ELEMENTS OF *PESHAT* IN TRADITIONAL JEWISH BIBLE EXEGESIS

by CHAIM COHEN

It is often claimed that the critical study of the Hebrew Bible began only within the last century or so. This claim — while not incorrect if one replaces the term "critical study" with "modern critical study," defining the latter as referring to the use of such new tools as archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Texts, which were previously unknown — completely ignores the important contribution of Jewish Biblical exegesis from the Biblical period itself until the nineteenth century C.E.[1] Likewise, it is often believed, quite incorrectly, that pre-modern scholarship was essentially uncritical and overwhelmingly concerned with the reading back into the text of the regnant religious ideas of the time, whether halakhic, midrashic, philosophical, Kabbalistic, etc. It is the purpose of the present article to briefly survey the history of this exegesis, while highlighting some of the many innovative proposals made by Jewish Biblical scholars in the aforementioned period. These

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1.   The most recent bibliographical discussion on the subject of Jewish Bible exegesis concludes E.L. Greenstein's article "Medieval Bible Commentaries," in Barry Holtz, ed., *Back to the Sources* (New York, 1984), 258-259. To this should be added three major works in modern Hebrew: M.H. Segal, *Parshanut ha-Miqra'* (Jerusalem, 1952); Ezra-Zion Melammed, *Mefarshey ha-Miqra'* 2 v. (Jerusalem, 1975); Moshe Greenberg, ed., *Parshanut ha-Miqra' ha-Yehudit* (Jerusalem, 1983).

proposals, still relevant today, have in many cases been wrongly attributed to later Biblical scholarship, which they anticipated by hundreds of years. As such, we will deal here only with that exegesis which in one way or another is relevant to our understanding of the *peshaṭ* — i.e., "the plain, literal meaning of the text" (as originally intended by the Biblical authors).

1. Biblical Exegesis in Late Biblical Books (C. 538-165 B.C.E.)

While the majority of those instances in which the later books of the Bible make reference to verses of earlier Biblical books are either cases of more or less direct quotation (e.g. Neh. 13:1-2 quoting Deut. 23:4-6) or midrashic expansion or explication intended to fill in gaps or to explain difficulties[2] (e.g. I Chron. 21:1, which attempts to explain away the theological difficulty of God inciting David to sin in II Sam. 24:1), the following example from II Chron. 35:13a indicates that the author was here motivated by the necessity to harmonize two apparently contradictory, but equally authoritative passages. The two laws in question (concerning the preparation of the Passover sacrifice in Ex. 12:8-9 and Deut. 16:7) represent a contradiction which to this day is still cited as evidence for the documentary hypothesis regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch.[3] The three texts read as follows:

> Ex. 12:8-9: "...they shall eat it [the Passover sacrifice] roasted over the fire... Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but rather roasted — head, legs and entrails — over the fire."
> Deut. 16:7 "You shall boil and eat [the Passover sacrifice]..."
> II Chron. 35:13: "And they boiled the Passover sacrifice in fire according to the Law..."

As noted by many scholars, the unique expression in II Chron. 35:13a, *wybšlw...b š* ("And they boiled.. in fire"), must be understood as having been artificially composed by the Chronicler in his attempt at harmonization. The term *wybšlw* ("and they boiled") is clearly based upon Deut. 16:7, *wbšlt* ("and you shall boil"), while the element *b š* "in fire" is derived from Ex. 12:8-9 *ṣly š* ("roasted over the fire"). Only in this way could the Chronicler claim that the Passover sacrifice was prepared "according to the law" (i.e. according to both the tradition in Ex. 12:8-9 and the contradictory tradition in Deut. 16:7). One can certainly not claim that the Chronicler, by virtue of his exegesis, is doubting the Mosaic origin of either Ex. 12:8-9 or Deut. 16:7. To the contrary: it was because of his absolute faith in the Mosaic origin of both passages that he felt compelled to treat his topic in this way

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2.   A massive work has recently been published on this subject which should also be consulted for all previous bibliography: Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985).
3.   On the specific issue of the preparation of the Passover sacrifice, see most recently Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1978), 321-323.

(i.e. harmonization and "according to the Law"). Yet it seems equally clear that this particular contradiction was especially problematic for him. Nowhere else in the books of I-II Chronicles do we find *both* harmonization and the term, "according to the Law." It is precisely the isolation of this case and the special treatment meted out with respect to it, which demonstrate the beginnings of a critical attitude — if not with respect to the suggested solution, at least with respect to the implied question.

2. Rabbinic Exegesis in the Talmud, Early Midrashic Literature and in the Targumim (ca. 165 B.C.E. – 900 C.E.)

Most Rabbinic exegesis found in the Talmud and the Midrash and as reflected in the Aramaic translations of the Bible (especially Targum 'Onqelos to the Torah and Targum Jonathan to the Prophets) is either midrashic or periphrastic.[4] This is, however, not *always* the case. One device which was usually used in Rabbinic exegesis for midrashic purposes, but occasionally is based on the *peshaṭ* – i.e. "the plain literal meaning of the text (as originally intended by the Biblical authors)" – is *'al tiqrê* – literally, "do not read" – implying the emendation of the Masoretic text.[5] While it is often claimed that the purpose of this device was "not to abrogate the accepted reading or deny its literal meaning," the latter two cases below indicate that this device was at least at times based on authentic variant readings which might be closer than the Masoretic version to the original text. In order to understand the regular midrashic use of this device, consider the following comment on the term *harût* ("incised" – Ex. 32:16): "Do not read *ḥarût* ('incised') but *ḥerût* ('freedom')" (BT, 'Eruvin 54a), to which Exodus Raba 41:7 (and parallels) adds the following midrashic interpretation: " 'freedom from captivity,' 'freedom from the Angel of Death' and 'freedom from suffering.' " As opposed to this fanciful midrash, compare the following comment on Ps. 49:12: "Do not read *qrbm* ('their inner [thoughts]') but *qbrm* ('their grave')" (BT, Mo'ed Qatan 9b). Note that within the overall context of Ps. 49:10-13, death is clearly spoken of (as indicated both by the imagery of v. 10 and the parallelism "they will die // they will perish" in v. 11), supporting the emended reading (through metathesis) of *qbrm* ("their grave") instead of the Masoretic reading *qrbm* ("their inner thoughts"). Note further that this emended reading is supported by the Septuagint, the Peshiṭta and the Targum.

Perhaps the most significant usage of the *'al tiqrê* device (albeit without specific reference to the formulaic phrase *'al tiqrê*) from the point of view of modern

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4.   In general, see M. Greenberg, ed., *Parshanut ha-Miqra ha-Yehudit*, 3-13.
5.   On the subject of *'al tiqrê*, consult the following two encyclopedia entries: A. Arzi, "Al Tikrei," *Encyclopedia Judaica* II: 776; N.H. Tur-Sinai, "'Al Tiqrê" [Heb.], *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1950), I:420-421.

Biblical scholarship is the following comment on one of the most difficult Biblical verses, Gen. 49:10.[6]

> עד כי יבא שילה "Until Shiloh come." This indicates that all the nations of the world are destined to bring tribute to Messiah the son of David, as it is said: "In that time, tribute shall be brought (Heb. *yûbal šay*) to the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 18:7). Transpose *yûbal šay* and expound it and you find that it reads Shiloh.

This comment should be understood together with Targum 'Onqelos to the parallel clause in Gen. 49:10 — *wlw yqht 'mym* — which is translated in the Aramaic thus: *wlyh yštm'wn 'mmy'* ("and him shall the nations obey"). In the spirit of these comments, as well as further evidence, it is here suggested that we read as follows: *'d ky yuba' šay lô' // wlw yqht 'mym* ("Until tribute is brought to him // and the homage of peoples is his").[7]

3. The Medieval Judeo-Arabic Commentaries Written Outside of Spain

The Muslim conquest (seventh century C.E.), on the one hand, and the rise of the Karaite sect (eighth century C.E.), on the other, greatly influenced the language, style and to a large extent the content of early medieval Jewish Bible commentary. Arabic became not only the vernacular (displacing Aramaic), but also in many areas the written language of the Jews (mainly in the Judeo-Arabic dialect generally utilizing the Hebrew alphabet). Rational Arabic literary criticism of the Qur'an served as an impetus for Jewish scholars to develop their own parallel criticism of the Hebrew Bible (from the ninth century C.E. on). At the same time, the ideological threat of Karaism (which accepted only Written Scripture while rejecting the Talmud) placed Rabbinic Judaism on the defensive, likewise spurring on literary activity, the polemical purpose of which was to prove that the Hebrew Bible could not be properly understood without recourse to the "Oral Torah." It is in this context that we may properly appreciate the prolific scholarship of Sa'adiah Gaon, the outstanding scholar of his day (882-942 C.E.), who has been called "the father of Hebrew philology." His Arabic translation of the Bible is still in use today and he also wrote commentaries on most of the Biblical books (in some cases both a long and short commentary on the same book). Many of his comments are still quite relevant to modern Biblical scholarship such as his commentary to Gen.

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6.   Genesis Rabba, New Version of the "Blessing of Jacob" [Gen. 49], section 2:10. Note also the commentary of the famous 11th century French commentator, Rashi, to Gen. 49:10: " 'Until Shiloh come'... An aggadic interpretation: Shiloh is *šay lô* ('tribute to him') as it is stated (Ps. 76:12) 'They shall bring tribute (*šay*) unto Him who is awesome.' "

7.   See provisionally W.L. Moran, *Biblica* 39 (1958), 405-425; N.H. Tur-Sinai, *Peshuto shel Miqra'* (Jerusalem, 1962), I:80; M.H. Lichtenstein, *JANES* 2/2 (1970), 94-100; C. Cohen, *"yiqhat 'amîm," Enzeqlopedyah 'Olam ha-Tanakh: Bereshit* (Ramat Gan, 1982), 248. I intend to deal with this problematic verse in greater detail in a future article.

35:16: *kibrāt hā-'āreṣ.* – "a distance of a 'mile' (or 'league') on the road until they would enter Efrat."[8] Such later scholars as Ibn Ezra and David Kimhi (see sections 4 and 5, below) both gave Sa'adiah Gaon the credit for being the first scholar to realize that the first letter "*k*" of the word *kibrat* is not a root-letter, but rather the prefixed particle of comparison "*k-*" meaning here "approximately" (cf. e.g. Num. 11:31). In fact, some modern scholars still take the first letter "*k*" incorrectly as a root-letter in all three occurrences of this phrase (Gen. 35:16; 48:7; II Kings 5:19) comparing Akkadian *kibrātu* "regions, edge, shoreline", which is, however, used only for very long distances [cf. the semantic parallel in Isa. 11:12 to the common Akkadian phrase *kibrāt arba'im / erbettim* "the four regions (of the inhabited world)"]. In all three Biblical occurrences of *kibrat [hā-] 'āreṣ*, a relatively short distance is implied and the phrase should be translated (see the evidence below) "approximately one land-'mile' " (where the ancient "mile" was equivalent to a distance somewhat greater than ten kilometers). The correct comparison (disregarding the initial "*k*") is with the Akkadian phrase *ber qaqqari*, where *bēr* (= Hebrew *bᵉrat*) is the construct form of *bēru*, the regular Akkadian term for the ancient "mile" (as defined above) and *qaqqaru* (semantically equivalent to Hebrew *'ereṣ*) is one of the regular Akkadian terms for "land." In Akkadian, *bēr qaqqari* "the land-'mile' is distinguished from *bēru ša/ina šamê* – literally, "the 'mile' for [the measuring of] the heavens" – a measurement of astronomical longitude equivalent to the twelfth part of a circle (i.e. 30 degrees). Thus, the use of the qualifying term *'ereṣ* ("land") in the phrase *bēr qaqqari*, was necessary in order to indicate which kind of "mile" was intended. While this Akkadian parallel is certainly indispensable for a correct understanding of *kibrat [ha-] 'āreṣ*, it also serves to reaffirm the brilliant pioneering commentary of R. Sa'adiah Gaon.

4. The Medieval Jewish Bible Commentators from Spain

The two previously mentioned factors (viz. the Muslim conquest and the Karaite threat) which so stimulated such scholars as R. Sa'adiah Gaon outside of Spain, also served to influence (in some case directly, in others indirectly) such major medieval Spanish Jewish commentators as Abraham ibn Ezra, Naḥmanides and the Hebrew grammarian Jonah ibn Janach. A single example will be discussed from the works of each of these great scholars in order to demonstrate their quest for the *peshaṭ* ("the plain literal meaning of the text").

8.   On Gen. 35:16 and Sa'adiah's interpretation of *kibrat ha-'areṣ*, see J. Derenbourg, *Version Arabe du Pentateuque* (Paris, 1893), 55, n. 3; Tur-Sinai, *Peshuto shel Miara'* I:58-60; Y. Kapah, *Perushey Rabbenu Sa'adia Gaon 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1963), 42 and n. 7; I. J. Gelb et al. eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1965), II (B):208-211; M. Weinfeld, *Sefer Bere'shit* (Tel-Aviv, 1975), 211; C. Cohen, "Kibrat ha-'areṣ," *Enẓeqlopedyah 'Olam ha-Tanakh: Bereshit*, 198.

a) **Abraham ibn Ezra.** Abraham ibn Ezra's (1089-1164) commentaries to the various books of the Bible are perhaps the most faithful to the principle of *peshaṭ* of all his contemporaries and are therefore the most deserving of the attention of modern Biblical scholarship (which has hitherto taken note generally only of his higher critical comments − see the conclusion to this article). A case in point is the often-disputed connection between the terms *sûtōh* ("his garment" − Gen. 49:11) and *masweh* ("veil" − Ex. 34:33-35).[9] In his commentary to Gen. 49:11, he first stated his opinion that both terms should be derived from the same root. This view was then strengthened in his commentary to Ex. 34:33 (the longer version) which in many respects would be considered today in the forefront of critical scholarship, lacking only the corroborating evidence from Ancient Near Eastern texts (which was of course unavailable in Ibn Ezra's day − see the introduction to this article):

> מסוה(*Masweh*) Similar (in meaning) to *kswt* ("covering, garment"). Some scholars content that from the same root is derived סותה(*sûtōh* − Gen. 49:11); and don't be surprised that the *w* in *masweh* appears as a consonant while the *w* in *sûtōh* does not. For compare *'awlatâ* (Hos. 10:13) with *'ōlātâh* (Job 5:16); *'ûl* (Isa. 65:20) with *'awîlîm* (Job 19:18); *tôk* (Deut. 23:11) with *tāwek* (Gen. 15:10).

Thus, Ibn Ezra first deals semantically with *masweh*, claiming that it is similar in meaning to *kᵉsût* ("covering, garment") to which may be added the Biblical corroborating evidence, the phrase *kᵉsût 'ênayim* ("veil, covering of the eyes" − Gen. 20:16). This demonstrates that *kᵉsût*, like *masweh*, is used with respect to the face/eyes (albeit *kᵉsût 'ênayim* is used idiomatically in Gen. 20:16 referring to a gift or bribe which is intended to make Sarah "blind" to the entire unfortunate incident alluded to in the verse). Likewise, the parallelism *kᵉsût//lᵉbûš* ("covering // garment" − Job 24:7; 31:19; cf. Isa. 50:3) should be noted together with the fact that the latter term in the form *lᵉbûšô* ("his garment") is parallel to *sûtōh* ("his covering") in Gen. 49:11. With regard to the etymological equivalence between *masweh* and *sûtōh*, Ibn Ezra rightly emphasizes the status of the *w* in the word *sûtōh* as the key issue. That the *w* in *masweh* is a consonantal root letter is obvious, so that the etymological relationship between the two terms is dependent upon whether the *w* in *sûtoh* is likewise a consonantal root letter. This question is addressed by Ibn Ezra in the way that all such questions should be treated − namely, on the basis of precedents. Now, in his own day, there is no way that Ibn Ezra could have proved his case positively. The most his precedents could show is that the occurrence of *w* in the term *sûtōh* as a "vowel letter" rather than as a consonant does not preclude the possibility of the term *sûtōh* being derived from a root with a consonantal root-letter *w* − a principle brilliantly demonstrated by Ibn Ezra. The concrete evidence, unavailable to Ibn Ezra to prove his case, is now

available from Phoenician inscriptions. There, the term *swt* ("garment, covering") occurs three times (once in the plural as *swyt*) in the Phoenician script, *which represents only consonants and never indicates "vowel letters"*. These three occurrences date from the ninth to the third centuries B.C.E., the earliest occurrence being the following proverb cited from the Kilamuwa inscription from Y'dy-Sam'al (cf. ANET^3, 654-655): "The King of the Danunites (tried to) overpower me, but I hired against him the King of Assyria, (who) 'gave a maid for a lamb, a man for a garment (*swt*)'." Thus, *masweh* and *sûtōh* are indeed related both semantically and etymologically as first suggested by Ibn Ezra. They should both be derived from an assumed root *swy*, a poetic synonym of *ksy* "to cover."

b) **Naḥmanides (Ramban).** Although born in Gerona in Northern Spain, Moses Naḥmanides (Ramban, 1194-1274) was educated by masters in the three great centers of Jewish learning of his day — Spain, Provence and Northern France. His commentaries on the Torah and the Book of Job thus represent a synthesis of the best these three centers had to offer. More than any other medieval commentator, his commentary often takes the form of a rebuttal of the views of his predecessors, especially Rashi (quoted in about one third of Naḥmanides' comments on individual verses of the Torah) and Ibn Ezra (quoted in about one eighth of Naḥmanides' comments). Naḥmanides was eventually banished from Christian Spain because he insisted on setting the historic record straight with regard to a famous disputation in which he defended Judaism against the anti-Jewish missionary work of the King and the Church. The last three years of his life were thus spent in the land of Israel, where he added to and revised several items in his Torah commentary. The following comment concerning the weight of the ancient Sheqel coin [10] was written sometime after his arrival at the port of Acre. It both demonstrates how open-minded a scholar Naḥmanides could be, as well as constituting clear evidence as to *how medieval scholars of the Bible would have generally related to the use of archaeological evidence had it been available in their day:*

> The Lord has blessed me until now in that I have been privileged to arrive at Acre. I found there a silver coin in the possession of the Jewish elders, engraved with seal engravings — on one side a sort of almond branch, while on the other a kind of vessel, and on both sides all around, an engraved legend, written clearly. They showed the legend to the *kutiyim* (i.e. the Samaritans) who immediately deciphered it, for it was written in the (early) Hebrew script which the *Kutiyim* continued to use, as indicated in (BT) Sanhedrin (21b). They read on one side *šql hšqlym* ("Sheqel of sheqels") and on the other side *yrwšlym hqdwšh* ("Jerusalem the Holy"), indicating that the figures (represent) the staff of Aaron (together with) its sprouts and almonds (cf. Num. 17:23) and the second figure (represents) the jar of manna (cf. Ex. 16:33). We weighed it (the sheqel coin) on the "tables" and its weight was... the same half an ounce

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10.   On this additional note by Naḥmanides to his Torah commentary concerning the weight of the *sheqel*, see the critical edition of C.B. Chavel, *Perush Ha-Ramban 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1960), II:507-508. On the *sheqel* coins of the Jewish War against Rome (66-70 C.E.), see, e.g., A. Kindler, *Coins of the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1974), 52-57.

(i.e., of gold according to the standard weight of Cologne) to which Rashi referred (in his commentary to Ex. 21:32)... Thus, Rashi's opinion been provided with considerable support (as opposed to Nahmanides' earlier view stated in his commentary to Ex. 30:13 that the weight of the ancient sheqel was equivalent to three quarters of an ounce of gold according to the standard weight of Cologne)...

Without delving into the numismatic details of this commentary, it may be safely assumed that the sheqel coin seen by Nahmanides dated from the second to the fifth years of the Jewish revolt against Rome (67-70 C.E.), which culminated in the destruction of the Second Temple (the first year, 66 C.E., is eliminated from consideration because all known sheqel coins from that year included the inscription *yrwšlym qdwšh* ("Holy Jerusalem") rather than *yrwšlym hqdwšh* ("Jerusalem the Holy"). This example demonstrates the extent of open-mindedness reached by the best of medieval Jewish Biblical scholars in their quest for the *peshaṭ*; but even more significantly, it clearly shows how these scholars were willing to use all the evidence at their disposal, no matter what the source.

c) **Jonah ibn Janach.** The Spanish Hebrew grammarian and lexicographer, Jonah ibn Janach (Abu al-Walīd Marwān, ca. 985 – ca. 1040), was perhaps the most brilliant and surely the most daring of an entire group of early medieval (10th-11th centuries C.E.) Hebrew grammarians and lexicographers who in fact dealt extensively with the *peshaṭ* interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, but presented their conclusions exclusively within the framework of Hebrew root dictionaries, grammatical treatises or the like, rather than in actual commentaries to individual books of the Bible.[11] Other famous scholars belonging to this group include Judah ibn Quraysh, Menaḥem ibn Saruq, Dunash ben Labrat and Judah ben David Ḥayyuj. These scholars are often quoted by the medieval Jewish Bible commentators mentioned in this article and were certainly within the mainstream of Biblical *peshat* research of that era. Ibn Janach's two most important works, *Sefer ha-Shorashim* ("Book of [Hebrew] Roots") and *Sefer ha-Riqmah* ("Book of Colored Flowerbeds") were both translated from Arabic into Hebrew in the twelfth century C.E. and remain to this day the single greatest theoretical contribution to Biblical Hebrew grammar and lexicography ever made by a Jewish author. The following example (of which I was first made aware by my revered teacher of blessed memory, Professor Moshe Held) proves unmistakably that Ibn Janach had already theoretically established the existence of the *enclitic-"mem"* some 900 years (!!!) before the Ugaritic writings were to be unearthed in our own century providing the first solid Northwest-Semitic evidence for this phenomenon. Briefly

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11. For a comprehensive annotated bibliography concerning early Hebrew grammarians and lexicographers and their works, see D. Tene, "Hebrew Linguistic Literature," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971), XVI:1375-1390.

the *enclitic-"mem"* refers to the consonant *m* occurring as a semantically redundant suffix attached to virtually any part of speech. It often occurs within a construct chain causing the Masoretes, who did not recognize this phenomenon, some very serious problems regarding vocalization (e.g., in Gen. 14;6, for MT *behararam s'yr* read *bₑharₑrê-ma s'yr* ["in the mountains of Seir"]; in Deut. 33:11, for *motnayîm qmyw* read *motnê-ma qmyw* ["the sinewy mid-sections of his enemies"]). The following is Ibn Janach's contribution to this issue in two sections of his *Sefer ha-Riqmah* (somewhat freely translated): [12]

> It is possible that the *mem* will be pushed aside when it occurs attached to a noun in construct state as in the following verses: II Kings 3:4 (*êlîm ṣmr*: read *êlê-ma ṣmr*); Ezek. 22:18 (*sîgîm ksp*: read *sîgê-ma ksp*); Ezek. 40:38 (*bₑêlîm hš'rym*: read *bₑêlê-ma hš'rym*; I Kings 7:42 (*tûrîm rmnym*; read *tûrê-ma rmnym*. This is also the correct understanding of Amos 9:5 (*'elohîm hṣb'wt*: *'elohê-ma hṣb'wt*; and cf. Hos. 12:6). Likewise, the *m* is pushed aside in I Chron. 15:19 (*bim ₑṣiltayîm nhšt*: read *bimₑṣiltê-ma nhšt*; and futher Ezek. 47:4 (*mayîm brkym*: read *mê-ma brkym* which is similar to *mê 'ofsayîm* (Ezek. 47:3) and *mê motnayîm* (Ezek. 47:4), except that the additional *m* in the first instance has been pushed aside at the end of the noun in construct state...
> *mhṣ motnayîm qmyw* (Deut. 33:11) should be understood as if the text read *mhṣ qmyw motnayîm*; but it is (also) possible that the original intention of the text was to read *mhṣ motnê-ma qmyw* with the *m* (at the end of the word *motnayîm*) pushed aside, as in the following verses: Ezek. 22:18 (*sîgîm ksp*: read *sîgê-ma ksp*; Ezek. 40:38 (*bₑ-'êlîm hš'rym*; read *bₑêlê-ma hš'rym*; I Chron. 15:19 (*bim'ṣiltayîm nhšt*: read *bim'ṣiltê-ma nhšt*.

Of the eight cases referred to by Ibn Janach, three (Deut. 33:11 [cf. the Samaritan recension: *motnê*]; Ezek. 22:18; Amos 9:5) are obviously to be accepted. In addition, I Kings 7:42 should be accepted in light of Ex. 28:17 vs. Ex. 39:10. Ezek. 47:4 should be accepted in the light of Ps. 18:16 vs. II Sam. 22:16 together with the other verses cited by Ibn Janach himself (see above). In his classic article on the *enclitic-"mem"* in the Hebrew Bible, H.D. Hummel makes the following statements: [13] 1. "Enclitic *mem* was totally unsuspected in Hebrew until its discovery in Ugaritic, although it had long been known to exist in Akkadian and certain South Semitic dialects." 2. "...enclitic *mem* was indeed represented in MT and occurred

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12.   Jonah ibn Janach, *Sefer ha-Riqmah*, M. Wilensky, ed. (Jerusalem, 1964), I:235,13-19 and 360,4-6. Dr. E. Qimron of Ben-Gurion University has kindly informed me that Abraham ibn Ezra (perhaps under the influence of Ibn Janach as in other instances) was also aware of the existence of the enclitic-"mem" (which he called *mem nosaf*) in Deut. 33:11. See Abraham ibn Ezra, *Moznei Lashon ha-Qodesh* (= *Sefer ha-Moznayim*), ed. W. Heidenheim (Offenbach, 1791), 30 and n. 230.

13.   See H.D. Hummel, *JBL* 76 (1957), 85-107, esp. 85 and 88-89. For an updating of Hummel's article concerning the *enclitic-mem* in Northwest Semitic words found in Akkadian texts of the 15th-13th centuries B.C.E., see D. Sivan, *Grammatical Analysis and Glossary...* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984), 124-126.

commonly in the Canaanite Amarna letters, but these occurrences were consistently misunderstood or otherwise interpreted, until enclitic *mem* was detected and isolated in the Ras Shamrah texts." As demonstrated above, Jonah ibn Janach was the first to brilliantly discover the existence of the "pushed aside" *enclitic-"mem"* some 950 years ago. Hummel's comments should be revised accordingly.

5. The Medieval French Jewish Bible Commentators

The two above-mentioned factors which served to influence and stimulate both the medieval Jewish Bible exegetes from Spain and those who wrote their commentaries in Judeo-Arabic outside of Spain (see sections 3 and 4 above) were virtually non-existent in Christian-ruled France. The Karaite threat was effective and had to be answered only in those countries (under Moslem rule) where scholarly debate was encouraged. Furthermore, while in Spain and in other areas under Moslem control Arabic was both the daily language of the Jews and the language of scholarly discourse, the scholarly language in France was Latin, a language unknown to most Jews. If, despite the absence of such stimuli, such major commentators as Rashi, Joseph Qara and Rashbam in Northern France, and the Kimchi family in Provence in Southern France (which because of their close proximity to Spain served as a conduit for the Spanish grammarians) succeeded in attaining a level of *peshaṭ*, which while perhaps not as sophisticated as that of the Jewish exegetes from Spain is still no less of a contribution to Jewish Bible scholarship, then there must have been other stimuli, perhaps of a different nature, which operated in France. Undoubtedly, one of these stimuli was the intensive study of the Talmud. Rationalism had likewise penetrated French scholarship, so that the quest for the *peshaṭ* was also undertaken there. The two major differences between medieval Jewish Biblical exegesis from France and its counterparts from Spain and other Moslem controlled areas were as follows: 1) The rationalistic approach to the study of Talmud and the liturgy in France (undertaken by most major medieval Bible commentators there aside from their Biblical studies) had a profound influence on the rationalistic study of the Bible. French exegetes quote the Talmud and the Midrash freely in their works, while at the same time, the line of demarcation between *peshaṭ* and *derash* is usually well-drawn. 2) Far less of an attempt was made in France to fit the Bible commentaries into the general framework of intellectualism and scholarly debate. Thus, such scholarly disciplines as general Aristotelian philosophy, Arabic language and poetry, etc., are referred to far less than they are in other cultural milieus. As a result, the French commentaries were more popular than their Spanish counterparts. There is no doubt at all that the most popular commentary of all time was that of Rashi (1040-1105 C.E.), whose commentary, to this day, is the only one which is almost always printed together with the Hebrew Biblical Text and the Aramaic Targum 'Onqelos in most

editions of the Pentateuch.[14]

To exemplify the quest for the *peshaṭ* among Jewish medieval Biblical commentators from France, we have selected the following passage from the commentary of Radak (1160-1235 C.E.), the most noted member of the Kimchi family from Provence in Southern France,to I Chron 1:7:[15]

> ורודנים("and Rodanim" – I Chron. 1:7) written with *resh* as the first letter, while in Genesis (10:4) it is written with two *dalets* – *wddnym*; this is because the *dalet* and the *resh* are orthographically similar... Thus, *rblth* (e.g. Jer. 39:5; 52:9,26) with *resh* and *dblth* (Ezek. 6:14) with *dalet*; *r'w'l* (Num. 2:14) with *resh* and *d'w'l* (e.g. Num. 1:14) with *dalet*. There are likewise alternate readings between words with *waw* and *yod* because of orthographic similarity... Although various (homiletic) *derashot* have been suggested to explain these alternate readings, I did not consider it worthwhile to quote them because they would unduly increase my work, and in any case, the correct understanding of this phenomenon is as I have written above.

Now, while it is true that Radak did not go so far as to claim that these variants are due to scribal errors (in fact, in the continuation of his above comment to I Chron. 1:7, he claimed that the two variant readings were *intentionally* included in parallel Biblical passages in order to indicate that the name in question is actually read both ways), the fact that he both attributed the variant readings to orthographic similarity and adamantly opposed any midrashic explanations for this phenomenon is a firm indication of the extent to which the critical spirit of the *peshaṭ* had permeated his commentaries.[16]

6. Jewish Bible Commentary from the End of the Middle Ages until the End of the Nineteenth Century

This period was a turning point in the history of Jewish Bible research. It began with the period of the Ghetto, during which virtually no innovative Biblical research of any consequence was undertaken with regard to the *peshaṭ* (except in Italy, where Jewish Masoretic studies continued to flourish, although this did not generally include the writing of Biblical commentaries). From this stifling extreme, which could well have marked the end of innovative Jewish Biblical scholarship, arose its antithesis, the Biblical scholarship of Moses Mendelssohn and his followers in the eighteenth century Enlightenment period in Germany and the rest of Europe. This school was the first major step back to Biblical scholarship based on the

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14.   For the numerous elements of *peshaṭ* in Rashi's Biblical commentaries, see most recently M.I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Philadelphia: JPS, in press).
15.   Cf. also Radak's comment on *dîfat* in the previous verse compared with *rîfat* in Gen. 10:3.
16.   For the interchange of orthographically similar letters (e.g. ר/ד; ה/ח; ו/י) see, e.g., E. Wurthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament*[4] (London, 1980), 106; J. Weingreen, *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford, 1982), 38-45.

peshaṭ. However, this movement was not dedicated to Biblical scholarship for its own sake − i.e., the determining of the original meaning of the text as intended by its author. Mendelssohn and his followers aimed rather at freeing the study of the Bible (and thereby all of Jewish scholarship) from the shackles of *Pilpul* and *Derash* and from the so-called ghetto mentality. Thus, considerable effort was expended in replacing Yiddish with Hebrew and German. Mendelssohn and his school translated the entire Bible into German, adding comments whenever deemed necessary; but for them Biblical research was only a means towards an end, and in fact, their work never reached the high standards set by the great Jewish medieval Bible exegetes.

These standards were met and the understanding of the *peshaṭ* advanced in the Biblical commentaries and other works of the nineteenth century Italian Biblical scholar, Samuel David Luzzatto (*Shadal*; 1800-1865 C.E.).[17] *Shadal* was a traditionalist who considered himself much closer to the French school of Rashi and Rashbam than to the Spanish school of Maimonides and Ibn Ezra. Yet, it must be remembered that since the end of the medieval period, innovative Biblical scholarship had passed over into the hands of such major Christian scholars as Lowth, Herder, Gesenius, De Wette and Eichhorn. Although usually critical of their theories, Shadal exhibited the same spirit of scientific inquiry in his own work. He was the first Jewish traditionalist scholar to make extensive use of textual emendation in his commentaries (although *not* with respect to the Pentateuch). The following comment on the *hapax legomenon* דבשת ("hump [of a camel]") in Isa. 30:6 is typical of his work (this comment is somewhat freely translated):[18]

> *Dabbešet*. All agree that this term refers to "the hump (of the camel)" but it is difficult to determine its etymology. Rashi understood it as referring to the medicinal use of honey (*dᵉbaš*) to soothe the wounded camel hump (cf. BT, Bava Mesi'a 38b, Shabbat 144b). Gesenius wrote that it refers to the shape of the camel's hump which is like a bee hive (thus also deriving it from *dᵉbaš* − "honey"); later on, Gesenius wrote that the root *dbš* is related to the root *dwš* ("to trample") and the root *lwš* ("to knead") and that honey is called *dᵉbaš* in Biblical Hebrew because of its similarity to dough (cf. BT, Bava Batra 8:3). It has likewise been suggested that the camel's hump consists of soft fat. All these theories are far-fetched and forced. My view is that the *dalet* of *dabešet* is instead of a *gimel* (i.e., it should be read *gabbešet*!), as in the Aramaic *šgr* / *šdr* ("to send") and, in Talmudic Hebrew, *glosqema'* / *dlusqema'* (in Greek, Τλωσσόχομον "coffin" − BT Gittin 27a). Likewise in Italian: *veggo* / *vedo; ghiaccio* / *diaccio; ragunare* / *radunre*.

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17. Note that there were some other important Jewish Biblical scholars in nineteenth century Europe, such as Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) and Meir Loeb ben Yehiel Michael (*Malbim*, 1809-1879), but their exegesis was never as truly innovative with respect to the *peshaṭ* as that of Luzzatto. See, e.g., Greenberg, ed., *Parshanut ha-Miqra ha-Yehudit*, 132-136.
18. *Shadal*'s commentary to Isa. 30:6 is quoted from S.D. Luzzatto, *Perush 'al Sefer Yesha'yahu* (Tel-Aviv, 1970), 232. On this and other emendations in *Shadal*'s commentaries, see M.B. Margolies, *Samuel David Luzzatto: Traditionalist Scholar* (New York, 1979), 120-123. On Isa. 30:6 and Ugaritic *gbšt*("hump"), see especially H.L. Ginsberg, *JPOS* 16 (1936), 143-144, n. 14; H.R. Cohen, *Biblical Hapax Legomena in the Light of Akkadian and Ugaritic* (Missoula, 1978), 132, n. 64.

Thus *dabbešet* is the same as *gabbešet*, which is connected etymologically with Talmudic Hebrew *gabšúšít* (BT Shabbat 73b). The latter term comes to mean essentially "back" on the basis of its meanings "pile" and "mound". Similarly, the camel's hump is like a mound on its back as it is also the case with respect to Latin *gibbus*.

This view of Luzzatto's has now been confirmed by Ugaritic Text KTU 1.12; I: 30-32:

bhm qrn, km ṯrm	"Upon them [the gods] shall be horns like bulls
wgbtt km 'ibrm	and *humps* like steers."

Thus, an Ancient Near Eastern Text has once again confirmed the view of a Jewish Biblical scholar expressed long before such texts were unearthed by twentieth century archaeologists.

In conclusion, it may be said that, until now, modern Biblical scholarship has generally taken note of Jewish Biblical scholarship of the past only with respect to higher criticism — e.g. the comments of Ibn Ezra with respect to Gen. 12:6; 13:7; 36:31 (concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch) and with respect to Isa. 40:1 (concerning the authorship of Isa. 40-66). It should be the special task of modern Jewish Biblical scholarship to demonstrate how the modern textual criticism of the Bible is to a large extent the logical development of the best of the Jewish Bible scholarship of the past — a development which is a direct result of the new tools placed in the hands of modern Biblical scholars by twentieth century archaeology.