

ATTENTIVE TO THE CONTEXT: THE GENERIC NAME OF GOD IN THE  
CLASSIC JEWISH LEXICA AND GRAMMARS OF THE MIDDLE AGES—  
A HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Grammatical features of the generic name of God (אלוהים) have been examined by the Jewish literati who realized that Christian theologians presented such features as proof for their trinitarian concept, which, from the Jewish point of view, would compromise the principle of the absolute unity of the Godhead.

Plural grammatical forms connected to the generic name of God (e.g. Gen. 1.26; 3.22) or to God's very name (י) (e.g. Gen. 11.7) were interpreted in trinitarian terms by early Christian writers,<sup>1</sup> whereas the

1. As typified by Clement of Rome, 'Constitutiones apostolicae', in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus...Series Graeca* (161 vols.; Paris: Migne, 1857–66), I, pp. 849–50 (V, VII); *idem*, 'Homilia XVI', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, II, pp. 373–76 (XII); Barnabas, 'Epistola catholica', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, II, pp. 733–44 (V–VI); Tertullian, 'Liber adversus praxeam', in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus...Series Latina* (220 vols.; Paris: Migne, 1844–63), II, pp. 191–94 (XII); *idem*, 'Adversus Marcionem libri V', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, II, pp. 520–23 (V, VIII); *idem*, 'Liber de resurrectione carnis', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, II, pp. 846–49 (V–VI); Ignatius of Antioch, 'Ad Anthiochenos', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, V, pp. 899–900 (II); Theophilus Antiochenus, 'Libri tres ad Autolycom', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, VI, pp. 1081–82 (II, 18); Justin Martyr, 'Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo', in *PG*, VI, pp. 617–20 (62); Irenaeus, 'Adversus haereses', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, VII, p. 975 (IV, Praefatio), pp. 1032 (IV, XX, 1), 1123 (V, I, 3); Origen, 'Commentaria in evangelium secundum Matthaeum', in Migne (ed.), *PG*, XIII, pp. 979–80 (XII, 1). See also Jules Lebreton, *Les origines du dogme de la trinite* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1919), pp. 507–12 (III, VI, note B); Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* ('Excursus: The History of the Exegesis of Gen 1.26–27') (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), pp. 147–48; Robert McLachlan Wilson, 'The Early History of the Exegesis of Gen. 1.26', *Studia Patristica* 1 (1957), pp. 420–37; Gregory T. Armstrong, *Die Genesis in der alten Kirche: Die drei Kirchenväter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1962).

plain grammatical features of the generic name of God (especially plural characteristics thereof) have been utilized in Christian trinitarian argumentation since the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup>

The ancient church fathers did not adduce the plural ending (ים) of אֱלֹהִים as proof of the presence of the trinitarian concept in the Hebrew Bible, but they were rather confined to those plural forms related to the Divine that were visible from the Septuagint, because, except for Origen and Jerome, they did not know Hebrew. In Jerome's case, his epistle treating אֱלֹהִים, which is studied later in the present paper, was free of any trinitarian claims and demonstrated serious exegetical engagement by its author.

It is legitimate to construe the Jewish exposition of the generic name of God, on the one hand, as an instrument of the internal Jewish elucidation of the sacred writings of Israel, and on the other hand, as a catalyst for the Christian and Jewish interaction. Although the practical dimension of the monotheism of Second Temple Judaism is complex and debatable,<sup>3</sup> it is evident both from the Christian Scriptures and from the Babylonian Talmud that the Jewish tradition of that time was committed to fortifying the One God concept. Such a commitment indicated that the Jewish sages would pay heed to the lexical and grammatical features of the names of God, particularly of God's generic name, due to its non-divine denotations, its plural ending and its limited, yet attested, occurrence with plural grammatical forms. For instance, comments made by Philo of Alexandria<sup>4</sup> implied that his

2. As exemplified by Peter Abelard, 'Introductio ad theologiam', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 998-1000 (I, XIII); *idem*, 'Theologia christiana', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 1126-28 (I, III); *idem*, 'Epitome theologiae christianae', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CLXXVIII, pp. 1705-1707 (IX); Peter Lombard, 'Sententiarum libri quatuor', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CXCII, pp. 527-28 (I, II, 6); Garnerius Lingonensis, 'Sermo XXII in festo ss. trinitatis', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CCV, pp. 716-17; Allain de Lille, 'De fide catholica contra haereticos', in Migne (ed.), *PL*, CCX, pp. 403-405 (III, III).

3. See Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

4. Philo of Alexandria, 'De opificio mundi', in Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland (eds.), *Opera quae supersunt* (7 vols.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1896-1926), I, pp. 24-25 (24); *idem*, 'Legum allegoriarum libri I-III', in Cohn and Wendland (eds.), *Opera*, I, pp. 90 (II, 1), 134 (III, 31); *idem*, 'De confusione linguarum', in Cohn and Wendland (eds.), *Opera*, II, pp. 261-64 (33-36); *idem*, 'Quis rerum divinarum heres sit', in Cohn and Wendland (eds.), *Opera*, III, pp. 37-

interest in the plural forms adjacent to the Divine, which were preserved in the LXX, was not polemical but rather philosophical and exegetical. Thus, an internal Jewish need for an explanation of those phenomena appears to be established historically.

*Sanhedrin* 38b<sup>5</sup> identified several plural forms linked to the Divine (Gen. 1.26; 11.7; 19.24; 35.7; Deut. 4.7; 2 Sam. 7.23; Dan. 7.9) and dismissed claims made by ‘dissenters’ (מִינִים), which, from the Jewish point of view, undermined or denied the absolute unity of the Godhead. Ancient Judaism offered two complementary interpretations of such forms.

First, the Jewish sages situated the plural forms connected to the Divine against the singular forms connected to the Divine in the preceding or following verses, and they perceived such plural forms as a plural of majesty. Secondly, they could interpret such forms as denoting angels representing God, or the entire heavenly court (פמליא)<sup>6</sup> surrounding God. Although the concept of the heavenly retinue and the concept of the divine courtroom, both of which were common in the ancient Middle East,<sup>7</sup> occurred in the Tanakh and rose to prominence in the ancient Jewish literature (Targumim, Midrashim, Talmudim, etc.) and the classic Jewish commentaries, the medieval Jewish lexica and grammars analyzed in the present essay were not preoccupied with those concepts while expounding the generic name of God.

Despite the uncertain identity of ‘dissenters’ and of proponents of ‘two powers in heaven’,<sup>8</sup> it is conceivable that the Babylonian Talmud

38 (33); *idem*, ‘De fuga et inventione’, in Cohn and Wendland (eds.), *Opera*, III, pp. 124-26 (13-14); *idem*, ‘De mutatione nominum’, in Cohn and Wendland (eds.), *Opera*, III, pp. 161-63 (4); *idem*, ‘Philonis quaestionum et solutionum quae in genesi: Sermo I’, in Joannes Baptista Aucher (ed.), *Paralipomena armena* (Venice: Lazari, 1826), pp. 12-14 (XV–XIX); *idem*, ‘Philonis quaestionum’, pp. 34-37 (LII–LIV).

5. ‘סנהדרין’, in תלמוד בבלי (20 vols; Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1859–64), XIII, p. 38v [38b].

6. This Hebrew term originated from Latin (*familia*). As a matter of fact, Greek or Latin loan words were not unprecedented in the classic rabbinic literature. See Samuel Krauss (ed.), *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (2 vols.; Berlin: Calvary, 1898–99).

7. See Ari Mermelstein and Shalom E. Holtz (eds.), *The Divine Courtroom in Comparative Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

8. Adiel Schremer, ‘Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited’, *JSJ* 39 (2008), pp. 230-54; Robert Travers Herford, *Christianity in*

fended off Christian or Gnostic propositions. Actually, in light of *Hag.* 14b–15a,<sup>9</sup> it is possible that the Talmudic sages intended to counteract certain tendencies, for instance, tendencies to accord a semi-divine status to the intermediary angel, Metatron, existing within the Jewish community of that time.

Given that the subject matter is immense, and the Jewish and Christian sources are ample, the present paper is focused on the explanation of those features offered in the classic Jewish grammars and lexica which were composed in or translated into Hebrew<sup>10</sup> in the Middle Ages and which were typified by the works of Menahem ben Saruq (מנחם בן סרוק), Jonah ibn Janah (יונה בן גינאח), Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome (נתן בן יחיאל מרומי), Solomon Parhon (שלמה פרחון) and David Kimhi (רמב"ם).<sup>11</sup> Consequently, such an exposition is studied from a hermeneutical and theological perspective.

Furthermore, the early sixteenth-century Christian reception<sup>12</sup> of these grammatical and lexical instruments comes under close scrutiny granted that Christian Hebrew studies, which emerged in the early sixteenth century, originated from Jewish Hebrew scholarship.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the Jewish communities scattered throughout the world retained a proficiency in Hebrew even in the whirlwind of the early Middle

*Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903), pp. 261–66 (I, B, ii); *idem*, *Christianity*, pp. 291–303 (I, B, iii); Heinrich Graetz, *Gnostizismus und Judentum* (Krotoschin: Monasch, 1846); Moriz Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnostizismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1898).

9. 'חגיגה', in *תלמוד בבלי*, VI, pp. 14b–15a.

10. The earliest Jewish Hebrew scholarship in Arabic was flourishing. See Morris Jastrow, *Abu Zakariyya Jahja ben Dawud Hajjug und seine zwei grammatischen Schriften über die Verben mit schwachen Buchstaben und die Verben mit Doppelbuchstaben* (Giessen: Keller, 1885); Leopold Rosenak, *Die Fortschritte der hebräischen Sprachwissenschaft von Jehuda Chajjug bis David Kimchi: X. bis XIII. Jahrhundert* (Bremen: Diercksen und Wichlein, 1898).

11. Other medieval grammars of Hebrew did not address this topic and therefore are not referred to in the present essay.

12. Later on, Christian Hebrew scholarship became more independent from its Jewish medieval roots.

13. Hermann Greive, 'Die hebräische Grammatik Johannes Reuchlins: De rudimentis Hebraicis', *ZAW* 90.3 (1978), pp. 395–409.

Ages, namely shortly after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of the selection of passages the present paper investigates those loci containing the generic name of God which were scrutinized in the medieval Jewish lexica and grammars especially in connection with its non-divine denotations and in view of the Jewish concept of the unity of the Godhead. Consequently, the Jewish discourse on God's very name (י'), which in the Hebrew Bible denoted solely the God of Israel, does not fall within the compass of this study.

It is notable that the medieval Jewish lexica and grammars in question dealt only with selected biblical passages. For instance, Exod. 21.6 (האלוהים)<sup>15</sup> was not invoked probably because this text resembled Exod. 22.7-8 (האלהים and אלהים) where the Targum Onkelos<sup>16</sup> and the Mekhilta<sup>17</sup> interpreted both אלהים and האלהים as judges. In fact, the Babylonian Talmud<sup>18</sup> kept using אלוהים with reference to judges, especially discussing Exodus 21–22.<sup>19</sup> It seems that in certain passages the interpretation of אלוהים as judge(s) could be accepted with ease because it coincided with the Jewish assertion that God's generic name reflected divine judgment, whereas God's very name (י') reflected divine grace.<sup>20</sup> Thus, אלוהים in its divine sense was said to portray God

14. Aron C. Sterk, 'Latino-Romaniotes: The Continuity of Jewish Communities in the Western Diaspora (400–700 CE)', *Melilah: Manchester Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (2012), pp. 31–42.

15. Following the Targum Onkelos, Rashi and all subsequent commentators interpreted this term in Exod. 21.6 as judges. Abraham Berliner (ed.), *Targum Onkelos* (2 vols.; Berlin: Kauffmann, 1881–84), I, p. 83 (Exod. 21.6); *idem* (ed.), *Raschi: Der Kommentar des Salomo b. Isak über den Pentateuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Kauffmann, 1905), p. 151 (Exod. 21.6).

16. Berliner, *Targum*, I, p. 84 (Exod. 22.8).

17. Isaac Hirsch Weiss (ed.), *Mekhila: Der älteste halachische und hagadische Kommentar zum zweiten Buch Moses* (Vienna: Schlossberg, 1865), pp. 97v–98v (no. 15 משפטים [Exod. 22.7–8]).

18. 'בבא קמא', in תלמוד בבלי, XI, pp. 84r–84v (no. 84a–84b); *Sanh.* 2b, 3b and 4b.

19. *B. Qam.* 56b.

20. 'יומא', in תלמוד בבלי, VI, p. 87r (no. 87a); Julius Theodor and Chanoch Albeck (eds.), *Bereschit Rabba mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar: Parascha I–XLVII* (Berlin: Poppelauer, 1912), p. 308 (no. 33 פרשה [Gen. 8.1]); Abraham ibn Ezra, ספר יסוד מורא וסוד תורה (Prague: Landau, 1833), pp. 41v–43v (XII). It appears that Philo was ill-acquainted with this distinction because he relied solely on the LXX. Consequently, Philo reversed the distinction, supposing that θεός (אלוהים)

as the Judge, while אֱלֹהִים in its non-divine denotations portrayed human judges.

There were also other conspicuous verses for plural forms related to various names of God (e.g. Isa. 42.5 [וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם]) that were not included in the medieval Jewish lexica and grammars but were examined in the classic Jewish commentaries. In Isa. 42.5 God (הָאֵל יי) was described by a series of participles as the One who was creating, stretching, spreading forth (וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם) and giving. All these participles were singular except for וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם. David Kimhi opined that the presence of 'י' in וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם made it plural, which, in his view, was an indication of the plural of majesty. Besides, he referred to Job 35.10 (עֹשֶׂי) and to Ps. 149.2 (בְּעֹשֶׂי) where the plural forms of the suffixed participle appertained to God.<sup>21</sup> Kimhi was right in observing that the plural forms in Isa. 42.5, Job 35.10 and Ps. 149.2 stemmed from לִי"ה verbs (נָטָה and עָשָׂה), and therefore the process of suffixing left a similar imprint on them. Nonetheless, modern scholars doubt whether such suffixed forms as attested in Isa. 42.5 must be parsed as plural.<sup>22</sup>

Although contemporary scholarship recognizes the multi-faceted signification of God's generic name,<sup>23</sup> non-divine denotations of אֱלֹהִים are open to dispute<sup>24</sup> and, currently, they seem to be accepted less frequently than in medieval Jewish Hebrew studies. In principle, present research refrains from projecting the findings of modern historical-critical exegesis into the world of pre-critical Jewish Hebrew scholarship of the Middle Ages but rather ventures to explore the

highlighted the divine mercy and benevolence, while κῆρυξ (יי) reflected the divine righteousness and governance. Philo, 'Quis rerum divinarum', p. 38 (34). See N.A. Dahl and Alan F. Segal, 'Philo and the Rabbis on the Names of God', *JSJ* 9.1 (1978), pp. 1-28.

21. David Kimhi, 'ספר ישעיה', in *מקראות גדולות* (11 vols.; Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1864–79), IX, pp. 123-24 (Isa. 42.5).

22. Wilhelm Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar* (ed. Emil Kautzsch and Arthur Ernest Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 273-74 (§ 93 ss), 399 (§ 124 k).

23. Helmer Ringgren, 'אלהים', *TDNT*, I, pp. 267-84.

24. As exemplified by Cyrus Herzl Gordon, 'אלהים in its Reputed Meaning of "Rulers, Judges"', *JBL* 54.3 (1935), pp. 139-44; Anne E. Draffkorn, 'Ilani/Elohim', *JBL* 76.3 (1957), pp. 216-24; Murray J. Harris, 'The Translation of Elohim in Ps. 45.7-8', *TynBul* 35 (1984), pp. 65-89; Michael S. Heiser, 'Deuteronomy 32.8 and the Sons of God', *BSac* 158 (2001), pp. 52-74; Jan Joosten, 'A Note on the Text of Deuteronomy 32.8', *VT* 57.4 (2007), pp. 548-55.

phenomenon of Jewish Hebrew studies in its own right and in its own milieu.

### *Classic Jewish Grammars and Lexica*

Since the literature on the origin of Jewish Hebrew scholarship<sup>25</sup> is vast, the present essay deals only with those grammars and lexica that cast light upon the grammatical features of the generic name of God. In Jewish Hebrew studies David Kimhi authored a grammar (ספר מכלול), which, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, proved to be of fundamental importance.<sup>26</sup> As regards the Hebrew editions of that compendium, it should be noted that the incomplete Hebrew text thereof was printed in the bilingual edition prepared by a Christian grammarian, Agazio Guidacerio,<sup>27</sup> in 1540, while in 1545–46 a Jewish Hebrew scholar, Elia Bachur (אליהו בחור), annotated and published the complete Hebrew original.<sup>28</sup> The critical edition of the Hebrew text was released in 1862.<sup>29</sup>

25. Wilhelm Bacher, *Abraham ibn Ezra als Grammatiker: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hebräischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1882); *idem*, *Die Anfänge der hebräischen Grammatik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1895); *idem*, *Die hebräische Sprachwissenschaft vom 10. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Trier: Mayer, 1892); Shimeon Brisman, *A History and Guide to Judaic Dictionaries and Concordances* (Hoboken: KTAV, 2000); Franz Delitzsch, *Isagoge in grammaticam et lexicographiam linguae Hebraicae* (Grimma: Gebhardt, 1838); Michael Friedländer, *Ibn Ezra Literature: Essays on the Writings of Abraham ibn Ezra* (London: Society of Hebrew Literature, 1877); Ludwig Geiger, *Das Studium der hebräischen Sprache in Deutschland vom Ende des XV. bis zur Mitte des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Breslau: Schletter, 1870); William Horbury (ed.), *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999); Yonatan Kolatch, *Masters of the Word: Traditional Jewish Bible Commentary from the First through Tenth Centuries* (2 vols.; Jersey City: KTAV, 2006–2007), I-II; Nicholas De Lange (ed.), *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

26. For a case study of the subsequent Jewish reception of Kimhi's legacy by an early seventeenth-century Jewish scholar from Poland, שבתי סופר, see Stefan C. Reif, 'A Defense of David Qimhi', *HUCA* 44 (1973), pp. 211-26.

27. David Kimhi, *Liber Michlol grammatices linguae sanctae* (ed. and trans. Agazio Guidacerio; Paris: In Collegio Italorum, 1540).

28. David Kimhi, ספר מכלול (ed. Elia Bachur; Venice: Bomberg, 1545–46).

29. David Kimhi, ספר מכלול (ed. משה הערים and יצחק ריטטענבערג; Lyck: פעטצאלל, 1862).

As far as the Latin renditions are concerned, Guidacerio's edition contained a literal Latin translation of the Hebrew text; Sante Pagnini's Latin version of Kimhi's grammar was published in 1526<sup>30</sup> and in 1549.<sup>31</sup> In fact, by annotating, compiling and making his own comments, Pagnini was able to produce a textbook that drew upon Kimhi's compendium instead of being a literal translation thereof.

A dictionary composed by Menahem ben Saruq<sup>32</sup> can be counted among the earliest extant Hebrew lexica written in Hebrew, but in the sixteenth century, it was still circulating in manuscript form. In the first half of the eleventh century Jonah ibn Janah penned his lexicon in Arabic,<sup>33</sup> which Judah ibn Tibbon (יהודה אבן תיבון) later translated into Hebrew.<sup>34</sup>

A monumental Hebrew dictionary (ספר הערוך) authored by Nathan ben Jehiel dated back to the eleventh century. In the sixteenth century it was published several times,<sup>35</sup> while in the second half of the nineteenth century, the critical edition was prepared by Alexander Kohut.<sup>36</sup> A dictionary (מחברת הערוך) composed by Solomon Parhon dated from the

30. David Kimhi, *Hebraicarum institutionum libri IV* (ed. and trans. Sante Pagnini; Lyons: Ry, 1526).

31. Kimhi, *Hebraicarum institutionum libri IV* (ed. and trans. Sante Pagnini; Paris: Stephanus, 1549).

32. Menahem ben Saruq, *מחברת מנחם* (ed. Herschell Filipowski; London: Hebrew Antiquarian Society, 1854). See Menahem ben Saruq, 'Wörterbuch von Menachem ben Seruk nach einem Manuskript der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien [...] herausgegeben von Simon Deutsch', in Max Emanuel Stern (ed.), *Kochbe Jizchak: Eine Sammlung hebräischer Aufsätze exegetischen und poetischen Inhalts zur Förderung des hebräischen Sprachstudiums*, I (Vienna: Schmid und Busch, 1845), pp. 3-12; Leopold Dukes, 'Literaturhistorische Mitteilungen über die ältesten hebräischen Exegeten, Grammatiker und Lexikographen', in Heinrich Ewald and Leopold Dukes (eds.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der ältesten Auslegung und Spracherklärung des Alten Testaments* (3 vols.; Stuttgart: Krabbe, 1844), II, pp. 119-40 (IV).

33. Jonah ibn Janah, *The Book of Hebrew Roots* (ed. Adolf Neubauer; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875).

34. Jonah ibn Janah, *Sepher Haschoraschim: Wurzelwörterbuch der hebräischen Sprache* (ed. Wilhelm Bacher; trans. Judah ibn Tibbon; Berlin: Itzkowski, 1896).

35. Nathan ben Jehiel, *ספר הערוך* (Pesaro: Soncino, 1517; Venice: Bomberg, 1531; Venice: Bragadin, 1552-53; Basel: Waldkirch, 1598-99).

36. Nathan ben Jehiel, *Plenus Aruch: Targum-Talmudico-Midrash verbale et reale lexicon* (8 vols.; ed. Alexander Kohut; Vienna: Brög, 1878-92), vols. 1-8.



twelfth century,<sup>37</sup> yet in the age of the Reformation, this work was still circulating in manuscript form.

Kimhi's lexicon (ספר השרשים) was acclaimed as a lexical breakthrough in Hebrew scholarship, and it influenced major Hebrew–Latin dictionaries compiled by Christian Hebrew scholars in the first half of the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Kimhi's masterpiece was published in Naples (1491)<sup>39</sup> and in Constantinople (1513).<sup>40</sup> Those editions presented the stark Hebrew text, and they are barely legible from the contemporary point of view. Later, Kimhi's dictionary was carefully edited and released in Venice in 1545–46<sup>41</sup> and in 1546–47.<sup>42</sup> Finally, in 1847 Johann Heinrich Raphael Biesenthal and Fürchtegott Lebrecht published the critical edition of the original text.<sup>43</sup>

*Explanations by Menahem ben Saruq, Jonah ibn Janah, Nathan ben Jehiel and Solomon Parhon*

Examining אל and אלוה, Menahem ben Saruq<sup>44</sup> observed that to capture their multi-faceted signification, it would be advisable to study the use of those terms in various contexts. It must be remembered that, because of the lexicon format, Menahem subsumed various words (such as a

37. Solomon Parhon, *Lexicon Hebraicum* (2 vols.; ed. Salomo Gottlieb Stern; Pressburg, Bratislava: Schmid, 1844), II, p. 4v (s.v. אלה).

38. Sebastian Münster, *Dictionarium Hebraicum* (Basel: Froben, 1523); *idem*, *Dictionarium hebraicum ex rabbinorum commentariis collectum* (Basel: Froben, 1525); *idem*, *Dictionarium hebraicum [...] ex rabinis praesertim ex radicibus David Kimhi auctum et locupletatum* (Basel: Froben, 1535, 1539, 1548, 1564); Sante Pagnini, *Thesaurus linguae sanctae* (Lyons: Gryphius, 1529); *idem*, *Thesaurus linguae sanctae ex R. David Kimchi ספר השרשים* (Paris: Stephanus, 1548); Johann Reuchlin, *Principium libri: De rudimentis Hebraicis* (Pforzheim: Anshelm, 1506); Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros and Arnaldo Guillén de Brocar, *Vocabularium hebraicum atque chaldaicum totius veteris Testamenti* (Alcala: In Academia Complutensi, 1515).

39. David Kimhi, ספר השרשים (Naples: Soncino, 1491).

40. David Kimhi, ספר השרשים (Constantinople: Rikomin, 1513).

41. David Kimhi, ספר השרשים (Venice: Bomberg, 1545–46).

42. David Kimhi, *Thesaurus linguae sanctae sive dictionarium Hebreum* (ed. Elia Bachur; Venice: Giustinian, 1546–47).

43. David Kimhi, *Radicum liber sive Hebraeum bibliorum lexicon* (ed. Johann Heinrich Raphael Biesenthal and Fürchtegott Lebrecht; Berlin: Bethge, 1847).

44. Menahem ben Saruq, מחברת, pp. 24–25 (s.v. אל), 25 (s.v. אלוה). See Menahem ben Saruq, 'Wörterbuch', pp. 6–7 (s.v. אל).

preposition, a demonstrative pronoun, a particle of negation or some verbal and nominal forms) under the entry אֶל in his dictionary. Although from a modern perspective his approach appears to be flawed, it was typical of early Hebrew lexica.

Thus, Menahem began by listing passages (Gen. 17.1; 31.29 [לְאֵל]; Exod. 15.11; Josh. 22.22; Ps. 29.1, 50.1, 63.2; Prov. 3.27) in which אֶל communicated a sense of power (כֹּחַ) and strength (אֳנִיָּה) with reference to the LORD (יְיָ) or with reference to creatures. Indeed, his propositions could be argued from the Aramaic<sup>45</sup> and Greek<sup>46</sup> renditions of those passages.

Menahem was aware that in Gen. 31.29 (אֵל), Exod. 24.1 (אֵל), Ps. 2.5 (אֵלֵינוּ), Prov. 8.4 (אֵלֵינוּ) and Job 3.21-22 (אֵלֵינוּ), 5.26 (אֵלֵינוּ) and 29.19 (אֵלֵינוּ), אֶל functioned as the suffixed or un-suffixed preposition. His interpretation was supported by the Aramaic<sup>47</sup> and Greek<sup>48</sup> translations of those verses. Consequently, in 1 Sam. 27.10 he interpreted אֶל as synonymous with עַל on account of a parallelism between אֶל פֶּשֶׁתָּם and עַל נֶגֶב, and therefore resolved to explicate אֶל as

45. Adolf Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum zum Pentateuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Erras, 1875), pp. 17 (Gen. 17.1), 82 (Exod. 15.11); Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 34 (Gen. 31.29); Brian Walton (ed.), 'Targum', in *Biblia sacra polyglotta* (6 vols.; London: Roycroft, 1653–57), III, pp. 162 (Ps. 50:1), 180 (Ps. 63.2), 326 (Prov. 3.27).

46. 'Auctarium ad Origenis Hexapla', in Frederick Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: Sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), II, pp. 3 (Gen. 17.1 [Aquila]), 129 (Ps. 29.1, LXX 28.1), 172 (Ps. 50.1, LXX 49.1 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]), 193 (Ps. 63.2, LXX 62.2 [Aquila and Symmachus]); Frederick Field (ed.), *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: Sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1875), I, pp. 107 (Exod. 15.11 [Symmachus]), 389 (Josh. 22.22 [Aquila and Symmachus]).

47. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 34 (Gen. 31.29), 86 (Exod. 24.1); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, pp. 37 (Gen. 31.29), 93 (Exod. 24.1); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, pp. 8 (Job 3.21-22), 12 (Job 5.26), 56 (Job 29.19), 88 (Ps. 2.5), 336 (Prov. 8.4).

48. Henry Barclay Swete (ed.), *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint* (3 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887–94), I, pp. 58 (Gen. 31.29), 151 (Exod. 24.1); II, pp. 215 (Ps. 2.5), 430 (Prov. 8.4), 526 (Job 3.21-22), 530 (Job 5.26), 572 (Job 29.19).

לָ (towards) which was vindicated by the Targum (לָאֵן)<sup>49</sup> and by the LXX (Ἐπὶ τίνε).<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, Menahem noted that in Gen. 19.8 (הָאֵל), Lev. 18.27 (הָאֵל), Ezra 5.15 (אֵל) and 1 Chron. 20.8 (אֵל), לָ was a form of a demonstrative pronoun אֵלֶּה.<sup>51</sup> This was consistent with the Targumic<sup>52</sup> and Greek<sup>53</sup> renditions of those texts, and in the case of the Pentateuchal passages, corroborated by the Samaritan text as well.<sup>54</sup> In 2 Sam. 13.16, 2 Kgs 3.13, 4.16, Ps. 143.2 and Prov. 3.28 and 30.10 Menahem recognized לָ as a particle of negation. His recognition is principally substantiated by the Greek versions<sup>55</sup> and by the Targum,<sup>56</sup> except for 2 Sam. 13.16 where the Targum reads עֵל.<sup>57</sup>

Besides, Menahem listed some verbal and nominal forms, which were purported to be cognates of אֵל, indicating that they were actually derived from other roots, to wit, either from יֵאֵל in Hiphil (Gen. 18.27-31 [הוֹאֵלִי]; Exod. 2.21 [וַיֹּאֵל]; 2 Kgs 5.23 [הוֹאֵל]; Hos. 5.11 [הוֹאִיל]; Job 6.28 [הוֹאִיל]) or from אָלָה (Lev. 5.1 [אֵלֶּה]; Num. 5.23 [הָאֵלֹת]; 1 Sam. 14.24; Hos. 4.2 [אֵלֶּה]). Menahem's propositions, generally speaking, coincided with the Aramaic<sup>58</sup> and Greek<sup>59</sup> renditions of those texts.

49. Paul de Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ chaldaice* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1872), p. 104 [1 Sam. 27.10].

50. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 603 (1 Sam. 27.10).

51. See Wilhelm Gesenius, *Student's Hebrew Grammar* (ed. Emil Roediger; trans. Benjamin Davies; London: Asher, 1869), p. 93 (§ 34).

52. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 17-18 (Gen. 19.8), 131 (Lev. 18.27); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, pp. 19 (Gen. 19.8), 139 (Lev. 18.27).

53. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, pp. 29 (Gen. 19.8), 227 (Lev. 18.27); II, pp. 43 (1 Chron. 20:8), 170 (Ezra [B] 5.15).

54. Benjamin Blayne (ed.), *Pentateuchus Hebraeo-Samaritanus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1790), pp. 40 (Gen. 19.8), 301 (Lev. 18.27).

55. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, pp. 746 (2 Kgs 3.13), 748 (2 Kgs 4.16); II, pp. 406 (Ps. 142.2 LXX), 422 (Prov. 3.28), 464 (Prov. 30.10).

56. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 188 (2 Kgs 3.13), 190 (2 Kgs 4.16); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, pp. 308 (Ps. 143.2), 326 (Prov. 3.28), 390 (Prov. 30.10).

57. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 124 (2 Sam. 13.16).

58. Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, pp. 19 (Gen. 18.27, 31), 64 (Exod. 2.21), 120 (Lev. 5.1), 161 (Num. 5.23); Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 17 (Gen. 18.27, 31), 61 (Exod. 2.21), 112 (Lev. 5.1), 151 (Num. 5.23); Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 83 (1 Sam. 14.24), 192-93 (2 Kgs 5.23), 436 (Hos. 4.2), 437 (Hos. 5.11); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, p. 14 (Job 6.28).

Menahem explicated **אלי** in Joel 1.8 and **אללי** in Mic. 7.1 as woe (הוי) and lamentation (נהי). Additionally, he identified various forms and cognates of the noun **אלה** in Isa. 1.29 (אילים), 1.30 (אלה), 6.13 (אלה and אלון) and 61.3 (אילי) and in Dan. 4.8-11 (אילנה) and 4.17-20 (אילנא). Apart from Isa. 61.3,<sup>60</sup> what Menahem propounded was anchored to the Aramaic<sup>61</sup> and Greek<sup>62</sup> translations of those passages.

In Num. 12.11 (נואלנו), Isa. 19.13 (נואלי), Jer. 4.22 (אוייל) and 5.4 (נואלו) and Prov. 22.15 (אולת) Menahem discovered various forms and cognates of the verb **יאל** in Niphal and regarded them as expressive of a wild behavior (הוללות) or stupidity (סכלות). Again, such an interpretation concurred with the Aramaic<sup>63</sup> and Greek<sup>64</sup> renditions of those texts.

Parsing **אלילי** in Isa. 31.7, **אליל** in Jer. 14.14 and **אלל** in Job 13.4, Menahem traced those forms back to the noun **אליל** signifying idols (עצבים).<sup>65</sup> Moreover, in Eccl. 6.6 and in Est. 7.4 he interpreted **אלו** as

59. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, pp. 28 (Gen. 18.27, 31), 107 (Exod. 2.21), 194 (Lev. 5.1), 266 (Num. 5.23), 571 (1 Sam. 14.24), 752 (2 Kgs 5.23); II, p. 532 (Job 6.28); III, pp. 4 (Hos. 4.2), 6 (Hos. 5.11); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, pp. 83 (Exod. 2.21 [Symmachus and Theodotion]), 661 (2 Kgs 5.23 [Symmachus]); *idem* (ed.), *Origenis*, II, p. 945 (Hos. 4.2 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]).

60. See Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 286 (Isa. 61.3); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, p. 212 (Isa. 61.3); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, p. 554 (Isa. 61.3 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]). To the contrary, the Jewish exegetical tradition in the Middle Ages espoused Menahem's interpretation (see *Mikraoth Gedoloth: Isaiah* [2 vols.; New York: Judaica Press, 2007–12], II, pp. 478–79 [Isa. 61.3]).

61. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 226 (Isa. 1.29, 30), 231 (Isa. 6.13), 444 (Joel 1.8), 463 (Mic. 7.1).

62. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 36 (Mic. 7.1), 38 (Joel 1.8), 103 (Isa. 1.29, 30), 111 (Isa. 6.13), 526 (Dan. 4.8–11 LXX), 527 (Dan. 4.8–11 [Theodotion]), 528 (Dan. 4.17–20 LXX), 529 (Dan. 4.17–20 [Theodotion]); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, pp. 441–42 (Isa. 6.13 [Symmachus]), 997 (Mic. 7.1 [Aquila and Symmachus]).

63. Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, p. 171 (Num. 12.11); Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 162 (Num. 12.11); Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 242 (Isa. 19.13), 298 (Jer. 4.22; 5.4); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, p. 370 (Prov. 22.15).

64. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 282 (Num. 12.11); II, p. 458 (Prov. 22.15); III, pp. 134 (Isa. 19.13), 232 (Jer. 4.22), 233 (Jer. 5.4); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, pp. 582 (Jer. 4.22 [Aquila and Theodotion]), 583 (Jer. 5.4 [Aquila and Theodotion]).

65. As corroborated by Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 255 (Isa. 31.7), 312 (Jer. 14.14); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, p. 26 (Job 13.4); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in*

equivalent to the conjunction **אם** (if).<sup>66</sup> Besides, Menahem equated **אֱלֹ** in Dan. 4.10 and **אָרוּ** in Dan. 7.5 with the demonstrative particle **הִנֵּה**.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, Menahem analyzed **אֱלֹה** as denoting the LORD in Hab. 3.3 and in Job 9.13,<sup>68</sup> pointing out that the aforementioned noun (to be more precise, the plural form thereof [i.e. **אֱלֹהִים**]) could also signify leaders (sing. **שׁוֹפֵט**) or judges (sing. **דִּיין**) as exemplified by Exod. 4.16 (**לְאֱלֹהִים**), 22.8 (**אֱלֹהִים**) and 22.27 (**אֱלֹהִים**). His interpretation was attested in the Targum,<sup>69</sup> while the Greek renditions of those verses<sup>70</sup> suggested the signification ‘God’ or even ‘gods’.<sup>71</sup>

Speaking of **אֱלֹהִים**, which Menahem treated as the plural<sup>72</sup> form of **אֱלֹה**, he argued that, in Gen. 32.30-31 (**אֱלֹהִים**), Ps. 82.6 (**אֱלֹהִים**) and Dan. 2.11 (Aramaic, **אֱלֹהִין**), this appellation denoted angels (**מְלָאכִים**) given the context of those passages. His reading of them was congruous with the Targum,<sup>73</sup> yet counter to the Greek translations of those texts,<sup>74</sup>

*Greek*, II, p. 542 (Job 13.4); III, pp. 157 (Isa. 31.7), 254 (Jer. 14.14); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, pp. 24 (Job 13.4 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]), 491 (Isa. 31.7 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]), 609-10 (Jer. 14.14 [Aquila and Symmachus]).

66. As corroborated by Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, II, p. 20 (Est. 7.4); Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, III, p. 410 (Eccl. 6.6); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 492 (Eccl. 6.6); yet not by Est. 7.4 in the LXX (see p. 771 [Est. 7.4]).

67. As corroborated by Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 526 (Dan. 4.10 LXX), 527 (Dan. 4.10 [Theodotion]), 546 (Dan. 7.5 LXX), 547 (Dan. 7.5 [Theodotion]).

68. As corroborated by Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetae*, p. 469 (Hab. 3.3); Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, III, p. 20 (Job 9.13); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 536 (Job 9.13); III, p. 61 (Hab. 3.3); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, pp. 18 (Job 9.13 [Symmachus]), 1007 (Hab. 3.3 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]).

69. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 63 (Exod. 4.16), 84 (Exod. 22.8), 85 (Exod. 22.27).

70. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, pp. 110 (Exod. 4.16), 147 (Exod. 22.8), 148 (Exod. 22.27); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 119 (Exod. 22.8 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]).

71. As regards Exod. 22.8, the Samaritan text sided with the LXX. See Blayne (ed.), *Pentateuchus*, p. 197 (Exod. 22.8-9).

72. Menahem treated this term as plural in terms of parsing but not necessarily in terms of its denotation, which could be either singular or plural, depending on the use thereof in a specific context.

73. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 36 (Gen. 32.30-31) in connection with Gen. 32.28-29; Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, III, p. 218 (Ps. 82.6) in connection with Ps. 82.1.

where ‘God’ or ‘gods’ were preferred. As regards Dan. 2.11, Theodotion explicated אֱלֹהִין as ‘gods’ (θεοί), while the LXX translated it as ‘an angel’ (ἄγγελος).<sup>75</sup> Subsequently, medieval Jewish exegesis followed in Menahem’s wake by interpreting אֱלֹהִין in Dan. 2.11 as angels.<sup>76</sup>

In his lexicon Jonah ibn Janah<sup>77</sup> scrutinized אֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹהִים, which he considered to be the plural form of אֱלֹהִי. First, Jonah maintained that, in Hab. 3.3 (אֱלֹהִי) and in Josh. 24.19 (אֱלֹהִים), the true God was signified by those appellations, whereas in Deut. 31.16 (אֱלֹהִים)<sup>78</sup> and in Hab. 1.11 (אֱלֹהִי),<sup>79</sup> the appellations denoted idol(s). According to Jonah, in Hebrew the plural was prone to intensifying, and therefore, it might be either expressive of glory (God) or indicative of disgrace (idols).

Furthermore, Jonah remarked that in Exod. 22.27 and in Gen. 6.2-4<sup>80</sup> אֱלֹהִים meant leaders of various sorts (either שׁוֹפְטִים or נְשִׂאִים) or the nobility (אֲצִילִים). In his view, 2 Chron. 15.3 (אֱלֹהִים)<sup>81</sup> communicated that for the time being, when Israel would be tempted to exchange the

74. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 62 (Gen. 32.30-31) in connection with Gen. 32.28-29. See Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 48 (Gen. 32.28-29 [Aquila and Symmachus]); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 323 (Ps. 81.6 LXX) in connection with Ps. 82.1 (81.1 LXX). In case of Ps. 82.1 (81.1 LXX), it appears that Symmachus sided with the LXX, whereas Aquila sided with the Targum (Field [ed.], *Origenis*, II, p. 234 [Ps. 82.1, LXX 81.1]).

75. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 504 (Dan. 2.11 LXX), 505 (Dan. 2.11 [Theodotion]).

76. As collated in *Mikraoth Gedoloth: Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah* (New York: Judaica Press, 1991), p. 14 (Dan. 2.11).

77. Jonah ibn Janah, *Book of Hebrew Roots*, p. 49 (s.v. אֱלֹהִי); *idem*, *Sepher*, p. 32 (s.v. אֱלֹהִי).

78. As corroborated by Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 234 (Deut. 31.16); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 408 (Deut. 31.16).

79. As corroborated by Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 467 (Hab. 1.11).

80. As corroborated by the Targumim (Targum Onkelos and Samaritan Targum to be precise) and by Symmachus’s Greek version; Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 6 (Gen. 6.2-4); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, pp. 6-7 (Gen. 6.2-4); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 22 (Gen. 6.2-4 [Symmachus]). The LXX explicated sons of אֱלֹהִים, on the one hand, as angels of God (Gen. 6.2), and, on the other hand, as sons of God (Gen. 6.4). See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 9 (Gen. 6.2-4).

81. As corroborated by Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 84 (2 Chron. 15.3); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 741 (2 Chron. 15.3 [Symmachus]).

true teaching (תורה) about the true God for the false one, while Dan. 11.38-39 (אלוה)<sup>82</sup> treated a foreign religion with its foreign god.

The sixteenth-century editions<sup>83</sup> of the lexicon authored by Nathan ben Jehiel were usually less comprehensive than the critical edition,<sup>84</sup> which was intended to embrace all historical materials pertinent to the edifice of ערוך. Discussing Gen. 6.2, Nathan cited the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis (בראשית רבה),<sup>85</sup> according to which a second century sage Simeon bar Yochai (רשב"י) interpreted בני האלוהים as 'sons of judges' (דיינים), condemning anyone who would dare to speak of 'sons of God' (בני אלהיא) in the literal sense as if the LORD could sire.

Nathan then referred to the grand Midrash on the Book of Leviticus (ויקרא רבה),<sup>86</sup> which claimed that some Gentiles would venture to call their kings 'gods' (אלהיא). Furthermore, he ascertained that in Aramaic אלה might denote the true God (Dan. 2.20; 3.28 [LXX 3.95]),<sup>87</sup> an unspecified (generic) deity (Dan. 6.7-8, 13)<sup>88</sup> or even idol(s) (Dan. 2.11,<sup>89</sup> 5.4;<sup>90</sup> Jer. 10.11<sup>91</sup>).

82. Greek versions of Dan. 11.38-39 were susceptible of various interpretations. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 570-72 (Dan. 11.38-39); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, 932 (Dan. 11.38-39).

83. Nathan ben Jehiel, ספר (Pesaro: Soncino, 1517), 8v (s.v. אלה); (Venice: Bomberg, 1531), 10r; (Venice: Bragadin, 1552-53), 7v; (Basel: Waldkirch, 1598-99), 7v.

84. Nathan ben Jehiel, *Plenus* (8 vols.; Vienna: Brög, 1878-92), I, p. 87 (s.v. אלה).

85. Theodor and Albeck (eds.), *Bereschit*, pp. 247-48 (no. 26 פרשה [Gen. 6.2]).

86. 'מדרש ויקרא רבה', in ספר מדרש רבות על התורה (Leipzig: Wienbrack, 1864), p. 354 (no. 33 פרשה [Lev. 25.1-26.2]).

87. As corroborated by the Greek versions: Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 504 (Dan. 2.20 LXX), 505 (Dan. 2.20 [Theodotion]), 524 (Dan. 3.28-95 LXX), 525 (Dan. 3.28-95 [Theodotion]).

88. As corroborated by the Greek versions: Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 540-42 (Dan. 6.7-8 LXX), 541-43 (Dan. 6.7-8 [Theodotion]), 542 (Dan. 6.13 LXX), 543 (Dan. 6.13 [Theodotion]).

89. In Dan. 2.11 Theodotion read 'gods', whereas the LXX reads 'an angel'.

90. As corroborated by the Greek versions: Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 534 (Dan. 5.4 LXX), 535 (Dan. 5.4 [Theodotion]).

91. As corroborated by the Targum and by the LXX: Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetae*, p. 306 (Jer. 10.11); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, p. 245 (Jer. 10.11).

In his dictionary Solomon Parhon<sup>92</sup> began with Hab. 3.3 and subsequently studied the grammatical features of the generic name of God. Citing Josh. 24.19, in which אֱלֹהִים was modified by a plural form of an adjective (קְדָשִׁים),<sup>93</sup> Parhon declared that the aforementioned plural form did not change the singular denotation of אֱלֹהִים evident from the context.

Similarly, he pointed to Jer. 10.10, where אֱלֹהִים was modified by a plural form of an adjective (חַיִּים),<sup>94</sup> noticing that אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים and the 'eternal king' (מֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם) were parallel in that verse. Thus, in his opinion, the singular מֶלֶךְ would necessitate the singular denotation of אֱלֹהִים modified by חַיִּים.

Parhon remarked that, although in Deut. 4.7 אֱלֹהִים was modified by a plural form of an adjective (קְרָבִים),<sup>95</sup> אֱלֹהִים קְרָבִים was in the same verse equated with (by virtue of the preposition כּ), God's very name (יְיָ), which is absolutely singular. As regards 2 Sam. 7.23, Parhon argued that in 2 Sam. 7.23 אֱלֹהִים as the subject of a plural form of a verb (הִלְכּוּ)<sup>96</sup> was referred to by a singular form of a pronominal suffix on a preposition (לּוֹ).

From Parhon's perspective, plural forms connected to the generic name of God did not undermine the absolute singularity of the LORD but rather reflected his divine glory (לְשׁוֹן כְּבוֹד). Exploring the multifaceted use of אֱלֹהִים within the Tanakh, Parhon observed that in Exod. 22.19-20 אֱלֹהִים denoted idol(s),<sup>97</sup> while in Exod. 22.27 אֱלֹהִים signified

92. Parhon, *Lexicon*, II, 4v (s.v. אֱלֹהִים).

93. The Targum and the LXX used a singular form of an adjective. See Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 32 (Josh. 24.19); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 473 (Josh. 24.19).

94. The Targum and the Greek version (Theodotion) translated חַיִּים as singular. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 306 (Jer. 10.10); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, p. 598 (Jer. 10.10).

95. Both the Targum and the Greek versions rendered קְרָבִים as singular. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 199 (Deut. 4.7); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 348 (Deut. 4.7); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 279 (Deut. 4.7).

96. In 1 Chron. 17.21 we encounter the text parallel to 2 Sam. 7.23 but with the singular form of the same verb (הִלָּךְ) which could imply either that in the tradition of the Book of Chronicles the plural form of the verb (הִלְכּוּ) attested in 2 Sam. 7.23 was regarded as equal to the singular one (הִלָּךְ) or that the Chronicles tradition found the aforementioned plural form challenging and refined it accordingly.

97. The Greek renditions and the Targum explicated אֱלֹהִים as the idol(s). See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 148 (Exod. 22.19-20); Field (ed.),



judges (דיינים).<sup>98</sup> Accordingly, in Gen. 6.2 and 6.4 Parhon interpreted בני (הנשיאים) as ‘sons of leaders’ (האלוהים).

Finally, Parhon tackled Dan. 11.38-39 and 2 Chron. 15.3. In his opinion, the former was about a foreign religion and about a foreign god, whereas the latter described Israel without a proper religious knowledge and observance.

### *David Kimhi's Dictionary and Grammar*

Although Kimhi's dictionary was a landmark in Hebrew lexicography and an instrument indispensable to mature Hebrew scholarship, it drew on the lexical legacy established earlier by Menahem, Jonah, Nathan and Parhon.

Working on אלה, Kimhi<sup>99</sup> began with Hab. 3.3, and later stated that in Josh. 24.19 (אלוהים קדושים) and in Ps. 136.2 (לאלהי האלוהים),<sup>100</sup> the true God was referred to despite the fact that in terms of parsing, אלוהים should be classified as the plural form of אלה, while in Hab. 1.11 the singular form (i.e. אלה) denoted a disgraceful reliance upon an idol.

Citing the examples of Exod. 22.27 and 2 Chron. 15.3, Kimhi argued that אלוהים could also denote leaders (שופטים) in the wide sense of that term as exemplified by Isa. 1.26. According to Kimhi, in Gen. 6.2-4 and Job 1.6,<sup>101</sup> ‘sons of אלוהים’ denoted leaders (נגידים) and the nobility (אצילים).

*Origenis*, I, p. 119 (Exod. 22.19-20 [Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion]). Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 85 (Exod. 22.19-20).

98. In this instance, an evident parallelism between נשיא בעמך and אלוהים fortified Parhon's argument.

99. Kimhi, *Radicum*, p. 17 (s.v. אלה); *idem*, ספר השרשים (Venice: Bomberg, 1545–46), p. 30 (s.v. אלה); *idem*, *Thesaurus*, p. 29 (s.v. אלה).

100. The LXX and the Targum expounded that phrase literally (‘to God of gods’), presuming the Hebrew superlative construction (meaning ‘to the true God who is above all false gods’), while medieval Jewish exegesis interpreted האלוהים as angels (meaning ‘to God of angels’). Irrespective of the explanation of האלוהים, the Jewish expositors agreed that the noun in the construct state (אלהי) denoted the true God. See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 397 (Ps. 136.2; 135.2 [LXX]; Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, III, p. 300 (Ps. 136.2). As collated in *Mikraoth Gedoloth: Psalms* (3 vols.; New York: Judaica, 2001–2004), III, p. 506 (Ps. 136.2).

101. The LXX and the Targum interpreted ‘sons of אלוהים’ as God's angels. See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 520 (Job 1.6); Walton (ed.), ‘Targum’, III, p. 2 (Job 1.6).

Granted that in 2 Sam. 7.23 אֱלוֹהִים was the subject of a plural form of a verb (הִלְכוּ), Kimhi was inclined to interpret אֱלוֹהִים as messengers (plausibly angels) or prophets whom the LORD used as his instruments for delivering his people from captivity in Egypt.

To substantiate his statement, Kimhi, on the one hand, referred to Num. 20.16, which read that the LORD sent an angel to deliver his people from Egypt. In addition, Kimhi mentioned that such an interpretation was mirrored in the Targum,<sup>102</sup> which assigned the action of delivering Israel from captivity in Egypt to angels coming from the LORD's throne and representing him.<sup>103</sup>

Nonetheless, it should be noted that commenting upon Num. 20.16, Rashi (רש"י)<sup>104</sup> cleaved to the generic signification of מַלְאָךְ (i.e. a messenger) and thus identified the LORD's messenger, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, with Moses. Similarly, the Samaritan Targum<sup>105</sup> to Num. 20.16 stated that the LORD sent his agent (שְׁלִיחַ) to carry out this task. As a matter of fact, the appellation 'agent' (שְׁלִיחַ) is generic enough to denote a human or angelic deputy.

On the other hand, Kimhi admitted that in 2 Sam. 7.23 אֱלוֹהִים might signify Moses as an archetype of all prophets provided that in the Hebrew Bible Moses was depicted as a prophet (see Hos. 12.14), while in Exod. 4.16 Moses was described as אֱלוֹהִים in relation to Aaron, and in Exod. 7.1 in relation to Pharaoh.<sup>106</sup>

In his comprehensive grammar Kimhi<sup>107</sup> explored the grammatical features of the generic name of God, discussing the category of the plural number as far as verbs are concerned. While expounding a plural

102. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetae*, p. 117 (2 Sam. 7.23). To the contrary, in 2 Sam. 7.23 the LXX explicated אֱלוֹהִים as ὁ θεός (Swete [ed.], *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 625 [2 Sam. 7.23]).

103. The function of the angel of the LORD as God's agent of deliverance was underscored in Gen. 48.16 which Christian exegesis was determined to expound christologically. See Martin Luther, 'Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535–1545', in *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (54 vols.; Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–1928), XLIV, pp. 696–702 (Gen. 48.15–16).

104. Berliner (ed.), *Raschi*, p. 320 (Num. 20.16).

105. Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, p. 182 (Num. 20.16).

106. The Targum to Exod. 4.16 and 7.1 interpreted אֱלוֹהִים as a leader/ruler (רֶב); Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 63 (Exod. 4.16), 66 (Exod. 7.1).

107. David Kimhi, *ספר מכלול* (Lyck: פעטצאלל, 1862), 7r (שְׁעַר דְּקְדוּק הַפְּעִלִים), IV), 11v–12r (שְׁעַר דְּקְדוּק הַפְּעִלִים, XI); *idem*, *ספר מכלול* (Venice: Bomberg, 1545–46), 3v, 5r; *idem*, *Liber*, pp. 53–56, 89–92 (misprinted as '62').

form of a verb in Gen. 1.26 (נעשה) attributed to the generic name of God, Kimhi asserted that the use of plural verbal forms in the context of (self-)deliberation was evidenced in the Tanakh, for instance, in 2 Sam. 16.20 (נעשה).<sup>108</sup>

Kimhi gave an account of his renowned father, Joseph (יוסף קמחי), who noticed that God's creative commands towards the four elements and towards all creatures except for human beings were articulated in the singular as typified by Gen. 1.11 (תדשא), 1.20 (ישרצו) and 1.24 (תוצא), whereas in the case of humankind a plural form of a verb (נעשה) was used.

In Joseph Kimhi's opinion, God created humanity in the image of the 'upper sphere' (העליונים) in the sense that a supreme spirit (רוח עליונה) was given to human beings, whereas the human body (גוף) was formed in the image of the 'lower sphere' (התחתונים) on the stipulation that a supreme spirit symbolized the upper sphere, while human corporeality symbolized the lower sphere.

Joseph Kimhi's exposition of Gen. 1.26 did not eventuate from the Neoplatonic contempt for corporeality but rather reflected a typical Jewish proposition that human beings could be viewed as the union (fusion) of the material dimension and the immaterial one. Thus, every single human being would embrace the intangible (symbolized by a spirit) common to God and to angels, and the tangible common to all inanimate and animate creatures.

Notwithstanding the Jewish affirmation of the corporeality<sup>109</sup> of the world as God's perfect and definitive design, medieval<sup>110</sup> Jewish

108. Both the Targum and the LXX retained the plural form (נעשה) in 2 Sam. 16.20. See Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetae*, pp. 129-30 (2 Sam. 16.20); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 646 (2 Sam. 16.20).

109. For instance, commenting upon Gen. 4.1, Abraham Saba (אברהם סבע) emphasized that sexual intercourse within marriage should be regarded as completely pure and holy on account of God's commandment to reproduce which was articulated in Genesis 1. Consequently, such intercourse was to be construed as a means of sanctifying human beings. According to Saba, this affirmation of human corporeality and sexuality based on Scripture was denied by the mainstream of Greek philosophy, which, in his opinion, treated sexual urge as a sort of disgrace. Saba considered the commandment to multiply to be of paramount importance and to be endowed with holiness, which would equip human beings for life eternal. Abraham Saba, 'ספר בראשית', in *ספר צרור המור* (Warsaw: וואלדען, 1879), p. 18 (Gen. 4.1). See Gary Anderson, 'Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden',

exegesis was reluctant to admit that humankind could be construed as created in God's very image (namely in the image of God alone) because such an interpretation might bridge the ontological gap between the Creator and the creatures which was cherished in Judaism.<sup>111</sup>

The Targumim, for instance, tended to insulate the LORD from the realm of the creatures and thus attempted to circumvent the situation in which the very Creator would be thought of as the direct object of human action. For this purpose, the Targumim were constantly introducing the LORD's word (מימרא) as the instrument mediating between the intangible and the tangible especially in the context of creative operations engaging the Transcendence. This approach coincided with the Philonian concept of λόγος, and it could even be traced back to the late strata of the biblical literature (e.g. Job 28 or Prov. 3.19; 8), which recorded the idea of divine wisdom (חכמה, σοφία) emerging in the Hellenistic Judaism of that time.

Therefore, Joseph Kimhi assumed that, deliberating upon his anticipated action of creating humankind, God directed, 'Let us make ...', on the one hand, towards the angels surrounding him and participating in the immaterial sphere together with him, and on the other hand, towards whatever had been created in material terms prior to the creation of humankind. Consequently, the twofold (immaterial–material) audience receiving God's command would correspond to the twofold nature of human beings who comprise a supreme spirit and the

*HTR* 82.2 (1989), pp. 121-48; James A. Diamond, 'Nahmanides and Rashi on the One Flesh of Conjugal Union: Lovemaking versus Duty', *HTR* 102.2 (2009), pp. 193-224.

110. Ancient Judaism felt free to expound God's image in human beings or even human beings as God's image in the literal sense. Alon Goshen Gottstein, 'The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature', *HTR* 87.2 (1994), pp. 171-95. Nonetheless, it is incontrovertible that the foundations of Kimhi's exposition of Gen. 1.26-27 could be traced back to the grand Midrash on the Book of Genesis. See Theodor and Albeck (eds.), *Bereschit*, pp. 54-65 (no. 8 פרשה [Gen. 1.26-27]).

111. This ontological divide appertained only to the relationship between the Creator and creatures as far as creation was concerned. Judaism did not perceive God as alien to humankind or as detached from his people, but rather eulogized the LORD's benevolence towards and compassion upon Israel which reflected the divine favor that even extended beyond the covenant people. See *תפלה מכל השנה* (Mantua: [s.n.], 1562), 8r, 19v-20r, 21r, 23v, 25v, 27v-29r, 31r, 46v-47v, 49v, 69r, 114r.

body. This twofold nature, figuratively speaking, reflected both the heavens and the earth.

Both Joseph Kimhi and David Kimhi avowed that the plural form of the verb assigned to God in Gen. 1.26 could be understood as the plural of majesty (לשון תפארת). Consequently, Kimhi cited the example of Dan. 2.36 (נאמר) where, although Daniel was speaking of himself, he described his own action by means of a plural form of a verb.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, Kimhi asserted that plural grammatical forms might be applicable to singular phenomena for the sake of emphasis (see the plural of majesty), whereas singular grammatical forms could denote plural phenomena or could convey a collective sense (דרך כלל). To illustrate the latter proposition, Kimhi cited some collective nouns, namely singular forms of nouns which were used collectively in the following passages: Gen. 32.5-6 (שור and חמור); Exod. 4.20 (חמור), 5.21 (יד and חרב), 8.2 (צפרדע) and 8.13-14 (כנם); Lev. 21.5 (זקן and ראש), 22.11 (לחם); Num. 3.50 (בכור); Judg. 21.16 (אשה); 1 Sam. 11.9 (איש); 14.24 (איש); 2 Kgs 7.10 (חמור and סוס); Isa. 23.2 (סחר); Ezek. 7.19 (נפש); and Ps. 5.10 (לשון and גרון).

Therefore, Kimhi concluded that, in Hebrew, singular grammatical forms might denote plural phenomena or generic concepts without compromising the clarity of language, which, in his view, rested on the use of words in a given context.

Furthermore, Kimhi contended that plural forms of אֱדוֹן should be viewed as the plural of majesty. Thus, both un-suffixed (Gen. 42.30 [אֲדֹנִי];<sup>113</sup> 1 Kgs 16.24 [אֲדֹנִי];<sup>114</sup> Isa. 19.4 [אֲדֹנִים]<sup>115</sup>) and suffixed (Exod.

112. The plural form of the verb (נאמר) was preserved in the Greek renditions. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 508 (Dan. 2.36 LXX), 509 (Dan. 2.36 [Theodotion]).

113. The fact that אֲדֹנִי was appositive to a singular הָאִישׁ, and that אֲדֹנִי was the subject of singular verbs (יתן and דבר), lent credence to the singular signification of אֲדֹנִים granted that אֲדֹנִי was the construct state thereof. In addition, such an interpretation of Gen. 42.30 was supported by the Targumim (Targum Onkelos and Samaritan Targum, to be exact) and by the LXX. See Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, pp. 48-49 (Gen. 42.30); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, p. 52 (Gen. 42.30); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 84 (Gen. 42.30).

114. Obviously, Shemer depicted as אֲדֹנִים is the construct state thereof) was a single person. This reading of 1 Kgs 16.24 was mirrored in the Targum and in the LXX. See Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 173 (1 Kgs 16.24); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 720 (1 Kgs 16.24).

21.4 [אֲדָנִי]<sup>116</sup>) plural forms of אֲדָנִי were meant to highlight a human or divine lordship or a splendor due to a single person.

Delving into this subject, Kimhi ascertained that a plural form of אֲדָנִי bearing any pronominal suffix might be used emphatically with reference to the creatures, whereas the plural form thereof with the suffix of the first-person singular vocalized with קִמְּךָ (אֲדָנִי) would be synonymous to God's very name. According to Kimhi, to denote a creature, a plural form of אֲדָנִי with the suffix of the first-person singular would have to be vocalized with פִּתַּח (אֲדָנִי) as evidenced in Gen. 19.2, where in light of the context, אֲדָנִי denoted angels.<sup>117</sup>

Besides, Kimhi remarked that, in Judg. 6.15, Gideon, supposing that he was speaking to the LORD, called an angel אֲדָנִי, because in the narrative both the LORD and the angel of the LORD were inextricably intertwined. As a matter of fact, Kimhi presumed that, although Gideon imagined that he was talking to God, he was actually referring to the angel of the LORD, because in the Targum, Gideon was pictured as conversing with the LORD's angel<sup>118</sup> and as calling him 'my master' (רִיבוֹנִי).<sup>119</sup> The same reasoning is mirrored in several Masoretic manuscripts of the Scripture that replaced אֲדָנִי with אֲדָנִי, assuming that the latter would be a more correct form to address an angel.<sup>120</sup>

From Kimhi's perspective, an emphatic use of the plural number reached its climax in the plural form of אֲדָנִי bearing the suffix of the

115. As parallel to a singular מֶלֶךְ and as modified by a singular adjective (קֶשֶׁה), the plural form (אֲדָנִים) must denote a single person in the aforementioned verse.

116. Since אֲדָנִי was the subject of a singular verb (יָתַן), it should be considered singular which was attested in the LXX and in the Targumim (namely Targum Onkelos and Samaritan Targum). See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 144 (Exod. 21.4); Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 83 (Exod. 21.4); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, p. 89 (Exod. 21.4).

117. Both Targum Onkelos and LXX interpreted אֲדָנִי as 'my masters/lords' which confirmed Kimhi's observation. See Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 17 (Gen. 19.2); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 28 (Gen. 19.2).

118. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 42 (Judg. 6.14-15). The LXX reads likewise. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 491 (Judg. 6.14-15).

119. Consult the vocalized text of the Targum contained in the Second Rabbinic Bible: Jacob ben Hayyim (עֵקֶב בֶּן חַיִּים) (ed.), *מקראות גדולות* (4 vols.; Venice: Bomberg, 1524-25), II, n.p. (Judg. 6.15).

120. Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi, *Scholia critica in V.T. libros: Seu supplementa ad varias sacri textus lectiones* (Parma: Ex Regio Typographeo, 1798), p. 37 (Judg. 6.15).

first-person singular and pointed with קמץ (אֲדֹנִי), which glorified the absolute lordship of the single and indivisible God. To buttress his argument, Kimhi listed additional passages in which the plural number was applied emphatically either to the LORD for the sake of his glory or to the creatures.

Thus, in Isa. 42.5 (נוֹטְיָהֶם) and 54.5 (עֲשִׂיָּךְ and בְּעֲלִיָּךְ) Kimhi identified plural forms of suffixed participles that were referring to the LORD. This phenomenon he explicated as the plural of majesty.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, in Job 35.10 a plural form of a suffixed participle (עֲשִׂי) was appositive to God and was modified by the following singular participle (נִתַּן), which would entail the singular reading of עֲשִׂי.<sup>122</sup> In Ps. 149.2 Kimhi discovered a plural form of a suffixed participle (בְּעֲשִׂי) that referred to the LORD mentioned previously (Ps. 149.1).<sup>123</sup> In addition, Kimhi pointed to a plural form of an adjective (קְדָשִׁים) that was modifying the generic name of God in Josh. 24.19.

Examining the emphatic use of the plural apart from the Divine, Kimhi observed that in Exod. 22.10-11 a suffixed plural form of בעל (בְּעֲלָיו), which denoted a human owner, must be interpreted as singular because it functioned as the subject of a singular verb (לָקַח).<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, Kimhi noticed that in Judg. 5.25 a plural form of an adjective (אֲדִירִים) was connected to a singular noun (סִפֵּל) governed by a preposition (בְּ). The Targum<sup>125</sup> and the Greek translations<sup>126</sup> viewed סִפֵּל as the construct state, while אֲדִירִים as a substantive-adjective

121. The Targum and the Greek versions interpreted the aforementioned participles as singular. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, pp. 267 (Isa. 42.5), 279 (Isa. 54.5); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, pp. 178 (Isa. 42.5), 201 (Isa. 54.5); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, p. 536 (Isa. 54.5 [Aquila and Symmachus]).

122. Such an approach was mirrored in the LXX and in the Targum. See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 586 (Job 35.10); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, p. 72 (Job 35.10).

123. Kimhi's insights were substantiated by the LXX, while the Targum was elusive in this respect. See Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, II, p. 414 (Ps. 149.2); Walton (ed.), 'Targum', III, p. 316 (Ps. 149.2).

124. Such an exposition was attested in the Targumim (i.e. Targum Onkelos and Samaritan Targum) and in the LXX. Berliner (ed.), *Targum*, I, p. 84 (Exod. 22.10-11); Brüll (ed.), *Das samaritanische Targum*, p. 91 (Exod. 22.10-11); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, 147 (Exod. 22.10-11).

125. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 41 (Judg. 5.25).

126. Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, I, p. 488 (Judg. 5.25); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, I, p. 416 (Judg. 5.25 [Theodotion]).

(meaning ‘in a bowl of [for] the mighty’). Nevertheless, in Exod. 15.10 and in Ps. 93.4 and 136.18 אֲדִירִים modified plural nouns instead of being a substantive-adjective. Therefore, it seems that אֲדִירִים could also be parsed as a plural form of an adjective qualifying a singular noun (סֵפֶל) in the absolute state.<sup>127</sup> Following the Targumic rendition, Kimhi presumed that this cup had to be reserved for the mighty (לְאֲדִירִים) who were worthy of drinking out of it. Speaking of אֲדִיר, it should be noted that the plural form of that adjective (אֲדִירִים) would modify the generic name of God in an idiomatic expression ‘good God’ (אֱלֹהִים אֲדִירִים).<sup>128</sup>

Elucidating Ezek. 46.6, Kimhi registered a plural form of an adjective (תְּמִימִם) modifying either פֶּר or בֶּן בֶּקֶר/בָּקָר. This passage is susceptible of various grammatical interpretations because both פֶּר and בֶּן בֶּקֶר could be construed as collective nouns. In fact, some Masoretic manuscripts contained a singular form of the adjective (תְּמִימִם).<sup>129</sup> The Targum<sup>130</sup> interpreted תְּמִימִם as a substantive adjective synonymous with שְׁלָמִים mentioned in Lev. 3.1 and 3.6, while בֶּן בֶּקֶר was interpreted as a collective noun. On the other hand, in the LXX פֶּר was perceived as a singular noun modified by a singular adjective standing for תְּמִימִם, while בֶּן בֶּקֶר was perceived as appositive to פֶּר.

From the grammatical point of view, it is arguable that in Ezek. 46.6 the plural form of the adjective (תְּמִימִם) was used twice for the sake of emphasis, because at the end of that verse, a ram (אֵיל), which is singular or collective, was qualified by the plural form of the same adjective (תְּמִימִם).

Since Num. 28.11 stipulated that two young bulls must be offered on account of the new moon, Kimhi suggested that the plural form of the adjective (תְּמִימִם) might indicate that בֶּן בֶּקֶר was to be viewed not as appositive to פֶּר but rather as another sacrificial animal. In this instance, Ezek. 46.6 would imply that two perfect (תְּמִימִם) young bulls (פֶּר and בֶּן בֶּקֶר [because בֶּן בֶּקֶר was *ex definitione* בֶּקֶר]) were to be sacrificed on that festival. Nonetheless, his interpretation would require a conjunction (ו), linking פֶּר and בֶּן בֶּקֶר, which is missing from the text.

127. The form סֵפֶל could be classified either as the absolute state or as the construct state.

128. Dunash ben Labrat (דּוּנָשׁ בֶּן לָבְרַט), *Criticae vocum recensione*s (ed. Herschell Filipowski; London: Hebrew Antiquarian Society, 1855), p. 20 (no. 91).

129. De Rossi, *Variae lectiones Veteris Testamenti* (4 vols.; Parma: Ex Regio Typographeo, 1784–88), III, p. 166 (Ezek. 46.6).

130. Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 429 (Ezek. 46.6).



Kimhi glanced at Ezek. 45.18 according to which one young bull (פֶּרֶךְ), depicted as בֶּן בֶּקֶר and qualified as תָּמִים, should be sacrificed on the first of Nissan. In Ezek. 45.18 בֶּן בֶּקֶר must be acknowledged as appositive to פֶּרֶךְ due to מִקֵּר connecting פֶּרֶךְ and בֶּן בֶּקֶר, whereas the singular form of the adjective (תָּמִים) would give a singular flavor to פֶּרֶךְ.<sup>131</sup> Thus, Kimhi tried to solve this difficulty, surmising that, if two young bulls could not be found, then one young bull might be sacrificed to celebrate the new moon.

Actually, Kimhi himself traced back such an explanation to the Rabbinic sages of old (רז"ל), and commenting upon Ezek. 46.6,<sup>132</sup> he expanded on this subject and disclosed the source of that explanation which was identified earlier by Rashi in his commentary on that verse.<sup>133</sup> Both Rashi and Kimhi referred to *Men.* 45a as their source.<sup>134</sup>

### *Christian Reception*

The Hebrew lexica compiled by Christian Hebrew scholars in Latin could be divided into two categories. Consequently, concise dictionaries were recapitulating only highlights of the classic Jewish lexicography embodied in Kimhi's masterpiece, while comprehensive dictionaries ventured to reproduce the Jewish lexical treasury grounded in Kimhi and supplemented with references to the LXX and the Vulgate.

As far as the generic name of God is concerned, the Alcalá lexicon (i.e. a dictionary contained in the Complutensian Polyglot<sup>135</sup>) and Reuchlin's lexicon<sup>136</sup> must be classified as concise lexica, even though relying completely on Kimhi's legacy. Similarly, all Münster's dictionaries<sup>137</sup> should be considered concise lexica, but anchored to

131. The Targum and the Greek versions spoke of one young bull. See Lagarde (ed.), *Prophetæ*, p. 429 (Ezek. 45.18); Swete (ed.), *Old Testament in Greek*, III, p. 488 (Ezek. 45.18); Field (ed.), *Origenis*, II, p. 892 (Ezek. 45.18 [Symmachus]).

132. Contained in *Mikraoth Gedoloth: Ezekiel* (2 vols.; New York: Judaica, 2000), II, p. 409 (Ezek. 46.6).

133. See above.

134. 'מסכת מנחות', in *תלמוד בבלי* (Warsaw: Orgelbrand, 1862), XV, p. 45r (No. 45a).

135. De Cisneros and de Brocar, *Vocabularium*, pp. 5r-5v (s.v. אֵל; אֱלֹהִים).

136. Reuchlin, *Principium*, p. 55 (s.v. אֱלֹהִים) (see an expanded version thereof); *idem*, *Lexicon Hebraicum* (Basel: Petrus, 1537), pp. 82-83 (s.v. אֱלֹהִים).

137. Münster, *Dictionarium* (Basel: Froben, 1523), p. 20 (s.v. אֱלֹהִים); *idem*, *Dictionarium* (Basel:

Kimhi's magnum opus.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, the original version of Pagnini's lexicon<sup>139</sup> could be labelled as a comprehensive lexicon, while the abridged version thereof<sup>140</sup> published later was *eo ipso* a concise lexicon. None of those dictionaries put any trinitarian construction on the generic name of God.

To the contrary, Pagnini's Latin version of Kimhi's grammar,<sup>141</sup> in which the content of the Hebrew original was meticulously arranged and expanded, made trinitarian claims typical of the medieval Christian theology and exegesis. Pagnini alleged that according to Gen. 1.1 'gods' (*dii*) (אלוהים) created the universe, while Josh. 24.19 invoked 'holy gods' (*dii sancti*) (אלוהים קדושים). For Pagnini, those 'gods' were a token of the Trinity. As a matter of fact, the literal translation of that section of Kimhi's grammar<sup>142</sup> made by Guidacerio in 1540 was free of trinitarian interpolations.

Both the Alcala lexicon<sup>143</sup> and Reuchlin's lexicon<sup>144</sup> referred to Jerome's letter<sup>145</sup> concerning various names of God in the Hebrew Bible, which was known to the medieval exegetes.<sup>146</sup> In the aforementioned letter Jerome asserted that in Hebrew אלוהים, which he romanized as 'Eloim', was 'of the common number' (*communis numeri*) because this noun could denote one God or many gods, depending on the context. Jerome compared such grammatical features of אלוהים to those of the Hebrew noun 'heavens' (שמים), which he

Froben, 1535), C7r (s.v. אלוה); (Basel: Froben, 1539), D2r-D2v; (Basel: Froben, 1548), D2r-D2v; (Basel: Froben, 1564), D2r-D2v.

138. Actually, Münster also compiled an Aramaic dictionary in which the אלהא entry appeared to be independent of the Jewish scholarship examined in the present paper, but the quality of that entry was mediocre. See Münster, *Dictionarium Chaldaicum* (Basel: Froben, 1527), p. 20 (s.v. אלהא).

139. Sante Pagnini, *Thesaurus* (Lyons: Gryphius, 1529), pp. 81-82 (s.v. אלה).

140. Sante Pagnini, *Thesaurus* (Paris: Stephanus, 1548), p. 42 (s.v. אלה).

141. David Kimhi, *Hebraicarum* (Lyons: Ry, 1526), pp. 75-76 (II, IV); (Paris: Stephanus, 1549), pp. 79-80 (II, IV).

142. Kimhi, *Liber*, pp. 89-92.

143. De Cisneros and de Brocar, *Vocabularium*, 5v (s.v. אלה).

144. Reuchlin, *Principium*, p. 55 (s.v. אלוהים).

145. Jerome, 'Epistola XXV ad eandem Marcellam de decem nominibus Dei', in *PL*, XXII, pp. 429-30.

146. As exemplified by Rabanus Maurus, 'Commentariorum in Genesim libri quatuor', in *PL*, CVII, pp. 511-12 (Gen. 6.1-2). Luther referred to this epistle as well. Cf. Luther, 'Operationes in Psalmos (1519-21)', in *WA*, V, p. 184 (Ps. 5.12).

romanized as ‘samaim’, and to those of the Latin names of three cities: ‘Thebae’ (Θῆβαι), ‘Athenae’ (Ἀθῆναι) and ‘Salonae’.

Describing grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים, Jerome resorted to the technical term ‘common number’ which in the ancient Latin grammar appertained to the dual number or to such nouns which could be parsed either as singular or as plural (e.g. *species, facies, res, dies, fluctus, tempus*).<sup>147</sup> Thus, ‘species’, for instance, might be parsed either as Nominative, Singular, Feminine or as Nominative/Accusative, Plural, Feminine, which was caused by the Latin system of declensions (see the fifth declension).

In his epistle Jerome brought forward various arguments to illustrate the grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים, making, however, no trinitarian claims. Actually, Jerome’s propositions were idiosyncratic from the grammatical perspective, yet his point was valid. Although some nouns like ‘Thebae’, ‘Athenae’ and ‘Salonae’ in Latin, and Θῆβαι and Ἀθῆναι in Greek and שָׁמַיִם in Hebrew could be parsed either as plural or as dual, they clearly denoted singular phenomena. Therefore, for Jerome, it was not unusual to find that in Hebrew אֱלֹהִים might signify either God or gods.

### *Conclusion*

An explanation of the grammatical features of the generic name of God offered in the classic Jewish lexica and grammars was substantial, comprehensive and contextual. Jewish scholars examined the issue in etymological, lexical and syntactical terms, presupposing that a diligent student of the Hebrew language and of the Hebrew Scriptures must be attentive to the context. Furthermore, while interpreting the Tanakh, Jewish literati consulted authoritative Targumim and tended to follow the Targumic reading.

Christian Hebrew scholarship, which was launched in the autumn of the Middle Ages, arose from Jewish Hebrew scholarship. Therefore, studying the grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים, Christian Hebrew scholars of the first half of the sixteenth century relied on the Jewish legacy, additionally drawing on the LXX and the Vulgate. Unlike medieval Christian theologians, those Christian scholars, who in the first half of

147. Cledonius, ‘Ars’, in *Grammatici Latini* (7 vols.; ed. Heinrich; Keil Leipzig: Teubner, 1857–80), V, p. 10 (De nomine); Pompeius, ‘Commentum Artis Donati’, in *Grammatici Latini*, V, pp. 165 (De numeris), 174 (De numeris quasi retractando).

the sixteenth century were translating Jewish lexica and grammars into Latin, did not discredit the findings of the Jewish divines but rather put a trinitarian construction on אלוהים as a sort of a Christian addendum.

Despite their non-Jewish background, these scholars had a fair command of Hebrew and only occasionally struggled to understand Hebrew texts that they were processing. Guidacerio, for instance, failed to explicate an acronym (רזייל)<sup>148</sup> and misconceived מדבר,<sup>149</sup> though Pagnini was able to manage both.<sup>150</sup>

Luther's remarks<sup>151</sup> about the grammatical features of the generic name of God and his trinitarian argumentation related to them demonstrated his familiarity with the Christian Hebrew studies of that time which stemmed from the Jewish Hebrew scholarship. That scholarship eventuated from a long-standing mastery of Hebrew which was characteristic of the Jewish tradition and which is vital to the Jewish identity.

148. Kimhi, *Liber*, p. 92.

149. Kimhi, *Liber*, p. 89.

150. David Kimhi, *Hebraicarum* (Paris: Stephanus, 1549), pp. 79-80.

151. Luther, 'Operationes in Psalmos (1519–1521)', p. 186 (Ps. 5.12); *idem*, 'Vorlesungen über Jesaias 1527–1530', in *WA*, XXXI/II, pp. 70-71 (Isa. 9.6); *idem*, 'Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535–1545', in *WA*, XLII, pp. 605-607 (Gen. 17.1); *idem*, 'Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535–1545', in *WA*, XLII, pp. 10-13 (Gen. 1.2); *idem*, 'Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535–1545', in *WA*, XLIII, pp. 128-29 (Gen. 20.11-13), 199-200 (Gen. 21.33-34); *idem*, 'Vorlesungen über 1. Mose von 1535–1545', in *WA*, XLIV, pp. 38-40 (Gen. 31.26-30), 104-106 (Gen. 32.27-28), 184-86 (Gen. 35.6-7), 509-510 (Gen. 42.29-34); *idem*, *Vorlesung über den Hebräerbrief nach der Vatikanischen Handschrift* (ed. Emanuel Hirsch and Hanns Rückert; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1929), pp. 118-24 (Heb. 2.7); *idem*, 'Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi (1538)', in *WA*, L, pp. 262-83; *idem*, 'Von den letzten Worten Davids (1543)', in *WA*, LIV, pp. 45-46.