Alexandra Zirkle
University of Chicago

Modeling a Jewish Exegetical Imagination: Nineteenth-Century *Peshat* and Heinrich Graetz's Commentaries on Kohelet and Song of Songs

The nineteenth century witnessed a flourishing of German-Jewish scriptural exegesis; over the century, more than ten German-Jewish exegetes published significant commentaries to the Torah or portions of the Tanakh.[1] These remarkable commentaries were agents of cultural paideia, or *Bildung*; through scriptural hermeneutics, exegetes modeled cultural ideals for their nineteenth-century German-Jewish readers. Each commentary modeled a microcosm of ideals, explicitly or implicitly instructing readers in the realms of politics, culture, and religion: how one ought to conceive of and relate to one's fatherland; how one ought to relate to non-Jewish society and culture; which texts – Jewish and non-Jewish – one ought to consider constitutive of the Jewish exegetical canon; and which hermeneutic modality one ought to employ to read scripture. This essay focuses on how biblical commentaries were forces of cultural paideia as they modeled ideal exegetical canons and ideal hermeneutic methods.

The particular cultural significance of each biblical commentary derives in part from the specific combination of sources that comprise the citational canon from which the commentary is woven. Biblical commentaries exemplify Michael Fishbane's claim that "the exegetical

1 Nineteenth-century German-Jewish commentaries include: Jehuda Loeb Shapiro's *Ha-Rechasim le-Bik'ah*, (Altona, 1815); Wolf Heidenheim's *Moda le-Vina* (Rödelheim, 1818) and *Sefer Tehillim* (Rödelheim, 1806); Jeremiah Heinemann's *Humash Mekkor Hayyim* (Berlin: 1831-33); Michael Sach's *Die Psalmen* (Berlin, 1835); Levi Herzfeld, *Qohelet* (Brunswick, 1838); Jacob Zvi Mecklenburg's *HaKetav ve-haKabbalah* (Leipzig, 1839); Salomon Herxheimer's *Die vier und zwanzig Bücher der Bibel im ebräischen Texte* (Berlin, 1840-48); Ludwig Philippson's *Die Israelitische Bibel* (Leipzig, 1839-49); Samson Raphael Hirsch's *Uebersetzung und Erklärung des Pentateuchs* (Frankfurt am Main, 1867-78) and *Die Psalmen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1882); and Heinrich Graetz's *Qohelet* (Leipzig, 1871), *Schir ha-Schirim* (Vienna, 1871), and *Die Psalmen* (Breslau, 1882-83). "German Jews" is a term of convenience and is employed to refer to Jews residing in lands that will comprise the federal republic of Germany under unification in 1871.

imagination in Judaism rises and falls to the cadence of citations. . . . Change the citation and you change the exegesis; exchange the exegesis and new theology is the result."[2] Cultural ideals informed which sources exegetes brought to bear on the biblical text, and the combination of sources produces a distinct "intertext" that modulates possible registers in which scripture could signify, opening up certain hermeneutic possibilities and closing off others.[3] In Heinrich Graetz's (1817-1891) commentaries to Kohelet[4] and Songs of Songs,[5] he cites a distinct matrix of historical, philological and literary sources; from this particular constellation of sources, Graetz's unique *peshat* hermeneutic emerges. The sources cited in Graetz's commentaries constitute a distinct Jewish exegetical canon and the ways in which he appeals to these sources in order to

2 Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.

3 German-Jewish exegesis operates similarly to Daniel Boyarin's formulation of the intertextuality of midrash : "The biblical narrative is gapped and dialogical. The role of midrash is to fill in the gaps. The materials which provide impetus for the specifics of the gap-filling are found in the intertext in two ways: first in the intertext provided by the canon itself, the intertextual and interpretive interrelations which exist and which can be made to exist between different parts of the canon, and second, within the ideological intertextual code of the rabbinic culture. The midrash is not, then, a reflex of that ideology but a dialogue with the biblical text conditioned and allowed by that ideology – and as such is no different from any other interpretation," *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 17.

4 Graetz's translation of and commentary to Kohelet was published in Leipzig in 1871. He entitled this work "Kohélet, קהלת, or the Salomonic Preacher. Translated and critically explained by Dr. H. Graetz, Professor at the Breslauer University. With an appendix on Kohelet's place in the canon of Greek translations of Kohelet, Greekisms in the book, and a glossary." The book consists of a 52 page introduction, 90 pages of the text, its translation and commentary, and a three-part appendix, divided into (I) the Old Testament canon and its closure, (II) the Greek translation of Kohelet, and (III) Greekisms in Kohelet; and finally a fifteen page glossary.

5 Graetz's translation of and commentary to Song of Songs was published in Vienna in 1871. He entitled the work "Schir ha-Schirim, שיר השירים, or the Salomonic Hohelied, translated and critically elucidated by Dr. H. Graetz, Professor at the University of Breslau." His introduction consists of eight sections: a brief general introduction; (I) a survey of the state of exegesis on Song of Songs; (II) the poetic style; (III) the *Tendenz*; (IV) the date of composition; (V) the technique of the author of Song of Songs; (VI) composition of the text; (VII) history of commentary on Song of Songs; then the final 80 pages of the 220 page book include the text, translation and commentary.

Graetz also published a translation of and commentary to the Psalms in two volumes in Breslau from 1881-82. He entitled this work "A Critical Commentary to the Psalms, in addition to the Text and Translation, by Dr. H. Graetz, Professor at the University of Breslau." His introduction consists of ten sections: (I) the character and meaning of the Psalms; (II) division of the Psalms; (III) authorship of the Psalms; (IV) the times of composition of the Psalms; (V) the poetic form and style of the Psalms; (VI) the liturgical use of the Psalms and their musical accompaniment; (VII) superscriptions to the Psalms and other non-integral appendages; (VIII) collection, final redaction and ordering of the Psalter; (IX) composition of the texts; and (X) ancient interpretations of the Psalms. Volume One ends with the commentary to Psalm 60 (382 pages). Volume II includes the commentary to Psalms 61-150 and ends on page 701.

The material elements of Graetz's commentaries consist of the Hebrew text on the left-hand page, Graetz's German translation on the right-hand page, and his German commentary comprising the bottom portion of each page.

interpret scripture constitute a distinct hermeneutic; both elements serve as agents of cultural paideia. By selecting a distinct collection of philological, historical and literary sources from the realms of *Wissenschaft* and Jewish religious texts, Graetz models an ideal exegetical canon and implicitly argues that German Jews should read these sources (and not other sources) in order to understand scripture. By interpreting scripture according to a philological-historical *peshat* hermeneutic, Graetz models an ideal hermeneutic and implicitly argues that German Jews should read in this way (and not another way) in order to understand scripture.

Part I of this essay illustrates how Graetz's commentaries to Kohelet and Song of Songs (both published in 1871) serve as agents of cultural paideia by modeling an ideal exegetical canon and an ideal hermeneutic method. After identifying the elements that comprise his exegetical canon and analyzing how his hermeneutic functions, this section explores the cultural ramifications implied by his canon – the sovereignty of *Wissenschaft* in the realm of biblical interpretation and a defense of the contemporary relevance of rabbinic literature, especially Talmud and midrash. This section also examines the cultural ramifications implied by Graetz's hermeneutic – that philological-historical *peshat* is the exclusive level on which scripture signifies. Part II elucidates the broader cultural implication of Graetz's hermeneutic by examining how Graetz's commentary functions as a historiographical counter-narrative. Graetz's exegetical projects subvert a reigning historiographical schema positing the degenerative nature of post-exilic Judaism that had long been deployed in the realms of German scholarship, culture and politics. The final section, part III, identifies methodological ambiguities in Graetz's hermeneutic which complicate his identification of textual narrative with a factual historical account.

Graetz's biblical commentaries have not been the subject of sustained scholarly attention,

and much existing scholarship focuses on his critiques of Julius Wellhausen's (1844-1918) documentary hypothesis, which were published in the late 1870s and 1880s.[6] This essay focuses on Graetz's earlier exegetical oeuvre and illustrates how his hermeneutic method was already engaging many of the culturally and politically significant issues that would come to the fore in the highly-publicized and volatile debates of the 1880s.

I.

Graetz's hermeneutic method is concerned with discerning how the text signifies as a philologically coherent literary work that reflects a precise historical context. This hermeneutic method assumes meaning-as-reference: that a coherent textual narrative refers to a historically real state of affairs.[7] He describes the appropriate mode of reading scripture using such adjectives as plain or simple (*einfach*) and literal (*buchstäblich*); Graetz's hermeneutic is, in effect, a nineteenth-century reformulation of *peshat*, in which the "plain sense" of scripture coheres through historical, philological and literary consistency. The interplay between the three strands of criticism – historical, philological and literary – tends to function in the following way: philological elements provide the *terminus ad quo* for dating, at which point historical criticism takes over as the strong frame of interpretation, the lens that determines how the realia of the text

6 Studies on Graetz's exegetical works include Nathan Porges, "Graetz als Exeget," in *Heinrich Graetz, Abhandlungen zu seinem 100. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Brann (Vienna, Berlin: Löwit, 47-64); Michael Reuven, *Hainrikh Grets: Ha-historyon shel ha-am ha-yehudi (*Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2003); Matthias Morgenstern, "jüdischer Züchtigkeit und sinnlichem Vergnügen – Die Kommentare zum Hohenlied von H. Graetz und R. Breuer," in: *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge*, 28/2001, S. 121 – 148; Yaacov Shavit and Mordechai Eran, *The Hebrew Bible Reborn: A History of Biblical Culture and the Battles over the Bible in modern Judaism* (Berlin: New York, 2007), pp. 133-139; they focus on Graetz's engagement with Wellhausen and focus on Graetz's articles from the late 1880s; and 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), 35-59.

7 Hans Frei notes this trend in biblical criticism: as the gap between the biblical narrative and the "real" world widened, "literal reading came increasingly to mean two things: grammatical and lexical exactness in estimating what the original sense of a text was to its original audience, and the coincidence of the description with how the facts really occurred." *Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1874), 1-8; 138.

has to work. Graetz cites G. Zirkel to posit that historical criticism should lead in the interpretation of biblical texts: "I am convinced that we will never understand the Bible so long as we do not understand all of the circumstances in which each book [of the Bible] was composed and the relations between [the book and] the manner of thinking and the history of the era in which each book emerged."[8] Graetz reformulates this principle to characterize his approach to interpreting Kohelet: "As long as the particular historical era and the prevailing moments to which the author alludes – which inform the complexion, the perspectives, the *Tendenz* and the understanding of the particular traits of the time – are not understood, the multifaceted riddles of the book [of Kohelet] cannot be considered solved."[9] In other words, the biblical text can be deciphered only through reference to the thick historical contexts in which they were composed.

Applied in concert with historical criticism, philological criticism and literary criticism are tensile threads which simultaneously demarcate outer limits, the trespass of which would render the interpretation violent or gross, as well as open expanses within the text that allow the historical narrative to grow forth from the textual loam. The philological details and literary logic of the textual narrative simultaneously allow Graetz great creativity in his interpretation while demanding that he remain reasonably grounded in the text on the page.

With this brief theoretical overview of Graetz's hermeneutic method, let us turn to the specifics of his approach by focusing on the three strands of criticism that govern his interpretation of scripture: historical, philological and literary criticism.

---

8 G. Zirkel, *Untersuchungen über den Prediger: nebst kritischen und philologischen Bermerkungen* (Würzburg: Bey Johann Jakob Stahel sel Wittwe, 1792), cited in Graetz, *Kohelet*, 9.

9 "So lange nicht die bestimmt individualisirte Zeitephoche und die in derselben waltenden Momente, auf welche der Verfasser anspielt, von denen das Colorit, die Anschauungen, die Tendenz und das Verständniss der einzelnen Züge bedingt sind, erkannt sind, so lange können die vielfachen Räthsel des Buchs nicht als gelöst gelten," Graetz, *Kohelet*, 9.

Graetz orients his interpretation of Kohelet and Song of Songs by dating them as post-exilic rather than Solomonic compositions, a conclusion he draws from the philological traces of Aramaic, Neo-Hebrew,[10] Persian and Greek in the biblical texts.[11] With the *terminus ad quo* delimited by these philological markers, Graetz focuses the chronological scope by appealing to historical sources to correlate textual details with historical events, places, people, and ideological atmospheres. These sources include, in order of frequency, Josephus' *Antiquites* and *Jewish War*; the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds; Greek tragedies and histories;[12] and contemporary historical scholarship.[13] Graetz's method exemplifies the historicist assumption that a text can be understood only through reference to the historical context in which it was composed; in the case of scriptural hermeneutics, Graetz suggests that scripture is reanimated as contemporaneous historical accounts breathe life into textual allusions to formerly-forgotten places, people or events.

From amongst the historical sources Graetz cites, Josephus' accounts function as the lynchpin supporting Graetz's fundamental historical claims. Graetz narrows the historical scope of the text further by analyzing the "atmosphere" evinced in the book, making the questionable claim that Kohelet could have been composed only in an era of pessimism and gloom and Song of Songs could have been composed only in a contented, peaceful era.[14] Graetz turns to Josephus

10 "Neo-Hebrew" refers to "well-known Hebrew roots and forms, which are not attested in Old Hebrew literature but are common in the Mishnah and its related literature," *Das Hohelied*, 43.

11 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 8-16; *Das Hohelied*, 40-91.

12 Aeschylus' *The Persians*, Sophocles' *Electra*, Polybius' *The Histories V*, Philo's *Every Good Man is Free* and Pliny's *Historia Naturalis*, Theocrites' *Idyll,* Anacreon, *Ode 29*.

13 Ludwig Friedländer, *Darstellung aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Auzgang der Antonine* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1867-71); Wilhelm Adolf Becker, *Charikles: Bilder altgriechischer sitte, zur genaueren kenntniss der griechischen privatlebens* (Leipzig: F. Fleischer, 1854); Edward Robinson, *Palästina und die südlich angrenzenden Länder: Tagebuch einer Reise im Jahre 1838 in Bezuf auf die biblische Geographie* (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1841-42); Abraham Geiger, *jüdische Zeitschrift*, 1868, 106ff; and his own *Geschichte der Juden*.

14"Ist dem so, so sehen wir die Lebensansichten derer, welche der Verfasser verspotten oder belehren wollte, deutlich geschildert. Finster und düster schlichen sie umher, mochten kein fröhliches Lied hören, an keinem heiteren Mahle theilnehmen, nur an Trauer und Wehklage weidete sich ihr verdüstertes Gemüth, sie hassten das Leben, und der Tod erschien ihnen als ein willkommener Gast, der ihnen Erlösung bringen würde. . . . Solche krampfhafte oder krankhafte Paroxysmen lassen sich nur aus der Herodianischen Missregierung erklären," *Kohelet*, 23. "Da nun das

to identify just such historical contexts for each book, and finds that the misery of the Israelites under the reign of Herod exemplifies the mood of Kohelet,[15] and the "golden era" Israelites enjoyed under 3rd-C BCE Joseph the Tobiad offers a precisely-fitting context for Song of Songs.[16] He buttresses these conjectures with a series of additional links between textual details and Josephus' historical reports, seeing in Kohelet reference to Herod, Herod's sons Alexander and Aristobul, and King Hyrcanus II;[17] Herod's ambitious building projects;[18] Herod's opening of the tombs of David and Solomon;[19] and the habits of the Essenes.[20] In his commentary to the Song of Songs, Graetz interprets biblical details through recourse to Josephus' accounts of Judean Hellenization[21] and various archeological, botanical and political realia consonant with life in Judea under Joseph the Tobiad.[22] Graetz consistently relies on Josephus to correlate the biblical text with precise historical eras and the particular people, ideas and events that populated them. His use of Josephus is apace with contemporary scholarly norms in the fields of history and

H.L. in rosigem Schimmer und in klarer Heiterkeit gehalten ist, so kann es nur in friedlichen, glücklichen, gewissermaassen heitern Tagen enstanden sein, in denen Lebensbehaglichkeit vorherrschend und Sinn für Liebeständeleien vorhanden waren," *Das Hohelied*, 79.

15Graetz cites two accounts of rebellion under Herod in Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, 8, 3-4; XVII 6, 2-3, 4; *Kohelet*, 23-25.

16Graetz cites the misery of the Jews under Antiochus the Great, Josephus, *Antiquities* XII, 3, 2; the troubles under the sons of the tax-collector Joseph of the Tobiads, *Antiquities* XII, 4, 9, 11; the golden era of Joseph the Tobiad; Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, 4, 10; 4, 3, 9; *Das Hohelied*, 80-83.

17Kohelet 4:13-16, *Kohelet*, 78-80: *A poor and a wise child* refers to Herod's son Alexander, whom Herod despised, *an old and foolish king* refers to Herod, *the second child* refers to Aristobul, the younger brother of Alexander, Josephus, *Antiquities* XVI, 1, 2; 4, 3; 8, 3; Kohelet 6:1-6; *Kohelet*, pp. 88-89: *A man to whom God has given riches, wealth and honor . . . but a stranger eateth it* refers to King Hyrcanus II, whose wealth was enjoyed by Herod, Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, 6, 3.

18 Kohelet 2:6, *Kohelet*, 60-61: *I made me pools of water* refers to Herod's Herodion, Josephus, *Bellum Judaicium* 1:21, 10 and *Antiquities* XV, 9, 4; corroborated by accounts of Herod's other building projects, such as the Phasaelis, *Antiquities* XVI, 5, 2.

19 Kohelet 2:8, *Kohelet,* 61: *Treasures of kings* refers to Herod furtively opening the graves of Kings David and Solomon in search of gold, Josephus *Antiquities* XVI, 7, 1.

20 Kohelet 10:15, *Kohelet* 122-123: *Go not out of the city*, satirical references to the Essenes; Josephus, *Antiquities,* XVIII, 1, 5; *Jewish War*, II, 8, 12. Kohelet 10:20, *Kohelet*, 126-127: cruel irony about Herod being popular with the Essenes; Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, 10, 4.

21 *Das Hohelied*, 85-86, Hellenization of Judea, Josephus, *Antiquities* XII, 5, 1; 4, 6, 11.

22 Song of Songs 3:3, *Das Hohelied*, 147-148; *Guardsmen*, refers to commander at the acropolis at Jerusalem Josephus, *Antiquities*, XII, 3, 3. 4:4, Song of Songs 4:4, *Das Hohelied,* 156-157; *Tower of David*, Josephus, *Antiquities* XV, 11, 4. Song of Songs 6:11, *Das Hohelied,* 186; The mention of nuts, which were originally from Persia and had been transplanted to Palestine, attests to the late dating of Song of Songs.

biblical criticism,[23] although Graetz rarely evinces any degree of methodological sophistication by reading Josephus as anything but a coherent, reliable historical source.[24] Salomon Herxheimer (1801-1884) and Ludwig Philippson (1811-1889), German-Jewish exegetes who each published commentaries to the entire *Tanakh* in the 1840s, also cited Josephus in their commentaries, but Graetz distinguishes himself by the extent to which he draws on Josephus' writings and the ways in which he deploys Josephus as part of his focused historicist project.

With these details of the specific historical contexts as the strong frame, Graetz works within the text to provide a coherent philological and literary account. Graetz offers a critical philological account by drawing on ancient Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin and Hebrew versions of Kohelet;[25] as well as consulting what he considers roughly contemporaneous literature including the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds,[26] biblical literature,[27] extra-biblical literature,[28] New Testament gospels,[29] Jewish liturgy;[30] and contemporary biblical exegesis[31] and philological

23 Josephus was most often cited as a historical source for scholarly monographs on various archeological, political or cultural aspects of Roman Judea, Judaism and early Christianity; scholarship debating the authenticity of the Testimonium Flavianum also formed a small but distinct stream of scholarship. See Heinz Schreckenberg's *Bibliographie zu Flavius Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968) and his *Supplementband mit Gesamtregister* (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

24 *Pace* his use of Josephus as a historical source in his *History of the Jews*. On observations about problematic aspects of Graetz's methodology, see below, pp. 22-24.

25 Graetz, *Kohelet*, vii, 47.

26 Graetz writes, "Obwohl gegenwärtig allgemein zugegeben wird, dass Kohelet der nachexilischen Zeit angehört, so haben die Ausleger doch nicht mit Ernst ihr Augenmerk auf das reiche Sprachgut dieser Zeit gerichtet, wie as sich in der Mischnah-Literatur (Mischnah, Boraitha, Tosifta, Mechilta, Sifra und Sifre) ausgepragt hat," *Kohelet*, 46. As opposed to arguing from Arabic cognates, a practice he criticizes Ewald and Hitzig for (*Kohelet,* 46, 66), although he himself indulges in it (*Das Hohelied,* 136, 143, *passim*); The related practice of studying contemporary "Semitic" cultures – Arabs and Bedouin – for exegetical insight into the biblical text was established already in Michaelis' *Mosaic Law*, cf. Frank Manuel, *The Broken Staff: Judaism Through Christian Eyes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 257-58 and Jonathan Hess, "Orientalism and the Colonial Imaginary: Johann David Michaelis and the Specter of Racial Antisemitism," in *Germans, Jews and the Claims of Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 51-89

27 Particularly those he dates as post-exilic including portions of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Daniel and Jeremiah.

28 Sirach, Tobit, Judith and Maccabees

29 Gospels of Matthew and Luke, *Kohelet*, 85; *Das Hohlied*, 203.

30 Graetz cites "the Hanukkah prayer" and "the Passover Aggadah," *Kohelet*, 61.

31 Graetz cites the following commentaries on Kohelet: J. G. van der Palm (1784), G. L. Spohn (1786), G. Zirkel (1792), J. E. Chr. Schmidt (1794), Fr. W. C. Umbreit (1818, 1820), Aug. Knobel (1836), L. Herzfeld (1838), Fr. De Rougemont (1844), F. Hitzig (1847), A. Heiligstedt (1848), E. Elster (1855), J. G. Vaihinger (1858), E. W. Hengstenberg (1859), H. A. Hahn (1860), Samuel David Luzzatto (1864), P. Kleinert (1864), L. Young (1865), H. Ewald (1867), Zöckler (1868). He also cites the commentaries of Mendelssohn, Grotius, Ibn Ezra, Luther, Elster, Döderlein, Rosenmüller, Michaelis, Augustine, Winzer and Gurlitt.

scholarship.[32] By including this broad range of texts in his citational canon, Graetz accesses a rich range of sources from which to justify possible formulations of the text that support his suggested historical reading – and Graetz indeed avails himself of such creative powers and emends the biblical text often.[33]

When the gap between the philological account and the historical account seems too wide, Graetz is able to dissolve incoherent or problematic textual details by casting them as rhetorical devices. In this way, textual wrinkles do not contradict his suggested historical narrative because they do not signify in the register of realia; alternately, obscurities in the text are clarified by tying the text to historical realia via literary devices. For example, Graetz correlates the biblical text with historical sources by reading Kohelet as a satirical depiction of King Herod's reign, and explains numerous obscure passages by invoking the text's satirical nature.[34] In his reading of Kohelet 8:5, *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing*,[35] Graetz rejects the reading of Heinrich Ewald (1803-1875), E. W. Hengstenberg (1802-

---

Graetz cites the following commentaries on Song of Songs: K. F. Umbreit (1820), H. Ewald (1826, 1867), J. C. Döpcke (1829), Ant. Th. Hartmann (1829), Köster (1839), J. Chr. Hormann (1841), E. Magnus (1842), A. Heiligstedt (1848), O. v. Gerlach (1849), Fr. Böttcher (1850), F. Delitzsch (1851), H. A. Hahn (1852), Hengstenberg (1853), E. Meier (1854), F. Hitzig (1855), E. F. Friedrich (1855), G. Hoelemann (1856), J. G. Vaihinger (1858), Fr. Ed. Weissbach (1858), E. Renan (1860), O. Zöckler (1868). He also cites the commentaries of Ibn Ezra, Mendelssohn, Herder, Magnus, Rashi, his own commentary on *Kohelet*, Cocceius, Rosenmüller, Eusebius and Döderlein.

32Gesenius' *Thesaurus* (1829-); Jacob Levy's *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Theil des rabbinischen Schriften* (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1867-68); Heinrich Middeldorpf, *Codex Syriaco-Hexaplarus* (Berlin, Th. Chr. Fr. Enslin, 1835); Constantin Tischendorf, *Codex Ephrämi Syri* (Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz, 1845); Schulchan Aruch; Otto Fridolin Fritzsche's *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments, die Weisheit Jes. Sirach's* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1851-1858); Robert Lowth's *De sacra poesie Hebraeorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1753); Nachman Krochmal's *More Neboche ha-Zeman* (Lemberg: M. Wolf, 1863); Georg Winer, *Biblisches Realwörterbuch zum Handgebrauch für Studirende, Candidaten, Gymnasiallehrer und Prediger* (Leipzig: C. H. Reclam, 1847); Buxtorf.

33 Foreshadowing his manifold textual emendations – and anticipating the backlash to them – Graetz writes in his foreword to Kohelet that when he suggests emendations, he strives to establish the necessity of such changes – and notes that perhaps the "naïve" (*unbefangene*) reader may judge that he has been "hypercritical." A list of his emendations to Song of Songs is noted in the introduction, *Das Hohelied*, 109. .Note also his opening sentence to his commentary to the Psalms, "this book, translation and commentary, [which is composed] according to the critical method, is not written for those who would not change a single iota/yod from the received text," *Die Psalmen*, ix.

34 *Kohelet*, 17-18; 8:4, 37-38; 8:5, 104; 10:5, 118; 10:15, 122-123; 12:5, 139. *Das Hohelied* 1:12, 134.

35 Scriptural verses follow the KJV's English translation unless Graetz's German translation diverges, in which case an English translation of Graetz's German translation is given.

1869), Otto Zöckler (1833-1906) and other "Protestant commentators," who view the verse as an injunction to comply with the authority of a divinely appointed ruler. Instead, he reads the verse as a deliberately veiled satirical barb against Herod's unscrupulous guards, who follow the command of the king as cogs in the political economy of patronage. With recourse to literary devices, Graetz's interpretive options expand to include a broad range of possible historical circumstances rather than remaining constricted to details that support a completely literal reading of the text. Graetz draws upon a wealth of literary devices, including sarcasm,[36] comic effect,[37] hyperbole,[38] ellipses,[39] pleonasm,[40] parallelism,[41] simile,[42] and paranomasia.[43] Throughout his commentary, philological principles and literary conventions provide Graetz with the tools to be eminently flexible while remaining grounded in (a version of) the biblical text. This unique *peshat* hermeneutic has far-reaching cultural consequences: both his exegetical canon and his hermeneutic are forces of cultural paideia, modeling for communities what to read and how to read in order to understand scripture.

By selecting the particular constellation of sources he has assembled, Graetz models a very particular ideal Jewish exegetical canon that exemplifies the middle way approach characteristic of the Positive-Historical movement. By drawing upon historical criticism, philological criticism, and literary criticism, Graetz models a citational canon whose breadth speaks to the broad sovereignty of scholarship in the realm of scriptural interpretation. Weaving critical scholarship into the Jewish exegetical canon in this way elevates scholarship to the

36 *Kohelet*, 18.
37 *Kohelet*, 37.
38 *Das Hohelied* 5:6, 175.
39 Kohelet, 1:4, 54; 11:3, 130. *Das Hohelied* 4:13, 164; 5:11, 177; 5:12, 177; 7:13, 201.
40 *Kohelet*, 4:2, 75; 5:11, 85.
41 *Kohelet* 10:16-17, 123-124; *Das Hohelied* 1:3, 127; 1:5, 129; 3:11, 152; 4:9, 160; 4:13, 164; 5:1, 169; 6:8-9, 184.
42 *Das Hohelied* 4:13, 164; 5:12, 177; 5:13, 178; 5:14, 178;
43 *Kohelet*, 3:3, 68; 3:18, 73.

position of being able to authorize textual emendations or innovative interpretations. The degree to which scholarship is sovereign in the provinces of *Torah* or *Nevi'im* is unclear given that Graetz wrote commentaries on only the books of the *Khetuvim*; many nineteenth-century German Jewish exegetes modulated their hermeneutic according to which section of the Tanakh they were interpreting, and Porges suggests that Graetz would have limited the authority of scholarship before the sanctity of *Torah*.[44] An exegete's notion of the reach of scholarship in the province of scripture seems to signal their ideological position within Reform, Positive-Historical or Neo-Orthodox Judaism;[45] the exegetical canons they model, then, are forces of cultural paideia by exemplifying what one reads as member of a particular stream of Judaism – not just exemplifying a *Jewish* exegetical canon, but a *Positive-Historical* exegetical canon. The sources from which Graetz wove his commentaries construct an ideal exegetical canon that suggests that scripture can be understood only with reference to scholarship, a position that exemplifies a primary tenet of Positive-Historical Judaism.

Graetz's canon formed cultural values from the other direction as well: just as he manifests how scholarship can illuminate religious texts, he also illustrates how religious texts – particularly rabbinic literature – can illuminate scholarship. Graetz's ample citation of Talmudic and midrashic sources implies that these sources provide crucial philological and historical insights into post-exilic biblical texts. By citing rabbinic literature in concert with sources that were widely embraced by the scholarly community, such as the writings of Josephus, Graetz implies the equal legitimacy of rabbinic literature as a resource for scholarly exegesis. Graetz's approach to rabbinic literature contrasts with the anti-rabbinic animus perpetuated in scholarly,

44 Porges, "Graetz als Exegete," 54.

45 While Hildesheimer's stream of Neo-Orthodoxy argued that *Wissenschaft* could meaningfully illuminate religious texts, Hirsch's stream of Neo-Orthodoxy posited a much narrower conception of the role of *Wissenschaft.* On the various approaches to the value of *Wissenschaft* expressed within Neo-Orthodoxy, see Mordechai Breuer, *Modernity Within Tradition: The Social History of Orthodox Jewry in Imperial Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 149-214.

cultural and political debates that maligned the Talmud as corrupt and midrash as nonsensical.[46] In an article published in 1917, Porges writes that Graetz's biblical commentaries indeed had the effect of resurrecting the Talmud and midrash as significant sources for the interpretation of the Bible.[47] Graetz's citational canon implies the cultural value of rabbinic literature: it can no longer be derided as degenerate or neglected as a scholarly source, indeed it is integral to the comprehension of biblical books considered canonical by both Christians and Jews.

Through the composition of his particular citational canon, Graetz has modeled ideal cultural practices for contemporary readers, positing that (1) readers should avail themselves of critical scholarship in order to understand the biblical text and (2) as a sub-category of the former, readers should avail themselves of the philological and historical insights contained in rabbinic literature, particularly Talmud (Jerusalem and Babylonian) and midrash.

The *peshat* hermeneutic that originates through this particular citational canon also serves as a force of cultural paideia by modeling an ideal hermeneutic practice. Graetz explicitly presents his hermeneutic method as a cure to the manifold ills engendered by homiletic, allegorical, kabbalistic and typological interpretation. He faults non-*peshat* hermeneutics on

46In the same year Graetz's commentaries were published, August Rohling published his *Der Talmudjude*, which became a standard for future anti-Semitic works; see also Wilhelm Pressel, *Der Thalmud vor dem Schwurigkeit am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ein Zeugnis für die Wahrheit*. On Jews who perpetuated this master narrative and their Jewish critics, see Jay Harris, *How Do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), 147-250; Ismar Schorsch, "Ideology and History in the Age of Emancipation," in *The Structure of Jewish History and Other Essays* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 1-62 and *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914*; Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870-1914*. Michael A. Meyer writes that in 1831, a commission report was presented to the Diet of Baden which recommended the political equality of Jews with Christians if Jews were to accept certain conditions, including the abandonment of Hebrew, circumcision, kashrut, observance of the Sabbath on Saturday – and either purify or abandon the Talmud, in "German Political Pressure and Jewish Religious Responses in the Nineteenth Century," *Judaism Within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion*, p. 149. Graetz notes Renan's anti-rabbinic animus in his *Das Hohelied*, 77; see below.

47 ". . . Darum benutzt Graetz als Exeget den Talmud und Midrasch und dazu auch die jüdischen Erklärer des Mittelalters möglichst ausgiebig und zeigt, wieviel für das sprachliche, sachliche und geistige Verständnis der Bibel aus diesen literarischen Quellen zu schöpfen ist. So ist ein exegetisches Hilfsmittel, über das die christliche Bibelforschung vor 40 Jahren mit souveräner Verachtung hinwegsah, erst durch Graetz zu vollem Rechte und zu Ehren gekommen." Porges, "Graetz als Exegete," 62.

several levels: on one level, exegesis is simply poor scholarship if practiced without the sorts of controls introduced by the application of critical scholarly standards, slippery though they may be. Graetz vividly illustrates how the failure to apply critical scholarship has precluded exegetes from being able to render coherent interpretations of scripture: in the case of Kohelet, exegetes were so confused, they discarded the possibility of untangling Kohelet's riddles or discerning the book's unity and alternately characterized the text as an epicurean composition, a *misère* from a monastery, a morbid Shakespearean dialogue, or a Walpurgis Night dream![48] Graetz maintains that consistently applying textual and historical criticism would keep exegetes from stumbling into such absurd and arbitrary conclusions. Without careful attention to historical, philological and literary contexts, the interpretation of scripture devolves into bad scholarship and discredits the field of exegesis as a *wissenschaftliche* discipline.

Graetz's criticism of non-*peshat* hermeneutic methods registers on another level: if there is no independent matrix of standards regulating exegetical practice, scripture lays vulnerable to the vagaries of dogmatic bias. Graetz criticizes Ewald for arbitrarily inserting the phrase "in God" into verses that commend enjoying the pleasures of life, thereby imposing through his free emendation a strong theological reading that is not indigenous to the text. Graetz criticizes Hengstenberg for arguing that each biblical book participates in a unified "biblical holy economy" and that the book of Kohelet was a "holy philosophy" whose teachings, such as despair over the brokenness of life or the vanity of all ambition, foreshadows Christianity and functions as a sort of foreword to the New Testament.[49] Given the imbalance of power between

48 Graetz writes that commentators had stood long before the Book of Kohelet as before a riddle, not only unsure whether they could find an answer to the riddle, but unsure whether an answer even existed at all. Since Kohelet is so full of contradictions, readers have taken its exhortations to enjoy pleasure as anti-moral and its skepticism about the immortality of the soul as anti-religious; no other book has been pegged as so "anti-Biblical" a book as Kohelet. As adumbrated in the foreword, Graetz concludes that the prevailing state of exegetical confusion derives from a failure to apply the advancements in biblical exegesis to the book of Kohelet, *Kohelet*, iii-viii, 1-4.
49 *Kohelet*, 6-9. See also Hengstenberg's christological interpretation of Kohelet 8:2, *Kohelet*, 101.

Christians and Jews in the academy, as well as the permeable borders between theological accounts of biblical Israelites and cultural and political critiques of contemporary Jewry, standards that distanced biblical studies from the reach of Christian dogma were a pressing desideratum for Graetz.[50]

Whereas the cultural implications of Graetz's ideal exegetical canon – that scripture be read in concert with philological and historical sources, including Talmud and midrash – could be considered a moderate approach that found adherents in both Reform and Neo-Orthodoxy, the cultural implications of his ideal model hermeneutic are far more radical: Graetz's hermeneutic models an exclusive notion of *peshat* that rejects the multivalent hermeneutics employed by various contemporary Neo-Orthodox as well as Reform exegetes. In contrast to other Jewish exegetes whose notions of *peshat* were informed by or complemented notions or *derash, remez*, or *sod*, Graetz advocates reading scripture on the level of *peshat* over and against reading it on any other level, thus suggesting a radical constriction of the hermeneutic possibilities contained within scripture.

By presenting his biblical commentary as critical scholarship, Graetz positions himself as a qualified participant in broader scholarly debates, and indeed levies a deep critique of a popular historiographical schema perpetuated by contemporary biblical critics, theologians and historians. As detailed in the following section, various elements of Graetz's commentaries on Kohelet and Song of Songs comprise a counter-history to prevailing accounts of post-exilic Judaism. Susannah Heschel and Christian Wiese have masterfully illustrated how German Jews used historiography to revise or dismantle problematic historiographical master narratives;[51]

50 Porges, "Graetz als Exegete, 47-48; Ismar Schorsch, "The Religious Parameters of *Wissenschaft*: Jewish Academics at Prussian Universities," in *From Text to Context*, pp. 51-70.

51 On the use *Wissenschaft* by German Jews to construct counter-narratives in the context of Protestant institutional and cultural dominance, see Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of

what has yet to be recognized is the extent to which German Jews composed counter-narratives within the genre of biblical commentary.

II.

Constructing a Counter-Narrative

The historiographical narrative Graetz rejects assumes that the Babylonian exile limned two eras: the earlier era witnessed the flourishing of the ethical teachings of the Israelite prophets, the subsequent era marked the inauguration of Judaism, a movement whose hyper-ritualism and enervated literary compositions betrayed a state of cultural and moral stagnation.[52] This view was common amongst leading scholars who otherwise represented radically different exegetical schools, including W. M. L. De Wette (1780-1849), E. W. Hengstenberg (1802-1869), and Ernst Renan (1823-1892), whom Graetz regularly engages in his commentaries.[53] Graetz critiques this schema and its influence on biblical criticism in the opening lines of his introduction to the Song of Songs:

> Hopefully the time is not too far distant when one no longer uses the church's rubric to evaluate biblical writings. It remains a relic of the churchly perspective that when one takes the Babylonian exile as a border line between literary epochs, the might, depth and flourishing of Hebrew literature on the one side is assumed, whereas on the other side, the decay [of Hebrew literature is assumed to have] commenced with the demise of the prophetic *Gnadenzeit*. Facile schematizations have been deduced from historical-

Chicago Press, 1998), Christian Wiese, *Challenging Colonial Discourse; Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhemine Germany*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005).

52 On this schema, see 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); Hans Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von hegel bis Max Weber* (Tübingen, 1967); Christian Wiese**,** *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhemine Germany*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Christian Wiese (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005); Christhard Hoffmann, *Juden und Judentum im Werk deutscher Althsitoriker des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden: 1988); Rolf Rendtorff, "The Image of Postexilic Israel in German Bible Scholarship from Wellhausen to von Rad," in Michael Fishbane and Emmanuel Tov (eds.), *Sha'arei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 1992).

53 James Pasto, "W. M. L. de Wette and the Invention of Post-Exilic Judaism: Political Historiography and Christian Allegory in Nineteenth-Centiry German Biblical Scholarship," in *Jews, Antiquity, and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, pp. 33-52. See also John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London: Fortress Press, 1984).

> philosophical premises, [suggesting] that with collapse of the conditions which obtained in the pre-exilic era, and with the changes cohering in the post-exilic constitution of the Jews, a diminution in the vitality of Hebrew poetry must have been inevitable. . . . According to this appraisal, the hagiographa have been undervalued and, indeed, could not have had their true value appreciated.[54]

Exegetes who interpret scripture according to this historiographical schema are left with two options for interpreting Kohelet and Song of Songs: either they date the books to the pre-exilic era, thus critically misunderstanding the texts, or they date them to the post-exilic era and maintain that these books are not inspired religious texts. Graetz notes that Renan adopts the former approach and dates the Song of Songs early since "a literary masterpiece such as Song of Songs could not have been the fruit of Rabbinism."[55] Although Graetz would be justified in critiquing adherents of this historical narrative based on their blatant prejudice, he couches his critique in *wissenschaftliche* terms: he argues that by improperly dating these sources, exegetes necessarily misunderstand the texts, and historiographical revision is the only key by which to unlock scripture's actual meaning.

Graetz constructs a counter-narrative to this schema by dating Kohelet and Song of Songs to the post-exilic era while emphasizing the literary brilliance and deep ethical nature of these books. Using the same philological and historical tools with which the master narrative was constructed, Graetz composes a counter-narrative in which post-exilic Judaism in no way manifests ethical or artistic inferiority. Graetz makes his aim explicit, writing, "My work on Kohelet and Song of Songs will initiate an even deeper understanding of the broader hagiographic literature and ascertain the reality that even though the largest portion of this

54 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, iii.

55"Als Curiosität müssen wir noch Renan's Bewisführung für das hohe Alter des H.L. anführen. Sie ist ihm eigentlich von seiner antipathischen Ideosynkrasie gegen das Judenthum inspirirt, das er noch weniger leiden mag als den ganzen Semitismus. Er meint nämlich: ein Kunstwerk wie das H.L. könne nicht die Frucht des Rabbinismus sein," *Das Hohelied*, 77.

literature belongs to the post-exilic time, they were in no way stripped of the Holy Spirit."[56] The following section illustrates how Graetz argues for the vibrant character of post-exilic Judaism by highlighting the deep ethical nature of Song of Songs.[57]

Graetz depicts Song of Songs as a beautifully-crafted paean to chaste love, a literary testament to the deep ethical character of the Israelite *Geist*. That the Song of Songs is a work of poetry is particularly significant, for Graetz follows Herder in assuming that poetry is a manifestation of a *Volk*'s *Geist*. Graetz writes that "the literature of a people, especially an ancient people, springs from the innermost kernel of the folk consciousness, from their foundational character."[58] Graetz characterizes Song of Songs as an epic love poem that teaches that "intimate love is chaste and pure,"[59] and argues that Song of Songs "is a product of the Israelite *Geist*, for which chastity is a pinion in the law and religion, in a way shared by no other ancient *Volksindividualitaeten*."[60] By suggesting that these poetic ethical teachings flowered from the vibrancy of the post-exilic Israelite *Geist*, Graetz upsets the popular schema that cast this era as a period of superficiality and moral stagnation.

Graetz contrasts the ethical disposition manifested in Song of Songs with the corruptive influence of Hellenization.[61] According to Graetz, the poet who composed the Song of Songs was intimately familiar with Greek literature and Greek morals (and lack thereof) and "sought to neutralize the poison of the advent of the decline in morality in Judea through the antidote of a seemingly erotic poem."[62] By correlating decadence with Greek influence, Graetz inverts the

56 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, vi.
57 Another branch of his counter-narrative consists of highlighting the literary brilliance of *Kohelet*. For example, he associates the author of *Kohelet* with "his contemporaries" Horace and Juvenal, suggesting a literary genius and vibrancy at odds with depictions of Judaism of the time as flaccid and unproductive.
58 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, 11. Also: "Die gesammte hebräische Literatur ist eben ein Denkmal dieses religiös-ethischen (heiligen) Gesites" – the entire corpus of Hebrew literature stands as a monument to the religious-ethical (holy) Geist of the Israelites.
59 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, 35.
60 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, 35.
61 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, 87.
62 Graetz, *Das Hohelied*, 91.

commonly-held narrative noted above: ethical degeneration was not an expression of the degeneration of the *Israelite Geist*, but rather a characteristic of the spreading *Greek Geist*.[63]

Since Graetz rejects the characterization of post-exilic Judaism as a degenerative period, he does not interpret verses referencing the Temple or sacrifice with an eye to illustrating post-exilic Judaism's superficial ritualism. Exegetes and historians who ascribed to the prevailing historiographical schema commonly cited the Temple and Temple service as grand markers of decadence and empty ritual. Interpretations of Kohelet 5:1-6 exemplify this trend: Kohelet 5:1 reads *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.* In Hengstenberg's commentary to Kohelet (1859), he interprets these verses thus: "[The author] proceeds to bring to light the evils which at that time were to be found in connection with the public worship of God. . . . A superficial piety sought to put God off with sacrifices, instead of walking in the way of His commands."[64] Hengstenberg dates the advent of this "superficial," "dead" religious culture to the return from Babylonian exile: the people "were devoted to a *dead orthodoxy*. Such a time began shortly after the return from exile, as soon as the first mighty stirrings of the heart had relaxed, as soon as the first enthusiasm had vanished."[65] Citing the prooftexts commonly deployed to critique the practice of sacrifice – 1 Samuel 15:22, Jeremiah 7:33, Hosea 6:6, Proverbs 11:3 – Hengstenberg concludes: "What the voice of the Lord calls for is love, righteousness, justice; whereas soulless sacrifices are not claimed by him: to bring them therefore instead of love and the like is the contrary of obedience."[66] In other words, by offering sacrifice, members of this

63 On Graetz's views of Hellenism and Judaism and the larger context of German Classicism and Orientalism, see Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 116-118.
64 Hengstenberg, Ernst Wilhelm, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, translated from German by D. W. Simon (Philadelphia: Smith, English, 1860), 133. Cf. Hengstenberg, *Der Prediger Salomo* (Berlin: L. Oehmigke, 1859).
65 Hengstenberg, *Ecclesiastes*, 134.
66 Hengstenberg, *Ecclesiastes*, 135.

presumably decaying culture were actually transgressing God's commands. Hengstenberg's interpretation of Kohelet 5:1-6 employs cliché elements of the Protestant critique of post-exilic Judaism, including adjectives describing Judaism as "dead" or Jewish practice as "superficial" or "soulless;" biblical prooftexts that seem to reject the religious value of sacrifice and had been wielded polemically for centuries; and the historical schema into which this devolution plays its part as a prelude to a higher stage of ethical consciousness (Christianity). Graetz alludes to commentaries like Hengstenberg's when in his own interpretation of these verses he writes, "of the pharisaical *Opferwesen*, which so many commentators so easily peg to these verses, there is naturally no mention."[67]

Graetz's interpretation of these verses explicitly rejects the exegetical bias of commentators like Hengstenberg who point to Temple worship as the material manifestation of Judaism's ethical degeneration; rather, he looks to contemporary literary and historical sources to contextualize the oddities in these verses. Graetz argues that Kohelet 5:1 must be interpreted in reference to vv. 2-6 since only the connection between *sacrifices/vows* (4:17, 5:3-5) and *dreams* (5:2, 5:6) render the passage coherent.[68] Graetz suggests that here the author of Kohelet is mocking a superstitious belief that bad dreams have inauspicious properties that can be neutralized only through a propitiatory sacrifice. He notes that this concept was familiar to the Greeks, as illustrated in Aeschylos' *The Persians* (5thC BCE) when Atossa, the aged mother of Xerxes, has a bad dream and hopes to counteract the effects by offering sacrifices to mollify the

67 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 82.

68 The verses read: (4:17) *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.* (5:1) *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.* (2) *For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.* (3) *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.* (4) *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. (*5) *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?* (6) *For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.*

Gods. Similarly, in Sophocle's *Elektra* (5thC BCE), Clymenestra offers a propitiatory sacrifice after envisioning her murdered husband in a dream. Graetz asserts that this Greek notion of apotropaism does not appear in the Bible, but that in b. Shabbat 11a and b. Taanit 12b, Rab, a 3rd century source is cited as saying that fasting may be used to render a bad dream ineffectual (אמר רב יפה תענית לחלום כאש לנעורת). Graetz suggests that the transference of this notion into Jewish culture may have come through Greek influence and concludes that Kohelet 5:1-6 is a satirical passage in which the author means to counteract Greek influence by mocking this apotropaic view of dreams and sacrifices.[69] Graetz's interpretation of these verses indicates the radical difference of his methodological orientation and the ways in which his hermeneutic revises prevailing scholarly trends.

By revising this master narrative in general, and by rejecting this characterization of sacrifice in particular, Graetz destabilizes arguments that had been deployed against Jews in their quest for political emancipation, primarily that Jewish religious ritual held no moral significance and should be discarded if Jews were to be a part of the German nation. Both Kant and Schleiermacher provided theoretical underpinnings for these culturally and politically potent critiques. Kant argued that Judaism was a "statutory" rather than "natural" religion, and pointed to the ancient Temple service as non-moral ceremonial observance *par excellence*, calling it the public and legal form of the "servile worship of God."[70] The critique of religious formalism was expressed in new ways at the turn of the nineteenth century in the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who argued that religion should be understood in terms of "edification" and an emphasis on one's disposition; contemporary scholarship frequently deployed these buzzwords to malign the ancient Temple service for not engendering edification

69 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 37; 80-82.
70 Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Reason Alone*, 194-195

nor requiring worshippers to cultivate a religious disposition. Although the granting of full legal emancipation to Germany's Jews upon the unification of the Reich in 1871 may have suggested that Jews were immune to real ramifications enjoined by such rhetoric, this historiographical master narrative continued to have significant cultural and political consequences in the following decades, as Graetz would indicate when he again entered the fray with his commentary on the Psalms published ten years later.

III.

Some Methodological Critiques

Although Graetz wields his critical hermeneutic approach with great confidence – he often remarks how effortlessly and distinctly the meaning of a passage emerges once its philological and historical contexts are discerned – his approach is, however, beset by several methodological flaws. First, because Graetz conceptualizes scripture as literature reflecting actual historical accounts and deploys rhetorical devices to correlate the philological narrative with the historical narrative, there is an element of ambiguity in discerning whether elements of the texts are references that require a historical referent or whether they are rhetorical devices that do not require any historical explanation. Is a reference to a particular detail an allusion to a historically-instantiated detail or is it an element of satire or exaggeration? How does one discern whether elucidating a textual element requires recourse to a historical context or may be resolved outside the realm of history by appealing to literary convention? Depending on what one takes as literary contention and what one takes as historical detail, drastically different historical narratives may emerge. This ambiguity exemplifies one of the complications of identifying biblical exegesis with factual historical narrative.

Graetz's interpretations of Josephus introduce another methodological ambiguity. In his biblical commentaries, Graetz reads Josephus plainly without noting contradictions within Josephus' own accounts or variations editions of his works. Although this approach may strike readers as naïve, it seems to reflect the fact that Graetz's use of Josephus in these two commentaries was not compromised by acknowledged tensions within Josephus' corpus.[71] Graetz does evince a degree of methodological sophistication in one particular passage, which throws into relief the inherently interpretive nature of the historian's craft. In his commentary on Kohelet, Graetz reads Josephus creatively in order to maintain his argument that Jews did not believe in the immortality of the soul at the time of Herod (cf. Kohelet 3:19-22, 7:14). To harmonize Josephus' characterization of the Pharisees as the sect that believes in the immortality of the soul with several contemporary sources that suggest that belief in the immortality of the soul was *not* an established religious principle at the time (cf. Sirach 19:11-19 and b. Eruvin 54a), Graetz argues that Josephus' formulation about the immortality of the soul was actually a cultural translation of the established religious principle of resurrection of the dead for an Alexandrian audience influenced by Neoplatonism.[72] With this interpretive innovation, Graetz resolves the seeming conflict between Josephus and the texts of Kohelet, Sirach and Eruvin, thereby maintaining the coherence of his own interpretation. Wielding his power as interpreter, Graetz coaxes Josephus' account into line with his own historical narrative. In this example, the inherent ambiguities of the plain sense of historical sources bubble to the surface.

A related methodological concern centers on how one evaluates the historical integrity of

71 For contemporary accounts of the various nuances in Josephus' writings on topics of significance to Graetz's historical narrative – particularly Josephus' accounts of the Temple and sacrifice – see the articles by Batsch, Ben Zeev, Hata, Regev, Schimanowski, and Tuval in Jack Pastor, Pnina Stern and Menahem More, *Flavius Josephus: Interpretation and History* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011). See also Louis Feldman's magisterial *Josephus and Modern Scholarship (1937-1980)* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1984) for bibliographies on the Tobiads, pp. 215-217; Herod, pp. 278-303; description of the Temple, pp. 438-457; for an overview of the use of Josephus as a source in Jewish biblical exegesis, see the chapter "Josephus' Influence until the 20th Century, pp. 853-875.
72 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 28-29.

conflicting interpretations of Josephus. This ambiguity becomes explicit when Graetz critiques Ferdinand Hitzig's (1807-1875) use of Josephus in his commentary on Kohelet (1847). Although Graetz frequently condemns his fellow exegetes for insufficiently applying historical criticism in their commentaries,[73] his subsequent citations make clear that he is not alone in assuming the need to set scripture in its historical context, particularly through reference to Josephus. Graetz criticizes Hitzig's reading of Josephus when Hitzig suggests that the *old and foolish king* of Kohelet 4:13 refers to Onias II and the *poor and wise child* to the tax-collector Joseph, based on Josephus' account in *Antiquities* 4, 2.[74] In Graetz's view, Hitzig's reading is not tenable because it does not account for the word *melekh* (Onias II was a high priest, not a king) nor does it account for the reference to prison (Onias II was not known to have been in prison); rather, these verses refer to Herod and his sons Alexander and Aristobolus, as detailed in Josephus' *Antiquities* XVI 1, 2; 4, 3; and 8, 3.[75] Graetz also criticizes Hitzig's interpretation of Kohelet 8:2, where he correlates *the oath* with the oaths Jews took in allegiance to Ptolemy Lagi as reported in Josephus' *Antiquities* XII 1, 1.[76] Graetz claims that this cannot be correct since Kohelet reflects and speaks to a Palestinian rather than exilic audience and so the text must refer to the oath Herod required his subjects to take, as reported in Josephus *Antiquities* XV 10, 4. Of course conflicting interpretations are inherent in the scholarly project, and Graetz's critique of Hitzig's use of Josephus implicitly warns Graetz's readers to keep an eye on the interpretative nature of Graetz's own readings of Josephus.

Each of these three considerations complicates Graetz's characterization of his hermeneutic as presenting a textual narrative that reflects historical reality.

*

73 Graetz, *Kohelet*, vii.
74 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 79.
75 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 79-80.
76 Graetz, *Kohelet*, 102.

In the introduction to his commentary on the Psalms, Graetz alludes to his biblical exegesis as a force of cultural paideia, writing that he hopes that the use of criticism will re-establish the value of scripture and revivify scripture's influence on modern generations.[77] Indeed, his commentaries are precisely such a cultural force. As a translator, he renders the Hebrew text of scripture into an elegant, literary German "out of which the original Hebrew glimmers."[78] In this way, the very words of scripture are formulated from the interstices between contemporary German and traditional Jewish culture, simultaneously limning and weaving together the gap between the two cultural worlds.

The particular exegetical imagination Graetz models speaks to an ideal readership of educated German Jews whose culture is interwoven with the texts of the Ibn Ezra, Josephus, Goethe, Rashi, Sophocles and Graetz's own *History of the Jews*. By modeling this multifaceted cultural composition as a Jewish commentary, Graetz presents an exemplum of a modern Jewish exegetical canon that speaks to the multifaceted dimensions of German Jews' identities.

Graetz's hermeneutic models an ideal cultural practice of reading scripture as a thick historical narrative; such a hermeneutic points beyond itself, and suggests that religious texts broadly understood may be read in this way, perhaps signaling an entrée into traditional Jewish texts for an audience for whom homiletical or allegorical interpretation feels foreign. Are Graetz's ideal citational canon and hermeneutic approach attempts to speak in the language of *Wissenschaft* to Jews alienated from Jewish sources or are they efforts to elevate the exegetical language employed by Jewish communities to a higher level of sophistication? Do the multivalent aspects of Graetz's commentaries draw in readers based on their familiar features or

77 "Die strenge Textkritik ist eine Lebensfrage für Religion und Sittlichkeit. Die bisher nur schütern und tastend angewandte positive Kritik kann allein die Würde der heiligen Schrift wiederherstellen und sie Einfluss auf das moderne Geschlecht gewinnen lassen," *Die Psalmen*, xi.

78 "Bei der Uebersetzung, die ich zum Texte gebe, war meine Aufgabe dahin gerichtet, das Original durchschimmern zu lassen, und zugleich die Resultate der kritischen Operation zur Anwendung zu bringen," *Kohelet*, vii.

does their composite nature alienate readers unfamiliar with either religious or scholarly sources? While these questions remain open, it is evident that Graetz's biblical exegesis was an agent of cultural paideia, through which he critiques and models ideals of exegesis and scholarship.