**Academic Profile**

My academic research focuses on two different fields: while I have published numerous studies on the art of biblical narrative, my chief academic interest is medieval biblical interpretation.

Much of my research features an integration of these two fields, illustrating literary and artistic expressions in the Bible as revealed by medieval exegetes.

**The Art of Biblical Narrative**

I set out on my academic path with a thesis devoted to a close literary analysis of the biblical account of Jephthah the Gileadite, in which Jephthah was presented as a tragic figure who suffers because of his generation. In the years following the presentation of my thesis, I presented new insights on the Jephthah account in an article published in the Israeli journal *Iyunei Miqra ve’Parshanut*. My doctoral thesis expanded on the theme of measure for measure in biblical narrative. Over the course of my thesis, I analyzed approximately one hundred and fifty stories, scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible, that feature the theme of measure for measure. I concluded that this theme is not merely literary, but is also an educational-ideological principle. This doctoral thesis was adapted into a book and was published in 2006.

My study of the theme of measure for measure produced two additional articles published after the completion of my doctoral studies. The first dealt with the fixed phrase used to formulate the theme measure for measure, and was published in the Israeli journal *Leshonenu*. The second dealt with the inverse of measure for measure—remunerating evil deeds with good. I illustrated this situation with recourse to the figure of David, and the article was published in the *Iyunei Miqra ve’Parshanut*.

After completing my doctorate I continued to research the art of biblical narrative, publishing a number of articles concerning the character building of the biblical hero. Three of these articles were published in *Vetus Testamentum*: the first dealt with the character of Abraham in the story of the binding of Isaac; the second with Saul and the secondary characters surrounding him in the account of his royal anointment; and the third with a description of the tragic figure of David, specifically the consequences of his dalliance with Bathsheba. Another article on the character development of Esther at the outset of the eponymous book saw publication in the online journal *JHS*.

Recently two additional articles of mine on the subject of the Biblical narrative have seen publication: the first, in the journal *SJOT*, dealt with the dual coronation of King Saul; the second, in the collection *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, focused on Michal and Jonathan as secondary figures to David. In addition, I have submitted for publication an article dealing with the story of Saul and the Witch of Endor.

I teach a number of courses on Genesis, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and the Five *Megillot*, in which I instruct students in close literary readings of the biblical text.

**Biblical Exegesis in the Middle Ages**

As I have mentioned, the main part of my academic research focuses on the study of medieval biblical interpretation. Over the course of my studies, I have examined the commentaries of Tobiah ben Eliezer (the *Leqaḥ Ṭov*), Rashi, R. Joseph Kara, R. Samuel Ben Meir (Rashbam), R. Joseph Bekhor Shor (Ribash), Radak, R. Abraham ibn Ezra, Nachmanides (Nachmanides), R. Meyuchas ben Eliezer, and R. Samson Raphael Hirsch. Hereafter my research will be described according to the chronological order of its subjects.

In two articles published in the Israeli journal *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* and in the *AJS Review*, I investigated, for the first time, Rabbi Tobiah ben Eliezer’s commentary on Song of Songs. In the first article, I demonstrated that he is the first commentator to offer a literal interpretation of the book, and I emphasized his importance to the history of *peshat* interpretation. The second article focuses on his singular approach to the book within its respective homiletical tradition. An additional article dealt with the *Leqaḥ Ṭov*, Tobiah’s commentary on the Torah, and to what extent Rashbam was familiar with it.

In a critical article on the book “*Leyashev Pshuṭo shel Miqra”*, published in the journal *Shnaton*, I surveyed the accepted positions within scholarship regarding the question of Rashi’s approach to the tension between simple versus homiletical interpretations of the Bible, and offered my own novel opinion on this issue.

In an additional article on the commentaries of Rashi, published in the journal *Leshonenu*, I demonstrated how Rashi forged a unique path, distinct from that of his predecessors, in his interpretation of the Talmudic expression “the four senses of ‘*ki*’” and how this innovation was rejected by his students.

In an article published in the journal *JSQ*, I investigated intra-Biblical exegesis in Rabbi Joseph Kara’s commentaries on the Bible, emphasizing the method he employs in the matter of “retrospection.”

I published seventeen studies covering many topics related to the biblical commentaries of R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam)—his hermeneutical principles; his interpretive style; internal biblical hermeneutics; and the extent of his works’ circulation and influence; Theology un his commentary.

In an article published in *REJ*, I revealed Rashbam’s principles of literalism as he presents them in a polemical letter. I dealt with Rashbam’s interpretive style in three articles published in the Israeli journal *Tarbitz*, the journal *HUCA*, and the book *Zer Rimonim*. In these articles, I suggested criteria for identifying later additions to Rashbam’s commentary, examining Rashbam’s own additions, as well as later additions made after his death. Likewise I contended with the question of whether the extant version of Rashbam’s commentaries is an abridgment of his original work.

I dedicated six articles to the internal biblical hermeneutics at work within Rashbam’s commentaries on the Bible. In three articles, published in *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, in the book *Teshurah le-`Amos*, and in *Proceedings of the Midrash Section*, I presented Rashbam as a commentator who employed internal biblical hermeneutics in the most comprehensive manner seen during the Middle Ages. In the third article, published in *REJ*, I drew attention to the fixed terminology used by Rashbam when quoting passages for the purpose of internal biblical hermeneutics. In two additional articles, I show how Rashbam used internal biblical hermeneutics as a literary tool in addition to an interpretive one – both in the 'Principle of Anticipation' and the 'Phenomenon of Retrospection'. These articles were published in *Iyunei Miqra ve’Parshanut* and the Israeli journal *Igud* and they combine my two main research interests: the art of biblical narrative in light of biblical hermeneutics.

I have gathered a great deal of material relating to the extent of the circulation and influence of Rashbam’s Torah commentary. In two articles I demonstrated that Rashbam’s interpretation did not reach Provence (Radak’s place of residence), Spain, or the Land of Israel (Nachmanides’ areas of activity). One article was published in the Israeli journal *Jewish Studies*, and the other in *Shnaton*. In these articles, I suggested a list of criteria that would enable scholars to confirm or reject affinities between various commentators. In a third article (published in *Beit Mikra*) I investigated the limited circulation of Rashbam’s commentary, and offered an explanation for this surprising phenomenon.

I devoted three articles to an examination of Rashbam’s sources. In one article, published in *JJS*, I demonstrated for the first time that Rashbam had written his commentary under the influence of Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Short Commentary, written in Italy. In the other, published in a memorial collection for Professor Israel Ta-Shma, I examined the influence of R. Tobiah ben Eliezer, the author of the *Leqaḥ Ṭov*, on Rashbam’s interpretations. The third article offered a comprehensive survey of Rashbam’s multifarious use of the commentaries of Onkelos; this article was published in the journal *Aramaic Studies*.

Finally, I recently published in the journal *Da`at* a comprehensive article on Rashbam’s view of a theological dilemma – the feasibility of divine revelation to man – and ascribed the commentator’s unique approach to the influence of polemics with Christians on his exegesis.

Three years ago, Magnes Press published my new book on the exegetical method of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor (Rivash), entitled *Bekhor Shoro Hadar Lo - R. Joseph Bekhor Shor between Continuity and Innovation*, which has attracted remarkably little attention on the part of scholars of medieval interpretation. The book (that won a grant from ISF) contains thirteen chapters, presenting the central problems of Rivash’s interpretation by way of constant comparison with the earlier commentaries that were available to him, beginning with those of the early rabbinic sages, continuing to the Targum Onkelos, and concluding with those of the literalist school – Rashi, Joseph Kara, and Rashbam. My research details how Rivash contended with the issue that troubled him and his contemporaries: the place of a new commentary on the Torah in addition to existing commentaries available to him (Rashi, Kara, Rashbam, Abraham ibn Ezra, and more)? I assert that Rivash chose a path that vacillated between continuity and innovation. In tandem with his obligation to hermeneutic tradition, Rivash successfully forged new paths unexplored by his predecessors. The research discusses the movement within Rivash’s interpretations between familiar and original, and presents this issue as the central focus of his hermeneutics.

Per reports from the publisher, the book has been rather successful, and the first edition has sold out. In a review, Professor Nahem Ilan remarked: “Professor Jonathan Jacobs has already established himself as one of our generation’s most outstanding and productive researchers in the field of *peshat* hermeneutics dating from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, particularly in France, but also in Provence and Germany…Jacobs’ greatest strength lies not only in what he has discovered and brought forward, but especially in his research methods…a systematic reading of the book entailing a continuous intellectual effort, and in so writing I mean to commend Jacobs…Jacobs’ book is a milestone in a systematic and consistent research project, and he makes a substantial contribution not just to the understanding of Rivash’s exegesis and the uniqueness thereof, but also to the expansion of the researcher’s tool kit.”

I continued to study Rivash’s exegesis even after the book’s publication, and as part of the continuation and expansion of the ideas presented therein, I published three additional articles dealing with his approach. The first, published in the journal *HUCA*, deals with the matter of retrospection in his exegesis. In the second, I demonstrated for the first time that Radak’s commentary on the Book of Genesis was substantially influenced by that of Rivash; this article was published in the journal *JSQ*. In the third, I further expanded on the subject, presenting a comparative analysis of the usage of the “narrative parable” in the exegeses of Rabbi Joseph Kara, Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugency, and Rivash; this article was published in *Shnaton le-Ḥeqer ha-Miqra’ ve-ha-Mizraḥ ha-Qadum.*

Over the course of many years, in conjunction with Professor Yosef Ofer, I have studied the additions made by Nachmanides to his interpretation of the Torah following his arrival in the Land of Israel. With the help of a grant awarded by the Israel Science Foundation (ISF), we produced an annotated scholarly edition of Nachmanides’ additions, based on a comprehensive examination of approximately fifty manuscripts of Nachmanides’ commentaries on the Torah. In the course of this study, we uncovered hundreds of additions made to later editions of Nachmanides’ commentaries, presented the various methods employed by him to integrate his additions into his earlier work, and explored the reasons for his desire to alter or add new passages to his commentaries. Our study of the additions composed by Nachmanides in the Land of Israel constituted a significant contribution to the understanding of his method and hermeneutics, and to the resolution of problems in his work and the clarification of his writings. The study contains more than seven hundred pages and was published in 2013 by the World Union of Jewish Studies and the Research Authority of Herzog College.

This study garnered widespread praise. The book won the 5777 Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Prize for Research on Mizrahi and Sephardic Communities and Their Dispersion. In a review of the book, Professor Hananel Mack wrote: “the book before us is the fruit of meticulous, refined, and by no means easy labor, relying on detailed and precise philological study…here is an important and eminent book whose place at the forefront of recent innovations in Jewish studies and Land of Israel studies must be acknowledged…the book presents its audience with a new way to consider the works of one of history’s most noteworthy Jewish sages, and his comprehensive exegesis.”

Beyond the aforementioned book, I published six articles dealing with various expressions of Nachmanides’s interpretation of the Torah. In the first of them (in conjunction with Prof. Ofer), published in the journal *JJS*, I pointed out the importance of one particular manuscript of Nachmanides’ commentaries for our understanding and identification of his additions. The second, published in the journal *JSIJ*, provided an accounting of all the books that were available to Nachmanides once he arrived in the Land of Israel. The third, which will be published in the Israeli journal ’*Al* ’*Atar*, deals with the influence of circumstances in the Land of Israel on Nachmanides’ commentaries of the Torah.

I have also investigated another area of inquiry related to Nachmanides’s Torah interpretation, namely the question of whether he was aware of the dual interpretations of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra. This question had never before been addressed, and in two innovative articles published in the journals *Hispania Judaica* and *JJS*, I demonstrated for the first time that Nachmanides was unaware of Raba’s longer commentary on Genesis, as well as his shorter commentary on Exodus. I have recently completed an article dealing with Nachmanides’s virtue ethics, set to be published in a collection presenting the various approaches to the topic taken by Jewish sages over the generations.

Recently I have returned to the study of exegesis in Byzantium, having devoted, as previously mentioned, three articles to one the empire’s foremost sages (Rabbi Tobiah Ben Eliezer). As will be described in further detail under the heading “Future Plans,” I am studying the Biblical commentaries of Rabi Meyuchas ben Eliezer, in which context two articles have already been accepted for publication. The first, set to be published in the journal *RRJ*, presents the reception of Targum Onkelos by the sages of Byzantium, among them Rabbi Samuel of Rushino and Rabbi Meyuchas. The second, due for publication in a book honoring Professor Shamir Yona, focuses on Rabbi Meyuchas’ unique system of Biblical allegory.

I have also dealt with the Torah commentaries of Samson Raphael Hirsch, and an article detailing his use of literary phenomena in his commentaries was published in the journal *RRJ*. In this article, I also demonstrated the integration of the art of the story and biblical hermeneutics.

I am deeply interested in the history of biblical interpretation. For seven years, I have, as part of the Department of Bible, taught a course surveying biblical interpretation throughout history. The course’s first section reviews internal biblical hermeneutics, afterwards moving on to interpretations of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Jewish-Hellenistic era, the Targumim, the early rabbinic sages, and, finally, the Karaites and their Geonic opponents. The second section surveys medieval interpretive traditions in Spain, France, and Provence, moving on to those of the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries, and concluding with the biblical commentary of Moses Mendelssohn and Jewish responses to it in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

I regularly present my research and discoveries in international conferences both annual and one-time. I regularly participate in the World Congress for Jewish Studies, the *SBL* International Meeting, and the *SBL* Annual Meeting, as well as in conferences by *IOSOT, AJS, NAPH,* the *EAJS* Congress, and *EABS.*

I have likewise been invited in recent years to give lectures in research seminars organized by Bible departments at Tel Aviv University, York University in Toronto, and Trinity College in Dublin. My term as a guest professor at the University of London (UCL) in the second semester of 2020 saw plans for lectures and meetings to be held with members of the university’s Department of Jewish Studies, but these were canceled due to the impact of the coronavirus.

It appears that my research is garnering the attention and esteem of my scholarly colleagues: within the last years I have been appointed a deputy editor in the field of biblical exegesis for the New Hebrew Encyclopedia, a member of the steering committee for the sections on Midrash and exegesis in the *SBL* Annual Meeting, and a member of the academic committee accompanying Gorgias Press’s new series on Judaism.

I have been invited to contribute articles to the *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (EBR); to this end, I have thus far written sixteen entries touching on Biblical exegetes in various historical periods, nine of which have already been published. I am regularly asked to serve as a peer reviewer for articles submitted to noteworthy journals in Israel and abroad, as well as judge academic papers and research proposals for scientific institutions.

**Future Plans**

Two main projects currently occupy my attention.

1. I am engaged in comprehensive research on the Torah commentaries of Rabbi Meyuchas ben Eliyahu (Ramba). Ramba was a Byzantine commentator living, by my estimate, in the second half of the fourteenth century. His is one of the most significant commentaries to emerge from the Byzantine school of exegesis, which also includes anonymous tenth century commentators whose writings were uncovered in the Cairo Genizah, as well as Rabbis Tobiah ben Eliezer (author of the *Leqaḥ Ṭov*), Samuel Rushino, and Menahem ben Shlomo (author of *Seikhel Ṭov*), among others. This important commentary has not heretofore been the subject of comprehensive study – indeed, scholarship has almost entirely ignored it. Once research is complete, I intend to publish my results as a monograph. At present, I have completed ten out of sixteen planned chapters, among them an introduction dealing at length with Ramba’s place and time; his relationship to Targum Onkelos, to Rashi, and to other prior exegetes; his relationship to the homiletics of the Jewish sages; and *darkei ha-miqra’ot* (literary devices) in his interpretations.
2. Together with Professor Yonatan Grossman, I received a four-year grant from *ISF* for research on the attitudes of medieval commentators to Biblical Ambiguity, tracking mutual influences and investigating correlations with Christian Biblical exegesis and Muslim exegesis of canonical texts. We have begun gathering materials related to the most significant of the commentators active between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries: Rashi, Rabbi Joseph Kara, Raba, Rashbam, Rivash, Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugency, Radak, Nachmanides, Rabbi Joseph Kaspi, and Rabbi Bahya ben Asher. Once research is complete, we intend to publish a comprehensive monograph detailing our findings. This study combines both pf my areas of academic interest – medieval Biblical interpretation and the literary analysis of the Bible.