what tools.

Before describing the development of the Jewish reaction to nineteenth-century Bible criticism, it is important to note that it did not depend only on internal factors originating in Jewish society, but rather to a larger extent on the overall German background. After Napoleon’s defeat in 1812 and until the 1860s, reactionary trends edged out liberal Protestantism and strengthened conservative Protestantism. In an atmosphere of that sort, it was impossible to publish critical

³⁰⁹ Hirshberg’s Introduction to Kittel, pp. 162–163.

works, and the attitude towards Bible criticism was cautious, if not hostile. The reason radical *maskilim* on the German periphery had already been able to voice radical views in the mid-nineteenth century was probably due to the fact that they wrote in Hebrew and did not need to concern themselves with outside censorship. Members of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, founded in 1819, who strongly believed in the possibility of renewing Judaism through science (namely, the science of history) and its principles, and manifested a positive attitude towards Bible criticism as a scientific discipline, refrained from engaging in study of the Bible,³¹⁰ because they were apprehensive about openly expressing this view.

This reserved, cautious attitude is reflected in the liberal journal *AZdJ*. Its editor, Ludwig Philippson (1811–1889) wrote in 1857 that Bible criticism had created “terrible confusion and chaos” by “tearing the books of the Bible into shreds”: every critic bases his views on his own reading of the Bible and arrives at diverse conclusions, and hence the work of the critical school can be regarded as worthless. It is ridiculous, Philippson added, that modern Jews have hastened to jump on the galloping wagon of this criticism.³¹¹

In a novel, *Buchenstein und Cohnberg: Ein Familiengemälde aus der Gegenwart*, by the radical reform rabbi Salomon Formstecher (1808–1889), published in 1863, one of the characters says:

The conclusion, the truth of which is proven with certainty by one scholar today, is later refuted as false by another scholar with the same degree of certainty. One proves that the first two chapters in Genesis are the earliest segments of the Bible, and the other persuades you with the same clarity that they ought to be regarded as the latest.³¹²

³¹⁰ Only in the third issue of their journal, did an article appear by the mathematician and philosopher, Lazarus Bendavid (1762–1832), which contained the claim that Moses did not write the Pentateuch in the extant version and that the original version of the Ten Commandments was not preserved. Lazarus Bendavid published his theory in a pamphlet entitled *Über die Religion der Ebräer vor Moses* (On the Religion of the Hebrews before Moses, Berlin, 1812) which aroused harsh reactions by both Christians and Jews. Bendavid proposed a model of the development of ancient religions and claimed that the concepts of the divinity of the Patriarchs was consistent with those of the Egyptians and differed from those of the Canaanites. He also used the division into a J source and an E source.

³¹¹ L. Philippson, “Die Bibel und ihre Auslegung,” (The Bible and its Interpretation), *AZdJ*, 21, 1857, pp. 41–43.

³¹² On his philosophy of religion, see: Eliezer Schweid, *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*, Part II, Tel Aviv, 2002, pp. 40–50 (Hebrew). In large part, the discussion of the attitude of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* towards Bible criticism in the following pages is largely based on Ran Hacohen, *The Encounter of Wissenschaft des Judentums in Germany with Nineteenth-Century Biblical Criti-*

From the 1860s, particularly from the 1880s, liberal Protestantism repossessed its place at center stage, and, as we shall see, the documentary hypothesis became a popular scientific dogma. Then liberal Jewish scholars were also free not only to unconcernedly accept the principles of Bible criticism, but also to publicly express radical views. They hoped to find allies in the liberal Protestant camp, among other reasons because they believed this camp's reading of the Bible was a scientific reading, free of the tradition of the Christological reading and the long-lasting Jewish-Christian polemic.

Although Philippson wrote in 1889 that Bible criticism did not reach the broad public and remained only within a small circle of scholars,³¹³ in actual fact the radical views found their way to the educated public.

Bible Criticism as a Challenge and a Crisis

We begin with an anecdote from *Chatot neurim* (Sins of Youth, 1872–1873), the autobiography of Moshe Leib Lilienblum (1843–1910), a radical *maskil* and later a nationalist. Lilienblum describes the emotional turmoil that gripped him after he read in the issues of *Hechalutz* ("The Pioneer") articles by the radical *maskil* Joshua (Osias) Heschel Schorr (1818–1895) and Abraham Krochmal (1823–1895), Nachman Krochmal's son, about Spinoza's Bible criticism.³¹⁴ Before reading these articles, he had had complete faith in the existence of the Creator and a divinely given Torah, and everything written in the Torah had been sacred to him; and now, after having read them, he was agitated by the discovery that the Bible "in its present form" was written in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, and that it had previously consisted of a number of scrolls and was not known to the Jewish people before the time of King Josiah. His peace of mind was troubled by the idea that the Pentateuch also contained legendary stories, and hence the laws of the Torah should be separated from the stories of the Bible. His encounter with these views caused him much confusion and perplexity, in his own words: "It was very difficult for me. For

cism, Ph.D.dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2002 (Hebrew). On the novel, see in HaCohen, p. 127.

³¹³ "Die Bibelkritik in Frankreich," *AZdJ*, 53 (36), 1889, pp. 559–561.

³¹⁴ On Schorr, see below. A. Krochmal, "Ivri anokhi," *Hechalutz*, IV. And see: *Hak-tav ve-hamikhtav* (Writing and the Letter, Lemberg, 1874), and idem, *Die Theologie der Zukunft*, Lemberg, 1872. On Nachman Krochmal, see below.

is it possible that they would write legendary stories and read them aloud before thousands of people and say to them explicitly that they saw these deeds with their own eyes?" His tormented inability to decide between the God of Israel and the "god of Spinoza" went on for about a year, and finally Lilienblum chose Spinoza's god. As a result of this choice, he found himself "alone and abandoned in the world of the living."³¹⁵ In this autobiographical confession, even a reserved acceptance of the main points of the documentary hypothesis (before Wellhausen's book was published) is depicted as a manifestation of apostasy attended by a profound psychological crisis. The confession also casts light on the deep-set inhibitions of the Jewish *maskil*, even a radical one, in relation to nineteenth-century Bible criticism.³¹⁶ He was unable to avoid exposure to the new theory, and once he was laid open to it, he was strongly affected by it.

Inhibitions of the sort described in Lilienblum's confession left the impression that the Jewish reaction to the documentary hypothesis was hesitant and very slow in coming.³¹⁷ Max Wiener explained that the reason for this delayed reaction and the restrictions members of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* placed upon themselves regarding this sensitive subject, in the "most terrifying century," was clearly a result of "the vestiges of the influence of traditional faith in the sanctity of the [divine] inspiration," a faith that gave rise to mixed reactions of fear and eschewal of the "terrifying" criticism of the ancient source of Judaism.³¹⁸ Benno Jacob declared at a rabbinical conference held in Berlin at the end of 1906, that "We should not, for dogmatic reasons,

³¹⁵ M. L. Lilienblum, *Ktavim autobiographiyim* (Autobiographical Writings), vol. 2, pp. 45–51. Judah Leib Levin (1844–1925) counts the volumes of *Hechalutz* among the books that evoked his doubts and uncertainties and finally made him a "free-thinker." See: J. L. Levin, *Zikronot vehegyononot*, pp. 44–45.

³¹⁶ Lilienblum relates how he found it difficult "to sever the ties that bound him," and that even after he accepted Krochmal's hypothesis (that the present version of the Torah was written in the time of Josiah), although he allowed himself to carry a lit candle on the Sabbath, he did not allow himself to extinguish it, because putting out a candle is a major form of work according to the Talmud. *Ktavim autobiographiyim*, p. 60, n. 77.

³¹⁷ Cees Houtman, *Der Pentateuch*, pp. 165–172.

³¹⁸ Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation*, p. 211–212. Haran also concurred with this view and wrote about the "historical delay in the meeting between this subject and the Hebrew language. This comment is based on a partial review of the literature written by Jews on the subject, which led him to conclude that the scholars of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* had no ambitions in this direction and that even the most extreme maskilim engaged only in "pretty wild emendations in the biblical text," and did not engage in textual criticism in the spirit of higher criticism because "the Bible still served as a last bastion of pure faith." Haran, *Biblical Research in Hebrew*, pp. 14–15.

leave Biblical scholarship to Protestant theologians; we need unbiased scholarship of our own.”³¹⁹ His words met with strong opposition, which reflected the tendency of nearly all circles to abstain from Bible criticism. Nearly thirty years later, at the beginning of his book on Genesis, *Das erste Buch der Tora* (1934), Jacob repeated this view and argued that it was a disgrace that Jews still needed Christian research in order to understand their holy book. In other words, despite the research that had already been conducted, of which Jacob did not have a high opinion, there were still grounds for the claim that no independent, methodological Jewish research, worthy of the name, existed. In Nahum Glatzer’s opinion, the main reason why *maskilim* and members of *Wissenschaft* refrained from dealing with the documentary hypothesis was because they strongly wished to avoid any confrontation with Christian science.³²⁰ In an article published in *Hashiloach* in 1913, Chaim Arye Chazan (1863–1941), a *maskil* from Chorodna (who later moved to Vilna), suggested a simpler explanation: their apprehension stemmed from the knowledge that the documentary hypothesis irreparably undermined the foundations of the faith, and hence “until recent times any dealings with Bible criticism were far from Jewish authors because they naively thought that the glory of God is to keep things hidden and that the generation would certainly fall into sinful ways when it heard that the Torah was not given in its present form on one occasion.”³²¹ In their book, *History of Bible Criticism* (1925), Soloweitschik and Rubascheff wrote that the result of this apprehension was “that most of the Jews who engaged in historical research focused on later periods, and seemed reluctant to touch upon biblical history.”³²² This widespread view is summed up by the German biblical scholar, Rudolph Smend (1851–1913),³²³ who writes that in the nineteenth century, very few reactions by Jews to Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* were published.³²⁴

³¹⁹ Quoted from Robert S. Schine, *Jewish Thought Adrift: Max Wiener (1882–1950)*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1992, p. 15.

³²⁰ Nahum Glatzer, “The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Studies,” in A. Altmann (ed.), *Studies in Nineteenth Century Jewish Intellectual History*, pp. 27–45.

³²¹ C. A. Chazan, “Mavo lecheker Torah” *Hashiloach*, 30 (issues 178–180), January–July, 1913, Odessa, p. 539. And see below.

³²² Soloweitchik and Rubascheff, *History of Bible Criticism*, Berlin, 1925, p. 128, (Hebrew).

³²³ R. Smend, “Wellhausen und das Judentum”, pp. 208–209.

³²⁴ Smend mentions only David Kaufmann’s article in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums (MGWJ)*, 39, 1895, and Heinrich Graetz’ article “Die allerneueste Bibelkritik Wellhausen–Renan” in *MGWJ*, 35, 1886, pp. 193–202, 233–251. See also: Felix Perles, “Judentum und Bibelwissenschaft Bibelkri-

Did this widespread view reflect the true situation?

We have already mentioned that in the Middle Ages, a great deal of Jewish interpretive literature on the Bible was written,³²⁵ but very few Jewish commentators dared to deal with the development of the biblical text or to point out some of the chronological contradictions and inaccuracies in it. Not a single one of them dared to publicly cast doubt on the tradition according to which the Pentateuch is a uniform book, written by Moses.³²⁶ This does not mean that rabbis and educated Jews at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century were not aware of developments in Christian Bible criticism. In the 1830s, the *maskilim* and members of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were already faced with the challenge of Bible criticism, and in the second half of that century, knowledge about that criticism became part of the cultural baggage of a growing number of *maskilim*, compelling them to grapple with this challenge. While it is true that the Jewish reaction was hesitant, reserved and slow, that until the end of the nineteenth century, very few Jews dared look critically at the Pentateuch, and that the first generation of *maskilim* that congregated around *Hame'asef* engaged mainly in “lower criticism,” namely clarifying words and inserting corrections, which led to their being described as no more than “minor investigators,”³²⁷ nonetheless,

tik,” *Die Welt*, 15, 1899. David Kaufmann (1852–1899) taught in the rabbinical seminary in Budapest.

³²⁵ See: Moshe Greenberg (ed.) *Jewish Bible Exegesis: An Introduction*, Jerusalem, 1983 (Hebrew); Ezra Zion Melamed, *Exegetes of the Bible*, Jerusalem, 1975 (Hebrew); Israel M. Ta-Shma, “Biblical Criticism in Early Medieval Franco-Germany,” in Sara Japhet (ed.), *The Bible in the Light of its Interpreters: Sarah Kamin Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem, 1994, pp. 453–459 (Hebrew); Robert A. Harris, “Awareness of Biblical Redaction among Rabbinical Exegetes of Northern France,” in Sara Japhet (ed.), *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, 12, Jerusalem, 2000, 289–310 (Hebrew). Ernest Renan noted that in the Middle Ages Jews in Spain and Provence wrote hundreds of books of exegesis (and midrash) about the Bible. Elvin Irving Kose, *Ernest Renan and the Jewish World*, 1955, pp. 89–94.

³²⁶ Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164), for example, dared to suggest that Moses could not have written the last chapters of Deuteronomy. On the traditional exegesis of the Bible and the first buds of Jewish Bible study, see: Greenberg, *Jewish Bible Exegesis*; Amos Funkenstein, *Styles in Medieval Biblical Exegesis: An Introduction*, Tel Aviv, 1990 (Hebrew); Uriel Simon, “Ibn Ezra between Medievalism and Modernism: The Case of Isaiah,” in *Vetus Testamentum*, Sup. 36 (1985), pp. 257–271; Soloweitschik and Rubascheff, *History of Bible Criticism*, pp. 31–50.

³²⁷ Menachem Diman (Haran), “Chakirat haMikra be'Ivrit mireshit hatekufah haleumit ad yameinu: sekirah bibliographit historit” (A Bibliographical Historical Survey of Biblical Research in Hebrew From the Early National Period to the Present Day), *Bizaron*, 1950, 21, 110–114, 189–196, 256–262; 22, pp. 189–192; 23 (1951), pp. 38–41, 111–116, 187–193. For a detailed description of Bible study in the *maskilic* press,

maskilim and members of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* could not ignore the new theory or its conclusions, which began to influence them and their writing. Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, quite a few books by Jewish authors were published on the subject, and a great many more appeared after the publication of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*. The contents of the various reactions to the documentary hypothesis and the historicization of the biblical text, as well as the way in which these ideas permeated and even took root in Jewish thought, reflects the various trends of intellectual and cultural development in Jewish society. Each of the streams in modern Judaism and many of the figures active in them reacted differently to the historicization and secularization of the Bible. On the one hand, there was the view that any historicization of the biblical text was tantamount to destructive heresy, and on the other, the view that historicization depicts Judaism as a dynamic, constantly changing entity.³²⁸ In the final reckoning, most of the reactions viewed modern Bible criticism as a new movement of heresy, aimed at injuring Jewish faith. It was thought to be more dangerous than all the other heresies that had preceded it due to its pretension to be a positivistic science.³²⁹

The challenge was a formidable one. It was much easier to accept some of the claims of criticism of the Massoretic text, or of lower Bible criticism, in particular that related to the later books (Prophets and Hagiographa) than to accept some of the views of the documentary hypothesis about the time of the composition of the Pentateuch. However, there was a profound difference between claims, such as that the Book of Daniel was written in the time of the Hasmoneans or that there were two prophets named Isaiah, and the claim that the Priestly Source was written only at the beginning of the Second Temple period, or even more serious – that the entire Torah of Moses was written only then. Nonetheless, there were radical *maskilim* who did not totally reject the historicity of biblical tradition, and were even prepared to discuss the documentary hypothesis and its conclusions, including those relating to the way the Pentateuch was composed.

see the unpublished dissertation by David S. Boros, *The Development of the Jewish Study of the Bible as Reflected in the Hebrew Periodicals Published in Europe between 1783 and the Nineteenth Century*, Philadelphia, 1976.

³²⁸ I. Schorsch, "Scholarship in the Service of Reform," in Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, pp. 303–334.

³²⁹ Clements writes that while it was possible to falsify the intentions of Bible criticism, most of the scholars were far from being anti-Jewish in their views and some even openly expressed their objections to anti-Semitism. Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*, p. 143.

Some of them employed it as a weapon in their war against the authority of the rabbinical tradition.

Initial Jewish Reactions to Higher Criticism

Jews entered the “fortress of the Bible” slowly, hesitantly, full of inhibitions and opposition.

When Nachman Krochmal (ReNak, 1785–1840), the philosopher, historian and leader of the Haskalah movement in Eastern Europe wrote that educated Jews ought to engage in Bible criticism “because the diverse and often fallacious views [of biblical critics] were spreading rapidly,” he undoubtedly was referring to lower criticism. Nonetheless, he wrote that prior to the time of Ezra (the return to Zion) no annotated Bible had existed from which the Priests and Levites could read aloud and interpret the Torah for the people. In other words, he drew a distinction between the time of the First Temple period, during which the Torah was given to the Priests and the Levites, and the Second Temple period, during which it was given to the public at large.³³⁰ Only in relation to the Prophets and the Hagiographa was he prepared to deviate from the tradition of the Sages.³³¹ Moses Mendelssohn rejected the assumptions of Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), which were formulated in his book *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1780–1783). Insofar as the history of the version of the Torah is concerned, he wrote, he does not repudiate the Christian scholars, who share Eichhorn’s view, because for them the Torah is only “a history from which to learn the events that occurred in ancient times.” However, Jewish scholars are prohibited from adopting this approach.³³² Yet Mendelssohn believed that it was important to understand the

³³⁰ N. Krochmal, *Moreh nevukhei hazeman: Moreh emunah tzerufah umelamed chokhmat Israel*, 13, Yom Tov Lipmann Zunz edition, Berlin, 1923, pp. 146–148.

³³¹ A. Greenbaum, “Biblical Criticism in Krochmal’s Work,” in A. Greenbaum and Alfred L. Ivry (eds.), *Thought and Action: Essays in Memory of Simon Rawidowicz*, Tel Aviv-Haifa, 1983, pp. 101–105 (Hebrew).

³³² M. Mendelssohn, Introduction to the book of Exodus 9:2. In the introduction to his *Bi’ur*, Mendelssohn wrote that the Christian exegetes were adding to, detracting from and altering the Torah of God; but “for us Jews, this is unacceptable because for us this Torah is a legacy” (Mendelssohn, *Or lenetivah*, Berlin, December 1782. Reprinted in *Netivot hashalom*, Berlin, 1782). In his book, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (1780–1783), Eichhorn wrote that every part of the Old Testament declares that it cannot all be the invention of one imposter, since it shows a variety of language and expression. However, even supposing the Mosaic books are not the work of Moses, still they are all composed of Mosaic materials.

historical-cultural background of the five books of the Pentateuch. He acknowledged the fact that the Pentateuch contained history, but denied that it was a product of history.³³³

The book, *Mavo el mikra'ei kodesh* (Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, Vienna, 1810), by the prolific *maskil* Jehudah Leib Ben-Ze'ev (1764–1811) is a free, abridged adaptation of Eichhorn's book. He called Eichhorn "the scholar, who is not a member of the Jewish people," and wrote that since he is not a Jew, he is not obliged to accept the words of the Bible literally, while "we [the Jews] have no right to follow this mode of thinking."³³⁴ Despite this reservation, Ben-Ze'ev did accept some of Eichhorn's claims in relation to the time of composition of various books of the Bible and to various versions of the biblical text, and stated that the words of the Sages are legends that are not binding.³³⁵ The strategy that Ben Ze'ev chose in order to legitimize the use of some of the conclusions of Christian higher criticism was to argue that it contradicted the words of the Sages. Chaim Sheli writes that whenever Ben Ze'ev made claims similar to Eichhorn's, he preferred to base them on medieval Jewish exegetes and to find the source for his views in "the satchel of our Sages of blessed memory."³³⁶ In the coming generations, this strategy was adopted by many writers.

Ben-Ze'ev's book was the first in Haskalah literature to suggest the recognition, albeit with some reservations and rejection, of the principles of Bible criticism. Most of the *maskilim* in the first half of the nineteenth century followed in the path of the believing Christian Enlightenment that defended the principles of the revelation, authority, antiquity and unity of the Pentateuch, as well as the authenticity of the Massoretic version.³³⁷ The early *maskilim* preferred to remain within the safe confines of the study of the poetics of biblical literature³³⁸ and the clarification of biblical language, or to suggest the correction of various errors they found in the text. Very rarely did they dare to discuss the time when various books were written or the identity of

³³³ David J. Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah and German Religious Thought: Orphans of Knowledge*, London and Portland, Or., 2000, p. 85.

³³⁴ J. L. Ben Ze'ev, *Introduction to the Book of Samuel*, 12 (Hebrew). The only monograph on Ben Ze'ev is that of Ruben Fahn, *Pirkey Haskala*, pp. 30–54.

³³⁵ Ben Ze'ev, *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*, General Introduction, 1810, Parts III–IV (Hebrew).

³³⁶ Hayim Sheli, *Bible Study in Haskalah Literature*, Jerusalem, 1942, p. 33 (Hebrew).

³³⁷ Sorkin, *The Berlin Haskalah*, pp. 95–125.

³³⁸ See Shlomo Levisohn's (1789–1821) book, *Melitzat yeshurun*, Vienna, 1816. On him, see Tova Cohen, "Melitzat yeshurun" by Shlomo Levisohn: *The Work and its Author*.

their authors (for example, the authors of the book of Isaiah), but they scarcely related to the history of the Pentateuch itself or to the historical reliability of the biblical tradition. At the most, a radical position was reflected in views like those of Isaac Euchel (1756–1804), who suggested that the words of the Sages about Solomon are legends, and that Solomon's old age was a disgrace to his youth because he introduced idolatrous ritual into Jerusalem, or the view that the biblical chronology is not systematic.³³⁹

The first who dared express a truly radical view, and was harshly censured for doing so, was the historian Isaak Marcus Jost (1793–1860), Eichhorn's student in Göttingen. The radical nature of Jost's outlook was expressed in his view that the religion of the Bible was an idolatrous religion, which belonged to the time of the Jewish people's childhood, in the fact that he cast doubt on the reliability of the biblical historical documents, and in his readiness to accept the principles of higher criticism, which held that the Pentateuch was written after the destruction of the First Temple.³⁴⁰ Jost regarded the Bible as a collection of documents, edited over a period of more than 800 years, but in his view, one could believe that the text had undergone development without necessarily casting doubt on the veracity of its content.³⁴¹ At the end of the third volume of his first book, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, Berlin (1820–1828), published in 1822, Jost did not hesitate to express wholehearted support for Bible criticism, and claimed that it would cause no harm to Judaism. In his view, each of the books of the Bible was the creation of one man, written under divine inspiration, but nonetheless the product of a writer of the time. He accepted the contemporary documentary hypothesis so he would not lag behind the times, but he did try to defend Judaism against it by stating that Judaism is based not on the veracity of the biblical historical story – on the *res gestae* – but rather on the story of the deeds – on the *historia rerum*.

³³⁹ *Mishlei, Meturgam umevu'ar al pi hamefarshim vehama'atikim harishonim vegam ha'achronim al yedei Wolf Meir (miPrag) im mavo shel Yitzhak Euchel* (The Book of Proverbs, Translated and Annotated by Meir Wolf with Introduction by Isaac Euchel), Prague, 1834.

³⁴⁰ Reuven Michael, *Jewish Historiography from the Renaissance to Modern Time*, Jerusalem, 1993, p. 94 (Hebrew). Schorsch writes that Jost devoted an “uncritical and tedious survey” to the biblical period, but that nonetheless one ought not to overlook the innovativeness of his achievement: a secular spirit, source criticism, a philological method and the broad use of non-Jewish sources (Schorsch, “From Wolfenbüttel to Wissenschaft: The Divergent Paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 233–254).

³⁴¹ Schorsch, “Scholarship in the Service of Reform,” in *From Text to Context*, p. 360. On Jost, see: ibid., p. 358–363.

gestarum, namely, on the way in which the deeds are recounted. The Bible, in his view, is an ahistorical, atemporal book, so that historical research can neither impair it nor deny its status as the formative book of Judaism. Its historical reliability is of no value, since Judaism was shaped according to the way the story was told (a claim voiced a great deal in the coming generations). This being the case, the Bible is not an historical book, and the period it describes is of no importance for Jewish history, and hence historical criticism cannot cause any damage to Judaism. In his book, *Allgemeine Geschichte des Israelitischen Volkes, seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsere Tage*, I-II (General History of the Jews, Berlin, 1832), which is more conservative in nature, Jost returned to the biblical description; he provided a naturalistic explanation for the miracles or interpreted them as symbols (except for the theophany at Mt. Sinai!) but he skirted the issue of the identity of the author of the Pentateuch, merely noting that the book is “attributed to him [Moses].” As for the books from Joshua to Kings, those, in his view, were written after the exile in Babylonia.³⁴² Jost believed that the value of a legendary story does not lie in its historicity, but rather in its being – as the Bible really was – a powerful historical force. He may have borrowed this argument from Goethe who asserted that the Bible is a work drawn from various sources, which was created and even readapted in different periods, but one possessed of an inner power: “Herein lies its original, divine, influential, unchallenged, endurable character.”³⁴³ Many others repeated this view, and the best known version of it in Hebrew literature is that of Ahad Ha’am.³⁴⁴ It is noteworthy that when Jost came to the story of the theophany at Mt. Sinai, he rejected the various mythological and naturalistic explanations that had been proposed and returned to the position that had developed in the biblical exegesis and the philosophy of the Middle Ages.³⁴⁵ According to it, this is an historical event, evinced by the fact that the Bible repeatedly mentions it and no one – even outside of Judaism – has questioned its veracity.

Jost’s view is an important milestone in the development of the new Jewish picture of the past. He accepted the [dichotomic] division between “biblical Judaism” and “post-biblical Judaism” from the Exilic period. As far as he was concerned, the Bible was a later creation,

³⁴² M. Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 238–239.

³⁴³ J. W. Goethe, *Poetry and Truth*, pp. 56–57. Jost may have influenced Ahad Ha’Am’s position on this matter, but in any case, predated it.

³⁴⁴ In his article, “Moses,” see below.

³⁴⁵ See Chapter 11.

namely, not one written during the “biblical period,” and hence it did not shape the world of the Jews in that period, but rather the world of the Jews after it. Hence, it was the canonical biblical text that shaped the spiritual image of Judaism. This would seem to be a call for a “return to the Bible” in the spirit of the national outlook, namely, a return to the “authentic world” of the Bible. Jost, however, had a completely different intention. As far as he was concerned, the world of the Jews in the “biblical period” was an early, “primitive” stage, while their post-biblical world – shaped by the Bible – is the world of Judaism as a religion of the book. This is the Judaism that has a “mission to the Gentiles” (*der Beruf Israels*), and puts into practice the Mosaic Code and the spirit of the Prophets. The appearance of the Bible after the Destruction is tantamount to a rebirth of Judaism, emanating from the old seed that gave birth to a new fruit.

In the eyes of the defenders of the tradition, even views of this kind were an intolerable heresy from within. The Jewish Italian rabbi and scholar, Samuel David Luzzatto (Shadal, 1800–1865) wrote that Jost had accepted the conclusions of higher criticism regarding the idea that the Torah had originated from various sources because he denied that it had been divinely given. In a letter he sent to the rabbi and scholar Solomon Judah Leib Rapoport (Shir, 1790–1867) in January 1831, he wrote with extreme animosity: “I hate and detest Jost, and as long as I still draw a breath and a pure heart still dwells within me, I shall hate him and hate him ... for the things that he wrote.” He wrote these harsh words because Jost tried to prove in his book that the Torah “had been assembled and written from various scrolls and different writers who sometimes contradict one another.”³⁴⁶ Shadal (like Mendelssohn before him) believed it was forbidden to study the antiquities of Israel in the way that the antiquities of Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia were explored. In his view, the biblical criticism of Jost (and of his German teachers) was akin to a gush of malignant water that threatened to destroy the Jewish faith.³⁴⁷ He averred that the denial of faith in the antiquity of the Torah and in the revelation on the basis of the “spirit of free investigation” was based on “the blind leading the blind,”

³⁴⁶ *Igerot Shadal* (Shadal’s Letters) vol. II, ed. Eisig Gräber, Przemyśl, 1882–1887, p. 178. See: Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, p. 130–131.

³⁴⁷ S.D. Luzzatto, “Ha’emunah beTorat Moshe” (“Faith in the Torah of Moses”), in *Mechkerei HaYahadut* (Studies in Judaism) 1913, pp. 10–17. He was also prepared to discern the traces of Greek mythology in the book of Genesis. See: S.D. Luzzatto, *Kerem chemed*, 1843, 7, p. 2. Avraham U. Kovner described Luzzatto as a “circus acrobat” who engages in barren philological research (Kovner, “Ru’ach mishpat” [Spirit of Judgment, 1868] in idem, *Ketavim*, Tel Aviv, 1947).

and he concluded that there was a need for Jewish Bible research: “If we are silent and wait a while longer, malicious waves will burst in as through a gaping breach, and a torrent of water will inundate the standing grain and sheaves, vineyards and olive trees, and a wicked fire will be set ablaze, feeding on briars and thorns, and no one can quench the flames.”³⁴⁸ Shadal opposed all proposals to reconstruct the composition of the books of the Torah, and agreed only to accept the view that Moses did not write the account of his own death. He attributed the different styles in the books of the Torah to the fact that they were written in different periods of Moses’ life. At the very most, he was prepared to accept that several chapters of Psalms were written after the Babylonian Exile and that several sections in the book of Zechariah and one prophecy in Isaiah were not authentic.

Against the background of this severe criticism, we ought to note that Shadal believed that without faith in the divinely given Torah and in “the literal truth of the wonders and miracles recounted in the Torah,” there was no basis for the existence of Jews and Judaism. He also believed in the need to use the tools of higher criticism in responding to it, as he did when he tried to prove that there are no later additions to the Torah, and that all the parts of its five books were written and edited by Moses, the greatest of the prophets. And no less important, neither did Shadal balk at using external evidence, in those cases where it seemed effective, to counter what he described as unfounded assumptions of the critical history of the Bible. Thus, as evidence of the antiquity of Moses’ Torah, he cited the discovery that a rich written literature had existed in the Near East long before the time of Moses, solid evidence of the fact that Moses could have written the Torah.³⁴⁹ Luzzatto also

³⁴⁸ Letters from Shadal to S.J.L. Rapoport in June 1860. *Igerot Shadal*, IX, Krakow, p. 1367. On Luzzatto’s Bible criticism, see: Shmuel Vargon, “Luzzatto’s Attitude towards Higher Criticism of the Torah,” in Sara Japhet (ed.), *Shnaton*, 13, 2002. See: Shmuel Vargon, “S.D. Luzzatto as a Pioneer of Jewish Bible Scholarship,” in Rimon Kasher, Moshe Tsippori (eds.), *Studies in Bible and Exegesis*, vol. VI, Ramat Gan, 2002, pp. 71–148 (Hebrew). See also: J. Elbogen, “S.D. Luzzatto’s Stellung zur Bibelkritik,” *MGWJ*, 44, 1900, pp. 460–480.

³⁴⁹ Luzzatto, “Faith in the Torah of Moses”, *Mechkerei HaYahadut*, vol. I, part 2, Warsaw, 1912, pp. 5–10. See: Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, pp. 131–133; M. Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 59–69. On this subject, Shadal conducted a dispute with Isaac Samuel Reggio (Yashar, 1784–1855), who argued that the art of writing was given to Moses in a revelation, and that it had been known to no nation previously. They both based their arguments on Herodotus, Hellenistic literature and the Church fathers. Shadal apparently was opposed to Reggio’s position primarily because he feared that if a link was created between the revelation and the writing of the Torah by Moses and the origin of writing, this might turn into a two-edged sword that would help those who questioned the revelation. See: Samuel Vargon,

believed that the version of the books of the Pentateuch was the only one meticulously preserved, while errors had occurred in the other books, but, nonetheless, that each book of prophecy contained only its *ipsissima verba*. Luzzatto also engaged extensively in the lower Bible criticism of the books of Prophecy and Hagiographa.³⁵⁰

The radical *maskil* Joshua (Osias) Heschel Schorr, a native of Brody,³⁵¹ also known as the “Galician Voltaire,” expressed a distinctly radical position, which enraged Lilienblum, in articles printed in Jost’s periodical, *Israelitische Annalen*, published in Frankfurt am Main (1839–1841) and in particular in *Hechalutz*, published under his editorship from 1852–1889.³⁵² Schorr’s main objective was to challenge the authority of the Oral Law, but he also engaged in lower Bible criticism. He pointed to hundreds of errors and authors’ corrections, since he believed there were errors in every book of the Bible. In three essays, he also engaged in higher Bible criticism.³⁵³ His epistolary essay, “*Mikhtav kolel chakirah al inyenei hamesorah*” (A Letter Containing an Inquiry into Matters of the Massorah), printed in *Hechalutz* in 1852, may have been the first Hebrew article in which the claim was made that the Masoretic version was full of errors because the Bible was edited after the biblical period. He argued that it was legitimate to engage in Bible criticism because only Jewish biblical criticism could overcome the danger of Christian criticism and its “diverse but clearly erroneous views,” and that such criticism could do no harm to “the wall of pure faith.” Schorr,

“The Controversy between I. S. Reggio and S. D. Luzzatto on the Date of the Writing of the Pentateuch”, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 72, Cincinnati, 2001, pp. 139–153. See also: Morris B. Margolies, *Samuel David Luzzatto, Traditionalist Scholar*, New York, 1979.

³⁵⁰ S.D. Luzzatto, “Introduction to Criticism and Exegesis of the Torah” (1829), in idem, *Selected Writings*, edited, with Introduction and Notes by M.E. Hartom, vol. 2, Jerusalem, 1976, pp. 97–134 (Hebrew); *Perush Shadal al Chamisha Chumashim Torah* (Shadal’s Exegesis on the Five Books of the Pentateuch), Tel Aviv, 1971 (Hebrew).

³⁵¹ See Ezra Spicehandler’s introduction to Joshua Heschel (Osias). Schorr, *Selected Essays*, Jerusalem, 1972, pp. 7–37 (Hebrew). And see list of Schorr’s writings in Ezra Spicehandler, “The Writings of Osias Heschel Schorr”, in *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, 2 (1), Cincinnati, Ohio, 1955–56, pp. 20–36. Spicehandler and Klausner err in listing the names of the essays mentioned in notes 367 and 368. On Schorr, see: Haim Cohen, *Joshua Heschel Schorr: Hechalutz and the Radical Haskalah*, M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2003 (Hebrew).

³⁵² The complete name of the periodical: *Hechalutz ha’over lifnei am Israel lemilchemet hadat vehatshiah*. 13 issues were printed in the course of 37 years. The first three in Lwow, the following three in Breslau, the seventh and eight in Frankfurt am Main, issues 9–11 in Prague, and the last two in Vienna.

³⁵³ The three are: “*Mikhtav kolel chakirah al inyenei masoret ...*”, *Hechalutz* 1, 1852; “*Tikunim bamikra ...*”, ibid. 3, 1857, pp. 89–118; “*Sefer haTorah hamusam lifaneinu ...*” ibid. 6, 1865, pp. 1–73.

like Ben-Ze'ev before him, found legitimation in the tradition for the opinion that the Torah was compiled after the books of the Prophets, in, among others, the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Batra* 15a, which states that Hezekiah and his faction wrote the books of Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, and Schorr maintained that the reference was to Hananiah ben Hezekiah ben Garon.³⁵⁴

Schorr, however, did not limit himself to criticism of the Massoretic version. From the contemporary research, which he followed closely, he concluded that from the time of the Babylonian Exile, Judaism had undergone many changes under the influence of the Zarathustrian religion. He also learned from scholarly research about the influence of the mythologies of ancient peoples on the Bible that stemmed from the cultural affinity between the Canaanites and the Babylonians. Schorr claimed that the Book of Genesis is not an historical book and that mythological motifs are embedded in it that belong to the ancient Semitic mythological tradition. But he qualified his statement, adding that these mythological motifs (including the story of the flood) did not have an adverse influence on the Jewish faith, because they were adapted to the Jewish world-view:

... the Jews have always been willing and prepared to accept much from the peoples in whose midst they dwell, in ancient times from the Canaanites and Babylonians and other nations ... but then a new, sacred spirit came upon them, a spirit of zeal for unity, and they accepted with open eyes only those things that are fitting for their faith, and the alien they scattered to the winds.³⁵⁵

In his essay entitled, "Tikunim bamikra," Schorr wrote that the new critics had proved that the author of Genesis had two versions describing the creation of the world before him, and he used them both. He added that in his view, the other stories of the Bible also had various versions. He wrote that the book of Genesis is not a work of history, "although it is full of stories of the ancients, some of them true and others based on myths."

As radical as he was, Schorr did not doubt the truth of the stories of the Patriarchs, the antiquity of the Torah, or that Moses was an historical figure. His firmly entrenched position was that it is not important when the story was written, but rather what its content is: "In truth, the

³⁵⁴ Schorr, "Mikhtav kolel chakirah al inyenei hamasorah vesimat ayin beturgum Yochanan ben Uziel lenevi'im acharonim betikunei sofrim chadashim," *Hechalutz*, 1, 1852, pp. 97–103, 105–108. Schorr also claimed that one cannot rely on the printed version of the Bible from the fifteenth century, since it is based on one of the many versions of the original.

³⁵⁵ Schorr, "Hatorot: Torah shebichtav – Torah shebe'al peh – Torat Zarathustra" (The Torahs – the Written Torah, the Oral Torah, the Torah of Zarathustra), *Hechalutz*, 7, 1865, pp. 9–16.

letters and the words are like carcasses, and only the spirit, the spirit of God hovers over the Holy Scriptures.” Schorr was not the only *maskil* in Galicia to engage in Bible criticism, but he certainly was the most well-versed in the research literature and also the most radical in his views, except for Abraham Krochmal. It is no wonder that he was regarded as a heretic and a man who wanted nothing more than to “destroy and shatter, to harm and desecrate all that is sacred to the children of Israel,”³⁵⁶ who was a great threat to Judaism, and the like. Two orthodox writers, Rabbi Moshe Arie (Leib) Hermlin of Brody, and Zvi Hirsch Edelman, also wrote polemic articles in which they attempted to refute all of his claims, describing his writing as “unfit heresy” and Schorr as an “enemy of Israel.” Geiger, who saw nothing wrong with Schorr’s interest in Bible criticism, asserted that he often proposed assumptions that had no basis in reality, but he adopted a lenient attitude towards him, because, as he put it, Bible research is an elusive field, hence it sometimes contains an idea that is more dazzling than true.³⁵⁷

The most radical view in the mid-nineteenth century was probably put forward by the merchant and *maskil* from Tarnopol Shlomo Zvi Hirsch (1834–1879) in his book *Korot Yisrael ve’emunato* (Jewish History and Faith) (Part I, Vienna, 1873; Part II, Tarnopol, 1879). His audacity was exceptional, and hence he took care to disguise it by referring his book to “every reader of the Bible who has cast off the nonsense he was raised with from his youth imparted only by deceptive teachers,”³⁵⁸ as if he intended only to present to the Hebrew reader the words of the “disgraceful heretics.” Hirsch discerned seven sources in the Pentateuch, written from the time of Joshua and thereafter by various writers and various sects, sometimes opposed to one another: “The contradictions and repetitions result from the fact that the different authors drew upon different sources and the editors copied everything in the order they found it without changing anything.”³⁵⁹

As for the antiquity of the Torah, Hirsch wrote:

Who is so naïve as to believe that in the days of Moses such a huge book as the five books of the Pentateuch was written at a time when, as every-

³⁵⁶ Shimon Bernfeld, *Dor chakham* (A Wise Generation), Warsaw, 1896, p. 79.

³⁵⁷ A. Geiger, “Recensionen – Hechalutz,” *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, 5, 1866, pp. 67–80.

³⁵⁸ Hirsch, *Korot Yisrael ve’emunato*, p. 75.

³⁵⁹ Hirsch, *ibid.*, p. 14. F. Lachower writes that his innovations were not widely known, “because of the special, extremely unclear way in which he couched his words,” or because he presented them as the “views of heretics,” as if he did not agree with them. F. Lachower, *History of Modern Hebrew Literature*, Book I, Tel Aviv, 1936, p. 189 (Hebrew).

one knows, hardly anyone knew how to write or read? ... All the puzzles will be solved if we set a later date, as I will prove we should, [and accept] that a series of scrolls at various places and various times were handed down in tradition or written one after the other by the heads of families and of different tribes.³⁶⁰

Two other East European *maskilim* with radical views were Isaac Kovner, who used De Wette's book in his own unpublished work *Sefer hamatzref* (1868) to make several critical comments about the nature of biblical chronology,³⁶¹ and the prolific popularizer Shlomo Rubin (1823–1910),³⁶² who believed it was impossible to determine the exact time when each of the books of the Bible was written, and who, like Schorr before him, set the period in which the Persian religion began to influence Judaism as the watershed of the changes that took place in it.³⁶³

The Liberal Wissenschaft des Judentums and Bible Criticism

What was the attitude towards the documentary hypothesis adopted by members of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany, who advocated “corrections to the religion” and a “free” reading of the sources?³⁶⁴ In

³⁶⁰ Hirsch, *ibid.*, p. 36. And see: Sheli, *Bible Study*, pp. 116–122.

³⁶¹ Kovner, *Sefer hamatzref*, p. 68.

³⁶² Rubin was born in Dolina, Galizia and in 1869 was awarded a doctorate by Göttingen University – although he never studied there – for his book *Spinoza und Maimonides*, Vienna, 1868. See J. Klausner's introduction to all of Rubin's writings, Warsaw, 1910. See below in Chapter Three.

³⁶³ Salomon Rubin, *Paras veYehudah* (Persia and Judea), Krakow, 1909. In a pamphlet entitled *Eretz ha'ivrim/rayonot al-odot Eretz Israel* (The Land of the Hebrews/Ideas about the Land of Israel, Vienna, 1884), Rubin proposed, perhaps for the first time in Jewish historical writing, a theory about the autochthonousness of the Jewish people. According to this theory, the Land of Israel is not only the country conquered by the Tribes of Israel that left Egypt; it is also the land of the Hebrews even before Canaanites and Amorites settled there. Tribes of the children of Israel lived in the land of Israel from the dawn of history, but under the pressure of the Hittites, the Philistines and the Amorites, some of them were forced to emigrate to Mesopotamia. When Abraham came to the Land of Israel, he was returning from a place of exile, and when the children of Israel returned from Egypt, they found members of their nation living there. This theory was later repeated by Itamar Ben Avi in his book *Canaan is our Country: 5000 Years of Uninterrupted Inhabitation by the Jews on their Land*, Jerusalem, 1932 (Hebrew), and by David Ben Gurion (see Chapter 15). In 1908, Salomon Rubin published a brief summary of the biblical books in Krakow entitled *Asefat sifrei hakodesh (Tanakh) lefi da'at shloomei emunei Israel* (A Collection of the Holy Scriptures according to the View of Observant Jews, Krakow, 1908), in which he expressed his doubts about the tradition.

³⁶⁴ See: H.-J. Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart, 1995.

principle, reform Jews were in favor of Bible criticism, both because they believed the historicization of the text would irretrievably impair the foundation of orthodox faith, and because they accepted the principle that the historical laws of change and evolution also applied to the Torah.

However, since the leaders of the *Wissenschaft* in Germany were accused of heresy by their orthodox adversaries, and as assimilationists “with the aid of the Bible” by their critics from the Reform stream, they were forced to act with caution. Yom-Tov Lipmann (Leopold) Zunz (1794–1886), one of its founders,³⁶⁵ accepted the view that the Pentateuch was composed from independent sources, and that Genesis was composed from various sources and written during the Kingdom of Judah, but he asserted that the sources of the Pentateuch were compiled into one book by a single editor. Zunz believed that the historical layer of the Pentateuch was a projection from a later period,³⁶⁶ while Abraham Geiger, one of the founders of the reform movement,³⁶⁷ described the biblical period as a “hornets’ nest”, as a subject that should be circumvented “almost the way a cat circles around a bowl of hot porridge” (“*die biblische Kritik, um die man wie um einen heißen Brei umgehen muss*”). He was prepared to argue, although not publicly, that the Bible stories were not real history. In November 1840, Geiger wrote in a letter to his confidant, Joseph Derenbourg (1811–1895):

Out with the Talmud! Out too with the Bible as the words of God, although it is a collection of writings, most of which are beautiful and sublime. Perhaps it is the most sublime of all the books written by man ... Will we forever keep declaring from the pulpits of the synagogues that the Bible stories actually happened? Until when will we persist in clinging to them as if they were historical events of the greatest significance while for us they belong to the world of legend? Until when will we derive instructions from them or draw upon them for the topics of our sermons? Until when will we continue to warp our children’s minds with those stories that distort the natural sense of tender humans?³⁶⁸

³⁶⁵ Heinz Mosche Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, Hamburg, 1969, pp. 180–183.

³⁶⁶ H.-J. Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 64–88; Soloweitschik and Rubascheff, *History of Bible Criticism*, pp. 137–138.

³⁶⁷ H. M. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 186–187, 261–262, and Joseph Klausner’s introduction to the Hebrew translation of Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel*, Breslau, 1857, pp. 9–45.

³⁶⁸ A. Geiger, *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben*, 1, 1862, pp. 1–9; L. Geiger (ed.), *Einleitung in die Bibel, Abraham Geiger’s nachgelassene Schriften*, vol. 4, Berlin, 1876. See also: Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 195–288; Michael A. Meyer (ed.) *Abraham Geiger, His Selected Writings on Corrections in the Religion*, trans. G. Eliasberg, Jerusalem, 1979, p. 95 (Hebrew), and M. Meyer,

Geiger came out publicly against what he described as the huge heaps of peculiar theories about how the laws came into being proposed by Christian scholars who did not understand the Bible. However, since he believed there could be a healthy new Jewish world only if the old (rabbinical-orthodox) world were to collapse, he could not avoid arguing that in ancient times, the Jews were quite free, even arbitrary in the wording of the Bible, and that the copiers and translators, for various reasons, inserted views that reflected their own outlook.³⁶⁹

In the 1880s and '90s, the liberal *AZdJ* devoted very little space to a discussion of the documentary hypothesis, but Ludwig Philippson had already published qualified articles on Bible criticism in the 1850s and '60s.³⁷⁰ We will recall that at the end of the 1880s, Philippson spoke out against Christian Bible criticism, which he described as biased and very prejudiced. In later years, he changed his mind and wrote several articles on the subject. As a defense against the possibility that it would give rise to "nihilistic" views that would deny the validity of the foundations of religion and faith, Philippson repeated Jost's argument that the issue of who wrote the books of the Pentateuch was of no importance. The determining, influential factor was the fact that the five books are notable for the unity of views that are eternal truths. Philippson distinguished between biblical science (*biblische Wissenschaft*) and biblical criticism, and asserted that the objective of higher criticism is to describe the all-embracing ideological unity of the Bible. In addition, several orthodox, liberal and reform rabbis and scholars published books on the subject.³⁷¹ Among these, the most important and the most radical in their views were: Salomon Ludwig Steinheim's (1789–1866) four-volume book *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge* (Frankfurt am Main, 1835–1865) and the reform rabbi and preacher, Julius Popper's (1822–1884) book, *Der biblische Bericht über die Stiftshütte. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Composition und Diaskeue des Pentateuch*, (Leipzig, 1862). The latter also wrote a children's Bible,

Response to Modernity, p. 115–144; N.M. Sarna, "Abraham Geiger and Biblical Scholarship", in J.J. Petuchowski (ed.), *New Perspectives on Abraham Geiger, An HUC-JIR Symposium*, New York, 1975, pp. 17–30.

³⁶⁹ A. Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel*, p. 159.

³⁷⁰ Ludwig Philippson, "Die Bibel und ihre Auslegung", *AZdJ*, 21 (4), 1857, pp. 41–43; "Das Judenthum und die Schriftkritik", *ibid.*, 28 (35), 1864, pp. 539–540; "Zur Bibelkritik", *ibid.*, 32 (41), 1868, pp. 811–815; "Die Einheit der Ideen in der heiligen Schrift Israels," *ibid.* 43, 1879, pp. 1–4, 33–35, 49–52, 131–133, 145–147, 243–245, 257–259, 321–325, 370–373, 386–388, 418–421; "Die biblische Wissenschaft," *ibid.* 49 (43), 1885, pp. 681–683.

³⁷¹ Meyer Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*: vol. 3, pp. 473–621; vol. 4: Part Two, pp. 657–735, New York-London, 1969 edn.

entitled *Israelitische Schulbibel und Sprachbuch* (Dessau, 1854). Steinheim's book is a theological work, centered on a defense of the principle of revelation and its understanding as a revolutionary event, an epistemological-religious "leap", and hence he rejected the theory of evolution. Steinheim also disagreed with the widespread idea that 'Torah' and 'law' were identical. Popper dealt with a description of the tabernacle in the Book of Exodus and tried to prove that the story about its construction was taken from two sources – an earlier and a later one.³⁷² Another scholar, the linguist and historian Julius Fürst (1805–1873), in his book *Geschichte der biblischen Literatur und des jüdisch-hellenistischen Schriftthums*, I (Leipzig, 1867), to some extent based his views on the documentary hypothesis and stated that the legalistic parts of the Pentateuch were derived from three sources, but that all of them were the product of Moses' creation. Most of these scholars were reluctant to accept the documentary hypothesis primarily because they regarded it as a tool that served Protestant theology;³⁷³ some liberal rabbis did show a readiness to accept several of its principles,³⁷⁴ although they preferred not to make their view public. The dilemma confronting liberal and reform Judaism stemmed from its inability to oppose in principle the submission of the Pentateuch to the scrutiny of scientific research or the historicization of the Torah.

The biography of the moderate reform rabbi Dr. Levi Herzfeld (1810–1884), a graduate of Berlin University, reveals the difficulties confronting liberal scholars who wished to express views in the spirit of Bible criticism. In 1834, he was denied an academic award because he had dared to describe a biblical story as a fable, and consequently he did not publicly state his criticism of the attribution of Ecclesiastes to Solomon. In a letter to Zunz, who had rebuked him for his reluctance, he wrote: "My silence simply resulted from the fact that seventeen years ago, a rabbi could not have engaged in Bible criticism without placing his life in serious danger."³⁷⁵ In his book, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I–III, Braunschweig, 1847–1857, Herzfeld did dare break his silence, and wrote that while the Torah was written before the Babylonian exile, the beliefs and customs contained in it were not widely circulated

³⁷² Ran HaCohen describes in detail the influence of the book by the Dutch scholar Reinhart Dozy (1820–1883), *Die Israeliten zu Mekka*, Leipzig, 1864 in German translation, on Popper.

³⁷³ Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 167–169.

³⁷⁴ Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 64–329.

³⁷⁵ Quoted in Schorsch, "Scholarship in the Service of Reform," in *From Text to Context*, pp. 381, 379–384. And in Graupe, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 202–203; Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*.

among the public during the Second Temple period. He also asserted, as had Schorr and Rubin before him, that during the Babylonian exile, Judaism was influenced by the Zarathustrian religion.³⁷⁶

Another radical reform rabbi, Samuel Hirsch (1815–1889), tried in his 1854 book *Die Humanität als Religion* to find a common denominator between reform Judaism and liberal Christianity and its ideal of *Bildung*, based, among other things, on a description of Abraham and Moses as the deliverers of eternal rational and universal truths. If Abraham and Moses were not the ones who gave the world these truths, others, who lived in a later period, attributed them to these two. In brief, the content of the words is important, not the identity of the person who handed them down.³⁷⁷

Another dilemma was linked to the fact that reform Judaism returned to the Bible as the book that expressed original and obligatory Judaism. There were even radical reform rabbis who claimed that the word of God is found only in the Bible – and whatever is not in the Bible is not the word of God.³⁷⁸ On the other hand, the liberal and reform view held that “the Bible is sacred not because it is the fruit of inspiration but because it instills inspiration.”³⁷⁹ The result was that the acceptance of the documentary hypothesis met with reservations and obstacles even in these circles. It was one thing to describe the evolution of the Oral Torah, or even to accept criticism of the Massorah; but it was quite another thing to cast doubt on the sanctified formative truths of the Bible and to challenge belief in a divinely given Torah. The caution displayed by the reform camp in relation to Bible criticism was reflected in the resolution passed at the conference of reform rabbis in Leipzig in 1869, that in teaching Bible to Jewish children no mention should be made of the findings of Bible criticism, and a conference of rabbis in Augsburg in 1871 resolved that in order to avoid impairing the ideals of adolescents, the method of Bible criticism should not be taught.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Schorsch, pp. 379–384 and Graupe, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 202–203; Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 289–362.

³⁷⁷ On Hirsch see: Ken Koltun-Fromm, *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity*, Bloomington, Ind., 2001, pp. 101–105.

³⁷⁸ David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, London, 1907, pp. 453. See also in his book, *Liberal Judaism, an Essay*, London, 1903 (*Liberales Judenthum*), Leipzig, 1906.

³⁷⁹ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*. Moses Hess argued against the reform view that there is no basis or justification for attributing more sanctity to the written Torah than to the Oral Torah. He believed that it was in fact the latter that expressed the creative power of Judaism. See: Hess, *The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem*.

³⁸⁰ David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, p. 422.

Thus, even if the reform movement's attitude towards Bible criticism underwent an enormously radical change towards the end of the nineteenth century, the prevalent view in it was that Bible criticism ought to remain outside the synagogue and the Sabbath sermons, since the worshippers wanted to hear about the problems of eternity, not about issues linked to the development of the Biblical text; an orthodox rabbi would not in any case refer to the criticism, and a reform rabbi would not see the synagogue as the proper place for it. Moreover, it should remain outside of the schools as well.³⁸¹ A similar position, as we shall see, was adopted by Ahad Ha'am in a debate on teaching Bible at the Herzliya *gymnasium* in Tel Aviv in 1912. Another opinion regarding the place of Bible criticism in the schools was voiced by Felix Coblenz (1863–?) of Bielefeld. In his view, it was impossible to teach religion even in the elementary school without Bible criticism and without distinguishing between legend and history, and between eternal principles and the principles of the ancients. The secondary school teacher should read the entire Bible – in translation – and explain to the students the development of the concept of the Divine in the Bible. He also repeated the argument – now already dogma – that by teaching that the Pentateuch was written on the basis of various sources, some of them late in time (around 550 B.C.), the value of the Bible would not be diminished, but rather it would be enhanced.³⁸² In a series of articles printed in the early 1890s in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, the liberal Jewish British author and scholar, Claude Montefiore, surveyed the various theories of Bible criticism and agreed with the view that Moses played a very limited role in the composition of the Pentateuch. In Montefiore's opinion, the Pentateuch was assembled from ancient fragments that reflect the archaic and immature phases of religious thinking, namely, the 'low religion,' while the prophecy reflects the mature religion, namely the 'high religion', which is monotheistic and ethical, a religion that does not call for sacrifices or magical customs. And again, the crucial question is: does a Jew who accepts the principles of Bible criticism and its challenge to faith in the revelation stop being a Jew? His unequivocal answer was that although the liberal Jew does not believe in miracles, in the unity of the Pentateuch, in Moses as its author, or that the Ten Commandments were given by God, he does unreservedly accept the fundamental doctrines of Judaism (faith in one God, the love of God, the ethical code,

³⁸¹ C. G. Montefiore, "Should Biblical Criticism be Spoken of in Jewish Pulpits?" *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 18, 1906, pp. 302–316; M. Joseph, "Biblical Criticism and the Pulpit," *ibid.*, pp. 291–302.

³⁸² F. Coblenz, "Biblical Criticism in Religious Instruction," *ibid.*, 19, 1907, pp. 1–23.

etc.), and these are not affected by Bible criticism. The liberal Jew's belief that the Jews had a mission to the nations also has not ended and cannot be influenced by the criticism.³⁸³ Only towards the end of the century did Montefiore write his book *The Bible for Home Reading*, intended for readers who do not believe the Bible is an historical document, who accept the fact that the books of the Bible were written in different periods and that Moses was not the author of the entire Pentateuch. Montefiore wrote that for such readers the value of the Bible does not lie in the historical stories it relates, but rather in the message they contain (and that not all the messages have a worthy character).³⁸⁴

It was only in the middle of the nineteenth century, and particularly at its end, that the reform camp began to openly voice radical views. For example, the reform rabbi David Einhorn (1809–1879), who served as a rabbi in Pest, Hungary and emigrated in 1855 to the United States where he was appointed rabbi of the Mt. Sinai congregation in Baltimore, wrote in his book *Das Prinzip des Mosaismus* (Leipzig 1854), that the books of the Bible were assembled from various sources and expressed different world views. Einhorn believed that the peoples of the ancient Near East were familiar with an archaic pre-biblical form of monotheism, and that the (historical) theophany at Mt. Sinai did not produce any novel ideas, but rather it "refined ancient concepts about the sole, unique Creator." In his book *Die Bibel und die Todesstrafe* (Leipzig, 1868) the reform rabbi Dr. Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926), who, after being an orthodox rabbi in Leipzig, became a reform rabbi and from 1903 served as President of the Hebrew Union College,³⁸⁵ also accepted the documentary hypothesis and wrote that the Torah does not reveal the word of God as it was handed down at a later date, but rather the religious consciousness of the people, as it developed throughout many generations. The spirit of God hovers over the letters of the living biblical law and continues to live, while the letter itself is dead and deadens. Hence, there is no prohibition against scientific

³⁸³ C. G. Montefiore, "Recent Criticism upon Moses and the Pentateuchal Narratives of the Decalogue," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 3, 1891, pp. 251–291; "Some Notes on the Effect of Biblical Criticism upon the Jewish Religion," *ibid.*, 4, 1892, pp. 293–306.

³⁸⁴ C. G. Montefiore, *The Bible for Home Reading, with Comments and Reflections for the Use of Jewish Parents and Children*, 1899 edn., pp. i–viii.

³⁸⁵ Among Kohler's books: *Grundriss einer systematischen Theologie des Judenthums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*, Leipzig, 1910; *Jewish Theology*, New York, 1918; *The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*, New York, 1929. See: Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 90–194; Graupe, *Die Entstehung*, pp. 217–221, and Meyer, *Response to Modernity*. On Kohler, see Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 289–362.

inquiry into any part of the Bible, not even the Ten Commandments.³⁸⁶ This was the basis for Kohler's argument that the biblical rituals are not an inseparable part of the essence of Judaism.³⁸⁷ Kohler dismissed Schechter's argument that higher criticism is higher anti-Semitism and claimed that "All our Bible critics, Old Testament critics like Reuss and Wellhausen ... with very few exceptions ... are Christians insofar as they hate whatever is Jewish."³⁸⁸ Kohler reacted sharply to Schechter's harsh attack on higher criticism: "Such brilliant phraseology as is the label 'Higher anti-Semitism' given to Higher Criticism may captivate many by its seeming truth, but it cannot stand the test of scrutiny ... We cannot escape the conclusion of Higher Criticism ... What geology did for us in laying bare the different strata of the earth telling of the various epochs of creation, Higher Criticism does in disclosing the various stages of growth of the truth of divine revelation."³⁸⁹

However, not all the learned non-orthodox rabbis, who might have been expected to accept the evolutionary concept of the history of religious faith, agreed with the documentary hypothesis. One such was Dr. Benno Jacob, a rabbi in Göttingen and Dortmund, and the first German Jewish scholar who attempted to develop Jewish Bible criticism that would offer a full, systematic answer to the Wellhausen school.³⁹⁰ In 1889, Jacob wrote in *AZdJ* that there was a need for a

³⁸⁶ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 273.

³⁸⁷ The biblical critic Arnold Bogumil Ehrlich (1848–1919) had a different opinion. He wrote: "What the Gentile scholars are doing today to the Holy Scriptures, for good or for bad, is incredible: On the one hand, they invest enormous efforts and they mean well, on the other hand, they take devious paths." His criticism centered mainly on the ignorance the Christian critics display in interpreting biblical verses. See: A.B. Ehrlich, *Mikra kifeshuto veihu mikra mefurash vesom sekhel* (The Bible According to its Literal Meaning), Book II, New York, 1969 printing, pp. 7–8, n. 1, orig. Berlin, 1899–1901. The 1885 Pittsburgh platform of the reform movement in the United States stated that: "We recognize in the Bible the record the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as priest of the one God, and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific researchers in the domain of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age and at time clothing its conception of Divine Providence and Justice with man in miraculous narratives." Quoted in Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 387.

³⁸⁸ K. Kohler, "The Attitude of Christian Scholars toward Jewish Literature," in K. Kohler, *Studies, Addresses and Personal Papers*, New York, 1902, p. 417.

³⁸⁹ K. Kohler, "The Four Ells of the Halakhah and Requirements of a Modern Jewish Theological School," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 1904, 1, pp. 10, 12–13. On Kaufmann Kohler, see: Jacob Haberman, "Kaufmann Kohler and his Teacher Samson Raphael Hirsch," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 43, 1998, pp. 73–102.

³⁹⁰ See his book: *Im Namen Gottes: Eine sprachliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, Berlin, 1903. On him, see in Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 182–190.

Jewish Bible science that would be faithful to the Bible,³⁹¹ but also that there was no such thing as a “pure” science, free of ideological considerations. He believed in the unity of the Torah as a creation written by one editor, probably early in the monarchic period,³⁹² and said, that although the Torah was written on the basis of earlier traditions, it bore the stamp of one spirit – the spirit of Moses.³⁹³ The Torah is sacred because of its content, not because of the identity of its author. Jacob also overturned the prevalent view: Wellhausen did not contribute to heresy, he opined, but actually to the “orthodoxization” of the science of Judaism, since Judaism is indifferent to the question of whether Moses was the author of the Torah, although no convincing argument has been made to contradict this belief. The “orthodox” claim that the copiers of the Bible handed it down to the coming generations word for word is nothing other than “the Christianization of Judaism”, and it contradicts what is written in the Talmud. On the one hand, Jacob argued that Protestant Bible study is dogmatic, not objective, and he rejected the hypotheses that denied the literary unity of the five books of the Torah. On the other hand, he partially accepted the later date attributed to the writing of the Priestly Torah (*Priesterschrift*). The reform scholar from Berlin, Benzion Kellermann (1869–1923) attacked Jacob’s article, asserting that he was engaging in obsolete apologetics, antithetical to pure scientific-objective research. In his view, there was no reason to denounce the documentary hypothesis since it enhanced the value of the prophecy by representing it as a more sublime phase of the Jewish spirit.³⁹⁴

The reform rabbi, Max Wiener drew a distinction between ideology and the reality: the sermons of the liberal rabbis showed, in his view, that they were in fact continuing to firmly reject Protestant Bible criticism because it had turned the study of the Bible into a playing field on which the Christians gave vent to their animosity towards the Jews and their heritage, and hence he saw it as no more than a new form of anti-Semitism. But Wiener believed that a more persuasive reason for the reform movement’s rejection of Bible criticism was its need to regard biblical prophecy as its main foundation since it perceived the tal-

³⁹¹ B. Jacob, “Unsere Bibel in Wissenschaft und Unterricht”, *AZdJ*, 62, 1898, pp. 511–513, 525–526, 534–536. See also in Chapter 11.

³⁹² Ibid., “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie,” 66, 1903, pp. 187–189.

³⁹³ C. Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, p. 140.

³⁹⁴ See: B. Kellermann, “Bibel und Wissenschaft”, *AZdJ*, 62 (49), 1898, pp. 583–586.

See: Wiese, pp. 186–187. Benzion Kellermann also wrote the monograph, “Der ethische Monotheismus der Propheten und seine soziologische Würdigung,” in *Jüdische Schriften*, Bd. 2, Berlin, 1917.

mudic-rabbinical literature as inferior.³⁹⁵ It seems, however, that David Neumark (1866–1924), the reform rabbi and philosopher, was more to the point in his criticism of his movement, when he claimed that the reform movement was forced to accept Bible criticism because otherwise it would have no *raison d'être*: it is only the principle of evolution and the historicist approach that enable it to relinquish important parts of the Torah (the 'law' and the 'commandments'). As a result, however, he argued, the movement was caught up in a profound internal contradiction since it did not know how to answer the crucial question – what is the power that makes the observance of commandments binding? Neumark said that the reform rabbis and teachers (in the United States) were repeating the "despicable slander" they had taken from Bible criticism – that the prophets had been opposed to any form of institutionalization and religious ritual.³⁹⁶ These remarks by Neumark were directed at the main trend in the reform approach: a distinction between the Torah and the Prophecy. The reform movement described the prophecy (the spirit) as the antithesis of the Torah (the law), both as a more "advanced" stage in the history of Jewish religion from the standpoint of the evolutionary continuum, as well as a more sublime level of religion and faith. Thus, for example, the preacher and reform teacher Siegmund Maybaum (1844–1919) accepted the main points of the documentary hypothesis and its conclusions about the composition of the Pentateuch, but he proffered a revised version of it. While Wellhausen identified the biblical law with the post-biblical *halakhah*, Maybaum depicted Jewish history as an arena of constant struggle between the prophets and the priests. The prophets were identified with ethics, the priests with "frozen ritual" and conservative dogmatism. In his view, the biblical law was a synthesis between the priestly laws and the prophets' ethical principles, which was carried out by the prophets (the prophet Ezekiel was the son of priests). In this way, Maybaum attempted to "rescue" Judaism from its image as a stagnant religion of law, and to present it as a prophetic religion bearing a universal humanistic message. Needless to say, reform Judaism was perceived as continuing the way of the prophets and the orthodox the way of the priests. Orthodoxy represents Judaism as a *Gesetzesreligion*, while the reform movement represents it as an ethical value system.³⁹⁷ It is

³⁹⁵ Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 167–168.

³⁹⁶ David Neumark, "On the Issue of Bible Criticism," *Luach Achi'ever*, 2, New York, 1921, pp. 25–38.

³⁹⁷ See: S. Maybaum, *Die Entwicklung des altisraelitischen Priesterthums: Ein Beitrag zur Kritik der mittleren Bücher des Pentateuchs*, Breslau, 1880; *Die Entwick-*

no wonder, then, that the orthodox regarded the reform religion as a Christian version of Judaism.

We should point out here that the reform movement could have found legitimacy within the tradition itself; namely, it could have argued that the belief that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch is a growing, post-biblical tradition that developed over time.³⁹⁸

Graetz and Bible Criticism

The historian Heinrich Hirsch (Zvi) Graetz rejected the documentary hypothesis and branded Wellhausen a hater of Jews, an attitude he did not bother to conceal: “He [Wellhausen] vents his antipathy on Abraham, Moses and Ezra.” Graetz attacked Wellhausen for his ignorance and his failure to know the basics of the Hebrew language. He held that Wellhausen’s claim that Ezra had written the Torah was merely “idle chatter,” since Ezra’s style was so different than that of the author of the Torah,³⁹⁹ and that the Samaritans, the avowed enemies of Ezra, would never have accepted the Pentateuch in its entirety as a sacred book if it had not been an earlier book. Graetz called on his readers to rally to the defense of the Holy Scriptures against the criticism which, in his view, was replete with superficialities and errors.⁴⁰⁰

In a more direct manner, Graetz responded to the documentary hypothesis in an article printed in *MGWJ* in 1886,⁴⁰¹ and in another printed in the *Jewish Chronicle*⁴⁰² In the former, he analyzed the

elung des israelitischen Prophetenthums, Berlin, 1883. Also see his article, “Zur Pentateuchkritik,” *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, 14, 1883, pp. 191–202.

³⁹⁸ R.J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law*, pp. 1–3.

³⁹⁹ In this, Graetz was repeating the words of J.G. Eichhorn in his book *Einleitung in das A.T.*, II, p. 269 Eichhorn wrote: “In Moses’ case – the language is pure, noble and attractive; in Ezra’s case, it is mixed, rough, superficial, tiring. In the former, the expression is full of the fire of life, in the latter, the chill of death.” On Graetz’s interpretation of the Bible see in his updated biography: Reuven Michael, *Hirsch (Heinrich) Graetz – The Historian of the Jewish People*, Jerusalem, 2003, pp. 130–147 (Hebrew).

⁴⁰⁰ H. Graetz, “Jewish Academy,” *Jewish Chronicle*, July 22, 1887.

⁴⁰¹ H. Graetz, “Die allerneueste Bibelkritik: Wellhausen-Renan,” *MGWJ*, 35, 1886, pp. 193–204; 233–251.

⁴⁰² H. Graetz, “Judaism and Biblical Criticism,” *Jewish Chronicle*, August 5, 1887, p. 9. On Graetz and his conception of biblical history, see: R.E. Clements, “Heinrich Graetz as Biblical Historian and Religious Apologist”, in J.A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif (eds.), *Interpreting the Hebrew Bible: Essays in Honour of E.I.J. Rosenthal*, Cambridge, 1982, pp. 35–59.

meaning of the Hebrew word “*atzeret*” in the Pentateuch to prove its antiquity and in this way to reject Wellhausen’s claim about the late date of the composition of the “Priestly Torah” (Leviticus and parts of the books of Exodus and Numbers) in contrast to Deuteronomy. Graetz’ article in *The Jewish Chronicle* was apologetic and principled. In it he took part in a debate that was conducted on the pages of the paper in the summer of 1887 on modern Bible criticism and its implications, a debate in which a range of opinions on the subject was aired. The fundamental issue was whether belief in the Torah necessitates the belief that the Pentateuch was written in the order fixed in the tradition and that the historical story it relates is reliable in all its details. Graetz responded to an article by Alfred G. Henriques, entitled “Modern Biblical Criticism,” printed in the newspaper on July 22, 1887, in which Henriques claimed that it was very difficult to reconcile the contradictions between the conclusions of Bible criticism and the tradition. Graetz wrote that:⁴⁰³

No danger that Judaism has ever escaped is as formidable as the present one. Judaism has in the past entered into contests with rival creeds. It has overcome them all in solid argument, but the approaching combat will be of a totally different kind. None of the old weapons will avail, none of the old arguments will succeed against an array of learning which the world has never before equaled. The field of the combat has also changed. It will not be a challenge of a doctrine or of a text or the interpretation of a Prophecy. It will be a challenge as to the value of the records upon which *all* is founded. If the “Book” be unhistoric and incapable of sustaining the pretensions of dogmatic Judaism, pious Hebrews need not be disheartened. Fundamental beliefs need no historic records to validate them. A new foundation must be found sought for the Ancient Faith and it will doubtless be no less potent to concentrate religious fervour than that which may be lost.

In the exchange of views printed in the paper – in a brief polemic that exposed fundamental differences of opinion regarding the relations between the Bible and Bible criticism – another reader, signing his name as A. Yehoodi, wrote a letter to the editor,⁴⁰⁴ in which he reiterated Henrique’s statement that “fundamental beliefs need no historic records to validate them.” Another writer, who used the pseudonym *Historicus*, opined that Jewish faith is not based on the authenticity of historical events, and that as long as the laws of the Torah are in harmony with reason, the Jews will continue to observe them according to the tradition that sanctified them, without any connection to

⁴⁰³ A.G. Henriques, “Modern Biblical Criticism,” *Jewish Chronicle*, July 22, 1887, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁴ A. Yehoodi, “Modern Biblical Criticism,” *Jewish Chronicle*, July 29, 1887, p. 6.

the historical story.⁴⁰⁵ Harry S. Lewis wrote that “Judaism, the faith of the sons of Judah, rests on history and can have no other basis,” but added that the documentary hypothesis has not succeeded in shaking faith in the historical story related in the Pentateuch.⁴⁰⁶ The writer of an editorial asserted that Bible criticism does not pose a danger to Judaism because of its many weaknesses, which Wellhausen’s Christian critics have pointed out.⁴⁰⁷

The dilemma in Graetz’ reply is clear. On the one hand, he related dismissively to the exorbitant importance that in his view was attributed to the historical aspect of the biblical tradition (in the Pentateuch), and on the other hand, as we saw in the previous chapter, he expressed his confidence that at least some of the stories told in it were historically reliable. He stated that while Protestantism is indeed threatened by the scientific criticism of the Gospels, “Judaism is a healthy religion and cannot be affected by the diseases that threaten Protestantism and Christianity.” He went on to claim that:

Christianity possesses a uniform set of literary sources from the Gospels to the Revelation. If a single one of these is proved ahistorical, the remainder fall to pieces. It is far otherwise with Judaism. Besides the Pentateuch and the historical books, it has others whose genuineness and authenticity no critic dares to impugn, the Prophets from the earliest Amos to the latest Malachi, and besides these, the Psalms, Proverbs and other works. These contain references to the historic events of earlier times, and rightly understood, fully confirm the historical narratives in the Pentateuch and other books. The deeper one penetrates into the spirit of the greater Prophets, the more confirmed becomes the historical truth of the remaining Scriptures. We have then a wide field for Biblical criticism which produces a richer harvest the more rigidly it is exercised. Such a criticism does not destroy, it builds afresh.⁴⁰⁸

One ought not to conclude from the above that Graetz was an uncritical believer. In his discussion of the documentary hypothesis in the sixth appendix to the second volume of his *History of the Jews*, he claimed that the Book of Genesis and the historical chapters linked to it in the Book of Exodus form an artistically edited, uniform unit written by one author, and that the historical description leads to the revelation at Mt. Sinai, but that the Book of Deuteronomy is an independent book of laws. Graetz also expressed doubt about the reliability of the biblical historical tradition regarding the exodus from

⁴⁰⁵ *Historicus*, ibid., pp. 6–7.

⁴⁰⁶ *The Jewish Chronicle*, August 5, 1887, p. 9–10.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴⁰⁸ H. Graetz, “Judaism and Biblical Criticism,” *op. cit.*

Egypt. Moreover, he applied the idea of evolution to Jewish faith. His view is clearly expressed in his programmatic article “The Structure of Jewish History,” in which he describes the stages of development of Jewish faith from the period of the people’s wandering in the desert until the Babylonian exile as a process in which the monotheistic idea was perfected and became sublime.⁴⁰⁹ In other words, Graetz criticized Wellhausen, but to a great extent he followed in his footsteps.

Graetz’ critics noted the “heresy” in his views. The orthodox paper *Der Israelit* wrote that Graetz is a hater of Judaism and is the first among the apostates, and that his biblical commentaries are devoid of any scientific value.⁴¹⁰ Peretz Smolenskin claimed that Graetz’ translation of the *Song of Songs* was full of errors and nonsense, that he had turned a rose into a pool of mire and that in his translation, the croaking of frogs was heard instead of the song of a nightingale; in his view, Graetz’ interpretation was “a blind bat.”⁴¹¹ Moreover, Smolenskin rejected Graetz’ opinion that the *Song of Songs* was written after the Babylonian exile. Simon Bernfeld (wrote that Graetz had tried to find a middle road between unquestioned acceptance of the Bible stories, on the one hand, and doubt as to their reliability, on the other. In his opinion, Graetz had resolved his dilemma by beginning Jewish history with the Israelites’ entrance into Canaan, and from that time, his survey of the history of the biblical period was actually a paraphrase of the biblical story. For Graetz, the Torah was “a tiresome burden. He knew that he was compelled to integrate it into a particular period, but he was uncertain about the place he ought to assign it, hence he settled on the Prophets, who wished to educate the people by publicizing the Torah.”⁴¹² Bernfeld was referring

⁴⁰⁹ Graetz, “The Structure of Jewish History,” in H. Graetz, *The Structure of Jewish History*, pp. 55–102. The division Graetz suggested of three stages in the development of Judaism’s central idea was influenced by Wellhausen (and Hegel). See also: Reuven Michael, *Jewish Historical Writing*, pp. 349–356. Graetz was also criticized for having adopted several of the ideas of Bible criticism by the biblical scholar David Kahana (1838–1915) in his book *Massoret seyag laMikra* (Vienna, 1881, reprinted in Jerusalem, 1970). Kahana described textual criticism and the documentary hypothesis as “vain and malicious assumptions.”

⁴¹⁰ See: E. Schmerler, *Graetz’ Life, Including a Biography of the Great Historian, Heinrich Graetz and his Work in Commentary and Jewish History*, New York, 1921, pp. 127–135 (Hebrew).

⁴¹¹ P. Smolenskin, “Et lata’at” (A Time to Plant), *Hashachar*, 3 (6), 3 (5), January 1893, (printed in *Ketavim*, vol. 2, p. 236). The critique is on: *Schir haSchirim, oder Das salomonische Hohelied, übersetzt und kritisch erläutert*, von H. Graetz, Wien, 1871.

⁴¹² S. Bernfeld, “Dorshei reshumot” (A View on the Writers of Jewish History), III, *Hashiloach*, 1897, pp. 396–401 (the article was printed in four installments in

to the fact that in Graetz' opinion, the Jewish people had adopted the monotheistic idea only in the time of the Prophets. Hence, Graetz who had harshly criticized Wellhausen, was himself suspected of heresy. Shaul Pinhas Rabinowitz (Shefer, 1845–1910), Graetz' translator into Hebrew, wrote in the introduction to the first volume of *Sefer divrei yemei Yisrael miyom heyot Yisrael le'am ad yemei hador ha'acharon* (The History of the Jews from the Time they Became a People Until the Last Generation), Warsaw, 1888, that he had seen fit to omit from the Hebrew translation those matters that he believed had originated from the method of Bible criticism:

I did not adhere to his words in relation to the origin of the Holy Scriptures or their composition and several matters that were drawn from Bible criticism on the basis of far-reaching or more modest hypotheses, a method which is not to my liking, and in these I see no benefit for the majority of the readers.⁴¹³

Shefer explained that he had taken this course even though Graetz had not deviated from the biblical story in his historical description.

Bernfeld exemplifies the fact that the distinction between faith and heresy was not always unequivocal and was constantly changing.⁴¹⁴ We have seen that he wrote some biting remarks against "Wellhausen and his faction in Bible criticism ... who approach the Holy Scriptures as if they were analyzing animals according to symptoms they have dreamed up."⁴¹⁵ His opinion was that the story of the exodus from Egypt and the settlement in Canaan is authentic: "It is impossible, in my view, that a story like that, which our Prophets have expounded

Volume 2 (issues 7–12, Nisan–Elul, 1896). Despite his criticism of Graetz, Bernfeld was not spared the wrath of Yehoshua Heschel Yeivin (1891–1970), the revisionist-maximalist scholar, who wrote that as a talmudic scholar Bernfeld ought to have spurned the documentary hypothesis which was destroying "our Bible to its foundation," but instead had disseminated it in Hebrew in his book *Mavo lechitvei hakodesh* (J. H. Yeivin, "The Foreign Legion Returns Home," in Yeivin, Y. H. *Ketavim*, Tel Aviv, 1969, p. 378 [Hebrew]).

⁴¹³ Graetz-Shefer, *Sefer divrei yemei Israel*, p. vi.

⁴¹⁴ His translation of the Bible appeared in 1903: S. Bernfeld, *Die Heilige Schrift*, Berlin, 1903. See: Joseph Klausner, *Creators and Builders: Critiques*, vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1943 (2), pp. 298–300 (Hebrew); and idem, "Dr. Simon Bernfeld," *Creators of a Period and Continuers of a Period, Collection of Articles*, Tel Aviv, 1956, pp. 153–161 (Hebrew). In his autobiography, Klausner describes Bernfeld as a man who is fickle in his views (Klausner, *My Course towards Revival and Redemption*, Part I, Tel Aviv, 1955 (2), pp. 90–91 [Hebrew]). Waxman writes that Bernfeld did not limit himself to the method of four sources but split the Pentateuch into many units that were joined together by different editors. M. Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*, IV, New York, 1947, pp. 656–663.

⁴¹⁵ S. Bernfeld, "Ernest Renan veiyichuso el haYahadut," (Ernest Renan and His Attitude towards Judaism), *Hashiloach*, I, October 1896–March 1897, pp. 102–103.

on and our poets have sung about endlessly can be a total invention. Nonetheless, I can understand the view of the freethinking scholars who do not believe in all of these stories that have been handed down.”⁴¹⁶ Still, Bernfeld was prepared to accept the view that Moses, in writing the Torah, had used several earlier sources, from which he had taken the description of the nation’s history up to the exodus from Egypt, and that some errors and changes had been inserted into the text in a later process of copying the Holy Scriptures. However, he argued, this is not a basis for questioning the reliability of the original core, since the main point was to prove the antiquity of Moses’ creation. Accordingly, he believed that the documents from Mesopotamia contradict Wellhausen’s theory about the later date to be assigned to the writing of the Pentateuch:

Wellhausen’s method, which made a great impression on the camp of critics when it was first published, is based on the view that the stories of the Torah were not only written at a very late date (during the Babylonian Exile) but that most of them were written at that time with a specific objective in mind. According to him, all the stories of the Holy Scriptures up to the time of Solomon are merely legends devoid of any historical value, or were written at a later date according to the world-view of the generation in exile in Babylonia for a well-known purpose.⁴¹⁷

Bernfeld believed that as a result of archaeology, “the Bible criticism adhered to by both Jewish and Christian critics fell by the wayside, and everyone then expressed views in a similar vein, that the stories of the Torah were written later in time and for a special purpose. But now we should know that the stories of the Torah are true historical events from a very ancient time.”⁴¹⁸ In other words, while he agreed that the final editing of the books Genesis to II Kings was carried out during the Babylonian Exile based on various sources, he argued that the early sources that were the foundation for these books were authentic and reliable. Although Bernfeld regarded the Babylonian documents (and the Mesha stele) as reliable evidence of the biblical tradition, he was perturbed by the fundamental question: Was there any need for evidence in wood or stone to testify to the veracity of the Holy Scriptures?⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶ Bernfeld, *Dorshei reshumot*, Berlin, 1897, p. 399.

⁴¹⁷ Bernfeld, *ibid.*, p. 514.

⁴¹⁸ Bernfeld, *ibid.* In his article “Tekufat hayetzirah besifrutenu hakedumah mizeman galut Bavel ve’ad zeman Romi” (The Period of the Creation of our Ancient Literature), printed in the fourth issue of the periodical *HaOmer* (Nissan 1908), Bernfeld wrote that the Torah was given its final form early in the Second Temple period and that the Book of Kings was edited during the Babylonian Exile.

⁴¹⁹ Bernfeld, “Ernest Renan,” pp. 104–105.

Here we have an instance, then, of a learned rabbi defending the sanctity of the Bible and its unchallenged authority. But a few years later, in his book *Mavo sifruti-histori lechitvei hakodesh* (Literary-Historical Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, Berlin, 1923–1929),⁴²⁰ in which he surveyed the history of Bible criticism from the time of Astruc and Spinoza, Bernfeld had already accepted the view that Moses was not the author of the Torah, that the books of the Pentateuch were not a unified work, but contained contradictions that the editor had chosen to leave in. He discerned three elements in the narrative material of the Bible: 1. an historical tradition or legend; 2. a literary, poetic work; 3. a homiletic interpretation of the stories. The last editor collected and unified various compilations of literary creations, and in his work made much use of interpretation and exegesis of the historical and literary material at his disposal. Bernfeld concluded that Moses did not write the Ten Commandments and that “the Torah that we have in our possession, in its present scope and form, is unquestionably a product of a number of consecutive editings,”⁴²¹ which was attributed to Moses in a later period. These were, needless to say, far more radical views than Graetz’ were. In Bernfeld’s case too, the safe position was to assert that the important point was not the unity of the Torah, but rather “when it was written and edited, and when it became well known throughout the world” (and on him, see Chapter 14 as well).

Jewish Orthodoxy and Bible Criticism⁴²²

For the neo-orthodox Jews in Germany, and all the more so for the ultra-orthodox in Eastern Europe, even the most moderate acceptance of the documentary hypothesis was perceived as destructive and dangerous heresy. They looked with horror at what seemed to them to be a thin stream that was turning into a strong current of influence by

⁴²⁰ Bernfeld, *Mavo lechitvei hakodesh*, I, Moriah and Dvir Publishing, Jerusalem – Berlin, 1923.

⁴²¹ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴²² See: Shalom Rosenberg, “Bible Study in the New Religious Jewish Thought.” In Uriel Simon (ed.), *The Bible and Us*, Tel Aviv, 1979, pp. 86–119 (Hebrew); idem, “Jewish Science – Three Orthodox Approaches,” in Shaul Israeli *et al.* (eds.) *Jubilee Book in Honour of Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik*, vol. II, Mossad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, and Yeshiva University, New York, 1984, pp. 856–865 (Hebrew); Steven Shaw, “Orthodox Reactions to the Challenge of Biblical Criticism”, in *Tradition*, 10 (3), Spring 1969, pp. 61–85. See also in Chapter 14.

Bible criticism even on the science of Judaism. The orthodox biblical interpretation was called upon to react to Bible criticism and the use made of it by the reform movement. That is what Rabbi Meir Lebush ben Yehiel Michel Malbim (1809–1879) did in his commentaries on the Bible. Others to react were Samson Raphael Hirsch, founder of neo-orthodoxy in Germany, and even more strongly, Dr. David Zvi Hoffmann (1843–1921), dean of the Berlin rabbinical seminary.⁴²³ Hoffmann openly expressed his concern about “the high tide of destructive Bible criticism that has swept away many students of Jewish theology and carried them into the wrong path of apostasy and denial of the most important religious principles.”⁴²⁴ Dr. Aharon Marcus (1843–1916)⁴²⁵ was much more acerbic in his comment: “The theory of sources is a madness that has been raised to the level of scientific dogma but is really only desecration of the Almighty; it cuts up the Torah in the same way as the Torah parchments were cut into bits by the Cossacks in the 1648–1649 pogroms.” He regarded the documentary hypothesis as a link in the chain of ferocious anti-Semitism that led from Apion to Astruc, and from Astruc to Wellhausen.⁴²⁶

Ze’ev Jawitz, the Hebrew spokesman of German neo-Orthodoxy, wrote that modern Bible critics were not only building castles in the air, but also spreading “much antagonism, subtle hatred and fierce loathing for the Jews, and displaying pride and contempt, scorn and disgrace towards our holy books and their authors that would freeze the blood of any Hebrew man upon hearing them.” He also compared Bible criticism to the pogroms in Czarist Russia: While there anti-Semitism was manifested in violent riots, in the West it is expressed in disrespect and contempt for the Jewish spirit. Jawitz compared Wellhausen to “the enemy Apion” and saw in the historicization of the biblical text a deliberate attempt to impugn the spirit of the Torah and to represent the Jewish people as an empty vessel.⁴²⁷

⁴²³ On him, see: Hanna Liss, “From Mar Samuel to David Hoffmann (1844–1921): Biographical Mirroring of an Orthodox Life,” *EAJS Newsletter*, 12, March 2002, pp. 19–23; Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 363–438.

⁴²⁴ M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 204. (See entire discussion on pp. 184–214).

⁴²⁵ On him, see the Appendix.

⁴²⁶ A. Marcus, *Zwischen zwei Stühlen*, Altona, 1905.

⁴²⁷ Jawitz, “Habikoret keshehi mevukkeret” (Criticism when it is Criticized), *Tachkemoni*, II, Berlin, 1910, p. 13. On Jawitz see M. Waxman, IV, pp. 727–735 and M. Eliash, “R. Ze’ev Jawitz,” in Shmuel K. Mirsky (ed.) *Figures and Personalities in Jewish Scholarship in Eastern Europe before its Decline*, New York, 1959, pp. 155–173 (Hebrew).

Neo-orthodoxy in Germany was divided on the issue of whether to react to Protestant Bible criticism, and since it did not regard the Bible as a foundation it had in common with Protestantism, it was relieved of the desire to view it as a book that offered a universal humanistic code of ethics. The controversy within orthodoxy centered on the questions of whether Bible study was a science and what the relationship was between science and faith. Opposition to the doctrine of evolution and the historicization of Jewish history underpinned the world-view of orthodoxy, and it regarded the written Torah and the oral Torah as a unified unit and both of them as a product of revelation and divine origin. It tended to react to the challenge to the principle of revelation by explaining it as a revolutionary phenomenon, “ex nihilo,” for which there is no rational explanation.⁴²⁸ The most conservative position was adopted by the rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and his circle, who labeled modern biblical science a “fallacious science” that questions the observance of the commandments and the existence of Judaism.⁴²⁹ In Hirsch’s eyes, the studies of David Hoffmann and Jacob Barth were examples of heresy that resulted from the damaging influence of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* on learned orthodox rabbis. He took this view despite the fact that Hoffmann had explicitly stated that there can be no Judaism without the principle of a divinely given Torah and that he believed in the unity of the Pentateuch, in the Oral Law and in the integrity of the Masoretic text.⁴³⁰ Hirsch’s ‘modernity’ was expressed, however, in his attempt to deny the scientific validity of Bible study, since it could not explain the revelation as a phenomenon outside of nature. A similar position was taken by the rabbi, Dr. Josef Gugenheimer (1833–1896) (Hirsch’s son-in-law) in seven articles published in *Jeschurun* between 1867–1869. Gugenheimer reiterated

⁴²⁸ Jay M. Harris, “Modern Students of Midrash Halakha: Between Tradition and Wissenschaft,” in Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, New York, 1992, pp. 261–277; J. M. Harris, *How do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism*, Albany, NY, 1995.

⁴²⁹ A similar criticism of the rationalist-positivist approach to the Bible was written about one hundred years later by Prof. Jacob Katz (1904–1999), an eminent scholar of the Jewish people and an observant Jew. In his view, modern biblical criticism approached the Bible “with naïve audacity, with total confidence in the power of common sense – in short without epistemological and methodological criticism of the criticism, which is fundamental to the scientific approach to history” (J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, pp. 24–26). The problem is that Katz failed to clarify what the epistemological and methodological flaws of the historical-philological approach were that led to its misunderstandings of the Bible.

⁴³⁰ See: Jenny Marmorstein, “David Hoffmann’s *Introduction to Leviticus* – Defender of Faith,” *Tradition*, 7–8, 1966, pp. 91–101.

Hirsch's position that science could not prove there was a revelation, nor that there was none. But, at the same time, he believed there was a basis for challenging the method of Bible criticism by means of a painstaking philological-historical study. Such a study would prove, in his view, that there were no grounds for negating the unity of the Pentateuch and its authorship by Moses. Anyone who denied this was in effect denying the revelation. Gugenheimer was probably the first to propose something that was later repeated in principle by many scholars – that the two names of God in the Book of Genesis (Elohim and Jahweh) express two different concepts of God and His deeds: the former denotes the universal, omnipotent God; the latter denotes life or existence.⁴³¹

Even if the orthodox felt the need to react, the question still remained as to how to react to Christian Bible criticism and whether to introduce modern Jewish orthodox Bible study, namely, whether to strike at the enemy with his own weapons in order to save "Bible study which can be likened to an infant taken prisoner by the Gentiles." In the conservative neo-orthodox camp the claim was made that a Jew who views the Torah as the word of God has no need for any evidence of its sanctity and veracity; on the other hand, anyone who believes the Torah is the creation of man is a heretic and cannot be changed.⁴³² Hirsch opined that the authority of the Bible stands above Bible criticism and hence cannot be harmed by it,⁴³³ but nonetheless he attempted to prove that Bible criticism is a fallacious science, namely "unscientific," caught in the deceptive trap of prejudice.

The rabbi and physician Haim Eduard Biberfeld (1864–1939) suggested another line of defense; he asserted that there was no science without preconceptions, and hence the Jewish biblical scholar could believe a priori in the sanctity of the Bible and set the aims and limits of every inquiry accordingly.⁴³⁴ The more moderate Hildesheimer school, which formed in Berlin around R. Esriel Israel Hildesheimer (1820–1899) and the *Jüdische Presse* and counted among its members

⁴³¹ J. Gugenheimer, "Die Hypothesen der Bibelkritik und der Commentar zur Genesis von Herrn Rabbiner S. R. Hirsch," *Jeschurun*, 13, 1866–1867, pp. 293–312, 397–409; 14, 1867–1868, pp. 1–17, 173–190, 312–324; 15, 1868–1869, pp. 81–100, 179–192.

⁴³² M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 206.

⁴³³ Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism: The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. David W. Silverman, Garden City, New York, 1964, p. 282; Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 203–214.

⁴³⁴ Breuer, *ibid.*, p. 202. Articles by orthodox authors were already being published in the 1860s.

David Zvi Hoffmann, Jacob Barth and others, believed that Jewish Bible study was feasible and that there was a need for Jewish historiography of the biblical period.⁴³⁵ This modern neo-orthodoxy held that in defending the Bible with the tools of Christian Bible criticism, one could rely on the fact that the Bible was its own best and most reliable witness. On this basis, the *Orthodox-Israelitische Bibelanstalt* was founded, and as we shall see later, it was these circles that stood at the forefront of the orthodox response to Delitzsch.

In 1879–1880, Dr. David Hoffmann published the first series of articles against Wellhausen in *Magazin für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*. His book *Die wichtigsten Instanzen gegen die Graf-Wellhausen-sche Hypothese* (Decisive Evidence against the Graf-Wellhausen Theory) came out in 1904, and in 1905 his books *Das Buch Leviticus, übersetzt und erklärt* (Commentary on Leviticus) and *Das Buch Deuteronomium, übersetzt und erklärt* (Commentary on Deuteronomy) were published.⁴³⁶ Hoffmann obviously regarded Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis as monstrous heresy, which was giving rise to a growing tide of destructive Bible study that the Jews should combat using Wellhausen's own weapons. He argued that the Jewish interpreter was obliged to write in accordance with the principle of belief in the divine source of the written Torah, and that he must totally reject higher criticism. The struggle against the documentary hypothesis does not necessitate the sacrifice of reason (*sacrificium intellectus*), he opined, but it does require the use of reason in the service of faith. In the introduction to his commentary on Leviticus, Hoffmann wrote:

I willingly admit that on the basis of the articles of my faith I would be unable to conclude that the five books of the Torah were written after the time of Moses or by someone other than Moses, but in my desire to scientifically ground these fundamental assumptions, I have always tried to put forth only those arguments that persons holding other fundamental views would acknowledge as correct.

At the very most, Hoffmann was prepared to agree with the hypothesis that Moses wrote the Pentateuch at different periods of his life, and that the scrolls were assembled before his death. But he insisted that the different names of God in the Pentateuch (Jaweh, Elohim) are not evidence supporting the documentary hypothesis. Hoffmann invested his

⁴³⁵ M. Breuer, *ibid.* pp. 184–193. See what he wrote about Isaak Breuer's criticism of Barth's commentaries on the Book of Isaiah, pp. 186–187.

⁴³⁶ On Hoffmann, see: Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature*; Bechtoldt, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik*, pp. 363–438. Hoffmann's book on Deuteronomy was published in a Hebrew translation, Jerusalem, 1972.

major scholarly effort to disprove Wellhausen's theory that the Priestly (P) Code was from the post-Exilic period, and to prove the tradition that both the Priestly Code and the Deuteronomic (D) source were at least contemporaneous and pre-Exilic. He believed that if he could refute this claim, the whole documentary hypothesis would fall.⁴³⁷

To the non-orthodox in Germany, Hoffmann seemed to have been trying to prove "the truth of Moses' Torah with scientific and literary models," but then found he was compelled to accept several principles of Bible criticism and the idea of evolution. Hence, Hoffmann represented the complicated path followed by the orthodox scholar which ended in a cul-de-sac between tradition and scientific research.⁴³⁸ Rabbi Markus (Mordechai Ze'ev) Braude (1869–1949), who came from Galicia to study in the Berlin rabbinical seminary, recounts in his memoirs that in the seminary they never referred to the various methods of Bible criticism, and that although Dr. D.Z. Hoffmann did deal with them, he did so mainly in order to "know what to reply to the apostates." He wrote that the studies in the seminary did not provide answers to the views the students heard within the German university.⁴³⁹ The scholar of Talmud and rabbinical literature, Louis (Levi) Ginzberg (1873–1953) wrote that Hoffmann was the only Jewish scholar to grapple with the documentary hypothesis who did not ignore the problems posed by modern Bible study. Ginzberg believed that Hoffmann wrote the finest criticism written to refute the Graf-Wellhausen method.⁴⁴⁰ Alexander Altmann summed up Hoffmann's endeavor as follows:

Hoffmann's learned and skillful rebuttal of Wellhausen was more in the nature of an apologetic than modern scholarship, no matter how justified were his strictures in detail.⁴⁴¹

In contrast, some among the orthodox in Germany felt that Hoffman's writings provided a sufficient reply to the Graf-Wellhausen theory. He was depicted as the first among those faithful to the Torah (*Gesetzes-*

⁴³⁷ See: David H. Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy*, Tuscaloosa, Alabama and London, 1990, pp. 150–154; Assaf Yedidia, *The Hildesheimer School – An Orthodox Alternative to the Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Jerusalem, 2006 (Hebrew).

⁴³⁸ Neumark, "On the Question of Bible Criticism," *Lu'ach Achiever*, New York, 1921, pp. 25–38 (Hebrew).

⁴³⁹ See: Mordechai Ze'ev Braude, *A Collection in his Memory*, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 121–122 (Hebrew).

⁴⁴⁰ Louis Ginzberg, *Students, Scholrs and Saints*, pp. 252–262. S. Bernfeld described Hoffmann's book *Die wichtigsten Instanzen* as "devoid of any scientific value" (*Introduction to the Holy Scriptures*, p. 19).

⁴⁴¹ See: A. Altmann, "Theology in Twentieth Century German Jewry," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 1, 1956, pp. 93–216.

treue) who, as far back as the 1870s, dared publish criticism of Wellhausen and came out in defense of the destiny of the Jewish people and the veracity of the biblical tradition, primarily the unity of the Pentateuch and its composition prior to the destruction of the First Temple. While Wellhausen's Christian critics accepted his views, and tried only to at least salvage Moses' status as the author of parts of the Pentateuch, Hoffmann declared there was no room for any compromise with the documentary hypothesis. Moreover, he "proved" that the Priestly (P) source was not written after the destruction of the First Temple because the laws written in it were not applicable in the economic reality of the 5th century B.C. Hoffmann, in their view, had annihilated Wellhausen!⁴⁴²

The "conservative" orthodox reaction was worded by the rabbi Isaac Breuer (1883–1946), a leader of Agudat Yisrael in Germany until 1936 in his book *Moriah*. Breuer labeled Bible criticism as "odious wisdom and a "defiled animal" and cried out: "Leave Bible criticism to those who were present at Mt. Sinai. Do not abominate your souls! And do not despoil your minds!" His argument was that the conclusions of Bible criticism and of the wisdom of the Torah (*chokhmat haTorah*) contradict one another because they address totally different subjects. The conclusions of Bible criticism can only be correct based on the assumption that the Torah does not contain the words of the living God and that the divine spirit did not dwell within the Prophets. If so, then "it is not Bible criticism that leads to apostasy; rather it is apostasy that leads to Bible criticism."⁴⁴³ As we shall see, both reform and orthodox Jewry were compelled to revise their world-views and their claims in relation to Bible criticism, as well as their attitudes to one another, as part of and a result of the Babel-Bibel controversy.

Eliezer Meir Lifschitz (1879–1946), who wrote the introduction to the Hebrew translation of Hoffmann's book *Die wichtigsten Instanzen* (Jerusalem, 1928), described him as a man who had "performed a sacred act" by destroying the edifice Wellhausen had supposedly constructed so superbly.⁴⁴⁴ The translator, in his introduction, still seems to be expecting to see a Jewish Bible study at last:

⁴⁴² J. Neubauer, "Wellhausen und der heutige Stand der Bibelwissenschaft," *Jeschurun (Neue Folge)*, 5 (3/4), 1918, pp. 203–233. Lifschitz, who immigrated to Palestine from Lwow, was the principal of the HaMizrachi (the national-religious movement) teachers seminary in Jerusalem, from 1921.

⁴⁴³ Isaac Breuer, *Moriah: The Elements of National and Religious Education*, revised edition, Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 168–169 (Hebrew).

⁴⁴⁴ Hoffmann's book *Die wichtigsten Instanzen gegen die Graf-Wellhausensche Hypothese* was translated into Hebrew in 1928. Wellhausen's book *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* was translated into Hebrew only in 1938.

Bible study can be likened to an infant taken captive by the Gentiles. If we are fortunate – our work has been and is being done by others; others, and sometimes also those who hate us and cast us out, have done what they wished with it, as if it were their own, while we stood by at a distance and denied the existence of the labors and exertions and all the investigations of the Christian scholars.

And we must admit to the bitter truth, that the non-Jewish theologians and philologists have done some splendid work – despite all their errors and misconstruing – in studying the Bible and the Aprocrypha. Anyone desiring to learn in depth about Jewish history and Hebrew literature during the time when the Bible was taking shape must with pain quench his thirst at the wellsprings of “the cold flowing waters” of others. And within us, very often, these wellsprings will turn into bitter, accursed waters that cause pain and suffering to our national soul.

Let us then hang our heads in shame and admit to the truth: Our land has become the estate of foreigners, and we are gathering gleanings left by the reapers, the forgotten sheaf and the edges of the field ... Christian professors of theology are researching the Bible and smashing it to smithereens, and men of science among our Jewish brethren, who stand in the midst of our national history and write Hebrew for the Hebrews, take pleasure in the sight of this investigation and accept all the conclusions of the new criticism.

The ambivalence of the Orthodox in relation to Bible criticism is clearly reflected in Lifschitz' words. He argues, on the one hand, that Bible study is fed by subjective national and religious views, and on the other, that the Jew should react to Christian Bible criticism using its “objective” methods.

The most virulent attacks on Wellhausen and his school were probably written in Hebrew, not in German. The task of writing apologetics in Hebrew was undertaken by Ze'ev Jawitz, with the encouragement of the orthodox rabbi, Isaac Halevy (Rabinowitz, 1847–1914), a native of Poland.⁴⁴⁵ Neo-orthodox circles in Germany asked Jawitz to write his book because they feared that the “insipid, rash criticism” would cross borders and influence educated orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe as well. Jawitz regarded Wellhausen and Delitzsch as two enemies on a par with one another that had to be fought against tooth and nail. In his article, “*Totz'ot hachatitot vehachakikot*,” he attempted, according to his own testimony, to wage a defensive battle

⁴⁴⁵ In his book, *Dorot harishonim: Sefer divrei hayamim livnei Yisrael*, Frankfurt am Main, 1906 (The First Generations: History of the Jews), Part I/vol. VI: The Biblical Period, Halevy rejected the claim that the Prophets had not known the Mosaic Code. His book was published in 1939 by Mossad HaRav Kook (Jerusalem), edited from the manuscript by Dr. B. M. Levine. On Halevy, see the article by Dr. M. Eliash, in Saul Mirsky (ed.), *Figures and Personalities*, pp. 115–165; L. Ginzberg, *Students, Scholars and Saints*, p. 262.

against “envious false witnesses” and the “shaky sophistry of Wellhausen that hangs by a thread.” In another article, “Criticism when it is Criticized,” he compared Wellhausen to “Apion the enemy”:

In conclusion, this document of “criticism” assigns a later date to the Bible, which distorts, debases and slanders it. This document has the same aim as our bitter enemy, Apion, had, to disgrace the spirit of our Torah in the eyes of the Gentiles.⁴⁴⁶

Jawitz’ words enunciate the position of Jewish orthodoxy in relation to Bible criticism and the documentary hypothesis.⁴⁴⁷

Even earlier, the educated orthodox in Eastern Europe had learned about the method of the documentary hypothesis and its conclusions, either from the German source, or through the mediation of books in Hebrew. There were some among them, not necessarily great talmudic scholars, who hastened to react even before a scholarly response was forthcoming from orthodox scholars. One such response came from David Krivitsky, an unknown educated orthodox Jew from the city of Lodizin in Ukraine, who wrote a long book (128 pages), entitled *Keshet umagen: Yekalkel bikoret al “historiah Yisraelit” leDr. Joseph Klausner, al odot hade’ot hatzarot shel ba’alei bikoret hamikra ha’atzurot basefer hazeh* (Bow and Shield: Further Criticism of Dr. J. Klausner’s “Jewish History,” Regarding the Narrow Views of Biblical Critics Contained in his Book, Berdychiv, 1911). The book was a reaction to Dr. Klausner’s book published in Odessa in 1909, which we will discuss later. The author believed that Klausner had “brought shame and disgrace upon our Torah and Holy Scriptures, by citing the views of the critics of these holy books and by following in the footsteps” of these critics “from whose throats the spirit of hatred speaks.” Hence Krivitsky embarked on a defensive war “armed with bow and shield,” to launch an extraordinarily harsh and detailed attack against “the forces of destruction,” namely, the method and conclusions of the documentary hypothesis, which is ostensibly armed with the weapons of science. In his view, this method is predicated on an assumption that is wrong to begin with, that the authors of the Bible deviated from the truth because of their religious world view, from which the critics arrived at “imbecilic groundless hypotheses.” To counter this view, he argued that the fact that the authors of the Bible also included stories that were antithetical to their religious tendencies shows that they told

⁴⁴⁶ Jawitz, “Criticism when it is Criticized,” ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁴⁷ See: Zwi R. J. Werblowsky, “Bible Study as a Religious Problem,” *Molad/Scientific and Literary Monthly*, 18, 141–142, May 1960, pp. 162–168 (Hebrew).

the whole truth. Krivitsky went over Klausner's claims, one by one, and attempted to refute them all. He argued, for example, that when the Sages wrote "The Torah was given scroll by scroll" (Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 60a) they did not mean that the Pentateuch was written at different times, but that Moses wrote it scroll by scroll, and later assembled them into one whole book. Consequently:

The Christian critics, and Mr. Klauser who imbibes of their waters, separated the five books of the Torah and decided that the Book of Deuteronomy was written in the days of Josiah, and the other books in the time of Ezra. However, if we look searchingly into the matter, we will find that this separation is groundless since Deuteronomy itself will testify to the fact that it is a continuation of the previous books of the Pentateuch, for many things are found in this book that clearly show that its author based himself on things he had already written in the previous books, and if this were not the case, they would be meaningless, and it is essential to conclude that all five books were given by one shepherd!⁴⁴⁸

The author, then, attempted to defend the principle of a divinely given Torah and the historicity of the theophany at Mt. Sinai (which took place in the presence of all the Israelites), as well as the tradition of the antiquity of the Pentateuch and its authorship by Moses. At the same time, he did his utmost to uphold the truthfulness of each detail of the historical story related in the Pentateuch and in other books of the Bible.

As we noted, orthodox scholars tried to challenge not only the conclusions of the philological-historical research, but also the main-stay of Bible criticism – the concept of evolution. They devoted much effort in an attempt to prove that the principle of evolution did not apply to the history of religions in general, and to the Jewish religion in particular. Siegmund Jampel (1874–1934)⁴⁴⁹ derisively called the theory of evolution *evolutionistischer Wahn* (evolutionary mania) and claimed that Wellhausen had imposed it on the Bible. It does not explain why monotheism did not make an appearance among earlier Semite peoples or why their religion developed along a different track. Nor is there any basis for the claim that the ethical monotheism of the Prophets is on a different (and higher) level of development than that of the earlier biblical religion, since there is no disparity between the laws in the Pentateuch and the words of the Prophets. The fact that there were also manifestations of idolatry during the biblical period cannot serve as evidence that the religion of the Prophets is a new phase of evolution. In later periods too, belief in astral powers and

⁴⁴⁸ Krivitsky, p. 39

⁴⁴⁹ On him, see the Appendix.

magic existed alongside absolute monotheism (and observance of the commandments).⁴⁵⁰

Neubauer, the author of the article on Hoffman mentioned above, argued in a similar vein that the various religions did not develop in a linear fashion, but rather in waves (*nicht geradlinig, sondern wellenförmig*).⁴⁵¹ He agreed that abstract monotheism is the highest form of the religion, but argued that it is not a product of a later evolutionary stage of the religion, since belief in one God already existed in the earlier phase.

Nationalism and Bible Criticism: Early Responses

The *maskilim* and the “freethinking” nationalist ideologues were also beset by uncertainties and quandaries. They tried to defend the tradition because of the national value they assigned it and described the Bible as a work that gave expression to the creative national genius, but at the same time they espoused radical historicist views.

Moses Hess, who developed an organic concept of the link between race and religion, regarded the Bible as an organic creation that expresses the genius of the Jewish race and its living unity: “It is not theory that forms life, but race,” he wrote in *Rome and Jerusalem*.⁴⁵² As a result, he was not troubled by the issue of the sources of the Pentateuch and the time of its composition. On the one hand, Hess accepted the view that the first four books of the Pentateuch were edited after the Book of Deuteronomy was, but were based on ancient documents, and on the other hand, he agreed with the view that the cosmology of the Book of Genesis was composed under the influence of the Babylonian cosmology only during the Babylonian Exile, when the need to explain the day of Sabbath arose.⁴⁵³ To a nationalist *maskil* like Peretz Smolenskin, a bitter adversary and critic of Mendelssohn and the German Haskalah, which he described as “an alien branch

⁴⁵⁰ See his articles: S. Jampel, “Die bibelwissenschaftliche Literatur der letzten Jahre,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, 51, 1907, 52, 1908, pp. 21–36, 659–677; 52, pp. 145–161; “Die neuesten Aufstellungen über Moses und sein Werk,” ibid. 53, 1909, pp. 641–656; “Die neuen Papyrusfunde in Elephantine,” ibid. 55, 1911, pp. 641–665.

⁴⁵¹ J. Neubauer, “Wellhausen und der heutige Stand der Bibelwissenschaft,” *Jeschurun*, 5 (3/4), 1918, p. 224.

⁴⁵² Hess, *The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem*, p. 85.

⁴⁵³ M. Hess, “Dynamische Stofflehre,” Paris, 1877. We will return to this matter in the discussion on the Babylonian and the biblical flood stories in Chapter 10.

from Germany,”⁴⁵⁴ the negative term “the Darwinian method” also characterized Bible criticism. He attacked it, among other reasons, because he believed that it served the anti-nationalist advocates of emancipation. Smolenskin held (as did Mendelssohn and Graetz) that Judaism is not a “revealed religion” but rather a “revealed code of laws” and based on this premise, he felt the need to defend faith in revelation. Smolenskin mainly came to the defense of the sanctity of the Pentateuch and the books of prophecy. He did not cast any doubt on the principle of revelation and stated that “the House of Israel” depended on the Torah, which is the complete, authentic manifestation of the people’s spirit.⁴⁵⁵ Nonetheless, as a nationalist *maskil* and a “freethinker,” Smolenskin found it difficult to accept the authority of the Pentateuch on every subject, and hence, he argued that it was not intended to teach the history of the generations (namely, to be a history book) nor to describe the order of the creation (namely, to be a science book); the objective of the story in Genesis was to serve as an introduction to the book of laws.⁴⁵⁶

The degree of caution also shown by “freethinking” nationalists, at least in public, in regard to Bible criticism, is reflected in a September 1896 letter by Ahad Ha’am, the nationalist thinker and then editor of the nationalist Hebrew periodical *Hashiloah*. Replying to a question as to whether it would be possible to publish an article in the spirit of Bible criticism in the periodical, Ahad Ha’am wrote:

In relation to Bible criticism, it is difficult for me to say in advance whether I would accept such articles. You know how much caution we need to exercise in such matters, both because of the censor and because of respect for the religion. It all depends then on the way the subject is worded and the style you choose. And for my part I believe it is possible to write anything if the writer only understands how to write.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Smolenskin, “Et lat’at,” p. 237. And see: S. Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, pp. 317–340. For a detailed discussion of Smolenskin’s view, see: David Engel, “Hebrew Nationalism and Biblical Criticism: The Attitude of Perez Smolenskin,” in Robert Chazan et al. (eds.), *Ki Baruch Hu: Studies in Honor of Baruch A. Levine*, Winona Lake, Ind., 1999, pp. 483–507; Haran, *Biblical Research in Hebrew*, pp. 15–22.

⁴⁵⁵ Smolenskin, *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁵⁶ P. Smolenskin, “Mishpat ami” (The Law of my People), *Hashahar*, 1883, in *Ma’amarim*, vol. IV, pp. 171–197.

⁴⁵⁷ Ahad Ha’am’s *Letters*, vol. I, revised and expanded edition edited by Arye Simon, Tel Aviv, 1955, pp. 113–114 (Hebrew). Despite his criticism of higher criticism, Ahad Ha’Am agreed with the view that in the biblical period, the great majority of the Jewish people had not accepted the idea of monotheism, but believed in “double polytheism,” in “natural gods” that represented the forces of nature, and “national gods,” while the monotheistic doctrine of the prophets was the province of only a small circle. See discussion in Noah Rosenbloom, “Chapters in Ancient

Joseph Klausner, who was himself the object of Krivitsky's severe criticism,⁴⁵⁸ offered a survey of ancient Jewish history in his book *History of Israel: Lessons in Jewish History* (Odessa, 1909). The book was based on lessons he gave at the Reform Yeshivah in Odessa (founded in 1866), which were discontinued because of their overly "radical" content. This is how Klausner worded his approach to ancient Jewish history:

As I did not show partiality towards the tradition when it was contrary to the clear-cut scientific truth, so I did not reject it because of hypotheses that hang by a thread, nor did I show favor to Wellhausen and his pupils, whose method has also become a truly sanctified "tradition," and none who touch it will go unpunished.⁴⁵⁹

In fact, in the book Klausner does not commit himself. For example, he regards Moses as an historical figure, but he makes no mention of the theophany at Mt. Sinai or the principle of a divinely given Torah. He describes monotheism as a product of historical development, influenced by a henotheistic view that was shared by the Semitic peoples and by the nature of the natural surroundings (the desert). But at the same time, he views it as a phenomenon unique to the Jewish people who recognized the existence of a sole supreme power. The Torah, on the other hand, is a product of historical development that reaches its zenith with the prophecy. These opinions, along with Klausner's emphasis on the social, political and economic background to the development of Jewish faith were sufficient to lead traditional Jews to consider them "heretical."⁴⁶⁰

At the time when Joseph Klausner was editor of *Hashiloah* (1903–1927), the periodical accepted articles of a radical nature. For example, from 1911–1913, Chaim Arye Chazan published articles in it entitled "*Mukdam umeuchar baTorah*" (Early and Late in the Torah)⁴⁶¹ and

Jewish History according to Ahad Ha'am's View," in idem, *Studies in Literature and Thought from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Jerusalem, 1989, pp. 234–258 (Hebrew). And see more on Ahad Ha'am's views in Chapter 12. In *Voschod*, the major Jewish literary journal in Russia, only a few original studies on the Bible were published between 1885–1889. On the other hand, translations of articles by Reus, Keynan and Cornill were printed. See: Yehuda Slutsky, *The Russian-Jewish Press in the Nineteenth Century*, Jerusalem, 1976, p. 290 (Hebrew).

⁴⁵⁸ From 1897–1902, Klausner studied ancient languages, history and Assyriology at Heidelberg University and was a delegate to the first Zionist Congress in 1897.

⁴⁵⁹ Klausner, *History of Israel*.

⁴⁶⁰ See more on Klausner in Chapter 12.

⁴⁶¹ *Hashiloach*, 24, 139–144, February–July 1910, pp. 300–321, 509–523. The articles were published in a booklet of the same name, Odessa, 1911. It was a reaction to an article by Ephraim Jerushalmi, "Sefer Devarim vatorat kohanim"

“Mavo lecheker haTorah” (An Introduction to Research on the Torah),⁴⁶² in which he described the Wellhausen method and stated that very few disagreed with it. He claimed that all those who had tried to conceal it had failed, and that nevertheless they were trying to plant in the heart of the Hebrew reader the erroneous view that it was “merely heretic claptrap.” He asserted that while the generation of faith might have had some basis for this fear of the documentary hypothesis, in the modern age when the public at large no longer believed in miracles (including the revelation on Mt. Sinai), there was no reason for such apprehension. He was convinced that the questions of how many people wrote the Torah or how it was given were no longer important, since the Bible is “the hallmark of the spirit of the Jewish people in the days of its childhood, which developed and flourished during a long period, in the days when they lived in their land and the days when they aspired to return to it.” On the basis of these premises, Chazan called for original and creative Jewish criticism in Bible study:

The few comments made here, which include views that are not accepted by most of the biblical scholars, show how many uncultivated corners still remain in this field that await diligent working hands. And it is advisable for Jewish scholars to take up work in this field themselves, for owing to our idleness and negligence it has been left to alien others who dominate it today.⁴⁶³

In 1904 Ahad Ha'am formulated his fundamental position on Bible criticism in his well-known article “Moses.” In it, he distinguished between “historical truth” and “archaeological truth,” and stated that the Bible should be taught as one whole unified creation, as it was produced, shaped and sealed by its editors and received by the tradition. The Bible should be regarded as a book that reflects and expresses the Jewish world-view.⁴⁶⁴ Its value stems from its wholeness and the fact that it encompasses the entire world; if it did not, it would not have become Holy Scriptures.⁴⁶⁵ In a similar vein, the biblical scholar Menahem Soloweitschik (1883–1957) proposed in his pamphlet *Rashei-perakim bemada’ei hamikra* (Chapter Headings in Bible Studies, Odessa,

(The Book of Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code), *Hashiloah*, 22, pp. 141–147, 319–329, 409–417. On Jerushalmi, see Chapter 13.

⁴⁶² *Hashiloah*, 30, 1920, p. 327–341, 452–539.

⁴⁶³ “Mavo lecheker haTorah,” *Hashiloach*, 30, p. 539.

⁴⁶⁴ Ahad Ha'am, “Moses,” in *Al parashat derakhim* (At the Crossroads), Part 3, pp. 210–221.

⁴⁶⁵ Ahad Ha'Am wrote that it is possible to find in the Bible Plato and Aristotle, mysticism, Copernicus and Darwin! See: “Perurim: bein kodesh lechol” (Crumbs: Between Secular and Profane), in *Al parashat derakhim*, Part I, pp. 138–140.

1914)⁴⁶⁶ that a distinction should be drawn between the Bible as historiography and the Bible as an expression of historical consciousness and an historical view. In other words, he suggested that the Bible be regarded as a creation that reflects the *Zeitgeist* of its composition and the historical consciousness of the people, and that the study of the Bible as history be separated from its study as a world-view.⁴⁶⁷ In his opinion, it was impossible to teach the story of the Creation in the Book of Genesis as scientific truth in the schools. The major “spiritual heritage” and “spiritual property” of the Bible is the Prophecy, in which “our classic world-view is expressed.” On the other hand, the religious part of the Bible should be removed from the curriculum: “And thus that same element required for an understanding of the historical evolution of Jewish culture will be constructed, the only understanding that can and will reveal to us the true value of our Jewish culture and show us the eternal assets embodied in it.”⁴⁶⁸ Jewish scholarship and Bible criticism therefore have an important role to play in building, not only in contradicting. Soloweitschik also believed that the eternal truth of the Torah does not depend on the results of excavations or scientific criticism: what is truly important in the Holy Scriptures does not require the testimony of the Mesha stele.

M. Berdyczewski expressed an exceptionally radical view. In principle he accepted the documentary hypothesis and attempted to expose the ways in which the Bible was adapted and edited. He claimed that parts of the biblical story were legends, believed it was possible to distinguish between the tradition of the kingdom of Israel (the Ephraimite) and the tradition of the kingdom of Judah in biblical historiography, and accepted the view that the return to Zion marked a profound shift in the faith of Israel and its historical concept.⁴⁶⁹ In his criticism

⁴⁶⁶ The article was first printed in Russian in the monthly of *Chevrat Mefitzei Haskalah*, 19–22, 1913.

⁴⁶⁷ Soloweitschik based his view on E. Kautzsch's proposal, *Bibelwissenschaft und Religionsunterricht*, 1903, and Kittel's 1910 book. Kautzsch wrote: *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, I–II, 1909–1910.

⁴⁶⁸ Soloweitschik, *Headings in Bible Studies*, pp. 83–88. In a book entitled *Toldot hasifrut ha'ivrit livnei haneurim* (The History of Hebrew Literature for Youth) published by Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz (Azar, 1854–1945) in the Moriah publishing house in 1906, he wrote that before the Bible was written, the Israelites had a rich oral literature as well as laws: “The laws in the Mosaic code are largely based on customs, practiced by the people before the Torah was given” (*ibid.*, pp. 5–6).

⁴⁶⁹ M. J. Berdyczewski, “Me’achorei hapargod” (Behind the Dividing Screen). See: Immanuel Bin-Gorion, *Koré hadorot*, Tel Aviv, 1981, pp. 95–141. Most of Berdyczewski's studies on the Bible were published only after his death (Only his *Sinai und Garizim* came out in German: M. J. Bin Gorion, *Sinai und Garizim*, Berlin, 1926),

of A.Z. Rabinowitz' adaptation of some of the Bible stories (Odessa, 1906) Berdyczewski wrote that he (and perhaps Bialik, the publisher, as well) did not know how to distinguish between the various layers in the books of the Bible, overlooked different human aspects and their literary-artistic facets, and gave preference to the theological aspect. The adapter, Berdyczewski wrote, did not discriminate between "history" and "literature," hence the book should be hailed as an attempt to write a history of Hebrew literature for young readers "but there is still a long way to go for us adults."⁴⁷⁰

Research on the Bible conducted by Jewish scholars from all camps in the nineteenth century was, therefore, elicited by Protestant Bible study, and it generated a variety of strategies of reaction. These strategies were directed both outward and inward: outward, to defend the Bible against the attacks on its spiritual unity and value, and inward, in order to find in it a source and basis for the various views about the correct way to reshape modern Judaism and the correct way to describe the distant, formative past of the Jews. These strategies were given a coherent and intensive expression in the Babel-Bibel controversy in the early twentieth century, which we deal with in the second part of this book. They did not remain the province of a small circle of scholars, but were known to a growing public and became an inseparable part of the *Kulturmampf* within Jewry.

The various views as to the correct way to relate to Bible criticism and its influence, as they developed in Europe, first and foremost in Germany, reached Palestine even before 1914, and particularly after that year. Teachers, autodidactic researchers and graduates of various universities brought them there. In the third part of this book, we will describe the development of the attitude to Bible criticism and

hence they had no influence on Jewish biblical research in the period under discussion here. See also Chapter 12.

⁴⁷⁰ Berdyczewski, "Torah ve'aggadah: Divrei bikoret" (Torah and Aggadah: A Critique), *Kitvei M. Berdyczewski: Ma'amaram*, pp. 247–248. C.N. Bialik collaborated on the translation from German of part of the book, *Die sozialen Probleme in Israel und deren Bedeutung für die religiöse Entwicklung dieses Volkes*, Strassburg, 1892, which was published under the name *Halikhot hamedinah shel ha'ivrim bimeい kedem ad chorban bayit sheni* (Warsaw 1904, and was published again in 1971 in Jerusalem), by Wilhelm Nowack (1850–1928), a professor of theology in Strasbourg. In the introduction, the two translators wrote that Nowack accepted the documentary hypothesis in relation to the order in which the Pentateuch was written, but they believed it was important to translate the book, in particular the part dealing with the structure of the government in ancient Israel, to avoid leaving the investigation into the antiquities of the Jewish people and its holy books to the Gentiles.

the study of the Bible in the new Jewish society from the nineteenth century onward. We will also attempt to clarify what influence Bible criticism had on the development of the national secular outlook and on the new Hebrew culture.

Chapter 3

“Truth Shall Spring out of the Earth”:⁴⁷¹ The Initial Jewish Reaction to the Archaeo- logy of the Ancient Near East

He came a distant road and was weary
but granted rest, [he] set down on a stele all [his] labors.

The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet I, 9:10, Introduction,
Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts, Vol. 1, trans. A.R. George,
Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 539.

Do not look for truth from Assyria and Egypt⁴⁷²
What have we to do with the way of Egypt and of Assyria,
to draw water from broken wells
when our people is a source of living waters,
a wellspring of an everlasting flow.

J.L. Gordon, “*Tzelochit shel pleiton*” (“A Vial of Perfume”),
Hamelitz, 18, 1887, p. 793.

A Brief History of Assyriology

The interest taken by Jews in the archaeology of the ancient Near East, the use of archaeology for an understanding of the Bible and an examination of the link between the Bible and the Near Eastern cultures were among the most interesting aspects of the biblical revolution.⁴⁷³ In the first half of the nineteenth century, archaeology was

⁴⁷¹ Psalms 85:11

⁴⁷² By Assyria and Egypt, the reference here is to non-Jews. Rabbi Judah Messer Leon, *Nofet Tsufim*, Book I, Chap. 13, p. 145. in Azariah de’Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, translated by Joanna Weinberg, New Haven, Conn., 2001, p. 98.

⁴⁷³ Josephus was apparently the only one to use testimonies about ostensibly ancient remains, once to support the biblical flood story with the aid of a tradition about the relics of an ark found in Armenia on the mountain of the Cordyaeans (“the Armenians show the relics of it to this day”) (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Book 1,

viewed as the enemy of the documentary hypothesis and as the new basis for defending the Bible. But towards the end of that century, it was also perceived as one of the Bible's most formidable enemies.

“To resuscitate the dead of Hades” – was the reply of Ciriaco de' Pizzicilli of Ancona (1391–1457), the traveler, collector and dealer in ancient manuscripts, when he was asked why he took such an interest in ancient manuscripts and drawings of ancient ruins.⁴⁷⁴ Indeed, archaeology, one of whose aims was to search for the sources of human civilization, reawakened dead cultures, ignited the imagination and aroused the curiosity of the modern world, and became a basis for the writing of new universal histories and for shaping old and new territorial national identities.

In his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, under the entry *Prière* (Prayer), Voltaire wrote: “It is regrettable, for those wishing to delve into the meaning of things, that nothing has remained of the letters of the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, while the Jews have preserved their writings.”⁴⁷⁵ In the mid-1870s, August Ludwig von Schlözer, a prominent historian of the German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), wrote that from an historical standpoint, the Old Testament is as reliable as the *Edda*⁴⁷⁶ and the *Iliad*, or any other myth or saga, and that it would be possible to assess its reliability as an historical document only if other sources from the same period were found.⁴⁷⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder

trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Harvard, 1930, p. 45), and once in a story about monuments erected by the sons of Seth, on which were inscribed their knowledge of the order of the planetary systems, monuments that existed until his own time in the “land of Seires”, ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁷⁴ Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, Cambridge, 1990 edn., pp. 35–40; Ronald and Françoise Etienne, *The Search for Ancient Greece*, London, 1992, pp. 24–29. Ciriaco drew the ruins of the Parthenon and Mycanae, and purchased medals, coins and manuscripts.

⁴⁷⁵ Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique, Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris, 1821, pp. 186–189, in *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (Essay on the Customs and Spirit of the Nations), 1765. Voltaire stated that the histories of Egypt and of ancient China are more important than the history recounted in the Bible. Comte C.F. Volney, (Constantin-François Chasseboeuf) in his book *Voyage en Egypte et Syrie*, Paris, 1787 (*Travels through Egypt and Syria in the Years 1783–1784, and 1785*, London) predicted in a similar vein: “Were Egypt possessed by a nation friendly to the fine arts, discoveries might be made there which would make us better acquainted with antiquity than anything the rest of the world can afford us.” On Voltaire's attitude towards the Bible see: Bertram Eugene Schwarzbach, *Voltaire's Old Testament Criticism*, Genève, 1971.

⁴⁷⁶ *Edda*, two collections of Icelandic mythological literature, written from 800–1200.

⁴⁷⁷ August Ludwig Schlözer, *Weltgeschichte nach ihren Haupttheilen im Auszug und Zusammenhange*, 2 vols., Göttingen, 1785–1789 (2nd ed. 1792–1801). See: Peter Hanns Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*, p. 86.

lamented the fact that very little of the ancient literature was extant, and that hence it was impossible to fulfill the desire to learn about it. In 1865 (about twenty years after the first finds in Mesopotamia) Joshua Heschel Schorr wrote in *Hechalutz*:

When ancient books are discovered, we will find that the author of the various stories in the Book of Genesis collected mythological tales of the ancients, and from them composed his book; Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem and Abraham are all characters known to the peoples of the ancient world (the Canaanites), and from this literary foundation, they came into the ancient Israelite literature.⁴⁷⁸

From the 1850s, following the discovery of monuments and the archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia, a panoramic, rich picture of the ancient past of the cultures of this region emerged. Friedrich Delitzsch expressed the view of many when he announced in his 1898 lecture that the finds in Mesopotamia had resuscitated the great Mesopotamian culture, after a sleep of thousands of years. Benno Jacob agreed with him when he described Assyriology as a glorious chapter in the history of science.⁴⁷⁹ These ancient cultures evoked enormous interest in themselves, but to a great extent this interest stemmed from the fact that they were perceived as the cradle of Western civilization and the background to the world of the Bible. Nearly every text discovered in Egypt or in Mesopotamia was assessed according to the manner in which it was linked to the Bible and how it illuminated and clarified it. For the first time, these ancient, authentic documents told about the world of the Bible, and the cultures of the ancient East told about themselves in their own language. Hence, the nineteenth-century archaeological research fulfilled the hopes of all those who desired to cast off the exclusive dependence on the biblical testimony as well as of those who wished to find in it earlier evidence of the Bible's historical reliability. Assyriology was not only a discipline that posed the greatest challenge to the authority of the Bible;⁴⁸⁰ it was perceived as providing decisive proof of its authority, but at the same time, also as the adversary of biblical criticism.

⁴⁷⁸ Y.H. Schorr, "Ha-Torah vedat Zarathustra" (The Torah and the Religion of Zarathustra), *Hechalutz*, 7, 1865.

⁴⁷⁹ See in Chapter 11 and in B. Jacob, "Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie", *AZdJ*, 88, 1902, p. 198.

⁴⁸⁰ Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. G. Patterson-Black and V. Reinking, New York, 1984, p. 5.

In their book, *The History of Bible Criticism*, Soloweitschik and Rubascheff summed up the development of scholarship on the history of the ancient Middle East and the biblical period from the 1840s:

In the meantime, and outside of the theological faculties in which until now the wisdom of the Bible has been confined, treasures have been discovered from long forgotten sites. The bounds of our historical knowledge have been greatly expanded. The excavations and their results in the lands of antiquity have unfolded before us previously unimagined chapters of ancient history. What we had thought belonged to the sphere of legend has been filled with real content, before the eyes of the witnesses of those days, which were raised from the depths, and in their light, the shadows of dawn have also lifted from our earliest history.⁴⁸¹

The fascinating history of the archaeological excavations and finds in Mesopotamia from the discovery and decipherment of the Behistun inscription in 1846–1848, has been told many times and there is no need to retell it here.⁴⁸² We will only note in brief that the excavations in Mesopotamia began in the 1840s, and that from the '50s they had an enormous public impact.⁴⁸³ A.H. Layard's (1817–1894) book, *Nineveh and its Remains* (1849) is a well-known example of a book on the subject that became an unprecedented best-seller.⁴⁸⁴ A high point in

⁴⁸¹ M. Soloweitschik and Z. Rubascheff, *History of Biblical Criticism*, Berlin, 1925, p. 101.

⁴⁸² Among the vast research literature on the subject, see: the first chapter in W.F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore, MD, 1940 (2nd edn. 1946); E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology*, London, 1925; C. Wade Meade, *Road to Babylon: Development of U.S. Assyriology*, Leiden, 1974; Herbert F. Hahn, *Old Testament in Modern Research*, Philadelphia, 1954, pp. 185–225; Robert William Rogers, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria*, I–II, Freeport/New York, 1900 (rep. 1971); Bruce Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon: The Ancient Near East and American Intellectual Life, 1880–1930*, Princeton, NJ., 1996; Mogens-Trolle Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land, 1840–1860*, London-New York, 1996; idem, “Orientalism and Near Eastern Archaeology”, in Daniel Miller *et al.* (eds.), *Domination and Resistance*, London and New York, 1989, pp. 229–239; Tom B. Jones (ed.), *The Sumerian Problem*, New York, 1969; C.W. Ceram, *Gods, Graves and Scholars: The Story of Archaeology* (trans. E.B. Garside & S. Wilkins), Penguin Books, 1979 printing (German orig. *Götter, Gräber und Gelehrte*, Hamburg-Stuttgart, 1949), pp. 229–334; J.W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, II, New York, 1942, pp. 463–487; Seton Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust: A Story of Mesopotamian Exploration*, London, 1980 edn.; E. Doblhofer, *Vocies on Stone: The Decipherment of Ancient Scripts and Writings*, trans. M. Savill, London, 1961; Mark W. Chavalas, “Assyriology and Biblical Studies: A Century and a Half of Tension”, in M.W. Chavalas & K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002, pp. 21–67.

⁴⁸³ On the history of the decipherment of the Akkadian script, see: R.W. Rogers, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria* (6th ed.), New York, 1915, pp. 175–199.

⁴⁸⁴ Kenneth Hudson, *A Social History of Archaeology: The British Experience*, London, 1981, pp. 69–97. In 1853, A.H. Layard's book *Discoveries in the Ruins of*

this history is the dramatic story of the decipherment of Tablet XI of the Epic of Gilgamesh, which contains a section on the flood (the Babylonian version of the earlier flood myth, bearing the name Astrahasis), by George Smith (1840–1876), who worked in the British Museum's department of Oriental antiquities.⁴⁸⁵ The decipherment, and the announcement of it, made on December 3, 1872 at the monthly meeting of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, founded in December 1870,⁴⁸⁶ stirred enormous excitement in public opinion in and out of Britain.⁴⁸⁷ Similar excitement was aroused by the additional documents discovered in excavations directed by Smith at the site of ancient Nineveh in 1874–1876, about three thousand clay tablets, which also contained another part of the Gilgamesh epic. The reason for the immense public impact of the discovery of the earlier flood story, engraved on a clay tablet and found in the “library” of King Ashurbanipal, ruler of the Assyrian empire from 668–628 B.C., and deciphered by Smith, is obvious.⁴⁸⁸ The parallel to the flood story in Genesis was immediately seized upon by all branches of Protestant orthodoxy as an uncontested confirmation of the biblical tradition.⁴⁸⁹ In addition, Ashurbanipal's library contained historical documents, such as the report on the

Nineveh and Babylon was published, and in 1849–1853, the book *The Monuments of Nineveh*. And see the first summary based on the findings in defense of the Bible: J. Bonomi, *Nineveh and its Palaces: The Discoveries of Botta and Layard, Applied to the Elucidating of Holy Writ*, London, 1852.

⁴⁸⁵ Smith had earlier lectured at a meeting of the Society in 1871 on “The Early History of Babylonia,” in *Transactions*, vol. I, December 1871. The first reaction to the discovery came from A.H. Sayce in an article entitled, “The Chaldean Account of the Deluge and its Relation to the Old Testament,” *Theological Review*, 10, 1872, pp. 364–377. On the myth of Arthatosis, see: Jørgen Laessoe, “The Arthatosis Epic: A Babylonian History of Mankind,” *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 13, 1956, pp. 90–102. See also: Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*, Philadelphia, PA, 1982.

⁴⁸⁶ The lecture was published in *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, 2, 1873, pp. 213–234. The first reaction to the sensational discovery was that of A.H. Sayce in an article entitled, “The Chaldean Account of the Deluge and its Relation to the Old Testament,” *Theological Review*, 10, 1872, pp. 364–377.

⁴⁸⁷ G. Smith, *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, London, 1875 (in German: *Die Chaldäische Genesis*, Leipzig, 1876); J.W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, II, pp. 463–487. Smith summed up his finds in Nineveh in his book, *Assyrian Discoveries: An Account of Explorations and Discoveries on the Site of Nineveh during 1873 and 1874*, New York, 1875.

⁴⁸⁸ On Ashurbanipal's library, see: Simo Parpola, “The Royal Archives of Nineveh,” in K.R. Veenhof (ed.), *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries*, Leiden, 1986, pp. 223–236; A.L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*, Chicago, 1964, pp. 15–24.

⁴⁸⁹ Mogens-Trolle Larsen, “The Babel/Bibel Controversy and its Aftermath”, in J.M. Sasson (ed.-in-Chief), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Vol. I., New York, 1995, p. 99.

conquest of the kingdom of Israel by Tiglath-Pileser and Sennacherib’s campaign into Judah,⁴⁹⁰ and these documents, which related to the Judean monarchic period, also evoked intense interest. The poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) wrote in his poem *The Burden of Nineveh*: “... an English word broke silence first at Nineveh.”

Archaeological finds in the years to follow, primarily the discovery in 1901–1902 at Susa, the biblical Shushan (capital of Elam⁴⁹¹), of the laws of Hammurabi, the sixth in the dynasty of Amorite kings of Babylonia, identified with the biblical Amraphel, king of Shinar, by a French expedition headed by Jacques Jean Marie de Morgan (1857–1924),⁴⁹² further inflamed the public imagination. This time it seemed that the ancient source of the Mosaic Code had been found. The fact that these laws had been known approximately 1600 years after they were written (from copies made during Ashurbanipal’s reign and preserved in his library) was immediately seized upon as overwhelming evidence that they predated the Torah of Moses. Some even rushed to state that the discovery had completely undermined Wellhausen’s theory that the Mosaic code was written only during the First Temple period: “With satisfaction and joy I declare that the discovery and interpretation of the codex deepen my faith in the divine source of the Torah.”⁴⁹³

Even earlier, in the 1820s, soon after the hieroglyphs had been deciphered, Egyptology produced a growing number of books describing the reciprocal relations between the two great ancient civilizations – Egypt and Babylonia – and debated the question of which of them merited the status of seniority, and which of them had influenced the other.⁴⁹⁴ Some of these works attempted to point to the vestiges of

⁴⁹⁰ P.S.P. Handcock, *Mesopotamian Archaeology: An Introduction to the Archaeology of Babylonia and Assyria*, London, 1912 (rep. 1969), pp. 51–54.

⁴⁹¹ The city existed from the third millennium B.C. It was destroyed in the time of Ashurbanipal and rebuilt by Darius I.

⁴⁹² In addition, about 140 of his letters engraved on clay tablets were found. Morgan wrote: *Mémoires de la Perse publiés sous la direction de M.J. Morgan*, i–xiv, Paris, 1900–1913.

⁴⁹³ Johannes Jeremias, *Moses und Hammurabi*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 46. This book was one of the sources of Thomas Mann’s great novel, *Joseph und seine Brüder (Joseph and his Brothers)*, 1933–1944.

⁴⁹⁴ Fritz Hommel, *Der babylonische Ursprung der ägyptischen Kultur*, 1892. This is not the place to describe the differences of opinion between advocates of the Egyp-tocentric theory and of the Babylonic theory. We should only comment that the discovery of the “Egyptian background” to the Pentateuch contradicted the finding of its “Babylonian background”: If the Israelites lived in Egypt for many generations, one can assume that their culture was shaped under the influence of this great civilization. And if Akhenaten’s revolutionary “monotheism” was the

Egyptian culture in the Bible,⁴⁹⁵ and others even tried to prove the correspondence between Egyptian history and the relevant biblical historical tradition. This is not the place to survey the many and varied proposals put forward by 1914.⁴⁹⁶ Putative evidence of the antiquity of Israel had been found earlier in the Sinai peninsula. These were rock inscriptions, first discovered in the sixth century A.D. by Kosmas Indikopleustes ("the Indian traveler"), an Alexandrian merchant who described what he had seen in Sinai as inscriptions made by the children of Israel on their way from Egypt to Canaan. His book, *Topographia Christiana*, was publicized by Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680) in his own book *Lingua aegyptiaca restituta* (1643). The inscriptions were documented by various travelers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and some were deciphered and published in 1869 by Julius Euting (1839–1913). Kalman Schulman (1819–1899), the *maskil* and first professional Hebrew popularizer,⁴⁹⁷ hastened to use this publication as evidence of the veracity of the story of the

soil from which the Mosaic Code sprang, that can serve as a challenge to the argument that it was a product of Babylonian influence.

⁴⁹⁵ Among the many books on the subject published by 1914, see: William Osburn, *Ancient Egypt and her Testimony to the Truth of the Bible*, London, 1849; W. Spiegelberg, *Der Aufenthalt Israels in Ägypten im Lichte der ägyptischen Monamente*, Strasbourg, 1904; D. Voelter, *Ägypten und die Bibel: Die Urgeschichte Israels im Licht der aegyptischen Mythologie*, Leiden, 1903; A.H. Sayce, *The Egypt of the Hebrews and Herodotus*. London, 1896; E.W. Hengstenberg, *Egypt and the Books of Moses*, Edinburgh, 1845; H. Winckler, *Abraham als Babylonier. Joseph als Ägypter*, Leipzig, 1903; G. Ebers, *Aegypten und die Bücher Mose's*, Leipzig, 1868; R.H. Brown, *The Land of Goshen and the Exodus*, London, 1895; M. Gemoll, *Israeliten und Hyksos: Der historische Kern der Sage vom Aufenthalte Israels in Ägypten. Nebst einem Anhange: Indogermanische Mythologie im alten Orient*, Leipzig, 1913.

⁴⁹⁶ Jewish scholars also wrote on this subject. In an article by R. Eisler of Felerfing, in *Dvir, Me'assef iti lechokhmat Yisrael* (March-June, Berlin, 1923, pp. 14–21; II, pp. 46–60) entitled "Ma'ase haktav b'doro shel Moshe" ("Writing in Moses' Generation"), he used Egyptian sources to prove that writing was already known in the time of Moses, and hence there are no grounds for the claim that he was unable to write the Torah (see n. 36). The astronomer and Orientalist Dr. Eliahu (Eduard) Mahler published an article there entitled "Yetzi'at Mitzrayim. Chakira historit-chronologit" ("The Exodus from Egypt: A Historical-Chronological Study") (*ibid.*, 1–13), in which he tried to determine the time of the exodus based on Egyptian sources. Dr. E. Mahler (1875–1945), a native of Hungary, in 1912 was appointed director of the newly formed Egyptological Institute in Budapest, and in 1922 as director of the Oriental Institute there. Among his works: *Der Pharaon des Exodus*, Vienna, 1896; *Babylonia es Assyria*, Budapest, 1906. On the claim that Egyptian cosmology and theology influenced the Book of Genesis, see: John D. Currid, "An Examination of the Egyptian Background of the Genesis Cosmology", *Biblische Zeitschrift*, Neue Folge, Jahrgang 35 – Heft 1, 1991, pp. 18–46.

⁴⁹⁷ On him, see: Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, pp. 247–266.

exodus from Egypt (even though the earliest inscription was dated 150–151 B.C.).⁴⁹⁸ Schulman described the rock carvings in Sinai as: “The Voice of the Children of Israel on Mt. Sinai.”⁴⁹⁹

The most important discoveries in the context of the Egypt-Canaan-Babylonia triangle were: the rich archives of el Amarna, which is Akhetaten, the capital of the Pharaoh Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV) from 1337–1351 B.C., found in 1887,⁵⁰⁰ and the victory stele of the Pharaoh Merenptah (1231–1223 B.C.), found in 1898. The mention of the name “Israel” on the stele (“Israel is desolated and has no seed”) moved some of the scholars to suggest that Merenptah was the pharaoh of the Exodus from Egypt and that the mention of *ha-bi-ru* in the el-Amarna documents attested to the fact that the exodus had taken place in the time of Akhenaten. The publication of the “long hymn” and the “short hymn” of Pharaoh Akhenaten to the sun god Aten,⁵⁰¹ gave rise to a flood of books linking his “monotheism” to the Jewish faith.⁵⁰²

As far as we are concerned, the archives of el-Amarna were important because they provided evidence that the Babylonian culture had a strong presence in Canaan even before the Israelite tribes settled there. This led to the conclusion that these tribes could already have been within the circle of influence of Babylonian culture in their early history, hundreds of years before the Babylonian exile. The documents from el-Amarna made it possible to reject the view, widely accepted in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, that the Babylonian culture influenced the biblical world only during the monarchic or the Exilic period.⁵⁰³ The eminent

⁴⁹⁸ In 1902, 2,743 inscriptions were published in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*. See: Avraham Negev, “Rock Inscriptions in Sinai,” *Qadmoniot*, IV:1(13), 1970 (Hebrew), pp. 21–24.

⁴⁹⁹ K. Schulman, *Sefer Ariel, Yesodot behararei kodesh*, Vilna, 1868, pp. 3–17.

⁵⁰⁰ This is the date according to the low chronology of Egyptian history (according to the middle chronology: 1436–1411, and according to the high: 1452–1450). The documents appeared in German and English translation in 1896/97. See: H. Winckler, *Die Thontafeln von Tell el-Amarna*, Berlin, 1896; C. Niebuhr, *Die Amarna-Zeit*, Leipzig, 1899.

⁵⁰¹ The text was first published in U. Bouriant, *Mission archéologique française au Caire I*, Cairo, 1884. In German it was published by J.H. Breasted, *De Hymnis in Solem sub rege Amenophide IV conceptis*, Berlin, 1904. Breasted wrote his doctoral dissertation in Berlin in 1894. See also: James H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest*, 2nd edn., London, 1905.

⁵⁰² For a translation of the hymns, see: Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Volume II: The New Kingdom, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1976, pp. 90–92, 96–100. On the nature of Akhenaten’s monotheism, there is a wealth of literature and various opinions. See: Dominic Montserrat, *Akhenaten: History, Fantasy and Ancient Egypt*, London New York, 2000, pp. 95–105.

⁵⁰³ The French Egyptologist, Edouard Naville even suggested, on the basis of the El-Amarna finds, that the Pentateuch was originally written on tablets in Akkadian.

Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921),⁵⁰⁴ for example, wrote in his book *Mythology among the Hebrews* (*Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, Leipzig, 1876) that wandering tribes would have been incapable of absorbing, adopting and adapting the highly developed religious and literary creation of the Babylonian culture. That would have been possible only in the Exilic period, and only then could the Hebrews have shaped a complete, original world-view.⁵⁰⁵ Now it seemed possible to assign an earlier date to the period of this influence, and the documents appeared to refute the documentary hypothesis, particularly the idea that the Mosaic Code could not have been written in an earlier period. The discovery and decipherment of the el-Amarna documents was perceived as a death blow to the “high criticism,” which confidently asserted that writing was unknown in the time of Moses, and hence Moses could not have written the Torah.⁵⁰⁶

Against the background of the scholarly publications about the new discoveries from Egypt,⁵⁰⁷ Bernfeld hastened to write in 1897 that

See: Edouard Naville, *Archaeology of the Old Testament: Was the Old Testament Written in Hebrew?*, London, 1913.

⁵⁰⁴ On Goldziher see: Meir Plessner, “Ignaz Goldziher, His Life and his Scholarly Work,” the Afterword to the Hebrew translation of I. Goldziher’s *Lectures on Islam*, Jerusalem, 1950, pp. 289–309. See also: Peter Haber, *Zwischen jüdischer Tradition und Wissenschaft: der ungarische Orientalist Ignac Goldziher (1850–1921)*, Köln, 2006. See also Chapter 9.

⁵⁰⁵ I. Goldziher, *Mythology Among the Hebrews and its Historical Development*, London, 1877, p. 318. The translator into English wrote that because of the author’s corrections, the English version is better than the German original. See also in Chapter 9.

⁵⁰⁶ The cleric, Reverend James Smith wrote in 1897 that “by the discovery and decipherment of them [the ancient languages of the Near East] a crushing blow has been given to those ‘higher critics,’ who confidently asserted that the art of writing was unknown in the time of Moses, so he could not have written the Pentateuch,” Rev. James Smith, *A Pilgrimage to Egypt: An Account of a Visit to Lower Egypt*, Aberdeen, 1897, p. 307. Samuel David Luzzato (Shadal) wrote in the same vein that the fact that Moses was able to write the Torah was substantiated by the knowledge that writing was already known to the ancient Egyptians (in his words: “Pharaoh did not learn the art of writing from the Israelites”), as well as to the Canaanites before Moses’ time, as the inscription in Libya shows: “We are the people who fled before the robber, Joshua Ben-Nun,” about which the Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea wrote in his book on the war against the Vandals (on this tradition and its background see in Johanan Hans Levy, *Studies in Jewish Hellenism*, Jerusalem 1969, (Hebrew), pp. 60–78. S.D. Luzzatto, “Ha’emunah beTorat Moshe,” *Mechkerei HaYahadut* (Faith in the Mosaic Code, Studies in Judaism), Part II, Warsaw, 1912, p. 5–8.

⁵⁰⁷ In 1862, Moses Hess used the Egyptian wall paintings to prove the continuity of the primary “Semitic” type (*The Revival of Israel: Rome and Jerusalem*, Epilogue, p. 183). On Graetz’ response to the literature that sought parallels between the Egyptian religion and the Mosaic Code, see in Chapter 2.

within a short time it would be possible to rewrite Jewish history.⁵⁰⁸ The el-Amarna letters contradicted the claims of historians who argued that the exodus from Egypt was only a legend, and that Semitic tribes (the Habiru-Hebrews) lived in the Negev during that period.⁵⁰⁹ Archaeological research in the ancient Middle East completely demolished all of Wellhausen’s assumptions: “The new investigations came on to the scene and proved them wrong.”⁵¹⁰ Each month the excavations produced new evidence that “scholars of history had never previously imagined.” According to Bernfeld, during the last twenty years:

Several pieces of writing have been discovered, dug up from the depths of the soil of Assyria and Babylonia. From them, we have learned some surprising new information, very important matters for an understanding of the Holy Scriptures and of our language ... [As a result] biblical criticism has taken a fall, that which was expounded by both Jewish and Gentile critics, all of whom conjectured in one voice that the stories of the Torah were written at a very late date and for a special purpose. Now we know that the stories of the Torah are true historical impressions from a very ancient time.⁵¹¹

In his book *Kadmoniot* (Krakow, 1896) another scholar, Dr. Ahron Marcus, printed “translations of several of the el-Amarna letters,”⁵¹² and throughout 1900 the newspaper *Hamaggid Hechadash* published a series of articles by Dr. M. Margel (based on Prof. Mjózesz (Moses) Schorr’s books⁵¹³) entitled “*Kadmoniot haYehudim*” (Antiquities of the Hebrews), in which he surveyed the Amarna documents and the “links between these letters and the Holy Scriptures.”⁵¹⁴ He concluded that the Bible accurately describes the situation in Egypt and Canaan at the time of the exodus from Egypt. In 1903, a book in Hebrew by Yosef Elhcanan Melamed (1858–1913), a rabbi and Zionist activist (a delegate to the Third Zionist Congress) from Dangarpils (Dvinsk, in present-day Lithuania) was published in Vilna, entitled *Sefer shivtei Yisrael* (Book of the Tribes of Israel, including Original Studies from Ancient Jewish History based on the Holy Scriptures and the Tablets of Amarna, as well as the Inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria Discovered by Researchers in

⁵⁰⁸ Simon Bernfeld, “Dorshei reshumot” (On Jewish Historiography), IV, *Hashiloach*, 1897, pp. 515–518.

⁵⁰⁹ See also N. HaLevy’s article, “Malchei haro’im hiksas,” (Kings of the Shepherds, Hyksos), *Hamaggid*, 4, 1860, supplement to issue 49.

⁵¹⁰ S. Bernfeld, “Dorshei reshumot,” p. 515.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² In the original: *Jüdische Chronologie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1935. On Ahron Marcus, see the Appendix.

⁵¹³ On him, see the Appendix.

⁵¹⁴ *Hamaggid Hechadash*, 15.2.1900, 15.11.1900, 22.11.1900, 16.12.1900.

Recent Years). At the beginning of his book, Melamed stated that the educated, believing Jew cannot “bury his head in the sand like an ostrich” and refrain from reacting to the false theories that construct a sophisticated method on “the destruction of the Holy Scriptures and denial of Jewish tradition.”⁵¹⁵ By comparing the biblical testimony to the el-Amarna letters, Melamed tried to prove the reliability of the biblical story. The external documents cast light “on the deep darkness of that period”; only “owing to the negligence of the Sages of Israel, was the study of the Bible left to the Christians, and in particular to the Germans, mainly to Assyriology, which has been very successful.” It is imperative not to remain silent on these matters or to try to hide them from the eyes of the Hebrew reader who might read them in foreign languages and even believe them: “Every knowledgeable person knows how the studies of the biblical critics are likely to find their way into the hearts of educated readers and how their alarming assumptions may find favor particularly with the young.” These scholars, in Melamed’s view, were “rending our holy books and turning our history into a sponge that absorbs everything and a dream in which everyone can see his own wishes.” The time has come, he asserted, for educated Jewish sages to undertake the study of Near Eastern history in order to verify the words of the Bible. His book was part of the “defensive war” so much needed for the sake of “the tradition of our people and our history.”⁵¹⁶

The archaeology of the Near East was generally regarded by educated Jews, who were familiar with it mainly from German publications, as a science that was totally demolishing the central pillar of the documentary hypothesis. Archaeology (namely, Egyptology and Assyriology) was in their eyes an unbiased science, that had pulled the ground out from under another science – biblical criticism – which was based on bias and prejudice. This new science repudiated the claim that the Pentateuch could not have been written in as early a period as the thirteenth century B.C.⁵¹⁷ It seemed that “the Wellhausen school, which

⁵¹⁵ The title in German was J. E. Melamed, *Neue Untersuchungen über Bibel und Babel (mit Illustrationen)*. Melamed reviews at length *Geschichte Israels in Einzeldarstellungen*, Leipzig, 1895, by H. Winckler (the man “with the alarming method regarding early Jewish history”), and harshly criticizes him. See also the small (eight-page) pamphlet by Abraham Haim Rosenberg: *Ktav bachartumim uchtav hayetedot veharto’let hayotzet mehem benoge’a lekadmoniot haYehudim* (Hieroglyphics and Cuneiform Writing and the Benefit They Bring in Relation to Jewish Antiquity), New York, 1894.

⁵¹⁶ J. E. Melamed, *Sefer Shivtei Yisrael*, pp. IV–V.

⁵¹⁷ Shlomo Goldman, in his book, *Currents in Biblical Criticism*, wrote that at first the archaeological finds provided material for the pan-Babylonian theory “that attempted to turn Judaism into a religion of stars and signs of the Zodiac and its he-

had attempted to overturn the whole of Jewish history, had been dealt a fatal blow.”⁵¹⁸ If it seemed that the Bible was having a difficult time defending itself on its own, archaeology had come to its aid as an “external” helpmate.

“What do the Stones Cry Out?”⁵¹⁹ Biblical Criticism and Archaeology

Is this how things really were?

George Smith’s book on the Babylonian flood story (1876) engendered many books dealing with the relations between “the monuments” (archaeology) on the one hand, and the Bible and the documentary hypothesis, on the other.⁵²⁰

We will describe the relations between archaeology and the documentary hypothesis with the aid of the British scholar Archibald Henry Sayce (1845–1933). He defined the higher criticism as “a critical inquiry into the nature, origin, and date of the documents with which we are dealing, as well as into the historical value and credibility of the statements which they contain.” Higher criticism compares the

roes into Asherahs and sun-pillars.” However, in the final analysis what remained from this theory was the refutation of Wellhausen’s approach,” S. Goldman, *Currents in Biblical Criticism*, Jerusalem, 1951, p. 47 (Hebrew).

⁵¹⁸ N. Rudnitzky, *Die Bibel im Lichte der neuesten Ausgrabungen*, Bonn, 1914, p. 11.

⁵¹⁹ Luke 19:40.

⁵²⁰ Joel Sweek, “The Monuments, the Babel-Bibel Streit and Responses of Historical Criticism”, in S.W. Holloway and L.K. Handy (eds.), *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström*, in *Journal of the Study of the Old Testament*, Supplement Series 190, Sheffield, 1995, pp. 401–419. The article reviews the vast literature on the monuments (archaeological finds) and the relation between them and the Bible. Among the many books on this subject, see: Rudolf Buddensieg, *Die assyrischen Ausgrabungen und das Alte Testament*, Heilbronn, 1880; Eberhard Schrader, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament* (2nd edn.), London, 1885 (German orig. *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*), Gießen, 1872 (the English translation was based on the 2nd edition of 1883); K. Budde, *Das Alte Testament und die Ausgrabungen*, Gießen, 1903; Carl Bezold, *Ninive and Babylon*, I–II, Bielefeld, 1903; T.G. Pinches, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2nd edn., revised, London, 1903; Adolphe Lods, *Les découvertes babylonniennes et l’Ancien Testament*, Dole, 1903; R.W. Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, translated and edited, New York and Cincinnati, 1912; W. St.C. Boscawen, *The First of Empires: “Babylon of the Bible” in the Light of Latest Research*, London, 1903. For a brief summary of the archaeological opposition to the documentary hypothesis regarding the composition of the Pentateuch, see in R.J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism since Graf*, pp. 91–96.

versions of the different traditions immersed in the biblical text, tries to determine which is the earlier and which is the later version, as well as to reconstruct the stages of its editing and the sources that the editor had at his disposal. Until the discovery of the ancient documents, the Bible was the only source of its history, and hence textual criticism was the sole research tool. As a result of the archaeological finds, extra-biblical evidence came to light which could be compared with the biblical testimonies. Two camps took up positions opposite one another, Sayce wrote: the higher critics who undertook to challenge the reliability of the biblical story, on the one hand, and the apologists, who wished to see in the archaeological finds confirmation of its reliability, on the other. Sayce believed that Assyriology substantiated the antiquity of the biblical story and its realistic background. “The same canons of criticism,” he opined, “that had relegated the story of Mykenaeian power and the Trojan war to mythland, relegated also the earlier narratives of the Bible to the same unhistorical region. Abraham only followed Agamemnon.” But then the excavations in Mesopotamia did for him what Heinrich Schliemann’s (1822–1890) excavations in Troy in 1871–1890 did for Agamemnon: they brought him back from the realm of legend (mythology) to history.⁵²¹ Those whom Sayce called apologists believed that archaeology bolstered all of their claims, because it restored faith in the historical reliability and authenticity of the biblical traditions. In their view, archaeology

⁵²¹ A. H. Sayce, *The ‘Higher Criticism’ and the Verdict of the Monuments*, London, 1894, p. 17 (hereinafter: Sayce). Among his other works: *The Races of the Old Testament* (2nd edn.), Oxford, 1893; *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, London, 1900; *Archaeology and the Cuneiform Inscriptions*, London, 1908; *The Early History of the Hebrews*, 1899; *Monuments, Facts and Higher Critical Fan-cies*, (3rd edn.), London, 1904 (in this book, he reinforces his conservative position against the documentary hypothesis). In the final analysis, in the coming years, Sayce moved away from the balanced depiction of the relations between biblical criticism and archaeology, and regarded the biblical scholar as someone who, with the aid of his pen, demolishes the historical truth of the Bible, while the excavator and the decipherer provide it with a firm footing. Hence, he predicted that “in another half century Elohist and Jahwist, P and Q, Redactor, etc. will have been relegated by the Old Testament scholar to the limbo of forgetfulness to which the archaeologist has already consigned it.”(Sayce, *Higher Criticism*, 7th edn. (1910). We quote from the 3rd revised edn., 1894). See: R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law*, pp. 91–95. On Sayce, see: T. K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 231–242. Recently, Edward Yamanchi has repeated the question that Sayce asked: “If Homer can in a sense be ‘historical’, why not the Hebrew Bible?” See: E. Yamauchi, “Homer and Archaeology: Minimalists and Maximalists in Classical Context,” in James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge U.K., 2004, pp. 69–90.

reinforced not only the Bible’s realistic credibility, namely the reliability of the background descriptions, but also its historical credibility, namely its reliability as evidence of the events.⁵²² Sayce believed that archaeology obviously could not confirm everything written in the Bible, but that it should suffice for the historian that he can read the five books of the Torah with the same degree of confidence with which he reads Thucydides or Tacitus.⁵²³ He accepted, among others, the claim that the documents confirm the connection between the biblical story of creation and the Babylonian cosmology despite the disparities between them, and that the source of the institution of the Sabbath was Babylonia.⁵²⁴ On the basis of the documents from el-Amarna, Sayce predated the time of the Babylonian influence on the ancient Hebrew culture to the thirteenth century B.C. In doing so, he joined those who rejected the theory that Genesis was written in the Exilic period.⁵²⁵ In summary, he stated: “The conclusion, then, to which the archaeologist is inclined by his evidence is that the biblical writer has drawn his materials from different sources, but those materials, it is important to remember, were presumably all literary.”⁵²⁶

The German Assyriologist Fritz Hommel believed that archaeology substantiates the Bible and that its evidence is preferable to philosophical analysis. Addressing novice theologians, he said: “I take this opportunity of urging the younger school of Old Testament theologians to abandon their barren speculations in regard to the source of this or that fraction of a verse and rather to devote their youthful energies to the far more profitable study of the Assyro-Babylonian and South Arabian inscriptions, in order that they may be able, at first hand to place the output of these absolutely inexhaustible mines of knowledge at the service of biblical students.” From this study, he opined, they would better understand the Bible at first hand and learn that Wellhausen biblical criticism was bankrupt and the Bible’s reliability was firmly established.⁵²⁷ “It is from external evidence, therefore, that the final decision must come,” he concluded.⁵²⁸ At the end of the nineteenth century, the British biblical scholar Samuel R.

⁵²² Sayce, pp. 161–173, 554–583. See also: George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 7th edn., Philadelphia, 1937.

⁵²³ Sayce, pp. 161–171, 554–563.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., pp. 61–173.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., pp. 81–82. On this matter, see Chapter 10.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., pp. 105–106.

⁵²⁷ Fritz Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, London, 1897, p. xv.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

Driver (1846–1914)⁵²⁹ surveyed the achievements of Assyriology in reconstructing the sources of the ancient biblical world picture and its relations with the documentary hypothesis, and stated that many of the descriptions in the Bible can be understood only in the light cast upon them by archaeology. In some cases, it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that they need to be elucidated differently than they were in the past.⁵³⁰ From this point of departure, Driver stated, there was a link between the Babylonian creation story and the biblical story, despite the profound differences between them, that the source of Shabbat was the Babylonian *sabattu(m)*, and there is a correspondence between the historical description in the Books of Kings and the one in the Assyrian and Babylonian annals.⁵³¹ However, he added, the Babylonian source does not detract from the value of the biblical story, but rather enhances it: “The Israelite writer, gifted by the Holy Spirit, was overruled to draw, here from one source and there from another, the materials for a constructive account, which while it embodied the fullness and variety of Hebrew tradition, was itself the appointed medium of divine instruction.”⁵³² The biblical scholar Rudolph Kittel also warned against generalizations and tried to define the limitations of the ancient documents’ reliability: not every ancient document should be treated as if it were unconditionally reliable evidence; some had been preserved in a partial, flawed state, others were written long after the events they describe. To this reservation, Kittel noted, it is necessary to add the fact that the archaeologist and the historian often suggest hypotheses, not actually unequivocal facts.

⁵²⁹ In David G. Hogarth’s book, *Authority and Archaeology: Sacred and Profane*, London, 1899. See also: E. Sellin, “Archaeology versus Wellhausenism,” in H. M. du Bose (ed.) *The Aftermath Series*, Nashville, 1924, pp. 227–271.

⁵³⁰ Samuel R. Driver, “Hebrew Authority”, in Hogarth, *ibid.*, p. 8. On Driver see: Chyne, *ibid.*, pp. 248–372. Driver also wrote: *Modern Research as Illustrating the Bible*, London, 1909. But his most influential work was: *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, Edinburgh (7th ed.), 1897. Rogerson refers to this book as the most influential critique published in England. See: J. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 275. On Sayce and Driver as representatives of the two poles – the one which views archaeological as a confirmation of the Bible’s reliability, and the other that holds it cannot negate the high criticism and confirm the reliability of the biblical story, see the recent article: Mark Elliot, “The Sayce – Driver Controversy,” *Biblical Archeology and its Interpretation*, March 2003, pp. 1–15.

⁵³¹ S. R. Driver, “Hebrew Authority,” in D. G. Hogarth, *Authority and Archaeology*, pp. 81–152. And see Chapter 10.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, p. 35. The quotation is from H. E. Ryle, *The Early Narratives of Genesis*, London, 1892.

Despite the reservations and words of caution, many Protestants and Jews tended to believe that the archaeological finds substantiated the Bible’s reliability as an historical document. The unavoidable outcome of this view was that the interpretation of the archaeological findings took on great importance. This ardent response – the antecedent of a key element in modern historical fundamentalism – also met with a chilling attitude; some thought it was undermining the Bible’s credibility.⁵³³ Alfred Jeremias termed this apologetic approach, “the doctrine of the crying stones” (“Schreienden Steine”).⁵³⁴ According to it, he wrote, every clay tablet in Babylonia is tantamount to a declaration in support of the Old Testament. In his view, the response had been sensationalist, but transient, and within a short time the trend had shifted, and the cuneiform tablets had actually strengthened the destructive criticism.

These two patterns of response continued to exist alongside one another throughout the whole period, from the 1850s, constantly conflicting, even waging all-out war against one another.

“Evidence from Assyria?” Initial Jewish Reactions to the Archaeology of Mesopotamia

We begin by describing the reverberations of the finds in Mesopotamia in the educated Jewish public from the 1850s onward. These reverberations were an expression of the heightened interest of this public in history – Jewish and general – including the distant past of the ancient Near East.

In 1861, Mendele Mocher Sefarim wrote about “the scholars of antiquities” who flooded the literary supplements of periodicals such as *Hamaggid* and *Hacarmel* with studies that were nothing but the “chewing of cud and the grinding of straw.”⁵³⁵ This description was not hyperbole; the Jewish press – particularly the Hebrew – was full of articles on various historical subjects, including the ancient Near East. Radical *maskilim* believed that people had become obsessed with a dybbuk of “antiquities,” a barren preoccupation which could be of no

⁵³³ B. Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, p. 7.

⁵³⁴ “Das Herrenwort von den ‘schreienden Steinen’ wurde bis zur Ermüdung missbraucht.”

⁵³⁵ See in Shlomo Breiman, “U. R. Kovner and Hebrew Criticism,” *Metzudah*, 7, London and Waltham, Mass., 1954 (Hebrew), pp. 416–457; Gedaliah Elkoshi, “Judah Leib Gordon as a Critic,” *ibid.*, pp. 458–489.

use in the urgent struggle to reform Jewish society (the “question of life”). The peoples of Europe, first and foremost the English, Moses Leib Lilienblum, then a radical *maskil*, wrote in 1875, could spend large sums of money “on digging for treasure to remove monuments and ancient ruins from the depths of the earth.” In his view, “the British people already has a life and many, many authors who deal with all manner of wisdom, craft and medicine,” and hence it can also deal with antiquities. The Jews, on the other hand, were still not a living nation, and hence ought not to dabble in antiquities and philology, which are nothing other than “a chorus of pleasing songs and uplifting melodies in the ears of men hungering for bread.”⁵³⁶ He expressed an opposite view in March 1883, this time not as a radical *maskil*, but as a national *maskil*, when he wrote to the radical *maskil* and poet Judah Leib Gordon that the discovery of the cuneiform texts and their decipherment was providential, because it had helped establish the “veracity of our holy scriptures.” Lilienblum wrote enthusiastically that if previously one could argue that the fact that Herodotus made no mention of the Jews aroused some doubt about the things told about in the Bible, “and we ourselves were denying them until the discovery of the Assyrian cuneiform documents, which have been helpful to our holy writings.”⁵³⁷ His correspondent, J. L. Gordon, published a series of articles entitled “Eretz Bavel vechakhameiha” (“The Ancient Land of Babylonia and its Wise Men”) (based on the 1851 book by the Russian scholar and convert, Daniel (Yosef) Chwolson [1819–1911])⁵³⁸, in *Hashachar* (1861) and *Hatzefirah* (1862), bringing to the knowledge of the Hebrew-reading *maskil* the history of Babylonia written by Berossos. Gordon wrote that the history of Babylonia had been lost in the abyss of forgetfulness; “but nonetheless that land in ancient times was a land of wisdom and knowledge and its sons were

⁵³⁶ Moses Leib Lilienblum, “Al devar chakirat kadmoniot” (On the Study of Antiquity), *HaShachar*, 1874. in *Complete Works*, II, Krakow, 1910, p. 10–11 (Hebrew). In a letter to J. L. Gordon dated October 16, 1877, Lilienblum wrote that a knowledge of classical culture (“*Klassizismus*”) would be more beneficial to Jewish wisdom than “the language of the Chaldeans, Arabs and Syrians” and that “the wisdom of the ancients” contains only “forgotten languages, their grammar, and some imaginary stories and philosophical methods, which are already obsolete.” See: Shlomo Breiman (ed.), *Letters of Moshe Leib Lilienblum to Yehuda Leib Gordon*, Jerusalem, 1968, (Hebrew), pp. 158–159.

⁵³⁷ Breiman, ibid., pp. 187–188.

⁵³⁸ Daniel A. Chwolson, *Über die Überreste der altbabylonischen Literatur in arabischen Übersetzungen*, St. Petersburg, 1859. Chwolson translated the Bible into Russian for the Russian Orthodox Academy and the British Society for the Dissemination of the Holy Scriptures. He received a doctoral degree in Leipzig (1855) and was a professor of Semitic languages at the University of St. Petersburg.

great scholars!” Other than its great achievements in other fields, in the literature of Babylonia, there “things are written that touch upon the stories of the Torah and the legends that refer to them.”⁵³⁹

The first signs of interest in the ancient history of Assyria and Babylonia (and of Egypt) had begun to appear fifty years earlier in several articles printed in *Hame'asef* in 1788–1810, which were brief adaptations of the German research literature published during the same period.⁵⁴⁰ The echoes of the archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia from the 1850s that came to the knowledge of the educated Jewish public,⁵⁴¹ did not pass it by without arousing interest and even excitement. The major forum that printed archaeological news for the Hebrew reader was the moderate *maskilic* Hebrew paper, *Hamaggid*, published from 1857–1880 in the small city of Lyck, on the Prussian-Russian border (in 1890 the paper moved for two years to Berlin, and later to Krakow, where it came out until 1903 under the name *Hamaggid hechadash*).⁵⁴² The newspaper, which had several hundred subscribers, reported regularly on archaeological news, adding to them background information and commentary. We will quote briefly from some of the reports and their accompanying commentaries written by scholars, since the *maskilic* Hebrew press did not heed the warning written by Shadal in June 1860 to Shlomo Judah Rappaport, stating that it is forbidden to inquire into the antiquities of the Jews, “as others inquire into the antiquities of Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia.”⁵⁴³ With these words, Shadal was repeating the view of Azariah de’Rossi (1511–1578) who wrote in his book, *Me’or einayim: Imre binah* (Chapter 2), quoting the rabbi and philosopher, Judah

⁵³⁹ J. L. Gordon, “Eretz Bavel ha’atikah vechakhameha” (The Ancient Land of Babylonia and Her Wise Men), *Hashachar*, 1861, pp. 241–260.

⁵⁴⁰ “Divrei hayamim lemalkhei Ashur, Madai uVavel” (The History of the Kings of Assyria, Media and Babylonia) by Joseph Baran, *Hame'asef*, 5, 1789, pp. 66–78; “Churban ha’ir Nineveh, ibid., 10, pp. 313–316, 1809; “Divrei hayamim leVavel [Toldote’ha, kibushah bidei Koresh veshivat Tzion]” (The History of Babylonia), ibid., 9 (2), 23–40, 1810.

⁵⁴¹ In 1857–1861, Julius Fürst (1805–1873) published the book *Hebräisches und chaldäisches Schul-Wörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, Leipzig, 1920.

⁵⁴² Yosef Shalmon, “David Gordon and the *Hamaggid* Newspaper: A Change of Positions on Jewish Nationalism 1860–1882,” *Zion*, 47, 1982, pp. 145–164; Gideon Kouts, *La Naissance de la presse Hébraïque Moderne 1856–1886*, Paris, 1993, pp. 83–117. News about the excavations in Mesopotamia and Egypt were sent to the newspaper primarily by two of its regular correspondents: C. G. Vidover from England, and A. J. Bruck from Kherson. See: S. Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, pp. 213–214. Another regular correspondent was Dr. Hayim J. H. Oppenheim (1832–1891). See below.

⁵⁴³ Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, p. 177.

Messer Leon (1470/72–1526): “Do not look for truth from Assyria and Egypt.”⁵⁴⁴ On the contrary, this press – and at least part of the educated public – were extremely enthusiastic about the archaeological finds and it did “foretell evidence from Assyria.”

On March 3, 1857, the newspaper reported on the excavations of the ruins of Nineveh, the largest city, and told its readers that the excavators (the “*chakhamim*,” or “wise men,” as it called them) had brought up “from the bottom of the earth into the light of the sun [things] whose memory had been nearly forgotten”:

... Those men who are wise in their own eyes, who did not believe the stories of our holy Torah or the words of our faithful prophets – now hearing what was found and seeing with their own eyes some of the artifacts brought from there to [France] are ashamed to lift their heads and they keep quiet!

On August 5, 1857, in an article entitled “Nineveh,” the newspaper wrote that the excavations at Nineveh had revealed the Eastern sun, “the origin of light and the cradle of our childhood,” but they had also taught the world that the only people still remaining of all the ancient peoples are the Jews. The excavations also show how greatly the culture of Babylonia influenced Greek culture. On May 7, 1858, in the first article of a series called “*Niflaot chakhmei dorenu*” (“The Wonders of the Scholars of our Generation”)⁵⁴⁵, *Hamaggid* wrote in glowing terms about the “giant strides” of archaeology:

Who would believe that the human spirit could summon up the courage to delve into the buried unknown, to pierce the veil and comprehend ancient riddles and words of wisdom inscribed with a pen of iron and lead on marble pillars and precious treasures, which had been entrapped by more than two thousand years of time ... Nonetheless the scholars of our generation, with their mighty spirit and wisdom, have uncovered deep things from darkness, destroyed the locks and doors of time and succeeded in discerningly reading and interpreting sealed and obscure texts! Who would have believed it? But, so it is, for the Almighty inspires the human heart and this heroic act also is not beyond His power.

Hamaggid ebulliently welcomed the decipherment of the cuneiform script: “Thus, the inscriptions carved on rocks and stones of the Nineveh palaces and temples have given us the annals of ancient Assyria;

⁵⁴⁴ Joanna Weinberg, *Azariah de’Rossi’s Me’or Einayim*. In his program for the Jewish Encyclopedia, Ahad Ha’am wrote: “The remains of antiquity should be given a place in our treasures only if they can be considered concrete clarifications of historical events that are of significance to us.” Ahad Ha’am, “Al d’var otzar haYahadut (On the Treasure of Judaism),” *Al parashat derakhim*, I, Odessa, 1895, p. 331.

⁵⁴⁵ A similar survey entitled “Ginze nistarot” was printed in *Hamaggid*, 3, on November 9, 16 and 22, 1859.

Everything is correct!” The Assyriologists are “the victorious heroes, and will forever be renowned!”⁵⁴⁶ And the cuneiform script is a testimony to Israel:

Stones of darkness and tablets hidden in the sand, speak out like the voice of thunder in the heavens [Psalms 77:18] to say: the Torah of Israel is truth evermore! From the mouths of the promontories and the crevices of desolate rocks of Nineveh and Egypt, the word of God has the might to still the enemy and the avenger.⁵⁴⁷

And the conclusion: “The veracity of our holy books shines like the glow of the heavens ... and from antiquity is proven every day. Truth will spring from the earth.”⁵⁴⁸

The paper’s enthusiasm intensified. On January 1, 1873, it informed its readers about the lecture by George Smith, “The scholar, Smith, the major researcher of antiquities in England,” as it described him, and that William Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, had attended the lecture. Smith, the newspaper wrote, announced the discovery of a tablet in “hieroglyphics,” which is a “copy of an ancient Chaldean inscription,” made in the time of King Ashurbanipal. The story of the flood that appears on the tablet, *Hamaggid* explained, is similar to the biblical flood story, with the exception of a few minor changes, which indicates they come from a common source:

Understandably, the above account made a deep impression because it offers us very ancient evidence of the veracity of what is written in our holy Torah and this will seal the lips of those who do not believe its truth.

On January 16, 1874, the rabbi Dr. Hayim Oppenheim of Torun in Prussia reported to readers of the paper on “the discovery of an inscription of the Kings of Assyria and of their attitude towards the biblical evidence.” These reports continued throughout the coming years. The newspaper reported the discovery of the Mesha stele (the writer, Dr. Albert Levy, claimed it was a fake),⁵⁴⁹ the discovery of the Hammurabi Code, and others, and also reported on the Babel-Bibel controversy. In an article published Volume 6 of the annual *Ha’asif* (published in Warsaw, 1885–1889, 1894, edited by Nahum Sokolow) entitled “Migdal dor haPalagah,” Oppenheim attempted to explain the story of the Tower of Babel in light of the new discoveries. He carried on the line taken by *Hamaggid* in lauding Assyriology:

⁵⁴⁶ “Mif’alot chakhmei dorenu” (Marvels of the Scholars of our Generation), *Hamaggid*, 2 (14), May 1858.

⁵⁴⁷ “Edut leYisrael” (A Witness unto Israel), *Hamaggid*, 2 (5), October, 1858.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 7 May 1858.

⁵⁴⁹ *Hamaggid Hechadash*, 23 October 1903.

And here, in our own time, the desire of those searching for antiquities has succeeded in expanding the inquiry into and criticism of the history of nations almost lost to the world ... And after they succeeded in removing from the darkness monuments and steles, precious stones, and pillars and tablets on which letters in ancient scripts are inscribed from bygone days, and to remove the veil covering them and to decipher the script and the letter, their eyes were opened and they were able to read what ancient kings recounted of their deeds and wars. And from the states that existed there in ancient times, they also shed light on other matters, which were wrapped in fog. And it is known that some things written in the Torah and the Prophets, which are hard to interpret, and other important questions relating to our history have been clarified by them. Hence I have said that these inquiries are of great value, and when their fruits of knowledge have ripened, they will undoubtedly also send of their harvest to the sea of Talmud and the tales it relates.⁵⁵⁰

In Volume 4 of *Ha'asif* (1887), Oppenheim published an article entitled “Bikoret kitvei kodesh al-pi tziunei Ashur uVavel” (Criticism of Holy Scriptures Based on the Inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria), in which he lashed out at those who believed that many of the historical stories in the Bible were legends. Although the words of the Torah need no support, nonetheless “it will be beneficial to seal the lips of those who speak ill of it.” He was referring to the criticism that passed “like a flash flood over ancient human history, and also moved against the Holy Scriptures, trying to destroy the tradition of the Sages,” and turned the biblical stories “into mere legends.” He noted that the archaeological discoveries had verified various passages in the Torah and helped interpret other obscure matters. The article was largely devoted to a clarification of matters connected to the Israelites’ monarchic period.⁵⁵¹ Another writer, the engineer Abraham Tennenbaum (1858–1921)⁵⁵² wrote, in the first journal of the periodical *Knesset Israel* (Warsaw, 1895) an article entitled “*Habenniyah vezagzeirah*,” that dealt with the architecture of synagogues. He wrote that Assyriology had shown that Assyria and Babylonia were the source of the Israelite art of building, which came to them from Assyria through the mediation of the Canaanites.⁵⁵³ In his 1896 book, *Kadmoniot*, the rabbi Dr. Ahron Marcus wrote:

⁵⁵⁰ *Ha'asif*, 4, pp. 106–108.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 167–173.

⁵⁵² Tennenbaum worked in the Russian Ministry of Transport and from the 1880s was affiliated with Chibat Tsion.

⁵⁵³ Tennenbaum, ibid., p. 1022. In the children’s newspaper *Haperachim* (“The Flowers”) (No. 9, 1909, p. 286) published in Lugansk in Ukraine, under the editorship of the rabbi and author Israel Benjamin Levner (1862–1916), author of *Kol Aggadot Yisrael* (Jewish legends) (printed in many editions from 1898 onwards), a brief news item reported on Delitzsch’s lecture, and wrote that in it, he had stated that

Thus, the dead of the world, who had been covered in darkness for thousands of years, arose and testified to the wondrous truth of the Holy Books of the exile-fatigued Jews, whose enemies have recently come forth again to exterminate them from among the peoples ... now the history of ancient times is revealed to them ... and all those among the scholars of the nations who honor the Torah are delighted as if they had come upon a great treasure.⁵⁵⁴

The Jewish liberal German press, in particular the *AZdJ*, reported on the progress of archaeological research in Mesopotamia, albeit with less enthusiasm than *Hamaggid*. For example, the newspaper reported on Smith’s lecture, summarized the achievements of scholarship (including Schrader’s books) and noted that the Assyrian tablets mention names and places that appear in the Bible. This “proved to what extent the books of the Bible ought to be considered historically authoritative.”⁵⁵⁵ In the coming years, the paper reported, among other things, on the discovery of the Merodach Baladan stele and the stele of Esarhaddon.⁵⁵⁶

The great interest in the archaeological finds and the new picture of the past that they depicted naturally resonated in the popular historical literature. In the first volume of his book, *Divrei yemei olam* (Vilna, 1867), the first universal history in Hebrew in the modern era, Kalman Schulman devoted a chapter to the history of the Babylonians

“Thousands of years ago, Babylonian education was of the highest level. Commerce and agriculture were highly developed then, and the soil was more fertile than at the present. The source of his information was the ancient monuments and tables found by scholars in Babylonia.” It is not clear which lecture this news item refers to. We thank Dr. Leah Tzivoni for referring us to this source.

⁵⁵⁴ A. Marcus, *Kadmoniot*, I, Krakow, 1896, 2nd edition, Dr. Yosef Marcus (ed.), Tel Aviv, 1973, pp. 89–90. Marcus wrote: “The discovery of the ancient hidden treasures of Babylonia has shaken the foundation laid by the Greeks for their Roman pupils and after them for all writers, this nonsense called Mittelalter (Middle Ages) in Europe which held that the beginnings of the wisdom of life and human habitation were in the land of Egypt, until the mendacity of this idea was discovered and now everyone once again acknowledges that the primary source of the human wisdom known as *Kultur* is the land of Babylonia and the Egyptian nation also drew its knowledge from there ... and everyone admits that the knowledge of engineering and astronomy and mathematics and astrology and the planetary system all originate in the land of Babylonia, and the ancient Egyptians have even been deprived of the earliest knowledge of construction, which until today had been firmly accepted by all the critics.”

⁵⁵⁵ Anon., “Die Keilschriften der Assyrer und die Bibel”, *AZdJ*, 37, 1873, pp. 153–154, 188–191, 225–227.

⁵⁵⁶ Anon., “Wieder ein Beweis für die geschichtlichen Berichte der Bibel”, *AZdJ*, 53, 1889, pp. 30–31; D. H. Müller, “Ausgrabungen aus Sendschirli”, *AZdJ*, 57, 1893, pp. 103–105, 113–115; “Die jüngsten Ausgrabungen von Sendschirli”, *AZdJ*, 58, 1894, p. 557; Anon., “Miscellen”, *AZdJ*, 59 (16), 1985 and 59 (36), 1895.

and the Assyrians. He rhapsodized about the material civilization of Babylon and Assyria and wrote that the archaeological excavations had affirmed the ancient tradition about the size and wealth of Nineveh. About its spiritual culture, he had nothing good to say. In his view, the land of the Chaldeans was “a land of idols from the day of its founding, with frightful rituals ... The Chaldeans were driven by lust ... and engaged in every form of lechery.” However, in writing about all the precious things found in Nineveh, Schulman wrote:

“the most precious in the eyes of all the historians are the ancient inscriptions found by that scholar [A.H. Layard] on the walls of the palace. Written in them are the words of the kings of Assyria, ancient texts which, together with the stories in the Holy Scriptures, tell about those kings and cast light upon history and antiquity.⁵⁵⁷

In Part 8 of the book, Schulman marveled at the archaeological finds:

In those tablets, many things were found that are similar to the stories of our faithful Torah, such as the sin of the Tree of Knowledge committed by our forefather in the Garden of Eden, the flood which the Almighty brought down to destroy all flesh because of their evil deeds, the Tower of Babylon constructed by the *dor haPalagah* (the generation of the Tower of Babel), and many more such. The tales of the wars fought by the kings of Assyria against the kings of Israel and Judah also are consistent with the words of our prophets regarding those wars. And other ancient things have been revealed to us by these great finds made by the scholars of our generation in the ruins of the palaces of Assyria that were swallowed up by the earth many long years ago.⁵⁵⁸

In *Ariel* (Vilna, 1857), Schulman wrote in a similar vein about the importance of the discoveries in Mesopotamia (“the antiquities of Assyria, Nineveh and Babylon”):

The hidden mysteries of history that came to light owing to the scholars Botta⁵⁵⁹ and Layard evoked a sense of wonder in the hearts of all the scholars of the world who inquire into the roots of antiquities, for what they believed they never would see, their eyes have seen, and what they did not dare even to think of or imagine, has been revealed to them.

Archaeology uncovers the secrets of the world, the beginning of world history, the annals of the kingdoms of Egypt and Babylonia, Schulman added, “dear to every educated man who seeks to understand the Holy Scriptures.” And this because “the history of their kings, priests and high ministers are often combined with the history of the

⁵⁵⁷ Kalman Schulman, *Sefer divrei yemei olam*, Book I, Vilna, 1867, pp. 67–78.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., Part 8, Vilna, 1883, pp. 49–50.

⁵⁵⁹ The reference is to the French archaeologist, Paul Emile Botta (1802–1870). On him see: Seton Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust*, pp. 94–100.

kings of Judah and Israel, and the history of their inhabitants is oft intertwined with the history of the children of Israel as related in the writings of our holy prophets.” Without knowing the history of the Egyptians and Assyrians, “we will be unable to know many things about the history of our own people in ancient times. Hence the histories of these peoples are dear to us, for they will greatly illuminate the history of the children of Israel.”⁵⁶⁰

The important difference between the items published in *Hamaggid* and Schulman’s views is that *Hamaggid* believed that the archaeological discoveries were providing historical validity to the biblical cosmology, while Schulman wrote that they were casting light on Jewish history from the time of Abraham, but in particular on the monarchic period.

Shlomo Rubin, author of the first Hebrew book based on archaeological finds *Berossi hakasdi o kadmoniot haAshurim vehabavlim* (Vienna, 1882),⁵⁶¹ followed the same line as *Hamaggid*. In the introduction to his book, Rubin declared that his purpose was to defend the Torah against all those who gainsay it: “In each and every generation, there have been those who questioned the stories of Moses in the Book of Genesis, who raised doubts about their simple truth, and were skeptical about the antiquity of their time in world history.” Such doubters were now also coming forth from within the Jewish people itself, but the finds in Mesopotamia were a convincing rebuttal to these heretic views. The story of the flood was brought by our forefathers from Babylonia: “The tradition of our Hebrew forefathers is their legacy from their father Abraham who came out of Ur of the Chaldees, a city in the heart of the land of Chaldeans ... and one tradition and several stories together became their inheritance from their fathers, which in the generation of the sons was split according to their separate beliefs, and remained with the Babylonians in the form of a multitude of gods and among our forefathers was united in the form of our one God, with the exception of some changes, such as the length of the flood, in names and in the dimensions of the ships, in the calculation of the months and

⁵⁶⁰ K. Schulman, *Sefer divrei yemei olam*, pp. 113–115.

⁵⁶¹ German title: *Berossos oder chaldäische Alterthümer, als durch die neulich im Boden Assyriens ausgegrabenen Keilinschriften bestätigte Semitenstücke zur Bibel*, Wien, 1882. And see his book, *Etz hada’at began ha’eden mikkedem*, Vienna, 1891 (*Baum der Erkenntnis im Paradiese des Ostens, Encyclopaedie aller Wissenschaften mit Hinblick auf deren Gestaltung im Alterthum respective im biblischen Zeitalter*) (The Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden), *Biblisch-archaeologische Monographie*, 1891.

the times of year ..." However, the Israelites adapted and altered the story according to their world-view. The Babylonian flood story – based in his view, on the memory of a real event that took place – confirms the realistic background of the biblical story (as well as of similar traditions of other peoples).⁵⁶² In Rubin's view, then, the biblical story of the flood, one of the foundations of biblical cosmology, was borrowed from an Assyrian-Babylonian source.⁵⁶³ In his article, "Ma'aresh bereshit shel haKna'ani Sanchotiton" ("The Genesis Story of the Canaanite Sanchotiton"),⁵⁶⁴ published in *Hashachar* in 1878, he asserted that there were Assyrian and Babylonian influences on the Torah and on Jewish law.⁵⁶⁵ In 1898–1900, Jacob Frankel published a book in Warsaw entitled *Toledot ha'emunot vehadatot* (2 volumes), a translated adaptation of *History of Religion*, written by the Scottish scholar Allan Menzies (1845–1916), professor of biblical criticism in the University of St. Andrews. In his book, Frankel had no reservations about proposing an evolutionary approach to religion in general, and the Jewish religion in particular. In the first part, he described Assyria and Babylonia and wrote that it is still impossible to understand the nature of the Chaldean religion, since only fragmentary information is available about it. He added, however, that "remnants of literature exist suggesting that individuals (in Assyria and Babylonia) believed in a sole god, and they may have influenced members of the Hebrew tribe who settled in Ur of the Chaldees, Abraham's birthplace." Moreover, he opined, there is no truth in the image of the Chaldean religion as despicable idolatry: "This religion too was endowed with a life force and it also rose to great heights in its development."⁵⁶⁶

Obviously, we were unable to locate all the articles written in the Jewish press in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. However, those we have cited will suffice to demonstrate the great interest evoked in the history of the ancient Near East, the

⁵⁶² Rubin, *Berossi haKasdi*, pp. 59–93.

⁵⁶³ See Chapter 10.

⁵⁶⁴ Shlomo Rubin, *Ma'aresh bereshit shel hakena'ani Sanchuniton im mavo gadol hamareh be'aspaklaria me'ira chotem tavnit misterei ma'aresh bereshit vesodot sifrei yetzirah etzel habodim hakadmonim* (German title: *Kosmologie und Theogonie der Phönizier*). The reference is to Sanchuniathon, the Phoenician author, translated by Philo Byblos (preserved in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*), who claimed it is based on a book written before the Trojan war. See: *HaShachar*, 3, 1871, pp. 43–68.

⁵⁶⁵ R. Kittel, *Hachakirah behkitvei hakodesh*, Vilna, 1913, p. 164.

⁵⁶⁶ Y. Frankel, *Toledot ha'emunot vehadatot* (*History of Religions and Faiths*), published by *Tushia*, Warsaw, I (2), 1899/1900, pp. 113–135.

expanded knowledge about it, and the tendency to attempt to verify the biblical story on the basis of the archaeological and epigraphical finds. Unquestionably, the articles printed in the Hebrew press lauding Assyriology show that by 1902 the prevailing view was that archaeology is a science that confirms the Bible.

Rudolph Kittel as an Ally

The case mentioned above is an example of the readiness of Jews to use the works of German Assyriologists even after the Babel-Bibel controversy. In 1911, Rudolph Kittel's booklet, *Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft in ihren wichtigsten Ergebnissen* (6 Vorträge, Leipzig, 1910), was printed in Vilna by the monthly *Biblioteka*, in Hebrew (second edition printed in 1913). The booklet was based on six lectures delivered by Kittel to schoolteachers, at the invitation of the Minister of Education of the Saxony government. The translator of the book wrote in the afterword that since the question about the Bible's reliability “descended from Mt. Olympus,” and became an issue for “schoolchildren,” the Jewish public could not ignore the subject:

Biblical criticism which is the province of Christian scholars, who have almost completely dominated it, in the new period since the hatred of Jews has been dressed in scientific garb, has also become one of the most dangerous weapons that the scientific anti-Semites employ in fighting against the Jews, to deprive them of the honor of their origin in the past, to muddy the fount of their source, and to deride their Torah and laws in a very alarming fashion, and all this supposedly on the basis of science. May our ears save us from hearing all the false assumptions based on erroneous analogies and vain imaginings directed towards destroying the foundations of Judaism, in religion, its ethics and history. The means they have used for this purpose is to collect all the pagans and idol worshipers in Egypt, Arabia, Babylonia, Assyria, Persia and Media, and all their absurd customs and to give them precedence over our people of the biblical era, and to make them the source and foundation of all the laws of our Torah, and also to assign a later date, up to the time of the Babylonian exile, to the greater part of the five books of our Pentateuch and its more notable laws as well as a large portion of the other holy writings, and this in order to divest them of their originality and ancient source.

According to the editor, the finds from el-Amarna, Megiddo, Shushan and Babylonia actually undercut biblical criticism and reinforce the antiquity and originality of the Bible. The paradox is that at the very

time when biblical criticism had had lost its high position in the Christian world, it became popular among the Jews. Since the believing Jew could not be adversely affected by this scientific criticism, it seemed desirable to take advantage of the views of the Christian scholar. Kittel, the Jews believed, was not one of the anti-Semitic biblical critics, but rather was “redeeming the honor of our origin, our Torah and our prophets in the noblest manner.”⁵⁶⁷

How was Kittel redeeming the honor of the Torah? He believed that archaeology could not provide an answer to every question and that the correctness of the answers depended on the nature of the ancient document, its relationship to the other facts and to the time when it was written. The documents from Mesopotamia do indicate Assyrian-Babylonian parallels to various chapters in the Book of Genesis, but the disparity is greater than the similarity. In the Bible, God creates light through the power of speech, and nature does not give birth to itself. Moreover, in the Babylonian literature there is no story about the sin of the first man. Genesis is, therefore, a whole and unique story, the result of a spiritual revolution the Jews underwent in the Babylonian exile. The documents show a strong Babylonian cultural influence on the land of Canaan before the Israelite settlement, and hence suggest that the Israelites may have been influenced by Babylonian culture through the medium of the Canaanites. It is also possible, however, that an earlier common historical memory existed. In other words, despite the similarities, there is a yawning abyss between Babylonian and biblical cosmology.

What then was the positive aspect that the translator found in Kittel's views?⁵⁶⁸ It seems he was particularly taken by Kittel's criticism of the Wellhausen school and the theory that assigns a later date to the writing of the Mosaic Code. According to Kittel, the fact that the

⁵⁶⁷ And see his books: Rudolf Kittel, *Die babylonischen Ausgrabungen und die biblische Urgeschichte*, Leipzig, 1903; idem, *Der Babel-Bibel-Streit und die Offenbarungsfrage. Ein Verzicht auf Verständigung*, Leipzig, 1903; *Die Religion des Volkes Israel*, Leipzig, 1921.

⁵⁶⁸ The story has an ironic side. Kittel, who was regarded as a champion in the struggle against Delitzsch, was involved in the action filed by Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (the central organization of German Jewry) against the anti-Semitic demagogue Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933) in 1911, because of his anti-Semitic pamphlet entitled *Beweis-Material gegen Jahwe* (Evidence against Jahweh). Kittel supported Fritsch's claim that the biblical-Jewish ethics were inferior. See: Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und Protestantische Theologie*, pp. 206–209; Marvin Lowenthal, *The Jews of Germany: A Story of Sixteen Centuries*, Philadelphia, 1936, pp. 343–34. On this matter, see more in Chapter 11.

Torah was read aloud to the people during the time of Josiah, and was not regarded as a forgery, demonstrates its antiquity. The translator also found a favorable note in Kittel's statement that although the final form of Genesis was determined during the Exile, earlier versions existed then, and that the stories of the Patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt are the truth, not legends. Kittel suggested that biblical criticism should not be taught in the schools, even in its moderate version. The purpose of teaching the Bible is to give the student religious satisfaction and spiritual uplifting. Nonetheless, in addressing historical issues, the truth should not be concealed.⁵⁶⁹

Evidence in Wood and Stone or Reliable Witnesses? Or: Why Seek the Living among the Dead?

While all our descriptions until now may suggest that the enthusiasm evoked by archaeology in the period under discussion was almost uncontested, Ze'ev Jawitz writes about the ambivalent attitude of the orthodox in relation to the use of archaeological evidence. In an appendix entitled “The Antiquity and Unity of the Torah,” in the first part of his book *Sefer Toledot Ysrael* (The History of the Jews), Warsaw, 1894, Jawitz totally rejects the use of archaeological evidence to confirm the authenticity of the biblical tradition:

From the day that biblical criticism has undertaken to deny well-known facts, to cast doubt on what is certain and to change what is known, there is no longer any validity to the long-standing rule that everything is valid until it is proven wrong. Now, on the contrary, the burden of proof is upon the holder of the view; anyone making changes has the upper hand; the argument ‘we have not seen’ is tantamount to convincing evidence, and he who distorts is to be commended. Now while secular books can reliably testify to themselves, holy books are not reliable unless they bring witnesses from the marketplace. For while the new criticism repudiates our holy books, all of which give forth a crystal-clear voice and a healthy taste and are full of power and the life of the spirit, it endorses as witnesses fragments of tablets from Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt and scraps of scrolls removed from the earth by Rawlinson, Schrader, Oppert and Abram. These peoples and their scribes were no better than dead in their lifetime, all the more so after they died. Their books were filled with futile, worthless tasks, and these wizards and mediums that peep and mutter, the new biblical critics have sanctioned as witnesses to testify

⁵⁶⁹ Kittel, ibid. On Kittel's opinion on the revelation, see Chapter 9, as well as Wiese, ibid., p. 216–217.

about our Torah, our Prophets and our biblical texts. Is this testimony, which can be likened to the testimony of a deaf man, a fool or a child, or that of a slumbering dreamer or a dying man whose mind is demented, better than the testimony of an alert, agile, quick-witted man? Heaven forbid we should speak lightly of the scholars whose names I have mentioned who strive to retrieve from this evidence in wood and stone some knowledge about the history of those peoples, for without that they have no other source for their own histories. But it is gross stupidity to inquire of these idols about the Holy Scriptures, which have never lost their full vitality and health until the present day. Apt to this is Isaiah's complaint: "Should not a people seek unto their God? For the living to the dead?" (Isaiah, 8:19)⁵⁷⁰

Jawitz was convinced that the archaeological finds ought not to be used to prove the veracity of the Holy Scriptures. Yet he did not hesitate to quote from studies that used extra-biblical sources to confirm the words of the Bible. As a result of the Babel-Bibel controversy he openly changed his mind. In his article, *Totzot hachatitot vehachakikot*" (The Results of Archaeological Excavations), he quoted from Hommel who suggested one ought to abandon the "meaningless casuistry" of "destructive biblical criticism" and to pay attention to the archaeological finds that tell about Abraham's generation. Since the leading Assyriologists have discarded biblical criticism, he stated, it is clear that archaeological scholarship is beneficial to tradition:

Wondrous are the deeds of the Almighty, for when the delusions of the biblical criticism of Wellhausen and his colleagues had achieved a lofty position, suddenly those that slept in the dust of the earth awoke from a slumber of three thousand years, to testify to the truth of the antiquity of Moses' Torah, to tell us that it was given in their time, that the prophets prophesized in their time and that all the deeds related in the Holy Scriptures took place in their time, for inscriptions were carved on monuments, and the walls of caves and palaces ruined millenia ago have been revealed, and their inscriptions are clearly undeniable evidence of the antiquity of Israel and its Torah.

Now Jawitz was prepared to accept the testimony of "witnesses from the marketplace," such as the el-Amarna letters, the Mesha stele and inscriptions of the kings of Assyria and Babylonia, and even to regard them – as *Hamaggid* had – as a divinely ordained discovery: "It is the Lord's doing, the discovery of the secrets of ancient times, which leave not a trace standing of the words of the skeptics." Ar-

⁵⁷⁰ Ze'ev Jawitz, Chap. 23: "Kadmut haTorah ve'achdutah: (The Antiquity and Unity of the Torah), in *Sefer toledot Yisrael metukan al-pi hamekorot harishonim*, Part I, 4th edn., expanded and annotated with many additions, Tel Aviv, 1931, pp. 170–171.

chaeology has proven there is no basis for denying the existence of the Patriarchs:

Wellhausen and some of his clergy and many of his colleagues and the multitude of his followers will do their utmost to deny the existence of the Patriarchs, and will depict what is written about them in the Torah as a fantasy fabricated by some priest in the last generations of the First Temple, or by some rabbi in the first generations of the Second Temple.

Jawitz claimed that archaeology and scholarship had proven that the names of the geographical places in the stories of the Patriarchs are the names of real places, that historical events, such as the war of the five kings, actually occurred, and the like. He even went much further, from his point of view, in claiming that there is in fact a similarity between the Hammurabi Code and the Mosaic Code – evidence of the fact that the laws of Babylonia were preserved in the memory of the Israelites. However, a gaping abyss divides these two codices, and the “Torah of Moses is higher than [the Hammurabi Code] as the heavens are higher than the earth” insofar as its moral content is concerned. The Mosaic code was a revolution that had far-reaching repercussions. In an article “Habikoret keshehi mevukeret” (Criticism when it is Criticized), published in the periodical *Tachkemoni* in 1911,⁵⁷¹ he wrote that the ostraca discovered in the excavations in Samaria are evidence of the antiquity of the writing and literature of the Jewish people: “And we have no doubt that in view of this wonderful news, the eyes of all honest men among the obstinate, misled followers of the false criticism will be opened and they will see that all of its specious reasoning which attempts to deny the existence of writing and literature in Israel before the time of Amos, is both nonsense and falsehood.”⁵⁷²

The willingness to embrace archaeology and to regard its as a science that supports (or complements) tradition did not result only from the need to contend in the external arena, namely against the radical Christian criticism of the Bible. It also resulted from the need to contend in the internal arena, namely, against those Jews who had adopt-

⁵⁷¹ Published by the “Tachkemoni” students society in Bern, Berlin, 1911, pp. 9–18.

⁵⁷² According to Jawitz, there were many enthusiastic readers. One of them, David Krivitsky, whose review of Klausner’s book *Israeli History* was mentioned in the previous chapter, added an appendix to his book *Keshet umagen* (Berdychiv, 1911). There he stated that Jawitz had proved, with the help of various scholars, that the historical evidence in the Book of Genesis is reliable. If Jawitz claimed that semi-intellectual Jews are selling “the wares of biblical criticism” in small, remote towns, Krivitsky testifies to the fact that the news of the demise of biblical criticism had reached such towns. David Krivitsky, *Keshet umagen*, pp. 108–111.

ed the principles of the Christian biblical criticism. Jews attempting to defend the traditional view relied heavily on Gentile scholars not only for want of a better source, but also in order to gain “external” validity and authority vis-à-vis their Jewish critics.

The Continued Interest in Archaeology and the History of the Ancient Near East

Jewish interest in the archaeological discoveries and the new picture of the ancient past that they created did not end after the Babel-Bibel controversy died out. On the contrary, it intensified. We will cite several examples. In November 1906, *Hamaggid hechadash* published a series about the expedition of the American Assyriologist Hermann Vollrath Hilprecht (1859–1925) to Nippur, that “verify the stories of the Patriarchs.” In 1914, the La'am publishing house of the HaPoel HaTzair party in Jaffa published a booklet signed by “Eliezer” (Eliezer Volkani) entitled *Ashur uVavel ha'atikot* (Ancient Assyria and Babylonia).⁵⁷³ In May 1918, the *Chadshot Ha'aretz* (*Palestine News*) newspaper printed an article in its literary supplement by Chaim Michel Rivlin entitled *Lekadmoniot Eretz Israel (al-pi hachafirot vekhitvei hayetedot)* (“On the Antiquities of Palestine based on the Excavations and the Cuneiform Tablets”), in which he tried to prove the reliability of the biblical story of the exodus from Egypt on the basis of the Amarna letters. In 1911, Shmuel Rephaeli (Rafaelowitch), 1867–1923), a merchant and amateur numismatist from Jerusalem, published a booklet entitled *Ha'aretz lifnei kibbush Yehoshua* (“The Land before Joshua's Conquest”), lauding archaeology which had uncovered “mysterious forces” from the depths of the earth. Rephaeli described Assyriology as a science “that began with a small group” of scholars, numbering no more than twenty men, and grew after a century to no more than 150 men: “However, this small camp has accomplished wonders in scholarship and has published its discoveries in all the enlightened languages.” This research, he opined, ought to be dearer to the Jewish people than to any other, because it sheds light on its ancient life. Hence, no heed should be

⁵⁷³ The La'am publishing house of the Hapoel HaTzair party also published a booklet on the archaeology of Palestine based on a book by the Irish archaeologist R. A. S. Macalister (1870–1950), *Culture in Palestine* (Hebrew), Jaffa, 1913.

paid to the words of Delitzsch, Schrader, Winckler and others, “who have undertaken to expunge our antiquity, to strip our history of the splendor of age that envelops it. We will look rather to our defenders, Jensen, Hilprecht, Barth and others, who knew how to deliver a rebuttal to Delitzsch’s statements in his pamphlet ‘The Babel-Bibel Controversy’ and in his lectures.” Rephaeli summarized the documents found in el-Amarna and regarded them as solid evidence of the antiquity of the Israelites in Palestine.⁵⁷⁴

Other books published in Hebrew included historical stories whose plots took place in ancient Egypt (N. Levinsky, *The Life of Pharaoh, Some Memoirs of the High Priest Ra-Man-Ptah*, 1905; S. Rosenfeld, *History of Pharaoh, King of Egypt*, 1924, and others);⁵⁷⁵ translations of books on the history of the ancient Near East, and original adapted history books.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ Shmuel Rephaeli’s (Rafaelowitch) book, *Ha’aretz lifnei kibbush Yehoshua* (The Land before Joshua’s Conquest), was previously printed as three chapters in A.M. Luntz’ book *Yerushalayim/Mea’ssef sifrut lechakirat eretz hakodesh* (A Literary Collection on the Study of the Holy Land), vol. 8 and 9 (1910–1911). He wrote that the discoveries being made promise wondrous new finds “that will shed light on all of our ancient tradition, of which we can be proud.” In an article, “Records of the Past: being English translations of the Assyrian and Egyptian monuments, published under the sanction of the Society of Biblical Archaeology,” London, Rafaelowitch translated several Egyptian and Mesopotamian documents. In *Chadashot meha’aretz* (7, 19 July 1918) he published an article entitled “Jacob and Joseph in Discoveries in Egypt,” in which he wrote that the name *Yaakov-el* (el=ma) was found in an Egyptian inscription from the time of Sestoris III. On another matter, see his article “The Excavations in Jerusalem,” *HaOlam*, 8, 1914, pp. 18–20. Rafaelowitch also wrote *Matbe’ot haYehudim* (Coins of the Jews), Jerusalem, 1913.

⁵⁷⁵ For a survey of the guidebooks and texts for teachers and pupils, see: C.A. Zuta, *Darkei halimud shel haTanakh* (Ways of Studying the Bible), Jerusalem, 1934, pp. 307–320.

⁵⁷⁶ The first volume of Gaston Maspéro’s (1846–1916) book *Histoire ancienne des peuples de l’orient classique* was translated into Hebrew by Abraham Liudbipul, and was published in Warsaw in 1897 under the title *Toledot yemei amei hamizrah hakadmoni*. The Hebrew translation of the book by Hermann Schneider, the German Egyptologist, *Kultur und Denken der alten Ägypter*, Leipzig 1907, was published in Vilna in 1912 under the title *HaMitzrim hakadmonim*. In C.A. Kaplan’s textbook, *Amei hatanakh: tziyurim histori’im michayei amei hamizrah hakadmonim* (Peoples of the Bible: Historical Pictures from the Life of the Ancient Peoples of the East) (published by Limud, Warsaw, 1926), he wrote: “The Ten Commandments were known to the Egyptians even before they were given to the Israelites, and their headings were recorded in the ‘forty-two commandments’ that are in the ‘Egyptian Book of the Dead.’” (pp. 34–35). Kaplan also included a brief survey of the achievements of Assyriology (*ibid.*, pp. 42–57). We also note Nachum Sloushz’s articles “Hebrew and Canaan” in *Hashiloach*, 37–39, 1920–1929 and Y. Harari’s adaptation of Flinders Petrie’s book, *Israel in Egypt*, printed in the periodical for youth *Moledet*. Also see Chapter 15.

In 1925, about twenty years after the Babel-Bibel controversy, to which we will devote the coming chapters, Soloweitschik and Rubascheff wrote that it was merely an episode that derailed the discussion about links between the Bible and Babylonia from its serious, scientific path. When the waves of the controversy subsided, scholarship continued to illuminate the ancient East, and from it, “rays of light came forth that also illuminated the obscure corners of the inquiry into the history of Israel in biblical times, which then was a creative, fervent people that was inspired by and inspired other ancient peoples!”

The question of the historical relationship between the Bible and Babylonia rapidly changed to the question of the relationship between the two cultures insofar as their values and morals were concerned. In his public lectures, Friedrich Delitzsch rapidly moved from the question of “who came before whom” to “who is superior to whom” and the answer was in keeping with the taste of his audience, made up of men of influence in the Christian world and the haters of Israel ... this youngest child of scientific research stumbled and turned aside from the scientific path. But the course of the path was not changed by this episode in its history. The controversy that arose in view of the excesses of the pan-Babylonian stream was also beneficial in that it noted the independence of the Hebrew culture and literature within the culture of the East, and the discovery of Babylonia along with the excavations in Egypt was very beneficial in finding the link between the Israelites and the peoples in whose midst they lived.⁵⁷⁷

In other words, in Soloweitschik and Rubascheff’s view, the earsplitting boast of innovativeness uttered by Delitzsch and those who shared his views was soon replaced by a balanced, reliable historical description of the link between the Bible and its cultural environment, with a stress on the uniqueness of the Bible and ancient Israelite culture. Hence the controversy had no influence – either good or bad – on the development of Jewish biblical scholarship or on Jewish interest in the history of the ancient Near East.

The documents and monuments from the ancient past, resurrected like “those who slept in the dust of the earth,” reconstructed the “great interrelationships” (*die grossen Zusammenhänge*) within which the Israelite people lived and developed. Archaeology and the study of ancient Eastern cultures were important, Driver wrote, because they extricated the Hebrews from the solitary state in which until then they were seen to have lived, and pointed to their strong connections with the surrounding cultures.⁵⁷⁸ In 1947 Joseph Klaus-

⁵⁷⁷ Soloweitschik and Rubascheff, *History of Biblical Criticism*, p. 113.

⁵⁷⁸ S.R. Driver, in D.G. Hogarth, *Authority and Archaeology*, pp. 6–7.

ner wrote in a similar vein that archaeology was important because: “If you want to understand the Jewish people in the First Temple period, go and learn about the great political-cultural sphere of ancient Asia, of which Judah and Israel were but a tiny circle – albeit an important and unique one.”⁵⁷⁹

The return to the Bible with the aid of the archaeological finds, in the company of travel books and works on the historical geography of Palestine, made it possible to reconstruct the real life of the biblical world. In his book *Sekhiyot haMikra* (Treasures of the Bible: A Collection of Pictures for the Holy Scriptures and their Antiquities), which contained 700 photographs and illustrations of archaeological finds of the Ancient East, Soloweitschik wrote that the pictures provide a living, concrete pattern of the biblical world:

If we imbue the abstract writings with vitality, our exemplary creation can be imparted to the student as a vibrant component of his emotions and thoughts. Just as the Greek and Roman cultures are ever in the mind of the educated man and seem real to him, thus the forms of our classical culture may be ever with him, not only as literary, biblical abstractions, but also as living, concrete entities.⁵⁸⁰

In the introduction to a textbook for young pupils (published by Limud, Warsaw, 1926), the author, Chaim Aron Kaplan (1880–1942), wrote that his book is based on “recent archaeological discoveries confirmed by expeditions of Assyriologists and Egyptologists.” He had no qualms about writing the following for Jewish (Hebrew-reading) students in Warsaw:

The ancient Israelite world and all the events that occurred in it, particularly during the biblical period, are organically linked to the world as a whole and to events in the lives of the ancient peoples of the world. Any-one desiring to gain a true understanding of the “history of Israel” in the distant biblical periods, should first go to their neighbors and learn their history, the principles of their religions, the roots of their customs and the foundations of their cultures ... many of the customs of Israel are based on foreign doctrines; and vice-versa, many major traits of Jewish culture were taken up by ancient peoples and assimilated by them until over the years they became alien and distant from their original source.⁵⁸¹

M. J. Berdyczewski took a favorable view of the discovery of Mesopotamian literature because it demonstrated that the books of the Bible

⁵⁷⁹ Joseph Klausner, “Jewish Science between the Two World Wars,” in *Problems of Literature and Science*, Tel Aviv, 1956 (Hebrew), pp. 164.

⁵⁸⁰ M. Soloweitschik (Menahem Soliel), *Sekhiyot haMikra: Otzar temunot lekhitve hakodesh velekadmoniotehem*, Berlin, 1925, p. 206.

⁵⁸¹ C. A. Kaplan, *Amei hatenach* (Nations of the Bible), Warsaw, 1926.

are not “a closed circle, and that in order to properly evaluate them, attention needs to be paid to the documents of the neighboring peoples.” He also claimed that the discovery of the Babylonian myths was helpful in understanding the manner in which they were preserved in the talmudic literature as well.⁵⁸² Y.N. Simchoni (1884–1926)⁵⁸³ wrote, in the introduction to the Hebrew translation of the *Gilgamesh Epic* (1924) by the poet Saul Tschernichowsky (1875–1943), that the Mesopotamian literature was part of Hebrew literature, but that the renaissance of this creation cannot take place in Europe, but only by “a permanent Jewry in Palestine,” whose cultural revival will also turn to “the ancient Semitic creation,” in a manner similar to the renaissance of classical Greek culture in the cultures of Europe.⁵⁸⁴

The extrication of the Jewish people from this picture of solitude and alienation – of “a people that dwells apart” – and the discovery of the cultural link between the biblical world and the surrounding cultures was intended to legitimize a similar link between the Jews and their environment in the modern world. But at the same time, they gave rise to a widespread polemic about the boundaries and content of this link. The growing keen interest in the history of the Jews’ culture – not only of their religion – made the question of the cultural link between them and other nations the paramount issue on the polemical and scholarly agenda in the twentieth century.⁵⁸⁵

Was Assyriology really initially an innocent scholarly pursuit that soon became a discipline that had direct relevance for modern religion, as Chavalas claimed, or was this relevance clear from the first

⁵⁸² M. J. Berdyczewski, *Sinai und Garizim*, Berlin, 1926.

⁵⁸³ Yaakov Naphtali (Herz) Simchoni studied in Leipzig and lived and worked in Berlin and Lodz. Among others, he translated Josephus’ *War of the Jews*, Warsaw, 1923, and *Against Apion*, Berlin, 1928, into Hebrew.

⁵⁸⁴ Y.N. Simchoni, *Alilot Gilgamesh* (The Epic of Gilgamesh), Warsaw, 1924, p. XI. On biblical archaeology in Palestine, see Chapter 15.

⁵⁸⁵ A vast literature deals with the principles underlying the comparative method in the context of the Babylonian and biblical cultures. See, for example: Richard E. Averbeck, “Sumer, the Bible, and Comparative Method: Historiography and Temple Building”, in M. W. Chavalas and K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, pp. 88–125; J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Winona Lake, 1987 (2nd edn.); I.J. Gelb, “Comparative Methods in the Study of Society and Economy of the Ancient Near East,” in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, 41, 1980, pp. 29–36; M. Malul, “The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Legal Studies”, in *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 22 (7), 1990; Shemaryahu Talmon, “The Comparative Method”, in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume*, Göttingen, 1977 (*Vetus Testamentum*, Leiden, 1978, pp. 320–356); K.H. Veeuhof, “Seeing the Face of God: The Use of Akkadian Parallels”, *Akkadica*, 94 (5), 1995, pp. 33–37.

steps taken by this science?⁵⁸⁶ In an age in which the evolutionary view and the comparative method have shaped the modern approach to the study of the history of religions, the relevance of the finds in Mesopotamia to this subject became very clear from the very early phases of the research. Accordingly, the major importance of the status of primacy and originality assigned to the culture and religion of the ancient East actually has no real bearing on issues of historical truth, namely, the question of whether the biblical source is less valid than the Mesopotamian source because it is later in time. The question was not whether “less primary” means “less true.”⁵⁸⁷ Assyriology was important primarily because the claim that the Bible had Mesopotamian origins undermined the tradition about the divine source of the Pentateuch and Moses as its author. It was this claim about the authorship of the Bible, and not its religious world view and content, that challenged the ‘truth’ of the Bible. And this, among other reasons, is why the fundamental issues raised by the discovery of the finds in the Near East have never completely vanished nor has the great impression they made subsided. These issues, an outcome of the encounter between the Bible, biblical criticism and the archaeology of the ancient Near East in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, touched upon the foundations of faith of many people. Hence, the results of this encounter aroused enormous curiosity, strong emotions, doubts and polemics, and all of these seeped into the Babel-Bibel controversy, which we will discuss in the following part of this book, and endured even after this specific controversy died down and was nearly forgotten.

⁵⁸⁶ M. W. Chavalas, “Assyriology and Biblical Studies,” in Chavalas and Younger (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, p. 32.

⁵⁸⁷ This claim was put forward by Dr. Nathan Wasserman in his review of the Hebrew version of the book printed in *Ha’aretz*, Culture and Literature Section, 27.2.2004, p. H4.

Part Two

The War of The Tablets

La cheute de Babel confuse bruit encore.

Gulliaume de Salluste du Bartas (1544–1590), “La Tour de Babel,”
(from *La Semaine de Création du Monde*).

Jehovah! I proclaim my eternal scorn for thee – I am the King of Babylon!
(*Jehovah! Dir künd' ich auf ewig Hohn – ich bin der König von Babylon!*)

Heinrich Heine, “Belsazar” (trans. Peter Barnscome).

Chapter 4

The Babel-Bibel Controversy as a Typological Event

There, in the valley of northern Germany on the Spree river,
a second Tower of Babel was built, its head in the heavens,
from which the wise men of Ashkenaz could wage a battle against
the holiness of the Hebrew Bible and the influence of
the sons of Shem on the world.

Shimon Menahem Lazar, *Hamaggid Hechadash*, February 1903.

In the spring of 1903, the Jewish neo-orthodox secondary school in Frankfurt am Main, Hirsch Realschule, founded by the Yeshurun congregation, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.¹ As part of the festivities, a satirical comedy, written by Dr. Jonas Bondi (1862–1929), the rabbi of the Mainz community, was performed by the pupils.² In the play, a splendid royal figure, conjured up from the dead, comes on to the stage. He is Hammurabi, King of ancient Babylon.³ The character who is the host in the play, Professor Babylonowitsch, welcomes the king and asks him to present to the audience the tidings of the one and only God. Hammurabi begins by babbling (*Gebabbel*), then quotes some of the cruelest of his laws, and declares his faith in a multiplicity of gods. “This fellow,” pointing angrily to his host, “wants to Judaize

¹ The school was founded by Samson Raphael Hirsch in 1853. In 1881 it moved to a new, ornate building, and in 1905 it had 550 pupils. See: Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 104–105. See also: Robert Liberles, *Religious Conflict in Social Context: The Resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in Frankfurt am Main, 1838–1877*, Westport, 1985.

² Jonas Bondi, *Babel und Bibel: Ein Scherzspiel, aufgeführt bei einer Jubiläumsfeier*, Frankfurt am Main, 1903. In 1901, Bondi wrote in *Der Israelit* that Graetz was a “midget” (Breuer, ibid., p. 195). See also: M. L. Bamberger, “Purim nach der Keilschriftforschung”, *Der Israelit*, 44 (20), 12 März 1903, *Purimbeilage*, S. 27.

³ Several methods were proposed for determining the period of Hammurabi’s reign: 1728–1696, 1792–1750 as well as 1880–1842 B.C. It has recently been decided that it was from 1696–1654 B.C. See in Chapter 10.

my pure faith in idols!” (“Er will mir mein reines Götzentum verjudent!”) Professor Babylonowitsch is taken aback, since in his lectures he has described the ancient king as a just monarch who believes in one God – in Jehovah, who later became the God of Israel. He turns to the audience, apologizes, and says that the King must be somewhat demented, probably because of his exorbitant age. Hammurabi, however, jeers at the professor. He accuses him of trying to thrust the alien spirit of the Bible on him, and adds that if he had a sword in his hand, or at least a whip, the distinguished professor would not get away without receiving his just punishment. Only after the Babylonian king leaves the stage does the professor regain his composure and tells the audience that the figure they had seen on stage was only pretending to be Hammurabi.

At the end of the play, the Eternal Jew comes on stage to speak the last words. He is the son of an ancient but living people that faithfully brings the message of the one and only God to humankind:

God will guide me and humankind to the goal,
He Himself will bring redemption to us all,
Every cloud of error will disappear
And the promised future will come to us here.⁴

The professor, who was the object of derision in this play, is Friedrich Delitzsch (1850–1922), a well-known German Assyriologist who will be the main character in this part of the book, and the play was intended to mock two of the three lectures he delivered (the first in January and February of 1902 and the second in January 1903) under the title “Babel and the Bible,” lectures that aroused the Babel-Bibel controversy (*Babel-Bibel-Streit*) in the German public.⁵ The Jewish public in Germany saw these lectures as a blatant, dangerous attack against the Bible, and hence, against Judaism, and they provoked reactions from all the camps of German Jewry. The Jewish involvement

⁴ “Gott wird zum Ziel mich und die Menschheit leiten,
Er wird sich uns allen Heil bereiten,
Und aller Hauch des Irrtums wird verweh’n
Und die verheiß’ne Zukunft wird ersteh’n.”

⁵ Although Nineveh, capital of Assyria, was the first city excavated in the 1850s, Delitzsch preferred to give the name of Babylonia, not Assyria, to the cultures of Mesopotamia. This was certainly because in German, the name Babel has a ring similar to that of Bibel. On the other hand, the discipline dealing with the history of Mesopotamian-Assyriology – was derived from the name of Assyria. German archaeologists, in particular Robert Koldewey, excavated Babylonia mainly from 1903–1914, and they uncovered the capital of the neo-Babylonian empire from the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. German archaeologists also discovered the ruins of the city of Assyria in 1902–1904. See: Seton Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust*, pp. 174–178.

in this controversy was an important milestone in the history of the Jews' defense of the Bible against its critics, and it has a typological status in the history of the struggle over the Bible. For this reason, we will describe the chain of events in this intense controversy and review the Jewish reaction to it, which until now has not received any attention in the research, and in fact is almost unknown.

Mordechai Breuer, the leading scholar of Jewish neo-Orthodoxy in Germany, regards the comic play as an expression of the sigh of relief heard in the Orthodox camp, a reflection of its belief that the claims against the Bible made by Delitzsch in his strongly reverberating lectures were soon found to be no more than "soap bubbles" from the standpoint of scholarship.⁶ Hence the neo-Orthodox felt there was no need to enlist any more apologetic and scholarly reactions of the type published in the Jewish neo-Orthodox press in Germany immediately after the first lecture, and that from then on it would suffice to mock and satirize Delitzsch's views, as many were doing in the Christian camp.⁷

The Babel-Bibel controversy was a public-scholarly controversy carried on in a defined time period; it resonated widely in the public and many disputants engaged in it. In other words, it was not limited to an exchange of letters between its participants, nor was it waged on the pages of professional journals. The polemic was so intense and aroused such a furor because it touched on sensitive issues that were on the public agenda. It produced not only direct polemical writings and scholarly works, but also caricatures, jokes, satires and comic plays⁸ – "Babel-

⁶ Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 209–212. *Der Israelit* reported on the play and the publication of the text and noted that most of those in the audience found it difficult to understand its content. See: Anon., "Zeitungsnachrichten und Correspondenzen", *Der Israelit*, 44 (45), 1903, pp. 974–975. The text of the play was printed in a small number of copies.

⁷ The periodical *Lustige Blätter* even printed a special issue ("Babylon-Heft") containing caricatures and comic songs.

⁸ For example, the pantomime play, written by Alexander Moszkowski, that premiered at the Zirkus Schumann in Berlin in December 1903, entitled *Babel und Bibel. Die Pracht, der Untergang und die Wiedererweckung des Weltreiches von Babylon* (The Glory, the Destruction and the Revival of the World Power, Babylon). See Lehmann, pp. 236–241, 360–377. To attest to the popularity of the lectures, we should mention that Karl May (1842–1912) the popular German writer, attended the January 31, 1903 lecture and wrote a play entitled "Babel und Bibel," which takes place in Iraq and has hardly any connection to the content of the polemic. See: B. Kosciuzko, *Karl May's Drama Babel und Bibel*, Karl May Gesellschaft, Hamburg. Sonderheft Nr. 10, 1978; M. Schenkel, "'Babel und Bibel': Ein aufklärerisches Drama des Mittelalters", in: H. Schmiedt (ed.), *Karl May*, Frankfurt am Main, 1983, pp. 278–309. We thank Prof. W. Kaminski of Frankfurt for his assistance.

Bibel” became a widely used phrase and an idiom. Politics, science and theology and their interrelations were involved in the controversy, and the boundaries between these fields were blurred. The neo-Orthodox weekly, *Der Israelit*, which had devoted much space to covering the controversy, recommended that “everyone whose doctor had ordered him to get well by laughing” ought to read the play.⁹ It seemed that the Jews had the upper hand in the battle being waged in several fields (theology, linguistics, the science of religion, archaeology, and others) and could now draw some optimism from their victory. Judaism had benefited enormously from the controversy. The refutation of Delitzsch’s claims had bolstered faith in the ancient covenant (*des alten Bundes*) between the Jews, the people of the Bible, and their God, and the comparison with the Babylonian culture had only reinforced recognition of the superiority of the Jewish faith and its mission.¹⁰

Against this background, the public mockery of Delitzsch in a Jewish school is worth mentioning, since he was not only a reputed scholar, but also a favorite of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Yet it was possible to boldly perform the comic play because German scholars and theologians had published hundreds of books, pamphlets and articles against Delitzsch, and the Kaiser himself had expressed reservations about some of his ideas. However, the fact that the play was performed during the orthodox school’s festivities (and that the pupils could learn from it of the claim that the ancient Babylonian laws were the source of the laws of the Torah) shows not only that the Jewish neo-orthodox in Germany felt compelled to defend the Bible against its critics, who were armed with archaeological finds from the ancient Middle East, but also that these heretic views had penetrated into the younger public in the orthodox school. Moreover, despite the allusions to the sigh of relief engendered by the confidence that Delitzsch’s claims had been thoroughly reputed and had vanished from the world, that relief was definitely premature. The curtain had not yet come down on the attack on the Bible from that quarter, and the questions that Delitzsch provoked in the Babel-Bibel controversy have not disappeared from the Jewish (and the Christian) intellectual agenda in the hundred years that have passed since then. Delitzsch’s radical views were rejected, but the idea that the Bible cannot be understood in isolation from its broad cultural context was accepted.

⁹ Anon., “Vom neusten Thurmbau zu Babel”, *Der Israelit*, 44 (40), 25. Mai 1903, pp. 889–892.

¹⁰ S. Samuel, “Wissenschaft und Judentum am Ende des Bibelstreits”, *AZdJ*, 67 (28), 1903, pp. 330–332; L.A. Rosenthal, *Bibel trotz Babel!*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 6.

It is no wonder, then, that in the contemporary Jewish discourse, a great deal was written about the attack (*Angriff*) on the Bible, or about the war (*Kampf*) being waged against it – and in its defense. In the Babel-Bibel controversy, much use was made of this militant language. *Der Israelit* described it as “the war of the tablets”: a war between *Tafeln* and *Täfelchen*: between two covenant tablets, one “written at Sinai by the finger of God,” and the other, “tiny, moldy, decaying and illegible” tablets, each of which could be interpreted at will, dug up from the graves of Babylonians who had died and vanished ages and ages ago. By means of these ancient tablets, the weekly wrote, the spirit of Babylonia was conjured up to proclaim that the Jews are a nation preening itself in borrowed plumes, having no achievements of its own. But, actually, it went on, the name Babylon means confusion (*Verwirrung*): Where now is this Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed our Temple? His kingdom declined and vanished into dark tombs, while the truth God wrote with His finger on the tablets of the covenant that He revealed to His people at Mt. Sinai continues to guide humankind forever and ever!”¹¹

The attack in Delitzsch’s lectures was against the Bible, but in actual fact, it was directed in particular against the Pentateuch, not only against the Mosaic laws,¹² but against the contents of the entire Pentateuch – its cosmology, theology and history – as well as against the prophetic literature and some parts of the Hagiographa. The title Delitzsch chose for his lecture created absolute congruity between the Pentateuch and the entire Bible. Consequently, the Jews, who, in reacting to the lectures, intended primarily to come to the defense of the Pentateuch, found themselves defending the entire Bible.

The Jewish public campaign in defense of the Bible – and first and foremost, of the Pentateuch – was the high point of the involvement of academically educated rabbis and Jewish scholars in the Babel-Bibel controversy in the early twentieth century. We have seen that even before this controversy, they had had to defend the Bible against criti-

¹¹ Kohn, “Die Sinaitischen Tafeln und die Babylonischen Täfelchen!”, *Der Israelit*, 43 (55), 10. Juli 1902, pp. 1163–1164. Jacob Horowitz wrote in a similar vein that the Ten Commandments received by Moses on Mt. Sinai were the eternal property of all mankind, and more eternal than any stone tablets. See: J. Horovitz, *Goethe, Friedrich Delitzsch und das Zehnwort*, Berlin, 1925, p. 12. Many held the view that this was a war between two different world-views, conducting a modern battle over the Bible (*modernen Kampf um die Bibel*), with both camps making use of the findings of scholarship. This, for example, was the name of a pamphlet written in November 1905 by the theologian Prof. J. Lieber, Rector of Prague University.

¹² A reference to the Torah of Moses sometimes means the Mosaic Code and sometimes the entire Pentateuch.

cism and attacks from various quarters, but the Babel-Bibel controversy spurred their activity, making it a typological event. In other words, unlike their attempts to counter biblical criticism, which went on constantly over the years, the Babel-Bibel controversy occurred in a very short period of time. It gave expression to many of the arguments that from then on became an indivisible part of the modern Jewish attitude to the Bible and the polemics on it. The involvement of university educated rabbis, scholars and Jewish men of letters in the Babel-Bibel controversy is a consummate example of an attempt by both orthodox and reform Jews to enlist the tools of modern research in defense of the Bible. This included a readiness to accept the use of extra-biblical evidence as a legitimate tool with which to reconstruct the process in which the biblical text came into being, with the aim of understanding its world, as well as to affirm its reliability as an historical document. It was impossible to make do with the claim that the value and status of the biblical testimony were determined by a venerable tradition, and that it was this tradition that gave it its validity. Now it was necessary, on one hand, to prove that the historical-philological discipline confirmed the tradition, and on the other, that there was a strong correlation between the biblical evidence and the extra-biblical archaeological evidence.

The outcome was that, even more than previously in the intellectual history of the Jews, Jewish scholars and rabbis were prepared to rely on extra-biblical evidence too in order to defend the Bible, or found it necessary to defend the Bible against extra-biblical evidence, and to do so, referred to works written by Christian scholars and theologians. The weapons employed in the theological, historical-philosophical and historical-positivistic polemic were not the traditional commentaries, or the midrash, but philology and archaeology. It was, therefore, the second encounter-clash – one more important than its predecessor – between the Bible and the written extra-biblical evidence from archaeological excavations in the ancient East, evidence that for the first time made it possible to know the ancient civilizations based on their testimonies, and to know the culture in which and from which the world of the Bible had sprung. It was possible to categorically reject Delitzsch's anti-Jewish theology and to regard its neo-paganism as part of a wave of slander by the "army of the enemies of the Bible," but it was impossible not to react to his claim, based on solid evidence, that part of the Bible's spiritual and cultural world had been borrowed from the Assyrian-Babylonian civilization. This claim gave biblical cosmology the standing of a myth and rebutted the belief

that the Torah had originated in a supernatural historical revelation. One could react by disparaging the value of extra-biblical evidence, by rejecting the claim that the Mesopotamian civilization had any influence on the culture of the ancient Israelite people, or one could argue that the Bible had borrowed various elements from that civilization, but that the unique Jewish genius had altered their content and meaning, thereby producing a totally new creation.¹³ In any event, the issues raised by Delitzsch and the need to contend with them were the greatest challenge ever laid at the doorstep of the modern Jew – be he orthodox, reform or freethinking – and his consciousness of the past. The controversy shifted the discussion of the essence of biblical Judaism, its sources and content, from the theological and philosophical domain to the historical-positivistic domain.

Many of the Jews who reacted chose to dispute with Delitzsch on his own home ground – the reading and interpretation of the Akkadian documents. They were helped in this by books written by Delitzsch's Christian critics, and were able to find support for their arguments. *Der Israelit*, for example, brought its readers reviews of some of the critiques written by Christian biblical scholars and Assyriologists about Delitzsch, in order to substantiate the strongly held view that Delitzsch's arguments lacked any scientific basis, and to prove that not everyone was a party to the attempt “by the fanatic, religion-hating press to make the Bible loathsome to the [German] people.”¹⁴ The reform rabbi Kaufmann Kohler pointed out that Delitzsch's views were rejected by renowned Assyriologists in Germany, France and the United States, as well as by biblical scholars throughout the world.¹⁵ In most cases, the Jews took up the arguments of these Assyriologists. The large majority did not believe that Delitzsch had been reluctantly swept up on the waves of the sensation he had caused, or that he was motivated by deep religious beliefs and the desire to contribute to the liberalization of the Church. Rather, they regarded him as a reputed Assyriologist, who had deliberately enlisted his expertise and authority in the service of theology and ideology.¹⁶ Delitzsch, Nathan Porges

¹³ See J. Oppenheim in *Jewish Chronicle*, April 10, 1903, p. 6.

¹⁴ Anon., “Vom neusten Thurmab zu Babel”, in: *Der Israelit*, 44 (40), 25. Mai 1903, pp. 889–892; E. Sellin, “Ein Schüler des Professor Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel,” *ibid.*, 44 (10), 1903 pp. 205–208.

¹⁵ *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, vol. 13, Detroit, June 29–July 4, 1903, pp. 104 (hereinafter, Central Conference).

¹⁶ Kraeling writes that Delitzsch should not be blamed, “because there is an unconscious drift in the development of popular narrative which the scholar should be aware of.” E. Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation*, pp. 159.

(1848–1924) wrote, is no fool, but a top notch scholar, and in the name of science he wants to detract from the value of the Jewish holy scriptures. Because he is not an enemy of the Jews or an incorrigible chatterbox, or a sensation-seeking writer, but rather a serious Assyriologist, there is an even greater danger that Germans and Jews alike might regard him as a worthy teacher, and the protection the Kaiser has granted him merely heightens this danger.¹⁷

The Babel-Bibel controversy that took place towards the end of the long nineteenth century (which ended in 1914) is not, therefore, a forgotten, marginal episode in the intellectual history of Germany Jewry and of modern Jewry; nor is it a footnote in the history of biblical scholarship or of the ancient East. Although it has remained on the sidelines of Jewish historical memory and is generally mentioned as an ignominious episode, there are some who raise it from its oblivion to warn of the slippery slope awaiting scientific research if it becomes a party to a sensational controversy and serves as tool in the hands of ideologues and theologians. However, the Babel-Bibel controversy is important in the context of its time as well as in that of the coming generations. It was, on the one hand, a high point in the war over the Bible waged in Germany in the nineteenth century, but in other places as well, and on the other hand, it was the opening shot in the war over the Bible in the twentieth century, that led the way to controversies waged in the coming generations.

In the internal German (as well as in the overall Christian) context, the controversy was part of the battle of opposing views between the conservative Lutheranism and liberal Lutheranism, and a battle in which those adhering to neo-pagan and anti-Christian views were also involved. It was part of the *Kulturkampf* waged in Wilhelmian Germany. In the professional, academic context, it was the scene of a debate among Assyriologists and biblical scholars about the right way to read the contents and meaning of the ancient documents, two and three thousand years old. In the broader intellectual context, it was part of the argument about the right way to understand the history of religion and the history of culture, and also part of the nearly obsessive search conducted in the intellectual world of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe to find the primary source of Western civilization in the ancient Near East, or in the distant East (Persia and India), on one hand, and the ancient sources of monotheism, on the other. Together with the ancient civilization of Assyria and Babylonia,

¹⁷ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, Leipzig, 1903, pp. 8–12.

nia, other ancient cultures – of Pharaonic Egypt, classical Greece, of Rome and India – played a key role in shaping the consciousness of the West's ancient past and its cultural ideals. The controversy also fit into the theory that divided humankind into races that differed in their character and traits – the Semitic race, the Indo-European (Aryan) race and the Hamitic race.

The controversy about the nature of the Mesopotamian civilization and its meaning for the present did not cease after Delitzsch delivered his three lectures. New finds from Mesopotamia among them the discovery of the Sumerian civilization at Nippur and Ur of the Chaldees from 1898 and thereafter¹⁸ continued to arouse much interest, and the attribution of the Sumerian culture to the Indo-European race was depicted as yet another manifestation of anti-Semitism aimed at depriving the Semitic peoples of their primacy.¹⁹ However, the debate on the nature of the Sumerian civilization did not become a public polemic, as the Babel-Bibel controversy did.

Since most of our readers are probably not familiar with the controversy and its content, we will devote a brief discussion to it, but will deal primarily with the intense Jewish involvement in the controversy as part of both the Jewish-Christian debate and the internal Jewish debate. In the Jewish-German context, Jewish involvement in the controversy was part of the discourse – real or imaginary – that was conducted between Jews and Germans. Although the controversy is not mentioned in books on the intellectual history of German Jewry, or if it is, then only as a fleeting episode, we regard it as an important chapter in the history of modern Jewish apologetics. Suzanne Marchand is of the opinion that the controversy should have been a warning sign, which did not draw enough attention at the time, that historical knowledge could be used to achieve base ends.²⁰ Jewish involvement in the controversy was in fact a chapter in the Jewish reaction to scientific anti-Semitism, and it reflects the dissension between the orthodox and the liberals in the German Jewish public about how to understand anti-Semitism and what the reaction to it should be.

The controversy did not remain within the borders of Germany. It reverberated to the centers of the Jewish enlightenment (the Haskalah) in Eastern Europe, where the return to the Bible was part of the process

¹⁸ H. V. Hilprecht excavated in Nippur from 1898–1900, H. R. Hall in Ur of the Chaldees in the '60s; C. L. Woolley dug there from 1922–1932. See in Chapter Three.

¹⁹ Tom B. Jones (ed.), *The Sumerian Problem*, New York, 1969.

²⁰ Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970*, Princeton, NJ, 1996, p. 227.

of enlightenment, secularization, and the appearance of both proto-nationalism and modern nationalism. The *maskilim* did not only follow everything published in Western Europe; they also reacted to these publications, often before members of the *Wissenschaft* in Germany did. The rapid developments, during the 1850s, in the study of cultures of the ancient East, for example, resonated more strongly in the Jewish-German periphery than in Germany itself. *Maskilim* in the East European centers of the Haskalah – in Brody, Vilna, Odessa and other places – were familiar with the literature of the new biblical criticism, and reacted to it. In Eastern Europe, the tension between the traditional literature of biblical commentary and the new research literature was part of the *Kulturkampf* waged between East European orthodoxy and its rabbinical elite and the spokesmen of the Haskalah and secularism.²¹

Jewish involvement in the the Babel-Bibel controversy was one expression of the internal controversy in Jewish society about how Judaism should be shaped in the modern age, how it should be defined and what its contents should be. It was a chapter in the history of the restructuring of the consciousness of the past and the picture of the past, both as part of the processes of the modernization of Jewish thought and of the national revival of the Jews in the modern era. The various answers to questions posed in the Babel-Bibel controversy marked the common ground between the different streams in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Judaism and the boundaries dividing them. The controversy took place about a quarter of a century after the formation of the various camps in German Jewry, which had disparate views about the essence of Judaism and its historical character. Hence the Jewish reaction can be seen as a mirror that reflects the differences of opinion between neo-Orthodoxy, liberal Judaism, the reform movement and historical-positivistic Judaism, no less than in their response to the documentary hypothesis, perhaps even more.²²

²¹ See, for example, the harsh criticism of the radical *maskil*, Yitzhak Eizik Kovner (1840–1909) in his book *Sefer Hamatsref* (written in Vilna in 1868 but never published) about traditional biblical commentary. Y.E. Kovner, *Sefer Hamatsref: An Unknown Maskilic Critique of Jewish Society in Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (Hebrew), ed. Shmuel Feiner, Jerusalem, 1998. And see in Chapter One.

²² M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*; Steven M. Lewenstein, “Das religiöse Leben”, in Michael A. Meyer et al. (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit*, Band 3: *Umstrittene Integration 1871–1918*, München, 1996, pp. 101–122, (English edition: *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 3: *Integration in Dispute, 1871–1918*, New York, 1997, pp. 125–152). And see Chapter 8.

The Jewish reaction echoed issues that engaged the general debate, such as the question of the openness of Jewish culture and what was permitted or forbidden vis-à-vis the acceptance of external influences and alien cultural traits. New concepts, an inseparable part of the climate of the time, were introduced into use. One particular concept, which emerged mainly in the Babel-Bibel controversy, was that of the spiritual-cultural selfhood (*Eigenart*) of a people and a nation, namely the claim that one culture can borrow cultural traits from another, but can shape them according to its special world-view, thus imbuing itself with a unique, original character. In other words, the Jewish reaction to the controversy expressed the internalization of the ethnocentric and immanent concept, which regards the collective consciousness of a people – or the creative power of its select members – as the power that generates and creates its religious awareness and world-view. Moreover, the recognition of the fact that every culture borrows various traits from other cultures was part of the internal debate within modern Jewry in relation to the fixing of the boundaries and areas of borrowing by modern Jewish culture from the European cultures. The claim that various traits could be absorbed from other cultures since the Jewish culture was capable of altering them in accordance with its character gave legitimation to present and future cultural borrowings.

In the Babel-Bibel controversy, several of the insights that developed and coalesced throughout the twentieth century were formulated: from a freethinking, liberal, even radical approach, at one extreme, to historical-biblical, even creationist fundamentalism, at the other. The controversy was, then, an important event both for its own time and as a milestone, and it merits a significant place in the history of the intellectual polemics that engaged the Jewish public in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter 5

Friedrich Delitzsch and a Second ‘Tower of Babel’

The Resurrection of Babylon

In Berlin, the capital of the Second Reich, which was called the New Babylon, a new chapter opened in the attack on the Bible, in the name of ancient Babylon. Babel was chosen as the name to describe the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia²³ because it had the same ring as the German word for the Bible (*Bibel*), but it referred to all of the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia: Sumeria, Assyria and Babylonia. In Germany, Professor Friedrich Delitzsch was the most important among those “awakening the slumbering” of Assyria and Babylonia, and he consequently earned the title of “apostle of the new Babylonian religion,” (*Apostel der neubabylonischen Religion*²⁴) and bearer of “the flag of the gods of Babylonia.” He was the one who, with a great clamor, aroused Babylonia from the dead.²⁵ In the 1850s, Babylonia had already been revived in London and Paris, but it was from Berlin,²⁶ that

²³ The city of Babylon on the bank of the Euphrates (south of present-day Baghdad) was founded at the start of the second millennium B.C. It achieved greatness during the reign of the Hammurabi dynasty, was destroyed by Sennacherib in 689 and revived during the time of his son, Esarhaddon, destroyed again in the time of Assurbanipal and then revived again. Its golden age was the neo-Babylonian period during the reign of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. It continued to exist until the second century A.D. as a provincial city and gradually disappeared under Sasanian rule (226–636 A.D.). The name Babylon denotes both the kingdom and its capital city (See: D.J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, London, 1985; Gwendolyn Leick, *Mesopotamia: The Invention of the City*, 2001, pp. 218–274). Here we use the name Babylonia to denote all the cultures of Mesopotamia.

²⁴ This was the name of a book written by Dr. Hermann Klüger (Leipzig, 1912) whose subtitle was “*Ein Mahnruf an das deutsche Volk.*”

²⁵ Views similar to Delitzsch’s appeared even before the controversy, for example, in Heinrich Zinnern’s book, *Vater, Sohn und Fürsprecher in der babylonischen Gottesvorstellung*, Leipzig, 1896. However, they did not stir up a storm, because they had a limited readership.

²⁶ On Berlin as a center of research on the ancient Near East, see: Johannes Renger, “Die Geschichte der Altorientalistik und der vorderasiatischen Archäologie in Ber-

the public declaration was issued, asserting that the biblical prophets had failed to predict the downfall of Babylon, because it had never fallen but had willingly opened its gates to Cyrus (hence proving that the prophetic declaration, “the word of our God shall endure forever,” was not fulfilled), and it ceased to exist only in the time of the Seleucids. It was from Berlin too that the tidings went forth that the time had come to grant Babylonia the honor it deserved and to restore her to her rightful, central place in the history of mankind and its culture. And most important of all, it was from Berlin that the call went out to the Germans to use the heritage of Babylonia to counter the heritage of the Bible and its influence on the German spirit: Babylonia is Sinai and Nineveh – Jerusalem.²⁷

What was Resurrected?

The destruction of the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia was preserved in the historical memory of Judaism and Christianity as the fulfillment of the biblical prophecy. According to the biblical tradition, these two great kingdoms were destroyed because they had caused the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the devastation of Jerusalem and the First Temple. The prophets, who were very familiar with the greatness and power of Assyria and Babylonia (“Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord’s hand, that made all the earth drunken,” Jeremiah 51:7); “Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city,” Jonah 3:3), gloatingly described the downfall of these proud, arrogant kingdoms – which they regarded as a divine punishment – and promised they would never rise from their ruins. These prophetic words can also be viewed as a reaction to the panegyric literature written about Babylonia by her scribes, who waxed eloquently about her richness and splendor, calling her the “pure” and “eternal” city and other words of praise.²⁸ In the Book of Isaiah, the prophet predicted the downfall of Babylonia: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the

lin von 1875 bis 1945”, in W. Arenhoevel & Chr. Schreiber (Hrsg.), *Berlin und die Antike*, Berlin, 1979, pp. 151–192; Kay Kohlmeyer and Eva Strommenger, *Wiedererstehendes Babylon: Eine antike Weltstadt im Blick der Forschung*, Berlin, 1991.

²⁷ In the words of Otto Weber, in: *Theologie und Assyriologie im Streit um Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig, 1904.

²⁸ A.R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, Leuven, 1992. According to one suggestion, the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11) is a counter-myth to the myth of the creation of Babylonia as a centralized, world empire. See: Severino J. Croatto, “A Reading of the Story of the Tower of Babel from the Perspective of

Chaldeans' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation" (13:19–20). Jeremiah prophesied in a similar vein: "Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon; and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken; for the Lord God of recompense shall surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake" (Jeremiah 51:56–57). The prophet Nahum used similar language in his prophesy about Nineveh²⁹: "Woe to the bloody city, it is all full of lies ... Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets ... There is no healing of the bruise, thy wound is grievous. All that hear thy bruit shall clap their hands over thee. For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (Nahum, 3).³⁰

History has ostensibly substantiated the words of the biblical prophecy. The kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia and their glorious cities have nearly been forgotten for centuries, remaining in the memory of the western world mainly as a negative symbol. Knowledge of their chronicles reached the Roman-Hellenistic civilization, and through it the Christian world, primarily via the *Babyloniac*,³¹ written in Greek by Berossos, an historian and priest at Babylonian Bel, from 293–280 B.C.³² This work

Non-Identity", in F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert (eds.), *Teaching the Bible: The Discourse and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, Maryknoll, 1998, pp. 203–223.

²⁹ The largest capital of Assyria (near Mosul, in present-day Iraq) was bounded by Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.) at a site that had already been settled in the third millennium B.C. The height of its glory was in the days of the last kings of the Sargon dynasty (from Sennacherib to Sin-šar-Iškun) in the neo-Assyrian period (934–707 B.C.). A small, poor settlement continued to exist there in the Persian and the Parthian period. The length of the wall that surrounded the city was 12 km. Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib's grandson, built a magnificent palace for himself, which, among other things, contained his library where 30,000 documents were discovered.

³⁰ The prophet Zephaniah described the end of the "rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said, in her heart, I am and there is none besides me" (Zephaniah 2:15). This motif is repeated in the eschatological literature of the Second Temple period. The Book of Baruch, for example, prophesized about Babylonia that "For fire shall come upon her everlasting long to endure/And she shall be inhabited of devils for a long time" (Book of Baruch 4:35). In R.H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, vol. 1: *Apocrypha*, Oxford, 1913, p. 594. See also Peter Machinist, "Assyria and its Image in the First Isaiah", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 103 (4), 1983, pp. 719–737. He writes that the image of Assyria in Isaiah is similar to the image that the Assyrian propaganda produced about the empire as an aggressive, cruel power.

³¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, X, 219–220.

³² See: Paul Schnabel, *Berossos und die babylonisch-hellenistische Literatur*, Leipzig-Berlin, 1923; Berossus, *The Babyloniac*, trans. S.M. Burstein, in *Sources from the*

recounts the history of Babylonia from the Creation until the time of Alexander the Great, but only fragments of it were preserved through quotations made by Alexander Polyhistor in the 1st century A.D., transmitted in Eusebius' *Chronicon*, and in Josephus' book *Against Apion* (Book I, 19–20). Another main source was *Persica* by Ctesias of Cnidos (written c. 404–397 B.C.),³³ as well as information preserved in the *Eclipe Chronographias*,³⁴ a work by the Byzantine author, Georgius Syncellus of the 9th century A.D. Historical works from the Roman-Hellenist period and the medieval Christian chronographies³⁵ included Assyria and Babylonia in books on world history that attempted to create a correlation between the ancient chronography and the biblical chronography. However, while Assyria is mentioned in the order of the great kingdoms they describe, Babylonia seems to have been erased from memory,³⁶ although the Jewish reader in the Middle Ages could also have learned about the downfall of Babylonia from the *Book of Josippon*.³⁷

In the Christian world, the Bible became the main source for the images of the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia as symbols of idolatry, sin and arrogance (“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,” Revela-

Ancient Near East, I (5), Malibu, 1987. The discovery of the documents in Babylonia was perceived as providing support for Berossos' information about the Babylonian myths, in particular the flood story. The second half of the book describes the history of Babylonia from the reign of her first king until it was conquered by the Assyrians in 732–731 B.C.

³³ On the view in Hellenist historiography that Assyria, not Egypt, was the most ancient civilization, see: William Adler, *Time Immemorial: Archaic History and Its Sources in Christian Chronography from Julius Africanus to George Syncellus*, Washington, D.C. 1989; Robert Drews, “Assyria in Classical Universal Histories”, in *Historia*, 14, 1965, pp. 129–142. The first six volumes of the book are devoted to the history of Assyria, from its founding until the King Ashurbanipal. The story of Ninus and Semiramis is the prototype of the historical romance in Hellenist literature. Ctesias is also the author of the *Indica*.

³⁴ F. W. König, *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos*, Archiv für Orientforschung, Beiheft 18, Gratz, 1972. In his book, *Biblioteca*, Diodorus Siculus of the first century B.C. relies mainly on Ctesias. See: Diodorus Siculus, *The Antiquities of Asia*, trans. Edwin Murphy, New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and Oxford (U.K.), 1989. pp. 1–42. On the legend about Semiramis see: ibid., pp. 5–20. And on Sardanapalus (Ashurbanipal), see: ibid., pp. 23–28.

³⁵ Jean Bottéro, “A Century of Assyriology”, in idem, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Zainab Bahrani and Marc Van de Mieroop, Chicago, 1992, p. 44.

³⁶ Arnaldo D. Momigliano, “Daniel and the Greek Theory of Imperial Succession”, in Momigliano, *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, ed. S. Berti, trans. M. Masella-Gayley, Chicago, 1994, pp. 29–47; J. W. Swain, “The Theory of the Four Monarchs: Opposition History under the Roman Empire,” *Classical Philology*, 35, 1940, pp. 1–21; Adler, ibid., pp. 18–19.

³⁷ *The Book of Josippon* [Josephus Gorionides] edited with an Introduction, Commentary and Notes by David Flusser, Jerusalem, 1982, (Hebrew) pp. 20–25.

tion 18:2). And it was the Bible that for generations fixed the memory of the city of Babylon with its palaces and temples (the Greek historical writing added to these its hanging gardens) as the symbol of a metropolitan, large, splendid capital city, bustling with life, but also as a symbol of a city filled with sin and corruption – a “harlot city.”³⁸ In contrast, the memory of Nineveh was forgotten and many of its features were attributed to Babylon.

Assyria and Babylonia came back into historical memory independently of the Bible when ancient sources were revived in Renaissance Italy. In 1498, the Italian scholar Annius of Viterbo (c. 1432–1502) published Berossos’ book, and, according to Anthony Grafton, attempted to use it as a means of divesting Greek culture of the central status it had been given in human history and to link the contemporary West directly to the ancient Near East.³⁹ In this way, Annius and others predated the use that anti-biblical Orientalists made of the ancient East against the Bible in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁰ In the seventeenth century the German Jesuit archaeologist, mathematician, biologist, philologist, astronomer, musicologist, physicist, and polyglot Athanasius Kircher, used the ancient sources as the basis for his speculative theory about the history of language in his book *Turris Babel* (Tower of Babylon) (Amsterdam, 1697).⁴¹ The historians and philosophers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment

³⁸ Augustine in his *Confessions* (II:8) describes the city of his birth, Thagaste, as Babylonia: “Such were the companions with whom I made my way through the streets of Babylon. With them I rolled in its dung as if rolling in spices and precious ointments.” (*Confessions*, Trans. with introduction by Henry Chadwick, Oxford, 1991), p. 28. In *The City of God*, Augustine compares the Church to the Heavenly Jerusalem and the state to Babylonia. See: Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 2: *Mediaeval Philosophy*, Part I, Garden City, New York, 1962 ed., pp. 102–105.

³⁹ Anthony Grafton, “Tradition of Invention and Invention of Tradition in Renaissance Italy: Annius of Viterbo”, in idem, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450–1880*, Cambridge, Mass. 1991, p. 58. The traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, described the ruins of Nineveh and Babylonia in his book in 1160, which was published in a Latin translation only in 1633. The ruins of Babylonia were described in the 16th century by John Eldred and in the 18th century by Pietro della Valle and J. Beauchamp. See E. Unger, “Babylon,” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Archäologie*, I, Berlin, 1928, pp. 330–369. From the mid-18th century, the translation of Persian and Indian literature introduced the Far East to Europe, enabling it to regard it as an alternative to the biblical tradition, on the one hand, or as a source of the biblical literature, on the other.

⁴⁰ Suzanne Marchand, “German Orientalism and the Decline of the West”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* V., 145 (4), December 2001, pp. 465–473.

⁴¹ Joscelyn Godwin, *Athanasius Kircher: A Renaissance Man and the Quest for Lost Knowledge*, London, 1979.

movement wrote primarily about Pharaonic Egypt and stated with regret that they knew very little, if anything at all, about Assyria and Babylonia, and hence their picture of the ancient past was missing an important link in the annals of human history.⁴²

In a previous chapter we described how the situation changed completely from the second half of the nineteenth century, when archaeology awakened Assyria and Babylonia from their eternal slumber, to which they had been foredoomed by the prophets of Israel. Late in the eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried Herder wrote that the ancient civilization of Babylonia is a lost dream, since no vestige of its libraries has remained,⁴³ but archaeological excavations in the second half of the nineteenth century unearthed these lost archives. Y.N. Simchoni wrote in his introduction to his translation of Shaul Tcher-nichovsky’s *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that nineteenth-century scholars were astounded by the “graveyard” uncovered in front of their eyes “as if they had been privileged to restore a soul to corpses.” These finds aroused enormous excitement, which also affected the *maskilim* of that period.

Not only did the finds from the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia tell about the splendid civilization that had existed for thousands of years in the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and contribute immeasurably to knowledge and understanding of the ancient Near East, they also exposed the strong link between the spiritual-religious world of the Pentateuch, in particular the Book of Genesis, and this civilization. At first they were perceived as an affirmation of the historical and realistic reliability of the stories of the Patriarchs. In 1869, before the Epic of Gilgamesh was discovered, George Smith, whose decisive role in reviving the dead of Babylonia has already been mentioned (his 1875 book was translated into German at Delitzsch’s behest), deciphered an Assyrian document, which told of the division of the month into four weeks, in which the seventh day was a day of rest – or a “Sabbath”⁴⁴). Unlike the finds from Pharaonic Egypt (at least until the publication of the inscriptions and documents from el-Amarna), those from Mesopotamia pointed to a strong resemblance

⁴² Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation – The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York, 1977 edn., pp. 87–95.

⁴³ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, p. 329.

⁴⁴ G. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, p. 12. See: Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath: A Comprehensive Exegetical Approach*, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, p. 160.

between the Babylonian cosmology and religion and the ancient biblical cosmology and religion.⁴⁵

Delitzsch's lectures, then, did not really contain any original discovery or insights, but nonetheless his words provoked a stormy controversy that differed from the excitement aroused by the publications of the archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia in the thirty-five years prior to 1902. Not only did Delitzsch take to extremes the view that parallels between the culture of Babylonia and the Bible attested to the fact that a large part of the biblical world was borrowed from Babylonia, nor was he content to describe Babylonia as the "glory of kingdoms" and to depict it as the ancient source of Western culture. He went a step further and placed Babylonia one spiritual level higher than that of ancient Israel, presenting the Babylonian culture as a model of law, ethics and justice. Thus he turned "sinful Babylon," the city that, in the world of Christianity, symbolized vainglory, sin and evil,⁴⁶ into the ancient source of Christian values and Western civilization – all via its influence on Greek culture and Christianity. Babylonia, now enjoying a renaissance, was depicted as a developed, advanced culture worthy of admiration for its estimable qualities, a culture that influenced the entire region in whose center it dwelled, and even beyond that, a culture whose literature – and not the Bible – represented the values of humanistic-universal ethics.

We use the term renaissance here to refer to the discovery of an ancient world and its culture, about which very little had been known until then, and to its transformation into an important part of the living cultural heritage of the western world. Sumer, Assyria and Babylonia – civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia – became a scientific subject and a focus of intellectual curiosity, and their renaissance was reflected in many museums in Europe and the United States, which were filled with various monuments and archaeological finds brought there from Mesopotamia.⁴⁷ But even more than that, Babylonia be-

⁴⁵ Hermann Gunkel, *Israel und Babylonien: Der Einfluss Babyloniens auf die israelitische Religion*, Göttingen, 1903.

⁴⁶ *Revelation* 18. Luther described the papacy as the kingdom of Babylonia and the rule of the wild hunter Nimrod. "Paptum esse regnum Babylonis et potentiam Nimroth robusti venatoris," in Luther, *De Captivate Babylonica ecclesiae pareludium* (1520).

⁴⁷ Scenes from the history of Assyria and Babylonia, based on the Bible and the artists' creative imagination, appeared in French and English paintings even before the archaeological discoveries. See: Frederick N. Bohrer, "Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France", *The Art Bulletin*, 80 (2), June 1998, pp. 336–356; idem, "The Time and Space of History: Representation, Assyria, and the British Museum", in D.J. Sherman and I. Rogoff (eds.),

came a topic on the intellectual and cultural agenda of German culture (and not only of that culture),⁴⁸ joining other ancient “Eastern” cultures that were enjoying a renaissance in nineteenth-century European culture, although its discovery did not have as profound an intellectual and cultural impact on western culture as did the discovery of cultures of the Far East, Persia and India.⁴⁹ Nor did Babylonia enjoy a status in the West similar to that of Pharaonic Egypt, since the admiration of the “East” – the *ad maiorem gloriam Orientis* – that began in the Hellenist period, centered mainly on Pharaonic Egypt, whose role in the creation of western culture had a long tradition,⁵⁰ and certainly Babylonia’s status was in no way similar to that of the classical heritage in western culture.⁵¹ Babylonia was not depicted as an Arcadia, as the lost Paradise, and the West was not caught up in a “Babylonian obsession” like its “Greek obsession” or its Egyptomania, although there were some authors who held pan-Babylonian views and tried to endow it with such a status. Nonetheless, the discovery of the Mesopotamian civilizations added another dimension to the debate about where the ancient source (*Urheimat*) of human culture (*Urkul-*

Museum, *Culture, Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, Minneapolis, Minn., 1994, pp. 197–222; idem, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Cambridge, 2003, p. 200. The power and glory of Nineveh and Babylonia, on the one hand, and their fall and destruction, on the other, were also a popular subject in western literature. One example is the poem “The Destruction of Sennacherib” by Lord Byron (1788–1824).

⁴⁸ It is a great exaggeration to describe the influence of the ancient East in Germany as a “renaissance.” See: G. Schmidt, “Die babylonische Renaissance. Walter Benjamin und die Einflüsse der altorientalischen Geisteskultur auf das Denken des 20. Jahrhunderts”, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 22, 1995, pp. 187–196.

⁴⁹ See: Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*.

⁵⁰ See in brief, in Yaacov Shavit, *History in Black: African-Americans in Search of an Ancient Past*, London-Portland, OR, 2001, pp. 70–144. See also: Jean-Marcel Hubert, “Egyptomania: A Current Concept from the Renaissance to Postmodernism”, in Hubert et al., (eds.), *Egypt in Western Art, 1730–1930*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1994; Sergion Donadoni, et al., *Egypt from Myth to Egyptology*, Milano, 1990; Dirk Syndram, *Aegypten-Faszination: Untersuchungen zum Ägyptenbild im europäischen Klassizismus bis 1800*, Frankfurt am Main, 1990; Siegfried Morenz, *Die Begegnung Europas mit Ägypten*, Berlin, 1967; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge, Mass., 1997.

⁵¹ Among the many works on this subject, see: Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany*; Elizabeth M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 1958, 2nd ed.; Yaacov Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem: Classical Antiquity and Hellenism in the Making of the Modern Secular Jew*, London-Portland, 1997, pp. 21–39; Zainab Bahrani, “Conjuring Mesopotamia: Imaginative Geography and a World’s Past,” in Lynn Merskell (ed.), *Archaeology under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East*, London – New York, 1998, pp. 159–174.

tur) was found – in Egypt, Mesopotamia or India. It also added a link to the debate about how human culture developed in general, and how monotheism developed from polytheism in particular. In other words, the discovery of the ancient cultures placed the history of Judaism and Christianity (and of the West) into a broad historical framework of genesis and of religious and cultural evolution.⁵² During the nineteenth century, a new element entered the debate: the growing interest in the “racial” identity of the various cultures, and the connection between culture and race: what was the difference between the Semitic cultures of Assyria and Babylonia and the Indo-European cultures? What was the connection between the non-Semitic culture of Sumer and the Semitic cultures that succeeded it?

We need to bear in mind that the ancient cultures discovered in the Near East were not of the sort that could be regarded as primitive cultures; rather they were highly developed civilizations in nearly all areas. It was not only the fact that they could be regarded as the “source” of Western culture that had such a powerful impact, but also their overall achievements in the various domains of culture and science. Obviously, it was possible to regard them as civilizations that represented the “period of childhood” of human reason, but no less than that, they could also be viewed as mature, adult civilizations, and hence – from a Eurocentric point of view – as the cradle of Western culture. It is no wonder, then, that the astounding discoveries of the spiritual and material assets of the Mesopotamian civilization that came to the knowledge of the educated European public from the mid-nineteenth century also gave rise to the pan-Babylonian theory,⁵³

⁵² See Bottéro’s two articles: “In Defence of a Useless Science” and “Assyriology and our History”, in idem, *Mesopotamia*, pp. 15–25, 26–40.

⁵³ For an informative and beneficial survey of the school of panbabylonianism (or the Astral-mythological school) and its studies, see: Gary D. Thompson, “The Development, Heyday and Demise of Panbabylonianism,” in *Essays Relating to the History of Occidental Constellations and Star Names to the Classical Period*, <http://members.optusnet.com.au>, 2004–2006. In his view, the argument ended in 1913 with the death of Hugo Winckler, and he depicts it as “an episode of pseudo-science in early Assyrian studies.” Alfred Jeremias distinguished between pan-Babylonianism (*Panbabylonismus*) and Babylonianism (*Babylonismus*). See: A. Jeremias, *Der Einfluss Babyloniens auf das Verständnis des Alten Testaments*, Berlin, 1908, p. 8. See also: Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, Freiburg (Schweiz) and Göttingen, 1994, pp. 39–48; Klaus Johanning, *Der Babel-Bibel-Streit: Eine forschungsgeschichtliche Studie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1988, pp. 265–290; Mognes-Trolle Larsen, “Orientalism and the Ancient Near East”, in M. Harbsmeier and M. T. Larsen (eds.), *The Humanities Between Art and Science: Intellectual Developments 1880–1914*, Copenhagen, 1989, pp. 181–202; idem, “Orientalism and Near Eastern Archaeology”, in D. Miller (et al., eds.), *Domina-*

or as some have suggested it be called – Panorientalismus. This theory was given expression in the works of the scholars Hugo Winckler (1863–1913),⁵⁴ Peter C. A. Jensen (1861–1936),⁵⁵ Fritz Hommel, Alfred Jeremias (1864–1934)⁵⁶ and others.⁵⁷ The theory proposed that there had been a unified Assyrian-Babylonian world-view that left its imprint not only on the Bible, but on the entire ancient world, including Egypt. From such a broad viewpoint, Babylonia's influence on the Bible was of secondary, even marginal, importance, since the hypothesized circle of Babylonia's influence was universal. It is interesting to note that this theory did not disappear, but was revived and revised, particularly at the end of the twentieth century.⁵⁸

tion and Resistance, London, 1989, pp. 229–239; S. L. Marchand, *Down From Olympus*, pp. 220–227. For a brief summary of the history of Assyriological research in France, see: E. A. W. Budge, *The Rise and Progress of Assyriology*, New York, 1975, pp. 196–223. And in Germany, *ibid.*, pp. 223–241.

⁵⁴ A professor in Berlin, among his works: *Himmels- und Weltenbild der Babylonier als Grundlage der Weltanschauung und Mythologie aller Völker*, Leipzig, 1902; *Keilinschriftliches Textbuch zum Alten Testament*, 1903; *Die Gesetze Hammurabis*, 1902; *Die babylonische Geisteskultur in ihren Beziehungen zur Kulturreichweitung der Menschheit*, Leipzig, 1907. Winckler argued that a common astronomical world-view (*einem astralen Schema*) was predominant in ancient Asia, and that all the figures of the gods of the ancient East are astral figures.

⁵⁵ A professor in Marburg. On him see: H. J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, pp. 306–309. Among his works P. Jensen, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, Strasburg, 1906; *Gilgamesch-Epos, jüdische Nationalssagen, Ilias und Odyssee*, Leipzig, 1924.

⁵⁶ 1864–1934, a clergyman and teacher in Leipzig. Among his works: *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients*, Leipzig, 1904; *Die Panbabylonisten, der Alte Orient und die ägyptische Religion*, Leipzig, 1907. See also in brief, the entry “Babylonische Traditionen und das Alte Testament,” in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Erster Band A–C, Tübingen, 1957, pp. 822–826.

⁵⁷ On pan-Babylonianism, see: R. G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 39–48.

⁵⁸ Since the early twentieth century, scholarship has expanded knowledge about the influence of the cultures of the Tigris and Euphrates valley on the ancient Middle East and the Aegean region. Recently, the Finnish scholar Simo Parpola has returned to the radical pan-Babylonian theory, this time in a version that claims neo-Assyrian influence on Jewish monotheism and Jewish culture, before the Babylonian Exile and thereafter. See: Simo Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life: Tracing the Origins of Jewish Monotheism and Greek Philosophy”, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 52 (3), July, 1993, pp. 161–207; *idem*, “Monotheism in Ancient Assyria”, in Barbara M. Porter (ed.), *One God or Many? Concepts of Divinity in the Ancient World*, Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriology Institute, vol. I, 2000, pp. 165–209. On the influence of Mesopotamian culture on the culture of Greece, see the broad, up-to-date summary of Martin. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth*, Oxford, 1997. There were also some Jewish scholars who accepted some part of this pan-Babylonian view and believed that at least one Babylonian cultural heritage enjoyed a long life in both Jewish and Christian culture: Babylonian esoterica, namely the belief in devils and

In Wilhelminian Germany, “Babylonia” was accorded an honorable status. The parallel between Babylonia and Berlin was a widespread cultural code: on the one hand, they were both described as splendid cosmopolitan metropolitan cities,⁵⁹ and on the other, as corrupt cities, filled with sin and debauchery. It is important, however, to bear in mind that nearly every large city, such as Paris or London, was also given the epithet “Babylon.” “Harlot Berlin” was the mirror image of “harlot Babylon” (“Mother of harlots and of earth’s abominations,” Revelation 17:15).⁶⁰ German interest in the ancient East was also linked to the Second Reich’s Eastern policy, expressed in the political, economic and military involvement of Imperial Germany in the Ottoman Empire and in the pilgrimage of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Palestine in 1898. Suzanne Marchand writes that “Babylonia, one might say, has seized the Wilhelminian Empire.”⁶¹ Indeed, the state-supported excavations conducted in 1899–1917 by Robert Koldewey (1855–1925) and his student Walter Andrae (1875–1956) in Babylonia, as well as the archaeological museums established during this period (the Ancient Asia wing was established in the Berlin museum in 1899) are telling illustrations of this trend. Kaiser Wilhelm II played a very active role in fostering the Babylonian renaissance and tried to find a similarity between the centralized Babylonian empire and Imperial Germany (he noted that it is to Babylonia’s credit that it had no parliament), and between him and the kings of Assyria and Babylonia, who created empires, constructed monumental works, and promoted scholarship and art. The Kaiser stated that he himself had spent long hours in studying the subject both to understand the roots of Greek art and to better understand the Holy Scriptures, and hence had accepted the position of President of the German Oriental Society. At his initiative and under his inspiration, the Royal Opera House in Berlin mounted the pantomime play *Sardanapalus* (the Greek name of Assurbanipal) on September 1, 1908, so that the German public, as

spirits, in astrology, amulets and the like. These superstitions came from Babylonia to Palestine where they were widely accepted, particularly among the Essenes, and from there were passed on to Jesus and early Christianity. Moreover, Kaufmann Kohler claimed that while the Sages had denounced these superstitions, the Church fathers had made them an inseparable part of the Christian doctrine. See: *Central Conference*, p. 114.

⁵⁹ On the role filled by the Jews in turning Berlin into a modern metropolis of cosmopolitan culture, see: Emily D. Bilski (ed.), *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 2000.

⁶⁰ Peter Welten, “Babylon und Berlin: Geschichte und Wirkungsgeschichte eines biblischen Motivs”, *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift*, 14, 1998, pp. 234–251.

⁶¹ S. Marchand, *Down From Olympus*, p. 24.

the Kaiser put it, might learn about Assyriology, which was engaging the minds of scholars and theologians. The plot of the play centered on the fall of Nineveh (later Andrae wrote that the Kaiser had foreseen the downfall of Germany in World War I).⁶² The Kaiser personally attended the rehearsals and Delitzsch served as an artistic adviser. Between the ballet scenes, texts were read by allegorical characters, representing “science” and “the Assyrian past.” The play, to which guests from Britain and France were invited, was not a success, and was described as “deathly boring.” It was performed several times, at the Kaiser’s request, but to empty halls.⁶³

It was the revelation concerning the Bible’s dependence on Babylonia that had a staggering impact on the consciousness of the public at large, mainly because of the lectures – and the publications that accompanied them – of the famous Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch. Delitzsch was a scientific authority, one of the founders of modern Assyriology, the son of the biblical scholar, famous in his own time, the Lutheran minister, Franz Julius Delitzsch (1813–1890).⁶⁴ His lectures,

⁶² K. Kohlmeyer and E. Strommenger, *Wiedererstehendes Babylon*, Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, 1991. M. J. Berdyczewski, who was in the audience, described the play as an “Assyrian ballet.” See: Avner Holzman (ed.), *Collections of Micha Yosef*, vol. 7, 1996, p. 54 (Hebrew).

⁶³ *Wiedererstehendes Babylon*, pp. 13–18; S. Marchand, *Down From Olympus*, p. 224. It would seem that Marchand exaggerated by stating that “Babylonia, one might say, had seized the Wilhelmine Empire.” See also: W. Nagel, “Ninus und Semiramis in Sagen und Geschichte”, in *Berliner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, NF2, Berlin, 1984. An opera entitled “Sarandapalus” was mounted at the Lyric Theater in Paris in 1867.

⁶⁴ On him see: H.J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des A.T.*, pp. 230–234; D. Kaufmann, “Franz Delitzsch (1812–1890): A Palm-branch from Judah on His Newly-Covered Grave”, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 2, 1890, pp. 386–399; T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 155–171. Franz Delitzsch was not an advocate of biblical criticism, but he did accept the view that the Book of Isaiah from chapter 40 and thereafter was written by Deutero-Isaiah, as well as the later dating for the Priestly code. His biblical commentaries, which he published from 1869–1895 together with Seligmann Isaak Baer (1825–1897), influenced the revival of Hebrew in Eastern Europe. Mendele Mocher Sefarim (Shalom Yaacov Abramowitsch) wrote: “For anyone who does not know, I am opening a book for him by the scholar Franz Delitzsch. This Christian scholar... will rightly prove that the Hebrew language is not dead, and from time immemorial until the present day, its youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (S. Abramowitsch, *Ein mishpat*, Zhitomir, 1865, pp. 4–5). Franz Delitzsch earned the favor of the Jewish orthodox community when he came out publicly against the 1882 blood libel, but it denounced his missionary tendencies. See: Mordechai Breuer, “The Reaction of German Orthodoxy to anti-Semitism,” in S. Almog, et al. (ed.), *Israel and the Nations: Essays presented in Honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, Jerusalem 1987, pp. 185–213 (Hebrew). In any event, Franz Delitzsch believed there was a sharp dissonance be-

which were intended for the broad public, were granted the auspices of the German Kaiser, and hence reverberated widely and had the effect of arousing a great controversy. M. T. Larsen writes that as a result of these lectures, Germany became the most dramatic battlefield on which Assyriology played an active role at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁶⁵ The Babel-Bibel controversy placed the theory that Babylonia was the source of the Bible on the agenda of the educated German public, and from Germany it resonated to other countries where it also gave rise to an intense, stormy reaction. J. W. Thompson wrote that Delitzsch's theory drew worldwide attention;⁶⁶ the Jewish scholar Julius (Jules) Oppert (1825–1905),⁶⁷ who reacted sarcastically to the storm, commented that Delitzsch's lectures created a sensation in Germany, although the discoveries had been known for a long time, and were in fact the outcome of studies by British and French scholars, and all that because of the haughtiness and cultural narrowmindedness of the German public.⁶⁸

The Kaiser's patronage was an important factor in turning the lectures into a public event and a controversy, but it was not the sole reason. Nor were the curiosity and excitement aroused by the discovery of the ancient past sufficient to spark such a controversy. As we shall see later, it was the intellectual and cultural scene of the late nineteenth century that laid the ground for it.

Delitzsch's Path to the Babel-Bibel Controversy

Since Friedrich Delitzsch is the main character in this part of the story, it would be fitting to briefly describe how a renowned Assyriologist like him became the driving force behind such an intensive, torrid public

tween Judaism and Christianity and that the two religions are hostile to one another, because they are historically close to one another. See: Franz Delitzsch, "Es muss und wird und kann geschehen: Gedanken über die Bekehrung Israel und das Verhältnis der Institute dazu," *Saat auf Hoffnung*, 22, 1882. See: Christian Wiese, "Es muss und wird und kann geschehen – Protestant Theology in the Shadow of Hitler," in Henry Wasserman (ed.), *The German-Jewish History We Have Inherited: Young Germans Write Jewish History* Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 86–88 (Hebrew).

⁶⁵ Larsen, "Orientalism and the Ancient Near East", p. 184.

⁶⁶ J. W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, New York, 1942, vol. 2, p. 479. However, even if the public at large could not really comprehend the scientific debate, it undoubtedly grasped the basic claims raised in it and the conclusions that could be drawn from them.

⁶⁷ On Prof. Jules Oppert, see the Appendix.

⁶⁸ J. Oppert, *Jewish Chronicle*, 17.4.1903, pp. 14–15.

controversy, to examine his major claims and to try to ascertain what his motivations – either overt or covert – were.⁶⁹

The fact is that before the Babel-Bibel controversy erupted, Assyriology had not gained the same popularity in Germany as it had in France and England. Marchand believes this was largely because of the hegemony of historical-philological biblical criticism, on the one hand, and the debates between the professionals about the correct decipherment of the cuneiform script, on the other.⁷⁰ In contrast to Assyriologists in France and Britain, those in Germany did not have at their disposal archaeological finds like those in the Louvre and the British Museum.⁷¹ As a result, public interest in the subject in Germany was late in starting and only from the 1880s were books published on the cultures of the ancient East, based on the achievements of Assyriology and intended for the broad public.⁷² These books and the frequent news of the ongoing discoveries in the soil of Mesopotamia, as well as the transfer of archaeological finds (such as the stele of Sargon II in 1864) to Berlin, did evoke interest among the broad German public, but it was Delitzsch who in the early twentieth century made Assyriology a hot topic in Germany.

Delitzsch was one of the most highly reputed Assyriologists of his generation. Although he became a controversial figure because of the Babel-Bibel polemic, he did make a considerable contribution

⁶⁹ See biography of Delitzsch in Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 59–79.

⁷⁰ Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, p. 222. Larsen was of the same opinion, Larsen, “Orientalism and the Near East”, p. 189. Marchand went even further and regarded the Babel-Bibel controversy as the parallel of the Scopes trial, known as the ‘Monkey trial’ in 1925 in Tennessee, only that in Germany the subject was the Bible and the ancient East rather than the Bible and the life sciences. See: Marchand, “German Orientalism and the Decline of the West”, p. 469. On the trial, see: Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, Cambridge, 1997.

⁷¹ See: J. Renger, “Die Geschichte der Altorientalistik und der vorderasiatischen Archaeologie in Berlin von 1875 bis 1945”, pp. 151–192, in W. Arenhövel & C. Schreiber (eds.), *Berlin und die Antike*, Berlin, 1979, pp. 151–192.

⁷² Including: Delitzsch’s own book, *Wo lag das Paradies? Eine biblisch-assyriologische Studie*, Leipzig, 1881 (in 1900 Prof. Klausner described it as an “excellent book ... for a survey of the Bible in general”, in J. Klausner, *Prehistoric Man*, I, Warsaw, 1900, p. 39); as well as the books by Eberhard Schrader, *Studien zur Kritik und Erklärung der biblischen Urgeschichte*, Zurich, 1863 F. Hommel, *Geschichte Babylons und Assyriens*, 1885; Heinrich Zimmern (1862–1930), *Die Assyriologie als Hülfswissenschaft für das Studium des Alten Testaments und des Classischen Alterthums*, 1889; A. H. Sayce, *Alte Denkmäler im Lichte neuer Forschungen*, Leipzig, 1886 (see Chapter 3), and others. See also: A. von Gall, “Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Keilinschriftliche Forschung”, *Archive für Religionswissenschaft*, 5, 1902, pp. 289–339.

to research. The Jewish scholar Heymann (Chayim) Steinthal (1823–1899)⁷³ wrote that Eberhard Schrader (1836–1908), the renowned German Assyriologist, the first to occupy a chair of Assyriology at Berlin University (1875–1908), was the one who, in his book *Die Höllenfahrt der Istar* (1874)⁷⁴ made Assyriology a respected academic discipline in Germany.⁷⁵ Friedrich Delitzsch, who was Schrader's student (from 1873–1874) helped bolster the academic status of Assyriology.⁷⁶ The Jewish Assyriologist Morris Jastrow (1861–1922) wrote that “the distinguished professor, Friedrich Delitzsch, did more than any other single individual in training a large body of Assyriologists and in arousing popular interest in the civilizations that once flourished in the Euphrates Valley.”⁷⁷ Even before 1902 Delitzsch did not devote all of his time to the publication of important scientific works, such as his *Assyrisches Handwörterbuch* (1896),⁷⁸ but also delivered lectures to the public at large, intended to promote the status of Assyriology in Germany. These lectures, delivered for the purpose of obtaining public and government support for German archaeological research, aroused much curiosity but did not spark a public controversy, perhaps because the nonconformist, dissident views they contained were not stated openly or in a provocative enough manner. In this way, Delitzsch made Assyriology a relevant discipline in the German public discourse, turning it from an “innocuous” scientific discipline into a highly charged subject, connected to a debate on key religious

⁷³ A philologist and philosopher, who together with M. Lazarus, founded “psychology of the nations” (*Völkerpsychologie*) research. Based on this approach, nationality is not determined by deterministic factors (origin, soil) but rather by subjective factors like desire and emotion. See: Hartwig Wiedebach and Annette Winkelmann (eds.), *Chajim Steinthal: Linguist and Philosopher in the Nineteenth Century*, Leiden, 2002.

⁷⁴ *Die Höllenfahrt der Istar: Ein altbabylonisches Epos*, Gießen, 1874.

⁷⁵ “Die babylonische-assyrische Philologie auch bei uns heimisch gemacht”. These words were written in a review by Steinthal of Schrader's book in *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, 8, pp. 339–350. Schrader was, among other things, editor of the series *Sammlung von assyrischen und babylonischen Texten in Umschrift und Übersetzung*, I–IV, Berlin, 1888–1915.

⁷⁶ Renger, “Die Geschichte der Altorientalistik.”

⁷⁷ Morris Jastrow, *The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, Philadelphia and London, 1915, p. 54. Speiser wrote that Delitzsch “drew sharp attention to the Babylonian ingredient in Genesis and went on to conclude that the Bible was therefore guilty of crass plagiarism.” See: E.W. Speiser, *Genesis*, Garden City, New York, 1962, pp. LIII–LVIII. See also: Hayim Tadmor, “The Babel-Bibel Polemic,” *The Israeli National Academy's Science Newsletter*, No. 23, November 2002, p. 6 (Hebrew).

⁷⁸ In 1896, Delitzsch published his book *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos*. For a complete list of his works, see Lehmann, pp. 382–384; 424–426 (*The Hebrew Language Viewed in the Light of Assyrian Research*, published in English in London in 1883, without mention of the translator's name).

issues.⁷⁹ The lectures and the controversy became a crossroads in the history of Assyriology and of biblical scholarship.⁸⁰

Among his lectures that preceded the one on January 13, 1902, we will mention two: the first is the acceptance speech made by Delitzsch in 1878, when he was appointed a professor of Assyriology and Semitic languages at Leipzig University, where he taught from 1874–1893.⁸¹ In this lecture, entitled “The Study of Cuneiform Literature and the Old Testament” (*Keilinschriftenforschung und die Bibel*), Delitzsch stressed the great similarity that existed, in his view, between the Syrian-Babylonian religion and the religion of the Bible, a similarity that is clearly evident in the story of Creation and the institution of the Sabbath. Delitzsch argued in his lecture that the author of the Book of Genesis had revised ancient Sumerian legends, but had given them greater spiritual depth.⁸²

The second lecture was delivered in Berlin about twenty years later – on April 7, 1899. Then the Kaiser was in the distinguished audience along with a small circle of members of the government and senior officials, including Chancellor von Bülow, who came to hear the latest news about the excavations in Babylonia. Delitzsch reviewed the young history of Assyriology and noted with joy that it had been joined by “scholars with German blood.”⁸³ He particularly emphasized that German schol-

⁷⁹ M. T. Larsen, “The Babel/Bibel Controversy and its Aftermath”, p. 99; Emil Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation*, p. 162.

⁸⁰ Bill T. Arnold and David W. Weisenberg, “A Centennial Review of F. Delitzsch’s ‘Babel und Bibel’ Lectures”, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 121 (3), 2002, p. 442.

⁸¹ He later moved to Breslau and taught there until 1899, and from there to Berlin to replace Schrader as director of the Ancient Asia wing in the imperial museums. Leipzig was a center for Judeophobic publication well into the eighteenth century. See: Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff*, p. 248.

⁸² R. G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 69–70. Simon Bernfeld may have been the first Jewish scholar to react to the Delitzsch’s theory. In his 1897 book *Da’at Elohim*, he wrote that “the scholar Friedrich Delitzsch” has contributed much to the history of the Hebrew language and to the relationship between the Jewish religion and the religious views of the Chaldeans; however, “We will not follow him with our hearts to find a connection between Judaism and the ancient Chaldeans.” In any event, the influence of the Mesopotamian culture, Bernfeld argued, began only with the Babylonian Exile. See: Simon Bernfeld, *Da’at Elohim: Toledot haphilosophia hadatit beYisrael*, I, Warsaw, 1897, p. 16.

⁸³ See: *Ex Oriente Lux! Ein Wort zur Förderung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*, Leipzig, 1898. (In the United States, the lecture was printed in the 1901 Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution). On the Oriental Society and German archaeological activity in Mesopotamia, see: Robert William Rogers, *A History of Babylonia and Assyria*, I, pp. 246–250. It was preceded by Die Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, founded in 1845. On German scholarship on Palestine, see: Haim Goren, ‘Go View the Land:’ German Study of Palestine in the Nineteenth Century, Jerusalem, 1999 (Hebrew).

ars ought not to lag behind those from other European countries and the United States, but should take an active part in the research in order to promote German science and “to honor and glorify the German fatherland.” He stated that “in the competition between the nations over the discovery of the treasures of humankind, German patriotism is prepared to gain an honorable place for itself and to safeguard the place it merits.”⁸⁴ In this lecture, Delitzsch surveyed the archaeological finds in Mesopotamia, which resurrected the ancient cultures of the Near East after they had been forgotten for thousands of years, stressing the importance of the discovery of the Sumerian civilization that he described as non-Semitic and non-Indo-European, and which was the source of the Assyrian-Babylonian culture. He added that research would reveal to the world that Babylonia was the source of science, of religious principles and of law, but in particular it would advance the study of the Bible. There is hardly a story in the Book of Genesis that will not be better understood from then on by means of the cuneiform documents. Delitzsch declared: “The history of the ancient Hebrews is connected by hundreds of threads to the history of western Asia, and in particular to that of Babylonia and Assyria ... a new world is opening to human knowledge as a result of the excavations in Assyria and Babylonia.”⁸⁵ In this regard, he mentioned George Smith’s lecture on the discovery of the Babylonian version of the biblical flood story, a discovery celebrated, in his words, in the daily press and in the churches, and one that determined the dominant view that “Babylonia confirms the Bible.” “I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would cry out,” he quoted from the New Testament (Luke 19:40).⁸⁶ Delitzsch wrote the program for the work of the German archaeological expedition that left for Mesopotamia under the auspices of the German Oriental Society – *Babylon* (1901) – and described the archaeological excavations as a national and scientific mission. There was an anti-Semitic innuendo to his claim that Jewish (and Armenian) dealers in antiquities in Baghdad were engaged in a dishonest trade, breaking monuments in order to increase their profits. In his pamphlet, *Ex oriente lux*, he was already belittling the value of the Bible, not only by emphasizing its dependence on the Assyrian and Babylonian cultures, but also by depicting these two cultures as the source of many elements of the world picture of the

⁸⁴ F. Delitzsch, *Babylon*, Leipzig, 1901, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 11–12.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

ancient Hebrews. In other words, the Babylonian culture is a direct source of knowledge about the development of biblical theology.

At the end of the 1870s, and even more so at the end of 1890s, there were glimmers of neo-pagan ideas in Delitzsch’s utterances, as well as a clear-cut attack on the Bible and its values, but because of the provocative way in which he couched his lectures, these ideas did not resonate widely in the public. In his writings from the 1870s until 1902, he expressed his views consistently, but he formulated them more sharply. His understandable excitement at the finds in Mesopotamia, and particularly the discovery of Hammurabi’s laws in 1901, moved Delitzsch to heap praises on the Babylonia culture, and we can assume, that in the ardor of his response to the harsh criticism leveled against his views, and against him personally, he was carried away into adopting views that were more and more extreme and provocative, until they became openly anti-Semitic. However, each of his earlier publications contain the seeds of a more extreme view, more sharply formulated in the next publication. It seems possible to find evidence that Delitzsch planned his steps in advance, and that the anti-Semitic, even racist, content in his 1920 book was a direct product of the views he expressed in his public lectures, and which he put down in writing from the 1870s.⁸⁷ In other words, Delitzsch came to his 1902–1904 lectures not only as a renowned Assyriologist, but also as an ideologue who wanted to influence public opinion and to propose solutions to the current problems of German culture, and that is how his words were received by the German public.

The Stages of the Controversy: 1902–1906⁸⁸

The Babel-Bibel controversy began on January 13, 1902. On that day, Delitzsch delivered his lecture in the hall of the Academy of Music in Berlin, on the occasion of the convention of the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* (The German Oriental Society). In 1898 Delitzsch had been among the major participants who founded this society, and the Kaiser had granted it his auspices in 1901. Kaiser Wilhelm II, commanders of the army and the senior officials of the empire came to hear the lecture. As we have already learned, this was not a chance visit. The distinguished lectures on the archaeological finds in Mesopotamia were held

⁸⁷ See also: Larsen, “The Babel/Bibel Controversy”, pp. 104–105.

⁸⁸ For the dates of the polemic see in Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, p. 281–286.

annually and the Kaiser was always present, and usually interrogated the Empress and the court ladies about what they had learned from the lectures. After the lectures, the Kaiser would host the members of the Society's board in the palace. At the Kaiser's request, Delitzsch repeated this lecture on February 1, 1902 at the royal palace, in the presence of several of the leading German theologians,⁸⁹ and he had about 40,000 copies of it printed at the Kaiser's explicit request.⁹⁰ As a token of his great esteem for Delitzsch, the Kaiser awarded him the royal medal of citation as well as a budget for travel to the Near East (and also saw to it that he would have an audience with the Sultan Abdul Hamid II). This royal patronage turned the lecture into a sort of "official statement on behalf of the Kaiser and the state."⁹¹

The Kaiser also extended his patronage to the second lecture, about a year later on April 17, 1903, after Delitzsch's return from his visit to the Near East. The Kaiser, Chancellor von Bülow and government ministers also came to hear this lecture, along with an audience of about one thousand, including students in the higher classes of Berlin gymnasiums. The London *Jewish Chronicle* reported that after completing his lecture, Delitzsch was invited to the Kaiser's box, where Wilhelm II had a lively conversation with him.⁹² The British Assyriologist Theophilus Pinches (1856–1934) wrote that after reading Delitzsch's eloquent words, he was sure that "those who were privileged to hear them must have enjoyed a true archaeological feast, all the more exquisite in that the subject was that which throws more light upon the Old Testament than any other".⁹³ This lecture, too, was printed in numerous copies and in several editions.

This lecture, however, disturbed the Kaiser because of what to his mind was its overly radical criticism of the New Testament. He regarded as particularly dangerous the use made by the German Social-Democratic party of Delitzsch's arguments. The German Assyriologist Paul Haupt (1858–1926), Delitzsch's first student, who emigrated to the United States,⁹⁴ spoke about three components of the controversy – *Babel*, *Bibel* and *Bebel*. By Bebel, he was referring to August Bebel

⁸⁹ F. Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel. Ein Vortrag*, Leipzig, 1903.

⁹⁰ See: Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, p. 107. The sixth edition came out in 1921.

⁹¹ In the words of Rudolph Kittel, in Lehmann, *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹² A report in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 24.4.1903, p. 12.

⁹³ Theophilus G. Pinches, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2nd. rev. edition, London (The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), 1903, p. 526.

⁹⁴ Haupt was Albright's teacher at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

(1840–1913), leader of the Social-Democratic party in Germany.⁹⁵ As a result, Delitzsch was summoned to the palace, and there, in a long conversation, Kaiser Wilhelm expressed his severe criticism, and he widely published his letter of February 15, 1903, addressed to Admiral Friedrich Hollman, Vice President of the German Oriental Society. The Kaiser’s letter, which we will review later, was discussed in nearly every periodical and newspaper in Germany, not only because of Delitzsch’s positions on controversial theological subjects, but also because it touched upon the issue of the boundaries of freedom of scientific research. The orthodox rabbi Dr. Immanuel Plato (1863–1937)⁹⁶ did not err when he explained that the Kaiser was obliged, despite his sympathy for Delitzsch and his support for the principle of freedom of research, to object to the content of the lectures because the combination of the two crowns he wore – as head of the Lutheran church and as head of the German nation – was more important in his eyes than the freedom of Assyriological research.⁹⁷ The *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* (*AZdJ*), the major organ of liberal Jewry, rushed to print the Kaiser’s letter, and wrote that the lectures were strongly resonating not only because of the sympathy the Kaiser had shown towards them, but that now, following the Kaiser’s letter, the imperial halo over Delitzsch’s head was fading, and the fact that he was encroaching on areas outside of his province had been exposed.⁹⁸ The newspaper preferred to ignore the fact that the Kaiser had not objected to the criticism that had been leveled against the Old Testament.

The third lecture in the series was delivered by Delitzsch on three separate evenings – at the end of October and the beginning of November 1904 – this time far from the spotlights of Berlin, in Cologne, in the town of Barmen,⁹⁹ and in Frankfurt, and now without the Kaiser’s patronage. In any event, the Kaiser’s publicly stated reservations about some of Delitzsch’s ideas did not cause him to take exception to Delitzsch himself or to his views. The Kaiser continued to meet with Delitzsch on various occasions, and in 1906 even appointed him as a privy counselor (*Geheimrat*).

⁹⁵ Paul Haupt, “Bible and Babel,” *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, vol. 22, No. 163, Baltimore, June 1903. The German Kaiser feared that the liberal German bourgeoisie might find encouragement in the lectures for its anti-Church position, and end up by joining the anti-religious Social-Democrats.

⁹⁶ On Plato, see Appendix.

⁹⁷ Plato, *Reflexionen über “Babel und Bibel”*, I, Hamburg, 1903, p. 39.

⁹⁸ Anon., “Der Kaiser über Babel und Bibel”, *AZdJ*, 67 (9), 1903, pp. 100–102.

⁹⁹ A town in the state of Nordrhein Westphalia, near Cologne.

The first two lectures in Berlin in 1902 and 1903 provoked a great storm. Within a short time, oppositional articles were published at the rate of one a month, and the rate increased, until Alfred Jeremias found it necessary to ask Delitzsch to reconsider his views.¹⁰⁰ The reactions subsided somewhat after the third lecture,¹⁰¹ but the controversy continued to reverberate even in later years. The lectures were printed in several editions and in tens of thousands of copies, and were also translated into many languages.¹⁰² Delitzsch estimated that by 1904 he had gained a response in 1,350 brief articles, 300 lengthy articles in the press and in various periodicals, and in 28 pamphlets. These were published not only in Germany but also in other countries.¹⁰³ It seems that nearly every theologian, biblical scholar and Assyriologist, professionals and amateurs, published a critique or words of agreement. Some of Delitzsch's critics argued that in fact he had not said anything new, but had only added a sensational layer to views that had been well-known in the research for more than two decades. Haupt noted that Delitzsch had already said all of this previously, and enumerated the books he himself had written on the subject to prove that he had preceded Del-

¹⁰⁰ A. Jeremias, *Im Kampfe um Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Published in Stuttgart in 1905 under the title: *Dritter (Schluss-)Vortrag*.

¹⁰² Into English, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Hungarian, Czech and others. See: Herbert B. Huffmon, "Bibel und Babel: The Encounter between Babylon and the Bible," *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 22, 1983, pp. 316–317. For a list of the editions, see Lehmann, pp. 50–54. In English, they were published in 1906 under the name *Babel and Bible: Three Lectures on the Significance of Assyriological Research for Religion*, Chicago, 1906. The English translation also included a lecture given by Delitzsch: *Mehr Licht*, in 1907. Delitzsch introduced various changes in the different editions of the original, but the spirit and content of his words were not altered. Consequently, we did not think it important to follow up on these changes.

¹⁰³ According to one source, in Germany alone, about 1,600 articles and editorials appeared by September 1903, dealing with the debate between "the scientific-critical interpretation and the dogmatic-fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible." See: Timothy J. G. Doherty, "Babel-Bibel-Streit", in H.-P. Müller (ed.), *Wege der Forschung, Band 633: Babylonien und Israel: Historische, religiöse und sprachliche Beziehungen*, Darmstadt, 1991, p. 540. Lehmann enumerates 1,850 articles and 28 pamphlets. The encyclopedia *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, Vol. I (Tübingen, 1957) refers to 53 polemical works from 1902–1903 (*ibid.*, p. 823). Kaufmann Kohler notes that the first two lectures were disseminated throughout the world in tens of thousands of copies, *Central Conference*, p. 13. Chavalas writes that the Assyriologists refrained from participating in the polemic, although Delitzsch did give public expression to the views held by many of them. The list of the Assyriologists who took part, directly or indirectly, in the polemic, does not corroborate his view, however. See: M. W. Chavalas, "Assyriology and Biblical Studies," in M. W. Chavalas & K.L. Younger, Jr. (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible*, p. 34.

itzsch on all the major points.¹⁰⁴ Among other things Haupt argued – and his words clearly reflected writers’ jealousy – that Delitzsch’s lectures had been widely publicized only because he had enjoyed the Kaiser’s patronage. “There is hardly anything new in Delitzsch’s lectures on Babel and Bible,” he commented, “only the German Emperor’s keen interest in these investigations is something novel.”

Delitzsch, feigning naïveté, asked: If there is nothing new in what I have said, why have my words aroused such a furor? The answer is his success in capitalizing on Assyriology to engage in a theological and ideological controversy. It was his harsh criticism of Catholic Christianity and of German orthodox Lutheranism, which, in his view, had moved far away from Martin Luther’s original spirit, and his favorable attitude towards Babylonian polytheism that had turned the conservative Protestant camp against him, despite his statements about the great spiritual value of the New Testament and his declared faith in Jesus. However, many of his supporters came from circles that wished to release Christianity from its ties to the Bible, and from others that wanted to sever the link between Judaism and the Bible.

During this time, in addition to the series of lectures, Delitzsch published other writings on the subject intended for the public at large. In 1903, his book *Im Lande des einstigen Paradieses: Ein Vortrag* (In the Ancient Land of Paradise) came out, and in 1904 the polemical book *Babel und Bibel: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick* (Babylonia and the Bible: A Look Back and a Look Forward), in which he responded to his critics’ arguments; in 1907 he published a short work, *Mehr Licht* (More Light), and in 1908 the book *Zur Weiterbildung der Religion* (On the Continuation of the Teaching of Religion). After World War I, in a political and cultural context that differed from that of the early twentieth century, the time of the Weimar Republic, Delitzsch published his book *Die große Täuschung*¹⁰⁵ (The Great Delusion), in which he bluntly expressed his views on the Bible and in fact

¹⁰⁴ A lecture he delivered in March 1894 at a conference of the American Oriental Society held in New York, was printed in the literary supplement *Ner Hama’aravi* (vol. 1, No. 6, New York, June 1895, pp. 2–10), under the name “History of the Biblical Sources by Paul Haupt.”

¹⁰⁵ *Die große Täuschung: Kritische Betrachtungen zu den alttestamentlichen Berichten über Israels Eindringen in Kanaan, die Gottesoffenbarung vom Sinai und die Wirksamkeit der Propheten*, I-II, Stuttgart – Berlin, 1920/1921. Among the reactions to this book, see: Max Beermann, “*Die grosse Täuschung*,” Berlin (n. d.); Jakob Horovitz, *Goethe, Friedrich Delitzsch und das Zehnwort*, Berlin, 1925; Eduard König, *Friedrich Delitzsch’s “Die große Täuschung” kritisch beleuchtet*, Gütersloh, 1920; Johannes Theis, *Friedrich Delitzsch und seine “Grosse Täuschung,” oder Jaho und Jahwe*, Trier, 1921 (See Chapter 11).

his *Bibelpophobia*, to which we will return later. This book was clearly anti-Semitic in nature and hence one may ask whether it was a consistent continuation of his views from an earlier period, or whether it casts a heavy shadow of anti-Semitism on his legitimate historical views from the same period. Or, perhaps, the public had lost interest in Delitzsch's views, so that he became disillusioned and more radical, adopting Volkish ideas.

Chapter 6

Delitzsch's Three Lectures on Babel and Bibel

What do the Stones Cry Out?

In this chapter we will review the content of Delitzsch's three lectures and the major claims made in them, to which the Jewish participants in the Babel-Bibel controversy had to react.

In the first lecture¹⁰⁶ Delitzsch underscored the importance of Mesopotamian culture to an understanding of the Bible. He stated that modern man is fascinated by Babylonia (and Egypt) because a rich, highly developed human civilization has been revealed to him, about which very scant knowledge had previously been available. Hence, this discovery deepened the time dimension of human history. However, western man is attracted by this ancient culture particularly because it reveals the profound link between it and the Bible. As a result of the archaeological finds, he stated, Babel and Bible will remain inseparably together, and the discovery of ancient Babylonia will cast light on the Bible and help mankind understand its background. From now on, Delitzsch stated in his second lecture, Babylonia would serve as an interpreter and illuminator of the Old Testament ('Erklärer und Illustrator der Bibel'). Archaeology interprets and illustrates the language and symbols of the Bible, as well as its spiritual and material world. The Babylonian documents tell us that both the biblical world view and the biblical laws originated in Babylonia. Although the biblical writer-editor took infinite pains to eliminate all mythological features from his story of the creation of the world, "many Babylonian features still cling through the medium of the Bible to our religious thinking."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ For a review of the first lecture and the reactions to it, see Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 80–123; Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible. A lecture on the significance of Assyriological research for religion*. Delivered before the German Emperor. Trans. from the German by Thomas J. Cormack. Chicago, 1906.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 86.

Delitzsch repeated these themes in his second lecture: “Assyriology is restoring confidence in the authenticity of the text of the Old Testament, which has for some time been so violently assailed...In truth every friend of the Old Testament scriptures should assist with all his might in bringing to light the thousands of clay tablets and all other sorts of written monuments that lie buried in Babylon ...” He did not deny the importance of the Bible or its value for modern Christians, and said that “It [the Bible] will nevertheless always maintain its great importance, especially as a unique monument of a great religious-historical process ... [it] will always find a living echo in our hearts.”¹⁰⁸ As he had in his first lecture, Delitzsch described Assyria and Babylonia as well-organized, constitutional states, similar to Germany from many points of view.¹⁰⁹

His first lecture, then, contained two “heretical” claims. One, that the origin of the ancient Israelite religion and culture is not the revelation on Mt. Sinai, but the Babylonian culture and religion. He declared, however, that this was not a theological claim, but an historical one anchored in authentic ancient documents. The second, the claim that the great influence of Babylonia on the Bible – and through it on the religious thought of western Christianity – is evident in many elements of the religious and cultural world of the Bible, and in particular in the resemblance between the laws of Babylonia and the Mosaic laws and between the institutions of the biblical Sabbath and the Babylonian Sabbath. The God Jehovah (*Jhwa*) was already the god of the nomadic Canaanites who settled in Babylonia 2,500 years before Christ, one of whom was Hammurabi, and from whom the Israelites descended several centuries later.¹¹⁰ In any event, this proto monotheism succumbed to the anthropomorphism of the ancient peoples of Mesopotamia, whose influence is still evident in the prophecies of Ezekiel. In other words, Delitzsch held that from the dawn of their history, the Semitic peoples knew about the monotheistic idea, but under the influence of pagan polytheism, anthropomorphism filtered into their culture. It was the prophets who purged monotheism of these pagan vestiges and paved the way for Jesus. The sole element of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 86. With these words, Delitzsch contradicted the Kaiser’s praises of the autocratic character of Babylonian rule, which he expressed at the premiere of the Assyrian ballet, mentioned above.

¹¹⁰ See the discussion in Chapter 10. The Finnish Assyriologist Simo Parpola recently claimed that the Deuteronist school borrowed the idea of one god from the Assyrian (not the Babylonian) religion. See: Parpola, “The Assyrian Tree of Life”, pp. 190–191, note 107.

any “racial” ideas in the first lecture was the allusion to the Aryan origin of the Assyrians, and this was based on a copy of a painting of an Assyrian queen, perhaps Assurbanipal’s wife, whose hair is blond.¹¹¹

Since Delitzsch knew very well how the German Protestant orthodox theologians would react to his words, he reminded them – rather immodestly – that both Luther and Philip Melanchton (1479–1560) had at the time rejected Copernicus’ heliocentric view. The obvious conclusion would be that scientific truth surpasses theological doctrine and will always triumph in the end.

The first lecture made an enormous impression, because for the first time, the audience of laymen was exposed to solid historical “facts” relating to the connection between the Bible and the ancient Mesopotamian literature. Many regarded it as evidence that archaeological discoveries could free modern man from the shackles of religious dogma.¹¹²

Babylonia and Ethical Monotheism

In the second lecture,¹¹³ Delitzsch continued to stress the great similarity that existed, in his view, between Babylonia and the Bible: “How great the similarity between all things in Babel and Bible!” But the lecture focused mainly on a description of Babylonia not only as the sole source of the biblical religion and of ancient Israelite culture, but also as a culture, whose lofty traits made it superior to the culture of the Bible.¹¹⁴ Delitzsch harshly attacked biblical prophecy, which he had previously described as paving the way for the appearance of Jesus. Now he depicted it as filled with abysmal hatred for other nations and totally contradictory to ethics and science. Biblical prophecy (for example, Isaiah 63:3–4: “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in my anger

¹¹¹ “... eine Prinzessin arischen Geblüts ist und blondhaarig zu denken.” The Orthodox scholar Aaron Marcus responded sarcastically to this claim: “The princess may have been a brunette, without this in any way detracting from her Aryan origin.” See: A. Marcus, *Zwischen zwei Stühlen*, Altona, 1905.

¹¹² E. Forester, “Babel und Bibel”, *Die Christliche Welt*, 16 (8), pp. 189. Quoted in Larsen, “Orientalism and Ancient Near East”, p. 194.

¹¹³ For a review of the second lecture and the reactions to it, see in Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 170–210.

¹¹⁴ F. Delitzsch, *Zweiter Vortrag über Babel und Bibel*, Stuttgart, 1904. In the second edition of the lecture, Delitzsch added his response to the criticism of the Kaiser and others.

and trample them in my fury ... For the day of vengeance is in mine heart and the year of my redeemed is come") and some of the Psalms, reflect fierce hatred of anyone who is not an Israelite. He stated that the more deeply he delves into the Bible, the more opposed he becomes to Jehovah, the god who butchers the people with the sword of his insatiable anger, who has but one favorite child, while he consigns all other nations to darkness, shame and ruin. Hatred for other nations is deeply rooted in the character of the Semitic peoples, he claimed, while the laws of Hammurabi show that in Babylonia, in contrast to Israel, justice prevailed. Unless humankind can wrest itself free from "the illusion of a 'primitive revelation'"¹¹⁵ and the burden of the Bible, it will be impossible to advance the Christian religion. Biblical monotheism was national and particularistic, and it was only thanks to Peter that the barrier dividing the Eastern-Israelite world-view and the Christian philosophical world-view was surmounted.

To critics of his view that the roots of Hebrew monotheism lie in the Babylonian "god" (or "*él*," which means "goal of the eye")¹¹⁶, Delitzsch replied in his first lecture that the idea of one god already appears in the Babylonian cosmology. As evidence, he produced a neo-Babylonian document, deciphered and published in 1895 by Theophilus Pinches, in which, he claimed, the various gods appeared as different designations of the god Mardoch. About this, he noted in his first lecture: "Is this not indo-Germanic monotheism," which is the doctrine that "they are all one with him and in him."¹¹⁷ From this Delitzsch concluded that the ancient Babylonians had acknowledged one god as a "unitary, spiritual being." His critics' claim that the Babylonian documents refer to personal names is incorrect, Delitzsch argued, since the personal names, which include the signifier *ilu*, express a monotheistic religious concept. The source of the name of the biblical godhead would therefore be the Babylonian name *Ya-a'-ve-ilu: yaum-ilu*. In contrast, there are many expressions of Hebrew polytheism in the Bible, for example, in Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image." As for the source of the Sabbath day, Delitzsch argued in his first lecture, and repeated the claim in his second and third lectures, the correct interpretation of the Babylonian term *sabatu(m)*, "the day par excellence," is "the cessation (of work), keeping holiday."¹¹⁸ Although the Babylonian Sabbath day occurs on the seventh,

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 111. Quotation marks in the original.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 147.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 37, 101.

fourteenth, twenty-first and twenty-eighth day of the month, it was a day of rest from work. Hence, “we must acquiesce in the fact that the Hebrew Sabbath ultimately is rooted in a Babylonian institution.”¹¹⁹

In his second lecture, then, Delitzsch clearly crossed the line that separated a philological-historical discussion of cultural parallels and influences from the expression of value-laden positions that stressed what he regarded as the moral superiority of the mythology and religion of Mesopotamia.¹²⁰ He described the Babylonian story of the flood as possessing a more exalted moral content than that of the biblical story: the Babylonian hero laments the catastrophe that befell humankind, and the story reveals great human compassion, whereas there is no expression of compassion in the biblical version. In any event, the Israelite people during the biblical period, as the Bible itself shows, did not behave according to the precepts of morality, and its world-view was clearly national and exclusive, even racist, while Babylonian law had a humanistic-universalistic nature. The God of Israel is a god of the sword and insatiable anger, while the God of Babylonia (and the Christian God) is a gracious, merciful God.¹²¹ “Jesus himself has erected a monument to universal neighborly love, an ideal of the Babylonians,” hence the source of his moral doctrine is not biblical, but Babylonian.¹²² Delitzsch did not explain why such a totally disparate ethical approach had developed among two Semitic peoples – the Babylonians and the Israelites – despite their common origin.

Delitzsch also contended that Moses had misled the Israelites and the world as a whole by transmitting to them a distorted version of the content of the revelation at Sinai. In other words, he assailed the belief in a divinely given Torah, and stated that Mosaic law is a consummately human creation. This was the basis for his call for abandoning the accepted church doctrine; even the Reformation, he argued, was only one step towards the discovery of the eternal truth. It is no wonder that these words incurred the wrath of the Kaiser, head of the Lutheran church. The Kaiser’s severe criticism, as we shall see in the next chapter, was not provoked by the parallels Delitzsch drew between the Babylonian religion and the religion of the Bible, nor even

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 156. See discussion in Chapter 10.

¹²⁰ Arnold and Weisenberg are of the opinion that Delitzsch underwent an ideological shift in the year that passed between the first and second lectures. See: Arnold and Weisenberg, “A Centennial Review,” p. 445. Tadmor accepts the view that Delitzsch did not intend to incur a controversy and that the polemical tone was in reaction to his critics. See: Tadmor, “The Babel-Bibel Controversy,” p. 7.

¹²¹ This criticism was, in fact, also directed against the God of Islam.

¹²² Second lecture, p. 202.

the way in which Delitzsch depicted biblical prophecy, but rather by his criticism of Christianity – Catholic and Protestant alike – which was not obeying, in Delitzsch's view, the prohibition against making any engraved or molten images, and in particular the Kaiser objected to his questioning the principle of revelation.

In his third lecture,¹²³ Delitzsch underscored his depiction of Assyrian-Babylonian polytheism not only as a moral religion, but as one more moral than the monotheism of the Israelites. Not only did he stress the seniority and primacy of the Babylonian culture, but also repeatedly described it in a favorable light, as far superior to the culture of the Bible. While previously he did not deny the fact that the Assyrians and the Babylonians were Semites, and hence was unable to adopt the view that members of the Semitic race were inferior in their mental capacities to members of the Aryan (Indo-European) race, now he emphasized the non-Semitic element in Mesopotamian society. In this third lecture, he suggested that Jesus may have been a descendant of inhabitants of the Galilee, who had been brought there from Eastern Asia by the Assyrians, and had Aryan (Sumerian) elements. Alternatively, he suggested Jesus might have been a descendant of the Yatureans, nomads, who had a kingdom in Lebanon in the 1st century B.C. and in the 2nd, infiltrated into the Galilee and were forcibly converted to Judaism by the Hasmonean king Aristobulus I. This meant that Jesus was not a pure Semite, but a mixture (*Mischvolk*) of Sumerian-Galilean origin. Many parallels for Jesus' words can be found in the Babylonian literature, he argued, and it was from Babylonia that Jesus took his ideal of universal humanism. It is no wonder that "the Evangelist granted the Babylonian wise men [the three magi] the right to be the first to offer their homage at the cradle of the Christian faith." In his book *The Great Delusion*, Delitzsch asserted there was a similarity between the Sumerians and the Germans.¹²⁴

Delitzsch's description of the Bible's supposed or actual dependence on Babylonia is not necessarily linked to his harsh criticism of the biblical religion and Judaism. His attack on the Bible was intended to undermine, and, in fact, to bring to an end its formative status in Protestant Christianity. The comparison between Babylonian moral-

¹²³ See Lehmann, p. 250 and thereafter.

¹²⁴ Delitzsch did not explain how Jesus the Galilean acquired the Babylonian ideas – whether from an "autochthonous Babylonian" tradition, or through the Jewish (Pharisaic) tradition, of which he was a disciple. He also did not explain why the ancient Israelites changed the elements of Babylonian culture and converted them into an ethnic-particularistic and fanatic view.

ity and that of the Bible was intended to negate the value of biblical morality in the name of all the German virtues (*alle echt deutschen Tugenden*). In other words, the point of the comparison was to argue that the Bible is an ancient Hebrew (or “Oriental”) national literature, and hence cannot be a Christian book, and certainly not a German national book.

Did Delitzsch reveal himself, in his third lecture, as an advocate of blatant neo-pagan, anti-Semitic and anti-Christian views? Unquestionably, his words contained ideas that distinguished him from the German anti-Christian and anti-Semitic Volkisch camp, which called for the revival of the pre-Christian Germanic world and the elimination of any trace of the “Judification (*Verjudung*) of the nations” by Judeo-Christian ethics and monotheism.¹²⁵ Nonetheless, what set him apart from the anti-Christian Volkism was his stress on the moral, humanistic and universalistic dimension in the Babylonian religion and law (and in Jesus’ teaching). Moreover, although Delitzsch underscored the non-Semitic element in the Assyrian-Babylonian culture (and hence the non-Semitic element in Christianity), in the Western public’s perception Babylonia was perceived as an inseparable part of the Semitic world and the Semitic race. Consequently, at least on the surface, his doctrine was totally contradictory to the prevailing negative image of the Semitic race (which was described as the opposite of the Aryan race) in the neo-pagan perception, and it was also seen to be cutting the ground out from under the typological theory of race. The racist historian, Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927)¹²⁶ even attacked Delitzsch’s “Semitomanie” in the fourth edition¹²⁷ of his book *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century (Die Grundlagen des 19. Jahrhunderts, 1899)*. Some of the Jews who reacted believed that Delitzsch’s theory (and the pan-Babylonian theory in general) was destroying the basis for the theory of race.¹²⁸ However, at the same time, since Delitzsch in his lectures called for the revival of the pre-Christian Germanic world, the anti-Christian German circles could find support in them. His criticism of the Bible was in the spirit

¹²⁵ Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, pp. 225–289. See also in Chapter 8.

¹²⁶ See: G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain*, New York, 1981.

¹²⁷ It was published in 1903, München. Chamberlain wrote: “Eine der monströsesten Eingebungen der Semitomanie, die je erlebt wurde.”

¹²⁸ See: S. Jampel, “Die bibelwissenschaftliche Literatur der letzten Jahre. Zweiter Artikel. Der Panbabylonismus,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 52 (1), 1908, pp. 21–36.

of contemporary Volkisch neo-pagan attacks on the Bible, to which Delitzsch contributed an additional dimension.¹²⁹

We need to bear in mind that Delitzsch did not address questions relating to the history of the biblical text or the identity of its author. He believed in the accuracy of the histories of the patriarchs and of Moses and in the antiquity of Israelite monotheism, and was of the opinion that the Babylonian influence began during the period of the Israelite conquest, namely according to the prevalent view, in the time of Amarna, in the 14th century B. C. Hence he rejected the theory that dated the writing of the Torah at the end of the First Temple period and believed in the authenticity and antiquity of the historical story in the Pentateuch. His theory about ancient Babylonian influence on the Pentateuch was based on acceptance of the antiquity of that text, and hence there were those who accused him of conservatism. We also should note that Delitzsch did not refer to contemporary theories that regarded Egypt as the major source of the biblical culture, just as he did not relate to the question of what exactly Babylonia had contributed to Greek culture, which, according to the dominant view in the nineteenth century, was the alma mater of western civilization.

Delitzsch Contends with his Critics

Delitzsch exploited his prestige and authority as an Assyriologist to widely disseminate his religious and national views. It is clear, then, why he was immediately seen not only as an enemy of the Bible, but also as an enemy of Judaism. His theory was perceived not only as an attempt to describe the development of the ancient Israelite culture out of the culture of its environment – *Babel und Bibel* – and under its influence, but as a deliberate attempt to position Babylonia against Israel – *Babel gegen Bibel*. The Jews regarded these views as a consummate example of scientific anti-Semitism. For example, the *maskilic* Hebrew newspaper *Hamaggid hechadash*, which represented the line of the moderate Haskalah, believed that Delitzsch carefully marshaled his words to “accustom the people to the desecration of the holy,” and also claimed that the Kaiser was a full partner in this

¹²⁹ Lehmann, pp. 256–271. On the neo-pagan attack on the Bible (and through it, on Lutheran orthodoxy) in the name of the Germanic spirit, see: George L. Mosse: *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York, 1981, pp. 149–170.

intention. On February 26, 1903 the newspaper wrote that the criticism leveled against Delitzsch by Catholics, Protestants and Jews had not succeeded in convincing the German public, and that this public regarded Delitzsch as a redeemer – a new Martin Luther. There was some truth in the paper's statements, although it understated the importance of the negative resonance of Delitzsch's words in the German public.¹³⁰

Authoritative Assyriologists were among those who criticized Delitzsch's theory. Some of them drew a sharp distinction between Assyriology as a discipline and Delitzsch's lectures and theological polemical writings, and others rejected his arguments, asserting that the discoveries in Mesopotamia did not adversely affect the Bible. In the following chapter, we will review some of their arguments, but here will only note that Professor Hermann V. Hilprecht (1859–1925), of the University of Pennsylvania,¹³¹ who studied in Leipzig (from 1880–1885), embarked on a “crusade” against both the pan-Babylonian theory and Delitzsch. His view was that Christian truth was revealed only in the Bible, and that Assyriology provided historical evidence for the Bible. Hilprecht went so far as to forestall Delitzsch's invitation to lecture in Pennsylvania. Prof. Jules Oppert, the renowned Jewish Assyriologist,¹³² wrote derisively about Delitzsch's attempt to gain a place for German Assyriology at the forefront of research, and about the “revelation” that came from the other bank of the Rhine, publicly proclaiming that Hammurabi and Abraham were close friends. Oppert noted that French and British scholars had discovered Assyria and Babylonia and had published documents connected to Hammurabi as far back as 1861,¹³³ contradicting each and every one of Delitzsch's major arguments.¹³⁴ Delitzsch's lectures, Oppert wrote, on April 17, 1903, were “much ado about very little.”¹³⁵ Ironically enough, the *Jewish Chronicle* saw fit to write in an editorial that “a curious vein of French chauvinism runs through Prof. Oppert's learned article. If Oppert is a Jew defending ancient Judaism, he is still more a polemist of the university of the French republic arguing against the autocracy of the Imperial and Royal Colleges of Berlin ... He is, unconsciously,

¹³⁰ See in Chapter 8.

¹³¹ See Hilprecht's book, *Recent Researches in Bible Lands*, Philadelphia, 1896, and also Bruce Kunklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, p. 126.

¹³² Oppert was the first to state that the Sumerians invented cuneiform script.

¹³³ Oppert's letter was printed in *Temps* in Paris and translated in the March 6, 1903 edition of the *Jewish Chronicle*, p. 10.

¹³⁴ On him, see in the Appendix.

¹³⁵ Quoted in the *Jewish Chronicle*, April 17, 1903, pp. 14–15.

more Gallic than the Gauls, and cannot forget that he is answering from the library of the Sorbonne the darling professor of the German court.”¹³⁶

Delitzsch did not fail to respond to his critics. He represented himself as someone interested only in pursuing scientific truth, and pointed out that his father, Franz Delitzsch, “was persecuted even on his death bed (1890) by the denunciation of whole synods,” and was forced to accept some of the claims of biblical criticism in relation to the Book of Genesis. In reply to his orthodox Evangelist critics, Delitzsch reiterated that scientific research had proven there was no foundation for the belief in the divine source of the Torah of Moses. It is impossible to combine belief in divine revelation and belief in human-historical evolution. One must choose one of the two: “*tertium non datur*” (a third [alternative] is not given). In Delitzsch’s opinion, the discovery of the Assyrian-Babylonian culture was not made against God’s will; it was God who helped bring about a revision of the concept of revelation, as it was created in the Bible. In his words of retort, Delitzsch also replied at length and in detail to arguments leveled against the manner in which he read and interpreted the ancient documents as well as against his conclusions. He also reacted to the criticism hurled at him by Jews and accused the rabbis of nationalistic prejudice. Just as the Christian scientific theology does not shrink from historical critical research of the New Testament, which extricates the life and teaching of Jesus from the legends woven around him, thus Judaism too ought to try to arrive at the truth through scientific inquiry. And the truth is that the Jewish god is a national god par excellence and that Jewish monotheism is national theism.¹³⁷ Delitzsch based this opinion of his on quotations from Jewish sources which, in his opinion, show that the view that it is the distinctive national character of Judaism that has preserved the Jews for generations is more well grounded and is also the view that prevails among the Jews themselves, far more than the view that Judaism is in essence a universal religion of redemption and morality.

¹³⁶ Ibid., April 24, 1903, p. 17.

¹³⁷ See Delitzsch’s letters to Sigmund Maybaum and Seligmann Meyer in Lehmann, pp. 293, 308–309. Delitzsch wrote to Meyer on February 28, 1902, before his trip to the Middle East, that he agreed with his view that the demonology (*die Dämonenlehre*) is not Israelitic but was accepted into Jewish culture only after the Exilic period, but he reiterated his opinion that the Israelites had already come under the influence of Babylonian literary culture in Canaan around 1350 B.C. The letter was printed in *Deutsch Israelitische Zeitung*, 19 (10), 6. März 1902.

Delitzsch after the Controversy

In the introduction to the 1906 edition of his three lectures, Delitzsch summed up his opinion that the finds in Mesopotamia

have awakened to new life, after a sleep of thousands of years, the buried glory of millenniums gone ... What a mass of knowledge and multitude of new points of view for religious and profane history, for linguistics and geography, for archaeology in all its branches ... [The] excavations in the mounds of Mesopotamia have opened and are continually opening new and rich sources of highest importance for an entire series of sciences – Old Testament research, ancient history and geography, the history of art and archaeology, the history of religion and comparative mythology, Semitic and general philology, comparative history of jurisprudence, the history of astronomy and mathematics, and many other sciences ... Truly a new world is opened to human knowledge and inquiry through the Babylonian-Assyrian excavations.

After the public controversy had subsided, Delitzsch, in his books *Mehr Licht* (1907) (More Light) and *Zur Weiterbildung der Religion* (1908) (On the Development of Religion), expanded his views about the cultural broadmindedness of the Assyrian-Babylonian world, and expressed his amazement at the material and technological progress it had brought to the world at large and at its scientific and artistic achievements. Babylonia gave the world writing, craftsmanship and art, the sciences (particularly astronomy), the rule of law and justice ("the law of the peoples"), but also astrology, magic and the like. Belief in Satan and demons was brought to Samaria and the Galilee by the Babylonian population, which was settled there, and hence they play such an important role in the world of images of Jesus and his disciples.

Once again, Delitzsch contrasted Babylonian cosmopolitanism with what he described as the narrow-minded provincialism of the Jewish people. He also repeated his comparison between what he regarded as an Assyrian-Babylonian moral credo that expresses a universal concept of social justice, and the nationalism and legalism of Judaism. At the same time, he repeated his claim about the dependence of the Creation story and the story of the flood on the Babylonian myth.

The fundamental conclusion Delitzsch wished to draw from the historicistic view of the development of the history of faith and religion was that religious dogmas change over time, and sometimes are also distorted by various human additions. Hence, these additions must be eradicated from the Old and the New Testaments to make it possible to arrive at the eternal, incontrovertible truth. The discovery of Babylonia is an important means for arriving at this truth: *ex oriente lux*.

In his last book, *The Great Delusion*,¹³⁸ Delitzsch sharpened his negative depiction of Judaism. In his views, he drew close to the Volkisch writer Wilhelm Schwaner, who called for the replacement of the Old Testament with “the Germanic Bible.”¹³⁹ Delitzsch portrayed the religion of the Bible as an arrogant religion that held that the Jews are the chosen people with a mission to perform within the nations of the world. The biblical stories, he wrote, arouse revulsion, and the Christian world ought to wrest itself free of them. The Jews have nothing to be proud of – neither their monotheism, their lack of respect for women, their moral standard, nor their love of their fellow men. In the spirit of anti-Semitic literature, he stated that the Jews were using God as an instrument to maintain the Jewish race and to satisfy their greed. They are not the chosen people and they do not have a valuable moral credo. He wrote that biblical Judaism belongs among the pagan religions and that the verse in Genesis stating that God created man “in his image, after his likeness” has done more to distort the concept of the Divinity than all the pagan religions and their idols. He also wrote that the Jewish God is a narrowminded and jealous entity, and that the concept of the Sabbath originated in a Babylonian superstition. Hence the Old Testament ought not to be part of the Christian theology, nor should it be regarded as a divine revelation or a holy book, since when liberal theology relates to it as such that merely grants recognition to the boundless arrogance of the Jews who speak of their historical mission (“*weltgeschichtlicher Mission*”). As for the contemporary Jews, Delitzsch wrote that it is clear that the existence of a homeless people poses a great, terrible danger to mankind as a whole. Ebach writes that in these words, the real core of “the Babel und Bibel movement” is exposed; its real intention was not to try to integrate the Bible into the broad fabric of the cultures of the ancient East, but rather to tarnish it as epigonic idolatry, and to replace it with Germanic idolatry. The logic underlying it was: if the Bible gives expression to Semitic idolatry, it would be best for the Germans to exchange it for an original Germanic-Aryan idolatry.¹⁴⁰

Delitzsch himself wrote:

¹³⁸ See: Lehmann, pp. 268–271.

¹³⁹ Rüdiger Liwag, “Bibel und Babel: Wider die theologische und religions-geschichtliche Naivität,” *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift*, 15 (1), 1998, pp. 206–299 (p. 211). Schwaner edited the book: W. Schwaner (ed.), *Germanen-Bibel: Aus heiligen Schriften germanischer Völker*, 3 edn., 1910.

¹⁴⁰ Jürgen Ebach, “Babel und Bibel oder: Das ‘Heidnische’ im Alten Testament”, in R. Faber & R. Schlesier, (eds.), *Die Restauration der Götter. Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus*, Würzburg, 1986, pp. 26–44.

I know there are many educators and philosophers who are not willing to forego the biblical story of creation in the teaching of religion in the school. If so, they should also candidly tell the children that the description of the creation in all its details was borrowed from the Babylonians...they should also mention that Goethe was opposed to teaching the Ten Commandments in the schools. He wrote that the commandment about honoring one's father and mother is nice and quite reasonable, but why teach the child the commandment "Thou shall not kill," as if humans had some sort of instinct driving them to kill others! Is it not barbaric to forbid children to kill and murder?¹⁴¹

It was this book that labeled Delitzsch as an anti-Semite, even a consummate racist.¹⁴² In 1921 this is how he summed up his position vis-à-vis the controversy he had engendered:

The era of Babel-Bibel has passed. After perusing fifteen bundles of articles in the press, in periodicals and in pamphlets, I burned them all. I still have ten, eleven serious polemical writings, but none of them has succeeded in swaying me to fundamentally change the views I expounded in my lectures on Bibel und Babel and in the brief writings that followed them.

The controversy did not shake his views. On the contrary, Delitzsch was certain that he had gained the upper hand in it and that it was his truth that had emerged triumphant from it.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Die große Täuschung: Erster Teil, Stuttgart, 1921, pp. 97–98. See in Lehmann, p. 231 and thereafter. Delitzsch quoted from Goethe's (1809) novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* ("Kindred Spirits," or according to Collins, "The Elective Affinities"). Jacob Horovitz wrote that Delitzsch had distorted Goethe's intention, since in the novel these words are spoken by one of the characters and Goethe himself mocks them. In actual fact, he writes, Goethe, in his various writings, expressed his great esteem for the Holy Scriptures. See: J. Horovitz, *Goethe, F. Delitzsch und das Zehnwort*, pp. 4–9.

¹⁴² In the sixth edition of *Babel und Bibel*, published in 1921, Delitzsch also sharpened his anti-biblical views, which were given expression in *Die grosse Täuschung*.

¹⁴³ One can only read with surprise the view expressed by the renowned Jewish Assyriologist Prof. Benno Landsberger (1890–1968), who received the chair in Assyriology in Leipzig, that before Delitzsch, Assyriology had the image of a profession dominated by the imagination, but that "Delitzsch imposed on this freely creative fantasy the fetters of sound methodology and laid the foundation of our philology by quiet persevering work, uninfluenced by sensationalism." He expressed this view in 1926, long after the controversy had subsided, but also five years after the publication of *Die große Täuschung*. Landsberger chose only to mention Delitzsch's great contribution to philology. See: Benno Landsberger, "Die Eigenbegrißlichkeit der babylonischen Welt," *Islamica* 2, 1926, pp. 355–372. (English trans. "A Conceptual Autonomy of the Babylonian World", trans. T. Jacobsen et al., Malibu, 1976). For criticism of Landsberger's concept of *Eigenbegrißlichkeit* ("conceptual autonomy"), see: William W. Hallo, "Sumer and the Bible: A Matter of Proportion," in James K. Hoffmeier and Allan Millard (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Archaeology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004, pp. 163–192. Hallo suggests replacing the term used by Landsberger to "conceptual approach."

Babylonia and the Bible: Biblical Scholarship and Anti-Semitism

The question of whether Friedrich Delitzsch was a declared or covert anti-Semite, and whether his lectures were deliberately intended to harm Judaism, has already arisen in this chapter. It is important not in the context of Delitzsch himself, but in the context of the Jewish reaction to the Protestant biblical scholarship in general, and to the German in particular. In discussing this issue, we need to distinguish between three different matters: 1. the author's intentions, those explicitly stated in the text as well as those that can be discerned in it; 2. the interpretation given to his views and the intentions attributed to him by others; 3. the use, possibly the misuse, made of his views by others.¹⁴⁴

In light of events that occurred in the ensuing years, we now read Delitzsch's writings from the years 1902–1907 differently than we would have then against the background of the time. A reading from a later perspective highlights the implicit and explicit anti-Semitic elements in these writings, and they seem to be the seeds of ideas that ripened in later years. Against this backdrop, it is important to draw a distinction between a critical and negative attitude towards Judaism in general, and biblical Judaism in particular, on the one hand, and a concrete anti-Semitic ideology directed against both Jews and Judaism, on the other. Nonetheless, a reading of the 1902–1907 lectures and writings from an historical perspective, in search of the roots of a future intellectual development, is not in itself unwarranted.

Delitzsch represented himself as an unbiased scholar – neither an anti-Semite nor a philo-Semite – who swears by science and scientific truth. In defending himself against the accusation of anti-Semitism, he noted that he had not leveled any criticism on the Talmud or on the post-biblical Jewish tradition, and that he had not written a single word against the Jews of Germany. He further stated that he had

¹⁴⁴ Christian Wiese suggested a distinction between three types of anti-Jewish trends within Protestantism: 1) an anti-Jewish trend (*antijudaistische*), which is hatred of Jews (*Judentumfeindschaft*) based on theological reasons (and whose spokesmen, Harnack, for example, often battled against anti-Semitism and in favor of rights for the Jews); 2) political-cultural hatred of Jews, and 3) racist anti-Semitism, whose extreme exponents aspired to purge all Jewish traces from Christianity. See H. Wasserman, "Protestant Theology in the Shadow of Martin Luther," in *idem*, (ed.), *The German-Jewish History We Have Inherited*, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 81–84 (Hebrew).

never claimed that the Jews were an inferior people, nor had he ever called for the nullification of the civil rights given them by the emancipation, or for any discrimination against them. In fact, he argued, he had never dealt at all with the “Jewish question.”¹⁴⁵ This apologetic is hypocritical in view of the fact that during the controversy, and all the more so after it, and as we noted, particularly in his last book *Die große Täuschung*, Delitzsch had expressed even more extreme views and positions, and at the end of the process had shown himself to be an out-and-out racist anti-Semite.

In the early twentieth century, Delitzsch’s criticism of the Bible and its values became part of an anti-Jewish *Weltanschauung* and a means of his contending with the evangelical and pietist tradition in which he had been educated. His outspoken criticism of the Bible was explicitly directed against Judaism and the Jews. Unquestionably, Delitzsch utilized Assyriology for anti-Semitic propaganda, aided in this by his scientific prestige. He was not merely an Assyriologist, then, desirous of giving the public at large a reliable reconstruction of ancient history, but rather a public figure and a polemicist, who consciously made use of Assyriology to contribute to the formulation of a German Volkisch national ideology, and to assist it in its war against what it described as the “negative influences of Judaism on the German spirit.” From this standpoint, Delitzsch was a part of the neo-pagan stream in German culture. Although neo-paganism also had a distinctly anti-Christian dimension, Delitzsch’s attack on the “Semitic heritage” or the “Asiatic heritage,” of the Bible, as well as that of the New Testament, was directed primarily at Judaism and the Jews. Far more than an historical criticism of the character of biblical Judaism, it was also directed against present-day Judaism and the Jews.¹⁴⁶ In the climate of the time, it was impossible to separate the discussion of questions relating to the distant past from their implications for the present, nor was it possible to separate academic historical research from the use made of it outside the halls of academia.

In the early twentieth century and in the coming generations, the attitude towards Delitzsch’s views was influenced by his last book (which he had already completed, according to his own testimony, in 1914). This book served the purposes of the anti-Christian German

¹⁴⁵ The term was mentioned only once in his book *Die große Täuschung*, pp. 107–108.

¹⁴⁶ Although not all of the Volkist literature was anti-Jewish, the greater part of it was. See, in brief: Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914: A Study in the History of Ideas*, Cincinnati, 1980, pp. 134–136.

circles. In it, at the start of the twentieth century, Delitzsch launched a more extreme attack against the Bible and the God of the Bible. Biblical Judaism was slandered and the prophets were described as a coterie of militant nationalists speaking in the name of a god who loved only his people and who sentenced all other peoples to darkness, shame and eternal disgrace.¹⁴⁷ He described the Bible not only as a book replete with contradictions and inconsistencies, but also as one that adopts a favorable attitude towards acts of deceit and cruelty. Hence, in his view, the Bible cannot be a Christian book. H. J. Kraus defines *Die große Täuschung* as a “pathetic appeal to Babylonian idolatry,” that culminated in an extreme nationalization (*Ethnisierung*) of the Old Testament and anti-Semitism. In this book, Delitzsch became one of the heralds of the new German Christianity when he declared that the book known as the Old Testament is superfluous for the Church and the Christian family.¹⁴⁸

Volkisch anti-Semites and German racists during the time of the Weimar republic reiterated the opinion that Jesus was a Galilean of Cuthite descent, or of Sumerian, non-Semitic origin, and hence Christianity had no connection whatsoever with the Bible or the Jewish people. These neo-pagan anti-Semites found support for their view in Delitzsch’s assertion that the biblical legends ought to be supplanted by pure Germanic heroic legends that reflect the true Germanic virtues. As a result, Delitzsch became known as one of the anti-Semitic propagandists, or as someone who had provided them with pseudo-scientific inspiration.

Any discussion of the anti-Semitic nature of Delitzsch’s lectures and writings raises a preliminary basic question: Is the argument that Christianity should forego the Bible and sever its ties to it necessarily one that is anti-Semitic in nature, or is it more correct to examine it as part of the internal Christian polemic and as an expression of the quandaries of modern Christianity in relation to its Jewish origin? Is the claim that the Babylonian culture was the source of inspiration for biblical Judaism necessarily an anti-Jewish claim? Moreover, is the radical assertion that there were loftier moral elements in the religion of Babylonia than in the religion of the Bible necessarily an

¹⁴⁷ Delitzsch, *Zweiter Vortrag über Babel und Bibel*, Stuttgart, 1903, pp. iv–v. The bitter irony here is that the admirer of German nationalism finds fault with the God of the Bible because of his “nationalism.” For a review of the content of the book, see Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 150–163.

¹⁴⁸ Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, pp. 4, 313.

anti-Jewish assertion? In other words, the fundamental question at stake here is whether modern biblical criticism, and even more than that, criticism of the values of the Bible's spiritual-cultural world, necessarily stem from an anti-Semitic view, or whether it is possible to distinguish between a legitimate criticism of Judaism – as part of the Jewish-Christian polemic – and criticism arising from anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic attitudes. Were Delitzsch's contemporaries – at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century – capable of drawing this distinction? Did they believe that the denial of faith in a divinely given law, doubt about the historical reliability of the biblical tradition and the view that the culture of the biblical Jewish people was shaped under the influence of the great civilizations surrounding them were necessarily anti-Jewish, even anti-Semitic views and claims? Or were they able to draw a clear dividing line between a liberal, free-thinking science of the Bible and an atheistic view, on the one hand, and anti-Semitism on the other?¹⁴⁹

Hermann Gunkel, a student of Paul de Lagarde, who greatly admired the biblical message and the spiritual world of the Bible and believed the Jews were the “chosen people” and the “source of redemption,” related to this dilemma in his 1916 book, *Was bleibt vom Alten Testament?* (What is Left of the Old Testament?)¹⁵⁰ In it, Gunkel asked if accepting the view that the tradition that the Pentateuch was written by Moses is legendary, that many historical stories in the Bible are not credible, and that the Bible sometimes relates positively to immoral behavior (for example, its favorable attitude towards Jacob, even though he had cheated in order to receive God’s blessing), amounts to adopting an anti-Semitic position?

Gunkel wrote:

It is no wonder that in the last century the opposition to the Old Testament engendered sharp struggles between the opponents of the religion and the Bible and the God-fearing friends of the Bible. What in the view of the critics was rooted in the love of truth, in the eyes of the religious was the result of a lack of faith. Opposition on the basis of race also cropped up. Germans with deep national feelings felt it was an affront to their dignity that a book written by Semites should have such a great

¹⁴⁹ In 1902, an article by the rabbi Paul Rigger (1870–1939) from Hamburg entitled “Antisemitismus und Wissenschaft” was published in the *Im Deutschen Reich* newspaper. In it he wrote that those writing against Judaism from the viewpoint of theology are “playing into the hands of the anti-Semites” because the stereotype they are disseminating has a political impact. See: Wiese, *Protestant Theology*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁰ H. Gunkel, *Was bleibt vom alten Testament?*, Göttingen, 1916.

influence on German spiritual life. In these circles, a biblical scholar, who attributed value to the Old Testament, was regarded as a prejudiced “philo-Semite.” On the other hand, there was another phenomenon that stemmed from the pride of the Jewish people, so that any reservation or objection about the religion or ethics of the Old Testament was perceived as hostile towards present-day Judaism, and hence the critic of the Bible was thought of as an “anti-Semite.”¹⁵¹

Gunkel added that biblical scholarship has suffered from the fact that many laymen compared the ancient Jewish people to German Jewry, failing to take account of the long time that had passed since then – three thousand years. The comparison between the Jews of Germany and the Jews of the biblical period is similar to a description of “the ancient Germans based on the model of a contemporary German travel agent!”

The dilemma that Gunkel posed has not disappeared in the hundred years that have passed since the Babel-Bibel controversy. The challenge to the historical reliability of some parts of the Bible, the description of its dependence on the cultures of the ancient Near East, as well as its depiction as a human creation that changes and develops over time – all of these are perceived by the defenders of the Bible – believing Jews and secular Jews alike – as a denial of the Bible.

Delitzsch’s anti-Semitism in Modern Research

Scholars are divided in their opinions about whether Delitzsch was an anti-Semite, and if so, what led him to make his position more extreme after World War I. In Emil Kraeling’s view, the accusations that Delitzsch was an anti-Semite stem only from his last book, which led everyone to forget that Delitzsch had made an important contribution to biblical research, and to the position that the Bible should no longer be studied from a theological standpoint but should be regarded as a subject of historical research.¹⁵² Kraeling wrote that Delitzsch’s anti-biblical views were part of the religious-theological anti-Judaism tradition, although undoubtedly in the last years of his life he was influenced by the spirit of German Volkism,¹⁵³ and was also captivated by the allure of

¹⁵¹ Gunkel, p. 3.

¹⁵² Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, pp. 162–163.

¹⁵³ It is impossible to avoid noting the paradox inherent in this polemic. Delitzsch speaks in the name of universal moral and humane values, while describing the Bible as a book that expresses an opposite view. At least in the first lectures, he found Babylonian polytheism (or Babylonian proto-monotheism) to be the source of the

the racist myth. He expressed the view that Delitzsch had shown “how necessary it is for theology to find a better basis for its retention of the Old Testament than antiquated constructions of philosophy or history, or a mere reliance on Jewish traditionalism on the part of certain New Testament writings.”¹⁵⁴ Raymond Surburg also claims that although Delitzsch launched a malicious, defamatory attack on the Bible, he only expressed his explicitly anti-Semitic views in his last book. To support this argument, he reminds his readers that in 1902 a true anti-Semitic racist like H. S. Chamberlain had accused Delitzsch of philo-Semitism and described him as a Semitomane.¹⁵⁵ From Chamberlain’s point of view, anyone who claimed that the Semitic Babylonians made an important, valuable contribution to Western culture, and had even attributed to them the universal concept of morality, cannot be regarded as an anti-Semite.¹⁵⁶ Lehmann concurs with the view that the later book appeared against a different theological and cultural background than the one that existed at the time of Delitzsch’s lectures, and that he was not a consummate anti-Semite. Lehmann also points out that the anti-Semitic expressions were somewhat toned down in the second edition of *Die große Täuschung*. He quotes from Delitzsch’s brief 1920 autobiography, in which he writes about his relations with Jews and claims he never expressed an anti-Semitic view.¹⁵⁷ Lehmann is therefore convinced that one ought to entertain some reservations about the accusation that Delitzsch was clearly anti-Semitic; in any event, he was not a racist like Gobineau or Chamberlain.¹⁵⁸ In an article written in 1999, he reiterated his opinion that it would be a mistake to ascribe anti-Semitism to Delitzsch in his three lectures, since his true – almost lofty – intent was to arrive at the true core of the religion and the true faith, for the purpose of strengthening it. It was with this in mind, that he called for “purging the Bible” of Babylonian ideas.

Our understanding of the text is different: when Delitzsch suggested the need to cast out the Babylonian element that had passed into Christianity via the Bible, he mentioned only one element: de-

universalistic humanism of Christianity – a humanism that is far from everything that German neo-paganism sought in the ancient or archaic world.

¹⁵⁴ Kraeling, p. 271.

¹⁵⁵ Lehmann, pp. 7–8. Chamberlain was enraged by the fact that Delitzsch believed that the Semitic, or perhaps the Canaanite Western-Semitic, term *'il* came before the Indo-German world *Gott*. See the detailed discussion in Lehmann, pp. 268–271.

¹⁵⁶ R. F. Surburg, “The Influence of the two Delitzsches on Biblical and Near Eastern Studies,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 47 (7), July 1983, pp. 225–240.

¹⁵⁷ Lehmann, p. 270.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 271.

monology, namely, belief in devils and the notion of the scapegoat (Leviticus, 16:8).¹⁵⁹ He did not refer to other ideas, which he greatly esteemed, and claimed had first originated in Babylonia – not in the Bible. On the other hand, there is no doubt that his claim about the Babylonian source of these ideas was intended to sever the New Testament's dependence on the Old. Consequently, the claim that Delitzsch was a philo-Semite seems rather implausible.¹⁶⁰ Herbert Huffmon is of a similar opinion and argues that the lectures of the early twentieth century should not be read in light of the book published in the 1920s, and one ought not be misled by a few “innocent sentences” into believing that Delitzsch adhered to a coherent nationalistic and anti-Semitic view. Nonetheless, he believes that the pamphlet written by Delitzsch in 1904, *Babel und Bibel. Ein Rückblick und Ausblick*, contains some elements of a nationalist-Volkist approach in the spirit of the German-Christian movement of the period of the Third Reich, and states that “the sentiments behind these publications by F. Delitzsch ultimately played into the hands of the Deutsche-Christian movement, a key feature in the sad story of Christian collaboration with the Third Reich.”¹⁶¹

Andrea Becker, K. H. Bernhardt and M. T. Larsen take a different view. They believe Delitzsch from the first had nationalistic, anti-Semitic and racist proclivities,¹⁶² and that his ideas were close in spirit to Volkist ideas.¹⁶³ Christian Wiese also believed there were sound reasons for the suspicions of German Jews that Delitzsch’s ideas would serve German anti-Semitism, as in fact turned out to be the case.¹⁶⁴ Arnold and Wiesberg are of the opinion that Delitzsch did not actually want to admit he was an anti-Semite, but did not hesitate to join, and even to contribute to the anti-Semitic wave of the Weimar period.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel*, First lecture, pp. 55–56.

¹⁶⁰ R. G. Lehmann, “Der Babel-Bibel-Streit.” Ein kulturpolitisches Wetterleuchten, in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte*, Berlin, 1999, pp. 505–521.

¹⁶¹ Herbert B. Huffmon, “Babel und Bibel: The Encounter Between Babylon and the Bible”, pp. 309–320.

¹⁶² See note 3, Chapter Six.

¹⁶³ Mogens-Trolle Larsen, “The ‘Babel/Bible’ Controversy and Its Aftermath”, in J. Sasson, *History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. I, pp. 95–106; idem, “Orientalism and the Ancient Near East”.

¹⁶⁴ Bill T. Arnold and David B. Wiesberg, “Babel und Bibel and Bias: How Anti-Semitism Distorted F. Delitzsch’s Scholarship”, *Bible Review*, 18 (1), February 2002, pp. 32–40.

¹⁶⁵ B. T. Arnold and B. Wiesberg, “A Centennial Review of Friedrich Delitzsch’s ‘Babel und Bibel’ Lectures”, pp. 441–457. In his monumental book on the history of anti-Semitism, Leon Poliakov devotes one page to Delitzsch. See: Leon Poliakov (ed.), *Histoire de l’antisémitisme. 2. L’âge de la science*, Paris, 1981 edn., pp. 278–279.

Delitzsch's anti-Semitism in the Eyes of his Contemporaries

How did Delitzsch's contemporaries perceive his statements: did they regard them as a manifestation of the hatred of Jews (*Judenhass*) or even of anti-Semitism, or did they academically and dispassionately address his theory about the sources of biblical culture and its values, detached from the use that could be made of it in the context of the anti-Jewish ideology of the time?

Before replying to this question, it is important to note that there are scholars who attempt, for various reasons, to downplay the importance of anti-Semitism (and racism) in the Second Reich, the influence of anti-Semitic literature on the public at large, and the essential link between anti-Semitism and racism.¹⁶⁶ According to this approach, a large number of the accusations leveled against the various manifestations of German anti-Semitism were no more than an expression of exaggerated sensitivity. In our opinion, it ignores the fact that the public does not need to read literature (in this case, anti-Semitic or racist literature) for its key motifs to permeate in various ways into their world picture and be internalized by them. It is true that anti-Semitism was only one facet of the complex life of the “restless” Second Reich (*Das ruhelose Reich*), and it is also true that not all German Jews were equally sensitive or reacted in the same way to anti-Semitic expressions. However, most of the Jewish reactions to the Babel-Bibel controversy show that Delitzsch's statements, from 1902–1904, were generally perceived as one more expression of the hatred of Jews and

Lowenthal also describes the polemic as part of the wave of anti-Semitism. See: Marvin Lowenthal, *The Jews of Germany: A Story of Sixteen Centuries*, Phil., 1936, pp. 336–346.

¹⁶⁶ They note that from 1893–1907, the various anti-Semitic parties only gained about 2.5 percent of the votes. See Shulamit Volkov's article, “The Written Word and the Spoken Word: On Crisis and Continuity in the history of anti-Semitism in Germany,” in Jacob Borut and Oded Heilbronner (ed.), *German anti-Semitism: A Re-evaluation*, Tel Aviv, 2000, pp. 29–51 (Hebrew), and Heilbronner's article, “From anti-Semitic Peripheries to anti-Semitic Centers: The Role of anti-Semitism in Modern German History,” *ibid.*, pp. 70–87; Werner Jochmann, “Struktur und Funktion des deutschen Anti-semitismus”, in W.E. Mosse (ed.), *Juden im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, 1890–1914, Tübingen, 1976, pp. 386–477. For a useful review of the relevant literature and an analysis of the various views on the character and motives of German anti-Semitism, see: Shulamit Volkov, *The Magic Circle: German Jews and Anti-Semites*, Tel Aviv, 2002, pp. 77–140 (Hebrew). See also: W. Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*, Frankfurt am Main, 1965. On the Treitschke-Graetz polemic, see: R. Michael, *Hirsch (Heinrich) Graetz*, pp. 161–179.

of scientific anti-Semitism, which in his case used Assyriology for its purposes. Even if we interpret the Jewish reaction as exaggerated, it reveals both sensitivity and grave concern.

Although some of the Jews who reacted to Delitzsch's remarks saw in them an explicit aim of debasing Judaism and glorifying Christianity, they did not regard them as expressing overt anti-Semitism, certainly not extreme racist anti-Semitism of the brand advocated by Chamberlain and his ilk.¹⁶⁷ Others tried to suggest a distinction between an erroneous, distorted criticism, even one underpinned by supposedly scientific misconceptions about the Bible, and an avowed anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic position. However, from the entire gamut of Jewish reactions to the controversy, one feature is clearly evident – the great sensitivity of the Jewish-German intelligentsia to expressions denigrating what they regarded as the fundamental values of the Bible, and hence of Judaism. This sensitivity was shared by Orthodox and liberal Jews alike.¹⁶⁸

Here are a few examples.

The liberal rabbi from Berlin, Siegmund Maybaum, was probably the first to state – in two articles published in *AZdJ* – that the lectures on Babylonia and the Bible were an anti-Semitic lampoon.¹⁶⁹ Still, in a personal letter he wrote to Delitzsch, Maybaum tempered his words and asserted that Delitzsch was looking at Judaism through a prism of prejudice that originated in Christian assumptions. He knows, he said, that Delitzsch has no a priori prejudice against Judaism. After all, he is Franz Delitzsch's son, blessed be the memory of the righteous (*zekher tzadik livracha*, these words were written in Hebrew), so he should feel sympathetic towards Judaism.¹⁷⁰ Other Jews were far less forgiving. W. Münz wrote in his pamphlet *Es werde Licht! Eine Aufklärung über Babel und Bibel* (1903), that when he read Delitzsch's lectures he recalled anti-Jewish rallies in Berlin and Vienna. Although Delitzsch's claims are not new, and are part of anti-Semitic literature, when they are uttered by Friedrich Delitzsch, the son of the great Franz Delitzsch, "they fill our hearts with profound woe." Benno Jacob described De-

¹⁶⁷ M. Lewin, *Chamberlain, Harnack und Delitzsch in ihrem Kampfe gegen das Judentum*, 1907.

¹⁶⁸ Mordechai Breuer, "Two Fronts: The Reaction of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany Combined with its Struggle against Reform", pp. 185–213; S. Ragins, *Jewish Responses to anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914*, pp. 45–103.

¹⁶⁹ S. Maybaum, "Friedrich Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel", *AZdJ*, 67 (4), 1903, pp. 37–39; "Noch einmal Babel und Bibel", *ibid.*, 68 (10), 1904, pp. 109–110.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Lehmann, p. 309.

litzsch's statements as anti-Semitic slander;¹⁷¹ Jakob Horovitz wrote that Delitzsch the amateur had overpowered Delitzsch the man of science and become the spokesman for German nationalism,¹⁷² and Seligmann Meyer (who, in 1880, participated in a public debate with Treitschke) called his two-part pamphlet *Contra Delitzsch!* to draw a parallel between Delitzsch and the anti-Jewish Egyptian Hellenist writer, Apion, against whom Josephus had written his book *Contra Apionem*. Meyer believed the Jews should not take the attack on Judaism lying down. Rather, all those falsifying the spirit of Judaism should be admonished.¹⁷³ Delitzsch's statements are redolent of missionary, or anti-Semitic literature, he opined, and he found much similarity between them and the nationalistic Germanic anti-Semitic publications that endeavored to find a link with ancient Germanic times. For M. A. Klausner, Delitzsch's words were reminiscent of Chamberlain's "mad racist prattle" (*irrlchterndes Rassengeschwätz*). *Der Israelit* also believed that Delitzsch, after his second lecture, had drawn close to Chamberlain's views.¹⁷⁴ Nathan Porges wrote that Delitzsch is in the same camp as the "Teutonic anti-Semites" who want to remove the Old Testament from Christian education, but after they succeed in doing that, what will they have left? The suggestion to replace the one God with a Germanic, Slav, or Roman god and the like is nothing but a tasteless joke.¹⁷⁵ Dr. Immanuel Plato, in contrast, believed that Delitzsch was not an anti-Semite and that he had nothing against the Jews.¹⁷⁶

The view that Delitzsch was an out-and-out anti-Semite was also given currency in the United States. In 1903 Salomon Z. Schechter wrote in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* that "this Higher anti-Semitism has now reached its climax when every discovery of recent years is called to bear witness against us and to accuse us of spiritual larceny."¹⁷⁷ Reform rabbis in the United States – who devoted a lengthy discussion to Delitzsch's lectures at their annual conference in Detroit in 1903 – also had no doubt that this was an anti-Semitic campaign in pseudo-scientific guise, and Kohler stated with regret that it appears that anyone can gain popularity by spouting anti-Semitic and rac-

¹⁷¹ B. Jacob, "Prof. Delitzsch's zweiter Vortrag über 'Babel und Bibel'", *AZdJ*, 67, 1903, pp. 197–201; 213–215; 233–235; 260–262.

¹⁷² Jakob Horovitz, *Babel und Bibel*, Frankfurt am Main, 1904, p. 7.

¹⁷³ Jacob Borut, *A New Spirit among our Brethren in Germany* (Hebrew), p. 70.

¹⁷⁴ *Der Israelit*, 46, 1905, 300f.

¹⁷⁵ Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, 1903, p. 95.

¹⁷⁶ Plato, *Reflexionen über Babel und Bibel*, I & II, 1903, p. 38.

¹⁷⁷ S. Schechter, *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers*, p. 27. On Kohler's reaction to Schechter's view, see Chapter 2.

ist views. A different opinion was voiced at the conference by David Philippson. He believed it was best not to engage in denouncing Delitzsch, but rather in demonstrating the positive aspects of Judaism. No religion was perfect from the very beginning, and hence there is no reason to be offended by Delitzsch's criticism of the biblical religion and no need to launch an attack against him. Anti-Semitism in Germany is also a result of the emergence of Jewish orthodoxy (just as Zionism is the outcome of this anti-Semitism!).¹⁷⁸ The minutes of the conference note that Philippson's words were met with excited shouts of protest from the audience: "No, no, no."

The reaction in the Hebrew press was extremely harsh. In a later chapter, we quote at length from Shimon Menahem Lazar's article in *Hamaggid hechadash* in which he wrote of the danger posed by Delitzsch's theory, since it was removed from the halls of the scholarly world and given a respectable forum from which he could expound it, and it received many public responses. Delitzsch wanted to deny that Judaism was the source of Christianity, and the device he used to do so was to disclaim the originality of Judaism and "to make ancient Babylonia the glory of kingdoms, the proud beauty of the peoples of culture." Lazar prophesized that: "A new generation of the tower of Babel has arisen in Germany, and who knows what the future may hold."¹⁷⁹ Ze'ev Jawitz regarded "Delitzsch's vision" as a nightmare, a product of the spirit of the haters of Israel. When they realized that they had been deprived of the weapon of biblical criticism, they grabbed up Delitzsch's theory as if they had found a great treasure. This involves not merely Delitzsch's desire to defend the Christian religion, but mainly his suppressed hatred for the Jewish people, who have remained faithful to their teachings and past despite all the attempts to debase them.¹⁸⁰

The entry for Friedrich Delitzsch (in the German edition) of *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Berlin 1930) states that Delitzsch believed that the culture of Babylonia could serve as a background and explanation for the Bible and its world. Only in his last book did he sharpen the opposition between the ancient Babylonian culture and biblical Judaism

¹⁷⁸ Central Conference, p. 118.

¹⁷⁹ He is referring to the division into races that describes the Germans as the offspring of Japhet (Aryans) and the Jews as the offspring of Shem. And on the same matter, see Mendele Mocher Sefarim's story, "Shem veYepheth ba'agaloh" (Shem and Japhet in the Train, 1890), in Zuckerman, M. Stilling, G. & Herbst, M., *The Three Great Classic Writers of Modern Yiddish Literature*, vol. 1, 1991, pp. 377–396.

¹⁸⁰ Ze'ev Jawitz, "Criticism when it is Criticized," *Tachkemoni*, p. 13.

and expressed the extreme positions of *Judenfeindschaft*. Nonetheless, the entry does not accuse Delitzsch of anti-Semitism.¹⁸¹ In contrast, the entry on Delitzsch in the *Jüdisches Lexikon* of 1927 states that, over time, Delitzsch became a consummately anti-Semitic author.¹⁸² In 1925 Soloweitschik and Rubascheff summed up Delitzsch's words as follows:

Delitzsch found a higher moral standard in the laws of Hammurabi than in the Old Testament. The Babylonian songs of praise are in his eyes superior to the psalms of the Bible. For him, the prophets of Jehovah are the prophets of insularity and national haughtiness since they are consumed by hatred of foreign nations, and thus have debased the moral power that lay in the legacy of Babylonia.¹⁸³

From all of the above, it seems that most of the Jewish scholars and rabbis who reacted to the Babel-Bibel controversy regarded Delitzsch's lectures and his writings in the early twentieth century as an anti-Semitic attack in the guise of objective scientific research. Delitzsch was depicted as a representative of nationalistic anti-Semitism, who sought to replace the Jewish moral ethos with the primitive ancient Germanic past. Some of these Jews, who thought of themselves as an inseparable part of German culture, defended the Bible not only with the claim that this was an anti-Semitic attack, but also with the argument that not only Judaism was endangered by Delitzsch's ideas. They argued that they might also have a ruinous effect on German culture, which could not exist without the biblical heritage.¹⁸⁴ In other words, the main reason Delitzsch became a bitter, hated enemy in the eyes of many of the reacting Jews was not his hatred of Judaism, but primarily his attempt to divest it of its universal moral message, which originated in the Bible. His blatant negation of the universal moral value of the Bible was perceived by them as a dangerous assault on a constitutive element in the modern consciousness of German Jews, on which were based not only their self-image but also their claim that Judaism and German Christianity share a common foundation. Since they regarded the Bible as the major asset the Jews had contributed

¹⁸¹ *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Band 5, Berlin, 1930, pp. 912–914.

¹⁸² Band II, p. 66 (“Aber schon bald nach Kriegsende meldete sich mit dem erwachenden Antisemitismus die alte Bibelfeindschaft vom neuen ...”) See also: H. Laible, “Etliche Streiflichter und Delitzsch's ‘Große Täuschung,’” *MGWJ*, 1920, S. 163ff, 273ff. In the entry in the *Hebrew Encyclopedia* (1949, vol. 12, pp. 645–646) Pinhas Artzi wrote that Delitzsch was marked by “anti-Semitic tendentiousness par excellence.”

¹⁸³ Soloweitschik and Rubascheff, *The History of Bible Criticism*, p. 113.

¹⁸⁴ Plato, *Reflexionen*, I, II.

to Western society and culture in general, and to the German in particular, their defense of the Bible seemed to them not only a defense of this ancient and invaluable asset of Judaism, but also of the culture of liberal Germany, into which most of German Jews hoped to integrate, or at least to live in as a minority enjoying equal rights. They took encouragement from the fact that they were not alone in this struggle, but had allies in a large camp of Christians who marshaled their forces to defend the honor of the Old Testament.

In the final analysis, the Jews reacting to the controversy, as we shall see in the coming chapters, were more anxious to defend their self-image, their faith, culture and past than to defend the image of Judaism in German society. It is no wonder that after the Holocaust, some regarded this reaction as one more expression of the illusion the Jews of Germany had clung to and of the eclipse that had darkened their vision. It reflected their confidence in their future in a liberal and tolerant Europe, while all that Europe wished for was to “throw off the Bible” and to return to its pagan past, a desire that was expressed in biblical criticism and in the Babel-Bibel theory.

The radical nationalist author and journalist Yehoshua Heschel Yeivin (1891–1970) wrote:

Two or three generations before the Teutons conducted Majdanek and Auschwitz for Jews, the learned Teutons conducted Majdanek and Auschwitz for the Jewish spirit, for the soul of Judaism, for the fountainhead from which the Jews drew the essence of their existence and which has been the source of our pride vis-à-vis the nations. These learned men, Delitzsch and Wellhausen at their head, assailed the Torah of Moses and with the scalpel of their recondite surgery slashed it into unrelated shreds...these enemies knew in their subconscious that if they could divest the nation of this primal unparalleled document, if this source of its spirit were to become barren and desiccated, then in the end the Jewish substance, left without support or source, would be lost.¹⁸⁵

Yeivin’s description of biblical criticism and of the Babel and Bibel theory as “a spiritual furnace of Majdanek” was written in 1948. The connection it makes between biblical criticism and the Holocaust is totally groundless, and stems from an organicistic conception of Judaism and Jewish culture, as well as from the belief that the fate of the Jews as a people is irretrievably linked to an acceptance of the principle of the antiquity and unity of the Pentateuch. Nonetheless, his words seem to illustrate how the Babel-Bibel controversy was gener-

¹⁸⁵ Yehoshua Heschel Yeivin, “The Foreign Legion Returns Home,” in idem, *Ktavim*, Tel Aviv, 1968, p. 378 (Hebrew).

ally preserved at the margins of the Jewish historical memory: as an all-out, brutal attack on the foundations of Judaism and its legacy. In our view, there is no doubt that Delitzsch was an anti-Semite and a clever manipulator even though in the Babel-Bibel controversy, his anti-Jewish views were not fully expressed, but only insinuated.

Chapter 7

The Controversy in the German Arena: Theology vs. Science

Orthodoxy itself committed the blunder of letting reason into the field of religion, in that she sought to prove the positions of faith by the test of reason. Under the pressure of the Enlightenment, theology had almost nothing to do but defend herself against the intolerable contradictions which were pointed out to her.

Doctor Faustus, Thomas Mann, London, 1951
(trans. by H. T. Lowe-Porter).

The content of the Babel-Bibel controversy and the way it was waged on the internal German scene have been discussed at length by Johanning and by Lehmann.¹⁸⁶ We will describe them here through their books and some other brief summaries as well as several supplementary insights and clarifications of our own.¹⁸⁷ A brief survey of the internal German controversy is probably important not only for the reader who is unfamiliar with it but also for an understanding of the

¹⁸⁶ The two books by Johanning and Lehmann (Klaus Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel Streit: Eine forschungsgeschichtliche Studie*; Reinhard G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit*) are based on a reading of a large part of the polemic literature. The other, earlier works were based on the knowledge of a small part of this literature (some of them have already been mentioned in previous chapters).

¹⁸⁷ H. B. Huffmon, “Bibel und Babel: The Encounter between Babylon and the Bible”, pp. 309–320; Mogens-Trolle Larsen, “The ‘Babel/Bible’ Controversy and its Aftermath”, pp. 95–106; idem, “Orientalism and the Ancient Near East”, in: M. Harbsmeier and M.-T. Larsen (eds.), *The Humanities Between Art and Science. Intellectual Developments 1880–1914*, pp. 181–202; Raymond F. Surburg, “The Influence of the Two Delitzsches on Bible and New Eastern Studies”, *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 47 (2), July 1983, pp. 225–240; H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, pp. 309–319; H.H. Schmid, *Die Steine und das Wort: Fug und Unfug biblischer Archäologie*, Theologischer Verlag, Zürich, 1975, pp. 9–19; R. Liwag, “Bibel und Babel”, pp. 206–289; Arnold and Weisenberg, “A Centennial Review of F. Delitzsch’s ‘Babel und Bibel,’” pp. 441–457; Joel Sweek, “The Monuments, the Babel Bibel Streit and Responses to Historical Criticism.”

broad context of the Jewish response to it. For our purposes, it will also serve as background for an understanding of the different ways in which orthodox and reform Jews viewed the nature of the battle over the Bible that was being waged in German society between liberal and conservative Protestants. It will also elucidate the similarities each Jewish camp perceived between themselves and their adversaries, and between the two German camps.

From the start of the polemic, an attempt was made to separate its scientific aspect from its theological aspect. Delitzsch's critics contended that he had turned the German Oriental Society, which was meant to serve as a forum for scientific research,¹⁸⁸ into a battlefield of theological struggles. And as we noted previously, even Emperor Wilhelm II complained after Delitzsch's second lecture that he had exceeded his authority as an Assyriologist when he began engaging in theological issues that ought not to be a topic of public debate. In his letter of November 15, 1903 to Admiral Hollman, the Emperor expressed his opinion that Delitzsch had strayed from his scholarly authority into a field that was not his province: "Unfortunately he abandoned the standpoints of the strict historian and Assyriologist, going into religious and theological conclusions which were quite nebulous or bold ... In this province I can only urgently advise him to proceed cautiously." In actual fact, it was difficult to isolate theology from Assyriology, just as it was difficult to isolate Assyriology from ideology and politics. This connection between the fields had already been created in 1902, but after that year it became profound and patent.

Even Delitzsch's trenchant critics agreed that he was not an amateur but a scholar par excellence, who unfortunately had violated the rules of scientific research, had rashly drawn conclusions from partial and limited information,¹⁸⁹ and had enlisted his scientific reputation in the cause of ideology. In this context, we need to bear in mind that in 1902, Assyriology was still a young discipline, in existence only about fifty years, and many of the things written during the time of the controversy – and in fact before and after it – even by reputed Assyriologists, were unfounded speculative conclusions. In any event, it would have been naïve to expect scholars (and all the more so, dilettantes) to wait patiently until the available knowledge was broad enough to enable them to draw more well-founded conclusions. The

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, the criticism of the reform rabbi, S. Maybaum: "F. Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel", *AZdj*, 67 (4), 1903, pp. 37–39.

¹⁸⁹ See statements by Prof. Max Margolis at the conference of reform rabbis in 1903. *Central Conference*, p. 125.

large number of general books published until 1914 on the history of Babylonia and Assyria attests to this trend.¹⁹⁰ As a result of the immense enthusiasm aroused by the increasingly growing discoveries about the ancient past and the various meanings attached to them, research could not be conducted in isolation from public interest. Delitzsch was not the only Assyriologist (and biblical scholar) who rushed to draw far-reaching conclusions from the preliminary material.

Various, sometimes opposing, reactions also came from the scholarly community and the public at large in Germany. Some regarded the lectures as another sign that “rational” science was triumphing over religious tradition and authority. The climate of opinion during the period of Delitzsch’s lectures was characterized by attacks on Christian doctrine by those adhering to various secular ideas: positivist, materialist, evolutionist¹⁹¹ and even neo-pagan. In this climate, religion was depicted as a symbol or myth, the validity of religious tradition and its authority was weakened, and conservative Lutheranism in Germany was facing criticism by the liberal Protestant camp that wanted to free Protestantism of the shackles of dogma and the church establishment. One of the major weapons employed in this attack, particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was philological historical research on the Holy Scriptures (the Old and the New Testaments) and the sources, which proposed a sophisticated method for describing the historical development of the biblical text and a critical examination of the history of faith and religion, among other aims, to separate “history” from “myth” and “legend,” in order to arrive at the “pure” essence of faith. The dominant historicist-evolutionist approach was applied to both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁹² In addition, the doctrine of Bibles (OT & NT) divine source (*Inspirationstheorie*)¹⁹³ was chal-

¹⁹⁰ A detailed, albeit incomplete, list of this literature can be found in the relevant volumes of A. Freiman & H. Brody, *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1902–1904.

¹⁹¹ See: Thomas Albert Howard, *Religion and the Rise of Historicism: W.M.L. de Wette, Jacob Burckhardt, and the Theological Origins of Nineteenth-Century Historical Consciousness*, Cambridge, 2000; van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer*; Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Baltimore and London, 1971; Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth-Century*, Cambridge, 1979 (rep.).

¹⁹² The book that opened the period was *Das Leben Jesu – kritisch bearbeitet (The Life of Jesus)* (1835/1836) by the German theologian, David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874).

¹⁹³ Reimarus jun., *Babel und Bibel. Resultate der neuesten Bibelforschung*, Leipzig, 1903, pp. 3–11. And see: I. Clifford, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 3rd edn., London, 1899.

lenged and it was represented as a human creation expressing disparate views that should be understood in the context of their time.¹⁹⁴ To this process of secularizing the Bible, Delitzsch added the new evidence, namely, the ancient documents that predated the Bible, and which, in his view, had influenced it.

Emil Kraeling¹⁹⁵ suggested a moderate interpretation of the views Delitzsch presented in his 1902–1904 lectures and the reason they had evoked so much excitement. He believed that the lectures were perceived in the Christian world as a menace to faith, although in fact they had only challenged orthodox Protestant theology and belief in the supernatural.¹⁹⁶ This is, however, only a partial explanation, since orthodox Protestants were not the only ones who were shocked by Delitzsch's attack on the Bible. Many liberal Christians were disturbed by his challenge to the belief underpinning the German Christian tradition, namely that the Bible was the product of a divine revelation.¹⁹⁷ A challenge of this kind was also perceived as an injury to the foundations of the German Christian society and state.

What was the debate about?

The Orthodox vs. the Liberals – in German Lutheranism

The major polemic in Germany was conducted between the orthodox Lutherans and the Pietist movement,¹⁹⁸ which Bigler terms strict or-

¹⁹⁴ From the Christian standpoint, the threat did not lie in the negation of the divine source of the Mosaic Code, but in the rejection of the belief that the books of prophecy, the fruit of divine inspiration, had heralded the coming of Jesus. Peter Jensen, for example, argued in his book on the Gilgamesh epic, that the story of Jesus' death had emerged from the Mesopotamian myth.

¹⁹⁵ Kraeling was a professor at the liberal Union Theological Seminary and at Columbia University in New York.

¹⁹⁶ Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation*, pp. 96–97.

¹⁹⁷ H.H. Schmid, *Die Steine und das Wort*, p. 18.

¹⁹⁸ The movement was active primarily from the late seventeenth century until the second half of the eighteenth, and called for a religious revival within the Lutheran church. Together with the stress it placed on the rejuvenation of religious life and on inner devotion, with the aid of solitary reading of the Bible at home, the movement encouraged the philological study of the Bible and rejected dogmatic interpretation. Its members, however, believed that the Old and New Testaments "form a most reliable and precious system of divine testimonies." The Pietist movement greatly influenced the Methodist and Evangelical movements. See: Peter C. Erb (ed.), *Pietists: Selected Writings*, London, 1983; Kurt Aland, *Pietismus und Bibel*, Wittenberg, 1970.

thodox-biblical Christianity¹⁹⁹ on the one hand, and, on the other, the liberal Lutherans and cultural Protestantism (*Kulturprotestantismus*), namely the view that tried to reconcile modern culture, in particular modern science, with some of the fundamentals of Christianity.²⁰⁰ The polemic began in the 1830s and continued throughout the nineteenth century. The debate centered on issues bearing on the essence of Christianity, and hence on the nature of the relations between the Old and New Testament. It pertained to the essence of the revelation, the nature of biblical prophecy, the authority of the Holy Scriptures in general and to the boundaries of free critical research on faith and religion.²⁰¹

As far as the Catholics were concerned, the fact that the polemic had stirred up German Lutheranism, was the “malodorous outcome” of the Lutherans’ perception of the Bible as *sola scriptura*, the sole source of faith and religious authority. From this standpoint, the polemic was regarded as the inevitable consequence of the “fatal error” of rejecting Augustine’s dogma that “*Ego evangelio non crederem nisi auctoritas sanctae ecclesiae me commoverit*” (“I would not have believed the Gospel had it not been for the authority of the Catholic Church”). In the Catholic view, the direct Protestant approach to the Bible questioned the church’s authority to determine the articles of faith, while in Catholicism the Bible was the source of its authority, but the church retained the authority to decide how it should be interpreted. The official position was adopted in Pope Leo XIII’s (1810–1903) encyclical of 1893, *Providentissimus Deus*, which stated that the Bible was written by humans, “who correctly conceived, accurately wrote down and truthfully expressed all that He intended.” The conclusion to be drawn from this was that the Bible was written

¹⁹⁹ Robert M. Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism. The Rise of the Protestant Church Elite in Prussia, 1815–1848*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1972, p. 117. See also: Markus Matthias, “Orthodoxie, Lutherische”, in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Bd. 52, Berlin – New York, 1995, pp. 464–485.

²⁰⁰ See the entry “Kultur” in: H. Kunst & S. Grundmann, *Evangelisches Staatslexikon*, Stuttgart-Berlin, 1966, pp. 1185–1189. Also: Notker Hammerstein, *Antisemitismus und deutsche Universitäten 1871–1933*, Frankfurt am Main, 1995, pp. 421–444; Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, “Kulturprotestantismus, Zur Begriffs geschichte einer theologopolitischen Chiffre”, *Archive für Begriffsgeschichte*, 28 (1984), pp. 21–27; George Rupp, *Culture-Protestantism: German Liberal Theology at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, Atlanta, Ga., 1977.

²⁰¹ See, inter alia, Henning Graf Reventlow, *Hauptprobleme der alttestamentlichen Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt, 1982; R. M. Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism*; Johannes B. Kissling, *Der deutsche Protestantismus, 1817–1917: Eine geschichtliche Darstellung*, 2 vols., Münster, 1917–1918.

under divine inspiration and hence is reliable and expresses what God wanted to be written for the sake of human redemption.²⁰²

Consequently, the Catholics who participated in the Babel-Bibel controversy asserted that the approach of the Lutherans, who enlisted the Holy Scriptures in their battle against popedom, was responsible for what they viewed as the total breakdown of Protestantism from within. It is ironic, a Catholic critic wrote, that the factions that broke away from the Church, calling for a “free Bible,” are the very ones who have lost faith in the authority and supernatural source of the Bible, while the Catholic believers have not been adversely affected.²⁰³

At the conference of American reform rabbis held in Detroit in the summer of 1903, Rabbi Wolf I. Willner (1863–1932) suggested an interesting insight to explain the intensity of the controversy in the Protestant camp. He noted that “the Jew reads Scripture for the purpose of study, while the Christian is apt to do so for devotion. Hence to him who reads a chapter daily, the tenth chapter of Genesis and other genealogies have the same devotional value as a chapter of Isaiah or a psalm. On this difference of method, a great deal depends.” For the Protestant believer, the entire Bible is literally true because, in his view, the entire Bible was written under divine inspiration. The Protestants (and orthodox Jews) thus share the erroneous belief that all the words in the Bible are the “words of the living God” that are eternally binding, and the internal German (Protestant) polemic stems from this mistaken belief: the orthodox want to preserve and defend it while the liberals want to contradict it. That is why Delitzsch’s opinions have stirred up so much excitement in the Protestant camp. Delitzsch too departed from this mistaken understanding of the Bible and showed his total misconception of how the Jew reads it.²⁰⁴ Although Delitzsch’s contention that the biblical message did not have a divine source and that it originated in pagan Babylonia did seriously challenge the belief in the Pentateuch’s divine origin, a “progressive Jew” correctly reading the sources (as Maimonides also did)²⁰⁵, knows that many of the “common sense commandments” preceded the revelation

²⁰² On Catholicism’s position regarding modern biblical research, see: Robert K. Gnuse, *The Authority of the Bible: Theories of Inspiration, Revelation and the Canon of Scripture*, New York, 1985, pp. 6–31; John J. Collins & John Dominic Crossan (eds.), *The Biblical Heritage in Modern Catholic Scholarship*, Wilmington, Delaware, 1986.

²⁰³ Thomas J. McCormack, *The Open Court*, vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 130–132.

²⁰⁴ *Central Conference*, pp. 121–122.

²⁰⁵ See: Stephen D. Benin, *The Footprints of God: Divine Accommodation in Jewish and Christian Thought*, State University of New York, 1993, pp. 139–176; Amos

on Mt. Sinai and were drawn from earlier sources. In other words, according to Willner, faith in the Torah given at Sinai was not adversely affected by the discovery that parallel commandments can be found in pagan religions. He therefore concluded that what shook the very foundations of the world of the orthodox Protestants did not need to shake the world view of the reform Jew. The biblical scholar Professor Max Leopold Margolis (1886–1932)²⁰⁶ also stated that since Delitzsch believes in the unity of the biblical text, he in fact believes in the vulgar orthodoxy of the Protestant doctrine, which he ostensibly is attacking.²⁰⁷ Kaufmann Kohler spoke in a similar vein when he described it as a child-like faith that had eaten from the tree of knowledge, found itself to be naked, had lost its innocence and hence was impelled to seek refuge in rebellious, heretical views.²⁰⁸ From these views it is clear that the reform rabbis believed a fundamental common denominator existed between the liberal, reform Jew and the liberal Protestant. We will see later that this common denominator was not so simple even from the reform Jewish vantage point.

An interesting reaction came from an unexpected source. Rabbi Elijah David Rabinowitz (AdeReT, 1843–1905), head of the rabbinical court of Ponevezh (Panėvėžys) and chief rabbi of Jerusalem from 1901–1905.²⁰⁹ His son-in-law, R. Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935), recorded R. Rabinowitz' opinion that the immoral behavior of the Catholic Church, which “took great pride in its faith in God and the holiness of the Scriptures,” had aroused the people’s hatred and given rise to Protestantism, which in turn gave rise to the affront to the holiness of the Bible and the desecration of the faith.²¹⁰

Funkenstein, “Maimonides: Political Theory and Realistic Messianism,” in idem, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1993, pp. 131–155.

²⁰⁶ M. L. Margolis wrote, inter alia: *The Hebrew Scriptures in the Making*, Philadelphia, 1922. On him, see: Leonard J. Greenspoon, *Max Leopold Margolis, a Scholar’s Scholar*, Atlanta, Ga., 1987.

²⁰⁷ *Central Conference*, pp. 123–125.

²⁰⁸ *Central Conference*, p. 108.

²⁰⁹ On Rabbi AdeReT, see: Menachem Friedman, “The Rabbinate and the Leadership of the Ashkenazi Old Yishuv, 1890–1917,” In Moshe Lissak (ed.), *The History of the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine from the First Aliyah: The Ottoman Period*, Part II, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 101–102 (Hebrew). AdeReT came from Mir (Lithuania) to Jerusalem in March 1901 and died four years later (February 1905).

²¹⁰ Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacohen Kook, *Eder hayakar ve’ikvei hatzon* (1905), Mossad HaRav Kook, Jerusalem, 1982 (third printing), p. 48. See also in Chapter 8.

The Kaiser's Letter and the Reactions to it

The letter written by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who was also the head of the state church, and the reactions to it can help us describe the views that drew a distinction between orthodox Protestantism and liberal Protestantism.²¹¹ As we noted, the Kaiser supported the German Oriental Society, encouraged the excavations of the German expedition to Mesopotamia, and was the living spirit behind “the Babylonian Renaissance” in Germany. He regarded himself as the mentor and source of the nation’s happiness on this issue. Within this capacity of his, the Kaiser stated that as a theologian, Delitzsch had attempted to challenge the authority of the Bible and its status as well as to claim that the Bible did not contain any prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. He praised Delitzsch for having defended the honor of Babylonian culture, which had been slandered by the Bible, but Delitzsch should have stopped at this point, and ought not to have gone further and questioned the doctrine of revelation. Delitzsch, however, went too far, and this was a grave error on his part, because he touched on the innermost, holiest possession of many of his hearers.²¹² The Kaiser was prepared to agree with the view that many sections of the Bible are of a purely human nature and that Moses may have written the law under the influence of the code of Hammurabi, who was a contemporary of Abraham. However, he opined, this cannot disguise the fact that God inspired Moses and revealed himself to the people of Israel. Elsewhere in his letter, the German Kaiser suggested that a distinction should be drawn between two different kinds of revelation: one that is progressive, namely historical (*fortlaufende*), and the other, which is purely religious (*rein religiöse*), preparing, as it were, the way for the future Messiah. The first is a revelation to great sages, or men of singular intellect. The other is a revelation that began with the Jewish people in Abraham’s generation and concluded in the revelation to Jesus; this is a revelation that transmits God’s mercy from the seed of Abraham to the Christians, and which brought a universal message to the world.

²¹¹ Lehmann, *Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel Streit*, pp. 211–241.

²¹² The Kaiser was unaware of – or ignored – the fact that panbabylonianism also regarded ancient Christianity as an offspring of Mesopotamian mythology. The salient formulation of this theory appeared in Heinrich Zimmern’s book, *Zum Streit um die “Christusmythe”* (Berlin, 1910). Zimmern based the claim on an erroneous interpretation of the text called *Marduk’s Ordeal*. In any event, it is important to recall that not only the Bible was the subject of a radical attack, but the formative narrative of Christianity as well.

At the end of his letter, the Kaiser reiterated his faith in one God and his belief that human beings need a form in order to teach His existence. He stated that the present version of the Old Testament might be substantially modified under the influence of archaeological research, and added that “it does not matter that much of the nimbus of the chosen people will thereby disappear,” since “the kernel of the contents of the Old Testament will remain always the same – God and His works” (*Gott und Sein Wirken*). His final conclusion was that “Religion has never been the result of science, but the pouring out of the heart and being of man from intercourse with God.”

For the Kaiser, then, the eternal value of the Bible lay in the fact that it was the source of faith in one God, who reveals himself to the elect. In his view, the hidden meaning in Delitzsch’s words was not merely criticism of the Bible, but also a threat to the Christian articles of faith and the status and authority of religion and the Church. Kraeling writes that “people all over the world felt that Christianity was basically threatened. In reality, the only thing that was threatened – though really not more so than it had been all along – was orthodox theology.”²¹³

Hence he was prepared to accept the evolutionary concept of the gradual perfection of religion, and even what he defined as the criticism of biblical dogmatism. But he was resolute in his view that the doctrine of revelation must remain above – and outside – biblical research.²¹⁴ He did not accept the claim that an evolutionist historical view did not mean to spread atheism but only intended to cleanse religion of dogmas and dogmatism. He held, as did other critics, that the most serious aspect in Delitzsch’s statements was the offense against the trinity: the throne (the Kaiser), the nation and the altar (the church). From this standpoint, the question of whether Delitzsch was right or wrong in his interpretation of the signifier “el” in the Akkadian documents, for example, was of no importance. The Kaiser, and other critics of Delitzsch, understood all too well the explosive nature of the issue that Delitzsch had publicly presented: if the Bible had grown on

²¹³ Kraeling, *The Old Testament Since the Reformation*, pp. 96–97.

²¹⁴ The historian Eduard Mayer also responded to the Kaiser’s letter. On the responses, see: Oswald Loretz, *Das Ende der Inspirations-Theologie. Chancen eines Neubeginns*, Bd. I., *Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung der theologischen Lehre über die Inspiration der Heiligen Schriften*, Stuttgart, 1974, pp. 115–120; T. Weber, *Kaiser Wilhelm and Admiral Hollmann über “Babel und Bibel”*, Gotha, 1903; Otto Weber, *Theologie und Assyriologie im Streit um Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig, 1904; Karl Thieme, *Der Offenbarungsglaube im Streit um Babel und Bibel. Ein Wort zur Orientierung*, Leipzig, 1903.

Babylonian soil, then the articles of faith that religious tradition attributes to a divine source became a human creation, the contents of which are temporary and relativistic, and should be examined against the background of the period.

The Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums, the newspaper of liberal Jewry in Germany, reacted enthusiastically to the Kaiser's words. In contrast to Kohler, who believed that in his letter the Kaiser had undermined the principles of his own faith,²¹⁵ the weekly noted with satisfaction that the Kaiser had affirmed his belief in the revelation to Abraham. We concur in his view, the paper wrote, that although many sections in the Bible have a human, historical nature, and despite the link found between the Mosaic laws and the code of Hammurabi, there can be no doubt that God was the source of the revelation to Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. With complete agreement, it quoted the Kaiser's words: "The kernel of the contents will remain always the same – God and His works," and held that they were identical to the view of Jewish philosophers in the Middle Ages and in the modern era. The paper took exception only to fact that the Kaiser had given Delitzsch credit for having divested the Jews of their pretentious nimbus of being the chosen people, and wrote that the mission of the Jews as a holy people is a source of humility, not of pride.²¹⁶ The rabbi and scholar Dr. Nathan Porges²¹⁷ argued that anyone ascribing to the Bible one of the greatest deceptions of the human spirit is attempting to separate the Bible from the New Testament while overlooking the fact that the New Testament is based on the Old Testament.²¹⁸ Porges was referring, among others, to people like the prominent historian Eduard Meyer (1855–1930), who contributed to the controversy by heaping praise on Delitzsch's lectures because he had demonstrated to the Kaiser and members of his court how dependent the Bible was on its environment and in doing so had exposed the religious and intellectual inferiority of the Old Testament.²¹⁹

Delitzsch's supporters regarded the Kaiser's letter as an expression of pious Protestantism. They did not accept what he had to say about the need to separate theology and Assyriology, but instead described science (including biblical research) as a divine manifestation. They

²¹⁵ Central Conference, p. 101.

²¹⁶ Anon., "Der Kaiser über Babel und Bibel," *AZdJ*, 67 (9), 1903, pp. 100–102.

²¹⁷ See Appendix.

²¹⁸ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 57.

²¹⁹ Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althistoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 159–166.

felt that the Babel-Bibel controversy was important because it publicly exposed the conflict between science and faith, and compelled the sides in the debate to take an unequivocal stand in relation to the principle of revelation. Moreover, in opposition to the claim that Christianity is based on belief in the historical truth of Jesus' life as described in the Gospels and that it would stand or fall on this belief, they held that Christianity had always known how to adapt to scientific developments. Liberal theologians were of the opinion that if indeed the Kaiser was in favor of the freedom of research and of conscience, he could not anchor his judgment about the reliability of the Bible on faith and religious dogma, but had to relate to it as to any other human creation. The Kaiser's letter was perceived as an attempt to impair the freedom of research.²²⁰

Such was, for example, Adolf von Harnack's reaction to the Kaiser's letter. In his view, it would be a grave error on the part of the Protestants if they were to continue in the twentieth century to treasure the Bible as a canonical document, since that would lead to the paralysis of church and religion.²²¹ Harnack believed there was nothing really new in Delitzsch's statements, and that it had long been known that large parts of the Bible were myths and legends that had their origin in Babylonia. But, he went on to say, this fact is fatal only to those who desire to uphold the current notion that the Old Testament was divinely inspired. Hence the Church and theology (*Kirche und Schule*) have joined hands to suppress this knowledge, and indolence and fear have also done their share. Although Delitzsch contributed greatly to a correct understanding of the Bible, the exposure of the Bible's sources is of no importance in the context of the history of religion and of the spirit. "All Evangelical Christians," Harnack wrote, "will frankly and joyfully agree with the final sentence of the Emperor's letter: 'Religion was never a result of science'." Science in its strictest sense cannot accept the doctrine of revelation, whereas faith cannot exist without the belief in revelation. Harnack agreed with the Kaiser that throughout history, various great persons were privileged to be the recipients of a revelation, or epiphany, but he distinguishes between them and the unique revelation of Jesus. He believed that

²²⁰ *Lustige Blätter*, 71 (6), 1903 printed a song protesting against the attempt to "shut Delitzsch's big mouth."

²²¹ Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott: Eine Monographie zur Geschichte der Grundlegung der katholischen Kirche*, Leipzig, 1924, p. 217. And see: Adolf Harnack, "Der Brief Sr. Majestät des Kaisers an den Admiral Hollmann," *Preussische Jahrbücher*, 111, 1903, pp. 584–589.

Christianity developed from biblical prophecy but this belief does not create a similarity between the Bible and Christianity, and hence he accepted the view of Marcion of the 2nd century A.D. (the proponent of a heretic movement that only accepted the ten letters of Paul and a truncated version of the Gospel of Luke) that the Bible ought not to be part of the Christian canon and faith. The fact that rationalism and research have undermined the authority of the Bible shows that the Christians ought to cut themselves off from it. To refute the claim that Jesus himself acknowledged the authority of the Bible, Harnack argued that Jesus denied the importance of the earlier instances of revelation when he said: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matthew 11:27).²²² One might conclude from Delitzsch's statements that he did not hold the orthodox belief in the divinity of Christ, but Harnack, coming to Delitzsch's defense, asserts this was not the case. Harnack was not the only one. In the controversy, many Protestant theologians expressed their view that Judaism had always tried to mislead others with the claim that it was a chosen people, while it was isolated from and intolerant of other peoples, and that Protestant theology, in contrast, faithfully represented both tolerance and scientific thought.

Delitzsch formulated his principled stance on this issue in the following way: belief in the divine source of the Bible cannot be part of a scientific discussion; this belief is in itself an historical phenomenon, a product of human history, and as such is a subject for historical research; it is impossible to reconcile the dogma of divine revelation and the view that this revelation was written and handed down by human agents.

This is how Kraeling summed up the main points of the debate between Lutheran orthodoxy and Lutheran liberalism: while the orthodox deliberated about which part of the Bible was open to criticism, the liberals went from one destructive criticism to the next, not only as part of a scientific approach but also as an expression of their concept of the essence of religion. They regarded the Bible as a human creation, which has a certain literary, religious and moral value, but at the same time emphasized its flaws and inferiority in relation to the New Testament. The orthodox were prepared to agree with some of these positivistic-historical arguments, but they took refuge in a doctrinaire

²²² Kraeling, *The Old Testament*, pp. 147–149.

position, as formulated by the Kaiser, that the revelation was indeed an historical event and that the biblical literature is part of the process of revelation, during which faith cast off prior inferior and primitive elements – a process that reached its apogee in Christianity. From such a point of departure, they could participate in biblical research on the assumption that it would enable them to reconstruct the process of revelation in history.²²³ In other words, liberal theology, and to a certain extent orthodox theology as well, regarded the Bible as a human creation and believed that biblical faith underwent a process of development and perfection that reached its peak with the prophecy. However, while liberal theology questioned the doctrine of revelation, for orthodox theology, belief in the revelation and the history of salvation (*Heilgeschichte*), as described in the Bible, were the cornerstone of Christian faith.²²⁴ Both these doctrines, however, denied the link between the revelation and the obligation to acknowledge the Mosaic law; they both aspired to isolate those elements in the Bible that were not perceived as Jewish, but rather as universal and pre-Christian.

There is, then, much truth in R. Liwag's statement that Delitzsch's approach undermined the credibility of Christian theology and threw into sharp focus the problems involved in the theological interpretation of the Bible. Although in retrospect, the polemic may look like a "typographical error," the questions it generated and the challenge it posed to Christianity have not yet been resolved.²²⁵

We will recall that writers with neo-pagan views also participated in the Babel-Bibel controversy.²²⁶ They aspired to sever German culture from the entire Old Testament (and the New as well) and to connect it to "the ancient Germanic roots", in order to establish a national German religion. According to this view, it was a mistake to ascribe prophecies of Jesus' coming to the Bible, because they were uttered about a local, national king, "the hero of the tribe," not about

²²³ Ibid., p. 126.

²²⁴ It is impossible to avoid noting that in all of these exchanges, one key point is overlooked: the Christian view accepted the biblical cosmology as a "scientific" or "allegorical" description of the creation of the world and of mankind. The claim that this cosmology originated in Babylonian pagan myths challenged this dogma.

²²⁵ R. Liwag, "Bibel und Babel", p. 227.

²²⁶ J. Ebach, "Babel und Bibel oder: Das 'Heidnische' im Alten Testament," pp. 26–44. See also: S. Almog, "The Borrowed Identity: Neo-pagan Reactions to the Jewish Roots of Christianity," in Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *Demonizing the Other: Anti-Semitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, Amsterdam, 1999, pp. 131–147; Susannah Heschel, "Quest for the Aryan Jesus, The Archaeology of Nazi Orientalist Theology," in Hayim Lapin & Dale B. Martin (eds.), *Jews, Antiquity and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, Bethesda, MD, 2003, pp. 65–84.

“the son of God” – the most ideal man who ever lived, brought Greek idealism to perfection and established an ideal religion. Those advocating this view also held that the Aryans had suppressed and purified the Semitic world-view, and that modern research should complete the process of purging German idealism of any Semitic elements which still remain in it.²²⁷ They achieved this by depicting Jesus as an Aryan from a racial standpoint. From this they concluded that the New Testament also was produced by the spirit of a genius that differed from the genius that created the Bible, namely the spirit of the Aryan genius.²²⁸ In the view of the neo-pagan circles, the fact that such great interest in the antiquities of Babylonia arose in Germany proves that the Germans were charged with the mission of raising the flag of idealism and progress.

On the Front of Historical Scholarship

The polemic stirred up by Delitzsch raised two problems: first, an historical problem, relating to the similarity found between the biblical texts and texts from the ancient Near East. The questions posed were: how much similarity is there and how valid are the comparisons? The second problem is theological: what conclusion can be drawn from this similarity if in fact it exists? Has it the ability to undermine belief in the revelation, in the originality and uniqueness of the religion and culture of ancient Israel?

What Delitzsch and some of his critics had in common was that they did not regard Assyriology as a specific field of study dealing with the Mesopotamian civilization as an independent entity, but also as a field of study linked to historical and theological issues. Delitzsch's views rested on his scientific authority as a reliable interpreter of the documents found in the excavations in Mesopotamia. It was on this authority that he himself grounded his view about the development of religion. Hence the question of the scientific validity of the pan-Babylonian theory in general, and Delitzsch's in particular, played a central role in the controversy. The Babel-Bibel controversy was, then, also a

²²⁷ Reimarus jun., *Babel und Bibel*, pp. 22–23.

²²⁸ Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany*, pp. 228–229. We mention only the following books of the neo-pagan literature: Otto Hauser, *Der blonde Mensch*, 1921; Gustav Hildebrandt, *Neues Leben*, 1919; Otto Schrader, *Die Indogermanen*, 1911.

debate within the discipline, although the boundaries between science and theology were blurred.

Assyriology had a life of its own outside of theology and the Bible.²²⁹ Larsen wrote that: "... the disciplines of Near Eastern Archaeology and Assyriology which developed on the basis of the continuous stream of new evidence from the ancient cultures in Mesopotamia have to a large extent moved away from their ties to Bible studies." The enormous interest in the discoveries in Mesopotamia that began in the mid-1840s stemmed from their link to the world of the Bible, but after George Smith's 1875 book, *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, revealed incongruities between the Assyrian and the biblical chronology concerning the period between King Solomon and Nebuchadnezzar, the two disciplines began to split apart, and Assyriology gained independence.²³⁰ At the same time, however, between the 1870s and World War I, many books were published in various languages, particularly in German, dealing with biblical research and the history of the biblical period against the background of the new sources from the ancient Near East, drawing comparisons and parallels between the cultures of the ancient East and of the Israelites in the biblical period. Although the history of Assyria and Babylonia was written by professional Assyriologists as a history that stands on its own, independent of the Bible,²³¹ insofar as it related to research on and an understanding of the Bible, the link between these two fields endured and became even stronger among biblical scholars and within the public at large. Devoid of this link to the Bible, Assyriology would probably not have gained so much popularity. Y.N. Simchoni wrote that Assyriology developed "from the limbs of the ancient, living creation of the Jewish people." In other words, the interest in ancient Mesopotamia stemmed from Babylonia's link to the ancient history of the

²²⁹ M.T. Larsen, *The Conquest of Assyria: Excavations in an Antique Land*, p. x; Hayim Tadmor, "Nineveh, Calah and Israel: On Assyriology and the Origins of Biblical Archaeology", in: *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, Jerusalem, April, 1984, pp. 260–286.

²³⁰ Wellhausen did not accept Smith's view that one ought not to look for connections between the two chronologies. See: J. Wellhausen, Review of Smith, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1, pp. 539–541. See also: H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, pp. 305–309.

²³¹ See the criticism (in the spirit of the fashion that regards any "Western" position as an expression of "Orientalism") of a focus on Mesopotamia's contribution to Western civilization: Zainab Bahrani, "Conjuring Mesopotamia: Imaginative Geography and World Past", in: Lynn Meskell (ed.), *Archaeology under Fire*, pp. 159–174.

Jews.²³² The Babel-Bibel controversy is an indubitable testimony to this profound link.

From the vantage point of the history of Assyriology as a science, Delitzsch's lectures and the controversy waged in their wake is ostensibly no more than a sensational episode, lacking in any scientific value, and even as a serious deviation from the highroad of science. Some scholars believe that the polemic was important because it drew attention to the possibility and need to understand the Bible against the broad background of its cultural environment. The Babel-Bibel controversy stressed the need for biblical research to make intelligent use of new methods and new sources, and put an end to the tendency to examine the history of the Bible in isolation from its cultural environment, and thus it prepared the ground for building a new historical structure based on broad documentation.²³³

Since the scholarly aspect filled a central role in the controversy, an effective and obvious way to refute Delitzsch's theological and normative conclusions was to question the scientific validity of his views. The claim was made that although Delitzsch was presenting his interpretation as scientific truth, his conclusions, despite his professional authority, were not at all certain: sometimes they could not be proven, and sometimes they were essentially groundless. Most of his critics agreed that the archaeological finds had endowed the history of religion with a new depth and had revealed the genesis of religion, which was also influenced by external factors. However, they argued that it was always necessary to examine the nature of these influences in relation to the new content injected into the borrowed ideas.²³⁴ The conclusion was, then, that although the Bible was not a creation *ex nihilo*, it was a manifestation of a unique genius. The idea that the Bible is a product and expression of *Volksgeist* could be used for two opposite purposes: on the one hand, to describe the positive qualities of the specific "Volksgeist", and on the other to describe its negative qualities. If one accepts the principle that the Jewish national genius created individuality, rather than universality, then that would mean describing the Bible as a distinctly national creation; not as one that crosses national boundaries, but one that delimits national boundaries.

Some Assyriologists and biblical scholars accepted part of Delitzsch's historical claims regarding the link between the Bible and the

²³² Simchoni, *Introduction to the Gilgamesh Epic*, pp. viii–xi (Hebrew).

²³³ Herbert F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research*, p. 90.

²³⁴ Ibid., pp. 83–96.

Babylonian culture,²³⁵ while others accused him of drawing rash conclusions on the basis of limited historical material, of making groundless generalizations, and of incorrectly reading the documents and interpreting them in a one-sided or mistaken manner dictated by ideology. In brief, they described him as a reputed Assyriologist who had diverged from the rules of scientific method, and they suggested different interpretations of the Akkadian documents. Nor could Delitzsch's critics overlook the neo-pagan and anti-Christian facet of his theory, which expressed preference for the Babylonian moral code over that of the Prophets and tried to premise a direct link between Babylonian morals and Christianity, leaving the Bible out entirely. The reaction was a mixture of theological and scientific arguments leveled against both the way in which Delitzsch had interpreted the ancient texts and the conclusions he had drawn from them.

We will quote from just a few of his critics.

Eduard König (1846–1936), for example, argued that Delitzsch's theory “Babylonized the Bible” (*Babelsierung der Bibel*),²³⁶ and pointed to the contradiction between the historical-evolutionary concept and Delitzsch's view. He was opposed to the idea of evolution, which held that religious faith had evolved from a primitive stage to a more advanced stage. While it is very possible that the Bible used materials borrowed from the Babylonian polytheistic culture, this was a lower stage in the evolution of religion. Dependence on a source earlier in time does not negate the originality or uniqueness of the Bible, but only underscores the fact that it was in a more advanced stage in the development of human culture. In other words, the evidence that Delitzsch presented to prove the dependence of Hebrew monotheism on Babylonian polytheism only stresses the essential difference between them, or, in another version, between the Babylonian (esoteric) pre-monotheism and the Hebrew monotheism. König averred that Delitzsch had ignored the essential differences between the outlook of the Bible and that of the Babylonian religion: in Babylonia the elect aspired to reach the heavens in order to understand the decisions of the gods through omens, while the Israelites aspired to unravel the very secret of life.²³⁷

²³⁵ See, e.g., T.G. Pinches, *The Old Testament*, pp. 525–536.

²³⁶ The name of his 1922 book, E. König, *Die moderne Babelsierung der Bibel*, 1922, which had appeared earlier in 1903 under the title *Bibel und Babel*.

²³⁷ E. König, *Die Babel-Bibel-Frage und die wissenschaftliche Methode. Zugleich Kritik von Delitzsch's IIIter Babel-Bibel-Schrift*, Berlin, 1904, p. 12. And see: Lehmann, pp. 142–152.

Alfred Jeremias believed that Delitzsch had advanced the science of Assyriology and had put a stop to the flagrant use of archaeology to prove biblical truths. He also averred, however, that Delitzsch had gone too far in the opposite direction: the excavations in Mesopotamia could not serve as the graveyard of the Holy Scriptures; ten verses from Luther's Bible would suffice to prove the superiority of the Old Testament to Babylonia.²³⁸ Delitzsch had greatly exaggerated in pointing to Babylonia's influence on the Bible, and this had led him to an erroneous conclusion that the whole of the ancient religion of Israel was borrowed from the Babylonians. In Jeremias' view, it was possible that a secret religion (*eine esoterische Religion*) might have existed in Babylonia that believed the gods were manifestations of one divinity (*Gottheit*), but this faith was not shared by the population as a whole. Moreover, the Babylonian doctrine of creation believed in a primeval beginning (*Uranfang*), but according to it, the world was not created by God but was formed out of primal chaos. In contrast, the Hebrew doctrine of creation believes that the world was created by the spirit of God which is transcendent to it.²³⁹ As a result, it is impossible to agree to a view that ascribes greater value to the spiritual world of Babylonia than to the Bible.

The Assyriologist Fritz Hommel, who leveled severe criticism on the Wellhausen school's hypothesis of the sources, suggested that Christians should not give up their belief in the revelation because of the archaeological discoveries, but that instead they should thank the Almighty and take joy in the treasures uncovered from the earth. The history of the evolution of religion in ancient Asia is the best defender of the Bible. He was totally confident that the extra-biblical documents would substantiate faith and that truth would triumph.²⁴⁰ Ernst Sellin believed there were many positive aspects in Delitzsch's lectures, but that he had erred in mixing personal views with scientific research. For example, Delitzsch had deliberately overlooked the fact that a nation's cultural uniqueness is not determined by the elements it shares with other nations, but by the assets peculiar to it. Moreover, Delitzsch had ignored the moral-religious content of the stories of Creation and the flood in the Bible.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Alfred Jeremias, *Im Kampfe um Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 36.

²³⁹ A. Jeremias, *Der Einfluss Babyloniens auf das Verständnis des Alten Testaments*, Berlin, 1908.

²⁴⁰ F. Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, London, 1897, pp. 22, 317.

²⁴¹ R. E. Clements writes: "In the years before the first World War the study of the connections between the Bible and the rediscovered religions of Mesopotamia became known as the Babel-Bibel controversy and was brought under the deepest

Sellin further asserted that Delitzsch had glossed over the fact that the Babylonians were total polytheists, and at the very most, henotheists (believers in the superiority of one god within a pantheon of gods), but certainly not monotheists. He felt it was unfortunate that Delitzsch's opinions might leave the public with the impression that Assyriology was not a serious science.

Hermann Gunkel, who conceived the method of Biblical Form Criticism, accepted some parts of Delitzsch's criticism of Judaism, but rejected others. Gunkel agreed with him about the "national haughtiness of the chosen people," and also asserted that Jewish scholars cannot be objective, since their apologetics is a result of their fear that they might be deprived of their exclusive right to the revelation and of their desire to revile the other religions. He also held that Judaism was tainted with hatred for other peoples. In defense of the Jews, he noted that the source of this hatred was understandable in view of the historical conditions in which Judaism had developed, but that it ought to be uprooted from Christianity.²⁴² However, when it came to the attitude of Christians to the Bible, his opinion differed from Delitzsch's. Gunkel stated that the spiritual world of the Bible is different from anything that came before it, and that it contains eternal values, such as the concept of one God, the doctrine of reward and punishment, the relation between religious piety and love of homeland. The merit of the Bible stems neither from its historical accuracy nor its originality, but from its world-view and its unique values. The fact that the national genius adapts material it has borrowed from another culture does not make it less unique, because it endows this material with a loftier content.²⁴³ In other words, according to Gunkel, a comparative history of religions could contribute to an understanding of their evolution, but could not detract from their uniqueness. This view, as we shall see, was a key element in the claims made by many of the Jews who reacted in the controversy. Gunkel also stated that the doubts about the veracity of many of the biblical stories and the

suspicion ... The effect was to draw suspicion upon all who, like Gunkel, were interested in exploring the Old Testament in the light of what could be learnt of its background in the ancient world," in: Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study*, p. 13.

²⁴² Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, 1895 (English trans: *The Legends of Genesis*, Chicago, 1901); idem, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte der modernen Forschung, ein Beitrag zur Weiterentwicklung der christlichen Religion*, München, 1905.

²⁴³ Christian Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*, pp. 196–198. And see: Hermann Gunkel, *Was bleibt vom Alten Testament?*

dependence discovered between the Bible and the Babylonian culture could not constitute a reason for totally relinquishing the Bible. It is impossible to understand the New Testament without its link to the Bible, and an essential continuity exists between the Old and the New Testaments. Hence Christianity in Germany would do well to adapt itself to the sensitive forces of the Jewish religion. Peter Jensen asserted that Delitzsch had based his theory on erroneous evidence. For example, the story about Tiamat does not deal – as Delitzsch claimed – with a dragon; Nabu and Nergal, the gods of the sun and the moon, are not the same god.²⁴⁴ Cornill wrote that Delitzsch did not possess the restraint and caution required of a scholar, and that in the final analysis, the Bible would emerge triumphant.²⁴⁵

Alternative theories were also suggested about the source of Hebrew monotheism. One such theory spoke of the existence of an earlier Semitic monotheism (*Urmonotheismus*) or, in other words, a claim that a proto-monotheistic concept was shared by all the ancient Semitic peoples, and hence that the Babylonians and the Israelites drew their ancient monotheism from a common source, so there was no basis for speaking about the Bible borrowing from Babylonia.²⁴⁶ These alternative theories were no less speculative than Delitzsch's. Most of them, at any rate, regarded the historical biblical story about the genesis of the Jewish people as a quite reliable story, and on the basis of this assumption, various proposals of reconstruction were put forward and various suggestions were made about the possible link between the Bible and the Mesopotamian culture.

²⁴⁴ See Lehmann, pp. 159–162.

²⁴⁵ C.H. Cornill, "Friedrich Delitzsch, Babel und Bibel", *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 27, 1902, pp. 1680–1684.

²⁴⁶ See the dissertation: K. Müller, *Die seit Renan über einen israelitischen Urmonotheismus geäusserten Anschauungen disziplingeschichtlich dargestellt*, Breslau, 1911, pp. 11–78. One alternative theory was that of Albert Tobias Clay in his book: *Amurru, The Home of the Northern Semites*, Philadelphia, 1909. And see: J. Sweek, "The Monuments, the Babel-Bibel-Streit, and the Responses of Historical Criticism."

Chapter 8

At War – Within and Without

Not merely idle talk, these are words of desolation. If we had not known who was uttering and writing them, we would have said they are the fruit of a deranged mind.

Ze'ev Jawitz, "Criticism When it is Criticized", 1911.

Thus it was when Assyriology came into the world and confused men's minds with the similarities they found, based on their fanciful hypotheses, between our holy Torah and words written on cuneiform tablets in relation to opinions, morals and deeds.

Rabbi Kook, *Eder hayakar ve'ikvei hatzon*, 1905, p. 42.

Assyriology is one of the most glorious chapters in the history of science.

Benno Jacob, "Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie," 1903.

"Babel und Bibel" as a Declaration of War on Judaism

We can assume with near certainty that if Delitzsch's views had been uttered and written by an Assyriologist who was not German, and if the public polemic on the nature of the relationship between Babylonia and the Bible and its significance had been conducted elsewhere – not in imperial Germany of the early twentieth century – it would not have resonated so widely. It was the place and the time that caused these lectures to reverberate so strongly and turned them into a topic of public controversy. Since the Babel-Bibel controversy was a blend of theology, the history of religion, ideology and polemics, faith, tradition and free research, archaeology, biblical criticism, the theory of race and anthropology, it intrigued broad circles in Germany and had

a vast impact outside of Germany as well.²⁴⁷ As a result, the educated German Jewish public could not stand idly by when issues touching upon the history of Judaism and its essence were at the very heart of this polemic. Scholars, men of letters and academically educated rabbis could not remain on the sidelines; they had to defend the honor of the Book of Books. In the eyes of many, the honor of the Bible was identical to the honor, value and prestige of Judaism as a system of faith and ethics.

The Jewish involvement in the Babel-Bibel controversy can be seen as one link in the long chain of polemics between Jews and Christians, conducted from the Middle Ages; this polemic can be viewed as a link in the chain of Jewish reactions to modern anti-Semitism. The Jewish participants in it were all too aware that the attitude of Christian society to the Bible to a great extent reflected its attitude towards Jews and Judaism. Unquestionably, there was something of both these aspects in the Jewish reaction, but it was also part of an internal Jewish debate. In reacting to Delitzsch's lectures, the Jews were compelled to discuss the history of religion, comparative mythology, the history of culture and the philosophy of history. Concomitantly with these discussions, they had to come up with replies of a positivistic-historical nature: what was in fact written in the Mesopotamian documents and how should they be understood.

There was nothing new about Jews in Germany responding to publications dealing with Jews and Judaism. From the beginning of the Haskalah period, Jewish rabbis, thinkers, intellectuals and writers reacted to such publications. They followed Christian polemical writing and reacted to it in articles and books.²⁴⁸ In the modern era, several important polemics were milestones in the Jews' confrontation with anti-Jewish contemporary streams and views. From 1815–1850, approximately 2,500 books were published by Jews and non-Jews on the issue of whether Jews should be accorded civil rights. Later, the

²⁴⁷ One cannot help but agree with Thompson who writes that Delitzsch ignited a worldwide polemic. See: J. W. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, vol. 2, p. 479.

²⁴⁸ More than 60 polemical writings were published in 1803, after the appearance of Karl W.F. Grattenauer's, anti-Jewish book, *Wider die Juden*, which is a continuation of the anti-Jewish literature that began with Johannes Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, 1700. Between 1782–1884, about 160 works were published in Germany, written by Jewish authors and dealing with modes of studying the Jewish religion, as well as popular, apologetic reviews: See: J.J. Petuchowski, "Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the early period of Emancipation", in A. Altmann (ed.), *Studies in Nineteenth Century Jewish Intellectual History*, pp. 47–64.

polemic, known by the name *Antisemitismusstreit*, was conducted from 1879–1881, after the liberal nationalist philosopher Heinrich Treitschke (1834–1896) published his article on the Jewish question in the Prussian Yearbooks (*Preussische Jahrbücher*) in November 1879, in which he argued that the German nation could no longer suffer Jewish separatism.²⁴⁹ Shortly before the Babel-Bibel controversy – at the turn of the century – a series of lectures delivered by the scholar of Church history Adolf von Harnack at Berlin University provoked a flurry of reactions by learned rabbis and intellectuals.²⁵⁰

The Babel-Bibel controversy took place over a short period (its peak was from 1902–1905)²⁵¹ and the Jewish reaction, written and oral, to Delitzsch's lectures was immediate and intensive, which, of

²⁴⁹ Shulamit Volkov writes that Treitschke enabled anti-Semitism to enter German universities through the front door (Volkov, *The Magic Circle*, pp. 104–108). See also: Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bis Max Weber*, pp. 192–219; Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914*, pp. 14–17; Klaus Holz, *Nationaler Antisemitismus: Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung*, Hamburg, 2001, pp. 165–297; Walter Boehlich (ed.), *Der Berliner Antisemitismusstreit*; Michael A. Meyer, “Great Debate on Antisemitism: Jewish Reactions to New Hostility in Germany 1879–1881,” in *LBI Year Book*, XI, 1966, pp. 137–170. On the Jewish reaction to anti-Semitism in the said period, see also: Jehuda Reinharz, “The Responses of the Centralverein and the Zionist Federation in Germany to anti-Semitism in the Weimar Republic,” (trans. into Hebrew from the manuscript by Atalia Zilber), in Abraham Margoliot and Yehoyakim Cochavi (eds.), *History of the Holocaust: Germany*, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 13–20 (Hebrew).

²⁵⁰ We recall the action brought by the Central-Verein, against the anti-Semitic propagandist Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933), author of a demagogic propaganda pamphlet entitled *Beweis-Material gegen Jahwe* (The Evidence against Jahweh) (1913) that came out in 1916 under the name *Der falsche Gott* (The False God). In 1887 Fritsch published *Antisemiten-Katechismus*. See also Chapter 11. We also note the rabbi of Königsberg, Felix Perles' (1874–1933) polemic against Wilhelm Bousset (1865–1920), author of the book *Die Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Berlin, 1903) and the most outstanding representative of the school of the history of religion (Religionsgeschichte Schule). On Perles' response to the book, see: Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*, pp. 131–178.

²⁵¹ To fully evaluate the resonance of the polemic as it was taking place, it is also necessary to take note of who did not participate in it and who did not even relate to it. It is easier to survey the participants in the polemic and to explain their motives than to survey those who refrained from taking part in it. A great many of the key figures in the spiritual life of German Jewry failed to respond to the controversy. As far as we could ascertain, it was not mentioned in the diaries or correspondence of many persons, who were aware of what was taking place on the intellectual and scientific scene of Europe. They may not have known about it or ascribed no importance to it. Hardly any echo of the polemic is found in the writings of Zionist figures. During that time, the Zionist movement was engrossed in another stormy debate (the Uganda question).

course, tells us not only about the impression they made, but also about the urgent need to respond that they aroused in many Jews.

Soon after the first lecture, the orthodox Orientalist and linguist Prof. Jacob Barth (1851–1914) lectured in Berlin and Frankfurt on “Babel and the World of the Ancient Jewish Religion,”²⁵² and he was followed by many who reacted in Germany and outside it. The *Israelitische Wochenschrift* reported on a meeting in Berlin, in which a protest had been lodged “against Delitzsch’s debasement of Judaism.” The writer claimed that the reaction was exaggerated and only helped fuel Delitzsch’s pseudo-scientific megalomania.²⁵³ In contrast, the biblical scholar and journalist, Shimon Menahem Lazar (1864–1932),²⁵⁴ in an article published in February 1903 in *Hamaggid hechadash*,²⁵⁵ stated that in his lectures Delitzsch had declared war on Judaism, and interpreted its aims as follows:

And now Christian critics have come forth in Germany, desecrating the sanctity of the Bible and turning the Holy Scriptures into Jewish literature that has no advantage over Assyrian, Egyptian, Indian or Persian literature. Every learned man has therefore asked himself: What share do we have in the Torah of the Jews and what right does it have to place itself above any other ancient literature? Let the Jews take what is theirs and get out of our midst! This thought has for many years lingered in the minds of modern Christian scholars, but they did not dare utter it openly, and now it has found a redeemer in Professor Friedrich Delitzsch.

To totally reject in one fell swoop the influence of the Jews and biblical literature is impossible, for the roots of this great tree are strongly implanted and the spirit of simple criticism will not speedily uproot them. Hence Delitzsch has followed in the footsteps of those who preceded him, to fight against Israel and its Torah by means of biblical criticism. But rather than content himself with a handful of scholars, who in any case are not religiously devout, Delitzsch turned to the people and to their king and to the highest of their ministers to render biblical criticism more popular and to accustom the people to the desecration of the holy. The road has already been paved, milestones and signposts had already been erected, but a little courage, a bit of daring was needed to be the one to take it first, to show the many what were the intentions of those waging

²⁵² J. Barth, *Babel und israelitisches Religionswesen*, Berlin, 1902. See in Breuer, *Modernty within Tradition*, pp. 209–210.

²⁵³ Anon., “Babel und Bibel”, *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, 12 (4), 23. Januar 1903, pp. 51–52.

²⁵⁴ Later, editor of the weekly *Hamitzpeh* in Warsaw (1904–1914, 1917–1923). Among his writings: *Darkei sefer Hoshea uvi’uro* (*Commentary of the Book of Hosea*) (Przemyśl, 1893), *Chidat ha’agadot al dvar aseret hashevativim* (*The Riddle of the Legends of the Ten Tribes*), Zuvarnik-Oliphant, 1908, and a German-Hebrew dictionary.

²⁵⁵ *Hamaggid hechadash*, February 1903, p. 65.

the battle. And for this Professor Delitzsch found an effective machination: to find a precedent for Jewish influence, to deny its originality and to make Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the pride of the people of culture, to restore Babylon to its former honorable state: "I am and there is none else," as the Prophet said. Babylon is the first among the peoples; from there they split into nations and scattered to their lands according to the biblical story. The first human culture was established in Babylon according to archaeological excavations too ... Hence bring unto Babylon the honor of Israel, for ancient Babylon was not of the sons of Shem. The sons of Shinar (or Shamir) and Akkad were from the race of the Aryans.

So there, in the valley of northern Germany on the Spree river, a second Tower of Babel was built, its head in the heavens, from which the wise men of Ashkenaz could wage a battle against the holiness of the Hebrew Bible and the influence of the sons of Shem on the world.

And these are the harsh words written by the national orthodox historian, Ze'ev Jawitz, who drew a distinction between critical biblical scholars, whose views were not influenced by the hatred of Jews, and Wellhausen, Delitzsch and others who share their ideas, which are so suffused with hatred:

To our sorrow, we have seen in the camp of the "Bible critics" ... not merely castles in the air, but also much antagonism, suppressed hatred and strong loathing for Israel, and such scorn, ridicule and disgrace for our holy books that would make the blood of every Jew hearing them run cold. But the treatment we receive at the hands of the peoples of Europe we are already accustomed to. Those in the East would destroy our homes and tear our babes to bits, and those in the West would humble our spirit and despoil our honor, as they pour their contempt upon all that is sacred to us.²⁵⁶

In a lecture he delivered to members of the neo-Orthodox youth society *Nachalat Zvi* in Frankfurt²⁵⁷ Rabbi Isaac Breuer, Hirsch's grandson and an important orthodox thinker in his own right,²⁵⁸ stated that Delitzsch's main intent was to gain more fame than his eminent father, Franz Delitzsch, but he chose a different route. Rather than toil with the sweat of his brow over the interpretation of thorny biblical passages, he came out with the proclamation that not a single drop of precious Aryan sweat should be wasted on the biblical piece of trash that had captivated the Germans for such a long time. With this end in mind, Delitzsch declared publicly that the Jews were nothing

²⁵⁶ Ze'ev Jawitz, "Totzot hachitot vehachakikot" (A History of Archaeology), p. 24.

²⁵⁷ The society was founded in 1900 as a department of the *Mekor Haim* society, founded in 1874. See: M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 270.

²⁵⁸ M. Breuer, pp. 380–385. On Issac Breuer, see Appendix and Matthias Morgenstern, *From Frankfurt to Jerusalem*, Leiden, 2002. His important book is *Der Neue Kusari* (The New Kusari), Frankfurt am Main, 1934.

but petty imitators. The result was, Breuer claimed sarcastically, that the rustle that had moved through the forests of criticism had rapidly turned into a roaring storm. Many were panic stricken, and believing parents were fearful for the safety of their children.²⁵⁹

A sharp reaction also came from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The conservative scholar S.Z. Schechter wrote that he had read somewhere that the discovery of the Hammurabi code “means a blow to orthodoxy.” But would a Jew from any other stream agree to the description of the Mosaic code as a borrowing from idols? It is true that the Jews did not invent many things, but one thing cannot be denied them: the fact that they had given the world the word of God – the Bible – and had remained loyal to it despite destruction and persecution: “We have stormed heaven to snatch down this heavenly gift, as the paitanic expression is: we threw ourselves into the breach and covered it with our bodies against every attack; we allowed ourselves to be slain by the hundreds and thousands rather than become unfaithful to it.”²⁶⁰ At the Central Conference of American Rabbis, held in Detroit from June 29–July 4, 1903, a special session was devoted to the Babel-Bibel controversy.²⁶¹ Even among the reform rabbis in America, some of whom were advocates of radical biblical criticism, the prevailing view was that this was a scandalous, dangerous anti-Jewish attack. The president of the conference, Kaufmann Kohler, in a lecture entitled “Assyriology and the Bible,” reacted to what he called the resurrection of the dead of Babylon: “Babel is dead and her gods have fallen and her monuments have crumbled into dust. Israel’s God lives and will outlive all His blasphemers.”²⁶² Unfortunately, he went on to say, to gain popularity in Germany, you need “to blow the horn of anti-Semitism and give vent to the furor Teutonicus of a Schopenhauer, a Nietzsche, a Paul Lagarde and a Stewart Chamberlain,”²⁶³ and this time the science of Assyriology was being used for this purpose. In a similar vein, Rabbi Dr. Friedrich Cohen (1873–

²⁵⁹ Isaac Breuer, “Rückblick auf das Jahr 5663. Ein Vortrag”, *Der Israelit*, 44 (96), Dezember 1903, pp. 2115–2119.

²⁶⁰ S. Schechter, “Higher Criticism – Higher Anti-Semitism”, in *Seminary Addresses*, pp. 35–39.

²⁶¹ One of the speakers in the discussion noted that the difference between the situation of the Jews in Germany and of those in the United States was also reflected in the latter’s possibility and willingness to hold a public debate without being afraid. The fact is that although the Jews of Germany may not have responded to the polemic at official meetings, they certainly did not remain silent on the issue.

²⁶² *Central Conference*, p. 114.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 105.

1940) asserted that Delitzsch was attempting to provide the Germans “with an archaeological Krupp gun, for the use of anti-Semitism.”²⁶⁴ Rabbi Hillel (Hyman) Gershom Enelow (1887–1934) of New York stated that there were hidden motives behind Delitzsch’s lectures, and he suggested a psychological explanation for them. Nearly all of the speakers regarded Delitzsch as an enemy of the Jews and believed his views were shaking the very foundations of Judaism. Rabbi David Philipson (1862–1949) was the only one at the conference who suggested there was no reason to get so upset; the polemic would quickly pass, just as previous attempts to detract from the greatness of the Bible had. He called out: “Brethren, we need have no fears”²⁶⁵ and was loudly applauded.

Most of the Jews who reacted to the controversy recognized Assyriology as a scientific discipline. Some even described it as one of the greatest achievements of modern science. Assyriology, Benno Jacob wrote, is a science of facts whose achievements deserve to be considered one of the most glorious chapters in the history of science. Assyriology helps us to understand the Bible from the standpoint of linguistics, politics and history, and biblical research has profited from it in four domains: it has gained a better understanding of the linguistic aspect, of the political-social background, of the history of ancient cultures and the development of religion. A correct reading of the extra-biblical evidence will only prove and affirm the reliability of the Bible as history.²⁶⁶ Delitzsch’s lectures stirred up such a furor because along with the “profit,” there was also a “loss”: the God of Israel was stolen from the Jewish people.²⁶⁷ Delitzsch, the liberal rabbi Nathan Porges wrote, is not an enemy of the Jews, a mindless fraud, or a sensation-seeking writer. He is a recognized, authoritative Assyriologist, and that is why there is the danger that many Jews “who always tend to cheer the new” will accept his views. However, one ought not to reject Assyriology outright, since it has proven the historical reliability of the Bible and enriched knowledge about its world. Anyone who believes in the sacredness of the Bible needs no such proof or scientific support, and it is not within the power of science to undermine faith, but one cannot dismiss the value of scientific proofs.²⁶⁸ The liberal

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 135

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 119. David Philipson was one of the first graduates of the reform Hebrew Union College (in 1883).

²⁶⁶ Jacob, “Das Judentum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie”, p. 199.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, pp. 9–13. On him, see Appendix.

rabbi Arnold Aaron Tänzer (1871–1937)²⁶⁹ asserted that science does not deal with imaginary hypotheses, and hence the lovers of truth and the adherents of true religious faith have to cope with the findings of science and research; silence is tantamount to self-betrayal. The believing man must never ignore modern science, rather he should accept its findings and grapple with them. Assyriology has not detracted from the value of the Bible or its credibility.²⁷⁰ Since Delitzsch uses the ammunition of modern science, backed up by his scientific prestige, Rabbi Dr. Ahron Marcus wrote, we have no choice but to come up with ammunition that can penetrate this heavy armor.²⁷¹ Thus Shulim Ochser was able, on the one hand, to depict many of the findings of Assyriology as “fanciful imaginings” meant to sling mud at the Bible and Judaism, and on the other hand, to declare that Assyriology should be taught in rabbinical seminaries to prepare rabbis to defend Judaism against claims based on it.²⁷² Oppert wrote that the Lutheran clergy and Jewish orthodoxy had reacted to Delitzsch’s statements in a non-professional manner, because none of them were sufficiently well-versed in the science of Assyriology.²⁷³ However, quite a few of those who reacted did possess sufficient knowledge.

Some chose to react by fundamentally questioning the authority of the archaeological and philological research of the ancient Near East. The rabbi Dr. Benzion Seligkowitz, for example, wrote sarcastically about the Assyriologists who think they have found the philosopher’s stone, but, in effect from the womb of learned arrogance they have given birth to a new heresy.²⁷⁴ Those who reacted in this way raised the following claims: Assyriology is a science still in its infancy, and the Assyriologists themselves do not agree on everything; the dating of the documents is not always certain, and often they are only fragments, some of them later copies. Dr. Immanuel Plato (1863–1937)²⁷⁵ opined that it was impossible even to think of changing a tradition on the basis of one Babylonian calendar. Delitzsch had lifted several bricks and used them to construct a magnificent imaginary building. It was unthinkable to replace faith in the revelation on Mt. Sinai with “the

²⁶⁹ On him, see the Appendix.

²⁷⁰ Tänzer, *Judentum und Entwicklungslehre*, p. 10. On him, see the Appendix.

²⁷¹ Marcus, *Zwischen zwei Stühlen*.

²⁷² Ochser, *Judentum und Assyriologie*, p. 42. On him: see the Appendix.

²⁷³ Oppert, *Jewish Chronicle*, April 17, 1903, pp. 14–15.

²⁷⁴ B. Seligkowitz, “Der Vortrag ‘Babel und Bibel’ in seinen Konsequenzen für Judentum und Christentum”, *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, 12 (8), Februar 1903, pp. 107–109. On him, see the Appendix.

²⁷⁵ On him, see the Appendix.

revelation of a cuneiform tablet,” a divine revelation with one “dug up from the ground,” and to deprive humankind of the dimension of sanctity on the basis of one ancient inscription. Moreover, it is impossible to employ a similarity in symbols and signs to determine similarity in philosophical approaches, since disparate world views can use the same symbols and signs.²⁷⁶ David Philipson said that from time to time new suggestions about how to read the very same text are proffered, and it quickly turns out that the conclusions drawn from them were too rash.²⁷⁷ What seems certain to one scholar, Rabbi Dr. Bernard Ziemlich (1849–1907)²⁷⁸ also noted, is totally destroyed by another.²⁷⁹ The reading of cuneiform script is problematic, the rabbi, Dr. Max Beermann of Insterburg,²⁸⁰ wrote, and the documents should not be regarded as objective sources, since they were not intended to teach history, but to praise kings for their victories, on the one hand, and to cover up their defeats, on the other.²⁸¹ Again and again, the claim was made that Delitzsch had crossed the clear boundary between the science of Assyriology and theology, two separate domains,²⁸² and that his desire to express original views had led him to spread unfounded, sensational conjectures. As we have already seen, heaps of ridicule were hurled at Delitzsch and his “Babylonian babble” (*Gebabbel*).

The historian and literary scholar of literature, Joseph Klausner, tried to calm turbulent emotions and assuage fears. In 1903, in *Hashiloach*, Klausner, who had studied Assyriology at Heidelberg (in 1897–1902), praised that discipline. He described the Babel-Bibel controversy as no more than a fleeting episode in its history:

And suddenly, Assyriology, that young science, which took shape in our own time, has become a subject on everyone’s tongue ... There are only 150 people now in the whole world who know how to read cuneiform script, and yet the things written in it are becoming the property of the entire enlightened world. Assyriology has come into its own, a vast spiritual power, and no longer does it cling to the mainstays of Jewish faith – the foundation of the positive faiths of the whole world. And all the accepted beliefs and views have been shaken and have collapsed, and the entire camp of believers, Jews and non-Jews alike, has been thrown into

²⁷⁶ Plato, *Reflexionen über Babel und Bibel*, pp. 8–9.

²⁷⁷ *Central Conference*, p. 117.

²⁷⁸ On him, see the Appendix.

²⁷⁹ B. Ziemlich, “Die Thora, ein Erbe der Gemeinde Jakobs”, *AZdJ*, 66 (44), 1902, pp. 521–523.

²⁸⁰ On him, see the Appendix.

²⁸¹ M. Beermann, *ibid.*

²⁸² See articles by Barth, Hirsch, Hoffmann, Horovitz, Marcus, Meyer and Plato in the Appendix.

panic ... Assyriology, that dry and difficult science, has been placed on the agenda, has become the issue of the day, a scientific-philosophical and social question, and nearly a political question as well.

Klausner saw Delitzsch in a different light than did most of his Jewish critics. He described him not only as “one of the greatest scholars of Assyriology,” but also as a courageous man, who dared to widely publish the results of his research, including the conclusion that the stories of the creation and the flood, as well as monotheistic faith, had already been known to the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and that the ancient Hebrews had drawn beliefs and views from them. The result was that “the Jews – the ultra-religious as well as the free thinkers – were greatly alarmed by these new, courageous decisions,” which challenged the status of the Jews as an “original race.” However, there is no need to be alarmed by Delitzsch’s ideas, for several reasons: first, Delitzsch is not an anti-Semite and “a man may deny the originality of the Bible without being a hater of Jews.” Second, the Assyrians and the Babylonians were Semitic peoples, hence the anti-Semites did not gain anything from Delitzsch’s views. Third, other Assyriologists have already proven that Delitzsch was rash in jumping to his conclusions. The Babel-Bibel controversy is only dangerous because the heated altercation among Assyriologists, which has publicly resonated, might arouse people’s doubts and their mistrust of the entire discipline.²⁸³

Klausner’s soothing words were an exception to the accepted view. The general mood was one of profound fear aroused by Delitzsch’s ideas, in particular the fear that they might be widely circulated and have repercussions. Most of the writers were convinced that war had been declared on the Bible and on Judaism, that Babylonia and the science of Assyriology were being used as weapons in this war, and that Friedrich Delitzsch – a modern anti-Semitic Apion – now stood at the head of the enemy camp. They also believed that the views of the Assyriologists who criticized Delitzsch were of no importance, nor were the words of the Kaiser. What was important was that Delitzsch’s statements were liable to find an echo in public opinion and be uncritically accepted. In their eyes, this was not merely another chapter in

²⁸³ Joseph Klausner, “*Kitvei hayeteidot vekitvei-hakodesh*” (“The Cuneiform Writings and the Holy Scriptures”), *Hashiloach*, 11, Jan. – Jul. 1903, pp. 153–154. In the programmatic editorial with which Klausner launched his editorship of *Hashiloach* (“Our Purpose. A Word from the New Editor”), he declared his intention to publish articles in it about “the original periods of our history: on the First Temple period in connection with the new inquiries into the antiquities of the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Phoenicians,” ibid., p. 9.

the anti-Jewish Christian theology, but the revival of neo-paganism at the dawn of the twentieth century, this time in the guise of neo-Babylonianism. Since “Babel and Bibel” had become a catchphrase and a subject of discussion in the higher grades of the secondary schools, it was impossible not to respond.

The Stage of the Controversy and its Weapons

The Jewish public that participated actively in the controversy was small and well defined. The number of readers (and the audience at the lectures on this subject) can be garnered mainly from the circulation of the newspapers in which the articles were printed; authenticated information on the circulation of the pamphlets is not available.

The Babel-Bibel controversy took place at a time when a large group of educated modern Jews already existed in all streams of Judaism. There were orthodox, liberal and reform rabbis who had a full academic education, and a growing number of rabbis holding Ph.D. degrees, active both as rabbis and as representatives of the community vis-à-vis the outside world.²⁸⁴ Houses of study and institutes of research in Jewish studies were active in Germany²⁸⁵ and outside it,²⁸⁶ and all of these streams had different forums in which they could express their views:

²⁸⁴ See: Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 125–135; Schorsch, “The Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority, The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate” In Schorsch, *From Text to Context*, pp. 21–69; Graupe, *Die Entstehung des Modernen Judentums*, pp. 104–106; Alexander Altmann, “The German Rabbi, 1910–1939,” in *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 19, 1974, pp. 31–49; Michael A. Meyer, “Jewish Scholarship and Jewish Identity: Their Historical Relationship in Modern Germany,” in M. A. Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion*, Detroit, Mich., 2001, pp. 127–143.

²⁸⁵ Two modern rabbinical seminaries were founded, first in Breslau in 1854 (Jüdisch-Theologisches Seminar) and then in Berlin (Rabbinerseminar für das Orthodoxe Judentum, 1873 and the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1872). In 1902, The Society for the Advancement of Jewish Studies (Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums) was founded in Berlin. See: S. M. Lowenstein, “Das religiöse Leben”, in M. A. Meyer (ed.), *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit, Dritter Band*, 1871–1918: *Umstrittene Integration*, München, 1997, pp. 106–111: Eliezer Stern, “The Rabbinical Seminar of Berlin,” in Y.D. Gilat & E. Stern (eds.), *Michtam leDavid*, Ramat Gan, 1977, pp. 299–320; Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German anti-Semitism 1870–1914*, pp. 169–177. On the rabbinical seminary in Berlin, see Mordechai Eliav and Azriel Hildesheimer, *The Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin*, 2nd expanded edition, Jerusalem, 2001 (Hebrew). M. Breuer, ibid., pp. 11–15, and Wiese, pp. 59–78.

²⁸⁶ The most important of these was *Hevrat Mefitzei Hahaskalah*, founded in Petrograd in 1863.

periodicals, anthologies, newspapers and book publishing houses. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Jewish newspapers – weeklies and monthlies – began to appear in many places in the Jewish world; educated Jews read literature in foreign languages and kept abreast of the research literature published in Germany, France and Britain. During this period, a Jewish book market developed and the Jewish reader of scientific literature and popular science made his appearance.²⁸⁷

All this activity gave expression to curiosity and intellectual openness, as well as to the emergence of a new Jewish scholarship²⁸⁸ and of Jewish scholars well-versed in the languages and cultures of the ancient Near East. Jewish involvement in the Babel-Bibel controversy was a chapter in the development of the modern Jewish *Wissenschaft*, in its link to the polemic about the depiction of the biblical past and the development of the relationship between research and public opinion. The development of the Jewish *Wissenschaft* and the large-scale research activity was reflected in research institutions and societies, including those devoted to the Bible and to Jewish history.²⁸⁹ There were also Jews in the ranks of academic Assyriologists in European and American universities: David Heinrich Müller (1846–1912),²⁹⁰ Morris Jastrow,²⁹¹ Mojzesz Schorr (1874–1941),²⁹² Jules Oppert,²⁹³ Joseph Halévy (1827–1917)²⁹⁴ and others. Some of those who engaged in the polemic belonged to what can be called the “second track” of Jewish

²⁸⁷ Mordechai Zalkin, *A New Dawn: The Jewish Enlightenment in the Russian Empire – Social Aspects*, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 229–261 (Hebrew).

²⁸⁸ Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 253–258, and p. 196, n. 171.

²⁸⁹ Graupe, *ibid.*, p. 320; Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 184–194.

²⁹⁰ David (Zvi) Heinrich Müller studied at the rabbinical seminary in Breslau and at universities in Breslau, Leipzig, Strasbourg and Berlin, and served as a professor at the University of Vienna and the Israelitisch-theologische Lehranstalt of Vienna. He wrote important studies in Orientalism, conducted a comparative study of Semitic languages, and in 1903, translated the Hammurabi Code into Hebrew. His tombstone in the Döbling cemetery in Vienna bears the inscription: “To you, the stones spoke as they had in the past, to the prophet.” We obtained this information from a letter by Shalom Ginat in the literary supplement of the *Ha'aretz* newspaper, 12.9.2003.

²⁹¹ Morris Jastrow, the son of the historian Mordechai Jastrow (1829–1903) studied in the seminary in Breslau, and later at universities in Leipzig, Strasbourg and Paris. In 1892, he was a professor of Oriental studies in Philadelphia and a member of the reform movement.

²⁹² See the Appendix.

²⁹³ See the Appendix.

²⁹⁴ See the Appendix. Halévy, a French-Jewish Orientalist, who in 1893 founded the journal *Revue Sémitique*, was well known primarily because of his insistence that Sumerian was not a language but an artificial script, invented by the priests of Assyria and Babylonia and used only by them. Oppert was his main disputant in

historical writing,²⁹⁵ namely, they were second- or third-rank writers of theoretical works on faith, religion, history and culture. Their emergence was clearly a result of the processes mentioned above, and there are distinct echoes in their work of views formulated earlier in the writings of first-rank thinkers and scholars, which attests to the wide circulation and reception of these views. These writers produced new knowledge about the ancient past of the Jewish people and the Bible and disseminated it to the public at large. As a result, a new picture of the ancient past was created, as well as new historical images that were an indivisible part of the public polemic.

These publications appeared not only in scientific journals, but also in periodicals intended for a broad readership. Now, for the first time, the educated Jewish reader could find in Jewish papers and magazines facts and views that previously were the province of a small number of individuals. Paradoxically, it was the debate with the heretical views that helped to publicize them.

The Jewish Reaction and Jewish *Wissenschaft*

The various replies to questions that arose in the polemic, and the disparate degree of importance attributed to them, marked the boundaries between the different streams in nineteenth century Judaism, certainly insofar as biblical study was concerned. The Babel-Bibel controversy erupted about a quarter of a century after the different camps in German Jewry took shape. Each of these had a different view of the essence of Judaism and its historical character and also reacted differently to the documentary hypothesis, as we described in Chapter Two. Consequently, the Jewish reaction can also be regarded as a mirror that reflects the differences of opinion between the neo-orthodox, on one hand, and the liberal camp, the reform movement, positivistic-historical Judaism and the “free-thinking” Jews, on the other.²⁹⁶ If the Bible

a lengthy debate, in which Oppert was correct. See: T. Jones (ed.), *The Sumerian Problem*.

²⁹⁵ Shmuel Feiner, “Nineteenth-century Jewish Historiography: The Second Track”, in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*, New York, 1994, pp. 17–44.

²⁹⁶ On these movements and their development, see: Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*; Breuer, *Jüdische Orthodoxie*; Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*. On the split in orthodoxy in Germany in general and in Frankfurt in particular, see: Jacob Katz, *The Unhealed Breach: The Secession of Orthodox Jews from the General Communities in Hungary and Germany*, Jerusalem, 1995,

was perceived as the source of the law (the Torah) and as an authoritative source, then the various interpretations about the development of the Pentateuch were inevitably linked to views about the authority of the Torah and the Halakhah in the modern world. If, as Schorsch put it, history “had become an arena for resolving the dilemmas that wracked the present,”²⁹⁷ and was supposed to offer the key for shaping a new imagined future, then the Bible as an historical document and as “history” was an important part of this key.

The Babel-Bibel controversy sharpened the dilemma, which had already arisen in reaction to the higher criticism, about whether there was any need to react to Christian biblical research. It was a continuation of the earlier controversy, namely whether the Jews ought to react to the documentary hypothesis. The disagreement on this matter between and within the camps reflects the tension between faith and science in modern Judaism. The reactions keenly demonstrated how serious and thorny the question was – is it possible to be a Jew who accepts the rules of free critical science (*Wissenschaft*), this time not in philosophy or the natural sciences, but in biblical scholarship, which leads to the secularization of the Bible, or is there a fundamental opposition between Judaism and the rules of critical science,²⁹⁸ and in particular does this science impair a sacred tradition and belief in the revealed law (the Torah)? Does faith (the “true faith”) also have to pass the test of historical facts? Are there any historical facts which no one questions and that can be interpreted in only one way? Is history a science at all? If so, is it necessary or permissible to use extra-biblical sources to defend the Bible, or should any such use be rejected? Should one adopt the approach of “entrenched orthodoxy,”²⁹⁹ or should one accept the view that there

pp. 245–285 (Hebrew). On Hildesheimer see: David Ellenson, *Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer and the Creation of a Modern Jewish Orthodoxy*, Tuscaloosa, 1990. For an important discussion on the source of the term “orthodoxy” in the context of German Jewry, see J. Wohlgemuth, “Etwas über die Termine ‘orthodoxes’ und gesetzestreues Judentum,” in S. Eppenstein et al., (eds.) *Festschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstage David Hoffmann’s*, Berlin, 1914, pp. 435–448. The term *Gesetzes-treu* was translated as “faithful to the law.”

²⁹⁷ Schorsch, “Ideology and History in the Age of Emancipation,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 266–302.

²⁹⁸ In the words of Zacharias Frankel in 1903, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Frankfurt am Main, 1912, vol. 6, p. 393. See Schorsch, “Science and Values,” and “The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship, *Wissenschaft* and Values,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 151–157, 158–176. S.Z. Schechter argued that biblical criticism is not based on the strict rules of science, and that a large part of it is neither philosophy nor history, but at the very most, theology.

²⁹⁹ M. Breuer writes about a “bulwark (*Bollwerk*) approach,” *Modernity within Tradition*, p. 205.

are parts of the Bible that are above and beyond any scientific inquiry, while there are other parts that can be discussed by means of the scientific discipline? Some from the neo-orthodox camp expressed their fear of the danger posed to tradition by free research and the view that one ought not to allow the Bible to become a part of the struggle between religious authority and science.³⁰⁰ In the neo-orthodox camp in Germany, differences of opinion emerged and the question was deliberated in the journals of its different streams (“conservative” Frankfurt versus “liberal” Berlin).³⁰¹ R. Samson Raphael Hirsch rejected outright any scientific test of the development of faith, and stated in a “breathtaking sentence,” as Mordechai Breuer described it, that “it is better to be a Jew without science (*Wissenschaft*) than to be a scientist without Judaism.” However, Hirsch hastened to add: “Thank God, that is not the reality.” In other words, biblical criticism could be rejected not only on the basis of dogmatic premises, but also by denying the scientific nature of the criticism and depicting it as based on dogmatic premises. Biblical research in the spirit of modern criticism was depicted as following in the paths of “criticism that is non-Jewish and un-Jewish.” In Hirsch’s view, the Torah has no history. However, Hildesheimer and members of his circle believed science could serve Judaism, i.e., that an orthodox science was possible. Due to the growing influence of biblical criticism, neo-Orthodoxy could not merely characterize certain theses of this criticism, as “vain ideas.” It had to react to them in scientific parlance.

The need to react became urgent because of the enormous reverberation of the Babel-Bibel theory. Indeed, many from the neo-orthodox camp enlisted in the campaign that they believed was being conducted for “*kiddush hashem*,” to sanctify the Lord’s name, by defending the honor of Judaism. Rabbi Isaac Breuer believed that only orthodox Jews have the right to protest against Delitzsch’s words, but they were probably the very ones who would “be less enraged.”³⁰² The drive to engage in apologetics was stronger than any inhibitions, and the neo-orthodox stream filled a leading role in the battle against Delitzsch, not hesitating to use the works of Christian writers. In this camp, there were some who believed that Delitzsch’s theory could be

³⁰⁰ Like the name of Schorr’s article in Jost’s *Israelitische Annalen*, 1 (22), 31. Mai 1839, pp. 169–172, “Der gegenwärtige Streit zwischen Autorität und Kritik.” In the article Schorr discusses research on the *Halakhah*. The article was originally written in Hebrew.

³⁰¹ Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 193–202 (On the “Breslau Group,” ibid., pp. 11–15); Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 77–79.

³⁰² I. Breuer, “Rückblick auf das Jahr 5663,” pp. 2115–2119.

contradicted by the content of the Bible itself and through talmudic material, namely, they suggested legitimization from within,³⁰³ while others believed that it was possible to prove that Delitzsch's reading of the texts was nothing more than conjecture.³⁰⁴

The argument that orthodoxy need not react at all probably came not only from the profound belief that it was not dependent on science, but also from the fear that apologetics would call for the use of extra-biblical evidence and that traditional arguments about the sanctity of the text would not suffice. Since the power of persuasion of Delitzsch and those who shared his views was based primarily on their use of archaeological finds and not on theological claims, the use of extra-biblical evidence became essential, and was a sign of a significant intellectual development in the history of Jewish orthodoxy. The use of the new historical knowledge led the orthodox to believe that the "soap bubbles" Delitzsch had sent into the air had now vanished after being punctured by scientific criticism, and that the polemic had shown that Judaism "was capable of withstanding these new attacks with total calm." In later years, circles in modern orthodoxy clung to this position and it motivated the tireless effort made throughout the twentieth century to prove there was a complete correlation between extra-biblical evidence and the Bible.

In the Reform and liberal camp (one that contained circles belonging to the reform movement, as well as non-Orthodox Jews who belonged to various community and intra-community organizations³⁰⁵) there were some doubts about whether it was necessary to react, and if so, how to react. After Delitzsch's first lecture, the liberal rabbi and sermonizer Siegmund Maybaum wrote that Delitzsch was preaching to the converted: biblical science welcomed the achievements of Assyriology and its contribution to an understanding of ancient history, and biblical scholars only objected to the excessive estimation of the Babylonian and Assyrian culture. Hence there was no basis for Delitzsch's claim that all of his opponents have rallied to defend religious dogmas. On the contrary, many of them were in favor of free biblical research, but from this base they could oppose his views on subjects in the field of Assyriology.³⁰⁶ Maybaum held that it would not suffice to attack Delitzsch the theologian;

³⁰³ A. Rosenberg, *Delitzsch-Kaurach. Der papierene Weltkrieg im XX. Jahrhundert*, Wien, 1904, p. 129.

³⁰⁴ Seligmann Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, I, 1903, p. 11

³⁰⁵ Tal, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 164–165.

³⁰⁶ S. Maybaum, "Friedrich Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel", *AZdJ*, 67 (4), 23. Januar 1903, pp. 37–39.

Delitzsch the Assyriologist ought to be criticized. At the reform rabbis' conference in Detroit, Rabbi Bernt (Abraham) Elyas (1867–1936) from South Carolina, asserted there was no reason to be overly perturbed by Delitzsch's remarks: "We are raising so much fuss about it that we are giving the subject a factitious importance." At the same time, he said, it was impossible to refrain from reacting, because sooner or later there would be a need to reply to the questions they had raised. It was also impossible to evade expressing a view on the question of whether the Jewish people in the biblical period was influenced by various sources or was always original and autarchic. Rabbi Willner said "there is such a thing as righteous indignation," and bolstered that view by quoting a comment made by R. Yochanan in the name of R. Shimon ben Yehotzadak, that "a talmudic scholar who does not bear grudges and take revenge like a serpent is not a talmudic scholar" (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 22b). He asked, "How can we remain perfectly quiet and leave the arena to Christian scholars?"³⁰⁷ Kohler, the keynote speaker at the conference, who had accepted the main points of Wellhausen's biblical criticism, called on his audience to react to Delitzsch's publications not with apologetics but with scholarly, relevant answers: "... let us see to it that we have the men of large vision and lofty spirit, broadminded and abreast of the age, who stand forth as defendants of our heritage, able to answer the scoffer and the assailant of our faith, because they are equipped with the weapons of knowledge." He jeered at the naïve orthodoxy of the Breslau school of Samson Raphael Hirsch and his followers who were attempting to defend Judaism with unscientific methods.³⁰⁸ Kohler had no doubt that one could be both a scholar and a Jew: "I cannot be a scholar unless I can be a Jew at the same time."³⁰⁹

It seems, then, that everyone agreed that there was a need to react. The Jewish reaction to the Babel-Bibel controversy reflected the readiness of various Jewish circles to become actively and publicly engaged in the polemic that was being conducted in the German public because it also affected Judaism, and to defend the Bible using modern tools. The reaction was possible because the Jewish public had the necessary tools at its disposal. Obviously, it would be important to know how the Jewish reaction resonated in the educated German public in general, or in the liberal theological circles, and what kind of dialogue was created between the two sides.³¹⁰ In fact, no such dialogue existed.

³⁰⁷ *Central Conference*, p. 120.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

³¹⁰ See: Klaus L. Berghahn (ed.), *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse*, New York, 1996.

The three basic assumptions shared by most of those who reacted from all the camps were: 1. The result of a correct reading of the documents from Mesopotamia would be total repudiation of the conclusions Delitzsch had drawn from them. On the contrary, the archaeological excavations had contributed to the Bible's victory, rather than to its defeat. They had proven its reliability as an historical document. 2. The Wellhausen school, which "had tried to stand Jewish history on its head," had been struck a death blow by Delitzsch's theory. 3. Even if it was found that various elements of Mesopotamian culture were an earlier layer (*Urstoffe*) of Israelite culture, this was no more than a superficial similarity; in fact, there was a yawning abyss between these two totally dissimilar cultures. The Bible emerged from opposition to and conflict with its close cultural environment more than from any influence by that environment. The parallels between the Bible and Babylonia cannot be denied, but "it is the spirit that divides them."³¹¹ This statement, different versions of which were often repeated, sums up the essence of the modern Jewish reaction to the attack on the Bible. In marked contrast, a real abyss lay between the reform movement's claim that the Bible could be separated from talmudic literature, and the neo-orthodox claim that this was one unified spiritual creation. Thus, for example, Plato wrote that according to tradition, Moses had also received the Oral Law, and that it elucidates the law and explains how it should be observed, just as it interprets and explains historical events.

The Jewish-German Context

The Babel-Bibel controversy took place in the period when the process of acculturation of German Jewry had encountered popular and theological animosity. From the 1880s a new layer was added to this hatred of Jews: racist, scientific-biological anti-Semitism. The major book underpinning racist anti-Semitism, H. S. Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, published in 1899, was "the Bible" of Kaiser Wilhelm II.³¹² These views had other influential agents, such as

³¹¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 27.2.1903.

³¹² On the Kaiser's attitude toward Jews, see: Warner E. Mosse, "Wilhelm II. and the Kaiserjuden: A Problematical Encounter", in Jehuda Reinharz and Walter Schatzberg (eds.), *The Jewish Response to German Culture: From the Enlightenment to the Second World War*, Hanover, NH, 1985, pp. 164–194; Cecil Lamar, "Wilhelm II. und die Juden", in W.E. Mosse (ed.), *Juden im wilhelminischen Deutschland*, 1890–1914, Tübingen, 1976, pp. 313–318.

Paul de Lagarde, who widely disseminated them.³¹³ Jewish scholars and rabbis disagree about how much influence this racist anti-Semitic literature exerted on the broad German public of the Second Reich, and some tend to downplay this influence, but there is no doubt that many of its arguments permeated various sectors of German public opinion, including academia.³¹⁴ However, although the theory of biological racism reflected only the position of small radical circles, the theological and historical criticism of biblical and post-biblical Judaism was more widely disseminated and had stronger reverberations. Biblical criticism, which gained its position as a dominant scientific dogma in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was regarded by many circles of modern Jewish intelligentsia as a new scientific method intended to vilify historical Judaism. Against this background the Babel-Bibel theory seemed to be adding a new element to the scientific anti-Semitic literature, one based on ancient documents.

In the German context, the Babel-Bibel controversy was part of the Jewish-Protestant discourse about the place of the Jews in German society and culture. In this discourse, the description of biblical Judaism and Pharisaic-rabbinical Judaism was a key topic. This discourse, as Christian Wiese has shown, reflected the complex nature of the status of the German Jewish intelligentsia in general and in the academic culture in particular. The Jewish reaction to the Babel-Bibel controversy was a continuation of a process that began in the early 1890s. Then various Jewish circles in Germany launched an active defensive against anti-Semites and anti-Semitic literature (the liberal German organization, *Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus*, and the Jewish organization against anti-Semitism, *Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* (C.V.) were both founded in 1893). As a result of opposition to what was termed “the ostrich policy,” the defensive activity was conducted in print and in public: on the pages of the press and via leaflets (“defense leaflets”) and pamphlets.³¹⁵ This public counter-reaction was directed against various anti-Jewish manifestations, and was based on a fundamentally optimistic world view – the belief that it was possible to arrive at a common denominator

³¹³ See: Fritz R. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1961.

³¹⁴ On anti-Semitism in universities and among intellectuals (the “mandarins”) in the period under question, see: N. Hammerstein, *Antisemitismus und deutsche Universitäten. 1871–1933*, Frankfurt am Main, 1993, pp. 42–49; Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, pp. 137–140.

³¹⁵ Jacob Borut, ‘*A New Spirit among our Brethren in Ashkenaz:*’ *German Jewish Change in Direction at the End of the 19th Century*, Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 144–185.

between Jews and Christians, and in the context of this discussion, the belief, or the hope that German Protestants and Jews had common reasons to come out against Delitzsch and others like him. This optimistic world view was contrary to the sense of disillusionment and bitter disappointment with the Enlightenment, progress and modernization that appeared in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, particularly among circles of *maskilim* and the “westernizing” intelligentsia.³¹⁶

The fact that the assault on the Bible and Judaism came from liberal Protestant circles, which were considered enlightened and liberated from the shackles of “dark Medievalism,” was an unpleasant surprise that reinforced the pessimistic mood. However, the readiness of circles of Jewish intelligentsia in Germany to contend with the attacks, on the assumption that a common denominator could be found between Jews and Protestants, does not indicate weakness or disappointment, certainly not pessimism, but rather hope and faith that the anti-Jewish trends were the province of only a marginal stream in German society. This hope and faith were bolstered in view of the fact that the reacting Jews believed they had many allies in the camp of conservative Protestant (and Catholic) theologians, as well as among Assyriologists and biblical scholars, some of whom had embarked on a real crusade against Delitzsch and his views.³¹⁷ The most telling expression of this optimistic approach was the fact that these Jews relied on books written by Delitzsch’s opponents and critics among the Protestant theologians and Assyriologists. The Christian theologians and scholars, Rabbi Salomon Samuel from Essen (1867–1942) wrote in *AZdJ*, had saved the honor of the Holy Scriptures, some out of sincere conviction and zeal, some against their will. The statements by the latter were of greater value, since they did not make them out of friendship towards Judaism.³¹⁸

On the theological front, the Jewish reaction was part of the Christian-Jewish polemic in the modern era, and in particular the polemic with liberal Protestantism, concerning the essence of Judaism. This struggle already had a long history,³¹⁹ but in the nineteenth century it

³¹⁶ Shmuel Feiner, “Like a Babe Biting his Mother’s Breasts: Post-Haskalah in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Alpayim*, 21, 2000, pp. 59–94 (Hebrew).

³¹⁷ In particular, of course, the attack on the Bible challenged the faith of those who championed the idea of Judaism as a “German-Jewish culture” (Deutsch-protestantisches Kulturjudentum), one for which the Bible is a shared asset.

³¹⁸ S. Samuel, “Wissenschaft und Judentum an Ende des Bibelstreits”, *AZdJ*, 67 (28), 1903, pp. 330–332.

³¹⁹ On the controversy known as the Lavater affair, see in Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*, London, 1973, pp. 201–263.

took on new forms. Thus, for example, Jewish writers began openly criticizing the essence of Christianity or stressing its Jewish origin, and pointing out when and how Christianity had deviated from this source. Nonetheless, Jewish thinkers were influenced by the theological and intellectual fervor of the Protestant camp.³²⁰ Some among them accepted the evolutionist-historical concept of religion and drew a distinction between the religious establishment and the spiritual ideals of the religion, which were valid even in the absence of the institutionalized framework of Torah and commandments. However, for the majority, the important thing was to clarify, as Benno Jacob put it, “that Judaism is the sole, true heir of the religion of the Bible.”³²¹ An attack on the Bible – in particular on ethical monotheism – is, therefore, an attack on Judaism, but on Christianity as well.³²²

All of this is true mainly in relation to the liberal Jewish camp. Apparently the main reason liberal Jews embarked on a public campaign in defense of the Bible (and Judaism) was their desire to repulse the new attempt to undermine one of the foundations of the hopes and beliefs they believed were shared by Jews and liberal Germans. In their minds, this common ground was based, among other things, on the legacy of the Bible. While it may have been difficult to reach agreement with Protestant scholarship about the correct picture of Second Temple Judaism, insofar as the picture of biblical Judaism was concerned, for example, in relation to the content of biblical prophecy or of the Book of Psalms, such agreement seemed to be nearly self-evident. There is no way of knowing whether, in the absence of these shared views with a large, aggressive Christian camp, the public Jewish reaction would have been so resolute. Defense of the Bible might have been perceived as the defense of a holy book of Judaism, namely of a national-cultural asset, and hence as defense of a source of Jewish particularism, which would have been opposed to the trends of integration and acculturation. However, because the Bible was perceived as a universal asset, as a source of supranational moral values, and the constitutive book of Protestant Christianity, in the eyes of liberal Jews, they were defending an asset shared by liberal Jews and Protestants, the common foundation of Christianity (particularly Protestantism)

³²⁰ L. Baeck, “Theologie und Geschichte”, in idem, *Aus drei Jahrtausenden: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen und Abhandlungen*, Berlin, 1938, pp. 274–284.

³²¹ Benno Jacob, “Unsere Bibel in Wissenschaft und Unterricht. Vortrag gehalten in der wissenschaftlichen Vereinigung jüdischer Schulmänner zu Berlin”, *AZdJ*, 62 (43), 1898, pp. 525–526.

³²² See: Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 182–190.

and Judaism. From the vantage point of liberal Judaism, the defense of the Bible was at one and the same time a defense of the moral-universal message and of the ancient source of the unique Jewish identity. In the eyes of liberal Jews, it was a defense of their liberal German identity and their ability to integrate into the liberal German society while defining their new Jewish identity and its commitment to the past, as part of the definition of the uniqueness of Jewish identity in the modern German-European cultural space and of the definition of its boundaries and areas.³²³

On the face of it, liberal Judaism and liberal Protestant Christianity would seem to have a common foundation, the essence of which is the attitude towards religion as a social-human creation,³²⁴ coupled with the attempt to purge the religion of dogmas, sacraments, miracles and the like. Consequently, the fact that liberal Protestantism aimed its barbs at the Bible too – the source of the Jewish doctrine of ethics according to the liberal Jewish concept – was a great disappointment. Delitzsch deviated from what was perceived as a reform Jewish and liberal Protestant common denominator when he was not content to historicize the biblical religion, but also launched an attack on its ethic values. Hence the liberal reform camp was compelled to react. At a general meeting of the *Verband deutscher Juden*, convened on October 30, 1906, Cossmann Werner, a liberal rabbi from Munich (1854–1918), expressed his bitter disappointment at seeing liberal Protestantism take up a position at the head of the campaign against the Bible. In the past, it had been mainly orthodox Christian clergy who had fought fanatically against Judaism, while now liberal theologians and clergy were joining the fray. These men, he noted, believed in one God and in the love of humankind – principles that are the heritage of Judaism – but they have been brought up on the view that Judaism is an inferior, stagnating religion. To overcome this internal contradiction, they have devised two strategies: one is to try to deny that Judaism is the mother of faith in one God and the doctrine of ethics; the other tries to deny Judaism's right to exist in the present. According to the first strategy, the Jews are not such an ancient people, and they borrowed the great truths from people more ancient than they; according to the second strategy, the mother died after she

³²³ Volkov, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, München, 1990, pp. 166–180; K.H. Pickus, "German Jewish Identity in the Kaiserreich: Observations and Methodological Considerations", *Jewish History*, 9 (Fall 1995), pp. 73–91; Tal, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 15–80.

³²⁴ Tal, *Christians and Jews*, pp. 182–183.

gave birth to her daughter, Christianity, and lost all her rights.³²⁵ Harnack and liberal Protestant theology, the conservative rabbi Salomon Samuel (1867–1942) wrote, are trying to conceal the role of the Jews in the divine revelation of redemption,³²⁶ as well as the fact that they were the creators of universal ethics.

Some of the Jews from the liberal camp, in particular the reform camp, perceived Delitzsch's views as a threat to Protestant orthodoxy and Jewish orthodoxy, but not to “progressive Judaism.” The *Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens* dismissed the polemic with the claim that the desire to renounce the Bible was an internal Christian problem.³²⁷ In contrast, the liberal rabbi, Benno Jacob, who had rejected biblical criticism outright, regarded Delitzsch's views mainly as a threat to Jewish orthodoxy, which he described as the Christianization of Judaism.³²⁸ The main reason for this view was that the liberal camp regarded religion and faith as a human creation that had evolved over time.³²⁹ According to this concept, the religion of the Bible had undergone various stages of evolution, and hence the identity of its author was of no importance, only the content of the creation was of significance.³³⁰ The liberal camp also had a hard time rejecting the view that there had been external influences on the biblical culture. History was perceived as what could be defined a “deconstructive science” that permits reconstruction (unlike orthodoxy, which regarded it as a “destructive science,” after which nothing remain). To the claim that orthodox biblical research was

³²⁵ C. Werner, “Das Judentum im Lichte moderner Kritik”, *AZdJ*, 70, 1906, pp. 67–70, 81–83, 93–95. On him, see Appendix.

³²⁶ Samuel, “Wissenschaft und Judentum.” On him, see Appendix.

³²⁷ “Im Deutschen Reich”, *CV – Zeitung. Blätter für Deutschthum und Judenthum*, 9 (1), 1903, p. 81.

³²⁸ B. Jacob, “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie”, p. 189.

³²⁹ Morris Jastrow wrote that scientific research on the Bible had put the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity to the test. As a result, the reform movement in Judaism had been compelled to state its position regarding the ritual and customs created in an Oriental environment, far from the spirit of the enlightened West, on the one hand, and to re-interpret earlier doctrines in the light of modern principles of thought. All of this led it, as it had led liberal Protestantism, to a total break with orthodoxy. As a result, the reform movement had made the moral ideals of the prophecy the essence of Judaism. Jastrow was of the opinion that this also obligated the orthodox to make concessions in the spirit of the times. See: Morris Jastrow, *Zionism and the Future of Palestine*, New York, 1919, pp. 44–46.

³³⁰ Franz Rosenzweig wrote that Benno Jacob represents an orthodoxy that has lost its connection to modern scholarship and treats it as an enemy of the Bible. Hence, it has no influence, neither from within Judaism nor on the world outside of Judaism. See: “Zum ersten Band der Encyclopedia Judaica” *Der Morgen*, 4 (3), 1928, pp. 289–292.

feasible, Jacob replied that a science that determines its conclusions in advance was unthinkable.³³¹

It was impossible to hide the discomfiture, even the shock, provoked by the discovery that voices were raised against the Bible from, of all places, liberal Protestantism, which advocated freedom of criticism and liberation from the shackles of religious dogma and was in favor of appealing to the “inner spirit.” The liberal Jewish camp in Germany could not overlook the fact that supporters of Delitzsch’s ideas came from the liberal Protestant camp, from which those who fostered the negative image of Pharisaic-rabbinical Judaism also came. So, although the neo-orthodox Jews believed they had the sole right to react to the affront to fundamental beliefs, learned liberal and reform rabbis could not remain indifferent. They argued that the Babel-Bibel theory was injurious mainly to orthodox dogmas, but since it divested Judaism of what they regarded as its essence – its moral mission – they rallied to contend with Delitzsch’s theory. A description of the Bible as a plagiary and the denial of Judaism’s value as a humanistic-universal religion of ethics was an unsupportable depiction that served the anti-Jewish trends in German society. Therefore, liberal Judaism could not help but vigorously refute the negation of biblical Judaism’s universal moral message. In doing so, it found itself in the same camp with the Protestant circles that regarded the biblical prophecy (not the laws of the Torah) as the essence of the Bible’s message. Michael Meyer wrote that “The writings of Wellhausen, Delitzsch, Harnack and many others served to justify German Jews’ indifference to their religion. They also made opportunistic conversion to Christianity ... so much more palatable.”³³² If liberal Protestantism is the sublime embodiment of Jewish morality, then there is neither a place nor a future for liberal Judaism. Apparently, because these theories threatened the last bulwark of Judaism insofar as the world view of liberal Jews was concerned, they provoked a reaction on their part as well. This reaction took the form of books and articles intended to present Jewish ethics as a well-organized system.

The response of the liberal Jews to the Babel-Bibel controversy shows that they were compelled to examine their interpretation of the boundaries and content of Judaism. The criticism of the neo-orthodox also required them to do so. Jewish orthodoxy in Germany regarded the reform movement as a Jewish version of liberal Protestantism, which had taken from liberal Protestant theology the distinction be-

³³¹ Jacob, “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse.”

³³² Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 204.

tween a religion of universal prophecy and a national-particularistic religion based on practical commandments.³³³ In their rebuttal of this criticism, the reform Jews could relate, among other things, to an evolutionistic and historicistic concept of the Jewish religion in general, and of the biblical religion in particular: if the religion of the Bible also passed through stages of development and change, this obviously provided legitimization for its development and the changes they want to introduce into it in the modern era.

While in previous years, the neo-orthodox camp had not rushed to launch a campaign against anti-Jewish views directed against the Talmud and the *Shulchan arukh*,³³⁴ they became greatly engaged in the Babel-Bibel controversy. The controversy heightened the need of the neo-orthodox to define the appropriate areas and boundaries of their involvement in German culture, without renouncing the faith, commandments and tradition. It also heightened their desire to sharpen the profound differences between the orthodox and the liberals.³³⁵ The Reform movement was depicted as a heretical movement that had made a considerable contribution to the emergence of modern anti-Semitism, and which in fact has no right to protest against Delitzsch, since it shared his positions. This does not mean that the neo-Orthodox did not react with disappointment. Immanuel Plato stated that the Jews regarded the Bible as their spiritual and moral property, but that they know it is also a fundamental element in German culture. Hence, Delitzsch's affront to the Bible also is an injury to German culture that can lead to its total destruction. Will German Christians

³³³ See the words of Rabbi Joseph Wohlgemuth (1867–1942) in Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 164–167. See also: Akibah Ernst Simon, “Are We Still Jews?” in *Are We Still Jews? Essays*, Tel Aviv – Jerusalem, 1982 (Hebrew), pp. 9–46, who distinguishes between “Catholic Judaism” and “Protestant Judaism.” The philosopher Hermann Cohen was the consummate representative of the approach that strove to present a Protestant version of Judaism. See: David N. Myers, “Hermann Cohen and the Quest for Protestant Judaism”, in *LBI Year Book*, 46, 2001, pp. 195–214.

³³⁴ A legal code written by Rabbi Joseph Caro in the mid-1500s, and is still the standard legal code of Judaism.

³³⁵ M. Breuer, *Modernity within Tradition*, pp. 193–202; idem, “Two Fronts: The Reaction of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany to anti-Semitism Combined with its Struggle against Reform.” See also: H. Schwab, *The History of Orthodox Jewry in Germany*, 1950; H. M. Graupe, *Die Entstehung des modernen Judentums*, pp. 200–235; Alexander Altmann, “Theology in Twentieth-Century German Jewry”, in idem, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, Hanover, New Hampshire and London, 1981, pp. 288–289. See also: Michael A. Meyer, “Should and Can an ‘Antiquated’ Religion Become Modern?: The Jewish Reform Movement in Germany as Seen by Jews and Christians,” in *Judaism within Modernity*, pp. 209–222.

be prepared to take oaths on cuneiform tablets, and what articles of faith, customs and institutions are they prepared to change under the influence of documents from Babylonia?³³⁶

These deep differences of opinion, however, should not blur the common denominator. Neo-orthodox Jews, liberal Jews, and national “secular” Jews too, rallied to defend the uniqueness and originality of Bible. They did so because the Bible had become a value and an asset shared by all of them, even though they interpreted the meaning of its uniqueness and its originality differently.

When the liberal rabbi Dr. Israel Goldschmidt (1849–1924),³³⁷ compared Harnack and Delitzsch, he wrote that while Harnack questioned the greatness of Judaism, Delitzsch questioned its originality. But, in fact, their methods canceled each other out. Harnack stated that “The gospels are not a positivistic religion; they are the religion itself” (“Das Evangelium ist nicht eine positive Religion, sondern es ist die Religion”), and thus demoted Judaism to a lower level of development, debased it, and also claimed that after the appearance of Christianity, it had become an empty vessel. Goldschmidt concluded, however, that Harnack could not avoid seeing the Bible as the source of the ideas that Jesus preached with greater vigor. Delitzsch, on the other hand, denied the Jewish source of the New Testament. Goldschmidt wrote that it was hard to decide which of these two claims was more injurious and dangerous.³³⁸

The Babel-Bibel Controversy as an Internal Jewish Event and the Struggle against the “Frequenters of the Cafés”

If we depict Jewish involvement in the Babel-Bibel controversy only as part of the German-Jewish intellectual discourse (the nature and results of which are very controversial), or only as part of the struggle against anti-Semitism in Germany, we would be understating its importance. The public polemic in defense of the Bible was not only directed outward, it was also a clear reflection of the fact that a new Jewish self-consciousness was taking shape, as well as a part of the

³³⁶ Plato, *Reflexionen*.

³³⁷ On him, see Appendix.

³³⁸ J. Goldschmidt, *Delitzsch und Harnack über die Originalität des Judenthums*, Mainz, 1902.

re-building process of modern Judaism and of the modern Jew in Germany, but not only there. It was part of the attempt to define the essence of Judaism and to draw the conclusions that stem from this definition. In other words, the reaction was part of the attempt to create a new conceptual framework that would justify the new lifestyle of the Jew in Europe and the United States.

The Jewish reaction to the Babel-Bibel controversy reflected the fear that heretical views might have an influence on the broad Jewish public, in particular on the intelligentsia and the semi-intelligentsia. The danger seemed real because nineteenth-century German science enjoyed much prestige and authority, and because publications in Germany reverberated and exerted influence among broad circles of enlightened Jews in Eastern Europe.³³⁹ There were solid grounds for the fear that Delitzsch's (as well as Wellhausen's) views might lead to heresy among the educated and semi-educated Jewish public in Germany and Eastern Europe, because of their ostensibly scientific nature. Ze'ev Jawitz's article, "*Toledot hachatitot vehachakikot*" (A History of Archaeology)³⁴⁰ attests to the depth of this fear. Jawitz expressed his joy at what he viewed as Delitzsch's defeat at the hands of his critics, but at the same time, he described how the heretical views had reached the semi-educated Jewish public in Eastern Europe:

And why should we be surprised that after the memory of ancient Babylonia was revived, the critics became somewhat weary of denying our antiquity in their old councils, and conceived ways of retrieving a different testimony from those memories, which they have revisited, that the whole of the culture of the Torah and all its pristine views and all its commandments, all these are daughters of the Babylonian religion. And Professor Delitzsch has outdone them all, by asserting in his long-winded book *Babel und Bibel* that the Sabbath and the holy names too originated in Babylonia. Yet more revilers of our people and our Torah are noisily rejoicing upon hearing these words, and all the light-headed regiments that sit at their feet, the coffee-drinking maskilim who draw their wisdom from the press, morning and evening, rise from their seats in the taverns, clapping their hands loudly enough to make the earth tremble. Nearly all the scholars of Europe and America would openly prove to all the nations that the high mountains that Delitzsch has created with his breath do not have the slightest of threads to hang upon.

The conclusion that Jawitz reached, after surveying part of the literature against Delitzsch, first and foremost Ernst Sellin's book on the

³³⁹ In George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*, the heroine, Dorothea, wonders whether a knowledge of German is required to engage in comparative mythology (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Boston, 1956 edn. p. 164).

³⁴⁰ Jawitz, "*Toledot hachatitot vehachakikot*", p. 1.

excavations in the East,³⁴¹ which rejected the parallel drawn between the Hammurabi code and the Mosaic code, was:

The final word: the excavations of the antiquities in Babylonia have proven decisively that Judaism is unique, not the fruit of the spirit of every nation and tongue in the world, but rather a divine gift, one sole entity in the world. And this clear knowledge of ours that we now have, after the antiquities in Babylonia have been dug up, is the finest product of these excavations.³⁴²

Jawitz was vexed more than anything else by the fact that biblical criticism and Delitzsch's ideas had been accepted in various Jewish circles, after they had been rejected in Germany:

[They have found] refuge at the gates of the dark, desolate cities of Lithuania and Poland, given them by writers and teachers who acquit the many. These advocates of this criticism are clever and they follow the custom of crafty merchants. When they see that their wares are no longer to the latest taste of the city-dwellers, they speedily take them off to the small towns at the far borders of the land, or to countries whose inhabitants still have but dull senses and will gladly receive this unpalatable merchandise which is despised by men of good judgment. Just as an epidemic will break out with intensity in a small, far-off, abandoned city, when in the center of the land its fury has already abated.³⁴³

In the 1911 article, Jawitz repeated his claim that the main danger posed by Delitzsch's views (and biblical criticism) lay in its influence on *maskilim*. While in earlier generations, the Jews knew how to defend themselves against defamatory statements, this was no longer the case:

Now a different wind has carried off the regiments of our *maskilim* in its wings. In this they have strayed from the path of the early *maskilim* in Vilna and the surrounding towns, who, although many of them chose different paths than their pure-hearted brethren, proudly bore the flag of the Holy Scriptures on high because they were well-versed in the Bible and in the language, and knew that in knowledge of the Bible and the language the Jews were unquestionably far superior to the Gentile critics of their Torah. But a different wind has come forth to seduce the students of their students, to drive them mad, alter their taste and cause them to seek out the innovations and solutions with which biblical criticism would reward all men. And they have come to prefer their idle talk to our whole Torah, not merely idle talk, these are words of desolation. If we had not known who was uttering and writing them, we would have said they are the fruit of a deranged mind. And if these innovations were but vain words, devoid of sin, we would have remained silent. But to our great sorrow, we know that the entire substance of "this criticism," which has ensnared and led astray some of our young men in Lithuania, Poland and Galicia, has no

³⁴¹ Sellin, *Der Ertrag der Ausgrabungen im Orient*.

³⁴² Jawitz, p. 22.

³⁴³ Jawitz, p. 2.

other purpose than to trample the honor of our ancient Torah and of our exalted homeland.³⁴⁴

Jawitz regarded Delitzsch's views as part of the German neo-pagan trend, which put the Torah of Israel side by side with the "false gods of Greece and Rome" and the "abominations of the ancient Germans and Slavs."³⁴⁵ Delitzsch was described as a modern reincarnation of Apion and the attack on the Bible in the name of Babylonia was depicted as one more round in the attacks of pagan writers on the Bible, "seven hundred and thousands of years ago."³⁴⁶

Jawitz' words indirectly, perhaps with some exaggeration, attest to the fact that Delitzsch's views came to the knowledge of part of the educated Jewish public in Eastern Europe, left their mark, and helped to augment the abandonment of tradition, or at least contributed to it. There is some more evidence that the Babel-Bibel theory had indeed found its way to the Russian and Jewish intelligentsia in Czarist Russia during this period in the feuilleton "An Exchange of Compliments" published by Ze'ev Jabotinsky (1880–1940) in 1911. In a casual conversation (*causerie*) that takes place between a Russian and a Jew in a railway car, the Russian claims:

You are definitely a race that has no real value. As someone of real value, I represent a harmonious, many-sided creative race. You are neither of these. You have no creation of your own, and you never had. It's been proven already that your one God and your Sabbath were borrowed from others. In relation to these ideas, you only acted as popularizers, and if you permit me to say so, even as traveling salesmen.³⁴⁷

His Jewish interlocutor replies:

In your opinion, anyone who has borrowed elements of culture from Babylonia is likened to a traveling salesman. And in my opinion, every work of creation in the world is based on borrowed elements, and that same nation, which, at the dawn of its existence, knew enough to collect these fragments of gold and to make of them such an eternal temple – that same nation is a nation par excellence among all the nations of the globe.³⁴⁸

This example attests to the fact that the claims made in the Babel-Bibel controversy against the originality of the Bible and the use made of it to argue that the Jews lacked creative power resonated widely. In the following chapters, we will describe how the Jews, who engaged in the polemic, grappled with the arguments raised in the conversation.

³⁴⁴ Jawitz, "Criticism when it is Criticized," p. 14.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 14. Like Seligmann Meyer in his pamphlet *Contra Delitzsch*.

³⁴⁷ Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "An Exchange of Compliments." Printed in *Nation and Society*, Jerusalem, 1950, p. 149 (Hebrew).

³⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 152–153.

Chapter 9

Contra Delitzsch: Revelation, Originality and Ethics

The two tablets given to Moses on Mt. Sinai are the eternal property of all mankind.

Jacob Horovitz, *Goethe, Delitzsch and the Ten Commandments*, 1925.

The Jewish reaction to Delitzsch's lectures began simultaneously with the reactions from the Christian side. It included public lectures and about a hundred written publications – articles, pamphlets, books and letters to the editor.³⁴⁹ In all these, there were clear echoes of ideas and insights raised in the contemporary Jewish philosophical literature and they all share the same conceptual framework. We were not always successful in identifying the authors; in some cases, we could

³⁴⁹ The fact that in 1904 Sigmund Freud lectured on the Hammurabi Code before members of the Bnei Brith organization in Vienna attests to the great interest in the subject. Unfortunately, the content of his lecture has been lost. See: Hugo Knoepfmacher, "Sigmund Freud and the B'nai B'rith", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 27 (2), 1979, p. 444. Max Grunewald, *Kapitlach fun an Autobiographie*, YIVO-bleter, Band 36, New York, 1952, p. 242. Two other instances are further evidence of the polemic's resonance: the rabbi Dr. Mordechai (Markus) Braude, a native of Brest-Litovsk (1869–1949), wrote a Ph.D. dissertation at Freiburg University (1898), and later founded a network of Jewish secondary schools in Poland. When he was a preacher (*Synagogenprediger*) in Stanislav (Eastern Galicia) he apparently harshly criticized the statements made by the German Kaiser Wilhelm II in the Babel-Bibel controversy. His enemies wanted to turn him over to the authorities, and he was forced to leave his position (Gershon Bader, *Galician Jewish Celebrities*, New York, 1934, p. 51). In a diary he wrote during his stay in London, in March 1920, Moshe Sharett (1894–1965), later Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister of Israel (1953–1955), quotes from a letter he sent to Berl Katznelson. In it he wrote that during a debate concerning the contribution of the Zionists, he recalled that his father, Yehudah Shertok, a member of Bilu, had told him about the Babel-Bibel controversy, in which he said: "It is not important who first said [the commandment] 'Thou shalt not kill.' What is important is who observes it." See: Moshe Sharett, *The London Days: 1920–1921 Letters*, Tel Aviv, 2003, p. 123 (Hebrew).

determine the ideological identity of writers, about whom we found no biographical information, based only on the place of publication.

The orthodox rabbi Dr. Immanuel Plato wrote that rejection of Delitzsch's views had united all those in German Jewish society, even when they held diverse ideas, since an external enemy unites people with opposing political views.³⁵⁰ Johanning believed this was really the case, and most of the Jews who reacted tried to avoid publicly revealing their ideological differences of opinion with one another.³⁵¹ Delitzsch's attack on the Bible and on Judaism led the neo-orthodox to concur with the liberals and the reform Jews, but on more than one occasion, their reaction reflected the profound disagreements between them on substantive issues.

This chapter focuses on reactions relating to three fundamental issues in the domain of the philosophy and history of religion, which are linked to contemporary thought about the essence of Judaism and Jewish identity: revelation, the idea of evolution, originality, and the ethical nature of the biblical religion. Since a good many of the claims and much of the evidence put forward to support them are similar, we did not think it necessary to cite all the writings. The Appendix contains a list of the sources we used along with brief biographical notes about the writers we managed to identify.

The Revelation at Mt. Sinai

Delitzsch described Judaism as an “ancient Oriental faith in revelation” and declared that it repulsed him. These words of his were a brazen affront to the formative idea of Judaism. It is no wonder, then, that nearly all those who reacted took up arms to defend the belief in a revelation that was the source of the Torah and of its eternal articles of faith.

Belief in a divine Torah handed down at Mt. Sinai is the foundation of Jewish faith³⁵² and a principle absolutely obligatory for every

³⁵⁰ Plato, *Reflexionen*, p. 9.

³⁵¹ Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit*, p. 247.

³⁵² On the idea of the revelation in the new Jewish philosophy, see: Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jewish Thought in the Modern Era*, Tel Aviv, 1996, Part 1, pp. 121–125, Part 2, pp. 164–193 (Hebrew); Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism: The History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. David W. Silverman, New York, 1964, pp. 295–296, pp. 344–349 (German orig., *Die Philosophie des Judentums*, 1933); Max Wiener, *Jüdische Religion im Zeitalter der Emanzipation*, Berlin, 1933, pp. 148–153; Leo Strauss, “Progress or Return: The Contempo-

Jewish person.³⁵³ The revelation on Mt. Sinai is perceived as transcending the laws of nature and the laws of history, which are unable to explain it, but at the same time, as an event that occurred in history. Throughout the generations, Jewish philosophers have suggested various explanations for the essence of revelation and proofs that the theophany on Mt. Sinai was an historical event. The major claim of medieval Jewish thought was that the entire Jewish people witnessed and heard the event (the principle that the Torah was handed over by many to many), and hence that its historicity is based on reliable and irrefutable testimony.³⁵⁴ In the modern era, defense of the principle of a divinely-given Torah followed the same line and regarded any challenge to the historicity of the theophany on Mt. Sinai – the lawgiving and God's choice of the Jewish people – as a serious heresy.

Moses Mendelssohn defined the Torah as “a divine legislation” revealed to the Jewish people by Moses in “a miraculous and supernatural manner.”³⁵⁵ He never doubted the divine nature of the revela-

rary Crisis in Western Civilization,” *Modern Judaism*, 1, May 1981, p. 297. (Strauss writes that the revelation can neither be proved nor disproved). See also: Eliezer Schweid, *History of Jewish Thought in the Modern Era*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1977 (Hebrew), pp. 265–286; Shalom Rosenberg, “Biblical Research in Modern Religious Jewish Thought,” in Uriel Simon (ed.), *The Bible and Us*, Tel Aviv (Hebrew) 1979, pp. 86–119; Michael A. Meyer, “Scripture or Spirit?: The Revelation Question in German-Jewish Thought of the Nineteenth Century,” in M. A. Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity*, pp. 111–126. See also Rivka Horwitz, “Revelation and the Bible in Twentieth-Century Jewish Philosophy,” in idem, *Multiple Faceted Judaism*, Beersheba, 2002, pp. 435–461 (Hebrew). See also in Chapter 14.

³⁵³ Kittel wrote that the revelation is the very essence of religion (the Jewish and the Christian) so the struggle against the principle of revelation is a struggle against religion. There is no contradiction between “history” and revelation, which means the finger of God directing historical development. The content of the revelation at Sinai very clearly marks the difference between a monotheistic faith and the religion of Babylonia. At the same time, Kittel claimed that Judaism limited redemption to the Jewish people, but that the limitation should be understood in the content of its time. See: R. Kittel, *Der Babel-Bibel-Streit und die Offenbarungsfrage. Ein Verzicht auf Verständigung*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 4.

³⁵⁴ See: Judah Halevy, *The Kuzari* [trans. from the Arabic by Hartwig Hirschfeld, New York, 1964 (orig. 1905)], p. 61. Halevy writes that: “the people saw the divine writing, as they have heard the divine words,” p. 61. The principle of *tawātur* – the giving of the Torah in a revelation to many and not in a revelation to one person – was the major claim of medieval Jewish thought in its debate with Islam. See: Moshe Perelman, “The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism”, in S. D. Goitein (ed.), *Religion in a Religious Age*, Cam. Mass, 1974, pp. 103–138.

³⁵⁵ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, 89–106. See: Allan Arkush, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment*, New York, 1994, pp. 167–199. The theophany on Mt. Sinai is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, besides the Pentateuch, only once (Nehemiah 9:13–14), and is alluded to in several other places (Habakkuk 3: 1–7 and elsewhere).

tion at Mt. Sinai, at which the Jewish people was given the mandatory laws of the Torah. Salomon Ludwig Steinheim claimed in his book, *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge* (The Revelation according to the Doctrinal Concept of the Synagogue),³⁵⁶ that Judaism is a religion of revelation, whose genesis was in an event that occurred in history, and that the entire people was present at the occasion; the event itself, in which the Law was given in its entirety, had a metahistorical nature.³⁵⁷ Graetz depicted the theophany at Mt. Sinai as a wondrous, extraordinary historical event that took place in front of millions “who did not refrain from examining whether these wonders were not an illusion, a trick of the senses. This direct, ascertained and certain impression of revelation was passed down as a verified tradition from father to son, and here too there is no possibility of a mistake or deception.”³⁵⁸ Samuel David Luzzatto (Shadal) formulated it as follows:

Judaism without faith in the divinely given Torah cannot exist. Hence anyone desirous of the existence of Judaism and of the Jewish nation must do his utmost to bring to life in his heart, in the heart of his children and of all those around him, belief in the divinely given Torah. And he must do his utmost to keep those people, who do not acknowledge the veracity of the signs and wonders related in the Torah in the literal sense, from filling positions of leadership in the community, from addressing the people in the house of prayer and from teaching the children.³⁵⁹

Even Jost, whom Shadal detested, did not dare give the theophany at Mt. Sinai a naturalistic, or “symbolical” explanation, but gave it what

³⁵⁶ S.L. Steinheim, *Die Offenbarung nach dem Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge*, I-II, Frankfurt am Main – Leipzig, 1835–1865. See also: Eliezer Schweid, *A History of Modern Religious Philosophy*, Tel Aviv, 2005, Part 2, pp. 99–108 (Hebrew). Moses Hess was of the opinion that there is no basis or justification for attributing more sanctity to the written Torah than to the Oral Torah, since it is the latter that gives expression to the development and creative power of the Jewish people. See: Hess, *Rome and Jerusalem*, pp. 101–103, 149–153.

³⁵⁷ See: Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 148–154.

³⁵⁸ Heinrich Graetz, “The Structure of Jewish History,” in idem, *The Structure of Jewish History*, p. 110. In his history of the Jewish people, he omits any description of the event, and only describes it as a momentous happening. See: Graetz, *Volks-tümliche Geschichte der Juden*, I., Berlin – Wien, 1923, p. 3. In his poem, “Shirei tiferet” (Songs of Splendor), N.H. Wessely (1749–1841) wrote that the children of Israel received the Torah “from the mouths of their forefathers, from the mouths of six hundred thousand” (VI:60), and that Moses spoke “from a high mountain to six hundred thousand” (VI:75). The *maskil* Herz Homberg (1749–1841), wrote in his book, *Imrei shefer*, 1808 Chap. 7, p. 54, that the theophany at Mt. Sinai was a revelation to the entire nation “six hundred thousand persons (the number of members of the Israelite nation at the time) witnessed it and agreed to it.”

³⁵⁹ Shadal, “Faith in the Torah of Moses,” (1857) in idem, *Mechkerei haYahadut*, vol. 1, Part II, Warsaw, 1912, p. 26.

Max Wiener called a “halb erbaulichen halb wissenschaftlichen” (a semi-pious and semi-scientific description).³⁶⁰ Very few have dared to claim, as Abraham Geiger did, that it is not the miracle of redemption that is at the core of faith, but rather the creative human act of writing the Bible, and even fewer dared accept Abraham Krochmal’s radical view that the theophany at Mt. Sinai is a “poetic fantasy of the biblical author.”³⁶¹ The view taken by Moritz A. Stern of Göttingen, that the Reform movement ought to shatter faith in a positivistic revelation, did not gain any support at all.³⁶²

The Babel-Bibel controversy linked two claims. The first, that the story of the theophany at Mt. Sinai was written in a relatively late period, and that its purpose was to provide legitimacy to the priestly law, and the second, that the Mosaic code was in fact written at the beginning of the Jewish people’s existence, but under the influence of the Babylonian code, which predated it by many hundreds of years, and hence it is not the fruit of a divine revelation. Needless to say, these two claims are mutually exclusive. The challenge to the historicity of the theophany at Mt. Sinai was difficult to react to because it was impossible to present any archaeological or historical evidence to substantiate it.³⁶³ Moreover, the source of knowledge about the revelation is in a book – the Pentateuch – the date of whose composition and the identity of whose author are now being questioned. The issue at stake was, then, not only whether a divine revelation is possible, or whether it can be verified or denied by means of various arguments, but also, since the Bible is the only testimony to the event, can its testimony be relied upon? If the Bible is a human creation, isn’t there some basis for doubting its testimony?

Most of those participating in the polemic continued to argue that the theophany on Mt. Sinai is an event that requires no proof, one that has nothing to do with scientific arguments, and that belief in it is based on the assumption that God is omnipotent. Nonetheless, they were compelled to react to the denial of the historicity of the event based on the claim that the source of the Bible in general and of the Torah in particular is a human source, an argument supported by his-

³⁶⁰ M. Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, p. 211.

³⁶¹ A. Krochmal, *Die Theologie der Zukunft*, Lemberg, 1872, I, p. 32.

³⁶² Schorsch, “Ideology and History in the Age of Emancipation,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 268–269.

³⁶³ Some of the enormous effort that believing Jews invested in the twentieth century to prove the historicity of the exodus from Egypt may have stemmed – consciously or otherwise – from the assumption that if it were proven, then the historicity of the theophany at Mt. Sinai would also be verified.

torical documents older than the Bible. This need led them to use old arguments and also to add new ones.

The orthodox rabbi Dr. Seligmann Meyer (1853–1925), who wrote a detailed response to Delitzsch's lectures, drew a parallel, in his pamphlet entitled *Contra Delitzsch*, between Delitzsch and the anti-Jewish Egyptian Hellenist writer, Apion. He argued that the revelation on Mt. Sinai, during which the five books of the Pentateuch were given by God to Moses and the Israelites, is not a symbolic event. Anyone who argues that it is, is actually stating that one ought not to believe Moses, and suggesting that Moses purported to have received the Torah from God in order to glorify his own name. If Moses had taken his laws from the Hammurabi code, Meyer asserted (a bizarre claim, in our view) he would not have hidden that fact, just as he did not conceal his debt to Jethro, priest of Midian.³⁶⁴

The liberal rabbi L. A. Rosenthal wrote in his booklet, “*Babel und Bibel oder Babel gegen Bibel?*” (“Babylonia and the Bible or Babylonia against the Bible?”),³⁶⁵ that nowhere in the Bible does it say there were no revelations before Mt. Sinai: God revealed himself to Adam, to Enoch and to Noah, although they were not Jews, and he also revealed himself to Abraham. The Sages stated that the Torah existed before the theophany on Mt. Sinai, namely, that it is eternal, like God himself. The theophany on Mt. Sinai was, therefore, the event at which the Torah was proclaimed, and the date of its actual composition is irrelevant. The idea of evolution does not contradict the spirit of Judaism, because the value of the Bible does not stem from its source and origin, but rather from its core of belief; the sanctity of the Torah stems not from the fact that it was given at the first revelation, but because through it the Creator revealed the fact that he had created man in his image. Anyone who does not accept the belief in the Torah of Moses, has no resort but to move to the camp of the free-thinkers. Moreover, the New Testament also attests to the divine source of the Torah and Moses' role in receiving it. The orthodox rabbi from Mannheim Isaac Unna (1872–1948) added that if Delitzsch rejected the principle of revelation, he also had to reject the revelation in the New Testament.³⁶⁶ Nathan Porges stated that the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai as a whole and perfect entity. God existed before the revelation, but he revealed himself only to Moses. It may nonetheless be possible that some ele-

³⁶⁴ Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, I. pp. 49–59.

³⁶⁵ Rosenthal, *Babel und Bibel oder Babel gegen Bibel?*

³⁶⁶ I. Unna, “*Babel-und-Bibel*”, *Der Israelit*, 44 (23), 23. März 1903, pp. 509–511.

ments in the Pentateuch were borrowed from the Babylonian culture, but only after they underwent a substantive, profound change.³⁶⁷

The rabbi Dr. Leopold Goldschmied (1867–?) offered a different argument in his pamphlet “The War around Babylonia and the Bible in the Mirror of Judaism.”³⁶⁸ In his view, the Torah draws its authority not only from the revelation, but also from the tradition that was sanctified, and consequently, Assyriology can never do any harm to the Torah, which cannot suffer any injury from Babylonia’s rise from the grave. The tradition is immune to Assyriology and pan-Babylonianism. Kaufmann Kohler argued that even if some of the Mosaic laws were inspired by sources earlier in time, the revelation gave Moses the inspiration to create a new system of laws based on faith in one God, on ethical monotheism.³⁶⁹

A particularly interesting reaction came from Rabbi Dr. Immanuel Plato. He averred that faith in the revelation is an immanent psychological element which is not part of human knowledge; it is a binding agreement between divine reason and human creatures; it is the sublime mainstay of social order, for the principles of which millions of Jews and Christians have sacrificed their lives. This divine reason controls the psyche of man. The Oral Law and the tradition have provided a basis for faith in the divine source of the Torah. The Torah, the fruit of revelation, expresses the divine desire and intent, and each and every letter in it is a substantive part of it.³⁷⁰ Belief in God’s revelation to Moses is not within the reach of human reason and knowledge. Plato noted that any challenge to faith in the revelation also amounts to a challenge to a key principle of the New Testament: what Christian would take an oath on clay tablets from Babylonia instead of the Ten Commandments? Moreover, it is impossible to separate the Oral Law from the Torah, the written Law, which are organically connected.

However, although both orthodox and reform Jews shared the belief that the Torah, and certainly the Ten Commandments, were given at Mt. Sinai, there were profound differences of opinion between them as to the content of the Torah given at Sinai and its development throughout the generations. These differences reflected the intense opposing views between the streams. The debate centered on the question: what happened to the Torah after the theophany on Mt. Sinai; do the laws of evolution apply to it?

³⁶⁷ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*.

³⁶⁸ L. Goldschmied, *Der Kampf um Babel-Bibel im Lichte des Judentums*, 1903.

³⁶⁹ Central Conference, p. 110.

³⁷⁰ Plato, *Reflexionen*, III, pp. 15–16.

The Idea of Evolution

The idea of evolution and change as a category in the formation of history was the newest, most important, and perhaps the most revolutionary element in the Jewish reactions. This was an anthropocentric historical view about the genesis and evolution of the ancient Jewish faith. Ahad Ha'am attested to the fact that the idea of evolution, which was also applied to the history of the spirit, including the history of religion and faith, was a revolutionary idea. He was well aware of the revolutionary implications of the idea of evolution for the traditional approach: “There have never been worse days for ‘the heritage of the Patriarchs’ (*nachalat avot*) than the present days,” he wrote. After the idea of evolution was conceived in the natural sciences and passed into the ‘humanities,’ the view took hold that “all the deeds and thoughts of man [originate] in natural phenomena that arise from imperative causes, as products of the human spirit, which took shape and evolved in it gradually according to essential laws.” The theory of evolution aspires to find the internal and external conditions that gave rise to the various views and later led to the changes that took place in them over time. Ahad Ha'am added that in the context of human history, the theory of evolution had become a weapon in the struggle against tradition, one that was stronger than all “the fierce arguments of the ‘skeptics’ of the earlier generations.” But he believed that the idea of evolution had not yet influenced Jewish thought, nor nationalist thought, which in his view, still felt it necessary to defend the sanctified tradition, or at least to pay lip service to its defense. Ahad Ha'am probably underestimated the influence of the idea of evolution on Jewish thought in the second half of the nineteenth century, but he cogently described why it was so difficult to accept it, certainly insofar as the Bible was concerned.³⁷¹

The Babel-Bibel controversy revealed this difficulty and emphasized it because some of those who engaged in it had accepted the principle of evolution, including the view that the Torah too was a human creation, which over time, had historically evolved.³⁷² As we saw

³⁷¹ Ahad Ha'am, “Nachalat Avot: Yalkut katan,” *Al parashat derakhim*, vol. 3, pp. 44–49. Y.H. Brenner wrote derisively about Ahad Ha'am: “Is this a method, to advocate Spenser's theory of evolution and at the same time to speak about the eternal in Judaism and its ethics, which will never change or be replaced?” Brenner, “Mitokh hapinkas,” *Kitvei Y.H. Brenner* (Brenner's Writings), vol. 11, p. 138.

³⁷² Schorsch, “Ideology and History,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 268–269, 285–286.

in Chapter Two, it was extremely difficult to accept the principle that faith and religion developed over time, and this idea stirred up a sharp controversy. However, in the context of Bible criticism, the issue was that of the principle of immanent development, while in the Babel-Bibel controversy, the argument centered on the outside influence on this development, and as a result, led to another “heretic” conclusion. Judaism, Rabbi Dr. Benzion Seligkowitz wrote, believes in the direct revelation of God to select men, but the Holy Scriptures do not declare that everything written in them is the fruit of revelation, only that the source of the Mosaic code and of the Prophets’ words is divine. Although talmudic-rabbinical Judaism did claim that everything written in the Bible is the fruit of revelation, modern Judaism is not obliged to accept this view and it believes that the divine plan is expressed in the evolution of the religion. It attributes the major importance to revelation within the heart of man, namely an internal revelation, as in the words of the verse: “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psalms 73:25). Hence, it argues, as Graetz did in his reply to Alfred G. Henriques on the pages of the *Jewish Chronicle*, that the claim that the faith underwent historical evolution can only endanger Christian dogma.³⁷³ The liberal rabbi Dr. Aaron Tänzer accepted the view that the Pentateuch is a human creation and asserted that it was impossible to accept the dogma of the all-inclusive verbal inspiration. Of all the religions, Judaism, which developed and was perfected throughout the generations, ought to accept the idea of evolution and to judge its history in light of evolution. Judaism is the consummate embodiment of the evolution of religious and moral consciousness, and it did not stagnate after the days of Moses and Aaron. The ethical idea of Judaism evolved and improved over the generations, and would continue to do so in the future. With the exception of the idea of the oneness of God, who revealed himself in his perfect form at Mt. Sinai, the various laws in the Pentateuch underwent changes over time.³⁷⁴ In contrast, the conservative rabbi M. A. Klausner (1848–1910) admitted that not every word in the Pentateuch is the fruit of a verbal revelation, and that laws and forms of governance existed before Moses (he asked: did not Moses learn about forms of governance and law from Jethro, priest of Midian?). But, he added, although certain values were part of the

³⁷³ B. Seligkowitz, “Der Vortrag ‘Babel und Bibel’”, in *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, (8), 20. Februar 1903, pp. 107–109.

³⁷⁴ Tänzer, *Judentum und Entwicklungslehre*, pp. 24–34.

basic world-view of ancient humankind, these were nothing like the laws given at the revelation on Mt. Sinai.³⁷⁵ From the standpoint of the reform movement, the law of inevitable evolution rules everything, and the Mosaic code also underwent a process of evolution.³⁷⁶

One can say, then, that even those who asserted that Jewish faith and law underwent various stages of evolution and change after the theophany on Mt. Sinai believed that belief in one God – the consummate expression of Jewish faith and its most important contribution to mankind – did not gradually emerge but was the fruit of revelation, of a leap in the human consciousness. Kohler wrote that “evolution is the master key,” and it gives legitimacy to reform theology. The reform movement attributes no importance to the fact that the story of Creation, or the story of the flood, have a Babylonian source, but it does not cast any doubt on the uniqueness of God’s revelation to Moses (as an ethical force), or on the uniqueness of Hebrew monotheism; God is not Moses’ creation, as the “heretics” claim, rather He revealed Himself to Moses and made him a prophet.³⁷⁷

Originality and Selfhood

All the Jewish responses had one thing in common: they all came to the defense of the originality of Jewish faith and Jewish culture, because in the nineteenth century, *Originalität* and *Eigenart* became basic concepts in the historical consciousness of modern Jewry. To a great extent, these concepts became a replacement for the idea of revelation. If during the nineteenth century, the issues of the originality of Judaism and its ties to the surrounding cultures were discussed mainly in the context of the history of the Second Temple period, of the Jews in Spain, or of medieval Jewish philosophy, now these issues touched upon the formative period of Judaism and the Jews as it was reflected in the Bible. The claim that the Bible – the apogee of Jewish creation – is not original was perceived as a serious attack directed against the modern Jew, in the very age when originality was regarded as the expression par excellence of a nation’s creative spirit, its most important and essential asset, and as the element that determines its identity and shapes its content. According to this approach, it is a col-

³⁷⁵ Klausner, *Hie Babel – Hie Bibel!*, p. 22.

³⁷⁶ Schorsch, “Ideology and History,” p. 317.

³⁷⁷ Central Conference, pp. 108–110.

lective, immanent and vital force that creates and shapes the original, authentic content of a social group; it endows it with its unique world-view, its values and symbols. This may be the force of inspired men, first among them Moses and the prophets, or the collective creative force of the nation.

With the appearance of the idea of originality and selfhood in the Jewish intellectual world, under the influence of the Romantic concept of *Volksgeist*, of the “psychology of the nations,” and of racial typology, the theocentric approach was replaced by an ethnocentric approach, and together with the idea of evolution and change, this idea became a revolutionary element in modern Jewish thought. Liberals and free-thinkers had no problem accepting the claim that Jewish faith and culture had undergone a process of evolution, particularly if this meant an immanent evolution, originating in the national genius, rather than one that is a product of borrowing and emulation. Since the Bible was regarded as a distinct creation of the national genius, its immanency and originality became values that needed to be protected against any challenge or denial. Liberal circles could accept the secular idea of the evolution of faith, and could even forego faith in the revelation and the divinely given law, but it was hard for them to accept the negation of the original, unique and immanent character of Jewish culture. In other words, these circles could accept the view that the Torah is a human creation, but for that very reason they found themselves obliged to defend its originality and uniqueness. Any challenge to the original and unique character of the Torah was perceived as a serious affront to the key principle of the new historical consciousness, because it denied the Jews their singular national genius – the immanent force that created a unique world-view and world picture.

Liberal Jews, and even more so nationalist Jews, could accept the claim that Judaism was influenced by foreign cultures and that no closed culture ever existed, but only on condition that it was generally agreed that Judaism knew how to internalize these external influences and inject into them a totally new content, shaped by its unique world view. In this regard, Leo Baeck based his view on Goethe (his adversary, Harnack, also found support for his arguments in Goethe’s words³⁷⁸) that what counts is not the source, but the originality of the adaptation; in the context of the history of religion, what counts are the heights to which the religion ascended, not the point from which it began. The

³⁷⁸ In his response to the Kaiser’s letter, see Chapter 6.

sublimity of the Jewish faith was a result of immanent evolution and an expression of the idiocratic internal unity of Judaism.³⁷⁹

Others concurred with this view. A. Hoffmann wrote (in a pamphlet published in Buenos Aires, far from the scene of the polemic) that different nations learned from one another, and nonetheless produced original creations. Is the originality of a creation lost if a block of marble is brought from Italy to Paris and a great artist creates a work of art from it? What is important is the fact that the profound differences between the cultural creations of nations reflect the great disparity between them.³⁸⁰ Seligkowitz wrote that the culture of Israel developed in the midst of great cultures, and hence it could not resist their influence, but it adapted these influences in a singular manner without detracting from its religious originality. It is the originality of the pure, spiritual monotheism that counts, and no ancient ruins can erase any part of it.³⁸¹ Rabbi Dr. Wilhelm Münz (1856–1917) averred that it is the internal distinctiveness of the nation, which originates in the spirit, that creates the difference.³⁸² Kohler stated that the spirit of Judaism was shaped by the Prophets through the force of their prophetic spirit, and hence the question of the core of the ancient source is not important.³⁸³ Prof. Gotthard Deutsch (1859–1921) preferred Shakespeare to Goethe, and stated that “Shakespeare’s Hamlet is a masterpiece even through the plot was borrowed from the 13th century *Roman Cestorium*; no one would accuse Shakespeare of literary plagiarism.”³⁸⁴ Speaking at the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Rabbi Hyman G. Enelow said “... there is one characteristic about Judaism which under all environments has enabled it to reject the foreign and non-essential, and yet adopt and preserve the congenial and essential, and thus adapt itself to ever new environments, without in the process either losing its identity or betraying its foundation principles.”³⁸⁵

³⁷⁹ L. Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, Berlin, 1905, pp. 1–17.

³⁸⁰ A. Hoffmann, *Babel-Bibel-Fabel*, 1903, p. 6.

³⁸¹ B. Seligkowitz, “Der Vortrag ‘Bibel und Babel’ in seinen Konsequenzen für Judentum und Christentum.”

³⁸² Münz, “Es werde Licht!”, 1903, p. 20.

³⁸³ *Central Conference*, p. 109.

³⁸⁴ *Central Conference*, p. 125. In 1849 Ernest Renan replied to Joseph Salvador’s argument in his book *Jésus-Christ et sa doctrine*, Paris, 1838, that all of Jesus’ ideas originated in the Bible: “You could show me in detail all the maxims of the Gospel in Moses and the prophets, and I should still maintain that there is in the doctrine of Christ a new spirit and an original stamp.” Quoted in Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-Century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israélite Universelle*, trans. Jane Marie Todd, Stanford, Calif., 1990, pp. 213–214.

³⁸⁵ *Central Conference*, p. 130.

Not everyone agreed that this was in fact an immanent, totally autarchic evolution, but they accepted the view that an immanent religious and cultural evolution is also linked to external influences and the reaction to them. Some argued that the value and status of the borrowed components are of importance – whether they are articles of faith or marginal elements.³⁸⁶ Every culture, Rosenthal and Porges wrote, stands upon a foundation of the cultures that came before it, and this in no way detracts from its originality and uniqueness. Alluding to the Gospel of Luke, Porges wrote: “There is a similarity between the letters but the spirit of the words is totally different.”³⁸⁷ Rosenthal argued that dependence on an earlier source cannot expunge the originality of Jewish cosmology and faith in one God; it is Judaism that gave the world a universal ethical principle. The adaptation of foreign sources does not dim the glory, as the case of Christianity attests. The main question is: what is the nature of the world-view that adapted the raw materials and what new content it gave them. The spirit of Israel imbued the Babylonian story of creation with a totally new, pristine and human content. The wars of the gods vanished from the biblical creation story, and in their place one sole force reigns: one God created the universe and man in the divine image. Moreover, in the biblical story of creation the duality of God-nature vanished, and the principle of the unity of nature is dominant.³⁸⁸ Plato agreed that every culture is influenced by those that preceded it, but we learn about the nature of the overall culture from “the living life” (*das lebendige Leben*), and life teaches us that the Torah has, from time immemorial, been the basis of the Jews’ philosophy of life and social behavior.³⁸⁹ Benno Jacob wrote in *AZdJ* that while it is permissible to admit that the religion of Jehovah used the same words, the same means of expression, symbols, rituals and customs – the same anthropomorphism, rites of sacrifice, priestly institutions and the like – it completely changed their content. Jacob Barth went even further and claimed that Jewish orthodoxy was influenced by ideas of Greek and Christian origin, just as modern Jewish nationalism developed under the influence of German nationalism. Outside influences were always an inseparable part of the evolution of Judaism. It is not the raw material that counts but the manner in which it is adapted.³⁹⁰ Tänzer’s main

³⁸⁶ Thus, for example, the faithfulness of the description of the theophany on Mt. Sinai was of greater value than the historicity of the flood.

³⁸⁷ Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, pp. 3–31, 44.

³⁸⁸ Rosenthal, *Babel und Bibel*.

³⁸⁹ Plato, *Reflexionen*, I–II, p. 34.

³⁹⁰ B. Jacob, “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie.”

argument against Delitzsch was based on the evolutionary approach to culture: the Israelite narrator did use Babylonian sources, but in his hands the material turned into an unparalleled sublime creation. The use of earlier material attests to the inner force of the life of Judaism, which never developed in isolation from the surrounding cultures, and its vitality stemmed from its ability to change and be changed. It is this ability that advanced it far beyond its own time, and helped it to change during the coming generations. The Jews in the time of Ezra were at a higher stage of evolution than those who lived in the time of Moses, and Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and the Sages were more advanced than the high priests in the Second Temple period. Even if the aura of the chosen people were to be denied the Jews, they would still have the aura of a people who demonstrated the greatest capacity to develop and to aspire to ethical perfection.³⁹¹

Some of the neo-Orthodox writers did distinguish, as Moses Mendelssohn had in his time, between culture and religion.³⁹² Hence they could also accept the view that literary motifs, and even cosmological motifs in the Bible, were a result of the adaptation of an earlier Assyrian-Babylonian source. Not only was there nothing new in what Delitzsch had to say on this topic, but he was correct; peoples and cultures did learn from one another. The Bible itself did not conceal the fact that it had made use of borrowed basic materials. The main point, then, is the manner in which the borrowed material is adapted. In other words, some of the neo-orthodox Jews who reacted adopted the concept of the individual national genius, and regarded it as an internal force that adapted borrowed cultural materials, but endowed them with totally new content and meaning. There seems to be an inner contradiction in this reaction. On one hand, the neo-orthodox rejected outright the idea of the evolutionary development of the Jewish religion, but on the other, insofar as various cultural elements were concerned, some of them were prepared to accept the assumption that the Jewish culture adapted earlier foreign material to the Jewish world of concepts and values.

This is how writers related to the “dybbuk of originality” that was prevalent at the time. For example, in his book, *Mythology among the Hebrews and its Historical Development*, I. Goldziher came out bluntly against this “obession with originality.” Had the Greek philosopher Plato lost any of his value after it turned out that he had

³⁹¹ Tänzer, *Judentum und Entwicklungslehre*.

³⁹² Isaac Heinemann, “Unity in Moses Mendelssohn’s Philosophy of Religion,” (Hebrew), in *HaMetzudah* (Fortress), London, Waltham, Mass., 1954, pp. 197–219.

borrowed some of his ideas from others? It is not originality, but the final result that is of value. The most important thing in the history of culture is the final, mature product, which was developed and created from the various earlier elements that were collected, adapted and given new substance.³⁹³ Graetz wrote similar sentiments in his 1883 *The Correspondence of an English Lady on Judaism and Semitism*.³⁹⁴

An Egyptologist once whispered to me that he had read somewhere about Jehovah in an Egyptian papyrus, that monotheism was in fact the invention of the priests of the Egyptian god Amen-Ra. Others insist that the unity of God was taught in the esoteric Greek mystery cults in contrast to that which was represented exoterically in the official polytheistic religion. Nevertheless, I place no great worth on this objection, for unlike the field of inventions, in matters of the faith the question of who is first is unimportant. What counts is the strength of the commitment. No nation acknowledges with such fervor the verse “Hear, O Israel, our God is one,” and what is still more significant, no nation has sacrificed its happiness and life itself for this belief as we have done.³⁹⁵

Morris Jastrow, the Assyriologist and member of the reform movement, wrote that anyone studying the history of Babylonia and of ancient Israel cannot help but be impressed by the fact that “the civilizations of the Hebrews and the Babylonians moved along such different lines, despite the many features they had in common.” Consequently, the important thing is not to focus on the similarities between them in various areas, but to determine the factor or factors that led to such entirely different issues. In his view, “the real value of a comparative study of any kind lies in bringing out differences. Only a superficial view of comparisons stops at pointing out resemblance.”³⁹⁶ Hence Jastrow has a low opinion of any attempt to prove the dependence of the Bible on Babylonia on the basis of documents from Mesopotamia. Because the Babylonians and the Hebrews began from the same point, the profound differences between them, the result of a disparate development of religious thought, are so impressive.

In the first issue of the socialist-Zionist journal *Hashachar (The Dawn)*, published in Berlin in 1903, Nachman Syrkin, an important

³⁹³ I. Goldziher, *Mythology among the Hebrews*, New York, 1967 edn., p. 328. And see: Lawrence I. Conrad, “Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan: From Orientalist Philology to the Study of Islam”, in Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, Tel Aviv, 1999, pp. 137–180.

³⁹⁴ In his choice of an English addressee, Graetz may have been influenced by George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* (1876). See: Schorsch, “Ideology and History,” note 136.

³⁹⁵ H. Graetz, “Correspondence on Judaism,” in *The Structure of History*, p. 229.

³⁹⁶ Morris Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, London – Leipzig, 1914, pp. vii, 4–5.

Zionist Socialist thinker (1868–1924), wrote an article entitled “From the Outside Inward (Fragments),” in which he distinguished between periods in which Jewish culture was closed to outside influence, and hence stagnated, and periods in which it was enriched by new spiritual forces, and hence was stirred to engage in original creations. Syrkin dealt mainly with Jewish history from the Hellenistic period and thereafter, but he briefly mentioned the biblical period. From what he wrote, it is clear that he had heard about the Babel-Bibel controversy:

The new scholars have shown how greatly Babylonia influenced the Jewish people in the pre-historical period and to what extent the Judaism of Abraham was enriched by the culture of Ur of the Chaldees.³⁹⁷

We will leave the concluding words on this subject to Martin Buber (1878–1965). In his 1914 article “Myth in Judaism” he wrote that whenever a mythic motif was found among one of the peoples of the ancient East that resembled one in the Bible, everyone immediately pointed to it as the original one, and the Jewish motif was regarded as a copy. This is because the West has been attempting to purge Christianity of any Jewish element, and to provide it with a different source. However, the aggregate of a nation’s myths cannot be judged according to the ineffectual criterion of originality. “When we are confronted with the world of the mind, it is not originality that matters, but reality.” The obsessive search for the source is nothing more than a fruitless undertaking, which overlooks the fact that the history of the mind is never ending, and it creates new works from existing material. Even if it were possible to discover the “source” of this or that element in the world of Jewish myth, what counts is the whole: “For us, what is essential is the purity and greatness of a creative humanity that throws all these factors into the smelting furnace – as Cellini³⁹⁸ did with his household utensils – to create out of them the immortal form.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ *Kitwei Nachman Syrkin* (Writings of Nachman Syrkin), Collected and Annotated by B. Katznelson and Y. Kaufman, Tel Aviv, 1939.

³⁹⁸ The reference is to Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), an Italian goldsmith and sculptor, whose autobiography was published in 1728 (he also wrote a book on the art of jewelry making). Goethe translated the autobiography in 1803 and the premiere of Hector Berlioz’ opera “Bevenuto Cellini” was performed in Paris in 1838.

³⁹⁹ M. Buber, “Myth in Judaism,” in N. N. Glatzer (ed.), *On Judaism*, New York, NY, 1967, p. 98. In his article, “Al devar otzar haYahadut balashon ha’ivrit” (1893), Ahad Ha’Am wrote that the Jewish encyclopedia ought to deal with: “[from] the Egyptians and the Babylonians up until the Greeks and the Romans, as well as with the religions that originated in Judaism, affected it or were affected by it in different ways. Hence, it is befitting that special articles be devoted to their history and a description of their major traits, to the extent necessary for an understand-

National Ethics and Universal Ethics

The attack on the ethical content of the Bible and the moral behavior of its heroes began as far back as the seventeenth century, and exacerbated greatly in the nineteenth century. This is one of the main reasons why many Jewish thinkers in that century were drawn to discussing the difference between the Jewish and the Christian ethical doctrines, the source and status of ethics, the connection between ethics and commandments, as well as the question of whether the ethical conception of the Bible also underwent historical evolution.⁴⁰⁰ In view of the attack on Jewish ethics, liberal Jews in Germany felt an urgent need to present the Jewish doctrine of ethics as an original, methodical system. In 1883, Moritz Lazarus (1824–1903) was charged with this task. In 1885 he published his pamphlet on the fifteen principles of the Jewish ethical doctrine, which was signed by 350 rabbis and teachers, and in 1898 he published his book *Die Ethik des Judentums* (Ethics of Judaism).⁴⁰¹ Reactions or claims leveled at biblical ethics during the Babel-Bibel controversy also resonate in other works written about the ethics of Judaism.

An important element in this reaction was the depiction of the Bible as a source of the Jewish doctrine of ethics and as its consummate expression. Delitzsch described the prophets of Israel not as bearers of a humanist universal message, but rather as zealous nationalists. With these words, he denied Judaism – the orthodox as well as the liberal – what it regarded as a significant asset of its legacy and essence – the concept of monotheism as a moral commandment intended for all of mankind.⁴⁰² It is no wonder, then, that Benno Jacob believed it was not the question of originality that threatened Judaism, but rather the attacks on the ethical laws of the Bible.⁴⁰³

The view that there were moral values in the religion and law of Babylonia had already been heard before Delitzsch. For example, A.H. Sayce wrote that in the “hymns of Nebuchadnezzar” there is a clear expression of an ethical world view: “The man who could

ing of that relationship, which sheds light on several phenomena in Judaism,” *Al Parashat Derakhim*, Part I, pp. 331.

⁴⁰⁰ Max Wiener, *Die Anschauungen der Propheten von der Sittlichkeit* (The Prophets’ Views on Morals), Berlin, 1909. See: Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 199–205, and J. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism*, pp. 352–367.

⁴⁰¹ M. Lazarus, *Die Ethik des Judenthums*, I, 1898; M. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 236. The principles of Lazarus’ book are printed on pp. 111–129.

⁴⁰² N. Rotenstreich, *Philosophy in Modern Times*, II, pp. 6–113 (Hebrew).

⁴⁰³ B. Jacob, “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie,” *AZdJ*, 67, 1902, pp. 187–189, 198–200, 211–212, 222–225.

thus pray was not far from the kingdom of God.”⁴⁰⁴ Sayce believed in the existence of a monotheistic school of thought in at least one of the literary circles of Babylonia.⁴⁰⁵ I. Plato too believed that from the advent of humanity, it had common ethical values. Nonetheless, there was a fundamental difference between the claim that the Babylonians also had ethical values and the statement that their concept of ethics was more elevated than that of the Bible (including the Prophecy). Delitzsch’s theory, which challenged the view that Judaism is the diametrical opposite of idolatry and had developed out of conflict with it and total rejection of it, not only underestimated the value of the ethical content of Judaism in comparison to that of Christianity; it also undervalued the ethical concept of the Bible in comparison to the Babylonian pagan concept.

All the Jews who engaged in the polemic believed that the materialistic-naturalistic world view of the Babylonians could not have produced a transcendental and ethical world-view like that of the Bible, and it is obvious that there are no grounds for the claim that the Babylonians believed in one supernatural, supreme power or that an earlier faith in revelation had existed in Babylonia. Graetz formulated this view in the following words: “The sharp opposition of Judaism to a paganism sunk in idolatry and immorality, traits which are conspicuously evident at a single glance, is nothing but the broad antithesis between the religion of the spirit and a religion of nature, divine transcendence and the immanence.”⁴⁰⁶ The idea that there were heathenistic elements in the Babylonian religion was also perceived as a neo-pagan position, that deserved to be absolutely rejected.

None of the streams in German Jewry could accept the slur upon the ethical content of the Bible (and of Judaism) in the name of neopaganism.⁴⁰⁷ They were unable to accept the description of the Bible as a book that reflects a particularistic world-view, that is fraught with xenophobia, militancy and cruelty. The comparison of biblical

⁴⁰⁴ A.H. Sayce, *Babylonians and Assyrians: Life and Customs*, London, 1901, pp. 262–263. Jastrow wrote that the “spirit of humility and reverence does not fall short of the attitude towards Jahweh in the Psalms,” M. Jastrow, *The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, Philadelphia and London, 1915, p. 216. See also: K. van der Toorn, “Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study”, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica*, 22, 1985, pp. 1–9.

⁴⁰⁵ In his introduction to the Gilgamesh epic, Simchoni also claimed that the biblical ethical doctrine developed within the priestly circle and was not a folk creation.

⁴⁰⁶ H. Graetz, “The Structure of Jewish History,” in *The Structure of Jewish History*, pp. 68–69.

⁴⁰⁷ On Mendelssohn’s arguments in defense of the biblical ethics, see: A. Arkush, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment*, pp. 204–212.

ethics to the ethical world of Assyria and Babylonia was regarded as the most despicable comparison of all, since the Bible regarded them as immoral cultures, while it had brought to the world the commandment “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18). Delitzsch’s claim that the Babylonian story of the deluge was imbued with a higher degree of morality was met with outright rejection. Moreover: in Babylonia the flood was perceived as an arbitrary act of the gods, while in the biblical story it took on a totally different character as part of the story of the creation of the world, underpinned by a sublime moral concept.

The modern character of Jewish neo-Orthodoxy was manifested in its attempt to create a synthesis between Torah and Halakhah, on one hand, and the fundamental elements of humanism and universalism in Judaism, on the other. The neo-Orthodox also argued that the Jews had endowed humankind with the idea of the one and only God, who is not only the national god of the Jews nor their sole property, and that the Jewish people had an historical mission to impart the idea of pure humanity to the world.⁴⁰⁸ It is a fact that of all the ancient peoples, only the Hebrew nation has remained alive and exerted so much influence on mankind. Liberal Jews, in contrast, were critical of some parts of the biblical concept of ethics (and certainly of the moral behavior of many of the biblical heroes), and some accepted the claim that the Bible contains an expression of a national-particularistic, even a fanatic world-view. They regarded this world view as an early stage in the evolution of Jewish ethics, which reached its peak with the prophetic ethics that embodies the main essence of Judaism and its humanistic-universal content. As a result, they viewed any attack on prophetic ethics as the most insufferable manifestation of biblical criticism. Thus, in rejecting the claim that Jewish ethics is particularistic and egoistic, M. A. Klausner stated that the Bible speaks about the “God of our fathers,” and the “God of the Jews,” but not about a “Jewish God.” The Jews were charged with the mission of disseminating universal moral monotheism among the nations. Münz stated that the Bible demands holiness and morality of all humans, and Rosenthal wrote that it is Judaism that imparts a uniform moral world-view to the whole world.⁴⁰⁹ He also noted that the attack on the ethics of the Bible opened floodgates for

⁴⁰⁸ Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters of Ben Uziel: Being a Spiritual Presentation of the Principles of Judaism*, trans. by Bernard Drachman, New York, 1899 (orig. *Neunzehn Briefe über Judenthum [Igerot Zafon]*, Altona, 1836).

⁴⁰⁹ Rosenthal wrote: “der Welt den einzigen Gott, eine einheitlich-sittliche Weltanschauung geboten zu haben.”

neo-pagan contentions that its ethical doctrine is a sign of weakness, and hence the culture that upholds these values should be destroyed. In his view, if the attempt to liberate Christianity from the Jewish heritage is intended to provide validity to “Aryan ethics,” that would bring an end to Christianity too; it would be committing spiritual suicide. Kohler spoke in a similar vein, when he said that “Babel was a world without justice and without love and compassion, one void of purity and of truth. The Bible opened for man all the deeper treasures of the soul in giving him a God of righteousness and holiness to emulate and follow in humility.”⁴¹⁰ In other words, Delitzsch represents German radical nationalism, as well as German racism, as an ostensibly universal moral doctrine that seeks to sever the moral roots of Christianity by cutting it off from its biblical source. And this, despite the fact that the Bible is the sole basis of Christian ethics.⁴¹¹ Porges averred that the attempt to undermine the biblical concept of ethics stemmed from the fear that an unbiased comparison between the moral concept of the New Testament and that of the Old Testament would detract from the value of the former, because it would become obvious that the Bible is its source.⁴¹² The Bible does not demand faith but rather the maintenance of a correct life style and correct religious activity. The religious man is called a “righteous man” a *tzadik*, or a “devout man,” a *chasid*, but not a “believer.” The knowledge of God in Judaism is not metaphysical, but mainly ethical and practical. The biblical stories are the frame and the outer garb for ethical ideas. Science is incapable of shaking this belief. But this does not obviate the need to refute dubious conclusions of scholarship.⁴¹³ Benno Jacob wrote that the Assyrian-Babylonian religion was polytheistic, barbaric and distorted. Hence even if it were proven that at some time a monotheistic idea had been raised by some Semitic circle, this would not detract by an iota from the uniqueness of Jewish religion and culture. Monotheism is not only a theological-philosophical idea, it is a demand for moral behavior. It is not the idea

⁴¹⁰ K. Kohler, *Central Conference*, p. 113.

⁴¹¹ Plato, *Reflexionen*, I, pp. 18–20. The Jewish-Austrian scholar, Dr. Eduard Glaser (1855–1908), who studied southern Arabia, wrote that although he is not a professional biblical scholar, he feels the need to correct “the Assyriologist from Berlin,” who claimed that the biblical commandment “love thy neighbor as thyself” refers only to love for members of the Mosaic religion. According to Glaser, the intent is to everyone living within the boundaries of Jewish rule, without any distinction as to origin and religion. See: E. Glaser, “Zum altbiblischen Gebot der Nächstenliebe,” *Ost und West*, 5 (10/11), 1905, pp. 643–656.

⁴¹² Porges, *Bibelkunde*, p. 95.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 26.

that is the main thing, but rather the intent and the deed.⁴¹⁴ Heymann Steinthal wrote that the Prophets were the only ones who regarded all nations as one family and desired the happiness of them all.⁴¹⁵

The most effective line of defense against the claim that the faith of the Bible was nationalistic and particularistic was to recall, as Klausner did, John's report of the words of Jesus: "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). Hoffmann wrote that the Torah had laid the foundation for the creation of an ethicocracy based on the idea of the unity of God and had set forth the principle of unity and equality.⁴¹⁶ The biblical concept of God, C. Werner wrote, had become universal and contained the ideal element of everything to come: "This is our property, and we will not allow anyone to harm it."⁴¹⁷ In his pamphlet, "Goethe, Delitzsch and the Ten Commandments," Rabbi Jacob Horovitz (1873–1939), reiterated the view that world literature contains nothing that comes anywhere near the Ten Commandments, which are closely bound up with the Jewish people, as a doctrine of universal ethics.

An interesting reaction – from a different quarter – came from the pen of the ultra-Orthodox rabbi Rabbi Elijah David Rabinowitz-T'omim (AdeReT), reported by his son-in-law, R. Abraham Isaac Kook. Kook wrote: "It is a well-known fact that among the first humans there were spiritual men who knew God. Although it is unthinkable that Abraham may have been influenced by them, there is no doubt that before the Lawgiving, there were men of morals in the world."⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁴ Jacob, "Das Judenthum", p. 224

⁴¹⁵ H. Steinthal, *Über Juden und Judentum*, Berlin, 1925, p. 106. See: Moshe Greenberg, "The Biblical Grounding of Human Value," In *The Samuel Friedland Lectures, 1960–1966*, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, 1966, pp. 39–52.

⁴¹⁶ A. Hoffmann, *Babel-Bibel-Fabel*, p. 18.

⁴¹⁷ C. Werner, "Das Judentum im Lichte moderner Kritik", *AZdJ*, 70 (16), 1906, p. 69.

⁴¹⁸ In Rabbi Kook's book, *Eder hayakar ve'ikvei hatzon* (1905), there is an interesting reference to the claim that the cuneiform documents show there is a similarity in "morals and deeds" between the Torah and the Babylonian religion. He writes that it is well known that before the giving of the Torah there were men who "knew the religion of God," and certainly influenced others of their generation. Hence even in Babylonia there could have been men who possessed moral traits (*Eder hayakar*, pp. 42–43). See: Shalom Rosenberg, "Biblical Research in Modern Religious Jewish Thought." He writes that "The claim of the existence of monotheistic orientations that precede Abraham, as a basis for explaining the similarity between the Torah and the culture of ancient peoples, is only the first step in a more all-embracing position." According to this, the culture of ancient peoples was the background for the formulation of the Torah, the historical situation in which the revelation took place. U. Simon, *The Bible and Us*, p. 96 (Hebrew). On other suggestions

We will conclude the discussion of this issue with words written by the Jewish American scholar Jacob Finkelstein in 1958, about fifty years after the polemic, about the comparison between the Babylonian and the biblical doctrines of ethics, which emerged from two different assumptions. He asserted that the biblical concept of ethics is anchored in ideals of justice, while the Babylonians had a pragmatic system of ethics but appreciated morality and ethical conduct no less than any other nation of the ancient world. He agreed with the view that Delitzsch's statements were an unbridled attack on the religion of the Bible, but he believed that the Jewish (and the Christian) reaction was similar in principle to the attack: it repudiated the world of the other. Hence, in effect, the totally negative image that the Jews attached to polytheism is similar to Delitzsch's negative image of Judaism.⁴¹⁹

At least in the historical context in which Delitzsch's statements were made, Finkelstein's comparison seems out of place. Delitzsch did not attack a religion that had vanished from the world two thousand years earlier, and his Jewish disputants did not negate the moral content of a living religion – Christianity – and at least some of them found some affinity between its moral ideas and those of the Bible. Rather, they denied the existence of a moral dimension in a pagan religion that had disappeared from the world thousands of years earlier. In the context of the early twentieth century, L. A. Rosenthal's words of protestation seem more persuasive than Finkelstein's in the mid-twentieth century. Rosenthal pointed to the contradiction between those who accuse the Bible of imparting an "ethic of the weak," which is the "catastrophe of the Aryan world," and those who accuse the Bible of disseminating "an ethics of national superiority." In the final analysis, Rosenthal wrote, the attack on the Bible was an attack on its moral demands. It was these demands, and not some pagan henotheism, that created the moral world of western man. Hence, Delitzsch's challenge to the spirit of the Bible portends a bestiality that poses a terrible danger to the achievements of mankind.⁴²⁰

It seems to us that the following words by Stephen Langdon sum up the prevailing view:

regarding Mesopotamian (and Egyptian) monotheism, see: T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp. 188–200.

⁴¹⁹ Jacob J. Finkelstein, "The Study of Man: Bible and Babel – A Comparative Study of the Hebrew and Babylonian Religious Spirit," *Commentary*, 26 (5), November 1958, pp. 431–444.

⁴²⁰ L. A. Rosenthal, *Zurück zur Bibel!*, pp. 5–9.

This people, starting with the notion that sin is not a moral question, rose to the conception that immoral living is also sin. They held that it was a religious duty to obey all laws both religious and profane. Their great weakness seems to have been their utter dependence upon powers outside themselves. Their long services and beautiful prayers probably gave them peace and consolation, but the divine right of the mind to question why things exist and why laws are so, never existed during the millenniums of Babylonia and Palestine.⁴²¹

The Semitic Myth and the Aryan Myth Bible, Mythology and Myth

We will briefly note that another trend appeared alongside high biblical criticism, under the influence of the school of comparative mythology, whose major exponents were Adalbert Kuhn (1812–1881) and Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900). It held that the Semitic peoples, primarily the biblical Hebrews, did not possess the mental ability to create mythology, science and philosophy, because they lacked the power of imagination. The most important promoter of this pseudo-scientific dogma in the second half of the nineteenth century was the renowned French scholar Ernest Renan (1823–1892)⁴²² who asserted that the nomadic Semitic tribes borrowed the Assyrian-Babylonian cosmology (which originated with the non-Semitic Sumerians), but their Semitic genius lent it a much more sober and clear content, and divested it of its mythological elements, the product of a non-Semitic spirit rich in creative imagination.

The Babel-Bibel controversy also placed racial typology and its ties to the history of culture on the public agenda. This gave some of those who reacted an opportunity to clarify the link between race and culture. Others, who agreed that the link existed, used the finds from Mesopotamia to refute the prevailing dogma that the Semitic peoples (namely, the Jews) lacked the mental skills required to create a culture, i.e., mythology, belles lettres, art and science.

⁴²¹ Stephen H. Langdon, *Lectures on Babylonia and Palestine*, Paris, 1906, pp. 120–121.

⁴²² Shmuel Almog, “The Borrowed Identity: Neo-Pagan Reactions to the Jewish Root of Christianity,” in Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, pp. 131–147; Yaakov Shavit, “‘Semites’ and ‘Aryans’ in Modern Jewish Polemics,” in Almog et al. (eds.), *Israel and the Nations: Essays Presented in Honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 215–241 (Hebrew).

The use of racial typology and the division between Semites and Aryans was rejected by many. The history of the cultures of Mesopotamia, Jastrow stated, proves there is no basis for a theory about the psychology of the race as the source of culture. The population of Mesopotamia was a mixture of races, and components of culture moved from group to group without encountering any barriers or obstacles. As we noted, there were Jewish writers who accepted the claim of a link between race and culture,⁴²³ but they drew different conclusions from it than the disciples of the theory of Aryan superiority did. Beginning from the end of the 1850s, the discovery of the Mesopotamian culture was regarded as irrefutable evidence that not only did the Semitic peoples possess all the mental powers necessary to create art and science, but that they also preceded the Greeks in their cultural creation and imparted all of their achievements to them.⁴²⁴ The real inventors of all the accomplishments attributed to the Greeks, M. L. Lilienblum wrote, were in fact the Babylonian and Assyrian sons of Shem.⁴²⁵ And Moses Hess wrote “In contrast, one can see that the view held by those who explain the monotheism of the Bible as a result of the Semitic race’s dearth of imaginative and creative power is clearly marked by ignorance and superficiality.”⁴²⁶ Although the Bible employs Semitic (Assyrian-Babylonian) mythology, it has reduced it and given it new content.⁴²⁷

Heymann Steinthal, the founder, together with Lazarus, of the school of Psychology of the Nations (*Völkerpsychologie*), and the Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher⁴²⁸ were the fiercest critics of the theory propounded by Renan, Muller and Kuhn. To Steinthal and Goldziher, the Mesopotamian literature undeniably refuted the dogma that was widespread at the time, according to which the Jews (and the Semites in general) lacked the mental and creative capabilities required to create great literature and attain scientific achievements.⁴²⁹ Although E. Schrader, Delitzsch’s teacher, claimed that the source of the Semitic (Assyrian-Babylonian) creative works was Turanian (not Semitic), Steinthal be-

⁴²³ Sanford Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914*, pp. 83–86.

⁴²⁴ “Higgayon,” *Hamaggid*, September 10, 1857.

⁴²⁵ M. L. Lilienblum, *An Autobiography*, 3, 1970, p. 53 (Hebrew).

⁴²⁶ M. Hess, “Ein charakteristischer Psalm” (1873), in T. Zlocisti (ed.), *Moses Hess Jüdische Schriften*.

⁴²⁷ M. Hess, *Dynamische Stofflehre*, Paris, 1877, p. 247.

⁴²⁸ H. Steinthal, *Zu Bibel und Religionsphilosophie*, Berlin, 1895, pp. 35, 133; Yaakov Shavit, “‘Semites’ and ‘Aryans’ in Modern Jewish Polemics.”

⁴²⁹ Shavit, ibid. And see also the discussion in Y. Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem*, pp. 381–402.

lieved there was no reason to assume that the Jews were the only people that lacked the capacity for literary creation.⁴³⁰ The Semitic culture predated the Indo-German culture, and hence was less developed. The Semitic peoples contributed certain elements of culture to the world, such as the alphabet, weights and coins, astronomy and the like, which came to the West via the Phoenicians. It would not, however, be correct to say that all the Semitic peoples adhered to a monotheistic view; the Semitic peoples did not differ from the Indo-German peoples in their polytheism, and only the Hebrews brought monotheism and idealistic prophecy to the world, “the fresh wind of divine freedom.”⁴³¹ At the same time, Steinthal believed it was possible to find in the Bible vestiges of ancient Hebrew polytheism.⁴³² Goldziher, in his book, *The Myth of the Hebrews*, also asserted that Mesopotamian myths, like the story of the flood, are a literary creation, not a myth, and were borrowed by the Hebrews only in the time of the Babylonian exile. The biblical myth is found in other parts of the Bible, in which various characters or events are solar myths. For example, the story of the exodus from Egypt is an historical event verified by Egyptian documents, but over time it took on the form of a solar myth.⁴³³ The stories of the patriarchs are not etiological legends, or folk tales, as Gunkel argued, but rather cosmological myths that personify the forces of nature in the form of people and historical events and reflect the ancient world picture.⁴³⁴ This theory has remained on the fringes of Jewish scholarship. Very few, if any, were willing to accept the theory that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses are only mythological figures, not in the sense of characters in an historical legend, but in the sense of the personification of primal natural forces.

Some scholars believed that once the controversy subsided it would transpire that the Jews had actually profited from it because it would elicit a favorable, even an admiring attitude towards the Semitic peoples. In 1913, for example, S. Jampel, the rabbi and biblical scholar,

⁴³⁰ Goldziher expounded a similar view in his book *Mythology among the Hebrews*, New York, 1967 edn.

⁴³¹ Steinthal's ideas on this issue were expressed in numerous articles. See a summary of them in H. Steinthal, *Über Juden und Judentum*, Berlin, 1925, pp. 93–118.

⁴³² See his review of E. Schrader's book, *Die Höllenfahrt der Istar. Ein altbabylonisches Epos*, Gießen, 1874, *Zeitschrift für Völkerpsychologie und Sprachwissenschaft*, 8, 1875, pp. 339–350.

⁴³³ I. Goldziher, *Mythology among the Hebrews*, p. 23.

⁴³⁴ On this radical position, see: Christian Hartlich and Walter Sachs, *Der Ursprung des Mythsbegriffes in der modernen Bibelwissenschaft*, Tübingen, 1952; Edmund R. Leach and D. Alan Aycock, *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983.

repeated the enthusiastic response with which writers had received the discovery of the ancient Mesopotamia culture in the late nineteenth century. In his opinion, the central role that the new scholarship had assigned to the Semitic peoples in human history would be very beneficial to the Jewish cause, because its findings could serve as an immeasurably important weapon in the war against the racist anti-Semitism that had become legitimate in conversations in the salons of Germany. The achievements of the Mesopotamian culture, he opined, are convincing evidence that the claim that the German-Aryan race is superior is baseless and that it is impossible to sever European Christianity from its Semitic source. The Jews are entitled – and must – therefore take pride in the glory of Babylon, which is not the heritage of the Germans but rather their heritage. They ought to look proudly upon their ancient Semitic forefathers and exult in being a part of the Semitic race. Religious education also should educate them to feel such pride!⁴³⁵

⁴³⁵ S. Jampel, *Vorgeschichte Israels und seiner Religion*, Frankfurt am Main, 1913, pp. 255–256.

Chapter 10

From Noah to the Sabbath

And how wonderful and sublime is the story of Creation recorded in our holy scriptures. There is no comparison or relationship between it and the stories of creation written by the ancient peoples such as the Indians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and the Greeks, for their tales are full of vanity and a striving after wind.

David Kahana, *Masoret seyag lamikra* (Tradition, A Fence around the Bible), Vienna, 1882 p. 115.⁴³⁶

This chapter discusses the Jewish reaction to four major parallels that Delitzsch regarded as undeniable evidence that the Bible (namely, the Pentateuch) was dependent on the Mesopotamian culture. They are: the name of the divinity, the flood story, the institution of the Sabbath and the Mosaic code. By means of these four topics, we will describe the tactics of response adopted by the Jews who engaged in the Babel-Bibel controversy. As we have already noted, Delitzsch was not the only one who believed the two cultures were similar in these four matters as well as others.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ David Kahana (1838–1915) wrote, inter alia, *Sefer Toledot Shlomo* (History of King Solomon, Vienna 1883) and *Mavo leparashat Bil'am* (Introduction to the Portion on Bilaam, Lvov, 1883).

⁴³⁷ Thus, for example, in 1909, Driver wrote: “In fact, no archaeologist questions that the biblical cosmogony, however altered in form and stripped of its original polytheism is, in its main outlines, derived from Babylonia. Nor ought such a conclusion surprise us. The biblical historians make no claim to have derived their information from a supernatural source: their materials, it is plain (cf. Luke 1:1–4), were obtained from the best human sources available; the function of inspiration was to guide them in the disposal and arrangement of these materials and in the use to which they applied them.” See: S.R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, London, 1904, quoted from enlarged 12th edn. of 1926, pp. 30–31. Y. Kaufmann wrote that the pan-Babylonian view that “attempts to explain everything by the Babylonian influence” is greatly exaggerated, but that the Babylonian culture “was also a progenitor of the Israelite culture – there is no doubt of that. In the *aggadah* (legend) (especially in the Genesis legend), in the laws (particularly in the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20:22–23, in the Psalms, and in the wisdom literature the link to

The Name of the Divinity and the One God

Delitzsch's claim that the names "el" and "Yahweh" appear in documents from Babylonia as the names of the one and only God, was rejected by most of those engaged in the controversy.⁴³⁸ Their view was that Delitzsch had presented no more than a few broken tablets, on which, he asserted, the names *Ja-ab-ve ilu*, *Ja hu-um-ilu* and *Jhw* were inscribed, and on the basis of this find, he hastened to argue that the source of the name of the Israelite God, "Yahweh" is Babylonian.⁴³⁹ Oppert rejected Delitzsch's claim and stated that the idea that *Yahweh* was a Babylonian god called *Jahu* is based on a misreading of several personal names of the Elamites.⁴⁴⁰ The fact that the name *Jahu* is a part of Babylonian personal names, Seligmann Meyer and M. A. Klausner wrote, does not prove anything.⁴⁴¹ Meyer posed the question: if Hammurabi knew of the god *Jau*, why didn't he mention him in the introduction to his code, or among the curses⁴⁴² that he directed at many gods. The obvious conclusion is that the god *Ja* is none other than the Babylonian idol *Ea*.

Babylonian culture is clearly evident. It is also very obvious in many images of God and his deeds and in numerous ritual details." Kaufmann believed that the influence began as far back as the period of the Patriarchs. See: Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha'emunah haYisraelit* (History of the Israelite Religion), Jerusalem, 1942, Part 2, Book 1, pp. 19–20.

⁴³⁸ David Leimdörfer, *Der Jhwh-Fund von Babel in der Bibel*, Hamburg, 1903. On this matter, T. Pinches partially supported Delitzsch; however, he believed there was a need for more evidence to determine that the first component in the name *Ya'wa-illu* is *Yahweh*, the Hebrew god. See: Th. G. Pinches, *The Old Testament*, p. 536.

⁴³⁹ Cornhill expressed doubt about whether the names had been correctly read and interpreted and argued that among the thousands of Assyrian-Babylonian first names there is not a single one that contains the first name of any god. C. H. Cornhill, "Friedrich Delitzsch, Babel und Bibel", *Deutsche Litteraturzeitung*, 27, 5. Juli 1902, pp. 1680–1684.

⁴⁴⁰ Julius Oppert, "Babel und Bibel", *Jewish Chronicle*, April 17, 1903, pp. 14–15.

⁴⁴¹ Jacob Finkelstein wrote that it was easy to refute the alleged evidence that *Yahweh* was worshipped by the Canaanites in Mesopotamia because "the word which had been interpreted as referring to *Yahweh* we now know to be nothing more than the first person possessive pronoun. J. Finkelstein, "The Study of Man: Bible and Babel, p. 433. See the discussion in Meek that concludes that the name concludes that the name *Yawi-ilum* is composed of a verb plus the name of a divinity. Theophile James Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, New York. 1960 edn., pp. 102–105. Tadmor writes that the meaning of *Ja hu-um-ilu* in the Amorite dialect of ancient Babylonian is "the brother is mine." H. Tadmor, "The Bibel-Babel Controversy," *Newsletter of the Israeli National Academy of Science*, 23, November 2002, p. 7 (Hebrew).

⁴⁴² S. Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, II, p. 17. The reference is to the lines that curse anyone who dares harm the stele.

Nonetheless, the possibility that the name *Yahweh* does appear in the Babylonian documents posed a difficulty for some of the Jews who reacted in the polemic. They were prepared to accept the hypothesis that the source of the name *Yahweh* is Assyrian, and even to agree to the assumption that the Assyrians knew of a god called *Yahweh*, but they argued that there was no resemblance between that god and the biblical *Yahweh*. Even if Delitzsch's suggestion is correct, Jacob Barth, Benno Jacob and Mojzesz Schorr, among others, wrote, and the Assyrians did know of a god called *Yahweh*, for them he was only one of many in the entourage of the god Marduk, and certainly he was not the one and only god. The Assyrian-Babylonian religion was henotheistic, and preferred one god among the many gods in the pantheon, but it was not a monotheistic religion.⁴⁴³ Münz argued that even if the name *Yahweh* did in fact appear in the Assyrian tablets, it was a name devoid of content and spirit, and had no redemptive power.⁴⁴⁴ A. H. Hoffmann believed that the salient point was not the source of the name *Yahweh*, but the status of the god in the world.⁴⁴⁵ Isaac Hirsch was also prepared to accept the hypothesis that one supreme god was known in the generations prior to Abraham. As a matter of fact, the Pentateuch itself states "then began men to call upon the Lord by name," and that Melchizedek, a contemporary of Abraham's, was a priest of a supreme god.⁴⁴⁶ M. A. Klausner added that Genesis 14: 18–20 tells of Melchizedek, priest of God most high, who was also Abraham's god ("the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth")[(*ibid.*, 19)], which shows that in the time of Abraham there was a small community that believed in a supreme god.⁴⁴⁷ N. Porges wrote that the name *Yahweh* was known to the Semitic peoples from the dawn of their history, and hence it is not surprising that the Hebrew Semites employed it.⁴⁴⁸ In any event, the Israelites differed from the others in that they worshipped only one sole God, rather than the

⁴⁴³ B. Jacob, "Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse."

⁴⁴⁴ W. Münz, "Es werde Licht!", p. 42.

⁴⁴⁵ A. Hoffmann, *Bibel-Babel-Fabel*, pp. 5–9.

⁴⁴⁶ I. Hirsch, *Meine Glossen*, p. 36.

⁴⁴⁷ M. A. Klausner is apparently the anonymous author of the article: "Babel und Bibel", *Israelitische Wochenschrift*, 12 (4), 12. Januar 1903.

⁴⁴⁸ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde*, pp. 51–52. David Kahana wrote in a similar vein: "The name *Elohim* was a name shared by all the sons of Shem, and hence we found the name *Elohim* in the Holy Bible at times in relation to the faith of the Jews and belief in monotheism, and elsewhere also in relation to the faith of others who are polytheistic...the name *Elohim* was shared by all the sons of Shem, and for the Jews the name *Jahweh* was special and separate." Kahana, *Masoret seyag lamikra*, pp. 120–121.

forces of nature, which were personified in the various figures of gods. There may have been a small group in Babylonia who adored *Yahweh*, but only Abraham knew him as an invisible God and followed his call to the promised land (*dem Rufe seines unsichtbaren urgeistigen Gottes folgend*), where he imparted the idea of monotheism to his offspring.⁴⁴⁹ The name *Jhwh* in itself is therefore of no importance, and only the significance attributed to it is.⁴⁵⁰ Plato also stated that according to the Jewish view, Adam was the first “prophet,” and traditions about the name of God passed down from him to Babylonia. However, all the peoples that existed in Abraham’s generation disappeared, and only the Jewish people remained to impart the name to the coming generations.⁴⁵¹

In *Monatsschrift* of 1907–1908, S. Jampel noted that the Babylonian priestly religion believed in many gods, but had a monotheistic character in the sense that from time to time, its priests bestowed a preferred status on one of the gods. However, the Babylonian monotheism was the province of a small sect of learned men, who engaged in it secretly, while the religion of Israel was a living religion of the entire people. Biblical monotheism was totally different from the Babylonian since Moses separated the divinity from the astral system and nature. His god was transcendent to them, above nature and controlling it. Only such a concept of the divine can be the basis for a compulsory code of ethics.⁴⁵² In his 1913 book *Vorgeschichte Israels und seiner Religion* (The Ancient History of Israel and its Religion) Jampel repeated the view that the proto-monotheistic idea was known in Babylonia, but he added that faith in one god is not connected to a revelation, for Abraham arrived at it without a revelation. He further argued that Moses’ legislation was not a totally new phenomenon. The Jews’ opposition to these views, he claimed, stemmed mainly from the anti-Semitic content of Delitzsch’s lectures, but added that while there could be no doubt as to the superiority of the biblical law, Judaism would suffer no harm if it accepted the view that many of the biblical commandments originated in the ancient Babylonian code of laws.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴⁹ M. A. Klauser wrote that the God of the Bible is not anthropomorphous, as is written in Genesis 3:8: “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.” The subject is the “sound” not God. See: M. A. Klausner, *Professor Delitzsch: Eine Erwiderung*, 1904, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁵⁰ M. Beermann, “Bibel und Babel im Religionsunterricht der Prima.”

⁴⁵¹ I. Plato, *Reflexionen über ‘Babel und Bibel’*, III, 1903, p. 39.

⁴⁵² S. Jampel, *Die bibelwissenschaftliche Litteratur der letzten Jahre*, MGWJ, 52, Heft 1, 1908, pp. 21–36.

⁴⁵³ S. Jampel, *Vorgeschichte Israels*, Frankfurt am Main, 1913, pp. 246–253.

Both the neo-orthodox and the reform Jews believed that even if there were some semantic link between *Yahweh*, the God of Israel who revealed Himself at Mt. Sinai, and the Babylonian (or the ancient Semitic) “*Jhwh*”, there is no substantive connection between the two. Some of those from the reform camp who responded agreed that in the description of *Yahweh* who was revealed at Mt. Sinai there are mythological elements of a god who represents storm and fury, but the biblical God is special in that he appears from the first as a moral force.⁴⁵⁴

The Flood Story

As we noted in Chapter 3, the similarity between the biblical flood and tablet XI of the Gilgamesh epic, which throughout the centuries appeared in quite a few different versions in Mesopotamian literature itself, made an enormous impression. It was this similarity that engendered the comparative study between the Bible and the Mesopotamian literature.⁴⁵⁵ Delitzsch did not relate to the question of whether there is any factual truth in the flood story, but merely stated that the biblical story is clearly a copy of the Mesopotamian.⁴⁵⁶ Very few among the reacting Jews dealt with the issue of the historicity of the biblical flood story, and most regarded it as a story that expresses the biblical cosmology and its unique world-view. The issue at stake was the originality of the story, not its veracity or its correspondence to any scientific theory.⁴⁵⁷ Although some reacted by claiming that the

⁴⁵⁴ K. Kohler, *Central Conference*, p. 109–110.

⁴⁵⁵ H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit*, Göttingen, 1895; Th. Schneider, *Was ist's mit der Sintflut? Die Versuche ihrer Deutung als Geschichte, Sage und Mythos. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Babel und Bibelfrage*, Wiesbaden, 1903; Chr. Dieckmann, *Das Gilgamis-Epos in seiner Bedeutung für Bibel und Babel*, Leipzig, 1902.

⁴⁵⁶ Delitzsch believed that the Babylonian flood story was of a loftier moral character than the biblical story. See the discussion by Jastrow, in Morris Jastrow, *The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria*, Boston, 1898, pp. 467–517. He found elements of the Gilgamesh myth in the biblical story of Samson. For a broad survey of the literature published by 1918 on the Babylonian and biblical flood stories, see: James George Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament*, London, 1919, pp. 104–146. Frazer claimed that the two versions of the story in Genesis are independent of one another and that the “Jahwehist” version is the later of the two. He also stated that the Hebrews in the Land of Israel were familiar with the Babylonian story long before the Exilic period.

⁴⁵⁷ For the claim that the story of the Creation was proven by the scientific theory, see: Henry Hymans, “Babel und Bibel,” *Jewish Chronicle*, March 27, 1903, p. 8, and Isaac Lazarovich, “Babel und Bibel,” *Jewish Chronicle*, April 3, 1903, p. 9.

disparities between the two stories were so great that the Babylonian-Assyrian story could not have been the source for the biblical story,⁴⁵⁸ the majority found it difficult to deny that the two stories did resemble one another. From this point of departure, three tactics of response emerged.

The first was to defend the originality of the biblical flood story based on the claim that the biblical story was the earlier one, and that the Babylonian-Assyrian literature had borrowed it, and not the other way around.⁴⁵⁹ The second tactic was to argue that the flood story was based on a collective memory of a primal flood, or on legends about such a flood that were shared by many peoples. Hence there was no reason to assume that the Babylonian literature was the earlier, authentic source of the story.⁴⁶⁰ The common features of both stories stem from an ancient source that was shared by all the Semitic peoples, or that came to the Jewish people after having undergone many metamorphoses, so there is no way of knowing what the source was. In any case, the pure version of the story appears in the Book of Genesis.⁴⁶¹ The third – and main – tactic was the claim that even if the source of the biblical story was Babylonian-Assyrian, it was significantly processed and adapted in the Bible. The biblical flood story was consciously shaped as an opposition to the Babylonian story, with which the biblical author was very familiar. He regarded the Babylonian source as raw material only and adapted it to give it moral significance that it lacked in the Babylonian-Assyrian version.⁴⁶² In other words, it is the biblical author's adaptation of the ancient Babylonian-Semitic myth that is important, and not the source.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁸ Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, pp. 9, 49.

⁴⁵⁹ Anon., "Babel und Bibel", *DIZ*, 13, 12. März 1902, p. 197. The writer made this claim because he was unfamiliar with the earlier Sumerian version of the story.

⁴⁶⁰ See: Porges, *ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁶¹ B. Jacob, "Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie", p. 222.

⁴⁶² M. Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, pp. 65–123.

⁴⁶³ In his book, *Mavo sifruti-histori lekitvei hakodesh* (Literary-Historical Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, Jerusalem-Berlin, 1923–1929). Simon Bernfeld wrote that the Prophets of the First Temple period were not familiar with the flood story, and hence it came into the Bible only during the Exilic period. Only then could the exiles learn the different versions of the story and adapt them, while stripping them of the mythological element and imbuing the story with moral content. Bernfeld, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 55–58.

Shabbat and Sabattu⁴⁶⁴

The similarity between the biblical Sabbath (the Hebrew *Shabbat*) and the institution of *sabattu*, or *sapatti*, *sap-battum* in the Babylonian-Assyrian society was also one of the reasons underpinning the view that this was clearly a case of borrowing.⁴⁶⁵ The basic assumption of the discussion about the source of the Sabbath and its content was that the biblical Sabbath is a day of rest that begins on the seventh day of every week.⁴⁶⁶

In the discussion on this subject too, use was made of the tactics mentioned above: the first was to deny the similarity; the second, to claim that the institution of the Sabbath was shared by many peoples (in particular the Semites) during the pre-Abrahamic period; the

⁴⁶⁴ Of the voluminous contemporary literature on this subject see: J.N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and the First Day of the Week*, Michigan, 1887; J. Hirshfeld, "Remarks on the Etymology of Sabbath", *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, 53, 1896, pp. 353–359; M. Jastrow, "The Original Character of the Hebrew Sabbath," *American Journal of Theology*, 2, 1898, pp. 312–352; idem in: *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, pp. 134–253; C.H. Toy, "The Earliest Form of the Sabbath", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 18, 1899, pp. 190–194; J. Hehn, *Der israelitische Sabbath*, Münster, 1909.

⁴⁶⁵ According to Pinches, the Babylonian *sapattum* marked only the fifteenth day of the month, the day of the full moon, and the Babylonian day which has a core similar to the biblical Shabbat is *u-hulgala*, *umu limmu* (the "day of calamity"), see: Pinches, pp. 526–528. Jacob Finkelstein wrote that "the term *shapattu* did have a connotation of ending or termination, but this did not refer to any ceasing of work, but to the ending of the first half of the month, or the time of the full month. Although it is still possible that the Hebrew term for Sabbath is derived ultimately from the Babylonian term, the character of the days to which the Israelites applied it bears only the remotest relation to comparable Babylonian days." J. Finkelstein, "Babel and Bibel", p. 443.

⁴⁶⁶ The generally accepted view today is that the Babylonian *sapattum* referred to the 15th day of the month, the day of the full moon. See: Benno Landsberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Babylonier und Assyrer*, Leipzig, 1915; Jacob S. Licht (ed.), *Time and Holy Days in the Biblical and the Second Commonwealth Periods*, Jerusalem (Hebrew), 1988, pp. 83–100. See also: Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*, Hamburg, 1975. In her opinion (and that of others) the Sabbath during the First Temple period was a monthly festival to mark the full moon. For a useful discussion on the subject, see: William W. Hallo, "New Moons and Sabbaths: A Case-Study in the Conservative Approach," *HUCA*, XLVIII, Cincinnati, 1977, pp. 1–18. Tadmor writes: "Today it is possible to state that a part of Delitzsch's argument is not tenable. *Shapatum* is not linked at all to a system of the dangerous days of the month, but rather is a term connected with the position of the moon, and it means 'fullness of the moon,'" H. Tadmor, "The Bibel-Babel Controversy," p. 8. If "Shabbat" did indeed mark the day of the full moon before the Sabbath was removed from the lunar cycle of the Hebrew calendar, then the claim of Babylonian influence is feasible, but not in the way that Delitzsch proposed.

third, to argue that this was only a superficial similarity and that these days of rest had a totally different character in Babylonia and in the Hebrew nation. Nearly all the writers attempted to prove that there was no basis for the putative similarity that Delitzsch found between the institution of the *sabattum* in Babylonian culture and the Sabbath in the Torah. The major claim was that while the Babylonians did have days of *sabattum*, these did not fall on the seventh day of each week, but on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th day of the month. It was not a seven-day cycle, a fact that Delitzsch concealed. Moreover, in Babylonia these days were mentioned as evil times (*unu-lemnu*), on which work was forbidden because of the fear of the gods' anger, not as days to commemorate the divine act of creation.⁴⁶⁷ In Babylonia, the days of rest were intended only for the king, not for the entire populace, while in the Bible the Sabbath rest was a holy time for God, who had chosen the Jewish people as a holy nation. The seventh day was meant to mark the conclusion of the divine act of creation. The only connection between the biblical Sabbath and the Babylonian *sabattum* is, therefore, the number 7. In the Babylonian perception, this number denoted the end of a period fixed according to the heavenly bodies and its significance was atonement, while in the Bible it denoted a day of rest and was meant to describe God as master of the world. Jastrow stated that the Babylonian day of rest was part of the theology of the heavenly bodies. Although in the Bible too, there is a connection between the full moon and the Sabbath ("Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies," Isaiah 1:13; "From one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord," Ibid., 66:23), the biblical Sabbath is a religious concept depicting God's control over the universe.⁴⁶⁸ *Shabattum* referred to the day of *um nub libbi* – the rest of the heart (of the god), celebrated on the day of the full moon while the Hebrew Sabbath is the expression of a religious idea that has no parallel in the Babylonian religion.⁴⁶⁹ Jacob Horovitz devoted a special book to the subject, in which he wrote that Delitzsch had erred in interpreting the word *shabattum* as "the end of work," and cited the opinion of other scholars that it was a day for "appeasing the wrath of the gods, of

⁴⁶⁷ See the opinion of German scholars of the same period on this subject: C. H. Cornhill, "Friedrich Delitzsch Babel und Bibel", p. 1681; J. Hehn, *Siebenzahl und Sabbat bei den Babylonier und im Alten Testament*, Leipzig, 1907.

⁴⁶⁸ M. Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, pp. 134–195.

⁴⁶⁹ Jastrow, *ibid.*, p. 164.

atoning.” Moreover, the Assyrians and the Babylonians did not give the name “Sabbath” to the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th day of the month, and the documents show that during these days business contracts were signed. He also mentioned that in his book, *Rückblick und Ausblick*, Delitzsch had already withdrawn his far-reaching claim, and had only continued to adhere to the view that the Babylonians had a *schabatu* day, “a day for appeasing the hearts of the gods.” If that is the case, how can a similarity in name attest to similarity between a day intended to appease the rage of the gods and a festival to mark the sanctity of life and rest from the week’s work!⁴⁷⁰ M. Schorr noted that neither the 7th, 14th, 21st nor 28th day of the month was called “Sabbath” in the Babylonian documents, and nothing was stated in any Babylonian document about their being days of the cessation of work. In the Bible the Sabbath is meant to distinguish between the Israelites and the nations, and its social character has no parallel in other cultures. Porges argued that the hemerologic calendar (which determines favorable days and bad days) found in Babylonia does not indicate any connection whatsoever between the biblical day of rest and the Babylonian day for appeasing the gods. Hence, he asserted, humankind should thank the young Israelite nation of culture, not the Babylonian nation of culture that preceded it, for giving it the Sabbath day.⁴⁷¹ Jacob Barth claimed that the names *schabatu*, *schapatuu*, *sch-pat-tu* in the Assyrian tablets refer to a day intended to appease the anger of the gods. Although other peoples also had a week of seven (or five) days, it is the biblical Sabbath that is independent of the month and takes place throughout every year,⁴⁷² so there is no basis for the claim that it originates in the Babylonian day of rest.

The nearly sweeping opposition to Delitzsch’s opinion about the source of the Sabbath is telling. The manner in which the content and origins of the Sabbath is perceived is a touchstone for one’s attitude towards a key element of Judaism as a religion of commandments.⁴⁷³ It might have been expected, then, that the reaction to Delitzsch’s claims in this regard would be a point of controversy between the orthodox, on one hand, and the liberal and reform Jews, on the other. This is because as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, members of the reform camp had already voiced radical views that the deci-

⁴⁷⁰ Jacob Horovitz, *Babel und Bibel*, pp. 32–43.

⁴⁷¹ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, pp. 36–37.

⁴⁷² J. Barth, *Babel und israelitisches Religionswesen*, pp. 9–14. See also: I. Steiner, *Ist der Sabbat ein Unglückstag? Ein Wort zur Abwehr und Klärung*, Berlin, 1906.

⁴⁷³ M. Wiener, *Jüdische Religion*, pp. 107–111.

sion about patterns of observing the Sabbath could be left to individual conscience. The issue of Shabbat was at the top of the agenda of conferences of reform rabbis in Braunschweig (1844), in Frankfurt (1845), in Breslau (1846), Leipzig (1869) and Augsburg (1871). The debate centered on the question of whether Shabbat is a day dedicated to God (*Gotteszeit*) or a day of rest for man (*Ruhezeit*); is it a symbol or a purpose in its own right. Samuel Holdheim, the most radical of the reform rabbis, argued that according to Jewish theology, observance of a day of rest is in fact “acknowledgement of the act [of creation] and testimony to the fundamental truths of Jewish faith, and its desecration amounts to denial of these truths and abandonment of Judaism.” He added, however, that the nature of Shabbat, as set forth in the tradition, does not have to obligate the modern Jew, who is entitled even to move the day of rest in order to adapt it to the modern civil world.⁴⁷⁴ Those who disagreed vigorously asserted that if the Sabbath were moved to Sunday: “We will bury Judaism on Friday to allow it to be resurrected on Sunday as a new religion.” The Breslau conference rejected the radical approach and proclaimed Shabbat as a day of rest and sanctity, although it did accept many exemptions in regard to its observance.⁴⁷⁵ The debate about the character of the Sabbath also continued in the years to come.

One would not have expected the reform camp to be upset by the claim that the Shabbat originated in the Babylonian religion. Nonetheless, despite their lenient views about the patterns of observing the Shabbat, not all the reform rabbis were prepared to accept the claim that it originated in an idolatrous institution. Even those who accepted this hypothesis stressed the profound difference between the Babylonian day of rest and the biblical one. In their eyes, Shabbat was an expression of a lofty social and moral idea. Hence they found it hard to come to terms with the attempt to deny Judaism credit for imparting this idea to the world. Kaufmann Kohler, who was prepared to concur with the view that in pre-Exilic times the day of new moon was a more important holiday than the Sabbath, expressed the opinion that there is no comparison between “the Babylonian Sabbath, a

⁴⁷⁴ Holdheim found an ostensible justification for desecrating the Sabbath in the commandment to Jews to observe the laws of the land. Wiener, *ibid.*, pp. 107–109.

⁴⁷⁵ *The German Rabbinical Conferences, 1844–1846*, Introd. M. Meyer, trans. Z. Jacobson, Jerusalem, 1986 (Hebrew); David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, New York, 1907; M. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 138–140. The conferences of reform rabbis in the United States also devoted much time to a discussion of this issue.

day of fear and gloom ... with the Jewish Sabbath." The fact is that it was so essentially different that it was considered a sign distinguishing Israel from the surrounding nations. In other words, the form may have been Babylonian, but the spirit was a Jewish spirit.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the claim that the Sabbath originated in Babylonia contradicts the words of Isaiah, "Blessed is the man...that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it" (56:2), that the Sabbath distinguishes between idol worship and Judaism.⁴⁷⁷

The reaction from the neo-orthodox camp was obviously more extreme. To them, the very idea that the Sabbath had come to the Jewish people from an Assyrian-Babylonian (idolatrous) source was tantamount to desecration of the Holy Name. Jacob Barth's response was that nowhere in the Bible is there any mention of other nations observing the Sabbath and one can assume that if they did, the Bible would not have concealed the fact. In other words, the institution of the Sabbath is unique to the Jewish people.⁴⁷⁸ It is surprising, then, that even in the neo-orthodox camp, some, such as Immanuel Plato and Ahron Marcus, accepted the view that the Sabbath in its ancient (Abrahamic)

⁴⁷⁶ K. Kohler, *Central Conference*, p. 111. Yosef I. Elhanan Melamed tells about a Jewish French scholar and public figure, one of the heads of the ICA (Jewish Colonization Association), who accepted the view that the Jewish Sabbath originated in the Babylonian religion, and concluded that therefore Jews were not obligated to observe the Sabbath. Hence he wrote to the Jews of Russia, who asked for assistance from the ICA, that the way to solve the problems of the Jews was to work on the Sabbath. Here was proof of why it is necessary to observe the commandment of the Sages "know what to reply to a heretic" – in this case, scholars of biblical criticism and of the antiquities of Babylonia and Assyria! (Y.E. Melamed, *Shivtei Yisrael*, pp. 5–6). He is referring to the scholar Salomon Reinach (1858–1932), who was active in the ICA (as well as in Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PICA). We did not find such a letter in Reinach's files in the Alliance archives in Paris.

⁴⁷⁷ M. Beerman, "Bibel und Babel im Religionsunterricht der Prima."

⁴⁷⁸ J. Barth, "Der israelitische Sabbat und die Babylonier", *JüdPr*, 33 (19), 9. Mai 1902, pp. 175–177, 183–185; idem, *Babel und israelitisches Religionswesen*, pp. 6–14. See also: Morris Jastrow, "The Original Character of the Hebrew Sabbath", *American Journal of Theology*, 2, 1898, pp. 312–316; Emil Behrens, "Der assyrisch-babylonische Sabbath. Ein Irrtum des Professor Delitzsch", *Berliner Tageblatt*, 7. April 1904. Yairah Amit, "Creation and the Calendar of Holiness," in Mordechai Cogan, B.L. Eichler and J.H. Tigay (eds.); *Tehillah le-Moshe: Biblical and Judaic Studies in Honor of Moshe Greenberg*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1997, pp. 13–29. Scholars tend to emphasize, in various degrees, the connection between the Shabbat and the Mesopotamian culture, on one hand, and the unique character endowed it in the Israelite culture, on the other. A.J. Heschel writes in a similar vein that Shabbat is the eternity of time, in which man can turn the world into the kingdom of God and it is the apogee of life. See: Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, New York, 1951, revised by S. Heschel, 1979. Isaac Breuer wrote in a similar vein in his book *Nachliel*, 1951 (Hebrew).

form was common to the Israelites and other nations. Marcus believed that the Sabbath preceded the revelation at Sinai, and hence nations other than the Jews may have known it.⁴⁷⁹ Seligmann Meyer suggested a more moderate version, according to which the Assyrians and the Babylonians were unfamiliar with a seven-day week, but there may have been several extraordinary men in Babylonia, other than Abraham, who had learned about the Sabbath through an earlier divine revelation. He also thought there may have been some in other nations who were familiar with the Sabbath, but only the Hebrews observed it in its purity and handed it down from generation to generation. The fact is that there is no mention of a Sabbath in the Hammurabi Code, Meyer wrote, and on their day of rest, everyone in Babylonia continued to work at their occupations. Consequently, he sarcastically remarked, there may have been “reform Babylonians.”⁴⁸⁰

The Mosaic Code and the Hammurabi Code

As we noted earlier, the discovery in Susa of the text known as the Hammurabi Code, which was attributed to the King of Ur (Abraham’s birthplace according to the biblical story), also aroused enormous interest. In the years following the discovery, many studies were devoted to the subject,⁴⁸¹ most of which related to the text as laws, and even

⁴⁷⁹ A. Marcus, *Zwischen zwei Stühlen*.

⁴⁸⁰ S. Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, I. pp. 24–28.

⁴⁸¹ Studies during the period of the controversy, inter alia: J. Jeremias, *Moses und Hammurabi*, Leipzig, 1903; S. Oettli, *Das Gesetz Hammurabis und die Thora Israels*, Leipzig, 1903; Stanley A. Cook, *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, London, 1903; A. Rosenbacher, *Moses und Hammurabi*, Prag, 1904; Ch. Edwards, *The Hammurabi Code and the Sinaitic Legislation. With a complete translation of the great Babylonian inscription discovered at Susa*, London, 1904; D. H. Müller, *Das Gesetz Hammurabis und ihr Verhältnis zur mosaischen Gesetzgebung*, Wien, 1903; H. Grimme, *Das Gesetz Chammurabis und Moses. Eine Skizze*, Köln, 1903; C. H. W. Johns, *The Relations between the Laws of Babylonia and the Laws of the Hebrew Peoples*, London, 1914. For a survey of the reaction of German scholars, see in: K. Johanning, *Der Bibel-Babel-Streit*, pp. 291–316. For the most up-to-date evaluation of the “Codex”, see, inter alia: T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp. 49–81; Jean Bottéro, “The ‘Code’ of Hammurabi,” in idem, *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*, trans. Z. Bahrani and M. Van de Mieroop, Chicago, 1992, pp. 156–184; Horst Klengel, *König Hammurapi und der Alltag Babylons*, Düsseldorf-Zürich, 1999, pp. 184–264; M. E. J. Richardson, *Hammurabi’s Laws: Text, Translation and Glossary*, Sheffield, 2000. The collection of Hammurabi’s laws was not the only collection of laws found in Mesopotamia, nor was it the earliest. The laws that preceded Hammurabi were the laws of Ur-Nemo, king of Ur (about 330 years before Hammurabi), the laws of

as a constitution. In actual fact, it was a text that was apparently published for the purpose of glorifying the king as a sovereign who had introduced justice into his kingdom, and not a collection of laws.⁴⁸²

The exciting discovery of the Hammurabi Code provoked two questions about their possible connection to the Mosaic Code. First, were the laws of Hammurabi the source of the Mosaic Code? Second, if so, when, how and where were the Mosaic laws influenced by the Hammurabi Code? Needless to say, hovering over these questions was the obvious conclusion that if indeed the laws of Moses resembled the laws of Hammurabi, that would mean that the Torah was not divine, but rather a human creation, not even an original Hebrew creation, but a product of external influence.⁴⁸³

On the one hand, the discovery of the Hammurabi Code served the opponents of the documentary hypothesis of Wellhausen and his school, which held that the Priestly source was written at the end of the First Temple period, or even after it. Now it was possible to argue that when Moses wrote a system of laws for his people, he could have made use of the model of the Babylonian laws, which were appropriate for the Jewish people and conditions in the land of Canaan. To put it

Lipit-Ishtar, king of Isin (150 years before Hammurabi), the laws of the city of Eshnuna, and others. See the entry “Mishpat” (law) in Solieli, M. & Barcuz, M. (eds.) *Lexicon Biblicum*, Tel-Aviv, 1965, pp. 581–610 (Hebrew); and H. Tadmor, “Hammurabi and his Time,” in *The Great Man and his Age*, Jerusalem, 1963, pp. 39–55 (Hebrew).

⁴⁸² Tadmor, *ibid.*

⁴⁸³ The claim that the Hammurabi code influenced Moses made it necessary to accept the biblical tradition of Moses as a legislator. For example, Hess (who had no doubt about the historicity of the Patriarchal tradition, of the story about the destruction of Sodom, and the like) wrote that Moses had continued an ancient Hebrew tradition, and had not been a reformer of the Egyptian religion or of the ancient Aryan religion. See: M. Hess, *Dynamische Stofflehre*, Paris, 1877, in: “Briefe über Israels Mission in der Geschichte der Menschheit” (1864), 5th letter. Hess wrote that the destruction wiped out all the earlier races from the earth and made Hebrew creation possible. In: T. Zlocisti (ed.) *Moses Hess Jüdische Schriften*, pp. 28–32. An ultra-orthodox autodidact, Shmuel Moshe Rubinstein (1870–1942), a native of Latvia, who lived in Lithuania, proposed a theory in two books: *Torat haKabbalah* (Warsaw, 1912) and *Kadmoniot haHalakhah* (Kovno, 1926), which claimed that the Hammurabi code predated the giving of the Torah and were the province of the ancient peoples. The Torah from Sinai selected laws from it and gave them a new character, so that it distinguished between the people of Israel and the Gentiles. He also claimed to be proposing a “new method,” also based on “documents discovered in recent years.” These books and others, which we were unable to obtain, indicate that in the East European ultra-orthodox society there were also Jews who attempted to cope with the pan-Babylonian theory. We are grateful to Aaron Horovitz, of Bar-Ilan University, who drew our attention to these forgotten books.

differently, the fact that there were codices of law in the ancient East hundreds of years before the Mosaic Code, and that a detailed, uniform collection of laws from an earlier period had been found, served as putative evidence that Moses too had composed a similar complete codex.⁴⁸⁴ This fact also served as ostensible evidence that there were no grounds for suggesting that the Torah was written at a later date.⁴⁸⁵

In 1925, Soloweitschik and Rubascheff summed up this claim with the following words:

Now that we know that a detailed, complex codex of laws existed about two thousands years before the Common Era and that the Hebrew legislator had access to this codex, the view that the first documents of Hebrew literature ought to be dated as late as the eighth century C.E. has collapsed, and it has lost its credibility.⁴⁸⁶

On the other hand, this putative evidence of the antiquity of the Torah was a challenge to the idea of a divinely given Torah. It supported the view that the Torah (including the Ten Commandments) was a human creation, which was constructed and shaped on the foundation of and inspired by a long tradition earlier in time. From this standpoint, the Hammurabi Code was perceived as confirming the hypothesis that the Pentateuch was not written by one person at one time, and that its attribution to Moses was a later tradition. It is clear, then, that from the standpoint of the orthodox, the possibility of proving the antiquity of the Torah and thereby undermining a major element of the documentary hypothesis school, was not a good enough reason to agree that the Hammurabi Code may have influenced the Mosaic Code, since that would be an unthinkable challenge to faith in a divinely given Torah. Nonetheless, the orthodox could not dismiss the alleged similarity between the two codices, or fail to respond. Consequently, some orthodox writers attempted to challenge the authenticity of the Hammurabi Code, or at least to claim it had been composed at a later date. Seligmann Meyer, for example, argued that the Hammurabi Code may

⁴⁸⁴ Morris Jastrow believed that the Mosaic code was passed down as the Oral Law throughout the generations, until it was put in writing with various changes. "Moses is simply the great traditional figure that stands out at the beginning of Israel's national existence, just as the names of certain prophets become typical for a later period," M. Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, New York, 1983, p. 176, Note 2.

⁴⁸⁵ J. Jeremias, *Moses und Hammurabi*, Leipzig, 1903. The grounds for this claim seem doubtful, since there was a great difference between the centralized urban kingdoms of Mesopotamia and the wandering tribes of Israel, according to the biblical tradition, before the settlement in the Land of Israel and the establishment of stable political structures.

⁴⁸⁶ M. Soloweitschik and Z. Rubascheff, *History of Bible Criticism*, p. 108.

have been written much after the Bible, namely not during Hammurabi's lifetime, but about five hundred years after his death.⁴⁸⁷

The majority of those who reacted on this issue chose neither of these two possibilities, but rather adopted three tactics:

The first was to claim that the two collections of laws were similar because they both emerged from an ancient common Semitic (Arab) source: Hammurabi was an Arab, and Moses studied with Jethro, priest of Midian. Before Moses, there were developed kingdoms that had laws, and there is nothing to indicate that the Hammurabi Code had any influence on the Mosaic Code. This claim gave the Mosaic Code an "authentic Semitic" character. Some even asserted that the laws of the Torah preserve the more ancient version of the common Semitic law.

The second was to argue that the Patriarchs lived under the religious and cultural influence of Babylonia, so that Babylonian cosmological and literary traditions, as well as its legal system, could have been part of the religious, legal and mythological world of the Hebrews before they settled in Canaan. D.H. Müller, in his 1903 book on the Hammurabi Code,⁴⁸⁸ stated that there is some affinity between the Mosaic laws and that the Hammurabi Code, and the latter unquestionably influenced the former. However, he went on to say, these laws were based on an earlier source (*Urgesetz*), and hence one can assume that they were handed down by Abraham to the following generations and from them to Moses, but Moses completely transformed them. Hoffmann also believed that the Hammurabi Code was the earlier model on which Moses based his perfect system of ethics. Even Jawitz wrote that the family of Abraham the Hebrew was part

⁴⁸⁷ Seligmann Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch*, I., p. 57.

⁴⁸⁸ David H. Müller, *Die Gesetze Hammurabis und ihr Verhältnis zur mosaischen Gesetzgebung*, Wien, 1903. S. Ochsner summarized Müller's book in an article entitled "Hammurabi und Moses", *AZdJ*, 68 (3), 1904, pp. 29–30, and wrote that although Müller represented himself as an objective man of science, his statements are unintentionally apologetic in the full sense of the term. Shalom Yonah Tcherna (1878–1932) wrote in his 1923 translation into Hebrew of D. Müller's German edition of *The Hammurabi Code* (1903) that the Hammurabi Code elucidates the stories of the Patriarchs and serves as a commentary for several places in the Torah, in particular for the Ten Commandments. The laws according to which the Patriarchs lived prior to the giving of the Torah are similar to the laws of Hammurabi, and on the other hand, there are profound differences between the Hammurabi Code and the Mosaic Code. See also: D. Feuchtwang, "Moses und Hammurabi," *MGWJ*, 48 (7–8), 1904, pp. 385–399. Tadmor writes that "Not a single legal document was found among the hundreds of thousands of documents from the time of Hammurabi and his successors in which the judge would state that the verdict was given in accordance with the content of the Hammurabi laws." H. Tadmor "The Bibel-Babel Controversy," p. 54.

of the Mesopotamian culture and hence the memory of the Hammurabi Code had been preserved by the Jewish people throughout all the years of their bondage in Egypt. There was another possibility: that the Babylonian influence took place after the Israelite settlement of Canaan, since copies of the Hammurabi Code existed in Canaan, and the Israelites could have learned from them.⁴⁸⁹

The third tactic was to emphasize the profound difference between these two codices: a world of numerous idols is reflected in the Hammurabi Code, and there is no trace of the social conscience found in the Torah and the Prophecy.⁴⁹⁰ Although there are three laws in the Hammurabi Code that recall three of the Ten Commandments, that does not prove any link between them and the Mosaic Code. In every human society, laws were enacted to ensure man's primary assets – his life, family and property. The essential difference is that among other nations, these laws were enacted by human beings, and the ruler stands above them, while in Judaism the laws are divine commandments that obligate every person, including the ruler.⁴⁹¹

Mojzesz Schorr, an authority on the history of Babylonian-Assyrian law, suggested a different point of view: the comparison between the laws of the Torah and the laws of Hammurabi is irrelevant. The Hammurabi Code was a system of abstract laws, and hence, the Torah, a system of practical laws, should be compared to the Babylonian legal system as it was practiced in everyday life. In his article "Hebrew Culture and Ancient Babylonian Culture" Schorr argued that there is a similarity between the Babylonian legal documents and the laws of the Bible (in particular in Exodus 21–23). But the individualistic spirit of the Jewish people contributed to a new formulation of the earlier laws. He also stated that there is no basis for the claim that Hammurabi believed in one God, since in the introduction to his tablet of laws, he enumerates the names of several gods.⁴⁹²

In the first volume of his *World History of the Jews* (1925), the historian Simon Dubnow asserted that:

The great similarity between some of the Ten Commandments and the Babylonian laws of Hammurabi reveal the secret of how Hebrew law came into existence. It is one branch of the Babylonian law that prevailed

⁴⁸⁹ Y.E. Melamed, *Shivtei Yisrael*, pp. 3–5.

⁴⁹⁰ Emil Behrens, "Biblische und babylonische Religion. Eine Skizze", *MGWJ*, 51 (4), 1907, pp. 385–394.

⁴⁹¹ W. Münnz, "Es werde Licht!", p. 33.

⁴⁹² See also: M. Schorr, *Chukei Ashur* (The Laws of Assyria), Writings of the Institute for Jewish Wisdom, Warsaw, 1930.

from the days of Hammurabi in ancient Asia, including Canaan ... The leaders of Israel tended and raised this branch in their own way and some of the major articles of this law may already have been in effect in Israel in its wanderings in the south ... Afterwards they were sanctified by the holiness of the Torah of Moses ... The comparisons show us how from the common trunk of the law [*ursprünglichen Form*] of the ancient East, legal arrangements grew that resembled one another in Babylonia and in Israel.⁴⁹³

Dubnow believed that the culture of the Israelite people before the monarchic period was composed of three layers, one superimposed upon the other: the Babylonian element, the Canaanite element and the Israelite element. In conclusion, however, he stated that there were several essential differences between the Hammurabi Code and the Torah: "according to the disparate ways of life (*Lebensweise*) and the different legal approach (*Rechtsbewusstseins*)."⁴⁹⁴

From the early twentieth century, in the reactions to the hypothesis inferring a connection between the Mosaic Code and the Hammurabi Code, there was an implicit dilemma, expressed in Jewish writing on this subject even in the later generations. It can be defined as the need to choose between antiquity and revelation. Acceptance of the view that the Hammurabi Code influenced, in one way or another, the Mosaic Code (as well as the view that the Hammurabi Code and the Mosaic Code were borrowed from a common, earlier source) was perceived as undermining the hypothesis that the Mosaic Code was written at the end of the First Temple period, or even during the

⁴⁹³ *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes, I: Älteste Geschichte*, trans. from the Russian by A. Steinberg, Berlin, 1925, pp. 57–61.

⁴⁹⁴ Simon Dubnow, *ibid.* Martin Buber wrote in his book *Moses* (Oxford, 1946), p. 135: "The situation of Moses has been compared, not unjustly, with that of Hammurabi, who made his code in order to establish a strong unity among all the city communities of his kingdom, despite their many and varied customs and laws. But Hammurabi was the victorious ruler of a firmly established kingdom; Moses was the leader of an inchoate, stubborn horde during the transition of that horde from a lack of freedom into a problematic freedom." (Buber based this on J. M. Powis Smith, *The Origin and History of Hebrew Law*, Chicago, 1931). C. A. Zuta and A. Sternberg wrote in their textbook *Kadmoniot: Toledot amei hake-dem ve'am Yisrael ad galut Bavel*, Tel Aviv, 1934, about the Hammurabi laws: "The righteous and the just, many of which are similar to the laws in the Torah of Moses" (pp. 126–127). Some of the orthodox writers follow in the footsteps of scholars such as M. David and Henri Cazelles and reject the claim that there is any similarity between the laws of Hammurabi and the Mosaic Code, or, alternatively, argue that the Hammurabi Code is based on the seven Noahic commandments, but that it distorted them. See: Moshe Grilack, "Noah and Hammurabi and their Similarities," *Ma'ariv*, 14.10.1988, p. 9, and idem, "Hammurabi: The Unimaginative Similarity," *Nitzotzot*, 9, 1992, pp. 45–54.

Babylonian Exile. If Moses was familiar with the Hammurabi Code, then that is historical evidence of the antiquity of the Mosaic Code.⁴⁹⁵ On the other hand, acceptance of the view that the Babylonians influenced the Mosaic Code during Moses' own lifetime, or that Moses was influenced by an earlier Arabic-Semitic code, would undermine faith in a divinely given Torah. The dilemma was which to prefer – antiquity, ostensibly confirmed by the Hammurabi Code, or revelation and a divinely given law?

The Time of the Cultural Borrowing

The possibility that the ancient Jewish people borrowed cultural components from Assyria and Babylonia raised a question about when and by whom the Babylonian source was adapted.

In 1876, Goldziher had already rejected the view propounded by Schrader, Delitzsch and Renan, who followed the biblical tradition and asserted that the borrowing took place during the period of the Patriarchs. He claimed that the flood story was not an ancient myth but rather a complex literary creation, and hence the nomadic Hebrews could not have adapted it. The adaptation, in his view, took place in the Exilic period and arose out of the Priestly school's need to depict the creation in the spirit of monotheism,⁴⁹⁶ and he also maintained that the institution of the Sabbath was borrowed in a later period. Benno Jacob concurred with this view, and cited as evidence the fact that the name Babylonia is mentioned in the Books of Joshua and Kings many times, while in Genesis, it appears only twice. He believed this shows that the cultural link between the Israelites and Babylonia was forged only in a later period.⁴⁹⁷ M. Schorr had a different

⁴⁹⁵ This theory ignores the fact, among others, that the Hammurabi laws were copied many times in the following generations. In the neo-Babylonian period, its founders Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar, in the sixth century B.C., revived archaic versions from the time of Hammurabi and his legacy. The theory, which attempts to predate the influence on the Jews to the time of Hammurabi, cannot explain how the laws were preserved in the memory of the people throughout all the long years of their enslavement in Egypt.

⁴⁹⁶ I. Goldziher, *Mythology Among the Hebrews*, pp. 316–336. And see: Robert Simon, *Ignac Goldziher: His Life and Scholarship as Reflected in his Works and Correspondence*, Budapest, 1986, pp. 86–87. King believes that the borrowing took place at a later date, not necessarily during the Exilic period, but hundred of years before the destruction. L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion and Mythology*, London, 2nd edn., 1903, p. 145.

⁴⁹⁷ B. Jacob, “Prof. Delitzsch’ zweiter Vortrag”, *AZdJ*, 67 (18), 1903, pp. 213–214.

opinion; he rejected the notion that the borrowing and the adaptation of the Babylonian cosmology occurred at the end of the monarchic period. It is hard to believe that the prophets, who launched an all-out war against idolatrous rites, would have used a narrative with such distinctly idolatrous elements. Hence it is reasonable to assume that the Sumerian-Assyrian-Babylonian tradition had come to Canaan at an earlier time and already then had permeated into the ancient biblical literature. Jastrow also argued that the Babylonian tradition in Judaism was an ancient folk tradition that was popular and widely accepted for hundreds of years, and hence could not be glossed over. That is why, he claimed, the character of the ancient mythological-literary material had to be changed. The period of the Babylonian exile would not have been an appropriate time to adopt the world picture of the culture of the very nation that had exiled the Jews from their land. The fact is that the prophets and the later author tried to retain as little as possible of the Babylonian mythological tradition and rewrote it from a monotheistic perspective.⁴⁹⁸ At the same time, he contended that the Sabbath took on its later known significance and became a symbol of the superiority of man's honor only in the Exilic period.⁴⁹⁹

Therefore, for most of those engaged in the polemic, the documents from Mesopotamia and el-Amarna served as evidence that the Israelite tribes could have learned about Mesopotamian literature as soon as they settled in Canaan, and certainly during the period of the monarchy. The documents from the el-Amarna archives tell of an Assyrian-Babylonian cultural presence in Canaan as far back as the fourteenth century B.C., which shows that Canaan was a "province of Babylonian culture." The influence was so great that hundreds of years of Egyptian rule were unable to expunge it.

The Biblical Historical Narrative

The Babylonian documents (as well as monuments and inscriptions, such as the Mesha' stele (discovered in Dibon in 1868), the Shiloah inscription from Jerusalem (found in 1880), the "Black Obelisk" of Shalmanezer III and the inscription of Tiglath Pileser III (discovered

⁴⁹⁸ According to Jastrow, the Prophets in the Babylonian exile did their utmost to erase all memory of pagan influence, M. Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, p. 18. King also suggested a later date for the influence on the flood story, but prior to the Babylonian exile. L. W. King, *Babylonian Religion*, p. 145.

⁴⁹⁹ Jastrow fixed the date of borrowing during the Exilic period. Jastrow, *ibid.*

at Nimrod in 1846 and 1847), the inscription of the Assyrian King Esarhaddon (discovered at Nineveh in 1845–1847) and others, served not only as proof of the veracity and exactness of the biblical historical narrative of the kings of Judah and Israel in the period when Assyria and Babylonia were actively and intensively involved in determining the fate of the Jewish people⁵⁰⁰; they also furthered the attempt to affirm the reliability of an earlier historical layer, that of the story of the Patriarchs.

The documents from the time of Hammurabi were cited as authentic evidence of the reliability of the story of the war of the kings in the Book of Genesis 14. Porges wrote that the name of Amraphel appears in the documents and confirms the biblical story.⁵⁰¹ Rabbi David Feuchtwang (1864–1936) stated that Abraham had been a comrade-in-arms (*Kriegsgenosse*) of Hammurabi,⁵⁰² and Bernfeld noted that the documents show that the reign of the Assyrian kingdom also extended as far as Syria and Palestine, and that confirms the content of the Assyrian inscription about the Assyrian military campaign against Arioch, King of Elasar (Genesis 14). He wrote that in relation to the history of the Patriarchs: “Now new research has been conducted that incontrovertibly demonstrated that (Wellhausen and his school) were wrong, and proved the veracity of these stories in all their detail.” They proved that the stories of the Bible are “historical records from a very ancient time.”⁵⁰³

There were others who quashed this enthusiasm. J. Oppert derided the “new tidings that came from the other bank of the Rhine,” that Abraham was Hammurabi’s bosom friend,⁵⁰⁴ but nonetheless, the majority accepted the view that there was a correlation between the reality of Mesopotamia and that of the stories of the Patriarchs, and that this was evidence that the Patriarchs were historical, not mythological or literary figures. The fact that parallels to names in the Bible were found in Babylonian (or Egyptian) documents was perceived as proof that the stories of the Patriarchs were indeed ancient history. The strong impression made by this claim led even an educated orthodox Jew like Jawitz, who had always held that the testimony of the

⁵⁰⁰ G. J. S. Nagel, *Der Zug des Sanherib gegen Jerusalem. Nach den Quellen dargestellt*, Leipzig, 1902. And see: J. Klausner, “The Cuneiform Tablets and the Holy Scriptures,” *Hashiloach*, 11, January-July 1903, pp. 153–169, 233–242, 352–470, 555–565 (Hebrew).

⁵⁰¹ N. Porges, *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde*, p. 12.

⁵⁰² D. Feuchtwang, “Moses und Hammurabi”, p. 379.

⁵⁰³ S. Bernfeld, “Dorshei Reshumot,” I, *Hashiloah*, 1897, pp. 515–517.

⁵⁰⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 March 1903.

Bible sufficed in itself and needed no support from external evidence, to believe that in this case complete faith could be placed in the ancient documents. He wrote:

Wellhausen and some rabbis and many of his colleagues and his numerous disciples may deny and lie, which in fact is all that they do, about the existence of the Patriarchs, and speak of them and what is written about them in the Torah as an imaginary fiction contrived by some priest in the last generations of the First Temple, or by some rabbi in Babylonia in the first generations of the Second Temple.

According to this, the exquisitely designed structure underpinning the negation of the Bible's historical authenticity totally collapsed. The ancient documents confirmed Abraham's historicity, and hence that of the Patriarchs' stories.⁵⁰⁵ However, the confirmation of this historical reliability was "acquired" at the price of the willingness – declared or implied – to acknowledge that the Bible had been influenced by the Mesopotamian culture. The internal tension between these two assumptions continued in the coming generations. It was J. J. Finkelstein who persuasively noted that when the orthodox theological approach embraced the idea of selfhood, it in fact accepted the idea of the evolution, albeit an immanent evolution, of faith, law and culture, whether this was an evolution in reaction to "the world outside" or an internal evolution, in the absence of any outside stimuli; in both cases, this meant a reshaping of "prior material."⁵⁰⁶

Jewish involvement in the Babel-Bibel controversy was a landmark in the history of biblical commentary and the debates about it, in both the Jewish-Christian and the internal Jewish context. In 1913, from the perspective of a decade, Siegmund Jampel claimed that Delitzsch's lectures had arrested the progress of the science of religion – certainly within German Jewry – because so much energy was invested in writing articles and pamphlets and engaging in public debates. And when the laymen public no longer showed any interest in the subject, it was taken off the agenda, but, Jampel argued, that does not mean the subject itself lost all its importance.⁵⁰⁷

In actual fact, neither the subject nor the questions it provoked were removed from the scholarly and public agenda. We have seen that the questions were entirely different from those that preoccupied scholars engaged in traditional biblical exegesis, and naturally, the answers too were totally different. In defense of the Bible against Delitzsch and

⁵⁰⁵ Javitz, "The Results of Excavation," p. 13.

⁵⁰⁶ J. J. Finkelstein, "Bible and Babel," *Commentary*, 26, 1958, pp. 431–444.

⁵⁰⁷ S. Jampel, *Vorgeschichte Israels und seiner Religion*, pp. 243–244.

those who shared his views, as in defending it against Wellhausen and his school, the traditional weapons were not employed. Consequently, in the final analysis, this defense helped to deepen the ‘secular’ reading of the Bible. However, as we shall see later, the traditional exegetic reading of the Bible did not disappear. On the contrary, it took on greater impetus and vitality, but it also underwent a profound change and was infused with new content.

Part Three

In Search of Jewish and Hebrew Bible Study

True Bible criticism began only in Eretz Israel, particularly in Israel ...
only the Bible criticism created here has any real substance.

David Ben-Gurion, May 18, 1960.¹

Let us not dine too often at an alien table, even if it be the table of the wise men of the world. And let us not come to our Bible with borrowed ears. Let us lend our own Jewish, inner ear to it, for first and foremost, it was meant for us.

Abraham Kariv, *The Seven Pillars of the Bible*, 1958, p. 9 (Hebrew).

¹ *Knesset Records*, vol. 29 (20–34), May 9 – August 23, 1960, p. 1278.

Chapter 11

After Delitzsch: The Bible and Jewish Bible Study in Germany between the Two World Wars

Among a great many Jewish biblical scholars and educated Jews, the rejection of and opposition to Bible study, in particular in the form of higher criticism and the documentary hypothesis, remained firm throughout the twentieth century, and also continued after new hypotheses on the composition of the Pentateuch appeared, such as the school of Form Criticism (*Formgeschichte*)² and the traditional-historical method (*Traditionsgeschichte*).³ From the standpoint of the believer in tradition, there should not have been a difference in principle between the hypothesis that the Pentateuch was composed of four layers (sources) and the alternative paradigms, some of which suggested a more complex compositional structure. Nonetheless, it was the hypothesis of four sources for the Pentateuch that continued to pose a challenge to the educated Jewish public in Germany and later in Palestine. Many Jewish biblical scholars continued to view it as a manifestation par excellence of modern Christian Bible study, and to a large part of the secular educated Jewish public it still signified

² See: K. Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, trans. S. M. Cupitt, New York, 1969; J. H. Hayes, *An Introduction to Old Testament Study*, Nashville Tenn., 1979, pp. 121–154.

³ See: G. von Rad, “The Formative Problem of the Hexateuch,” in idem, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken, Edinburgh and London, 1966, pp. 1–78; M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. with an introduction, B. W. Anderson, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972. We mention again several of the studies on the development of Bible study in the twentieth century (see Chap. 2): Wilhelm Möller, *Die Einheit und Echtheit der 5 Bücher Mosis*, Bad Salzuflen, 1931; H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study*; H. F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research*; H.-J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*; C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch*; R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law*; E. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*; H. G. Reventlow, *Hauptprobleme der alttestamentlichen Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*.

a dangerous form of heresy. Needless to say, from the standpoint of orthodoxy, Wellhausen and his theory were a synonym for “Satan’s camp, which diverts Israel from its pure faith,”⁴ probably because this system of sources was simpler to understand and more convincing than the other paradigms, and hence it could not be ignored.

On the other hand, after the Babel-Bibel controversy died down, the claim of a link between the cultures of ancient East and the Bible was generally accepted, or remained in the background, and the nature and influence of this link became the issue of discussion. Thus, for example, in 1922 Felix Perles wrote that while in other areas Delitzsch was the cause of bitter disappointment, he was nonetheless the man who laid the foundation of criticism of the biblical text and also made people aware that it was necessary not only to remove the history of the Jews and their culture from its isolation, but also the history of their language, and to show the strong connection between Hebrew and other languages of the ancient East.⁵ He was referring to Delitzsch’s book *Die Lese- und Schreibfehler im Alten Testament* (Errors in Reading and Writing in the Hebrew Bible, Berlin and Leipzig, 1920), a book which also received glowing reviews in the Hebrew periodical *Hatekufah* (Warsaw). The reviewer summed up by saying: “The benefit to be derived from this book is far greater than that of *Die große Täuschung*, published by the author this year.”⁶

In the following five chapters, we will follow the development of Jewish and Hebrew Bible study, focusing on the opposition to the documentary hypothesis and pointing out its motivations and principles, and the attempts to offer alternatives to it. The first, Chapter 11, deals with Jewish Bible study in Germany in the period under discussion, and after the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933; the second, Chapter 12, addresses Bible study in Palestine, to which native-German scholars and teachers, or those who studied at German universities, brought the Jewish-German legacy on this subject. We will focus on the struggle against higher criticism in the Hebrew educational system in Palestine and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The third, chapter, 13, briefly surveys academic and non-academic Bible study in

⁴ R.J.Z. Werblowsky, “Bible Science as a Religious Problem,” *Molad/Political and Literary Journal*, 18 (141–142), May 1960, p. 168 (Hebrew).

⁵ F. Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig, 1922, Neue Folge, pp. vii–viii.

⁶ *Hatekufah*, 8, June–September, 1920, pp. 498–504. The critic only took exception to a few corrections which did not seem necessary to him. He added that the Christian biblical scholars were trying to “oust the Divine Presence” from the Hebrew language.

Palestine and the attempts to propose a Jewish or a Hebrew biblical science. The fourth, Chapter 14, deals with dilemmas of the orthodox study in Palestine, and the fifth, Chapter 15, with biblical archaeology and the question as to whether it was perceived in Jewish society in Eretz Israel as verifying the accuracy of the biblical tradition. In addition, in it we will describe the status of biblical archaeology in the Israeli public forum in the 1880s and thereafter.

In all these chapters, we refer to works that differ in value insofar as the history of Bible study is concerned, but do give expression to intellectual and scholarly creativity, and hence we believe they attest to the great challenge that modern Bible study posed to the modern educated Jew and to his desire to respond to this challenge.

The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation

In June 1887, during his visit to England, Heinrich Graetz put forth the idea of founding a Jewish Academy, which, among other things, would defend scripture against attacks upon it with the aid of “scientific proofs of which there are so many.” For this purpose, Graetz suggested that the Jewish academy commission a new translation of the Bible accompanied by modern interpretation, in which errors would also be corrected. Such a translation, he added, could bring Jews back to the Bible and evoke “new love for the Bible.”⁷ The idea was enthusiastically received in some quarters. For example, an editorial in the *Jewish Chronicle*, on June 24, 1887, stated that Graetz was the only Jew in Europe who could be considered an authority on the Old Testament.

A Jewish academy was never established, not because Jews continued to shy away from addressing the “problematic subject” of Bible criticism (and we have already seen that even in earlier years, there was no such tendency to refrain from doing so). Works written by Jewish authors in Western Europe dealing with various problems in Bible study were increasing in number, and the educated public was very interested in the development of Bible study, as evinced by the publication of book reviews and bibliographical surveys about advances in the field.⁸ This interest went beyond the boundaries of Germany, and Hebrew periodicals, like *Hashiloach* and *Hatekufah*, also printed sur-

⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22.7.1887.

⁸ See, for example, the survey by Max Wiener, “Einige Schriften zu biblischen Problemen,” *MGWJ*, 78 (2), 1934, pp. 257–267.

veys on this subject.⁹ Still, it would be an exaggeration to claim that in the interwar period in Germany there was no longer any need to call for a “return to the Bible,” despite the fact that a century of “returning the Bible” to Jewish culture had already endowed it with an important place and role in the world of the Jews. This picture of the situation was putatively substantiated by the claim that “there was hardly a meeting, a seminar, a conference, or a camp of a Jewish youth organization where Bible study was not a part of it.” At any rate, there was no need of an academy to raise important contributions to the biblical culture of the Jews and to the study of the Bible by Jews.

The most important contribution of German Jewry to Bible culture in the period under discussion was a translation of the Bible into German by two philosophers: Martin Mordechai Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), which was commissioned by a Christian publisher.¹⁰ Their collaborative work was cut short in 1929, when Rosenzweig died, and Buber continued alone for 32 more years.¹¹ The aim of these two philosophers in doing this translation was to promote the return of the Bible to the modern German Jew, to free it from translations in the spirit of Christian theology, and to bring it back to its archaic source as “*mikra*,”¹² namely as a text read aloud to the public.¹³ Some critics

⁹ See, for example, the review of Eduard König’s book, *Die Genesis, übersetzt und erklärt*, Gütersloh, 1919; “Bishetei haketzavot” (At Both Ends), *Hatekufah*, 16, June–September, 1922, pp. 521–523. The reviewer surveyed the “theory of tradition” (*Vererbungstheorie*), according to which the stories in Genesis are based on oral traditions, but he was particularly critical of the author because he adhered to the hypothesis of “three sources” to Genesis and dated the P source to the time of the Babylonian exile. A review was also published on Hermann Gunkel’s book *Das Märchen im Alten Testament* (The Fairy Tale in the Old Testament, Tübingen, 1917), ibid., 17, 1923, pp. 520–523). The reviewer regarded Gunkel as an example of Christian scholars who look for “fables” everywhere, but to Gunkel’s credit, he stated that his book shows that the Hebrews also were endowed with the power of imagination.

¹⁰ Ernest M. Wolf, “Martin Buber and German Jewry,” *Judaism*, 1, 1952, p. 350.

¹¹ Shmaryahu Talmon writes that this translation shared the same fate as the Septuagint translation; it was meant for Jews in the Diaspora and became the accepted version of the Christian church, and influenced contemporary Christian theology. See: S. Talmon, “Martin Buber als Bibel-Interpreter,” in W. Licharz (ed.), *Dialog mit Martin Buber*, Frankfurt am Main, 1982, pp. 269–289. In 1961, on the occasion of the publication of the revised, complete edition of the translation, Gershom Scholem wrote that Buber “was interested in translating not as a literature but as a realm of the living ‘spoken word,’ as an object of recitative reading. See: G. Sc-holem, “At the Completion of Buber’s Translation of the Bible,” trans. M. A. Meyer, in idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York, 1971, pp. 314–319.

¹² The Hebrew word for the Bible, literally “recitation.”

¹³ On the translation, see: E. Freund, “Das Prinzip der Buber-Rosenzweigschen Bibelübersetzung,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, 39 (98), 7. Dezember 1934, p. 3.; E. Fox,

praised the translation as one that was in the spirit of Romanticism, or even “German archaism,” while Buber regarded it as a translation that restored the Bible to its non-European, “less wild” form.¹⁴

Although Buber and Rosenzweig accepted the view that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, they regarded it as a creation marked by literary unity and a uniform theological world-view, endowed it by the Redactor. Rosenzweig preferred to call him Rabbenu, and according to him, he was “our teacher and his theology is our Torah.” In other words, in their view, the Pentateuch is not composed of four documents of a disparate nature, but rather is a uniform theological-literary creation that carries a divine message, composed from the outset on the basis of the principle of complementarity between all of its elements.¹⁵ In articles published in *Der Morgen*,¹⁶ Rosenzweig asserted that it would never be possible to resolve the question of whether Wellhausen’s theory about the composition of the Pentateuch was correct or mistaken. However, this question is of no importance; what is important is the fact that the Pentateuch in its entirety was written in one spirit. Hence, the Jewish biblical scholar (and reader) has no need to take an interest in the question of how the Bible was written but rather in how it should be read, and he ought to read it without considering the sources that comprise it, but according to its final editing, which gave it its ultimate, unified character. Rosenzweig stated: “Even if Wellhausen and all his hypotheses were correct … this would not adversely affect our faith in the slightest.”¹⁷ In

“We Mean the Voice: The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible,” *Response*, 5, 1971–1972, pp. 29–42; Paul Mendes-Flohr, “Jewish Cultural and Spiritual Life,” in Michael A. Meyer (ed.), *German-Jewish History in Modern Times*, vol. 4: *Renewal and Destruction 1918–1945*, New York, 1998, pp. 143–147; Avigail E. Gillman, “Between Religion and Culture: Mendelssohn, Buber, Rosenzweig and the Enterprise of Biblical Translation,” in Frederick W. Knobloch (ed.), *Biblical Translation in Context*, Bethesda, MD, 2002, p. 93.

¹⁴ See: Martin Buber, “Translation of the Bible, Its Intents and Modes” (printed in Hebrew in *Moznayim*, 10, 1940, pp. 26–33). In Maren Ruth Niehoff’s view, Buber-Rosenzweig refined their translation “in distinct alienation from Jewish texts, wishing to demonstrate their particular excellence” in the German language. Thus, “it is an irony of history that many critics consider this language to be Hebrew.” See: M.R. Niehoff, “The Buber-Rosenzweig Translation of the Bible within the Jewish-German Tradition,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 44, 1993, pp. 258–279.

¹⁵ See: Eliezer Schweid, “Martin Buber as Philosophical Interpreter,” *Binah*, 2, 1989, pp. 191–217; Talmon, “Martin Buber als Bibel-Interpreter.”

¹⁶ F. Rosenzweig, “Zum ersten Band der Encyclopaedia Judaica,” *Der Morgen*, 4 (3), 1928, pp. 289–292; idem, “Zum Zweiten Band der Encyclopaedia Judaica,” *Der Morgen*, 4 (5), 1938, pp. 501–506; idem, “Zum dritten und vierten Band der Encyclopedia Judaica,” *Der Morgen*, 5 (5), 1929, pp. 527–530.

¹⁷ F. Rosenzweig, “Zum ersten Band der Encyclopaedia Judaica mit einer Ammerkung über jüdische Bibelwissenschaft”; *Der Morgen*, 4 (3), 1928, pp. 292; idem, “Die

a review of the first volume of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, published in 1928, Rosenzweig wrote that Jewish orthodoxy is the only movement that still adheres to the dogma of revelation (“*Verbal-, ja sogar Buchstabens-Inspiration*”) and prohibits criticism of the biblical text. Wellhausen, with all the reservations one may have regarding his theory, is a *bête noire* for orthodoxy. However, Rosenzweig argued that by refraining from any response to the challenge of criticism, Jewish orthodoxy had lost any power to persuade others to accept its views.¹⁸

Buber stated that: “Biblia, books, is the name of a book composed of many books. It is really one book,” unified in one consistent idea.¹⁹ Benno Jacob and Umberto Cassuto,²⁰ he wrote, so fiercely attacked the theory of the separation of sources that those who were not totally enslaved to it had to consider whether it was not time to rethink their position and to recognize that the documentary hypothesis was based on finding imaginary contradictions in the Pentateuch. In Buber’s view, this was a “deeply-rooted barren argument based on the notion that stories of such monumental proportions could be the product of splitting source writings and gluing them back together again.”²¹ Buber repeated this view in his book *Moses*,²² however, as we noted, he did not reject the premise that Genesis was written by several authors “as an ongoing project over time of connecting and unifying in one

Einheit der Bibel,” ibid., 4 (4), 1928, pp. 400–404. And see: Eliezer Schweid, “The Role of Franz Rosenzweig as a Philosophical Interpreter of Scripture,” in *Millet: Everyman’s University Studies in Jewish History and Culture*, 2, Tel Aviv, 1983, pp. 299–332 (Hebrew).

¹⁸ F. Rosenzweig, “Zum ersten Band der Encyclopaedia Judaica.”

¹⁹ Martin Buber, “The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible,” in Nahum N. Glazter (ed.), *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies by M. Buber*, New York, 1982, p. 1. A collection of the articles appeared in London in 1968 under the title *Biblical Humanism*.

²⁰ Like the German scholars, Paul Volz and Wilhelm Rudolph, in their book *Der Elohist als Erzähler: ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?* (The Elohist as Narrator: A Fallacy in Criticism of the Pentateuch?), Gießen, 1933.

²¹ Buber, “Some of the Problems of the Book of Genesis,” in idem, *The Path of the Bible: Studies in Stylistic Patterns in the Bible*, Jerusalem, 1964, p. 41 (Hebrew). Reacting to this fundamental claim, made by many opponents of the documentary hypothesis, George F. Moore showed how Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, accepted as a gospel by the Syriac church, was edited as a compilation of the Gospels, and summed up: “Literature furnishes enough examples of every procedure which criticism ascribes to the author of the Pentateuch.” See: George F. Moore, “Tatian’s *Diatessaron* and the Analysis of the Pentateuch,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 9, 1890, pp. 201–215.

²² Martin Buber, *Moses*, Oxford, 1954. The Hebrew original came out in 1946. Buber wrote: “Rather do I believe of most of the biblical narratives that, underlying each single one, there was a reworking of tradition, which, in the course of the ages, experienced various kinds of treatment under the influence of different tendencies” (*Moses*, p. 8.)

spirit.”²³ Buber used the method of *Tendenztheorie* to reconcile the assumption that the text took shape over time with the claim that it has “one spirit.” He described this method as one that was gradually edging out the documentary hypothesis.²⁴ In his opinion, the role of Bible study was to discover the intentions that affected the choice and composition of the biblical material from the various traditions, as well as the way in which the tradition itself was shaped, rather than to try to uncover the sources, because he held that the processes of selection and composition operated according to fundamental trends. He called Bible study with this orientation “the trend that is the foundation stone of the Bible;” according to it, the text was not created by one specific, anonymous person, but rather by one “common spirit” in a process of synthesis. Hence the person who transformed the various traditions into an organic book, united by one spirit, in this specific case, the author of Genesis, remained anonymous.²⁵

As we shall see later, this synthetic-harmonistic approach exerted much influence because it depicted the Bible as a book offering one world-view and an all-embracing ethos, and hence showed no interest in the history of its composition. In fact, it offered a way of accepting the documentary hypothesis while at the same time, ignoring its conclusions.²⁶

Even before the appearance of the Buber-Rosenzweig translation, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch was working on a competing translation he had begun in an orthodox spirit, which was continued by his grandsons Raphael (1881–1932) and Yosef (1882–1980) until 1937, and four years after the rise of Nazism to power, the first volume of a new translation of the Bible by a group of liberal rabbis and scholars (among them, Benno Jacob and the reform rabbi Caesar Seligmann [1860–1950]), initiated by the Berlin community, came out. It was edited by the biblical scholar Harry Torczyner (Naphtali Herz Tur-Sinai), whom we

²³ Buber, “Some of the Problems of the Book of Genesis.”

²⁴ Harold Bloom writes that: “Buber had little interest in what is called the ‘documentary hypothesis’ of biblical scholarship.” See his introduction to Nahum W. Glatzer (ed.), *On the Bible: Eighteen Studies by Martin Buber*, p. xii. It seems to us that the shadow of the hypothesis hung over Buber’s writing and he coped with it, either explicitly or implicitly.

²⁵ Buber was active during the ’30s in the “Societies of the Jews” (*Jüdische Kulturbunde*), and in his lectures on the Bible, he claimed that the modern Jew with a critical world-view can approach the Bible directly, even if he does not observe the commandments. See: Yehoyakim Cochavi, *Jewish Spiritual Survival in Nazi Germany*, Tel Aviv – Jerusalem, 1988, p. 112 (Hebrew).

²⁶ A new edition of the Pentateuch appeared in 1981, *Die fünf Bücher der Weisung, verdeutscht von Martin Buber, gemeinsam mit Franz Rosenzweig*, Heidelberg, 1981.

will refer to again later.²⁷ During this period, a bibliophilic edition of the five books of the Pentateuch published from 1930–1933 was added to the Jewish bookshelf in Germany.²⁸

The Polemic with Delitzsch, Fritsch and Kittel

As was the case prior to World War I, many works by rabbis and Jewish scholars continued to be polemic, apologetic, or theological-philosophical in nature.²⁹ Several critics of the documentary hypothesis and those who had engaged in the polemic with Delitzsch early in the century continued to grapple with the challenge posed by Christian Bible study and to defend the Bible against it. The most striking example of this public activity were the strong reactions, some of which have already been mentioned in Chapter 6, to Delitzsch's book *Die große Täuschung* in 1921. The distinctly anti-Semitic nature of the book made it possible not to relate seriously to Delitzsch's claims and to cast doubt on his scientific authority. Y. N. Simchoni described him as a “pedant” and a “mediocre interpreter” of documents, as well as a consummate “enemy of the Jews,” who wrote a libelous parody in order to join the post-war wave of anti-Semitism so he could regain his public status. Indeed, Simchoni wrote, “the ways of science are mysterious when its purpose is to gain a foothold in the market ...”³⁰

A new, more dangerous adversary than Delitzsch who appeared in the interwar period was Theodor Fritsch, an anti-Semitic dema-

²⁷ His book, *Das Buch Hiob, eine kritische Analyse des überlieferten Hiobtextes* was published in Vienna in 1920, and his book *Die Heilige Schrift* in Frankfurt am Main in 1937 and in Jerusalem in 1954. See Chapter 13.

²⁸ The bibliophilic editions were described by critics as books designed to decorate the bookshelves of the Jewish nouveaux riches, and even as bibliophilic erotica. See: Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany*, p. 176.

²⁹ On the theological debate, see: Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums und protestantische Theologie*; Paul R. Mendes-Flohr, “Ambivalent Dialogue: Jewish-Christian Theological Encounter in the Weimar Republic,” in Otto Dov Kulka and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr (eds.), *Judaism and Christianity under the Impact of National Socialism*, Jerusalem, 1987, pp. 99–132; Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz, “The Relationship between Protestant Theology and Jewish Studies during the Weimar Republic,” *ibid.*, pp. 133–150.

³⁰ Y. N. Simchoni published two reviews of the book, “The Great Delusion”, *Hatekufah*, 7, 1920, pp. 259–469, and “The Great Delusion Again,” *ibid.*, 14–15, 1922, pp. 749–754. He wrote that Delitzsch based his claims on Wellhausen, but published his book after the latter’s death, and it is hard to believe that Wellhausen, who was an “admirer of the ancient Israelite creation,” would have been pleased with his pupil. In particular, Simchoni jeered at Delitzsch’s “theory” that Jesus was a descendant of the Sumerians.

gogue, the author of many anti-Semitic catechisms, who, in 1910 published the anti-Semitic book, *Der falsche Gott: Beweismaterial gegen Jahwe*³¹ in Leipzig and was put on trial in 1912–1913. The Jews' fury was directed at the expert witness for the defense, Professor Rudolph Kittel (one of whose books, we will recall, was published in Hebrew³²), whose testimony regarding the inferiority of biblical and Jewish morals led to Fritsch's acquittal.³³ The remarks written in this context were a mixture of theological claims and an a priori negative attitude towards Bible criticism, which Fritsch employed for his demagogic purposes. For example, Rabbi David Feuchtwang of Vienna mainly stressed the danger posed to Jews by the outspoken anti-Semitic hatred in Fritsch's book,³⁴ while Rabbi Adolf (Arye) Schwarz (1846–1931), the Rector of the Israelitisch-theologische Lehranstalt in Vienna, argued that Kittel, despite his scientific facade, was merely a Protestant missionary, whose entire aim was to diminish the status of the Old Testament and to deny that "the Torah of Moses is divine. There is no Torah without Moses and no Moses without the Torah," and that the message of the Torah is the monotheistic tidings intended for the whole of mankind.³⁵ In 1917, four years after the trial, Jacob Neubauer (1895–1945), a teacher at the teachers seminary in Würzburg, published a book entitled *Bibelwissenschaftliche Irrungen* (Errors in Bible Study), in which he responded to Kittel's testimony in court. In it, he argued that Kittel's opinion that the biblical religion of the Israelites does not resemble modern Judaism is a distinctly anti-Semitic view (Neubauer also claimed that no change had taken place in the Jewish religion throughout the years of exile).³⁶ In his review of Neubauer's book, Dr. Joseph Wohlgemuth (1867–1942), an editor of

³¹ His book *Handbuch der Judenfrage* was printed in 49 editions between 1880 and 1944. Fritsch tried to obtain Nietzsche's blessing, but was contemptuously rebuffed. See: Alfred David Low, *Jews in the Eyes of the Germans*, p. 381.

³² See Chapter 2.

³³ See a description of the affair in Wiese, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, pp. 206–231.

³⁴ D. Feuchtwang, "Bibelwissenschaftliche Irrungen," *Freie jüdische Lehrerstimme*, (Vienna), 6 (5 & 6), 15. Juli 1917, pp. 61–63.

³⁵ A. Schwarz, "Offener Brief an den Geh. Kirchenrat Herrn Prof. Kittel in Leipzig," *Freie Jüdische Lehrerstimme*, 4 (1 & 2), 15. März 1915, pp. 1–4; idem, "Zweiter offener Brief an den Geh. Kirchenrat Herrn Prof. Kittel in Leipzig," ibid., 4 (5 & 6), 15. Juli 1915, pp. 65–67. Kittel replied that he was not writing as a theologian, but as a man of science, and the fact is that he was invited to speak about Jewish history at Jewish forums. See: R. Kittel, "Antwort auf den 'Offenen Brief' des Herren Rektor Schwarz," ibid., 4 (3 & 4), 15. Mai 1915, pp. 53–54.

³⁶ J. Neubauer, *Bibelwissenschaftliche Irrungen. Ein Beitrag zur Kritik der alttestamentlichen Bibelkritik an der Hand eines gerichtlichen theologischen Gutachtens*, Berlin, 1917.

Jeschurun, reiterated the neo-orthodox view that the Bible criticism of Wellhausen's school posed a danger to German Jewry: if the German public were to accept the view that the "God of the Old Testament" is morally inferior, and if, Heaven forbid, "modern" Jews also accepted it, then there were liable to be Germans who would argue that the Jews believe in an immoral religion and hence are not deserving of the state's protection. Therefore, he praised Neubauer's book as a timely response, one that undermined the documentary hypothesis, and hence, Kittel's testimony as well.³⁷ The physician and biblical scholar Dr. Elias (Eliahu) Auerbach (1882–1971) held a different view on this matter. In 1932 and 1936, he published two volumes of his book, *Wüste und Gelobtes Land* in Berlin (we will write more about him and his book later on). He wrote that while it is true that Kittel wrote about the Old Testament as a Christian theologian, his Jewish critics were also replying to him as theologians, not as scholars, and were counterposing Jewish dogmas to Christian dogmas. In contrast, the right way, Auberbach asserted, was to contend with Christian Bible criticism by contradicting the documentary hypothesis with the aid of objective philological-historical research.³⁸

The Continued Debate with Wellhausen and Jewish Bible Study in Germany

The publication of the seventh edition (in 1914) of Wellhausen's *Prolegomena* provided another opportunity to criticize the documentary hypothesis. In a review printed in *Jeschurun* in 1918, Dr. Jacob Neubauer repeated his claim that Wellhausen often unjustifiably attacked Judaism, but his main criticism was that Wellhausen was trying to impose the theory of evolution on the Bible. He believed that David Hoffmann, in his book, *Die wichtigsten Instanzen gegen die Graf-Wellhausensche Hypothese* (Overwhelming Proof Against the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis), had succeeded in proving that the Priestly version was not written after the destruction of the first Temple because the laws in it were not applicable in the post-destruction period. Neubauer, like quite a few others before and after him, lamented the

³⁷ J. Wohlgemuth, "Bibelwissenschaftliche Irrungen," *Jeschurun*, 4 (5), 1917, pp. 229–248.

³⁸ E. Auerbach, "Bibelwissenschaftliche Irrungen," *Jüdische Rundschau*, 22 (35), 1917, pp. 288–290.

fact that Jewish scholars were still leaving Bible study in the hands of Christian scholars,³⁹ while Wohlgemuth called on Jewish scholars to follow in Neubauer's footsteps and to use scientific tools to grapple with the documentary hypothesis. The liberal Jewish press also reiterated the view that there was an urgent need for Jewish Bible study and the establishment of academic frameworks for such study, since Protestant Bible criticism, in the words of the liberal rabbi Max Dienemann (1875–1939), "was incapable of understanding the depth of the language and art of the biblical story." Jewish scholars, in his view, ought not to neglect Bible study because in the end, the Hebrew Bible would be regarded as no more than a preparatory stage for Christianity, and Judaism would be depicted as a national-particularistic religion controlled by a rigid system of laws.⁴⁰

There were Jewish scholars who rallied to the call, either by writing biblical commentary or by responding directly to the documentary hypothesis and the paradigm of the history of Jewish faith that it proposed. In 1929, Israel Abraham Rabin (1881–1951), a teacher and scholar from Ukraine, who was active in the HaMizrahi movement and taught in Gießen and Frankfurt am Main, published a book entitled *Studien zur vormosaischen Gottesvorstellung* (Essays on the Premosaic Concept of God), in which he rejected the paradigm of the historical development of Jewish faith and argued that monotheism emerged *ex nihilo* as a product of the genius and religious experience of its creators. In 1932, Martin Buber published his book *Königtum Gottes* in which he attempted to prove the antiquity of belief in the dominion of God over the Jewish people and saw a distinctly anti-monarchic trend in the Book of Judges. That same year, Joseph Carlebach (1883–1942), an orthodox rabbi, published the book *Die drei grossen Propheten: Jesajas, Jirmija und Jecheskel* (Frankfurt am Main), in which he tried to prove the unity of the Book of Isaiah.

The most important book of the time, however, was the translation and comprehensive (954 pages) commentary on Genesis, *Das Erste Buch der Tora. Genesis. Übersetzt und erklärt* (1934), by the liberal rabbi of the Dortmund community, Dr. Benno Jacob,⁴¹ who, the

³⁹ F.s., "Literarische Mitteilungen," *AZdJ*, 78 (24), 1914, pp. 287–288.

⁴⁰ M. Dienemann, "Die Joseph-Geschichte als Prüfstein der modernen Bibelkritik," *AZdJ*, 80 (24), 1916, pp. 282–284; idem, "Eine neue Wiederholung alter Irrtümer," 80 (43), 1916, pp. 505–508; idem, "Unser Verhältnis zur Bibel," *ibid.*, 81 (25), 22. Juni 1917, pp. 289–291; idem, "Hin zur Bibel!", *Liberales Judentum*, 1 & 2, Januar 1918, pp. 6–10.

⁴¹ On him, see Wiese, pp. 182–190. Although he was a liberal rabbi, Jacob was highly regarded by orthodox Bible scholars. The biblical commentator, Nehama Leibow-

reader will recall, was one of the most vocal advocates of Jewish Bible study (and also took part in the debate with Delitzsch). The translation and accompanying commentary were the most comprehensive effort made by a Jewish scholar to undermine Wellhausen's method, which Jacob regarded as Christian commentary, whose true aim was to debase Judaism.⁴² Jacob had already formulated this position vis-à-vis the documentary hypothesis in 1916 in his book *Quellenscheidung und Exegese im Pentateuch* (The Theory of Sources and Bible Commentary), which dealt mainly with the story of Joseph, in *Die Thora Moses* (Frankfurt am Main, 1912/1913) and in other books,⁴³ and he summed up his position in a long appendix (100-pages) in his commentary on Genesis. Jacob was of the opinion that the documentary hypothesis was the greatest obstacle to the correct understanding of the Pentateuch, since it took a unified text, all of whose parts were interconnected, and tore it to shreds. The Pentateuch, Jacob asserted, is a "uniform creation, conceived and written in one spirit (*in einem Geist*)," and has no contradictions in it. Like Buber and Rosenzweig, Jacob regarded the Pentateuch as a uniform, well-planned, thought-out creation, whose intent was "to communicate itself to the reader as One Book."⁴⁴ But in contrast to Rosenzweig, Jacob believed that the Book of Genesis had no editor or redactor, who compiled the various sources into one unit, but rather had one sole author, and that one can assume, at the most, that he had earlier sources at his disposal (which Jacob cites in an appendix). He summed up his view by saying that: "The theory that Genesis is composed from various sources, which can be separated, has been refuted."⁴⁵

itz, wrote that although he was a reform in the extreme and "certainly violated an enormous number of the commandments of our holy Torah," one can learn more from his commentaries than from the works of many pious Jews; He opened our eyes to see things we never saw about the truth of the Torah." From a letter quoted by Rivka Horowitz in the periodical, *A Page on Jewish Culture*, 256, Jerusalem, 2002, p. 16 (Hebrew). See: Meir Seidler, "The Chapter Va'era ("And I appeared," Exodus 6), 2004: Benno Jacob's Commentary on Exodus," *Weekly Page: Office of the Campus Rabbi of Bar-Ilan University*, June 5, 2006 (Hebrew).

⁴² See: M. Seidler, "Vergleichende Betrachtungen zu Benno Jacobs Kritik der Quellscheidung," *Trumah* (Heidelberg), 13, 2003, pp. 121–139; Hanna Liss, "Die Renaissance des Benno Jacob, ibid., pp. 141–153; Ernest I. Jacob, "The Torah Scholarship of B. Jacob," *Conservative Judaism*, 15 (4), Summer, 1961, pp. 3–6.

⁴³ The commentary on Exodus was published in English in 1922: *The Second Book of the Bible: Exodus*, Hoboken, and in German only in 1977.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 10. See: Kurt Wilhelm, "Benno Jacob, a Militant Rabbi," *LBJB* (Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook) 7, 1962, pp. 75–94.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 1048.

Jacob did not believe that Moses was the author of the entire Pentateuch, and in his book *Die Thora Moses*, he wrote: “The Pentateuch is a composite work and, in the version before us, not the work of Moses.” As evidence of this, he pointed out that in the Pentateuch itself no claim is made that Moses is the author of the five books, and that the later editor of the Pentateuch relates to some of them as books written before Moses’ time. Jacob also rejected the claim that Genesis represents a stage in the development of the religion. He further argued that proponents of the documentary hypothesis do not understand the nuances of the Hebrew language or the nature of the Pentateuch as a unique creation.⁴⁶

Christian scholars paid no attention to Jacob, just as they had ignored David Hoffmann in earlier years. On the other hand, the Jewish orthodox press praised him, despite his liberal views. In a review of Jacob’s translation and commentary, Ludwig Feuchtwanger commended him for having used Jewish biblical commentary from the Middle Ages, and repeated his hope that there would be more Jewish biblical scholars like him, who knew how to combine “science” (*Wissenschaft*) and “faith.” About Jacob’s book, Feuchtwanger wrote: “The first book of the Torah [Genesis] is not only the cornerstone of Jewish history, but also the basic beginning of a renewed acquaintance with the wealth of our knowledge, so sorely neglected since the age of Emancipation.”⁴⁷ Buber too described Jacob’s translation and commentary as a “marvelous book,” unrivaled by any other commentary in its use of exegeses written throughout the generations. Its only failing, in Buber’s view, was that sometimes the commentary turned into teleological sermonizing, and sometimes it took on a preachy tone.⁴⁸

Another critic, a contemporary of Wellhausen’s (and Delitzsch), Professor Jacob Barth, who also participated in the polemic with Delitzsch, did not record his criticism of Wellhausen in writing, and his son, Aaron Barth, summed it up years later (see Chapter 14).

Simon Bernfeld adopted a totally different approach to Bible criticism. His book, a literary-historical introduction to the Holy Scriptures (in four volumes) was published in Berlin in Hebrew (1923–1929),

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 9. See also: *Der Pentateuch. Exegetisch-kritische Forschungen*, Leipzig, 1905; *Die Abzählungen in den Gesetzen der Bücher Leviticus und Numeri*, Frankfurt am Main, 1909. Jacob completed his commentary on Exodus in London, and began working on a commentary on Leviticus, which was never published.

⁴⁷ L. Feuchtwanger, “Erneuerung der Bibelwissenschaft,” *Der Morgen*, 10 (2), Mai 1934, pp. 53–58.

⁴⁸ Buber, “Some of the Problems of the Book of Genesis.”

and not in German. Bernfeld, a particularly prolific author,⁴⁹ taught at the Seminary for Jewish Studies (*Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*) in Berlin, had a Ph.D., and from 1885–1894 served as chief rabbi of the Sephardic community in Belgrade. In Chapter Two, we briefly reviewed his main arguments, but we think it appropriate to expand this description here, since Bernfeld presented the Hebrew reader with the most radical version of the influence of Bible criticism on both the history of the biblical text and the history of the Jews in the biblical period. He opened his book with a survey of Jewish Bible criticism, the history of Protestant Bible criticism and the Jewish response to it (about David Hoffmann, he wrote that the evidence he brought against Wellhausen was not decisive) and set forth his basic assumptions about the Bible in general, and the Pentateuch in particular. These were:

1. Moses did not write the Pentateuch. It was written by various people and contains various elements, which sometimes contradict one another in details as well as content, in particular in religious concepts. It is not clear whether Moses was an historical figure, but he certainly did not write even a single chapter of the Pentateuch.
2. The various sources from which the Pentateuch is composed are not only given expression in the names of the divinity but also are evident from their literary-historical analysis.
3. The final Deuteronomist editing of the Pentateuch was made at the end of the Persian era.
4. The most ancient element embedded in the Pentateuch is the Book of the Covenant, Exodus 21–23 and part of 24, while Chapter 34 is a later addition.
5. Deuteronomy was written in the time of Hosea as part of the covenant entered into between God and the Jewish people, and includes chapters 12–26. The other chapters were added later and the entire book was compiled during the Babylonian Exile.
6. The historical part of the Pentateuch is composed of various legends and stories, which were compiled into one book during and after the Babylonian Exile. The last editor, who lived at the beginning of the Persian Era (the mid-6th Century) collected all the sources at his disposal, and although he noted the contradictions between them, he deliberately chose not to insist on uniformity.

⁴⁹ Joseph Klausner, himself a prolific writer on many varied subjects, wrote about Bernfeld that “he did not always get to the truth of the matter, in his scores of books and his hundreds of articles.” Klausner, *Creators and Builders: Review Articles*, Tel Aviv, 1944 (2), pp. 298–300 (Hebrew).

In other words, Bernfeld accepted the division into four sources – JEDP – and believed that once they were edited together, it became difficult to differentiate between them and to know what their original content and form were. He also regarded a large part of the historical stories in the Pentateuch as legends and folk tales. However, he also believed that the final editing of the Pentateuch was anchored in a world-view that sought to introduce moral-spiritual order into the historical events and their purpose, and looked towards the future. In his view, even if Delitzsch was correct in his claim that the story of the Creation was based on a Mesopotamian source, that source is mythology, while the act of creation in the Book of Genesis is cosmogony.⁵⁰ The story of the flood in Genesis is also not a mythological story, but rather a moral tale. Biblical history is not a chronicle, but history. In its content it is not an objective scientific investigation, but a subjective moral consciousness, and hence the authors based what they wrote on facts, but added a homiletic interpretation to them. He stated his position on Bible study as follows: “The use of the Holy Scriptures without Bible criticism is of indifferent merit,⁵¹ and often leads us into error. Bible study is the understanding of the Bible.”⁵²

Bernfeld’s introduction was a radical piece of writing and was exceptional in his time. So it is no wonder that he was described as “the lackey of Protestant Bible criticism,” and Klauser too, who was moderate in his criticism, wrote that Bernfeld, “does not bow down to the Christian scholars and biblical critics; nonetheless he has accepted all of their ‘innovations,’ even the most extreme among them. According to him, there are certain parts in the Bible that date from the end of the Second Temple. Such a thing would never occur to a man who truly knows that period and is cautious when he makes a judgment about the Bible.”⁵³

Bernfeld, however, was not the only one to accept the view of higher criticism. In an article he wrote entitled, “The Bible according to the Hypotheses of its Critics,” published in 1918 in *Hatukufah*, Israel Hayyim Tawiov (1858–1920), an author and translator active in Riga and Vilna, accepted the view (“now accepted by all educated Jews”) that

⁵⁰ Bernfeld believed the story of Creation is later and was written under the influence of Persian cosmogony, *ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵¹ Lit., “it is a meritorious quality that is not all that meritorious.” From a saying in the Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Mesia*, 33a. See Jacob Neusner’s translation of *Bavli Tractate Baba Mesia*, Atlanta, Ga., 1996, p. 159.

⁵² Bernfeld, *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵³ Klausner, “Dr. Simon Bernfeld,” in idem, *Creators of the Period and Continuers of the Period/Articles*, Tel Aviv, 1956, pp. 153–161 (Hebrew).

the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by a number of authors, and it (as well as the Book of Joshua) comprises four sources, of which the Elohist [E] source is the earliest. He also accepted the view that the P source was written during the Babylonian Exile, when the four sources were compiled into one book. However, he asserted that this protracted act of creation shows that creativity never ceased among the Jews, “despite all the claims made by the Christian theologians.”⁵⁴

We should also note that the first methodological analysis of Wellhausen’s view and his method was written by a Jewish scholar in Germany, in Friedemann Philip Boschwitz’ (1909–1974) dissertation, *Julius Wellhausen: Motive und Massstäbe seiner Geschichtsschreibung*, at Marburg University (printed in 1938 and translated into Hebrew only in 1982!)⁵⁵ However, this book, because of the date of its publication, probably reached very few readers. On the other hand, the first and only book on the history of Bible criticism in general and the documentary hypothesis in particular available to the Hebrew reader was a book by Soloweitschik and Rubasheff (published in Berlin in 1925). Typically, in his review of the book, Ben Zion Dinaburg (Dinur), who we refer to later, praised the authors, but he hastened to add that: “It is very surprising that the authors did not see fit to relate, at least briefly, to the ‘criticism of the criticism’ (which was mentioned only in the table of contents),” nor did they mention the names of “the transgressors of the Wellhausen school.”⁵⁶

We have reviewed only a few of the publications that came out in German and Hebrew in Germany (and Poland) between the two World Wars. In general, they bring to light the challenge posed by modern Bible study and the desire to employ new tools to cope with it. This attempt to grapple with Bible study was one manifestation of the modernization of the Jewish intellectual world in that period, as well as of the value it ascribed to the Bible. A large portion of the Jewish writing about the Bible and Bible study in the interwar period that demonstrates the creative activity of Germany Jews during the Weimar Republic and the first years of the Third Reich and reflects the problems that engaged them, has been nearly totally forgotten.

⁵⁴ Tawiov, *ibid.*, pp. 353–358.

⁵⁵ The author immigrated to Palestine in 1935 and taught at a *gymnasium*.

⁵⁶ B. Z. Dinur, *Hachinukh*, 8 (4), 1925, pp. 61–63.

Chapter 12

Bible Criticism Arrives in Eretz Israel: Struggle and Reception

In an address entitled, “Jewish Studies between the Two World Wars,” that he gave in the summer of 1947, Professor Joseph Klausner expressed the hope that in a Jewish state, Bible study would be part “of the unrestricted science of a free people,” which would map out an independent path for itself in this area too.⁵⁷ The fact that this hope was expressed in 1947, shortly before the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state, shows that, at least in Klausner’s opinion, such a study did not yet exist. Three years later, in 1950, about two years after an independent Jewish state was founded in Eretz Israel, an introduction to the first volume of *Encyclopedia Biblica (Encyclopedia Miqrait)*, a project that had begun in 1942 with the participation of scholars from the Hebrew University, read:

As the Jewish people is returning to a life of freedom in its land, the first volume of the *Encyclopedia Biblica* is being published, in order to collect and compile the results of Bible study in the past and to pave the way for new, renewed study in the future.

This project is also a product of the revival in Israel in the last generation. In previous generations, Gentile scholars were the leaders in Bible study, and Jewish scholars devoted most of their work to a study of the post-biblical period, in particular of the era of our Exile. Now the situation has changed. Hebrew science in our generation has opened new paths for Bible study, and the people that created the Bible have now succeeded in gaining a worthy place for the study of its eternal book.

According to this introduction, the expectation for the appearance of an original Hebrew Bible study had already been met, and this study was part of the achievement of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Israel. as well as an expression of it; this, however, was scientific research that is free of apologetics and used all the existing extra-biblical sources.

⁵⁷ J. Klausner, “Jewish Studies between the Two World Wars,” in *Problems of Literature and Science*, p. 169.

Indeed, one would have expected that Hebrew Bible study in Eretz Israel, taking place outside of the arena of the Jewish-Christian polemic, in a free, secular atmosphere, would be liberated from the firm opposition to the documentary hypothesis and the view that Protestant Bible study is merely a branch of Christian anti-Jewish theology. In other words, one might have expected that Bible study would no longer be bound by the traditional view that sanctifies the unity of the text, and would no longer be apologetic in nature. It also seemed likely that attention would be paid primarily to the historical books and the Bible as national history rather than to questions linked to the history of the Jewish faith. However, in reality this was not the case. The negative attitude towards higher criticism was an integral part of the struggle over how the Bible should be understood and what its role was in the new Hebrew culture.

This struggle was a continuation of the “Bible war” within Jewish society in Europe. It was brought to Eretz Israel by scholars, men of letters, and teachers from Europe, but it also was given new content there. In a part of the secular Jewish society, which did not accept the traditional view, higher criticism still was regarded as an anti-Jewish discipline with an anti-national orientation, and those who advocated it or tried to develop it further, were described as adhering to a “destructive method,” which was engaged in faultfinding, splitting hairs, and dividing the biblical text into small fragments. Not only the orthodox, but many “freethinking” nationalists viewed higher criticism as both an enemy and a danger, although for different reasons.

This reaction did not stem from a need for apologetics in the debate with Christian scholarship; rather it was part of the processes of constructing the new national consciousness and its new picture of the past. A segment of the secular public adopted a tendency, which became deeply rooted, that we call historical-secular biblical fundamentalism, or, in other words, an approach that attributes importance and value to the reliability of the national historical story related in the Bible. At the same time, the national religious (orthodox) camp attributed importance and value to the Bible as a whole, including its historical narrative and the books outside the Pentateuch, and a tendency emerged in this camp that we call religious biblical-historical fundamentalism, a phenomenon we will discuss in Chapter 15. Since from the 1980s, the Bible attained a status in the Hebrew culture it had never had in previous generations, a common denominator was created between secular and religious nationalists, on the one hand, and a struggle over the Bible’s meaning and value, on the other.

The coming chapters will focus on one facet of Bible science in Eretz Israel and its reception in the Hebrew culture – the manner in which it and the public discourse coped with Bible criticism, primarily with the documentary hypothesis. We are mainly interested in the dialectic response to higher Bible criticism by the secular camp: on the one hand, acceptance of its basic assumptions, and on the other, sharp opposition to some of its conclusions.

The “Bible War” and the Controversy about Teaching Bible in Hebrew Schools in Eretz Israel

The schools of the Hebrew educational system were the major arena of the Bible revolution and the creation of biblical culture, and hence in them the struggle was waged over the correct way to read and understand the Bible.⁵⁸ The debate centered on the question of how and whether to teach Bible in the schools, particularly in the secondary schools. In another chapter we will describe how the teachers understood the value of the Bible and tried to determine ways of teaching it. Here we will focus on their attitude towards Bible criticism.

As far back as the 1880s, criticism was voiced about the fact that Bible was taught in the Hebrew schools of the *moshavot*⁵⁹ as a history book, and not as a book of the Mosaic code. In 1911, however, the issue became a public debate known as the “Bible war.” It centered on the way the Bible was being taught in the Herzliya Gymnasium (founded in Jaffa in 1905 and then moved in 1911 to a building built for it in the new neighborhood of Tel Aviv, established in 1909). The Gymnasium, which had a student body of 254 in 1911, was managed by a public society. It was the apogee of modern secular Hebrew education, and diverse cultural activities were conducted in it. Ostensibly this was a debate about whether teachers in the Gymnasium were permitted to teach Bible under the influence of the documentary hypothesis, but in fact it touched upon a broader issue: what role should the Bible play in the new Jewish culture in Eretz Israel. The value and role assigned to the Bible by those who participated in the debate reflects

⁵⁸ In 1926, 19,000 pupils were enrolled in the Hebrew educational system, and in 1947, there were 75,000. On the history of the Hebrew school system in Eretz Israel, see: Simon Reshef and Yuval Dror, *Hebrew Education in the Years of the National Homeland* (1919–1948), Jerusalem, 1999, pp. 17–47 (Hebrew).

⁵⁹ Jewish agricultural colonies established in Eretz Israel from 1882.

what they thought the attitude of the Yishuv (the Jewish community) should be towards tradition and the Diaspora, and the fact that such a debate became a public event so early in the process of shaping the new Jewish society attests to the role already filled by the Bible in the society's culture during that period.

We have already quoted the derisive words of Ze'ev Jawitz directed against the Jewish semi-intelligentsia – “the regiment of our educated Jews” as he put it – in Eastern Europe, which accepted the “new theory” that came from Germany, while the German Bible scholars had already abandoned it. We will recall that he repeated these harsh words in an article entitled “Criticism when it is Criticized” in 1911. And now, what in his view had happened to these “semi-intellectuals” in Eastern Europe, was regrettably happening in Eretz Israel. Rabbi Kook, the leader of the Mizrachi religious Zionist movement and the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa at the time, claimed that the Gymnasium was educating “Jews without Judaism,” and compared the danger of the education given there to the danger posed by missionaries. When some of the students’ parents joined in a protest, the “Bible war” broke out.⁶⁰ The protest was directed mainly against the principal, Dr. Benjamin Mossinsohn (1878–1942),⁶¹ who had been a pupil of the theologian Professor Karl Marti (1855–1925) in Bern. Mossinsohn, who regarded the Bible (as we shall see in the next chapter) as the basic foundation of national education, explained his approach to the Bible in 1910 in an article entitled “The Bible in the School,” which became the pretext for the debate.⁶² In the modern method of study, he wrote, it is essential to learn about the development of the Bible and each of its books in the special context of their time, while drawing a distinction between the historical books, the books of prophecy, books of poetry and books of law. However, since these various elements are mixed in the different books, it is necessary to separate them:

Return to the Bible should be our motto, if we want to know it as it was created and to understand the period in which it was composed. And when we return to the Bible, we shall see that it contains an entire literature nearly a thousand years of age, and that each and every book differs

⁶⁰ For a description of the polemic and its background, see: Baruch Ben-Yehudah, *The Story of Gymnasia Herzliya*, Tel Aviv, 1970, pp. 95–112 (Hebrew); Rachel El-boim-Dror, *Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel*, vol. 1, 1854–1914, Jerusalem, 1986 (Hebrew). See also: J. Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education*, Assem, 1976.

⁶¹ Mossinsohn wrote, inter alia, *The Prophets*, New York, 1919 (Hebrew); *Palästina, seine Stellung und Bedeutung in der vorexilischen Literatur des Alten Testaments*, Zürich, 1907; *The Problem of Education in Palestine*, Tel Aviv, 1923 (Hebrew).

⁶² Printed in *Hachinukh*, 1 & 2, 1910, pp. 23–32, 110–119.

from the others, although infrequently some parts of one book are also totally different from the other parts.

The Bible is not simply a book from which to study the religion, because it also deals with other questions, and perhaps with them more than with the issue of religion ... In the Bible we find the remainder of the original national literature of the Jewish people living a life of freedom in Eretz Israel during the periods of the First and Second Temples. Hence the liberated creation of the Jewish people is reflected in the "Book of Books" more than in anything the people created afterwards. And that is the great value of the Bible ... A great shortcoming of the study of Bible as we practice it according to tradition is that it lacks any historical perspective ... Let us bring the Bible to the school in its true form, as a mirror of the development of an entire people; let us show our children the external beauty along with the profound contents of the Book of Books ... And our youth will then have an entirely different attitude towards the book. They only need to know how to read it. What do we have besides the Bible? What else can we place as a foundation for national education?

We see, then, that in Mossinsohn's program, the Bible was regarded as national history, and hence he saw the need to "peel away the shell of religion and Halakhah "as it was accepted in the time of the Diaspora," from nationalism. He viewed traditional Bible commentary as a reflection of the "unnatural" life in the Diaspora. He also proposed placing an emphasis on the prophecy and ignoring the books of laws. The program was perceived as one that "made version criticism and higher criticism the major content of the Bible lesson."⁶³

This article, and the curriculum fashioned in its spirit, gave rise to the furor that threatened the continued existence of the Gymnasium. To the orthodox, Mossinsohn's conception of the Bible symbolized everything that was unfit and dangerous in "liberal education" (added to this was the fact that more hours were allocated to the Bible in the curriculum than to the Talmud). The fact that Mossinsohn was regarded as an advocate of higher criticism only added fuel to the fire. Rabbi Kook, in his typically acerbic language stated that the teachers in the Gymnasium were "taking away the soul of Judaism" by teaching Bible "in the latest European fashion," and hence the Gymnasium was the "source of destruction." The national Hebrew-secular study of the Bible, in his view, lacked any "element of the soul of the nation and its generations, but has nothing in it other than the ring of the name and empties it of all content."⁶⁴ In an article entitled "The

⁶³ See: S. D. Goitein, "On Study of the Bible in the Israeli Nation," in *Teaching the Bible: Problems and Ways of Modern Bible Teaching*, p. 29.

⁶⁴ See in the report *Mission to the Galilean Colonies*, 1913, Frankfurt am Main, 1916, the introduction to which was written by Rabbi Kook.

Herzliya Gymnasium in Jaffa ("Words of Peace and Truth"), printed in *Hashiloach*, the author Zalman Epstein (1860–1936) claimed that the Herzliya Gymnasium was teaching Bible according to the method of [higher] Bible criticism as if it were secular literature. This kind of study, in his view, belonged in the university, not the school, where "the Hebrew child ought to live the life of the nation in its mysterious holiness, through the conduit of Mt. Sinai with all of its awe and the flames of its fire, so its shining light will carry the quiver of religiosity to all the recesses of his soul and the strings of his heart."⁶⁵ Rabbi Israel Chajim Daiches, a representative of HaMizrachi in England, stated at the Tenth Zionist Congress in 1911: "If we wanted to study Bible criticism, we would go to Göttingen to study with Wellhausen or to Zimmermann in Leipzig, or Delitzsch in Berlin, but in Jaffa the true Bible should be studied in the spirit of Judaism."⁶⁶

To the "free-thinkers," the attack on Mossinsohn symbolized the danger posed by the orthodox "reaction." Dr. Hayyim Bograchoff (Boger, 1867–1963), one of the heads of the public society that ran the Gymnasium, who also served as its principal, stated in his counterattack that it was true that at the Gymnasium every effort was being made "to strip the sanctity from the books of our Bible, so that in the eyes of our pupils it will not be enveloped in a holy mantle, but will be treated as secular literature in all of its details."⁶⁷ Defenders of the gymnasium argued that there was no basis to the rumor that Bible was taught there "according to the Wellhausen method and that of other Christian scholars, who diminish the value of the Holy Scriptures." In their view, the critics had exaggerated in their extreme reaction because they had regarded the teaching of Bible in the Gymnasium as a distinct expression of the "Bible revolution," which had been wrought in the new Hebrew culture in Eretz Israel and had become a central part of it. Later testimonies by pupils described the teaching of Bible in the Gymnasium not as "the desecration of the holy" but as a method of teaching that "truly sanctified the Bible."⁶⁸ Moshe Shertok (Sharett, 1894–1965), a graduate of the first class of the Gymnasium (and later Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister of Israel), wrote:

⁶⁵ *Hashiloah*, 25, July–August 1911, December–January 1913, pp. 145–150, pp. 351–360.

⁶⁶ *Minutes of the Tenth Zionist Congress in Basel*, pp. 154–155, 209.

⁶⁷ Ben Yehudah, *The Story of the Herzliya Gymnasium*, pp. 102–103.

⁶⁸ See: Shmariyahu Halevi Levin, "Avodah usecharah" (Work and its Reward), *Hashiloach*, Jubilee issue, 25, pp. 145–150.

To say that the main object of this method was to put the Marti theory into the pupils' heads is a total distortion of the facts and an outrageous injustice. If in a lesson, Dr. Mossinsohn occasionally mentioned how the Gentile biblical critics interpreted a certain passage or how they assessed a certain event, he frequently did so in order to refute their interpretation and to reject their version, and by doing so he only helped to broaden their [the students'] knowledge and to deepen their understanding.⁶⁹

Ahad Ha'am, whose principled position on this subject we described in Chapter Two, was called upon to rule on the controversy, and he devoted four days to investigating the issue. He met with the teachers, sat in the classrooms, and summed up his impressions and conclusions in an article entitled "Between the Extremes," printed in *Hashiloah* in December–January, 1912. He rejected most of the arguments against the radical secular spirit that supposedly prevailed in the Gymnasium, but he accepted the criticism about the manner in which the Bible was taught there. He was not fundamentally opposed to Bible criticism, and certainly he agreed with Mossinsohn that the Bible reflects the full life of the Jewish people in the past, but in his opinion, the attempt to reorganize the order of the books of the Bible was contrary to the perception of the Bible as a national creation, and was even less an appropriate pedagogical method for the national Hebrew school. Since the Bible is the major cultural-national asset of the Jewish people, and by its unity had shaped the national spirit, the Hebrew school is not the appropriate place to cast doubt on its unity and to break it down into units: "The basis of national education can only be the Bible as it is, as it was placed more than two thousand years ago at the core of our national life, and served our people as a foundation throughout the generations."⁷⁰ Hence, Ahad Ha'am stated, the *textus receptus*, namely, the text as it was sanctified in the tradition, must be retained.⁷¹ He called the documentary hypothesis a "scientific amusement," that ought to be left to professors whose field it is and averred that "it has no place in the Hebrew school that wants to make the Bible the basis of national education." In a private conversation in Tel Aviv, Ahad Ha'am said:

It is true that the Bible is a part of Hebrew history. We know that everything that comes from a source changes and differs from the source. Neither you nor I have the same religion as our forefathers did, but if we

⁶⁹ In Ben-Yehudah, *The Story of the Herzliya Gymnasium*, pp. 111–112.

⁷⁰ Ahad Ha'am, "The Hebrew Gymnasium in Jaffa," in *Al Parashat Derakhim* (At the Crossroads), vol. 4, pp. 145–158 (the article was first printed in *Hashiloach*, 21, December–January 1913 under the title "Ben haketzavot" (Between the Extremes)).

⁷¹ See: Alfred Gottschalk, "Ahad Ha'Am's Biblical Critic," in *Hebrew Annual Review*, 7, 1983, Columbus, Ohio, pp. 105–118.

want our sons to have a religion, we have to tell them the truth, that the religion ruled over us; they need to know the source from which they will see the religious development ... Research into the Bible has no place in the secondary school. They [the pupils] must become acquainted with the Torah and the Bible in its entirety; they must not be given fragments from one place and passages from another. Neither the religion nor common sense would suffer such a practice. It would be an imitation of the Gentile scholars, but not a knowledge of the Bible.⁷²

Nonetheless, Ahad Ha'am also defended the Gymnasium. On October 15, 1913, Solomon Z. Schechter, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, wrote to him saying that he totally repudiated the Gymnasium because of its secularity and the fact that it had introduced Bible criticism into the teaching of Bible, which in the end would morally destroy any chance of national revival in the Holy Land. Ahad Ha'am replied in a soothing tone, that indeed there were “some teachers who did not know what was right and had done the wrong thing,” but he came to the defense of the Gymnasium’s pupils, and wrote that in the whole world there is no “Hebrew type” like them.⁷³

In any event, Ahad Ha'am's conciliatory article did not silence the public debate. Chaim Tchernowitz (“Rav Tzair,” 1870–1949), a rabbi, scholar and later a professor of Talmud at the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, published two articles on the subject in the official paper of the Zionist Federation, *Haolam*. Tchernowitz wrote with irony that “In Eretz Israel every 12-year-old child simply knows that the Bible, for example, was written after the Destruction,” or that the Torah “was written in the time of Ezra, who later brought it with him from Babylonia.” In the curriculum of the Gymnasium, religion could not take on an important role, for the simple reason that in the opinion of the teachers, “the entire religion is *galuti*.⁷⁴ Consequently, the only thing left was the Bible, but this was not “the Bible of the Jews of the Diaspora, the Bible with Rashi's commentary, the legends of the *midrash* and the like, but the original Bible, free of the *galuti* environment,” and the way to the Hebrew Bible passes through the conclusions of Bible criticism. In an article entitled “Birur devarim”⁷⁵

⁷² See Yehudit Harari, *Among the Vineyards*, I, Tel Aviv, 1947, pp. 262–263 (Hebrew).

⁷³ On Schechter's position, see Chapter One and Shulamit Laskov (ed.), *Ahad Ha'Am, Letters from Eretz Israel* (1891–1926), Jerusalem, 2000, p. 399 (Hebrew).

⁷⁴ The adjectival form of the Hebrew word *galut*, which means exile or diaspora. It refers to the behavior and mentality typical of the diaspora Jew and has negative connotations.

⁷⁵ *Haolam*, 1911, pp. 7–10.

(Clarifying Matters), Tchernowitz sharpened the tone of his criticism and wrote that the teachers of the Gymnasium did not accept the tradition that “Moses received the Torah at Sinai, and the Torah was given as one whole.” Instead, they teach the Bible according to a supposedly “scientific” order, the Prophets before the Pentateuch, and tell their students that there are laws that were written after Moses and that the Book of Genesis was composed in the time of Samuel, and the other books in even later periods:

There is no Bible criticism here, but rather [the claim that] the Bible is a creation of “thousands of years of originality” ... They set down rules as do the Bible critics among the Gentile scholars, and are raising in Eretz Israel, the cradle of Hebrew prophecy and of our history, an entire generation that totally denies the tradition on which the soul of Israel was truly dependent for thousands of years. Until today these people have not uttered a single scientific statement in Bible criticism ... nonetheless, they continue to borrow the superficial conclusions of the Gentile scholars and to cram them into the minds of the young generation, the generation of our hope and future in Eretz Israel.

One result of the controversy was that the HaMizrachi center in Frankfurt am Main seceded from the Zionist movement and established the ultra-orthodox Agudat Israel party. For its part, the Gymnasium’s management gave into pressure and decided to change the way the Bible was taught and to introduce Halakhah in the Talmud into the curriculum. The curriculum published by the education committee in 1923 stated that the books of the Bible would be taught in their order.⁷⁶

Although the controversy over the teaching of Bible in the Herzliya Gymnasium was a passing episode, it was – like the Babel-Bibel controversy – both symbolic and paradigmatic. On the one hand, it gave public expression to Orthodoxy’s opposition to making the Bible a major subject in Hebrew schools at the expense of the Talmud, and later, to the opposition to studying the Bible in any interpretation other than the traditional. On the other hand, it reflected the view that the study of the Bible under the influence of the documentary hypothesis was a dangerous trend, from both a religious and a national standpoint. The “freethinkers,” who objected to teaching in the spirit of the documentary hypothesis, did not only express the doubt that it had anything to do with reading the Bible in a secular spirit and freeing it from the “approach of the Diaspora.” They also were concerned

⁷⁶ See: *Curriculum for Municipal Schools*, issued by the Zionist Executive in Eretz Israel, Education Department, Jerusalem, 1923.

that this kind of teaching would undermine the status of the Bible as a “national asset” of the new Hebrew culture and would impair its authority and value. The documentary hypothesis thus continued to signify denial of the “traditional” Bible and the ostensible attempt to totally abolish its value and its “natural splendor.”⁷⁷ However, there were those who believed that study in the spirit of Bible criticism was appropriate to the “spirit of free science” and would help to cast off the traditional reading and provide a new understanding of the Bible, making it the source of new national cultural values.

The Ongoing Debate about Teaching the Bible

The debate about the ways of teaching the Bible in the Hebrew schools was renewed after World War I. It became a paramount subject on the educational system’s agenda and was conducted mainly on the pages of the periodical *Hachinukh*. Other issues were also raised in this debate: What significance should be assigned to the religious layer of the Bible, and was there room for studying the Bible “according to the free criticism of the Christians”? The teachers offered no alternative method to “the free criticism of the Christians,” but were generally content to argue that national education, in which the Bible plays the same role as classical literature does in the humanist gymnasia in Europe and also serves as the people’s history, cannot be based on theories and hypotheses, but rather must be based on the text as it was handed down in the tradition. Hence, as Ahad Ha’Am asserted, the question of what was the “original version” of the Bible is of no importance.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Zevi Tzameret writes that most of the non-religious teachers preferred the “modern Jewish interpretations, which basically accept Bible criticism, to the traditional Jewish interpretations, and the written law [the Torah] was separated, in the world of the pupils, from the Oral Law.” See: Zevi Tzameret, “Jewish Education, Reality and its Problems in the General State Schools,” in Shmuel Stempler (ed.), *People and State: Israeli Society*, Tel Aviv, 1984, p. 312 (Hebrew). However, such a separation was not carried out under Wellhausen’s impact.

⁷⁸ See, inter alia, “The Issue of Studying the Bible,” *Hachinukh*, 1, April–May 1910, March 1910; “In the Hebrew Press: On The Study of Bible,” *ibid.*, 2, April–May 1911, pp. 276–279; S.D. Goitein, “Teaching the Bible in the Secondary School,” *ibid.*, 20 (9), 1926; Pinhas Shifman, “On the Question of Bible Study in the Elementary School,” *ibid.*, 8, 1925, pp. 7–13. See also: David Shachar, “The Biblical Past in the Study of the History of Israel at the Inception of Zionist-Oriented Education in Eretz Israel (1882–1918),” *Ma’ofuma’aseh*, 9, 2003, pp. 39–58.

In a book entitled *Darkei hora'at haMikra bevet hasefer* (Ways of Teaching the Bible in the School), published in Odessa in 1918, written in response to Mossinsohn's remarks, Dr. Shalom Yonah Tscharni (1878–1932), a teacher, pedagogue, and prolific writer from Vilna, who studied chemistry and philosophy in Berlin, made some favorable comments about N.M. Nikolskii's (1877–1959) translation into Russian of "Wellhausen's excellent book." But he also was of the opinion that the Bible should not be taught in the school on the basis of "unfounded hypotheses, which are biased and sometimes also anti-Semitic." In his view, "The students of teachers who are engrossed in searching for errors and in scientific hair splitting will never be left with that direct impression they should receive of the Bible as a truly artistic creation." Therefore, the teacher in elementary school should not separate the various elements of the Bible, since in doing so he would destroy the "fundamental aim of the creators of the Bible." In his book, *Darkei halimud shel haTanakh* (Ways of Studying the Bible) I-II, Jerusalem (1935–1937), the teacher, Hayyim Aryeh Zuta (1868–1939) defined the Bible as an ancient historical-national book, whose first parts are historical memories, and then from the time of the Judges become "true chapters in history." Hence, he believed, a teacher who does not accept the historicity of the Bible is not entitled to teach it in the school. Zuta adopted the distinction made by Ahad Ha'Am between "archaeological truth" and "historical truth." Since there is no doubt that the historical truth of the Bible has accompanied the Jewish people from the time of its canonization, there is no basis for questioning it in the Hebrew school. While in the eyes of the orthodox, Ahad Ha'Am was the founding father of "freethinking" heresy, Zuta regarded him as a teacher of the "middle-road approach." Zuta asserted that teachers of Bible ought to be familiar with lower Bible criticism, because "it is in no way based on apostasy, but rather on in-depth investigation," and one can find it in the writings of the Sages and of medieval commentators on the Bible. However, on the other hand, the higher criticism is heresy, the fruit of the imagination of "ignorant Gentile professors, given to wild fantasy, perhaps also permeated with hatred for the Jewish people and its Torah, who have spread false views and [mostly] unfounded assumptions, and we 'the possessors of the book,' too embarrassed to contradict the words of the 'erudite scholars,' have remained silent ... and their books are still sowing and spreading wormwood and gall."⁷⁹ Zuta also noted

⁷⁹ Zuta, *The Ways of Studying the Bible*, pp. 34–35.

that “Recently a reaction has set in all along the front against the extreme critics, and the more moderate views are beginning to gain in strength ...”⁸⁰ The teacher, Yosef Azaryahu (1872–1945), who held senior positions in the Hebrew educational system, stated in his book, *Teaching the Bible*:

Everything that falls within the realm of the scientific study of the Bible, which traces the roots of faith and views of our nation and the early origins of biblical literature, has no place in the study of the Bible in the schools, both secondary and elementary, if it contradicts the accepted tradition. The assumptions and conclusions of scientific criticism in this field are the domain of those engaged in Bible study, historians and teachers of Bible ...⁸¹

In another book on the subject, *Methods of Teaching the Bible*, published in Hebrew in New York in 1938 (a second expanded edition was published in 1951⁸²), Zevi Scharfstein (1884–1973), a teacher in the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, briefly reviewed the history of biblical research, and wrote that in general, this topic is ignored in the schools. He also claimed that Bible criticism actually began in the Talmud, which contains various comments on the time of the Bible’s composition (for example: “the events of the Torah were not given in their order,” Midrash Psalms 3),⁸³ but he did not discuss the influence of modern Bible criticism on teaching of the Bible.

All of the above shows that the teachers who had an educational program did not draw any distinction between the Pentateuch and the other books, but assigned an equal status to all 24 books. They attempted to defend the Bible as a whole, in the schools, against Bible criticism, both philological and historical.

To find out whether the pupils were exposed to a critical reading of the Bible and whether such a reading depicted the ancient past of the Jewish people in a manner that undermined the accepted picture of that past, we need to look not only at the Bible lessons, but also at the lessons in history, namely at textbooks on Jewish history. The main innovation in the teaching of biblical history was the strong focus on the history of Eretz Israel in the biblical period. These books did not digress from the biblical historical narrative, but in the schools that

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸¹ Yosef Azaryahu, “Teaching the Bible,” in *Yosef Azaryahu’s Writings*, vol. 1, Ramat Gan, 1946, p. 53 (Hebrew). Azaryahu wrote a Hebrew adaptation of Jean Henri Fabre’s (1823–1915) book, under the title *Pharaoh’s Scarab*, Tel Aviv, 1930.

⁸² A third edition appeared in 1966.

⁸³ Scharfstein, ibid., pp. 53–54.

belonged to the various streams in Hebrew education – the general stream, the workers stream (which were merged into state education in 1953), and the national-religious stream – different emphases were placed on the historical story related in the Bible (and of course, the obligatory validity of the laws of the Torah were interpreted differently). Not only in the textbooks, but also in history books accessible to students, there were some digressions from the biblical narrative. In Graetz' history, which came out in a Hebrew translation in Eretz Israel in 1938 (in 1939 a third edition was printed), the author solved the problem of how to describe the history up to the settlement in Eretz Israel by depicting it as the historical memory of the people (not as history "as it was"). Among these memories, Graetz included the patriarchs' acknowledgement of one God and the tradition about Moses and the theophany at Mt. Sinai. Simon Dubnow's book, which appeared in a Hebrew translation in 1929,⁸⁴ describes the development of the Israelite religion according to the evolutionary approach – from polytheism through henotheism to monotheism. He regarded the stories of the patriarchs as legends, in which layers of oral traditions are embedded, whose purpose was to "symbolize the separateness of the families of Hebrews from the other sons of Shem." He believed that Moses was a "biblical legend," although one underpinned by historical truth, because without such a personality it would be impossible to explain the historical revolution of the emergence of monotheism and its acceptance by the people. Dubnow regarded the theophany at Mt. Sinai as an historical event, at which the Israelites entered into a covenant with their God, but the "Mosaic code" developed without any miracles (namely, revelation), but rather under the influence of the cultural environment in which the Israelites lived in antiquity. As for the biblical narrative after the exodus from Egypt, Dubnow did not deviate from the accepted historical narrative.⁸⁵ The book *Israel: Sources and Documents. Part I: Israel in its Land* by Ben-Zion Dinur (Dinaburg), later the Israeli Minister of Education from 1951–1955, was published in Hebrew in 1938 in Tel Aviv. Its major innovation was the fact that it cited parallels from literatures of the ancient East (for example, the Hammurabi Code). Dinaburg also defined the patriarchs and the exodus from Egypt as a tradition, which also contains stories with no basis in history (such as the story of Joseph). He also

⁸⁴ Edited by Baruch Krupnik.

⁸⁵ See, for example, the introduction and first chapter in Dubnow's book, which was translated into Hebrew in 1947, and came out in a fifth edition in 1950.

wrote that there are various perceptions of the past in the Pentateuch, and that the Bible alludes to traditions that were not included in the official historiography (for example, Ezekiel 20:5–8).⁸⁶

The biblical historical story as an accepted narrative was preserved in most of the history books published in Hebrew in the coming years. One example is the first volume of the popular project *A History of the Jewish People* (in three volumes) written by Professor Abraham Malamat of the Hebrew University and published in 1969. In it, Malamat briefly surveys the documentary hypothesis, which he calls “orthodoxy in Bible study,” and notes that it treats the biblical historical tradition dismissively and regards it mainly as later reflections from the monarchic era, or even later. He himself takes exception to this view and makes it clear that even if the discussion about the original formation of the Jewish people will probably always be a matter of speculation, he believes that much authentic and reliable historical material is embedded in the biblical tradition about the genesis of the Jewish people. A real deviation from the accepted narrative can be found in the first and second volumes of *The History of Eretz Israel* published in 1982 and 1984, in which the stories of the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt and the theophany at Mt. Sinai are all depicted as an historical tradition, and not as “history.”⁸⁷

In general, as we shall see later, any attempt to undermine the foundation of an historical narrative based on the Bible and on the formative events in it was perceived as counter-history and regarded by many as a disavowal of ancient Jewish history motivated by ideological aims.

The Struggle Against Bible Criticism at the Hebrew University

We have seen that the opponents of the study of the Bible according to the documentary hypothesis argued that it did not belong in the schools, but rather in the university. However, the Hebrew University did not readily open its gates to Bible criticism either.

In S. Y. Agnon's (1888–1970) novel *Shira* (1971), which is set in the world of scholars at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during the

⁸⁶ Dinur (Dinaburg), *Values and Ways*, p. 121.

⁸⁷ Israel Ef'al (ed.) *The History of Eretz Israel: Introduction, the Early Periods*, Jerusalem, 1982; *Israel and Judah in the Biblical Period*, 1984 (Hebrew).

mandatory period, one of them mocks those engaged in Bible criticism and says that since they lack the imagination required to write historical novels, they are forced to come up with hypotheses that are flights of fancy.⁸⁸ Elsewhere in the novel, one of the characters says that he prefers to read articles in the newspaper rather than the corrections that professors make in the Holy Scriptures. These words echo the sharp opposition to Bible study in the spirit of modern criticism that also arose within the Jerusalem academia. As a matter of fact, it took many years until the University was able to overcome this strong opposition, and in that institution too the Wellhausen school was like a red flag for those who came to the defense of the “sanctity of the Bible and its authority” in the Holy Land. Mainly as a result of this opposition, a Bible department was established at the Hebrew University in the Institute for Jewish Studies as a sub-department only in 1932, and as a major department only in 1940.⁸⁹ On January 22, 1916, Chaim Weizmann wrote to the jurist and Zionist leader in London, Harry Sacher (1881–1971):

It is quite possible that a “Jewish faculty” would appeal to many, especially in this country, but you have to face a terrible difficulty, that a Jewish faculty is not possible without biblical research and various other subjects of this kind, which would create a storm, likely to blow away the whole of the faculty. To eliminate all the “free thinking” and the spirit of “free research” from a faculty means reducing it to dust or worse to a second rate Talmud-Torah ...⁹⁰

Ze’ev Jabotinsky adopted an even more acerbic tone when he wrote in July of 1914:

Our apprehension about Bible commentary is, in my view, not well founded. I admit that this is not a simple question, but a faculty of Jewish

⁸⁸ S. Y. Agnon, *Shira*, trans. Zeva Shapiro, Syracuse, NY, 1996 edn., pp. 141, 221–222.

⁸⁹ The discussion is based largely on Sarah Japhet’s article, “The Establishment and Early History of the Department of Bible, 1925–1949, to be published in the framework of the Project on the History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Our thanks to her for allowing us to peruse the manuscript. See also: S. Japhet, “Research and Academic Teaching of Bible in Israel,” *Jewish Studies*, 32, 1983, pp. 15–16; David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, New York – Oxford, 1995, pp. 102–108; Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Sixty Years of Teaching Bible at the Hebrew University – Directions, Restrictions and Expectations,” in Moshe Bar-Asher (ed.), *Studies in Judaica: Collected Papers of the Symposium in Honor of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Institute of Jewish Studies* (December 1984), Jerusalem, 1986, pp. 41–49 (Hebrew).

⁹⁰ *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann* (edited by G. Yogev, S. Kolat and E. Friesel), vol. 6: A, Oxford – Jerusalem, 1975, pp. 217–218.

philosophy in Jerusalem without Bible research would cry to the heavens. Has it been proven that the Orthodox and members of Mizrachi are threatening to use the same reasoning they used against the Gymnasium? After all, they themselves understand the difference.⁹¹

However, those who opposed the teaching of Bible at the University in the spirit of Bible criticism were those who set the tone and the policy. The argument about who was fit to be appointed a professor of Bible at the University became a public debate (as well as part of the internal University intrigues), while awareness of the fact that the lack of a renowned senior lecturer in Bible was a “disgrace” constantly hovered in the background. Opposition to teaching Bible at the Hebrew University in a modern spirit was received with much disappointment and dissatisfaction, which was expressed by C.N. Bialik in a letter to J.L. Magnes (1877–1948), one of the university’s founders and its first President (until 1948). He wrote that the absence of a Bible chair at the Hebrew University “demeans its value in the eyes of many and provokes justified grievance against it.” If this wrong is not righted, he went on to say, “it will be a great obstacle for the University in whatever path it may take.”⁹²

In his speech at the opening ceremony of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on April 1, 1925, Rabbi Kook took an orthodox position when he expressed his hope that Jewish studies at the University, “beginning with the Book of Books, the Bible, the light of our lives,” would be taught by teachers who would be men of science but also “religiously observant Jews in their views, their emotions and in all the paths of their lives.”⁹³ Since the founders of the University did not want to enter into a controversy with the Orthodox movement, its position exerted much influence.

The first candidate to teach Bible at the Hebrew University was the chief rabbi (from 1918) of Vilna, Hirsch Perez Chajes,⁹⁴ a native of Brody, who received his doctorate at the University of Vienna (where he studied with the Assyriologist Dr. D. H. Müller and Wilhelm Jerusalem [1854–1923]).⁹⁵ He taught Bible at the rabbinical seminary in Florence, founded the Jewish Gymnasium in Vienna, and published a commen-

⁹¹ Ze’ev Jabotinsky, *Letters*, I (ed. Daniel Carpi), Tel Aviv, 1992, p. 206 (Hebrew).

⁹² F. Lachower (ed.), *Igrot (Letters) of Ch.N. Bialik*, Tel Aviv, 1938, p. 263 (Hebrew).

⁹³ “The Speech of Chief Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohen Kook,” in Shaul Katz and Michael Heyd (eds.), *The History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: Origins and Beginnings*, Jerusalem, 1997, pp. 311–314 (Hebrew).

⁹⁴ See Chapter 1.

⁹⁵ A Jewish Austrian scholar, who engaged in philosophy and anthropology.

tary on the Book of Amos (1905) and the Book of Psalms (Zhytomyr, 1903).⁹⁶ Chajes did not shy away from the documentary hypothesis, and argued that an understanding and admiration of the Bible cannot be adversely affected by modern methods of criticism; on the contrary, these methods can only assist in gaining a true understanding of the Bible and knowledge of the “soul of the Bible.” In an address he delivered in 1919, entitled “the Bible and Youth,” he declared:

The Holy Scriptures describe to us not super-heroes, but persons of flesh and blood, and we feel that they are flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. And here too we receive the answer to the question that we are so often asked, and more than being simply a question, it is a rebuke: Why have you, the Jews, participated to such a minute extent in Bible criticism, and why should the non-Jewish scholars be credited with all of the important work and discoveries?

Chajes’ own answer was:

In the way of the world, if you live together with what you like most for many years – and we have been living with this cherished child of ours for thousands of years, day by day and hour by hour – then you are simply not capable of criticizing it. When an alien eye beholds it, it may see things that are not seen by the loving eye.⁹⁷

Magnes met with Chajes in Vienna, and C.N. Bialik and others tried to persuade him to accept the position as head of the Institute for Judaism and incumbent of the chair of Bible. Bialik, although he described the Wellhausen school as “wanton criticism,” wrote to Chajes, telling him that the news that he had been asked to take a position at the Hebrew University had evoked much joy among the professorial staff and his admirers, and that the restrictions that some at the University wished to impose on him would in future be automatically eliminated: “The removal of the Bible from the four walls of the Institute of Jewish Studies is so inevitable that it cannot be avoided and must be accepted,” and he hoped that Chajes would know how to rise above the temporary pettiness.⁹⁸ However, the criticism of Chajes voiced by orthodox circles in Vienna had its effect and at a meeting of the Kuratorium (Governing Council) held in London in July 1925, the Grand Rabbi of French Jewry, Israel Levi, announced, in the name of Baron Rothschild, that if Bible criticism were brought into the University, the Chair of Bible would not be established. In response, Chajes stated that science without criticism was unthinkable (“There is no

⁹⁶ As part of the biblical commentary edited by Abraham Kahana, about which see the next chapter.

⁹⁷ H.P. Chajes, “Die Bibel und Jugend,” in idem, *Reden und Vorträge*, pp. 150–154.

⁹⁸ *Igrot Bialik*, vol. 3, Tel Aviv, 1938, p. 57.

Wissenschaft without criticism”), that it was obvious that Bible science had to be taught at the Hebrew University, and with regret, he had decided to relinquish the position he had hoped to fill.⁹⁹

In 1927, Felix Perles, a rabbi in Königsberg and a Professor of Hebrew and Aramaic there was invited to teach Bible at the University.¹⁰⁰ In his programmatic opening lecture, entitled “What does Bible Science have to do with us?”¹⁰¹ Perles did not ignore the fact that many regarded Bible criticism as a war against Judaism. But for that very reason, he believed there was an urgent need for a Jewish Bible science, and that its absence was a “great disgrace.” The books of the Bible, he asserted, have been relegated to the sidelines, and the time has come for Jewish Bible scholars to participate in the “work of Bible science,” namely, also to engage in it employing the philological-historical method, and to “restore the Bible to its people.” Perles cried out: “We have no right to close our eyes to all this. If we do not hasten to engage in the work of Bible science, the Gentile scholars will be right when they say: ‘We have triumphed over Israel, because the Jewish scholars engage in pointless matters and not in their Holy Scriptures.’” Jewish scholars, in his view, could do a far better job than the Gentile scholars because they possessed the tools that are essential for the purpose, most importantly, first-hand knowledge of the traditional commentary, and this would be holy work that would produce “a new creation in our people.” Perles suggested that the correct way to proceed would be the “middle road,” which is neither extreme orthodoxy nor extreme criticism. He also emphasized the importance of a familiarity with the cultures of the ancient Near East for an understanding of the Bible. He did not, however, clarify what his attitude was regarding the documentary hypothesis. In any event, after nearly a year in Jerusalem, Perles returned to Germany and the quarrel over who would fill the position was reopened.¹⁰²

However, even such a “moderate” brand of Bible criticism infuriated the orthodox. There is an anecdote about Rabbi Kook (who died in 1935), according to which, when he heard the Bible criticism was being taught at the Hebrew University, he went into his small room and sobbed bitterly. To a student who asked why he was weeping, the rabbi replied: Chaim Weizmann explicitly promised us they would not teach criticism

⁹⁹ M. Rosenfeld, *Oberrabbiner Hirsch Perez Chajes. Sein Leben und Werk*, Vienna, 1933, pp. 106–108.

¹⁰⁰ On him, see Appendix.

¹⁰¹ Felix Perles, *What does Bible Science have to do with us?*, Jerusalem, 1927 (Hebrew).

¹⁰² Benno Jacob’s candidacy was removed because of his advanced age.

at the University," and because of that explicit promise he had agreed to attend the celebration of the founding of the University (in April 1925). And, now, the promise had not been kept.¹⁰³ Rabbi Kook regarded Bible criticism as "a monster spread widely by the German scholars who are imbued with the hatred of Israel, and whose cruel spirit they drew from the devils of their race, and which is now showing us its true face. And these are the authors of the thoroughly despicable books of the audacious 'criticism of the Scriptures', which is in its entirety a mix of evil and folly, but nonetheless they have attracted some of the teachers of our young generation, to our misfortune and disgrace."¹⁰⁴

The first two teachers who taught Bible at the Hebrew University as a minor subject were Rabbi Moshe Zvi Segal (1876–1968) from 1926, and Naphtali Herz (Harry) Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), who was appointed as a professor of Hebrew, from 1933.¹⁰⁵ For different reasons, they both rejected the documentary hypothesis and tried to prove that the order of the Hagiographa was the original order. Tur-Sinai held that all the layers of the Pentateuch had a common ancient source. Since the various determinatives of the divinity, which originated in Mesopotamia, had different interpretations, at times the name "Elohim" was used in the Pentateuch, and at others the designator "Yahweh", but this did not attest to various perceptions of the divinity.¹⁰⁶ M.Z. Segal agreed with the claim that there was no evidence in the Pentateuch that Moses had written its narrative layer, but that it was an ancient tradition, which had been accepted by the Jews from the time of antiquity and had become an unchallenged article of faith:

This ancient tradition is a matter of faith, and a believing Jew who feels the holiness of the Torah and its divine nature in his soul, a Jew who loves and adores the Torah and lives according to it, and is even prepared to die for it, such a Jew has no need of historical and literary proof or evidence of the truth of this belief. For him, the Torah itself is the strongest proof of its truth. And on the contrary, a man who does not believe that God wrought miracles for Israel and that He revealed Himself to Moses and gave him a Torah and commandments, will not change his mind even if

¹⁰³ The testimony of Rabbi Isaac Hotner is cited in Moshe Yehiel Zuriel (ed.), *Treasures of Rabbi Arye Yitzhak HaCohen Kook, A Collection of his Articles*, I, the Shalabim Yeshivah, 1988, p. 60 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁴ Cited in ibid., p. 163.

¹⁰⁵ Tur-Sinai was born in Galicia, studied at the rabbinical seminary in Vienna and from 1910–1912 taught at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Jerusalem. He then returned to Berlin, where he taught at the high seminary. On the decipherment of the Lachish letters, see Chapter 15.

¹⁰⁶ See N.J. Tur-Sinai, *The Literal Meaning of the Bible: Interpretation of Ambiguities in the Holy Scriptures According to the Order of the Writings in the Tradition*, 1–6, Jerusalem, 1962 (Hebrew).

we could bring evidence to prove the truth of the Torah and its having been written by Moses. For denial, like faith, lies in the heart and cannot be much altered by reasoning that appeals to the mind.¹⁰⁷

Segal's faith-based (and "scientific") point of departure was that in the human world there are "forward leaps," so that it is impossible to deny the existence of forces outside of man's knowledge. Hence, it is also impossible to a priori deny faith in a divinely given Torah. The multiplicity of styles in the Pentateuch cannot be examined as if it were a creation by a normal human being, since it was written in the spirit of God. The various names of the divinity are a result of the author's (Moses') desire to vary his style. This leads to the conclusion that "the main foundation on which the documentary hypothesis in relation to the Torah's composition rested has been disproved, and with the collapse of that foundation, the entire hypothesis falls, and with it the entire structure of the developmental method of Bible study and the study of the history of the Jewish religion".¹⁰⁸

Segal did not cite only an article of faith as a priori evidence; he also offered historical arguments as support, for example, the claim that the ancient Jewish people lived for hundreds of years in the environment of a high culture and was a "cultural people," not a tribe of "primitive" desert nomads, and hence the Torah could have been composed by them. At the same time, he wrote that the pure faith in the Mosaic Code had become defiled, and that due to political and social circumstances, the Jewish people had turned to idolatry and to behavior that was contrary to Mosaic law.

Although not everyone supported his candidacy, the orthodox rabbi Professor Moshe David (Umberto) Cassuto (1883–1951), who taught at the Collegio Rabbinico in Florence, received the appointment in 1938 and arrived in Jerusalem at the end of 1939. One thing was in his favor: he was an avowed opponent of the documentary hypothesis (he stated his position in his Italian book, *La Questione della Genesi*, Florence 1934). On November 15, 1939, Cassuto delivered the opening lecture of the Bible Department, entitled "Our Role in Bible Study," and his approach was summed up in a collection of articles in Hebrew, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem, 1942).

Like Chajes and Perles, Cassuto also argued that it was the Jews who ought to take Bible study upon themselves in order to prove its unity.

¹⁰⁷ M.Z. Segal, *Introduction to the Bible*, Book 1, Jerusalem, 1967, p. 129 (Hebrew).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 147.

Cassuto represented a “midway position” that was opposed to the Wellhausen school but held that along with the traditional commentary, the Bible should also be studied in the spirit of modern criticism, and that the study of cultures of the ancient Near East should be included in the research. Cassuto, like Segal, claimed that “the changes in style [in the books of the Bible] depend on changes in content, not changes in the sources.” Namely, the biblical author deliberately varied the names of the divinity, each name having its own significance. Yahweh is the name of the divinity in its national meaning, Elohim is the name in its universal meaning. The Pentateuch is a unified, harmonious creation, not an act of assembling various sources. The “layers” (the “documents”) are ancient “traditions,” not “sources.” In any event, even in Cassuto’s view, the Bible was constructed from various sources: the stories of the Pentateuch are based on historical facts and traditions that were widely accepted by the people at the time of its writing. Their main purpose was to instill in the reader’s heart the belief that it is the will of the sole God that determines everything that happens in the world. The final compilation of the facts and traditions into a single unit was done later by an editor, based on a uniform world-view. In other words, Cassuto did not argue that the historical-literary part of the Pentateuch had a divine source.

According to Cassuto, the cosmological, legendary and historical layer of the Book of Genesis was based on traditions, which the editor thought to be appropriate, and which he refined into one harmonistic creation:

From all this treasure, the Torah selected those traditions that appeared suited to its aims, and then proceeded to purify and refine them, to arrange and integrate them, to recast their style and phrasing, and generally to give them a new aspect of its own design until they were welded into a unified whole. Hence, all the pillars of the theory of documents have fallen. My final conclusion is that the documentary hypothesis is null and void.¹⁰⁹

This argument, as we saw in Part two of the book, was the main response that had been offered against Delitzsch not long before.

Criticism of Cassuto’s method came from different quarters. Some accepted his claim that the biblical author used a diversified style, and hence his use of different names for the divinity does not indicate the existence of different sources. Cassuto’s book was regarded as an important contribution to “building a Jewish Bible science,” since his method offered an objective criterion for understanding the Bible and hence cut the ground out from under the documentary hypothesis and demon-

¹⁰⁹ M.D.U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*, trans. Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem, 1961, p. 102.

strated the “weakness of its structure.”¹¹⁰ On the other hand, Yehezkel Kaufmann (1889–1963, discussed in Chapter 15), who began teaching in the Department of Bible of the Hebrew University in 1949, argued that Cassuto’s approach seemed to be conservative, but he accepts the assumption that there are “sources” for the Pentateuch, which are not documents, but rather various traditions that served as raw material. However, Kaufmann believed that Cassuto depicted the Pentateuch as if it “had created itself,” and did not state who created it and when. As for the widespread comparison of the multifaceted nature of the Pentateuch and the varied creation of great writers – a variety that came from a single source – Kaufmann argued that insofar as the similarity between the heterogeneous material included in the Pentateuch and the multifacetedness of great writers (he cites Dante as an example) is concerned, “it is not logical that one writer would alter his style and the means he employs to such an extent when he is adapting two twin-sources that serve him only as raw material. It is more natural to assume that the chapters are drawn from different cohesive sources.” In contrast to Cassuto, Kaufmann was convinced that the author of the Pentateuch used materials that had already been adapted into a literary form, not only as “traditions.” Once again, the determining factor is the “creating personality.”¹¹¹ The Jewish American scholar, Harold Louis (Hayyim Arye) Ginsberg (1903–1990)¹¹² was more critical. He pointed out that while Cassuto rejected the idea that there were numerous documents, he did accept the idea that a great many sources existed (which were collected and edited by one genius writer). According to this view, then, Cassuto is not “the savior of orthodoxy.” Although Ginsberg did not accept what he regarded as the excessive analysis of the text by higher criticism, he also rejected the unifying solution in the form of “traditions,” a principle he viewed as “monism that is out of place.” The Israeli scholar and lecturer at the Hebrew University Moshe Goshen-Gottstein (1925–1991) believed that for Cassuto the study of Ugarit literature served as an “enormous springboard for arriving at an understanding of the Bible and destroying the structure of Wellhausen criticism,”¹¹³ and by that he probably meant that the discovery of the highly developed cultural-literary background of the Jewish people’s close environment and

¹¹⁰ Y.A. Zeidman, “On Cassuto’s Path in Bible Science,” *Molad: A Political and Literary Journal*, 3 (15), June 1949, pp. 189–192 (Hebrew).

¹¹¹ Yehezkel Kaufmann, “Biblical Matters,” *Moznayim*, 20 (1–6), April–September 1945, pp. 34–39.

¹¹² Among his books, *The Legend of King Keret* (1946), New Haven, Conn., *Kitve Ugarit*, Jerusalem, 1936 (Hebrew).

¹¹³ Y.M. Goshen-Gottstein, “Sixty Years of Teaching,” p. 43.

the view that biblical literature is a continuation of the earlier Canaanite literature served as evidence for Cassuto that there is no reason to assign a later date to the writing of the Pentateuch (but, of course, such an argument accepts the idea that it was a human creation, written under the influence of Canaanite literature).¹¹⁴

Cassuto's commentary on the books of Genesis and Exodus was published in 1944 and 1951, but his great influence on the public at large was the result of the commentary on the Bible by the rabbi and commentator, a native of Italy, Elia Samuele Artom (1887–1965), which Cassuto edited. It is the most popular Bible commentary in Hebrew (from 1953 to 1999, it was printed in 25 editions) and was used by generations of school pupils. Cassuto's view is repeated in the introduction in a more conservative vein, and states that all those who proposed various hypotheses as to the sources that made up the Pentateuch and the way in which they were integrated and arranged by later editors were unable to offer a reasonable suggestion as to how this was done: "Each of these hypotheses came up against contradictions and difficulties that were greater than the contradictions and difficulties which, in the scholars' view, prove that the Torah was not a unified composition and that Moses was not its author ... the hypotheses of the scholars and critics have more contradictions in them than those that arise from acceptance of the tradition." At the same time, however, the introduction to Genesis states that there is "an external similarity between the stories and laws of the Torah and the legends and laws of other peoples in the ancient East. The words of the Torah were not created in a vacuum, but were affected by beliefs, views, laws and customs that existed in the environment in which the Jewish people lived at the time the Torah was handed down. The intent of the Torah is to confirm, correct or rescind the existing laws and views, or to add to them, according to the spirit of each." These words can lead to the conclusion that when Moses wrote the Torah he was well-versed in the views and laws that were customary in the ancient East, and passed laws that were a reaction to them. As for the history of the Pentateuch, the introduction states that: "We should note that various discoveries in recent decades have proven there is no basis for the various views that the narrative in the Torah is allegedly not consistent with historical truth."

We need only read the brief text of the introduction to discern the internal tension it implies between the two worlds – that of tradition and that of the world-view that regards the Pentateuch as a human creation.

¹¹⁴ See: M.D.U. Cassuto, *Studies in Biblical and Canaanite Literature*, Jerusalem, 1972 (Hebrew).

In 1949, two new teachers of Bible were appointed by the Hebrew University: the rabbi Dr. Isaac Leo (Arye) Seligmann (1906–1982), a graduate of the Amsterdam rabbinical seminary and the University of Leiden, who immigrated to Israel in 1950, and Dr. Yehezkel Kaufmann, a native of Ukraine, who taught in Bern and immigrated to Palestine in 1927. Thus in 1950 there were three teachers of Bible at the University: Cassuto, Kaufmann and Seligmann, each of whom represented a different approach to Bible criticism. Kaufmann, whose monumental work, in eight parts and four volumes, entitled *The History of the Jewish Religion from Antiquity until the End of the Second Temple Period* came out from 1937–1948,¹¹⁵ was the first attempt to propose a comprehensive view of the formation of the Bible and its spiritual world, was not opposed in principle to the documentary hypothesis, but did try to alter it from within.¹¹⁶ The common denominator between Kaufmann and Wellhausen was their view of the immanent development of Jewish faith. While Wellhausen spoke of development (and advancement) in stages, Kaufmann believed that monotheistic faith was an ancient phenomenon that emerged ex nihilo, as a revolutionary, primal event, the product of the Jewish people's genius, without any stages of development or outside influence. He was prepared, however, to agree that the high cultural level of the peoples of the ancient East could have served as the background to a great forward leap in the consciousness of the Jewish people. Kaufmann accepted the principle underlying the documentary hypothesis, namely, the division into sources, although he was opposed to the division of the Pentateuch into literary units. His major criticism of Wellhausen's paradigm was the dating of the Priestly code prior to the Deuteronomistic code, namely he did not agree with Wellhausen that the P source came later than the D source or that it was written after the destruction of the First Temple, or that the prophecy preceded the Pentateuch. In his view, the prophets did not create a new religion but only added the universal moral dimension to the existing Israelite religion. The Torah and the prophecy are two forms of Jewish monotheism, which had a single source but developed independently. According to Kaufmann, then, the entire Bible was written in the spirit of monotheistic faith, which also created a special world picture and a

¹¹⁵ For an abridged version in English, see: *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. and abridged by M. Greenberg, Chicago, 1960.

¹¹⁶ In the view of the radical right-wing thinker Dr. Israel Eldad (Scheib, 1910–1996), Kaufmann was waging a great crusade to save the Bible “from the hands of the malicious Bible criticism.” See: I. Eldad, “The Morals of the Conquerors of Canaan” (1966), in idem, *Hegyonot Yehudah*, Tel Aviv, 1981, p. 12 (Hebrew).

singular historical concept that left its imprint on the historical narrative of the Bible. It is important to note that Kaufmann did not accept the principle of revelation and regarded the theophany at Mt. Sinai as a “legend” and a “tradition,” rather than an historical event.¹¹⁷ (See more on him in Chapter 15).

In a critique published by the talmudic scholar Ephraim Elimelech Urbach (1912–1991) in 1938 on the first volume of *The History of the Jewish Faith* in MGWJ, he stated that the importance of the book lies in the fact that Kaufmann totally rejected the theory of the evolution of Jewish faith and argued that Jewish monotheism did not emerge from a struggle against polytheism, but was a prerequisite for this struggle. But, at the same time Urbach noted that Kaufmann had ignored the phenomenon of revelation, and had used in its stead Hegelian terms: *Volkskultur*, *Volksschöpfung* and the creative force that creates the nation (*schöpferische Kraft der Nation*), which cannot explain the emergence of monotheism in the Sinai desert.¹¹⁸ This critique, and others like it, pointed out that Kaufmann had in effect replaced a transcendental view with a meta-historical view; namely, he had replaced revelation with a collective genius.

The second teacher of Bible, Seligmann, objected to the apologetic approach to the Bible and unreservedly supported free, scientific inquiry anchored in philological-historical research. He believed that the documentary hypothesis did in fact point to the complexity of the text, but did not succeed in convincingly reconstructing the process in which it was created. He also did not accept the dating for the various literary layers it proposed. Nonetheless, Seligmann concurred with the view that many parts of biblical historiography, in particular the Pentateuch, were later creations not grounded in the historical reality.¹¹⁹ One of Seligmann’s students, Alexander Rofé, testified to the paradoxical situation that gave rise to this approach in the Bible research of a religiously observant teacher: “Quite a few crises occurred in Selig-

¹¹⁷ See: Nahum M. Sarna, “From Wellhausen to Kaufmann,” pp. 64–75. Sarna writes that “Kaufmann accepts the fundamental of the documentary hypothesis ... and the analytical method of his opponents. But he arrives at diametrically opposite conclusions”; Peter Slymovics, “Y. Kaufmann’s Critique of J. Wellhausen: A Philosophical-Historical Perspective,” *Zion*, pp. 61–92. And also, Chaim Gvaryahu, “The Monotheistic Faith According to Yehezkel Kaufmann,” in Benjamin Uffenheimer and H. Graf Reventlow, *Creative Biblical Exegesis*, pp. 166–170. See also: Chapter 18.

¹¹⁸ E. E. Urbach, “Neue Wege der Bibelwissenschaft,” MGWJ, 82 (1), 1938, pp. 1–22.

¹¹⁹ See: I. L. Seligmann, “From Historical Reality to an Historiographical Perception in the Bible,” in idem, *Studies in Biblical Literature*, Avi Hurvitz, Sara Japhet, Emanuel Tov (eds.), Jerusalem, 1992, pp. 82–101 (Hebrew).

mann's classes in Jerusalem, particularly in the early years, because of the unavoidable 'short-circuit' between the scientific approach of the religious teacher and the pre-criticism naiveté of his students, most of whom were 'free-thinkers.'"¹²⁰ Although Seligmann regarded the revelation and the handing down of the Torah as supra-historical truth, which does not depend on the reliability of its historical description, and which cannot be proven by historical evidence, this view did not exempt him from criticism. Rofé wrote that "This position is not accepted by the greater part of the religious public in Israel, and hence in his scientific work, Seligmann was alienated from the public that he naturally belonged to. And furthermore: even in the non-religious public there is much opposition to the scientific study of the Bible."¹²⁰

We will relate to only two other studies that rejected the documentary hypothesis and its reconstruction of the history of the Bible and of the Jewish people in the biblical period. In his book *The Book of Genesis: Its Uniqueness and Antiquity*,¹²¹ Yehoshua M. Grintz (1911–1976), Professor of Bible at Tel Aviv University, attempted to prove the antiquity of the Book of Genesis and the authenticity of the historical traditions in it, as well as the antiquity of the laws in the Priestly Code. However, he too agreed that the book of Genesis was composed of several literary units. For example, he asserted that the stories of the Patriarchs were fragmentary, while the story of Joseph is "a complete novel and the height of perfection." The world depicted in the stories of the Patriarchs and its Mesopotamian background are totally different than the story of Joseph and its distinctly Egyptian background. The authenticity of these stories is attested to, in his view, by the fact that they contain contemporary names and terms that could only have been known to someone who lived at the time. This shows that the author of Genesis used ancient traditions, some of which were brought from Mesopotamia by Abraham and were passed down through the generations.¹²² As evidence, Grintz quotes several lines from the midrash *Exodus Rabbah* as the epigram of his book: "Thus said Moses to the Almighty, I took the Book of Genesis and read in it and saw the deeds of the generation of the flood ..." (5:22) and "shows that the Israelites in Egypt had diverse scrolls which they enjoyed reading" (*Ibid.*, 5:18).

¹²⁰ See: Alexander Rofé, "Isaac Leo Seligmann – Teacher and Scholar," in Alexander Rofé and Yair Zakovitch (eds.) *I. L. Seligmann's Volume. Essays on the Biblical and the Ancient World*, vol. 3, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 1–9 (Hebrew).

¹²¹ Y. M. Grintz, *The Book of Genesis: Its Uniqueness and Antiquity*, Jerusalem, 1983 (Hebrew).

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. 46–48.

Thus, in this case too, the view identified with Delitzsch, that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were written under the influence of the Mesopotamian heritage, becomes the major weapon Grintz uses in combating Wellhausen and the documentary hypothesis, in order to prove the antiquity and authenticity of Genesis. He also perceives antiquity and authenticity as values that are worth defending. He also agrees with the claim that Genesis attests to cultural and religious development: customs that were prevalent during the time of the Patriarchs (Genesis) contradict others that appear in the remaining four books of the Pentateuch.¹²³

In 1953 Grintz translated William Foxwell Albright's book, *From Stone Age to Christianity* into Hebrew,¹²⁴ in part because he believed that Albright had taken a position in opposition to the Wellhausen school and did not accept its view that Jewish faith had developed in stages or that the stories of the Patriarchs were written during the monarchic period. In his introduction to the book, Grintz wrote that "The secret of the success of Wellhausenism unquestionably lies in its methodological nature. But this method is not accepted by our generation unless it meets a need of our generation." Archaeology, Grintz stated, demonstrates that there is no basis for Wellhausen's historical schema. We will write about Albright's enormous influence on biblical archaeology in a later chapter, and will only comment here that he rejected the evolutionary approach of Wellhausen's school, and its view that the stories of the Patriarchs were written in the time of the Divided Kingdom (9th and 8th centuries B.C.). He did, however, accept the distinction between the E source, the J source and the P source of Genesis and Numbers, although he argued that the first two documents are very similar in content and probably reflect different forms of an ancient national epos. In his opinion, the P source is different in nature and dates to a time before the Destruction, prior to the 6th c. B.C. The D source was written by the Deuteronomist group, which is also responsible for having collected and copied sources E and J, and it is based on documents, some of which are from a "northern" (Kingdom of Israel) source. The four sources [documents] were collected and edited together at the beginning of the sixth century.

The second book, a work in Hebrew, *Ever and Arav* (New York, 1946) was written by the Orientalist Abraham Shalom Yahudah (1877–

¹²³ Ibid., p. 51.

¹²⁴ W.F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore, 1940. The translation was made from the 1946 edition, and was published in 1953. On Albright, see Chapter 15.

1951), a native Jerusalemite, who was a professor in Berlin (1904–1914) and at the School for Social Research in New York from 1942.¹²⁵ It was primarily an attack on Sigmund Freud's book *Der Mann Moses, und die monotheistische Religion* (Amsterdam, 1939), but earlier Yahuda had severely criticized “the deceits of Bible criticism.” In his view, this criticism had become a scientific convention, “that all the spirits of the world are unable to undermine,” and which had turned the Bible into a “free-for-all” field. All those who doubt its [the criticism's] truth are to be commended.” Yahuda also tried to prove the authenticity and antiquity of the historical tradition in the Book of Genesis by arguing that words and terms from Egyptian culture are embedded in it, which attests to the fact that it was written in an Egyptian environment, close in time to the events it describes.

In his book in English, Yahuda wrote about:

...the mania of seeing everywhere a wrong text, and that there was a sane and sound method in biblical research. Unfortunately, this method has since deteriorated through more radical views adopted by the modern school of Higher Criticism. Especially under Wellhausen and his followers, it became a destructive method.¹²⁶

It is not surprising that the defenders of the tradition regarded Yahuda as a scholar who had overturned Delitzsch's method by proving that the Pentateuch is linked to Egyptian, not to Babylonian culture, and who had irrefutably demonstrated the antiquity of the Pentateuch.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Other books of his: *The Language of the Pentateuch*, London, 1933 (first published in German: *Die Sprache des Pentateuch in ihren Beziehungen zum ägyptischen, mit einer hieroglyphischen Beilage*, Berlin, 1929); *The Accuracy of the Bible*, London, 1934.

¹²⁶ A. S. Yahuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible*, London, 1934, pp. xxi.

¹²⁷ See the critique by Abraham Shmuel Hirschberg, “Language of the Pentateuch,” *Hatekufah*, 26–27, Berlin – Tel Aviv, 1930, pp. 688–897. Hirschberg (1858–1943) was a textile industrialist in Bialystok (Poland), a Zionist and scholar, who wrote two travel books on Eretz Israel and another on the history of textile among the Jews.

Chapter 13

“Extra-academic” Bible Study and Bible Criticism

Wellhausen in Hebrew

The struggle over Bible research was not conducted only within the halls of academia.¹²⁸ Higher criticism also engaged the interest of an educated public, and for many extra-academic Bible scholars, it was an enemy against which the Bible had to be defended. Most of those who wrote that the documentary hypothesis was a theory that was merely “castles in the air,” or as Bialik put it, “wanton criticism,” were scholars who were active outside an academic setting, and this was true in particular of those who accepted Bible criticism and the paradigm it proposed, and as a result suggested various reconstructions of ancient Jewish history.

In general, the then educated public had only a secondhand knowledge of higher criticism, sometimes through what its critics had to say about it. In 1925, the first attempt was made to rectify the situation when the Dvir-Mikra Publishing House for Books on Bible Research (Berlin-Tel Aviv), which had published Soloweitschik and Rubascheff’s book on the history of Bible criticism and Soloweitschik’s book *Treasures of the Bible: A Collection of Pictures for the Holy Scriptures and their Antiquities*,¹²⁹ announced it was preparing a translation of Wellhausen’s book, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* for publication. The announcement read:

The name of the author is quite well known to all those engaged or interested in the study of the Holy Scriptures and ancient Jewish history. He has many advocates and many detractors; however, very few Hebrew readers have read his writings. This time, his major book is being made available in Hebrew, in its entirety, and anyone desiring to learn about

¹²⁸ The first volume of Yehezkel Kaufmann’s book *The Religion of Israel* was published in 1937 while he was a teacher at the Re’ali school in Haifa.

¹²⁹ See Chapter 3.

the view of the author, who built a master structure for research on the Bible and mapped out new paths for it, which until today are followed by Bible scholars on the basis of his theory, should peruse it carefully. The author's scientific theory is brilliant, written in a lofty literary style, and with the publication of this book, one of the exemplary works in scholarly literature in general is taking its place in the Hebrew treasury of the spirit.

This translation was never published. Finally, a translation came out as the initiative of one individual, Israel Yevarechyahu-Bogoslavski (1876–1951), a lexicographer, author and translator (in 1920, his translation of C.H. Cornill's book *Der israelitische Prophethismus* came out in Kiev, and later in Tel Aviv in 1930).¹³⁰ Yevarechyahu, who earned his living as an employee of the Tel Aviv Worker's Council, undertook to complete the project on his own. According to his own testimony, he completed the translation of the *Prolegomena* in 1918, in Kiev, and further improved on it in 1928, but found a publisher only in 1938. In the introduction to his translation, Yevarechyahu harshly criticized the first volume of Yehezkel Kaufmann's book, which was published in 1937.¹³¹ he pointed out that many of those who reacted negatively to Wellhausen's views had never read his book. However, he mainly wondered how the question of whether the Priestly Code preceded the Mosaic Code, or vice-versa, could be of any importance if one acknowledged the fact that "there is no divinely given Torah, but rather a creation of the people." In his opinion, for the non-believing Jew, the issue of the order of the Pentateuch's sources and the time of their composition is not a theological question, but an historical one. The main point is that the various alternative paradigms for the composition of the Pentateuch all agree that the Torah was not divinely given but was written by Moses.¹³² Professor Tur-Sinai, who added an introduction of his own to the translation "perhaps as a counter-balance," disagreed with the Wellhausen school because it has no "true affinity to the Hebrew source," and hence the Hebrew reader should not accept its theory.¹³³ In Tur-Sinai's view, Wellhausen's great error was that he failed to understand that the different books of the

¹³⁰ It is really quite ironic that Bialik wrote to Yevarechyahu on February 4, 1930: "This is a fine book to write for young readers. Certainly they will find it of benefit and perhaps also it will serve as a barrier against wanton criticism." C.N. Bialik, *Igrot*, vol. 5, Tel Aviv, 1938, p. 27.

¹³¹ Yevarechyahu wrote that Kaufmann often attacks Wellhausen's views, but in the final analysis agrees with some of his ideas, and some others he is unable to contradict.

¹³² Yevarechyahu, *ibid.*, p. XX.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. XI–XX.

Pentateuch, in which stories are told “that here and there” contradict one another, are not different documents, but rather “literary adaptations of a great historical story, that of Moses and his Torah. The contradictions in the laws are contradictions in the literary tradition about Moses, but definitely not contradictions in the laws that existed during various periods in the life of the people and its history.”

There is scarcely a general book on the Bible that does not, directly or indirectly, take a position regarding the documentary hypothesis. We will review several of these books that were available to the educated reader.

Abraham Kahana (1874–1946) was a prolific autodidactic author and publisher, who, among other endeavors, translated and edited the Apocrypha in the 1930s.¹³⁴ Born in a small town near Zhitomir (Ukraine), he immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1923 and wrote many articles about Bible criticism. He also wrote and edited an annotated commentary on the Bible, the first volumes of which came out in Zhitomir in 1903, and were later completed in Tel Aviv in 1930.¹³⁵ In an article entitled “On the Stories in the Book of Genesis,” published in the literary anthology *Achiasaf* (Warsaw) in 1904/5,¹³⁶ Kahana wrote that the stories told in the Book of Genesis are legends, since no person existed at the time of the Creation who could testify to it.

[However], the power of the story lies in the fact that its author never doubted its veracity. Moreover, the methodical composition of the Book of Genesis, which makes an effort to explain the course of the events, as if each story was linked to the one before and after it, is artificial. This composition is nothing other than a result of redaction, whose main purpose was to polish the contents wherever this was required and would benefit the absolute, solid unity ... However, in principle, each story has its own special value, and is a legend in itself which is almost unconnected to the other stories.

In Kahana’s opinion, the reader of Genesis is like a man who looks upon “the poesy of his childhood and that of the old world in which he grew up.”

In the booklet, *Kitvei kodshenu. Hashkafah kelalit al motza’o utekhunato shel haTanakh* (The Holy Scriptures. A View of the Ori-

¹³⁴ See: Yaron Z. Eliav, “Abraham Kahana (1874–1946): A Self-Trained Scholar and Publisher of Jewish Studies,” in Yehoshua Rosenberg (ed.), *Kiryat Sefer: Collected Essays*, Supplement to vol. 68, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 7–19 (Hebrew).

¹³⁵ The commentary was reprinted in the anthology, *The Literature of Jewish History*, I–II, Warsaw, 1922–1923 (Hebrew).

¹³⁶ *Achiasaf*, 1904, 11, pp. 181–191.

gin and Composition of the Bible),¹³⁷ published in 1912 by the La'am publishing house of the Hapoel HaTzair party in Jaffa (which from 1910–1913, published about 90 booklets of popular scientific literature), Prof. Klausner, the editor of *Hashiloah*, offered the educated Hebrew reader a brief, somewhat unenthusiastic review of Bible criticism. His main objection to Bible criticism was that it is hard to believe that even a master editor could have united all of the sources and fragments into such a perfect creation. Hence, he concluded that:

Not all the innovations proposed by Graf and Wellhausen and their students should be accepted unreservedly. One can and should criticize the Bible critics in relation to the extremely minute divisions into which they divided the five books of the Pentateuch and several of the books of prophecy. We ought not to follow them blindly, in particular, we, the Hebrews, for whom the Holy Scriptures are a living, active body, not a dead body that does not feel the surgeon's scalpel.¹³⁸

However, Klausner did accept the view that the Torah had undergone various stages of development. In this pamphlet and in articles he published on the formation of the Jewish religion, he expressed no less heretic views. These views reflected an evolutionary approach to history, which denied a transcendental revelation and sought the source and background for the development of the Jewish genius in the natural milieu in which it was created, as well as a theory about the stages of the development of Jewish faith from henotheism to the prophetic universal monotheism, and the development of the Torah from the time of Moses to the time of Ezra.

A survey of the opposition to the predominant paradigm of the documentary hypothesis, which strove to “put an end to the method of fragments that now dominates Bible study,” was published in *Hashiloach* by Dr. Joseph Reider (1884–1960).¹³⁹ According to him, at first this opposition was like “a voice calling out in the desert, swept away by the winds of time.” One of the reasons for its weakness, in his view, was that this opposition used the weapons of higher criticism: “literary arguments and historical conclusions plucked from the air and lacking any real basis, instead of employing other weapons, like version criticism and the like.” Reider called on the opponents of the documentary

¹³⁷ Printed in *Kitvei Joseph Klausner*, in the volume *New Studies and Ancient Sources*, Tel Aviv, 1957, pp. 180–220. In the introduction Klausner wrote that the article includes some obsolete views, but the major statements are still valid.

¹³⁸ Klausner, *Kitvei kodshenu* (1912), pp. 6–7.

¹³⁹ “Criticism of the Torah in the Modern Era,” *Hashiloach*, 2 (37), 1920, pp. 331–349. At the World Congress of Jewish Studies in 1952, he lectured on “Innovative Bible Criticism.”

hypothesis to turn to the writings of Harold Wiener¹⁴⁰ and of the Dutch scholar, Bernardus Dirk Eerdmans (1868–1948) on the Book of Genesis.¹⁴¹ The article is not only one of the many instances that attest to the profound acquaintance of an East European scholar with the most up-to-date Bible study; it also is evidence of his readiness to use Eerdmans’ claim that the Priestly Code was earlier, in order to contradict the documentary hypothesis. In the author’s view, there are polytheistic elements in the Priestly Code, hence it could not have been written after the Destruction. That meant that monotheism was not known to Moses or the Prophets! Reider informed the educated Hebrew reader of “new times” and “new melodies” – if until recently, there had been very few Gentile scholars, “individuals on the battlefield fighting a war in defense of the antiquity of the Pentateuch, now the warriors are legions and the war is a war that has gained momentum all along the front.”

Israel Joseph Syrkis (1860–1928), a merchant and author from Kishinev, is another example of an autodidactic Jew who contended with the documentary hypothesis. Syrkis lived in Odessa, but after the Bolshevik revolution he lost all of his property and returned, penniless, to his native city. In 1928, he published a pamphlet entitled *Sefer Moshe: Raiyot chotkhot al sefer Devarim shenikhtav bamidbar* (The Book of Moses: Irrefutable Evidence on Deuteronomy that was

¹⁴⁰ Harold Marcus Wiener (1875–1929), a Jewish barrister from London, who was murdered in Jerusalem in the “riots” of August 1929, conducted an all-out war against the documentary hypothesis, which he regarded as a “German science riddled with anti-Semitism,” in a series of books, including: *Studies in Biblical Law*, London, 1904; *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism, Origin of the Pentateuch*, London, 1910; *The Main Problem of Deuteronomy*, Oberlin, Ohio, 1920; *Posthumous Essays*, Oxford, 1932; *Pentateuchal Studies, Bibliotheca Sacra*, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1910–1912. In this book Wiener wrote that “We find that not a shadow of a case can be made against the authenticity of the Mosaic speeches.” In his *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, Wiener attributed the changes found in the Pentateuch, not “to the variety of sources, but to the influence that normally operates on every manuscript text that is assiduously copied ... The critics have effected their partition on the basis of texts which sometimes demonstratively vary and frequently are quite uncertain.” Nonetheless, Wiener did not adhere to the traditional view, nor was he a fundamentalist of biblical history. In his book, *The Religion of Moses* (Oberlin, Ohio, 1919), he wrote that “The people who went down into Egypt, therefore, were polytheists and the descendants of polytheists [but] unlike all other relationships between the human and the Divine with which we met in the Semitic religion outside Israel, this was conceived as a voluntary sworn contract, called revelation.” In Wiener’s opinion, Moses was influenced by the “monotheism” of Ahknaton’s revolution, which failed, but instead of the speculative theory of Egyptian monotheism, he chose to focus on conduct and practice, because he knew it would be difficult for the people to give up the polytheistic approach. On him, see: R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law*, pp. 81–83.

¹⁴¹ He was referring to the book *Altestamentliche Studien*, Gießen, 1908–1912.

Written in the Desert). His aim was to prove that Deuteronomy was written by Moses towards the end of his life, since the book is based on his life experience and connected to the earlier books he wrote and to the laws of the Pentateuch, which show that it was written before the Israelites were well established in Eretz Israel and was the law for the coming generations. Syrkis uses the reality of Communist Russia to refute the argument that the Israelites did not observe the commandments contained in the Mosaic Code, which proves they did not exist then. He asserted that in Russia too an ideology exists in theory, but in practice it is not observed. The strife between priests and prophets is an inseparable part of life and does not attest to an historical development of Jewish faith from one stage to another. His conclusion is that “The Jewish people knew it was Moses who had turned them into a people and that its existence would always depend on him.”

A faithful representative of this type of amateur scholar, who devoted his life to Bible study and to contending with higher criticism, is the teacher Ephraim Yerushalmi (Yerushalimski, 1862–1952). He read only Hebrew and his knowledge of Bible criticism was all second-hand. In Odessa, he published a pamphlet entitled *Hitpatchut emunat ha'achdut beYisrael* (The Development of the Faith in Unity in Israel, 1914), and that same year he published an article in *Hashiloach* on Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code. After his immigration to Palestine in 1921, although he lived in poverty, he managed to publish a number of books in Hebrew, including *Studies in Jewish History and Religion* (I–II, 1923, 1929); *The Priests and Prophets during the First Temple Period* (1931); *The Deeds of Hosea and his Generation*, I–II (Tel Aviv, 1935–1936); and *Studies in the Bible: Clarifications and Comments* (Tel Aviv, 1945).¹⁴² In these books, he described the biblical period as one marked by struggle between the priesthood and the

¹⁴² He also published *The Book of Job: A Scientific View*, Jerusalem, 1927 (Hebrew). We also mention the pamphlet by Yekutiel Haber, published in Bielsko (near Katowice), entitled *The Development of the Bible* (1935). It dealt with biblical chronology and in general concurred with the traditional view; however, he did accept the division of the Book of Isaiah and the opinion that some of the books of the Hagiographa were written during the Persian and Hellenist periods. We also should mention a book by Mendel Wohlman (1854–1933), who taught at the rabbinical seminary in Warsaw, and immigrated to Palestine in 1925, where he published articles and books on the Bible and the Talmud. In his book, *The Time of Isaiah and his Visions*, Tel Aviv, 1929 (Hebrew), he asserted that only chapters 6–8 were written by the prophet himself, and the rest by the school of prophecy, and that the entire book was edited three times during various periods.

prophets, each of which had different rituals, and claimed that the biblical story reflects these antitheses.¹⁴³

One of the scholars who accepted the documentary hypothesis was Dr. Elias (Eliahu) Auerbach, whom we have already mentioned. He immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1909, settled in Haifa, where he was the first Jewish doctor, served in the German army in World War I and returned to Haifa at the end of 1920.¹⁴⁴ In 1920, Auerbach published the book *Die Prophetie* in Berlin, and in 1953, the book *Moses* in Amsterdam, in which he raised the hypothesis that the most ancient source about Moses, the Yahwist source, was written by the priests at the temple of Shiloh about 250 years after the time of Moses, who he believed was an historical figure. But he also held that most of the testimonies about him were legends written and adapted over time (just as the exodus from Egypt was an historical event, around which legends were woven). According to Auerbach, the name Yahweh as an appellation for God was created by Moses as a *Kunst-Produkt* (an artistic work), as a symbol of the start of a new religious era, just as the name Israel is his creation to denote the covenant of the tribes (without any ethnic or religious significance). Auerbach also argued that a distinction should be drawn between the Kadesh tradition and the Sinai tradition, which merged only in the second editing of the Pentateuch.¹⁴⁵

In 1958 and 1963, Auerbach's two-volume work *Wüste und Gelobtes Land* (which was published in 1932 and 1936 in Berlin) came out in Tel Aviv in a Hebrew translation entitled *The Desert and the Promised Land: A History of Israel during the Biblical Period*. It was his intention in this book to give Jewish history something of a “secular” form, so “it would be understood as history in general is understood in our time.”¹⁴⁶ For our purposes, it is important to note

¹⁴³ In a critique of Soloweitschik and Rubascheff's book, printed in *Hachinukh*, 4–8, 1925, B.Z. Dinur (Dinaburg) wrote that the authors had failed to mention some of Wellhausen's important critics (including Eerdmans) as well as Yerushalmi, whose works, although “they lack the methodicalness of Western scholarship” contain “wonderful flashes of intuition.”

¹⁴⁴ Auerbach's articles were published in the highly esteemed quarterly, *Vetus Testamentum* (which first came out in Leiden in 1951). See his autobiography, *Pionier der Verwirklichung*, Stuttgart, 1969, in which he tells who influenced him and relates how he learned Akkadian on his own while serving in the German army on the Western front. His main sources of influence were: Eduard Meyer, *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme*, Halle, 1906, and Hugo Gressmann, *Mose und seine Zeit*, Göttingen, 1913.

¹⁴⁵ Auerbach indeed stated that he followed in the path of two German scholars, Eduard Meyer and Hugo Gressmann, whose books are cited in n. 17.

¹⁴⁶ Auerbach, *The Desert and the Promised Land*, p. 10.

that the book was published in Hebrew in 1958, at a time when Auerbach knew that the educated Israeli public still had serious misgivings about a critical reading of the Bible:

I knew very well that our public does not look very favorably upon the critical approach to the Bible. Many regard Bible criticism as a method invented by “goyim” and directed against the Jews. While it is true that the classic “Bible criticism” is partially based on prejudice and unproven assumptions, and these ought to be rejected, its critics are guilty of the very same error. The historical-critical method is the only practical method from a scientific standpoint, and it is not destructive, but rather is constructive. It seems to me it is really essential for us, the Jews, in particular, to adopt the historical-critical method, so that we may mold a true historical picture according to the Bible and in our own spirit. However, our achievements in this field are still quite modest.¹⁴⁷

In Auerbach's view, higher criticism had become comprehensible only to those who had a knowledge of esoterica, and does not offer what the Hebrew reader needs – the history of the biblical period. Since the Bible contains an independent historical literature that vividly describes the events of the period with marvelous narrative skill, based on a precise intimate knowledge of them,¹⁴⁸ the history of the biblical period can be reconstructed with the help of that literature. This, however, can only be done on condition that the time when the document was written and edited is clarified. According to Auerbach, the story of the settlement and conquest (of Canaan) is the most ancient document in the Bible, written close to 1200 B.C. The Yahwist layer was written by a priest, scion of a venerable priestly family, who had access to the various sources between 100 to 960 B.C., and the final, Deuteronomist editing was completed during the Babylonian Exile.¹⁴⁹ That would mean that about a quarter of the Bible was edited during and after the Exile. This “reflects the enormous importance attributed to this process of editing the Bible insofar as the religious-historical development of the Jewish people is concerned.” He worded this importance as follows:

During the Babylonian Exile and thereafter, a supposedly new Bible was written, on top of the old Bible; and this new Bible is a product of other world-views and also aspires to achieve other aims. To gain a knowledge of these views and aims is our most important task, one that can only be carried out through study of the overall editing ... The large-scale editing of the biblical books is the most important fact in the history of biblical literature. Only someone who fully grasps this fact can understand the spiritual

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 38–39.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 265.

development that led to the formation of Second Temple-period orthodoxy, and consequently to the shaping of Judaism as it exists today.¹⁵⁰

Research on this large-scale, and in fact, revolutionary editing should, in Auerbach's view, be based on determining its particular qualities, linguistic, stylistic and content-related. In relation to content, Auerbach accepts the characterization of the post-destruction Jewish religion as a “religion of the law.” The great innovation after the Exile was that it became a religion in which the rituals embraced all spheres of life.¹⁵¹

According to Auerbach, the prerequisite for reconstructing the history of the Jewish people in the biblical period is to clarify which historical memory is preserved by the legends, how they reflect the history, and what trends underlie the various historical stories. Thus, for example, he believed there were no grounds for doubting that Moses was an historical figure or to deny that he was the source of the Ten Commandments, to whose original wording additions were later added.¹⁵²

In Germany, the book was given glowing reviews.¹⁵³ Georg Herlitz (1885–1978), for example, commended the author for his ability to assemble the sources in order to present a complete historical picture and to reconstruct all the aspects of the development of the Jewish people, as well as for his opinion that there are sources on Jewish history in the Bible that precede the time of Moses.¹⁵⁴

It is not surprising that the socialist-Marxist leftwing camp in Israeli society was the provenance of a radical interpretation of Jewish history written by scholars, some of whom had an academic education in the field. In this circle, a book by the French scholar Adolphe Lods (1867–1948), *Israël: Des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1930) was translated into Hebrew and published in 1932 by Sifriat HaPoalim, the publishing house of the Israeli Marxist-Zionist Workers' Party (Mapam). Lods had accepted the documentary hypothesis, as well as the method of *Traditionsgeschichte* (history of traditions)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 267, 273.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁵³ In contrast, his book, *Die Prophetie*, which dealt with the Book of Jeremiah, received an unfavorable review in *Hatekufah*, 8 (26–27), July – September 1930, pp. 508–509.

¹⁵⁴ G. Herlitz, “Wüste und Gelobtes Land,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, 37 (78), 30. September 1932, p. 378. Max Wiener took exception to the way in which Auerbach attempted to prove the unity of the various books of the Bible, but he commended him for having ascribed the beginning of the written tradition to an earlier era than the Wellhausen school had. Moreover, he praised him for having described the history of the Jews against the background of their environment.

and the method of *Ergänzungstheorie* (supplement theory), and regarded the Pentateuch as a product of the lengthy development of oral and written sources collected and edited by compilers. Although Lods in general accepted the biblical story of the history of the Israelites and regarded Moses as the founder of a people on the basis of a national religion, he argued that it was impossible to attribute any part of the Pentateuch to the time of Moses, not even the Ten Commandments. In an introduction he wrote to the book, Moshe Sister (1891–1971) argued – in total opposition to the prevailing view in academic research – that “the scientific polemic during the last three decades has further reinforced the dominant opinion of the Wellhausen school that the relative dates, and to a certain extent, the dates of the J, E, D and P sources as well, remain in place, that each of the sources underwent evolution, and that only this approach to biblical literature provides a correct picture of Israelite society and its faith as it formed and developed.”

Several books on this subject were published by Sifriat HaPoalim. Among these were: *HaTanakh veterbuyot ha'olam he'atik* (The Bible and the Cultures of the Ancient World, 1962) by Menachem Nadel (1896–?); *Vehadevarim 'atikim* (Ancient Things, Tel Aviv, 1985) by Benjamin Halevy, and *Miba'ayot hasifrut hamikra'it* (Problems of Biblical Literature, 1951, expanded edition, 1995) by Sister.¹⁵⁵

Sister studied Semitic languages at Berlin University and at the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums there. He later taught at the University of Kiev and immigrated to Palestine in 1939, where he became a Bible teacher. In his view, biblical literature in its “traditional version” was mainly religious literature, the work of great writers, but behind the religious framework and the theocentric explanation of the events, a primarily secular-realistic literature existed. In other words, the Bible also provides a “human, historical” explanation for the events; namely, it gives them a secular-realistic explanation. The major value, then, of the Bible lies in the fact that it makes it possible to know the early stages of the people’s development and reflects the reality of life at the time in all its layers and aspects. The Marxist method, Sister wrote, enables the re-writing of the history of the “Holy Scriptures” and the discovery of the stages of development of the people, its beliefs and laws, and of course, the class struggle, which is the main cause of this development.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Sister also wrote: *Toledot hachevrah vehasifrut betekufat haMikra* (History of the Society and Literature of the Biblical Period, Tel Aviv, 1962).

¹⁵⁶ Sister, *Problems of Biblical Literature*, pp. 225–241.

Benjamin Halevy (1913–1980), graduate of a *gymnasium* in Lithuania, who immigrated to Palestine in 1934 and joined the Bet Zera kibbutz in the Jordan Valley, published articles in the *Beit mikra* journal and in others. His book, *Ancient Things: Selected Essays of Biblical Studies*, which was published posthumously in 1985, attempts to expose the mythological element in the Bible, in particular in Genesis. Like J. H. Schorr and others, he regarded the antediluvian patriarchs (Genesis 4:5) as mythic figures, whose mythic nature was glossed over by the Priestly author and the monotheistic censor, and like other scholars before him, he regarded the Sabbath as the day of the full moon, during which not all work was forbidden, but at first mainly agricultural work. As for the documentary hypothesis, Halevy wrote: “One need not be a disciple of the Wellhausen school to note the multifaceted nature of the works that comprise the book [Genesis]: theogonic and theological stories on the one hand, and folkloristic stories or a short novella (the story of Joseph) on the other; lists of nations and genealogies here, and vestiges of myths and fragments of poetry, there; and more and more ...”¹⁵⁷

In his book, Menachem Nadel, who worked in the Statistics Department of the General Labor Federation, discussed the cultures of the ancient world as a background for understanding the Bible and biblical history from an anthropological standpoint. He described Delitzsch’s view as too extreme, but as one that shows that borrowing from external sources enriches cultures and spares them the need “to begin from scratch.” He also stressed the theo-historical character of the biblical historical narrative and argued that no attempt at reconstructing Jewish history up to the monarchic period could produce results, since the historical picture offered by the Bible is not reliable.

To sum up this survey, we refer again to M. J. Berdyczewski’s (Bingorion) work, *Sinai und Garizim*, translated into Hebrew in 1962, which we mentioned in Chapter Two. Berdyczewski was in favor of ignoring the plenitude of schools and critical methods, and engaging in independent research: “To return to the Bible as it is, as if it were virgin soil that had never been tilled by the plow of research.” He argued that the Pentateuch was edited by two different traditions – Ephraimic and Judaic – and embedded in it were several “covenants” between Israel and its God (*Stationen des Gesetzes*, Stations of Law). From this point of departure, Berdyczewski suggested a separation between the two major covenants between God and the Jewish people: one after

¹⁵⁷ Halevy, “The Aramaeans are Coming,” *Ancient Things*, p. 165.

the exodus from Egypt at Mt. Sinai, and the other in the land of Moab before Moses' death. And another separation between these two and a third covenant, entered into by Joshua between Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal (Joshua 8:30–35). In his view, this was the most ancient covenant while the other two had been joined to it. However, it was not because of this theory that Berdyczewski exerted such great influence on national Jewish thought; rather it was his radical anthropocentric and historicistic approach.

The History of Bible Criticism, Introductions, Lexicons and Encyclopedias

Introductions, lexicons and encyclopedias were other forums in which Bible criticism was contended with and where the educated reader could find information about the criticism and its critics. However, a comprehensive work on the history of Bible criticism does not exist in Hebrew. About twenty-five years after the publication of Soloweitschik and Rubascheff's book, a brief survey by Solomon Goldman (1893–1953) of the various streams in Bible criticism was published in 1951 (by the Jewish Agency's Department of Children's and Youth's Immigration, Jerusalem). This review was originally part of Goldman's book in English, *The Book of Books, An Introduction* (New York-London, 1948). In it, he surveyed the various schools of Bible criticism and rejected the documentary hypothesis:

One can probably only conclude from the aforesaid about Wellhausen's reconstruction of Jewish history that it has outlived its usefulness no less than many of the views adhered to by earlier scholars, and that the documentary hypothesis is not the final word on the issue of the Torah composition any more than the assumptions of medieval scholars were. Unquestionably in the last two centuries, Bible criticism has inestimably enriched our knowledge of the antiquity of the Jews in general and our understanding of the Bible in particular. However, to our regret, the scholars have at times tried to grasp too much, and in doing so have lost much.¹⁵⁸

As late as 1994, Alexander Rofé's book *Introduction to the Composition of the Pentateuch* appeared, and in 1997, Yair Hoffman's concise book (1997) that surveyed the history of Bible criticism, the documentary hypothesis in particular. Hoffman wrote that the claim leveled against Wellhausen, that it was not logical that any work would

¹⁵⁸ Shlomo Goldman, *Currents in Bible Criticism*, p. 40 (Hebrew). See also Chapter 2.

be edited from several written sources, was proven wrong after the discovery of the Temple Scroll at Qumran. It proved conclusively that "the Wellhausean model is possible, since cited in it, next to one another or mixed together, are fragments from Deuteronomy, Exodus and Leviticus."¹⁵⁹

And yet, more than 120 years from the time that Jewish scholars, researchers and men of letters in Europe began viewing Bible criticism as an intellectual, scientific and even existential challenge, there is still no Hebrew book that describes its history against the broad background of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual history.

In 1932, two teachers at the Nordia Gymnasium in Tel Aviv wrote about Bible study. The first, Shmuel Shrira (1883–1944), a Yeshivah graduate, who studied at the Seminary for Jewish Studies in Petrograd and at the Freiburg and Strasbourg Universities, published articles in *Hashiloach*,¹⁶⁰ and the second, Shmuel Herr (1887–1950), wrote the first Hebrew introduction (*Einleitung*) to the Holy Scriptures intended for secondary school pupils, and an introduction to ancient Hebrew literature, published by the Nordia Gymnasium (1932). About thirteen years later, Shrira published a far more comprehensive popular book, entitled *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures* (Hebrew, Tel-Aviv, 1945), that was printed in several editions. In his preface, Shrira mentioned the marginal status of Bible study in the *cheder* and the *yeshivah*, and the ultra-orthodox opposition to the teaching of Bible: "Only in the last generation, since the establishment of the modern Hebrew school, has [the study of Bible] been restored to its former glory. In its curriculum, this school has assigned Bible the place it merits. Since then the Bible has also taken the place it deserves in our lives."¹⁶¹ But in his book, Shrira did not deal with the question of how the Bible came into being. He only wrote that while Simon Bernfeld had included some daring hypotheses in his introduction, he had refrained from discussing them to avoid creating the erroneous impression that the hypotheses were established and accepted theories: "This book of mine does not deal with research on the sources or their analysis. It has no interest in esoterica, which the scholars are weary of interpreting. It surveys the

¹⁵⁹ Yair Hoffman, *Aspects of Modern Biblical Criticism*; recently, Alexander Rofé's book has come out: *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible*, Jerusalem, 2006 (Hebrew). It is the most comprehensive and up-to-date introductory book on this subject in Hebrew.

¹⁶⁰ On him, see in Zalman Rubaschoff's (Shazar) introduction to Shrira's book *Introduction to the Holy Scriptures* (Hebrew). The quotations are from the third edition, 1947.

¹⁶¹ Shrira, ibid., p. 1.

books of the Bible from the time of their final editing, and in any case is excused from entering into this dangerous controversy, from which none of those who participated in it have ever emerged.”¹⁶²

As for the historical layer of the Bible, Shrira repeated the view that the authors of the historical books did not intend to write “history” in the accepted sense, or to distinguish between historical truth and popular legend, but rather intended to teach a moral lesson. He also added an appendix containing translations of the Hammurabi Code, “the Assyrian law” (based on the 1921 translation of the tablets discovered in ancient Assyria), the laws of the Hittites (based on Johannes Friedrich’s (1893–1972) translation of the tablets discovered at Boghazkoi by Hugo Winckler in 1906–1907), and of the Babylonian stories of the Flood and the Creation.

Another “introduction” book was written by Deborah Avidov (Gerschmann) in collaboration with her husband, Mattityahu. In the book, *Paths in Bible Criticism* (Tel Aviv, 1940, Hebrew), the authors wrote that the documentary hypothesis had become dogma for the “Jews of our generation,” despite the fact that “none of the readers of the Bible had noticed the literary differences, until the new science came to open the eyes of the blind.” The educated public, they wrote, followed the new science “as if they had discovered a new land, new paths, and were filled with the spirit of inquiry and the zeal for more innovations, in the direction of dividing the biblical material according to stylistic sources.”¹⁶³ Hence, they argued, it was necessary to refute the documentary hypothesis. They repeated the argument that different literary styles do not necessarily indicate that there were different authors at different times,¹⁶⁴ claimed that the Pentateuch contained ancient traditions that the R editor could not have invented, and they unreservedly accepted the historical tradition in the Pentateuch.

In his review of the book, Cassuto praised the authors for having totally dismissed the “prevalent method of documents,” and went on to say that, “It shows its weaknesses, points out its errors, and plausibly questions many of its conclusions...The author should be commended for his courage in taking this daring stance against the prevailing view, which has been popular for so long, and until today has been regarded as one of the assets of science especially by the public

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶⁴ We should note here that the evidence they and others cited is not really relevant, since not only differences in literary style were found, but also in vocabulary, concepts and the like.

at large, which has not yet heard of the recent innovations in scientific research.” In Cassuto’s opinion, the most important innovations in the book were the arguments against the documentary hypothesis, “whose total refutation is unquestionably going to become the point of departure for scientific work on the Bible in the future.”¹⁶⁵

Another source from which the educated public could learn about the various paradigms proposed by the different schools of modern Bible research was the biblical lexicon and the biblical encyclopedia. These two scientific projects also included a broad survey of the history of Bible science. The *Lexicon Biblicum*, one of whose editor was Menachem Max Soloweitschik (Solieli), was published in 1965. In various entries, it described the documentary hypothesis and the criticism of it, but in summary, it expressed a “moderate” view. For example, in the entry on the Patriarchs, it wrote that the stories about them, which were passed down orally through the generations, took their final shape many generations after the time of the Patriarchs and were edited in a manner commensurate with the overall ideology of the whole of biblical literature, but preserved their “original, vital and faithful spirit.”¹⁶⁶ In the entry on the Book of Deuteronomy, the various hypotheses on its composition were also surveyed, and the concluding summary was: “No matter what our opinion is as to the time when this book was composed, we must pay special attention to the fact that in its time the Israelite religion had reached the stage of cogently formulating its principles, namely, it had crystallized its views.”¹⁶⁷

The lexicon was preceded by the *Encyclopedie Biblica: Thesaurus Rerum Biblicarum* (Jerusalem, 1950–1988). In their programmatic introduction, the editors stated that: “The method of the Biblical Encyclopedia is the historical method, which strives to reconstruct the past without any prejudice or preconceived idea, on the basis of perusing the sources and the documents.”¹⁶⁸ In the entry on the Patriarchs, for example, the hypothesis that they are mythological figures is cited, but the claim is made that some of the cores of the stories about them have an earlier source. In summing up the entry, the statement is made that although each story is a unit in itself, it is one link in the chain of a uniform creation. And the main point: “The great shortcoming in each of the mentioned methods is that they divert attention from the

¹⁶⁵ The review was printed in *Kiryat Sefer: Bibliographical Quarterly of the National and University Library in Jerusalem*, 19 January 1942, p. 7 (Hebrew).

¹⁶⁶ *Lexicon Biblicum*, vol. 1, p. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 216–219.

¹⁶⁸ *Encyclopedie Biblica*, p. 11.

main point, which is: the role of the Patriarchs in the formation of the religious concepts of the Israelites.”¹⁶⁹ Thus, for example, in the entry on Deuteronomy, the various hypotheses on the process of its composition are surveyed, but the summary statement is that the book as whole is ancient and was edited in the time of the Judges, and not in the monarchic period or after the Babylonian Exile.¹⁷⁰

In Dr. Sister’s review of the Encyclopedia, he wrote that it reflects the view of “the Israeli [scholarly] orthodoxy and its cohorts, who assume the airs of scientists ... This encyclopedia is not very different from the ornate encyclopedias issued by the Catholic Church... whenever it touches upon social and literary issues, all eyes are turned to our Father in the heavens, and instead of anthropology, instead of a precise and realistic knowledge of the development of the ancient Israelite society, what we get is theology.”¹⁷¹ According to Sister, the Biblical Encyclopedia’s ideological aim was to reject the connection between the development that took place in the Bible’s views and social history, and to present the Bible as a single unit.

Scientific Biblical Commentaries

In addition to Hartom’s commentary, the Hebrew reader had access to two others. The first, which became very popular, was the scientific commentary on the Holy Scriptures edited by Abraham Kahana (1874–1946), *Biblia Hebraica cum Commentariis Criticis Adjuvantibus Doctoribus* (Hebrew). The commentary on Genesis was published in Zhitomir in 1903, and those on Exodus and Numbers in Kiev in 1913 and 1914. The commentary combined traditional and scientific exegeses, accepted the principle of the division into sources, pointed out those literary units that were not interwoven, as well as contradictions and repetitions, and referred to the various stories in Genesis as ancient mythological legends.

The second book of commentary, which first appeared in 1928, was a popular commentary by the author and teacher, Shmuel Leib Gordon (1867–1933), a native of Lithuania, who immigrated to Palestine in 1898, returned to Warsaw and then back to Palestine in 1924.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 4–14.

¹⁷⁰ Vol. 2, 1954, pp. 608–619.

¹⁷¹ M. Sister, *Encyclopedia Miqrail* (Encyclopedia Biblica) p. 241. and idem, “The Biblical Encyclopedia,” *Orlogin: A Literary Journal*, 1–4, December 1950, pp. 254–260 (Hebrew).

This commentary, the first volume of which came out in Warsaw in 1913, was popular mainly in schools belonging to the labor movement. In his introduction to the commentary on Genesis, Gordon wrote: “The need for a new commentary on the Torah, the eternal book, which has accompanied our people on its long journey throughout the generations for thousands of years, has been evident for some time, and not only in the Hebrew school, but in every household in Israel as well. There is no universal book that is read and studied and endlessly perused like our ‘Book of Books’...” He defined his commentary as a “scientific-pedagogical” commentary, based on the traditional exegesis, and in his introduction he avoided any discussion of how and when the Pentateuch was composed.

Years passed before new commentaries appeared. One in a traditional spirit, entitled *Da’at mikra*, published by the Rav Kook Institution in Jerusalem, began to appear in 1970, written by various authors. In the introduction to the commentary on Genesis, the author, Yehuda Kiel, followed the tradition of the Sages and wrote that the book comprised a number of scrolls, each of which had several chapters, and that each scroll was “connected to and rooted in the one before it.” Another 24-volume commentary in Hebrew, *The World of the Bible: The New Commentary to the Bible* (which was approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture) appeared from 1982–1999. It declares itself to be “a combination of scientific and traditional commentary,” but it avoids any discussion of the various paradigms proposed for the composition of the biblical text and merely states that the books of the Bible were written over a period of about a thousand years – “from the last quarter of the second millennium B. C. for the stories of the Torah and for some of the books of the first prophets until the middle of the Hellenistic period.” However, “despite the length of this period, the books of the Bible are also marked by a uniformity that leaves an identical stamp on them all.” The commentary draws upon extra-biblical testimonies that point to similarities between the Bible and the surrounding cultures, and in particular they draw upon external sources for help in understanding the text. They are based on the assumption – as one of the participants in the Babel-Bibel controversy early in the twentieth century put it – that the Bible adapted the elements borrowed from the Mesopotamian culture and endowed them with a new and original content in the spirit of the monotheistic faith.

The Main Criticisms of Bible Criticism

All of the above shows that until the 1950s, the documentary hypothesis was perceived as a dogma and “orthodoxy,” and its critics viewed themselves as defenders of the Bible against a heretic, destructive dogma. They tried in particular to defend the Pentateuch, not the historical books. From the fifties, the critics of higher criticism believed they had succeeded in undermining its foundations. However, in this period, the public discourse was mainly interested in the reliability of the historical picture depicted by the historical books of the Bible and less in the question of the Pentateuch’s composition.

The basic arguments for rejecting higher criticism, in particular the documentary hypothesis, which were not grounded in the traditional view of belief in the origin of the Mosaic Code and the Pentateuch, were:

1. The evolutionary view, which believes in the development and perfection of spiritual life in general, and of religious faith in particular, is not valid. A human group can already reach a spiritual height (monotheism) in its historical phase, by making a “quantum leap,” through the leadership of a unique personality or through a collective revolution, the fruit of its “national genius.” Hence, the documentary hypothesis is based on pseudo-science and pseudo-rationalism.
2. The fact that the research suggested numerous and diverse hypotheses and paradigms proves that it is impossible to relate to any one of them as “scientific truth,” certainly not as a “truth” that can counter the “eternal truth” of the Bible. This view, we will recall, was uttered in a novel published in 1863, written by the reform rabbi Salomon Formstecher.¹⁷² One of the characters says: “The conclusion, the truth of which one scholar proves conclusively today will be refuted tomorrow as a falsehood by another scholar with the same degree of certainty.”
3. It is impossible to apply techniques, values and theories belonging to the Western cultural world of the nineteenth century to the Bible. The American scholar Nahum M. Sarna (1923–2005), for example, wrote in this spirit: “Could 19th century Western techniques and literary and aesthetic concepts be justifiably applied to a culture many thousands of years old and emanating from an en-

¹⁷² Buchenstein und Cohnberg: *Ein Familiengemälde aus der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt am Main, 1863. See Chapter 2.

vironment which cherished its own, wholly different categories...? The resulting value judgments are, methodologically speaking, a scientific anachronism.”¹⁷³

4. A correct reading of the biblical text demonstrates its ideological and literary uniformity. The writing in different styles actually shows that the Pentateuch had a single author, who saw no need to conceal duplications and contradictions. Moreover, great writers have throughout their lives written works that varied in style and content.
5. There is no basis for the argument that the Priestly Code was written after the prophetic literature, nor are there any grounds for dating the composition of the Pentateuch to a later time after the Exilic period. The prophets were familiar with the Torah and there is no fundamental contradiction between Torah and Prophecy.
6. Christian Bible criticism is foreign to the Jewish hermeneutic tradition and ignores it; hence it is unable to understand the biblical text and to correctly interpret it, and has been guilty of crude mistakes, even of ignorance.

However, most of these arguments were refuted, and Jewish Bible study did not totally reject all the various paradigms proposed as to when and how the Pentateuch was composed, including the religious portion of it. On the contrary, the fact that the Bible underwent a process of composition is a quite generally accepted view in scholarship.¹⁷⁴ The controversy centered mainly on the question of how this process of composition was carried out, by whom and when. It seems that research in the last fifty years has preferred to deal with “literal” interpretation of the text, with an historical explanation of the events, the ideological background of the writing and editing, and an analysis of the structure of the books and the various literary units and their particular literary qualities. The educated public is not especially interested in the question of when and how the Pentateuch was written, but in the historical reliability of the testimony in it and the other books.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Nahum M. Sarna, “From Wellhausen to Kaufmann.”

¹⁷⁴ See: Edward L. Greenstein, “The State of Biblical Studies, or Biblical Studies in a State,” in idem, *Essays on Biblical Method and Translation*, Atlanta/Georgia, 1989, pp. 53–68.

¹⁷⁵ See the brief survey by Yair Hoffman given at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, in April 1999: “Inside and Outside Factors Influencing Current Trends in Israeli Biblical Research.” We are grateful to him for allowing us to read his lecture.

In 1928, the author and essayist Jacob Rabinowitz (1875–1948) tried to explain the meaning of the “free-thinking” public’s hostile reaction to the documentary hypothesis. In doing so, he regretfully noted that Wellhausen’s *Prolegomena* had still not been translated into Hebrew, and he pointed to this paradox by saying:

A Jew may deny the existence of God, the national destiny and the after-life, and declare this in public, but Heaven forbid if he should state publicly that he believes it is possible that the Torah was written in parts or that the Book of Ruth was a creation of the Second Temple period. Such notions have to be written in hieroglyphics.

In his view, a “free-thinking” Jew need not fear the Wellhausen method, since it is based on an evolutionary and immanent-original world view. In other words, it regards the evolution of Jewish faith as an internal-autonomous process, not as one produced under the influence of external forces. What reason, he asked, does the secular Jew have to fear a theory that holds that Jewish monotheism was not created out of nothing, but evolved gradually? In his opinion, the critics of the documentary hypothesis had not taken note of the profound differences between Wellhausen’s theory and that of Delitzsch. Delitzsch is the great nemesis of the national historical view, not Wellhausen. Although the latter wrote about the deterioration of Judaism after the Destruction, his approach is underpinned by his recognition of an internal development: “Wellhausen’s theory is the basis for our national recognition. Without an immanent development and an internal choice there is no nation and no future.” He believed that was the view “most suitable to our national feeling in our generation.” A modern secular Jew believes that the creative force of the Jewish people has not abated, and that Judaism can embark on a new road, one that originates in the unique internal forces of the people. In any event, even after the scientific analysis, the biblical text has remained an organic text. As for the Bible as history, one can find consistencies and inconsistencies between it and extra-biblical testimonies, so that each case has to be examined on its own merits.¹⁷⁶

In contrast to Rabinowitz, and about thirteen years after he wrote these words, Cassuto claimed (in a review of Gressmann’s book) that the documentary hypothesis was still the prevailing view about the composition of the Pentateuch held by the educated Israeli public.

¹⁷⁶ Jacob Rabinowitz, “Not a Theologian, On Wellhausen’s Theory,” *Hedim, A Bi-monthly Journal on Literature and Criticism*, 6 (2), July-August, 1928, pp. 181–232 (Hebrew). In a note, Rabinowitz wrote that “In recent years changes for the better have taken place in this regard.”

If so, then who is right? Did the educated Israeli public reject the documentary hypothesis or did it accept it?¹⁷⁷ It seems to us that the main development in the public’s conventional wisdom did not depend at all on this question. Research on the ways in which the biblical text was composed has generally remained within the purview of a circle of scholars or amateur Bible researchers, while the educated public, certainly the secular public, has taken and still takes an interest mainly in biblical history. As a result, attention has been focused not on the relationship between the Bible and the research on the composition of the biblical text, but rather on the relationship between the Bible as an historical document and the extra-biblical documents on the history that it relates.

Higher criticism of the Bible forced both religiously observant and secular Jews to read the Bible while making use of historical philology and extra-biblical sources, and to analyze new historiosophical, theological and literary arguments. The acceptance of higher criticism as well as its rejection was, then, part of the Bible revolution in the new Jewish society in Eretz Israel. Bible criticism made an important contribution to the “secular” reading of the Bible, and the impression made by the criticism of higher criticism can be misleading.

If that is the case, we have to return to Rabinowitz’s query: What was so threatening in the documentary hypothesis also to those who do not believe the Pentateuch was written under divine inspiration by one man? What is so threatening in the view that every system of belief ought to be examined in the context of its time and development?

In our view, there were at least three reasons.

1. A large part of the secular public would like to believe that what is defined as ethical monotheism – expressed in both the Torah and the prophecy – appeared ex nihilo and was the sole province of the Jewish people from the dawn of its history, separating it from its pagan surroundings. This could perhaps also reinforce the view

¹⁷⁷ In an article entitled “In the Claws of the Mythic Past,” published in March 1993, the journalist Boaz Evron wrote that the non-Jewish Bible research is not translated into Hebrew and is not known to the educated public. In Hebrew one can only find attempts to refute Bible research; the educational system in Israel ignores modern Bible research, and hence the Israeli public’s picture of the ancient past is based on the traditional view. This brief article is full of factual errors (for instance, he writes that Wellhausen’s book was not published in Hebrew) and ignores many articles and books written in the spirit of modern research. Evron himself suggested a counter-history of the biblical era, which we will discuss later. See: Boaz Evron, “In the Claws of the Mythic Past,” *Politics/An Israeli Journal: Society, Policy, Culture*, 48, March 1993, pp. 6–7 (Hebrew).

that the emergence of the new Jewish culture was a revolutionary phenomenon, unique and separate from its environment. The religion and culture of the Jews developed as a rejection of the environment.¹⁷⁸

2. A large part of the secular (and the religious) public internalized the view that ascribed crucial importance to the originality, antiquity and unity of the Pentateuch. These qualities validated the reliability of the historical picture, while the division of the Pentateuch into literary sources and units was perceived as undermining its authenticity and consequently, its reliability, originality and uniqueness.
3. Higher criticism was perceived as “a science of the Gentiles,” who have appropriated the Bible and treated it as if it were their own.

The mathematician and theologian John Rickards Mozley (1840–1931) wrote that:

It is the book of Deuteronomy which stands in the way of this conclusion – which insists that the miracles of the Exodus and of Mount Sinai are literal truth, designed by God himself for the instruction of the Israelites first, of all mankind afterwards. If, however, the book of Deuteronomy was written six centuries after the Exodus, can the argument contained in it stand? Evidently not; the testimony in it, strong if Moses be supposed to be the true author of it, becomes weak when we see that it was written after his date.¹⁷⁹

In other words, the question of the antiquity and authenticity of the Book of Deuteronomy is critical insofar as ancient Jewish history and faith are concerned. Since the tradition is the only witness to its veracity, the need to defend it in “rational” scientific research also became essential, urgent and unequivocal. Acceptance of the hypothesis that the Pentateuch was written by different authors at different times, far from the period it described, casts doubt on the historical reliability of the later description as well on the master narrative of ancient Jewish history. This doubt was perceived as a threat to all those who regarded the Bible as a reliable historical document on ancient Jewish history.¹⁸⁰ The antiquity, authenticity and historicity of the Bible

¹⁷⁸ See: Ernest G. Wright, *The Old Testament against its Environment*, London, 1950.

¹⁷⁹ John Rickards Mozley, *The Divine Aspect of History*, I, Cambridge, 1916, p. 233.

¹⁸⁰ One example of such a reaction is the article by Dr. Gaby Avital, “Judaism Beyond the Mountains of Darkness,” printed in *Ma’ariv* on September 2, 2003. The author wrote (in a demagogic vein) that Bible lessons in schools and in Bible departments of universities bow down “to the calf of Bible criticism, even before reading the

and of the ancient Jewish people became an article of faith, which supplanted belief in a divinely given Torah and in Moses as the sole author of the Pentateuch.

It seems, therefore, that many were opposed to the documentary hypothesis because they believed the claim that there were four separate sources, written by four authors (representing four different schools in biblical Judaism) would open the door to the argument that there had been some "manipulation," namely, that it was a creation *directed* from the outset by an ideology (and interests). In contrast, the tradition theory presented the many diverse sources of the Pentateuch as a "popular" creation, and hence, as one that was "authentic" and "reliable."

In any event, as we shall see, the secular educated Jew did not necessarily need to accept any of the methods proposed by higher criticism in order to read the Bible not as a theological book or as holy scripture, but as a human creation, as history and literature. He did not necessarily need it in order to distinguish between the Pentateuch and the prophecy, and hence to accept the social and moral message of the prophets without accepting the obligation to observe the commandments, and also to accept moral principles from the Pentateuch, without ascribing any importance to its transcendental source. He did not need higher criticism in order to reject the theo-historical principle of reward and punishment, namely that the Jews' inhabitation of their land depended on the observance of Torah and commandments. He certainly did not need it in order to actualize the biblical restorative messianic vision. He accepted the view that Jewish history has to be understood against the cultural background of the environment, but he rejected the possibility that the Jewish people was not unique, different and totally separate from its neighbors in its religion and culture. However, higher criticism did help him cast off the deeply rooted inhibition that prevented the critical reading of the Bible, and offered him new ways of understanding it. At the same time, since higher criticism regards the Pentateuch as a human creation, the question of the reliability of the historical story in the Pentateuch (and certainly in the other books) became more acute for him.

We can sum up, then, by saying that in its attitude towards the documentary hypothesis, "free-thinking" Judaism exposed its imminent dilemma: the tension between its evolutionary and historicistic world view on the one hand, and its organicistic world view, which

source. Without batting an eyelash, they are prepared to accept garbled German interpretation for the origin of man and the Torah."

attempts to point to the unified continuity of Jewish culture, on the other. The view that Jewish faith was an outcome of evolution and had to be understood in the context of the circumstances of its time was not generally perceived as a legitimate historical view, but as an opening for relativism and an historical and cultural trauma.

Chapter 14

Orthodox Bible Criticism in Eretz Israel

“A Barreful of Abomination”

Modern Jewish orthodoxy in Europe viewed modern Bible study as a challenge that called for a response, and it adopted a resolute fundamentally negative attitude towards Bible criticism, in particular, of course, that written about the Pentateuch. This position became more firmly entrenched and extreme in Eretz Israel on the part of both ultra-orthodoxy and national orthodoxy,¹⁸¹ and led them to eschew any study of the history of the biblical text. It also had its effect on the religious university, Bar-Ilan University, founded in 1955, where the study of Bible was based on the axiom that God was revealed to His prophets and His words were handed down in the Holy Scriptures and the faith. A rumor that there were teachers in the Bible department teaching Bible criticism was enough, for example, to arouse the ire of the rabbis of the National Religious Party (Mafdal), with which the University was associated. In 1963, at a meeting of Rabbi Kook’s students at the Merkaz HaRav yeshivah, a “Committee against Bible Criticism” was established that warned against “a staff of inciting and instigating teachers whose aim is to destroy our religion and our holy Torah,” and regarded Bible criticism as heresy and apostasy.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ For a general discussion on this subject, see Chapter 2 and Mordechai Breuer, “Three Orthodox Approaches to Wissenschaft, in Shaul Israeli (et al., eds.), *Jubilee Volume in Honor of Moreinu Hagaon Rabbi Joseph D. Soloveitchik*, Jerusalem – New York, 1984, pp. 856–865 (Hebrew); Shalom Rosenberg, “Bible Study in the New Religious Jewish Thought,” in Uriel Simon (ed.), *The Bible and Us*, pp. 86–119; Steven Shaw, “Orthodox Reactions to the Challenge of Biblical Criticism,” *Tradition*, 10 (3), Spring 1969, pp. 61–85; Matthias Morgenstern, “Jüdisch-orthodoxe Wege zur Bibelkritik,” *Judaica*, 56, 2000, pp. 178–192, 234–250.

¹⁸² See: Menachem Klein, *Bar-Ilan: A University between Religion and Politics*, Jerusalem, 1998, pp. 105–108 (Hebrew); B. Uffenheimer, “Academic Freedom at Bar-Ilan: Bar-Ilan University and the National Religious Party,” *Molad*, 21, 1963–1964, pp. 272–273 (Hebrew).

Rabbi Issac Breuer (1883–1946), the paternal grandson of S.R. Hirsch, one of the leaders of Agudat Israel (the ultra-Orthodox party) in Eretz Israel from 1936,¹⁸³ who also had participated in the Babel-Bibel controversy, formulated the orthodox position. In his book *Der neue Kusari: ein Weg zum Judentum* (The New Kuzari, A Path to Judaism, Frankfurt am Main, 1934), Breuer drew a distinction between the domain of supernatural faith, which regards the world and the Torah as a one-time miraculous creation, and the domain of intellect that views the world and the Torah as a product of evolution. Hence, in the eyes of the believer Bible criticism has no scientific basis, nor is there any need to grapple with it.¹⁸⁴ Another formulation of this position was proposed by Professor Jacob Barth, also a participant in the Babel-Bibel controversy, but his commentary on the books of the Bible which he gave in lectures delivered at the Rabbinerseminar für das Orthodoxe Judentum in Berlin, was never published. One can, however, learn about the principles of his criticism of the documentary hypothesis from a book by his son Aaron Barth (1890–1957), a banker and Zionist activist, which was published in Hebrew (in 1955) and in English (in 1956), under the title *The Modern Jew Faces Eternal Problems*.¹⁸⁵ Barth stated that “the Divine nature of the Torah is self-evident,” and that for thousands of years none of the commentators on or readers of the Bible – Jewish and non-Jewish – noticed that the Pentateuch was composed from different sources.

There is, however, not the slightest shadow of evidence concerning their [the five sources] existence. There is not the remotest allusion to them in Jewish literature. In the whole of the vast treasury of the Aggadah, with its tens of thousands of legends and its hosts of ancient memories, there is not even one episode tending in the least to prove such a process. In the course of the three thousand years from the period of the wandering in the desert down to Astruc, the Torah was investigated from all possible angles by scholars, philologists, masters of the *Halakha hah* and masters of the Aggadah, by philosophers and historians, jurists and archaeologists, believers and non-believers, by Jews and Gentiles. All of them found in the Torah material for research, soluble and insoluble problems, but no one found grounds for pulling it to pieces. And yet, during the past

¹⁸³ On his religious view, see: Eliezer Schweid, *A History of Modern Jewish Religious Philosophy*, Part 3:2, Tel Aviv, 2005, pp. 146–171 (Hebrew), and the Appendix.

¹⁸⁴ Issak Breuer, *Der neue Kusari*, pp. 325–335.

¹⁸⁵ Aron Barth was the son of Azriel Hildesheimer’s daughter, and studied with his uncle and D.Z. Hoffmann, as well as in Berlin and Heidelberg, where he earned a law degree. He also served for some time as head of the Mizrachi movement in Germany.

two centuries, it has become “evident” that it is impossible to understand Scripture without the five different sources and at least two editors.¹⁸⁶

In addition, he repeated the argument that there are variations in style even among modern authors (Goethe and Shakespeare, for example), who wrote works that were completely disparate in style from one another.¹⁸⁷ As for the existence of an editor (redactor) and his role, how is it possible, he wondered, that the editor never took note of the contradictions that allegedly appear in his work: “Had there been different sources combined by one editor, he would surely not have allowed such discrepancies.” Barth did not stop at these arguments, but followed in the path mapped out by David Hoffmann, who, in his view, “had dealt Bible criticism a decisive blow,” and attempted to refute the documentary hypothesis using its tools. He distinguished between the method employed by Hoffmann and his father, Jacob Barth, and the method of Benno Jacob and Cassuto: while the former two accepted the principle of a divinely given Torah and the uniformity of the Pentateuch, which was handed down to Moses, the latter two did not accept it *a priori*, but sought “scientific” evidence of it:

Because the foundations of Bible criticism are so frail it is little wonder that there is no agreement and consensus of opinion among the critics themselves. They differ as to the number of sources and as to the source to which any particular verse or passage should be ascribed.¹⁸⁸

The “Aspect Theory”: Redemption out of Sin

An extraordinary and original dialectical view was proposed by the rabbi and scholar Mordechai Breuer (1921–), the great-grandson of the founder of neo-orthodoxy, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.¹⁸⁹ Breuer was the originator of the Aspect Theory, which to a great extent, accepted Bible criticism, but interprets it in a way that does not contradict religious faith.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ Aron Barth, *The Modern Jew Faces Eternal Problems*, Jerusalem, 1956, p. 256.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 257–258.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

¹⁸⁹ Isaac Breuer’s nephew. Not to be confused with the scholar Mordechai Breuer, Isaac’s son. Breuer’s articles and the controversy they aroused from 1960 were compiled in Joseph Ofer (ed.), *The “Aspect Theory” of Rav Mordechai Breuer: Articles and Responses*, Alon Shvut (a settlement in Samaria) (Hebrew). It is quite ironic that Breuer stated that he had this “epiphany” when he read Marti’s critical commentary on the Pentateuch, that same Marti who taught B. Mossinsohn, the man who started the “Bible war” in the Herzlyia Gymnasium.

¹⁹⁰ In an article on a book by Arye Leib ben Shmuel (1696–1733), head of a yeshivah in Minsk and later in Metz, published in 1764, Breuer found evidence that the Sages

According to Breuer, there are no grounds for gloating over the supposed defeat of the documentary hypothesis. On the contrary, he believes it is meaningful insofar as religious faith is concerned and that it still has a dominant position in Bible research. It is not surprising that very few in the national religious camp thought the Aspect Theory was the right way to cope with the documentary hypothesis; the majority regarded it as a theory built on quicksand, and preferred to challenge the principles underlying higher criticism.¹⁹¹ Breuer's basic assumption was that the saying of the Sages, "The Torah spoke in the language of men" (*Tractate Avodah Zara*, 27a) meant that the Torah spoke in different genres and different styles, in a way that would encompass antithetical and even contradictory traits, and hence it would seem to someone looking at it from the outside as if several people had written it: "Everyone knows it is impossible to prove that the Torah was not divinely given," and "everyone knows that the Almighty is not bound by the laws of literature," and he could speak in diverse and contradictory styles. Hence, those who have faith believe that the Torah, "with all the allusions to later times, with all its multifaceted styles, is what was given to Moses in a transcendental revelation that is beyond the grasp of the intellect." If we accept this a priori assumption, Breuer argued, the entire splendid structure of Bible criticism collapses and falls, and hence there is no need for apologetics, neither Hoffmann's nor Cassuto's brand; in both cases, this was apologetics attempting to prove the unity of the Bible using the tools of higher criticism, and there is no reason to be frightened by it.¹⁹² In Breuer's opinion, it was impossible to mount a defense against secular Bible criticism using the weapons of "apologetic jugglery." All the attempts to propose alternative paradigms to the documentary hypothesis based on criticism of the text are apologetics, which have only caused damage. He believed that these attempts reflected the readiness of circles in orthodoxy to accept the "rules of the scientific game." The struggle against the heresy of Bible criticism should, therefore, not be conducted by ignoring or rejecting it.

had preceded Astruc and higher criticism. Ben Shmuel claimed that Ezra had compiled his book from many sources, but it was his editing that sanctified the book and changed it from a secular book to a holy book, since the editing was carried out in the Divine spirit. See: Breuer, "The Theory of Documents of the Writer of 'Lion's Roar' (*Sha'agat arye*)," *Megadim, Journal on Biblical Matters* (published by the Mt. Etzion Yeshivah, a settlement in Samaria), 2, 1986, pp. 9–22; 3, pp. 67–91.

¹⁹¹ See: S.Z. Leiman, "Response to Rabbi Breuer," in S. Carmy (ed.), *Modern Scholarship in the Study of Torah: Contributions and Limitations*, New Jersey – London, 1996, pp. 181–187.

¹⁹² Mordechai Breuer, "Faith and Science in Bible Commentary," *De'ot/Journal of Religious/Academic Youth*, 12, Winter 1959, pp. 12–27.

Mordechai Breuer believed he had resolved the problem of contradictions and duplications in the Pentateuch with the aid of a dialectic (even mystic) view that regarded Bible criticism as a school that:

“had been revealed in its ugliness and foulness. It was born out of impurity and grew in wickedness. Its advocates stand on the impure earth of heresy and hatred of Judaism ... they [the followers of its method] divest Israel of the witnesses of its Torah ... They expose the literary layers of the Torah, and in doing so deny the Ten Commandments of Sinai; as if the gradual evolution of nature also applies to the world of the Creation, and the gradual development of literature also applies to the world of the revelation.”

However, Breuer’s conclusion from this total rejection of the documentary hypothesis differs from that of other orthodox Jews. The impurity enabled the “revealing of the *Shekhinah*”; it was nothing more than an “historical illustration of the Divine Providence in the world”; in the barrel of defilement of the criticism there is purity and it has a destiny to fulfill! It shows the multifacetedness and eternality of the Divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures.¹⁹³ According to this theory, then, the Almighty saw fit to tell the story of the flood, for example, via Moses, in two versions in order to prove the multifacetedness nature of the Divine revelation. However, Breuer was not prepared to accept the argument that the Torah was also compiled from the words of different prophets, other than Moses, and hence it has various layers. As far as he was concerned, such an argument undermines faith in a divinely given Torah.¹⁹⁴

This remarkable and original position of Breuer’s aroused a lively debate, conducted mainly within the national religious camp, and which touched on the fundamental issue of the relationship between faith and science (i.e., modern Bible study). Breuer was attacked by both believers and biblical scholars, and he was unsuccessful in allaying the apprehensions aroused by the documentary hypothesis. Some countered with the argument that believers in the Torah do not live according to the Bible, but according to the manner in which it was perceived by the following generations. Another argument against him was that even the Sages had left room for the possibility that Moses had not written the Torah, and that the act of giving the Torah was transcendental, but not the Torah itself, and hence it is open to various interpretations. An

¹⁹³ Mordechai Breuer, “Faith and Science in Bible Commentary,” *De’ot/Journal of Religious-Academic Youth*, 11, 1959, pp. 18–25.

¹⁹⁴ See also: Mordechai Breuer, *Pirkei bereshit*, vol. 1, Alon Shevut, 1998. It would be interesting to compare Breuer’s view with the words of St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, 11:23–25.

argument coming from another direction was that the documentary hypothesis had already been rejected by biblical research itself.¹⁹⁵ For example, in the view of Amos Chakham, Breuer was suggesting that the scientific analysis be accepted, along with its conclusions, but was claiming that the conclusions do not contradict faith, and in doing so was presuming to claim that he had scientific proof that the Torah was divinely given.¹⁹⁶ Breuer's suggestion as to how the tension between faith and science could be resolved was rejected by most of the orthodox Bible scholars. Thus, for example, two teachers in the religious educational system stated that they never mentioned Bible criticism, not even only to refute it, and based their teaching only on the Sages. Nonetheless, they were unable to avoid writing that:

In recent generations, scholars have begun to doubt [a divinely given Torah] and have constructed methods, at times very brilliant, about the composition of the Torah. The main idea in these methods is the “documentary hypothesis,” namely, that the Torah was composed during the Second Temple period from various documents or various sources ... These sources have been divided into different layers, and sub-sources and the like have also been added ... We have no interest in citing all the details of the various methods here; they all appear in books of introduction to the Bible written in various languages.¹⁹⁷

The scholar of religions R. Y.Z. Werblowsky characterized Breuer's view as a dialectic-mystic view, which combined Catholic and Protestant positions. Breuer is a fundamentalist on the one hand, who accepts the traditional rulings as facts, and on the other hand, does not reject the method and conclusions of Bible criticism. If so, in the final analysis, Breuer adopts the typological (or tropological) Christian method and applies it to the theosophical realm of divine names and attributes, in order to prove that *even* with Wellhausen or *particularly* with Wellhausen it is possible to deepen and illuminate the faith-based understanding of the Bible.”¹⁹⁸

The questions that the Theory of Aspects evokes do not stem only from the *a priori* rejection of its article of faith, namely that God the Creator of Heaven and Earth wrote the Pentateuch (and not only the books of laws) and hence the R is not Rabeno nor Redactor, but *Ribono*

¹⁹⁵ *De'ot*, 13, Spring, 1960.

¹⁹⁶ Amos Chakham, “On Bible Study, The Documentary Hypothesis and the Theory of Aspects,” *Megadim*, 3, 1985, pp. 67–71.

¹⁹⁷ Y.Z. Moshkowitz and H. Hamiel, *Introduction to the Study of the Bible*, Ramat Gan, vol. I, 1987, p. 16 (Hebrew).

¹⁹⁸ Werblowsky, “The Aspect Theory,” in J. Ofer (ed.), *The Aspect Theory*, p. 162–168.

shel olam (God Almighty). They also stem from the fact that Breuer does not find it necessary to grapple with other schools of Bible criticism, nor with the fundamental arguments that arose in the Babel-Bibel controversy that challenged the divine source of key parts of the Pentateuch and claimed that some parts of the Pentateuch originated in Mesopotamian cultures written long before the composition of the Pentateuch. From Breuer's words, one can understand that he is referring to the Bible as a whole, not only to the Pentateuch; it seems, however, that since he does not believe that the books from Joshua onward were written by God, he prefers to ignore the issue of the composition of the Deuteronomistic text and other issues (like those connected to the Masorah).

Another book that belongs to the orthodox literature on the subject is Rabbi Isaac Halevy's *Dorot Harishonim* (The History and Literature of Israel), the sixth volume of which on the biblical period was published in Jerusalem in 1939, about 25 years after his death.¹⁹⁹ Halevy, a talmudic genius, enlisted in the "war of the Torah" against the enemies of the Talmud and the Bible, who had made Jewish history "a free-for-all for all those loose-lipped people." In the third volume, Halevy attempted to prove that the Torah preceded the Prophecy, and argued, among other claims, that the fact that the Jewish people did not observe the Torah is not evidence that the Torah did not exist, for even in the Second Temple period, when there is no doubt that it did exist, not everyone observed its commandments. Halevy came out strongly against the Gentile scholars, with Wellhausen the goy at their head, who had tried to strip the Holy Scriptures of the "garment of sanctity" by maliciously distorting them. Halevy's conservative position was exemplified by the fact that he also regarded the Song of Songs as a holy book, and believed it was written by King Solomon. To his sorrow, he wrote, many young Jews are reading these heretic books as if they written by authorities on the subject. The rabbi J. L. Hacohen Fischmann (Maimon, 1875–1962), a leader of religious Zionism, wrote in his introduction to Halevy's book that "what is even more painful is that from our midst, injurious and damaging men have arisen who have chosen to follow the paths of these Gentiles and now have come carrying a destructive weapon to tear down and ravage the wall of the tradition of our Torah, and to strip it of its sanctity on the basis of ridiculous hypotheses and flimsy proofs ..." ²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ With an introduction by Rabbi Y.L. Hacohen Fischmann, published by Mosad HaRav Kook.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 3–8. And see M. Eliash's article on Halevy in Samuel K. Mirsky (ed.), *Figures in Jewish Studies in Eastern Europe before its Decline*, New York, 1959,

We should also mention David Hoffmann's book, which was translated into Hebrew in 1928 and warmly received (see Chapter Two), and Ze'ev Jawitz' historical work which followed the tradition as well as the historical narrative of the Bible, while openly contending with Bible criticism and basing many of his arguments on new archaeological finds. His book was the major historical work to come out of Eretz Israeli orthodoxy.

The controversy on this subject continued in world of the national religious yeshivahs until the 1990s. We will only cite one example, that of Rabbi Zevi Israel Tau and the polemic between him and other nationalist rabbis. Rabbi Tau left the Merkaz HaRav yeshivah (which was founded by Rabbi Kook in 1923 and from 1952 was headed by his son Rabbi Zevi Yehudah Kook [1891–1982], and in 1997 founded the nationalist ultra-orthodox Har HaMor yeshivah). In a pamphlet entitled *Tzadik be'eminato yichye: al hagisha lelimud Tanakh* (A Tzaddik Lives by his Faith: On the Approach to Study of the Bible, 1992), an adaptation of talks he had given, he objected strongly to study of the Bible with the modern approach in yeshivans (in particular in the Har Etzion Yeshivah) and to teacher training schools of national-religious Jewry (in particular, Herzog College). Relying in particular on the words of Rabbi Kook, quoted above, he described the study of Bible with a modern, secular, scientific approach as tantamount to “introducing an idol into the temple” and “impurity and heresy” into the heart; as an approach influenced by Ahad Ha'am, which “empties the soul of holiness and destroys the element of holiness of the religious,” and also weakens its national dimension and undermines faith in the wholeness of Eretz Israel. As far as Rabbi Tau was concerned, Bible criticism was a pseudo-science, which overlooked the fact that the Bible ought to be read as “the art of God-fearing.”

The pamphlet elicited a response, among others, from Rabbi Amnon Bazak of the national-religious yeshivah at Har Etzion. In it, he stated that “Herzog College is a lighthouse that spreads Torah and a center of Bible study the likes of which have never existed elsewhere.” The college, Rabbi Bazak, claimed, does not intend “to instill in the hearts of its teachers apostasy and a secular approach to the Bible; rather it grapples with the secular approach and its conclusions, while accepting the principle set forth by Rav Kook, that the contradictions

pp. 65–115 (Hebrew); Asher Reichel, *Issac Halevy, 1847–1914, Spokesman and Historian of Jewish Tradition*, New York, 1969.

in the Bible are ostensible contradictions while in fact they constitute a complete description of the reality in all of its manifestations.”²⁰¹

This internal controversy not only exposes the great revolution in the attitude towards the Bible and its status in the national-religious public, a revolution that turned it into a formative book and endowed it with importance and value vis-à-vis the historical reliability of all its parts. It also exposes the dilemma entailed in studying it not only according to the traditional interpretation. This is expressed in the comments made by Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, head of the yeshivah of the religious kibbutz at Ein Tsurim, on the Hebrew version of our book (*The War of the Tablets*, Tel Aviv, 2003). In his opinion, the advocates of Bible criticism have become “absolute apostates” – their intention being to challenge the historical tradition of the Bible. But his conclusion is that the national believing Jew should not close his eyes in fear of anything that has the “scent of enlightenment,” but rather should react to the criticism with its own tools.²⁰² In other words, Rabbi Bin-Nun, like the majority of those in the national-religious camp, rejects the notion that Judaism is indifferent to the Bible as history, and hence also to the question of its reliability as an historical document. On the contrary, it ascribes importance and value to the historical reliability of the Bible as a whole, not only of the Pentateuch. He also proposed an approach, which we define as historical-biblical fundamentalism and will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Fifteen.

The biblical revolution in National Zionist orthodoxy was expressed, among other things, in the fact that scholars from this camp did not shrink from relying on extra-biblical evidence or on archaeological finds in order to prove the authenticity of the Pentateuch, arguing that “a later author would definitely not have been able to guess such a reality of life and his readers would not have understood what he was talking about.” In other words, the Mesopotamian sources constitute for them too an essential and legitimate tool with which to affirm the authenticity and antiquity of the historical tradition in the Book of Genesis.²⁰³ The controversy also reveals to what extent the boundaries are blurred between the scientific criticism of the Bible

²⁰¹ See: Yair Sheleg, “The Gray Civil Disobedience of Rabbi Tau,” *Ha’aretz*, September 15, 2004, p. 5b, and Contact Page 845 on the Internet, February 26, 2003 (solely for students of the Yeshivah).

²⁰² Chayuta Deutsch, “The War of the Tablets: Interview with Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun,” *HaTzofeh*, May 21, 2004, pp. 11–12.

²⁰³ See the articles by Yoel Elitzur and Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun in the periodical, *Al Atar: A Journal on Eretz Israel and the Sources*, 7, September 2000, published by Herzog Teachers Training College at the Har Etzion Yeshivah, devoted to the subject:

and value-based criticism of the actions of the biblical heroes, who in the conservative orthodox approach have been endowed with the status of saints. Consequently, Rav Kook based his approach on the Sages, who did not ignore King David's transgressions, but exalted his image because he admitted his sin and repented.

As we shall see later, the dilemma that confronted modern orthodoxy in the nineteenth century, namely the tension between faith and science (i.e., Bible criticism) was not resolved despite all the efforts and attempts.²⁰⁴ From the 1970s, this tension moved, as we noted, from questions connected to the composition of the Pentateuch to those connected to the composition of the historical books and the reliability of the historical picture depicted in the Bible.

“Cult of the Book”

Another unusual position that merits our attention, one that is antithetical to Breuer's, was that of the orthodox philosopher, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903–1994). In his view, which he repeated orally and in writing on many occasions, the entire Bible is “holy scripture,” and its sanctity comes from the tradition (the Oral Law). But in itself the Bible has no constitutive status in Judaism. According to Leibowitz, the Bible presents the demand of worship of God and hence says nothing to anyone who does not intend to worship God. For such a man, the Bible has no meaning at all: “For the believing Jew, the Bible is the source of *midrash-halakhah* and *midrash-aggadah*; for the secular Jew, it is a collection of superstitions, a matter of interest for archaeology and a tool to be used to further national interests connected with Eretz Israel.”²⁰⁵ The Bible is not the Book of Books, nor was it intended to impart humanistic values;²⁰⁶ it has meaning only if one accepts its theo-historical view. He derisively termed “love of the Bible” as “bibliotelia” – cult of the books. Leibowitz therefore carried

“The Book of Books, Writer and Excavator: Bible, Archaeology, Literature and History.” And see below, in Chapter 16.

²⁰⁴ See: Moshe Orgad, *Elements in Teaching Bible*, Ramat Gan, 1987 (Hebrew). He claimed that Bible criticism should be eschewed and that the halakhic parts of the Pentateuch should be taught only according to the Oral Law and the traditional interpretation.

²⁰⁵ Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *On Just About Everything: Talks with Michael Shashar*, Jerusalem, 1988 (5th edn.), pp. 104–106 (Hebrew).

²⁰⁶ Y. Leibowitz, *Judaism, the Jewish People and the State of Israel*, Tel Aviv, 1977, p. 348 (Hebrew).

on conservative orthodoxy's attitude of indifference towards the Bible and ignored those parts of it that clearly dealt with profane worldly history and had no religious significance. Ostensibly, such a position would nullify the importance of a debate about the way the Bible was composed. It would, however, be a mistake to think that Leibowitz ascribed no value to the veracity of the historical description in the Bible – a veracity dependent, among other things, on the processes of its composition – and assigned value only to a theocentric perception of the historical events, in particular formative events such as the Exodus from Egypt and the theophany on Mt. Sinai ("divinely given Torah"). His writings show that he also considered these as historical events not only because the Oral Law views them as such, but also because their veracity is self-evident.

Chapter 15

The Bible as History and Biblical Archaeology: “Can Two Walk Together?” (Amos 3:3)

They have shown me the excavator
Digging up graves and antiquities
Examining shards and assembling them ...
Persistently, he delves into
The hidden history of the past
Perseveres until he solves
Every flaw in the rhyme
Every missing link
And every lost piece
In the name of the great dynasty
From Ur of the Chaldees to Judah

Zalman Shneur, “Song of the Excavators,”
in *Luchot Gnuzim* (Hidden Tablets), 1952, p. 68.

From Holy Land to Homeland

It was also through the Bible that Eretz Israel was transformed from a holy land into an historical country and a homeland. The historical geography of the period of the Bible (biblical geography) and the archaeology of the period of the Bible (biblical archaeology) purported not only to lead to a better understanding of what was written in *the Book*, but mainly to provide a better knowledge of the historical period depicted in it. From this standpoint, the book’s importance did not depend on its values, but on its reliability as history.

The British naturalist, Henry Baker Tristram (1822–1906), who made several study trips to Palestine between 1857 to 1864, wrote about the uplifted spirits he experienced during his encounter with the Holy Land:

It is like revisiting a father’s grave or the home of one’s youth, and no one is disposed to expatriate on the outline or details of the landscape which

rivets itself upon the soul with magnetic power, for over it hovers the memories of redemption achieved and the victory over the grave.²⁰⁷

James Finn (1806–1872), British consul in Jerusalem (from 1845–1862) wrote in a similar vein:

On Jordan's banks the mind is dilated till it feels the events of Biblical history...In this way the literature and the antiquity of the Holy Land are inseparable from religion, unless by force of unnatural and perceptive violence. Without the Bible, the Jordan is but a stream unfit for navigation. Tabor is a round topped hill of so many ascertained feet in height; and Bethlehem but a pleasant village in south of Palestine. With the Bible how great and how significant those localities become!²⁰⁸

In Hebrew literature too there are many texts that described the deep intimate bond to the landscape of Eretz Israel that the writers experienced when reading the Bible, or were inspired by. M.J. Berdyczewski, for example, in a chapter of memoirs entitled “*HaYetziah*” (Going Forth, 1910), wrote that in his hometown, the Jews knew Eretz Israel (“land of the Hebrews”) only by its name. The country took on a concrete shape only in his imagination when in his youth he read the historical books – Joshua, Judges, and Kings. It was then that he learned about Joshua’s war of conquest, the exploits of the Judges and Kings of Israel – “I gained familiarity with the kingdom of Judah and Ephraim, the mountains of Gilboa and Mt. Carmel.” As a result of his reading, at night he began to picture to himself the “mountains of Israel and the soil of Israel, Samaria, the city of Tekoa, the Besor river. Verses and individual words – for ages the people of Israel shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree – stirred my imagination and became a vision of mine.”²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ H.B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel: A Journal of Travels in Palestine*, London, 1865, p. 172. And Tristram concluded the book by stating that “The Holy Land not only elucidates but bears witness to the truth of the *Holy Book*” (emphasis in original), *ibid.*, p. 636. Edward Robinson (1794–1863), one of the pioneers of historical-geographical research on Palestine, wrote: “As in the case of most of my countrymen, especially in New England, the scenes of the Bible made a deep impression upon my mind from earliest childhood ... From his earliest years the child is there accustomed not only to read the Bible for himself, but he reads or listens to it in the morning and evening devotions of the family, in the daily village school, in the Sunday school and Bible class, and in the weekly ministration of the sanctuary.” See also: Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine and the Adjacent Regions* (3rd edn.), vol. 1, London, 1867, p. 46.

²⁰⁸ James Finn, *Stirring Times: Records from Jerusalem Consular Chronicles of 1853 to 1856*, London, 1878, p. 114. At the same time Finn wrote that there was no need of concrete testimonies from the past to attest to the events and to shape a psychological bond to them.

²⁰⁹ M.J. Berdyczewski, “Me’orot uma’asim” (Events and Deeds), in *Kitvei M.J. Berdyczewski* (Bin-Gorion): *Sipurim*, Tel Aviv, 1987 (5), pp. 147–151.

In that case, the distant Land of Israel is vivid in the writers' imagination. In contrast, in a short story entitled "A Tiny Homeowner" (1910), by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the country becomes concrete. The narrator climbs Mt. Tabor in the company of a boy, Itamar, from one of the Jewish colonies in the Galilee. From the top of the mountain, they look down at the Valley of Jezreel and the narrator discovers that for the boy, the sight they see is "living history," not merely a memory, or "ancient legends":

Here, on this very spot, Deborah gathered ten thousand men, and together they all descended this slope, and there, in the corner of the valley where the Kishon river winds, a place hidden from vision now, they struck a fierce blow at the armies of Yavin, King of Canaan ... and these are the mountains of Gilboa. There Saul and his sons were defeated by the Philistines, and when David heard the news of their death, he tore his clothing and uttered a dreadful curse upon these mountains ... and deeper yet, far, far away, near the Carmel itself, was Navoth's vineyard.

The traveler cannot conceal his great envy of the "natural," nearly autochthonous manner in which the boy relates to the historical landscape. In this case, the bond to Eretz Israel was not "acquired" through the literature, but was an "inherited" bond.

I look in envy. I never knew, nor will I ever know such a whole, organic, unified and unique emotion of a sense of homeland, in which everything is melded, past and present, legends and hopes, the individual and the historical. Every inch of the soil of the Jezreel Valley belongs to this boy; for him every cubit is peopled with living, familiar figures.²¹⁰

The boy in Jabotinsky's story seems to have been incarnated in Yigal Allon (1918–1980), who was born in the village of Mescha opposite Mt. Tabor (and who later became a senior military commander in the War of Independence and then a statesman). In his autobiography, *My Father's Home*, Allon writes:

Under the influence of the biblical stories, a new dimension was added to my hikes on Mt. Tabor ... As I climbed up the mountain or slid down it, I would conjure up the exploits of Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam. Here, I would say to myself, ten thousand sons of Naphtali and Zevulun stood here at the time ... My rambles on the Gilboa or its surroundings evoked Saul and Jonathan's lives, the splendor of their heroism and their death ...²¹¹

²¹⁰ Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "Ba'al bayit kezayit," in *Sippurim* (Stories), Jerusalem, 1954, pp. 207–218.

²¹¹ Yigal Allon, *My Father's House*, 1975, pp. 30–31 (Hebrew). According to his biography, Allon was particularly beguiled by Saul's tragic character. See: Anita Shapira, *Yigal Allon: Spring of His Life*, Tel Aviv, 2004, pp. 63–64 (Hebrew). An earlier example is a book by Zalman David Levontin (1856–1940), a member of Lovers of Zion and later a leading banker in Israel, which describes his encounter with a Bedouin tribe near Gaza in 1882: "A sense of awe gripped me when I saw with my

In these two groups of texts, the landscape draws its meaning from the Bible, but there is a significant difference between them. From the Christian standpoint, the Land of Israel is primarily the stage on which “sacred history” took place, whereas for the Jewish national movement, Eretz Israel is an historical country and a homeland. It is the stage on which the “worldly history” of the Jewish people took place in its formative, glorious period, and the Bible relates the national-territorial chapter in Jewish history. While for those living in the Diaspora, this history is a heritage, a memory that exists because of the Bible, realized mainly in the imagination, and also shaped via belles lettres in the nineteenth century,²¹² for the native-born in the new Jewish settlements in Eretz Israel, the distant past becomes a living, direct reality placed in a real, familiar landscape, an inseparable part of the “natural” homeland. The national consciousness assigned Jewish history in Eretz Israel during the First (and Second) Temple period a central place in the new Jewish picture of the past: the past of a sovereign people living on its land, which it must return to and restore. And in the country itself, the Bible became a guide to the country’s scenery and sites, and the link with the country’s past and its geography was to a great extent established through the mediation of the Bible.

In the above texts, the stories of the Bible are self-evident historical truth. None of them casts any doubt on the historical accuracy of the picture depicted by the Bible or the fact that its heroes are flesh-and-blood historical figures, not heroes of ancient legends. They make no distinction – in the spirit of Ahad Ha’Am’s proposal – between “archaeological truth” and “historical truth.” This is because a national movement bases its claims on elements that it perceives as a reliable historical narrative. From its inception, Jewish nationalism did not feel the need for any assistance from archaeology, but when it seemed that biblical archaeology was providing it with confirmation, it received it gladly. Hence, the discovery of ancient ruins like the Mesha stele (1868) from the 9th century B.C.,²¹³ or the inscription in

own eyes that place, the location of one of the events in the life history of our forefather Isaac. The King Abimelech and Phichol, the chief captain of his host, stood, as if alive, in front of me. I recalled the ‘hundredfold’ that Isaac had reaped here, and the ‘flocks and herds he possessed here.’” Z. D. Levontin, *To the Land of Our Fathers*, Tel Aviv, 1963 (4), p. 47 (Hebrew).

²¹² See Chapter 16, and Tova Cohen, *From Dream to Reality*.

²¹³ For example, the Hebrew newspaper *Halevanon* reported on the publication of the discovery of the basalt tablet in the *Journal Officiel* on January 18 of that year in Paris.

the Shiloah tunnel (1880), from the end of the 8th century B.C.,²¹⁴ as well as excavations at various sites, were perceived as conclusive proof of the reliability of the picture of the past presented by the Bible, on which the national movement based itself. The interest that part of the educated Jewish public in Europe had shown in Near Eastern cultures and subjects such as the connection between the Pentateuch and the cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia, was replaced over time by an interest – both public and scholarly – in the biblical period in Eretz Israel, but only gradually in biblical archaeology as well.

Later on, the issue of the veracity of the Bible's historical story was placed on the public agenda. What had been self-evident for earlier generations was no longer unquestioned. The contribution of biblical archaeology to an understanding of the past and the creation of a picture of that past became a controversial subject.

The Bible Comes Alive in the Land of the Bible

In an article published in *Hashiloach* at the end of 1921,²¹⁵ the American archaeologist William F. Albright,²¹⁶ wrote that the literary criticism of the Bible had completed the hard part of its work after the publication of Wellhausen's book. If until then, philological-historical research had been the major research tool in Bible study, now archaeological research was providing the biblical scholar with a plenitude of extra-biblical sources. The truth is, as we have seen in the previous chapters, that there is no basis for the claim that philological-historical research had completed its function in the 1880s. On the contrary, it continued to perfect its methods and to influence Bible study, and certainly had an impact on study of the Bible as history. As a matter of fact, it was impossible to separate the two disciplines – the philological-historical and the archaeological – regarding the investigation of the extent to which the picture of the past depicted in the Bible reflects the ancient historical reality.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ The first news in Hebrew about its discovery was printed in *Havatzelet*, 28 Cheshvan (November), 1881. On Hebrew inscriptions from the First Temple period, see: Shmuel Ahituv, *A Collection of Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, Jerusalem, 1992 (Hebrew).

²¹⁵ W. F. Albright, "The Dawn of the Hebrew People," *Hashiloach*, 39, April – October, 1921, pp. 28–33.

²¹⁶ On him, see: Burke O. Long, *Planting and Reaping Albright: Politics, Ideology and Interpreting the Bible*, University Park, PA, 1997.

²¹⁷ See: Nadav Na'aman, *The Past that Shapes the Present: The Creation of Biblical Historiography in the Late First Temple Period and After the Downfall*, Jerusalem, 2002 (Hebrew).

The history of biblical archaeology from Charles Warren's (1840–1927) excavations at Jericho in 1868 and Sir W.M. Flinders Petrie's (1853–1942) at Tel Hesi (which was mistakenly identified as biblical Lachish)²¹⁸ in 1890 has been extensively related. We will not repeat it here, nor will we describe the history of archaeological excavations in Palestine.²¹⁹ We do not intend to discuss the possibilities and limitations of archaeology or the polemic that began in the 1970s about the scientific validity of the name "biblical archaeology."²²⁰ Nor, obviously, can we survey the hypotheses on the relationship between the Bible and archaeology, book by book.²²¹ We are interested in the role that the archaeological finds played in creating the picture of the past. However, before we describe the growth of public interest in Eretz

²¹⁸ See the articles in *Archeologia: Bulletin of the Israel Association of Archaeologists*, 3, August, 1992 (Hebrew).

²¹⁹ See: Benjamin Maisler, *History of Archaeological Research in Palestine*, Jerusalem, 1936 (Hebrew); Carl Watzinger, *Denkmäler Palästinas: Eine Einführung in die Archäologie des Heiligen Landes*, Leipzig, I-II, 1933–1935; George A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1916 (7th edn.); idem, *Archaeology and the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1946; Millar Burrows, *What Mean These Stones? The Significance of Archaeology for Biblical Studies*, New Haven, 1941; Chester Charlton McCown, *The Ladder of Progress in Palestine: A Story of Archaeological Adventure*, New York, London, 1943 (3rd edn.); J.A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1962; Dame Kathleen M. Kenyon and P.R.S. Moorey, *The Bible and Recent Archaeology*, London, 1987 (revised and enlarged); Leo G. Perdue, Lawrence E. Toombs, and Gary Lance Johnson (eds.), *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, Atlanta, Georgia, 1987; A. Kempinski and M. Avi-Yonah, *Syria-Palestine (Archaeologia mundi)*, Geneva, 1979; Neil Asher Silberman, *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799–1917*, New York, 1982; Moshe Pearlman, *Digging up the Bible: The Stories behind the Great Archaeological Discoveries in the Holy Land*, New York, 1980.

²²⁰ Albright described archaeology as "the most scientific branch of history." See: W.F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Baltimore, 1965, p. 2. As for the above-mentioned argument that was evoked by the American archaeologist, W.G. Dever's suggestion that the name be changed to Syro-Palestinian Archaeology, see: William G. Dever, "Retrospects and Prospects in Biblical and Syro-Palestinian Archaeology," *Biblical Archaeology*, 45 (2), Spring, 1982, pp. 103–107; Yigael Yadin, "Biblical Archaeology Today: The Archaeological Aspect," *Biblical Archaeology Today: Proceedings of the International Congress on Biblical Archaeology*, Jerusalem, April 1984, pp. 21–27; Thomas W. Davies, "Faith and Archaeology: A Brief History to the Present," in *Biblical Archaeological Review*, 19 (2), March–April 1993, pp. 54–57. On this matter, we also refer the reader to the survey of John C.H. Laughlin, *Archaeology and the Bible*, London – New York, 2000, which contains an extensive, up-to-date bibliography, and to James K. Hoffmeier and Alan Millard (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Archaeology: Reassessing Methodologies and Assumptions*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 2004.

²²¹ See: Gaalyahu Cornfeld and David Noel Freedman (eds.), *Archaeology of the Bible: Book by Book*, San Francisco, 1976.

Israel in biblical archaeology, we should clarify the concept and the controversy surrounding it.

The name biblical archaeology first appeared in English in 1832. In German the name Hebrew archaeology – *Hebräische Archäologie* – was more prevalent,²²² and denoted interest in the society, religion and culture of Eretz Israel during the biblical period. The name “archaeology of the biblical period” marked the fact that although archaeological research was aided by the Bible, it did not see it as a reliable historical picture, and its declared intent was not to prove the veracity of the Bible. In contrast, the name “biblical archaeology” underscored the declared aim of many Protestant biblical scholars in particular – not only to illustrate the Bible, but also to verify the biblical story.²²³ The point of departure of biblical archaeology is the Bible. The Bible determined the motives and aims of the research, as well as which sites would be excavated. From this standpoint, the spade took on the symbolic status of the tool that would measure the extent of the Bible’s accuracy²²⁴ and resurrect the biblical past. In 1892, Adolph Saphir (1831–1891), a Jew born in Hungary, who converted to Christianity and became a missionary for the Presbyterian church, hastened to declare that “The evidence for the accuracy and veracity of the Bible is accumulating day by day, and comes to us from all sources.”²²⁵ This fervent belief produced a large harvest of books that held that “the Bible speaks the truth,” and that archaeological research had removed the “veil of the ancients from the Land of the

²²² See: I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie*, Freiburg – Leipzig, 1894; Wilhelm Nowack, *Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Archäologie*, Freiburg, 1894. Even earlier Joseph Lewin Saalschütz (1801–1863), who was not promoted to rank of professor at the University of Königsberg because he was Jewish, published the book *Archäologie der Hebräer*, Königsberg, 1855–1856.

²²³ The program of the Palestine Exploration Fund founded in Britain in 1865 stated that its aim was to aid in archaeology for the purpose of biblical illustration. In contrast, the program of the Palestine Exploration Fund founded in New York in 1870 stated that the purpose of archaeological research was to defend the Bible and to verify it, adding that this was “a sacred service for science and religion.” See: Roland de Vaux, “On Right and Wrong Uses of Archaeology,” in James A. Sanders (ed.), *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century, Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, New York, 1960, pp. 64–78.

²²⁴ Albright, writing about the services of the archaeologist to the biblical scholar, stated that “archaeological finds in Palestine agree with specific points in biblical history.” See: W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine: A Survey of the Ancient Peoples and Culture of the Holy Land*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1949, pp. 226–227.

²²⁵ See: Adolph Saphir, *The Divine Unity of Scripture*, London, 1892, p. 259. The book was printed in Jerusalem in 2001 by the *Keren Achva Meshichit* (The Foundation for Messianic Brotherhood).

Bible." Quite a few of them were widely circulated, regardless of their scientific value.²²⁶ In any event, it is important to note that without the Bible it would have been impossible to identify many of the sites, to learn about the history of the land and its inhabitants, and to place many extra-biblical testimonies in the framework and the context of an historical narrative for the simple reason that the Bible is the major – and in many cases the sole – historical source of the history of the Jews and of many other peoples who lived in the area.²²⁷

Before moving on to a discussion of the development of public interest in biblical archaeology and the various attitudes towards it, we should state that literature on this subject did not always draw the necessary distinction between archaeology of the Biblical period and archaeology of the Second Temple (of the Mishnah and Talmud) period. The two differ in several fundamental ways, the main one being that the latter does not raise any problems stemming from the link between holy scripture and unquestionably historical testimonies written by human beings. We also should mention again that the subject interested a part of the educated public and drew the attention of a broader public primarily after the news of a spectacular find, or (as in the case of Babel-Bibel) as the result of an opinion that aroused a furor (later we will discuss the storm provoked by David Ben-Gurion in 1960).

As a matter of fact, one would have expected the Jewish public in Eretz Israel, from the early days of the new settlement in the nineteenth century, to show an interest in everything taking place in biblical archaeology, and even to attempt to play an active role in it. The traveler and adventurer John MacGregor (1825–1892) who sailed the Sea of Galilee in a canoe, wrote, after passing through Tiberias in 1869:

But one wonders how [the Jews] with all their love of their people and their land, leave it to us the Christians to search for their records among the rubbish of their ruined cities – how they never ask the world for what

²²⁶ For example: Charles Marston's *The Bible is True: The Lessons of the 1925–1934 Excavations in Bible Lands Summarized and Explained*, London, 1934; Werner Keller, *The Bible as History: A Confirmation of the Book of Books*, trans. by William Neil, New York, 1956. The German original was entitled *Und die Bibel hat doch Recht*, Düsseldorf, 1955. It was translated into Hebrew in 1958.

²²⁷ The research into processual archaeology, namely that which uncovers the human environment and the patterns of settlement and society, can do without the help of the Bible. See: Ian Hodder, *Theory and Practice in Archaeology*, London and New York, 1995 edn.; Bruce G. Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, New York, 1989 edn.; Shlomo Bunimovitz, "The 'New Archaeology' and the Israeli Archaeology," *Archaeologia: Bulletin of the Israel Association of Archaeology*, 3, August 1992, pp. 59–67 (Hebrew).

the world will give them free, their own beloved Palestine, while they will with obstinate persistence cling to hopeless hope.²²⁸

However, members of the old Yishuv, namely the orthodox society, were not the only ones who showed no interest in biblical archaeology. The first generation of the new Yishuv also showed scant interest. As for the excavations, until the beginning of the British mandate (1920), no Jewish institution existed that was able to initiate an independent dig, and the archaeological research of Palestine was initiated and carried out by Christian archaeologists from the West. In 1845, James Finn proposed a multidisciplinary program to the Jerusalem Literary Society, founded in that city. It would encompass biblical manners and customs and profit from the fact that Finn was intimately acquainted with the country.²²⁹ At the end of Ottoman rule, (from the end of the nineteenth century until 1914), various Christian research institutions were established in Palestine and many excavations were conducted by expeditions and research institutions from Europe and the United States.²³⁰ The “days of glory” of this archaeological activity began under the British rule in the 1920s, and the official status of archaeological research was established in Clause 21 of the Mandate document and in the Antiquities Ordinance, dated October 15, 1920. These stated, among other things, that the right to excavate would be granted only to scholars, and to all nations. Previously, in July 1920, the Antiquity Authority of the Mandatory Government of Palestine was established.²³¹ In 1938, the Rockefeller Museum of Antiquities was inaugurated, close to the northern wall of the Old City.

There were those who tried to speculate as to why the Jewish public in Palestine had displayed indifference to the unceasing discovery of

²²⁸ John MacGregor, *The Rob Roy on the Jordan: A Canoe Cruise in Palestine and Egypt, and the Waters of Damascus*, London, 1904 (8th edn.), p. 357 (original, 1869).

²²⁹ Shimon Gibson, “British Archaeological Institutions in Mandatory Palestine 1917–1948,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 131, 1999, pp. 115–143.

²³⁰ See: Philip J. King, *American Archaeology in the Mideast*, Garden City, New York, 1970; Robert T. Handy, “Sources for Understanding American Christian Attitude towards the Holy Land, 1800–1959,” in Moshe Davis (ed.), *With Eyes toward Zion*, New York, 1977, pp. 34–66; Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, “Non-Jewish Institutions and the Research of Palestine during the British Mandate Period,” Part One, *Cathedra*, 92, June, 1999, pp. 135–172; Part Two, 93, September, 1999, pp. 111–152 (Hebrew).

²³¹ It was organized by John Garstang, a professor of archaeology from Liverpool, who was director of the School of Archaeology in Jerusalem. See: Rachela Makover, *Government and Administration of Palestine, 1917–1925*, Jerusalem, 1984, pp. 170–171 (Hebrew).

vestiges from the Jewish past. For example, after returning from a visit to the country at the end of the nineteenth century, the learned religious member of the *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) movement Avraham Samuel Herschberg (1858–1943) described the “foreign” archaeological activity (in particular that of Macalister at Gezer) and lamented that “but from among our own people, who should be most deeply absorbed in these excavations, no one joins in them.”²³² Not every one shared his regret. An educated orthodox man wrote in the Jerusalem newspaper *Havatzelet* that there was no need for Jews to raise up “ancient treasures” from the belly of the earth, and they ought not to waste their energy on excavations, because no good will come of it, and in any case they are not the basis for faith, but rather the schools and the *Talmudei Torah* were.²³³ The editor of the newspaper, Israel Dov Frumkin (1850–1914) hastened to reply to these remarks, and wrote that it is difficult to understand why Jews take no interest in the antiquities of their land, as people of other nations do. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922), the “reviver” of the Hebrew language as a lingua franca, also expressed his surprise at the indifference of the educated Jews of Jerusalem, for it is only via the archaeological finds, he wrote, that one can “understand the words of our Torah; hence it [archaeology] will cast light on all of our history.”²³⁴ The newspapers he edited did in fact print every piece of news about excavations conducted in Palestine. In 1904, the agronomist and statesman Aaron Aaronsohn (1876–1919) wrote in his diary about a lecture he had heard in Jerusalem by the German archaeologist Immanuel Benzinger (1865–1935) on his excavations at Tel-Mutesellim (Megiddo), which he began in 1902:

Normally, I do not take an interest in these excavations nor do I have any complaints when I see the Gentiles engaging in them. But when he [Benzinger] told about an altar and two tablets he found and passed photographs of them to the audience, I felt a slight twinge, as if a desecrating hand had touched something very sacred to us, although I had imagined that I was totally free of any religious superstition.²³⁵

²³² A. S. Herschberg, *In Oriental Lands*, Vilna, 1910, Jerusalem edition, 1977, p. 319 (Hebrew).

²³³ *Chavatzelet*, 20, April 1890. In 1864, members of the old Yishuv protested against the excavations being conducted by the French archaeologist L.F.J. Caignart de Saulcy at the tombs of the kings (a large system of tombs carved in rock in Eastern Jerusalem), which were mistakenly identified as belonging to the First Temple period. The newspaper *Hamelitz* wrote in 1864 that this activity was desecration by atheist Frenchmen of “the holiness of the people and tombs slumbering in the earth.”

²³⁴ E. Ben-Yehudah, *Chavatzelet*, 13, May, 1883.

²³⁵ See: Eliezer Livneh, *Aaron Aaronsohn, His Life and Times*, Jerusalem, 1969, p. 106 (Hebrew).

In 1912, the journalist David Smilansky (1875–1953), writing in nascent Tel Aviv, told his readers in Russia about a lecture by the German archaeologist Carl Watzinger (1877–1948) in which he discussed his own excavations in Jericho and those of Ernst Sellin (1867–1945) and Gottlieb Schumacher (1857–1924) in Ta'anach and Megiddo, and concluded by saying:

Thus Christian Germans are working in our historical homeland. Both religious and scientific interests are driving forces behind their activities. And we, who should be the party most interested in the success of these archaeological excavations, do almost nothing in this field and leave it to whoever else wants it: Germans, Americans, British.²³⁶

However, we should distinguish between an interest in excavations and participation in them, which was perceived as part of the process of national restoration and a demonstration of belongingness. In Chapter Three, we saw that the press in Palestine showed an interest in excavations in Palestine and its surroundings. However, the Jews who immigrated to Palestine in the First and Second Aliya (1882–1914) did not feel the need to go on pilgrimages to archaeological sites in order to strengthen their ties to the Land of Israel; for them the Bible and the visible “scenes of the Bible” were sufficient. These were part of what was known as “knowledge of the land” (a translation of the German concept, *Landeskunde*).²³⁷ Apparently the main interest was focused on biblical geography, in particular toponymy, namely, identifying settlements and sites mentioned in the Bible.²³⁸ The purpose of the first books in this field, such as *Mechkerei eretz* (A Biblical Geography) by Salomon Loewison (Vienna, 1819), which was adapted by Yaakov Kaplan under the title *Eretz kedumim* (Vilna, 1839), was to help their readers understand the Bible. The geographical guides that appeared in the coming years were intended to provide knowledge of the physical and historical geography of the country: Yehoseph Schwartz's (1804–1865) *Tevu'at ha'aretz*, 1845 (English translation by Isaac Leeser, entitled *A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine* (Philadelphia, 1850)), and Abraham Moses Luntz's (1854–1918) *Moreh derekh be'Eretz Israel uveSuriah* (Guidebook of Palestine and Syria, 1891). From the '40s, more extensive and popular guides began to appear, which of course included updated information about the results

²³⁶ David Smilansky, *A Town is Born* (Y. Katz, ed.), Tel Aviv, 1981, p. 34 (Hebrew).

²³⁷ Yoram Bar-Gal, *Moledet and Geography in a Hundred Years of Zionist Education*, Tel Aviv, 1993, (Hebrew).

²³⁸ See: Yoel Elizur, *Ancient Place Names in the Holy Land: Preservation and History*, Jerusalem, 2004 (Hebrew).

of archaeological research.²³⁹ The maps they contained created a new geographical space that possessed both a concrete and a symbolic character. In 1929, Professor Samuel Klein (1886–1940), a graduate of the Berlin Rabbinical Seminary, was appointed as professor of historical topography of Eretz Israel at the Hebrew University.²⁴⁰

And what about impressions gained in ways other than through the literature? There are some testimonies from visits to excavations conducted at sites from the biblical period that “resurrected the Bible.” Yitzchak Ben-Zvi (1884–1963), a leader of the Second Aliya (and later the second president of the State of Israel from 1952–1963) and scholar of the country’s history, wrote about his impressions from a visit he paid to the excavations of the Irish archaeologist Robert Alexander S. Macalister (1870–1950) at tel Gezer, which began in 1902:

Sad thoughts filled my mind. Here hidden in the earth is a time past, and the archaeologists come and dig up relics and glue one relic to another and one shard to another, and the ancient period comes to life in front of our eyes. Can we not also succeed in gluing together the relics of a people that will rise up and become one body, a living people in control of its own fate?²⁴¹

The discovery in the 1908 excavation of the Gezer calendar – a small stone tablet from the 10th century B.C. – made a particularly strong impression because it enumerated the months of the year according to agricultural tasks and was written in ancient Hebrew script – an expression of the link from the time of antiquity between the people and the land, which was considered to be the center of the universe.

The visitor to the excavations led by the American archaeologist William Frederic Bade (1871–1936)²⁴² at tel en Nasbeh, the biblical

²³⁹ In issue No. 4 of *Luach Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1895) edited by Luntz, the blind scholar wrote that when the time of a Hebrew “science of the Holy Land” arrives, articles from European languages should be translated into Hebrew in order to publicize the “information, the many studies and discoveries that have already been made by other nations in their researches and excavations for fifty years.” Only then would an end be put to this situation of paucity, in which the science of the Holy Land is like a “sealed book” to the Hebrew reader. The most popular of these guides were: Ze’ev Vilnay’s (1900–1988) *Guide to Eretz Israel* (Hebrew), and *Did you Know the Land?* by Yosef Breslavi (1896–1972) (Hebrew). On Vilnay, see the article “Zeev Vilnay’s Contribution to Literature on the Geography of the Land,” in Eli Schiller (ed.), *Sefer Ze’ev Vilnay: Essays on the History, Archaeology and Lore of the Holy Land*, Jerusalem, 1984, pp. 25–28 (Hebrew).

²⁴⁰ Klein wrote, *inter alia*, *Toledot haYishuv be’Eretz Yisrael* (History of the Jewish Settlement in Palestine), 1935.

²⁴¹ Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, *Memories and Notes*, Tel Aviv, 1966, pp. 40–42 (Hebrew).

²⁴² Bade, a professor of Semitic languages and the Old Testament, founded the Palestine Institute of the Pacific School of Religion, which he directed until 1928. In 1928 he began to dig at Tell en-Nasbeh north of Jerusalem, an excavation that

Mitzpah, was moved and spiritually uplifted. He underscored the symbolic dimension he found in the discovery of the seal of “Ya’azanyahu servant of the king,” which, in his view, attested to the biblical description of the location as the last refuge of the soldiers in the Babylonian army (II Kings, 25:23).

This small seal ... if anyone doubted how much connection there is between Jacob and this land, they would say to him – go and peruse that book. And if anyone doubted the truth of that book; [saying] fine and good, but who will prove it is accurate and historical? They would say to him: go take a look at that stone ring, upon which is engraved a lasting testimony ... Pick up this stone and pass your glance from the engraved side to the other side where there is the eye ... this wondrous eye is evidence that the hand of a stone mason carved it in the stone, and you will see with your senses that this is the eye of the heavens, which looks at you from the darkness of past generations and gazes from the depths of the lower netherworld, from which it miraculously rolled forth into the light of the world after two thousand years.²⁴³

Another event that aroused great excitement was the discovery of the Lachish letters at tel ed-Duweir (the ancient city of Lachish destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.), which was excavated by a British expedition led by James Leslie Starkey (1895–1938) early in 1935. The letters – a group of potsherds written in ancient Hebrew in ink – were deciphered and published by N.H. Tur-Sinai.²⁴⁴ It was described as an enormously important discovery which not only confirmed the contents of II Kings 18:13–14 and Jeremiah 7:34, but also provided evidence of the fact that writing was widespread in ancient Israel in 600 B.C. (leading to the conclusion that scribes were capable of writing down the books of the Bible).²⁴⁵

And what about archaeological research itself?

The first attempt to encourage Hebrew archaeology was made in 1913, on the eve of World War I, when the Hebrew Society for the

lasted for five seasons. See: W.F. Bade, *Recording of the Tell en Nasbeh Expedition in Palestine*, Berkeley, Calif., 1937.

²⁴³ “In the Paths of the Earth,” an article in *Hapoel Hatzair*, July 11, 1932 (Hebrew). The seal is from the end of the 9th – beginning of the 8th century B.C. See: C.C. McCown et al., *Tell en-Nasbeh: Archaeological and Historical Results*, Berkeley, 1947, p. 163.

²⁴⁴ On the history of the excavation and the letters, see: Z.B. Begin, *As We do not see Azekah: The Source of the Lachish Letters*, Jerusalem, 2000 (Hebrew).

²⁴⁵ See: N.H. Torczyner, “Evidence in the Letters of Lachish,” *The Jewish Daily Post*, 2. July 1935; Ze’ev Vilnay, “Lachish,” *Ha’aretz*, 6 August, 1935. The biblical scholar, Simon Bernfeld reacted vehemently to publications about the discovery, which he believed was of no importance: idem, “A Hypothesis Hanging by a Thread,” *Davar*, 4. October 1935. This is the same Bernfeld who in 1897 wrote that evidence had been found attesting to the story of the war of the kings (Genesis 14).

Study of Palestine and its Antiquities was founded in Jerusalem. The geographer Abraham Jacob Brawer (1897–1961), one of its founders, wrote that the reason for its establishment was “the disgrace that broke our hearts in view of the activities of strangers – British, German and French – in the study of Eretz Israel.” In 1920, the year in which British civil rule began in Palestine, the society renewed its activity under the name the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society. Its secretary, Isaiah Press (1874–1955) declared that the establishment of such an institution was imperative for both cultural and national-political reasons. He found it scandalous that Jews stood by idly as various nations conducted archaeological research on the Holy Land via their respective institutions in Jerusalem. Press called the creation of a corresponding Hebrew institution to survey the land’s antiquities “in the spirit of Israel” a “holy duty.”²⁴⁶

In 1925, the Society had 130 registered members and it undertook to issue a regular scientific bulletin,²⁴⁷ to establish a Hebrew institute for research on Eretz Israel, to organize public lectures and to conduct “excavations deep inside the soil of our land.”²⁴⁸ The society also appealed to the public to inform it of “every single thing uncovered in the earth.” In the near future, Press declared,

At all the historical locations, the soil of our land will be overturned, from top to bottom and from bottom to top, so that all of its secrets are revealed. Self-respect and the good of science urgently demand of us that we too play an important part in these excavations and research, whether within the framework of other societies, or by ourselves and at our own expense.

This expectation, however, was not fully met. While during the mandatory period, Christian archaeologists excavated many sites from the

²⁴⁶ Collection of the Hebrew Society for the Study of Jerusalem and Its Antiquities, I, 1921 (Hebrew).

²⁴⁷ In the *Palestine Yearbook* (Tel Aviv 1925), the teacher and critic, Dr. Avraham Zifroni (1882–1933) wrote about the second bulletin of the Society in 1924 that it enriches our knowledge about research on Eretz Israel, and the coming issues “will absolve us of the disgrace that until now we did almost nothing to investigate our own country.” *Ibid.*, p. 388 (Hebrew).

²⁴⁸ A. Y. Brawer, “From the Early Days of the Hebrew Society for the Study of Palestine and Its Antiquities,” in *Galilee and the Coast of Galilee: The 19th Archaeological Convention of the Israel Exploration Society*, October 1961, Jerusalem, 1965, pp. 228–236 (Hebrew). And see: Yaakov Shavit, “Archaeology, Political Culture and Culture in Israel,” in Neil Asher Silberman & David Small (eds.), *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 48–61. On the history of the Antiquities Authority, see: Ronny Reich, “The Israel Antiquities Authority,” in J. Amitai (ed.), *Biblical Archaeology Today*, Jerusalem, 1985, pp. 27–30; Ofer Bar Yosef and A. Mazar, “Israeli Archaeology,” in *World Archaeology*, 13, 1981/1982, pp. 310–325.

biblical period, during this time Jewish archaeologists only excavated five sites from the First Temple period (in contrast to 21 from the Second Temple period and 17 from the time of the Mishnah and the Talmud).²⁴⁹ In discussions prior to the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the argument was made that an historical-archaeological institute should be the first research institute to be established in it, and such an institute was created in 1926, a year after the university's establishment. However, only in 1935 was Eliezer Lipa Sukenik (1889–1953)²⁵⁰ appointed as a lecturer in the archaeology of Palestine from the Early Bronze period to the Byzantine period. In 1942, a museum of Jewish antiquities was founded at the Hebrew University.

Israeli archaeology began with the establishment of the State of Israel. On July 26, 1948, the Government Department of Antiquities was established, with hundreds of "friends" throughout the country. From 1948–1967, 132 excavations were conducted in Israel by Israeli archaeologists, while foreign archaeologists continued to conduct their own. Out of these, 36 were at First Temple sites (compared to 54 at prehistoric sites and 19 at Second Temple sites).²⁵¹

How were the content and the objectives of the "Hebrew science of archaeology" perceived? What expression was to be given to the supposed nationalization of archaeological research carried out by Jewish scholars?

First, in the selection of sites that belonged to the history of the Jewish people (during the Mandate, we will recall, preference was given to Second Temple sites). Second, in the inception of a Jewish periodization. Jews, Y. Ben-Zvi wrote in 1950, should use terms such as the "period of the Patriarchs" or the "First Temple period" that stress the "Jewish character" of the land. By using Hebrew terminology, he concluded, "we will compensate for the meager history of our nation and, at the same time, we will be more precise."²⁵² Indeed, in nearly all the Hebrew publications, the accepted periodization was

²⁴⁹ Figures based on: Gilad Ostrovsky, *The Attitude towards Archaeology as a Tool in Structuring the Image of the Country During British Rule and the Early Days of the State of Israel*, M. A. thesis, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, April, 2000 (Hebrew).

²⁵⁰ In 1940, together with Leo Arye Mayer (1895–1959), Sukenik uncovered the third wall in Jerusalem, and in 1947 acquired some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. On the Institute, see: Amnon Ben-Tor, "The Institute of Archaeology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," in *The Biblical Archaeologist*, 56 (3), 1993, pp. 121–153.

²⁵¹ Ostrovsky, *The Attitude to Archaeology*, pp. 71–77.

²⁵² Y. Ben-Zvi, "In the Caves of the Cliffs and Crevices of the Boulder," *Molad*, 10–11, 1953, pp. 237–241 (Hebrew).

from the biblical tradition: the period of the Patriarchs, period of the Judges, and the like. Third, in the interpretation of the archaeological finds as supporting and affirming the national Zionist historical narrative. For example, the excavations, whose first season was in October–December 1948, at tel Qasile, in the soil of the Arab village Sheik Muanis (which after 1948 became part of Tel Aviv) on the banks of the Yarkon river, were the first archaeological excavations in the State of Israel, and they evoked great excitement. Dr. Benjamin Maisler (Mazar, 1906–1995) who was responsible for the excavation, announced that they had discovered “ruins of the ancient Israelite city on the Yarkon.”²⁵³ The public excitement led the poet Nathan Alterman (1910–1970) to write in his weekly column “Hatur hashevi’i” in *Davar*, about the “miracle” in the form of the first Israeli excavation in the State of Israel, which illustrated the link between the ancient Hebrew city and Jewish existence in the new Jewish state.²⁵⁴

Biblical Archaeology vs. Archaeology of the Biblical Period

Against the background of these words, it is no wonder that Israeli archaeological research on the biblical period was regarded by its critics as a national archaeology committed to digging for roots in order to produce a concrete continuity between the ancient past and the present, and thus establishing a national-historical narrative of a link to the land and an historical right to ownership of it and sovereignty over it.²⁵⁵ Thus, for example, in 1949, David Ben-Gurion praised

²⁵³ *Yediot Iriyat Tel Aviv* (News of the Tel Aviv Municipality), 19 (1–2), May–June 1949, p. 8.

²⁵⁴ Nathan Alterman, “The New City,” *Davar*, 24. December 1948 (Hebrew).

²⁵⁵ See, from among the many articles and books on the subject: Magen Broshi, “Religion, Ideology and Politics, and their Impact on Palestinian Archaeology,” *Israeli Museum Journal*, 6, 1987, pp. 17–32; Aharon Kempinski, “Die Archäologie als bestimmender Faktor in der israelischen Gesellschaft und Kultur, *Judaism*, 38, 1989, pp. 2–20; Rachel S. Hallote and Alexander H. Joffe, “The Politics of Israeli Archaeology: Between ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Science’ in the Age of the Second Republic,” *Israel Studies*, 7 (3), Fall 2002, pp. 84–116; Nadia Abu El-haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, Chicago, 2001; idem, “Producing (Arti)Facts: Archaeology and Power During the British Mandate of Palestine, *Israel Studies* 7 (2), Summer 2002, pp. 33–61; Amy Dockser Marcus, *The View from Nebo: How Archaeology is Rewriting the Bible and Reshaping the Middle East*, Boston, 2000; Terje Oestigaard, *Political Archaeology and Holy Nationalism: The Struggle for Palestine’s Past*, Vancouver,

“Jewish archaeology” all of whose “conquests were bringing our past up to date and giving concrete form to our historical continuity in the land.”²⁵⁶ From this standpoint, biblical archaeology was a nationalistic archaeology whose aim was to prove the exclusive link of a defined group to a specific country and the reliability of its ancient past, and to play an active role in creating a cohesive national identity, a nearly universal phenomenon.²⁵⁷ A sharper critical claim was that biblical archaeology participated in the colonial project, first the Western, and then the Zionist, in Palestine, and its aim was to create an invented past that would legitimize and morally justify the Zionist project.²⁵⁸

On the internal scene, the criticism was voiced that at least from the ’20s onward – particularly in the 1950s – biblical archaeology became a public cult, part of the new Jewish “secular religion,” an important part of the new system of belief,²⁵⁹ and a national hobby, as well as evidence of the basic weakness of this secular religion. According to this argument, archaeology, which is nothing more than the “corpse of history disintegrating into these crumbled remains, cannot take the place of its soul, which lies concealed in the recesses

2002; Neil Asher Silberman, “Structuring the Past: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Symbolic Authority of Archaeological Monuments,” in N. A. Silberman & David B. Small (eds.), *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, Sheffield, 1997, pp. 63–81; J. Blenkinsopp, “The Bible, Archaeology and Politics, or the Empty Land Revisited,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 87, 2000, pp. 187–189; Thomas W. Davis, *Shifting Sands: The Rise and Fall of Biblical Archaeology*, Oxford, 2004.

²⁵⁶ Remarks made at the Sixth Convention on Israeli Geography, Succoth, 1950, in *Yediot HaChevrah Halvrit LeYediat Eretz Israel veAtikoteha*, 15, 1950, p. 125.

²⁵⁷ See, *inter alia*, Bernard Lewis, *History – Remembered, Recovered, Invented*, Princeton, NJ, 1976 (2nd edn.); Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett (eds.), *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*, Cambridge, 1955; Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson (eds.), *Making Alternative Histories: The Practice of Archaeology and History in Non-Western Settings*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1995; Lynn Meskell (ed.), *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East*; Margarita Diaz-Andreu Garcia and Timothy C. Champion (eds.) *Nationalism and Archaeology in Europe*, London, 1996; P. Graves-Brown, S. Jones, C. Gamble (eds.) *Cultural Identity and Archaeology: The Construction of European Communities*, London, 1999.

²⁵⁸ See: Michael P. Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*, Sheffield, 1997. Our comment about these claims is that one should distinguish between an argument about the political use made of the archaeological finds and the issue of whether the interpretation and significance assigned to the find in the research are manipulative in nature, namely that there was a fallacious report or even a forgery. In other words, a political or any other use of archaeological research does not in itself negate the scientific validity of its claims.

²⁵⁹ Charles S. Liebman and E. Don-Yehiya, *Traditional Judaism and Political Culture in the Jewish State*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1983, pp. 110–112.

of the people's cultural memory.”²⁶⁰ In other words, those for whom the Bible is merely a book of history, and not a theological book, need tangible remains, but these cannot provide spiritual content (one can reply to this argument that archaeological research does not reveal only physical remains – inanimate objects, figurines, shards, ruins of buildings and the like – from which one can also learn much about the culture and spiritual life, but also documents of various types, which also reflect the *Zeitgeist* and its culture).

In fact, the archaeological find in itself has no significance or value unless it is placed within the frame of a picture of the past and influences the shaping of this picture. It is not the tell or the site that determines the picture of the past, but the literature that makes use of the find. Accordingly, the major importance and value that the public discourse in Israel bequeathed to archaeological research depended not on its being a cult, but on the manner in which it contributed to verifying the biblical historical story and illuminating the picture of the ancient past of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel in the time of the Bible. Its cardinal value lay in the extent of its contribution to reconstructing the ancient national past by its discovery, recovery, or according to some, its invention of that past. Albright, who greatly influenced archaeological research in Israel, wrote that archaeology “does not support either the extreme radical school of biblical scholars or the ultra-conservative wing.”²⁶¹ In 1938, the German Bible scholar Martin Noth (1902–1968), who was head of the German Evangelical Institute in Jerusalem, wrote:

We should acknowledge the fact that in light of the archaeological investigations, we know less about the historical events mentioned [in the Bible] than we are ready to admit, and that the interpretation of archaeological finds against the background of written traditions is far more problematic and complicated than it seems at first glance, and this because of the nature of the latter.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Eliezer Schweid, *The Land of Israel: National Home or Land of Destiny*, trans. Deborah Greniman, London and Toronto, 1984, p. 208. In *Shira*, S. Y. Agnon derisively describes the career made by the scholar of antiquities from the Hebrew University Prof. Wexler (apparently a character based on Lipa [Eliezer] Sukenik) on the basis of his decipherment of an old amulet, which he believes is written in Hebrew letters. See: S. Y. Agnon, *Shira*, pp. 139–141.

²⁶¹ W.F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible*, New York, 1932, p. 128.

²⁶² See: Martin Noth, “Grundsätzliches zur geschichtlichen Deutung archäologischer Befunde auf dem Boden Palästinas,” *Palästinajahrbuch des deutschen Evangelischen Instituts für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem*, 34, 1938, p. 22. In 2005, N. Na’aman worded this position as follows: “Scholars are more conscious today of the many problems inherent in the study of the Bible as a source

As a generalization, one can say that there are three basic positions relating to the Bible as history: a) the position that the biblical testimony is totally compatible with the picture that arises from archaeological research; b) the position that there is partial, or limited, compatibility between the two (and it also distinguishes between “history” and “historiography”; namely, that the biblical historical story was shaped by a theohistorical view, and hence the historical layer in the Bible is important primarily because it reflects the historical consciousness of the Jewish people in the biblical period and the manner in which it shaped its unique picture of the past in the coming generations); c) The position that totally denies the historical veracity of the Bible. It has been called “minimalism” because it denies the very existence of the Jewish people as a separate ethnic-religious entity. It argues that the Bible was written during the Persian era, or even in the Hellenistic period, and is a distinct product of the desire of the Jews in the Second Temple period to “invent” a past for themselves. According to this argument, not only do the archaeological finds fail to confirm the biblical story, but they actually undermine its reliability, or totally refute it. The historical picture in the Bible is merely a legend, a myth or invented history, and the Jewish people did not exist at all in the biblical period.²⁶³

This last position was not accepted by most scholars in Israel and certainly was totally rejected by the educated public, and we will not discuss it here.²⁶⁴ The second position is probably the one accepted by

for the history of Israel and of the need for a thorough literary critical analysis of the text before taking it as evidence of ancient reality.” In Nadav Na’aman, *Ancient Israel and its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 2005, p. 1; Mario Liverani, *Israel’s History and the History of Israel*, trans. Chiara Peri and Philip R. Davies, London, 2006. This is the most comprehensive book on the distinction between “history” and “invented history.” However, its author does not suggest a satisfactory solution for the question as to what motivated the composers of the Bible to “invent” an historical narrative which also includes unfavorable details about the history of the Jewish people, nor a coherent history of his own.

²⁶³ Among the books representing this approach, we will cite only: Philip R. Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’*, Sheffield, 1992; Niels P. Lemche, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society before the Monarchy*, Leiden, 1985; Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources*, Leiden, 1992; Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, London and New York, 1996. This theory met with many justified critiques. See, for example: Zipora Talshir, “Textual and Literary Criticism of the Bible in Post-Modern Times: The Untimely Demise of Classical Biblical Philology,” *Henoch*, 21, 1999, pp. 235–251; Baruch Halpern, “Erasing History: The Minimalist Assault on Ancient Israel,” *Bible Review*, 11 (6), 1995, pp. 26–35, 47.

²⁶⁴ In our view too, this position is full of substantive contradictions, but this is not the place to enumerate them. We will not cite here all the arguments put forward

the majority of the secular public. At this point, we will attempt to elucidate the first position and to discuss some of the dilemmas that are inherent in both of its branches – the secular and the religious.

Historical Biblical Fundamentalism – Secular and Religious

We have suggested that the view which grants total reliability and veracity to the biblical historical picture be termed historical biblical fundamentalism or scripturalism. A view of this kind believes in biblical inerrancy, and in our context, in the Bible's inerrancy as an historical, not a theological document. A large segment of the "free-thinking" Israeli public adheres to this approach, and obviously all of the national-religious public. In both of these publics, the historical-biblical fundamentalist view legitimizes the use of extra-biblical evidence, and it is a product of the granting of this legitimacy.

This fundamentalism, however, differs from Christian evangelical fundamentalism. As is well known, fundamentalism is the name given to a phenomenon that developed in Protestant Christianity, particularly in its Evangelical stream, and first emerged in the eighteenth century as a counter-reaction to rationalist skepticism, and an extension of the counter-reaction to liberal Protestant theology. The enemies against which it waged a campaign were science – from philology to anthropology – and liberal theology.²⁶⁵ The challenge to the founda-

against the minimalist position, but will merely make a comment based on common sense: regardless of whether ancient Israel was "invented" at the end of the monarchic period, or after the return from Exile, it is hard to understand why the narrators chose to invent and narrate an historical plot such as the one that appears in the Bible, rather than a narrative that is uniform in character.

²⁶⁵ Among the many books on this subject, see: George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925*, Oxford, 1982; Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalism Observed*, Chicago, 1991; Kathleen C. Boone, *The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism*, New York, 1989; James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, London, 1977; idem, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1980; Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Divided Mind of Protestant America, 1880–1930*, Tussaloosa, Alabama, 1982; Shaul Adler, "Thomas Huxley and Bible Criticism," *Davar Yearbook*, Tel Aviv, 1957, pp. 290–302 (Hebrew). David S. Katz, "The Hutchinsonianism and Hebraic Fundamentalism in Eighteenth-Century England", in D. S. Katz and J. I. Israel (eds.), *Sceptics, Millenarians, and Jews*, Leiden, 1990, pp. 237–55; Eldred C. Vanderlaan, *Fundamentalism vs. Modernism*, New York, 1925; Norman F. Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918–1931*, New Haven, Connecticut, 1954; William G. McLoughlin, *Re-*

tion stones of faith in the authority of the Bible gave rise to an all-encompassing counter-reaction, whose modern character was expressed in an attempt to rebuild the walls of faith according to scientific criteria. The major claim of this attempt was that it is based on rational and scientific assumptions, namely, on the belief that science corroborates the Bible. According to this view, human intelligence affirms the truth of the Bible's testimony. Fundamentalism of this sort took shape in the United States as an organized movement between 1909–1915, and it rejected the argument that theological dogma is the sole weapon that the believer in the Bible needs to use, and that anyone who believes that God created the world and continued to intervene in it needs no scientific proofs, since the scientific proofs can offer no evidence.²⁶⁶ This modern religious fundamentalist view believes in supernaturalism, namely that the Holy Scriptures (the Bible and the New Testament) are the living words of God, an unchallengeable authority, that were given to them from the very beginning, not passed down to them in the generations that came after their composition, and that they are inerrant, including absolute authority in relation to the creation of the world and the history of the human race. Moreover, this view holds that every detail in the biblical description (including the miracles) is both scientifically and historically correct. In other words, evangelical fundamentalism argues that there is total compatibility between scientific thought and its conclusions and the Bible, as it is literally read, with complete faith and absolute confidence that science – including archaeological research – corroborates the Bible.

Is there not an internal contradiction in the term secular fundamentalism? Not if we mean that historical-biblical fundamentalism does not claim that the Bible contains absolute answers to all questions of human and social action. Its interest lies in the Bible as historical testimony, not as a theological document, and if the Bible gives a theohistorical explanation for events, it attempts to reveal their worldly truth. Such fundamentalism accepts the view that a large part of the books of the Bible are a human creation, but for that very reason, it believes that these human authors based their writing on reli-

vivals, Awakenings and Reform, Chicago, 1980 (paperback edn.); Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*, New York, 1993 edn., pp. 218–233; Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism; British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930*, Chicago, 1970.

²⁶⁶ Fundamentalist books ignore what preoccupied the rival camps in the Babel-Bibel controversy, namely the possibility that the source of biblical cosmology and the Mosaic code is Mesopotamian or Egyptian.

able sources and wrote history “as it truly was.” Even if it is true that the books of the Bible were written at different times, and even if they express different views and interests, nonetheless they are anchored in authentic, reliable historical traditions. Hence, the secular historical-biblical fundamentalist will accept the view that the religion of the Bible passed through different phases of historical development, and that parts of the biblical stories are legends, even myths. However, he will find it hard to accept challenges and doubts as to the reliability of the greater part of the historical story in the books of the Pentateuch, and certainly in the other books, and will tend to maximize the reliable historical layer. The challenge to the historical reliability of the Bible is perceived as undermining faith in the Zionist idea, or even as cultural nihilism.

There are several inherent problems in this view. We will illustrate them through the attitude of the biblical scholar Yehezkel Kaufmann, and David Ben-Gurion, who regarded himself as his student (he wrote that Kaufmann had wrought a “Copernican revolution in Bible study and had totally demolished the Bible criticism of Wellhausen’s school”²⁶⁷), to the link between archaeology and the Bible as history based on how they relate to the tradition of the exodus from Egypt.

Kaufmann, we will recall, did not believe in a divinely given Torah, but in one that originated in the unique genius of the Jewish people, a genius that created the idea of monotheism *ex nihilo*, as a primal act independent of anything that existed previously.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, he believed that the Bible provided a reliable description of the development of the faith and history of the people, and that it faithfully reflected the historical reality in the First Temple period. Thus, for example, Kaufmann believed Moses was an historical figure, since, in his view, what is written about him in the Pentateuch is basically confirmed by reliable historical facts,²⁶⁹ and he regarded the tradition of the exodus from Egypt as a reliable description of the years of wandering (it was only the theophany on Mt. Sinai that he described as a “legend” or “tradition”), for which archaeology is unable to provide any evidence, because no physical monuments have remained from that period, neither sphinxes nor pyramids, temples,

²⁶⁷ David Ben-Gurion, “Father of the Hebrew Nation” (On the Patriarch Abraham), in *Biblical Reflections*, Tel Aviv, 1969, pp. 95–96 (Hebrew).

²⁶⁸ See Chapter Two and Zvi Medin, “The Concept of Jewish Nationalism in the Thought of Yehezkel Kaufmann,” *Zionism*, 7, 1981, 36–72.

²⁶⁹ Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, 1976, vol. 2, Book 1, p. 37 (Hebrew).

or tombs, carvings, or inscriptions. Archaeology is of little help in understanding the period, but anyone perusing the biblical literature can discern in it phenomena that can provide the same testimony as monuments.²⁷⁰

In other words, in Kaufmann's opinion, wherever there is no archaeological evidence, it is enough to expose the historical core of the biblical story itself, and the exodus from Egypt (he dedicated a few pages to its description) is an historical fact that is indisputable.²⁷¹ At the same time, he used archaeological finds only when he believed they were consistent with his views. Thus, for example, he turned to documents from ancient Egypt to date the period of enslavement.

Ben-Gurion's historical approach was, generally, "conservative," and he regarded biblical historiography as a reliable historical story. He was aware that the Bible wished to impart a "religious lesson," but as far as he was concerned, it was primarily an historical source and a guide for behavior in the present.²⁷² He found perfection and unity in the Bible, although he agreed that possibly here and there, "several verses were distorted, omitted or added." Consequently, he claimed, "the biblical testimony on historical events in the not too distant past, which preceded its composition, are more believable than the premises of German hair-splitters and others in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." Although he praised biblical archaeology for testifying to the continual historical presence of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel, and revealing its concrete aspects, he did not rely on archaeological finds or on documents from the ancient East, but rather believed that the Bible is not dependent on archaeology (nor on the *midrash*), and that it ought to be understood based upon its content: "The Bible shines from its own light," he stated in 1953.²⁷³ The role of the biblical scholar, he argued, is to uncover the factual historical core of the biblical story, to reconcile contradictions and to correctly understand the meaning of the verses.

Our claim that Ben-Gurion's view was "conservative" or even historical-fundamentalist, may seem surprising against the background of the event we will next describe.

²⁷⁰ Kaufmann, *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 8–9.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, Book 1, pp. 60–66.

²⁷² See the collection, *Studies in the Book of Judges: Discussion of the Bible Circle in David Ben-Gurion's Home*, Jerusalem, 1966, pp. 192–194 (Hebrew); and see also: David Ben Gurion, *Ben-Gurion Looks at the Bible*, trans., Jonathan Kolatch, London, 1972.

²⁷³ Ben-Gurion, in *Biblical Reflections*, pp. 41–49.

In a lecture he delivered on May 25, 1960 before the Israel Journalists Association, Ben-Gurion put forward the theory that the biblical description of the story of the exodus from Egypt and the settlement in Canaan deliberately omitted the fact that the Hebrews had remained in Canaan even after a small number of them descended into Egypt:

I accept the exodus from Egypt and Moses's appearance at the theophany on Mt. Sinai as unquestioned facts. These are central, decisive events in the history of our people, and their traces are evident to this very day. But, in my opinion, only a few families – among the most highly ranked or perhaps also the most important – descended into Egypt. The remaining masses of the children of Israel remained among the peoples of Canaan.²⁷⁴

There was nothing new in Ben-Gurion's views about the exodus from Egypt. Shlomo Rubin, for example, had already expressed them in his book *Eretz ha'ivvim* (1884, Land of the Hebrews).²⁷⁵ Itamar Ben-Avi (1882–1943), the son of Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, who was known as "the first Hebrew child," suggested his own theory about the autochthony of the children of Israel in Eretz Israel, in his book *Canaan Our Land, 5000 Years of Israel Uninterrupted in its Land*, Jerusalem, 1932 (Hebrew).²⁷⁶

However, the fact that an hypothesis of this sort was voiced by a Prime Minister, who prided himself on being an amateur Bible

²⁷⁴ See: Ben-Gurion, "The Exodus from Egypt," in *Biblical Reflections*, pp. 243–252. He had previously expressed this view, but not in public. See: "The Antiquity of Israel in its Land," 1959, *ibid.*, pp. 50–68, and "The Antiquity of the Hebrews," *ibid.*, pp. 164–182.

²⁷⁵ See also: Theophile Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, New York, 1936, pp. 29–33; Samuel I. Feigin, "The Early Hebrews," in Menachem Ribolow and Zevi Scharfstein (eds.), *Sefer Hashanah: The American Hebrew Year Book*, New York, 1938, pp. 46–58.

²⁷⁶ In his view, the correct reading of the verse: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto a land that I will shew thee" (Genesis 12:1) should be: "Get thee out of thy land and out of thy birthplace of thy father's land to the land which is your land." In the book, he presented an historical version of the antiquity of the Hebrews in the Land of Israel and of the conquest of the land by the Hebrews, led by Joshua the "Canaanite" who joined with the Hebrews who had remained in the land and had not been forced to emigrate from it. The Canaanites are thus none other than ancient Hebrews – the children of Israel – who "subdued", that is, captured the land. Ben-Gurion also argued that Abraham went into the Land of Canaan because in it there was a people, or tribes, that believed as he did in one God, "God the possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:22). See: Yaakov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation: A Study in Israeli Heresy and Fantasy*, London, 1987, pp. 16–17. Ben-Avi did not relate to the descent of Jacob and his sons into Egypt. It is important to note that according to this theory, the Hebrews did not come to Eretz Israel as conquerors, but had been inhabitants there from time immemorial and the majority did not leave it to go to Egypt.

scholar, gave added weight to this view and immediately made it the subject of a public controversy. Not only did the religious public take exception to this idea of Ben-Gurion's for obvious reasons, but the secular public was also opposed to it, because for it the exodus from Egypt was the formative historical event in Jewish history. The ultra-orthodox Agudat Yisrael faction in the Knesset hastened to submit a proposal for a vote of non-confidence in the government on May 18, 1960, which was rejected by a large majority.²⁷⁷ Its spokesman, Rabbi Yitzhak Meir Levin, argued in the Knesset that since the Prime Minister had uttered these words in public, and they had been widely publicized, they no longer constituted a personal opinion, and hence there was a basis for expressing non-confidence in the government. Rabbi Levin was not content to merely repeat the view of the faithful, that the history of the Jewish people is an unbroken chain of miracles and wonders wrought by God. He also countered Ben-Gurion's theory with his own interpretation. The argument he posed, for example, to the Prime Minister was: is it possible that the Egyptians would have been frightened by only 600 men and women? The entire essence of the story of the exodus from Egypt is that of the exodus from slavery to freedom of an entire people, he contended, and not of a small group. The rabbi further added that Ben-Gurion's words were also offensive to "many Gentiles who believe in the literal truth and sanctity of the Bible."

The debate was joined by representatives of the right-wing opposition – the Herut movement and the General Zionists (the national religious party did regard Ben-Gurion's words as a reason for supporting the non-confidence proposal). For them, the debate was an opportunity to harass and deride Ben-Gurion, but they couldn't help making a few comments in the spirit of historical biblical fundamentalism: how did six hundred people build Pithom and Raamses, they asked him (an historical fundamentalist would, of course, never consider the possibility that they never built these cities). In reply, Ben-Gurion argued that the Knesset is not a suitable forum for a debate on questions of *halakhah* and faith. However, he added, nor is it the place for a debate on historical matters, since history is not a science. In other words, his comments about the exodus from Egypt were also nothing but the theory of an amateur, who appreciates the value of the Bible

²⁷⁷ The debate in the Knesset appears in *Knesset Record*, 29, May 9–August 23, 1960, Jerusalem, pp. 1272–1278. See also: Michael Keren, *Ben-Gurion and the Intellectuals: Power, Knowledge, and Charisma*, DeKalb, Illinois, 1983, pp. 100–117.

and the fact that it is the greatest, most precious heritage of the Jewish people. Ben-Gurion ended his reply with the following words:

The true Bible criticism begins only in Eretz Israel, and in particular in Israel. Here the most important book in this field came out, *History of the Religion of Israel*, by Yehezkel Kaufmann, from whom I learned a great deal ... In my opinion, only the Bible criticism created here will be of any real substance, because these people live in the land ... and it is unthinkable that outside this country, in some other place, someone could write about Bible criticism if they do not know what is going on and being written here on this subject.²⁷⁸

One might conclude from this polemic that Ben-Gurion was far from holding an historical fundamentalist view; however, the opposite is true. The intent of his version of events was to describe the people of Israel (the Hebrews) as a separate entity from the dawn of history, an entity that in the time of the Patriarchs already believed in one God, and hence Abraham joined them. These ancient Hebrews declined into idolatry, until those who came out of Egypt revived their monotheistic faith.²⁷⁹

We will return later to the status and role that Ben-Gurion granted the Bible in the new historical reality, and now we will move on to discuss religious historical-biblical fundamentalism.

The ultra-orthodox and national orthodox emerged in European Jewish society from the second half of the nineteenth century against a totally different background, from different sources and with a different content than that of the fundamentalism and evangelical awakening in the Protestant church.²⁸⁰ The formative book of the world

²⁷⁸ Knesset Record, p. 1278.

²⁷⁹ Ben-Gurion, *Studies in the Book of Joshua*, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 330–395 (Hebrew). And See: Benjamin Uffenheimer, “Ben-Gurion and the Bible,” in Mordechai Cogan (ed.), *Ben-Gurion and the Bible – The People and its Land*, pp. 54–69. We should note here that the Book of Chronicles does not describe the exodus from Egypt (nor the theophany on Mt. Sinai), and also omits the later mentions of them. It does now, however, of course offer a substitute for Ben-Gurion’s version.

²⁸⁰ See the introduction by Laurence J. Silberstein, “Religion, Ideology, Modernity: Theoretical Issues in the Study of Jewish Fundamentalism,” in idem (ed.), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective*, New York, 1993, pp. 3–26; Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem Friedman, “Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews”, in Marty and Appleby (eds), *Fundamentalism Observed*, pp. 211–215; Charles Selengut, “By Torah Alone: Yeshiva Fundamentalism in Jewish Life”, in M. E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, Chicago, 1994, pp. 239–241; David Landau, *Piety and Power: The World of Jewish Fundamentalism*, New York, 1993. Professor Aviezer Ravitzky was entirely justified when he wrote in his review of the book that “In the world of Judaism, the more conservative the religious movement, the more radical it is, the more likely its sons are to ‘neutralize’ the biblical source,

and lifestyle of all shades of Jewish orthodoxy was not the Bible, but the Talmud and the developing tradition, which meant a dynamic process of commentary and exegesis. Conservative orthodoxy also believed that the historical layer of the Bible was of no importance because it tells a profane story, shared with Muslims and Christians. Nonetheless, the orthodox apologetics in the Babel-Bibel controversy heralded the emergence of the historical-biblical fundamentalist trend in a portion of Jewish orthodoxy, a trend that over time became a kind of “vindicationism,” namely the need to defend, for example, the historicity of all the books of the Bible out of fear that this sacred asset might be harmed. Hence, as we have seen, the winds of skepticism and heresy that began to infiltrate into the Jewish world also induced learned orthodox rabbis to come to the defense of the Bible against science, using the tools of science to do so. So although non-national orthodoxy reads and interprets the text through the mediation of the Sages and the commentators in later generations, it does not think that the historicity of the historical picture of the Pentateuch and of the Bible as a whole is of no importance. From its standpoint, the historicity of the Bible is a self-evident truth. Hence, as we have seen,²⁸¹ it rejects outright, for example, any attempt to challenge the historicity not only of the exodus from Egypt, but also of the monarchy of David and Solomon. The national orthodox are not prepared to accept even the “moderate” view that the events described in the Bible did in fact take place but not in full conformity with the biblical description. From their vantage point, the Bible needs no affirmation, certainly not from secular science.

We discerned the preliminary stage of the development of historical-biblical fundamentalism in the orthodox camp in the Babel-Bibel controversy, and we have already described its continuation in Eretz Israel as a result of the status that the national orthodox camp assigned to the Bible, to a great extent under the influence of secular nationalism and as a reaction to its “appropriation” of the Bible. Thus, for example, in schools of the national religious school system, the study of the Torah (as a religious subject) was separated from the study of the Prophets and the Hagiographa; in other words, the Bible was also taught as history. Although there was no place in the na-

to turn to it only through the mediation of all the commentaries – *halakhic* and *aggadic*, the early and the later – until the final mediation through the present-day rabbinical authority.” A. Ravitzky, “Was Ben-Gurion a Fundamentalist?” *Ha’aretz/Books*, 18 August 1993.

²⁸¹ See Chapters Two, Thirteen and Fourteen.

tional-religious schools for Bible criticism, the way in which the Bible was taught was totally different than it had been in the *cheder*. The orthodox Talmud scholar Benjamin de Vries (1905–1966) described this situation from a critical point of view:

As a result of determining the distances and clarifying the historical background, the [religious] student did identify with the heroes of the past and the lofty and ideal qualities [in the Bible], but this divested the text of its atemporal significance, and at the very most, in certain cases, as a result of the comparison of a certain political or social situation, the words took on a temporal-current meaning ... The religious school was dragged in the footsteps of the secular school, both forcibly and willingly: forcibly because the modern religious man who is caught up in historical and literary categories has no choice but to see things from the vantage point of his general thought, and even if he sincerely rejects Bible criticism out of his complete faith in the word of God, he will rightly see in them [the historical categories] pedagogical progress in comparison to the old methods.²⁸²

For a part of national orthodoxy the historicity of the Bible took on a special value because it was seen to faithfully represent the distant past, which this group wished to re-establish. This value was a consummate expression of the biblical revolution that took place in the national-religious public (along with its contention with higher criticism, which we described in the previous chapter) and underwent a process of radicalization after June 1967.

The value assigned to the historical dimension of the Bible led various circles in religious Zionism to accept the positive position formulated by Ze'ev Jawitz towards the science of archaeology.²⁸³ Instead of identifying with the remarks of the Chief Rabbi, Shlomo Goren (1917–1995), that:

[Only] as long as archaeology does not impair the laws of the Torah and Jewish tradition can we accept it, although I do not have a high opinion of its reliability or its scientific value ... The faithful of Israel need no potsherds or finds dug up from under the earth in order to prove our rights over the Holy City²⁸⁴

fundamentalist circles in religious Zionism preferred to rely on the words of Rabbi Kook, who stated in 1911:

Blessed be the Almighty who has inspired our scholars to turn to the investigation of the antiquities of the Holy Land, which until now was

²⁸² Benjamin de Vries, “Achievements in Teaching Sacred Studies in the Hebrew Religious School in the Test of the Past Fifty Years,” in *The Jubilee Book of the Teachers Federation*, 1903–1953, 1967, pp. 231–236 (Hebrew).

²⁸³ See Chapter Three.

²⁸⁴ Shlomo Goren, *Yediot Aharonot*, August 28, 1981.

almost entirely in the hands of foreigners...And there is no doubt that as progress is made, the truth will emerge and Israel will greatly succeed in revealing to all of the nations the precise truth that is in our truthful Torah and in all of our sacred traditions.²⁸⁵

The biblical revolution in the national-religious society, which took on momentum after the Six Day War in June 1967, and was heightened by Israeli control over the heart of the “land of the patriarchs” – Judea and Samaria,²⁸⁶ strengthened the historical fundamentalist approach in an intellectual circle of national religious Zionism, and was mainly adopted by Gush Emunim, a radical, activist group within it, whose world-view produced a blend of modernity, nationalism and messianism²⁸⁷ (In the previous chapter, we saw how this group contended with Bible criticism). This circle established and fostered research and teaching institutes, guided trips and hikes to create a tangible link to the area,²⁸⁸ and gave the Bible a “secular reading,” namely, it assigned importance and value to the historical (and “realistic”) reliability of all the biblical stories. For the religious type of fundamentalist, every historical fact in the Bible – even those devoid of any theological significance – is “truth.” From their standpoint, any challenge to the veracity of any historical facts whatsoever is likely to open the door to a challenge to the veracity of really important historical facts. The historical-biblical fundamentalist legitimizes the use of extra-biblical evidence, namely archaeological research (as well as geographical, topographical research and the like) based on the a priori belief that biblical archaeology is a constructive field of research, namely, in every case, there always is compatibility between the archaeological find and the picture depicted in the Bible.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ *Letters of Rav Kook*, Part 2, Jerusalem, 1985, p. 24 (Hebrew).

²⁸⁶ See in Chapter 14. Since the main interest was to establish Israel's right to control the “West Bank,” no importance was attributed to the negative description in the Bible of the Kingdom of Israel (whose center was in Samaria) as a sinful kingdom.

²⁸⁷ On this group, see, *inter alia*: Tzvi Ra'anana, *Gush Emunim*, Tel Aviv, 1980 (Hebrew); Danny Rubinstein, *On the Lord's Side: Gush Emunim*, Tel Aviv, 1982 (Hebrew); Yair Sheleg, *The New Religious Jews: Recent Developments among Jews in Israel*, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 25–53 (Hebrew).

²⁸⁸ One of these guides stated: “You cannot feel Eretz Israel by studying 110 chapters of the Bible in preparation for your matriculation exam. Only this way, by walking in the path of Joshua Ben Nun, by seeing the connection, by touching the same places, can you become familiar and learn.” See: Zvi Bareli, Joshua Ben Nun, Aaron Pik, the Land of the Bible and Palestine,” *Ha'aretz*, 20. April 1984, p. 11.

²⁸⁹ See: Michael Feige, “Judea and Samaria is here, Territories are there: Scientific Practices and the Establishment of Space in Israel,” in *Theory and Criticism: An Israeli Forum*, 14, Summer 1999, pp. 111–131 (Hebrew). On the similarity between the Bible believers among the National Religious and Evangelical fundamentalism, see:

In practice, then, religious historical fundamentalism and secular historical fundamentalism have much in common. However, historical-biblical fundamentalism of the national religious type differs from the secular type of fundamentalism in that it regards the Bible as both history and theo-history. From its standpoint, there is no room for a distinction between the "historical truth" and the "religious truth" of the Bible. It is impossible, for example, to separate the historicity of the theophany at Mt. Sinai and the biblical picture of the exodus from Egypt, or between the biblical theo-historical view and the biblical picture of the conquest of the land and of the kingdom of David and Solomon, since biblical theology is expressed in a distinctly historical language.

Religious historical-biblical fundamentalism thus does not regard the Bible or the tradition of the Sages as sufficient evidence, nor does it accept the opinion that the Bible needs no affirmation. On the contrary, it enlists in its aid those opinions it finds in the research literature²⁹⁰ that are consistent with its view; for example, opinions that ancient Egyptian sources correspond with the biblical story, or that the biblical story is firmly planted in the Egyptian reality and hence it was undoubtedly written close to the time when it occurred by writers who were intimately acquainted with Egypt and its culture. However, since archaeological evidence cannot affirm that the historicity of the Exodus is undeniable,²⁹¹ but at the very most, can supply evidence of various details in the story, then the attempt by the religious type of historical-biblical fundamentalism to use extra-biblical sources (or "naturalistic proofs") as evidence of the Exodus in effect divests the tradition of its theo-historical and transcendental meaning, which is the major significance and value of the story.

It is difficult to assess the extent of historical-biblical fundamentalism within the secular public. One can only estimate that the majority of the secular and traditional public that is identified with the

Gideon Aran, "Return to the Scripture in Modern Israel," in Evelyn Patlagean & Alain Le Boulluec (eds.), *Les Retours Aux Ecritures: Fondamentalismes Présents et Passés*, Louvain-Paris, 1993, pp. 101–131. However, in the radical national religious group that Aran writes about, the Bible is also read in light of the later commentary, which endows it with its theo-historical and mytho-historical meaning.

²⁹⁰ A few of the books on this subject are: William H. Stiebing, Jr., *Out of the Desert? Archaeology and the Exodus/Conquest Narratives*, Buffalo/New York, 1989; Shmuel Ahituv and Eliezer D. Oren (eds.), *The Origin of Early Israel – Current Debate: Biblical, Historical, Archaeological Perspectives*, Beersheba, 1998; S. Ahituv, "The Exodus – Survey of the Theories of the Last Fifty Years," in Irene Shirun-Grumach (ed.), *Jerusalem Studies in Egyptology*, Wiesbaden, 1998, pp. 127–132; Pnina Gal-paz-Feller, *Reality or Illusion*, Jerusalem – Tel Aviv, 2002 (Hebrew).

²⁹¹ See: Cornfeld and Freedman, *Archaeology of the Bible: Book by Book*, p. 35.

“right,” but also part of the public identified with the “left,” is this type of fundamentalist. The secular part of this fundamentalism does not always *a priori* accept the transcendental dimension of the Exodus story, but it willingly focuses on the truth of the historical dimension of the story with the aid of extra-biblical testimony, while clearly distinguishing between the “legendary element” and the “historical element.” In practice, it can be satisfied with assumptions, such as that the story of the Exodus has an historical core (for example, the exodus of several households or tribes), which was later adapted into a “national epos.” However, although such a limited version may “save” the story from being a “legend,” it does not preserve its status as a formative narrative of the creation of the Jewish people.

We see, then, that archaeological research enjoys the blessing of both types of historical-biblical fundamentalists only if it substantiates the picture of the reality and history in the Bible. Both types will underscore the congruity between archaeology and the Bible, and will prefer to ignore any incongruities, or to offer several arguments: a) the extra-biblical documents are no more reliable than the Bible, because they are not an “objective source”; b) archaeological finds can be interpreted in a variety of ways,²⁹² and hence, as in Bible criticism, scholars are not in agreement; and c) until now archaeological excavations in Palestine have produced hardly any written documents and hence the information they provided is very scant.²⁹³

King David, Did he Really Exist? The Polemic over the Kingdom of David and Solomon

Until the 1990s, the “conservative” view that the Bible presents a reliable historical picture, certainly insofar as Jewish history from the tenth century B.C. is concerned, was the dominant view among Is-

²⁹² See: Moshe Shamir, “How the Nation was Strengthened,” *Ma’ariv*, 13. April 1982, printed in idem, *A Searchlight into the Depth: Our Jewish Identity – Heritage and Challenge*, Tel Aviv, 1996, pp. 290–295 (Hebrew). Shamir offered a dubious argument, that in contrast to the extra-biblical documents, the Bible was handed down by its commentators from generation to generation, and hence its “authentic meaning” was preserved.

²⁹³ At the same time, use was made of Mesopotamian documents to point to their influence on the laws and customs appearing the book of Genesis, in order to prove the antiquity of the book! See: Yoel Ben-Nun, “History and Bible – Can the Two Walk Together?/The Book of Genesis,” *Al Atar, A Periodical on Eretz Israel in the Sources*, 7, 2000, published by the Herzog Teachers Trianing College at the Har Etzion Yeshivah, pp. 45–64.

raelis. Only then did the educated public begin to learn about the research literature that casts doubt not only on the stories of the Patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of the land, but also on the reliability of Deuteronomistic historiography,²⁹⁴ as well as about the scientific controversy that this literature provoked.²⁹⁵

A scholarly and public controversy as a “public event” resulted from the wide publicity given in the press to the theories of Israel Finkelstein, an archaeologist from Tel Aviv University, and in particular to a provocative article by Zeev Herzog, from the same university, published in the *Ha'aretz* supplement on October 29, 1999.²⁹⁶

In a popular book written in collaboration with N. A. Silberman published in 2000,²⁹⁷ Finkelstein summed up a proposal for the reconstruction of Jewish history whose basic assumption is far from radical minimalism. According to this reconstruction, the biblical picture of the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel is a product of tendentious “Judaic” writing. In actual fact, the Kingdom of Israel preceded the Kingdom of Judah, and the great empire of David and Solomon was, at the most, a small, scarcely important kingdom. Finkelstein and Silberman argued that the stories of David have an earlier core, but that the description of David and Solomon’s empire is the product of a desire to endow the Kingdom of Judah with a glorious ancient past, after the destruction of the Kingdom of Israel. They connected the writing of the Deuteronomistic historiography to the kingdom of Josiah, the 16th king in the Davidic dynasty, to his attempts to expand the boundaries of the Judean kingdom and to take in refugees from Israel, as well as to

²⁹⁴ On the Deuteronomistic school, there is extensive literature. See: Erik Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History*, Leiden, 1996.

²⁹⁵ See, *inter alia*, Alan R. Millard, James K. Hoffmeier and David W. Baker (eds.), *Faith, Tradition, and History*, Winona Lake, Indiana, 1994; V. Philips Long (ed.), *Israel's Past in Present Research*, Winona Lake, 1999.

²⁹⁶ See: Israel Finkelstein, “The Archaeology of the United Monarchy: An Alternative View,” *Levant*, 28, 1996, pp. 177–187, and Amihai Mazar’s reply: “Iron Age Chronology,” *ibid.*, 29, 1997, pp. 157–167. The *Yedioth Ahronoth* printed a headline on June 7, 1998, reading “Archaeologists: King Solomon did not build the Temple.”

²⁹⁷ Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*, New York, 2000. The book was published in Hebrew in 2003. One of the published reactions was entitled “Finkelstein against the Bible” (see Haggai Segal, *Ma'ariv*, 14 April, 1998). For a survey on the controversy, see: John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel*, pp. 30–34, and Uriah Y. Kim, *Decolonizing Josiah: Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Deuteronomistic History*, Sheffield, 2005, pp. 114–181. Other than the excellent survey it provides, this is a very bizarre book.

the religious reform he introduced.²⁹⁸ Herzog was more radical, probably deliberately, and the title of his article was “The Bible: There are no Finds in the Field.” In it, he argued that the biblical historical narrative – from the time of the Patriarchs – is merely historical legend. This is how the newspaper summed up his major arguments:

After 70 years of laborious excavations, archaeologists have come to a frightening conclusion: none of this ever happened. The deeds of the patriarchs are folk tales, we never went down into Egypt and never came out of there, we never conquered the land and there is no trace of David and Solomon’s empire. The scholars and those who take an interest have known these facts for a long time, but Israeli society prefers to suppress them. Go tell this to your children.²⁹⁹

During the debate, Herzog argued that his intent had been to point to the need to separate the mythic parts of the Bible and “the historical truth that is being exposed with the help of archaeology.” However, his article did not deal only with the “mythic” or “legendary” parts of the Bible, but with parts that are considered “historical” in the full sense of the word.³⁰⁰ The result was pro and con reactions in the press, about a dozen widely attended academic conferences,³⁰¹ and several publications of a scientific nature intended for the public at large that presented it with a range of opinions.³⁰² As in the Babel-Bibel controversy and the debate over higher criticism, in this polemic too, fundamental arguments connected with the interpretation of extra-biblical evidence were introduced. Although there were those who defended the archaeologists, known as the “Tel Aviv school,” there were also quite a few who accused them of “heresy,” and of undermining the Jewish people’s right to Eretz Israel. Some of the Israeli archaeologists were accused of ignoring “historical facts,” and of deliberately interpreting them in a biased manner, of groundless “scientific pretentiousness” to “reveal the one and only truth,” and even of an attempt to “deny” the existence of the ancient Jewish people.

²⁹⁸ Which they accept as an historical fact.

²⁹⁹ Z. Herzog, “The Bible. There are no Finds in the Field,” *Ha’aretz* supplement, 29. October 1999, pp. 36–38.

³⁰⁰ See: Ze’ev Herzog, “The Scientific Revolution in the Archaeology of Ancient Israel,” in Lee I. Levine and Amihai Mazar, *The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible*, Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 52–65 (Hebrew).

³⁰¹ For example, on January 14–15, 2000 a conference was held on “The Bible in the Mirror of Innovative Archaeology,” and another on December 14, 1999 on “Has the Biblical Period Disappeared?”

³⁰² See: Levine and Mazar, *The Controversy over the Historicity of the Bible*, and the articles in *Beit Mikra*, 50 (1), 2004 on the origin of Israel in the Bible and in research, and in *Al Atar*, 6–7, 2000.

Unquestionably these events resonated widely, among other reasons, because of the assumption that this was not research for its own sake, but rather a challenge that stemmed from a desire to undermine the legitimacy of the national Zionist narrative, or the use of the Bible as support for the political camp that claimed Jewish sovereignty over all of western Palestine. The secular historical-biblical fundamentalist was not alarmed by the challenge to the historicity of the Patriarchs, but by the challenge to the biblical historical picture of the kingdom of David and Solomon. This was because in his eyes, this was a period of distinctly “earthly” history, which was perceived as a golden age that gave rise to messianic hopes of a political restoration.³⁰³ It was difficult for a fundamentalist of this type to accept a theory that challenged the reliability of the Bible in the chapters regarded as “historical” in the full sense of the term. This reaction was certainly influenced by the fact that this theory – like the minimalist theory – was depicted as research in the service of the opponents of Zionism and the State of Israel, and by the fact that the Palestinian side in the Israeli-Arab conflict was active in disseminating a counter-history to biblical history (although one that found support in the Bible) in which the Palestinians Arabs are described as the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine even before the exodus from Egypt, and the biblical Jews as “foreign invaders.”³⁰⁴

³⁰³ David Chazoni, who belongs to the right-wing conservative stream, wrote that for the Jews, “the days of David and Solomon are the classic, formative period, parallel to Athenian democracy or the early Roman republic in the general history of western civilization. Biblical Jerusalem is a symbol of humanity’s hope for moral and cultural exaltation. Hence, a challenge to its historical status casts doubt both on the vision that underpinned the national revival of the Jews in the last century and on it as a central symbol of the West,” idem, “Archaeology Loses its Way,” *Ha’aretz*, 23. December 2003, p. 22. These remarks are excellent testimony to the importance attributed to the scope of the walls of Jerusalem in the time of David and Solomon, totally ignoring the fact that the status of Jerusalem – and Athens – in Western civilization does not depend on the physical size of the cities or on their power, but rather on the creative works written in them. It is no wonder that the announcement of the “discovery of the palace of King David” late in 2005 aroused so much excitement. See: *Ha’aretz*, 8. September 2005.

³⁰⁴ See: Meir Litvak, “A Palestinian Past: National Construction and Reconstruction,” *History and Memory*, 6 (2), Fall/Winter, 1994, pp. 24–56. Another way of combating the Bible’s influence on part of the Christian world (and as a result, its support of the State of Israel) is to refute the world of values and symbols originating in the Bible, for example, the exodus from Egypt as a symbol of freedom. See: Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, London, 2001.

Did the Israeli Public's Interest in Archaeology Really Decline?

Did the controversy that took place in the last year of the twentieth century indicate a continued public interest in biblical archaeology, or was it a passing storm? Did the controversy and its reverberation show that interest is evoked only by a new, exciting find,³⁰⁵ or only when the educated public is confronted by a new, controversial theory? Every effort to reply to this question has to attempt to draw a distinction – one that is difficult to make – between intellectual curiosity per se, and an interest linked to an ideological and political view.

In any event, opinions that the status of archaeology in Hebrew culture in Israel has declined stem, among other things, from an exaggerated assessment of the status it enjoyed in earlier years. It is true that archaeological research in Israel has been described as a new, important chapter in the history of Jewish scholarship, as a major field of research in Jewish studies and as a central factor in the reviving Hebrew culture,³⁰⁶ and also by the author Moshe Shamir (1921–2004), who after the Six Day War became one of the spokesmen of the radical national stream, as “one of the major forms of the redemption of the

³⁰⁵ An example of such a “discovery” is “the altar on Mt. Ebal,” which the archaeologist Adam Zartal believes is the altar referred to in the Book of Joshua (8:30–35), and which he dates to the 12th century B.C. See: Adam Zartal, “The Ritual Altar on Mt. Ebal,” *Bamachane* (The I.D.F. magazine), 225, February 1985, pp. 25–32. Idem, *A People is Born: The Altar on Mt. Ibal and the Origin of Israel*, Tel Aviv, 2000 (Hebrew), and A. Zartal, “Has the Joshua Altar Been Found on Mt. Ebal?” *The Biblical Archaeology Review*, 16, 1990, pp. 26–43. For a review of this book, see Nadav Na’aman, “The Tower of Shechem and the Covenant of Beit El,” *Zion*, 51 (3), 1986, pp. 260–280. Biblical fundamentalists regarded the book as overwhelming “archaeological proof” of the truth of the biblical story (see Daniel Shalit, “To Be or to Desist,” *Ha’aretz/Books*, 27. September 2000, p. 4). Another book that takes an extreme fundamentalist position and champions the [chronological] validity proposed by Immanuel Velikovsky (1895–1979) which was adopted by biblical fundamentalists, religious and secular, is Yehoshua Etzion’s book, *The Lost Bible*, Jerusalem – Tel Aviv, 1992 (Hebrew). This book also was received by believers in the unchallenged truth of all of the biblical historiography as a strong-minded retort to the position of skeptics. In a letter to the editor, directed against a review written by Yaakov Shavit in *Ha’aretz/Books* on May 8, 1992, Dr. Yaakov Margolin wrote that the negative review was an example of scholarly conformism that is unprepared to take a position vis-à-vis the challenge of a new view and to admit that conformist scholarship has erred throughout (*Ha’aretz/Books*, June 14, 2000, p. 2). The same argument was made by a professor of genetics from the Weizmann Institute. See: Doron Lancet, “It’s Still Possible to Find the Lost Bible. Science Offers Tools for Doing So,” *Ha’aretz*, November 5, 1999, p. B–10.

³⁰⁶ Joseph Klausner, “Jewish Scholarship between the Two World Wars,” in *Problems of Literature and Science*, pp. 163–164 (Hebrew).

land and the people and of the revival of Judaism in its homeland.”³⁰⁷ In fact, however, very few finds from the biblical period became objects of public enthusiasm. There is no basis to the view that the “cult of archaeology is integral to modern Israeli identity.”³⁰⁸

The “commandment of the *tiyul* [tour],” which became institutionalized during the mandatory period and continued into the period of the state, is cited as evidence of the central status of the Bible. The reference is to tracks for hikes throughout the country organized by the General Federation of Labor in Israel, schools and youth movements and guided by professional tour guides.³⁰⁹ However, the number of organized tours to sites from the biblical period was far smaller than the number to sites from the Second Temple period and thereafter.³¹⁰ Another institutional manifestation of public interest in archaeology in general, and that of the biblical period in particular, was the annual conferences of the Society for the Exploration of Eretz Israel and its Antiquities, the first of which was held during the week of Succoth in November 1943. The conferences, attended by numerous amateur scholars in Bible and archaeology, were, particularly in the fifties, an important event, a sign that archaeology was turning into a major branch of Jewish studies in the State of Israel. However, beyond rhetorical declarations about how important the Bible was to national consciousness, lectures on various fields were delivered at

³⁰⁷ Moshe Shamir, “A Future for Hebrew Science,” *Ma’ariv*, 12. February 1982, printed in his book, *A Searchlight in the Depth*, pp. 40–43 (Hebrew).

³⁰⁸ See: Yaacov Shavit, “Archaeology, Political Culture, and Culture in Israel,” in Silberman and Small, *The Archaeology of Israel*, pp. 48–61.

³⁰⁹ Shaul Katz, “The Israeli Teacher-Guide: The Emergence and Perpetuation of a Role,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12, 1985, pp. 49–72; O. Ben-David, “The *Tiyul* (hike) as an Act of Consecration of Space,” in Eyal Ben-Ari & Yoram Bilu (eds.), *Grasping Land*, New York, 1997, pp. 129–145.

³¹⁰ The tours and hikes in Palestine were a combination of two traditions: A) That of Christian pilgrims who wanted to see with their own eyes the places where events related in the Bible and the New Testament occurred, and their pilgrimages took place in the space and time of biblical geography and biblical history (as well as that of the New Testament). The nun, Egeria, whose pilgrimage took place at the end of the fourth century, writes in her book: *Peregrinatio Aetheriae* (Pilgrimage of Etheria) the sentence, “*Ostendebantur iuxta scripturas*” (presented according to the Scriptures). B) The new tradition, the fruit of nationalism which ascribed an important role to hikes and tours in creating a psychological tie to historical sites in the homeland, and for which their destinations were not religiously significant sites, but meaningful from a national historical standpoint. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852) the nationalist demagogue, known as Turnvater Jahn, wrote in his book *Deutsches Volkstum* (Leipzig, 1810), that: “wandering by foot through the Fatherland is one of the most important parts of a spiritual and physical education” (trans. by Louis L. Snyder).

these conferences not necessarily for the purpose of attesting to the veracity of the biblical story, and some even dealt with the history of the country up to the Crusader period.³¹¹ Other manifestations of public interest in archaeology finds were the activity of amateur archaeologists, the establishment of state and local museums,³¹² and the large number of people that thronged to public lectures on the subject. Public excitement, however, was aroused primarily by finds and excavations at sites from the time of the Second Temple and thereafter, like Massada and the cache of letters from the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt found in a cave in the Judean desert in 1960. Finds from the biblical period were assigned a symbolic value in the applied arts, but they were not cult items. One example – only 94 postage stamps out of about a thousand printed in Israel over a period of 40 years pictured archaeological finds from various periods.³¹³

There are several possible reasons for the decline of interest in archaeology. On the one hand, part of the secular public regards the Bible as a reliable historical story that needs no “outside” substantiation.³¹⁴ In their eyes, it is not the accuracy of the details that determines the value of the historical picture that the Bible depicts; what does determine it is the master narrative, namely, the basic lines and the frame story of the history of the Jewish people as a people living separate from its environment and as a special entity in it, a people that has an unbroken history and a shared historical consciousness. Part of this

³¹¹ See: Michael Feige, “Archaeology, Anthropology and the Development Town: Constructing the Israeli Place,” *Zion*, 62 (4), 1998, pp. 441–459 (Hebrew).

³¹² Magen Broshi, “Archaeological Museums in Israel: Reflections on the Problems of National Identity,” in Flora E. S. Kaplan (ed.), *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity*, London, 1994, pp. 314–329.

³¹³ See: Yakov Tsachor, *Israeli Postage Stamps, 1948–1988*, Jerusalem, 1989 (Hebrew). Moshe Dayan (1915–1981), an obsessive amateur archaeologist who expressed his strong link to the Bible and archaeology in his book, *Living with the Bible* (New York, 1978), is often cited as epitomizing the “cult of archaeology” in Israel. However, he is not the exception that proves the rule, namely, he cannot serve as evidence of the status assigned in Israeli culture to the archaeological find from the biblical period.

³¹⁴ For an example of “innocent” historical biblical fundamentalism, see: Amos Kenan, *Rose of Jericho*, Tel Aviv, 1998 (Hebrew). Kenan writes that archaeologists have not found evidence of the Exodus and that the archaeological finds contradict the biblical picture of the settlement in Canaan. But, “nonetheless and despite everything: the wonderful tale of Moses man of God, cannot be a fictional creation of an ancient Shakespeare” (p. 47). And later he writes: “Truth shall spring from the earth. Whoever uttered this verse was not thinking of archaeological excavations, but contemporary man who loves his land also believes it, even when there is a contradiction between written history and that which lay in the depths of the earth until the excavator’s shovel raised it into the light of day” (pp. 60–61).

public has no need of testimonies from the distant past to legitimate the existence of the Jewish state. The appropriation of the biblical past by the national-religious public, headed by Gush Emunim, had the effect of further distancing secular public from archaeology. On the other hand, changes in the traditional and religious society turned many sites from the Second Temple period and the Middle Ages into sacred places, and new holy graves appeared as part of the emergence of a “popular religion” in Israel.³¹⁵ But whether the broad public’s waning interest in biblical archaeology reflects decreased public interest in the Bible and a decline in its status, or whether the status of the Bible is unconnected to the status of archaeology, remains a question that calls for a reply. We shall attempt to answer it in the following two chapters.

³¹⁵ See: Feige, “Archaeology, Anthropology and the Development Town,” pp. 448–459.

Part Four

The Well of the Bible: The Biblical Culture in the Jewish Society in Eretz Israel (1882–2005)

The Bible enhances our inner strength, our sense of life.
It enriches us ... here in the Land of Israel we hold on to the Bible
With our two hands and our fingernails.

Chaim Nahman Bialik, “Leshe’elat hatarbut ha’ivrit”
(On the Question of Hebrew Culture).¹

The future of a community beginning anew on the soil of the old homeland depends on the *rebirth of its normative primal forces* ... only a man worthy of the Bible may be called a Hebrew man. Our Bible, however, consists of instruction, admonition and dialogue with the Instructor and the Admonitor. Only the man who wills to do and hear what the mouth of the unconditioned commands him is a man worthy of the Bible.

Martin Buber, “Biblical Humanism.”²

¹ Bialik, *Devarim she béalphe*, vol. I, Tel Aviv, 1935, pp. 174–213. It is interesting to note that Bialik, “the national poet,” scarcely wrote about biblical subjects in his poems.

² In Nahum N. Glatzer (ed.), *Biblical Humanism*, pp. 211–216.

Chapter 16

The National Bible vs. the Cultural Bible

In the previous part, we saw how much importance various circles in the Jewish society in Eretz Israel ascribed to the teaching of Bible, Bible study and the history of the land during the biblical period. The importance and value of the subject were revealed, among other ways, in the public debate they aroused, in which the diverse shades of national ideology were given expression.

In this fourth and last part, we will describe the status of the Bible in various spheres of Jewish life in Eretz Israel from two aspects: the first, the Bible as an ideological and political text; the second, the Bible as a cultural document, namely, as a cultural Bible and even as an existential Bible. Of course, in the context of the new Jewish society in Eretz Israel it is difficult to separate the two; they can exist in harmony, but there can also be tension, or even conflict, between them.

The two-dimensional Bible was reborn in Europe, but only in Eretz Israel did it gain a full and vital status of this kind. In Eretz Israel it was not a part of the Jewish-Christian polemic, nor of the debate between Orthodoxy and Reform, but probably played a role it had never enjoyed in all previous generations. Only in the new modern national entity, in the “land of the Bible,” could the Book of Books really become a formative text which could serve as a wellspring of inspiration and be perceived as an all-encompassing source of models; as “the sole mirror, in which the life of our splendid past is reflected ... a life of freedom and respect,” as the “mirror of mirrors of the people’s soul.”³

As a “national Bible” it had many functions. First and foremost, it was the source of the national idea in general, “the original model of the nation,”⁴ which was first expressed in the Song of Moses (*Deuteronomy 32:8*):

³ Yaacov Steinberg, “Avotot haTanakh” (The Bonds of the Bible), in *Kol kitvei Y. Steinberg* (Writings), Tel Aviv, 1959, pp. 289–291.

⁴ See Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion, and Nationalism*, pp. 3–4. See also: Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, pp. 51–54 (see Chapter 1).

When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance,
 When he separated the sons of Adam,
 He set the bounds of the people
 According to the number of the children of Israel.⁵

In quoting from Deuteronomy, Lilienblum's intent was to refute the claim made by Jews and non-Jews alike that the Jews are a religious community, not a modern nation.⁶ However, to argue that the Jews are a nation in the modern sense was not enough. A nation needs a national homeland; hence, the Bible became the most important political Zionist document to be presented, as the ultimate basis for the Jews' claim to political sovereignty, to the "court of nations," in the hope of getting its ear. Chaim Weizmann, for example, told the Zionist General Council in London, on February 24, 1919, that "in the eyes of England, the Land of Israel is not a geographical or strategic concept," and on September 25 of that year, he informed the Council that when David Lloyd George (1863–1945), the British Prime Minister, drew a map of Palestine "from Dan to Beersheba," he, Weizmann, had replied: "You do not know the Bible very well."⁷ Appearing before the Palestine Royal Commission (the Peel Commission) in the summer of 1937, David Ben-Gurion, then the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, declared: "As to the Jews, I can only point to our Bible and its sequences in many Jewish initiatives to regain Israel stretching across the centuries since Massada and say: this is our mandate."⁸

To the Jewish society in Eretz Israel (as we already noted in Chapter One), the Bible, as a national text, also provided a national narrative which had an historical depth, rooted and anchored in geographical reality, to which the Bible became a guide. Guided by the Bible, rootless immigrants were supposedly converted into native-born Israelis, with deep ties to the soil and the landscape, and the new land was transformed into a national home and a homeland. It is not the Bible that became "reality"; it is the "place" that – through the Bible – became "reality."

A few words of caution are needed here. First, the Bible was not the sole inspiration of modern Jewish nationalism, which was, in our view, a modern phenomenon. Second, the biblical period may be

⁵ M. L. Lilienblum, *Al techiat am Yisrael al admat eretz avotav* (On the Revival of the People of Israel in the Land of its Fathers), Odessa, 1884.

⁶ See: Hayim Avni and Gideon Shimoni (eds.) *Zionism and its Jewish Opponents*, Jerusalem, 1990 (Hebrew).

⁷ See: Yehoshua Freundlich and Gedalia Yogeved (eds.), *The Minutes of the Zionist General Council*, vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1975, pp. 10, 223–234 (Hebrew).

⁸ David Ben-Gurion, *Recollections* (ed. T. R. Bransten), London, 1970, p. 11.

considered as paradigmatic, but it is dissimilar to the modern Jewish entity in many fundamental aspects. Lilienblum, for example, wrote as early as March 1872, that the Land of Israel is not a new country, but rather “a country in which our forefathers lived for about one thousand five hundred years, and as they lived we shall live in this country,” but, at the same time, he added that “the difference of course will be only in the way of life and the manner in which we earn our livelihood, in keeping with the difference between these distant times.”⁹ This, however, is much more than “only,” as Brenner bluntly pointed out: “biblical Judaism is far removed from modern Judaism whose world-view is very different from that of the Old Testament.”¹⁰ Third, it is important not to be misled by the biblical rhetoric; the modern Jewish society in Eretz Israel was from its start a modern society, and the so-called biblicalizing process was only one of its layers. The Second Temple period served in many ways as a model and inspiration no less than the First Temple (biblical) period; it was then that the biblical period became the “golden age” in Jewish historical memory and consciousness.

And finally, the Bible, as a common denominator between the two camps, became a focal point of a polemic between “free-thinking (secular) nationalism and national religious orthodoxy.”¹¹

The Ideological-Political Bible

In the ideological-political context, the Bible – as a history of the Jewish people and its deeds in the Land of Israel – was the major basis for the reasons offered, both internally and externally, by the national (Zionist) movement, in particular its secular stream, to legitimize the idea of Jews returning to Palestine.¹² The Bible also symbolized the territorial existence of the Jewish people and its sovereignty over that territory, and provided their most reliable and authoritative evidence. It reflected the “natural,” “normal” situation of the people, in marked contrast to the “unnatural” and “abnormal” situation of wandering

⁹ M.L. Lilienblum, *Ketavim* (Writings), 1, pp. 214–215.

¹⁰ Y.H. Brenner, “Leverur ha’inyan, bachayim uvasifrut” (To Clarify the Matter, In Life and in Literature) in *Kol kitvei Y.H. Brenner*, Tel Aviv, 1960, p. 58.

¹¹ See: “The Bible and National Identity,” in Danny Jacoby (ed.), *Nation Building*, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 105–118 (Hebrew).

¹² For a mapping of the various reasons for “the right to the land,” see: Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*, Hanover and London, 1995, pp. 333–388.

and exile. We have already mentioned Ben-Gurion's statement before the Peel Commission (1937) that the Bible is the mandate of Zionism. By that he meant that the basis for the new return to Zion was not the divine promise but rather history as it is reflected in the Bible. Consequently, the proto-national and the national literature frequently referred to Eretz Israel as the "land of the fathers" or the "land of our fathers," as "the homeland of the people," and not as the "holy land" or the "promised land." The orthodox "trinity" – Torah, people and land – was supplanted by another – Bible, people and land.

In Zionist ideology, Eretz Israel became the "land of the Bible" and the Bible became the ultimate justification for the Jewish people's historical right to the land. However, a distinction should be drawn between two types of justification. The first stems from the history of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel. In this context, the historical geography and the biblical archaeology of the country were a vital aid in proving this history and concretely describing it. The second stemmed from the biblical theo-history and theo-geography that constituted the explanation given in the Bible for the people's link to, and ownership of, the land.

The Bible was also perceived as the major reason for preferring Palestine as a destination for immigration. In October 1882, Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845–1934), the patron of the Jewish settlers in agricultural colonies from 1883–1900, explained why Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine had a far better chance of success than in Argentina (where Baron Maurice de Hirsch [1831–1896] was initiating Jewish settlement):

For a man to be attached to it, he must love the soil that he is tilling. He must be linked to it by all sorts of memories and traditions. Palestine is a land that the Jews are connected to through the force of tradition. All of our co-religionists in Europe and the lands of the East have drawn much from the Bible, and the Bible is full of historical stories connected to the names of various places in the land. Each and every corner in this land conjures up in their memory one of the stories of the Bible and speaks to their hearts. Consequently, I am convinced that in the land of our fathers the Jews will become attached to the soil that they till.¹³

¹³ Rothschild envisioned the type of new Jewish farmer in Eretz Israel as a man in whose home the only book was the Bible. The same argument was put forward by Franz Oppenheimer (1864–1943) during the controversy in the Zionist movement about the proposal to establish a Jewish settlement in Uganda: "The allocation of the most marvelous fertile fields in Canada or Argentine cannot enhance the strength of the wandering Jew (*die Kräfte Abhavers*) as can settlement in a poor wilderness, through which the Jordan River flows and which Mt. Lebanon overlooks,"

Indeed as David Vital writes, “The firm and almost unquestioning orientation toward Eretz Israel was one of *Hibbat Zion*’s great sources of strength; it placed it squarely within Jewry, rather than on its margins.”¹⁴

Zionist literature provided a long list of “existential” and “realistic” reasons for choosing Palestine as the preferred destination for immigration, but even socialist and Marxist circles could not fail to recognize the enormous symbolic impact of Eretz Israel – particularly in the biblical period – in creating a new national consciousness. Nor could they ignore the Bible’s attraction or the influence that the biblical picture of the past and biblical symbols had in transforming the country from an immigrant-absorbing territory into a national territory.

The Bible was also perceived as an authentic and full manifestation of the Hebrew creative genius – sublime and original, separate from and different than the creative works of the neighboring peoples. It had this special nature because it was created in the Land of Israel. The Bible, then, was the expression and symbol of the “greatness of the Jewish people’s spirit,”¹⁵ and the return to Eretz Israel was a prerequisite for the revival of the authentic national genius. National existence in a territory that is the homeland, the land of the fathers, the national land, is the natural situation, and only in that situation can the national genius – which originates in the people’s consciousness, spirit and culture – be revived and rehabilitated, be given full and authentic expression. This, for example, is what Ben-Gurion had to say on the subject:

Our character was not shaped during our wanderings. Here in our native land the Hebrew nation was born, grew and cohered, and here it created its eternal possession...the Book of Books. In the future, the endeavor and education of the Hebrew nation will be based on these two: the land and the book.

The idea, then, is one of an organic fusion: the unique sublime qualities of the Jewish people’s spirit found their expression in the Bible, and the Bible shaped these immanent and eternal qualities: “The greatness of the Bible is the greatest of the Jewish people’s spirit.” The Bible, not the Talmud, which is a separate and totally different world.¹⁶

Franz Oppenheimer, “Referat über Ansiedelung,” *Die Welt*, Separat-Ausgabe, 27. August 1903, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴ David Vital, *The Origins of Zionism*, Oxford, 1975, p. 149.

¹⁵ Ben-Gurion, “The Bible Shines in its Own Light,” in idem, *Biblical Reflections*, p. 44.

¹⁶ As we noted in Chapter 15, Ben-Gurion did not believe that the Bible ought to be interpreted according to the commentaries and the later midrash, and asserted that

We chose to quote from Ben-Gurion not because there was anything new or original in what he had to say, but because, from the 1950s, owing to his official status, he became the most important advocate of the need to make the Bible the foundation and the linchpin of Israeli society. Reflected in these views of his is a picture of Jewish life in the Diaspora and the spiritual-cultural creation produced there as shallow, puny and enervated. “Not a single Hebrew book written after the Bible or until thirty or fifty years ago,” Ben-Gurion wrote, “is as close or as intimately connected to youth as the Bible.” He added that the Bible is not only a legacy and a cultural asset, but a guide for national existence:

The stories of the Patriarchs from 4,000 years ago; the travels and life of Abraham, the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert after they went out of Egypt; the wars of Joshua bin-Nun and the Judges who came after him; the lives and deeds of Saul, David and Solomon; the exploits of Uzziah king of Judah and Rehoboam II, king of Israel, all are more topical, closer and more vital and real to the generation born, raised and living in the land, than all the speeches and debates at the Basel congresses.¹⁷

The background to these words is Ben-Gurion’s search for a system of “authentic” values and symbols, or for a common formative myth, that would cohere the new Israeli society in the fifties. He chose the Bible not only as a substitute for the values of rabbinical Judaism, but also as an option preferable to symbols from the Second Temple period (with the exception of the times of the first Hasmoneans).¹⁸

The secular national movement (as well as the national-religious) had an internal problem in turning the Bible and its theo-history into a fundamental document. It was unable to accept the view that the collective Jewish existence in Eretz Israel was dependent on the observance of the commandments, and that the penalty for their non-observance (sin) was exile. The secular national ideology could not agree with the words of the midrash that “three things were granted condition-

the Bible can only be interpreted from within the Bible itself. He repeated that he only relies on the Bible itself, and not on the later commentaries on it (nor even on the post-biblical historical reality), and stated on several occasions that Orthodoxy is opposed to study of the Bible and even regards it as heresy (“The Bible Shines,” p. 94).

¹⁷ Ben-Gurion, “Terms and Values,” *Chazut*, 3, 1957, p. 11. It is interesting that in listing the kings of Judah and Israel, Ben-Gurion leaves out King Josiah and his religious reform.

¹⁸ On Ben-Gurion and the Bible, see: Anita Shapira, “Ben-Gurion and the Bible, the Creation of an Historical Book?” in idem, *New Jews, Old Jews*, Tel Aviv, 1997, pp. 217–247 (Hebrew), and Zeev Tzahor, “Ben-Gurion’s Mythopoetics” *Israel Affairs*, 1 (3), Spring, 1995, pp. 61–84.

ally: ‘the Land of Israel’, ‘the Temple’ and the ‘kingdom of the House of David’...” (*Mechilta, Jethro* 2), and those are the same three things that were taken from the Israelites when they sinned and would be restored to them when they repent. Nor could it accept the limited declaration of the First Zionist Congress in Basel (1898) that “the establishment of the Jewish national home in Palestine Israel will be based on the law of the nations” (“Der Zionismus erstrebt für das jüdische Volk die Schaffung einer öffentlichrechtlich gesicherten Heimstätte in Palästina”). Since the principle of an historical right, or the motif of “land of the fathers” did not constitute a sufficiently strong basis to provide a metaphysical anchor and depth to the new territorial nationalism, the Zionist ideology had to formulate a new theo-history and new theo-politics. It found these in the *aggadic midrashim*, in the restorative messianic vision from the days of the Return to Zion and thereafter, in mysticism, as well as in European Romanticism. Thus, for example, Buber claimed that Eretz Israel is not like all other countries and that Jewish nationalism does not resemble European nationalism. In the Bible, he found an “entitative link” between the people, God and the land. The reference is to a covenant between the Jewish people and their God, and the sanctity of the land is a product of the desire and the choice of the Jewish people. This sanctity stems from a sense and consciousness that the people and the land belong to God, and from the fact that the land is destined to be the center of the redeemed world.¹⁹ The bond to the land is, then, an archaic force (*Urkraft*) expressed in a myth, which is both a concrete reality (*Wirklichkeit*) and an historical continuity (*Geschichtliche Kontinuität*).

During the Mandate period, the Bible functioned as the source of legitimacy and authority in the ideological-political sphere. For example, during the debate on the partition of western Palestine (based on the proposal of the Peel Commission), on July 7, 1937, the opponents of the plan, among other arguments, spoke about the deep bond between the Jewish people and western Palestine, which derived from the Book and had remained imprinted on the Jews throughout the

¹⁹ See: Martin Buber, *Between a People and its Land: Major Points in the History of an Idea*, 1944. (On Zion; the History of an Idea. With a new foreword by Nahum N. Glatzer. Translated from the German by Stanley Godman. New York, 1973); Uriel Tal, “Myth and Solidarity in the Zionist Thought and Activity of Martin Buber,” *Zionism*, 7, 1981, pp. 18–35; Avraham Shapira, “Buber’s Attachment of Herder and German ‘Volkism’,” *Studies in Zionism*, 14 (1), 1993, pp. 1–30; Shalom Ratzabi, “Zionism as Theo-Political and the Unnatural Character of the People of Israel,” *Iyunim Bitkumat Yisrael*, 14, 2004, pp. 97–129 (Hebrew).

generations.²⁰ In any event, the “biblical claim” was only one of a set of claims of an “objective” concrete nature (the paramount one being the need for a “Greater Land of Israel” as a solution for the acute distress of Europe’s Jews).

After the Six Day War (June, 1967) the ideological political Bible was greatly revived by both a part of the secular public and the religious-national public. The military victory was described in terms of a divine intervention and a miracle, and the occupation or “liberation” of the West Bank and of Eastern Jerusalem (including the Jewish quarter and the Temple Mount) – an area almost immediately given the name “Judea and Samaria” – from Jordanian control was perceived as a return to the land of the Patriarchs, to the holy sites, and to the heart of the “historical land of Israel,” as completion of the Zionist endeavor by the abolition of the partition of the country and the creation of the entity known as the “Greater Land of Israel.” In national religious Zionism, the event was depicted as the completion of the process of redemption and the return of the *Shekhina* (the Divine Spirit). It was regarded as the realization of the messianic vision in Jeremiah 31:17: “Thy children shall come again to their own border,” never to leave it again.²¹ According to this picture, Jewish history had completed its course from exile and annihilation to independence and control over all of Eretz Israel.

Messianic religious Zionism began to speak in theo-historical, eschatological, and even cosmic concepts about complete redemption. It imbued Eretz Israel with mystic qualities, consistent with the special traits of the Jewish people; Eretz Israel not only as a territory that ensures the national existence of the Jewish people, but one that possesses value in its own right. Hence it placed the territorial dimension of Judaism at the center of its world, and viewed Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria as the full realization of the three-fold covenant: the Torah, the people and the land.²² Secular Zionism, on the other hand, generally spoke in concepts of return to “the land of the Patriarchs”, to the cradle of the national homeland. For example, on August 3, 1967, the Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, declared that:

²⁰ See: Shmuel Dothan, *The Partition of Eretz Israel in the Mandatory Period: The Jewish Controversy*, Jerusalem, 1979 (Hebrew).

²¹ See: Arye Naor, “Behold, Rachel, Behold’: The Six Day War as Biblical Experience and its Impact on Israel’s Political Mentality,” *The Journal of Israeli History*, 24 (2), September 2005, pp. 229–250.

²² On the territorial dimension of Judaism, see: W.D. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1982; W. Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Philadelphia, 1977.

We have returned to the hills, to the cradle of our nation's existence, to the land of our fathers, the land of the judges and the realm of the kings of the house of David. We have returned to Nablus and Hebron, to Bethlehem and Anatot, to Jericho and Shilo.

Since it was not possible to apply Israeli law to these regions and to annex them to the State of Israel (the law that annexed eastern Jerusalem was passed by the Knesset in 1980), the way to demonstrate Israeli presence in it and "ownership" of it was by establishing settlements there. These became known by the Hebrew name "*hitnachluyot*" – a deliberate association with the "*hitnachalut*" of the tribes of Israel in Canaan (usually translated into English as "inheritance of the land") after its conquest by Joshua, and a section of the national-religious camp acted as the ideological and activist spearhead of this settlement endeavor.

The New Hebrew Person as a Biblical Hebrew: Biblical Utopias

The Bible, as a book describing an historical reality and containing the historical and theo-historical argument underpinning the demand for Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel, served as a common platform for all the major organizations in the Zionist movement. However, in the Zionist ideology various images of the "biblical reality" appeared – the one that actually existed and the one that existed only in messianic expectations. These images expressed various – even contradictory – utopias that depicted the desirable character of the modern return to Zion and the redemption of the Jews in their land. But no less than that, they expressed criticism of the present-day reality or of competing ideologies. The "biblical person" was portrayed as an archetype or as an ideal type of the new Jew or the new Hebrew. The "biblical reality" served as a model or metaphor of the aspired-to new Jewish society. By means of this model a concrete portrait was drawn, which was actually an imagined portrait of the society and the individual and all their traits. The human essence of the new biblical person was characterized by authenticity and vitality; he had a direct link to the landscape of the homeland and to nature, and embodied the national and political sovereignty in his personality and deeds.

We have already noted that in Haskalah literature, the biblical utopia generally took the form of an agrarian society inhabited by tillers of the soil, vine-growers and shepherds. Biblical village life

symbolized the aspiration to return to working the land and to a life directly linked to nature. Not everyone, however, was pleased with this biblical-agrarian image. Y.H. Brenner, for example, wrote quite sarcastically about the image of the agricultural biblical past:

We are all very familiar with the well-known verses of the Torah... Anything can be proved by them, one thing and its exact opposite. Because everything depends on the melody. However, leaving aside the religion of the ancient Hebrews, the history of the ancient and later Jews is certainly not a history of a people of farmers. You will find no traits of a soil-tilling people in it. Who of us knows the history? But even the general information tells us much. The history of the First Temple we have forgotten, gentlemen, and rightly so.²³

Here in arguing that the image of the Hebrew as a worker of the land is groundless, Brenner meant to criticize the tendency of most of the immigrants to Palestine to settle in the cities. In contrast, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the leader of the Revisionist movement that regarded the urban productive sector as the major factor in the new settlement of the land, vigorously rejected this image. To defend the middle class and urbanization, he depicted the Jews of the First Temple period as merchants who created and disseminated culture. However, at the same time, he sought biblical inspiration for his social views and found it in the laws relating mainly to a rural society. From these, he concluded that the Bible was not opposed to private ownership, enterprise and competition, but merely established restrictions to prevent exploitation and inequality, not by a one-time revolution, but by fixing regular times for correcting wrongs: the day of rest (social insurance), protection of the workers, annulment of debts.²⁴ Ben-Gurion went even further and asserted that all the answers to current problems could be found in the Bible. Anyone carefully perusing the Bible, he wrote, would find in it “a solution to the two crucial problems of humankind in our time: the problem of capital and labor in society and the problem of war and peace among the nations.”²⁵ He found in the Bible the idea that Israeli society ought to be an “exemplary society” or a “light unto the nations” through its rule of equality and social justice and its moral

²³ Brenner, printed in *Revivim*, 5, 1914.

²⁴ Jabotinsky, “The Idea of the Jubilee” (orig. in Russian, Paris, 1930) and “On the Social Philosophy of the Bible” (1933), in Ze'ev Jabotinsky, *Nation and Society*, Jerusalem, 1950, p. 173, (orig. in Yiddish, *Zamelbuch far Beitarischer Yugend*, Warsaw, 1933).

²⁵ David Ben-Gurion, “The Eternality of Israel,” *Government Annual*, 1953; idem, “Uniqueness and Destiny,” in *Uniqueness and Destiny: On the Security of Israel*, vol. 1, Tel Aviv, 1971, pp. 108–135 (Hebrew).

conduct. In his view, it was the book that gave the world universal humanistic values that would be realized in the new Jewish state.²⁶ Ben-Gurion replaced the theo-political image of a “chosen people” in the sense of a people worshiping the God-king, with an anthropological image that regards the Jewish people as an entity that is morally and intellectually superior.²⁷ The tangible fulfillment of these values is the mission assigned not only to the Jewish people but to all the nations. To prove that Zionist socialism draws upon the primal source of sublime biblical values and not upon “foreign ideologies,” quite a few works were published under the aegis of the Labor movement presenting social, socialist and humanist philosophy as the major message of the Bible throughout the generations.²⁸

Circles of the radical right wing fostered a totally antithetical ideological interpretation, which originated in the Hebrew revival literature. According to this interpretation, the Jewish people would renew their ownership of the land of Israel through activism – by the sword. Shaul Tschernichowsky wrote about “the God of those who stormed Canaan in conquest,” who had been “tied up with the straps of phylacteries”²⁹ by Judaism, and about “the blood of Canaan’s conquerors” that boils in him.³⁰ This was an existential idea that strove to create a new activist Jewish type. In the radical Zionist right wing, this idea was translated into a topical and political educational doctrine that portrayed the conquest of the land and the settlement in it in the time of Joshua as an historical act arising from God’s will, and hence as a supreme moral act. The Bible is not called upon to justify the conquest of the land, the assimilation or annihilation of its inhabitants,³¹ while the metaphysical justification is actually the

²⁶ Avraham Tzivyon, “Like all the Nations and the Chosen People, Ben-Gurion’s Bond to the Bible,” *Shadmot: Organ of the Kibbutz Movement*, 107, October, 1988, pp. 77–88.

²⁷ See: Benjamin Uffenheimer, “Ben-Gurion and the Bible,” in Mordechai Cogan (ed.), *Ben-Gurion and the Bible – A People and its Land*, pp. 45–96.

²⁸ See: for example, Avraham Wolfensohn, *Biblical Sources for Socialist Zionism*, Tel Aviv, 1985 (Hebrew).

²⁹ Tschernichowsky, “Before the Statue of Apollo,” 1889, in *Poems and Ballads*, pp. 85–87 (Hebrew).

³⁰ Tschernichowsky, “I Have a Melody” (1916), ibid., pp. 184–185.

³¹ Israel Eldad, “The Morals of the Conquerors of Canaan in the Land of Israel” (April 1966), printed in *Hegyonot Yehudah*, Tel Aviv, 1981, pp. 11–24 (Hebrew). Eldad overlooks the enormous effort by the Bible (and by the Sages) to provide justifications for the conquest of the land. See: Moshe Weinfeld, “Inheritance of the Land – Privilege versus Obligations. The Concept of the ‘Promise of the Land’ in the Sources of the First and Second Temple Period,” *Zion*, 92 (2), 1989, pp. 115–137 (Hebrew).

divine commandment. Moreover, the annihilation of the Canaanites, who refused to become assimilated, or to be enslaved, prevented a catastrophic merging of the Israelites and the peoples of Canaan. According to this approach, King David's wars to establish a kingdom and expand its boundaries were fought in the name of the spirit of Israel. A merciless military conquest is therefore the consummate expression of inheritance of the land and acquisition of mastery over it and of the existential, national-territorial redemption of the Jews.³² The prophecy was not presented as a moral and humanistic idea because the prophets were not opposed to wars of conquest or to the institution of monarchy (and statehood). The world of the prophets is therefore theological and worldly at the same time, and Zionism draws upon their messianic and restorative vision.

Another radical national trend, which also originated in an aspiration for existential change and then was transformed into an ideological-political doctrine, attempted to resurrect the vital, archaic dimension, which according to that view, existed and characterized the Jewish people in the biblical period. It regarded monotheism as a world-view that alienated man from nature, and hence it portrayed the ancient Jewish people as a pantheistic, pagan people whose myths symbolized a direct link with nature. Shaul Tschernichowsky, for example, described the fields of Eretz Israel as covered with ruins and swamps "in the shadow of the prophets of the desert" and the Jews' yearning for a renewed, organic link to nature:

Now with the coming of the ascending generation
 The pioneers of the Diaspora, dreamers of your redemption
 I am a god to them, I, lord of the valley,
 Master of the soil, masters of the valley ...
 For Zion will be redeemed by the hoe and her fields by labor
 As a blessing of a new god, lord of the valley³³

In the early forties, this idea became a counter-biblical historical picture based on the Bible. According to it, the "censorship" of the Bible's editors did not succeed in glossing over traces of the true nature of the Hebrew people during the First Temple period. They were a polytheistic people, whose world picture was anchored in the space where they lived and gave expression to their formative myths. These myths were shared by other peoples living in their environment, so the Jewish people and their neighbors were actually one *Kulturnation*.

³² Eldad, "The Attributes and Dimensions of David" (1964), *ibid.*, pp. 41–49.

³³ Tschernichowsky, "Vision of the prophet of the Astarte," (the poem was published in the periodical *Betar*, 1, 1933, pp. 332–325 (Hebrew).

tion. The discovery and decipherment of Canaanite literature in the coastal city Ugarit (Ras Shamra) near present-day Latakia in north-west Syria, from 1929, supposedly provided evidence that these two peoples did in fact inhabit one cultural space.³⁴ The archives of Ugarit made it possible to connect Delitzsch's claims about the Bible's debt to Mesopotamian (Western Semitic) culture with Wellhausen's views on the substantive difference between the Hebrews (or the Israelites) of the First Temple period and the Jews (or Judaism) of the Second Temple. The former were an ethnic group, not united or singled out by a special religion; the latter were an aterritorial ethnic group. In this view, the revival of the classic Hebrew nation in its natural "homeland" space, the land of antiquity, would be possible only if the Jews cut themselves off totally from the traditional Jewish narrative and the values of Judaism, and returned to the "authentic" biblical narrative.³⁵ This view, known as "Canaanism," was formulated by the poet Yonathan Ratosh (1909–1981) and the scholar A.G. Horon (Adia Adolphe Gurewitch, 1907–1972), who during his studies at the Sorbonne worked on the decipherment of the Ugarit tablets and was also influenced by Adolphe Lods' book, *Israël, des origines au milieu du VIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1930. According to Horon's testimony, on December 31, 1921, he had a mystic experience in which the Hebrews were revealed to him as a sole, distinct entity, and he decided to devote all of his life to proving that this entity really existed and still had topical significance. This testimony would seem to characterize the Canaanite ideology as one that strongly advocates the collective conversion of the Jews living in Eretz Israel and the repudiation of the anomalous and "fallacious reality" of the establishment of an "ethnic community," which originated in Jewish concepts. Only the creation of a new territorial national-human existence would redeem the Jews and the Middle East as a whole.³⁶

³⁴ In this concept, the Phoenicians were the major partners of the Hebrews. On the origins of this concept and its topical implications, see: Yaacov Shavit, "Hebrews and Phoenicians: An Ancient Historical Image and Its Usage," *Studies in Zionism*, 5 (2), August 1984, pp. 157–180.

³⁵ See the most current formulation of this theory in Boas Evron, *A National Reckoning*, Or Yehuda, 2002 (Hebrew). On the Canaanite movement, its sources and ideology, see: Yaacov Shavit, *The New Hebrew Nation: A Study in Israeli Heresy and Fantasy*, London-Portland, Org., 1987; James S. Diamond, *Homeland or Holy Land? The 'Canaanite' Critique of Israel*, Bloomington, Ind., 1986.

³⁶ The Canaanites presented their view as an attempt to revive the universalistic and secular element of Jewish life in the biblical period. However, in fact this was an organic national ideology that rejected universalistic elements because they did not originate in the "natural space" whose inhabitants create a cosmology and world-

In our context, it is important to note that in Horon's opinion there are traces in the Bible of reliable evidence attesting to the ancient history of the Western Semitic peoples ("Hebrews," as he called them). He rejects not only the traditional historical narrative, but also the conclusions of "foreign" Protestant Bible study (although he found much support for his views particularly in French research on the pre-history of the Maghreb and of the Hamitic-Semitic family of languages). In other words, the Canaanite biblical counter-history was based on a "subversive" reading of the Bible, but did not reject its evidence. Paradoxically, one could say that this was an "anti-Bible" reading of the Bible.³⁷

In the '50s, this theory was regarded as a dangerous heresy that proposed to separate the Jewish people from the "Hebrew people" in Eretz Israel and preached the abandonment of the whole of Jewish tradition (including the Bible as it was generally accepted). In a Knesset debate, which we have already mentioned, in May 1960, a spokesman for the ultra-orthodox party asserted that Ben-Gurion's words about the exodus from Egypt had "provided support for the Canaanite filth that has been spreading among us and aspires to sever all past connections with the Israeli nation, based on the assumption that the Jews in Israel are the descendants of the Canaanites."³⁸ Ben-Gurion himself denied there was any similarity between him and the Canaanites, although like them, he believed that in the Diaspora the Jewish people had turned into a religious sect, and he argued that the return to the Bible does not mean disassociation from the Diaspora. In any event,

view unique to them. The built-in contradiction in this ideology is the rejection of universalistic ideas (first among them, monotheism), on the one hand, but the unqualified acceptance of modernity on the other. In the context of actual events, the Canaanite ideology ignored the fact that even if there were a cultural partnership between the various peoples of the ancient East, this did not prevent wars between them over control of the space in general and Eretz Israel in particular.

³⁷ Horon enunciated his theory in a series of articles entitled "The World in a Hebrew View," that was published in issues of *Keshet*, 29–33, Fall 1965 to the Fall of 1966. They appeared in an expanded version in his book, A.G. Horon, *East and West: A History of Canaan the Land of the Hebrews*, Tel Aviv, 2000 (Hebrew). Horon's mystical experience is described in an introduction by the editor, Aharon Amir, p. 20. The writer and researcher Aharon Reuveni (1886–1971) also dealt with this subject in his books: *Shem, Ham and Japhet: The Peoples of the Bible, Their Origin and their Place in Ancient History*, Tel Aviv, 1932 (Hebrew), and *The Antiquity of the Hebrews: The Sons of Eber at the Dawn of their History*, Jerusalem, 1962 (Hebrew). He claimed that the name 'Hebrews' is much earlier than the name 'children of Israel' and the name 'land of the Hebrews' is earlier to the name 'Eretz Israel.' In addition, he accepted the identification of the Habiru with the Hebrews, and argued that they wandered as a people to Mesopotamia.

³⁸ *Knesset Record*, vol. 28, p. 1274.

like the “Canaanites,” he was of the opinion that under the influence of secular Jewish nationalism, Judaism had cast off its theocratic form and taken on a secular form. It is only owing to the Bible and on the basis of the Bible that the Jews have once again connected to their ancient historical origins and their ancient homeland, and have created a new Judaism in this homeland.³⁹

The Bible is therefore the basis for the creation of a Judaism that is not “theocratic,” and it is this new “secular” Judaism that is restoring the Bible to its rightful place and reviving the “truth” contained in it. This view, and the tradition of the biblical historical narrative, is shared by the great majority of the “secular” public in Israeli society.

³⁹ Ben-Gurion, “Uniqueness and Destiny,” p. 117.

Chapter 17

The Golden Age of Biblical Culture

In the Diaspora the image of our people was distorted, and the image of the Bible was falsified ... only now, when we are once again a free people in its land, and once again breathe the air that surrounded the Bible as it came into being, the time has come, it seems to me, when we can appreciate the Bible's essence and truth – the geographical, religious, and cultural.

David Ben-Gurion, “The Bible Shines in its Own Light” (1953).⁴⁰

This chapter was enormously difficult to write. In itself, this difficulty clearly attests to the character of the biblical culture that was created in Eretz Israel, to the panoply of its numerous and diverse manifestations, and to the fact that a biblical revolution did indeed take place in the new Jewish society in the land. This is why it is difficult to portray even a partial picture of the diversity and the wealth of these manifestations and the patterns of the Bible's presence in Jewish life in Eretz Israel in the last 120 years. It is clear, therefore, that this chapter is primarily a general outline, and at the same time we have been careful not to allow it to be merely an inventory. As we have noted, the Bible is a source of inspiration for a large repertoire of ideological views, paradigms and models, metaphors and *Sitz im Leben* in all spheres of life, not only in the national context. Use is made of the Bible in all types of media and at all times; it is not limited to public sermons or to the cycle of readings in the synagogue. The arena of this use is the written and electronic media, public polemics, literature and the arts, the theater, the cinema, and others. Consequently, we will not attempt here to suggest more than the contours of the biblical culture in the modern Jewish society in Eretz Israel.

⁴⁰ In David Ben-Gurion, *Biblical Reflections*, p. 48.

Two preliminary assumptions underlie the following description:

1. A distinction should be drawn between statements about the link to the Bible and its influence – a few of which we have already cited in Chapter One – and the real influence of the Bible on the historical consciousness, or on behavior, influences that are hard to assess in practice.
2. A distinction should also be drawn between the status of the Bible as a whole, or as an idea, and the use made of individual literary units, or of paradigmatic events (for example, the sacrifice of Isaac, the exodus from Egypt), and of biblical figures, both central and secondary. We cannot deal here with specific examples of how literary and artistic works retell the Bible, nor can we survey even a tiny portion of the vast field of biblical allusions.

We will also repeat what we wrote previously. It is not Bible study that determined the attitude towards the Bible and the modes of its usage. The critic Avraham Kariv (1900–1976) wrote that the Bible should not be drawn after the cart of the research or the literal interpretation, but rather one should search for its true atemporal meaning:

Let us not make an effort to expand the understanding of the Bible at the expense of the Bible's inspiration, because little will be gained by that!... The Bible is the identity card of the Jewish people and the scroll of its fate. It is the house of its covenant and the wellspring of its life from one generation to the next. Each generation and those in it who seek – whether God, the eternal Glory of Israel, or the future of mankind – they will all dip into the well of the Bible.⁴¹

In other words, we are speaking about a cultural Bible, the formative text of the Jewish culture and its embodiment. In this context, questions relating to the way the books of the Bible were composed or its historical reliability are of no importance. The only important questions are thematic, relating to ideas or human conduct. As a cultural Bible, the Bible is a “human book,” and as such, in reading it freely,

⁴¹ Avraham Kariv, *The Seven Pillars of the Bible: Essay of Biblical People and Biblical Ideas*, Tel Aviv, 1958, pp. 8–9 (Hebrew). In the introduction to *Biblical Anthology: The Bible in the Mirror of the New Literature*, Tel Aviv, 1953, (Hebrew), the editor, the literary scholar Dr. Gedaliah Elkoshi (1910–1987) made a claim different in direction. The link to the Bible strengthens our link to the European-American world of culture, for which the Bible is the source of its social and moral values, and which cannot be understood without the influence of the Bible: “The Bible is thus a sublime spiritual bridge for mutual understanding and cultural interrelations between our nation, which created the Bible and lives and speaks the language of the Bible, and that vast European-American world, whose historical destiny links us to it and to its culture,” Elkoshi, *ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

one finds in it not only a discussion of the relationship between man and God, but also – and primarily – of the behavior and fate of human beings. However, from such a vantage point, it has no “single internal essence” nor any sole idea. Nor is there one, exclusive “Jewish ear” attentive to its words: it is the free polyphonic reading of the Bible (which found in the Bible itself such polyphony) that has enabled readers to find in the books of the Bible what they were seeking.

The Bible and its Agents in Hebrew Culture

In the golden age of the biblical culture, from the 1880s to the 1960s, the marked presence of the Bible in many layers of the new Jewish life in Eretz Israel was an outcome of the activity of various agents of culture. They were the ones who translated declarations stating that the Bible was the basis, the justification and the inspiration for the existence of the Jewish people – and certainly of the Jewish society in Eretz Israel – into a concrete language, and they mediated between the book and the public. This involved not only elevating the Bible to the level of a master-text, a master narrative on the genesis of the Jewish people, but also creating literary units and stories. With the Bible as a master-text, there was a consensus as to its loftiness and eternity, its value and importance. On the other hand, insofar as an understanding of the significance of its views and values was concerned, diverse opinions existed from the inception of the biblical culture in Eretz Israel.

This biblical culture was created and disseminated by various agents – teachers, writers, poets and the like – who were generally active in secular frameworks. It is possible to describe the manner in which the active presence of the Bible in the society and culture was created. It is, however, more difficult to describe and evaluate the actual influence of this presence, namely, to assess its impact on patterns of behavior and the conduct of society and culture in the different areas of the public sphere. In any event, the dialectic result of the biblical revolution was that the book, which was perceived as a formative book of the new Jewish reality, also became an arena of controversy that reflected the cultural and political-ideological schism in Eretz Israel during the mandatory period (up to 1948) and then in the State of Israel.

As we noted, we cannot provide a detailed description of the inventory that demonstrates the presence of the Bible in Eretz Israel during this period. We are unable to survey the plentitude of “biblical

creations” according to the various genres,⁴² nor will we deal here with the development of biblical themes. Our intent is to focus mainly on the fundamental characteristics of the literary and artistic creation in its role as a new interpreter of the Bible and its world,⁴³ and on the manner in which it transferred the Bible and an understanding of it to the cultural arena via diverse forms and techniques of retelling.

The Hebrew School as an “Agent” of Biblical Culture

We will begin by returning to the Hebrew school. As we have just seen, it was the first, and probably the most important agent of culture, contributing to a recognition of the Bible by the young generation, and its internalization of the Bible’s value and contents. It laid the foundation of biblical culture in the new Jewish society in Eretz Israel. In Chapter 13, we described the controversy that arose in 1911 in the wake of the attempt to teach Bible in the Herzliya Gymnasium in Tel Aviv under the influence of Bible criticism. We argued there that the objection to “Wellhausen in the school” was motivated not only by opposition to high criticism itself, but also by opposition to the fact that the curriculum of the secular Hebrew schools was turning Holy Scripture into a cultural and national Bible. This was, then, a controversy, or perhaps even a miniature *Kulturmampf*, between various views as to what Judaism is and what the nature of its formative canon is.

This controversy arose, of course, because the teaching of the Bible was perceived as the supreme expression of national Hebrew educa-

⁴² For a detailed survey of the repertoire, see in Gabriel Sivan, *The Bible and Civilization*, Jerusalem, 1973, as well as in Eli Eshed, “The Bible in Hebrew Literature,” in *Al Happerek: Journal for Teachers of Bible in the General Schools*, 15, 1994, pp. 157–171, and idem, “The Bible in Cinema and Television,” *ibid.*, 16, 1999, pp. 154–180 (Hebrew).

⁴³ A discussion of the literary merit of the Bible and its poetics originated in works by the Bishop Robert Lowth (1710–1787), *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753; English translation: *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, 1787, repr., with an introduction by V. Freimark, Hildesheim, 1969); Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1736), (re., Hildesheim, 1976); Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, London, 1775. On early research on the literary qualities of the Bible, see: Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 148–181. On the influence of this research on Jewish study of the Bible’s poetic qualities (which began with Solomon Levisohn’s (1789–1821) book *Melitzat Yeshurun*), see: Tova Cohen, *Melitzat Yeshurun by Solomon Levisohn, the Work and its Author*.

tion and its aims. The Bible was a “treasure house of knowledge about the homeland” and a “textbook of national history”, and hence its teaching played a key role in the curriculum of the elementary schools in all three streams of Hebrew education – the general, the labor and the national-religious, as well as in the secondary schools.⁴⁴ It turns out, however, that after completing twelve years of study in a Hebrew school, a student was not familiar with the Bible as a whole, but did have some knowledge of a large part of it (he was able to learn about other parts through literary works and other sources).

One can say, then, that a graduate of the Hebrew educational system during the period of the Yishuv and later in the State of Israel knew more parts of the Bible than any student in the traditional educational system had ever known. Moreover, in contrast to the latter, he was familiar with all of its various aspects – the religious, historical, geographical, and literary. From this standpoint, the question of how the Bible was presented or interpreted by teachers adhering to diverse views is of no importance. In addition, biblical symbols and metaphors were an important part of the verbal and performative content in holiday ceremonies held in the kindergartens and the schools.⁴⁵

The major aim of the Hebrew educational system was to draw the students closer to an understanding of and affection for the Bible so that it might function as a formative book for them. This is how Yosef Azaryahu put it: “The teaching of Bible in our schools therefore has a

⁴⁴ In 1923, for example, 6 hours (out of 25) were devoted to teaching the Bible in the third grade of the general elementary school, and 4 hours (out of 33) in eighth grade. In schools of the labor stream, 3 hours were devoted to Bible in the third and eighth grades. In the '30s, three weekly hours each year (out of 34–36 hours) were devoted to Bible study in the secondary schools. The Bible curriculum, which was set by a committee of experts appointed in 1923 by the Education Committee and the Education Department of the Zionist Executive, regarded the teaching of Bible as a part of humanistic studies. It determined that from the fourth year, the students would study from the Bible itself, and not through the mediation of the midrash. After the State of Israel's law of education (1953) was passed, the Ministry of Education appointed a professional committee in 1956, which prepared a new program based on 5 weekly hours of study, which stated that the maximal number of Bible lessons for an academic year would be 4 per week and 30 weeks per year. All the curricula also determined which chapters would be part of the curriculum. The data were taken from Shimon Reshef and Yuval Dror, *Hebrew Education in the Years of the National Homeland (1919–1948)*, Jerusalem, 1999 (Hebrew). See also: Yaira Amit, “Teaching the Bible in General Education – A Study of the Curricula,” in Amos Hofman and Izhak Schnell (eds.), *Values and Goals in Israeli School Curricula*, Beth Berl College, 2002, pp. 239–264 (Hebrew).

⁴⁵ See Yaakov Shavit and Shoshana Sitton, *Staging and Stagers in Modern Jewish Palestine: The Creation of Festive Lore in a New Culture, 1882–1948*, trans. Chaya Naor, Detroit, Mich., 2004.

double objective: (1) to bring to bear the educational influence of this national treasure of ours on the students so that it may cast its spirit and light upon them to the greatest possible extent. And (2) to create an intimate link between the students and the Bible and to nurture their love of the Bible.”⁴⁶ The objective, then, was defined as a desire to impart to the students, through direct study of the Bible, knowledge about the ancient past of the Jewish people and to nurture their national sentiments, consciousness of the homeland,⁴⁷ ideals and values. All of these were intended to encourage youngsters to continue reading the Bible and to shape their world as adults. However, this definition of purpose inevitably raised the question – what are these ideals and values? And from its inception until the present day, the educational system has never stopped discussing this issue. In practice, this involved first of all a decision as to what books and what chapters would be included in the curriculum, and then in what context to teach them, what status to assign to the religious-legalistic aspect, and how to explain the principle of God’s intervention in history and the miracles.

In the schools of the general stream, the solution to this problem was to teach Bible as national history, as literature, and as a book that contains moral and eternal values. Its theological dimension was presented as a central expression of Jewish culture and as a source of its ideas and ideals, but not as a obligatory dimension. The biblical man was placed in the center, although it was acknowledged that his world was shaped by force of belief in God. However, an emphasis was placed on the fact that it is a world that reflects all the manifestations of the human soul. Goitein, for example, proposed resolving the dilemma of teaching the laws of the Torah in the national-secular schools by interpreting the commandments of observing the Sabbath (“But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God,” Deuteronomy 5:14) as an expression of belonging to the Jewish people and as an act of conscience.⁴⁸ In the schools of the labor stream, the dilemma was resolved by emphasizing the social aspect of the Torah, while omitting its religious-theological content.⁴⁹ As for the possibility that the student would discern flaws in the moral conduct of the biblical heroes, the teacher in the higher

⁴⁶ Yosef Azaryahu, “Teaching the Bible,” in *Yosef Azaryahu’s Writings*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ The Bible, S.D. Goitein wrote in 1939, “restores the homeland” and is a “textbook of the national history.” See: Goitein, “The Theoretical Elements of Bible Teaching,” reprinted in idem, *Teaching the Bible*, pp. 53–58.

⁴⁸ Goitein, ibid., pp. 72–75.

⁴⁹ For a comprehensive discussion, see in J. Schoneveld, *The Bible in Israeli Education*.

classes was advised to explain that the moral code that prevailed three thousand years ago differed from that which is accepted in modern times (namely, to explain that the laws of morality, certainly those that determined the behavior of those who lived in the biblical period, were not timeless), or to adopt the method of the *midrash* and to argue that the great heroes (for example, David and Solomon) who had sinned, repented and became in the end sublime exemplary figures.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the teachers were not required to discuss the historical reliability of the Bible. At the most they were advised to draw a distinction between historical memories (the stories of the Patriarchs) and “real chapters of history.”⁵¹

In any event, from the outset, the consensus that prevailed in teaching the Bible was that the Bible is the first, formative chapter of Jewish history, the first link in its organic historical continuity, the source of its uniqueness and its consummate expression. From the diverse views put forward in the ongoing discussion of Bible teaching and from the way it was actually taught, two conclusions emerge: first, nearly all the discussants found different aspects in the Bible and separated them, even though they wished to see them as forming one integral whole. Thus, for example, the teacher Pinhas Schifmann (Ben-Sira, 1873–1945) stated that it is educationally essential “to include the laws of the Torah in the Bible curriculum”. At the same time, however, he suggested distinguishing between the laws pertaining to the particular time period, eternal moral laws, and laws stemming from “our national essence.” Schifmann also believed the miracles ought not to be interpreted by explaining them in a rationalistic-allegorical manner, but rather by stating that “that is how the ancients perceived the spectacles of their lives and the world,”⁵² namely, to provide them with a subjective explanation. B. Z. Dinur also argued that the teacher should eschew “innocuous rationalism” and teach his students that man’s inner experience of the “incomprehensible” and “unconscious”, which are the sources of men’s knowledge of the world, and inseparable part of reality.⁵³

⁵⁰ C. A. Zuta, *Darkei halimud shel haTanakh*, p. 22.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9. Zuta adds, in the spirit of Ahad Ha’Am, that a teacher who doubts the truth of the biblical story is obliged to point out that the story determined the historical consciousness of the Jewish people and its picture of the past. Ibid., p. 17.

⁵² Schifmann, “On the Issue of Teaching the Bible in the Elementary School,” *Hachinukh*, 4, 1925, pp. 7–13, and ibid., 5, pp. 20–29.

⁵³ B. Z. Dinur (Dinaburg), *Values and Ways: Problems of Education and Culture in Israel*, p. 108.

Second, nearly all the teachers regarded the Bible as a multi-purpose book, namely, a book that could be used to impart and instill attitudes relating to various topics. As a result, the Bible was studied in the Hebrew school as a book composed of diverse elements – national and universal, religious and moral, historical and literary. However, an official, mandatory programmatic expression was given to this attitude in the curriculum of state education by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which was issued following the report submitted by the Shenhari commission, entitled “People and World, Culture and Judaism,” in 1994. The program stated that “the Bible in all its multifacetedness has been a key element in the cultural common denominator of the Jewish people throughout the generations.” Accordingly, teaching of the Bible must focus on the following points, among others:

- “To know what is related in the Bible about the creation of humankind and the place of the Jewish people among the nations, and to gain a familiarity with the research approaches to these topics.”
- “To know what is related in the various books of the Bible about the history of the Jewish people, about internal and external struggles, about situations of ebb and flow, as well as about their causes and results.”

To achieve this aim, the students, must:

- “See the Bible as a collection from various periods that expresses diverse views on most subjects and does not present a one-sided picture of the reality.”
- “Understand that the multiplicity of changing views and values in the Bible stems from human nature and from changing times.”
- “Understand the link that exists between views and values and the historical circumstances in which they are formed.”
- “Gain an acquaintance with the Bible as literature that usually does not ignore or gloss over human weaknesses.”

In addition, it states that the students should:

- “Realize that the link of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, in a large part of the books that are studied, is one of the key messages of the Bible.”
- “Know that Eretz Israel and its boundaries in the Bible differ in changing historical circumstances and in light of diverse world views.”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *The Bible Curriculum for the State Educational System from the Kindergarten to Grade Twelve*, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Jerusalem, 2005 (Hebrew).

In 1958, Dinur claimed that the teaching of the Bible should underscore the unity of Jewish existence, and that a relative appraisal of the values and symbols of the Bible would have an adverse effect on its essence, since these values are absolute and timeless. However, about fifty years later, the official curriculum proposed that the multifaceted nature of this existence should not be overlooked. This statement reflected the realization that in a divided society, it is impossible to present the Bible as an “organic book” that provides unequivocal and timeless answers to all eternal and contemporary problems.

The only way to determine to what extent the teaching of the Bible shaped the world picture of graduates of the Hebrew educational system is to read the many personal testimonies that describe the experiences (“love of the Bible”) provided by study of the Bible, the repertoire of biblical symbols, allusions and idioms that the students internalized, how it placed the biblical stories in the concrete landscape of the Land of Israel, molded their pictures of the past, and created an intimate bond and identification with historical figures.

Retelling the Bible in Literature and Art

Along with formal study of the Bible, literary works and the visual arts served as the major expressions of the biblical culture. The Bible created a common field of narratives, phraseology, metaphors, descriptive conventions and idioms. It was perceived as a consummate expression of the national collective creation, and hence as an important source of inspiration for new works, and its use gave historical depth and archetypical significance to contemporary ideological controversies and individual existential situations.⁵⁵ The Bible possessed this force in the overall cultural context because it was not perceived as a work that reflected an ancient world, but as a “modern work” in every sense of the term.

Moreover, just as Bible study in Eretz Israel was expected to become a “Hebrew Bible science,” there was an expectation that the influence of the new historical reality and the direct connection with the “ancient biblical landscape” would enable the Hebrew artist or writer in Eretz Israel to cast aside hackneyed theoretical conventions, and would

⁵⁵ See: Nurit Govrin, “The Link to the Bible in the New Hebrew Literature,” *Kivunim Hadashim: Journal of Zionism and Judaism*, 4, April 2001, pp. 96–109 (Hebrew).

create a “kind of natural, realistic continuity to the vision of the biblical events.”⁵⁶ In other words, the expectation was that through artistic creation, the Bible would return from its exile to its “natural” land.

From the end of the eighteenth century, “creative biblical works” actually continued an older trend that had begun with the *midrashic-talmudic* legend and the folk tale in the literature of the Sages (which Eli Yassif defines as “the expanded biblical story”),⁵⁷ works marked by creative imagination. This literature filled in gaps in the biblical stories, expanded them and made them topical, in order to use them to impart an ideological message and exempla.⁵⁸ Sometimes the biblical stories served as a core from which a totally independent story grew, one that had only a weak connection to the original story. Other predecessors of this new literature were the eschatological literature of the Second Temple period and the Hellenist-Jewish literature,⁵⁹ as well as a book like *Sefer hayashar*, apparently written in Naples in the early sixteenth century and first printed in Venice in 1625, which tells biblical stories, from the creation of the world up to the exodus from Egypt, with some expansions and the introduction of materials from other sources.⁶⁰

Haskalah literature engaged in retelling and rewriting the Bible, but in a way that differed from previous literatures. Noah Rosenblum is quite justified in stating that it was primarily the *midrash* that paved the way for modern literary adaptation of the Bible, because the tradition of homiletic interpretation freed the Jews from the literality of the Holy Scriptures but, at the same time, prepared the ground for the radical change that took place in Christian culture following the Reformation. This change motivated many writers and poets to introduce biblical themes into their works.⁶¹ The fact that Haskalah literature adopted major genres of contemporary European literature also posed

⁵⁶ See Gedaliah Elkoshi’s introduction to *Biblical Anthology: The Bible in the Mirror of the New Hebrew Literature*, pp. 17–18 (Hebrew).

⁵⁷ Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, pp. 79–89.

⁵⁸ On this, see: Joseph Heinemann, *Aggada and its Development*, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 7–15 (Hebrew).

⁵⁹ The most important work is *Exogōgē* (Leading Out) by Ezekiel the Tragedian from the 2nd century B.C., fragments of which were preserved by Eusebius and Clement of Alexandria, trans. R.G. Robertson, in James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, New York, 1985, pp. 803–819.

⁶⁰ *Sefer hayashar*, edited with Introduction, Joseph Dan, Jerusalem, 1986 (Hebrew).

⁶¹ See: Noah H. Rosenblum, *The Biblical Epic of the Enlightenment and Exegesis: Thought and Exegesis in Wessely’s Songs of Splendor*, Jerusalem, 1983, pp. 49–52 (Hebrew). See also: David C. Jacobson, *Modern Midrash: The Retelling of Traditional Jewish Narratives by Twentieth Century Hebrew Writers*, New York, 1987.

new demands. In his book, *Mimesis*, Erich Auerbach (1892–1957) claimed that the biblical narrative “is greatly in need of interpretation on the basis of its own content.” Thus, only interpretation uncovers hidden meaning, implied messages and complex significances.⁶² However, it was not merely the search for a hidden message that determined the course taken by belles lettres. Unlike the *midrash* (which originated in oral literature), the new Hebrew literature generally chose to retell a complete story. This story suggested a new interpretation of the biblical narrative, or was a total creative work that proposed an alternative to the biblical narrative.⁶³ In other cases, the Bible served as an historical background in which fictional characters were introduced. The retelling and rewriting, or even reworking and re-creation, took various forms: supplementing and expanding the biblical story, completely reshaping the characters, describing their inner world, adding new characters, and depicting the physical and historical reality. Focus on the inner world of the biblical characters underscored the human dimension of the biblical story and made a crucial contribution by expanding the options of reading the Bible, its iconography and its deconsecration. The new literature also created an alternative text to the biblical text, not only in the thematic and ideological sense,⁶⁴ through new expositions, but also in the sense that the reader often learned about the plot and the biblical characters only indirectly through the literary medium.

This use of the Bible posed new, difficult challenges to the writer. There were those who claimed that adding details to the Bible was tantamount to diluting the “essential elixir” with water. Others found a source for archetypes of the Jewish spirit in the biblical material.⁶⁵ In any event, use of the Bible – the most ancient book in Jewish literature – marked a cultural revolution that contributed to the relativiza-

⁶² Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* [1946], trans. Willard Trask, Princeton, NJ, 1953, p. 15. See the discussion of Auerbach’s view in Vassilis Lambopoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism: Anatomy of Interpretation*, Princeton, NJ, 1993, pp. 3–16.

⁶³ This is the distinction drawn by Chaim Shoham, “‘The Death of Abel’ [Der Tod Abels] by Salomon Gessner – a Hebrew Text as an Alternative to the Bible,” in idem, *Inspired by the Berlin Enlightenment*, pp. 49–64 (Hebrew). And for a broader version: “The Function of the Biblical Epic in Late Eighteenth-century Hebrew Literature,” *Dappim: Research in Literature*, Haifa, 1989, pp. 239–258 (Hebrew).

⁶⁴ See: Tova Cohen, “‘Simultaneous Reading’ – A Key Technique for the Understanding of the Confrontation with the Bible in the Poetry of Adam Ha-Kohen.”

⁶⁵ See: Gershon Shaked, “The Opportunity and the Risk: On the Problem of Judaizing Biblical Materials in Hebrew Drama,” *Bamah: A Quarterly on Drama*, 79–80 (132–133), Fall-Winter, 1978–1979, pp. 125–131 (Hebrew).

tion of the Bible no less than Bible research had, in fact, even more. It uncovered new aspects and different values than those found in the traditional reading of the Bible. This development can be viewed as a reflection of the fact that “each generation gave voice to its soul as it intoned the Bible, discovered in it its own thoughts and consigned them to it.”⁶⁶ However, these were not merely shifts in the climate of opinion as a result of the changing generations, but also various positions taken in the very same generation. Ruth Kartun-Blum is correct, then, when she writes that in the new Hebrew literature, but not only there, “The Scriptures do not function as a unifying myth, but rather as a battleground for contest and argument. The relationship with the Bible is one of conflict.”⁶⁷ And this is how Gershon Shaked depicts this situation: “The biblical canon became a central source from which Jewish and Israeli societies could each draw its own self-identification. By means of specific choices from the canon, different parties defined their ideologies, giving each of them canonical legitimacy.”⁶⁸ The selection from the canon can take the form of a different interpretation of the same plot or of the same character, or by choosing the heroes of the plot (sometimes secondary figures in the Bible). This can only take place, of course, if the Bible is regarded as the basic text of Judaism and as a source of the world-view and values of Judaism, and if one assumes that the reader is familiar with the original.

Historical supplementary sources that serve the need for “fill-ins” (namely, the addition of historical background, details of the material reality, and the like) were the *midrashim*, Josephus’ *The Antiquities of the Jews*, modern historical literature, and of course, the creative imagination. Contemporary Protestant Bible study and the response of Jewish research were already known to the Haskalah writers, and they used them: Adam Hacohen, we will recall, initiated a new printing of the *Bi’ur* in Vilna (1849–1863).⁶⁹ Their attitude towards this research, however, was ambivalent. For example, Adam Hacohen’s son, the poet Micha Yosef Lebensohn (Michal, 1828–1852), added a long note to his biblical poems – *Shirei bat Zion* (Vilna, 1895 and Berlin, 1924) – in which he agreed with the view that Solomon was

⁶⁶ Yaakov Fichmann, “The Bible as a Topic of Poetry,” in idem, *Rocks in Jerusalem: Poems and Essays*, Tel Aviv, 1951, p. 9 (Hebrew).

⁶⁷ See: Ruth Kartun-Blum, *Profane Scriptures: Reflections on the Dialogue with the Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ Gershon Shaked, “The Biblical Canon and Modern Literature,” *AJS Review*, 28 (1), April 2004, pp. 43–62 (quote from p. 46).

⁶⁹ See in Chapter One.

not the author of Ecclesiastes, and that it was composed in the Hasmonean period, but asserted that the attribution of the book to Solomon was one “of the most sublime ideas that ever emerged from human thought,” since it created a contrast between the young Solomon and Solomon at the end of his life. In other words, he accepted the attribution of the Song of Songs to Solomon despite the fact that “a growing number of critics are hastening to deny Solomon’s authorship of this book too.” And he added, “It pains me to see that the art of criticism has in these times become an occupation rather than an art and engages in defaming everything sacred and producing only news, ascribing every book to a different author and a different time.”⁷⁰ In any event, works of literature and art accepted the historicity of the biblical story as self-evident.

All the types of biblical literature can be examined according to two aspects: their ideological development and their division into genres. The first aspect relates to the changes that occurred in the ideological messages the new biblical works intended to convey. In this context, a distinction should be drawn between those that intended to convey what they regarded as the biblical message, employing literary tools, and those works for which the Bible was a vehicle for conveying a “modern” or even an “anti-biblical” message. In other words, the new literature was freeing itself of the authority of the Bible and beginning to deal with biblical themes with total artistic and ideological autonomy. The second aspect relates to the specific requirements that the literary and artistic genres imposed on the artists and writers. Thus, for example, a biblical novel required many “fill-in” materials not only in its plot, but also in its historical and realistic background, while the conflicts were expressed mainly in monologues and dialogues. Non-epic poetry, on the other hand, was not necessarily required to retell a biblical story, but could – far more than a work of prose – use only metaphor and allusions, and through them imbue the signified with depth. Malka Shaked distinguishes between two types of poetry that uses the Bible: Bible-linked poetry, which attempts to cast light on a biblical theme, namely to explain or interpret it, and poet-linked poetry, which uses the biblical text to voice the poet’s own position on the theme or through it, to express his state of mind either in the personal, biographical context or the public context.⁷¹ In

⁷⁰ *The Poetry of Michal, His Letters and Translations*, with an Introduction by Yaakov Fichmann, Tel Aviv, 1962 (12), p. 106 (Hebrew).

⁷¹ Malka Shaked selected a large selection of poems from modern Hebrew poetry that made use of the Bible and wrote a valuable introduction to the anthology. See:

all of these genres, the poets placed in the mouths of the biblical figures words that do not appear in the Bible, although they assumed the reader was familiar with the source and could understand the nature of the intertextuality between the Bible and the poem. However, in many other cases, the new text exists in its own right.

The Bible in Hebrew Literature and Drama

In the first chapter, we learned that even before the appearance of Haskalah literature, in fact, from the seventeenth century, the Bible and its heroes were used as literary subjects (particularly in drama). However, it was the Haskalah literature that turned the Bible into a virtual treasure of themes – a wellspring of all types of creative works: poetry and drama, and to a far lesser degree, prose.⁷² The use of the Bible provided belles lettres with legitimacy, endowed the new secular Jewish culture with vitality and significance and made biblical Hebrew the foundation of the new literary language. In particular, it enabled writers to give expression to new values and messages under the “aegis” of biblical authority. Since writers belonging to the radical Haskalah and most of those in the generation of revival and the following generations did not regard the Bible as holy scripture, but as sublime literature, a fundamental book of Jewish culture that depicts a wide range of archetypical human situations, they were able to make the Bible topical in keeping with their own world-views. The translation and adaptation of biblical works from European literature into Hebrew was also given legitimization from the end of the eighteenth century by describing it as a return to the source, rather than as the introduction of “foreign-born” literature into Jewish literature.⁷³

Malka Shaked (ed.), *I'll Play You Forever: The Bible in Modern Hebrew Poetry. I. Reading; II. An Anthology*, Tel Aviv, 2005 (Hebrew). For a short anthology in English, see: David Curzon (ed.), *Modern Poems on the Bible*, Philadelphia, 1994.

⁷² For a general survey, see Sivan, pp. 305–317.

⁷³ The translation of biblical plays into Hebrew during the Haskalah began with the translation of Salomon Gessner's (1730–1788) play, *Der Tod Abels* (1758), at first partially in *Hame'asef* in 1811, and later in full by Yehudah Witkowsky (Breslau, 1816) and by Moshe Mendelsohn-Frankfurter of Hamburg (1861–1882); a translation in rhyme entitled *The Face of the Globe* (Amsterdam, 1872). Mendelsohn-Frankfurter also wrote three biblical epics: *Death of Abel*, *The Story of Abraham*, and *The Story of Joseph*. On him, see: Noah H. Rosenbloom, “Moshe Mendelsohn-Frankfurter, One of the Last Maskilim in Germany,” in idem, *Studies in Literature and Thought from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Jerusalem, 1989, pp. 52–66 (Hebrew). In addition, S.L. Gordon made a translation-adaptation of

Although the Haskalah writers did find it difficult to cast off the “authority of the Bible,” some of them already in their early works felt free enough to give the characters and their actions a new interpretation. For example, in his play, *Melukhat Shaul* (Saul’s Reign, 1794) – the first original Hebrew drama – Joseph Ha-Ephrati not only added new characters and events that do not appear in the Bible, but also imbued King Saul’s life story with a new, tragic meaning. The play emphasizes the heavy burden of the monarchy, and influenced by Rousseau, criticizes man’s alienation from nature.⁷⁴ It also underscores Saul’s unavoidable conflict with the prophet (Samuel) who anointed him as king at the demand of the people. The reason given in the play for Saul’s tragedy is not theological, but stems instead from the king’s psychological state.⁷⁵ Ha-Ephrati’s play differs from Naphtali Herz Wessely’s epic poem *Songs of Spendor* (1789–1802), whose topic was the enslavement of Israel in Egypt and the exodus from Egypt.⁷⁶ In it, the retelling supplements and expands the biblical story through the use of materials from the *midrash*, the apocryphal literature and biblical commentaries, and reflects the views of the moderate Haskalah. However, as Rosenbloom writes, the protagonist who dominates the epos is God. In His revelation at Mt. Sinai, He handed down *Torat-haShem*, the “teachings of God” or the “sacred laws” intended only for the Jewish people, and *Torat ha’adam* (“the teachings of man”), intended for all human beings.

Poems on biblical topics were being written from the very beginning of modern Hebrew poetry. In Michal’s poem “Moses on the Mountain Abarim” in which the persona finds it necessary to apologize for daring to compose the poem (“Oh, who am I that I come today to sing songs about You?”), the new element is a description of Moses’ sense of loneliness on Mt. Nevo (from there, “his eyes gaze at Jerusalem,” which is not mentioned in the Pentateuch). However, when he turned from the “father of the prophets” to other characters, Michal felt freer and allowed himself to “humanize” them by

the play *Die Weisheit Salomo’s* (Warsaw, 1896) by Paul Heyse (1830–1914), at the end of which the love between Shulamit and Haddad triumphs. David Frischmann had high praise for the play (see: *Kol kitvei David Frischmann*, vol. 2, Warsaw, 1913, pp. 34–46). Another translation was made of Moritz Lazarus’s book *Der Prophet Jeremias* (*The Prophet Jeremiah*), Warsaw, 1897.

⁷⁴ Avraham Shaanan, *Studies in Haskalah Literature*, Merchavia, 1952, pp. 83–91 (Hebrew).

⁷⁵ See: Yosef Ha-Ephrati, *Saul’s Reign* (annotated by Gershon Shaked) Jerusalem, 1968 (Hebrew); Naomi Zohar, *In a New Light: Studies on the Hebrew Play of the Haskalah Period*, p. 25–43.

⁷⁶ The description is based on Rosenbloom, *Studies in Literature and Thought*.

describing their inner world. Thus, for example, in the poem “Jael and Sisera,” he describes the struggle that rages in Jael’s soul after she has killed the enemy of the Jews, Sisera. She can find peace of mind only when the people receive her as their savior: “Oh, now, my sins are cleansed, the blood is washed from my hands.”⁷⁷ The poem “Solomon and Ecclesiastes” moves from a romantic mood – inspired by the Song of Songs – to a description of the disappointed old king’s loneliness when he realizes the vanity of human life, wealth and wisdom, which were unable to bring him happiness or an escape from death. In the final analysis, the poem’s message is one of faith:

In the end you will learn the futility
Fear God and accept His commandments
That is *all of man!* And His creatures are doomed to die.

J.L. Gordon was considered the harbinger of the “anti-Bible” trend in Hebrew literature. His poem *Tzidkiyah bevet happekudot* (1879, Zedekiah in the Prison House) is an example par excellence of a radical reworking of the Bible. The king of Judah, Zedekiah, is taken prisoner by the Babylonians, fettered and led to Babylonia (II Kings, 25:7). In the poem, he is the one who is jailed, not the prophet Jeremiah, who prophesized the destruction of Jerusalem and was thrown into prison by King Zedekiah (Jeremiah, 37:15–16). Uzi Shavit writes that Zedekiah is cast as Jeremiah and uses his style and tone of speech.⁷⁸ In a complete reversal of the perception shaped in the nineteenth century that viewed the prophets as the creators of the universal biblical morals, the representatives of “true Judaism,” and contrasted them with their rivals, the priests, representatives of “ritual Judaism,” Y.L. Gordon, in the dramatic monologue that he places in the mouth of the imprisoned king, presents the prophets as the ones who endangered the state and its political independence and encouraged the people to annul it:

All of the people of the land from the youngest to the eldest
Will study the words of scripture and law
All of the people – from farmers to princes
All of them will be scribes and seers
Tillers of land will abandon their plowing
Soldiers their banners and weapons⁷⁹

⁷⁷ In the play “Sisera” (Lemberg, 1841) by Nachman Isaac Fishmann (1809–1878), the character of Sisera’s mother is humanized, and Jael’s hesitations before killing Sisera are described.

⁷⁸ Uzi Shavit, *At the Dawn: Haskalah Poetry and Modernity*, Tel Aviv, 1996 (Hebrew). pp. 68–72.

⁷⁹ Trans. Stanley Nash, “Zedekiah in the Prison House,” *CCAR Journal: A Reform Jewish Quarterly*, 50, Spring 2003.

An “anti-biblical” trend can be given expression through a positive attitude towards a character that the Bible depicts negatively (for example, Saul or Jeroboam son of Nebat) or by openly questioning a biblical value, such as the prophecy, and praising a “new truth,” such as different values. For example, Shaul Tschernichowsky wrote his poem “A Hymn to the Sons of Tuval-Cain” in this defiant spirit. It lauds the conquest of nature, the tilling of the soil, and the creation of a modern world, which he views as “Torah! I have a new truth!”⁸⁰

The fact that writers belonging to the radical Haskalah returned to the Bible but did not accept the authority of the traditional interpretation, and in many cases even questioned its values, led literary critics to regard their work as a distinct expression not only of the “secularization” of the Bible, but also of an “anti-biblical” stance. The literary critic Baruch Kurzweil (1907–1972) argued that Haskalah writers, and later those of the revival generation, such as J. L. Gordon, M. J. Berdyczewski, David Frischmann (1859–1922) and Chaim Hazaz (1898–1973), who assumed the role of the admonishing prophets, identified with the world of the Bible only externally. The spiritual content of their world was totally different from that of the biblical prophets. In Kurzweil’s opinion, “the biblical subjects [in their work] serve as no more than poetic material, and bear no special spiritual value or weight.”⁸¹ The Bible was used to disguise a position that in fact subverted the values of the Bible and the tradition in general. This claim of course raises the question as to what the biblical values are. In any event, some of these writers militantly flouted values and symbols perceived as consummately biblical. From this standpoint, these defiant works can be termed “anti-biblical.”⁸²

In writing prose, or more correctly, the historical novel and the historical novella, the author had to decide whether to use biblical Hebrew or to abandon it, but he also was compelled to “thicken” the story by adding historical and realistic material. Another possibility

⁸⁰ Shaul Tschernichowsky, *Poems and Ballads*, Tel Aviv, 1990 edn., pp. 161–163 (Hebrew).

⁸¹ See: Baruch Kurzweil, “Fundamental Problems of our New Literature,” in *Our New Literature: A Continuation or a Revolution?*, Jerusalem – Tel Aviv, 1965 (2nd edn.), pp. 24–28, 66–67 (Hebrew).

⁸² For an extensive discussion, see: Hillel Barzel, *The Anti-Biblical Element in our New Poetry*, Ph.D. dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1963; Moshe Granot, *Biblical Characteristics in Haskalah Literature 1789–1829*, Ph.D. dissertation Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1979 (Hebrew). See also: Ben-Ami Feingold, “Enlightenment Playwrights and the Bible,” *Te’uda: Studies in Judaica*, 7, Tel Aviv, 1991, pp. 429–449 (Hebrew).

was to use the biblical story only as background, the option chosen by Abraham Mapu in his two novels *Ahavat Ziyyon* (Love of Zion, 1852) and *Ashmat Shomron* (The Guilt of Samaria, 1865).⁸³ *Ahavat Ziyyon* was the first biblical novel in Hebrew and was enthusiastically received. Its influence on the readers was unquestionably the most salient expression of the nineteenth-century biblical revolution, and it contains the first descriptions of nature of its kind in Hebrew literature based on topoi and conventions borrowed from European literature.⁸⁴ The novel ostensibly resurrects the period in its rural pastoral stage and is imbued with heroism, action, and drives. But while *Ahavat Ziyyon* depicts an idyllic picture of the kingdom of Judah, *Ashmat Shomron*, which deals with the kingdom of Israel, is teeming with intrigues. The author Yaacov Fichmann, who heaped praise on the two novels, described them as no longer being a commentary on the Bible, but rather a “a song of completion of the Holy Scriptures”, as novels that resurrected the ancient world and filled every “isolated saying,” every “withered flowery phrase” with the “juices of life.”⁸⁵ He attributed their success to the fact that Mapu did not write a pseudo-biblical work, nor did he paraphrase the Bible as Wessely and Shalom HaCohen had done.⁸⁶

Jewish authors of popular historical novels in Germany usually avoided dealing with the biblical period. One exception is the novel *Ezra Ha-Sofer* (Ezra the Scribe) by Ludwig Philippson.⁸⁷ Another is the adaptation and expansion by Abraham Shalom Friedberg (1838–1902) of Hermann Reckendorf’s *Die Geheimnisse der Juden*, published in 1856–57 (also written under the influence of Eugène Sue’s *Les mystères du peuple*. The book, entitled *Zikhronot leveit David* (Memories of the House of David, Warsaw, 1893–1900),⁸⁸ was intended to “ignite the sparks of nationalism” in the youth and to con-

⁸³ *Ahavat Ziyyon* was translated into English several times under various titles: *Amnon, Prince and Peasant* (1887), *In the Days of Israel* (1902), *The Shepherd Prince* (1922), *The Sorrows of Noma* (1919). Both novels were written under the influence of *The Mysteries of Paris* by Eugène Sue (1804–1857) and novels by Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870).

⁸⁴ See: Tova Cohen, *From Dream to Reality: Eretz Yisrael in Haskalah Literature*.

⁸⁵ Yaacov Fichmann, *Introduction to the Writings of Abraham Mapu*, Tel Aviv, 1964 (11th edn.), p. xxii, (Hebrew).

⁸⁶ Fichmann, “The Bible as a Subject of Poetry.”

⁸⁷ In *Biblische Frauengestalten* (Figures of Women from the Bible, Leipzig, 1896), the teacher Bernhard Jacobsohn (1846–?) wrote about women in the Bible under the influence of German literature.

⁸⁸ Earlier, in 1865, the book was translated into Hebrew in Warsaw by Avraham Kaplan under the title *Mysteries of the Jews*.

nect them to their past. It was printed in numerous editions because it was a romantic popularization of Jewish history. However, only the first two chapters (one written by the adapter) were devoted to the biblical period: the story of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel son of Jehoiachin king of Judah that extends from the destruction of Jerusalem to the inauguration of the Second Temple, and the story of Azariah, a descendant of Zerubbabel, which begins then and ends with Alexander's conquest of the East.⁸⁹

Frequently a writer chose a period or a theme that he perceived as paradigmatic or analogous to an historical period or a current historical situation. For example, the most influential biblical novel was Ze'ev Jabotinsky's *Samson* (1927), a tale of the escapades of the hero who singlehandedly fought the Philistines.⁹⁰ All the supernatural elements were deleted from the plot and secondary characters and plot lines were added.⁹¹ It was received as a work that preaches the idea that the establishment of a state (a monarchy) calls for order and discipline and that there can be no independence without the power of weaponry. At least two of the three topical political-national recommendations that Jabotinsky places in the mouth of his hero as lessons for the members of his generation – “to hoard iron, to take upon themselves a king, and to learn to laugh” – were adopted by the members of the Revisionist movement (many of them gave their daughters the name Karni, the name of the woman from the Tribe of Dan, in Jabotinsky's novel, who Samson first rejected and to whom he later offered shelter). At the same time, most of the readers ignored the fact that it was actually among the Philistines that Jabotinsky found the secret of how the tribes of Israel should have united and established a kingdom. They also overlooked words in the spirit of Bible criticism that he placed in the narrator's mouth: Moses is the collective name for “the names of hundreds of propagandists, rebels, commanders, guides, who gathered the horde of Hebrews into one people over a period of more than one

⁸⁹ On the adaptation and the historical novel, see: Nitsa Ben-Ari, *Romance with the Past*, Tel Aviv, 1997 (Hebrew).

⁹⁰ The original was written in Russian (1927). It was translated into Hebrew by Baruch Krupnick, Berlin, 1929. Illustrations by Nahum Guttmann were added to the 1950 edition. It was translated into English from the German translation, *Philister über Simson*, in 1930 by Cyrus Brooks and entitled *Judge and Fool*.

⁹¹ Jabotinsky, *Samson*, 1982 edition, p. 52. See lengthy discussion of the book in the context of Samson's character in Western literature in David Fishelov, *Samson's Locks: The Transformations of Biblical Samson*, Haifa – Tel Aviv, 2000 (Hebrew). Fishelov does not mention Heymann Steinthal's article, “The Legend of Samson,” which depicted Samson as a character of the solar myth. The article was also printed as an appendix to Goldziher's book, *Mythology Among the Hebrews*, pp. 392–446.

hundred years. All these names were obliterated into one name. There is no justice here, but there is one supreme truth.”⁹²

Another prose work is a collection of biblical tales and legends from the period of the exodus from Egypt, entitled *Bamidbar* (In the Desert) by David Frischmann, first printed in 1923,⁹³ which included a harsh critique of the dogmatism and lack of humanity of some of the laws of the Torah.⁹⁴ Most biblical historical novels, however, were intended for young readers.⁹⁵ For example, Zvi Livne's (Lieberman) novel *From Babylonia to Jerusalem* (1933) drew an analogy between the return of Zion after the Babylonian Exile and the first and second waves of immigration to Palestine in the modern era. The heroes of his novel are young men and women yearning to reach the homeland, traveling there without an official permit from the authorities, struggling against enemies (Edomites) and settling new villages.

It would seem easier to use the Bible in drama than in novels, because drama does not have to be filled in with any realistic detail or background, but is based on monologues and dialogues. And, as a matter of fact, after the plays of the Haskalah period, several dozen original biblical dramas were written. In Herzl's description of cultural life in Haifa, the new Hebrew city, in his utopian novel *Altneuland* (1902), the most important performance is the opera *Sabbatai Tzevi*. But, at the same time, the national theater is putting on the biblical drama, *Moses*.⁹⁶ According to one of its founders, the He-

⁹² An interesting expression of Jabotinsky's view is in a personal letter he wrote on December 23, 1938 to Adiah Gurewitz (on him, see later). Jabotinsky (like Ben-Gurion) regarded the exodus from Egypt as a family legend about one household or one tribe (perhaps Ephraim). In particular, he argued that there is no justification for debasing monotheism and praising idolatry. The fact that the redactors of the Bible succeeded in “purging” it of evidence that the ancient Israelites were idol-worshippers shows that a large, major stream of the Jewish people accepted the monotheistic view. See: Eri Jabotinsky, *My Father, Zeev Jabotinsky*, Tel Aviv, 1980, pp. 134–135 (Hebrew).

⁹³ Printed as a book in Tel Aviv, 1950.

⁹⁴ Frischmann translated Lord Byron's 1821 *Cain* (Warsaw, 1900).

⁹⁵ Some among these: the trilogy by the teacher and writer Israel Sheff (1865–1938), *Aksa bat kalev* (*Achsah daughter of Caleb*, Warsaw, 1910–1911), *Ehud ben Gera* (Frankfurt, 1923) and *The Peg, or Yael Wife of Heber* (Tel Aviv, 1934); the novels of the writer and translator Menahem Zalman Valpobsky (1893–1975), *Jeremiah in the House of the Rechabites* (1947) and *Ruler and Prophet* (1947); the novels by Zvi Livne (Lieberman) (1891–1985), *From Babylonia to Jerusalem* (1933) and *David and Jonathan* (1954), and others; and the novel by the historians and writer Yaakov Yehoshua Churgin (1898–1990), *Upon the Horns of the Altar: A Biblical Tale* (1958), whose plot centers on Joab son of Zeruiah.

⁹⁶ A character in the book, Sarah Litwak, commented that it was “a most uplifting play.” Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland* (Old-New Land), trans. Paula Arnold, Haifa, 1960, p. 74.

brew National Theatre, established in Moscow in 1917, was intended to be a “biblical studio.”⁹⁷ Bialik encouraged this trend and stated that “The Bible already contains enthralling dramatic elements. Some parts of the Bible can be understood only by grasping their dramatic forms. Dialogues and chapters, which are small dramas, are found in particular in the Prophets.”⁹⁸ Nonetheless, only a small number of the biblical dramas were actually performed on the Hebrew stage. One of the most important was the poetic drama *Tyre and Jerusalem* (1933) by Matityahu Shoham (1893–1937), that treats the conflict between Elijah and Ahab, between Judaism and paganism.⁹⁹ Another important biblical play performed in Israel with great success was Nissim Aloni’s (1926–1998) play, *The King is the Cruelest* (1953).¹⁰⁰ This play, like Moshe Shamir’s novel, *Kivsat harash* (The Poor Man’s Lamb),¹⁰¹ alludes to David Ben-Gurion as an “omnipotent and manipulative” Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. Its tragic hero, Uriah the Hittite, the loyal Minister of War, contends with David, the treacherous king, who is a thinly disguised David Ben-Gurion.¹⁰²

A large number of adaptations (with illustrations) of Bible stories for adults, children and youth were also published.¹⁰³ In addition, in 1926,

⁹⁷ G. Chanoch, “Habimah in its Early Years,” *Bamah*, 1, May, 1933, p. 24 (Hebrew).

⁹⁸ Bialik, “Conversations in the Habimah Drama Circle in Berlin” (1929), *Bamah*, 1, 1933, p. 24 (Hebrew).

⁹⁹ A sequel play, *You Shall Make no Iron Gods*, was printed in Warsaw in 1937.

¹⁰⁰ Glenda Abramson, “Israeli Drama and the Bible: Kings on the Stage,” *AJS Review*, 28 (1), 2004, pp. 63–82. The subject was the background to a story, “Jeroboam and Rehoboam” written by Moshe Ben-Eliezer (1882–1944) in 1939. In a review of the play “Jacob and Rachel” performed in the Ohel Theater, Mattityahu Shoham enunciated his view in relation to biblical plays: In the biblical drama, it is not the biblical word (namely, the use of biblical language) that is important, but the biblical message ... A biblical play is not a play that attempts to ‘realistically’ portray life during the biblical period, but rather to give expression to ‘the bell of vision that once awed the Land of Israel.’ See: Mattityahu Shoham, “The Bible and the Hebrew Theater,” *Baderekh* (Warsaw), 106, 39 (3), 1935.

¹⁰¹ Published in English under the title *The Hittite Must Die*, trans. Margaret Benaya, New York, 1978.

¹⁰² See: Ruth Shenfeld, *From King Messiah to King of Flesh and Blood*, Tel Aviv, 1986 (Hebrew). Translated into English under the title *David Stranger*, 1963; Freddie Rokem, “The Bible and the Avant-garde: The Search for a Classical Tradition in the Israeli Theater,” *European Review*, 9 (3), 2001, pp. 305–317.

¹⁰³ Among these were: Yitzhak Levanon, *Bible Stories for Children*; Shraga Gafni, *The World of the Bible for the Child* (1962–1970); adaptations by Devora Omer (1982); Galila Ron-Feder, *King David* (1984), *Saul* (1985), and *The Tunnel* (1992) about the days of Hezekiah; Ephraim Sidon, *The Bible in Rhyme* (from 2003 and onward) Meir Shalev, *Flood, Snake and Two Arks* (1994), and others. Bible stories for children also appeared on audio cassettes, in animated films and comics.

the “Bible choir” was formed in Tel Aviv to perform biblical music (especially movements from oratorios). Its program stated that the choir would “sing biblical songs on current events and from the Weekly Portion.” The choir was welcomed as a temporary replacement for original Hebrew poetry.¹⁰⁴ Directors and choreographers also tried their hand at composing popular ceremonies for Jewish festivals and dances in a “biblical style.”

The Bible in the Visual Arts

In the visual arts, a transition took place from biblical iconography to representation. Even if we accept the view that the Commandment “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” did not prevent the Jews from engaging in aesthetics or applied art, and that they did not reject or remain indifferent to it,¹⁰⁵ undoubtedly in contrast to Christian culture,¹⁰⁶ the Bible did not have a very pronounced figurative presence in the Jewish world. Some outstanding exceptions were the frescos and murals discovered in the synagogue of Dura Europos on the Euphrates River in northern Syria from 245 B.C., and mosaics in synagogues in Palestine from the 4th to the 7th centuries (Bet Alpha, Jaf'a, Na'aran, Bet Shean, Jericho, Sepphoris, Merot and many others) in which biblical figures and motifs appear. After the thirteenth century, biblical figures began to appear in illuminated manuscripts of the Bible, to which figures from the *midrash* were added,¹⁰⁷ and particularly in illustrated Passover *haggadot*. But generally, non-representational art was preferred in the illuminated manuscripts. In Yiddish literature, such illustrations began to appear from 1692 with the Sulzbach edition of *Tz'enah ur'enah* (the first editions came out in Prague in 1620 and in Basle in 1622), and in a Yiddish translation of the *Book of Josippon*, which contained 41 illustrations, eleven of them from Hans Holbein's (1497–1593) *Historiarum Veteris Testamenti Icones*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ See: *Ha'aretz*, 7 April 1927.

¹⁰⁵ See: Kalman P. Bland, *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual*, Princeton/NJ, 2000; J. Gutmann (ed.), *No Graven Images*, New York, 1971; Mira Friedman, *Bilder zur Bibel: Altes Testament*, Wien – Bayreuth, 1985.

¹⁰⁶ On the Bible in medieval and later Christian art, see: Chiara de Capoa, *Erzählungen und Personen des Alten Testaments*, Berlin, 2004 (orig. Italian).

¹⁰⁷ Jacob Leveen, *The Hebrew Bible in Art*, London, 1944. Until the 13th century, this art was painted by Christian artists.

¹⁰⁸ See: H. Holbein, *Images from the Old Testament*; Chone Shmeruk, *The Illustrations and Yiddish Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Jerusalem, 1986 (Hebrew).

Only in the early nineteenth century did the Jews realize that the lack of “Jewish art” was a void that needed to be filled, a recognition that stemmed from the view that visual art was a central manifestation of culture and of the people’s creative ability.¹⁰⁹

Biblical motifs, such as a seven-branched candelabrum, a shofar, the tablets of the law, or two of the spies sent by Joshua carrying large bunches of grapes, appeared mainly in iconography and various types of applied art.¹¹⁰ During the same period, Western artists created numerous paintings of the “land of the Bible” (namely, the biblical landscapes and the holy places),¹¹¹ and under the influence of the romantic-idyllic approach to the biblical period, it also featured in Eretz Israeli paintings and applied art that depicted the biblical landscapes and figures in an Orientalist style. Ephraim Moshe Lilien (1874–1925)¹¹² illustrated *Die Bücher der Bibel* in 1908 in the Art Nouveau style; Boris Schatz (1866–1932) one of the founders of the Bezalel School of Art, sculpted Jeremiah,¹¹³ Abel Pann (Pfeffermann, 1883–1963)¹¹⁴ created stone prints and colored chalk drawings on carton, etc.

Under the influence of biblical paintings in European art (the most widely known were those by Gustave Doré, 1832–1883) many illustrated adaptations of the Bible began to appear, particularly those intended for children.¹¹⁵ Well-known examples are Nahum Gutman’s illustrations for the book *Stories of the Bible*, adapted by Bialik and Ravnitzki (from 1927 onwards),¹¹⁶ and Zeev Raban’s (1890–1970) illustrations, in an Orientalist style, for the *Song of Songs* (1923).¹¹⁷ Raban also illustrated the biblical legends adapted by Bialik (and the

¹⁰⁹ See: Sivan, *The Bible and Civilization*, pp. 401–406; Y. Shavit, *Athens in Jerusalem*, pp. 271–272.

¹¹⁰ See: Alec Mishory, *Lo and Behold! Zionist Icons and Visual Symbols in Israeli Culture*, Tel Aviv, 2000 (Hebrew).

¹¹¹ The first collection of views of the Holy Land was by the engraving artists W. and E. Finden in 1832–1833. See: Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, *Painting the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, Jerusalem, 1997.

¹¹² On him, see: Haim Finkelstein, “E.M. Lilien: Artist of the Zionist Movement,” *Ariel: A Review of Arts and Letters in Israel*, 80, 1990, pp. 45–62 (Hebrew).

¹¹³ Y. Zalmona, *Boris Schatz*, Jerusalem – Tel Aviv, 1985 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁴ See: Y. Zalmona, Abel Pann, *Painting and Sculpture*, 10, 1979, pp. 37–40 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁵ Nahum Gutman (1898–1980) illustrated Bialik’s book, *Once Upon a Time, Biblical Legends* (1934). See: Ayalah Gordon, *Hebrew Illustrations: The Hebrew Illustrated Book for Children – The International Age 1900–1925*, Tel Aviv, 2005, pp. 69–80 (Hebrew). A later example of popular biblical paintings are those by Arye Moskovitz (M. Arye); see catalog of his exhibition held at the House of the Bible Museum, Tel Aviv, 1994.

¹¹⁶ In 1940 this book came out in its 29th edition!

¹¹⁷ See: Zeev Raban, *Song of Songs*, Berlin, 1923.

Passover Haggadah), and he designed playing cards in which the king is David and the joker is Asmodeus, the king of demons in Jewish folklore.¹¹⁸ Biblical motifs, mostly of his design, appear on ceramic tiles that decorated the facades of buildings built in the 1920s in Tel Aviv.¹¹⁹ As a matter of fact, every adaptation of Bible stories for children was illustrated with figurative representations.

The Presence of the Bible in the Private and the Public Sphere

Everything described thus far does not sum up the presence of the Bible in the private and the public sphere of Jewish society in Eretz Israel. It exerted no less an influence on other aspects of society and culture. The fact that Hebrew was the national language of the Jewish society made the Bible the major source of names and metaphors and it fostered the trend of “Hebraizing” both the national and the private space with the aid of the Bible.

From the beginning of the period of the First Aliya (1882), the use of biblical idioms in non-literary texts became very widespread, along with the practice of giving boys and girls biblical names.¹²⁰ During this period, the Eretz Israeli press also came to the aid of parents and suggested a list of names such as: Eliashiv, Efrat, Bat-Shuah, Nechemia, Ezra, Yehoyachin, Hananel, and the like. The Eretz Israeli landscape was “Hebraized” by giving biblical names to hundreds of new towns and cities.¹²¹ The most well-known example is the name Tel Aviv given to the Jewish neighborhood established next to Jaffa in

¹¹⁸ See: Batsheva Goldmann-Ida, *Zeev Raban, A Hebrew Symbolist*, Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, 2001 (Hebrew).

¹¹⁹ See: Batia Carmiel, *Tiles-Adorned City: Bezalel Ceramics on Tel Aviv Houses, 1923–1929*, Tel Aviv, 1996 (Hebrew).

¹²⁰ See: Sasha Weitman, “First Names as Cultural Measures: Trends in the National Identity of Israelis, 1882–1980,” in Nurith Gertz (ed.), *Perspectives on Culture and Society in Israel*, The Open University, Tel Aviv, 1988, pp. 141–151 (Hebrew).

¹²¹ See: Lea Mazor, “On Bible and Zionism: The Tribal Conception of Territory as Reflected in Israeli Place Names during the First Years of Statehood,” *Cathedra*, 110, December, 2003, pp. 101–122 (Hebrew); Y. Katz, “Identity, Nationalism and Place Names: Zionist Effort to Preserve the Original Local Hebrew Names in Official Publications of the Mandate Government of Palestine,” *Names*, 43 (2), 1995, pp. 103–118. For a critique of the trend of “Hebraization,” as intended to erase the Arab presence in Eretz Israel, see: Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*, Berkeley – Los Angeles, 2000, pp. 11–44.

1909, which later became a city. The name was taken from the title of the Hebrew translation of Herzl's utopian novel, *Altneuland* (the name appears in the Book of Ezekiel 3:15, where it actually refers to a mound of ruins). Another way of forming a new biblical space and a new sense of space that will create a link to a place and turn it into a homeland by fixing it in ancient history, is to change the names of places with a long historical past from Arabic into Hebrew, often by reconstructing the tribal division of biblical Eretz Israel. This trend was saliently manifested after June 1967 in the names given to settlements in Judea and Samaria: Ophra, Beth El, Kedumim and the like.¹²² In addition, there were the popular "hikes following the Bible" and travel guides devoted to biblical sites.

More than one hundred melodies were composed to biblical verses (about a quarter of them from the Song of Songs).¹²³ They functioned in the culture as a repertoire of *Sitz im Leben* for all seasons, and were sung at various events. Biblical verses and parts of chapters filled this function in recitations at various ceremonies (for example, "David's lamentation" [Samuel 2:17–27] was recited at memorial services for fallen IDF soldiers held on the national Memorial Day). Verses from the Bible appeared not only on synagogue doors, but also in public places, such as military camps. From the early days of the state, it became customary to give soldiers a Bible at the ceremony marking the end of their basic training. Bible contests (the first of which was a festive occasion marking the State of Israel's tenth anniversary in 1958) were extremely popular when they were first held.¹²⁴

Lectures on the Bible given in different circles were another popular cultural event. The Israel Society for Biblical Research, founded in 1949, had dozens of branches throughout the country, and from 1951 held annual conferences. Its success was an inseparable part of the public interest in the Bible and in Bible study. At the same time, it was an effective agent in making Bible study (usually, according to the "conservative" or "moderate" trend) into a popular subject. A well-known Bible study circle met in Ben-Gurion's home once a fortnight from December 1958 until his resignation in 1963. It was another reflection of Ben-Gurion's view about the superiority of Hebrew Bi-

¹²² See: Zali Gurewitch and Gideon Aran, "On the Place (Israeli Anthropology)," *Alpayim*, 4, 1991, pp. 9–36 (Hebrew).

¹²³ Natan Shahar, "Women in the Bible and in Hebrew Songs," in Amira Meir (ed.), *The Image of Women in the Bible and in Midrash*, printed in a special edition of *Beit Mikra*, 39 (178), 1994, pp. 97–115 (Hebrew).

¹²⁴ Joseph Sha'ar (ed.), *Bible Contests*, Jerusalem, 1963 (Hebrew).

ble study. Top-ranking scholars participated in it and it endowed the study of the Bible with prestige.¹²⁵ On a radio program called “Bible Chapters of the Day,” chapters from the Bible were read followed by commentary and discussion.

¹²⁵ See: Haim M. Y. Gevaryahu, “Recollections from the Bible Study Circle at D. Ben-Gurion’s Home,” in Mordechai Cogan (ed.), *Ben-Gurion and the Bible – A People and its Land*, pp. 70–74.

Chapter 18

From “Golden Age” to Decline?

While the first half of the twentieth century is often described as the “golden age” of the Bible revolution that was fully realized in the Jewish society in pre-state Israel and in the State of Israel,¹²⁶ afterwards, some claim, and even lament, that the charm of the Bible faded and a trend of alienation toward it began that reached its peak in the last decade of the twentieth century. The Bible lost its value and its status as the formative book of the Jewish people, and the far-reaching expectations of it were never fulfilled. The century of the Bible – the twentieth century – therefore reached its end.¹²⁷ From then on, the Bible has been regarded as a “neglected book,” and the argument has been made that “there are hardly any signs of concern about the ignorance of the Bible and the neglect of Bible studies.”¹²⁸ The Bible became a “foreign language,” whose words and expressions – which once were an integral part of the written and spoken language – became unfamiliar to present-day Israeli Hebrew speakers.¹²⁹ This foreignness distances them not only from the Bible, but also from modern Hebrew literature, which is grounded in biblical Hebrew. Without an understanding of biblical language and idioms, readers are unable to understand these works, which are central to the new Hebrew culture. In other words, according to this view, the activity of the “agents” engaged in nurturing and disseminating the recognition and understanding of the Bible ceased or at least was greatly reduced. Some of the factors charged with the responsibility for this decline were what has been described

¹²⁶ For a cursory survey, see: Anita Shapira, “The Bible and Israeli Identity,” *AJS Review*, 28 (1), April 2004, pp. 11–42.

¹²⁷ Yair Zakovitch, “The End of the Century of the Bible,” in Israel Bartal (ed.), *The Full Wagon: One Hundred and Twenty Years of Israeli Culture*, Jerusalem, 2002, pp. 110–120 (Hebrew).

¹²⁸ Avi Becker, “A Neglected Book,” *Ha’aretz*, 24 May, 2005.

¹²⁹ This claim is frequently voiced in an attempt to explain the decline in interest in the Bible. One can refute it, however, by noting that to Jews in the traditional society, throughout the generations, the language of the Bible was, to the same extent, a “foreign tongue.”

as the crisis of secular nationalism, the immanent weakness of teaching Bible as a history and literature – and not as a religious book – and the methods of teaching Bible in the schools: “Now that the religious nature of the Bible has again become apparent, the secular public has demonstrated its willingness to abandon the claim to chosenness and perhaps also to the fact of ownership, and to return the Book of Books to those who believe in its sanctity. And they in turn hasten to find in the (relative) shortlivedness of the secular interpretation evidence of its lack of legitimacy, and intoxicated by the power that has fallen into their hands, they tend to arrogate exclusivity in understanding, interpreting and teaching the Bible.”¹³⁰ The last part of this statement refers to the national-religious faction in Israel, and not to the ultra-orthodox. Moreover, even for the new National Religious camp, the Bible is only one part of a spiritual world, in which a more important role is filled by the *midrashim* of the Sages, medieval philosophy (Judah Halevy, Maimonides, Maharal of Prague [Judah Loew Ben Bezalel]), the Kabbalistic literature and current halakhic rulings.

In any event, this is not a new lament. In fact, at the end of the ’30s, claims were already being voiced that young teachers were far less enthusiastic than their predecessors, among other reasons, because they lacked the depth of the religious experience that the older teachers had gained through the world of traditional Judaism.¹³¹ The generation of teachers, graduates of secular schools, found it difficult to present the Bible as a manifestation of a truth that was not human in origin. About twenty years later, Professor Dinur (who served as Minister of Education and Culture, 1951–1955), wrote: “There is an impression that the Divine Presence departed from the study of the Holy Scriptures ... many try to explain it simply: the decline in knowledge of the Bible is an expression of the decline in its influence on life.” While in earlier generations knowledge of the Bible stemmed from the book’s function in life, “in our time, these roots have been cut off. The school on its own can by no means fill the void in the reality.”¹³²

This view originated in the expectation that Bible teaching would be educational, part of the national *Bildung*. But it overlooked the fact that Bible teaching in the Hebrew school greatly expanded the various

¹³⁰ Uriel Simon, *The Place of the Bible in Israeli Society: From National Midrash to Existential Peshat*.

¹³¹ S.D. Goitein, “On Hebrew Secondary Education in Palestine, 1939,” in *Teaching the Bible*, p. 69.

¹³² Ben-Zion Dinur, “Points of Departure in Teaching the Bible,” in *Values and Ways*, pp. 98–99.

aspects found in the book, as well as the topics learned through it. Criticism in this spirit also continued to be voiced in the coming years, claiming that study of the Bible based on the principles of “pseudo-scientific” Bible criticism or as history divested the Bible of its spiritual dimension, and also obscured the fact that it is sublime literature. There is no Bible without God, and hence the non-believing secular Jew distances himself from it, and as a consequence, is indifferent to the existential message that the Bible has conveyed throughout the generations.¹³³ As a result, the decline of the biblical culture – the creation of the Bible revolution – in the secular society, which launched the revolution, not only weakens the society, but also reduces the value of the book *itself* and relegates it to a neglected corner of Jewish culture.

A totally opposite claim is also made. According to it, the status of the Bible in the secular culture was weakened because the Bible was studied as a religious book, or as a mythical national narrative, and after 1967 was appropriated by the national religious movement. A recent study confirmed this claim when it found that the subject of Bible was perceived as uninteresting or irrelevant by most students because of the religious meaning assigned to it.¹³⁴ The blame was placed not only on the “religious” character of Bible teaching, but also on its “scientific” nature, which divests it of its “divine” character as sublime literature.

Several other reasons were given for the decline of the status of the Bible: 1) Israeli society, which changed from a society with collective values into a society with individualistic values, no longer feels the need for a book underpinned by cohesive values of nationalism. 2) Other pictures of the past became a common historical narrative and a usable past, including the Second Temple period, Jewish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with an emphasis on the Holocaust, and the history of Jewish society in Palestine from 1882; 3) There was a trend, from the '50s and onward, of returning to “Judaism” and nurturing a Jewish-Israeli consciousness, of which the Bible is one part and not its major foundation. Attempts to formulate a national narrative and to shape the collective historical memory failed because Israeli society was not prepared to forego the post-biblical cultural heritage.

¹³³ See: Uriel Simon, *The Place of the Bible*, and also: Moshe Greenberg, *On the Bible and Judaism: A Collection of Writings*, Tel Aviv, 1984, pp. 319–343 (Hebrew).

¹³⁴ Asher Shkedi, “The Teaching of the Bible in Israeli Schools,” in Danny Jacoby (ed.), *Nation Building*, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 109–114 (Hebrew). See also: Avi Becker, “What are they studying in the Bible and how has the subject declined from its greatness?”, *Ha'aretz Supplement*, 31 December, 2003, pp. 12–15.

The Bible filled a vital, key role in the years during which the new Jewish society and culture were being shaped, and this role was attenuated in the coming years. However, it never totally vanished; it merely changed in nature. Alongside the importance attributed to its status as national history, it continued to act as support and authority for contradictory political positions.¹³⁵

As a matter of fact, in the Jewish-Hebrew culture in Israel, use was and is made of the four methods of interpreting the Holy Scriptures formulated by Augustine of Dacia (died 1282) in the footsteps of St. John Cassian (360–433):

Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, Moralis quid agas; quo tendas anagogia (The letter teaches deeds, Allegory teaches what you should believe, the moral meaning teaches what you should do, and Anagogy teaches where you should set your aim).

A part of the Israeli public continues to find in the Bible history, archetypes and symbols, a basis for a world-view, and a source for a vision of the future, on the national level as well as on the public and private level.

¹³⁵ See: Arie Lova Eliav, *New Heart, New Spirit*, trans. Sharon Neeman, Philadelphia, 1988. See also the criticism by the author Aharon Megged of Eliav's attempt to find in the Bible authority for a secular humanistic Zionist view. Megged, "The Bible Now," *Ha'aretz*, 25 July, 1986. The greatness of the Bible, Megged writes, is "that every person can find in it what he is looking for."

Afterword

In this book, we have attempted to show not only that the Hebrew Bible was reborn in Jewish culture in the last two hundred years, but also that possibly at no time in its long past did it have such a rich, varied life as it has had in this period. We refer not only to the status of the Bible as one complete book – a kind of textual meta-entity – but also to individual books, literary units, as well as verses in it. The Bible as a whole “opened up” during this period to many new options of interpretation and reading, and it functioned in society and culture in a far more intensive manner than it ever had before. It is these options of reading that have imbued the Bible with great vitality in the modern era and given expression to its atemporality and the many uses to which it can be put.

Throughout the generations, many explanations have been offered as to why the Hebrew Bible has enjoyed its unique status in Jewish culture, and as the Old Testament in Christian culture, other than the explanation that it bears the words of God and eternal truth. Goethe, for example explained it this way:

... since the Bible is so full of meaning ... it surpasses every other book in offering material for reflection and opportunity for meditation on human affairs, it could still, as before, be made the foundation of all sermons and other religious treaties.”¹

About a hundred years later, in 1892, the national thinker Ahad Ha'am gave a similar explanation for the secret of the Holy Scriptures' eternal essence:

The Holy Scriptures are not immanently holy. It is the content that sanctifies the book, transforming it into the primary element and making its content secondary. The book exists forever, but its content is changed by life and learning. What have men not found in the Holy Scriptures from the time of Philo until the present day? ... In the Holy Scriptures they all sought only the truth, each his own truth, and they all found what they

¹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Poetry and Truth: From My Own Life (Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit)*, II: vii, trans. Minna Steele Smith, London, 1908, pp. 243–244.

sought, found it because *they were compelled to*, for if not, the truth would not be the truth and the Holy Scriptures would not be holy.²

However, since the Bible was a text open to a variety of interpretations and commentaries, even some that contradict one another, over the generations it became a battlefield, an expression of the religious, intellectual and cultural history of the communities that believe in the Bible. In letter No. 134 of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1761), the Persian traveler Usbek tells of his visit to a large library, where he saw, among other things, thick volumes which explain the scriptures. When he wondered whether the scriptures were so obscure that they needed interpretation, the librarian replied:

These writers ... did not consult scripture so as to find out what we must believe, but to find what they believe themselves ... Scripture is a country where men of every sect make raids, as if in order to pillage; it is the battleground where hostile nations meet frequently in combat, attacking and skirmishing in numerous ways.³

That is precisely the reason why the Hebrew writer J. H. Brenner thought Jews should turn to the Bible and become captivated by what he termed its "hypnotic power": "Not every one of those who shout about the absolute value of the Holy Scriptures really finds what he needs in them. Rather the value is there in any case, outside of them [the Holy Scriptures]."⁴ In other words, Brenner had some doubts about the authentic nature of reliance on the Bible and believed that it is not the sole source for opinions and views, but because of the status it enjoys those referring to it find their justification and support in it.

The philosopher Martin Buber was not as skeptical as Brenner, but he believed that in the Jewish context, the invocation of the Bible is authentic, even primal in nature. A Hebrew man, he wrote, "can be someone who heard the voice calling to him in the Bible speaking in Hebrew ... A Hebrew man is not a biblical man. The 'return' that is meant here cannot in the nature of things mean a striving for the recurrence or continuation of something long past, but only a striving for its renewal in a genuinely contemporary manifestation."⁵ However, Buber realized that this Hebrew man cannot "return to the Bible"; he can only try to revive the Bible, to conduct a new dialogue with

² Ahad Ha'Am, "Perurim" ("Crumbs") (1892), "The Sacred and the Profane," in *Al Parashat Derakhim* (At the Crossroads), vol. 1, Berlin, 1930, p. 138.

³ Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. with an introduction and notes by C. J. Betts, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1973, p. 238.

⁴ J. C. Brenner, "In Life and in Literature," in *Kol kitvei J. C. Brenner*, vol. 2, p. 58.

⁵ M. Buber, "Biblical Humanism," in Nahum N. Glazer, *Biblical Humanism*, pp. 211–216.

it. “Each generation,” he wrote, “must struggle with the Bible in its turn, and come to terms with it.” Hence, he spoke about the expectation of a “recurrent revelation” that would cover the complete chasm that divides the modern Jew and the Bible;⁶ in fact, he was referring to the need for a new mediating interpretation between the Bible and its readers, one that would preserve the vitality of the text. However, as Usbek learned, there is no one single mediating interpretation. If there were one, the Bible would certainly lose its status.

The different options of reading or the different biblical discourses created and activated over the last two hundred years co-exist and conduct a polemic discourse – open and concealed – with each other. This discourse constitutes an inseparable part of the world in which it exists, on the one hand, and reflects part of this world, on the other. This is, of course, the reason why the struggles over the Bible are a central part of the history of biblical culture.

* * *

The options for reading the Hebrew Bible in the framework of the biblical culture in the new Jewish society differ from one another and constitute biblical sub-cultures, in which the Bible is the common factor (as well as the subject of controversy between them). We would seem to be speaking about two antithetical options: religious reading versus secular reading. However, as we have seen, part of the religious reading and part of the secular reading have quite a bit in common. This commonality is a direct result of the biblical revolution in both the religious and the non-religious society.

The major options for reading are:

1) A *midrashic-halakhic-aggadic* reading, which is ahistorical and meta-historical. It views the Bible as an organic part of the literature written after it and reads it through the medium of the exegetical literature. This exegetical commentary was the quintessentially Jewish genre of intellectual expression, and it continues to be such. Both religious and secular readers continue to adopt the technique of the *midrash* without ascribing any importance to the historicity of the text or to the reliability of the historical picture it depicts. The profound difference between the religious and the secular exegetical reading (when the latter also uses the *midrash* as an interpretative

⁶ Buber, “The Man of Today and the Jewish Bible,” in *ibid.*, pp. 1–13.

tool), lies in the fact that the latter “forgoes” the *halakhic* part of the Bible and the talmudic and rabbinical literature. It is interested mainly in the “earthly” aspect of the Bible, and in the post-biblical literature it turns primarily to the *aggadic* exegesis.⁷ This option has been given expression in exegetic texts, in public sermons, in the public discourse, and the like.

This reading does not “break down” the Bible by layers and sources – as modern biblical research has -- but rather by themes and motifs. This approach enables the Bible in the modern era too to serve as a reservoir of opinions, symbols, images and heroes that have an atemporal status and validity which is independent of an historical context, but at the same time, have status and validity in specific current historical contexts, both on the collective (national) public level and on the level of personal conduct and experience. This “break-down” is expressed in the freedom given to the creative imagination to interpret, to supplement and to expand the narrative in the Bible in belles lettres, in drama and in the fine arts, and even to deviate from the narrative. It also enables those adhering to secular ideologies to draw topical analogies from aspects they consider important. Those holding a nationalistic view, as we have seen, applied the political and territorial dimension of the Bible to the current situation, while those leaning towards socialism found a social and moral-humanistic message in it. Such a holistic reading of the Bible presents biblical Judaism as a dynamic, multifaceted world, and provides the possibility of choosing certain views while rejecting others. In effect, in such a reading, biblical Judaism is perceived as a mirror picture of modern Judaism, which does not preclude the rejection of various views or customs, which are perceived as far removed from the world of modern man. Or, perhaps modern Judaism is perceived as a mirror picture of biblical Judaism. As a matter of fact, for the secular Jew, the Bible is not a “doctrine of life” but rather an historical and literary document, as well as a source of values that seem consistent with the world of the modern Jew. In particular, it affirms that the Jewish people has an ancient history and that it is a unique people.

⁷ Various adaptations of the non-*halakhic* layer of the Talmud and of the *midrashic* literature were available to the Hebrew pupil and the Hebrew reader. The most popular one, *Sefer Ha'Aggadah: A Selection of Aggadot in the Talmud and the Midrashim*, by C.N. Bialik and Yehoshua Hana Ravnitzki, came out in its first edition in Odessa in 1907–1911. Bialik and Ravnitzki regarded the *Aggadah* as the consummate expression of the free, popular and personal world of creation of the Jewish people, and as an eternal classic.

2) A reading that finds a uniform world-view and one cohesive system of values in the Bible. The reason for this unity, Goethe wrote, is: “[the] prevalent view that this Book of Books was composed in one spirit; nay more it was inspired and, as if it were dictated by the Divine Spirit.” The non-believer, who sees in the Bible a compilation, dating from various periods and having undergone revision at different times, and acknowledges that contradictions exist in it, Goethe wrote, understands very well that the main point is the one “inner meaning” of the book as a whole. About that, he wrote: “here lies all that makes it original, divine, effective, unassailable and indestructible.” The book, with its enormous vitality, affects the inner core of life. Hence, Goethe asserted, criticism “would never succeed in depriving us of the essential foundation to which we cling nor even in shaking us for a moment in the confidence we have once felt.”⁸

The Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss (1899–1973) wrote, in his article “On the Interpretation of Genesis,” that “the sacred book, the Bible may then abound in contradictions and in repetitions which are not intended,” but that “...The Bible reflects in its literary form the inscrutable mystery of the ways of God which it would be impious even to attempt to comprehend.”⁹ From this standpoint, the Bible is a creation that reflects timeless truths.

In a similar vein, Buber claimed that the Bible is the sacred narrative of *Ur-Judentum*, that is, it relates a sacred history and expresses and embodies a direct emotion and a fundamental religious experience, and has determined for generations the world picture of those in whom this history is inscribed and internalized.¹⁰ Therefore he believed that the development of the Bible in the literary dimension should be separated from its development in the religious dimension. According to Buber, the monotheistic myth in the Bible – which he defines as a concrete-figurative expression – connects the “rational” explanation of nature with the super-earthly transcendental dimension,¹¹ and from such a vantage point, the biblical text becomes a sys-

⁸ Goethe, *Poetry and Truth*, III: 12, vol. 2, pp. 56–57.

⁹ Leo Strauss, “On the Interpretation of Genesis,” *L’Homme*, 21, January – March 1981, 30, p. 5–36.

¹⁰ According to a Jungian influenced interpretation, the stories of the Bible are not historical stories but rather the eternal story of the inner development of the psyche towards its mature consciousness. See: Eugen Drewermann, *Tiefenspsychologie und Exegese*, Olten, 1987–1988. On the Jungian interpretation of the Bible, see: Wayne Gilbert Rollins, *Jung and the Bible*, Atlanta, Ga., 1983.

¹¹ Here we have relied mainly on Yehoyada Amir’s article, “From Negation to Rehabilitation – Myth in Modern Jewish Thought,” in Moshe Idel and Ithamar

tematic set of dogmas that are the foundation for Jewish “selfhood” and the source of its life and vitality.¹²

Since this option of reading holds that the Bible has a unified world view (or philosophy) and values, according to which the Jews understood, and understand the world and behave in it, it has given rise to attempts to formulate the complete, all-inclusive system of the biblical world-view,¹³ and to find in it a theological or philosophical method that offers answers on all subjects, not only to theological questions.¹⁴ From this standpoint, the Bible reflects, among other things, a Jewish conception of time, a unique attitude towards nature, etc. This option is inevitably influenced by new conceptual modes of thought that emerged in the world of the modern Jew,¹⁵ and has given rise to hermeneutic interpretation that is influenced by new theories – an-

Gruenwald (eds.), *The Myth in Judaism: History, Thought, Literature*, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 237–273 (Hebrew). See also: Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, London, 1968 (2nd impression). In addition, see also: Benjamin Uffenheimer, “Buber and Modern Jewish Bible Research,” pp. 157–196; Regev Yakobowitch, *Martin Buber’s Biblical Project: Between a Scientific and a Conceptual Approach*, M.A. thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2001, pp. 5–83 (Hebrew).

¹² According to Buber, Moses’ life is not a biography, but a legend that reflects the spirit of the later time in which it was written; however, this legend gives expression to an authentic “organic-creative memory” and “mythicizes history.” It is not always clear, however, whether in Buber’s point of view, there is any importance to the question of whether the biblical story was written from the outset to create a uniform, systematic development of ideas, or is only endowed with an internal, organic continuity by a later reading. See: Martin Buber, *Moses*, as well as “The Jewish Myth,” (1914), in idem, *Te’udah veye’ud*, vol. 1, 1959, Jerusalem, pp. 80–89 (Hebrew) (Orig., “Der Mythos der Juden,” in *Vom Geist des Judentums*, München, 1916, pp. 75–95). On Buber’s concept of the “monotheistic myth,” see: Benjamin Uffenheimer, “Buber and Modern Jewish Bible Research,” pp. 157–196.

¹³ See, for example: Eliezer Schweid, *The Philosophy of the Bible as a Cultural Foundation in Israel: A Study of the Story, Teaching and Legislation of the Pentateuch*, Tel Aviv, 2004 (Hebrew); Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis*, New York, 2003.

¹⁴ On the difference between the history of the biblical religion (*Religionsgeschichte*) and biblical theology (*biblische Theologie*), see: Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Jewish Biblical Theology and the Study of Biblical Religion.” For several attempts to formulate biblical theology, see, for example: Kaufmann Kohler, *Jewish Theology, Systematically and Historically Considered*, New York, 1918 (orig., *Grundriss einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums auf geschichtlicher Grundlage*, Leipzig, 1910); Thorleif Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek*, trans. Jules L. Moreau, New York – London, 1960 (orig., *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen*, Göttingen, 1952); Zvi Adar (ed.), *The Old Testament Conception of God, Man and the World*, Ramat Gan, 1965 (Hebrew).

¹⁵ See: Schorsch, “The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship,” in *From Text to Context*, pp. 171–172.

thropological, philosophical or psychological.¹⁶ It also seeks to find in the Bible a systematic, all-inclusive system of insights and concepts, or the origin of the formative traits of the Jewish collective from the moment of its appearance on the stage of history, or general insights on the human psyche.¹⁷

A secular reading of the Bible in the spirit of this unified approach divests the Bible of its theological value, and in fact, relates to it as literature concerned mainly with the behavior of humans and society, and not with their obligations towards God, or as a philosophical book. The secular retort to the claim that such a reading is totally opposed to the essence of the Bible as “holy scripture,” is that the Bible was written by human beings and “sanctified” by humans in certain historical circumstances. Hence, in new historical circumstances, human beings can – and are entitled to – assign it a new “value.” In other words, according to this optional reading, one can accept the values of the Bible, even without accepting its theological layer. According to this view, the Bible as a whole is not a religious book, and large portions of it are distinctly “earthly history.”

What these two options have in common is that they both divest the biblical text of its history and regard it as a text whose messages are not dependent on the historical context in which they were written or on its internal development. According to a more moderate version of this view, which, we will recall, was formulated by Ahad Ha’Am, and exerted wide influence from the time the Bible was canonized, the reconstruction of the stages of its composition is no longer of any importance. What endows it with status and significance is the tradition, the manner in which it has been read and interpreted over the generations since then, and the way in which it has shaped and influenced the world of the Jew.¹⁸ In other words, the unity of the Bible is embodied in the text itself, as it was handed down to us, in the way it was understood by the tradition, and the manner in which it shaped the religious and historical consciousness of the Jews.

3) A secular reading (which can be defined as “historical literalism”) regards the Bible primarily as the history of the ancient Jewish people. It distinguishes between the true reality of the biblical period, its

¹⁶ As well as a feminist reading. See: Letty M. Russell (ed.), *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Oxford, 1985.

¹⁷ For an example of such an interpretation of the Book of Genesis, see: Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible*, Los Angeles – Berkeley, 2000.

¹⁸ See: James L. Kugel, *The Bible as it Was*.

representation in the Bible and the criticism of it, on the one hand, and the yearned-for or ideal reality that the Bible presents. From this point of departure, it is important to clarify, using extra-biblical evidence among other things, how reliable the historical picture in the Bible is. Because of the great value assigned to the historical layer of the Bible – in fact to nearly the entire Bible, and not only the Pentateuch – this optional reading and the use it makes of sources, such as extra-biblical documents and monuments, distinguishes between the book and its eternal values and the biblical period as a historical period. For the very reason that in this option, the Bible was written by humans, it makes a great effort to prove that the Bible's authors relied on authentic sources and that the historical picture it presents is reliable and truthful.

4) A “subversive” reading that attempts to “peel off” the layers of editing and “censorship” that have been stuck onto the Bible, in order to extract from it a different picture of the religious-cultural and national history of the biblical Jewish people, “as it really was,” and to propose a counter-history to the accepted tradition.

5) A reading that not only rejects the relevance of the biblical values in the modern world, but also finds fault with the values and heroes of the Bible, and hence asserts that the Bible has no relevance in our time.¹⁹

All of these modes of reading the Bible had to cope – each in its own way – with high Bible criticism. It seems to us that the degree of freedom the modern reader took in his approach to the Bible was influenced by his attitude towards the documentary hypothesis or by the way he contended with it. However, neither the documentary hypothesis nor other hypotheses were the cause of the great freedom that modern exegesis has appropriated to itself. This freedom, however, was born from the same spiritual and cultural background in which the documentary hypothesis made its appearance.²⁰

* * *

In this book, we have attempted to describe part of the history of the biblical revolution that created a modern biblical Jewish culture, or differently defined, a Bible-oriented modern Jewish culture. We have

¹⁹ For a contemporary view of this kind, see, for example, Moshe Granot, *The Bible – An Unfavorable Judgment*, Tel Aviv, 1986 (Hebrew).

²⁰ See the exhaustive discussion of the modes of reading and interpretation in John J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel*.

seen that the contents of the biblical revolution and of the biblical culture it created have undergone many changes in the course of the last two hundred years. This revolution was realized in full beginning in the 1880s in Eretz Israel, as a result of the fact that the “return to the Bible” was combined with “the return to the land of the Bible” and to an historical reality that was depicted as analogous to the “biblical period.” In this new reality, the Bible emerged from its pages and from among the pages of the exegetic and midrashic literature and belles lettres, into a primal experience and political and cultural life. The expectations of the Bible – messianic and utopian – were enormous: through it the historical continuity of Jewish life would be preserved; through it the tie to the land would be established, and with its help national life would be restored and shaped in the Land of Israel.

Against this background, we believe it would be correct to say that the story of the Hebrew Bible’s rebirth over a period of two hundred years is actually two intertwined, but also separate, narratives:

The first covers the history of the book in the last two hundred years, the status and values assigned it, and the struggles over the right ways to understand it, to interpret it, to study it and to research it. The various modes of use to which the Bible was put and the meanings ascribed to it reflect the diversity of opinion and viewpoint in modern Jewish society in general, and that in Eretz Israel in particular. This narrative can be summed up in a paraphrase of Buber’s words: interpretations come and go, uses come and go, the struggles over it grow stronger or weaken, but the Bible always remains an eternal book.

The second narrative is a description of the Bible’s real influence on shaping a consciousness of time and a picture of the past, a consciousness of space and of place in Jewish society in Eretz Israel. It is a description of its influence on shaping the values of the society and on the creation of the culture produced in it. We believe that here we should draw a distinction between two different domains in the biblical culture – between the use of the Bible as a source of legitimization, identity and belongingness, and its use as a guide for constructing social and cultural contents, and between its acceptance as the source of an historical meta-narrative and a meta-model, on the one hand, and as a reservoir of partial narratives and models on the other.

About two hundred years after the puritan revolution, the French historian, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1828–1893) returned from a visit to England, and stated in his book, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1864), that “to this day, the country is biblical.”

The Bible was surely not the sole factor that determined the character of Eretz Israel, its society and its culture, as it was imagined and shaped by the Jews from 1882 and thereafter, nor of the new Jewish culture. The degree of its influence should be assessed as part of an aggregate of factors that created and shaped the new Jewish society. The Bible provided a foundation and supporting walls for the edifice of the national society; it is an important part of its cultural legacy and basic assets, and it shaped the cognitive map of the land. But, despite its enormous influence, it would be an exaggeration to say that about one hundred and thirty years of biblical revolution have made Jewish culture in Eretz Israel into a biblical culture, that “Israel is text centered or biblical haunted,”²¹ or that to this day, Israel is a biblical state. Nor is there any doubt that its status as a formative book and as a source of models of emulation and inspiration, which was robust in the first generations of the national territorial revival, has weakened over time. At the same time, from the perspective of the early 21st century, there is no doubt that its constructive and creative role was not adversely affected by Bible criticism, but rather that – despite Bible criticism – it is greater and more multidisciplinary than ever before because of the active part it played in the processes of creating a new reality in Jewish history.

²¹ Gideon Aran, “Return to the Scriptures in Modern Israel,” p. 101.

Appendix

Articles by Jewish Writers on the Babel-Bibel Controversy¹

A. Abbreviations of newspapers and periodicals from 1902–1905

AZdJ – Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums. Ein unparteiisches Organ für alles jüdische Interesse, Berlin, 1837–1922.

A general newspaper, the major newspaper of liberal Judaism.*

Die Zeit, Morgenblatt, Wien.

DIslr – Der Israelit. Ein Centralorgan für das orthodoxe Judenthum, Mainz / Frankfurt am Main, 1860–1938.

An orthodox weekly founded in Mainz by Dr. Marcus Lehmann.

DIZ – Deutsch Israelitische Zeitung

An orthodox newspaper founded in Regensburg in 1884 under the name *Laubhütte*, edited by Seligmann Mayer. In 1901 its name was changed to *Deutsch Israelitische Zeitung*.

IsMsch – Israelitische Monatsschrift. Beilage zur Jüdische Presse, Berlin.

An orthodox monthly, founded in Berlin in 1882.

IsrWsch – Israelitische Wochenschrift. Zeitschrift für die Gesamtinteressen des Judenthums, Berlin, 1892–1906.

A moderate conservative weekly edited by M. A. Klausner.

Jeschurun – Monatsschrift für Lehre und Leben im Judenthum.

A monthly founded by S. R. Hirsch, edited by him from 1854–1870 and renewed in 1883.

JüdPr – Die Jüdische Presse. Organ für die Interessen des Judenthums, Berlin, 1870–1923.

¹ There was probably a greater number of articles and booklets published than those surveyed here, nor did we succeed in obtaining all the publications whose names were in our possession. We were aided in preparing the list by the bibliographies in books by Wiese, Lehmann and Breuer, in: A. Freimann & H. Brody, *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1902–1904; A. Freimann, *Katalog der Judaica und Hebraica*, Stadtbibliothek Frankfurt am Main, Band Judaica, 1932 (rep. 1968) and in other sources.

* This and most other German-Jewish periodicals of the 19th and early 20th centuries are available in full text at <http://www.compactmemory.de/>

An orthodox newspaper founded by Ezriel Hildesheimer. Edited by Dr. Enoch.

JS – Der jüdische Student, Monatsschrift der Vereine jüdischer Studenten, Berlin, 1902–1933.

MGWJ – Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums, 1851–1939.

A monthly founded by Zacharias Frankel, a leader of the conservative stream (positivistic-historical Judaism).

Ost und West: Illustrierte Monatsschrift für modernes Judentum, Berlin, 1901–1923.

SaH – Saat auf Hoffnung. Leipzig – Dresden, 1863–1935.

A periodical of the Institutum Judaicum (Delitzschianum).

ZA – Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie, Berlin, 1886–1938.

Articles and letters to the editor on the controversy were also published in *The Jewish Chronicle* in London from February–July 1903. In 1903, the *Revue des Etudes Juives* of the Alliance in Paris published an annotated list of books published on Babel-Bibel.

B. Unsigned Articles (partial list):

AZdJ: “Der Kaiser über Babel und Bibel”, 67 (9), 1903, pp. 100–102.

IsWsCh: “Babel und Bibel”, 12 (4), 23. Januar 1903, pp. 51–52.

JüdPr: “Correspondenzen”, 21. März / 25. Juli 1902.

Der Israelit:

“Babel und Bibel”, *Die Laubhütte*, 13. März 1902, pp. 196–197; “Zeitungsnachrichten und Correspondenzen”, 44 (21), 16. März 1903, p. 457; 44 (22), 19. März 1903, p. 470; “Eine Babel-und-Bibel Woche erster Ordnung”, Erste Beilage zu No. 23, *Der Israelit*, 44 (23), 1903, pp. 509–511; “Von neusten Thurmabau zu Babel”, 44 (40), 25. Mai 1903, pp. 889–892; 44 (68), 27. August 1903, 1513 f. (“Eine Antikritik zu Bibel und Babel”).

IsrMsCh: “Der babylonische ‘Sabbat’”, 5, 5. Mai 1904, pp. 17–18.

C. Signed Articles, Booklets and Books (and brief biographies)

1. Dr. Aaron Ackermann (1867–1912), reform rabbi in Brandenburg²: “Professor Delitzsch”, *JüdPr*, 35 (10), 3. März 1904, pp. 93–95.

² Wrote: *Judentum und Christentum*, Leipzig, 1903; *Geschichte der Juden in Brandenburg*, Berlin, 1906.

2. Prof. Jacob Barth (1851–1914), a linguist and Orientalist, the son-in-law of Azriel Hildesheimer, studied Semitic philology in Berlin, Leipzig and Strasbourg, taught at the orthodox rabbinical seminary in Berlin and Semitic linguistics at the university. In 1880 was appointed associate professor, was never appointed as full professor because he was Jewish, but was awarded the title of Geheimer Regierungsrat. Wrote important works on Semitic linguistics. Was a member of various Jewish organizations, and was one of the leaders of Verband der deutschen Juden:
 - (a) *Babel und israelitisches Religionswesen*. Vortrag, Berlin, 1902;
 - (b) “Der israelitische Sabbat und die Babylonen”, *JüdPr*, 33 (19), 9. März 1902, pp. 175–177; 183–185; (c) “Babel und Bibel”, *Die Laubhütte*, 13. März 1902, pp. 196–197; (d) “Vortrag”, *DIsr*, 44 (24), 26. März 1903, p. 530.
3. Rabbi Dr. Jonas Bondi (1862–1929), rabbi of the Mainz community³: *Bibel und Bibel: Ein Scherzspiel, aufgeführt bei einer Jubiläumsfeier*, Frankfurt am Main, Juni 1903.
4. Moses Loeb Levy Bamberger (1869–1924), rabbi in Frankfurt⁴:

“Purim nach der Keilschriftforschung. Vorlesung eines Berliner Professors, gehalten am 29. Februar 1903 gleichzeitig in der Singakademie zu Hotzenplatz und Posemukel”, *DIsr*, 44 (20), 12. März 1903 (Purim-Beilage, S. 2 f.).
5. Dr. Max Beermann (1873–1935), a rabbi in Insterbrug, later in Heilbronn:
 - (a) “Bibel und Babel im Religionsunterricht der Prima”, *IsrWsch*, 12 (10), 6. März 1903, pp. 137–138; (b) “Die grosse Täuschung”, Berlin: Litfass, 192 (?) .
6. Emil Behrens:
 - (a) “Der assyrisch-babylonische Sabbath. Ein Irrtum des Professors Delitzsch”, *Berliner Tageblatt*, 7. April 1904; (b) “Biblische und babylonische Religion: Eine Skizze”, *MGWJ*, 51, 1907, pp. 385–394.
7. Simon Bernfeld (1860–1940):

Ost und West, 3 (3), März 1903, p. 213.
8. Isaak Breuer (1883–1946):

“Rückblick auf das Jahr 5663. Ein Vortrag”, *DIsr*, 44 (96), 4. Dezember 1903, pp. 2115–2119.
9. Samuele Colombo (1868–1923), Italian rabbi and scholar:

Bibel und Bibel, Livorno, 1904.
10. Dr. Markus Epstein (1835–1916), jurist and journalist⁵

Bibel oder Babel, Frankfurt am Main, 1905.

³ Wrote: *Der Jüdische Krieg gegen Hadrian nach den Dorot Harishonim*, Frankfurt am Main, 1920; *Der Siddur des. R. Saadia Gaon*, Frankfurt am Main, 1904.

⁴ Wrote: *Ein Blick auf die Geschichte der Juden in Würzburg*, Würzburg, 1905.

⁵ Wrote *Prozessuale Rechtsgrundsätze der Juden in biblischer und nachbiblischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main, 1905.

11. David Feuchtwang (1864–1936), rabbi and scholar. Studied in Vienna and Berlin. Served as rabbi in Moravia and Vienna (Chief Rabbi from 1933):
 (a) “Moses und Hammurabi”, *MGJW*, 48, 1904, pp. 385–399; (b) “Zur Aufklärung über Babel und Bibel”, *Monatsblätter des wissenschaftlichen Klubs in Wien*, 24, pp. 118–131.
12. Dr. Samuel Geffen, of Hessen:
 “Wissenschaft und Judentum am Ende des Bibelstreits”, *AZdJ*, 67 (28), 1903, pp. 320–322.
13. Dr. Edward Glaser (1855–1908), Jewish astronomer and geographer, native of Austria, scholar of southern Arabia:
 “Zum altbiblischen Gebot der Naechstenliebe”, *Ost und West*, 5 (9), 1905, pp. 643–656.
14. Dr. Leopold Goldschmied (1867–?), a native of Hungary, from 1897 served as rabbi in Proßnitz (Mähren):
Der Kampf um Babel-Bibel im Lichte des Judentums, Frankfurt am Main, 1903.
15. Dr. Israel Goldschmidt (1849–1924), liberal rabbi in Hessen and in Offenbach:
Delitzsch und Harnack über die Originalität des Judenthums, Mainz, 1902.
16. J. Grünthal:
 “Professor Delitzsch über die zehn Gebote”, *AZdJ*, 69, 1905, pp. 379–380.
17. Joseph Halévy (1827–1917), Orientalist, philologist and archaeologist, native of Turkey, from 1879 professor of Ethiopic at Paris University:
 “Rezension Bibel-Babel I”, *Revue Sémitique d’Epigraphie et d’Histoire Ancienne*, 10, Paris, 1902, pp. 185–187.
18. Isaac Hirsch, a teacher of religious studies at the state *gymnasium* in Chernowitz⁶:
Meine Glossen zum zweiten Vortrage des Professor Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel, Wiznitz, 1903.
19. A. Hoffmann:
Bibel-Babel-Fabel, Buenos Aires: Federation “Zionista Argentina”, 1903.
20. Jakob Horovitz (1873–1939), an orthodox rabbi and scholar in Frankfurt, deputy chairman of the Allgemeiner deutscher Rabbinerverband⁷:
 (a) *Babel und Bibel. Randglossen zu den beiden Vorträgen F. Delitzschs*, Frankfurt am Main, 1904; (b) “Beilage zum Bericht der Israelitischen Religionsschule, Frankfurt am Main: Vortrag”, *DIsr*, 44 (26), 2. April 1903, p. 572; (c) *Goethe, F. Delitzsch und das Zehnerwort*, Berlin, 1925 (aus *Jeschurun*, 11 (5/6), Mai 1924, pp. 245–255).

⁶ Wrote: *Die Juden und der Krieg*, Wiznitz, 1915.

⁷ Wrote: *Untersuchungen über Philons und Platons Lehre von der Weltschöpfung*, Marburg, 1900.

21. Michel Howscha (1845–1917), rabbi in Skody (Russia):⁸
Babel, der echte Kommentar der Bibel: Erwiderung an Herrn Professor Delitzsch, Königsberg, 1905.
22. Dr. Benno Jacob (1862–1945), graduate of the seminary in Breslau and of the university there. Rabbi in Goettingen and Dortmund, and Bible scholar.⁹ Was active as a journalist and wrote against anti-Semitism and Zionism. One of the heads of the Central-Verein:
 (a) “Das Judenthum und die Ergebnisse der Assyriologie”, *AZdJ*, 66 (16), 18. April 1902, pp. 187–189; (17), 25. April 1902, pp. 198–200; (18), 2. Mai 1902, pp. 211–212; (19), 9. Mai 1902, pp. 222–225; (b) “Prof. Delitzsch’ zweiter Vortrag über ‘Babel und Bibel’”, *AZdJ*, 67, 1903, pp. 197–201, 213–215, 233–236, 260–262; (c) *SiSr*, 19 (18), 20. Februar 1902, pp. 111–113.
23. Siegmund Jampel (1874–1934), a conservative rabbi, Assyriologist, and Bible scholar, a native of Galicia¹⁰:
 (a) “Besprechungen”, *MGWJ*, 46, 1902, pp. 480–489; (b) “Die bibelwissenschaftliche Literatur der letzten Jahre. Zweiter Artikel. Der Panbabylonismus”, *MGWJ*, 52, 1908, pp. 21–36.
24. Saul Kaatz (1870–1942?):
 “Zur Klärung”, *DIsr*, 44 (46), 2. April 1903, p. 577.
25. Max Albrecht Klausner (1848–1910), conservative rabbi, born in Posen. Was political editor of the *Börsen-Courier* and was associated with pro-Catholic circles. One of the founders of the *Kol Yisrael Chaverim* branch in Germany and editor of the periodical *Israelitische Wochenschrift*. In 1901 published translations of biblical poetry:
 (a) *Hie Babel – Hie Bibel! Anmerkungen zu des Professors Delitzsch’ zweiter Vortrag über Babel und Bibel*, 2. Auflage, Berlin, 1903; (b) “Rezension”, *DIsr*, 16. März 1903, p. 457; (c) “Zur Klärung”, *IsrWsch*, 12 (14), 27. März 1903, pp. 175–177; (d) *Professor Delitzsch: Eine Erwiderung*, Berlin, 1903.
26. Dr. Kohn from Inowrazlaw in central Poland¹¹:
 “Die Sinaitischen Tafeln und die Baylonischen Täfelchen!”, *DIsr*, 43 (55), 10. Juli 1902, pp. 1163–1164.
27. Jechiel Lichtenstein (Hirschenson) (1827–1912), writer and missionary. Converted to Christianity in 1855 and taught at Franz Delitzsch’s Institutum Judaicum in Leipzig:
 “Anmerkungen zu F.D. ‘Babel und Bibel’”, *SaH*, 41, 1904, pp. 50–55.

⁸ Wrote: *Der Zukunftsglaube*, Riga, 1909.

⁹ Among his works: *Im Namen Gottes: Eine sprachliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Alten Testamente*, Berlin, 1903; *Der Pentateuch, exegetisch-kritische Forschungen*, Leipzig, 1905; *Die Thora Moses*, Frankfurt am Main, 1912/13.

¹⁰ Wrote: *Das Buch Esther auf Geschichtlichkeit* Frankfurt am Main, 1907 *kritisch untersucht; Vorgeschichte des israelitischen Volkes und seiner Religion*, Frankfurt am Main, 1928.

¹¹ No other details about him are known.

28. Dr. Ahron Marcus (1843–1916), born in Hamburg, joined the Chasidic movement and edited the *Krakauer Jüdische Zeitung*. Wrote about Kabbalah and Chassidism, was one of first members of Religious Zionism and later was associated with Agudat Israel. Wrote, among others: *Jüdische Chronologie*, Frankfurt am Main, 1935, which was translated into Hebrew, *Kadmoniot*, Tel Aviv, 1973:
Zwischen zwei Stühlen. Nachruf zu Delitzsch' Babel und Bibel, Altona, 1905.
29. Moritz Margulies (1866–1932) from Katowice:
Babel und Bibel. Vortrag gehalten in der Concordia-Loge zu Kattowitz, Kattowitz, 1903.
30. Dr. Sigmund Maybaum (1844–1919), liberal rabbi and preacher, native of Hungary. Taught the theory of homiletics at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin. Founded the Union of Rabbis in Germany. In 1897 was among the rabbis who opposed the convening of the first Zionist Congress on German soil. In 1903, was awarded the rank of professor by the Kaiser Wilhelm II. On him and his writing, see Chapter Two:
(a) "Friedrich Delitzsch über Babel und Bibel", *AZdJ*, 67 (4), 23. Januar 1903, pp. 37–39; (b) "Noch einmal 'Babel und Bibel'", *AZdJ*, 68 (10), 4. März 1904, pp. 109–110.
31. Dr. Seligmann Meyer (1853–1925), orthodox rabbi of the city (later a district) of Regensburg. Editor of the periodical, *Die Jüdische Presse*, and later of the *Deutsche Israelitische Zeitung*, that came out from 1884–1891 under the name *Laubhütte*. Taught at the orthodox seminary in Berlin and at the universities of Berlin and Leipzig. From 1918–1923 was present of the rabbinical council of Bavaria:
(a) *Contra Delitzsch. Die Babel-Hypothesen widerlegt*. Heft I–II. Mit einem Briefe des Herrn Professor F.D. an den Verfasser, Frankfurt am Main, 1903; (b) "Die Hypothesengläubigen", *DIZ*, 19 (8), 20. Februar 1902, pp. 111–113; (c) "Apologetik, Rezension zu Fuchs", *ibid.*, 44 (48), 18. Juni 1903, p. 1073 f.; (d) "Nochmals Babel und Bibel", *Augsburger Abendzeitung*, 112, 24. April 1902, p. 9.
32. Dr. Wilhelm Münz (1856–1917), rabbi in Tarnov, Silesia, and philosopher, author of works on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant:
"*Es werde Licht!*" Eine Aufklärung über Bibel und Babel, Breslau, 1903.
33. Israel Nobel (1887–1917), a native of Posen, Hungary. Was a teacher in Berlin and elsewhere:
Sabbath- und Festpredigten, Frankfurt am Main, 1902.
34. Shulim Ochser:
(a) *Judentum und Assyriologie. Drei volkstümliche Vorträge, gehalten im Vereine für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur in Berlin*, Berlin, 1904;
(b) "Hammurabi und Moses", *AZdJ*, 68, 1904, pp. 29–30.
35. Prof. Jules Oppert (1825–1905), philologist, Orientalist and archaeologist. Born in Hamburg. Was unable to obtain a position at a German

university and emigrated to France in 1847. From 1887, held a chair in Assyrian at Collège de France (Paris), first as professor of Sanskrit and comparative philology, and afterwards of philology and Assyrian archaeology.¹² Was active in Jewish affairs.”

(a) *Jahve?*”, ZA, 17, 1903, pp. 291–304; (b) “*Babel und Bibel, Bibel und Babel*”, *Die Zeit* (Wien), 2 (128), 6. Februar 1903, pp. 1–8; (c) “*Babel und Bibel, Bibel und Babel*”, *Ost und West*, 3 (3), 5. März/Mai 1903, pp. 153–160 (*Die Zeit, Morgenblatt*, 2, No. 128, 6. Februar 1903, pp. 1–8); (d) “*Babel und Bibel*”, *The Jewish Chronicle*, No. 1, 776, April 24, 1903, pp. 14–15.

36. Dr. Felix Perles (1874–1933), a rabbi in Königsberg. Served as an honorary professor of Armenian and modern Hebrew literature at Koenigsberg University. Joined the Zionist movement. On his brief sojourn at the Hebrew University, see in Chapter 12¹³:

Eine Probe neutestamentlicher Gelehrsamkeit bei F. Delitzsch”, *Ost und West*, 5 (2), Februar 1905, p. 135.

37. Dr. Immanuel Plato (1863–1937), born in Polda, the son-in-law of S.R. Hirsch. A graduate of the rabbinical seminary in Berlin, an orthodox rabbi in Brandenburg and Bingen and director of the Orthodoxes Lehrerseminar zu Köln. From 1910 served as a rabbi in Hamburg. Plato regarded himself as a “national German”¹⁴:

(a) *Reflexionen über “Babel und Bibel”: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Kultur und jüdischen Religion. 1. und 2. offener Brief an Herrn Professor Dr. Friedrich Delitzsch in Berlin*, Hamburg, 1903;
 (b) *Reflexionen über “Babel und Bibel”, zugleich eine psychologische und historische Vertiefung des kaiserlichen Handschreibens. Dritter offener Brief an Herrn Professor F.D. in Berlin*, Hamburg, 1903;
 (c) *Reflexionen über “Babel und Bibel”. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Kultur und jüdischen Religion. Vierter offener Brief an Herrn Professor Dr. F.D. in Berlin*, Hamburg, 1903.

38. Dr. Nathan Porges (1848–1924), conservative rabbi and scholar, primarily of Jewish medieval literature and linguistics. A native of Moravia, a graduate of the rabbinical seminary. Served as rabbi in various cities, including Leipzig. Professor at the University of Leipzig from 1913: *Bibelkunde und Babelfunde: Eine kritische Besprechung von Friedrich Delitzsch’s Babel und Bibel*, Leipzig, 1903.

39. Aron Rosenberg (1836–1928), native of Hungary, studied at the rabbinical seminary in Pressburg, lived in Vienna:

¹² Among his works: *Die assyrisch-babylonischen Keilinschriften*, 1872. Also wrote studies on the books of Genesis, Ruth, Judith, and others.

¹³ Among his works: *Bousset’s Religion des Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, Berlin, 1903; *Das Gebet im Judentum*, Frankfurt am Main, 1904; *Babylonisch-jüdische Glossen*, Berlin, 1905; *Jüdische Skizzen*, Leipzig, 1912.

¹⁴ Wrote: *Zur Geschichte der Exegese*, Halle, 1892; *Kunst oder Schablone in Religion und Religionsgesetz*, Hamburg, 1912.

- Der papierene Weltkrieg im XX. Jahrhundert*, Wien, 1903.
40. Dr. Ludwig A. Rosenthal (1855–1928), liberal rabbi in Preussisch-Stargard, lecturer at Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums. Published studies on the Bible and the Mishnah¹⁵:
- (a) *IsrWsch*, 11 (14), April 1902, pp. 211f.; (b) *Zurück zur Bibel! Mit einem Nachtrag: Bibelwissenschaft und Rechtgläubigkeit*, Berlin, 1902;
 - (c) *Babel und Bibel oder Babel gegen Bibel? Ein Wort zur Klärung*, Berlin, 1902; (d) *Bibel trotz Babel! Beleuchtung des zweiten Delitzsch'schen Vortrages und seiner neuesten Aeußerung "Zur Klärung"*, Leipzig, 1903; (e) *Hammurabigesetz, Thora und Talmud: Ein Vergleich*, Mainz, 1903.
41. Salomon Samuel (1867–1942), a conservative rabbi with liberal leanings. From 1894–1934 was a rabbi in Hessen. Died at Thierenstadt: “Wissenschaft und Judentum am Ende des Bibelstreits”, *AZdJ*, 67(28), 1903, 330–332.
42. Professor Mojzesz Schorr (1874–1941), scholar of the history of Polish Jewry, historian and Assyriologist. Preacher in the moderate reform synagogue in Warsaw, and member of rabbinical council of Poland. Studied under the Jewish scholar Professor David H. Müller in Vienna.¹⁶ In 1925, was appointed Professor of Sumerian and Near Eastern culture in Warsaw. Member of the Polish Senate (1936–1938). From 1907 published important works on Babylonian law in Polish and German,¹⁷ and the book *The Laws of Assyria* (Publications of the Institute of Jewish Studies, 3, Warsaw, 1931 (Hebrew)¹⁸: “Kultura babilońska a starohebrajska” (Z powodu wykładow Prof. Delitzscha – ‘Babel und Bibel’), *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 17 (2), Warsaw, 1903, pp. 2096–231. *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Detroit, June 29 to July, 1903.
43. Dr. Benzion Seligkowitz, rabbi in Cöthen. Was ordained in 1892 in Halle²⁰:
- (a) “Die Entwicklung der Religion”, *IsrWsch*, 11 (15), 11. April 1902, pp. 231f.; (b) “Der Vortrag ‘Babel und Bibel’ in seinen Konsequenzen für Judentum und Christentum”, *IsrWsch*, 12 (8), 20. Februar 1903, pp. 107–109.
44. Immanuel Sofér (Emilio Schreiber):
Bibbia e Babele, Trieste, 1904.

¹⁵ *Die Mischna: Aufbau und Quellenscheidung*, Strassburg, 1903.

¹⁶ Wrote: *Die Gesetze Hammurabis und die mosaische Gesetzgebung*, Wien, 1903. On him, see Chapter 7.

¹⁷ *Altbabylonische Rechtsurkunden aus der Zeit der 1. babylonischen Dynastie*, Wien, 1907; *Urkunden des altbabylonischen Zivil- und Prozessrechts*, Leipzig, 1913.

¹⁸ See: Joseph Guzik, “Mojzesz Schorr”, in: Samuel K. Mirsky (ed.), *Personalities and Figures in Jewish Studies in Eastern Europe*, New York, 1959, pp. 207–222 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ “Babylonia Culture and Ancient Hebrew Culture.”

²⁰ Wrote: *Jesus der Nazarener und die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*.

45. Dr. Arnold Aaron Tänzer (1871–1937), reform rabbi and writer in Hohenems (Vorarlberg), Meran (Tirol), since 1907 in Göppingen (Württemberg). Served as director of Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin (1919) and as professor of history in Zurich (1920–1924) and in Heidelberg (1924–1933). From 1910–1914 was editor of the *Israelitische Wochenschrift*²¹:
Judentum und Entwicklungslehre. Nach einem in Innsbruck am 4. Mai 1903 über "Babel und Bibel" gehaltenen Vortrage, Berlin, 1903.
45. Isaac Unna (1872–1948), an orthodox rabbi in Mannheim.²²
DIsr, 44 (23), März 1903, pp. 509–511.
46. Prof. Gotthold Weil (1882–1960), Orientalist, director of Oriental department at the Prussian library in Berlin. Professor of Semitic languages at Berlin University (1920) and Frankfurt (1931). Immigrated to Palestine in 1933 and served as director of the National Library and as professor of Turkish studies until 1946:
(a) “Das Neueste aus der Assyriologie”, *JS*, 1 (4), Juli 1902, pp. 51–55;
(b) “Das Urteil über Babel und Bibel”, *JS*, 1 (11), Februar 1903, pp. 177–185.
47. Dr. Cossmann Werner (1854–1918), moderate liberal rabbi in Munich²³:
“Das Judentum im Lichte moderner Kritik”, *AZdJ*, 70(6), 1906, pp. 67–70, 81–83, 93–95.
48. Dr. Bernhard Ziemlich (1849–1907), studied at the rabbinical seminary in Breslau, rabbi in Munich and Nuremberg from 1881–1907:
“Die Thora, ein Erbe der Gemeinde Jakobs”, *AZdJ*, 66, 1902, pp. 521–523.

²¹ Wrote: *Die Religionsphilosophie Josef Albo's*, Frankfurt am Main, 1896; *Stellung der Frau im Judentum*, Wien, 1901; *Die Geschichte der Juden in Tirol und Vorarlberg*, Berlin, 1903.

²² Wrote: *Die Leichenverbrennung vom Standpunkt des Judenthums*, Frankfurt am Main, 1903.

²³ Wrote: *Leben und Wirken des Abraham ben Maimun*, Danzig, 1879.

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* The list includes only works which are mentioned in more than one chapter.

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