

## HERMANN COHEN AND PROTESTANT BIBLICAL CRITICISM

NEIGHBORS AND STRANGERS:  
HERMANN COHEN AND  
PROTESTANT BIBLICAL CRITICISM

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## Abstract

My thesis investigates and evaluates Hermann Cohen's interest in and critiques of Protestant biblical criticism. In this thesis, I argue that Cohen's interest in Protestant biblical criticism stems from his quest to rejuvenate Jewish learning, foster relations between Jewish and Christian scholars and develop a philosophically sophisticated method for the study of the Hebrew Bible. To argue this point, I look at Cohen's philosophical construction of concepts such as monotheism, messianism and social justice, his methodology for the study of texts, his philosophical conception of "Jewish sources," and how this conception reflects contemporary interactions and tensions in Germany between scholarly biblical criticism, Jewish intellectual culture, and antisemitism. In doing so, I also examine how Cohen's complicated relationship with Protestant biblical criticism can be seen as part of Cohen's attempts to balance the assumptions he shared with Protestant biblical scholars, such as Julius Wellhausen, with his polemical response to Protestant biases in the work of other biblical scholars, such as Rudolf Kittel. This thesis, then, looks at both Cohen's implicit and explicit critiques of Protestant biblical scholarship in several of his "Jewish Writings" and in his *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, and investigates how Cohen's interactions with Protestant biblical criticism influenced his own methodology for the study of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible.

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## Abbreviations

### Works by Hermann Cohen

- JS I            *Jüdische Schriften*. Ed. Bruno Strauss, vol. 1 (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924).
- JS III          *Jüdische Schriften*. Ed. Bruno Strauss, vol. 3 (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924).
- RR            *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*. Trans. Simon Kaplan (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).
- RV            *Religion der Verknüft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1978). Reprint of 2nd edition.
- Werke* 15      *Werke: Kleinere Schriften IV: 1907-1912*. Ed. Hartwig Wiedebach, vol. 15 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009).
- Werke* 16      *Werke: Kleinere Schriften V: 1913-1915*. Ed. Hartwig Wiedebach, vol. 16 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1997).
- Werke* 17      *Werke: Kleinere Schriften VI: 1919-1918*. Ed. Helmut Holzhey, Julius H. Schoeps and Christoph Schulte, vol. 17 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002).

### Other Works

- AWG          Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, “Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Religionsgeschichte, Rede zum Antritt des Rektorates der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin” (Berlin: Gustav Schade, 1912).
- NU            Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, “Nationalismus und Universalismus, Rede zur Gedächtnisfeier des Stifters der Berliner Universität König Friedrich Wilhelms III” (Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei, 1913).
- NRSV          *Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (London: Collins Publishers, 1989).
- LBIYB         *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*

## Introduction

During his lifetime, Hermann Cohen (1842-1918) participated in heated debates among Jewish and Christian scholars over the study of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. Although Cohen was a philosopher and neither an historian nor a biblical critic, he was heavily invested in the state of biblical studies and *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Sharply aware of the large stakes involved in these areas, he saw biblical texts not only as objects of study, but as sources that remained vitally important to Jews and Christians alike. In his view, the way in which these texts were seen and studied affected how Judaism and Christianity were understood both by scholars and by society at large. Specifically, the connection between scholarship, texts, and cultural perceptions was of paramount significance for the political situation faced by Jews in Germany at his time, inasmuch as the results of biblical studies often entered negatively into discourses about the status of Jews in the academy and beyond.

In 19th- and early 20th-century Germany, the study of the Bible and Judaism in universities owed its origins to Protestant theology and emphasized philological, historical and literary aspects of biblical texts. Despite the fact that the scientific study of Judaism by Jews—the diverse activities known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—also emphasized biblical history and philology, the academic establishment did not acknowledge this approach as properly “scientific.” Since Cohen was formed by and contributed to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as we will see in Chapter 4, he felt compelled to respond to its absence in the academy.<sup>1</sup> In his view, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* merited a place

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<sup>1</sup> The larger development of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is analyzed by Wiese in *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany*, trans. B. Harshav and C. Wiese (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005). Wiese sketches Cohen’s participation in the discussions about instituting Jewish Studies in the university in chapters 5 and 7.

in the German academy because it shared the same scientific methods and goals as biblical criticism. Cohen also thought that Judaism should not be taught only by Christian historians and philologists, or by Christian theologians, but also by Jews, since Judaism was a thriving religion.<sup>2</sup> Cohen left his position as the only tenured Jewish professor at the Marburg University in 1912 in order to become a full-time teacher at the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Institute for the Study of Judaism) in Berlin.

As a philosopher committed to the ideals of scientific objectivity and authoritative scholarship, Cohen felt bound to and was interested in the development of disciplines and methods that emphasized these values. Far from ignoring the advancements made by Protestant biblical studies on these fronts, he incorporated some of these findings into his own work. Yet Cohen was also acutely sensitive to antisemitic movements, which were on the rise after 1880 and which played an increasing role in the structuring of his political views and his writings. Cohen was thus forced to reconcile his interests in Protestant biblical research with his view that this approach could potentially be used for antisemitic ends. As a result, Cohen's response to biblical criticism was complex and highly nuanced.

As a philosopher and a Jew, Cohen felt that biblical critics did not understand, or even worse, simply ignored, just how high the stakes were in the study of Judaism in Germany. As biblical scholars published work with anti-Jewish overtones, their ideas were being appropriated by the rapidly growing

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<sup>2</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Zwei Vorschläge zur Sicherung unseres Fortbestandes [1907]," in *Werke* 15:121-32.

antisemitic movements.<sup>3</sup> Cohen did not view the antisemitic appropriation and manipulation of these ideas as the fault of the scholars. He asserted, however, that they were blinded to the ideals of true scientific research, which were not just unrealized in their work but contradicted. Moreover, Cohen took issue with biblical scholars' claims to be objectively scientific and neutral in their investigations of the origins of biblical texts through their study of the texts' style, genre and history. He believed, for example, that their quest for origins could be neither completely neutral nor objective because it was a backward projection of Protestant ideals—such as *sola scriptura*—onto biblical texts. For him, this projection obscured the texts' own meanings, hid the Protestant confessional agenda under the name of objective science, and skewed the results of historical, literary and philological studies in favor of contemporary perceptions.

Cohen also thought that the search for origins overlooked the texts' lived and living significance for Jews and thereby disregarded the texts' own meaning and their significance for Judaism. In his view, to overlook the meaning of the texts was tantamount to denying the continuing development of the texts and of the ideas contained therein. Cohen pointed to one major problem with this denial: it reflected the tendency for Christians to render Judaism either as a “dead religion” or as a mere parent of Christianity, rather than a vibrant tradition with

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<sup>3</sup> One case in particular stands out. In 1910, Leipzig journalist Theodor Fritsch was charged with offending the Jewish religion. At the trial, prominent philologist Rudolf Kittel served as an expert witness, and eventually Fritsch was acquitted. Fritsch then used Kittel's anti-Jewish testimony to validate his own antisemitic assertions. This case is interesting because when Kittel eventually published his testimony, he critiqued Hermann Cohen's essay “Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte.” According to Kittel, Cohen's philological arguments about Leviticus 19:18, 34, verses that Kittel also used in his testimony, were completely mistaken. Cohen, in turn, replied to Kittel's objections in a reworked version of the essay (Werke 16:53-71). Cf. Rudolf Kittel, *Judenfeindschaft oder Gotteslästerung? Ein gerichtliches Gutachten. Mit einem Schlusswort: Die Juden und der gegenwärtige Krieg* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1914), and Wiese, 248-78.

significance in its own right and value in culture at large. Furthermore, Cohen criticized Christian scholars for their continued interpretation of the Hebrew Bible through the prism of the New Testament. For him, this approach not only ignored the integrity of the Hebrew Bible, but also denied its continuing development in rabbinic Judaism. He argued that this denial of post-biblical Judaism exposed the confessional bias of Protestant biblical criticism as well as its methodological weakness and potential antisemitic uses.

Significantly, Cohen's concerns about biblical criticism have parallels in contemporary debates about biblical scholarship. A number of scholars have analyzed the history of Protestant biblical criticism and the historical-critical method that grew out of it. Jon D. Levenson's critiques of these methods, as discussed in *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (1993), stand in particularly close relation to the critiques made by Cohen in the early 20th century. For example, both Levenson and Cohen are disturbed by the possibility that biblical criticism is antisemitic in its assumptions and by the potentially antisemitic ends to which the findings of biblical scholarship can be put. More importantly, both are concerned with the state of biblical and Jewish studies in the university. While Cohen argued for the establishment of the scholarly study of Judaism by Jews in German universities, Levenson deals with the problems that remain now that Jewish Studies is a firm presence in the academy. For instance, he speaks out against the ongoing privileging of biblical Hebrew over rabbinic Hebrew in the teaching of both Bible and Judaism and against the overwhelming interest in ancient Judaism over rabbinic Judaism.<sup>4</sup> Levenson views these problems as the continuing legacy of

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<sup>4</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 21.

19th-century biblical criticism's neglect of post-biblical Judaism. Cohen's critiques of the biblical criticism of his time thus still resonate today.

This thesis argues that Cohen's interactions with German Protestant biblical criticism had a significant impact on his methods for studying Judaism and on his portrayal of Judaism as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, this thesis asserts that Cohen's key concepts of monotheism, messianism, world history and social justice both motivated his critiques of biblical studies and provided him with the loci around which he built his critiques; and as a result, these critiques helped aid in the development of these concepts throughout Cohen's life culminating in his *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (1919/1929).<sup>6</sup> To argue these points, my study considers *Religion of Reason*, where Cohen articulates his key concepts in their fullest form, and investigates several of the essays that Cohen writes specifically about Protestant biblical criticism and begins to formulate the ideas he later expands upon in *Religion of Reason*. These essays originated as lectures, reports and responses that Cohen published in Jewish periodicals to work out his own ideas in relation to his critiques of Protestant biblical criticism. In order to investigate the extent to which Cohen's engagement with biblical criticism shaped his thought, I look at both Cohen's key philosophical concepts and his implicit and explicit critiques of biblical criticism. Furthermore, I interpret

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<sup>5</sup> Cohen's interactions with other Jewish scholars also played a major role in his thinking and would provide us with yet another way of understanding what Cohen was trying to accomplish in both his scholarly works and his political writings. This thesis, however, will not explore these interactions, nor will it explore the reception of Cohen's ideas within Germany's late nineteenth and early twentieth century Jewish community, as exploring these interactions and Cohen's reception would be another dissertation in itself.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. by Simon Kaplan (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), *Religion der Verknüft aus den Quellen des Judentums* (Wiesbaden: Fourier Ver., 1978), reprint of 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. *Religious of Reason* will be referred to as RR and *Religion der Verknüft* will be referred to as RV in the main body of the text.

Cohen's engagement with biblical research as arising out of his concerns about the Jewish situation in Germany as well as out of his more specific concerns about proper methodology.

This dissertation does not investigate the full corpus of Cohen's essays that include critiques of biblical studies. Rather, it focuses on the essays that Cohen wrote with regard to particular biblical scholars. This is because while most of his critiques center on the prejudiced assumptions of biblical scholars in general, it is with respect to particular scholars that Cohen points both to the problems inherent in allowing these prejudiced assumptions to dictate scholarly method and to the advancements that he sees within biblical criticism. Chapter 1, for instance, will look at three of Cohen's essays that deal with how Christian biases in biblical studies affect methodology as well as the presentation and dissemination of biblical scholars' results in reference to biblical scholars such as Paul de Lagarde, Rudolf Kittel and Theobald Ziegler: "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud" (1888; "The Love of Neighbor in the Talmud"), "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte," (1914/16; "The Neighbor. Biblical Exegesis and Literature History") and "Gesinnung" (1910; "Conviction"). Chapter 2, on the other hand, examines Cohen's positive portrayals of Alfred Bertholet and Wolf W. Baudissin in his essays "Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion" (1913; "The Particularity of the Old Testament Religion") and "Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität" (1913; "Two Presidential Speeches at the Berlin University") in order to investigate how and why Cohen approves of some methodological advancements in biblical studies. We will look at Cohen's critiques of these advancements and at how Cohen sees them as fitting into his overall project in *Religion of Reason*. Chapter 3 juxtaposes

Cohen's views of Ernst Troeltsch and Julius Wellhausen in the essays "Der Prophetismus und die Soziologie" (1917; "Prophetism and Sociology") and "Julius Wellhausen: Ein Abschiedsgruß" (1918; "Julius Wellhausen: A Final Farwell") in order to see how and why Cohen's critiques of biblical criticism develop over time. Moreover, this chapter will examine what Cohen understands himself to be doing in *Religion of Reason* in relation to methodologies employed by German biblical studies and theology. Chapter 4 will bring Cohen's concerns into conversation with late 20th century critiques of biblical criticism as represented by Jon D. Levenson and James Kugel in order to look at whether or not Cohen's critiques were relevant and are still continuous with present-day critiques. More importantly, this chapter will analyze Cohen's interest in the significance of education by looking at Cohen's view of the relationship between *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and biblical scholarship. In the conclusion I will present a comprehensive picture of Cohen's interest and concerns with regard to biblical studies and his own methodological assumptions.



## Chapter 1: Cohen and the Biases of Biblical Scholarship

### Introduction

Hermann Cohen's relationship with late nineteenth and early twentieth century biblical studies is undoubtedly complex and nuanced, for even as he disapproved of many aspects of biblical studies, he incorporated some of its results and its assumptions into his own work. Cohen's interest in biblical studies, however, begins with an assessment of the weaknesses that he saw in biblical studies as a whole. Cohen published three essays, for instance, that explicitly deal with what he sees as the negative biases and methods of biblical criticism and its perpetuation of both anti-Jewish and antisemitic beliefs: "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud. Ein Gutachten dem Königlichen Landgerichte zu Marburg erstattet" (1888; "The Love of Neighbor in the Talmud"),<sup>1</sup> "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte" (1914/16; "The Neighbor. Biblical Exegesis and Literary History")<sup>2</sup> and "Gesinnung" (1910; "Conviction").<sup>3</sup> In these essays, Cohen argues that Christian biases against Judaism affect not only the methodologies of biblical scholars, but also the ways in which their results were presented and disseminated. For Cohen, this meant that Christian scholars were blind to how

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud. Ein Gutachten dem Königlichen Landgerichte zu Marburg erstattet [1888]" (The Love of the Neighbor in the Talmud: Testimony submitted to the Regional Court of Marburg) in JS I:145-74. Essays from *Jüdische Schriften* will be referred to as JS, followed by the volume number, in the main body of the text. Except where noted, the translation of Cohen is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte [1914/16]" (The Neighbor. Biblical Exegesis and Literary History) in *Werke* 16:53-71. Essays from *Werke* will be referred to as *Werke*, followed by the volume number, in the main body of this text. For the English version of this text, I have used Dana Hollander's unpublished translation, "The Neighbor. Biblical Exegesis and Literary History."

<sup>3</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Gesinnung [1910]," in *Werke* 15:391-413.

their work both reflected and was appropriated by the academy and society as a whole. As a result, Cohen thought that biblical scholars' inability to understand their significance in the world at large, when combined with anti-Jewish biases, meant that biblical scholarship neither participated in real science nor disseminated truth. Moreover, they perpetuated Christian biases that fed antisemitic movements, leading to real danger for the Jewish people in Germany. At the same time, Cohen argued that the weaknesses of biblical studies, as well as the problem of antisemitic and anti-Jewish scholarship, could be avoided if biblical scholars were able to develop a properly scientific and sophisticated methodology for the study of the biblical and talmudic texts, and by extension, Judaism, that was free of bias. In a very real sense, Cohen's *Religion of Reason* was his answer to the question of how to properly study Judaism.

In this chapter we will look these three of Cohen's essays that deal with his ideas on how Christian biases in biblical studies affect methodology as well as the presentation and dissemination of results in connection with his ideas about the proper methodology for the study of Judaism and the Bible. In examining these essays, we will investigate four points in particular. First, we will investigate Cohen's argument that biblical studies does not pay adequate attention to what was going on in the world, both in terms of how their work reflected and affected the political, social, and religious situation in Germany. Second, we will see how Cohen seeks to use philosophy as a method of critique to counter the weaknesses that he asserts comes from the inability of biblical scholars to look beyond their own discipline and religious borders. Third, we will examine Cohen's assertions concerning the establishment of a proper methodology for the study of Judaism and the biblical text that takes Judaism and the Bible seriously by paying attention

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to the religion and to the text itself. This analysis will focus on Cohen's argument that the content and the method of the biblical text itself can be determined by investigating the text's main questions and philological markers. Fourth, we will look at how Cohen uses morality and the concept of the neighbor as an example of a proper method for the study Judaism and the biblical text that does justice to the subjects themselves and the world in which they are studied. We will then connect Cohen's assertions in these essays to Cohen's arguments in *Religion of Reason*. In this chapter, then, by looking at these three essays and *Religion of Reason*, I will investigate Cohen's explicit and implicit critiques of biblical scholarship in the context of his theories of neighbor love and Jewish conviction, and of his understanding of how these critiques and theories relate to the Jewish situation in Germany.

### **Hermann Cohen and Neighbor Love**

Cohen's essay "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud" was a direct response to the connections that Cohen saw between the weaknesses of biblical studies and antisemitism. This essay, however, was not written to specifically deal with this problem. In 1888, Cohen was called as an expert witness in the case of the Royal Regional Courts of Marburg versus Ferdinand Fenner. Fenner, a school teacher in Marburg where Cohen was teaching at the time, was accused under Section 166 of Germany's Criminal Code of claiming at an antisemitic rally that the Talmud condoned crimes against non-Jews.<sup>4</sup> As part of his testimony, Cohen submitted a

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<sup>4</sup> Ulrich Sieg, "'Der Wissenschaft und dem Leben tut dasselbe not: Ehrfurcht vor der Wahrheit.': Hermann Cohens Gutachten im Marburger Antisemitismusprozeß 1888," in *Philosophisches Denken—Politisches Wirken: Hermann-Cohen-Kolloquium, Marburg 1992*, ed. Reinhard Brandt und Franz Orlik, 222-49, 230 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1993). Section 166 of the 1871 Uniform Criminal Code of Germany made blasphemy and defamation of religious institutions and practices punishable by law. It reads as follows: "Whoever publicly, by insulting expressions,

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written document answering questions that the court had asked of him. Since the document was not submitted as evidence in the trial, Cohen later published the document himself. For Cohen, this essay represented more than just a piece of testimony, for it publicly established him as a defender of Judaism against antisemitism. This essay is also significant for our topic because through his participation in the trial Cohen was able to establish his interest in and critique of biblical studies, and to begin to construct a proper methodology for biblical scholarship, which was necessary because the religious concepts that appear in his work are derived from the biblical and talmudic texts.

Cohen begins the essay by citing the two questions that the court asks of him. The first question reads: "Whether or not the Talmud contains rules of faith and morals that are to be regarded as binding commandments for believing Jews and whether or not a slander of the Talmud appears to be a slander of the Jewish religious community or establishment" (JS I, 145). The second: "Whether or not the Talmud states: 'The Mosaic Law is valid only between one Jew and another, and that they are allowed to rob and cheat Gentiles'" (145). Cohen, however, does not begin to answer the questions until later on in the essay, as he feels that he must explain first why he will try to answer these questions. According to Cohen, although he is not in the strict sense an expert in Talmudic studies, Semitic philology and archaeology, as he is by profession a philosopher, he did receive

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blasphemes God, causes scandal, or whoever publicly insults one of the Christian churches or another existing religious association enjoying incorporation rights within the territory of the Reich, or its institutions and customs, and likewise, whoever, in a church or in another place designated for religious gatherings acts in a profane manner, shall be punished by imprisonment not to exceed three years." Translated by Dana Hollander, "Hermann Cohen on 'the Neighbor': Between Ethics, Politics, and Religion" (lecture, Natalie Limonick Symposium on Jewish Civilization: "The Ethics of the Neighbor," UCLA Center for Jewish Studies, May 2004). The basic information about Cohen's participation in the Fenner trial and its historical context has been taken from this lecture.

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Talmudic training for many years (145). For Cohen, then, through careful work and preparation he can answer the questions posed to him because in doing so, he, as a philosopher, actually serves his office as a philosopher (145-6). Cohen argues that the task of a philosopher is to get at the truth of a question, and then disseminate that truth, especially when the question involves the history of moral ideas (146). According to Cohen, philosophy must not only be the means by which the criteria for the judgment of human conviction is established, but must also then defend conviction against the effects of hatred (146). Cohen asserts that philosophers have always been given the authority by a community to judge the literature and worldview of its authors (146). Therefore, while he is not an expert in Talmudic studies, Cohen argues that he, as a philosopher, is able to make judgments about whether the Talmud contains rules of faith and morality because in “all literary questions of morality, the philosopher is an expert concerning the evaluation of moral ideas” (146). Thus, Cohen asserts that he is able to evaluate literary questions of morality because he has the ability to understand and evaluate the moral principle of the text in question. According to Cohen, discovering this moral principle is of paramount importance because it not only is the guide for all morality, but also because the other task of philosophy is to use this principle to enlighten historical research: “The business of moral theology overall, therefore, is to discover the prevailing principle—and to thereby enlighten historical research” (147). Based on his combined knowledge of the Talmud and his authority as a philosopher, then, Cohen asserts that he has the ability and the legitimacy to render accurate judgments in this case. Furthermore, and more importantly for our topic, Cohen argues that he has the task to enlighten historical

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research, which in this case means the study of the Bible, the Talmud and Judaism, and the ability to do so.

After Cohen establishes his method for answering the court's questions, he begins to set up the two themes by which he will answer these questions, defend Judaism against antisemitism, and critique biblical research as a whole: neighbor love and the Christian bias against Jewish morality. According to Cohen, because the court's questions are posed in order to see if Fenner's remarks are justified, the questions focus on the morality of the Talmudic text, and by extension, of all of Judaism (147-50). For Cohen, who will later argue that Judaism and the Talmudic text obviously operate with moral integrity (151), the questions of the court actually point to the Christian assumption that Judaism does not have morality. Thus, Cohen argues that before he can even begin to answer the court's questions, he must address the assumptions behind the questions (147). Cohen asserts that these assumptions stem from the separation of Judaism and Christianity (147). Cohen explains that after the separation from Judaism, Christianity argued that the Talmud did not contain a universal morality (147). In Cohen's view, this Christian bias against the morality in the Talmud was further compounded when the morality of the Hebrew Bible<sup>5</sup> was characterized in biblical studies according to the values of Christian theology instead of the value neutral philosophical-historical method (147). This characterization led to what Cohen calls "the difficult chapter of the relationship between theology and morality" because, generally speaking, the connection between morality and religion is seen as a disaster by theologians (147). For him, however, this lament is misguided because "the relationship [between theology and morality] is natural:

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<sup>5</sup> As was customary in his day, Cohen uses the title "the Old Testament." I, however, will use the title "Hebrew Bible."

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the creators of religious ideas are at the same time the creators of moral ideas. It is a historical prejudice that the religions are inventions of the priests, while moral doctrines are those of the philosophers” (147-148). Cohen continues:

The moral ideas . . . were discovered and developed by the prophets and the apostles. The philosophers’ task is to justify them and to correct them according to the justification that is to be discovered. This is because the prophets and apostles place their superior ideas in connection with and under the interest of their religious foundations and legitimize them as commandments of their God. Thus morality comes to be dependent on theology. (148)

Cohen explains that the dependence of morality on theology was ignored as morality became associated with content alone and not with the development of morality over time in connection to the prophets and to law (148). In Cohen’s opinion, Christianity therefore denied the morality of the Talmud because Christians thought that universal morality was not fully developed in the Talmudic text, and therefore did not exist as such. For Cohen, the important point is that Christianity also denied that the Hebrew Bible, one of Christianity’s own sources, contained the “basic form of monotheistic morality—love of the neighbor” (148).

According to Cohen, because neighbor love is the basic form of morality in the Hebrew Bible, neighbor love must be seen as the hermeneutical key for Christian and Jewish scripture (149). To support his point, he carefully establishes the connection between morality and neighbor love in scripture, and it is here that Cohen begins his first debate with Christian philology. Because Cohen gives neighbor love such methodological weight, Cohen must explain what he means by

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“neighbor” love by discussing the term “neighbor” and its use in Christian philology. According to Cohen, Christian philology misunderstands the term as it is used in the biblical text. Although Cohen later explains this more fully in “Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte” by arguing that the general problem with Christian philology is its inability, or lack of desire, to go beyond one single verse in order to connect the whole of the Bible together, thereby ignoring how the ideas and concepts develop in the biblical text,<sup>6</sup> in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” Cohen argues that Christian philology misunderstands the term “neighbor” because of the Christian bias that the Talmud, and hence Judaism as a whole, does not contain universal morality. According to Cohen, this Christian bias denies the moral significance of the neighbor, which means that biblical studies actually lose the Bible’s literary and hermeneutical key (149). Cohen points to Franz Delitzsch’s<sup>7</sup> discussion of the neighbor to prove his argument. Although Cohen admires Delitzsch’s defense against antisemitism in biblical studies,<sup>8</sup> he thinks that Delitzsch’s philological explanation of the “neighbor” (*der Nächste* in German, *rea’* in Hebrew) is incorrect and misleading because his explanation does not look to the whole biblical text (148-9). Delitzsch asserts that based on the philological evidence of Leviticus 19:18,<sup>9</sup> the “neighbor”

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<sup>6</sup> We will look at this argument later on in the chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890).

<sup>8</sup> Cohen is referring to Delitzsch’s defense of the Jews in his *Rohlings Talmudjude* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1881), which was written against the antisemitic attacks of August Rohling (1839-1905) in *Der Talmudjude: Zur Beherzigung für Juden und Christen aller Stände* (Münster: Russell, 1877).

<sup>9</sup> Unless noted, I have used the NRSV edition of the Bible. Lev. 19:18: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your neighbours, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.”



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could only mean the “national comrade” (*Volksgenosse*),<sup>10</sup> that is, the Israelite. For Cohen, this is a mistake because the “neighbor” later becomes modified by Leviticus 19:33-34<sup>11</sup> to mean the “fellow human being” (*Nebenmensch*), and not just the “national comrade” (148).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Cohen is not convinced that the “neighbor” (*rea*‘) had ever only meant the “national comrade” in the first place. He argues that the *rea*‘ stands so little for the national comrade that it just completely fades into the mere ‘other.’ ‘*Miteinander*’ [One with the other, or, with each other] is called ‘one with his *rea*‘” (149). Cohen’s point is simple: *rea*‘ is a general term, not a specific term as Delitzsch argues. To prove his point, Cohen references Deuteronomy 4:42 and Jeremiah 6:21 as examples of how the *rea*‘ can mean both stranger and friend (149 n. 1).<sup>13</sup> More importantly, the neighbor for Cohen is the basis for morality in the biblical text, and signals the universal morality of the biblical text rather than a nationalistic one as Delitzsch

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<sup>10</sup> In *Rohlings Talmudjude*, 12-13, Delitzsch writes: “Dort im Leviticus ist, wie 19, 18 zeigt, der Nächste s. v. a. Volksgenosse” (There in Leviticus 19:18, the neighbor appears as tribal member). Delitzsch writes this in reference to Rohling’s assertion that “Einem Israeliten, sagt der Talmud, ist es erlaubt, einem Goj Unrecht zu thun, weil geschrieben steht: Deinem Nächsten sollst du nicht Unrecht thun (Lev. 19, 13)” (The Talmud says that an Israelite is allowed to defraud a non-Jew, because it is written: You should not defraud your Neighbor [*rea*‘]) (*Der Talmudjude*, 62).

<sup>11</sup> Lev. 19:33-34: “When a stranger is living with you in your land, you should not do him wrong. He should live with you, as a local among you, should live with you, as a local among you, and you should love him, as you yourself; because you were also a stranger in the land of Egypt, I am the Lord, your God.”

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, Cohen does not point out that Lev. 19:18 and Lev. 19:33 deal with two words, not just the one. In Lev. 19:18, the word at issue is the *rea*‘, however, in Lev. 19:33, the word is the *ger*, which means stranger and/or resident alien. In the essay, “The Neighbor: Biblical Exegesis and Literary History,” Cohen rectifies this problem by giving an exegesis of how the *rea*‘ becomes connected to the *ger*.

<sup>13</sup> Deut. 4:41-42: “Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person (*rea*‘), the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and live.” Jer. 6:21: “Therefore thus says the LORD: See, I am laying before this people stumbling-blocks against which they shall stumble; parents and children together, neighbor and friend (*rea*‘) shall perish.”

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asserts. By using Delitzsch as an example, we can see that Cohen is pointing to a major fact that the court must take into consideration: some Christian philologists assert that Judaism and the Talmud contains morality, even though these Christians misrepresent it as a national morality.

Cohen thus sees his task as explaining the morality of the Talmud and of Judaism. Accordingly, he seeks to establish how the basic form of monotheistic morality, the love of the neighbor, was instituted in the Talmud and in Judaism. He mentions that since the Talmud uses the prophets along with the Pentateuch as authoritative material (149), the monotheism and morality of Judaism and the Talmud is connected to the prophets. He gives Isaiah 49:5 as an example of how the monotheism and morality of Judaism became universal. Cohen argues that in this verse—“He says, ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth’<sup>14</sup>—the national pathos of the chosenness of Israel for divine service becomes improved by the messianic, and therefore universal thought (149). According to Cohen, the prophets could not have meant only the “national comrade” by these words because the monotheism of Judaism as envisioned by the prophets and as established in the Pentateuch is characterized by “frequent, precise, and vivid reference to strangers” (149). Cohen argues that the command to love the stranger therefore arises when the prophets give the title “the friend of strangers” to their God (149).<sup>15</sup> Thus, Cohen asserts: “The idea that God loves the stranger connects

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<sup>14</sup> This verse can be found in NRSV as Isa. 49:6.

<sup>15</sup> Deut. 10:17-19: “For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves strangers, providing them with food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

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the ideas with which the mission of Israel begins, which is the idea of chosenness, with the idea with which the mission of Israel finishes, which is the idea of the messianic unity of humanity” (149). For Cohen, the significance of the stranger is clear: in the biblical text, the love of the stranger is a “creative moment of the genesis of the concept of the human as the neighbor” (149). That is, according to Cohen, in the biblical text the stranger becomes the neighbor and this process provides the basis for Judaism to move beyond a nationalistic pathos to a universal morality. On the basis of this movement, Cohen begins to answer the court’s questions. Before we get to Cohen’s answers, and to how those answers are connected to the concept of the neighbor, we must first look at how Cohen derives his answers from the biblical and Talmudic texts, which involves looking Cohen’s arguments regarding the proper study of Judaism.

### **Cohen and Determining Methods for the Study of Judaism**

Interestingly, Cohen’s justification that he is a legitimate witness in the Fenner case can be seen as the justification for his interest in and critiques of biblical studies and the study of Judaism at large. In writing about Judaism’s messianic mission in the context of Fenner’s trial, Cohen sets up his arguments about how the Talmud and Judaism should be seen and therefore studied. For him, a proper methodology for studying Judaism and the Talmud must be determined because only through proper understanding of the Talmud can there be a proper understanding of Judaism and its relation to the rest of the world; and only through analyzing methodology does Cohen feel that he can answer the court’s real question. In Cohen’s view, the court’s main interest is in the relationship between Jews and Christians as envisioned in the Talmud, as the charge brought

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against Fenner concerns his “alleged” antisemitic remarks about the Talmud. Thus, Cohen is interested in defining what constitutes the Jewish-Christian relationship, specifically in regard to the Jewish-Christian relationship in Germany, which we will look at later in the chapter. Cohen’s participation in the trial, then, can be seen as historically, socially and politically motivated. At the same time, since Cohen is mainly concerned with how the Talmud and Judaism are regarded by Christianity and are studied by both Jewish and Christian scholars, he asserts that any study must be thematically and methodologically grounded in order to avoid confessional bias.

To this end, in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” Cohen begins to establish what he thinks constitutes the proper study of the Bible and Talmud. Although Cohen admits to not being an expert in dealing with the content of the Talmud (151), he asserts that he has the ability to present a description of the style and the method of the Talmud, which he feels is more important than answering questions about simple content, especially in regards to the matters at hand (152). That is, he thinks that looking at the styles and method of the Talmud itself will yield a better answer than just looking at the content, as content itself can be rather misleading if one does not understand what the text is trying to do first. According to Cohen, one of the main purposes of the Talmudic text is to harmonize, through various types of exegesis, the teachings of the authorities and teachings contained in the Mishnah (152-155). Thus, he describes the types of exegesis that the Talmud uses as well as the authorities contained in the Talmud. Cohen begins by explaining that the Talmud itself is divided in several ways. First, the Talmud itself is divided into Mishnah and Gemara (152). The Mishnah, Cohen describes, which was written by the *Tannaim*, contains an “exegesis and expansion of the biblical

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statutes as well as of the ordinances and laws that date from the men of the great synagogue and from the scribes going back to the time of Ezra” (152). The Gemara, according to Cohen, is the subsequent interpretations and exegesis of the Mishnah by later scholars, such as the *Amoraim*, and the redactors of the Talmud, the *Saboraim* (152). Cohen explains that the Gemara developed “additional norms and regulations of deduction that were aimed at clearing up the issues that were left unresolved” by the Mishnah (153). Thus, the Gemara sought to explain and expand upon the Mishnah, just as the Mishnah sought to explain and expand upon the biblical text. According to Cohen, the exegesis of the Gemara is known by the technical name of Midrash (154). Second, Cohen explains that Midrash is divided into two distinct “styles” of its own (154). The first, pertaining to Halakhah, concerns the basis of the rules, regulations, as well as the moral conditions of the Talmud (154). Pertaining to the second, Aggadah consists of pure religious and moral reflections that move beyond Halakhah (154). Aggadah and Halakhah, Cohen continues, are not mutually exclusive, and are in fact mixed together throughout the entire Talmud (154-5). For Cohen, the “method of the Talmud,” then, is derived by the ways in which the various authorities (*Amoraim*, *Saboraim*, etc.) see themselves in relation to those that came before (*Tannaim* and the writers of the biblical text), while respecting and learning from previous authorities, the later interpreters constantly expand upon the material, explain conflicting teachings and seek to harmonize the many voices contained in the text (155).

According to Cohen, the process of the harmonization of the texts, then, results from the rabbinic view that there is an intimate relationship between the biblical text and its subsequent interpreters and the later interpreters are a part of a

continuous tradition that dates back to biblical times. To illustrate his point further, Cohen gives the following example:<sup>16</sup>

Tractate *Makkoth* 24a: “Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses . . . . David came and reduced them to eleven . . . . Isaiah came and reduced them to six, as it is written *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly*<sup>17</sup> . . . . Micah came and reduced them to three, as it is written, *It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: only to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly before thy God*<sup>18</sup> . . . . Again came Isaiah reduced them to two, as it is said, *Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye justice and do righteousness*<sup>19</sup> . . . . Amos came and reduced them to one, as it is said, *For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek Me and live.*<sup>20</sup> To this R. Naḥman b. Isaac demurred, saying: (Might it not be taken as,) Seek Me by observing the whole Torah and live?—But it is Habbakkuk who came and based them all on one, as it is said, *But the righteous shall live by his faith.*<sup>21</sup> (157-158).

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<sup>16</sup> Instead of translating Cohen’s translation of this text, I have used the following English translation of Tractate *Makkoth: The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Neziḳin. Vol. 4.* Trans. H. M. Lazarus (London: The Soncino Press, 1935).

<sup>17</sup> Isa. 33:15.

<sup>18</sup> Mic.6:8.

<sup>19</sup> Isa. 56:1.

<sup>20</sup> Am. 5:4.

<sup>21</sup> Habak. 2:4.

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Cohen's usage of this passage is quite illuminating because we can see that he uses it to highlight the unbroken link between the biblical and Talmudic text, and therefore, between the interpreters of the texts. More importantly, Cohen cites this passage in order to show the connection between ethics and the moral law in Judaism, that is, to show how the Talmud derives its ethics and morality directly from the biblical text. For Cohen, the reason that this connection between ethics and morality is important is because the interpreters in the Talmud are all searching for a proper way to understand morality, especially in relation to the Bible. Study of the Talmud, Cohen argues, should thus be focused on what the Talmud was trying to accomplish in its interpretations of biblical laws and statutes, which was to figure out the best way to live a moral life under God. According to Cohen, the key to understanding morality in the Talmud and the Bible is the morality as found in the neighbor passages (158). Before he explains this, however, he fleshes out the connection between ethics and moral law in Judaism, and then uses the neighbor as an example of this connection.

Cohen develops the connection between ethics and moral law in two distinct yet related ways. First, he asserts that the tendency of the Talmud is to switch the center of the law to ethics and morality (158). For Cohen, however, the morality of the Talmud has become obscured in religious, especially Christian, circles (158). Cohen gives two reasons for this. First, the general Christian belief states that the pure moral idea is obscured in its connection to acts of righteousness, or the righteousness of acts (158). In the Talmud, Cohen argues, the opposite is the case because the morality of the Talmud is grounded in its ritual laws and its guarantee of social services (158). That is, morality in the Talmud is grounded in what is generally defined as acts of righteousness. Second,

the Protestant consideration for the internalization of divine worship rejects the righteousness of acts (158), as one is saved by grace alone. Therefore, one does not need acts, but as we saw above, for Cohen, acts of righteousness are an integral part of morality, which includes the internalization of conviction. In his essay “Gesinnung” (1910), Cohen expands his argument further by including an analysis of how the Christian obscuring of morality in the Talmud stems from the Christian denial of Jewish conviction:

Frequently, conviction is denied to our religious existence. This prejudice took root in the Pauline fight of law against faith. The fact that faith itself includes statutes of faith is not carefully considered; never mind that these can press harder at the most cumbersome ties to the forms of life. Faith becomes, according to the idealization of Luther in his *Preface to the Psalms*,<sup>22</sup> something completely internal, opposing all liturgical activities. (*Werke* 15, 391)

According to Cohen, given the Pauline position, law became contrasted to freedom, and consequently, to all moral “inwardness,” which meant that confidence in God, love for his commandments, and the love for morality could not thrive (392). Cohen argues that in this view, one cannot possibly understand that morality becomes encoded in ethics as traditional law, that conviction requires its consolidation in duty, and most importantly, that the law by “no means stands in an absolute contradiction” to the “deep internalization” of morality (392). For Cohen, this position also means that one neither considers the dangerous double meaning of law in Paul (392), nor how much the Reformation

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Luther, *Vorrede zu den Psalmen*, 1528.



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plays a part in the Protestant distinction between rite and meaning that leads to the misunderstanding that faith does not demand rituals (392). Thus, according to him, the Protestant view is that since the rite prevails in Judaism, Judaism “lacks conviction” (392). Cohen asserts that rites are prevalent in both Judaism and Protestantism, that both religions “preserve and maintain” rites as acts of conviction. Furthermore, both religions guard their rites as “poetic property,” because they “idealize” the rites’ “intellectual and moral references to the entirety of human life” (392). In Cohen’s view, Protestant prejudice against Jewish morality leads to “unsatisfactory biblical research” (392), which further misconstrues and misrepresents Judaism’s basic system of morality, which then leads to more prejudice.

The second way that Cohen develops the connection between ethics and moral law in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” is in his argument that the Talmud itself offers a correction to the Protestant prejudice against “inner” morality in the Talmud in the Talmud’s conception of the *Noahide*. In his view, the concept of the Noahide is not only the continuation or implementation of the messianic idea found in Judaism’s conception of monotheism and morality, but also, and more importantly for our topic, the concept of the Noahide is itself a result of exegesis that again illustrates the relationship between the Talmud and the biblical text. Before Cohen unpacks the significance of the Noahide for the morality of Judaism, he describes the status of the Noahide:

The concept of the “sojourner” [resident alien] is summarized in the sense of the Noahide: he is required to accept seven commandments, which consists of six bans and one commandment. The one commandment requires the acceptance of

judgment. The six bans are: 1. blasphemy of God 2. idolatry 3. incest 4. murder 5. theft 6. the consumption of a limb from a living being. The commandments are therefore constitutional in nature and become instituted accordingly through the demand of the courts. After the ban of incest, murder and theft, abstinence from idolatry and from blasphemy of God is asked. (JS I, 158-159)

For Cohen, several additional aspects of the Noahide must also be recognized, including the facts that the Noahide does not have to believe in God, that the Noahide is regarded as a citizen, and that several rights are granted to the Noahide, including rights to the land<sup>23</sup> and to refuge<sup>24</sup> (159). Thus, the Noahide is recognized as a citizen and a moral human being, and is described as “the just one of the peoples of the world” or as one of “the pious of the peoples of the world”<sup>25</sup> (160). Cohen explains that as a “just one” or “pious one,” the Noahide has a share in salvation, or “eternal life,” which is the religious expression for absolute moral equality (160). To Cohen, as a moral equal to the Jew, the Noahide is blessed (160). He asserts: “Through the laws of the Talmud, the decisive equation is: *Stranger = Noahide = pious of the peoples of the world*” (160). In Cohen’s thought, then, this equation is the result of Jewish morality, which includes a

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<sup>23</sup> Cohen uses Ezek. 47:21-23 as an example. The verse reads: “So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you. They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord God.”

<sup>24</sup> Cohen uses Num. 35:13-15 as an example. The verse reads: “The cities that you designate shall be six cities of refuge for you: you shall designate three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge. These six cities shall serve as refuge for the Israelites, for the resident or transient alien among them, so that anyone who kills a person without intent may flee there.”

<sup>25</sup> Cohen cites *t. Sanhedrin* 13.

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universal view of humanity that comes from the Jewish conception of monotheism, meaning that the unity of God, the relationship between God and humanity, and the relationship between Jews and non-Jews grounds Jewish morality.

The connection between monotheism and messianism, or between God and humanity, or even between Jews and non-Jews is, Cohen argues, found in the concept of the Noahide. Cohen develops this line of thought further in the Noahide's conceptual partner, "the neighbor." That is, in his analysis of the neighbor, the significance of his vision of the Noahide is illuminated. Cohen's fullest analysis of the neighbor concept is found in his essay "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte," thus, we will now turn our attention to this essay. In "Der Nächste," Cohen formulates his concept of the neighbor based on an ethical and philosophical interpretation of Genesis 12:3, 28:14 and Isaiah 42:6, 49:6. These biblical passages refer to the origins and mission of Israel in relation to its place in the world. The passages from Genesis, for example, speak of God's promise to Abraham—not only will Abraham become the father of a great nation, but he will also become a blessing for all the families on earth. Isaiah 42:6 reads: "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness. I have taken you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations." Isaiah 49:6 makes the same point: "He says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.'" For Cohen, while the passages from Abraham set up the mission of Israel to be a great nation and a blessing to other nations, Isaiah connects the two by asserting that Israel will be the means by which other nations will be blessed, for as a light to the

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nations, Israel brings the message of God and salvation to the world, thereby revealing the ultimate meaning of Judaism as universal religion as proclaimed by the prophets (*Werke* 16: 54-55). According to Cohen, this ultimate meaning or universal mission has been given by God to Israel; and so already within this construction there lies an acknowledgment of the non-Jew by God (55). For Cohen, the acknowledgment of the non-Jew, or *rea'* (עָרֵךְ), or neighbor, therefore leads to the commandment found in Leviticus 19:18, which reads as follows: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your neighbors, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (57-60). Cohen explains that this commandment is expanded upon in Leviticus 19:33-34, where the *rea'* becomes connected to the *ger* in the command to love. Even if the *rea'* has heretofore meant only the neighbor, the *ger* becomes like the *rea'* in this verse because the command to love includes treating the *ger* as the *rea'* (61). He cites Leviticus 19:33-34:

When a stranger (Hebrew: גֵר, *ger*) sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you *shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself*; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (61; Hollander, 7)<sup>26</sup>

For Cohen, this is the type of authentic feeling that an authentically rooted religion speaks of (61), because the love command originated in this connection of *ger* and *rea'*, for it was the stranger (*ger*) who brought the command to love into the world; and in the stranger, the human being is recognized (61). Cohen thus asserts: “Love of the stranger is the originary motif of the love of humanity”

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<sup>26</sup> Italics are Cohen's.

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(61, n. d; Hollander, 7). According to Cohen, this commandment is neither an abstraction, nor a polemic, but comes directly from the reality of the national consciousness of Israel and its experience in Egypt (61). In his view, since the historical primordial consciousness only understood the concepts of native citizens and strangers, and since the abstraction of the human being is overcome through the stranger, strangers are no longer foreign in religion with the introduction of the command for neighbor love; and so, the love of the neighbor becomes the love of humanity (61-62).

Cohen uses Leviticus 19:33-34 again to express his concerns about ethics and morality. For him, the command to treat the stranger as the native because the native Israelite was once a stranger in Egypt brings the command to love into the real world (61). To Cohen, the *ger* can be nothing but a real person, and one must love every person (62). Thus, while both the *rea'* and the *ger* may be defined within the religious context, in his interpretation, the command to love is also to be understood in a political and moral sense. He points to the relationship between the command to love and politics by asking the rhetorical question:

What sort of development and what sort of sincerity would have been gained by political, or historical, culture if instead of the (empty) phrase about neighbor love, the pregnant command to love the stranger had become the fundamental law of religion? (62; Hollander, 8)

Moreover, according to him, the politics in Germany would “not so hypocritically fly in the face of religion if expressions such as ‘alien elements’ or even ‘foreign bodies’ were impossible in the language of a respectable politics: Politics is not child’s play. Massive difficulties constitute its ongoing task” (62; Hollander, 8).

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Indeed, Cohen argues: “The basic law of morality and, it is to be hoped, hence also of religion is to love all that bears a human face” (62; Hollander, 8). Acting out this love command in a political or juridical sense becomes imperative in Cohen’s argument, since to love the stranger is to protect the stranger from inhumane treatment and preserve the stranger’s political rights (62). This type of love for him is an active and true love (62). In his interpretation of the love command, politics and religion merge, for if aesthetics does not protect people from inhumanity, then religion should—one loves the stranger because the stranger is “the same” as oneself (62). In Leviticus 19:18, the formulation of the love command is “you shall love the stranger as yourself.” For Cohen, to translate this verse as “he is like yourself; he is the same as you” (63; Hollander, 9) recognizes the universal imperative and implications inherent in the command to love. He gives a word of advice: one cannot recognize this moral, religious and political imperative if one “always gets hung up on the nearest and dearest” (63; Hollander, 9).

To Cohen, then, the neighbor and the Noahide represent Judaism’s conception of humanity and morality, because in its conception of humanity, Judaism’s conviction is expressed, and conviction is the basis and prerequisite of all moral action (“Gesinnung,” *Werke* 15, 407). With his analyses of the neighbor and the Noahide, Cohen counters the prejudice of Protestant biblical studies:

If conviction were absent in the Jewish religion, if conviction were not the foundation of its existence, then the Jewish religion would simply be missing all morality. . . . how would our continued existence be at all conceivable historically if it lacked the internal

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foundation of life, which for the living confessor of a religion only exists in conviction? (407)

Although this quote above is from “Gesinnung,” it gets to the heart of Cohen’s arguments in “Die Nächstenliebe in Talmud” and highlights Cohen’s main reason for becoming involved in the Fenner trial. According to Cohen, in answer to the court’s second question, the Talmud obviously does not allow Jews to rob and cheat the morally and legally equal Noahide, or non-Jew, because to cheat a non-Jew would completely contradict morality in the Talmud and Mosaic Law, which forbids any kind of cheating and which governs not only the treatment of one Jew by another, but all interaction between Jews, the morally equal Noahide, and non-Jews (JS I, 161).

For Cohen, then, the concepts of the Noahide and the neighbor provide us with the answer to the court’s questions. More than that, these concepts provide us with the beginning of Cohen’s quest to find the proper methodology for the study of biblical and Talmudic texts. As we saw above, Cohen thinks that philosophical concepts, in this case the Noahide and the neighbor, should be used as the hermeneutical key for unlocking the overall purpose of the texts. Cohen’s interest in ethics and morality in the texts, from which he derived his concepts of the Noahide and the neighbor, accomplished two things. First, it established Cohen’s philosophical method for the study of Judaism and its texts. Second, it established the theme (the neighbor) by which Cohen would try to defend Judaism against antisemitism, and anti-Judaism, in Germany. Moreover, while “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud” began as part of Cohen’s participation in the Fenner trial, his defense of Judaism went far beyond the context of the trial as Cohen also used “Die

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Nächstenliebe im Talmud” as a way to defend Judaism against antisemitic and anti-Jewish trends in biblical research, a topic to which we now turn.

### **Cohen’s Analysis of the Relationship Between Antisemitism and Biblical Criticism**

As part of his written testimony in the trial against Fenner, Cohen analyzed the testimony of Paul de Lagarde,<sup>27</sup> a professor of Oriental languages at the University of Göttingen, who was asked to testify in the same case. De Lagarde’s testimony was based on the blatantly antisemitic scholarship of August Rohling in *Der Talmudjude: Zur Beherzigung für Juden und Christen aller Stände*. However, Cohen refused to comment on the outright antisemitic remarks of both de Lagarde and Rohling, especially as Rohling’s text was already ruled to be antisemitic (165). Instead, Cohen critiqued de Lagarde’s use of Franz Delitzsch’s *Rohlings Talmudjude*, a text written to counter Rohling’s *Der Talmudjude*, as well as the scholarly methods de Lagarde uses in dealing with the texts of Delitzsch and Rohling. Cohen’s assessment of de Lagarde’s testimony ranges from pointing out de Lagarde’s misuse and misrepresentation of biblical and Talmudic texts to underscoring his deliberate disregard for the scientific method. In analyzing de Lagarde’s scholarship and in defending Judaism against antisemitism, then, we can see that Cohen initiates his critique of biblical studies in general by looking at the work of one specific scholar.

Cohen begins his critique by calling attention to de Lagarde’s misrepresentation of the Talmud’s place within the Jewish community, which

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<sup>27</sup> Paul de Lagarde (1827-1891), “Ein Gutachten,” in *Mittheilungen* (Osnabrück: Zeller Verlag, 1982), 3: 3-23.



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allows de Lagarde to argue that slander of the Talmud, which Fenner was accused of, is not a slander of Judaism (de Lagarde, 7-8; JS I, 166). According to de Lagarde, the Talmud neither now nor ever has been a collection of laws with authority in the Jewish community, and uses the Karaites as proof (de Lagarde, 6-7; JS I, 165). Cohen counters de Lagarde's argument by stating that while the Karaites, a Jewish group that did not consider the Talmud to be authoritative, do exist, the Karaites were never the large segment of the Jewish population that de Lagarde presents them as (JS I, 165). For Cohen, to present the Karaites as the majority opinion is a gross overstatement of fact, for even if the Karaites had 6000 members by the year 1871, this number is in no way a "large segment" (165). According to Cohen, the Talmud is a collection of laws in and of itself for the majority of the Jewish community (165-6). Thus, contrary to de Lagarde's testimony that Jews would not be insulted by slander of the Talmud, Cohen asserts that every "Jew interested in the honor of his faith feels connected with the Talmud, to such an extent that he feels that a slander of the Talmud in reference to its moral foundational beliefs is a slander of the Jewish community" (151). Since Fenner argued that the Talmud plainly states that Jews are allowed to rob and cheat non-Jews, Fenner can then be seen as attacking the morality of Judaism as a whole. Therefore, for de Lagarde to justify Fenner's remarks by insisting that even the Pentateuch knows only destruction and plunder in regard to the non-Jew (de Lagarde, 8; JS I, 166) is, Cohen argues, a gross mischaracterization of the morality of the Talmud and the Bible, which is based on the love of the neighbor and stranger (166). For Cohen, then, de Lagarde makes a small mistake (the Karaites are not a large segment of the Jewish population) that has large ramifications, for in arguing that the Karaites represent the entirety of Judaism, de

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Lagarde argues that Judaism would not be insulted by Fenner's remarks, which for Cohen is plainly false, as Fenner was charged by the Jewish community for slander.

To Cohen, in not getting simple facts straight, de Lagarde completely disregards scholarly conventions and the scientific method as a whole. We can see why Cohen thinks so by looking at his examination of de Lagarde's argument that the *Tosafot* to the Talmud allows Jews to withhold the wages of a non-Jewish worker either overnight or altogether (that is, that Jews are allowed to cheat non-Jews) (de Lagarde, 16; JS I, 166). According to Cohen, for de Lagarde to argue this point, he must argue that the authors of the *Tosafot*<sup>28</sup> count as the fourth authority of the Talmud (de Lagarde, 6), a point which de Lagarde takes from Delitzsch (Delitzsch, 21). In Cohen's earlier description of the authorities of the Talmud, he does not list the *Tosafists*, thus both de Lagarde and Delitzsch are mistaken in thinking that the *Tosafists* are Talmudic authorities (JS I, 152). Moreover, according to Cohen, de Lagarde makes another simple mistake, which is further compounded by the fact that de Lagarde admits that he takes his information completely from Delitzsch because he has never looked at the *Tosafists* himself (167). Cohen points out that de Lagarde should have at least looked at and examined the text on which he built his argument (167). Cohen argues that not only did de Lagarde make a mistake in method by not looking at the text himself, but also makes a factual mistake because in relying only on Delitzsch, de Lagarde relied on a quote that actually contained a printing error (167). Cohen notes that Delitzsch's quoted position about the *Tosafot* to *b. Sanhedrin 57a* is wrong (167) because the verse does not appear in the Talmud at

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<sup>28</sup> Cohen, however, does not explain what *Tosafot* are. *Tosafot* are additional glosses on the Talmud, mostly printed on the outer margin of the page, opposite to Rashi's commentary.

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all, but in the Tosefta, which is a printing mistake that de Lagarde should have caught (169). For Cohen, de Lagarde cannot get even simple facts straight (*Tosafists* are not authoritative and the verses come from the Tosefta, not the *Tosafot*), therefore, de Lagarde cannot be counted on getting the larger picture straight. According to Cohen, the larger picture concerns the morality of the Talmud. Cohen argues that de Lagarde's presentation of the morality in the Talmud rests upon a printing mistake that he should have caught (169), and is therefore totally suspect.

As we saw above, de Lagarde argues that the Jew is allowed by the Talmud to rob and cheat non-Jews. While Cohen's above remarks point to the deficiencies in de Lagarde's method, Cohen also looks at the content of de Lagarde's argument as well. According to de Lagarde, Delitzsch proves that Jews do not treat non-Jews morally because the "*Tosafot*" to *b. Sanhedrin 57a* allows Jews to cheat non-Jews by withholding their wages (de Lagarde, 12). Cohen argues, however, that Delitzsch makes no such assertion (JS III, 168-169). Rather, he notes that Delitzsch quotes this statement as it is found in Rohling (Delitzsch, 20; Rohling, 88), and asserts that Delitzsch argues that Rohling is mistaken because in this passage, this action is forbidden, and that any wrongdoing by way of deception or coercion is strictly forbidden (Delitzsch, 20-1; JS I, 168-169). Cohen notes that de Lagarde does not even cite Delitzsch properly. Unsurprisingly, Cohen is outraged by de Lagarde's exclusion of the rest of Delitzsch's passage, especially given de Lagarde's acknowledged dependence on Delitzsch. That is, for Cohen, citing a text should involve citing it in entirety, and not misleading the public by making the text say something it does not. Interestingly, Cohen does admit that the Tosefta verses do appear to permit

robbery of an idolater (169). However, Cohen points out these verses do not make sense if one takes into consideration the fact that these verses are not interested in whether or not a Jew is allowed to steal from an idolater, but rather in whether or not a Noahide deserves capital punishment for an action like robbery, namely the capture, or rape (*Raub*), of a beautiful woman during war.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Cohen asserts this Tosefta passage is contradicted by the Tosefta to *b. Baba Kamma* 15a, which not only forbids robbing idolaters, but also commands that whatever is robbed from an idolater be returned to the idolater (169-170). Therefore, according to Cohen, de Lagarde takes the passages that Delitzsch discusses out of context, using instead Rohling's original interpretation, while attributing this passage to Delitzsch, who is writing to counter Rohling. Cohen cites further evidence of de Lagarde's persistent misuse of Delitzsch; for while de Lagarde maintains that the Talmud contains objectionable rules and examples (de Lagarde, 16), Delitzsch thinks that it is spiteful to infer that the Talmud does so (Delitzsch, 40; JS I, 170). Not surprisingly, Cohen leaves his reader to infer why de Lagarde refuses to cite Delitzsch properly: for de Lagarde, Delitzsch, who is known as a scholarly authority, legitimizes his claims, and so de Lagarde leaves out evidence that contradicts the point he is trying to make.

We will now look at the evidence that Cohen uses to refute de Lagarde's claims about the morality of the Talmud. Cohen argues that contrary to de

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<sup>29</sup> Cohen cites Deut. 21:10-14, which reads as follows: "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you take them captive, suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry, and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails, discard her captive's garb, and shall remain in your house for a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. But if you are not satisfied with her, you shall let her go free and not sell her for money. You must not treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her."

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Lagarde's characterization of the *Tosafists*, they are known for their insistence on the strongest morality, even in the case of the non-Jew (167). He refers specifically to the work of one of the *Tosafists*, Yehuda Ben Samuel from Regensburg,<sup>30</sup> a mystic who wrote in the 13th century. Cohen extensively cites Zunz's quotation of Yehuda Ben Samuel as proof:<sup>31</sup>

Deceive no one intentionally by your actions, even a non-Jew; be not quarrelsome towards people, regardless of their beliefs. . . . If a Jew or a non-Jew comes and wants to borrow money from you, and you do not want to, because you doubt that it can be paid back, say that you do not have the money. If a contract is made between Jews and non-Jews for mutual support, support must be given by the first, if the latter is to fulfill their obligation. If a Jew wants to kill a non-Jew, but the non-Jews does not want to kill the Jew, we must stand by the non-Jew. One should not do wrong to anyone, even if it is someone of a different religion. . . . In business with non-Jews make an effort to deal honestly as with Jews; make the non-Jew attentive to his errors, and better that you live from charity, than to the humiliation of Judaism and the Jewish name, walk away with another's money. If the non-Jew asks advice from you, tell him who is honest and who is a cheat in the place to which he is going. If you see a member of a different faith commit a sin, then foil it if you have the power to do so, and let the prophet

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<sup>30</sup> Yehuda Ben Samuel (d. 1217). He is credited with the writing of most of *Sefer Ḥasidim* (The Book of the Pious), and it is from this book that Zunz quotes.

<sup>31</sup> Leopold Zunz, *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* (Berlin, 1845), 135; *Gesammelten Schriften* (Berlin, 1875-76) 1:65-67.

Jonah be your model. Flee from a murderer, do not grant him shelter, even if he is a Jew; however if on a narrow, difficult path someone carrying a burden meets you, then make room for him, even if he is not a Jew. To the non-Jew who follows the natural (Noahide) commandments give back what he loses, hold him higher in honor than those Israelites who neglects the divine teaching. Incidentally, in most places the Jews are similar in their morals to the Christians. (cited in JS I, 167-168)

For Cohen, then, de Lagarde completely misconstrues the morality of the *Tosafists*. Worse than that, however, is that Cohen thinks that de Lagarde deliberately undermines the Talmud further by asserting that the Talmud, as verified by Rohling, refers to non-Jews as swine (de Lagarde, 20; Rohling, 58; JS I, 172-3). For Cohen, this assertion not only is not in the Talmud, but it plainly goes against the morality of the Talmud for non-Jews are considered to be neighbors, not swine (172-3).

Once Cohen has finished with his detailed critique of de Lagarde's work, he offers the following observations. First, de Lagarde, who considers himself to be of high rank in scholarly circles, testifies about passages he admits to have never seen, and therefore should not be seen as an expert in this case (173). Second, although de Lagarde explains that he is not an expert in Talmudic studies, he cites passages without understanding their connections, and describes the *Tosafists* incorrectly (173). Thus, for Cohen, de Lagarde's work contains false citation and "borrowing from condemned works" (Rohling's text) (173). Consequently, according to Cohen, all scholarly methods are disavowed in de Lagarde's work, especially when de Lagarde does not even examine the sources

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he cites. Furthermore, despite de Lagarde's citation of and complete dependence on Delitzsch, de Lagarde's comment that Delitzsch may have had to concede to a few points, which in the end, benefit the accused (presumably the fact Delitzsch actually argues that the Talmud forbids any wrongdoing towards non-Jews) (de Lagarde, 22), does not sit well with Cohen because Delitzsch is not writing to support these antisemitic remarks but to explicitly refute them (JS I, 173-174). Cohen concludes:

This report, therefore, appears not only to describe an individual crisis: it is the symptom of a more general sickness of our time. Where racial hatred and slander rage, the cliché prevails. Cliché and prejudice have an epidemic effect and quickly infect the rigorous work of science as well. The same thing is necessary for science and life: Reverence for the truth. (174)

For Cohen, then, de Lagarde's obvious antisemitic tendencies affect his scholarship to such an extent that they completely biased his method and his ability to produce scientific research, especially given de Lagarde's position that:

Israel has lost any right to existence, and lies around only as slag, worthless and therefore disturbing and offensive . . . Everything, without exception, that is worth something to the human race was achieved by non-Semites, non-Jews, after the church emerged." (de Lagarde, 21; cited in JS I, 173)

At the same time, without explicitly mentioning it, Cohen alludes to the fact that de Lagarde knew that he was misrepresenting and misinterpreting the basic facts of Judaism, thereby abusing his position as a professor and respected member of society to perpetuate these harmful beliefs by giving them a "scientific" basis.

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Therefore, Cohen sees de Lagarde as not only a terrible scholar, but also as representative of how antisemitic beliefs undermine scholarly methods by choosing to perpetuate antisemitism, that is bias, over scientific neutrality and by skewing results in favor of the bias. Moreover, for Cohen, because de Lagarde chooses to perpetuate bias over science, while using science, albeit bad science, to support bias, in a legal matter that demands science, or truth, not bias, means that de Lagarde shows that antisemitic interpretations of the Talmud and the Bible had no real ground to stand upon, underlining Cohen's argument that proper science disseminates truth not lies. For us, Cohen's line of reasoning here will later lead to his argument that proper science can be the best antidote to antisemitism,<sup>32</sup> which is why Cohen argues that methods for proper biblical scholarship must be established, a topic which we will explore more in Chapter 2. For now, however, before looking at Cohen's arguments for what constitutes proper methodology in biblical studies, we will look further at Cohen's critiques of the weaknesses of biblical studies by looking at Cohen's arguments concerning antisemitic and anti-Jewish trends in biblical studies.

### **“Gesinnung” and Biblical Scholarship**

In “Gesinnung,” Cohen continues with the assessment of antisemitic and anti-Jewish trends in biblical scholarship that he began with de Lagarde in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud.” Cohen's purpose, however, in this essay is to point out not blatant antisemitism in biblical studies, but its more naïve, and ultimately perhaps more dangerous, forms. Thus, Cohen seeks to examine how Protestant

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<sup>32</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Religion und Sittlichkeit: Eine Betrachtung zur Grundlegung der Religionsphilosophie [1907]” (Religion and Morality: An Observation about the Establishment of the Philosophy of Religion), in *Werke* 15:3-101, here 100.



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bias against Jewish conviction and morality leads to a misrepresentation and misunderstanding of the morality of both Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. In “Gesinnung,” for instance, Cohen argues that in denying that there is a concept of conviction, and hence, of morality in Judaism, Protestant biblical research entrenches this bias against Jews in its methods, which then leads to further prejudice against Jews. In order to support his argument, Cohen focuses on the philosophical motivations and philological markers that he deems necessary to any study on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible. Thus, Cohen investigates scholarship on the Decalogue, as the Decalogue deals specifically with Jewish morality, or with what Protestant prejudice asserts is the lack thereof. In the case of de Lagarde, antisemitism provided not only the backdrop, but also the motivating force for his scholarship. By contrast, the examples Cohen uses in “Gesinnung” establish his argument that anti-Jewish and/or antisemitic biases have become so embedded within biblical scholarship that they are not even acknowledged or questioned, and that in not being questioned, they promote a naïve type of scholarship that contradicts the scientific quest for truth, which is one of the goals that biblical scholars are supposedly working towards. Moreover, for Cohen, scholars do not pay attention to how this research will be seen in the world, proving yet again that scholars are unaware of how their work can impact society.

We will first look at Cohen’s philosophical arguments. As we saw before, according to Cohen, philosophy demands looking at the entirety of the problem before specifics can be addressed. Cohen argues, then, that to understand morality in the Hebrew Bible, one cannot focus only on one part of the text in order to determine the morality of the whole, one must look at the whole text first. Protestant bias against Jewish morality and conviction, however, Cohen asserts,

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limits examination of morality in the Hebrew Bible to only one instance at a time, and does not try to connect the whole. Cohen uses Theobald Ziegler as an example. Interestingly, Cohen prefaces his remarks on Ziegler's work *Geschichte der christlichen Ethik* (1886; History of Christian Ethics)<sup>33</sup> by saying that he does not think that Ziegler intentionally writes out of antisemitic spitefulness (*Werke* 15, 392). Cohen, however, does imply that Ziegler does perpetuate anti-Jewish scholarship because he misinterprets the morality of the Hebrew Bible. Cohen, for instance, disagrees with Ziegler's description of the commandments of the Decalogue. While Ziegler regards the Decalogue as especially important to the history of Christian ethics (Ziegler, 18), Cohen thinks Ziegler does not fully consider the problems inherent in the biblical text because he does not look at the full text, and so, Ziegler misinterprets the nature of the Decalogue, thereby making his entire project suspect (*Werke* 15, 392-3). Cohen argues, for instance, that Ziegler collapses the last five commandments into one single prohibition (393). For Cohen, the problem is clear—Ziegler does not pay adequate attention to each individual commandment. Cohen notes that this leads Ziegler to incorrectly paraphrase the last commandment in particular. According to Cohen, Ziegler's argument that the last commandment prohibits seizing the property of a neighbor under false pretenses<sup>34</sup> (Ziegler, 19; *Werke* 15, 193) shows that Ziegler does not argue from the text itself, but from some other means. Cohen points to Ziegler's use of David Friedrich Strauss' *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube: ein*

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<sup>33</sup> Theobald Ziegler, *Geschichte der Christlichen Ethik* (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1886).

<sup>34</sup> Exodus 20:17: "You shall not covet (חמד) your neighbour's house; you shall not covet (חמד) your neighbour's wife or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." Deuteronomy 5:21: "Neither shall you covet (חמד) your neighbour's wife. Neither shall you desire (אוד) your neighbour's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

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*Bekenntniss*<sup>35</sup> and Hermann Schultz's *Alttestamentliche Theologie*<sup>36</sup> to explain. According to Ziegler, the last commandment must be understood as a prohibition against "business ventures" (*Unternehmung*) that are undertaken with false pretenses, rather than as a prohibition against desire per se (Ziegler, 19). Ziegler notes that there is precedence for this argument as both Strauss and Schultz assert that the phrase *לֹא תַחְמֹד* (*lo tahamod*, you shall not desire) must mean a prohibition against business ventures, because if the commandment is understood otherwise, the commandment would be a "strange" (*merkwürdig*) one as the commandment itself does not come from the "interior of conviction" (Ziegler, 19 n.1; Strauss, 229-232; Schultz, 322; *Werke* 15, 394). That is, according to Strauss and Schultz the commandment against desire cannot be understood as a commandment about belief or conviction because the commandments of the Decalogue are not about convictions, but about how best to live life in a human community; therefore, for the commandment to make sense, it must concern law and the punishment that results from violating the law (Strauss, 229-232; Schultz, 322). Cohen, however, does not agree with Ziegler's description of the command "you shall not desire" as outside the realm of conviction because "business ventures" concern law, not conviction (*Werke* 15, 394). Cohen argues that if one does not see this commandment in terms of conviction, one distorts the meaning of the commandment if one follows this argument to its logical end. According to Cohen, if the purpose of the commandment was to prohibit the seizing of a neighbor's property under false pretenses, as Ziegler asserts (by quoting Schultz), then the yearning or intention behind the seizing of property can be seen as

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<sup>35</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *Der Alte und der Neue Glaube: ein Bekenntniss* (Bonn: E. Strauss, 1875).

<sup>36</sup> Hermann Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896).

legitimate, or as not prohibited, because only the action that results in the seizing of property is forbidden (394). Cohen argues that if the yearning for a neighbor's property is legitimate, then one can take that property as long as one does not try to make it "look right," which is the same thing as allowing someone the right to take something just because he or she desires it. For Cohen, this makes absolutely no sense at all, since the seizing of another's property all of a sudden appears to be justified, which counters the actual commandment (394).

In this example we can see Cohen as arguing that in Protestant biblical studies one can only describe commandments in only two ways: commandments as pertaining to law, and commandments as pertaining to conviction. Therefore, in Cohen's opinion, Ziegler thinks of the Decalogue only in terms of law commandments, not as commandments that concern conviction, because of the Protestant prejudice that Judaism does not have conviction (394-6). For Cohen, the bifurcation of the commandments into law and conviction is absurd because law and conviction cannot be separated—conviction remains empty unless action gives it life (404). Cohen uses ibn Ezra as support. According to Cohen, ibn Ezra argues that "the main point of all the commandments is to make the heart fair [whole]" (396).<sup>37</sup> Thus, when this commandment is combined with other biblical passages that call the heart the source of all action,<sup>38</sup> Cohen asserts that desire is prohibited because it goes against "making the heart fair" (396). For Cohen, then, the intention behind the action is what the commandment is speaking to, not just the action itself (396). According to Cohen, desire does not need to be acted on in order for it to be prohibited, which means that Ziegler, Strauss and Schultz do not

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<sup>37</sup> Abraham ibn Ezra, *The Commentary of Abraham ibn Ezra on the Pentateuch*, trans. Jay F. Schachter (Hoboken N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 2003), 5:145.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen cites Deut. 30:11-14.

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understand the nature of the Decalogue because they focus on an interpretation that strips the Decalogue of its conviction, thereby stripping the Hebrew Bible of its morality. For Cohen, not only is this commandment entrenched in conviction, but it is also determined out of conviction. That is, the commandment itself comes out of firm understanding of the meaning conviction for morality (397). Cohen points to a speech made by Moses in Deuteronomy as proof:

Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. (Deut. 30:11-14; cited in *Werke* 15, 397-8)

Cohen explains that this passage contains the law in which the teachings are substantiated in the heart and reason in the language of the mouth. Thus, the heart becomes the home of the law and of conviction (398). Moreover, for Cohen, everything the prophets have learned has its root in this teaching of Deuteronomy, where the word of God is not far from the people, because it lives in their hearts (398).

Given what Cohen argues above, he asks two significant questions. First: "What value does biblical criticism have for Deuteronomy, if its deepest thought is not understood and is not heeded for the history of religious thought?" (398). Second, Cohen asks:

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By the way, how would the commandment for the love of God be conceived of differently without this strength of conviction? Or how would love in general be conceivable as a religious commandment, if not due to the conviction of love? Is the love for the unique God the passion for a fetish? (398)

Cohen's point is twofold. First, if Judaism lacked conviction, then the commandments, especially the command to love, would be a joke in Judaism. Second, and more importantly, if biblical criticism does not understand the depth of conviction in Deuteronomy, then biblical criticism has absolutely no value for either scholarly or religious purposes because scholars will never be able to correctly interpret the rest of the biblical text without this key (398).

We can connect Cohen's point back to one of his earlier arguments in the essay. According to Cohen, the scholars he discusses do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that the Decalogue appears twice, first in Exodus 20:1-17, and again in Deuteronomy 5:6-21 (394-5). He notes that in the repetition of the Decalogue in Deuteronomy, significant changes have taken place in the conceptualization of morality (395). For Cohen, because philosophy looks at the whole of the text, instead of only individual parts, philosophy points to the changes and makes these changes the focus of the orientating questions for study. That is, philosophy allows us to ask: how and why did morality change between Exodus and Deuteronomy? It is at this point that Cohen's philological arguments come into play. Cohen argues that these changes are marked by philological changes in the text. Cohen draws our attention to the change of wording in the last commandment. While Exodus 20:17 states that one should not covet [Hebrew: חָמַד (*hamad*), German: *geliüsten*] the house of one's neighbor, nor covet [Hebrew:

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חמד (*hamad*), German: *geliisten*] his wife, Deuteronomy 5:21<sup>39</sup> states that one should not desire [אהה ('*avah*), *begehren*] the house of one's neighbor, nor covet [חמד, *geliisten*] his wife. According to Cohen, in changing חמד (covet) to אהה (desire), the biblical text emphasizes the difference between desiring a neighbor's property and coveting a neighbor's wife. For Cohen, obviously the biblical text wanted these two types of desire to be different and used a different term for both to signal this difference (395). Moreover, since a new word appeared in the Decalogue that described a special kind of human passion, Cohen notes that this kind of passion had become important in life, culture, and hence, morality (395). Cohen argues that Ziegler should have noted this change, but did not because Ziegler asserts that the Decalogue and the Hebrew Bible cannot reach into "the inwardness of conviction," as this would be incorrect as Judaism does not have inner conviction, therefore Ziegler could not possibly find the particular wording of the commandments worthy of notice (395). Cohen, however, does think the change in wording is significant, and he argues that he is not the only one to think so, as it has been a subject of debate in Jewish history, as this change is noted in ibn Ezra, who links this change in wording to the ongoing process of "making the heart fair," or the ongoing process of the development of morality (ibn Ezra, 27-8; *Werke* 15, 395).

While Ziegler does not look at the change of wording in the last commandment, Cohen notes that Emil Kautzsch does mark the change through his translation of this verse in Deuteronomy by translating חמד as *Verlangen haben* (to have desire) and אהה as *Verlangen tragen* (to have/carry desire)

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<sup>39</sup> Kautzsch lists this verse as Deut. 5:18.

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(Kautzsch, 250; *Werke* 15, 398-9).<sup>40</sup> According to Cohen, although Kautzsch acknowledges the change, Cohen argues that by using “Verlangen tragen” instead of “begehren” as he does for Exodus 20:17, Kautzsch denies the change in morality that the change in words signify because the two phrases that Kautzsch uses mean the same thing (*Werke* 15, 399). Moreover, since Kautzsch justifies his word choice by stating that these verses refer only to the Jew, and that one should therefore not try to exaggerate the meaning of the Decalogue for religion and morality (Kautzsch, 112; *Werke* 15, 400), Cohen asserts that Kautzsch denies the morality of the Hebrew Bible because he denies the morality of Judaism. For Cohen, this denial reflects the bias that Christianity has a morality that is different from the morality of the Hebrew Bible and of Jews, especially because Kautzsch asserts that the morality of the Hebrew Bible is not grounded in the Decalogue, but rather, in the *Shema*, which begins with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Kautzsch 112; *Werke* 15, 400).<sup>41</sup> According to Cohen, Kautzsch’s view that the Decalogue is only a skillful arrangement of verses and is therefore of questionable value for their application to religion and morality (Kautzsch 112; *Werke* 15, 401) is completely mistaken and distorts the text:

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<sup>40</sup> Emil Kautzsch, ed. and trans., *Die Heilige Schrift des Alten Testaments*, vol. 1., 3rd ed. (Tübingen: J.C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1909). Kautzsch translates this verse as “Du sollst nicht Verlangen tragen [המך] nach deines Nächsten Weibe, noch sollst du Verlangen haben [אור] nach dem hause deines Nächsten, oder nach seinem Felde, seinem Sklaven, seiner Slavin, seinem Ochsen oder Esel, oder nach irgend etwas, das deinem Nächsten gehört” (250). Kautzsch translates Exodus 20:17 as “Du sollst nicht deines Nächsten haus begehren [המך]. Du sollst nicht deines Nächsten Weibe begehren [המך], noch seines Sklaven, seine Sklavin, sein Rind, seinen Esel, noch irgend etwas, was deinem Nächsten gehört” (112).

<sup>41</sup> Deut. 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”



This blunt schoolmasterly judgment is imposed on the Decalogue in this comment on the Bible; but where morality intervenes into the law, that by a new word the sin of the heart is acknowledged, that where no decency exists on the part of the law, that is not emphasized, that is not indicated philologically, that remains unmentioned. (401)

Moreover, according to Cohen, given the example of Kautzsch's reliance on the Christian sentiment that the Gospels have another spirit than that which is found in the Hebrew Bible (Kautzsch, 112), instead of on basic philological work, Christian philology will never be able to produce scientific results (*Werke* 15, 401):

As long as one stands with the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible under the spell of this perspective, then no exact philological explanation of the Hebrew Bible can be expected. Philology here stands in the obligation, and history in that of restricted confessional faith. So it can happen that one does not indicate the entrance of a new word, with which a deepening of morality announces itself, because there a depth becomes unmistakable, which would not fit into the distinction brought between the Old and New Testament. (401-2)

Cohen, then, points out that Jewish and Protestant biblical criticism focuses on separate problems in the text. While this point is no surprise for us, Cohen is arguing not only against the Protestant bias that Judaism lacks morality, but also against Protestant biblical criticism that does not even think about using Jewish sources because of the Christian belief that the New Testament completely superseded the Old.

Cohen also calls attention to the Protestant tendency to use the biblical name of God in biblical research. According to Cohen, even if biblical studies uses the name Jehovah to refer to the early Jewish national God before Jews encountered other peoples, he asserts that the use of the name Yahweh for God is harmful and offensive to Jews (406). For Cohen, the use of Yahweh in modern biblical studies separates the “old Jewish God” from Jesus, marking the discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity (406). Cohen, however, does not understand why Christian biblical scholars need to make this distinction, especially since Yahweh is the messianic God of the prophets, who are considered to be the forerunners of Jesus (406). Cohen argues that biblical scholarship’s persistent reference to the present Jewish God as Yahweh (406) is not only methodologically incorrect, but also is representative of far more sinister motives, such as overt antisemitism, that continue to cause problems for Jews (406). According to him, in its use of the name Yahweh, modern science “has forged out of its confessional Jew-hatred the weapon that swings far beyond the heads that were initially supposed to be hit” as not only are Jews insulted, but God is as well (406). Cohen argues that the naming of God with a proper name is despicable and shamefully belittling for God (406), and has significant consequences for monotheism and the Jewish conception of universality:

It was the God of the Jews that was supposed to be insulted, but the short-sighted science has put the stupid axe to monotheism. The prophetic God is supposed to no longer be the God of the Christian world. But one does not consider that the source and origin of monotheism is inexhaustible and boundless, and that the world of the true faith of God is lost if the God of the old Bible, the God of

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the prophets and the Psalms, is reduced to a national God. He is “in your heart.”<sup>42</sup> The creator of humanity, the father of all humanity, is the creator of the heart of humanity. (406-7)

For Cohen, this “heart of humanity,” as the seat of God, unambiguously means conviction (407). More importantly, God as the creator of humanity cannot be reduced to the Jewish national God. With these assertions, Cohen moves towards the main point of this piece:

Thus we finally recognize conviction as equivalent to the terms and values of humanity. It is thus also the basis and the prerequisite of moral action. If conviction were absent from the Jewish religion, if conviction were not to be the foundation of the life of its essence, then the Jewish religion would quite simply be missing all morality. (407)

Having made his point that Judaism does indeed have conviction, Cohen calls the denial of conviction in Judaism a historical superficiality, which is revealed in this “disastrous prejudice” (407). Thus, according to Cohen, the Protestant bias that Judaism lacks conviction and therefore morality leads Protestant biblical scholars to completely misrepresent Judaism and the morality of the Hebrew Bible, an argument that he continues to develop in “Der Nächste.”

### **Cohen and Kittel**

In “Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte,” Cohen’s argument that Protestant prejudice against Jewish morality and the Jewish study of the biblical text comes into full force when he becomes engaged in a

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<sup>42</sup> Although Cohen does not give a reference this quote, he is probably referring to the beginning of the *Shema*.

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philological debate with Rudolf Kittel over the meaning of *rea'*. This essay, as we have it today, consists of two parts. The first part was written in 1914 as a response to how Cohen thought the “neighbor” was misunderstood in biblical criticism in both the philological and philosophical senses. Kittel, a Christian philologist, who is best known as one of the editors of the authoritative biblical text, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*,<sup>43</sup> read the essay and then incorporated a critique of Cohen’s arguments into his own notes about the neighbor. Cohen, however, did not appreciate Kittel’s critiques of his work, and was compelled to respond. He reprinted the original “Der Nächste” along with his new comments in a new expanded “Der Nächste” in 1916. For Cohen, Kittel’s critiques did not just amount to a corrective to Cohen’s supposed “nonsensical” arguments in “Der Nächste,” but also included an attack on Cohen’s Jewish and philosophically based methodology. According to Cohen, Kittel’s arguments concerning the non-viability of rabbinic voices in the debate over the term “neighbor” illustrated not only a terrible mistake in interpretation of method and subject, but also a mistake that exposed the fundamentally Christian, or more specifically Protestant, bias of biblical scholarship in general. To Cohen, the mistakes of Christian philology operated on two levels. First, Christian philology scorned Jewish studies. Second, it scorned non-philological methodologies. Cohen, however, offered a corrective to these mistakes. He argued that they could be corrected if philology incorporated insights from other disciplines, especially philosophy, and insights from Jewish voices. In this essay, then, Cohen presents a study of the biblical text that asserts his arguments for a philosophically and philologically based method.

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<sup>43</sup> Rudolf Kittel, ed., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1906, 1913).

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As I have shown earlier, Cohen formulates his conception of the neighbor within his critique of biblical scholarship. While in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” Cohen focuses on the philosophical motivations for the development of the concept of the neighbor, in “Der Nächste,” Cohen looks at the philological motivations behind questioning the meaning of *rea'* in the biblical text. For Cohen, the question of the different meanings of the neighbor (*rea'*) comes from a question asked by K. O. Erdmann in an article entitled “Nosismus” (Nosism).<sup>44</sup> In this article, Erdmann asks why every human being is called the neighbor—that is, *der Nächste* [the nearest]—in biblical language, when the altruistic thought would be better expressed by the furthest (Erdmann, 2ff; *Werke* 16, 56-57). While Cohen thinks that Erdmann asks a good question, he criticizes the Christian assumption on which Erdmann bases it. He notes that Erdmann’s question comes not from an analysis of the biblical Hebrew, but rather from the Christian belief that *rea'* means only “the countryman” or a “relative” (57). He argues that even though the Christian tradition translates the *rea'* as the “neighbor” because it is done so in an exegesis of Luke 10:25-28,<sup>45</sup> the general exegesis of *rea'* in this passage unacceptable because it takes into account only the one quotation of Leviticus 19:18 in the New Testament (57). For Cohen, the exegesis or interpretation of this passage must draw on all other available relevant material not only in the New Testament, as this commandment is quoted at Matthew 22:37, but also in rabbinic literature (57). According to Cohen’s way of thinking, in the quest to find the

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<sup>44</sup> K. O. Erdmann, “Nosismus,” *Der Zeitgeist* 51 (December 1913).

<sup>45</sup> Luke 10:25-28: “Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the law?’ He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’”

meaning of a particular word, material from other sources should be used, for how can one say what one word meant in one context, without looking at all other uses of the word? For Cohen, then, part of determining the meaning of the word comes from looking at the larger context in which the word appears. Thus, Cohen argues that one could not possibly answer Erdmann's question by using only one Christian text, while ignoring other Christian texts and all Hebrew literature, as trying to do so would not possibly provide an accurate or satisfactory answer because, as we have seen earlier, the *rea'* can mean different things depending on the focus of the passage.

Cohen, then, makes the case that the exegesis of the Leviticus passage, especially with the inclusion of New Testament material, "absolutely demands thorough reference to the contemporary rabbinic literature" (57-58; Hollander, 4). According to Cohen, the question is not necessarily what *rea'* means; rather, the question should be who the neighbor is in the text. He notes that in the Talmud, the question of the neighbor is asked several times and explains that there the question of who constitutes the neighbor is answered with regard to monotheism. According to Cohen, the unique God could not have created two kinds of human beings (58); therefore, the "stranger" must be the "neighbor," and the "neighbor" must then constitute every human being. He cites midrashic interpretations of Leviticus 19:18 in *Avot of Rabbi Nathan* (Chapter 14; Folio 25a) and *Sifra Qodashim* (Parashat 2, Perek 4) in his discussion (58).<sup>46</sup> In these passages, the love command in Leviticus is characterized as "the great principle of the Torah," because when connected to the greatness of the one God, who has created everything and everyone, it becomes the greatest command of all (58-59). To

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<sup>46</sup> Cohen also supports his point with reference to Matthew 22:37.

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Cohen, the greatest command in the text, the love of the neighbor, should be the hermeneutical key to the biblical text (59). As such, Cohen asserts that the love of the neighbor, when combined with its grounding in monotheism, means that the neighbor cannot be just the near one, but rather is the human being in general, because, as we saw above, God did not create two kinds of human beings (59). This move enables Cohen to postulate that given the evidence from rabbinic literature, both testaments produced the concept of universal humanity, and not just the New Testament as assumed by most, if not all, Christian biblical scholars (59).

Cohen, however, does not just state his position, but also defends his exegesis. He asserts that because of the traditional Christian translation of the *rea'*, Jews must always provide a corrective by pointing out that *rea'* often means the other person,<sup>47</sup> even as it also means the fellow countryman (59). According to Cohen, the Christian translation of the *rea'* as only “countryman” comes from the assumption that only with Jesus and Christianity did *rea'* begin to encompass more than the fellow countryman as a universal concept of religion was established only with Jesus and Christianity. Cohen, however, does not accept this assumption as the biblical text itself does not confirm this belief as his exegesis of Leviticus 19:18, 33-34 shows. This leads Cohen to assert:

Should the Old Testament, in its usage of ‘one and the other’ have always carefully anticipated that one day a religion would emerge from itself that could contest the originary meaning of its faith in God? ‘*Rea'* means the other person, who of course sometimes also

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<sup>47</sup> Although Cohen does not cite particular passages, he is probably drawing on passages such as Gen. 11:3, 43:33; Exod. 18:7, among others.

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is the other fellow-countryman. How could it be otherwise, since after all the Bible is not only a religious book, but also a work of national history, and, finally, also a book of legal provisions and of politics of the state. But that doesn't mean that '*rea*' generally means the other countryman. (59-60; Hollander, 6)

For Cohen, then, this Christian assumption distorts not only what the text says, but also distorts the text by restricting what the text was meant to be—a moral guide for all times, not just until Christianity superseded it. Moreover, Cohen asserts that the Christian suggestion that God's commands only apply to Jews is absurd: "Or did the Decalogue perhaps mean the prohibition of false witness only for the Jew? Or does the one against lusting after what belongs to the other, your neighbor's house, or after everything that belongs to your neighbor, only apply to the Jew?" (60). According to Cohen, one only has to look at Psalm 15 to see that this assumption is wrong (60). Cohen maintains that this Psalm, which asks "who is a righteous person," cannot be asking only about Jews because the *rea* ' in v. 3<sup>48</sup> obviously means more than just the immediate neighbor, and therefore to assert that the neighbor could only be the near one or fellow countryman is an ugly absurdity (60).

We now come to the main point of Cohen's essay. He argues that Erdmann, in asking his question, has hit upon what Cohen calls "the sore spot in this mistaken German translation of the 'neighbor,'" (61; Hollander, 7), which comes from the Vulgate and the Septuagint, or the Latin and Greek translations of

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<sup>48</sup> Psalm 15: 1-3: "O LORD, who may abide in your tent? Who may abide on your holy hill? Those who walk blamelessly and do what is right, and speak the truth from their heart; who do not slander with their tongue, and do no evil to their friends, nor take up a reproach against their neighbours."



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the Hebrew text (61). In these texts *rea'* is translated as the Greek and Latin equivalent of the near one—in Latin, *amicus* [friend] and in Greek *plesios* [neighbor]. To Cohen, this is a mistake because the *rea'* in this passage should mean the most distant one instead of the near one (61). In Cohen's view, Erdmann's question is the result of the Protestant bias against rabbinic Hebrew, a bias that is not always overt, but hidden within the history of biblical studies because he does not think that rabbinic Hebrew has anything to add to a discussion of *rea'* while the Vulgate and the Septuagint translations do. For Cohen, then, to rely on translations instead of rabbinic Hebrew, which is essentially the same as biblical Hebrew, is both methodologically incompetent and naive, as Erdmann should be aware of rabbinic literature, but is not because rabbinic literature is not part of biblical studies, and Erdmann does not think to ask why.

The relative naiveté of some of the proponents of biblical studies, such as Erdmann, is in the second part of “Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte” sharply contrasted by Cohen to the overt antisemitism that is seen in Germany. This part is all the more significant because it includes Cohen's response to Rudolf Kittel's critiques of the first section, critiques that Kittel published as part of his testimony in the trial of Theodor Fritsch. In 1912, Fritsch, a journalist from Leipzig, was charged with offending the Jewish religion under Section 166 of the German Criminal Code and Kittel was called to testify in the trial. Fritsch was acquitted (Wiese, 252-4) and later used Kittel's anti-Jewish testimony to validate his own antisemitic assertions (Wiese, 268-9). Although Kittel sought to distance himself from Fritsch's antisemitic movement (Wiese, 270), Kittel's testimony asserted that the Jews should give up anything overtly

foreign, or un-German, to ensure their place in German society (Wiese, 267-8; Kittel, 88-9). Kittel's Jewish critics were appalled that he made statements about how Jews should understand their own religion (Wiese, 278). According to Wiese, Kittel's testimony also "seemed symptomatic of the contempt that progressive Protestant Old Testament scholars showed for Jewish Studies, especially Jewish exegesis" (Wiese, 270). Cohen felt compelled to respond to Kittel and focused his response on both the methodological weaknesses of biblical scholarship and its implications for politics and society. For Cohen, these weaknesses were not separate, but rather intertwined: methodological weaknesses were fueled by antisemitic biases, and political antisemitism justified its actions by using biblical scholarship.

Before we get to Cohen's arguments in the second part of the essay about the weaknesses of biblical studies, we must first look at Kittel's objections to the first part of Cohen's essay. Interestingly, Kittel's arguments against Cohen's work are not found in the body text of Kittel's work, rather they are found in one footnote. In the main text, Kittel argues that there are two types of stranger in the Hebrew Bible—the *ger* (the resident alien), and the *nokri* (the foreigner) (Kittel, 45; *Werke* 16, 66). In the footnote to this claim, Kittel argues that one must maintain this distinction, and not be led astray by Cohen's interpretation of these terms, because although Cohen is a Jew and a well-known philosopher, he is not a biblical exegete (Kittel, n. 44). Thus, in his arguments, Cohen actually distorts the biblical text with his philosophy, and misleads the public with his assertions (Kittel, n. 44). Cohen, unsurprisingly, takes serious issue with Kittel's comments. In response to these objections, Cohen first criticizes Kittel's translation of *rea* ' as

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fellow countryman, or near one. According to Cohen, in doing so, Kittel does not understand the Hebrew text:

I do declare it an instance of pedantic lack of education to want to understand the second clause [in Leviticus 19:18], the one that establishes neighbor-love, in such a way that the new expression *rea'* that appears in this second clause must mean exactly the same thing as the countryman [בן עמ: *ben 'am*] in the first clause. The mechanical quality of this view can only be explained based on the literary superficiality that overlooks the newness in the word *love*. Instead of wondering at this newness and making [it] into a problem, one takes it to be self-evident and thereby thwarts the literary problem. (*Werke* 16, 65; Hollander, 11)

For Cohen, Kittel's focus only on the "meaning" of the words leads him to miss the "meaning" of the passage. According to Cohen, the goal of scholarship should be to understand the meaning of the entire passage, which means that one should examine the literary problem posed by the text itself. That is, by only looking at the meaning of the words, one cannot deal with the real issues in the text, which in this case concerns neighbor-love:

All the philological references for the meaning that the word *rea'* has in its various occurrences in the old Bible remain without internal success if one does not first attempt to recognize the actual literary problem that is posed by love of man. Only then will one also recognize the meaning of the *stranger* and how this concept constitutes the *mediation* to the *discovery* of the human being, as the one to be loved. (65-66; Hollander, 11)

Thus, Cohen argues that for Kittel to simply point out the philological difference between the stranger [*nokri*] and the stranger [*ger*] means nothing. Cohen asserts that the real question should concern how one moves from the *nokri* to the *ger* in the text (66). Moreover, Cohen argues that the distinction between the *nokri* and the *ger*, while political in one sense, should not be allowed to confuse the basic commandment to love, which comes from the fundamental idea of monotheism, and culminates in the messianism of the prophets (67). That is, he asserts that Kittel's distinction between the two terms only questions political relationships, and however important those questions may be, ethical and religious questions matter more (67). Furthermore, each of these sets of questions must be separated in order to create an objective methodology (67). For Cohen, then, one cannot answer questions of a political, philological, religious and ethical nature at the same time. While the conclusions from these studies may be combined, they must be determined separately. At the same time, Cohen does not agree with the common process of differentiating the view of the people from that of the prophets in biblical studies (67). According to Cohen, this process is detrimental to biblical studies because it assumes that the prophets are completely separate from the people (67). He asserts that the practice of contrasting the popular attitude of the people to that of the ideal teachings of religion is shameful because obviously the prophets are part of the people and would not teach anything that contradicted the beliefs of the people (67). Thus, for Cohen, one must be careful in distinguishing what must be separated methodologically for study, but be careful not to separate what naturally belongs together.

In Cohen's opinion, Kittel's inherent biases are also confirmed in Kittel's concession that the *rea'* may occasionally refer to the "other" (Kittel, n. 44). To

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Cohen, Kittel's use of the word "occasionally" is unacceptable because an "occasional" usage of a word still counts as a usage (*Werke* 16, 68), and so for Kittel, to disparage an "occasional" usage points to Kittel's interest in the initial meaning of a word, which is also unacceptable to Cohen (*Werke* 16, 68). Cohen argues that Kittel's need to seek out the initial use, or meaning, of the word is unacceptable because Kittel then does not allow one to address the conventional use of the word, let alone its prophetic use. By limiting the question to only the initial usage of the word, Cohen notes, all later uses of the word are ignored (68). Moreover, Cohen asserts that in refusing to look at the later and conventional usages of words, Kittel thereby leaves rabbinic literature unacknowledged because it does nothing to get at the original sense of the word (68). Cohen again quotes Kittel: "That the later rabbis, probably beginning with the *Sifra* to Leviticus 19, expanded the commandment to include universal love of humanity, cannot decide anything regarding the understanding of the original meaning" (Kittel, n. 45; cited in *Werke* 16, 70). At the same time, Cohen points out that Kittel argues that the use of this word in Hebrew should be compared to how it is used in Arabic (Kittel, n. 45). Cohen wholeheartedly disagrees with these practices because he does not think that Arabic would shed any more light on a word than an "occasional" usage of the word in the "original" language (*Werke* 16, 68). Furthermore, according to Cohen, Kittel, who says that he does not understand the Talmud, should not then use the Talmud as proof for his own arguments. To Cohen, Kittel's argument uncovers the fundamental danger that this type of biblical scholarship, which only deals with the twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible and does not look at rabbinic literature, has for understanding basic religious problems (70). Cohen explains that the time in which canonization

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of the Bible occurred almost completely coincides with the time in which the Midrash was written (70). Because of this, Cohen does not think that one can reject the “authenticity of this oldest Midrash for the meaning of one of the most profound sayings of this entire framework of thought, [while imagining] oneself able to find the ‘original meaning’ without this bridge” (70; Hollander, 15). Furthermore, Kittel’s privileging of the Arabic equivalent of the closer fellow to get at the initial meaning of the Hebrew word deeply insults Cohen, because it emphasizes the denial of the use of rabbinic Hebrew and material (70). Thus, for Cohen, this process becomes a fundamental danger to biblical scholarship, a danger that underscores the basic problem of confessional bias, which refuses to acknowledge rabbinic Judaism by refusing to acknowledge rabbinic Midrash as a bridge to the past.

Since Cohen’s argument rests on his ability to derive universal humanity from an interpretation of the meaning of the *rea*’ based on Talmudic and biblical passages, he believes that Kittel’s deriding of this interpretation again proves Kittel’s Christian bias. Cohen asks: “Ought confessional bias here to restrict philological method, so that the question concerning the discovery of the human being could not arise here, because it ought to have been answered from a different point of view?” (68; Hollander, 13). Cohen also alludes to the fact that Kittel’s argument that Moses could have only meant the Israelite contradictions Kittel’s other assumptions. Cohen asserts:

At the very least here the following upshot of the wisdom of biblical criticism is exposed as false: that the Decalogue should diverge vastly from the spirit of the prophets and from the spirit of Deuteronomy, in which it was taken up in a reworked way. Thus

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the Decalogue is abandoned in favor of universal morality. Should it not, following this philological insight, be struck from the Christian catechism? (68; Hollander, 13)

For Cohen, the above question is especially significant given that Kittel's arguments are a part of his testimony in a Section 166 trial (68-69). According to Cohen, Kittel's arguments are made even more suspect and deficient because of this situation, and can, in fact, lead to continued antisemitism:

For Kittel poses, with respect to the ambiguities of Yahweh, demands to the Jewish community that, even under the most charitable interpretation, can only be identified as a lack of insight into the limitations of the historical method. At the same time, however, this deficiency in scholarly method leads him unconsciously to assault the reverence before the one God, compared to which this grotesque intervention into the most interior religious being of the Jewish community—that is, the demand for a purification of the name of Yahweh in Holy Scripture!—becomes an antisemitic child's play. (69; Hollander, 13-4)

Thus, in Cohen's view, Kittel does not completely understand the method with which he works, nor does he understand the consequences of the way the method is used and interpreted.

Cohen gives a further example of the weaknesses in Kittel's work. Cohen notes that Kittel asserts that in Psalm 15:3, the *rea'* becomes interpreted by way of *karob* (כרוב), the near one (Kittel, n. 45, *Werke* 16, 69). According to Cohen, Kittel's argument results in this verse being emptied of its prophetic sense (69);

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and the word of nearness, which always means divine proximity in the Book of Psalms, and never the kinsman, is used here in its wrong lexical meaning as evidence against the neighbor (69). Cohen asserts that the divine proximity that is described by Psalm 15 is founded on the recognition that the fellow human being is acknowledged and felt as the one near to God and therefore the one near to you (69). Moreover, Cohen states that the matter of degree implied in Kittel's distinction between the *nokri*, the *ger*, and the *rea'* may lead one to believe in different degrees of humanity (70), which is unacceptable to Cohen. In the light of the possible abuse in the discussion of degree, he offers the following admonition and imperative:

Finally learn to recognize love of humanity as a duty that is not a matter of degree! For where differences of degree are admissible, different levels of love of humanity and degrees and relativities and finally mitigations and diminutions are unavoidable. Love of humanity however must become the absolute commandment of religion. (70; Hollander, 14-5)

He concludes:

I may also not refrain from pointing to the real reason behind the lack of living/vital scholarliness in today's academic biblical research, insofar as it treats the canon as a finished product, while not wishing to acknowledge its linguistic and intellectual survival in rabbinicism. The Bedouins are supposed to render more understandable what a most intimate Hebrew notion means, than is the homogeneous development that it has achieved in the Oral Torah. This critical situation of true scholarship ought not to be



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allowed to continue at our universities. May the Kittel case help to rectify this ill! (71; Hollander, 16)

For Cohen, then, the weaknesses that Kittel exhibits in his scholarship are symptomatic of the weaknesses in biblical scholarship as a whole.

According to Cohen's analysis of biblical scholarship in "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte," Kittel's chosen methodology and his testimony in the Fritsch case demonstrated how biblical criticism, in its myopic focus on detail, precluded asking larger questions of meaning and content. In this case, the fact that the larger question was the status of Jews in Germany made Cohen doubly aware of the shortcomings of biblical criticism. Moreover, in Cohen's view, since biblical criticism did not take rabbinic material into account, but made use of Arabic material, it denied the stake the Jewish tradition has in the questions asked of the biblical text and its ability to ask and answer those questions on its own. In late 19th-century and early 20th-century Germany, this denial proved to be disastrous for German Jews. Although Cohen's work points out deficiencies in 19th-century biblical criticism, this essay points to a troubling question. Is biblical criticism inherently antisemitic, or is it antisemitic only in its usage? The most troubling aspect that Cohen's essay points to is that not even he can satisfactorily answer this question, especially given that Kittel was not viewed as antisemitic by his Jewish critics (Wiese, 276).

The three essays that we have analyzed in this chapter all point to the problems of antisemitism and anti-Judaism in Germany and in biblical studies. For Cohen, German antisemitism and anti-Judaism took two major forms in biblical studies: the denial that there is a Jewish conviction and morality and the ignoring of Jewish forms of interpreting the biblical texts. Cohen's answer to the

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problems that he saw came in two stages. The first stage is marked by his defense of Judaism and his critiques of biblical scholarship in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” “Gesinnung” and “Der Nächste.” In his defense of Judaism, Cohen combined philosophical, ethical, political and religious views together to create a theory of the neighbor that would help alleviate the political and societal suffering of Jews, thereby leading to the second stage—his own portrayal of Judaism and interpretations of the biblical text as worked out in *Religion of Reason*.

### **The Neighbor in *Religion of Reason***

As a philosopher, Cohen relied on a philosophical worldview in order to present his interpretation of Judaism and religion in *Religion of Reason*. As a neo-Kantian, Cohen sought to ground his interpretation in rational thought by using an ideal—the messianic age. As Paul Mendes-Flohr explains,<sup>49</sup> Cohen followed in Kant’s footsteps by asserting that the rational is an ideal that must become real (Mendes-Flohr, 356). According to Mendes-Flohr, Cohen offered “an ideal construct meant to disclose the shortcomings of the present reality. Holding up the ideal as a mirror, he sought ever so gently to rebuke contemporary Germany and prod it to honor its humanistic heritage” (Mendes-Flohr, 356). That ideal was, for Cohen, the messianic age, and the suffering of Israel was its ever-present sign (*Werke* 17, 15). According to Cohen, the suffering of Israel pointed to the messianic message that injustice would cease. In Cohen’s connection of the messianic ideal to the suffering of the Jews in Germany, Cohen was pointing to

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<sup>49</sup> Paul Mendes-Flohr, “New Trends in Jewish Thought,” in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Interaction in Dispute 1871-1918* (ed. M. A. Meyer; New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3:336-59.

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the call of and for the messianic cessation of suffering through political justice and equality of Jews and Germans in Germany.

Before we investigate *Religion of Reason*, however, we will look at the “Schlußbetrachtung” (Final Reflection) that Cohen wrote for the republication of “Gesinnung” and “Der Nächste” in 1916.<sup>50</sup> As part of the analysis that Cohen offers for the shortcomings, anti-Jewish and antisemitic trends within biblical studies, he also introduces a political component that links his arguments about the neighbor to the political situation of the Jews in Germany. Cohen focuses, in particular on the problems of confessional conflicts within the national state. To begin, Cohen asserts that the national policy that calls for the agreement between and harmony of the various confessions, which became the foundation of modern Germany, came about in the age of Enlightenment and tolerance (*Werke* 15, 412/*Werke* 16, 74). According to Cohen, however, while the state called for tolerance between the confessions, only mutual tolerance between Protestantism and Catholicism is understood under this call (412/74). As a result, he asserts: “No one, not even the best ones, likes to speak about Judaism. One prefers to leave it unmentioned (412/74).” For Cohen, this ignoring of Judaism has a few key consequences. First, it damages the conceptual discussion of morality and religion, leading to further misunderstanding of morality in Judaism (412/74). Second, this “normal ignoring of Judaism and its confessors blunts neighbor love of its relevant point for the differences within the separate state” (412/74). According to Cohen, each member of the nation-state has the right to the religious love of true tolerance and the acknowledgement of the true essential part of his or her religion (412/74); but without the concept and practice of neighbor love,

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<sup>50</sup> Cohen published these two pieces together in 1916. I will give the page number from “Gesinnung” (*Werke* 15) first, then the page number from “Der Nächste” (*Werke* 16).

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which is central for both Judaism and Christianity, tolerance and acceptance will never come to pass. In Cohen's opinion, there "is no interiority of religiosity, there is no religious conviction, and likewise no true neighbor love without sympathy for those of different faiths"—but if tolerance and acceptance were attempted, "the highest activity of living religiosity will lead to national reconciliation and national harmony" (412-13/74). Cohen argues further that the moral demand for national reconciliation and harmony between Christians and Jews is all the greater given that Judaism forms the original foundation of Christianity, and not only remains a part of Christianity (through the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament), but also a living religion on its own (413/74-75). According to Cohen, because everyone in Germany were living "in a volcanic age of world history," peace was vitally entwined with matters of religious conviction (413/75). Practically, this meant that just as one could not have peace if one's religious conviction was doubted, neither could Germany have peace until Jewish conviction and morality was acknowledged, until Jews were given political equality, and until Jews were no longer denied their right to their religion, including its beliefs, its rituals and its study.

For Cohen, the political dimension and situation facing Jews in biblical studies was wrapped up in the question of how to properly study Judaism and the Bible. The suffering of the Jews in Germany thus played a vital role in how Cohen derived his messianic theories, as his messianic hopes are focused on the process by which the suffering of Israel will end. Or, to put it differently, Cohen's hope for the end of Jewish suffering is his messianic theory as it appears in *Religion of Reason*. Cohen's messianic theory in *Religion of Reason* is therefore his answer to how to properly study Judaism and the Bible, as these theories are

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grounded in Cohen's philosophical methodology that places morality and ethics at the center of his study. That is, Cohen uses philosophy and ethics as the orientating forces of his presentation of Judaism in *Religion of Reason*, which allows him to use real-life experiences as his starting point. As Cohen writes: "in any case, from where should ethics take its problems if not from *experience*?" (RR, 237/278). For Cohen, since messianism arises out of a historical and social context (282-283/329),<sup>51</sup> real experience plays a major role in the ethical and political context, because ethics takes its problems from experience (237/278).

Cohen, then, uses his messianic hopes as part of his philosophical orientation in *Religion of Reason*. For Cohen, however, hope is not enough because Israel's suffering, and social injustice in general, were actual fact, and his messianic hopes arise precisely because social misery was real. Thus, as part of his messianic theory, Cohen establishes the ground on which that misery could end. There are two main components for this process in *Religion of Reason*: (1) Cohen's theory of political justice, and (2) the Bible itself, as it provides the building blocks for the first through Cohen's ethical and religious concept of the neighbor. More specifically, for Cohen, just as the Bible gives the message of messianism, it also gives the means by which messianism can be achieved—the theory of the neighbor. According to Cohen, because the morality of God establishes the morality of the Hebrew Bible (a topic that we will explore in Chapter 2), the Hebrew Bible's concern for ethical and moral behavior results in a systematized view of morality, which can be found in the ethics of the neighbor, or fellowman. Cohen then uses the concept of the neighbor to establish his theory

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<sup>51</sup> I give the page number from *Religion of Reason* first, followed by the page number from *Religion der Vernunft*.

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of political justice, because, as he asserts, “no problem of morality takes precedence over this problem of the fellowman” (114/133).

The major example of Cohen’s theory of political justice in connection to the morality of the Hebrew Bible is thus found in his concept of the neighbor, which we have seen comes from his exegesis of the *ger*. While we have already seen how the *ger* functions in his earlier essays, in *Religion of Reason*, Cohen develops his interpretation of the *ger* specifically in regards to its political and religious dimension in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, according to Cohen, the process of the non-Israelite’s move from the status of the foreigner (*nokri*) to equal status with the Israelite (*ger*) recognizes the political (121/140) and religious (123/142) acknowledgment of the Israelites’ neighbor, who was also sometimes an enemy, by the Israelites themselves<sup>52</sup> and by the commandment of God<sup>53</sup> (120/139-140). In Cohen’s theory, the *ger* has the same legal and religious equality as the Israelites because God commanded it in Exodus 12:49<sup>54</sup> (121/140). There are several levels of significance for this process in Cohen’s thought. First, the *ger*, who is not only a neighbor of Israel, but also a neighbor within Israel (126/146), is a concept that is established in connection to monotheism. Cohen

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<sup>52</sup> Cohen cites 1 Kings 8:41-43, which reads as follows: “Likewise when a foreigner [*nokri*], who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.”

<sup>53</sup> Cohen cites Isa. 56:6-7, which reads as follows: “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

<sup>54</sup> Cohen cites Exod. 12:49, which reads as follows: “There shall be one law for the native [*’ezrah* of the land] and for the alien [*ger*] who resides among you.”

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uses Numbers 15:15-16<sup>55</sup> and Leviticus 24:22<sup>56</sup> as examples because these verses command the Israelites to establish one law for both themselves and the *ger* because they are equal before God (125/145). Second, because Deuteronomy 24:17-18 commands that “You shall not deprive a resident alien [*ger*] or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this” (125/145), the stranger belongs in a political category with the widow and the orphan as members of society who must be taken care of politically and socially. Moreover, for Cohen, connecting the stranger with the Israelites’ status as slaves in Egypt not only bonds the suffering of the stranger with that of Israel, but also links God’s love for Israel with God’s love for the stranger. The association of the widow, the orphan and the stranger within the political context leads to the third point of significance for Cohen. Cohen argues that because the Israelite is not allowed to take interest from the stranger because he is a brother (Lev. 25:35ff.), the relationship between the stranger and the Israelite is a familial bond (125-126/145-146), which leads to and is further strengthened by the fourth point: religious equality and love. Cohen argues that the political equality of the stranger and the Israelite corresponds to religious equality (127/147). In practical terms, this means that the stranger does not have to follow the religious requirements of Israel, but is allowed to sacrifice in the Temple (Num. 15:14-16; 1 Kings 8:41-43), thereby illustrating religious equality in the house of God (127/147). After giving his elucidation of the specific

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<sup>55</sup> Num. 15:15-16: “As for the assembly, there shall be for you and the resident alien a single statute, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the LORD. You and the alien who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.

<sup>56</sup> Lev. 24:22: “You shall have only one law for the alien and the citizen [*'ezrah*]; for I am the LORD your God.”

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political, economic and religious laws as they pertain to the stranger, Cohen finishes with an explanation of the love of the stranger. According to Cohen, these specific laws lead to the general law of the love of the stranger, or neighbor, that is found in the connection of Leviticus 19:17-18 to Leviticus 19:33-34. In these verses, the Israelites are commanded by God to love the stranger as one of their own because they too were once strangers in the land of Egypt, and therefore the stranger is just like them. More importantly, the Israelites are to love the stranger because God loves the stranger in Deuteronomy 10:18-19 (127/148). For Cohen, this is important because the love of the stranger leads to the love of the fellowman, (128/148) and the love of Israel for the peoples of the world.

The last level of significance in Cohen's exegesis of these biblical passages can be seen in his concern for the overall message of the biblical text—which is the connection between morality, monotheism and the neighbor. Since Cohen's exegesis begins with monotheism and depends on the concept of the fellowman (115/133), he asserts that the biblical quest for morality establishes the connection between Israel and the world, which thereby establishes Israel's quest for humanity, and the goal of humanity, which is unification under the one God. Cohen's political theory, then, is not just a quest for humanity, but also a quest for the unity of humanity under the umbrella of religion. At this point we can see the convergence of many of Cohen's arguments. At the root is Cohen's concern for proper understanding of how society works by determining its prevailing principle, which is Cohen's main task as a philosopher, and then using that principle to enlighten historical research (JS I, 147). That is, for Cohen, determining the truth is the most important goal of any scholarship, and it should be the goal of any scholarship to responsibly disseminate the truth into society. In



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his work, Cohen sees the truth in society as being comprised of many different aspects: the social, the religious, the academic and the political. Thus, any scholarship, especially any scholarship that deals with any of these aspects in particular, must deal with all other aspects in general. In Cohen's view, then, the social, religious and political aspects of the Bible must be dealt with in order to get at the truth of the Bible. Essentially, Cohen's arguments are predicated on the religious, through the connection of monotheism and messianism, but it is through the political that the messianic goal of peace and unity can be achieved in the social realm through the elimination of social misery.

In Cohen's German context, his messianic arguments in *Religion of Reason* are born out of a sense of urgency. Although the process of legal emancipation for Jews in Germany was achieved on July 3, 1869, when the North German Confederation passed a law that established the rights and duties of German citizens regardless of religious denomination,<sup>57</sup> legal equality by no means countered the upsurge of antisemitic movements in the 1880's. With the rise of the antisemitic movements that placed antisemitic politicians in the Reichstag, antisemitic newspapers everywhere and continued blockage of Jewish appointments to the academy in both the sciences and the humanities, the fight for Jewish equality in German society was carried out by organizations such as the League to Combat Antisemitism (*Verein zur Abwehr des Antisemitismus*), through publicity in newspapers, encouraging interventions at the Reichstag and in the electoral process (Pulzer, 524). In 1893, the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen*

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<sup>57</sup> Peter Pulzer, "Legal Equality and Public Life," in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times: Interaction in Dispute 1871-1918* (ed. M.A. Meyer; New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 3:153-95.

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*Glaubens, CV*) was created to take an active role in the fight for equality by using four sections of the 1876 Uniform Criminal Code to fight against the religious discrimination against Jews (Schorsch, 123).<sup>58</sup> Section 130, which criminalized incitement to class hatred, and Section 166, which made defamation of a religious community punishable by law, were the sections most frequently used in their fight, and the CV accomplished a goal in that offensive charges against the Jews could no longer be made with impunity (Pulzer, 256-58). Although he did play a part in the legal fight for equality with his participation in the 1888 trial of Fenner, and through his rebuttal to Rudolf Kittel's testimony in the Section 166 trial of Theodor Fritsch in 1912 in "Der Nächste. Bibelexegese und Literaturgeschichte," Cohen's major contributions were through his political theories as found in *Religion of Reason*, because it is there that Cohen expressly links his concept of the neighbor/stranger to the state and Torah of Israel. Whereas in his previous essays, Cohen explores the significance of the connection between conviction and law, *Religion and Reason* provides Cohen the opportunity to situate the neighbor clearly within Jewish law and morality—just as the Israelite is loved by God, so too is the neighbor/stranger, therefore the neighbor/stranger must be part of Israelite law and morality, thereby establishing equality between Jews and non-Jews in the biblical text.

Cohen's political and religious theory of the neighbor, then, focused attention upon the lack of "neighborliness" between the Jews and German Christians, while providing a way to ease the tension between the two groups through the concept of the neighbor in relation to the state. For Cohen, the main problem in Germany was that there was a lack of communication between the

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<sup>58</sup> Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870-1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 62, 123.

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Jews and the Germans because the Germans saw the Jews as political and religious “aliens,” or strangers, in their midst. Cohen’s answer to this problem was to show how the Jews dealt with “aliens,” or the *ger*, during their time of independence in hopes of using the *ger* as an example of how a stranger can become not only a neighbor, but a brother in the political, social, economic and juridical senses. More importantly, however, is that Cohen’s theory showed that the *ger* was never coerced to join the Israelite religion, rather the *ger* was able to practice his or her own religion, and was seen as a religious equal who was invited into the Temple. Thus, Cohen’s theory of the neighbor illustrated the equality between Jews and non-Jews, which respected the difference of religion, and welcomed the non-Jew into every aspect of Jewish life. This theory, then, allowed Cohen to emphasize the difference in the situations between non-Israelites under Israelite rule, and non-Christian Germans under German rule. It was a well-noted practice that for Jews to gain political equality in German society or academia, they often converted to Christianity. Cohen stressed the religious and political equality between the Jews and non-Jews during the time of Israel’s national independence in order to provide an example for how German Christians could accept and respect the Jews in their society without conversion. Moreover, since the theory of the neighbor highlighted the Israelite transformation from a national to a universalistic worldview, while still retaining the national, or particular, within the universal, the adoption of the neighbor theory into German politics and religious belief would allow for the inclusion of Jews into German society without the Jews having to give up their Judaism. More importantly, for us, Cohen’s philosophical theory showed how Jews could, and did, come up with a way to study the biblical text that did justice to the current political situation and

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to the rigors of academic scholarship, a topic that we will continue to explore in the upcoming chapters.

## **Conclusion**

Hermann Cohen's response to 19th-century biblical scholarship arose out of his concerns for the Jewish situation in Germany, as well as his more specific concerns about proper methodology and the presentation of Judaism in biblical scholarship. For Cohen, these concerns were not separate, but rather, intimately intertwined. As biblical scholars produced scholarship with anti-Jewish and antisemitic overtones, Cohen began to question not only the societal and methodical biases of these scholarships, but also the weaknesses in society and methodology that either resulted from or were the basis for these biases. Cohen's studies of these problems were directly influenced by the political situation of the Jews in Germany, and it was Cohen's participation in an antisemitism trial that triggered Cohen's response to the connections between antisemitism and biblical scholarship. Cohen's concern about the methods, results and biases of biblical scholarship did not end with his involvement in the Fenner trial as he continued to write about these concerns in several of his essays. However, it was with Cohen's *Religion of Reason* that Cohen's concern for, and interest in, biblical studies reached its culmination, for in *Religion of Reason*, Cohen presented Judaism in the way that he felt Judaism should be presented, in a methodologically, politically, and ethically responsible way.

Cohen's presentation of Judaism in *Religion of Reason* stemmed from his interest in and criticisms of biblical research. One of Cohen's main concerns about biblical criticism focused on its inability to understand its relationship to the

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real world. As a philosopher, he asserted that the methods of biblical research could not yield significant results because they could not answer political and ethical questions about the real world. At stake for him was how to live properly in the world. According to Cohen, philosophical inquires, especially inquires into biblical texts, can provide one with answers as to how to live, and to live well, in the world, while philological, literary and even archeological questions without the guidance of philosophy can only tell one how people used to live, and thus offer answers that are hypothetical or superficial at best. Moreover, Cohen also asserted that biblical scholars only ask questions that focus on myopic details that were fundamentally inconsequential to larger questions of content and meaning, which to him, were the most important questions. According to Cohen, because the methods employed by biblical scholars did not ask about content and meaning, while philosophy did, they lacked the ability to correctly interpret Scripture and their role in society. Cohen's concerns about the weaknesses of biblical studies, however, should not be seen as just a clash of methods because he did approve of some methods and finding of biblical scholarship. Thus, he asserted that one needed to look at all advancements in various types of studies and methods in order to present the best or most comprehensive picture possible. Indeed Cohen drew on philosophy, philology, and literary history in his analysis of biblical studies and the neighbor. As a philosopher and a Jew, Cohen's focus on the ethical imperative of the love command, his concept of neighbor love, and his analysis of the *rea'*, the *ger*, and the *nokri* were able to speak directly to his concerns about method and the political status of the Jews in Germany, which traditional Protestant biblical scholarship neither could nor were able to. Moreover, the methods of late 19th- and early 20th- century biblical criticism,

whose results were often biased against Jews, not only demonstrated German antisemitic and anti-Jewish tendencies, but also exacerbated the antisemitic movements that were on the rise. Thus, for Cohen, biblical scholarship was inherently political, as his concept of neighbor love clearly pointed to, and he thought that biblical scholarship needed to take this political involvement seriously in terms of both the methods and results that biblical research used and endorsed.

We can see Cohen's correlation of the political and academic most clearly in his studies concerning the neighbor. While Cohen stressed the process of the connection of the *ger*, *nokri* and *rea'* in the biblical text, he addressed the political situation of German Jews, who sought political equality in Germany. That is, in his exegesis of these terms, Cohen gave an example of the process of the foreigner becoming like the native, which was analogous to Jews being granted full rights as Germans: just as the *ger* became like the *rea'* in the command to love with full political rights in Israel, so too could a Jew become a German during the process of emancipation. The fact that Kittel chose to respond to Cohen on a technical level instead of on the more pressing political level again proved to Cohen the extent to which the political inequality of Jews played a role in scholarly debates, and how much Christian and Jewish scholars could be, and were, divided. At the same time, Cohen did think that there was hope for biblical studies—as long as it took into consideration the many findings and methodological breakthroughs of other areas—a topic that we will explore in greater depth in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 2: Cohen and the Methodological Advancements of Biblical Scholarship**

### **Introduction**

As we saw in our previous chapter, Cohen was heavily invested in the way that Judaism was seen and studied in Protestant biblical scholarship because it was the “home” of the academic study of the Bible and Judaism in 19th- and early 20th-century Germany. Christian Wiese argues that despite the fact that the diverse activities of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* emphasized the same philological, historical and literary aspects of the Biblical text as did Protestant theology and biblical studies, the academic establishment did not acknowledge *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as properly “scientific” (Wiese, 402). Since Cohen was formed by and contributed to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as both a student and a teacher, he responded to its absence in the academy. According to Cohen, as we will see later, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* merited a place in the German academy because it shared the same scientific methods and goals as biblical criticism. As a trained philosopher and professor of philosophy committed to the ideals of scientific objectivity and authoritative scholarship, Cohen was, as I will argue, interested in the development of disciplines and methods that emphasized these values. In this chapter, my intention is to show how and why he incorporated some of the methods and findings of Protestant biblical science into his own work in *Religion of Reason* in his effort to produce a methodologically correct, scientifically rigorous, and philosophical account of Judaism.

I shall demonstrate my claims with reference to his essays “Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion”<sup>1</sup> and “Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität.”<sup>2</sup> With these two essays, Cohen lauds the work of two Protestant scholars in particular, Alfred Bertholet and Wolf Wilhelm Graf von Baudissin respectively. Wolf Wilhelm Graf von Baudissin was a professor of Old Testament at Marburg University from 1881 to 1900; a professor at Berlin University, now known as Humboldt University, from 1900 to 1921; and president of Berlin University from 1912 to 1913. During his tenure as president, Baudissin gave two speeches that Cohen claimed exemplified the forward progress of Protestant scholars in the understanding of Judaism. Cohen examined Baudissin’s addresses, “Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Religionsgeschichte” (Old Testament Science and the History of Religions)<sup>3</sup> and “Nationalismus und Universalismus” (Nationalism and Universalism),<sup>4</sup> in the article “Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität,” which appeared in the newspaper *Israelitisches Familienblatt*. Alfred Baudissin was also a professor of Old Testament at the universities in Basel (1896-1912), Tübingen (1913), Göttingen (1914) and Berlin (1928-39). Cohen analyzed Bertholet’s 1913 inaugural speech at the University of Tübingen, “Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion” (The Peculiarity of the

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion [1913]” (The Particularity of Old Testament Religion), in *Werke* 16:19-26.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität [1913]” (Two Presidential Speeches at Berlin University), in *Werke* 16:7-15.

<sup>3</sup> Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, “Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Religionsgeschichte, Rede zum Antritt des Rektorates der Königlichen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin” (Berlin: Gustav Schade, 1912). References from this text will be noted as *AWG*.

<sup>4</sup> Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, “Nationalismus und Universalismus, Rede zur Gedächtnisfeier des Stifters der Berliner Universität König Friedrich Wilhelms III” (Berlin, Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei, 1913). References from this text will be noted as *NU*.



Old Testament Religion),<sup>5</sup> in an article by the same title that he published in *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*.

Although Cohen only wrote about Bertholet and Baudissin in these two essays, these scholars had significant impact on Cohen, for, as I will argue, they represented the advancements in authoritative and scientific scholarship that Cohen saw as taking place within Protestant biblical science and theology, advancements that Cohen integrated into his own writings on Judaism in *Religion of Reason*. Moreover, I will also argue that they represent for Cohen the opportunity to reconcile his interests in the seemingly divergent Protestant biblical scholarship and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* because these scholars speak, or at least Cohen saw them as speaking, to the same assumptions and problems that Cohen himself saw in biblical studies. In this chapter, I will show how Cohen's portrayals of Bertholet and Baudissin have significant ramifications for understanding Cohen's presentation of Judaism in *Religion of Reason*. In order to argue my point, I will first investigate the "hope" Cohen claims the two scholars represent. Second, I will establish how and why Cohen lauds the scholarship of Baudissin and Bertholet, and how doing so is consistent with Cohen's philosophical view of biblical scholarship of his day and how Judaism should be studied. Finally, I will show that the themes and principles that Cohen claims are developed by these two scholars are consistent with the principles that govern Cohen's biblical interpretations in *Religion of Reason*, which center on monotheism, nationalism, universality, and messianism.

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<sup>5</sup> Alfred Bertholet, *Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion: Eine akademische Antrittsrede* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1913).

### Protestant Biblical Studies as a Source of Hope

In his 1907 essay “Religion und Sittlichkeit” (Religion and Morality), Cohen asserts that “the biblical criticism of Protestant theology is the best antidote for the hatred of Jews” (*Werke* 15, 100). This emphatic statement has been used to characterize Cohen’s overall position with regard to Protestant biblical studies as one of respect and hope. Christian Wiese, for example, begins his essay “The Best Antidote to Anti-Semitism”? *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Protestant Biblical Scholarship, and Anti-Semitism in Germany Before 1933”<sup>6</sup> with this quote. For him, it illustrates the dialogue that Cohen hoped would emerge between Jews and Christians in Germany, as well as the fact that Cohen “consistently interpreted German Protestantism as Judaism’s partner and ally” (Wiese, 146). Wiese, along with David N. Myers, William Kluback, and Irene Kajon,<sup>7</sup> have written on the subject of Cohen’s complicated and nuanced relationship with Protestant biblical scholarship. Wiese and Myers in particular note that this relationship was complicated by the fact that although Cohen saw Protestantism as an ally, Cohen

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<sup>6</sup> Christian Wiese, “The Best Antidote to Anti-Semitism”? *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Protestant Biblical Scholarship, and Anti-Semitism in Germany Before 1933,” in *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities, Encounters, Perspectives*, ed. Andreas Gotzmann and Christian Wiese (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 145-192. Wiese translates “Judenhaß” in this sentence as “anti-Semitism.” I have chosen to translate it as the “hatred of Jews” because I believe that Cohen is referring to the entire history of the hatred of Jews, rather than the movement of “anti-Semitism” with its racial overtones. Although most scholars now refer to the hatred of Jews as “antisemitism,” there is a distinction between “antisemitism,” as the term that was coined by Wilhelm Marr in 1879, and anti-Judaism with its religious overtones. Cf. Michael Brenner. “Between Revolution and Legal Equality,” in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times. Vol. 2 Emancipation and Acculturation 1780-1871*, ed. Michael Brenner, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel and Michael A. Meyer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 279-318, 316.

<sup>7</sup> David N. Myers. “Hermann Cohen and the Quest for Protestant Judaism,” *LBIYB* 46 (2001), 195-214. William Kluback, “Friendship without Communication: Wilhelm Herrmann and Hermann Cohen,” *LBIYB* 31 (1986), 317-338. Irene Kajon, “Merits and Demerits of Protestant Biblical Science in Hermann Cohen’s *Jewish Writings*,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 4 (2000), 399-412.

had few, if any, real Protestant dialogue partners (Myers, 197; Wiese, 147). Nevertheless, they point out two key factors in Cohen's relationship with Protestant Germany. First, Cohen was deeply conscious of the differences between Jews and Christians in Germany, and at times, polemically emphasized these differences (Wiese, 147). Second, Cohen "belonged to an historical moment in which the principle of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) was central to the activity of Protestant intellectuals in Germany. He himself embraced the term as a tool of theological clarification to describe the nature of the relationship between humans and God" (Myers, 197).<sup>8</sup> Thus, while Cohen can be seen to be taking part in the intellectual life of Germany, he was clearly an outsider. Wiese's and Myers' view that Cohen was an interested outsider of Protestant intellectual movements focuses attention on the historical circumstances of Cohen's interactions with Protestant biblical science, and the lack of real dialogue between Cohen and his Protestant contemporaries. The significance of Cohen's interactions with Protestant biblical scholars, however, is not merely historical, as we will see in this chapter that Cohen's interest in the scholarly methods and assumptions of Protestant biblical studies shaped his vision of Judaism as presented in *Religion of Reason*.

Some historical contextualization will of course be helpful here. Thus, David Myers has identified the shared assumptions of Cohen and the Protestant biblical theologians and scholars of his day as follows:

the commitment to the preeminence of the ethical in understanding the spirit of religion; the conviction in the compatibility between ethical-religious values and modern social norms; and the belief

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<sup>8</sup> The concept of *Versöhnung* in Cohen's thought is the subject of Michael Zank's *The Idea of Atonement in the Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*.

that the German state, with its ethical and cultural legacy, was the most enlightened form of political expression ever developed, not to mention the catalyst for a global confederation of nation-states that heralded the messianic era. (Myers, 198).

Myers' depiction of these assumptions helps us understand Cohen's affinity for the work of Baudissin and Bertholet. Understanding the assumptions that Cohen may have shared with Bertholet and Baudissin, however, is only a preliminary step for understanding why Cohen was drawn to their work, because even as he uses one of their assumptions in particular to flesh out problems in the study of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, he also uses that assumption as the foundation on which he builds his methodology in *Religion of Reason*. In the section that follows we will examine this assumption, which I will call the "specifically Israelite" by using the German term *Eigenart*, as *Eigenart*, meaning "particular," is the means by which Cohen seeks to understand biblical scholarship in the areas of universality and nationalism, and the methodology that is used to examine these topics.

### ***Eigenart***

The concept of *Eigenart* is of key concern in analyzing Cohen's assessment of Bertholet and Baudissin because Cohen points to this concept as the link both between Bertholet and Baudissin and between each of them and their shared significance for the political, social and academic contexts. Thus, it will become for us the foremost category of investigation. The German word *Eigenart* can be translated into English by the words "peculiarity," "individuality," "characteristic," and "particularity." For Cohen's work, while the word itself has

meaning within his analysis of Judaism in *Religion of Reason*, which will be discussed later, the concept of *Eigenart* is of primary importance because of the methodological weight he gives it in his presentation of Bertholet and Baudissin. In Cohen's thought, the concept of *Eigenart* connects Bertholet and Baudissin because both scholars present a view of *Eigenart* that Cohen thinks is representative of a new trend in biblical studies that properly understands Judaism as a prophetic religion and a trend that the Jews should be thankful for. Cohen also thinks that Bertholet and Baudissin's work on the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion could contribute to his fight to overcome Protestant bias against Jewish particularism. As Wiese points out, Cohen writes in *Ethik des reinen Willens* that Protestant biblical criticism contributes to this goal (Wiese, 163).<sup>9</sup> As we will see in Cohen's essays on Bertholet and Baudissin, he attributes to them this same desire. To make this argument clear, we will first look at *Eigenart* in Bertholet because Cohen makes *Eigenart* an explicit category for analysis while looking at Bertholet. Then we will look at Cohen's essay on Baudissin to see the motivation of Cohen for looking at *Eigenart* in Bertholet. Finally, we will analyze the connection between Cohen's appraisal of *Eigenart* in Bertholet and Baudissin and Cohen's use of the concept in *Religion of Reason*.

*Eigenart*, of course, appears in the title of Bertholet's speech, "Die *Eigenart* der alttestamentlichen Religion" (1913; The Particularity of the Old Testament Religion), which Cohen also takes for the title of his own essay. Cohen uses Bertholet's title for his own because he wants to specifically draw attention to Bertholet's use of *Eigenart*. According to Cohen, the title of Bertholet's speech has special meaning because the "particularity" of the Israelite religion is the

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<sup>9</sup> Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1907), 406.

central subject of Bertholet's speech (*Werke* 16, 19). For Cohen, however, the significance of "particularity" can only be seen in relation to the Israelite community itself because Bertholet uses the Israelite community itself as the beginning point for his inquiry (Bertholet, 8-9; *Werke* 16, 19):

The *Eigenart* of the Old Testament religion forms the problem [of Bertholet's speech] that can only be solved from out of the old Semitic community. This community is not denied, and it is not doubted; rather, it forms the self-evident presupposition.

According to Cohen, Bertholet builds his argument about the "particularity" of the Israelite religion by first looking at the Israelite community itself. The significance is clear. Cohen argues that by placing Israel at the forefront of his studies, which investigate the role of the prophets for understanding Israelite morality and the Israelite conception of the kingdom of God (Bertholet, 11; *Werke* 16, 20), Bertholet studies only the Israelite community, and does not project a Protestant vision of that community onto it. Further, Cohen asserts that Bertholet's use of the Israelite community as the starting point for his studies into the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion means that a true picture of Israelite particularity now has a chance to emerge (19). For Cohen, then, the traditional use of *Eigenart* itself, which portrays the "particularity" of the Israelite religion in a negative light when compared to the universality of Christianity, is questioned by Bertholet, thereby signaling a growing consciousness within Protestant biblical scholarship to let the Hebrew Bible speak for itself, instead of seeing it only through the lens of Christianity. Accordingly, Cohen has high hopes for this new trend in biblical studies as represented by Bertholet because he thinks that this trend shows progress towards a better understanding of Judaism in general. This is

why Cohen tells his fellow Jews that they may take comfort in this sign of scholarly progress (26). He notes that Bertholet's attitude towards the Israelite religion has led him to be able to acknowledge "our religion in until now unknown depths" (25). This leads Cohen, the philosopher, to proclaim, "Can there be a more living comfort, a more encouraging confidence for us than that which speaks to us from these facts of our scientific modern age?" (26).

Cohen's focus on the term *Eigenart* in Bertholet's speech is paralleled by his use of this term in his essay on Baudissin. We first encounter the term *Eigenart* in "Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität." For Cohen, the methodological advances that Baudissin makes in his speech "Die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Religionsgeschichte" (Old Testament Studies and the History of Religion) are directly connected to Baudissin's efforts to alleviate some of the problems that Jews face with the Protestant German state and society. According to Cohen, the foremost problem is the defamation of the Jewish religion by the Protestant "state" and "society," which has created a rift between the Protestant "state" and "society" on the one hand and Protestant "theology" and "religion" on the other (*Werke* 16, 7). Cohen argues that this rift is evident because while the "Protestant state" and "society" causes problems for the Jewish religion, "Protestant biblical theology" seeks to compensate for the religious defamation of the Jews, and should be thanked for doing so (7).

How does a scholar such as Baudissin compensate for the religious defamation of the Jews according to Cohen? Here it is helpful to apply Myers' portrayal of the assumptions shared by Liberal Protestantism and Liberal Judaism about religion during this time, as Cohen thought that Baudissin shared a religious sensibility, or a religious point of view, with the Jews. Baudissin, as a

representative of Protestant biblical theology, was therefore an ally for Jews and a source of hope and comfort for them. At the end of the essay, Cohen asserts that Baudissin's scholarship is animated by his "religious conscientiousness and truthfulness," which leads to the beginning of a "deeper understanding of religious *Eigenarten*," an understanding that can be of comfort for Jews (15). Thus, we see that for Cohen, Baudissin's "religiosity," as evidenced by his "religious conscientiousness and truthfulness," gives Baudissin a deeper understanding of the particularities (*Eigenarten*) of religious traditions, especially the particularity of Judaism. Through his portrayal of Baudissin's attention to Jewish *Eigenart*, Cohen thereby understands Baudissin to be inverting the traditional German perception of Jewish particularity. Instead of the ground for German prejudice and denigration, Jewish *Eigenart* becomes in Baudissin the basis for a new respectful acknowledgement of the Jewish religion, which Cohen thinks will lead Germans to accept Jews as Germans, rather than as aliens in their midst (14-15). According to Cohen, it is in his methodology that Baudissin develops an acknowledgment of the *Eigenart* of Judaism.

Cohen begins to describe Baudissin's methodology by pointing to Baudissin's argument about the supposed distinction between *die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Old Testament Studies) and *Religionsgeschichte* (the History of Religions). In his address, Baudissin begins his argument for this distinction by arguing that while the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies are usually seen together, they should not be seen together because they are not supposed to study the same thing (Baudissin, AWG, 10, 7). Baudissin argues that they are usually grouped together because they actually do study the same thing (7-10). Baudissin explains that while the History of Religions ought to



study the origins of “all” religions and traces their developmental steps through history, and Old Testament Studies investigates the origins, developments and literature of only the Israelite religion (10, 7), the History of Religions actually looks at the developments of religions by tracing the development of Israelite religion, which is supposed to be the subject of Old Testament Studies (17; *Werke* 16, 8). Baudissin asserts that the History of Religions does so because it does not seek to study the developments of “religions,” but the development of “religion” (Baudissin, AWG, 17):

What we call history of religions is largely no more than a history of the *forms* [the outward manifestations—rituals, literature, etc.] of religion . . . . but within this history of the forms, there is everywhere a history not of the religions, but rather, of the *one and only*<sup>10</sup> religion. (Baudissin, AWG, 17; cited in *Werke* 16, 8)

That is, according to Baudissin, the History of Religions studies only the one true religion—which is Christianity—and privileges the Israelite religion because it is a direct precursor to Christianity (Baudissin, AWG, 17). Baudissin criticizes this methodology. In his view, in trying to trace the one and only “religion” by focusing on the Israelite religion, the History of Religions deems the Israelite religion to be a superior religion (13). He thinks that this focus thereby neglects other religions, including the Assyrian, the Egyptian and the Babylonian religions, because these religions are only seen to be influences on Israel and not as important to the development of true “religion” or not interesting religions themselves (8, 13). That is, according to Baudissin, the History of Religions pursues a methodology that contradicts what ought to be its goal, which is to trace

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<sup>10</sup> Italics are Cohen’s, not Baudissin’s.

the history of “religions” and not of one “religion” in particular. Moreover, since the History of Religions only traces the development of the Israelite religion, Baudissin argues that the History of Religion studies what is actually the subject matter of “Old Testament Studies”—the Hebrew Bible and Israelite religion—because it argues that religion as such, as that “which exists independently of all forms and doctrines,” that is, an inner spirituality, exists in the Hebrew Bible with a “special clarity” (17). For Baudissin, this claim contradicts the supposed goal of the History of Religions because if Christianity is seen to supersede Israelite religion in the history of religion, to argue that the Israelite religion was superseded by Christianity thus negates the claim that the Israelite religion is a superior religion in the first place (20-21).

For Cohen, the significance of Baudissin’s argument lies in Baudissin’s point that despite the fact that both the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies claim that they are doing different work, both areas of study actually trace the development of religion through an analysis of the “special clarity” of the *eigentlich* (real, actual), pure religion that is found in the Israelite religion (17; *Werke* 16, 8). While Baudissin argues that the methodology of the History of Religion contradicts its goals by doing so and thereby also studies what should be the area of Old Testament Studies, he points out that Old Testament Studies can study what the History of Religions wants to focus on—that is, that “which exists independently of all forms and doctrines as religion” with “special clarity” in the Hebrew Bible—because Old Testament Studies only studies the Israelite religion and does not make claims about other religions or “religion” in general (Baudissin, AWG, 17). In Cohen’s response, Baudissin’s claim has two points of significance. First, Cohen asserts that Baudissin’s claims separate him from the

actual methods of the History of Religions, while still allowing him to keep in line with its task of tracing Judaism's development as a religion (*Werke* 16, 8). That is, for Cohen, Baudissin, by investigating the method of the History of Religions, which is the newest and most popular area of study (8), proves that he is both familiar with new advancements in scholarship and has the ability to integrate the positive aspects of that scholarship into his own. Second, by looking at the assumptions of the History of Religions, Baudissin points out the Christian bias with which the History of Religions operates. While Baudissin argues that the Christian bias is inherent in the History of Religions' assumption that Christianity is the one and true religion, Cohen focuses on Baudissin's claim that this bias is also reflected in the assertion that "this true religion is a purely internal one" (Baudissin, AWG, 17; cited in *Werke* 16, 8). As we saw in Chapter 1, Cohen argues that one of the major Christian biases in biblical studies is the assertion that Judaism lacks the inner form of religion—conviction. However, in this essay, instead of arguing that the History of Religions perpetuates this bias, Cohen supports Baudissin's assertion that both the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies agree that the Israelite religion has an inner spirituality that exists with "special clarity" in the Hebrew Bible (8).

With Cohen's focus on the inner religiosity of the Israelite religion, we can see that Cohen acknowledges that some biblical scholars do not perpetuate Christian biases in biblical studies. At the same time, in highlighting Baudissin's point that both Old Testament Studies and the History of Religions study the "special clarity" of the *eigentlich* religion that exists within the Israelite religion, Cohen is able to argue that Baudissin makes the Israelite community itself, not Christianity, the basis for all investigations into the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the

terms *Eigenart* and *eigentlich* are akin to the German adjective *eigen*, which means “separate,” “own,” “peculiar” and “particular.” The connection between the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion and the *eigentlich* form of religion in Cohen’s presentation of Baudissin is directly related to the *eigentlich* form of religion that the History of Religions seeks. According to Cohen, Baudissin’s above-mentioned assertions about the *eigentlich* form of religion and the primacy of the Israelite religion in both the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies becomes the ground on which he builds his arguments in “Nationalismus and Universalismus” (Nationalism and Universality; *Werke* 16, 10). For Cohen, Baudissin’s declaration that he will only focus on the Israelite people during the time of their independence in his investigation into the history of the connection between nationalism and universality in this speech (Baudissin, NU, 5) is an application of this assertion (*Werke* 16, 11). That is, in marking the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion and its connection to the *eigentlich* form of religion, Cohen understands Baudissin to be making a claim about the primacy of the Israelite religion, which then means that acknowledging the Israelite religion’s primacy is the ground, or first step, in all his studies.

Cohen, therefore, was impressed with Baudissin’s elucidation of the traditional elevated place of the Israelite religion within the History of Religions. Cohen was equally impressed with Bertholet’s understanding of Israelite *Eigenart*. Once Cohen combined Baudissin’s claims concerning *Eigenart* with Bertholet’s claims, Cohen was able to find a solid “biblical studies” basis for arguing that there was something about the Israelite religion that must be real and true (*eigentlich*), and therefore useful for Germany. For Cohen, this meant that biblical studies acknowledged and appreciated the Israelite religion, which Cohen

thought could provide a way for the religious *Eigenart* of the Jews to be understood and appreciated in Germany. While Cohen does not explicitly take their ideas as his own, we can understand Cohen's interest in Bertholet and Baudissin's work as aiding in Cohen's development of methodology in *Religion of Reason*, for as we will see, in *Religion of Reason* Cohen develops these ideas further, as he uses the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion as the basis of his study of Judaism. That is, while Cohen's methodology in *Religion of Reason* cannot be attributed directly to Baudissin or Bertholet himself, Cohen's methodology can be seen as developing out of the connections he makes in his analysis of the significance of their work.

### ***Eigenart* as the Basis for Proper Methodology**

As we saw above, Cohen argues that Bertholet and Baudissin referred to the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion as the basis for their studies of the Hebrew Bible. This methodological choice on the part of Bertholet and Baudissin is significant for Cohen, I would argue, because it is the basis on which these two scholars ground their main arguments. That is, for Cohen, methodology is directly related to content. Thus, we now turn to how Cohen understands the content of their arguments in relation to their methodology. In Cohen's analysis of their arguments, Israelite *Eigenart* is best seen in terms of the Israelite understanding of the relationship between nationalism and universality. Cohen, however, points out that these two scholars choose to look at different aspects of the relationship between nationalism and universality in order to point out how this relationship is significant for the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion. For while Baudissin sees the Israelite *Eigenart* in Israelite nationalism and universality, which are both

subsumed under the umbrella of monotheism, Bertholet focuses on the prophets and morality. In this section, we will look at how Cohen understands Bertholet and Baudissin's explanations of Israelite *Eigenart*, and then at how Cohen uses his understanding of their work as the foundation on which he builds his presentation of Judaism in *Religion of Reason*.

Let us first look at how Cohen understands how Baudissin explains nationalism and universality in the biblical text. We will see three steps in Cohen's interpretation of nationalism and universality in Baudissin. First, Cohen looks closely at Baudissin's methodological statements. Second, he investigates Baudissin's presentation of monotheism, and nationalism and universality. Third, Cohen examines Baudissin's arguments as applied to Germany. To begin his analysis of Baudissin's methodology, Cohen quotes Baudissin as follows:

. . . I therefore consider nationalism in the religious sphere with the Israelites in view. As it seems to me that the Israelites are instructive for the relationship between that which is nationally determined, and that which applies to humanity . . . (Baudissin, NU, 6-7; cited in *Werke* 16, 11)

For Cohen, Baudissin's methodological choice to focus on Israelite nationalism in the biblical text in his speech "Nationalismus und Universalismus," rather than the present German stereotypes of Jewish nationalism, means that Baudissin fully understands how the methodology that he developed in his first speech, which looks at Israel through the eyes of Israel, must be properly applied to studies on the entire biblical text, not just studies on the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament. Although Cohen understands Baudissin's main argument in this speech to be that "Christianity's message of universal messianic humanity

depends upon the national Israelite religion”— an argument that involves study of the New Testament and not just the Hebrew Bible—Cohen points out that Baudissin does not read Christian universalism back on to the Israelite religion, or the Hebrew Bible (*Werke* 16, 12-13). Rather, in Cohen’s analysis, Baudissin shows how Christian universalism is not only in line with Israelite universalism, but also grew out of the Israelite conception of universality. To explain this point more fully, we must look back to one of Cohen’s citations of Baudissin’s first speech: “What the prophet of Nazareth announced was in detail hardly anything new” (Baudissin, AWG, 19; *Werke* 16, 9-10). With this quote in mind, we can see that according to Cohen’s reading of Baudissin, Baudissin does not use the Christian understanding of Jesus’ message of humanity to argue that Jesus’ morality was a radical break from the morality of the Israelite religion. From this reading we can also see that for Cohen, Baudissin’s assertion that Jesus’ teachings were in accordance with Israelite religion counters modern Christian tendencies to denigrate Jewish morality by showing how much more “advanced” Christianity was than Judaism. In Cohen’s opinion, then, Baudissin’s focus on Israelite religion results in a method of reading the biblical text from beginning to end, that is, from the Hebrew Bible to the New Testament, rather than the other way around, which means that Baudissin truly follows his own methodological advice in his presentation of the Bible as he first looks at the Israelite religion, and not at Christianity’s vision of Israelite religion.

In further analyzing Baudissin’s explanation of the *Eigenart* of Israelite religion, Cohen focuses on Baudissin’s view of monotheism. According to Cohen, the reason for this is because Baudissin highlights the “specifically Israelite” moral additions to monotheism. That is, Baudissin explains the particularity of

Israelite religion by looking at monotheism and morality in the Israelite religion. Cohen points out that Baudissin argues that the “specifically Israelite” form of monotheism can be found in the uniquely Israelite thought of the Kingdom of God (12; Baudissin, NU, 16). According to Cohen, Baudissin correctly interprets the Kingdom of God as the kingdom of morality; and, in doing so, Baudissin correctly asserts that the Kingdom of God not only institutes the moral world order, but also institutes a universal humanity under the rule of traditional law (Baudissin, NU, 16; *Werke* 16, 12). As Cohen sees Baudissin as equating traditional law with the national law of ancient Israel as he himself does, Cohen argues that for Baudissin, the specifically national element of the Israelite people produced this new type of moral, or ethical, monotheism. According to Cohen, in its discovery of ethical monotheism, the Israelite religion produced “the highest fruit of religion,” which is the establishment of harmony between an individual nation and universal humanity (12). This connection between nationalism and monotheism, Cohen points out, is further grounded in Baudissin’s idea that the Israelite national spirit is the manifestation of the idea of humanity (Baudissin, NU, 18; *Werke* 16, 13). According to Cohen, these ideas lead to Baudissin’s assertion that the strengthening of the individual spirit becomes the most reliable source of humanity (14). Cohen connects this assertion to Baudissin’s argument that “if the Kingdom of God is to spread itself over humanity as it is contained in this idea as a goal, then the Kingdom of God, which is first an internal one, must come ever more to the individuals” (Baudissin, NU, 24, cited in *Werke* 16, 14). For Cohen, Baudissin’s assertion means that the idea of universal humanity comes from the national spirit, or *Eigenart*, of Israel, which is grounded in the Israelite



idea of morality. Cohen notes that the connection between monotheism, morality, nationalism and universality is verified in Jewish prayer:

The daily service begins with the prayer: “See, I put myself into service by taking upon myself the yoke of the kingdom of God.” And the concluding prayer of each service (*Aleynu*) proclaims hope that “the world is created in the kingdom of the Almighty. And that all children of the flesh will call upon your name . . . and that they all together take upon themselves the yoke of your kingdom.” (13)

For Cohen, then, the “specifically Israelite” form of monotheism—ethical monotheism—creates the idea of a universal humanity, an idea that is also found in Baudissin.

Cohen, then, found a partner in Baudissin as they both assert that the Kingdom of God, as the ideal unity of humanity (Baudissin, *NU*, 24), came from the particularity of the moral and ethical commandments of the Hebrew Bible (*Werke* 16, 14). Moreover, both men thought that this moral particularity could be instructive for the modern German state (14). In Cohen’s opinion, this instruction could prove vital for the Jewish-Christian relationship in Germany as Christians would have to both acknowledge the world-historical significance of the Jews and treat them in a moral and ethical way. To argue this, Cohen points to Baudissin’s argument that the Israelites, not the Christians, produced “the highest fruit of religion” out of a specifically national element because this argument acknowledges that the Israelite religion created the idea of a universal humanity out of its morality, and in doing so, moved beyond a national religion to a universal one (14; Baudissin, *NU*, 16). For Cohen, the most important part of Baudissin’s argument comes from Baudissin’s use of the love command of

Leviticus 19:18 to prove the morality and universalism of the Israelite religion and to refute the German stereotype against Israelite particularism. According to Cohen, Baudissin uses the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” to explain that the love of one’s neighbor is the love of one’s brother (*Werke* 16, 9; Baudissin, *AWG*, 18). Cohen asserts that Baudissin not only understands the love command as a moral command that is part of the worship of God under traditional Israelite law, but also as the absolute summit of the ethical principle in the Hebrew Bible (*Werke* 16, 9; Baudissin, *AWG*, 18). More importantly, as we have seen earlier in chapter 1, in Cohen’s analysis, the love command shows the movement from a national to a universal religion in Israel. Since Cohen connects this movement to the Jewish situation in Germany, as he thinks that Jews and Germans should be brothers under the German state, Cohen’s approval of Baudissin’s argument is obvious, especially given Baudissin’s use of the phrase “opposite the fellow one,” as Cohen clearly interprets this phrase to mean the Jew in German society. Cohen argues that Baudissin’s argument thus allows him to counter the traditional German Protestant objection to Jewish particularity and nationalism, a prejudice that came from Kant, and was later used by Germans to argue for German national superiority (Baudissin, *NU*, 16-17; *Werke* 16, 12-3). To Baudissin, this argument was based on a view of the biblical text that stressed the national component of the Israelite religion. Baudissin asserts that this national component was overcome in the text itself as the Israelites moved to a universal form of religion (Baudissin, *NU*, 16-7). Therefore, Baudissin argues that the biblical text does not support the German/Christian view that the Israelite religion was only a national religion (*Werke* 16, 12-3, 14; Baudissin, *NU*, 16-7). In fact, Baudissin does not support any claim concerning German nationalism at

all. For instance, Baudissin issues a sharp admonition against the one-sidedness and confinement of nationalism in Germany: “Nationalism can, as we have recently experienced it with shudders, become an idol” (Baudissin, *NU*, 20-21; *Werke* 16, 14). Thus, given Baudissin’s fight against German nationalism and its claims, Cohen sees Baudissin as a partner in the fight against a rising German nationalism that excluded Jews by stressing the superiority of Christianity as a universal religion, when in fact, as Baudissin argues and Cohen notes, it was into this “particular” yet universal form of Israelite religion that Christianity was delivered (Baudissin, *NU*, 16; *Werke* 16, 12).

In investigating the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion in terms of its national and universal implications, Bertholet draws out a significant point about the national and universal for Cohen. As he had with Baudissin, Cohen argues that Bertholet focuses on morality as a way to get at the meaning of the national, the particular and the universal in Israel. Unlike Baudissin, who focuses on morality in connection to monotheism, Cohen notes that Bertholet looks at the prophetic understanding of messianic justice in order to explore the relationship of the national to the universal. According to Cohen, Bertholet begins by arguing that the prophets make God the foundation of morality, thereby constituting Israelite *Eigenart* (Bertholet, 12-13; *Werke* 16, 20). That is, the morality of God, which finds its home in messianic justice, as seen in the Hebrew Bible becomes the basis for Israelite *Eigenart*. But what does messianic justice mean in Cohen’s treatment of Bertholet? For Cohen, messianic justice is the result of the prophetic understanding of God’s own moral nature. Cohen explains that in Bertholet’s argument, Amos sees God’s morality in terms of justice (20; Bertholet, 11). Bertholet argues that Amos does so by linking God’s morality to the end of days

(Bertholet, 11). According to Bertholet, God's own morality demands that the end of days will become a Day of Judgment and justice, as God's morality makes demands of everyone (Bertholet, 11; *Werke* 16, 20). Cohen argues that Bertholet's point connects to the idea that the Messiah is produced from the "meaning of God for the task and for the concept of the moral world" (20). That is, the Messiah is the sign of God's morality and brings about God's justice on earth. Cohen notes that God's morality and the meaning of the Messiah for God's morality becomes the basis for Bertholet's argument that the "moral sovereignty of the God-idea is one of the most distinct features of the Old Testament religious particularity" (Bertholet 12-3; *Werke* 16, 20). According to Cohen, Bertholet thus makes "the moral meaning of God, the meaning of God [into] the foundation of morality, which constitutes the particularity of the Old Testament religion" (20). For Cohen, this moral meaning of God may come from the "specifically Israelite" form of religion, but once the idea of the Messiah and universal justice is added to the moral meaning of God, the Israelite religion moves towards universality. Thus, we can see that, in Cohen's opinion, Bertholet provides him with the ability to argue that the national element of the prophets creates the idea by which the universal, which is the thought of the Messiah and the justice of God, becomes included in the Israelite religion.

Interestingly, for both Bertholet and Cohen, the development of the moral meaning of God into the creation of the Messiah is contingent on history. According to Bertholet, under the influence of the prophetic proclamations concerning the moral meaning of God, and hence, the Messiah, the thought that Moses already had impressed onto the tribes, "the thought that Yahweh was a history-creating God" (Bertholet, 18-19), becomes manifest. Cohen fleshes out

Bertholet's theory as follows. For Cohen, this thought is the highest and the last thought of the prophets, and a thought that proved to be the dominant idea of the Israelites (*Werke* 16, 21). He asserts that the Messiah, the person in which the moral nature of God is recognized, brings the message of history in the message of the God of morality (21). More importantly, Cohen argues that the message of history brings about the thought of humankind because history cannot be confined to one particular people; rather, it demands the thought of world history and a united humanity because "the moral God, as the God of history, becomes the God of humankind" (21).

Cohen notes that the connection Bertholet makes between the moral God and the God of history becomes further developed in his exegesis of Jeremiah, according to which the omnipresent God is aligned with the concept of the God of the future (21-22). Cohen explains that in Bertholet's view, the God of history is therefore a "distant God" (Bertholet, 20; *Werke* 16, 22).<sup>11</sup> Cohen quotes Bertholet:

In the faith of Yahweh, God's distance was synonymous with Yahweh's ability to work into the distance, and therein lay a definite trait, which must have massively promoted the faith in Yahweh's *history-creating power* . . . and this makes him, in the full sense of the word, a *living* God. (Bertholet, 20-21, cited in *Werke* 16, 22)

In Cohen's view, with this quote, Bertholet grounds the life of God in the future, thereby allowing him to assert that God is the life of the people and the life of humanity as peoples (22). As a result of this assertion, Cohen argues, Bertholet connects God's history-creating power with the idea that God is the creator of the

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<sup>11</sup> This quote comes from Jer. 23:23.

life or world history (22). For Cohen, this means that the God of the future, the God of universal judgment at the end of days, the God of history, is the God of all peoples, the God of every individual (22). Cohen notes that as a result, Jeremiah thus discovers that “religion itself is history” (Bertholet, 24; *Werke* 16, 24). Accordingly, Cohen argues that Bertholet’s connection of morality and the future of all peoples, which results from the Israelite conception of universality, with the concept of God’s judgment means that Bertholet can argue that “the discovery of teleology in history is the pride of the Old Testament religion” (Bertholet, 22; cited in *Werke* 16, 22). According to Cohen, Bertholet’s assertion is “the highest acknowledgement that can be given from the ethical and the historical-cultural viewpoint” to the Jewish religion (22):

For teleology in history means the meaning of history as such. And the meaning of history, that is the meaning of the human existence, which can consist in nothing other than that life, in which the life of human beings differs from that of animals. The meaning of human life lies in the life of peoples, and in the development of the life of peoples into the life of humankind. In this development teleology culminates in history. Humankind is the highest purpose of the peoples, the final goal of human beings. (22-23)

For Cohen, then, the concept of teleology in history is the fulfillment of the promise of universality, for in the teleological conception of history all of humanity is united. According to Cohen, since Bertholet acknowledges that the Israelite religion discovered teleology in the world, which Cohen considers to be not only the Jewish religion’s highest achievement, but also expresses the most precise sense and value of Israelite particularity (23), Bertholet also acknowledges

that the Israelite religion has world historical significance because it too is a universal religion with a high standard of morality.

Cohen thus approves of Bertholet's presentation of Israelite *Eigenart*, which Bertholet explains through his investigation into the Israelite connection of teleology and morality. Cohen predicts that Bertholet's work on this connection will have a distinct impact on biblical scholarship in general (23). In Cohen's analysis we can see that Bertholet's scholarship has two specific points of interest for biblical scholarship. First, in Bertholet's analysis, he focuses on the prophetic discovery of the connections between morality, justice, history and teleology. For Cohen, in doing so, Bertholet acknowledges that the prophets are "the soul of the Jewish religion" as they have discovered the most important features of Israelite *Eigenart* (25). According to Cohen, the fact that the prophets are the soul of the Jewish religion is the "largest yield that biblical criticism has broken open" (25). Cohen asserts that the prophets should thus be used as the light by which the biblical text should be seen:

From its summits down into its valleys, the whole area must be thoroughly surveyed and illuminated. One must not only let the light radiate above, but also down around the dark points, which one in accordance with the template for clarifying differences, confidently lets stay in the dark. Once the summits are recognized, then the researcher has the task not to isolate them, but to illuminate with this light the places that in themselves seem to be dark and shady. (25)

Cohen, then, argues that studies of the biblical text must therefore take the prophets as the center of the biblical text and use them to discover and understand

all other aspects of the biblical text (25). Second, given that Cohen thinks the prophets are the soul of the Jewish religion, and thus, the light by which all developments in the Hebrew Bible must be seen, Cohen points out that Bertholet not only thinks the same way, but also in doing so, Bertholet does not share in the prejudices of certain biblical scholars (24). Cohen notes that Bertholet himself argues against the prejudiced view of Emil Kautzsch, whom Bertholet replaced at the University of Tübingen (24; Bertholet, 25). According to Bertholet, Kautzsch's argument that the words of the prophets were words of mere farmhands is completely offensive (Bertholet, 25; *Werke* 16, 24). Moreover, Bertholet argues that this type of argument is completely wrong and represents the types of arguments that become "from year to year ever more shriveled up to nothing with ever deeper penetration into the overwhelming phenomenon of prophetism" (Bertholet, 25-6; *Werke* 16, 24). Thus, for Cohen, Bertholet not only represents the advancements of biblical scholarship in terms of methodology and results, but also participates in the fight against Christian biases against Judaism in biblical scholarship.

While Bertholet's scholarship impacts Cohen's understanding of the methodological advances in biblical studies, Bertholet's scholarship helps Cohen to elucidate some of his own arguments. For instance, Bertholet's understanding of history and teleology helps Cohen verify the link between the universal God and humanity, thereby allowing him to argue that the "sense of human life lies in the life of people and in the development of the life of people for the life of humankind" (22). Cohen, therefore, plainly sees Bertholet as providing a theory of history and universality that Cohen can use in his discussion of Isaiah 49:5-8, where God makes Israel "a light to the nations." For Cohen, Bertholet gives Israel



a significant place in history. Since Cohen himself argues for the world-historical significance of Israel, as we will see later, Bertholet's theory of history adds weight to Cohen's assertions. To be sure, the connection of the God of Israel with Israel, and with the history of the world is to Cohen the justification of Israel's place in the world; and it is in Israel's world-historical meaning, which stems from Israel's faith in God, that Cohen calls the most important argument for the call for equality of Jews in Germany. Cohen concludes:

And no age is darker or cloudier, so constantly filled with hate and persecution, from waste and seduction to apostasy, from slandering and malignancy: but where the truth of our God shines out, there rises our light and our salvation. We will not have it differently, nor do we want to have it differently, than this: "the name of God will hurry in the world."<sup>12</sup>

"In the world," so reads the old phrase; and it means: not for us alone, in national isolation, but rather in the world of the peoples, in the world of history we must bring recognition to the holiness of God. Our God is the God of history. And so also Israel is the people of history. (26)

Thus, for Cohen, Bertholet understands the Jewish conception of the world, which thereby makes his scholarship not only acceptable, but also imperative for understanding a trend in biblical scholarship, a trend that will also help the Jews in their quest for equality. As we will see in the next section, Cohen incorporates what he has learned by looking at Bertholet and Baudissin in his own main scholarly treatment of Judaism, *Religion of Reason*.

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<sup>12</sup> Here Cohen quotes part of the third benediction from the *Shemoneh 'Esreh*.

### **Bertholet and Baudissin in *Religion of Reason*?**

In light of what we have seen was for Cohen Bertholet and Baudissin's shared focus on the "specifically Israelite" aspects of the Hebrew Bible, the *Eigenart* of the Israelites was the starting point and focus of their studies. Let us now look at the methodological role of the "specifically Israelite" in Cohen's own elaboration of the "religion of reason." In this section I will show that Cohen uses what he has seen in Baudissin's differentiation between the areas of the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies and in Bertholet's emphasis on morality as the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion as the basis for arguing that that which is "specifically Israelite" is the source of the religion of reason.

In the introduction to *Religion of Reason*, Cohen discusses the history and goals of Old Testament Studies and the History of Religions in terms that are consistent with his analysis of Baudissin. He begins his discussion by asserting that there have been two general presuppositions in the attempt to understand the content of religion. First, there is the presupposition that there are many religions, all having "something in common, which, despite their differences, would make it possible to recognize a unifying concept of all of them" (*RR*, 1/1). This point is consistent with Cohen's portrayal of Baudissin's analysis of the goals of the History of Religions into account and Baudissin's questioning of "religion" in general. Although neither Cohen nor Baudissin asks whether or not "religion" as such exists, for Cohen, Baudissin points to the trend in the history of religions that assumes that all religions have a part in the *eigentlich* form of religion. Consequently, some scholars generally assume that while there are many religions, there is, in the end, only "one" religion. Second, Cohen argues that since history confronts religion with the question "what development has religion,

in particular, and other cultural institutions as well, taken in the course of time and among various peoples?" (1/1), one denies that one can know "what religion is, if its substantive content is not uncovered out of its historical development" (1/1-2). The connection between this assertion of Cohen and Baudissin's assertion that the History of Religions traces this "something" throughout the course of history is obvious. Cohen thus disagrees with those who think that one can begin with "a vague, entirely indefinite and imprecise notion of religion," which allows one to "depict this notion in its historical forms" and "to determine from them the concept of religion itself" (2/2). Rather, in Cohen's opinion, the idea of religion must come first, because an idea can be tested through a process of verification. That is, the idea must be supported by the material; and if the material does not support the idea, the idea must be changed.

In *Religion of Reason*, the idea that Cohen presents is that the "*concept of religion should be discovered through the religion of reason*" (5/5). According to Cohen, the sources of Judaism, which include the biblical and Talmudic texts, "should be shown and proven to be that material which in its historical self-development must engender and verify the problematic reason, the problematic religion of reason" (5/5). This assertion is also in keeping with the Cohen's use of *Eigenart* in the essays on Bertholet and Baudissin, because Cohen argues that the "religion of reason only stands for the specific (*Eigenart*) content that actualizes itself in the general spirit of peoples, in their science, in philosophy as well as in religion" (7/8-9). Thus, Cohen uses the "religion of reason" as the means by which the *Eigenart* of the Israelites can be explained.

We can see here that just as Cohen interprets Baudissin and Bertholet as basing their studies of the Hebrew Bible on the "specifically Israelite" *Eigenart*,

Cohen also begins with the “specifically Israelite.” But while Baudissin focuses on the “specifically Israelite” aspects of nationalism and universality, and Bertholet on the “specifically Israelite” aspects of morality, Cohen chooses to look at nationalism, universality and morality by looking the whole of the Jewish sources, which include religious, scientific, and philosophical writings, because these concepts as found in the “literary sources” of Judaism provide the source material for defining the religion of reason, the topic of his study. Moreover, Cohen asserts: “It is impossible to develop a unifying concept of Judaism out of the literary sources unless the concept of Judaism itself is anticipated as an ideal project, in a manner methodologically analogous to the study of the organism” (3/8). Here we can see Cohen as taking the “specifically Israelite” as the basis for his study of the religion of reason because he thinks that Judaism, as known through its literary sources, is the actual source, or primary origin, of the religion of reason (34/39). Compare this with Baudissin’s claim that Old Testament Science is the field in which one is able to figure out that which exists in the Hebrew Bible with special clarity, which is then used by the History of Religions to track the development of “religion” (Baudissin, *AWG*, 8-9). In arguing that Judaism is the source of the “religion of reason,” Cohen is in actuality arguing that there is something that exists in the Hebrew Bible with special clarity that one can use to track the development of “religion.” That is, Cohen argues that the specifically Israelite form of religion helps in the development of the “religion of reason.” Thus, just as Baudissin asserts that the “specifically Israelite” form of religion is the basis for the studies of the History of Religions, Cohen asserts that the Israelite religion is the basis for his own study as it provides the material for determining the form of “religion” that develops and must be traced throughout

history. Note, however, that Cohen did not argue that Judaism is the only religion of reason (*RR*, 34/39). Rather, for him, Judaism is the primary origin of the religion of reason (34/39), or the logical source of that which develops and must be traced. Thus, Baudissin's assertion that all studies in the History of Religions and Old Testament Studies should begin with Israel because Israel articulates an *eigentlich* form of religion, becomes in *Religion of Reason* Cohen's assertion that Judaism is the primary origin of the religion of reason, and so should be used as the means to track the religion of reason throughout history.

### **Monotheism, Messianism and the State of Israel**

While Cohen explains the development of the "specifically Israelite" throughout *Religion of Reason*, it is in the chapter "The Idea of the Messiah and Mankind" and in his ideas about monotheism and messianism that Cohen fully cashes out the significance of the "specifically Israelite" views of nationalism, universality and morality. Thus, in this section we will first look at Cohen's claims concerning monotheism and messianism, and then connect these claims to Cohen's arguments about nationalism and universality.

Cohen begins his discussion of monotheism by asserting that monotheism "claims that not every people may have its own peculiar God, but that there is one God for all peoples" (252/295). According to Cohen, since Judaism is a monotheistic religion, all claims about Judaism must be based on the "specifically Israelite" form of monotheism, which is ethical monotheism. We can see here again the influence of Bertholet and Baudissin on Cohen as Cohen uses his connection of Baudissin's idea of the "specifically Israelite" addition to monotheism—morality—with Bertholet's argument that God's own moral nature

should be the basis of humanity's moral nature because God is the God of all to argue that Judaism must be seen in terms of its monotheistic beliefs. For Cohen, because Israel formed this new view of monotheism, Israel must be the basis for which ethical monotheism is explained. Thus, Cohen explains monotheism according to the state of Israel. Cohen asserts that the "specifically Israelite" form of monotheism developed in relation to the political fate of the Israelites that continued to develop in and beyond the Bible (252-53/295). Indeed, Cohen claims that the development of monotheism "could not be entrusted to those peoples who did not produce the ancient Bible" (253/295). Cohen argues, however, that the Israelites' influence on monotheism had to move beyond that of a state's influence, it had to become a spiritual influence in order for its influence to become universal (253/295). Therefore, Cohen asserts that the Israelites' fate, which included the destruction of their state, became a sign for the movement from a national to that of a messianic universal spirituality:

That the state declined, while the people were preserved, is a providential symbol of Messianism; it is the sign of the truth of monotheism. No state, but yet a people. But this people is less for the sake of its own nation than as a symbol of mankind. A unique symbol for the unique idea; the individual peoples have to strive to the unique unity of mankind. Thus Israel, as a nation, is nothing other than the mere symbol for the desired unity of mankind . . . . The idea of one mankind could only arise under the one God. The one God, however, arose in the one people. Therefore this one people had to endure. (253/295)

For Cohen, then, Israelite monotheism laid the ground for the universalistic view that the Israelites had. However, despite this tendency towards universalism, Cohen asserts that monotheism had a distinct nationalist, and hence, specifically Israelite dimension, that needed to be completely developed before Israel could embrace its universalistic tendencies (254/296). Cohen argues that just as the Israelites created in isolation their idea of monotheism, they also needed further religious isolation, or religious one-sidedness, that is, a religious nature that was free from the influence of others, for the idea of monotheism to be further developed (256/298). In Cohen's opinion, religious one-sidedness is important for the sake of monotheism because the unique God's relationship to man "had to be secured before any question of the human spirit, which lie outside the correlation of God and man, could claim the interest of the Jewish people" (256/299). Moreover, Cohen argues that the Israelites had to be isolated from other people or "monotheism would not have been capable of living on and resisting the many assaults of opposing movements" (258/301). Cohen asserts that religious one-sidedness, protected by nationalism, "must be also regarded, in the light of a higher historical meaning, as a preparation for messianism" (258/301). Therefore, Cohen argues:

For the furtherance of monotheism [both during biblical times and in the present] we must remain a national individuality, because monotheism has stamped upon us an historical singularity. And since this national existence is not inhibited by a state of one's own, it is protected against the fate of a materialization of its nationalistic idea. The national peculiarity in its stateless isolation

is the symbol for the unity of the confederation of mankind, as the ultimate value of world history (254/296).

For Cohen, then, both nationalism and universality are vital to the development of monotheism and messianism in Judaism.

While Cohen uses the national and universal tendencies as seen in the ancient state of Israel to describe the development of Israelite monotheism, he also focuses on the “religious” side of these tendencies. Cohen highlights the thought of Ezekiel to explain the specifically theological motivations behind the movement from the national to the universal. Cohen asserts that along with the political dimensions of messianism as seen in the destruction of the state for the sake of the universal message of monotheism, Ezekiel encapsulates the universal religious thought in his teaching that the individual soul becomes the universal soul (259/303). This teaching leads Cohen to argue that “*national* limitations are abandoned for the sake of messianism” (259/303), which means that the political process fulfills the tendency towards religious universality, because in Israel’s messianic call, Israel becomes elevated as the symbol of one mankind in the religious thought of messianism (260/303). Therefore, Cohen asserts, the prophets “condemn the nationalistic pride that violated the universalism of monotheism” (260/303), because eventually, within the precepts of monotheism and messianism, all “Israel and finally all men should become servants of God” (261/304). Thus, Cohen argues that “there is no doubt that their [the Israelites’] messianism corrects their own national particularism” (253/296) as messianism is “capable of unlimited expansion” (254/296).

Moreover, Cohen points out, the thought of messianism demands the political and religious message of salvation and restoration of Israel and all other



nations (253/296). For Cohen, however, Ezekiel adds something new to this message—the connection between repentance, purification and the messianic idea. Cohen explains that along with the thought of God’s judgment there arises the thought of the purification of Israel and the other nations (245/286). Cohen connects the notion of the purification of Israel to “‘the sanctification of God’s name’ among the peoples of the world” (280/327) in Ezekiel 36:22-32. Ezekiel 36:23 reads: “I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nation, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes.” In Cohen’s reading of this passage, the sanctification of God’s name comes about through the purification of Israel (281/327). Ezekiel 36:25-27: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to follow my ordinances.”<sup>13</sup> In terms of Cohen’s overall argument about universalism in Judaism, it is interesting that he does not cite Ezekiel 36:22, or 36:32, where God tells Israel that this purification happens not just for its benefit, but is actually done for the sake of the sanctification of God’s name among the nations. Obviously, these passages are significant for Cohen’s theory of universalism, for they verify not only the connection between Israel and the nations by having Israel serve as God’s model for the nations, but also the connection between God and the nations. Based on these passages, Cohen points out that nationalism is “‘the most offensive antithesis

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<sup>13</sup> Cohen does not fully cite this passage in his text.

to messianism” (280/326). According to Cohen, this can also be seen in Ezekiel 16:

“Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say: thus saith the Lord the Eternal unto Jerusalem: thine *origin* and thy nativity is of the land of Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father and thy mother was a Hittite” (Ezek. 16:1-3); and he repeats and even completes this line of thought: “And thine elder sister is Samaria . . . and thy younger sister . . . Sodom” (Ezek. 16:46). And just as the prophet refutes the self-conceit of nationalism, so it is typical, not only for his poetic power but for his messianism as well, that he terminates his tidings of disaster for the peoples with a message of salvation, in which the warm human hearts of the prophet beats.  
(280/326)

For Cohen, then, Ezekiel’s message of salvation is tied to the salvation of all humankind for “just as the national disaster is only the preparation for the messianic future of their own nation, so the restoration of the other peoples is the necessary means to win and incorporate them into the messianic future” (253/296).

With the elucidation of the relationship between the national and the universal in Israel, and the movement from religious one-sidedness to universal messianism, and through using ideas developed in relation to his critiques of Bertholet and Baudissin, Cohen begins to work out the relationship between Israel and the world. For Cohen, this means that the connections between the messianic God and the moral God, Israel as a people and Israel as a symbol of humankind, Israel and other people, and God and humanity all had to be established in relation

to each other, and in relation to the ultimate goal of messianism. As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, Cohen considers both the political and religious motivations behind the movement from the national to the universal in Israel. For Cohen, however, the true significance of the universal in Israel can be seen in the prophetic connection of the sanctification and purification of the world through the unity of humanity because the sanctification and purification of the world under the umbrella of ethical monotheism (the moral unity of God) is the ultimate goal of religion and world history. In the next section, we will explore Cohen's ideas concerning this goal as it relates to the Israelite message of messianism and monotheism.

### **The Prophets and History**

As we saw above in his analysis of Ezekiel, Cohen argues that the salvation of humanity is intimately tied to the purification and uniting of humanity under the moral God. We have also seen that in his analysis of Bertholet, Cohen asserts that the thought of a united humanity comes from the message of history because "the moral God, as God of the history, becomes the God of humankind" (*Werke* 16, 21). In *Religion of Reason*, these arguments of Cohen's converge in his argument that the "concept of history is a creation of the prophetic idea" (RR, 261/305). We will look at this argument by analyzing Cohen's assertions about the connection between the prophetic message of the end of days and the meaning of the moral and unique God. In this section, then, we will look at how Cohen's argument for the salvation of humanity comes from his understanding of history in the prophetic message of the end of days, and at how the end of days becomes for Cohen the ultimate symbol for the specifically Israelite message of

monotheism and messianism. Thus, we will also look at Cohen's elucidation of the prophetic understanding of history and salvation in connection to his understanding of the purpose of the Messiah and the justice of God.

To begin our discussion, we must first look back to two points that emerge in "Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion." First, as we saw above, Cohen highlights Bertholet's view that the *Eigenart* of Israelite religion is found in his discussion of the prophetic idea of morality and the Kingdom of God. According to Cohen, Bertholet's view leads him to analyze the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion in connection with the prophetic conception of the end of days (*Werke* 16, 20). For Cohen, this is significant because, in his investigation, Bertholet highlights Amos' reinterpretation of the final days into ones of misfortune and judgment (Amos 5:18) in order to argue that God's own moral nature requires justice, however devastating that nature may be (Bertholet, 11; *Werke* 16, 20). In Cohen's view, Bertholet shifts the origin of the messianic thought into justice in order to introduce God's justice into his analysis and to ground the messianic conception of the final days in morality, as "the idea of the Messiah was produced from the meaning of God for the tasks and for the concept of the moral world" (20). For Cohen, this allows Bertholet to assert that "the moral sovereignty of the conception of God is one of the most distinct features of Old Testament religious peculiarity [*Eigenart*]" (Bertholet, 12-13; cited in *Werke* 16, 20). Bertholet, in Cohen's opinion, makes the moral meaning of God into the foundation of morality, which in turn constitutes the particularity of the religion of the Hebrew Bible (20). Cohen thus approves of Bertholet's position that the "Jewish God is not based on the magic of mythology, but rather on the right and wrong of human morality" (20). Second, according to Cohen, Bertholet emphasizes the role of the

prophets in the *Eigenart* of the Israelite religion. For Cohen, Bertholet's recognition that the prophets are the soul of the Jewish religion is the highest achievement of biblical criticism (20) comes directly from his attention to Israelite *Eigenart*. This is why Cohen will go on to use the prophetic writings as the matrix around which he forms his theories of monotheism and messianism. That is, because Cohen asserts that textual high points provide the basis for understanding the whole (25), as the task of philosophy demands (JS I, 146-7), Cohen's argument, as per Bertholet, that the prophetic writings provide those high points means that Cohen sees the concepts of monotheism and messianism by the light of the prophets. In *Religion of Reason*, he argues that the prophets show the completion of the development of monotheism, or more specifically, that "from the social-moral point of view, one may even say it [monotheism] develops toward the prophets" (RR, 132/153). Thus, in *Religion of Reason*, the writings of the prophets are the high point from which Cohen interprets the development of monotheism and messianism, and so Cohen organizes his thoughts on the developments around his exegesis of the prophets.

Cohen's focus on Bertholet's view of the prophets and the morality of the Israelite religion directly corresponds to both Cohen's and Bertholet's interest in history. For Cohen, the moral nature of God, which is known through the prophetic literature, results in the Messiah, who connects the message of morality and the message of humankind within the message of history (*Werke* 16, 21). Cohen argues that the message of the moral God as the God of humanity and history is developed by the prophets in the concept of the end of days and their understanding of the future. In keeping with these ideas and his ideas as first laid

out in his essay “Die Messiasidee” (1890-1892),<sup>14</sup> as well as his critiques of Bertholet’s usage of the concept of “messiah,” Cohen begins his account of the development of the prophetic connections between the moral God, the God of history and the God of humanity in *Religion of Reason* by looking at the concept of the end of days (RR, 244/285). With this, we have a striking similarity to the starting point of Bertholet’s exegesis of the end of days as both Cohen’s and Bertholet’s discussions open with Amos 5:18 (245/286; JS I, 109; Bertholet, 10): “Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light.” According to both scholars, it is appropriate to start with this verse from Amos because Amos is the “eldest” of the literary prophets (JS I, 109; Bertholet, 19), and therefore, this verse is the oldest verse in the prophetic literature concerning the “day of the Lord,” or the “end of days,” thereby representing the best place to start analysis. Yet, despite the same initial starting place of the end of days, Cohen’s interpretations of this concept in “Die Messiasidee” and in *Religion of Reason* differ considerably as Cohen orders his thoughts differently by focusing on other concepts and other biblical verses, thereby showing the development of Cohen’s thought on the subject. For instance, in “Die Messiasidee,” Cohen’s next exegetical step is to focus on the development of Amos’s conception of the end of days in relation to the love of God for Israel by using Hosea 2:20<sup>15</sup> and 6:6.<sup>16</sup> Cohen also highlights the return of Israel to God

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<sup>14</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Die Messiasidee [1892]” (The Messianic Idea), in JS I:105-24.

<sup>15</sup> The full citation in Cohen is Hosea 2:18-20: “I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD.”

<sup>16</sup> The full citation in Cohen is Hosea 6: 4-6: “What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.

through love in Joel 2:12-17<sup>17</sup> and Joel 3:1<sup>18</sup> (JS I, 109-110). In contrast, in *Religion of Reason*, Cohen concentrates on the aspects of punishment, destruction, and justice inherent in the prophetic view of the end of days (RR, 244-45/285-87) and argues that within “monotheism the idea of the end of the world can be made use of only as God’s *judgment*” (245/286). Bertholet’s influence is obvious, as this is the same path that he uses (Bertholet, 10-11), a path which Cohen comments upon and approves of (*Werke* 16, 19-20).

For Cohen, God’s judgment is the direct result of God’s justice, which is the direct result of God’s own moral nature. That is, God’s own moral nature demands justice, which demands judgment. In God’s judgment, Cohen sees the result of the establishment of morality on earth, which is the cessation of injustice. Cohen asserts, then, that the cessation of injustice on earth is precisely the meaning of the Messiah because the morality of God, which is represented by the

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Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have killed them by the words of my mouth, and my judgement goes forth as the light. For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”

<sup>17</sup> Joel 2:12-17: “Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

<sup>18</sup> Joel 2: 28-32: “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.”

Messiah, results in messianism, which “means the dominion of the good on earth” (RR, 21/24), as morality “will be established in the human world” (21/24). Cohen notes that the concepts of morality and justice demand possible punishment. However, he argues that while the moral nature of God demands judgment, and therefore possible punishment and destruction, the idea of punishment contains within itself a correction—a provision for the future (244/285). For Cohen, the thought of the end of the world thereby includes in itself the thought of the “*renewal of the world*” because destruction “is not thought of without regeneration” (244/285). That is, while there may be destruction, there will also be salvation. As we saw above, in his analysis of Ezekiel, Cohen associates salvation with purification. Therefore, Cohen asserts that out “of the notion of God’s punitive judgment gradually emerges the thought of the purification of Israel and no less of the other people” (245/286). With this thought Cohen argues that the concept of the end of days turns into the “Day of Judgment,” which “inspires the thought of the renewal and re-creation of the world” (245/287). The thought of renewal, along with the thought of restoration, allows Cohen to argue that the “Day of Judgment” becomes the “Day of the Lord” (246/287), and once the “Day of the Lord” was established, the horror of judgment is overcome because God’s moral nature allows for the “hope in a new existence for one’s own as well as for the alien nation” to be established (246/287).

With the thought of hope and salvation for Israel and the world, Cohen notes that the prophets have now included in their thoughts the universal world and its history. According to Cohen, in doing so, the prophets become the originators “of the concept of *world history*” (246/287-88). Cohen argues that the concept of world history stems from the connection of the social, the political and



the economic interests of the prophets, a connection that comes directly from the prophets' commitment to the religious:

But he [the prophet] can become all this [politician, historian, moralist] only because he is the creator of religion, of the revelation of the true God, admonishing to the true worship of God, which cannot be thought of separately from the true service between man and man and between people and people. It is in this connection that the concept of the good, first objectively and then as applied to God, originates. (246/288)

For Cohen, while the prophetic concept of God has heretofore demanded justice within the national context, and has merely alluded to that of the universal, now the concept of the good and the concept of world history, when applied to the concept of God, call for God's love of all humanity (246/288). Since monotheism means that there is only one God, the whole world is the realm of God, and therefore the concepts of teleology and world history call for not only the love of all humanity, but also the inclusion of all of humanity in that religion as this new concept of God, God as the God of humanity "demands justice and love for all men" (246/288). Accordingly, once the prophets looked beyond themselves towards other nations, thereby bringing the message of God's morality and justice to the other nations, Cohen asserts that the prophets were able to establish a universal religion. For Cohen, this universal religion, which is "based on the harmony between God's ideas and the moral 'statutes and ordinances' which this God commanded" (242/283), the true religion of the Lord "of morality demands submission to his commandment" (247/288). Thus, Cohen argues that under the precepts of monotheism and the unique God—where the unique God "should be

called the Lord over all the earth”<sup>19</sup> (243/284) and be known and worshiped by all people—the morality and justice of the unique God institutes a new view of history, where the salvation or damnation of Israel also entails the salvation or damnation of all other peoples (242/283).

According to Cohen, this new view of history rests on the idea of the future. As we saw above, the ideas of God’s morality and justice play a vital role in the establishment of the prophetic vision of the end of days. We must, however, note that the theories of the end of days are theories about the future, or the direction in which history is headed. That is, in Cohen’s thought, history only develops, or is created by the prophets, because of this thought of the future, as he argues that everything is directed towards the future. We can explain Cohen’s ideas about the future and history through his concept of messianism. Cohen argues that messianism “is directed to the future” (248/290). As we have seen before, Cohen sees within Ezekiel’s message of salvation a message of restoration that enables the prophet to create the means by which to win and incorporate all other nations into the messianic future (253/296). Thus, we can see that for Cohen, the “universal” incorporation of the nations into the “national” religion takes place because of the prophetic vision of future salvation. This vision of salvation and restoration in the future means in Cohen’s opinion that past “and present submerge in this time of the future” (249/291) because the Messiah, as the figure of salvation, dissolves the notion of “the personal image in the pure notion of time,” where “time becomes future and only future” (249/291). Cohen argues that the following results: “All existence sinks into insignificance in the presence of the point of view of this idea, and man’s existence is preserved and elevated

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<sup>19</sup> Zec. 14:9: “And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one.”

into this being of the future” (249/291). For Cohen, then, in the face of the future, the figure of the Messiah creates a new ideal for humanity—the being of the future—and in doing so, impacts the concept of God. Cohen argues:

The creator of heaven and earth is not sufficient for this being of the future. He must create “a new heaven and a new earth.” The being of previous history is inadequate even for nature, for development is required for the course of things, and development presupposes a goal to which it strives. Thus progress is required in the history of the human race. (250/292)

Cohen’s point is that the future establishes both God’s presence on earth and the goal of history. That is, the monotheistic meaning of God as a unity becomes established on earth in a new way with the prophetic vision of the future. As a result, Cohen asserts, “the unity of God becomes the model for the peoples of the world so that they set their unity in mankind as the goal of their historical existence. The unity of men is the eternal value of the human race” (255/297). Cohen argues, then, that the goal of history is the unity of the human race, which can only be established because of the unity of God, and God’s presence on earth, which is the meaning of messianism as developed by the prophets.

The prophets’ creation of the concept of history, and of world history, is for our purposes one of Cohen’s most important arguments because it helps us to explain Cohen’s understanding of the meaning of world history, which is related to how he sees the significance of biblical scholarship in Germany. Before we get to how Cohen sees world history as related to biblical scholarship in Germany, however, we must look closely at Cohen’s arguments concerning the meaning of world history in general. As we have already seen, Cohen asserts that world

history is the product of the prophetic vision of the moral God and the future. Cohen asserts that the prophets see the goal of world history as the unification of all peoples under the one God. Since Cohen argues that the prophets create the idea of world history out of their ideas about God's justice and morality, he connects the idea of world history to the idea of messianism. In doing so, Cohen is able to assert that the "messianic concept of world history is focused upon the suffering of the majority of mankind hitherto" (263/307-8). Cohen is able to assert this because of the inherent connection that he sees between the prophetic view of God's justice and human suffering. Cohen argues further that God's justice is linked to God's love, and as a result, God demands both punishment and restoration, meaning that "man's sufferings become [God's] 'chastisements of love<sup>20</sup>'" (264/308). Cohen explains that this idea demands that "the man, the Messiah, is conceivable as representative . . . of the suffering, which otherwise would have to be their punishment" if not for the idea of God's love (264/308). That is, the Messiah must be both a figure of suffering and a figure of redemption, because Cohen thinks that only "through the Messiah's taking the earthly suffering of man upon his shoulders does he become the ideal image of the man of the future, the image of mankind, as the unity of all peoples. He becomes . . . Atlas who supports the moral world of the future" (264/308). Cohen further argues that only "through this concept of the representation of human suffering could the messianic concept of history be fulfilled" (264/308). We can explain Cohen's argument as follows. In asserting that human suffering is necessary for the messianic concept of history, Cohen is arguing that only through suffering can the goal of unity be achieved as the world is united under the idea that suffering

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<sup>20</sup> Cohen quotes from *b. Berakhot* 5a.

will indeed cease under the precepts of the moral and just God. This is why Cohen asserts that the meaning of the Messiah is that “injustice will cease” (21/24). That is, the Messiah, as the representative of human suffering, is necessary for the messianic view of history because the promise of the Messiah is that human suffering will come to an end under God. According to Cohen, the Messiah thereby institutes “the foundation of the ethical concept of history . . . that every eudaemonistic appearance is nothing but an illusion” (264/309). Thus, for Cohen, the meaning of history is the same as its goal—in the future suffering will end and “all the peoples will worship the unique God” just as the prophets prophesied (284/331).

Since the meaning and goal of history were understood first by the Israelite prophets, Cohen argues that the prophets, with their views of morality and justice, have laid the foundation for the ethical concept of history. As a result, Cohen asserts that “the genuine value of life for the entire history of peoples lies in moral ideas and is therefore represented among men only by those who are accredited as carriers of these ideas” (264-65/309). Since the prophets have created the concept of history, and along with it have described the meaning of the Messiah and world history, Cohen asserts that Israel becomes the signpost for the goal of history (267/312). Cohen therefore argues that Israel must suffer vicariously for the other nations as history moves towards its goal, and “through this widening of the national limits of suffering, which is demanded by humanitarian ethics, the true sense of the messianic idea is satisfied and fulfilled” (268/313). That is, in suffering for the nations, the Jewish people have become the foundation on which the unity of the whole world is built because “Israel’s suffering is the tragic chastisement which is to bring about peace among men”

(284/331). We can connect this line of thought with Cohen's understanding of Ezekiel—for just as Israel is the sign for the suffering of the world, so too is Israel the sign of the restoration of the world as seen in Ezekiel 37. Cohen argues:

[Ezekiel's] political and messianic utilization of the myth of resurrection . . . touches the messianic idea . . . that Ezekiel already interprets . . . in terms of a philosophy of history. The people cannot die. The death of the people is only a frightened illusion of despair, an illusion which is healed and removed through messianic confidence. Just as death is not real, so the resurrection is only the rejuvenation to a new historical life. (281/327-28)

For Cohen, Israel, as the nation that suffers and cannot die, is the sign of God's love for all humanity. Thus, Cohen asserts:

World history [with Israel as its sign and] with its messianic goal actualizes this reconciliation of the peoples with God. And in the vision of God's servant the people of Israel is more than a priest; it is, rather, the sacrificial victim who exposes himself to suffering because of his knowledge of the irreplaceable value of this suffering for the historical welfare of mankind. (286/333-34)

In this quote we see that in Cohen's understanding of the meaning of world history, Israel becomes the bearers of the meaning of world history because only Israel understands the significance of the meaning of world history as only Israel hopes for a true universality.

Given his arguments in *Religion of Reason*, then, it is no surprise that Cohen lauds the work of Bertholet. Although chronologically speaking *Religion of Reason* comes after "Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion," Cohen's

arguments in *Religion of Reason* are not substantively different from those in “Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion,” as the seeds that Cohen builds his arguments around in *Religion of Reason* are seen in his essay on Bertholet. For instance, Cohen positively acknowledges Bertholet’s assertion that the God of the future, the God of morality, becomes the God of history, and the God of history becomes the God of humanity (Bertholet, 18-22; *Werke* 16, 21), and then uses this ground of reasoning in his own analysis of the creation and meaning of history as we have seen above. Cohen also approves of Bertholet’s argument that “the discovery of teleology in history is the pride of the Old Testament religion” (Bertholet, 22; *Werke* 16, 22). Bertholet’s acknowledgment of this point means that one can now argue that “the meaning of history, that is the meaning of the human existence . . . lies in the life of the peoples, and in the development of the life of the peoples into the life of humankind . . . . Humankind is the highest purpose of the peoples, the final goal of human beings (22-23). In *Religion of Reason*, we can see that Cohen uses this argument as the basis on which he can assert that the goal of history, as revealed by the prophets, is the unity of humanity under the unique God as “the unity of God becomes the model for the peoples of the world so that they set their unity in mankind as the goal of their historical existence. The unity of men is the eternal value of the human race” (RR, 255/297). Finally, because both Cohen and Bertholet understand this goal of history as originating with the prophets, Israelite *Eigenart* becomes for both Cohen and Bertholet the true foundation of morality, justice and universality. Cohen uses the connections between morality, justice and universality that he saw in Bertholet’s work to ground his arguments for the purpose and meaning of the

Messiah, as he argues that the Messiah becomes the symbol of a united humanity (264/309).

### **World History, Nationalism and Universality: Cohen's Theories in Relation to His Analysis of German Biblical Studies**

We are now at the point where we can look at Cohen's theories about history, nationalism and universality in relation to his analysis of biblical studies in Germany. As we have previously noted, Cohen asserted that "the biblical criticism of Protestant theology is the best antidote for the hatred of Jews" (*Werke* 15, 100). Although Cohen did not write this with reference to Bertholet and Baudissin, Cohen clearly saw Baudissin and Bertholet as representative of his hope. Cohen thought that their scholarship on Israelite *Eigenart* pointed to a new and better understanding of the Jewish religion in German society. We can see that Cohen focused on Bertholet and Baudissin's theories of nationalism and universality, as well as Baudissin's methodological theories, and Bertholet's theories of history, in order to support his belief that Bertholet and Baudissin were part of the new trend of biblical studies that provided Jews with hope. By analyzing these theories and building his own in these areas, Cohen, Bertholet and Baudissin's theories of nationalism and universalism accentuated the narrowness of nationalism and the potential of universalism. Cohen then used these theories to argue that under the guidance of messianism, Jews and Christians could be united. For Cohen, because these theories were biblically based, and because the Bible was the shared ground for political and religious equality of Jews and Christians, the Bible should be the ground for the relationship between Jews and Christians in Germany. Therefore, in Cohen's opinion, biblical studies as a whole must be open



to the studies of both Jews and Christians, and research should be open to methodological advances that take advantage of the findings of Jewish studies on the Bible, while incorporating Christian studies that acknowledge a better understanding of Judaism instead of perpetuating anti-Jewish biases. That is, Cohen thought that biblical studies should acknowledge their neighbor in the Bible, the Jews. Cohen, however, does note that it is the hardest thing to accept a neighbor, especially when the neighbor is seen as a foreigner (*Werke* 16, 15). At the same time, he thinks that he is not the only one who sees the neighbor as useful for the situation of the Jews in Germany. Cohen calls attention to two aspects of Baudissin's thought for support: Baudissin's rejection of Kant's objection of Jewish particularism, and Baudissin's rejection of how this objection has been used to argue for German superiority and nationalism (*Werke* 16, 12-13, 14; Baudissin, NU, 16-17). Most significantly, Cohen argued that in light of Baudissin's work, Jews will be more mindful of Christianity's status as another foundation of human culture and be grateful for Christianity's intellectual, political and patriotic view of the "fellow one" because it helps their situation (*Werke* 16, 15). Cohen also argued that the "fellow one" provided the means by which "Jews can continue and develop their religious life without the religious forms becoming fossilized or deteriorating into the blindness and pigheadedness of national isolation, whereby the interaction of the cultural forces would be missed in a genuine national life" (15). When one adds Cohen's assertions about the significance of Judaism's place in world history to Cohen's assertion that Bertholet acknowledges the centrality of the prophets for Judaism, and not just Christianity, which therefore shows the possibility to deepen Christians' own "religious insight" (26), one sees that Cohen truly thought that there could be a

reciprocal and enriching relationship between the Christians and Jews in Germany. Thus, in light of Baudissin and Bertholet's advancements, Cohen asserts that the Jewish hope for the betterment of their situation in Germany may finally be realized, because "the days of deeper understanding of religious characteristics have obviously started" (15), and there can be no better comfort than that (15, 26).

For Cohen, the comfort comes from his messianic theory that the suffering of the Jews will one day stop because all suffering will cease. Cohen explains further:

Messianism absolutely defies the whole present political actuality of its own as well as of the other peoples. Messianism degrades and despises and destroys the present actuality, in order to put in the place of this sensible actuality a new kind of supersensible actuality, not supernatural, but of the future. This future creates a new earth and a new heaven and, consequently, a new actuality. This creation of the future, as the true political actuality, is the greatest achievement of Messianism. (RR, 291/338-9)

That is, messianism itself promises that suffering will stop because it knows that present suffering needs to stop in order for the future actualization of monotheism. Thus, Cohen argues that suffering will cease because in the future all humanity will be united under God. According to Cohen, although it is "that which could not be apprehended by the sense of reality of all historical politics, that which even the political imagination could not conceive," the messianic idea shows that "the future of the human race [is] the true actuality of mankind" (292-3/341). Therefore, Cohen asserts, the horrifying political situation of the Jews in Germany

will one day come to an end once the world accepts the messianic idea and the idea of Israel's world historical significance. Cohen asserts that biblical studies can help this situation by acknowledging the work of Bertholet and Baudissin, as they both see the world historical meaning of Judaism and use their work to help right the wrongs that political, religious and academic prejudice reinforces in German society. Thus, Cohen sees Bertholet and Baudissin as his partners in perpetuating his messianic theories.

**Conclusion: How Bertholet and Baudissin Help Us Understand *Religion of Reason* as Cohen's Contribution to Biblical Studies as a Whole**

Alfred Bertholet and Wolf W. Baudissin highlight some of the most important features of Cohen's relationship with biblical criticism and his scholarship on Judaism, both in terms of methodology and content. Moreover, they represent features of the hope that Cohen had for the future of biblical scholarship because Cohen's interest in biblical scholarship was not just based on an interest in methodology or theory. In his opinion, studies of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible were significant for both academia and society at large. The Jewish fight for equality in Germany, for instance, was mirrored in the fight of Jewish scholars and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to be taken seriously in the academy. Cohen himself is extremely important in this regard because as a philosopher, he was already an accepted part of academia in Germany, but as a Jew who produced scholarship on Judaism, he was not. At the same time, Cohen never gave up hope that a real relationship between Christian and Jewish scholars was possible because he felt that they had the ability to influence each other and the world around them. To this end, Cohen argues that Bertholet and Baudissin represented

this possible relationship because he thought that they not only understood the significance of the Jewish fight for equality in German society and academia, but also helped in this fight through their methodological choices and the subjects of their studies.

Methodologically, Cohen asserted that the prophets are the high point of the biblical text. As such, he argued that the prophets represent the summit of religious monotheism. The significance for this is multi-fold. Since the biblical text develops towards the prophets, every interpretation of the biblical text must rely on the ideas developed by the prophets and the principle of monotheism or the interpretation will be incorrect. Given that people strive for a correct interpretation of the Bible, particularly because they then use their interpretation and apply it to everyday life, or in this case, scholarship, the pressure to get that interpretation right is immense, because if the interpretation is not correct, then how can one ever hope to achieve, or correctly describe, the biblical vision? Moreover, because both Jewish and Christian scholars were using the prophets as a methodological starting point for their studies of Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, Cohen's use of the prophets can be seen as part of his participation in the study of Judaism and religion in general in both the academic and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* contexts. More specifically, based on his methodology and his use of the *Eigenart* of the Israelites, Cohen can be seen as integrating Protestant biblical studies and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in such a way that he created a new model for biblical studies as a whole, a topic that will be developed more fully in Chapter 4. The fact that the Protestant scholars Wolf Baudissin and Alfred Bertholet also worked towards better understanding the prophets for the sake of better understanding religion, which was accomplished through their

achievements in method and result, verified Cohen's idea about the significance of biblical scholarship in society, and validated his hope that biblical scholarship could influence society through its religious and ethical point of view. Thus, Cohen thought that their work was consistent with his own critiques of biblical studies and the way that Cohen thought that Judaism should be studied. As a result, Cohen paid homage to their work on the "specifically Israelite" religion and ethics, as well as the quest for humanity, not only to pay homage to their methodological breakthroughs, but to prove that Israel, even for Christians, has an integral place in society, which verifies their existence, and indeed, their right to exist. For Cohen, who was fighting for the equality and recognition of the Jews in German society, the Jews' right to exist in that society as Jews was unmistakably based on the idea that Jews have something to offer that society, which was its "specifically Israelite" God-given mission as the symbol for the unity of humanity. Since Cohen felt that Bertholet and Baudissin emphasized the meaning of the "specifically Israelite" and prophetic form of morality and monotheism, they were natural partners in his quest because their very way of looking at Israel proved the truth and meaning of its existence, which was found in its messianic hope for the salvation of the world.

Cohen, therefore, saw Bertholet and Baudissin as perpetuating a vision of Israel that was consistent with his own. We, then, can see Cohen's analysis of Bertholet and Baudissin as highlighting some of the most important features of his portrayal of Judaism, including his messianic vision, as we can see that Cohen's main arguments in *Religion of Reason* have already been carefully thought out in reference to the work of Bertholet and Baudissin. Indeed, the main thrust of his analysis of Bertholet and Baudissin, and one of his main arguments in *Religion of*

*Reason* is the same—the grounding of the world historical meaning of the Jews within their similar theories of monotheism and morality. Thus, the world historical meaning of the Jews as God’s people and symbol for humankind works in Cohen’s thought in *Religion of Reason* and in his essays on Bertholet and Baudissin precisely because the God of Israel is the Lord over the whole earth and Israel is the light by which this message is known in the world. At the same time, Cohen points out that Israel’s mission as a light to the nations leads to the suffering of Israel. Cohen further argues that Israel’s suffering, especially as seen in his own German context, is a way to see the importance of the quest for peace as offered by God. According to Cohen, peace can only happen once social injustice has been eliminated, and since Israel is held up as a mirror to see the effects of social misery and provides the means by which that suffering can be eliminated through the ethics of the prophets, Israel’s suffering in the world must come to an end. In Cohen’s thought, then, messianic hope is not just empty words, but a concretized theory for the elimination of Jewish suffering in Germany aided by the proper study and understanding of Judaism and the biblical text; and once the main message of the Bible is understood, and integrated into society responsibly, then society has a chance at achieving the messianic goal of peace and unity with the whole world. Thus, instead of engaging only in the traditional apologetics, which defended Judaism against attack, Cohen uses his theories, which are grounded in his vision of the messianic, to critique biblical studies, because he thinks that a fruitful interaction between philosophy and biblical studies, and between Jews and Christians, has the ability to produce real change in the world, thereby allowing him to spread his messianic hope:

Is it not now our most intimate comfort in this age, which has brought too much worry for us, with all the pain and concern, it, at the same time, also has shown that the *acknowledgement of our religion* has now begun to unfold and spread into unknown depths, and that it is the science that comes from Protestant theology that has achieved this knowledge and through it, has deepened their own religious insight. Can there be a more living comfort, a more encouraging assurance for us, than that which speaks to us from these facts of our scientific modern age? (*Werke* 16, 26)

### **Chapter 3: Scholarship on the Prophets: Meeting Ground for Cohen, Wellhausen and Troeltsch?**

#### **Introduction**

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Cohen's views about the positive aspects of biblical criticism can be found in his work on the prophets and messianism. For Cohen, scholarship on the prophets proved vital to how Judaism and the Bible were properly understood and presented, and represented the meeting ground for Jewish and Christian scholars. Although Cohen approved of the scholarship of Baudissin and Bertholet, he still saw problems in biblical criticism's general portrayal of the prophets. In this chapter, we will look at Cohen's critique of prophetic scholarship of two scholars in particular. The first is Cohen's good friend Julius Wellhausen. In "Julius Wellhausen: Ein Abschiedsgruß (1918),"<sup>1</sup> Cohen discusses the methodological strengths and weaknesses of Wellhausen's theories concerning the prophets. The second scholar is Ernst Troeltsch. Cohen, in "Der Prophetismus und die Soziologie (1917),"<sup>2</sup> however, does not attribute any strengths to Troeltsch's arguments about the prophets in "Glaube und Ethos der hebräischen Propheten" (1916; Faith and Ethos of the Hebrew Prophets).<sup>3</sup> Instead, Cohen focuses on the methodological weaknesses of Troeltsch's portrayal of the prophets and links these weaknesses back to the Protestant biases in biblical

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<sup>1</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Julius Wellhausen. Ein Abschiedsgruss [1918]" (Julius Wellhausen. A Farwell), in *Werke* 17:615-22.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Der Prophetismus and die Soziologie [1918]" (Prophetism and Sociology), in *Werke* 17:505-10.

<sup>3</sup> This essay was first published as "Das Ethos der hebräischen Propheten," in *Logos. Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur*, 6 (1916/17), 1-28. It later appeared as "Glaube und Ethos der hebraeischen Propheten," in Troeltsch's *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Hans Baron (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1925), 4:34-64.



criticism that we saw in Chapter 1. When these two essays are seen together, especially when we see Cohen's positive portrayal of Wellhausen in contrasted to Cohen's negative comments on Troeltsch, several questions about Cohen's interactions with biblical criticism emerge: Why is scholarship on the prophets vital to Cohen's overall presentation of Judaism? Why does Cohen single out the work of Wellhausen and Troeltsch? What are the presuppositions according to Cohen that each scholar brings to bear on his scholarship? What aspects of the prophets do they focus on, and what methods do they use? This chapter will attempt to answer these questions in order to get a grasp on both how and why Cohen critiques of biblical criticism develop over time. Moreover, by answering these questions, we will be able to closely examine what Cohen understands himself to be doing in *Religion of Reason*, because, as we have seen before, *Religion of Reason* is Cohen's answer to how Judaism and the biblical text should be studied.

### **Cohen and Wellhausen**

Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) was a scholar whom Cohen admired, and he wrote "Julius Wellhausen: Ein Abschiedsgruß" as a commemorative piece in *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte* on the occasion of Wellhausen's death. Although Cohen and Wellhausen had been colleagues at the University of Marburg for only seven years (1885 to 1892),<sup>4</sup> Cohen was undoubtedly influenced by Wellhausen's work, as we will see below in our discussion of Cohen's essay "Die Versöhnungsidee." In fact, Cohen considered writing his *Abschiedsgruß* as an honored duty, as he thought that Wellhausen should be honored in Jewish circles.

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<sup>4</sup> Wellhausen was *Ordinarius* for Semitic philology in Marburg (Zank, 109).

According to Cohen, Wellhausen dedicated his life to teaching and studying the Hebrew Bible and “rendered eternal services for the understanding of the Israelite prophets” (*Werke* 17, 615). While Cohen did not think that he had the proper authority to speak on all facets of Wellhausen’s work, he asserts that his piece should be of some objective importance (615). Writing this piece presented him with the opportunity to critique Wellhausen’s work in the wider sense of proper methodology and biblical research, including both negative and positive aspects of that work, as well as an acknowledgment of the significance of their friendship in the academic world and in Germany in general.

In *The Idea of Atonement in the Philosophy of Hermann Cohen*, Michael Zank discusses several aspects of the role that Wellhausen played in Cohen’s early scholarship on Judaism. According to Zank, in his attempts to track the development of sacrifice in Judaism in the 1892 essay “Die Versöhnungsidee,” Cohen adopts the “basic periodization of Julius Wellhausen’s history of Israel,” and builds on Wellhausen’s “theory of the sources of the Pentateuch” (Zank, 109-10). In Zank’s view, Cohen uses Wellhausen’s *Geschichte Israels* (Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel)<sup>5</sup> first and foremost because Cohen simply has to “take into account contemporary biblical scholarship” (Zank, 111). At a time when biblical studies was dominated by Protestant scholars, and since Jews received “much of their knowledge about the history of Judaism from Christian authors” (Zank, 486), Cohen “could not ignore the results of Higher Criticism” (Zank, 112). Moreover, as Wellhausen was seen to be among the best and brightest, for Cohen to draw on Wellhausen’s research in his own studies of

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<sup>5</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Reimer, 1878). *Geschichte Israels* was republished a few years later as *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Reimer, 1883).

Judaism shows his ability to understand and integrate “the best available scholarship” (Zank, 486). Thus, Zank argues that by relying on the results of Protestant biblical scholars, Cohen was able “to meet them on their own ground” (Zank, 112). According to Zank, this was significant because for Cohen’s work to be seen as successful, he had to be seen as accepting scholarly consensus, and not be seen as attacking “any of the seemingly objective scholarly results” (Zank, 112). Zank, however, also asserts that Cohen was “quite taken by the Protestant preference of a spiritualization and interiorization of ethical principles to the exteriority of ‘works’” (Zank, 122). For Zank, this means that Cohen not only incorporates “basic historical facts” (Zank, 484) from Protestant scholars such as Wellhausen, but also shares some of their base assumptions. For instance, Zank points out that Cohen and Wellhausen both have the “perception that, as Hans Joachim Kraus puts it, the ‘essence of the religion of Israel’ was not to be found in any particular one of its periods, but in *‘the development as such—this exciting process of becoming’*”<sup>6</sup> (Zank, 110).

For Zank, Cohen and Wellhausen’s shared interest in the development of the Israelite religion and Cohen’s appreciation for Wellhausen’s reputation leads Cohen to portray this development along the same lines as Wellhausen. Zank argues that both Wellhausen and Cohen understand the “ancient Israelite religion as a ‘natural’ religion in which cultic institutions such as the slaughter of animals were joyous occasions, family meals in the presence of the tribal God Yahweh” (Zank, 113). Zank points out that both men focus on sacrifice as a means for tracking the development of Israelite religion over time, and that Cohen “presents a view of the original character of Israelite sacrifice which corresponds to the

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 264.

view held by Wellhausen in his *Geschichte Israels*” (Zank, 484). Cohen and Wellhausen share methodological presuppositions as well. Both were well acquainted with the practice of comparing the development of the Israelite religion with the development of other religions. Zank notes that both men are familiar with the theory of scholars of Greek religion that “the connection of religion and ethics” was a “relatively late achievement of the classical period” and that both apply this insight to the history of Judaism (Zank, 117). Moreover, they assume that “the sacrificial cult underwent certain changes” (Zank, 484). More importantly, however, Zank argues that Wellhausen and Cohen both search for the distinct character that the Israelite religion takes on over time by using the concept of monotheism as their guide for tracking these changes (Zank, 113).

Although Cohen and Wellhausen share key methodological assumptions, and although Cohen uses the historical evidence provided by Wellhausen as the basis for his study on the history of sacrifice in “Die Versöhnungsidee,” Cohen did not agree with several of Wellhausen’s conclusions and offered an interpretation of the material that ran counter to that of Wellhausen (Zank, 484). Not surprisingly, their conclusions differ with respect to their conflicting theories of history. Zank argues that whereas Wellhausen works within the Protestant dialectical view of history that sees periods of time as discontinuous or in opposition (Zank, 126), Cohen “understands the relation between the periods as steps in a continuous development” (Zank, 110). Zank also asserts that the two scholars simply saw the biblical text through different lenses—Wellhausen through that of Protestant Old Testament scholarship and Cohen through modern Reform Judaism (Zank, 126). Zank points that where “Wellhausen sees degeneration and decay, Cohen finds a sequence of institutions and ideas that

testify to a common ground that provided the foundation for the work of further development” (Zank, 126). So for Cohen, Wellhausen’s assertions that the history of the Israelite religion degenerated<sup>7</sup> are completely false. More importantly, Zank argues, this leads Cohen to think that Wellhausen operates with a flawed philosophy of history that sees degeneration where one should see progress (Zank, 110).

The key differences between Cohen and Wellhausen’s interpretations of Israelite history may also be understood as a difference in opinions about the purpose of the interpretive task at hand. While the Protestant scholars emphasized *sola scriptura* and finding “an *Urtext*, *Ur*-meaning, or *Ur*-revelation,” Zank points out that “the Jewish exegetical tradition found it more appropriate to the idea of revelation to imbue sacred text with esoteric meanings found between the lines than to reduce it to its literal meaning” (Zank, 111). That is, while Christian scholars focused on the original and literal meaning of the text in its historical context, Jewish scholars thought that the meanings in the text continually evolved. Therefore, Zank asserts, Jewish scholars argued that the “character of revelation demanded one to seek its meaning actively, by bringing one’s own insights to the text so that its meanings were increased rather than reduced” (Zank, 111). Cohen’s interpretations, then, differed from those of Wellhausen’s because he understood the Jewish tradition as a continuous progression. Wellhausen, on the other hand, saw the Jewish tradition as the degeneration of the Israelite tradition in history, and therefore presented his *Geschichte Israels* as a history of that degeneration. For Zank, the difference also lies in the fact that Cohen did not pretend that he was searching for “objective” truth, as many of the Protestant

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<sup>7</sup> We will look at Wellhausen’s argument in greater detail later in this chapter.

scholars, including Wellhausen, did. Instead, “Cohen’s method in approaching Jewish sources is determined by his interest in linking modern ideas and principles of ethics historically and systematically with their antecedents in classical Judaism” (Zank, 111). Thus, Cohen and Wellhausen did not share the same interpretative task, for while Wellhausen was interested in the history and redaction of the Pentateuch, Cohen was interested in the area of “philosophical theology” (Zank, 112).

For Cohen, the differences between himself and biblical scholars were not just limited to those of interpretative stances and areas of interest. Nor did the problems that those differences created only stem from the fact that Cohen was a Jewish philosopher and biblical scholars were Protestant. While there is no question that, due to cultural circumstances, Cohen was in a “particular apologetic situation” (Zank, 126), the criticisms that Cohen made about biblical scholarship pointed to the deeper issues about biblical scholarship that he wanted to address. For instance, while Wellhausen, among others, presented Judaism as the degeneration of the Israelite religion and as a dead, legalistic religion, Cohen sought to counter this image and to show that Judaism was and still is a living and thriving religious tradition (Zank, 486). So, while Cohen could and did use historical material from biblical scholars, he could not base his own reconstruction of the history of Judaism or the ultimate interpretation of the prophetic mission of Judaism that he developed in *Religion of Reason* on the findings of Protestant scholars because several of their presuppositions were completely incompatible with his own (Zank, 112). In a very real sense, then, Cohen’s presentation of Judaism can be seen as a direct response to the limitations that he saw in the Protestant biblical scholarship of his day. That is, while Cohen

responded to the results of the historical studies of biblical scholars by incorporating these results into his own work, as we will see later, he could not accept many of the “Protestant” presuppositions and conclusions of these studies and instead offered his own interpretation of the material. As Zank asserts, in doing so, Cohen became “one of the earliest Jewish authors who, though not a specialist, tackled a field which had been all but left to the Protestants” (Zank, 112). More significantly, Cohen’s *Religion of Reason* became a model for *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and a call for the importance of the Jewish voice in biblical studies, which was supplemented by Cohen’s pursuit to improve “Jewish learning from basic education through the academic level” (Zank, 486).

Furthermore, the limitations that Cohen sees in the Protestant presentation of the Jewish religion are linked to Cohen’s critiques of Wellhausen’s work, especially his work on the prophets. For while Cohen praises Wellhausen’s understanding of the prophets and acknowledges Wellhausen’s studies on the ethics and universalism of the prophets (*Werke* 17, 616), Cohen asserts that a study of the messianic message of the prophets lies far beyond the borders of what Wellhausen was academically capable of understanding (616). Thus, Cohen’s relationship with and critiques of Wellhausen represent the full scope of Cohen’s interactions with biblical scholarship, as on the one hand, Cohen both praises and make use of Wellhausen’s scholarship, while on the other, he critiques Wellhausen in such a way that speaks to Cohen’s critiques of biblical studies in Germany as a whole.

### **Cohen's Eulogy for Wellhausen**

Cohen published his "Julius Wellhausen: Ein Abschiedsgruß" in the Jewish publication *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*. While the fact that this piece is of a commemorative nature prevents Cohen from presenting a full-scale critique of Wellhausen's significance for biblical studies in Germany, Cohen does not let the occasion pass to closely look at Wellhausen's body of work. As Zank has shown in his above-cited analysis of Cohen's reliance on biblical scholarship, Cohen rated the work of Wellhausen highly. Although Zank makes the case that Cohen had no choice but to use the work of scholars such as Wellhausen in his reconstruction of Israelite history, I would argue that Cohen singled out Wellhausen's work for two additional reasons. First, Cohen sincerely respected Wellhausen not only for his achievements in philology, but also, and perhaps more importantly, for the potential that Wellhausen had and represented for greater growth in biblical studies. Second, just as he had for Bertholet and Baudissin, Cohen took the potential that he saw in Wellhausen, expanded upon it and tried to actualize that potential in the methodology of *Religion of Reason*. In doing so, he transformed the original purpose of Wellhausen's thesis to suit his own political and academic ends. For Cohen, the objective of scholarship was to get at the truth of the matter by using every tool at hand, and he no doubt saw Wellhausen's work as a tool for getting to the next level in that search. Or to put it differently, in *Religion of Reason*, Cohen tried to help the seed that Wellhausen planted grow, and although the plant does not look like the seed, the plant comes from the seed, and in fact would not exist without the seed.

Before we are able to fully comprehend how Cohen uses Wellhausen as a catalyst in his analysis of biblical studies, we must look closely at Cohen's



complicated portrayal of Wellhausen. Cohen begins by making the following statement about Wellhausen and biblical scholarship:

In order to understand Wellhausen's relationship to biblical research, one must above all understand that he was not in the strict sense both a historian and philologist. Also, in order to understand Wellhausen's relationship to religion in general, one must understand that he was not a philosopher, and therefore was in no way a dogmatist; rather for him, his mind and his character were connected to religion. (615-16)

According to Cohen, an analysis of Wellhausen's scholarship must take into account Wellhausen's disposition towards religion because this disposition was the driving force behind his work and was also the measure by which Wellhausen judged the scholarship of others. For instance, Cohen notes that Wellhausen once said about a famous theologian that he "only had the understanding, and not the heart, for religion" (616).<sup>8</sup> To Cohen, Wellhausen will always be the simple son of a minister, who never had any doubt in God (617). However, while Cohen admires and supports Wellhausen's unshakable faith, he thinks that this religiosity limits and even compromises Wellhausen's scholarship. He argues that Wellhausen's disposition meant that he was unable to correctly understand both the biblical prophet Ezekiel and messianism in general (616). To Cohen, messianic theories were beyond the borders of what Wellhausen was academically capable of (616). He asserts that because Wellhausen was limited by his own religious viewpoint, he ignored the philosophy of history, thereby compromising the accuracy of his research (617). Cohen further argues that

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<sup>8</sup> The editors of the *Werke* edition of this text write that Wellhausen probably meant Adolf von Harnack (616, n. 1).

Wellhausen's views on messianism did not come from his detailed and praiseworthy philological work, but from the restrictions of his naive childlike beliefs (617). That is, Cohen thinks that Wellhausen's theories of messianism are dictated by his faith, rather than being based on the material itself. For Cohen, this proves that Wellhausen was blinded by his own naiveté, and did not actually pursue an academic reading of the material. Moreover, according to Cohen, Wellhausen's naive belief that the "good" is reasonable and always reliable in the human world (617) shows that Wellhausen did not completely understand the point of world history and messianism, topics that we discussed in chapters 1 and 2, which further compromises his scholarship in those areas.

At the same time, Cohen points out that Wellhausen was able to complete complicated studies on the characteristics of the prophets (617). He asserts that as a result, Wellhausen made considerable contributions to the acknowledgment of the ethics and the universalism of the prophets (617), a topic that we will explore in greater depth later in this chapter. For Cohen, Wellhausen's work on the prophets, especially Wellhausen's favorite prophet Amos, is notable (617). For instance, he argues that Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* finely portrays the glory of the greatest prophets in their elemental force. Surprisingly, in Cohen's opinion, Wellhausen was able to portray the prophets accurately because they stood in close relation to Wellhausen's own beliefs in God (617-18), even if those same beliefs limited his scholarship on world history and messianism. Interestingly, Cohen makes the following statement about the future reception of Wellhausen's scholarship:

Only in later times will it be made clear how much value this method had for the pioneer of biblical criticism, and how much the

meaning of this research method was thereby protected from serious dangers, that so clear a religiosity within faith in God and simple morals assisted this great researcher and guided him in his entire representation of the history of Israel. (618)

Cohen's statement is significant for two reasons. First, Cohen notes that Wellhausen's true significance for prophetic scholarship cannot possibly be recognized during an age in which religiosity, or the religious point of view, is outlawed in biblical scholarship, when the internal connection between religion and morality is ignored, and when the religious morality of the prophets is jumped over (618). Second, given Cohen's claim that the way one studies religion affects the way in which religion is seen in society in general, he argues that to outlaw religiosity in scholarship, and to ignore the connection between religion and morality, is a serious error (618). Thus, according to him, even though Wellhausen was severely limited by his religiosity, it also played a positive role in his scholarship. As Irene Kajon points out, Cohen and Wellhausen's friendship was based on "their common fight against materialism and atheism" (Kajon, 408), which stemmed from their deep respect for religious sentiment.

Cohen also asserts that while Wellhausen was not a philosopher, historian, or philosopher of history, all negatives according to Cohen, Wellhausen did have positive points as he was a religious moralist and a brilliant, detailed and creative scholar of philology and antiquity (*Werke* 17, 619). He continues: "From these partly negative, partly positive moments, may also be understood the lacunae and the one-sided aspects that are attached to his assessment of the Jewish religion according to its continued existence in world history" (619). Cohen argues that these lacunae can be traced to puzzling gaps and cracks that appear in

Wellhausen's work (619). Cohen claims that one such gap can be found in Wellhausen's abrupt shift in interest from the political history of Israel to that of the history of the Arabic nation (619). Although Wellhausen mastered Arabic language and literature and did not see any "racial" connection between the Israelites and the Bedouins,<sup>9</sup> which Cohen thinks are positive aspects of Wellhausen's scholarship, Cohen did not understand how Wellhausen could possibly study the political history of the Israelites and the Arabic language and literature without studying rabbinic Hebrew and the continuing religious development of Judaism (619). More importantly, Cohen argues that Wellhausen was not enough of a historian to make the world-historical question of Judaism itself into a problem (620). Cohen describes how when he himself gave a lecture at the World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress about Jewish religious progress in the German context,<sup>10</sup> Wellhausen disagreed with Cohen's lecture and asserted that the continuing existence of Judaism was due to the Jewish obligation to the traditional laws (620). For Cohen, this meant that the continuing existence of Judaism beyond the emergence of Christianity never became for Wellhausen a historical problem for religion and religious culture, not to mention a problem for their study, and Wellhausen's inability to understand that Judaism's continued existence went beyond mere obligation impaired his work (620). At the same time, while we saw in Chapter 1 that such arguments concerning the Christian interpretation of Jewish law could be understood as antisemitic, Cohen asserts that Wellhausen's religiosity was devoid of the problems and biases that one typically finds within Protestant dogmatics (620).

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<sup>9</sup> A point that Cohen argues for in "Der Nächste."

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Die Bedeutung des Judentums für den religiösen Fortschritt der Menschheit [1910]" (The Meaning of Judaism for the Religious Progress of Humanity), in *Werke* 15:431-54.

Cohen, therefore, did not attribute Wellhausen's methodological weaknesses to any antisemitic biases as he had in the case of other scholars such as Kittel and de Lagarde.

While Cohen spends the first part of the piece critiquing Wellhausen's methodology, he devotes the second part to his friendship with Wellhausen and to his hopes for the continuing significance of that friendship (621). Although Cohen asserts that he and Wellhausen also shared a connection in scientific and collegial questions, he states that by no means were they always of the same opinion in faculty matters (621). Since their friendship was so close despite their differences, Cohen thinks that their friendship should serve as an example for Jewish and Christian colleagues in the university:

Given the existing state of distress for Jewish professors, shouldn't there be a modest application of the story of this essay? What does this life experience of two university colleagues, who despite such strong differences arrive at such intimate sympathy, without basis in a deeper scientific commonality, teach? For although Wellhausen did not disregard or minimize my Jewish-scholarly education, he did not sufficiently regard it as scholarly. What hope, then, can be drawn from this private life experience of mine for the future of Jewish university professors, for genuinely warm accord and familiarity between Jewish and Christian university colleagues? (621-22)

For a real relationship between Jews and Christians in the academy to happen according to the example of his and Wellhausen's friendship, Cohen offers the following advice: Jews must have solid confidence in themselves and in their

Jewish religiosity (622). Cohen also asserts that Jews should not lose their way among scientific, social and political concerns about the basic norms of their nature and their behavior, because if they do not, then they will be able to achieve collegial acceptance and strength in all aspects of life, not just in academia (622). For Cohen, religion is the core of human nature, and people must learn to love and respect each other. Cohen argues that people must recognize the power of religion even though modern disbelief in general denies it and liberal prejudice strengthens antisemitism (622). He argues that under such “liberal” conditions, collegiality and friendship will never be maintained between Jews and Christians. Thus, he thinks that people must be retrained to think religiously, and in doing so, Jews will be able to restore faith to their religious selves, which will then enable Jews and Christians to become partners (622). So while Cohen does not think that Wellhausen’s method is all that conducive to effecting change in the academy, he believes that their friendship will serve as an example of how Jews and Christians can not only work together, but become friends. Indeed, Cohen writes: “I would like for the example of my long friendship with Julius Wellhausen to be instructive and comforting for the Jewish community, and I would especially like for it to arouse courage and confidence in university relationships” (622). In the end, Cohen hopes that Wellhausen’s scholarship and their friendship will have the ability to be the foundation for the dissolution of antisemitism in the academy.

In Cohen’s view, the negatives and positives of Wellhausen’s scholarship demonstrated both how far biblical criticism had advanced, as well as how far it still had left to go, for although Cohen approved of Wellhausen’s portrayal of the prophets, he did not agree with Wellhausen’s portrayal of Judaism as a whole. However, while Cohen did not approve of the way Judaism was viewed by

Protestant biblical scholars, he thought that scholarship on the prophets could be a meeting ground for Jewish and Protestant scholars, and a guide for what scholarship on Judaism should look like. In the next two sections we will reconstruct and examine the aspects of Wellhausen's scholarship concerning the prophets that Cohen responded the most to, in both positive and negative ways.

### **Cohen and Wellhausen on the Prophets**

Wellhausen's main question in the *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*<sup>11</sup> concerns the place of Mosaic Law in history. Wellhausen asks "whether that law [as found in the Pentateuch] is the starting-point for the history of ancient Israel, or not rather for that of Judaism" (Wellhausen, 1). For the purposes of our analysis, this question is important because Wellhausen's dating of the sources of the Pentateuch rests partly on his assumptions about the place of the prophets in ancient Israel. That is, he uses the prophetic writings, along with the historical books, as a resource for tracking the development of Mosaic Law, the status of its authority in the Israelite community, and its codification in the Priestly Code. Within this methodology, we can clearly see Wellhausen's assumption that the centrality and authority of the prophets and the prophetic writings must have an earlier origin than that of the Priestly Code. In fact, according to Wellhausen, "the whole historical movement now under our consideration, so far as it was effective and thereby has come to our knowledge, is in its origin and essence prophetic, even if latterly it may have been aided by priestly influences" (48). Simplifying Wellhausen's question along these lines, we can say that his sub-question is whether the law came before or after the prophets. While Wellhausen discusses

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<sup>11</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel: With A Reprint of the Article "Israel" from the Encyclopedia Britannica* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

the various sides of this question throughout the book, Wellhausen's answer is not as straightforward as one might expect because Wellhausen's question concerns the process of canonization. For Wellhausen, the question concerns what the Israelite community accepted as authoritative, and when they accepted it. Wellhausen explains:

The historical and prophetic books were, in part at least, a long time in existence before they became canonical, and the same, it is thought, might be the case with the law. But the case of the law is essentially different. The law claims to have public authority, to be a book of the community; the difference between law and canon does not exist. Hence it is easy to understand that the Torah, though as a literary product later than the historical and prophetic books, is yet as law older than these writings, which have originally and in their nature no legal character, but only acquired such a character in a sort of metaphorical way, through their association with the law itself. (409-410)

For Wellhausen, then, even if the Priestly Code is dated later than the prophetic writings, the significant point is that the law as such existed before the prophets and the law's later codification in the Priestly Code.

Wellhausen's main question concerns the process of canonization, and the development of the authority of both the prophets and the law. Wellhausen's presentations of the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah and Jeremiah are the most important in this regard because for Wellhausen, these prophets are markers of the movements that became central for the law. Wellhausen's privileging of the prophets in his analysis speaks to Cohen's hope that biblical scholarship would



focus on the centrality of the prophets in Judaism and would use the prophets as a meeting point for Jewish and Christian scholars. Since Cohen thought that Wellhausen's work on the prophets could be the basis for that meeting point, let us now look at Wellhausen's understanding of the prophets and their relationship to the law in order to understand what aspects of Wellhausen's thought Cohen either agreed or disagreed with. Interestingly, while Cohen's thoughts on Isaiah and Jeremiah align with those of Wellhausen, the major differences between Cohen and Wellhausen can be seen in their treatments of Ezekiel. Therefore, we will begin with an analysis of Wellhausen's portrayal of Isaiah, then examine Jeremiah in Wellhausen's thought, and finish with Wellhausen's arguments concerning Ezekiel.

Isaiah is one of the loci around which Wellhausen builds his arguments for the distinction between the prophetic and priestly movements. For instance, in his investigation into the place of sacrifice in the history of Israel, Wellhausen asserts that rather than encouraging sacrifice, the prophets focused on Torah (57). Since Wellhausen uses this assertion to support his argument that "sacrificial worship is not of Mosaic origin" (57), we can also see that for Wellhausen, the prophets' concentration on the Torah highlights a certain tension between the priests and prophets of Israel. Although Wellhausen uses Hosea to argue that the prophets did not understand the cultus as the subject of God's Torah (57), he brings this point home with Isaiah 1:10-12:

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Listen to the teachings [Torah] of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not

delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before me, who asked this from your hand? Trample my courts no more.

According to Wellhausen, “Isaiah uses the word Torah to denote not the priestly but the prophetic instruction” (58). For Wellhausen, Torah as used in v. 10 cannot possibly be attributed to the Priestly Code because the Priestly Code codified sacrifices, while the prophets denounced them (58). Wellhausen’s purpose here, then, is to separate the prophetic movements from the priestly; and he does so in order to argue that the Priestly Code was written after the prophets. As Wellhausen asserts, Isaiah could not have prophesied the above if sacrificial worship, as argued in the Priestly Code, had been properly Mosaic and thus, desirable (58). Therefore, according to Wellhausen, the Priestly Code and its sacrificial laws could not have been “properly Mosaic” if it was codified after the prophets wrote.

We can see Wellhausen’s preference for the prophetic movements over the priestly in this line of argumentation. While there is no doubt that Wellhausen argues that the movement towards the implementation of the Priestly Code represents a decline in the Israelite religion, especially since the prophets Hosea, Isaiah and Micah radically denounce sacrifice (57), Wellhausen’s reasons for preferring the prophets over the priests are significant for Cohen. Thus, to understand why Cohen approves of Wellhausen’s assertions on the prophets, we must look at why Wellhausen prefers the prophetic movement over the priestly. We can see two reasons for Cohen’s approval of Wellhausen’s scholarship on the prophets. First, in Wellhausen’s preference of the prophets over the priests, Cohen thinks that Wellhausen is arguing for the prophetic concern for the universal

over the national. Second, this concern is tied to the prophetic reforms. Before we get to Cohen's theories, however, we must focus on Wellhausen's.

According to Wellhausen's article on "Israel,"<sup>12</sup> the prophets were the makers of a new Israel (464), because the canonical prophets undertook a major reform of the Israelite religion. Wellhausen argues that they started their reform by severing the bond between the state and the religion (473) through introducing into Israel an ethical element that "destroyed the national character of the old religion" (474). For Wellhausen, the prophets' prophecies concerning the downfall of Israel and Judah allowed the prophets to save the religion of Israel when the nation of Israel did indeed fall, thereby instituting their major reform:

The downfall of the nation did not take place until the truths and precepts of religion were already strong enough to be able to live on alone; to the prophets belongs the merit of having recognised the independence of these, and of having secured perpetuity to Israel by refusing to allow the conception of Jehovah to be involved in the ruin of the kingdom. They saved faith by destroying religion. (474)

Thus, according to Wellhausen, by destroying the ties to a state, and therefore national religion, the prophets were able to focus on faith, which led to another major reform.

This reform, argues Wellhausen, led to the true religion of Israel, which was consolidated under the guidance of Isaiah (479). While Isaiah did influence Hezekiah in his reforms for Israelite worship, including the abolition of the high

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<sup>12</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th ed., s.v. "Israel." Wellhausen wrote this article in 1881. The page numbers refer to the work as it appears in *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel: With A Reprint of the Article "Israel" from the Encyclopedia Britannica*.

places (480), Wellhausen also argues that, since Isaiah was mainly a theologian (*Prolegomena*, 404), the most important reforms to the Israelite religion were theological in nature rather than sacrificial. Stemming from the prophecies for the downfall of Israel and Judah, Wellhausen asserts that Isaiah's promulgation of the Torah for both Israel and the heathen secured the universalistic and messianic point of view that the prophecies about the downfall of Israel and Judah alluded to (400). Moreover, Wellhausen argues that the author of Deutero-Isaiah continued this line of thought by reflecting the most on what this movement meant for Israel. For instance, Wellhausen points out that Deutero-Isaiah concentrated mainly on the meaning of Torah (400). According to Wellhausen,

the Torah, which [Deutero-Isaiah] also calls *mishpat*, right (*i.e.*, truth), appears to him to be the divine and imperishable element in Israel. With him, however, it is inseparable from its mouthpiece, the servant of Jehovah, xlii. 1-4, xlix. 1-6, l. 4-9, lii. 13-liii. 12. The name would denote the prophet, but here it stands for the people, a prophet on a large scale. Israel's calling is not that of the world-monarchies, to make sensation and noise in the streets (xlii. 1-4), but the greater one of promulgating the Torah and getting it received. This is to be done both in Israel and among the heathen. (400)

Thus, we can see that for Wellhausen, by eliminating the state religion, Israel moved towards a universal faith. Moreover, Wellhausen asserts that after the exile, the Torah could not be allowed to die—"truth must prevail, must come to the light" (401)—and that for Deutero-Isaiah, the Torah is the promise for the resurrection of Israel (401). Wellhausen continues: "not only in Israel itself with

the Torah, will the servant of Jehovah prevail and bring about a regeneration of the people: the truth will in the future shine forth from Israel into the whole world, and obtain the victory among all the Gentiles (xlix. 6). Then it will appear that the work of the servant, resultless as it seemed to be up to the exile, has yet not been in vain” (401). For Wellhausen, the theology of these passages is completely incompatible with the priestly and the “Torah of Moses” (401). At the same time, Wellhausen’s contrast of these passages with the “so-called” “Torah of Moses” illustrates his high regard for the theology of Isaiah—which in Wellhausen’s view institutes the same universal character of the Israelite religion that Cohen argues for, as we will see later in the chapter.

Like Wellhausen, Cohen also thinks that the prophets railed against priestly sacrifice in Israel. Cohen follows Wellhausen in arguing that the prophets fought against sacrifice because doing so was necessary for the institution of monotheism (RR, 171/199). Although Cohen points out that sacrifice should be understood as the “oldest mythological symbol through which the correlation between man and the gods is achieved” (170/198), he thinks that sacrifice was rooted in idolatry, therefore the prophets’ message of monotheism had to include an injunction against sacrifice (171/199). There is, however, a fundamental difference in the way both men view the place or importance of sacrifice in the ancient Israelite religion. As we saw above, in Wellhausen’s opinion, the codification of sacrifice was central in the Priestly Code for Temple worship. Cohen, by contrast, does not equate sacrifice with the Temple cult. In his opinion, sacrifice and cultic worship were never the same thing in ancient Israel (171/199). According to Cohen, the prophetic understanding of the worship of God included the injunction “to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God”

(Micah 6:8) (171/199). Thus, for Cohen, worship of God required morality, not sacrifice. The rejection of sacrifice in the prophetic literature, then, Cohen argues contra Wellhausen, cannot be understood as a rejection of the entire cultic practice of the Temple, as to argue so would “contradict all historical sense” (172/200). Moreover, for Cohen, Wellhausen’s argument failed to ask the key question: why did the prophets reject sacrifice? Cohen argues that the prophets did not necessarily reject sacrifice, “but merely its connection with moral wrong and injustice” (172/200). According to Cohen, instead of “rejecting sacrifice” out of hand, the prophets fought against sacrifice because of their ideas of morality and moral reformation (172/200). That is, the prophets did not reject sacrifice per se, but rather the connection between sacrifice and injustice (172/200). Cohen asserts that one should ask what the prophets were trying to move beyond and what their new and great idea was in their rejection of the connection between sacrifice and injustice (172/200). Therefore, Cohen argues that to miss this point would be to deny the historical and psychological implications of “original and great ideas” and to obscure “the new main direction” that has been pursued (172/201). By using Isaiah 1:10-20 as an example, Cohen argues that the prophets wanted to move past the idolatrous and mythological origins of sacrifice, and the justification of immoral behavior through sacrifice (172-173/200-01). According to Cohen, these verses do not reflect a rejection of sacrifice, but rather the outgrowth of the institution of sacrifice as the idea of monotheism takes over (173/202). Moreover, Cohen argues:

In the history of moral and spiritual ideas in general, rarely has an entire revolutionary thought been expressed and carried out with such clarity and distinctness, with such strictness and precision, as

the prophets achieved in expressing the purely moral character of monotheism. They did this through an unrestrained fight against sacrifice. (173/202)

For Cohen, then, the true significance of the prophets' fight against sacrifice is found in their new idea of monotheism, which connects monotheism to morality.<sup>13</sup>

The connection between monotheism and morality, for Cohen, leads to the development of a universal view of messianism. Cohen argues that the relationship between God and Israel expands to include the relationship of God and Israel to other nations. In fact, Cohen considers Isaiah 19:21-25<sup>14</sup> as “a high point in the messianic idea of the unification of peoples” (274/319). Cohen argues that in this passage the election of Israel is surpassed as Israel is now called third after Egypt and Assyria, peoples “who previously were doomed to destruction, but to which [sic] God’s blessing is now granted. God now calls even Egypt ‘My people,’ and Assyria, ‘the work of My hands’” (274/319). With Isaiah 25:6-8,<sup>15</sup> Cohen asserts that “the idea of the unification of all the peoples is advanced to a

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<sup>13</sup> We also saw this argument for the connection between morality and monotheism in Cohen’s analysis of Bertholet and Baudissin.

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 19:21-25: “The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them. On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.’”

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 25:6-8: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the LORD GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.”

new critical clarification” (274/320). Cohen notes that Isaiah’s imagery of the veil<sup>16</sup> means that a cover is spread over the people as long as they are not united under God, but if they are united under God, the veil will be lifted (274/320). Moreover, once the veil has been lifted, the antagonism between the peoples will end, and God will be able to wipe up the tears of their people and give them consolation (274/320). For Cohen, God’s consolation is also linked to the prosperity of the peoples in Isaiah 32:15-17,<sup>17</sup> which is conditioned by moral righteousness (275/321). Thus, according to Cohen, the united humanity is connected to a moral and peaceful humanity (274-275/320-321).

At the same time, Cohen asserts that conversion is required for the peoples before the goal of messianic humanity can be reached. In fact, he argues that Deutero-Isaiah<sup>18</sup> explains that the Messiah himself is “mainly for the conversion of the peoples of the world” (282/328). Cohen thinks that Deutero-Isaiah’s motif of Israel as the servant of God serves as the best illustration of this construction and points to Isaiah 41:8, 9<sup>19</sup> and 42:1, 3<sup>20</sup> as examples; but Isaiah 42: 4-8 and

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<sup>16</sup> Cohen also notes that the term for veil is reminiscent of the term for idolatry (274).

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 32:14-17: “For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watch-tower will become dens for ever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks; until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever.”

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 40-55.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah: 41:8-9: “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off.’”

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 42:1, 3: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations...he will faithfully bring forth justice.”



Isaiah 49: 5-8 are for Cohen the culmination of the servant motif of Israel in the context of God's relationship to the nations. Isaiah 42:4-8:

He [Israel] will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in the darkness. I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols.

This passage highlights the major concepts that are brought together in Cohen's theory. One concept is that Israel has a role in the establishment of God's justice on earth, which stems from the morality of God and the possibility of the righteousness of Israel, which Cohen explains in line with the following of God's commandments in his use of Micah 4:1-4; 11-13, as we will see later in this chapter. The second concept is that the servanthood of Israel leads to the sanctification of God's name, which we will see in Cohen's exegesis of Ezekiel 36, because God has made Israel "a light to the nations" so that God's name and God's justice will be known to the nations. Lastly, this passage focuses on the creation of the heaven and earth by God in order to assert that the whole world is the realm of God, and no other God exists but him, which verifies Cohen's arguments about monotheism and the uniqueness of God, as well as God's

intentions for the salvation of the other nations. Isaiah 49: 5-8 also calls attention to these concepts:

And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—he says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, “Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.” Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages.”

While Isaiah 49:5-8 speaks directly to God’s mission for Israel “as a light to the nations”, according to Cohen, this passage marks the “difference between the Messiah’s vocation with regard to the nation and mankind” (282/329) in a more precise way than any other expression in the biblical text. For Cohen, these verses show the transition from a national consciousness to that of a universal one, which is actually commanded by God, but they clearly differentiate the steps of the redemptive process, starting with the national and leading to the universal. That is, the purification of Israel is the first step in the redemptive process, while the

second step is the sanctification of God's name, which can only take place at the universal level.

Isaiah 49:5-8 is also significant because it calls attention to the suffering of Israel, and the meaning of this suffering. Cohen argues that the suffering of Israel that results from their mission as God's light to the nations is the reason Israel has the right to complete its mission: "*in suffering for the peoples Israel acquires the right to convert them*" (283/330). Moreover, in Cohen's view, this "historical suffering of Israel gives it its historical dignity, its tragic mission, which represents its share in the divine education of mankind" (283/330). Since Cohen first spoke of Israel's purification, and by extension, the other nations, in regards to the thought of God's justice, which leads to the thought of God's guidance and education of the world (245/286), the suffering and purification of Israel is not to be thought of as a sorrowful fate. Rather, this suffering is Israel's "tragic calling, for it proves the heartfelt desire for the conversion of the other peoples, which the faithful people feels" (283-284/330). Cohen asserts that this suffering will only come to an end once the mission of Israel is fulfilled, when all people will indeed worship the unique God (284/331), and his name be sanctified. For Cohen, then, "Israel's suffering is the tragic chastisement which is to bring about peace among men" (284/331). More importantly, because of their messianic mission, only the Jewish people have this hope (289/337); and because this mission entails the purification of Israel, which includes the forgiveness of sins by God, God truly becomes the God of forgiveness (293/342) that Cohen set out to understand in the first place (236/276), and God will be able to bring "about the complete disappearance of sin from the human race" (293/342). Cohen concludes that this process verifies the second concept with which he starts, the God of social love

(236/276), that is, the God of morality and justice, because God's forgiveness proves the goodness of God: "Therefore, God is good with regard to all human beings, not only in regard to social matters but, what is no less important, in regard to the messianic goodness that extends to all peoples" (295/343).

Cohen also approves of Wellhausen's methodology for tracing the development of the Israelite religion. According to Wellhausen's methodology, developments in the Israelite religion were based on the reforms that the prophets introduced. As we saw above, for Wellhausen and Cohen, Isaiah's prophecies represent the movement from a national to a universal religion. Wellhausen argues, however, that the last true prophet of Israel is Jeremiah, and all the prophets who came after him are prophets in name only (Wellhausen, 403). Although this statement seems to run counter to Wellhausen's esteem for the prophets, I would argue that it shows that for Wellhausen, Jeremiah changed the composition of the Israelite religion, thereby changing the meaning of "prophet" for Israel and making the "traditional" prophet unnecessary. According to Wellhausen, Jeremiah's reform of prophecy stems from his view of the relationship between God and Israel. For instance, in Jeremiah 7:23, God says "Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you." Wellhausen argues that before Jeremiah, with Amos and Hosea, the nation was the focus of the Israelite religion, however, with prophecies such as the one above, Jeremiah introduces the concept of "religious individualism" into Israelite consciousness (491). According to Wellhausen, while Amos and Hosea tried to make morality and inner conviction the "basis of the national life" (491), Jeremiah sees this as a mistake. For Jeremiah, Wellhausen asserts, Israel referred only to the individual

Israelite, and so religion became personal instead of national (491). Thus, Wellhausen argues, with Jeremiah another covenant was to come into effect:

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jer. 31:31-34)

With Jeremiah, then, Wellhausen asserts, a new covenant and relationship between the individual Israelite and God was born (491) in which knowledge of God no longer came only through the nation. Now the knowledge of God was “written on the hearts” of each individual Israelite. Wellhausen argues that with this, Jeremiah transforms prophecy, or more specifically, prophecy transforms itself: “Especially with Jeremiah did prophecy, which is designed primarily to act on others, transform itself into an inner converse with the Deity” (506). If before the prophets were distinguished by their relationship to God, now each individual laid claim to the same relationship. More importantly, this relationship, the inner relationship with God, was for Wellhausen “the essence of the life of religion that

the prophets thus brought to view and helped to declare itself” (506). According to Wellhausen, Jeremiah’s experience “propagated itself and became the experience of religious Israel” (506). Thus, the relationship between the individual and God is transformed along with prophecy, and in turn, prophecy and religion are forever changed.

Cohen, too, affirms that God puts the spirit “not only into the individual, and indeed into every man, not only into the prophet” (RR, 103/119). That is, Cohen argues that the God has put the spirit into every individual, not just the prophet. Moreover, like Wellhausen, Cohen also focuses on the individual aspects of Jeremiah’s prophecies in relation to God. For instance, according to Cohen, Jeremiah transforms the relationship between God and man through his individual concept of sin. Cohen argues that Jeremiah rejected the idea that the guilt of the parents leads to the punishment of the children (189/221). Jeremiah 31:29-30: “In those days they shall no longer say ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge” (cited on 190/221). For Cohen, however, Jeremiah’s prophecy reflected the idea that sin was still social sin, and therefore did not understand sin “as the sin of the individual proper” (190/222), but rather communal sin that affected all individuals. At the same time, Cohen notes that Jeremiah 23:1-8<sup>21</sup> repudiates any nationalistic stance, which

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<sup>21</sup> For our purposes, the most important section is Jeremiah 23:5-8: “The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’ Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,’ but ‘As the LORD lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.’ Then they shall live in their own land.”

correlates with Wellhausen's arguments concerning Jeremiah as seen above. Cohen takes this argument in a different direction than Wellhausen, for while Wellhausen asserts that Jeremiah focuses on the individual, Cohen maintains that in rejecting nationalism, Jeremiah furthers the universal ethic that was established by Isaiah. Cohen argues that God's promise of a new future covenant with Israel, a covenant that is "written on the heart," in Jeremiah 31:31-36 can be applied to other nations because "in this future age [the messianic age] the knowledge of God will be a common good for all"<sup>22</sup> (278/324). Since this new covenant shall be written on the heart, Cohen asserts that it is grounded in morality and that it will institute God's justice for all (278/324). Thus, for Cohen, Jeremiah's prophecies combine morality with a universal vision of messianism. So, although Cohen and Wellhausen do not agree with the place of morality within Jeremiah, both argue that Jeremiah transforms the focus of prophecy, for after Jeremiah, prophecy lives in the heart of every Israelite. Moreover, when this passage is connected to Jeremiah 12:15-16, Cohen points out that the restoration and salvation of Israel is extended to the restoration of Israel's neighbors, which leads to the conversion of the peoples to the true religion, and therefore to their salvation, in Jeremiah 16:19-20 (279/325), thus again proving the universalism of the Israelite religion.

However, for Wellhausen, the transformation of prophecy in Jeremiah begins a decline in the religion of Israel because after Jeremiah, the Israelites focused more and more on the written Torah. As we saw above, Wellhausen argued that Jeremiah was the last true prophet of Israel and that all of the prophets that followed were prophets in name only (Wellhausen, 403). Wellhausen contrasts the experiences of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to prove his point. He notes that

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<sup>22</sup> Cohen cites *Midrash Tanchuma*.

Jeremiah speaks out against the scribes who write down Torah, saying that the process of writing turns Torah into a lie (Jer. 8:7-9, 403 n. 2). In contrast, Wellhausen argues, Ezekiel fully embraced the combination of writing and Torah. In fact, as Wellhausen points out, “Ezekiel had swallowed a book (iii. 1-3), and gave it out again” (403). According to Wellhausen, the contrast between the attitudes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel to written Torah results from the “discovery” of Deuteronomy (402). With Deuteronomy, which is known in 2 Kings 22-23 as the book of the Torah, authority becomes enshrined in a book. Wellhausen explains:

[Deuteronomy] is written with the distinct intention not to remain a private memorandum, but to obtain public authority as a *book*. The idea of making a definite formulated written Torah the law of the land, is the important point: it was a first attempt and succeeded at the outset beyond expectation. (402)

Wellhausen, then, asserts that with Deuteronomy, authority is no longer in the hands of prophecy, but in the hands of a book. For Wellhausen, what was authorized in the book was also a problem. Wellhausen asserts that instead of embracing the new sense of prophecy that was instituted with Jeremiah, the Israelites wrote down past, and no longer religiously viable “acquisitions” for the purpose of “practical use in the civil and religious life of the people” (402). According to Wellhausen, after the downfall of Israel, this book became “the compass of those who were shaping their course for the new Israel” (402). It is at this point that Wellhausen argues that the decline of the Israelite religion truly begins, for what Deuteronomy actually authorized was now defunct law, not Torah. Consequently, Wellhausen claims, with “the appearance of the law came to an end the old freedom, not only in the sphere of worship, now restricted to



Jerusalem, but in the sphere of the religious spirit as well” (402). Moreover, according to Wellhausen, because religion was now enshrined in a book, authority became objective instead of creative “and this was the death of prophecy” (402). Wellhausen further notes that the death of prophecy had already been seen in Jeremiah, who he says argues that the Israelites began to despise “the prophetic word because they had the Torah in black and white (viii. 7-9)” (403, n. 2).<sup>23</sup>

For Wellhausen, Jeremiah’s warning of the dangers of written Torah goes unheeded as Ezekiel embraces written Torah during the exile. According to Wellhausen, after Ezekiel, a Temple priest and a prophet, was carried off into exile, he tried to preserve the Temple practices by writing them down. Interestingly, while Wellhausen does not approve of written Torah, he defends Ezekiel: “it is easy to understand how the sacred praxis should have become a matter of theory and writing, so that it might not altogether perish, and how an exiled priest should have begun to paint the picture of it as he carried it in his memory, and to publish it as a programme for the future of the theocracy” (60). While Wellhausen may approve of Ezekiel’s attempts at preservation and his right to do so, he does not approve of the treatment this preservation received in the following generations. For him, the study of these texts gave them an artificially high value (60). Further, Wellhausen does not agree with traditional scholarship that refers to Ezekiel’s portrayal of Temple practices as attempts at reform (60). Rather, Wellhausen argues that “Ezekiel’s departure from the ritual of the Pentateuch cannot be explained as intentional alterations of the original; they are too casual and insignificant” (60). Moreover, Wellhausen asks why Ezekiel would

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<sup>23</sup> Wellhausen, however, neglects to mention that it is Jeremiah’s vision around which the Jews sought to rebuild their life during the Exile and the foundation for their life thereafter. Cf. Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 74.

bother to write down Temple practices if Israel already had a text for them. According to Wellhausen, Ezekiel neither knew of, nor could have been attempting a reform of, the Priestly Code simply because it did not exist (60).

At the same time, Ezekiel's preservation of Temple practices helped in the process of the codification of the law, a process that Wellhausen thinks resulted in the death of prophecy and freedom in Israel. For Wellhausen, then, Ezekiel is the link between prophecy and law (421), and represents the transition between oral and written Torah, or, the movement from living religion to dead law. Wellhausen explains:

He claims to be a prophet, and starts from prophetic ideas: but they are not his own ideas, they are those of his predecessors which he turns into dogmas. He is by nature a priest, and his peculiar merit is that he enclosed the soul of prophecy in the body of a community which was not political, but founded on the temple and the cultus.

(421)

For Wellhausen, then, Ezekiel is the link between the prophets and the law because he embodies both. But while Wellhausen admires Ezekiel's link to prophecy, he thinks that Ezekiel's connection to the law is part of the decline of the Israelite religion. According to Wellhausen, the law, as seen in Ezekiel 40-48, was an artificial product and led to the rise of another artificial product, the sacred constitution of Judaism (421). For Wellhausen, Ezekiel "led the way in reducing to theory and to writing the sacred praxis of his time; in this he was followed by an entire school; in their exile the Levites turned scribes" (*Israel*, 496). Moreover, while Ezekiel should be praised in Wellhausen's estimation because he

“championed in a notable way the cause of individualism” (503), Wellhausen thinks Ezekiel led the ancient Israelites down the wrong path:

He maintained that each man lived because of his own righteousness, and died because of his own wickedness; nay more, the fate of the individual corresponded even in its fluctuations to his moral worth at successive times. The aim he pursued in this was a good one; in view of a despair which thought there was nothing for it but to pine and rot away because of former sins, he was anxious to maintain the freedom of the will, *i.e.*, the possibility of repentance and forgiveness. But the way he chose for this end was not a good one; on his showing it was chance which ultimately decided who was good and who was wicked. The old view of retribution which allowed time for judgment to operate far beyond the limit of the individual life had truth in it, but this view had none. Yet it possessed one merit, that it brought up a problem which had to be faced, and which was a subject of reflection for a long time afterwards. (503-4)

This passage points to the key element in Wellhausen’s thinking about Ezekiel and the written Torah. Wellhausen had earlier argued in relation to Ezekiel that when a Babylonian scribe, Ezra, came to Palestine and began a reformation of the community, the two important civilizations met and formed a new entity (496). With Babylon as the home of the Torah, and with Palestine elevating literary study over religious practice (496), by the time Ezra’s reforms were implemented, the literary study of the Torah, or law, became a significant religious exercise, and eventually, with the Torah, “religion came to be a thing to be learned” (502). This

process resulted in the scribes becoming more important priests and the rule of religion became the rule of law (502). Consequently, given Wellhausen's theory about the literary study of the Torah, we can see that Wellhausen thinks that Ezekiel's "mistake" becomes enshrined in the written Torah, and that the subsequent study of Ezekiel in other texts leads Israel in the wrong direction, thereby contributing to the decline of the ancient Israelite religion and its transformation into the "artificial Judaism." When taken together, Ezekiel's reforms become for Wellhausen the picture of degradation of the ancient Israelite religion—traditional priests are replaced, prophecy dies, and the written Torah both documents the change and is the result of the change, or in Wellhausen's opinion, the destruction of the ancient Israelite religion.

Cohen, undoubtedly, would agree that Torah is living religion. Cohen, however, would not agree with the value judgment that Wellhausen places on the distinction between written and oral Torah, nor would he agree with Wellhausen's assessment about written Torah and the degeneration of the Israelite religion. For Cohen, written Torah does not represent the degeneration of Israelite religion, rather, it represents the progression of it. According to Cohen, once Torah is written on the hearts of every Israelite, as proclaimed by Jeremiah in Chapter 31, morality became central in Israelite religion because morality was now the basis of the new relationship between God and humanity. For Cohen, if Torah is written on the heart, then writing itself is neither degenerative, nor is it even the focus of the passage. According to Cohen, the point of Jeremiah's prophecy is that there is, or will be, a new covenant between God and humanity. For Cohen, the new covenant comes into effect with Ezekiel and can be seen in his reformation of the

relationship between monotheism and morality. We will look at Cohen's arguments in detail.

Cohen begins his argument by asserting that until Ezekiel, the prophets stressed social morality as "the main point of monotheism" (RR, 178/208). According to Cohen, this meant that prophets, such as Isaiah, condemned the path of individuality and focused on the problems of the fellowman (178-9/208-9). For Cohen, however, the concept of the fellowman engenders a concept of the individual (178/208), which leads to a new concept of sin (180/210-211). Cohen explains that before Ezekiel, the prophets considered sin mainly as social sin, which is "committed between man and man" (183/214). Ezekiel, on the other hand, "attributes to sin the meaning of a sin against God," thereby establishing within morality a concept of the individual and a "new connection between sin, individual, and God" (183-184/214-215). Cohen asserts that with this new relationship between God, the individual and sin, a new concept of redemption and liberation also emerges. Cohen points out that even though the individual discovers himself through sin (185/216), sin does not define the whole of the individual because as sin is only "a transitional point for the begetting of the new I" (187/218). Cohen argues that the individual only becomes an I once the I's goal has been achieved. For Cohen, that goal is liberation from sin (187/219), which leads to redemption by God and a new understanding of God as the Redeemer (188/219).

The goal of liberation from sin also leads to the reconciliation of the I with God and with itself (189/220) through guilt, punishment and the confession of sin. Cohen explains that one of the peculiar features of biblical thinking is that the guilt of the parents leads to the punishment of the children (189/221). However,

Cohen argues that the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel reject this connection. Jeremiah started the transformation with his prophecy that in the future times, “everyone will die because of his own sin” (190/221).<sup>24</sup> To Cohen, Jeremiah’s prophecy reflected the idea that sin was still social sin, and therefore did not understand sin “as the sin of the individual proper” (190/222). According to Cohen, the concept of individual sin emerges only with Ezekiel. Cohen uses Ezekiel 18:2-4 to explain:

What mean ye, that ye use this proverb in the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Eternal God, ye shall not have occasion anymore to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, *all souls are Mine*; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (cited in 191/223)<sup>25</sup>

For Cohen, this passage marks an important development in the concept of sin—“only from now on could punishment be regarded as a sign of sin, because it follows only after the sin of the person himself” (191/223). Cohen notes further that in this passage God “becomes the owner of the human soul” (191/223). Cohen argues that when these two points are taken together, they lead to the idea that the characteristics of the soul are irrefutably linked to the death of the soul (191/223). Cohen asserts that this idea is further developed in connection with morality, because Ezekiel describes the righteous and the evil soul only in terms of moral actions, and not in regards to “cultic piety or sacrificial sacrilege” (191/223). Cohen claims that this point is usually overlooked in biblical research

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<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 31.

<sup>25</sup> I have used the quote as it appears in *Religion of Reason*.

(191/223), and so he takes great care in fleshing out its meaning. For Cohen, it is only when Ezekiel connects righteousness and evil to moral actions does one's knowledge of the soul become paramount in the relationship between God and man (191/223). This is because with knowledge of one's soul, a "new moment enters in the process of sin and punishment" (191-92/224). According to Cohen, this new moment means that one may choose between righteousness and evil, and therefore, is able to "*return* from the evil way of life" (192/225). Thus, punishment of the son is no longer acceptable, argues Cohen, because the father has the ability to turn away from his evil ways (193/225). Cohen asserts that God too is changed through this development, and he cites Ezekiel 18:27, 30 to show that God does not take pleasure in the individual's death, but does take pleasure in one's life and in one's return from sin:

Again when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive . . . . Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord the Eternal. Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity unto you. (193/225)

For Cohen, this passage illustrates the development that turning away from sin has now become possible (193/225). He argues that through the possibility for self-transformation, "the sinful individual becomes the free I" (193/225) and now has the power to create a new heart and spirit for himself (Ezekiel 18:31; RR, 194/226).

According to Cohen, the return from sin is exacted through penance, which is the means of both punishment and liberation (195/227). That is,

punishment is “a means of liberation” (195/227), which means that the sinner must have knowledge of his sin and confess it, and that this knowledge and confession of sin is the penance that the sinner “must take upon himself” (195/228). Cohen also argues that the confession of sin must be linked to a religious institution or else it becomes a mere abstraction (195/228). Thus, Cohen asserts that the public institutions of divine worship and sacrifice “support the individual in his moral work” (196/228). To understand the significance of Cohen’s arguments about sacrifice, however, we must look back at Cohen’s understanding of the place of public institutions in ancient Israel. According to Cohen, sacrifice was the only public institution, as prayer hardly existed as a form of worship at this time, and that Ezekiel therefore sought to ground his new understanding of sin and morality in the institution of sacrifice (196/229). But, Ezekiel’s transformation of sacrifice took place through the establishment of the congregation (197/230). Cohen points out that during Ezekiel’s time, the Babylonian Exile, the state had been destroyed and sacrifices had ceased in the Temple; thus, Ezekiel had to be “inspired by another political and religious insight” to provide the necessary unity for the Jewish community in Exile (196/229). Thus, Cohen argues that the congregation “originated as the unity exclusively suited to the unique task of religion,” a unity that could in no way come from the state (197/230). In support of this fact, Cohen explains that the “Hebrew root for the word ‘congregation’ [קהל (*qahal*)] already shows that it is based on unification [קהל (*qahal*)] and not on lordship and dominion, as the state is” (197/230).<sup>26</sup> For Cohen, the congregation could only be established through the cultic institution of sacrifice simply because no “other public instrument of the

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<sup>26</sup> Although Cohen does not note the root for kingship, which is מלך (*melek*), or the root for unification, his point is that these two words do not have the same root, or semantic range.



religious spirit was in existence” (197/230). The congregation’s true significance, however, does not rest in how it was established; rather it rests in why it was established. According to Cohen, the congregation and sacrifice are significant because they become the means through which the individual is able to confess and atone for his sin (199/233), a process that is later institutionalized in the Day of Atonement, the center of Jewish worship (215/251).

Since Cohen asserts that the congregation and sacrifice provides support for the individual in his quest for morality, he does not think that one should question, as biblical scholars do, whether or not “it would have been better if sacrifice had been entirely suppressed” (198/231). For Cohen, one should ask a deeper question:

whether the connection with sacrifice is in all respects damaging to monotheism or whether, in spite of all sound considerations against it, the requisite deepening of monotheism beyond the social prophets demanded the bringing into play of sacrifice, which not only failed to hinder this goal but perhaps was indispensable to its execution. (198/231)

According to Cohen, one can find the answer to this question by ascertaining whether or not the sacrificial cult was “changed in accordance with the new reformation” (198/231). To Cohen, the answer is a resounding yes. Cohen points to the part of the priest in the sacrifice to explain. In contrast to most scholarship, Cohen argues, the priest does not represent the main defect in the whole institution of sacrifice. While other scholars assert that man becomes overpowered by the priest and must step aside during sacrifice,<sup>27</sup> Cohen maintains that man’s

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<sup>27</sup> Cohen does not mention who these scholars are.

stepping back behind the priest is actually a point in favor of sacrifice because God steps back as well and takes no part in the act of sacrifice at all (198/231). For Cohen, the fact that neither man nor God takes part in the actual sacrifice means that an “unmediated connection between man and God is involuntarily prepared,” which makes way for man’s independent communication with God, during which redemption—the atonement between God and man—is achieved (198/231). Thus, in Cohen’s opinion, sacrifice is not necessarily a negative thing because through the combination of the priest’s actions, public sacrifice and individual confession, the two important characters in the sacrifice, God and man, are able to achieve a new level in their relationship. According to Cohen, then, without sacrifice, the individual cannot find God, redemption or himself.

Cohen describes the continuing significance of sacrifice for Ezekiel in terms of Ezekiel’s inner transformation of sacrifice. He argues that in connecting sacrifice, sin and atonement, Ezekiel connects the casting off of sin with the worship and essence of God. To explain this, Cohen cites Ezekiel 18:31: “Cast away from you all your transgression . . . and make you a new heart and a new spirit” (207/242). According to Cohen, this verse connects the repentance of the individual through sacrifice with God’s forgiveness of sins (206-7/241-242). That is, one’s repentance of sin correlates with God’s forgiveness of that sin, which stems from God’s goodness (209/244). That is, “forgiveness of sin is the simple consequence of God’s goodness. . . . It is the essence of God to forgive the sin of man” (213/249). Further, Cohen asserts that worship of God must be in direct accordance with this essence of God. He points out that the Psalms praise God’s goodness and ability to forgive, and so “the entire monotheistic worship is based on forgiveness of sin” (209/244). Cohen argues that through the lyricism of the

Psalms and the polemics of the prophets, the old idolatrous view of sacrifice is transformed into the process by which man and God are reconciled (213-14/249). Further, because God's goodness serves as the "archetype for the actions of man" (215/251), the correlation of God and man establishes the realm of morality (215/251). The result for Cohen is that sacrifice, morality and the worship of God are transformed in the new view that morality, sacrifice and the worship of God now take place in the human heart—the result of a new covenant. Cohen asserts that sacrifice can no longer be equated with animal sacrifice; rather, the "heart, and indeed the humble heart, is by this time the proper object of sacrifice" (213/249).

Earlier in this chapter we noted that Cohen relied on Wellhausen's historical research on sacrifice and atonement, especially in the essay "Die Versöhnungsidee,"<sup>28</sup> even as he sought to produce a philosophical reading of biblical history. By the time Cohen writes *Religion of Reason*, he begins to rely less and less on Wellhausen's conception of biblical history; and in fact starts to counter Wellhausen's portrayal of the history of the Israelites. At issue in Cohen's subverting of the Christian view of the development of the Israelite religion is the forced separation between the Israelite religion and the religion of Judaism. As we saw above, for Wellhausen, the introduction of the Priestly Code and the death of prophecy in the Israelite religion resulted in the "artificial product of Judaism," which Wellhausen specifically sees in the "reforms" of Ezekiel. For Cohen, however, Ezekiel does not mark the deterioration of the Israelite religion into Judaism, but rather another stage in the development of Judaism, a stage in which the relationship between God and Israel is elevated to the next level. While both

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<sup>28</sup> Hermann Cohen, "Die Versöhnungsidee [1892]," in *Jüdische Schriften*, ed. Bruno Strauss (Berlin: Schwetschke, 1924), 1:105-39.

Wellhausen and Cohen assert that Ezekiel's significance lies in his theories of sin and repentance (or atonement), their understanding of this significance differs vastly. Cohen argues that this stage in the development of Judaism implements the correlation between God and humanity and results in a new understanding of morality. Wellhausen, on the other hand, thinks that Ezekiel marks the codification of the Priestly Code, which kills the creative processes of prophecy. These differences in their theories, then, can be seen according to their differing perspectives on history. In the following paragraphs we will look at these differences in terms of their views on the significance of Ezekiel.

According to Cohen, Ezekiel's significance lies in the fact that the connection between monotheism and morality comes to its fullest expression in Ezekiel. Interestingly, Cohen's arguments concerning Ezekiel, monotheism, and morality stand in direct contrast to Wellhausen's portrayal of Ezekiel. Unlike Wellhausen, who concentrates on the development of the Priestly Code, Cohen focuses on the development of the "morality code" in the Hebrew Scriptures. The search for the origins of the Priestly Code holds no interest for Cohen because, as we will see later in the chapter, the Priestly Code can be understood only as an artificial construct of Protestant Christianity.<sup>29</sup> Rather, Cohen is interested in the relationship between Torah (Law) and worship as explored in Ezekiel's development of monotheism and morality because, as he argues, no religious teaching can be brought to spiritual and historical actualization without entering into a relationship with the Law (RR, 176/205). Thus, we already see that the Law functions differently in Cohen's account than it does in Wellhausen's. While Wellhausen considers the Law to be a degenerate form of the Israelite religion,

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<sup>29</sup> Although Cohen only alludes to this, we can clearly see that this is the case through looking at Cohen's conception of the Torah.

Cohen affirms the Law as central to its development. He argues that ideas, rituals, and beliefs cannot exist without a connection to the Law. For Cohen, this means that the Law does not represent the cold, legislating force that Wellhausen portrayed it as, but rather, is part of the Torah in its fullest form. Torah as Law cannot exist without Torah as belief, Torah as ritual, Torah as idea, Torah as teaching. Thus, for Cohen, Torah is everything, it is an integrated system.

In accordance with this understanding of Torah, we can begin to explain Cohen's major criticism of Wellhausen. Cohen notes that Wellhausen once told him that Jews only remain Jews because of their obligation to the Law (*Werke* 17, 620). If we replace Law with Torah as Cohen understands it, then Cohen would say that Wellhausen is right; but according to Cohen, Wellhausen misunderstands what is meant by Torah and therefore risks "his assessment of the Jewish religion in its continued existence in world history" (619). Moreover, Cohen argues that Wellhausen's intellectual disposition, a disposition that focuses on historical rather than philosophical developments, leads Wellhausen to misunderstand Ezekiel. Wellhausen's understanding, or misunderstanding, of Ezekiel is central for our purposes because here we can see why in Cohen's assessment, Wellhausen's method, which only focuses on history and philology, does not have the capacity to recognize exactly what is being studied. For Cohen, Wellhausen cannot understand Ezekiel's reforms because he places emphasis on the wrong thing. That is, Wellhausen traces the development of Ezekiel's thought, but he does not understand the guiding principles behind Ezekiel's thought, and therefore cannot understand the true significance of Ezekiel in the history of Judaism. According to Cohen, in studying any one thing in particular one cannot apply a method that focuses only on history and philology, and not on the actual material.

Although there is no question that Cohen incorporates historical and philological conceptions within his presentation of Judaism, he is primarily guided by philosophy because, as he argues, only philosophy tries to make sense of the material, and the ideas behind the development of history. As we saw before, Cohen argues that one cannot study the development of one particular thing until one knows its definition, which only philosophy is interested in knowing (RR, 1-2/1-2). Wellhausen's historical method, which traces the development of content, never defines the "thing" that develops, and therefore, can never understand what it is. For Cohen, this means that, in accordance with Cohen's understanding of the limitations of the historical method, because Wellhausen does not approach his subject with the correct methodology, that is, with an idea of the thing that develops, he will not achieve never understand the material correctly, not will he achieve a "scientific" result.

We can clarify this methodological divergence by looking at the basis on which Cohen builds his arguments about the historical and religious significance of Ezekiel. According to Cohen, the main problem for determining Ezekiel's significance is trying to define the historical and religious problem that Ezekiel attempted to solve with his reforms. For Cohen, Ezekiel's reforms were motivated by the prophetic rejection of sacrifice and by the prophetic desire to retain the cult (174/203). Cohen argues that Ezekiel, however, did not seek a mere reform of cultic practice, but sought to transform the inner meaning of sacrifice in accordance with the prophetic spirit (174/203). He uses the relation between ideas and institutions to explain this process. As we saw above, Cohen asserted that the original intention of sacrifice was to establish the relationship between God and man, and that later sacrifice was institutionalized alongside cultic worship. To

reject sacrifice outright would not have been possible, or beneficial, because it had been institutionalized and brought into accord with the law; thus, Cohen argues that the prophets sought to transform sacrifice from the inside through the insertion of a new idea about the relationship between God and man. For Cohen, the new progressive idea becomes combined with the old institution. Instead of viewing this process as degenerative, Cohen sees this process as preserving the integrity of the developmental process—the old idea, or institution, provides the basis for the new idea:

In the very mind which brings forth the new motif, the aftereffect of the institution which is to be fought lingers on. In this development the old motive preserves its right in the new one; it retains its share in the development toward the new one. Thus the new idea remains connected with the old one even then, when it does not entirely eliminate the old institution, but only transforms it. (176/205)

In this argument we can see that, for Cohen, the new idea would lose its grounding and would not be able to take hold if the old idea were forgotten and the chain of development were broken. As Cohen puts it: “in actual history light and shadows belong together . . . all great reformers in spiritual history had to submit to this necessity” (176/205). The new idea, the light, then, can only be seen as light next to the shadow of the old institution.

Cohen also argues that it is not up to the scholar to judge whether or not things should have happened the way they did (175/204). Moreover, Cohen asserts that scholars cannot let the course of history prescribe or solve the problems that they must solve. For Cohen, this means that Christian scholars

cannot impose their religious beliefs on the material; rather they must let the material speak for itself. That is, Wellhausen cannot argue that the Israelite religion deteriorated into Judaism just because he believes that Christianity was a return to an “authentic” form of Israelite religion. According to Cohen, the material itself must support the belief that there was deterioration. Therefore, the ideas in the text must correspond to the ideas one takes to the text. Moreover, Cohen argues that ideas have to be developed according to their logical content (176/205); thus, one must examine the development of the idea in the text rather than judging that idea from outside the text. Cohen further argues that value judgments as such do not have a place in the study of those ideas. That is, one cannot decide whether an idea was positive or negative or of whether the movement issuing from that idea was positive or negative. He argues that value judgments can only be based “upon the resulting power of the whole effect” (176/205). This means that in Cohen’s opinion, any dogmatic one-sidedness that judges that any development is positive or negative is suspect within the historical method simply because history is not one-sided (176-77/206)—what is considered as positive by one can be considered to be negative by another. Therefore, Cohen argues that history cannot be confined to any one particular view because history is everywhere “entangled in reciprocal effects” (177/206). He asserts that “progress, regress, standstill, all these moments are not an objective criterion” for understanding history because again, what is positive for one, is negative for another (177/206). We may understand this assertion as a direct criticism of Wellhausen’s argument that the Israelite religion degenerated with the introduction of the Priestly Code, because Cohen himself obviously does not think that this is the case. Thus, other criteria for understanding history must be found.



Cohen asserts that the concept, or method, of continuity does provide such criteria. He argues that continuity is the only “methodological signpost” for history because it “is independent of such contingent and external matters as before and after, and even contemporaneity; continuity overcomes and permeates all these” (177/206). That is, the concept of continuity is independent of all value judgments and biases. Cohen, however, notes that continuity can “become a principle of history only through the assumption that all ideas and all institutions in history, in whatever contradiction with one another they might seem to be, are considered as, and have as their goal, one community in reciprocal effect” (177/206). In the case of the prophetic fight against sacrifice, Cohen asserts that the principle of continuity insists on finding the general problem that the entire community was dealing with, which is the problem of prophecy and “true devotion to God through social morality” (177/206). Cohen argues that Ezekiel’s attitude towards sacrifice was different from those of the other prophets because a new idea of God and a new idea of man had emerged in the community (177/207). According to Cohen, these new ideas, which had to correlate with each other, can only be understood under the concept of continuity because only continuity can adequately explain the development of these ideas in relation to the whole without placing value judgments upon them, which normally come from only one part of the whole (177/207).

Cohen further explains his concept of ideas and institutions and his notion of continuity by linking them together. For Cohen, the dependence of ideas and institutions upon each other establishes the theory that each movement in the relationship between ideas and institutions must be related to the continuity of the community itself. Thus, ideas and institutions are dependent on the community in

which they are developed, instead of the other way around. The community is not at the mercy of its ideas and institutions, rather the community as a whole is the developing and driving force behind the ideas and institutions. For Cohen, since continuity expresses a notion of progress that does not imply positive or negative judgments, as progress is the development of one idea to the next, one must take the progress of the community into account under the umbrella of continuity, or else one will not understand the history of ideas and institutions. Thus, any progress of ideas and institutions must come from the community itself. This view differs from that of Wellhausen, for whom, the community is at the mercy of the ideas and institutions. As we saw above, Wellhausen thinks that the law—or in Cohen's terms, the ideas and institutions—dictates the progress, or lack thereof, of the community. So, according to Wellhausen, the degeneration of the Torah into the Priestly Code leads to the degeneration of the Israelite community. Cohen seeks to subvert this way of thinking by introducing a concept of development, or progress, that is dependent not on value judgments, but on scientific, objective methodology.

Cohen, then, presents an overall view of the prophets that runs counter to Wellhausen's. For while Wellhausen uses the prophets to argue that sacrificial law is the degeneration of Torah, Cohen sees sacrificial law as pointing towards how the Israelite community progressed. Although Cohen counters Wellhausen's arguments, Cohen can also be seen to use Wellhausen's scholarship as learning tool and a catalyst for Cohen's presentation of the prophets, in both positive and negative ways. For instance, while Cohen's and Wellhausen's views of the universal nature of Isaiah and Jeremiah's introduction of personal religion do correspond, Cohen cannot accept Wellhausen's scholarship on Ezekiel, and

therefore, argues against it. For Cohen, Wellhausen cannot grasp world-historical questions and the significance of Ezekiel in particular, because Wellhausen focuses on the wrong questions. Thus, Cohen develops his methodology for the study of the prophets partly in response to the negatives that he sees in Wellhausen's scholarship. Moreover, Cohen thinks that Wellhausen does not understand the relevance of scholarship in the world. Cohen applies this critique to Wellhausen; however, he thinks that many scholars suffer from this same lack of understanding. Cohen uses scholarship on the prophets to point to this lack for two reasons. First, as we saw in chapter two, he asserts that the best available scholarship has verified that the prophets are the soul of the Jewish religion, and therefore, any scholarship that is motivated by this thought will produce excellent scholarship. Thus, for Cohen, scholarship on the prophets provides an excellent case study for the strengths and weaknesses of a particular scholar's work, and for the positive and negative aspects of biblical scholarship as a whole. Second, because the prophets represent the common ground between Christians and Jews, research on the prophets motivates a hope for a better relationship between Jews and Christians. According to Cohen, despite the weaknesses in Wellhausen's scholarship on Judaism as a whole, the strengths of Wellhausen's prophetic scholarship far outweighed these weaknesses, thereby providing hope that the prophets can be a ground for co-operation between Jewish and Christian scholars. In the next section, however, we will see that Cohen also focuses on other prophetic scholarship that hinders this relationship rather than helps it.

## Cohen and Troeltsch

In Cohen's quest to find a satisfactory way of incorporating the results and methods of biblical criticism into his presentation of Judaism, Cohen's dispute with Ernst Troeltsch marks a vital point. At stake in this dispute is Cohen's methodology for the study of the biblical text, which is exemplified by his study of the prophetic books. Moreover, Troeltsch, like Cohen, was not a biblical scholar, and so the disagreements between the two scholars point to problems of biblical studies that went beyond the traditional "borders" of Protestant biblical scholarship and illustrate the fluidity of biblical scholarship in early twentieth-century Germany as both scholars participate in a "field" that is not their own. Unlike Cohen's interactions with other Protestant scholars such as Wellhausen, Baudissin and Bertholet, and similarly to his interaction with Rudolf Kittel, the interaction between Cohen and Troeltsch is reflected in a well documented scholarly dialogue. Troeltsch, for example, published favorable reviews of Cohen's lecture "Die religiösen Bewegungen der Gegenwart" (1915)<sup>30</sup> and of his *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie* (1915).<sup>31</sup> However, Cohen did not respond positively to Troeltsch's work. Cohen's essay "Der Prophetismus und die Soziologie" (1918), a review of Troeltsch's essay "Glaube und Ethos der hebräischen Propheten" (1916; Faith and Ethos of the Hebrew Prophets), was the essay that started the dispute between the two scholars. Cohen's view of Troeltsch is important in our analysis of Cohen's critiques of biblical criticism for two reasons. First, as Wendell Dietrich argues, because Cohen and Troeltsch both

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<sup>30</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, "Hermann Cohen, *Die religiösen Bewegungen der Gegenwart: Ein Vortrag*," in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 40, no. 16/17 (1915): cols. 383-86.

<sup>31</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, "Hermann Cohen, *Der Begriff der Religion im System der Philosophie*," in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 43, no. 4/5 (1918): cols. 57-62.

presented their respective traditions as the basis for ethical monotheism, they had each other's work in mind while working on their respective presentations of their religious traditions (Dietrich, 29). It is for this reason that Cohen's criticisms of Troeltsch are important in analyzing Cohen's views of the prophets, for as Dietrich points out, Cohen understands exactly how Troeltsch both challenges and threatens Cohen's base assumptions about methodology and the content of religion (Dietrich, 30). Second, since their readings of the prophets differ so vastly, the dispute between Cohen and Troeltsch can be viewed as a final test case in analyzing Cohen's biblical hermeneutic, for Cohen's biblical methodology has a direct impact on how he critiques Troeltsch. In analyzing the reading of the prophets that Cohen's critiques of Troeltsch point to, we will also be able to understand how the assumptions and methodologies involved in Cohen's reading and critique of Troeltsch play a part in Cohen's presentation of Judaism in *Religion of Reason*.

Before we get to the content of Cohen's criticisms of Troeltsch, we will first look at the historical circumstances surrounding this dispute.<sup>32</sup> Troeltsch presented what later became "Glaube und Ethos der hebräischen Propheten" at a lecture for the Berlin Society for the Study of Religion in 1916. Benzion Kellermann, one of Cohen's students, took immediate issue with Troeltsch's views and countered them at the lecture. When Troeltsch eventually published his lecture in *Logos*, a periodical that he co-founded and regularly contributed to, Cohen also submitted an essay written by Kellermann that developed his initial critiques of Troeltsch. Although Kellermann's essay was rejected by the editors of

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<sup>32</sup> The account that follows in this paragraph is based on the account in Wendell Dietrich's *Cohen and Troeltsch: Ethical Monotheistic Religion and Theory of Culture* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 30.

*Logos*, he was later able to publish it as a pamphlet entitled *Der ethische Monotheismus der Propheten und seine soziologische Würdigung* (The Ethical Monotheism of the Prophets and Their Sociological Appreciation).<sup>33</sup> Understanding the challenge that Troeltsch's work presented to his views of religion and biblical studies, Cohen then published his own reply to Troeltsch's essay in the August 1917 issue of *Neue Jüdische Monatshefte*, a journal that he himself edited.

In his critique of Troeltsch's essay, Cohen draws on his own concerns regarding proper methodology in the study of religion and the Bible. That is, he seeks to balance his support of the method of sociology in the study of the Bible with his own philosophical reading of this same text. Thus, Cohen outlines why he thinks that sociology, when combined with philosophy, is a worthwhile methodological tool in biblical studies. However, he also asserts that some sociologically orientated scholars do not employ a proper methodology in their studies of the biblical text. He argues that some of these scholars, such as Troeltsch, deny the place of philosophy and ethics in the study of the Hebrew Bible, and in doing so, reject the message of the Hebrew Bible itself, and the inheritors of that message, Jews. As we will see for Cohen, Troeltsch rejects the relationship between the prophets and morality, denies all the advancements that biblical criticism has made, and even denies the precepts of ethical monotheism that both Cohen and Troeltsch propose as normative for their respective religious traditions. This section will analyze each of these critiques in turn.

Cohen begins his critiques of Troeltsch with a discussion of the methods of sociology and historiography. Cohen, however, does not define what he means

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<sup>33</sup> Benzion Kellerman, *Der ethische Monotheismus der Propheten und seine soziologische Würdigung* (Berlin, Schwetschke & Sohn, 1917).

by “sociology” or “historiography.” Instead, Cohen argues that the concerns of sociology proper, which studies various aspects of cultural forces, must be differentiated from those of sociology’s sub-method of historiography. According to Cohen, while sociology looks at cultural forces as a whole, historiography focuses only on economic forces in society (*Werke* 17, 505). Cohen argues that in doing so, historiography reduces all cultural achievements to their connections to economic need and obligation (505). For Cohen, historiography thus does a great disservice to the understanding of culture and its intellectual and moral forces (505). Cohen asserts that because historiography subsumes all aspects of culture under economics, it fails to recognize the creativity and independence of the intellectual forces of culture, and comes to regard “moral ideas as the evil products of economic needs and motives” (505). According to Cohen, sociology as a whole sees historiography as reductive (505). Cohen argues that sociology fights against historiography by asserting that while all cultural forces obviously interact within society, they need to be explained according to their own specific domain (505). That is, economics must be studied according to economics, politics according to political science, and so on. According to Cohen, sociology therefore analyzes the driving forces of culture—which are suppressed by this other view because it understands everything only in regards to economics—and seeks to discover and make understandable the mutual understanding between economics and intellectual forces (505). Given this task, Cohen asserts that sociology carefully distinguishes the various aspects of culture, and in doing so, classifies economic needs differently from moral ideas, preserving the latter for the history of ideas alone (505). Cohen argues: “In proceeding with this caution and prudence, sociology has its methodical value and constructive fruitfulness”

(506). In Cohen's opinion, then, sociology highlights the role of intellectual forces, which therefore illustrates its methodological sophistication and caution (506). At the same time, Cohen points out that because sociology seeks to understand the various cultural forces, it often unconsciously asserts the view that "the economy itself would like to be a product of intellectual ideas," and not the other way around as historiography proposes (506). Cohen states his disapproval of historiography even further by asserting that the moral ideas of religion, which he calls "the softest flower of intellectuality," become nothing but rising materialism if they are only seen as the product of economic forces (506). However, for Cohen, because morality and religion are connected, religion is another branch, along with that of economics, of the cultural forces and should not be studied according to the methods and conclusions of economics (506). According to Cohen, this means that the thought of divinity can no longer be thought of as a deception of the priests, or as the means to their economic survival (506). More importantly, for Cohen, this means that religion protects the moral ideas of society, thereby making morality a central problem of culture, a topic that we will explore later.

Before we analyze the centrality of morality for Cohen in his analysis of Troeltsch's work, we must note that Cohen reiterates in this discussion one of his main points from "Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion:" that one of the main achievements of Protestant theology and biblical scholarship is its recognition of the intrinsic value of the prophets for moral thought (506). For Cohen, in light of this achievement, Troeltsch's choice of historiography over sociology proper is surprising, especially since Troeltsch claims that he follows a sociological methodology (506). More important to Cohen than what he sees as



Troeltsch's incorrect appeal to sociology is his view that Troeltsch resists the advancements of biblical research by interpreting the prophets under the influence of historiography. Cohen argues that because of the influence of historiography on Troeltsch, Troeltsch denies "the ethical meaning of monotheism, belittles the ethics of the prophets as simple farm morals, and consequently, also reduces the universalism of the teaching of God to the particularism of a tribal God" (506).

For his part, Troeltsch does not distinguish between historiography and sociology, as he sees historiography as a sub-field of sociology. Thus, Troeltsch does not have the same methodological concerns within the field of sociology as does Cohen. At the same time, Troeltsch does have a significant methodological concern for sociology—he does not think that sociology should be combined with philosophy or morality. In fact, Troeltsch opposes Cohen's attempts to do so. For Troeltsch, Cohen's methodology contradicts the material. According to Troeltsch, the prophets were in no way philosophers (Troeltsch, 9), nor were they concerned with questions of destiny (9). Moreover, Troeltsch argues that the morality of the prophets did not concern the morality of humanity (15), nor were the prophets the fanatics of monotheism as some scholarship (presumably that of Cohen) maintains (16). According to Troeltsch, due to the utopian character of their views (22), the prophets were actually indifferent to culture and even at times, hostile to culture (5), bracing themselves against both cultural developments and political necessities (22). This culturally indifferent attitude, Troeltsch asserts, meant that the prophets had nothing to do with the ideals of their own culture, let alone with the ideals of socialism, democracy, or even freedom and humanity that appear in modern scholarship (18). Rather, the prophets propounded a system of laws that were based on the rules of an agricultural kinship group (18), on the worship of a

tribal god (20-21), and on a morality that was based on the fight of their god against that of another tribal group (16). Troeltsch further argues that the God of Israel could never become the god of other tribes because of his continued personal relationship with Israel, which was reinforced through the concepts of punishment and purification (10). Thus, for Troeltsch, Israel's God never moved past the *Stammesgott* (tribal god), and Israel's God did not proclaim a universal morality. Consequently, the Israelites' worship of their god reinforces the morality of *Brüderlichkeit* (brotherhood) (22), meaning the particularity of Israel, through its focus on its own tribe. According to Troeltsch, these particular characteristics of Israelite religion continued on in Judaism, and have come to light with Zionism (26). Furthermore, Troeltsch argues that once all these characteristics are seen together, it becomes evident that the prophets do not lay claim to a universal world view. This claim, in turn, allows him to argue that only with Jesus does a universal ethic unfold (22). For Troeltsch, then, the prophets do not lend themselves in any way to Cohen's universalistic vision, or to the development of ethical monotheism, or to the development of social ethics.

To counter Troeltsch's views, Cohen demonstrates that the particular relationship between God and Israel is connected to the universal relationship between God and humanity. He argues that with the prophets, Israel becomes the "servant of the eternal one," and that as the servant of God, Israel becomes the servant of humanity (*Werke* 17, 507):

Thus we understand: Hear Israel, the eternal, our God, is one.<sup>34</sup>

Israel must learn to understand that for God to be the unique one,  
God becomes the God of all humanity. Our God is not just our

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<sup>34</sup> This is the first line of the *Shema*, Deuteronomy 6:4.

God, rather, as the unique God, God is the God of all human beings, and all peoples. (507)

If the God of Israel were only the Jewish God, Cohen reasons, then Judaism would not be a religion (507). Since this is clearly not the case, as Judaism is a living, thriving religion, Cohen asserts that Troeltsch's view is a devastating attack on Judaism. Cohen adds that since some see Troeltsch's view as stemming from a completely modern and objective conception (507), Troeltsch's view becomes even more devastating. Cohen also thinks that in asserting that the prophets are "culturally indifferent," Troeltsch denies the prophets their rightful place in the development of social ethics, and even robs the prophets of their ethics and their value for religious morality (507), which Cohen would like to see re-appropriated for present-day society. As a result, Cohen argues, humanity is robbed of its tie to the divine, and the authenticity of the prophets' ethical religion is reinterpreted with an immature and awkward bias (507). Moreover, Troeltsch's arguments concerning the economically agricultural ground of the prophets and their focus on their own kinship group instead of on the greater good of society are completely mistaken in Cohen's eyes. Cohen asserts that this line of thinking leads to the conclusion that agricultural morality is in no way connected to social ethics, and that the unique God is only the God of farmers, which is absurd as these two assertions are obviously contradictory (507). Furthermore, according to Cohen, Troeltsch's conclusion confuses the concept of the unique God with that of the particular, and asserts that because God is in a resolute relationship with Israel, the God of Israel cannot possibly be the only God of humanity (507-8). Thus, according to Cohen, Troeltsch's view destroys Judaism as a religion, because Cohen understands religion to consist of the universal relationship

between God and human beings, and not just of the particular relationship between God and an individual people (507). In essence, Cohen thinks that Troeltsch's arguments deny the traditional Jewish link between the prophets and the continuing existence of the Jewish people precisely by emphasizing the Christian bias that only Jesus established a universal religion. Cohen also highlights the political dimension of Troeltsch's misapprehension of Judaism. Thus, he introduces the political situation of the Jews into his critique of Troeltsch. Cohen asserts that because the Jewish situation in Germany is at the gravest point in all its history, the main concern of religious Jews is to keep Judaism's teachings alive (508). Therefore, religious Jews fight against the political slogans of Zionism, which argue for the nationalism of Judaism just as Troeltsch does. For Cohen, the Jewish teachings about monotheism and humanity are not only a comfort for Jews, but also prove Judaism's historical and eternal right to exist (508-9).

While we have already seen that Cohen uses the universal and messianic vision of Isaiah to counteract the arguments that Israelite religion (and Judaism) was only a nationalistic religion, Cohen points out in *Religion of Reason* the various passages from the other prophets who also propound a universal message. One of Cohen's first examples is Micah 4:1-4; 11-13:

But in the end of days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the Eternal's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say; come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths;

for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Eternal from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between many people, and shall decide concerning mighty nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Eternal of hosts has spoken . . . Now many nations are assembled against thee that say: "Let her be defiled, and let our eye gaze upon Zion." But they know not the thoughts of the Eternal, neither understand they His counsel; for He hath gathered them as the sheaves to the threshing-floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thy horn iron and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples; and thou shalt devote their gain unto the Eternal, and their substance unto the *Lord of the whole earth*. (Cited in RR 270-271/315-316)

In his interpretation of this passage, several of Cohen's key points about universalism, messianism and the morality of the prophets emerge. First, Cohen uses the reference to the end of days and the unity of all people in and under the house of God as verification for his argument that the concept of the end of days and its connection to morality is the beginning of the concept of universalism. Second, Cohen stresses that God is the "Lord of the whole earth," not just the *Stammesgott* of Israel as Troeltsch has argued. Third, Cohen notes that God will judge the Israelites and non-Israelites. Fourth, Cohen points out that a universally messianic humanity is possible because nations will no longer be at war with each

other, thus countering Troeltsch's assertion that the prophet's morality was based on the fight of one tribal group against another. Fifth, according to Cohen, there will be peace because political injustice will cease, which is, as we have seen before, his definition of the true meaning of the Messiah (21/24).

Cohen clearly uses this passage from Micah to illustrate his universal and messianic ideals, and he goes on to amass other passages to prove the development of the universal messianic idea alongside moral ideals in the prophetic writings. With Ezekiel, Cohen also connects the prophets' messianic and universal ideals to the development of the political message of salvation and restoration. In Cohen's opinion, Ezekiel's connection of repentance with the messianic idea takes the universal ideal to the next level. Cohen argues that through Ezekiel's notion of God's universal judgment, the purification of Israel is linked to the purification of the other nations (245/286) because in Ezekiel 36:22-32, the notion of the purification of Israel is connected to "the sanctification of God's name' among the peoples of the world" (280/327). Ezekiel 36:23 reads: "I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nation, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes." According to Cohen's reading of this passage, the sanctification of God's name among the nations comes about through the purification of Israel (281/327). Ezekiel 36:25-27: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to follow my

ordinances.”<sup>35</sup> In terms of Cohen’s overall argument about universalism in Judaism, it is interesting that he did not cite Ezekiel 36:22, or 36:32, where God tells Israel that this purification happens not just for its benefit, but is actually done for the sake of the sanctification of God’s name among the nations. Obviously, these passages are significant for Cohen’s theory of universalism, for they verify not only the connection between Israel and the nations by having Israel serve as God’s model for the nations, but also the connection between God and the nations. Based on these passages, Cohen points out that nationalism is “the most offensive antithesis to Messianism” (280/326). According to Cohen, this can also be seen in Ezekiel 16:

“Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say: thus saith the Lord the Eternal unto Jerusalem: thine *origin* and thy nativity is of the land of Canaanite; the Amorite was thy father and thy mother was a Hittite” (Ezek. 16:1-3); and he repeats and even completes this line of thought: “And thine elder sister is Samaria . . . and thy younger sister . . . Sodom” (Ezek. 16:46). And just as the prophet refutes the self-conceit of nationalism, so it is typical, not only for his poetic power but for his Messianism as well, that he terminates his tidings of disaster for the peoples with a message of salvation, in which the warm human hearts of the prophet beats.

(280/326)

For Cohen, then, Ezekiel’s message of salvation is tied to the salvation of all humankind.

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<sup>35</sup> Cohen does not fully cite this passage in his text.

Cohen uses Zechariah to sum up his arguments about universality, messianism and morality. According to Cohen, Zechariah 14:9 contains “the great statement of messianic religion” (288/335): “And the Eternal shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall *the Eternal be Unique and his name unique*.”<sup>36</sup> For Cohen, this is the greatest statement because it means that the Day of the Lord is “transformed into the Messianic Age, which brings fulfillment to monotheism through the uniform acknowledgment of the name of God” (288/335). Cohen ties this statement to God’s admonition in Zechariah 8:16: “Speak ye every man the truth with his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gate”<sup>37</sup> (288/335). To Cohen, the genuine messianic idea is clearly here, and it is based on social justice (288/335). Moreover, he argues that the messianic idea completely overcomes the nationalistic idea of election in the verses that follow (288/335). Zechariah 8:22-23: “Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days then men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, ‘Let us go with you for we have heard that God is with you.’” According to Cohen, these verses are an intensification of Zechariah 2:15: “And many nations shall *join* themselves to the Eternal in that day, and *shall be My people*”<sup>38</sup> (288/335). For Cohen, then, Zechariah clearly connects all the ideas of monotheism, messianism, and morality, and in doing so, reaches a new height for the messianic idea and completely instills the universal goal of messianism (288/336).

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<sup>36</sup> Cohen’s translation and italicization.

<sup>37</sup> Cohen’s translation.

<sup>38</sup> Cohen’s translation and italicization.



Not surprisingly, Cohen finishes his argument with two notions from Malachi. First, Cohen points out that Malachi 3:17<sup>39</sup> draws on the notion of the correspondence between those who fear [respect] God, and his own people (288-89/336). Although Cohen does not explicitly argue for the movement from the national to the universal that is inherent in this verse, along with its correspondence to Isaiah and Ezekiel, we can see the connections between the prophets that Cohen reinforces by choosing these verses. Second, Cohen draws attention to the last two verses of *Nevi'im*, Malachi 3:23-24: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers” (288/336).<sup>40</sup> According to Cohen, the mission of reconciling of the family that is allotted to Elijah must precede the Messiah’s reconciling the people of the world with God (288/336). We can see that with this assertion Cohen brings to a close the “light to the nations” motif of Isaiah by showing the political implications of Isaiah’s prophecy. For Cohen, the “light to the nations” mission of Israel means that Israel is not a “nation” onto itself; rather, its mission is to go out into the world for the sake of salvation of all other peoples.

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<sup>39</sup> Malachi 3:16-17: “Then those who revered the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD took note and listened, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who revered the LORD and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as parents spare their children who serve them.”

<sup>40</sup> Cohen’s translation. There is a variation between the JPS translation and the NRSV for these verses. The Jewish Publication Society translation, using the Masoretic text, reads: “Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the LORD. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction. Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the LORD.” NRSV lists these verses as Malachi 4:5-6, and reads as follows: “Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse.”

For Cohen, then, the morality of the prophets proves vital to his understanding of Judaism's status in the world. For Troeltsch to completely disregard not only the morality of the prophets, but also the ability of modern scholars to use the prophet's moral teachings as a guide means for Cohen that Troeltsch's work totally contradicts the entire body of advanced research on the biblical text. Moreover, if we recall that Cohen sees the major achievement of biblical scholarship as the recognition of the role of the prophets in the development of moral thought (*Werke* 17, 506), we can see that Cohen understands Troeltsch to be counteracting the advancements of biblical scholarship in general by relying on old stereotypes. In Cohen's opinion, instead of keeping abreast of the latest research, which sees the prophets in terms of their contributions to the development of society and morality, Troeltsch clings to an unscientific and non-objective view of the prophets that sees the prophets according to their opposition to society. As Wendell Dietrich points out, Troeltsch's arguments profoundly disturb Cohen, because Cohen's whole project is based on "properly connecting the prophetic ethos with the prophetic breakthrough to a universal ethical monotheism" (Dietrich, 31-32). Thus, for Cohen, in denying that the prophets can be used as the moral ground of a just society, Troeltsch rejects the possibility that the prophets can speak to modern man and modern German society (Dietrich, 31). Consequently, according to Cohen, in perpetuating old stereotypes under the guise of objective science, Troeltsch destroys the link between progressive scholarship and society, and the link between Israel (Judaism) and the prophets. Troeltsch's claim that the prophetic ethos of ancient Israelite religion continues on only in Christianity, and not in Rabbinic Judaism, because only Christianity can lay claim to a universal

ethic (Troeltsch, 8), also is mistaken in Cohen's opinion as Cohen thinks that an argument such as this are solidly based in antisemitic claims and even further such claims. According to Cohen, to argue that Judaism remains a nationalistic religion, based on his conclusions about the prophets' "brotherly" morality and agricultural context, means that Troeltsch intentionally misses the universal and moral significance of neighbor love in Judaism (*Werke* 17, 509-10) in his argument that through the concept of the remnant, Judaism contracts further into itself, and even becomes a pariah-people (Troeltsch, 26). For Cohen, Troeltsch's claims further negate Judaism as an ethical religion, deny the importance of Judaism in Germany society, and again contribute to antisemitic propaganda. Thus, Cohen sees Troeltsch's scholarship as a biased reaction that masquerades as science, and even makes a joke of science and religion (*Werke* 17, 510). For Cohen, Troeltsch's views not only counter biblical criticism, but also deny Judaism its right to interpret its own texts. Moreover, in Cohen's view, Troeltsch's work distorts the message of Judaism, and contributes to the desperate situation faced by the Jews by disparaging the Jewish religion during a time when a true understanding of Judaism would help alleviate that situation.

In Cohen's concluding paragraph of this essay, he asserts the following: "Genuine science, genuine methodical philosophy can lead in each case to genuine and true religion" (510). Cohen's point is clear—if one does not participate in genuine science, which includes a proper methodology based in philosophy, one will not understand religion, nor understand any of the world religions. In this case, Cohen thinks that Troeltsch does not follow a proper methodology and as a result cannot possibly understand Judaism. To Cohen, this is an insult for science and an even worse insult for Judaism. Additionally, Cohen

thinks that Troeltsch will never be able to follow a proper methodology or reach a proper conclusion because of his bias. Cohen, however, by following what he thinks is the proper methodology, asserts what he considers to be the truth about Judaism:

The truth of our religion exists in our world religion. World religion, however, can only be the religion of pure morality. "Then where is a great people that has such statutes and rights?" [Deut. 4:8] Deuteronomy raised this signpost for our religion. And because of it, we do not become confused by any other motto. Our religion exists in our pure monotheism. And pure monotheism took root in the pure love of humanity, as the love for the children of the unique God, as everyone is, culminates in universal messianism.

(510)

Troeltsch, then, is for Cohen representative of those scholars who continue to exhibit Protestant biases about Judaism, even when other scholars, both Jewish and Christian, prove these arguments to be false. Moreover, this essay adds to Cohen's argument that only proper methodology can lead to proper conclusions, and his assertion that prejudice can shape a field of study to such an extent that scholars no longer pay attention to the ideals of science, proper methodology, the advancements made by their own field, and the effects of scholarship in society at large. The major point of significance for this essay, then, lies in the fact that Cohen thinks that Troeltsch's work is completely mistaken both in terms of content and method. Whereas Cohen could support some of Wellhausen's findings and methods, Cohen could not do the same for Troeltsch. For Cohen, Troeltsch's methodology for the study of the prophets and his interpretation of the

prophetic material were academically irresponsible. Furthermore, given that Cohen thinks that scholarship on the prophets could contribute to a collegial relationship between Christians and Jews also means that Cohen thinks that Troeltsch is moving the relationship between Christians and Jews backwards and not forward, which for Cohen, is doubly insulting.

### **Conclusion: The Significance of the Prophets in Cohen's Thought**

Cohen's reading of the prophets, then, can be seen as the culmination of what Cohen has learned through his interactions with biblical criticism. For not only does Cohen's scholarship on the prophets point to the strengths and weakness that he sees in biblical criticism, but also uses them in orientating his own presentation of Judaism. In other words, Cohen both learns basic facts from biblical scholarship and tries to improve upon its weaknesses. By looking at Cohen's critiques of Wellhausen and Troeltsch and at *Religion of Reason*, we can see Cohen working through the problems that he sees in biblical criticism, both in terms of its methodologies and its base assumptions.

In Cohen's critiques of Wellhausen, for example, we see that Cohen shares in the base assumptions of many scholars of his time. As we saw earlier, Cohen and Wellhausen assert the same basic periodization of the biblical text, analyze the significance of sacrifice in the development of the Israelite religion, and draw attention to the universal aspects of Isaiah's prophecies. At the same time, however, Cohen does not share Wellhausen's interpretation of Judaism as a whole. While Wellhausen argues that the Israelite religion degenerates with the institution of the Priestly Code, Cohen understands the integrity of the Israelite religion to be in its continuity, that is, its continuing development. Therefore, he

does not agree with Wellhausen's interpretation of decline. For Cohen, Wellhausen's overall interpretation of Judaism was not based on strong, scientific methodology; rather, it came from a pro-Christian, or even anti-Jewish, bias. Moreover, Cohen thought that this bias led Wellhausen to focus neither on the right questions when dealing with the biblical text, nor on the problems and message of the biblical text. Cohen extends these same critiques to Troeltsch. According to Cohen, Troeltsch's interpretation of the prophets misses the mark completely because it does not take into consideration the latest in scholarship and methodological advances. For instance, while some scholars assert that the prophets are the soul of Judaism, Troeltsch presents the prophets as a counterpoint to Judaism, which Cohen thinks is a result of Troeltsch's bias against Judaism and a methodology that does not privilege questions of philosophy and morality. Thus, in Cohen's opinion, like Wellhausen, Troeltsch does not look at the whole picture, either in terms of biblical scholarship, or how scholarship relates to the real world.

The differences between Cohen on the one hand, and Troeltsch and Wellhausen on the other, can be seen in their interpretations of the prophets. This has both negative and positive implications for Cohen's thought. First, we may say that in asserting that Wellhausen and Troeltsch cannot grasp the message of the biblical text because they do not focus on the right questions, Cohen is imposing his own biases onto these scholars by denying their right to study the material according to their own chosen methodology. At the same time, Cohen points to the problems that result from scholarship that does not pay attention to the real world and the damage that is done to Jews with anti-Jewish scholarship. To counter this damage, Cohen puts forward a view of Judaism that does not rest on anti-Christian biases. In doing so, Cohen shows what happens in biblical

scholarship when Judaism is highlighted rather than denigrated. While this can be seen as Cohen subverting Christian perceptions and presentations of Judaism, one can also see that Cohen creates a bridge between Jewish and Christian scholars. For Cohen, this bridge may be built by focusing on proper methodology, but it is based on scholarship concerning the prophets, because he understands the prophets to be the common ground between Christians and Jews. Thus, Cohen emphasizes not only why scholarship on the prophets must be methodologically correct, but also what this scholarship must consist of. Since Cohen uses the prophets as the basis for his messianic arguments, which focus on the unification of all the peoples of the world, we can see that for Cohen, scholarship on the prophets represents the most basic problem for biblical criticism.

## **Chapter 4: Continuity and Discontinuity: Cohen, Levenson and Kugel on the Problems of Biblical Studies**

### **Introduction**

On March 26, 1903, Solomon Schechter gave a speech entitled “Higher Criticism—Higher Anti-Semitism.”<sup>1</sup> In this speech, Schechter asserts that the genesis of a “higher” type of antisemitism, that is, one of a professorial and imperial nature (Schechter, 38), “is partly, though not entirely . . . contemporaneous with the genesis of the so-called Higher criticism of the Bible” (36). Schechter’s speech does not contain an analysis of Higher Criticism, nor an analysis of higher antisemitism, nor does it seek to analyze the relationship between the two. Rather, the speech is a battle cry. Schechter asserts that in order to fight against the antisemitic attacks of Christian biblical scholars and to protect the Jewish *raison d’être* Jews must fight for the Bible by using their own intellectual and interpretative traditions because “this intellectual persecution can only be fought by intellectual weapons” (38). For Schechter, to fight this “battle of duty” (38), Jews must “make an effort to recover our Bible and to think out our theology for ourselves, [otherwise] we are irrevocably lost. . . . We have to create a really living, great literature, and do the same for the subjects of theology and the Bible that Europe has done for Jewish history and theology” (38). While Schechter’s speech does not provide us with an analysis of the connections between “Higher Antisemitism” and “Higher Criticism,” his speech does point to the ever mounting concern in the early 20th century to establish *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a way to fight for the rights of Jews to interpret their own tradition

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<sup>1</sup> Solomon Schechter, “Higher Criticism—Higher Antisemitism,” in *Seminary Addresses and Other Papers* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing, Co., 1915), 35-39.



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and to fight against antisemitism in general. In this, Schechter's concerns mirrors those of Cohen's. At the same time, Schechter's equation of what he called "Higher Antisemitism" with Higher Criticism contrasts with Cohen's assertion that biblical criticism could effectively end antisemitism and could provide Jewish scholars with the tools to establish *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the academy.

In this chapter we will explore how and why Cohen argues for the establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a university discipline. In doing so, we will bring Cohen into conversation with contemporary Jewish biblical scholars James Kugel and Jon D. Levenson. Although Levenson, Kugel and Cohen lived at different times (Kugel and Levenson today, Cohen a century ago), engage in different types of study (Kugel and Levenson are biblical scholars, while Cohen is a philosopher), and exist in different academic contexts (Kugel and Levenson are a part of the university discipline of Jewish Studies, while Cohen was not as Jewish Studies was not a part of the university during his lifetime) all three scholars focus on the theoretical, and some may say, theological, problems within biblical studies. Therefore, in this chapter, I will bring these scholars together in order to see the light that Levenson and Kugel's projects shed on Cohen's interactions with biblical criticism. We will look at Kugel's "The Bible in the University"<sup>2</sup> and *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*,<sup>3</sup> as well as Levenson's *The Hebrew Bible, the Old*

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<sup>2</sup> James Kugel, "The Bible in the University," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, eds. William Henry Propp, Baruch Halpern and David Noel Freedman (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 143-66.

<sup>3</sup> James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

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*Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies*<sup>4</sup> and “How Not to Conduct Jewish-Christian Dialogue.”<sup>5</sup> By looking at these works, we will ask whether or not Cohen’s critiques are still relevant and resonate with present-day discussions about problems in biblical studies. In asking this question we will be able to determine both what the differences and similarities are between Kugel’s and Levenson’s critiques and those of Cohen, and what these differences and similarities tell us about Cohen’s specific concerns about biblical criticism and Jewish education. In order to do this, we will look back to Cohen’s critiques of Wellhausen and compare them with the critiques of Wellhausen that Kugel and Wellhausen offer. We will also look at Cohen’s essays “Zur Begründung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums,”<sup>6</sup> “Zwei Vorschläge zur Sicherung unseres Fortbestandes”<sup>7</sup> and “Salomon Neumann: Rede bei der Gedächtnisfeier der Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums am 25. Oktober 1908,”<sup>8</sup> as in these essays, Cohen connects the problems of biblical studies to his ideas about Jewish education and *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. This chapter, then, will look at the specific problems of biblical scholarship that Kugel

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<sup>4</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Jon D. Levenson, “How Not to Conduct Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *Commentary*, December 2001, 31-37.

<sup>6</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Zur Begründung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums [1918]” (On the Establishment of an Academy for the Science of Judaism), in *Werke* 17:625-35.

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Zwei Vorschläge zur Sicherung unseres Fortbestandes [1907]” (Two Proposals for the Assurance of Our Survival), in *Werke* 15:121-32.

<sup>8</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Salomon Neumann: Rede bei der Gedächtnisfeier der Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums am 25. Oktober 1908 [1908]” (Salomon Neumann: Speech at the Commemoration of the Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums on October 25, 1908), in *Werke* 15:285-304.

and Levenson point to, and then will investigate the continuity and discontinuities of their critiques with those of Cohen's. Finally, we will discuss the role of education in all three scholars' work as their thoughts on education provide us with the solutions that all three scholars present for the problems in biblical studies.

### **Kugel and the Problems of Biblical Studies**

In this section we will begin to investigate how the critiques of Cohen and Kugel can be seen as continuous with regards to the problems that both scholars point to in biblical studies. To do so, we must look back at some of the problems that Cohen sees in biblical studies. As we saw in previous chapters, Cohen asserted that the problems of bias directly affected the outcomes of biblical scholars' studies. In arguing his point, Cohen looked at the prevalence of bias in philological questions and the unwillingness of Christian scholars to either use or acknowledge aspects of Jewish learning, especially in regard to philological questions. Cohen also argued that Christian scholars often did not even question how their biases affected their scholarship, resulting either in an embracing of their biases (for instance, as was the case with Paul de Lagarde) or in naïve forms of scholarship (as Cohen argued in "Der Nächste"). In "The Bible in the University," Kugel investigates these problems as well by examining the origins of biblical studies. This section, then, will look at Kugel's analysis of the problems in biblical studies and his argument that these problems stem from the origins of biblical studies and are perpetuated through the continuing effects of its origins.

In “The Bible in the University,” Kugel examines “the origins of the discipline known as modern biblical scholarship” because “biblical scholars often show a surprising lack of interest in, or knowledge of, their own discipline’s earlier years” (Kugel, 143). The problem with this lack of knowledge, Kugel contends, is that without critical reflection on the history of the discipline, biblical scholars study and teach the biblical text using methods and assumptions that may no longer apply (164). According to Kugel, these methods, which grew out of sixteenth-century religious polemics, now stand in contradiction to what we know about the Bible and its history of interpretation not only because our knowledge of the biblical text has grown, but also because sixteenth century religious polemics no longer define the situation in which the Bible is studied (164). For Kugel, using these methods to study the Bible, then, is not only somewhat “wrongheaded,” but also biased because not everyone who studies the Bible bases their methods upon the religious polemics of centuries ago (163). Kugel, however, does not think that these biases are inherent in how the Bible is studied and thought about. Thus, he seeks to show how the methods and assumptions of present day biblical studies, which are grounded in past biases, can be overcome by analyzing biblical studies in the past. That is, according to Kugel, how the Bible was studied provides important clues for how people thought that the Bible should be studied in the past, and how people argue for how the Bible should be studied in the present.

The beginning of Kugel’s essay, to use a phrase of Cohen’s,<sup>9</sup> already stands in contrast to the “usual” way of presenting the past of biblical studies. Kugel argues that unlike what is written in “many standard introductions, modern

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<sup>9</sup> Reference to Cohen’s essay on Baudissin, “Zwei Rektoratsreden an der Berliner Universität.”

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biblical scholarship did not begin in the nineteenth century, nor yet in the eighteenth, but in the sixteenth” (143). According to Kugel, sixteenth-century innovations in the use of scholarly tools and the creation of new assumptions “caused a whole new field of study to be born—the same field in which biblical critics are engaged today” (144). For Kugel, the origins of biblical studies can be seen in two distinct, but intertwined, historical movements—the Renaissance and the Reformation—because these movements represented both a shift in consciousness and a new way to read the biblical text.

Kugel argues, for instance, that the Renaissance contributed to a “shift in consciousness” (148) that changed how the Bible was seen, interpreted and studied. According to Kugel, the interest in ancient literature that the Renaissance is known for gave rise to interest in the ancient languages (146). As Kugel explains, interest in the Bible meant that a greater knowledge of Hebrew was sought and this interest was encouraged by the invention of the printing press, which enabled a “rapid diffusion of Hebrew texts of the Bible, Hebrew grammars written in Latin, and dictionaries, lexicons, and even rabbinic texts and commentaries published either in the original or in Latin translation” (144). The resulting access to the Hebrew text created a class of scholars, who became known as “Christian Hebraists.” For Kugel, the Christian Hebraists were significant because as “these men sought to master every aspect of the Hebrew Bible,” they not only wished “to read and understand the text in its original language, but they undertook to translate it anew, no longer confiding in the judgment of Jerome’s Vulgate and other received wisdom” (144). Accordingly, they began to look for other sources on which to base their studies. Kugel argues that because these scholars “generally assumed as axiomatic the continuity (just as

some modern scholars have assumed the discontinuity) between biblical and postbiblical Jewish civilization,” “the first place to look for the elucidation of a difficult word or theologically troubling passage was among the ‘learned Rabbins,’ and Jewish tradition was, at least initially, consulted as a kind of ‘native informant’ for all matters touching on the Bible” (145). As Kugel notes, these scholars were also interested in the “reliability of the Masoretic text, the system of Hebrew poetry, authorship and the unity of various books, [and] the nature of prophecy and divine inspiration” (146). Kugel explains that these interests were a result of the “new focus on the human (as opposed to the divine) side of the biblical texts” (149). That is, Kugel asserts that as scholars began to connect actual human beings to the different biblical texts leading to “an identification between the exegete and the human transmitters of the Divine Word, so that one of the most striking features of Christian biblical scholarship in the sixteenth century was the imaginative comparison between past and present” (150). According to Kugel, this focus on the humanity of the text allowed scholars to ask what Moses or Isaiah meant by a particular passage in its original setting, and what that meaning meant for the exegete’s present day circumstance (150). Overall, Kugel argues, this new focus on the humanity of the text allowed scholars a freedom to ask their own questions of the text, instead of relying on Church tradition (150).

The freedom from Christian tradition that scholars gained during the Renaissance, Kugel explains, was fostered and enshrined during the Protestant Reformation (151). Indeed, as Kugel asserts, this freedom led biblical scholarship to help “make the Reformers’ stance more than that of mere malcontents, just as it was the newly established Protestant denominations that subsequently provided

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biblical scholarship with its greatest on-going sponsor” (148). While he argues that modern biblical scholarship and the Protestant Reformation essentially “made” each other, Kugel notes that the extent of “this movement’s Protestant character is still today largely ignored” (151), and biblical scholars have no real idea that “biblical criticism is Protestant in its very attitude towards the text” (152). According to Kugel, the Protestant movement “was predicated on the unmediated encounter between man and God,” and so the “encounter between man and text was the precise parallel of the encounter between man and God” (152). Although the Renaissance quest for freedom from traditional wisdom informed the Reformation’s emphasis on *sola scriptura*, Kugel argues that the Reformation did not rely on Jewish sources for new learning (152-153). Kugel points out that because the Reformers did not want to be corrupted “by the errors of the past” (152), “eventually Jewish exegesis, and even Jewish philology, chronology, and the like were banished from Protestant Bible study” (153). As Kugel asserts, Jewish learning began to be seen as the product of the decline of Judaism, and a line was drawn between the biblical “Israel” and the present-day “Hebrews” (153), meaning that any study using the methods and “traditions” of present day Jews was not compatible with Protestant ideals.

By the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Kugel continues, Protestant biblical studies had enshrined the Renaissance’s questions about the authorship of the biblical text in Source Criticism (153). For Kugel, Source Criticism—that is, the search for J, E, D, and P—also tried to flesh out the original meaning of the biblical text by focusing not only on the figures who wrote the text, but also on “what really happened” in and behind the text (154). According to Kugel, then, the desire for an unmediated encounter between “man” and the text led to a deep

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interest in the history of the text (154). However, Kugel argues, “what really happened” was not easy to determine because “the biblical books themselves were composites and shaped by later editors possessed of their own theological or political designs, [and so] the Bible could hardly be considered an adequate account of what really happened” (154). Kugel explains that as a result of the complicated history of the biblical text, and the rejection of tradition, along with its apologetics (155), as a means of explaining the past, scholars began to search for “an adequate history of what *did* happen” (154). Kugel cites C. A. Briggs<sup>10</sup> in order to underline the importance of historical investigation in biblical studies:

Ancient Jerusalem lies buried beneath the rubbish of more than eighteen centuries. It is covered over by the blood-stained dust of myriads of warriors, who have battled heroically under its walls and in its towers and streets. Its valleys are filled with the débris of palaces, churches, and temples. But the Holy Place of three great religions is still there, and thither countless multitudes turn in holy reverence and pious pilgrimage. In recent times this rubbish has in a measure been explored; and by digging to the rock-bed and the ancient foundations bearing the marks of the Phoenician workmen, the ancient city of the holy times has been recovered, and may now be constructed in our minds by the artist and the historian with essential accuracy. Just so the Holy Scripture, as given by divine inspiration to holy prophets, lies buried beneath the rubbish of

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<sup>10</sup> Briggs was a professor of Bible at Union Theological Seminary. His work on the biblical text led to the publication of a Hebrew lexicon with Francis Brown and Samuel R. Driver. The lexicon, known as Brown-Driver Briggs, or BDB, is the standard Hebrew lexicon for students of biblical Hebrew. Kugel takes this quote from Briggs’ *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (New York: Scribners, 1901).



centuries. It is covered over with the débris of the traditional interpretations of the multitudinous schools and sects. The intellectual and moral conflicts which have raged about it have been vastly more costly than all the battles of armed men. For this conflict has never ceased. This battle has taxed and strained all the highest energies of our race. It has been a struggle in the midst of nations and of families, and has torn many a man's inmost soul with agony and groanings.

The valleys of biblical truth have been filled up with the débris of human dogmas, ecclesiastical institutions, liturgical formulas, priestly ceremonies, and casuistic practices. Historical criticism is digging through this mass of rubbish. Historical criticism is searching for the rock-bed of the Divine Word, in order to recover the real Bible. Historical criticism is sifting all this rubbish. It will gather out every precious stone. Nothing will escape its keen eye. (Briggs, 531; cited in Kugel, 156).

Kugel cites Briggs extensively because in this quote, Briggs equates the history of biblical exegesis with garbage that needs to be cleared away to get at the real origins of the Bible, and the real message of the Bible that people could use (156). For Kugel, however, Briggs' arguments for finding the "real Bible" are "hopelessly naive" (156). According to Kugel, not only has the Biblical bedrock been "an elusive item" (156), but also scholars are no longer sure that the "original meaning" and "what really happened" really matter (157). Kugel notes that scholars now have a newfound respect for the editorial activity and the final shape of the biblical text (157). As a result, Kugel argues, scholars are now

looking at the “area of ‘inner-biblical exegesis,’ in which later biblical texts patently seek to interpret, expand, or apply earlier materials” to all the biblical books (157). For Kugel, then, biblical studies has taken a new turn as it changes its methods in order to reflect the knowledge that old methods has uncovered and to show that biblical studies as a whole can grow and change as its material grows and changes.

In our investigation, before we look at how Cohen and Kugel’s critiques compare, which we will look at later in the chapter after we have discussed Levenson as well, we will look at how Cohen can be seen in light of Kugel’s critiques of the past of biblical studies because Kugel’s interpretation of past movements in biblical studies brings to the fore ways in which Cohen was continuous and discontinuous with several movements in biblical studies. Cohen, for instance, is continuous with movements that both focus on the importance of the language of the biblical text, and then use that focus to question authority as Cohen questions the authority of Protestant biblical scholars in their interpretations of Hebrew in his essays “Der Nächste” and “Gesinnung.” Cohen’s interest in the history of sacrifice and the prophetic arguments against sacrifice, as we saw in Chapter 3, also relies upon the assumption, as per Briggs, that one can find out “what really happened” in history, and like other biblical scholars stressed the need for Source Criticism as we will see later in this chapter. Moreover, just as Kugel highlights the role of Jewish scholars within the quest for knowledge of biblical Hebrew and the subsequent rejection of Jewish modes of interpretation by Protestant scholars, so too does Cohen, as he argues that one of the major weaknesses of Protestant biblical scholarship is its lack of dialogue with Jewish sources and scholarship. Interestingly, while Cohen can be seen as

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continuous with biblical studies in that he also uses biblical scholarship to support his arguments in order to keep from looking like a “malcontent,” just as early Protestant biblical scholars did in their fight against Christian traditional authorities, the fact that Cohen does so can be seen as one way in which he is discontinuous with biblical scholarship traditions, because in doing so, Cohen turns the traditions of Protestant scholarship against Protestant scholars. Cohen, however, may not just be seen as discontinuous in this regard because Cohen is actively disagreeing, just as Kugel does, with several aspects of biblical studies that Kugel points to. For instance, as we have seen before, Cohen does not approve of the quest to find “origins” in the biblical text; rather, Cohen is interested in the process and progress of the biblical text. That is, Cohen focuses on the cumulative meaning of the text and the relevance of inner-biblical exegesis just as present-day biblical scholars do. As a result of this interpretive stance, then, Cohen relies on tradition in ways that the Protestant scholars fought against, while at the same time, participating in biblical scholarship that Kugel argues is happening now.

By looking at the problems that Kugel sees in the origins and subsequent history of how the Bible was seen and studied by biblical scholars, and then looking at how Cohen’s work is both continuous and discontinuous with movements in biblical studies as Kugel describes, we begin to see that Cohen’s thought resonates with present-day discussions about the problems of biblical studies. Cohen resonates with these discussions because Cohen himself can be seen by Kugel as an example of both positive and negative aspects in biblical scholarship. Cohen’s work is positive in that he tries to keep up on the latest scholarship and points out the weaknesses and biases of biblical scholarship,

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therefore, pushing biblical scholarship to be better. At the same time, because Cohen tries to keep up on the latest scholarship, Cohen's work is negative because he assumes, along with other nineteenth-century scholars, that one can find out "what really happened." Thus, in a very real sense, by putting Kugel and Cohen into conversation here, we can see that Cohen's work is precariously balanced, as he both tries to fit into biblical studies, while also using his stance as an outsider to critique the assumptions, tools and goals of biblical studies. In our next section, we will look further into the light that contemporary critiques of biblical studies can bring to Cohen's work by turning to the work of Jon D. Levenson.

### **Levenson and the Assumptions of Biblical Studies**

Levenson, like Kugel and Cohen, also investigates the problems in biblical criticism in his book *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies*. As we have seen earlier, Cohen argues that theoretical deficiencies in the methods of biblical scholars generally come from an unwillingness to understand the relationship between scholarship and the wider world, and that biblical scholars mask their biases under the ideals of scientific objectivity. Arguing along these same lines, Levenson asserts that the theoretical deficiencies of biblical scholarship can be understood by looking at the relationship between scholarship and the theological assumptions behind the methodologies employed by biblical scholars. In this section, we will look at Levenson's analysis of the costs involved in the methodological and theological assumptions of biblical scholarship.

In *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies*, Levenson concentrates on the problematic

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assumptions in biblical studies by analyzing “the relationship between two modes of biblical study, the traditional and the historical-critical” (Levenson, xiii). For Levenson, studying this relationship is crucial for understanding not only the history, but also the profession, of biblical scholarship (xiii). He argues that studying this relationship does not usually garner much attention because it points to the theoretical deficiencies in the history and assumptions of the historical critical method (xiii). According to Levenson, because the liberal Protestant view advocates “the *replacement* of traditional interpretation with the historical-critical method” (xiii) without a critical reflection on that system, often historical-critical interpretations of the Bible are deficient because they are only “rewordings or recasting of traditional Christian views” (xiii). In so arguing, we can see that there are commonalities between Levenson’s argument and that of Kugel. For instance, we have already seen that Kugel asserts that “biblical criticism is Protestant in its very attitude towards the text” (Kugel, 152), and that the Protestant emphasis on *sola scriptura* enshrined the Protestant break with traditional Christian (and Jewish) forms of interpretation (152-3). But whereas Kugel points out that the Protestant character of the historical-critical method is largely ignored (152), Levenson argues that most biblical scholars simply accept the method uncritically, which amounts to “a blindness to the inability of a self-consciously universalistic and rationalistic method to serve as the vehicle of any particularistic religious confession” (Levenson, xiii). The consequence is that:

This, in turn, has meant that the continuity of the Hebrew Bible with the ongoing Jewish tradition (and not with the church alone) has been denied or, more often, simply ignored. And so, we are too often left with Christianity trying to pass as historical criticism and

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with historical criticism severely distorted by unacknowledged religious allegiance. (xiii)

At the same time, Levenson points out that the problem has been recognized and that solutions for it have led in two main directions—the suspicion of religious claims of continuance with the Hebrew Bible under the guise of religious neutrality (xiii) and the privileging of the historical context at the cost of the literary context (xiv). For Levenson, however, these solutions pose problems of their own, which we will look in the following paragraphs.

As we saw above, Levenson asserts that there are serious deficiencies in the liberal Protestant assumptions of the historical-critical method. Interestingly, Levenson analyses these deficiencies by evaluating the arguments concerning the method's benefits. One such benefit is the collaboration and cooperation between the Jews and Christians who study the Bible. According to Levenson, the ability of Jews and Christians to cooperate within biblical studies stems from “the phenomenon of ecumenical dialogue” (82). Levenson asserts that the idea that Jews and Christians can work together in biblical studies does not just come from religious ecumenism, but also comes from a new situation within biblical studies itself. He uses the work of Lawrence Boadt to explain this point. Boadt, a Catholic priest, explains in his introduction to *Biblical Studies: Meeting Ground of Jews and Christians*<sup>11</sup> that our expanding knowledge of ancient history and civilization has led to a greater understanding of the “semitic world,” which has “created a scientific passion for capturing the original setting and sense of the biblical books” (Boadt, 3-4; cited in Levenson, 83). Levenson points out that this passion

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<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Boadt, “Introduction: Biblical Studies on the Fifteenth Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*,” in *Biblical Studies: Meeting Ground of Jews and Christians*, eds. Lawrence Boadt, Helga Croner and Leon Klenicki (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1980), 1-15.

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for studying the original setting and sense of the Bible allows Boadt to assert that “the relationship of the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament . . . must begin with the premise that each speaks from its own complete integrity” (Boadt, 5; cited in Levenson, 83). For Levenson, this leads to the popular conception within biblical studies as seen in the work of Boadt that in recognizing the individual integrity of the Hebrew Scriptures and the prevalence of the new ecumenical movements, Christians and Jews will no longer be involved in the Jewish-Christian disputations that have often characterized the “working” relationship between Christians and Jews who study “the Bible.” Levenson, however, asserts that the “idea that the historical study of the Bible has replaced Jewish-Christian disputation with ecumenical dialogue has not historically been one with a resounding resonance among Jews” (83). Levenson points out that one can encounter the idea that “it is better to study Bible with a Jew hostile to Jewish practice than with a Gentile deeply respectful of it” (83). At the same time, Levenson notes, biblical scholars, both Christian and Jewish, have been confronted with the question of religious commitment itself. That is, as Levenson notes, scholars should be asked the following questions: 1. “In what way and to what degree are the Jews who meet Christians in biblical studies Jewish?” (83-84); 2. “What is Christian about the premise that the Hebrew Scripture ‘speaks from its own complete integrity’ over against the New Testament?” (84). According to Levenson, the fact that these questions have to be, or even are, asked point to the problem that both Jewish and Christian biblical scholars often put their religious commitments on hold when dealing with the “common ground” between them—that is, when dealing with the Hebrew Scriptures. Levenson argues that “to the extent that Jews and Christians bracket their religious

commitments in the pursuit of biblical studies, they meet not as Jews and Christians, but as something else, something not available in the days of Nachmanides and Pablo Christiani” (84). For Levenson, then, although Christians and Jews meet on common ground, that ground could be considered neutral rather than common because they do not actually meet as Christians and Jews (84). Levenson asserts that acknowledging the benefits of biblical studies—the rising ecumenism and cooperation between Jews and Christians—exposes the costs and limitations of the historical-critical method, which actually threaten the burgeoning ecumenism of biblical studies in ways that are even more threatening to Jews and Christians than bias and prejudice and that call into question the benefits that were sought in the first place (84). Thus, according to Levenson, “a method that studiously pursues neutrality [should not] be mistaken for the key to a genuine and profound dialogue between these two great religious communities” (84).

For Levenson, religious neutrality, then, is a central problem within biblical studies. According to Levenson, the problem of neutrality has serious ramifications for both methodologies and justifications of biblical studies, and points to problems that exist from the very beginning of modern biblical studies to the present day. Levenson argues that the problem of neutrality in biblical studies stems from the origins and assumptions of modern biblical studies itself. He begins his analysis by asserting that one of the pioneers of biblical criticism, Baruch Spinoza, launched a program for the study of the Bible that relied upon a position of neutrality that was to some extent dictated by the Reformation agenda to use the Bible as “its own interpreter (*interpres sui ipsius*),” which “requires no ecclesiastical or other traditionary mediation” (91). Levenson explains that in



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using the text as its own interpreter, as per the Reformation fight against ecclesiastical authority, Spinoza based his program for the study of the Bible, as found in *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, on the following statements:

1. Our knowledge of Scripture must then be looked for in Scripture only. (Spinoza, 100; cited in Levenson, 91)<sup>12</sup>
2. the authority of the Hebrew high-priests [is not a] confirmation of the authority of the Roman pontiffs to interpret religion, [but] rather tend[s] to establish universal freedom of judgment. (Spinoza, 119; cited in Levenson, 91)

Levenson asserts that Spinoza was partly able to question the authority of traditional interpretation of the biblical text because he denied not only the divine authority of the priests, kings and prophets (96), but also the divine authority of the text itself. Moreover, according to Levenson, Spinoza “denied supernatural revelation altogether” (92). For Spinoza, Levenson asserts, human reason was “the primary cause of Divine revelation” (92) and so Spinoza argues that “the rule for [biblical] interpretation should be nothing but the natural light of reason which is common to all—not any supernatural light nor any external authority” (Spinoza, 119; cited in Levenson, 92). For Levenson, then, Spinoza’s arguments mean that the Bible was just another book (93). Accordingly, he points out that Spinoza asserts that “the meaning of a scriptural passage is the author’s meaning alone, not God’s” (93). Since Spinoza focuses on the purely human origin of the Bible, Levenson notes that Spinoza concentrates on “the life, the conduct, and the studies of the author of each book, who he was, what was the occasion, and the

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<sup>12</sup> Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theological-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1951).

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epoch of his writing, whom did he write for, and in what language” (Spinoza, 103; cited in Levenson, 93). With this statement, Levenson argues, we can see that Spinoza begins the “preoccupation with dating and authorship that dominated the distinctly modern study of the Bible until this generation and continues to flourish” (93). Spinoza’s program, in Levenson’s analysis, becomes a program for neutrality because Spinoza does not have to refer to any traditional authority when looking at the biblical text, as Spinoza argues that any type of religious orientation distorts the biblical text.

According to Levenson, Spinoza’s program for religious neutrality in biblical studies was based on his growing skepticism about the political order. He assumed that “spiritual systems are really only political” (94), and therefore his goal was to “free the political order from subservience to religion” (95). At stake for Spinoza was the creation of an order in which new religious alternatives could be accepted, and in which differences and divisions would no longer matter, thus, Spinoza tried to create a neutral, or free, space for this to happen. Levenson argues that Spinoza grounded his vision for a free political order in two ways. First, he displaced the authority of religion with philosophy, which thereby relativized Judaism and Christianity (94). In Spinoza’s view, both Testaments were equals; thus, Levenson asserts, Spinoza argued that their characteristic features cancelled each other out (94). As Levenson explains, what is left after the differences are neutralized are a “few vague moral imperatives, namely, the practice of justice and charity and obedience to the state” (94). According to Levenson, these moral ideals were “the substance of the universal and immutable philosophical religion with which Spinoza hoped to replace Judaism and Christianity and thus to end the political turmoil and insane bloodletting that

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Christian sectarianism had inflicted upon his country and the rest of Europe” (94).<sup>13</sup> Second, Spinoza replaced the divinity of the biblical text with humanity and history. As we saw above, Spinoza argued against the divine nature of revelation and the Bible. He asserted that, as Levenson notes, “the law revealed by God to Moses was merely the law of the ancient Hebrew state” (Spinoza, 8; cited in Levenson, 94), and a law that was no longer binding after the state’s downfall (Spinoza, 8; Levenson, 94). Thus, according to Levenson, Spinoza sought to free politics from religion by attaching “religious documents inextricably to a vanished political order” (95), thereby rendering these documents useless in the new order, and severing the relationship between political authority and divine mandate. In effect, as Levenson points out, because Spinoza respected neither the claim that the Bible was divinely inspired, nor the claim that kings, priests and prophets were divinely ordained (96), Spinoza asserted that both the text and its ideals were human products. Levenson argues that in doing so, Spinoza pioneered “the systematic transference of the normativity of the Bible from its *manifest text* to its *underlying history*” (96). For Levenson, the “Bible in Spinoza’s naturalistic theology becomes another political text, and its real meaning lies not in its textuality, but in its historical message, of which its own authors may have been unaware” (96). Spinoza’s task, as Levenson explains, was to uncover this message, “which belongs to the contemporary moralizing historian” (96).

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<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Spinoza’s privileging of morality over religion in order to end political strife somewhat parallels Cohen’s own motivations for privileging morality and the neighbor because, like Spinoza, Cohen also wanted to free the political order from subservience to religion. Unlike Spinoza, however Cohen did not give up anything Jewish in his work, nor did Cohen argue for freeing society from religion in general because Cohen sought equality for Judaism and Christianity in society, not the dismembering of “religion.”

Interestingly, while Spinoza sought to neutralize the differences between Judaism and Christianity in order to stop political and cultural persecutions by recognizing Jewish and Christian equality, as neither had a right to authority, Levenson argues that Spinoza's program for biblical studies did effectively undermine religion itself. For Levenson, the reason for this is because the method that Spinoza asserted is "historical and therefore privileges the period of composition at the expense of all later recontextualizations" (96). That is, in privileging the original text, the method undermines the religions—the recontextualizations—for which that text is authoritative. Levenson argues that because the method of historical criticism that grew out of Spinoza's program sharply distinguishes between what the Bible meant in its own time, what the Bible means now, and or at any point in its history, the method drives a wedge between the past and the present (97). Or to be more specific, the method *can* drive a wedge between the past and the present. According to Levenson, the method itself is neutral—it can either heal the rupture caused by the historical consciousness of the difference in time periods, or, it can "aggravate the rupture and help in dismantling tradition" (97). Levenson argues that whether the rupture can be healed or aggravated depends on the scholar, or the scholarly community at large:

To the extent that historical critics restrict themselves to descriptive history and avoid thorny questions of contemporary appropriation, they contribute, even if inadvertently, to the dismantling of tradition rather than to the healing of the rupture. For historical criticism so restricted subtly fosters an image of the Bible as having once meant a great deal but now means little or

nothing. It tells us that the current meaning of the text is better discovered by people only minimally involved in the historical investigation of its composition. (97)

He argues that most often the scholars who practice this restricted type of biblical scholarship, or those who are the most outspoken debunkers of traditional beliefs, had lives that were once dominated by religion, and who now have disassociated themselves from religious institutions (98). We can see that for Levenson, the movement from belief to skepticism in the lives of biblical scholars often parallels the view of some biblical scholars that the Bible itself meant something once, but not anymore. Although Levenson points out that there are scholars with active religious lives, he asserts that even these scholars focus on the past instead of the present, and that, like the non-religious scholars, they divorce theology from the historical study of the text (98). In doing so, Levenson explains, “Judaism and Christianity have become historical contingencies, relativized by historicism and replaced as indications of absolute truth not by philosophy but by the amorphous secular liberalism that dominates the academic world” (98). According to Levenson, this liberalism often leads to “a trivializing antiquarianism, in which the bath water has become more important than the baby, and the enormous historical and philological labors are not justified by reference to any larger structure of meaning” (99).

Levenson points out that “religious” scholars also contribute to the problem of neutrality in that if “the remarkable pluralism of the field rests on a foundation of historicism, and the cooperation of diverse groups is purchased at the cost of the tacit agreement on the part of all that the diversity matters so little that it can safely be privatized and thus excluded from academic discourse,” then

the “Jewishness” or “Christianness” of the participants is only vestigial and therefore lacks any relevance (98). Yet, Levenson also points out that if we take each tradition’s claims seriously, “there will come a moment in which Jewish-Christian consensus becomes existentially impossible” (104). According to Levenson, then, there are inherent tensions in present-day biblical studies between the costs and benefits of religious neutrality because while one benefit is that neutrality enables the meeting of Jewish and Christian scholars on common ground, one cost is the relativizing of those traditions. Moreover, Levenson notes that if biblical studies focuses on the differences between Christianity and Judaism, then biblical studies cannot be a joint venture between Jews and Christians because there will never be common ground for the traditions to work on (104). However, if biblical studies is grounded in the commonalities between Jews and Christians, then their differences no longer matter, their religions become bracketed, and both Judaism and Christianity may vanish in the process (98). For Levenson, there is no clear-cut solution as both sides—the side for commonality, and the side for difference—have their benefits and limitations, and so one side cannot be sacrifice for the sake of the other.

For Levenson, then, the problem of neutrality stems directly from the problems of religious difference. That is, according to Levenson, biblical studies assumes a stance of neutrality in order to move beyond the political, cultural, and religious differences between Christians and Jews. Levenson asserts that Jews and Christians have made real attempts to overcome these differences. On the Christian side, Levenson argues that there has been “a dramatic shift in the Christian teaching about Judaism” (Levenson, 2001, 31)<sup>14</sup>—Christians have

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<sup>14</sup> Jon D. Levenson, “How Not to Conduct Jewish – Christian Dialogue.”

reexamined their “teaching of contempt,” affirmed the connections between Judaism and Christianity, acknowledged their indebtedness to Judaism, and apologized for “the long history of anti-Jewish persecution, including the Holocaust” (32). Jews, for their part, Levenson explains, have often helped in the Christian reexamination of history and theology, and have participated in interfaith dialogue (32). At the same time, however, Levenson asserts that while this willingness to move beyond their differences has instilled a new respect between Christians and Jews in biblical studies, there are significant costs and risks to Jews, Christians and biblical studies in general that result from the perceived need to gloss over these differences. In essence, Levenson’s argument is that in minimizing religious difference, in terms of its theological, historical and literary contexts, biblical scholars minimize actual methodological problems. In the following paragraphs, we will examine these problems by investigating Levenson’s exploration of how the assumptions of neutrality affect not only methodologies in biblical studies, but also the justifications of these studies.

The first major problem with regard to methodology that Levenson points to is that despite claims to the contrary, the Hebrew Bible is not the same book for Jews and Christians<sup>15</sup> (35). The differing canonical order of the Hebrew Bible, along with the different theological positions that are demonstrated in a traditions ordering of the Hebrew Bible, Levenson argues, makes it clear that generally speaking one must ask “Whose Bible?” will be studied (Levenson, 1993, 104). Thus, in the context of biblical studies, if one is to take seriously both traditions views of scripture, the question of whose sense of scripture is to take precedence becomes a major theological and methodological question. Levenson, however,

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<sup>15</sup> The canonical order of the Hebrew Bible also differs among various Christian denominations.

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asserts that “pleas for a ‘Jewish biblical scholarship’ or a ‘Christian biblical scholarship’ are senseless and reactionary” because the religious traditions themselves affirm the meaning of the text in several different contexts, and periods, at once (104). As Levenson states: “Just as the text has more than one context, and biblical studies more than one method, so scripture has more than one sense” (104). Thus, for Levenson, biblical scholars ought to be able to deal with both Christian and Jewish interpretations in their studies.

The second problem that Levenson points out is that the origins and assumptions of biblical studies were motivated by a theological world view that was couched in terms of religious neutrality. As a result of this “neutrality,” which came from the ideas to neutralize religious persecutions and place religious authority in the hands of individuals instead of traditions, biblical studies was marked from the beginning by an irresolvable tension. That is, some, if not most, early biblical scholars asserted a theologically Protestant program of biblical studies that sought to break the hold “traditional” religion had upon the biblical text and to separate religious authority from political authority, thereby creating a neutral, or free, space for individuals to interpret the biblical text themselves. In creating this space, Levenson argues, biblical scholars transferred “the normativity of the Bible from its *manifest text* to its *underlying history*” (96) in order to facilitate their goals of wresting authority from traditions and place it in the hands of individuals. In the process, however, Levenson notes that biblical scholars ultimately undermined the religious traditions from which they came and destroyed “the literary context that is the Bible (either Jewish or Christian) as a whole and often even the smaller literary context that is the book, the chapter, or whatever” (100). At the same time, they used these religious traditions to justify



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their studies because as Levenson notes, “in all cases, what scholars study and teach is partly a function of which practices and beliefs they wish to perpetuate” (110). For Levenson, these scholarly choices, which are theological in nature, are at odds with the basic claim of historical criticism that “one may legitimately interpret scripture against one’s own tradition and personal belief” (109). Furthermore, he asserts, the “two-sidedness. . . of biblical scholarship in the historical-critical mode” (109) means that “the very value-neutrality of this method of study puts its practitioners at a loss to defend the *value* of the enterprise itself” (109).

Levenson argues that this value-neutrality results in further methodological confusion, for while a program of neutrality highlights the historical contexts of the text, religious interpretations of the text often rely on the literary context of the Bible instead of the historical. This methodological confusion of historical context vs. literary context leads to another significant problem because the historical contexts and the literary contexts of the Bible are different for Christians and Jews, and as we have noted above, biblical scholars generally choose one religious context over the other. Levenson argues that this choice causes yet another problem, for in awarding monopoly to one interpretive lens over another, the modern interpreters privilege themselves not only over “their own contemporaries, but also, and more revealingly [over] the very material that they are seeking to understand” (114). According to Levenson, scholars who privilege themselves, or their own interpretive lens, are “actually asserting a secular analogy to a religious revelation: they are claiming to have a definitive insight, not empirically derived, into the meaning of things, even things that they have never directly experienced and that are interpreted very differently by those

who have” (115). The result of this action, Levenson asserts, is that the scholar assumes that his or her observations are “truer than the practitioner’s practice,” which sets up a hierarchy with the scholar on top (115), and also validates the distance between the scholar and the material that “neutrality” and “scientific” objectivity depends upon. For Levenson, since it is the “outsider” who has “the clarity of vision” (115), the locus of truth shifts “from the practicing community to the nonpracticing and unaffiliated individual” (116). While Levenson thinks that the type of thinking dominant in this model “is a secular equivalent to fundamentalism” because it, “by definition, can never be in error” (117), the more pressing problem is that it both ignores and insults the communities on which it is based—as Levenson argues, “the vitality of their rather untraditional discipline has historically depended upon the vitality of traditional religious communities” (110). Furthermore, because a canon is “never generic, never universal,” Levenson argues that scholars must face the fact that “the object of their study cannot. . . be detached from specific religious communities and from traditions that are postbiblical” (122), as to do so is to “attack their own project” (122). According to Levenson, in trying to invalidate the traditions on which their work is based, they “cast considerable doubt upon the ongoing importance of the book to which they have devoted their life’s work” (122).

For Levenson, then, the “polarization of scripture and tradition” (46) that results from the preference for the historical over the literary context, and for neutrality and secularism over religion, in biblical studies has separated the traditions who claim the Bible as a foundational document from the document itself. In our present context of multiculturalism and religious plurality, the justifications for studying the Bible become even more precarious. Levenson

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asserts that to justify biblical studies in a “secular” and “neutral” context, that is, in the university rather than in seminary, scholars often resort to the argument that we should study the Bible because it is “the foundational document of *our* culture” (109). However, according to Levenson, this reason is not enough because western culture cannot be separated from its Judeo-Christian context, whether the embracing of these religions, or the rejection of them that secularism and neutrality represents. As Levenson points out, to “replace an authoritative culture founded upon that book is still to make a claim that goes beyond the limits of historical description” (109). Moreover, the claim that the Bible is a “foundational document” for culture is, for Levenson, “to imply more cultural homogeneity than many believe to be warranted” (109), especially in our “multicultural society.” Thus, Levenson asserts, to take the present day religious community out of the “historical” picture of the Bible means that biblical studies either has nothing left to stand on, or it attacks the very means by which it is legitimized—the religious community itself—for without them, there would be nothing to study. Levenson explains further: “In short, biblical studies inevitably (indeed, by definition) involves the affirmation of certain religious judgments—if not for the present, then at least as a legacy of the past with continuing *normative* effects” (125-6). In this quote we can see that Levenson points out that despite the fact that biblical studies depends on a program of “neutrality” in a “secular” context, secularity “is no guarantee of religious neutrality” (126). Therefore, for Levenson, the assumptions concerning “history” and the method of “historical criticism” in biblical studies is often at odds with the past of biblical studies and the results that biblical studies wish to find because neutrality and religiosity both

skew the results in favor of their own methodological and theological assumptions.

With these points we can now bring Cohen into conversation with Levenson because while Cohen himself argues that scientific objectivity should play a part in the methodologies of biblical studies, Cohen can be understood to be making some sort of theological choices in his given studies. He, after all, does argue in *Religion of Reason* that Judaism is the primary origin of the religion of reason (RR 34/39-40). Cohen, then, is obviously not interested in “religious” objectivity. He feels no need to bracket his religiousness in his pursuit of biblical studies. Cohen, however, does argue that all studies must have a question that can be verified through objective study. That is, one must approach one’s sources with a concept, which must be laid “as a foundation in order to be instructed by them and not simply guided by their authority,” and then verify that concept with reference to the sources (4/4-5). Cohen, then, offers a counterpoint to Levenson’s account that stresses how biblical scholars often assert the need for religious neutrality, or “objectivity.” That is, Cohen would be, for Levenson, an example of how one can pursue biblical studies without compromising one’s religiosity. For us, this means that Cohen and Levenson represent continuity in critique because the critiques of biblical criticism that Cohen had are also found in Levenson. For instance, even though they focus on different aspects of religiosity in biblical studies, both Levenson and Cohen speak about the impact of secularism and neutrality in biblical studies.

### **Cohen and Our Biblical Scholars**

Now that we have looked at the respective critiques of Levenson and Kugel and have brought them into conversation with Cohen, we will look further at the similarities and difference in our scholars' critiques of biblical studies. We will focus on the problems of bias, context and contemporary appropriation in order to get at how Cohen's critiques can be seen as continuous, or in some cases, discontinuous with the critiques of Levenson and Kugel. We will begin our analysis with where this chapter started—bias, as bias, in our investigation is seen to shape presuppositions, methods and results in biblical criticism. The bias that we will deal with is the anti-Jewish and antisemitic biases of Protestant biblical science by looking at our scholars' respective critiques of Julius Wellhausen. The question of antisemitism itself, however, is not the subject of our analysis so much as it helps us understand Cohen, Levenson, and Kugel's critiques of bias in biblical studies. We will then look at the ways in which our scholars seek to solve the problems that they see within biblical studies.

In the beginning of this chapter we saw Solomon Schechter's equation of higher criticism with higher antisemitism. For Cohen, however, neither antisemitism nor anti-Judaism were inherent characteristics of Protestant biblical science. As we saw in Chapter 2, he thought that biblical criticism would be the best antidote to antisemitism (*Werke* 15, 100). Furthermore, according to Cohen, the Protestant bias against Judaism does not necessarily lie in the methods that were used for biblical study; rather, he asserted that bias often shapes the ways in which the results from those studies are interpreted. In Chapter 1, for instance, we see Cohen's critiques of how material is interpreted with regard to bias in his participation in Section 166 trials, his interactions with Rudolf Kittel, his concept

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of the neighbor, and his arguments against the Protestant bias that Judaism was a “particularistic” religion that had neither inner morality nor a conception of universality. In Chapter 2, we examined Cohen’s assertions that proper methodology could eliminate bias. The subject matter of Chapter 3—Cohen’s critiques of Wellhausen—will be further expanded upon in this chapter as it is useful in comparing the views of our scholars on religious bias in scholarship not only because Wellhausen is considered to be a pioneer of biblical criticism, and therefore receives attention from Cohen, Schechter, Kugel and Levenson, but also because Cohen’s treatment of Wellhausen points to the complex nature of antisemitism and anti-Judaism in nineteenth-century biblical criticism. For instance, Cohen, unlike Schechter, does not equate Wellhausen with antisemitism, and even argues that the friendship that he shared with Wellhausen could serve as an example of collegiality between Jews and Christians in the academy. Why, then, does Cohen offer a different picture of Wellhausen than does Schechter, Levenson, or even Kugel? To answer this question, we will focus on how Cohen, Kugel and Levenson explain anti-Jewish biases in Protestant biblical studies by looking at Wellhausen’s theory of history.

Kugel, for instance, notes that in his Documentary Hypothesis, Wellhausen argues that we can trace the “hardening” of Israelite religion into doctrines, laws and theories (Kugel, 2008, 298).<sup>16</sup> According to Kugel, because Wellhausen thinks that the Priestly source (P) was completely divorced from the real world and enshrines “tedious priestly rules and procedures,” it lost the spontaneity that originally defined Israelite religion (299, 325). Kugel argues that, for Wellhausen, as Israelite religion “morphed into a thing of laws and priestly

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<sup>16</sup> James Kugel. *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*.

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ceremonies” as seen in P (297), the “great religion was on its way down” (299). While Kugel does not explicitly link Wellhausen’s arguments concerning the degeneration of Judaism with antisemitism per se, the implication of bias is nonetheless clear. Levenson is just as careful. After describing Wellhausen’s portrayal of the developmental stages of Judaism, Levenson argues that in Wellhausen’s view, with the triumph of P, Judaism can be seen as “Israelite religion after it has died” (Levenson, 11). Levenson cites the following two quotes from Wellhausen as proof:

1. When it is recognized that *the canon* is what distinguishes Judaism from ancient Israel, it is recognized at the same time that what distinguishes Judaism from ancient Israel is *the written Torah*.<sup>17</sup>
2. Yet it is a thing which is likely to occur, that a body of traditional practice should only be written down when it is threatening to die out and that a book should be, as it were, the ghost of a life which is closed. (Wellhausen, 405 n. 1; Levenson, 11)

In calling attention to these two passages, Levenson argues that, for Wellhausen, “the Torah defines Judaism, and Judaism is the ghost of ancient Israel” (11). For both Kugel and Levenson, the Protestant bias that Judaism is degenerate and therefore had to be superseded by Christianity is evident in Wellhausen’s claims. According to Levenson, this bias can most clearly be seen in *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* where Wellhausen asserts that the gospel is the fourth stage

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<sup>17</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), 410, cited in Levenson, 11.

of development in Israelite religion (12).<sup>18</sup> Thus, according to Wellhausen, Levenson asserts, the spirit of the Israelite religion did not “continue on” in Judaism, but in Christianity.

As I showed in Chapter 3, Cohen also does not shy away from identifying the bias in Wellhausen’s presentation of the stages of Israelite religion, and his assertions about the degeneration of Israelite religion into “law.” Cohen, however, does not explicitly critique Wellhausen’s portrayal of the stages of development. Along with Kugel, who asserts that Wellhausen’s main theory that there are stages of development remains uncontested in biblical criticism (Kugel, 42), Cohen does not question Wellhausen’s basic methodology. As we saw in Chapter 3, Cohen uses Wellhausen’s periodization of the Israelite religion in order to track the changes of sacrifice in Israelite religion. What Cohen does do, like other biblical scholars who came after him (Kugel, 306),<sup>19</sup> is modify Wellhausen’s conclusions in order to bring them more in line with his (Cohen’s) own methodological assumptions, as well as with what he asserts should have been the results of Wellhausen’s study. According to Cohen, “development” in history must be understood as forward progress. For Cohen, Wellhausen’s arguments that the “developments” of Israelite religion resulted in degeneration, not progress, are plainly absurd. Thus, Cohen seeks to prove that Judaism is not the degeneration of Israelite religion, but the progression of it. For us, Cohen’s modification of Wellhausen’s theory shows that while Cohen agreed with Wellhausen’s basic assumptions that the Israelite religion did develop and change over time, Cohen did not think that Wellhausen’s results were adequate because they were not the

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<sup>18</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1895), 356.

<sup>19</sup> Kugel, however, does not explicitly mention Cohen.



“obvious” outcomes of the method. Thus, as we saw earlier, Cohen thinks that Wellhausen does not have the ability to follow through with his own method because he is not a historian and actually misunderstands the “purpose” of history as a discipline. That is, history as a discipline must be scientifically objective and free from value judgments. For Cohen, this means that history must be thought of in accordance with a concept, which Cohen asserts should be continuity (RR, 177/206), and since Wellhausen asserts a concept of degeneration, Cohen thinks that Wellhausen’s presentation of Israelite history should be called into question. For our purposes in this chapter, we can see here that Cohen alludes to the point that Wellhausen’s conclusion that Israel degenerated into Judaism is a conclusion that is not based on scientific historical principles but on religious bias.

At the same time, Cohen does not explicitly assert that Wellhausen’s scholarly weaknesses stem from his religious biases. Kugel and Levenson, however, argue that Wellhausen’s results can be seen as based on the Protestant theological stance, or in their terms, bias, that Judaism was superseded by Christianity. Levenson, for instance, explains that for Wellhausen, “no choice between historical description and normative theology was necessary, since he thought history showed a development toward the theological affirmation that claimed his allegiance” (Levenson, 15). Therefore, because Wellhausen already thought that the Torah was no longer important because it had been replaced by the New Testament, Levenson argues that Wellhausen’s theory about the degeneration of the Israelite religion fit with his Protestant biases. Kugel makes a similar point. According to Kugel, Wellhausen’s presentation of Judaism corresponded to his theory of the evolution of Christianity; therefore, Wellhausen would have favored the certain presentations of the Documentary Hypothesis that

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pitted the evolution of Christianity against the degeneration of Judaism (Kugel, 302). Levenson calls attention to Wellhausen's autobiographical reading of the Torah by extensively citing from the introduction to the *Prolegomena*:

In my student days I was attracted by the stories of Saul and David, Ahab and Elijah; the discourse of Amos and Isaiah laid strong hold on me, and I read myself well into the prophetic and historical books of the Old Testament. Thanks to such aids as were accessible to me, I even considered that I understood them tolerably, but at the same time was troubled by a bad conscience, as if I were beginning with the roof instead of the foundation; for I had no thorough acquaintance with the Law, of which I was accustomed to be told that it was the basis and postulate of the whole literature. At last I took courage and made my way through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. . . . But it was in vain that I looked for the light which was to be shed from this source on the historical and prophetic books. On the contrary, my enjoyment of the latter was marred by the Law; it did not bring them any nearer to me, but intruded itself uneasily, like a ghost that makes a noise indeed, but is not visible and really effects nothing. . . . At last, in the course of a casual visit in Göttingen in the summer of 1867, I learned through Ritschl that Karl Heinrich Graf placed the Law later than the Prophets, and almost without knowing his reasons for the hypothesis, I was prepared to accept it; I readily acknowledged to myself the possibility of understanding Hebrew antiquity without the book of the Torah. (Wellhausen, 3-4; cited in Levenson, 12-3)

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According to Levenson, Wellhausen argued that the only way the Law made sense was if it was later than the rest of the Old Testament, and discovering “this point of chronology thus proved to be the great liberating experience of Wellhausen’s intellectual life” (13). Levenson, then, asserts that Wellhausen himself points out his own confessional reading of the text as he explicitly notes that he uses this reading to orient his studies. We can see, then, that Levenson’s and Kugel’s analyses agree with Cohen that Wellhausen’s conclusion that Israelite religion degenerates is a non-scientific argument that finds its support in confessional bias rather than scientific objectivity.

By looking at Levenson’s and Kugel’s critiques of Wellhausen, we see that while Cohen questions Wellhausen’s theory of history, he never explicitly questions Wellhausen’s Protestant bias even though he questions the biases of Paul de Lagarde and Rudolf Kittel. Given that Wellhausen clearly outlines his theological reading of the “Old Testament” in his work, the fact that Cohen ignores the confessional Protestant aspect of Wellhausen’s thought is somewhat odd. Why then does Cohen not call attention to Wellhausen’s admitted bias? There are a few possible answers to this question. On the one hand, if we use Levenson’s perspective, we may say that Cohen may have either missed, or may even have been wrong about what the significance of Wellhausen’s bias would be for the history of biblical studies. As Cohen himself states, only later will “it be made clear how much value this method had for the pioneer of biblical criticism” (*Werke* 17, 618). However, even if Cohen missed the significance of Wellhausen’s bias as explained by Levenson, Cohen did not think that Wellhausen himself was antisemitic (620), and therefore did not search for something in Wellhausen’s work that he did not expect to find. Moreover, by the

time that Wellhausen and Cohen were colleagues in Marburg, Wellhausen no longer was a professor of Old Testament theology as he had moved on to studying Semitic languages and Islam. Kugel, for instance, notes that Wellhausen became “increasingly agitated” with his Documentary Hypothesis because it undermined his sense of the unity of Scripture and eventually left his position at a Protestant theological faculty as a result (Kugel, 300). Cohen, then, may not have spoken to Wellhausen directly about these theories, even as he had access to them. On the other hand, because Cohen argued that Wellhausen’s work on the prophets was methodologically sound (*Werke* 17, 618), we may be able to say that Cohen did not want Wellhausen’s methodological breakthroughs on the prophets to be overshadowed. Or, more specifically, we can say that by ignoring Wellhausen’s biases, if Cohen, like Levenson, did think that Wellhausen had them, Cohen was able to appropriate Wellhausen’s work for use in his greater purpose—to prove that Judaism was not the degenerate religion that Wellhausen concluded it was by specifically using the methods that Wellhausen himself asserted.

As we saw earlier, Michael Zank also argues that Cohen endorses Wellhausen’s theory of stages in Israelite history by using this theory to inform his own methodology (Zank, 110-113), and by using this theory as a catalyst for his own thought. One of Zank’s points is particularly significant for us. He asserts that where “Wellhausen sees degeneration and decay, Cohen finds a sequence of institutions and ideas that testify to a common ground that provided the foundation for the work of further development” (126). This point is important because when we combine it with our analysis of Levenson’s and Kugel’s history of changes in biblical criticism, we can see that just as Cohen develops his theory of ideas and institutions to argue against Wellhausen’s interpretation of history (as

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we saw in Chapter 3), Cohen also implicitly uses his theory of ideas and institutions to argue for reform in biblical studies. Cohen, for example, argues that new ideas can only take hold if they are bound to old institutions, and through the process of development, the old institutions are transformed (RR, 176/205). Cohen's argument, then, parallels his quest for the transformation of biblical studies as Cohen tries to validate his ideas about reform in biblical criticism by linking them to the ideas of the founder of modern biblical criticism—there was, after all, no one better for him to base his ideas on. That is, Cohen tries to show how the positive aspects of Wellhausen's work do not need to be overshadowed by the negative, and once the negative aspects are removed, or reworked, Wellhausen's methods can be used as the basis for a proper methodology. Thus, Cohen uses Wellhausen to show that true reform is both desirable and possible within biblical studies itself. Moreover, by the time he writes *Religion of Reason* and his eulogy for Wellhausen, Cohen no longer has to exhaustively analyze all the weaknesses he sees in biblical criticism as he had already done so in the past with his other writings and these critiques were now givens in his thought. Therefore, he could now focus entirely on transforming the “old” institutions with his “new” ideas.

In their respective analyses of Wellhausen's theory of history, Cohen, Kugel and Levenson, then, focus on different aspects of Wellhausen's thought. They do so because they each have a different purpose for which they write. Kugel and Levenson look to the history of Protestant biblical theology to explain Wellhausen's theory because they are interested in presenting an analysis of bias and methodological problems in biblical criticism. Cohen, on the other hand, as we saw in Chapter 3, stresses the methodological implications of Wellhausen's

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theory because he is trying to argue for the need for philosophical orientation in biblical studies that calls attention to the bigger picture in which biblical studies is situated. In a certain sense, because Levenson and Kugel are interested in presenting an analysis of the history of biblical criticism, which was mainly practiced by Protestant biblical scholars, they justifiably do not pay attention to Cohen the philosopher, and so do not bring Cohen into this conversation themselves. I argue, however, that Cohen, the author of *Religion of Reason Out of the Source of Judaism* and the advocate of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, should be. For instance, in studying Cohen's critiques of biblical studies, we are provided with a counter-history—a counter-history wherein Cohen subverts the biases of Protestant biblical studies in his efforts to establish Jewish studies.<sup>20</sup> For Cohen, that meant using a philosophical methodology that highlighted the relationship between society and biblical studies to argue for necessary changes in biblical studies by presenting his own biblical hermeneutic that was based on both Jewish and Protestant forms of biblical analysis. Or, put differently, Cohen was trying to transform the “old” institutions with his “new” ideas. Interestingly, Kugel notes that Wellhausen himself, in leaving the field of Old Testament theology behind, left room for scholars to do with his work what they will. For us, this means that we can see that Cohen was being able to appropriate Wellhausen's scholarship and rework it within the context of his own theories, especially those concerning sacrifice, which we saw in Chapter 3, thereby providing Cohen with the opportunity to subvert the biases of biblical studies and transform “old” institutions with “new” ideas.

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<sup>20</sup> This is one of the subjects of Christian Wiese's *Challenging Colonial Discourse*.

If we see Cohen in the light of Kugel's analysis of Wellhausen's reasons for leaving biblical studies, the counter history that Cohen provides us with becomes clear. According to Kugel, Wellhausen himself was not prepared to deal with the "fallout" that came from his Documentary Hypothesis because it undermined the basic idea of Scripture (Kugel, 300). Kugel explains that acknowledging the different sources of the biblical text, along with the contradictions that result, was to highlight "the absence of agreement between one part of the Bible and another," which in turn, "necessarily undermined the notion of the common divine origin of the whole" (664). Kugel asserts that one answer to the problem was to embrace the humanity of the text, its historical context and its human terms and purposes (665). If we see Cohen along these lines, we can see that Cohen seeks to answer the problem of textual unity in the human terms that biblical criticism set forth, all the while making slight modifications to them. Cohen, for instance, embraces the humanity of the biblical text in two ways. First, in *Religion of Reason*, as we have seen earlier with reference to Wellhausen in Chapter 3, Cohen explains the significance of the prophets' fight against sacrifice by investigating the historical problems that the prophets were trying to solve. Second, Cohen's project as a whole—discovering the "religion of reason out of the sources of Judaism"—relies on reading the sources of Judaism in accordance with an understanding of reason and its place within religion. At the same time, as we saw in "Der Nächste," Cohen does not agree that biblical scholars should search for the biblical text's origin in order to locate the "truth" or meaning of the text. According to Cohen, the "truth" can only be found in the cumulative meaning of the text, which includes looking at the literary product that is the

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biblical text as a whole,<sup>21</sup> as well as the tradition and the community that developed it, not just at the individual parts of the biblical text and their original meaning or setting. Kugel, too, stresses that looking for origins is not the best use of one's time because in doing so, one misses that "the original meaning and even the original genres of Israel's ancient texts were subtly modified, reconfigured by a whole new way of reading" that was developed by the ancient interpreters (671). Further, he asserts that what became the Bible was a book of "changed meanings that was the original Bible" (671). Thus, according to Kugel, the "original" meaning of the Bible is not the meaning as first written down, but the meaning that the redactors of the Bible gave to it, and therefore, the Protestant search for the "original" meaning, the "bedrock" of the Bible, has actually found the history of a rewritten Bible (671). For Kugel, then, the search for origins overlooks what the text is actually telling us about its own development. If we apply Kugel's insight to Cohen's work, we can see that Cohen too interprets the developments within the text as evidence for the gradual evolution or development of the Israelite religion. In "Gesinnung," for example, Cohen argues that the changes in the wording of Decalogue result from the deepening of morality, a deepening that had to be reflected in the biblical text (*Werke* 15, 395). Thus, he interprets the changes in the text (changes, as per Kugel, that came from the redactors) as evidence for the gradual evolution or development of Israelite religion, changes that can only be seen if one takes the idea of textual unity seriously—that is, that the entire, cumulative, text speaks to the history of the Israelite religion, and not just the individual parts.

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<sup>21</sup> Cohen would include the New Testament for Christians, and the Oral Torah for Jews.



The problem of textual unity is also a concern for Levenson. Levenson, however, casts his discussion of this problem in a slightly different way. According to Levenson, the problem of textual unity shows up in the preference of scholars for either the historical or literary contexts. As we saw earlier, Levenson argues that the Hebrew Bible is always subject to some type of recontextualization, whether literary or historical, Christian or Jewish, past or present. Often, Levenson continues, one context is sacrificed for the sake of another. Thus, when the historical context is studied, the literary context is lost (Levenson, 97, 100), or when the history of a tradition or text is studied, the contemporary appropriations of that text or tradition are lost (97). Moreover, the question “Whose Bible” reflects how historical criticism chooses one religious tradition over the other because the Hebrew Bible is not the same for Christians and Jews, both in terms of the order of the books (104), and in terms of the place that the Hebrew Bible holds within their respective traditions (105). Cohen, unlike Levenson, does not ask the question “Whose Bible” as his interest in canon is not in whose canon should be studied, because during Cohen’s time, the Bible was understood as containing both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. Cohen’s interest, then, is in developing a methodology that can apply to all parts of Scripture, while still keeping them separate. Thus, in “Der Nächste,” Cohen argues that biblical scholarship must “grasp and research Holy Scripture as a formation of a national literature subject to all the effects of the history of its time, and of all the myriad international intellectual and political interconnections” (*Werke* 16, 53). That is, Cohen asserts that biblical criticism must understand the Bible as a collection of literary products that were produced in specific historical circumstances according to specific styles—naïveté for the Hebrew Bible, and

critique for the New Testament (54). For Cohen, to read the biblical texts in such a way pays respect to both parts by not confusing them. Consequently, Cohen argues that one cannot ask the same questions of the New Testament that one asks of the Hebrew Bible and vice versa as often these types of questions do not let each testament speak for itself (54). Thus, for Cohen, there is no doubt that the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament need to be seen through different lenses because they are different historical and literary products. At the same time, both Levenson and Cohen acknowledge the tension between the historical and literary contexts of the Bible. As we saw above, Levenson argues that to study one means that the other is sacrificed. For Cohen, literary questions must understand the text's outside world—its political and historical situation—otherwise the message of the text, the point for which the text was written, is lost. For Levenson, this concern relates to the question of textual unity because when one chooses the historical context over the other, the text is dismembered. However, Levenson points out that if one chooses the literary context over the historical, historical criticism assumes that a judgment must be made about what literary context, Christian or Jewish, a particular text should be viewed by (Levenson, 104). Levenson and Cohen, then, both argue that although there exists a tension between the historical and literary contexts of the text, one cannot sacrifice one context for the other, for in doing so, the text will unravel. Levenson tries to solve this problem by asserting that historical criticism must learn that the biblical text can be understood in many ways at the same time as the religious traditions themselves affirms the many senses—historical and literary, past and present—of Scripture (104).

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According to both Levenson and Cohen, one of the reasons that biblical criticism cannot, or at least, does not, understand the many senses of either Scripture or the biblical text is that biblical scholars ignore what Cohen calls “the bridge” between the past and the present (*Werke* 16, 70). As we saw above, Kugel points out that the Protestant ideal of *sola scriptura* plays a major role in the methods of biblical criticism, thus the scholars are able to have an unmediated experience with the text and do not need a bridge. What, then, does Cohen mean by “bridge,” and why does he think it is important? For Cohen, and for Levenson, “the bridge” is tradition. Since Protestant ideals provide the foundation for Protestant scholars to argue against the deteriorating effects of tradition, tradition therefore does not play a role in their study of biblical texts.<sup>22</sup> This method of textual study, then, does not take into consideration either the Jewish idea of Scripture or Jewish methods of textual study because they are grounded in “tradition.” Accordingly, as both Levenson and Cohen point out, Protestant Scriptural study does not take into account relevant material that is found in rabbinic literature. According to Cohen, to ignore rabbinic Judaism in Hebrew Bible studies, while interpreting the Hebrew Bible through the prism of the New Testament, contradicts scientific objectivity and proves confessional bias (*Werke* 16, 57, 70). Cohen argues that biblical studies must take rabbinic literature seriously because, if one is looking for history in a text, then one must look at all historical material found in other related texts. Moreover, as we saw before, Cohen explains that the canonization of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament coincided with the time during which Midrash and Mishnah was written;

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<sup>22</sup> One may argue, however, that the way, or how, the text is studied can be considered “tradition”—the tradition of historical criticism.

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therefore, in attempting to find the historical meaning of the Hebrew Bible, through finding the meaning of the words, by using the New Testament and Arabic material, and not rabbinic literature is absurd (70). According to Cohen, rabbinic Hebrew and rabbinic literature provides a bridge from the present to the past, and so one must use this bridge if one want to understand the meanings found in the biblical text (70). Or, as Levenson explains, cutting off the Hebrew Bible from rabbinic literature handicaps “real” study because “one cannot be a competent scholar of the Christian Bible without a solid command of rabbinic literature and rabbinic Hebrew (and Aramaic). Hebrew did not die on the cross” (Levenson, 21). We can see in these arguments Cohen’s concept of continuity in history. In *Religion of Reason*, for instance, Cohen argues that one cannot study history without a concept of continuity, as continuity neither makes historical judgments nor is dependent on “contingent and external matters as before and after” (RR 177/206). That is, continuity is independent of the value judgments and confessional biases that one normally brings to the study of the biblical text, where historical judgments take precedence over the literature and makes the text say something it does not.

The question of textual unity for both Levenson and Kugel leads to the question of contemporary appropriations. While we have seen that Levenson and Kugel both point to the problems that result from both bias and neutrality in biblical studies, these two scholars note that biblical studies must to some extent address the fact that the biblical text does belong to communities that consider it to be sacred scripture in the present, not just the past. That is, both scholars deal with the theological and philosophical questions that result from question of how best to deal with the results of biblical scholarship while taking seriously the

claims of the religious communities to which the biblical text belongs, an endeavor that Cohen also emphasized in his assertions about the need to look to the cumulative text instead of the text's origins. In looking at the ways in which scholars deal with these theological and philosophical questions, Kugel and Levenson investigate the relationship between the past and present views of the biblical text, and in doing so, help us to explain the theological position that Cohen takes while looking at the biblical text.

Kugel, for instance, draws our attention to the compromises that modern scholars make between modern and ancient methods of biblical interpretation. Kugel argues that liberal theologians, which Cohen can partly be described as, "attempt to find a compromise between scholarship and what the commentators themselves would still like the Bible to be" (Kugel, 677).<sup>23</sup> For Cohen, modern scholarship cannot be ignored; however, he still wants Scripture to be, in Kugel's words, a "guide and a source of still-relevant teachings" (677). Thus, Cohen attempts to apply modern scholarship to his view of the biblical text as a guide. While we can see this as putting Cohen into what Kugel calls on the one hand, the "uncomfortable position of wanting to have [his] Bible and criticize it too" (677), a description that Kugel applies to most modern biblical scholars and not Cohen in particular or at all, Cohen's scholarship just may offer the bridge between ancient and modern scholars that Kugel wishes for on the other hand—a bridge that incorporates the events of the past and the present with the words of Scripture (677-78). Or, a bridge that takes seriously both the biblical text and the religious communities to which the text belongs. According to Kugel, one way that modern scholars attempt to build this bridge is by showing how meaning is altered within

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<sup>23</sup> Kugel, however, does not look at Cohen in his analysis.

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the biblical text itself (678). As we saw above, Cohen attempts to do this by pointing to the changes of wording in the Decalogue (in “Gesinnung”), the changes in sacrifice (in *Religion of Reason*), and in the changes to the status of non-Israelites, or the neighbor, in the love command of Leviticus (as argued in “Der Nächste”). It is possible, then, to see Cohen’s work in the same vein that Kugel points to—Kugel, for instance, argues that scholars must not erect a border between ancient interpreters and modern scholarship (678)—and Cohen’s method may be understood as moving in the right direction because Cohen does not erect this border and tries to build a bridge between the past and the present. Cohen, as we have seen, can be seen as building this bridge by looking at the cumulative meaning and final form of the biblical text. However, Cohen does not argue for studying the final form of the Bible in explicit terms, rather, he focuses on the cumulative form of the Oral and Written Torah. In doing so, Cohen sees, as does Kugel, the freedom to interpret scripture within scripture itself (681). For Cohen and Kugel, this shows the dynamism of Torah in Judaism, which according to Kugel comes into inevitable conflict with modern biblical scholarship because “the modern program rules out of bounds precisely that which is, for traditional Jews, the Torah’s ultimate significance and its definitive interpretation” (681).

Neither Kugel nor Cohen, however, is content with these “irreconcilable differences” because “what Scripture is, and always has been, in Judaism is the beginning of a manual entitled *To Serve God*, a manual whose trajectory has always led from the prophet to the interpreter and from the divine to the merely human” (685). Kugel explains that because the commandment “to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul” (Deut. 10:12) is “the purpose of all of Scripture and all later interpretation,” to leave the text alone

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without any modern interpretation would make the text fossilized, outmoded and obsolete (685). We can see this point in Cohen as well for he argues that worship of God is connected to morality and ethics within the biblical text (RR, 171/199-200); therefore the biblical text is the means by which people know how to serve and worship God. Thus, both Kugel and Cohen engage in modern biblical scholarship because they are open to changing interpretations of Scripture—and modern biblical scholarship can be seen as one of the new interpretations of the Bible. Moreover, as Kugel argues, studying the Bible is “the most accessible avenue to the world” of changing interpretations of what it means to serve “God in daily life” (Kugel, 687). Kugel’s sentiment finds its counterpart in Cohen’s assertion that “Genuine science, genuine methodical philosophy can lead in each case to genuine and true religion” (“Der Prophetismus und die Soziologie,” *Werke* 17, 510). For Cohen, without genuine science one can neither understand religion, nor understand what the purpose of religion is—which Cohen argues is the worship of God by all peoples. According to Cohen’s view, to engage in biblical scholarship is a way to remain true to God’s message and to the mission of Israel as a light to the nations because biblical scholarship is a way to spread the message of Judaism, while also keeping that message alive.

As we have noted earlier, Cohen obviously is not interested in “religious” neutrality, or in Kugel’s words, singing about the Bible without singing the song of the Bible (682). That is, Cohen does not shy away from questions of contemporary appropriation. Neither does Levenson. Levenson, for instance, argues that while Christian recontextualizations of the Bible often promote biases in how the text is read and skews the results in favor of those recontextualizations (Levenson, 20), to “the extent that historical critics restrict themselves to

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descriptive history and avoid thorny questions of contemporary appropriations, they contribute, even if advertently, to the dismantling of tradition” and foster “an image of the Bible as having once meant a great deal but now means little or nothing” (97). Therefore, according to Levenson, only when one brings the text into the present by asking contemporary questions can one show that the text is still meaningful. Cohen would agree with Levenson, as after all, he argues that it is the present day interpretations of the text that means something for contemporary Jewish circumstances, especially since it is the “present” day Christian interpretations of the text that contribute to the “dark times” that the Jews are facing in Germany (“Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion,” *Werke* 16, 26). Thus, Cohen asserts that Jews must fight against these Christian interpretations with their own textual interpretations and traditions, all while having an eye on how their problems can be answered by the biblical text itself. Cohen, for example, focuses on the messianic message of the biblical text in order to fight against antisemitic trends in Germany and in biblical criticism—his arguments about the neighbor and the universal message and mission of the Israelites counter the Protestant arguments that Jews are “particularistic,” lacking in morality and have no inner religious soul. For Cohen, then, the biblical text has present day cultural and societal import. Levenson also argues for this point as well. He asserts, for instance, that because there is “no communication that is altogether outside culture... and no culture that is outside history” (Levenson, 110), recontextualization is “the hallmark of historical criticism” (110). Since recontextualization involves historical judgment on behalf of the scholars, the question is whether or not a judgment has been made poorly or well, a question which, Levenson argues, can only be answered by examining how the scholars



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face their own “particular temptations” (111). Or, as Cohen, argues, whether those judgments can be verified by using the concept of continuity and asking whether or not the text itself supports the result. Cohen, then, can only argue for his messianic vision if the text itself supports this recontextualization. Therefore, for Cohen and Levenson, recontextualizations exist, and so how those recontextualizations are justified become of paramount importance, as they can be done badly or well.

At this point, it may be useful to ask if Cohen faced his own particular temptation well. Did he, as Levenson asks of biblical scholars, use the biblical text as a cipher, or an ideological reading of political power, for his own purposes (111)? In one sense, Cohen most definitely does; however, the reasons why he does so may bring him in line with what Levenson is actually arguing for. Cohen, as we have seen, uses his messianic reading of the Hebrew Bible to assert that a Jewish reading of the Hebrew Bible must be included in biblical studies in order to fight against political antisemitism and religious anti-Judaism. Therefore, just as Levenson argues against “interpreting the text as *ideology*, that is, as only a justification for political arrangements” (111), Cohen argues that one cannot use the biblical text for validating antisemitism and anti-Judaism, an argument that we have seen in “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud.” For Levenson and Cohen, using the text as the basis for ideology and political arrangements in a Christian majority would skew the biblical text towards Christian interpretations of the Hebrew Bible and completely distort Jewish interpretations. Thus, they assert that any method used for studying the biblical text must do justice to both religious traditions—one cannot insult or ignore one tradition, even while remaining true to the other,

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because the biblical text belongs to both traditions and therefore cannot justify political ideologies that do not support, to some extent, both sides.

Thus, we can see that at the heart of Cohen and Levenson's arguments is the religious tradition that is being studied. Any method for studying that community that is at odds with, or undermines, the community should not be used. For Levenson and Cohen, this means that secularism in biblical studies is another problem. According to Levenson, when biblical scholars bracket their religious traditions, they undermine those traditions (98). For Cohen, as we saw with "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud," not paying attention to religion is a problem when biblical scholars do not pay attention to the consequences of their studies in the real world. Thus, Cohen asserts in "Julius Wellhausen: Ein Abschiedsgruß" that Jews and Christians must learn to work with each other so that the results of biblical criticism are positive for both Christians and Jews (*Werke* 17, 622). Levenson, however, questions whether or not Jews and Christians can meet productively in biblical studies, because there comes a point in time when the truth claims of both traditions come into conflict with each other (Levenson, 79). Levenson explains: "In short, Judaism and Christianity differ from each other not only over 'what it [the Bible] means' as opposed to 'what it meant'; they also differ over the antecedent of 'it,' and this difference, crucial to the shape and identity of those communities, can never be resolved by historical criticism" (81). At the same time, Levenson does argue that Jews and Christians can work together to investigate the meaning of the smallest literary units:

Only within the limited area of the smaller literary and historical contexts is an ecumenical biblical theology possible, and only as awareness grows of the difference that context makes shall we

understand were agreement [between Judaism and Christianity] is possible and where it is not, and why. (81)

The question, then, for both Levenson and Cohen is how Jews and Christians can work together in biblical studies while respecting differences and without losing their religions in the process.

In this section, then, we have seen that in their respective critiques of biblical studies, Cohen, Kugel and Levenson focus on the same problems in biblical studies in order to find the best principles, that, when applied to biblical scholarship, will yield the best results. According to these scholars, these principles must be consistent with biblical studies methods and goals. Moreover, all three scholars assert that biblical studies cannot be reliant on bias (whether religious or secular), but still must take the religious tradition that one is studying seriously by not placing oneself above it. The continuity in critique that these three scholars represent, however, is off-set by the fact that to some extent, Cohen does not always fit into the picture of biblical studies that Levenson and Kugel present, for at times, Cohen contradicts their arguments, as we have seen in the case of Wellhausen. Further, while the pictures of Levenson and Kugel, to be sure, are not the same themselves, Cohen's project can be seen as the idealized version of their more "practical" arguments. That is, Cohen is fighting for something that actually exists for Levenson and Kugel—the establishment of Jewish studies in universities and the ability for Jews and Christians to work together in biblical studies—and so, Cohen must work within a context that is not really his. Thus, Cohen writes about what should be, rather than what is, as Kugel and Levenson do. In the next section, we will be able to see how their different

situations, both academic and historical, play a role in their critiques of biblical studies more fully.

### **Biblical Studies: Views of Education**

Before we can continue with our analysis, let us point out that, since Cohen lived in a different time period than Levenson and Kugel, he has different concerns than they do. These very differences, however, may be used to investigate each scholar's solutions for the problems that they see in biblical criticism by analyzing how the Bible is taught in universities. This section, then, will focus on the fact that Cohen lived before Jewish Studies was admitted into the universities and actively worked towards its acceptance, while Levenson and Kugel deal with the problems that occurred after Jewish Studies was admitted. Thus, we will continue to look at whether or not Cohen's solutions can be seen as continuous with Levenson and Kugel's by exploring their views of education.

The first scholar we will deal with is James Kugel. As we noted earlier, Kugel's analysis in "The Bible in the University" leads him to assert that a quest for the original meaning of the biblical text has led to a greater respect for the editorial activity of the redactors of the Bible and the final shape that the Bible took. He argues that, as a result of this greater respect, biblical scholars are now exploring the texts of Qumran, the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of Hebrew Bible, and examples of "inner-biblical exegesis" in efforts to understand the interpretive process in Israel's literary, social and political history that went into the final version of the biblical text (Kugel, 157-58). Kugel, however, asserts that although biblical scholars are expanding their fields of research to include the above mentioned areas of study, these areas are often not taken account of in how

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the Bible is taught in the university (158). According to Kugel, this means that “our whole notion of how to teach the Bible in a university is still lopsided and fundamentally confessional in character: the things that we do teach are certainly valuable, but they are far less than what ought to be taught, and they are presented with an unspoken order of priorities that translates perfectly the Protestant program” (158). Kugel explains that courses that are taught under the titles of “Introductions” to the Old Testament or Bible usually only focus on the history of ancient Israel, that is on “what really happened” when the spirit of Israel was at its “most present” (158-9). While Kugel thinks that these types of courses are important, they only provide half of the story and are often skewed towards a certain confessional bias (159). To complete these incomplete classes, Kugel tries to “rethink a Bible course from the ground up, one that would try to present all the material rigorously and above all historically, but without the slanting things to conform to any particular confessional orientation” (159).

He proposes the following course: *The Hebrew Bible in the Making*. Kugel describes the purpose of the course as one that seeks to tell the “story of how the Bible came to be, and more precisely how it came to be read, from the earliest beginnings of its constituent texts to the time when these came together as . . . the sacred book of early Judaism and early Christianity” (159-160). He asserts that this course would trace the construction of the Bible “from its earliest building blocks until its completed form” (160). For Kugel, the final form of the biblical text would be the logical end of the course because what was institutionalized in this final form was not just a “fixed body of Scripture,” but also a “peculiar way of reading these ancient texts,” which combined to make “the Bible for Judaism and Christianity for a very long time” (160). Kugel, however,

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points out that this type of class will have its detractors for several reasons ranging from simple disinterest in the material to lack of training to arguing that the class is “nothing more than the project of canonical criticism” (162-3). For Kugel, rejections to this class leads to the following question:

Is there not something biased and rather wrongheaded in the way we currently conceive of the task of teaching the Bible, a wrongheadedness whose origins are all too obviously located in the religious polemics of the sixteenth century and which, having been institutionalized by the modern scholarly movement and passed on from teacher to pupil for generations, now stands more clearly than ever in contradiction both to what we know about the Bible’s earliest origins and to what we have come to glimpse of the origins of biblical interpretations (and radical rereading) within the biblical period itself? (163-4)

Kugel’s program for teaching biblical studies in universities, then, shows both the strengths and weaknesses of biblical studies itself. While this program fights against the biases of Protestant biblical criticism by proposing an inclusive way of studying the Bible that does justice to the Jewish and Christian communities for whom the Bible is Scripture, it embraces and emphasizes the work that biblical studies has accomplished in uncovering the history of the literature and the religion of the Bible, not to mention the traditions that grew out and up with the Bible.

Kugel’s program can be connected to Cohen’s early 20th-century call for Jewish education. For example, Kugel considers the both the ancient and modern knowledge of all the sources of the biblical text to be the necessary basis for any

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accurate and meaningful study of the biblical text. Cohen, too, argues for this, as we have seen in his essays “Der Nächste” and “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud.” For Cohen, as for Kugel, biblical studies must take into account all relevant material in order to produce accurate results, and new knowledge and methods must be incorporated into the discipline of biblical studies. As we have seen earlier in “Der Nächste,” Cohen argues that biblical studies must take a look at rabbinic sources (*Werke* 16, 58), while also incorporating knowledge from other disciplines such as literary history and philosophy (54-5). Both Kugel and Cohen, however, point out the lack of knowledge about Jewish sources within the teaching methods of biblical studies. Kugel, for instance, as we saw above, asserts that due to the Protestant preference for *sola scriptura*, which cuts out tradition and what is the basis of Jewish sources, such as Talmud and Midrash, teaching the biblical text becomes an exercise in teaching Protestant ideals rather than teaching about the biblical text and how it came to be “the Bible.” Cohen goes one step further than does Kugel and connects the lack of knowledge of the Jewish, as well as Christian, sources in biblical studies to Jews themselves. Cohen, therefore, is concerned about the precarious state of Jewish religious education and scholarship, or *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. For instance, in “Zur Begründung einer Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums,” Cohen asserts that Jewish religious education and scholarship is at a crisis point (*Werke* 17, 625), partly because Jews have separated religious learning from scientific learning (626-627). He argues that this is an artificial bifurcation because the one depends on the other, the one can only exist with the other; therefore, Jews cannot afford to separate religious learning from scholarship on Judaism (629). While Cohen argues that the lack of scientific learning is partly due to the reliance on the

rabbinate, which in Cohen's opinion does not support "modern" learning (625-627), Cohen asserts that Jews must take account of "modern" learning because Jewish existence is dependent upon the integration of scientific learning with religious learning (632). Cohen has argued this point before. In "Salomon Neumann," a speech that Cohen gave for the memorial celebration of the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, for instance, Cohen connects the problem of Jewish learning to a lack of knowledge about Jewish sources. Thus, he calls for more scientific learning on the Jewish sources by Jews themselves (*Werke* 15, 294).

For Cohen, then, the lack of source knowledge is one of the greatest problems facing Jewish education. Cohen argues that "it must become our endeavor to establish *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the universities" ("Zwei Vorschläge zur Sicherung unseres Fortbestandes," *Werke* 15, 130), and he asserts that this would only be possible if the studies are based on source research (*Quellenforschung*). According to Cohen, "without the knowledge, without the mastery, without the methodical competence and certainty in the treatment of the source material, there is no genuine science" ("Salomon Neumann," *Werke* 15, 294). He therefore calls the task of research on the Jewish sources "the greatest task of our institute" (the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums*) (295). Cohen argues that if Jews do not undertake this research, they are abandoning their own Scripture to the Protestants:

Or should we have left the study of our Bible to Protestant theology; and should we not only, as we do, recommend to our auditors to attend these lectures at the university, but rather also demand it from them and confine them to that? Fairly and



understandably, no one can doubt that a still-living religion . . . may never again entrust the study of its own sources to a science that is actually and programmatically by no means simply scholarship, but rather through this scholarship wants to establish and strengthen its own religion, another religion. We will always remember with deep gratitude the merits that Protestant academic theology acquired for itself regarding biblical criticism, but in doing so we may not be untrue to our own obligation, which is imposed on us by the tending of our own most possession. (295)

In this quote we again see that while Cohen thinks that Protestant biblical criticism has something to offer Jews, he also thinks that Protestant biblical criticism shows how important it is for Jews to undertake their own source criticism. According to Cohen, if Jews do not do this work, they are being untrue to their own tradition and are letting the Protestant scholars say whatever they want about Judaism. Further, Cohen argues that source criticism should be a religious as well as scientific task because in learning about the sources, Jews have the opportunity to learn more about their religious tradition (296). Thus, Cohen is again arguing that religion and science should not be separated in Judaism. Moreover, he asserts that because of the unbroken continuity of the Jewish tradition (296), one cannot assume that biblical Judaism can be separated from post-biblical and contemporary Judaism (296).<sup>24</sup> Rather, Cohen argues, biblical Judaism is fundamentally “a dead island” without its connection to post-

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<sup>24</sup> We can see here that Cohen operates with the assumptions that Kugel applies to ancient interpreters.

biblical and contemporary Judaism (296).<sup>25</sup> For Cohen, the scholarship on Jewish sources is vitally connected to the theory of continuity that we have seen previously in Chapter 3, because continuity—as the idea of historical progression that is not grounded in any type of value judgment—provides the justification for *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. According to Cohen, the historical connection between Jews and their literary sources is precisely the problem that justifies the method of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as their source material reflects Judaism’s history, morality and uniformity (296). Therefore, Cohen asserts: “The continuity of the Jewish sources in this historical sense is the methodological ground for the specialty of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*” (296-7). While we may see this essay as part of Cohen’s fight against antisemitism and his quest to get *Wissenschaft des Judentums* into the university, Cohen himself clearly states that his goal is not an apologetic one (296). That is, Cohen is not interested in simply defending the methods and relevance of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Rather, Cohen asserts that the methods and subject matter alone justifies *Wissenschaft des Judentums* because Jews must be granted the ability to study their own texts in the university as these texts are a vital part of Jews themselves, thus any defense of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is unnecessary (296).

Cohen’s theory of continuity also comes into play in his arguments for the establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the university. For Cohen, the continuity of Judaism lives in the fact that it is a living religion, with a real history and real adherents. As a result, in “Zwei Vorschläge zur Sicherung unseres

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<sup>25</sup> We can also see here that Cohen does not shy away from “contemporary appropriations” of the text, but in fact, argues, just as Levenson does, that without contemporary appropriations of the text, the religions that are based on the text are dead.

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Fortbestandes,” Cohen asserts, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* is a Jewish science and should be taught by Jews:

Judaism is our living religion; it is not merely a field of the study of antiquity, nor of Christian theology, nor simply of the history and philosophy of religion—both of which, even in gatherings of Orientalists and religious congresses, regard Judaism as a preliminary stage of Christianity. A person of a different faith cannot lecture on the science of our living religion. A living religion can only be scientifically presented by someone who is part of it, with his inner religiosity. This is distinguished from denominational bias by the scientific attitude and its public supervision. But a person with a different faith in his heart cannot scientifically represent the essence of a living religion. The time will come when the state will find itself forced to recognize the scientific representation of our religion as its own task, first in the interest of its Jewish citizens, but also out of the duty toward scientific truth. But, however near or far this time may be, we cannot now measure. Instead, especially in this field, we have to deal with the intention of eradication. (*Werke* 15, 130-1; cited in Wiese, 355)

The last line of this quotation is especially significant for us. According to Cohen, the problem in biblical studies is not extreme or overt antisemitism, but Christian attitudes towards Jews in general, even when that attitude is one of sympathy and concern for “our poor Jews,” as all attitudes are partially grounded in a wish for Jews to disappear (*Werke* 15, 123).

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Christian Wiese, in *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* and “‘The Best Antidote to Anti-Semitism’? *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Protestant Biblical Scholarship, and Anti-Semitism in Germany Before 1933,”<sup>26</sup> seeks to situate Cohen squarely within the fight of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to enter the scientific academy and in the fight over the “legitimacy of Judaism’s continuation.”<sup>27</sup> For instance, as Wiese points out, in the essay “Emanzipation,”<sup>28</sup> Cohen argues that the principle and fact of emancipation meant that:

the complete intellectual, scientific care and development of our religion is admitted in its politically acknowledged relevance as a cultural task of the state. [. . .] We have correspondingly to assume the demand that Jewish studies is represented in the universities by scientifically free adherents of our belief. The science of our living religion is not to be taught as a historical fossil, but rather on the basis of the scientifically free conviction of the truth inherent in Judaism. (*Werke* 15, 616-7; cited in Wiese, 359)

Therefore, as Wiese explains, Cohen argues that if the state is to take its own statutes seriously, including the 1812 emancipation edict, thanks to which Judaism “went from being a protected religion to a faith equal to the Christian

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<sup>26</sup> Christian Wiese, “‘The Best Antidote to Anti-Semitism’? *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Protestant Biblical Scholarship, and Anti-Semitism in Germany Before 1933,” in *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities, Encounters, Perspectives*, ed. Andreas Gotzmann and Christian Wiese (Boston: Brill, 2007), 145-92.

<sup>27</sup> This quote and the information for this and the subsequent paragraphs come from the title for Chapter Six in Wiese’s *Challenging Colonial Discourse*.

<sup>28</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Emanzipation: Zur Hundertjahrfeier des Staatsbürgertums der preußischen Judentums (11 März 1912) [1912]” (Emancipation: On the Century of the Citizenship of Prussian Jews), in *Werke* 15:607-19.

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denominations” (Wiese, 359), the state must no longer officially privilege “Christian theology by paying for theology departments, while Jewish Studies [is] deliberately barred from the universities” (358). According to Wiese, Cohen’s call for a chair in Jewish Studies in at least one university, which Cohen argues should be held only by a Jew, counters a model of emancipation that leads to “Jewish assimilation and gradual dissolution by only granting equality in a long, delayed process” (359-60). Building on Wiese’s interpretations, we can see that for Cohen, since the placement of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the university is the obvious outcome of a real commitment to emancipation, the continued barring of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* from the university is not a passive commitment that will eventually lead to Jewish destruction, but an active “war of extermination” (“Zwei Vorschläge,” *Werke* 15, 123).

Wiese connects Cohen’s above argument with his participation in the 1910 “World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress,” which was held in Berlin. According to Wiese, this congress provided Cohen with “the opportunity to effectively and directly express Jewish-liberal identity and the religious and cultural claims of contemporary Judaism before the forum of German Liberal Protestantism” (Wiese, 2005, 314). According to Wiese, while the purpose of the Congress was to look at Liberal Protestant theology in Germany, the organizers invited speakers from other free church movements and world religions to present their religious ideas on religious progress (315). Cohen, who was a former colleague of Martin Rade, a Protestant theologian and one of the organizers of the Congress, was invited to participate. Wiese argues that Cohen was invited as a representative of Liberal Judaism, instead of a rabbi, because he was considered to be a scholar who had the same scholarly status as

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the leading participants of the Congress and who was also “acknowledged by broad segments of German Jewry as an authority and who embodied the will to preserve a unique Jewish identity” that was “closely intertwined with modern German culture” (316). Cohen’s speech, entitled “Die Bedeutung des Judentums für den religiösen Fortschritt der Menschheit,”<sup>29</sup> Wiese explains, sought to teach “the value of Jewish ethics for the progress of humankind” (318).<sup>30</sup> Wiese argues that Cohen’s participation in the Congress emphasized the fact that for some Protestant scholars there was a desire to create a genuine encounter between themselves and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (320). Moreover, Wiese asserts, “Cohen’s impressive speech made some Protestant scholars aware that Liberal Judaism had developed an understanding of itself that they simply could not interpret as a rapprochement to Christianity and that they could not deny a certain respect” (320). In fact, Martin Rade includes praise for Cohen in his report in *Die Christliche Welt*:

For many, Cohen’s clear and sharp speech was one of the most important events at the Congress. I cannot recall intellectual Judaism in Germany ever appearing so scientific and religiously aggressive as in this speech. In all contact with the Protestant and Kantian culture, which can hardly be more strongly approved, but with the energetic assertion of what the world owes to Judaism and the advantages of Judaism over Christianity.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Hermann Cohen, “Die Bedeutung des Judentums für den religiösen Fortschritt der Menschheit [1910]” (The Meaning of Judaism for the Religious Development of Humanity), in *Werke*, ed. Hartwig Wiedebach (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009) 15:431-54.

<sup>30</sup> Wiese gives a detailed account of the speech on pages 317-20.

<sup>31</sup> *Die Christliche Welt* 24 (1910), No. 34, 803, cited in Wiese, 320. Martin Rade was the editor of *Die Christliche Welt* from 1886-1931.

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According to Wiese, Rade, influenced by Cohen's theories, proposed that a Jewish theology department be established in the new university in Frankfurt am Main, a department which was to include chairs for rabbinic literature, biblical exegesis, philosophy of religion, practical theology and biblical exegesis (398-99). Wiese asserts that Rade opened new doors by "insistently indicating Christian theology's responsibility to understand Judaism and its history as a living religion, which is based in its Jewish roots, and therefore wanting to establish Jewish Studies firmly as an acknowledged university discipline" (402).

Wiese points out that Rade faced major opposition. Hermann Gunkel, one of the participants in the 1910 Congress, was one opponent, and he wrote the following to Rade:

Are you really familiar with contemporary Jewish Studies? Do you know whether it has progressed so far that it can assume a position of honor in a Prussian university? . . . . What I personally know of Jewish "Studies" has never inspired me to any particular respect. Most of our Jewish scholars have not yet experienced even the Renaissance! Instead, the fact is that Protestantism is still the only denomination in which the academic spirit is truly possible.<sup>32</sup>

Wiese argues that Gunkel's letter illustrates the privileged Protestant position that claimed scientific objectivity, and a true scholarly nature, only for itself, while "degrading Jewish Studies as an apologetic discipline, trapped in prejudice and hence unworthy of integration into the university" (403). Moreover, Wiese also notes a later letter to Rade, in which Gunkel argues that because of political

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<sup>32</sup> Hermann Gunkel to Martin Rade, March 26, 1912. Martin Rade Papers, University Library Marburg. Cited in Wiese, 402.

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ramifications, Protestant theologians generally do not want contact with Jewish scholars (404).<sup>33</sup> As a result of this type of opposition, and because the Jewish community did not contribute money towards the establishment of the department, Frankfurt University opened in 1914 without a Jewish theology department, or even a chair in Jewish Studies (409). Wiese notes that in 1920,<sup>34</sup> the Jewish community of Frankfurt did request that a special lectureship for Judaica be founded in conjunction with the department of philosophy. The position was originally offered to Franz Rosenzweig, who declined due to his illness. In 1924, the lectureship was realized when Martin Buber began to teach in the areas of Jewish ethics and religious studies (409 n. 151).

Cohen's goal of establishing *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as an independent university discipline, then, was not achieved during his lifetime. Although Berlin's *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* was granted the status of *Hochschule* in December 1918, which was also after Cohen's death, the *Hochschule* once again became a *Lehranstalt* in 1924 (421 n. 191). Wiese explains that during the years of the *Hochschule*, "its scientific achievements were recognized de facto, and it was considered to be a private institution that corresponded to a theological department" (421 n. 191), meaning that at least temporarily *Wissenschaft des Judentums* did achieve some form of acceptance in the German academy. However, Wiese notes that the renaming of the *Hochschule* as a *Lehranstalt* reflects the declining "position and fate of the Jewish community in Germany" (421 n. 191). According to Wiese, by the time of the Third Reich,

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<sup>33</sup> Hermann Gunkel to Martin Rade, June 3, 1913. Martin Rade Papers, University Library Marburg.

<sup>34</sup> 1920 also saw the opening of the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, which was run by Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber.



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Cohen's hope "for an 'antidote to anti-Semitism' embodied by an enlightened Christian biblical scholarship had proved to be a dream: the grand endeavor to legitimize Judaism's right of existence in modernity through a counterhistory based on modern scholarship was brutally destroyed by an inhuman society" (Wiese, 2007, 192).

While *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was destroyed in Germany, Jewish Studies programs were established in Israel and the United States during the 1920's. Although Cohen himself may not be a direct influence on the establishment of these programs, his call for equality between Jews and Christians, for better Jewish education, especially on the Jewish sources, and for theoretical and methodological sophistication was part of an overall movement that eventually found success. In light of Cohen's call, we can see that Levenson is in a certain sense heir to Cohen's interest in the theoretical presuppositions involved in the evolving *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in two main ways. First, Levenson himself critiques the theoretical underpinnings of biblical studies as Cohen did. Second, Levenson is a Jewish biblical scholar in the vein that Cohen hoped would emerge, as Jewish Studies is now an official discipline in the structure of several universities across the world. But while Levenson can be seen as heir to what Cohen was fighting for, some of Levenson's critiques about biblical studies may not actually support Cohen's major contribution to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—the connection between philosophy, history, and biblical studies.

Levenson, for instance, may perhaps charge Cohen with overstepping his boundaries in two ways. First, Levenson argues that questions regarding the conceptual framework of a discipline or discourse belong to philosophy and not to

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biblical studies proper as biblical studies only needs to focus upon the biblical material (Levenson, 124). Cohen as a philosopher, however, would disagree because he, as we have seen, asserts that the task of philosophy is to discover the prevailing principle and enlighten historical research with it (“Nächstenliebe im Talmud,” JS I, 147). Cohen, then, may argue that Levenson misses the facts that philosophical orientation is necessary for the success of any study and that disciplines are not static. Rather, disciplines must crossfertilize each other—just as Levenson argues that historical and literary contexts must complement each other. That is, Levenson, in a sense, dismisses two of Cohen’s major problems with biblical studies—its lack of methodological sophistication and its inability to look beyond its own borders. On the other hand, from Levenson’s point of view, Cohen may be imposing his own brand of philosophical historicism on the biblical material in order to perpetuate a particular position (Levenson, 123). Cohen, after all, chooses his material—morality and the neighbor—in order to argue against Christian biases in biblical studies and for Jewish equality in both Germany and the academy. In doing so, Cohen systematizes Jewish thought and engages in biblical theology, a field which seeks to find an overarching concept that unifies the whole of the biblical text. Levenson would see Cohen’s participation in biblical theology and his systemization of Jewish thought as yet another way that Cohen may go beyond his borders. Levenson points out that Cohen and Maimonides are the only real exponents of systematic Jewish theology as systematic theology is more at home in Christianity than in Judaism (51); therefore, as Cohen may be seen as engaging in Christian, rather than Jewish, pursuits. Moreover, Levenson asserts that Jews are generally not interested in biblical theology (33), as the Jewish “impulse to systemize finds its outlet in law,”

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not theology (51). At the same time, Levenson argues that “one can, of course, attempt constructive Jewish theology with special attention to the biblical sources—and I believe there is a great need for such studies” (38). However, for Levenson, biblical theology is not a Jewish endeavor, because constructing a Jewish theology out of the biblical text is “closer to what Christian faculties call ‘dogmatics’ or ‘systematics’ than to ‘biblical theology’” (38).

Cohen does indeed seem to be walking the line between biblical theology and “constructive Jewish theology.” While he bases his messianic vision upon the prophetic books, thereby doing the type of study Levenson calls for, Cohen’s focus on messianism as the overarching unity of Judaism, even if in *Religion of Reason* Cohen’s focus is limited to the biblical books, fits into Levenson’s characterization that biblical theology highlights widespread themes in the biblical text in order to make assertions about an “overarching unity” (36). Furthermore, for Levenson, Cohen’s very orientation to the biblical text is more theological than historical because Cohen can be seen to be taking, as Levenson describes, the “theologians’ stance of ‘faith, identification, acknowledgment of value and meaningfulness, of taking a personal stand in the present, which draws nourishment from the same spring from which the teachings (tôrôt) of the past flowed’” (37).<sup>35</sup> Thus, seen in the light of Levenson’s description, Cohen’s work is not based on history, but on his personal theological stance. That is, Cohen’s arguments about messianism are directly related to how he views his present situation and the place of his religion within it.

We must ask, however, if Cohen is actually participating in biblical theology. Cohen is, after all, a philosopher, and as we saw earlier in chapter 2,

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<sup>35</sup> Levenson’s quote comes from Moshe Goshen-Gottstein’s “Jewish Biblical Theology and the Study of Biblical Religion” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 50 (1980/81): 37-67, 45.

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Cohen prefers the method of History of Religions over that of biblical theology, which Cohen calls Old Testament Studies. On the other hand, Cohen's analysis of Baudissin and Bertholet leads him to propose that *Eigenart*—that which is specifically Israelite—can be used as a way to trace the developments of Judaism. That is, Cohen uses an overarching theme to trace developments of religion, thereby combining the methods of Old Testament Studies and History of Religions. More specifically, however, Cohen's combination of these methods is motivated more by philosophical than theology. Cohen is trying to find the “truth” of the methods of Old Testament Studies and History of Religions in order to find the philosophical principle that can orient both studies. Thus, while Cohen participates in both Old Testament Studies and History of Religions, he does so only for his philosophical arguments, meaning that he does not actually participate in either area of study.

So while neither we nor Levenson can actually characterize Cohen as a biblical theologian, Levenson's investigations into biblical theology and historical criticism nevertheless further elucidate Cohen's use of Christian areas of study in order to supplement his position that philosophical orientation does have a place in biblical studies. That is, in arguing that philosophy grounds proper methodology, Cohen demonstrates how bias skews both methodology and results. Simply put, Cohen uses Christian forms to subvert Christian bias. Levenson's analysis also validates Cohen's interest in the methods of biblical studies beyond his political motivations. For instance, Levenson argues that “the truth of a method must be logically distinguished from the uses to which it is put” and that “Protestant biases are not only unnecessary to the historical-critical method, but, in fact, contradict its assumptions” (88). In this argument we can also see Cohen's

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assertions that biblical criticism is not inherently antisemitic and could actually be the best antidote to antisemitism (“Religion und Sittlichkeit,” *Werke* 15, 100). We can also see Cohen’s argument from “Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud” that bias is not a part of method; rather, bias is a part of how scholars interpret their results. Therefore, just like Cohen, Levenson, as a Jewish scholar, has no problem working within a method that was once described as “higher antisemitism” by Schechter, because, for him, the method is not inherently antisemitic. Moreover, Levenson’s investigation into the secular and neutral assumptions of historical criticism shows that the method of historical criticism masks religious bias by relocating commitment to affirmations of secularity, or political ideology rather than being bias itself (Levenson, 124-5). According to Levenson, “secularity is no guarantee of religious neutrality” (126), but is rather merely a relocation of religious commitment. Levenson argues, then, that scholars must not bracket their own religious commitments if they have them. Thus, Levenson’s argument mirrors those of Cohen, who opposes taking “religion” and “religiosity” out of biblical studies because to do so is to deny the stake that religion has in society (“Julius Wellhausen. Ein Abschiedsgruss,” *Werke* 17, 618). According to Cohen, this error not only denies Jews the right to interpret their own tradition, but also contributes to political antisemitism, which is far more dangerous than religious anti-Judaism because it combines religious anti-Judaism with racial prejudice, thereby creating a more dangerous problem for Jews (“Zwei Vorschläge,” *Werke* 15, 122-3).

In this section, we have seen how Kugel and Levenson help us understand how some of Cohen’s critiques are historically motivated or contextually contingent by pointing to how political motivations and practical questions of

method have played a role in biblical studies. For instance, we have seen how Cohen's fight for Jewish equality and for the academic establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* plays a major role in his attitudes towards and uses of biblical studies. At the same time, Levenson's argument that there is no longer a need for a Christian biblical studies and a Jewish biblical studies (Levenson, 104-5) both verifies Cohen's desire for equality in biblical studies, while contrasting with Cohen's argument that only Jews can teach about Judaism. For Levenson, since biblical studies is now able to support the equality of Jews and Christians, Jews no longer have to fight, as Cohen did, for the right to scientifically study their own religion because Jewish Studies is a part of the university. Thus, we can see that equality is now a part of biblical studies due to the persistence of scholars like Cohen, who also pointed to the need for integrated studies in the areas of method, text and tradition, not to mention the need for respect, objectivity and the elimination of bias. At the same time, Kugel's arguments help us to point out that Cohen's call for specific avenues of Jewish learning played an important role in the quest for Jewish equality in biblical studies. For instance, as we saw earlier, Kugel notes that as Protestant scholars gained their own knowledge in various areas of biblical studies, they relied less and less on Jewish teachers, and eventually did not need Jewish teachers at all. If we apply Kugel's description of the relationship between Protestant and Jewish scholars in the past to Cohen's ideas, we can see that Cohen's call for Jewish source criticism follows along the same lines—as Jewish scholars gain source knowledge, they will no longer need Protestant scholars to provide them with basic information, and Jewish scholars will therefore be able to operate on the same level as Protestant scholars. The practical ramifications of Cohen's argument can be seen in Kugel's program for

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biblical studies. Kugel's class "The Hebrew Bible in the Making" and his book *"How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now"* illustrate how source criticism has helped equalize Jewish and Christian biblical scholarship as Kugel's program for biblical studies relies heavily on the results of source criticism. According to Kugel's program, biblical scholars need to focus on the differing interpretations and historical aspects of the text, aspects and interpretations that can only be recovered through source criticism. Thus, Kugel shows us that if source criticism had not become part of Jewish Studies, then his program for biblical studies would not have the proper material and methodological underpinnings, which would have left the methods of biblical studies unchanged and firmly in the hands of Protestant scholars.

## **Conclusion**

The critiques of Cohen, Levenson and Kugel, then, can be seen as both continuous and discontinuous. These critiques illustrate the individual concerns and interests of our scholars, while also pointing to how developments within biblical criticism play a role in shaping these scholars' concerns and interests. Moreover, we have also seen that our scholars' concerns and interests shape biblical studies in turn. Specifically, however, by bringing Levenson and Kugel into conversation with Cohen, we better appreciate several key points about Cohen's critiques of biblical criticism by looking at the similarities and differences between Cohen's critiques and those of Levenson and Kugel.

We will first look at the similarities in their critiques. For instance, all three of our scholars begin their critiques of biblical studies with an analysis of the confessional biases that are apparent within biblical studies. Kugel argues that

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“biblical criticism is Protestant in its very attitude towards the text” (Kugel, 152). Levenson makes a similar point when he asserts that in biblical studies “we are too often left with Christianity trying to pass as historical criticism and with historical criticism severely distorted by unacknowledged religious allegiance” (Levenson, xiii). Cohen too asserts that religious bias also plays a role in biblical studies as it often affects the ways in which results from biblical studies are interpreted and disseminated. Levenson, Kugel and Cohen all note that as a result of Protestant bias, biblical studies has often either ignored Jews and their studies of the biblical text or have perpetuated Christian prejudices about Judaism—including the belief that Judaism is the degenerate form of Israelite religion while Christianity is its true heir. Moreover, all three scholars disagree with the search for the origins of the biblical text because this search ignores both the communities for which the text is scripture and the development of the biblical text itself. Levenson’s argument that respect for literary context, tradition and community needs to be central in biblical studies is therefore continuous with Cohen’s assertion in *Religion of Reason* and “Der Nächste” that community and cumulative meaning must ground all studies of the biblical text. Kugel’s class “The Hebrew Bible in the Making,” can also be seen in conjunction with Cohen’s assertions that the cumulative text not only needs to be respected, but also that the traditions themselves play a role in the creation of the text. Further, we can link Levenson’s and Kugel’s arguments to Cohen’s in that Cohen focuses on the literary questions that the biblical text itself asks, that is, questions and concerns that the biblical text has and tries to solve. While Levenson and Kugel discuss the question of literary context in biblical studies in different ways—Levenson by analyzing the differences between studying the historical context versus that of



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the literary context, Kugel by highlighting the changing interpretations of the text throughout history—their discussion of literary history highlights Cohen's focus on the interpretation of the Jewish sources through the use of philosophy and literary history.

Cohen's, Kugel's and Levenson's attention to education show us the continuing significance of the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of Cohen's arguments. Cohen, for instance, argues that without education and attention to the sources, Jews will not be able to establish *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the academy, or even justify the methods of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in general. We can see in this argument that Cohen connects his theoretical and methodological arguments about how the biblical text should be studied—all relevant material needs to be studied and source criticism (which looks at all relevant material) should become the basis for education because only with source criticism can Jews produce scholarship that is equal to Protestant scholarship without depending on Protestant scholarship. We can also see that with this argument, Cohen participated in changing the ways in which the Bible was studied that Kugel and Levenson outline in their programs for biblical studies. That is, Kugel's program for "How to Read the Bible" and Levenson's argument that scholars must look at how Scripture has always left room for the manifold senses of the text relies on the findings of source criticism as it allows both Kugel and Levenson to understand how the text was developed, seen and interpreted throughout its history.

While Cohen's similarities to Kugel and Levenson point to the resonance that Cohen's critiques of biblical studies still has today, the differences in Cohen's arguments as compared to those of Levenson's and Kugel's shed light on the

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particular interests of Cohen's. Cohen's critiques of Wellhausen as opposed to Levenson's and Kugel's critiques show us that Cohen's appropriation and reworking of Wellhausen's theories rest partly on Cohen's argument that Jews should be grateful for advancements in scholarship that Protestant studies have made and should use these advancements to spur on their own scholarship. Cohen's argument, however, also rests, to some extent, on a different understanding from Levenson and Kugel about the meaning behind Wellhausen's scholarship. That is, while Levenson and Kugel stress that Wellhausen's theological assumptions about the biblical text played a major role in his conclusion that Judaism was the degenerate form of ancient Israelite religion, Cohen focuses on the methodological weaknesses of Wellhausen's arguments instead of their theological basis. In their focus on different aspects of Wellhausen's work, we can see that their respective perspectives on Wellhausen are, for the most part, historically contingent—while Cohen uses Wellhausen to help him fight for the establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in the academy, Levenson and Kugel critique Wellhausen now that Jewish Studies is a discipline in the university, and note how Wellhausen represented a stream of thought that kept Jewish Studies out of the university in the first place.

By placing Cohen into conversation with Kugel and Levenson, then, we can see that Cohen critiques of biblical studies point to perpetual problems in biblical scholarship. Furthermore, in this chapter we have seen that the similarities and differences of Cohen's critiques with those of Levenson's and Kugel's point to Cohen's nuanced response to Protestant biblical scholarship. For as just as Cohen argued against the methodological weaknesses in biblical studies, he also incorporated some methods of biblical studies into his own work and used certain

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biblical scholars to motivate methodological growth within *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

## **Thesis Conclusion**

Hermann Cohen's interactions with biblical criticism were complex because although he was not a biblical scholar, he was intensely aware of the stakes involved in the study of the biblical text for Jews and Christians alike. Indeed, Cohen's entrance into the debates surrounding the proper methodologies for biblical studies came about because he understood that the ties between scholarship and society often dictate the ways in which the biblical text and the religions for which the biblical is authoritative are presented. While "Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud" focused more on the proper study of the Talmud than on the proper study of the Bible, Cohen did not see the study of the Talmud and the study of the Hebrew Bible in different lights. Rather, because both the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud were sacred Jewish texts, Cohen thought that they should be studied according to the same methodologies. That is, for Jews to study the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud is analogous to Christian studies of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. At the same time, Cohen came to focus on the proper study of the Bible rather than on the proper study of the Talmud and the New Testament. In our study we have seen that there are two reasons for this. First, the Hebrew Bible is a shared text between Christians and Jews, while the Talmud and the New Testament are not. According to Cohen, this meant that studies of the Hebrew Bible could, or more accurately, should, inform the methodological principles for governing the studies of the Talmud and the New Testament, rather than the other way around. That is, Cohen did not approve of the way that New Testament studies, or theories, dictated the way that the Hebrew Bible was studied because the Hebrew Bible was not just a Christian text, but a vital part of the Jewish tradition as well. Moreover, Cohen did not agree with the

practice in biblical studies of cutting the Talmud off from the Hebrew Bible because the Talmud was as connected to the Hebrew Bible for the Jews as the New Testament was for Christians. Thus, as we have seen in Chapter 1, Cohen argues against Paul de Lagarde's remark that one no more insults Jews by insulting the Talmud than one insults Lutherans by insulting Luther's *Table Talk* because, for Cohen, the Talmud is not a mere epilogue to the Hebrew Bible for Jews, just as the New Testament would not be for Christians ("Die Nächstenliebe im Talmud," JS I, 166). Second, because Christians were studying the Hebrew Bible in an academic setting while Jews were not able to, Cohen argued that Christians did not take Jews and Jewish learning seriously, which stemmed from anti-Jewish and antisemitic biases in society and academia, and led to further bias. According to Cohen, these biases were problematic because they also distorted the studies of the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature and the New Testament. For Cohen, however, a proper methodology for the study of the Hebrew Bible, which would pursue and be guided by scientific ideals and the quest for truth, could help to eliminate these biases and institute Jewish Studies as a university discipline. Thus, he sought to establish this methodology by first critiquing the methodologies and biases of biblical scholars, and then by applying what he had learned from his studies to his own theories on the proper study of the Bible.

As we have seen, Cohen's task was not an easy one. As a philosopher and a Jew, Cohen did not fit in with Protestant biblical scholarship and therefore had a distinct lack of real dialogue partners within biblical studies. Cohen, however, capitalized on the contacts that he had, scholars such as Wellhausen and Rade, and used his established authority as a philosopher to aid in his goals. In fact, Cohen asserted that his position as a philosopher gave him the ability and duty to

discover prevailing principles and apply them to historical studies (JS I, 146-47). Thus, Cohen, the philosopher, was able to gain entry into the world of biblical scholarship because of his contact with Martin Rade, who not only supported Cohen, but also invited him to participate in the 1910 “World Congress for Free Christianity and Religious Progress.” Christian Wiese argues that by participating in this congress, Cohen was “provided [with] the opportunity to effectively and directly express Jewish-liberal identity and the religious and cultural claims of contemporary Judaism before the forum of German Liberal Protestantism” (Wiese, 2005, 314) because he was considered to be a “scholar of equal status,” who also “embodied the will to preserve a unique Jewish identity” that was “closely intertwined with modern German culture” (316). Cohen’s involvement with biblical scholarship was grounded in his position as a philosopher, and in his philosophical ideals; and he used his position as a philosopher to critique biblical studies. Furthermore, Cohen argues that there is a link between philosophy and religious literature because often “the same authors are devoted to independent philosophy and to Bible exegetics” (RR, 29/34). Therefore, Cohen asserts, “philosophy is unintentionally brought into religious literature” (29/34). We can see here that Cohen justifies his participation in biblical studies because as per his argument, the link between philosophy and religious literature has already been formed and philosophers can indeed also participate in biblical exegetics.

In participating in biblical exegetics and the quest for proper methodologies for studying the Hebrew Bible, Cohen focuses upon the concepts of monotheism, messianism and morality. In Chapter 1 we saw that these concepts were the starting point for Cohen’s critiques of biblical studies. According to Cohen, these concepts formed the overall message of the Hebrew

Bible. Thus, Cohen seeks to explicate not only these concepts, but also how these concepts could be used as the basis with which to critique the work of other biblical scholars. Cohen argues that since monotheism, messianism and morality form the basis for the main messages of the biblical text, any study of the Bible had to take them into account. In Chapters 1 and 2, Cohen's particular examples for nationalism, universality and the neighbor were used to illustrate how Cohen's general themes of monotheism, messianism and morality were applied to his critiques of biblical scholars. For instance, on one hand, Cohen argues against de Lagarde's, Kittel's and Ziegler's interpretations of Israelite morality, the general Protestant prejudice that Jews lack universality and philological studies of the Hebrew words *rea'* and *ger*. On the other hand, Cohen asserts that if studies were to take seriously the concepts of monotheism, messianism and morality, as was done in the studies by Baudissin and Bertholet, the work of biblical scholars could lead to real methodological breakthroughs. According to Cohen, writing on Bertholet, the biggest breakthrough that biblical scholars have made by using these concepts is the discovery that the prophets are the soul of the Jewish religion ("Die Eigenart der alttestamentlichen Religion," *Werke* 16, 25). For Cohen, this is a methodological breakthrough because it recognizes that the prophets both embody the particularity and the universality of the Israelite religion and are the basis for our knowledge of monotheism, messianism and morality. Moreover, Cohen argues that this discovery means that the prophets should become the light by which the entire biblical text should be seen and studied (25). Thus, according to Cohen, the concepts of monotheism, messianism and morality could become the basis on which biblical studies could build something positive instead of

something negative in the relationship between Jews and Christians in academia and society.

For Cohen, then, scholarship on the prophets becomes the measuring stick by which he critiques the work of biblical scholars. In Chapter 3, we also saw that Cohen's reading of the prophets represents the culmination of all that he has learned in his interactions with biblical scholarship. In his critiques of Wellhausen, for instance, Cohen not only points out that Wellhausen has contributed greatly to the overall understanding of the prophets, but also that Wellhausen's interpretations of individual prophets were problematic because Wellhausen did not understand the basic tenets of prophetic messianism. In his critiques of Troeltsch, however, Cohen argues that because Troeltsch does not take the latest scholarly developments into account—that is, the breakthrough that the prophetic message should be the basis for interpretations of the biblical text—Troeltsch misinterprets the meaning of the prophets, thereby exposing the Christian biases against Judaism and his own methodological weaknesses. Thus, we can see that for Cohen, scholarship on the prophets emphasizes the importance of proper methodology for the study of the biblical text, for if one does not understand the concepts that rule the text, then one's study is called into question.

In Chapter 4, Cohen's argument that one needs to understand the ruling principles of the biblical text becomes the basis for his arguments concerning the need for better education on the biblical sources. According to Cohen, if one does not understand these ruling principles the whole biblical text will be misunderstood, and will continue to be studied in a biased manner. Thus, we saw in this chapter that Cohen calls for more extensive Jewish learning on the biblical text. According to Cohen, if Jews do not participate in source education, the



biblical text may be lost to the Christians, and the Jewish voice will be lost. At this point, we see the convergence of many of Cohen's arguments concerning biblical scholarship. First, we see the importance of education and scholarship in Cohen's thought as he argues that education is vital to the survival of Jews in Germany because it is the avenue on which Jews are able to assert their religious and political equality with Christians. Second, Cohen does not argue that Jews should abandon their own interpretive traditions and methodologies and take up Protestant scholarly ideals. Rather, according to Cohen, scientific ideals should govern scholarship, and Jews should not ignore scholarly advances just because they come from Protestant scholars. Cohen further asserts that some of the advances of Protestant scholars could actually lead to bettering the Jewish situation in Germany because the more Protestant scholars learn about Judaism, the better Judaism will be understood. Although Cohen did not live to see the establishment of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as a university discipline in Germany, Jewish Studies departments became established across the world in the decade following Cohen's death. The scholarship of James Kugel and Jon D. Levenson attests to the success of the call for Jewish education on the Bible that Cohen was a part of. More importantly, their respective critiques of biblical studies point to the continuing relevance of Cohen's ideas about biblical scholarship and his specific concerns when dealing with biblical scholarship.

Cohen's reading of the biblical text, for instance, both in his essays and *Religion of Reason*, stresses his idea that one needs to look at the whole text in order to determine the questions and concerns (including methodological, societal, philosophical and philological) that the biblical text itself points to. Cohen then uses these questions and concerns as the basis for interpreting the text's material.

In doing so, Cohen shows that, like present-day biblical scholars, the biblical text must be seen in the light of its historical and literary contexts. Thus, Cohen argues that the biblical sources must become the major focus of biblical education so that one can understand these contexts and how asking questions concerning one context could shed light on the other. Moreover, Cohen's reading of the Hebrew Bible illustrates the importance of respect for religious traditions and the theoretical and theological underpinnings of the study of the Bible that scholars such as Levenson and Kugel continue to point to. For example, all three of our scholars look at the ways in which scholarly and religious ideals (and biases) affect one's study of the biblical text. At the same time, just as Cohen argues that biblical studies, particularly studies on the prophets, can be the meeting ground for Christians and Jews, so too do Levenson and Kugel. But while Levenson and Kugel point out that further problems result from joint study, which Cohen does not, even as they argue that there is no need for a separate Christian and Jewish biblical studies, Cohen stresses the need for a Jewish voice in biblical studies.

The basic methodological grounding of Cohen's study of the Bible and Judaism, then, comes from his philosophical view that one must use real-life experiences as the basis for one's studies (RR, 237/278). We can therefore see that Cohen's theories of messianism, monotheism and morality do more than just provide orienting questions for biblical studies, as they are also the reasons that Cohen is interested in biblical studies in Germany. Cohen's theory of messianism, for instance, is Cohen's answer to the suffering of Jews in Germany because if one is to take monotheism seriously, then one must be committed to unifying humanity under the worship of one God. As we have seen earlier, Cohen equates the worship of God with the ability to act morally and justly in the world. For

Cohen, social justice must therefore be the objective of both Christians and Jews, and with the establishment of social justice in the world, injustice and suffering will cease. According to Cohen, this is the reason why the Jewish voice must be heard in biblical studies, for if it is not, Jews will never be able to bring about the end to social injustice in both the academic sphere and society at large. If we connect Cohen's messianic vision to his philological arguments concerning the *ger* and the *rea'*, we can see that Cohen uses his theories and his philological arguments in order to argue that biblical studies needs to interact with philosophy and with *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, which will then lead to strangers becoming neighbors in an equal society.

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