Qimḥi’s Sefer ha-Shorashim: A Didactic Tool

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El Séfer ha-Šorašim de David Qimḥi: una herramienta didáctica.— Menos de cuarenta años después de que Judá ibn Tibbon tradujera al hebreo el Kitāb al-Uṣūl de Ibn Ȳnah, David Qimḥí se aprestó a elaborar un nuevo diccionario de raíces hebreas conocido como Séfer ha-Šorašim. La obra alcanzó gran éxito y, en consecuencia, eclipsó el trabajo de su predecessor quien, en cualquier caso, había servido de modelo a Qimḥí. Una investigación preliminar basada en aquellas raíces encabezadas por las letras ṭet y sameḵ constituye una muestra representativa para el conocimiento de la historia del texto: primero, porque permite entender mejor los motivos de Qimḥí para llevar a cabo un nuevo diccionario; y después, porque el análisis de este corpus, relativamente pequeño, nos da pistas para entender el acercamiento lexicológico de Qimḥí a la raíz del hebreo y su estrategia a la hora de organizar cada entrada del diccionario.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lexicografía hebrea medieval; David Qimḥí; Ibn Ȳnah; herramientas didácticas; lexicografía latina; minimalismo del significado; reglas nemotécnicas.

Less than forty years after Judah ibn Tibbon translated Ibn Janāḥ’s Kitāb al-Uṣūl into Hebrew, David Qimḥí availed himself to write a new dictionary of Hebrew roots, known as Sefer ha-Shorashim. This book achieved great success and consequently overshadowed the work of his predecessor which nevertheless served as a model to Qimḥí. A preliminary research based on the roots starting by the letter ṭet and sameḵ seems to constitute a representative sample for the history of the text. First of all, it allows to better grasp Qimḥi’s motivation for writing a new dictionary. Further, the analysis of this relatively small corpus gives us clues to understand Qimḥi’s lexicological approach to the Hebrew root and his strategy in the organization of each entry.

KEYWORDS: Medieval Hebrew lexicography; David Qimḥí; Ibn Janāḥ; Didactic tools, Latin Lexicography, Meaning-minimalism; Mnemonic devices.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew lexicographical works composed in the Middle Ages were the outcome of a lengthy process, which probably had its inception in the Masoretic lists of words prepared for scribes to ensure the accuracy of the biblical text. Although we can discern evolution over the centuries from elementary lists, which reveal great interest in words derived from the same root and in homonyms, to more elaborate ones organized alphabetically, it is impossible to deny the influence of Arabic linguistic books on the development of Hebrew grammar in general, and on Hebrew lexicography in particular. The most famous medieval dictionary is David Qimḥi’s *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, which was completed in Narbonne (Provence) in the early thirteenth century (1210). This dictionary attained impressive popularity among Jews and

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1 They were ordered according to their appearance in the biblical text. On the evolution from Masoretic lists to dictionaries, see A. DOTAN, *The Awakening of Word Lore: From the Masora to the Beginnings of Hebrew Lexicography* (Jerusalem 2005 [in Hebrew]). Notwithstanding Saadya Gaon’s introduction to the *’Egron* which is cited there (p. 12), Dotan claims that Hebrew lexicography was solely the outcome of internal evolution. In this introduction, Saadya explicitly mentions a booklet he saw aimed at helping people speak Arabic correctly, which prompted him to compose the *’Egron* to help Jews better understand the *masoret* [probably the Bible, here]. Dotan claims that the booklet was not and could not have been a dictionary and that Saadya Gaon only borrowed the didactic idea. Although the idea that lists were the prelude to the development of dictionaries is an assumption shared by Latin researchers (see e.g. O. WEIDERS, “Lexicography in the Middle Ages,” *Viator* 20 [1989] pp. 139-153), we are missing some steps in the evolution from lists to dictionaries of roots arranged alphabetically, as is Menahem ben Saruq’s. See also J. MARTÍNEZ DELGADO, “Caracterización general de la lexicografía hebrea andalusí,” *Revista de la Sociedad Española de Léxico y Lingüística* 38:2 (2008) pp. 103-128, and “Lexicographical Arrangement of Masoretic Material,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 54:2 (2009) pp. 333-363.

2 *Sefer ha-Shorashim* was printed three times before 1500: first in Rome (between 1469 and 1472) by Obadiah (b. Moses?), Manasseh, and Benjamin of Rome, and then twice in Naples by Azriel ben Joseph Ashkenazi Gunzenhauser (1490), and by Joshua Solomon Soncino (1491). During the sixteenth century, one edition was produced by Samuel Rikomin and Azriel de Toulon in Constantinople (1513), and another by Gershom Soncino in Salonika (<1530), but the most famous are the Venetian ones: the Bomberg edition of 1529, a second Bomberg edition dated 1546, and the Guistiniani edition dated 1547. The most recent edition of *Sefer ha-Shorashim* was published in 1847: D. QIMḤI, *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, eds. J. H. BIESENTHAL and F. S. LEBRECHT (Berlin 1847).
almost completely supplanted the works of earlier grammarians. For this preliminary study of Sefer ha-Shorashim, the roots starting with the letters "tet" and "samek," and the first entries of the dictionary, were chosen as a representative sample for the history of the text. First of all, this allows us to better grasp Qimḥi’s motivation for writing a new dictionary less than forty years after Judah ibn Tibbon translated Ibn Janāḥ’s Kitāb al-Tanqīḥ. Further, the analysis of this relatively small corpus facilitates our understanding of Qimḥi’s lexicological approach to the Hebrew root and the underlying organizational strategy of each entry. Through comparison of Qimḥi’s dictionary with that of Ibn Janāḥ, this paper considers two points: Qimḥi’s educational objectives and the lexicographic thought underpinning Sefer ha-Shorashim.

2. Scientific-theoretical description vs. pedagogical tool.

Modeled on Jonah ibn Janāḥ’s Kitāb al-Tanqīḥ (first half of the eleventh century), Qimḥi’s Mikhlol is composed of two parts, a grammar (Ḥeleq ha-Diqduq), which is commonly called Mikhlol, and a dictionary now entitled Sefer ha-Shorashim (Ḥeleq ha-‘Inyan). This second part, dedicated to the lexicon, orders the roots alphabetically, thus allowing the convenient grouping of all biblical Hebrew words. Although it is possible to identify significant excerpts from Ibn Janāḥ’s work in Sefer ha-Shorashim, and although it

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4 The title of Kitāb al-Tanqīḥ’s second part, Kitāb al-Uṣūl, was translated by Judah Ibn Tibbon as Sefer ha-Shorashim. This translation may have influenced the appellation assigned to Qimḥi’s work. See ABU’LWALID MERWĀN IBN GANĀH, Sepher Haschoraschim [hereafter JANAḤ, Shorashim], trans. Judah IBN TIBBON, ed. W. BACHER (Berlin 1896).

5 Since the ordering of the entries is different in those two dictionaries, as we shall demonstrate, we can only rely on short phrases which were borrowed from Ibn Janāḥ’s Hebrew translation and rearranged by David Qimḥi. First, the meaning of the root is often expressed in the same words (e.g. root חכל יעלה ושכמה – סנף root נכנע חבל יעלה, ירך חבל ונאך חבל – נрабатыва ביבא). Now and then, Ibn Janāḥ’s explanation is clearly summarized in a few words: e.g. in the root סנף, Ibn Janāḥ’s dictionary has יודר סנף, but in Sefer ha-Shorashim, the interpretation is "sanhur, yad, ṣănḫur, eladhur, dihur, etc."
exhibits similarities to his predecessor’s dictionary, the works differ significantly not only in content but also in form.

Ibn Janāḥ’s Kitāb al-uṣūl was intended for scholars, as stated in the introduction where the author describes the potential reader as al-nāẓir fī ʾilm al-luğā, “one who examines carefully the science of language,” while Qimḥi employed the term talmid, a student. Ibn Janāḥ’s readers were already well versed in the Hebrew language and could check the details for a correct interpretation of the Bible in other grammatical works in their possession. This is illustrated by the following quotation in which he refers to Hayyuj’s work, Kitāb al-Afʿāl Dhawāt al-Mithlayn (“The Book of Geminate Verbs”).

If the early grammars of the “formative” period (until the late eleventh century) were not pedagogical tools and did not aim to facilitate the study of the Hebrew language, the structured architecture of the later Hebrew grammars served didactic purposes. David Qimḥi himself provides a glimpse of why he undertook the writing of Mikhloł.

6 Judah Ibn Tibbon translated literally the brackets indicate that these words were not in the Arabic text and were added by Ibn Tibbon (see ed. BACHER, p. xliii); Qimḥi writes that the Hebrew andor words, veser, hebrew, ʿalā ʿamman, and yet the terms for the geminate are derived from those in the Hebrew text. Qimḥi, Sefer Mikhloł, ed. I. RITTENBERG (Lyck 622 [1862], repr. Jerusalem 1966) f. 1r.

8 Qimḥi, Mikhloł, f. 1r.
QIMḤI’S SEFER-HA-SHORASHIM: A DIDACTIC TOOL

Clearly, David Qimḥi had an educational objective in mind: he wanted to take a didactic approach to the science of the Hebrew language. Accordingly, in writing Sefer ha-Shorashim, his goal was not to innovate but to organize the linguistic knowledge of Hebrew lexicography in a fresh manner; as he himself stated in the introduction to Mikhlo, he had no other ambition than to be a “gleaner who follows the harvesters.” One of the questions treated in this article relates to how this reorganization reflects Qimḥi’s didactic purpose.

3. SEFER HA-SHORASHIM: A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

In planning a dictionary, lexicographers must define the categories of users for whom their dictionary is designed, which will determine the types of questions to which they provide answers. They must choose lemmas and, in the case of this particular type of dictionary, their choices are determined by linguistic knowledge. They must decide on the different classes of information they will include and use a metalanguage that is accessible to their readers. The result is a text formed of paragraphs that possess a repeated structure and, indeed, this is one of the most striking features of Qimḥi’s work.

11 This passage was cited in English translation by F. E. TALMAGE, David Kimhi: The Man and the Commentaries (Cambridge 1975) p. 57.

12 QIMḤI, Mikhlo, f. 1r: ובאתי כמלקט שבילו איורי חוקר, ומשמלל איורי בחזרה ומאתות העקבותיהם על צורות נושאים, “I come thus like the gleaner after the reaper, following the footsteps of my predecessors, but abridging their material” (TALMAGE, David Kimhi, pp. 56-57).
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1. The first step of the process is the selection of lemmas or entries. Here I exemplify a difference between Ibn Janāḥ and Qimḥi, which reflects the debate concerning identification of the root of certain words, by citing their entries for the first word mentioned in both dictionaries, בְּאִבֵּי. Ibn Janāḥ created two entries, one with the headword אב and a second one with אבב, 13 whereas Qimḥi’s entry included all the words mentioned by his predecessor in these two entries under the same root: אבב.

Ibn Janāḥ:

האלפ ובהינ. לראות בְּאִבֵּי התחל פירוש דשת התחל, ומקים מקום הדשת
ניקרא מכם כ받 כמך שמרם עדות בָּאָב אלא كسף רובי תמר במקים צמח
וחשך אומרים למקים מרחם אָבִּי כשב אָבִּי Thứב.

Alef and bet: To look at bē-‘ibê of the valley (Song of Sol. 6:11). That is the grass of the valley, and the place where the grass grows is also called ebh, as Scripture states: While still bē-‘ibo — in his greenness, and not cut down (Job 8:12), I mean the place where it grows. And in Arabic, a pasture is called ‘abi, as is lawn.

David Qimḥi:

אבב. לראות בְּאִבּוֹ (שה”ש ו יא). הדגש לחסרון הב”ה אבב
ופירושו בעצי הנחל. ועודנו בְּאִבּוֹ לא יקטף (איוב ח יב). פירוש שהגמא
[...]

אבב. To look at bē-‘ibê of the valley (Song of Sol. 6:11). There is a dagesh because the geminated bet is omitted. And this means “the trees of the valley.” It is the same as While still bē-‘ibo — in his stem, and not cut down (Job 8:12). This means that the papyrus in stem [‘es], not yet cut down, will become dry [...]

13 For Ibn Janāḥ, the word אב, ‘father,’ has a triliteral root, probably אבה, just as ابن comes from the root אב ותא: יתכן שיווה מן הרטש אוֹת אב אמס ותא שסרל הלוך מסר ויא. This point is mentioned by D. BECKER, “Grammatical Thought: Influence of the Medieval Arabic Grammatical Tradition,” in Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics, ed. G. KHAN (Leiden 2013) vol. 2, pp. 113-128: 119.

14 The translation is here purposefully different and matches Qimhi’s explanation.
Ibn Janāḥ did not take the *dageš* in the *bet* into consideration and had difficulty identifying the root of the word אִבֵּי / *ibê*. His final choice was probably influenced by Arabic usage. In the same entry, Ibn Janāḥ quotes another meaning for the word אִבֵּי / *ibê*, “fruits,” but immediately rejects it for exegetical reasons.\(^{15}\) Qimḥi also mentions this option at the very end of the entry, using wording very similar to that of Ibn Ezra,\(^ {16}\) who suggests another triliteral root, אֵב / *aB*, in his commentary:

>וְאֵבִּיהָ שָׂגִיא (דָּנֵי 9), וְאִנְבֵּהּ שׂגיא (דניאל ד ט), וְאִנְבֵּהּ שׂגיא

And some interpret be-*'ibê* ha-naḥal, as a fruit, and the *dageš* comes to replace the missing nun, and its root is אֵב / *aB*, from the Aramaic *wē-'inbeh sagi*, *the fruits were in abundance* (Dan. 4:9); and similarly, it appears in the Targum without nun, where “fruit” is rendered איבא / *iba*.'\(^ {17}\)

Clearly Qimḥi favours the incorporation of אִבֵּי / *ibê* into the root אֵב / *aB*, but he does not reject this possibility, introducing it with the words וְיָשִׁיר מִפְּרִישִׁים: “and some interpret.”

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\(^ {15}\) *Janāḥ, Shorashim*, p. 9: יש מי שפירש באבי הנחל הפרי, והדף לשוורים גניקו, ושרשו אונב מלושון אֵבֵּי – be-*'ibê* of the valley (Song of Sol. 6:11), ‘at the fruits of the valley’ and drew an analogy with the Aramaic which renders [the expression] nor will their fruit fail (Ezek. 47:12) as nor will their אֵבֵּה - איבא cease. And what we said suits the text better because it says afterwards (Song of Sol., ad loc.) if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom; and if it means, as they said, “fruit,” it would not have detailed if the vines had budded or the pomegranates were in bloom.”

\(^ {16}\) *Ibn Ezra*, Song of Sol. 6:11: ובא – כְּהַמַּי מִי הַחֲלִלָה שֶׁאָכַל מַעַד בַּאֲדָם אָל: *ab* – הבא – be-*'ibê* as at the fruits of the valley, as the fruits were in abundance (Dan. 4:9). And similarly While still in his greenness, and not cut down (Job 8:12) and some say that it is the early fruits and they derive it from 'aBiB and 'aB.

\(^ {17}\) L. *Koehler and W. Baumgartner, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden 1994) 1: 2: “*אֵב*” — “support for בּאֵב (Leslau 9) and not בּאֵב (Zimmern 55, KBL)”. See also Elijah *Levita, Meturgeman, ed. P. Fagius (Isnae [Isny] 1541) f. 1r: אֵבִּיא, ‘*aBiB*’ for *fruit* and how it is rendered according to the Targum, you will find it under the root ‘NB since it belongs there.”
Although the difference between the two lexicographers concerning the choice of the root has more to do with the state of science than with pedagogy, Qimḥi favors the memorization of the meaning of אִבֵּי / 'ibê by making connections with previous knowledge. Indeed, he introduces the entry with a grammatical remark which has two goals: to explain the presence of a dageš in the letter bet and to establish a semantic link with the next word to be listed, אבִיב / 'abib, “stalks of wheat” (Lv 2:14), which his pupils probably know, since it frequently occurs in the prayers. For Qimḥi, the word אָב is a generic word, meaning “tree” which designates trees, as well as papyrus (Job 8:12) and wheat. He tells it explicitly in this entry: “every plant which grows on a stem is designated by the term ‘eṣ [= ‘abib]’ / כל דבר שעלה בקנה יקרא בלשון עץ.

2. Like any lexicographer, Qimḥi had to establish a taxonomy of the classes of information he would introduce in response to his readers’ questions. These responses, which always appear in the same order, follow the parts of speech – verbs, nouns and particles – and use the same formulation. In general, first to be mentioned are occurrences of verbs which usually follow the order of the binyanim, as we know it, the only difference being the existence of the po’el which is a pi’el of the geminates (verbs with a duplicated second radical). Then Qimḥi lists the to’ar, a subclass of the ‘verbal noun’, and the different morphological patterns of the noun which appear in the Bible. As he states in Mikhlof, and this also applies somewhat to Sefer ha-Shorashim too, Qimḥi does not differentiate between the different classes of nouns; for he believes that the reader will understand them by himself, but he does detail morphological patterns, plurals, and inflections.

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18 David Qimḥi divides the noun in two parts, שֵׁם דָּבָר and שֵׁם הַפּוֹאֵל, of which שֵׁם הַפּוֹאֵל is a subclass. שֵׁם דָּבָר is an “object noun,” in fact a primitive noun or a noun for which no verbal stem is extant (אבן, אישה, איש). שֵׁם הַפּוֹאֵל is either a “deverbal noun” (שִׁמְעוֹן deriving from שָׁמַע) or a “verbal noun” which serves as a basis for verbal formations (חקם, קש, קְדֻשׁ). שֵׁם הַטָּוָר is an “adjective noun,” either an agent noun (מלך, עבד) or a term used substantively (שֶׁמֶה ‘esem) to indicate intensity or quality (אנדרק, זמן, קְפֻלָה, תְמוֹנָה). See Qimḥi, Mikhlof, ff. 140v-142v; W. Chomsky, David Kimḥi’s Hebrew Grammar (mikhlof) (New York 1952) p. 218.

19 Qimḥi, Mikhlof, f. 142v: ואין רצוני להפריש ביניהם בהביאי אותם על משקלם כי א niezbęל על המבין כי נקל הוא להפריש ביניהם. לפיכך לא אחוש לחלק ביניהם ברוב כי עקר חפצי להורות לך.
when describing the additional elements whose adjunction allows noun formation. What characterizes Qimḥi’s works is the attention he pays to morphology in his dictionary; he is interested not in theory, in logical categories, but in practice. Each entry not only regroups the words of the same root, but also underscores the elaboration of morphological structures by noting the various elements added to a derivational base.

3. The third point I would like to briefly develop in this part concerns the terminology used by Qimḥi in his dictionary. Although I have not yet arrived at a complete list of the metalinguistic terms that appear in Sefer ha-Shorashim, it seems to be very limited. Moreover, when he had the choice between various synonyms, Qimḥi always favoured the most explicit, simple and straightforward technical term, the one that uses imagery to describe the morphological structure of the word. This is, in my view, the case for the names of the different binyanim. Indeed, Qimḥi preferred the periphrastic expressions already present in Ibn Janāḥ’s dictionary and rejected the designations piʻel and puʻal, hif‘il and hof‘al.20

20 In his introduction to Ša‘ar ha-pe‘alim in Sefer Mikhloł, Qimḥi lists the different binyanim as follows: the first column is binyan qal which the foundation of the verbs and is so called because there is no letter added to the fundamental letters except for those needed for the conjugation of the second, the third and the first persons as well as for the masculine and feminine plural … the second column is called binyan niʃ‘al … the third column is called binyan pi‘el ha-daguš but also nosaf since there is an additional mem in...
He tends to use *ha-po‘al ha-kaved* (רְדֵד) for *pi‘el*, *she-lo‘ nizkar po‘alo me-ha-daguš* for *pu‘al* (סְבָעָה), *ha-po‘al ha-kaved ha-nosaf* for *hif‘il*, *she-lo‘ nizkar po‘alo me-ha-nosaf* for *hof al* (סְבָעָה).

Nevertheless, when quoting his father or another author, Qimḥi does not modify their metalanguage and we therefore frequently find two synonyms in the same entry: the one he has used throughout his book; the other found in the quoted excerpt. For the root *ידה*, for example, two technical terms or expressions designate the same binyan: *ha-po‘al ha-kaved ha-nosaf* which is David Qimḥi’s terminology in *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, and *hif‘il* which appears in a comment emanating from his father’s work:

ףלא הַדְּנַדֲנָה הַפְּלוֹא בָּהָדֶנָה הַפְּלוֹא מְסַפִּיק וְיַדְּדוּ. הַפְּלוֹא הַפָּלָּא מְסַפִּיק

According to my father, blessed be his memory, it belongs to *binyan hif‘il* and according to the morphological norm, it should be *wa-yēyaddu*. And *ha-po‘al ha-kaved ha-nosaf* is employed for another meaning […]

Although the appellation of the different *binyanim* was not his invention, one clearly sees Qimḥi’s didactic intentions in using them; he is the first to organize the entries of his dictionary according to the various modifications and additions of affixes to the root, a phenomenon that clearly corresponds to the different names of the *binyanim*: *ha-po‘al ha-kaved* (because of the presence of the *dageš*), *ha-po‘al ha-kaved ha-nosaf* (because of the presence of a supplementary – *nosaf* – letter). The introduction of the *binyanim* in the lexicographic works was not systematic. In Ibn Janāḥ’s *Kitāb al-ʿUṣūl*, for example, which is organized according to the different meanings of the root, the *binyanim* are rarely indicated. They were however introduced in the *Qitsur Sho-*

rashim\textsuperscript{22}, an abridged version of Ibn Janāḥ’s dictionary, which mentions for each meaning the corresponding binyanim. It is not surprising since this work too was, in my opinion, intended as a didactic tool.

To conclude this first part, I would like to reiterate that Qimḥi’s Sefer ha-Shorashim is clearly a didactic text. It seems to reflect a constant dialogue with a virtual student (and perhaps not so virtual, but one based on actual teaching),\textsuperscript{23} resulting in a text which is nothing other than a compilation of all the answers to the questions asked by these virtual interlocutors. Every detail is thought out: lemma, structure, and terminology; this was an educational tool that allowed the dissemination, all over Europe, of Hebrew grammatical thought in non-Arabic speaking, and probably less scholarly, Jewish communities.

This development corresponds to a wider phenomenon: the production of linguistics books for a broader circle than just scholars. In the case of Latin lexicography, for example, during the eleventh century Papias wrote a dictionary \textit{Elementarium doctrinae rudimentum} (completed c. 1053), whose conception and organization overshadowed the oldest glossaries (\textit{Liber glossarum}, etc.). Such a book, which reflects true lexicological thought, propounded by the author in the preface, met the needs of his time: a growing number of people from all social milieus wanted to learn how to write Latin for practical reasons,\textsuperscript{24} and they needed an easily consultable dictionary that facilitated mastery of a large number of words. To achieve his goal, Papias introduced the \textit{derivatio} method that was employed for

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22}This abridged dictionary was composed according to Judah Ibn Tibbon’s translation of Ibn Janāḥ’s \textit{Kitāb al-ʾUṣūl} and was probably written before Qimḥi’s work. See J. Kogel, “La diffusion inattendue du \textit{Dictionnaire hébreu de Provence} édité par Ángel Sáenz Badillos,” \textit{Revue des études juives} 175:1-2 (2016) pp. 47-66; Á. Sáenz-Badillos (ed.), \textit{Un Diccionario hebreo de Provenza (Siglo XIII)} (Granada 1987).
\item \textsuperscript{23}According to Qimḥi’s own testimony, he was a teacher of Talmud (QIMḤI, \textit{Shorashim}, p. 420). Let us examine for example the root ṭaw. Qimḥi quotes two occurrences for the \textit{qal}, then one for the \textit{poʾal ha-kaved (ha-nosaf).} He pursues with the “adjective noun” and the noun, with and without the \textit{heh}. He finishes by explaining that “one must say that \textit{tov} with a \textit{ḥolem} is an “adjective noun,” while \textit{tov} with a \textit{šureq} is an “object noun” and they are identical whether they are in absolute or construct case.” The text itself does not mention any students who could have been asking a question. However, the last phrase seems to be an answer for the following possible question: how can I distinguish between “adjective noun” and “object noun”?\textsuperscript{24}
\end{itemize}
The objective, as Olga Weijers has explained, was to explain words according to their origin and their mutual relationship out of the conviction that all of them, except for the primitive ones, are derived from one or more other words. The introduction of the *derivatio* method profoundly changed the practice of lexicography: Hugucio (Italy, second half of the 12th century) made the derivation method his leading principle and organized the Medieval Latin vocabulary in families around one basic term or root. The result was not very practical because locating a word in such a book was not easy. Despite the later addition of indexes listing all the words alphabetically with references to the part of the work where they can be found, this type of organization was soon abandoned for a more classical list of words in alphabetical order. An important change nevertheless occurred and the entries henceforth included grammatical elements, mainly borrowed from the *derivatio* method.

Although Qimḥi’s *Shorashim* ensues from an internal evolution in Hebrew lexicography, we cannot discount the possible influence of Latin didactic works on this scholar. It has already been suggested that David’s elder brother, Moses Qimḥi, was aware of Latin grammars from which

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25 In Late Antiquity and in the early Middle Ages, the partial reliance on the question of the origin of words for their explanation was best illustrated by the *etymologia* method; it attempted “to yield up the words’ ‘true sense’ … and indeed something of the intrinsic character of the thing named by the word” (S. A. Barney et al. [trans.], *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* [Cambridge 2006] p. 11 [http://site.ebrary.com/id/10130374]), or as Isidore of Seville puts it, “when you have seen whence a word has originated, you understand its force more quickly” (Isidore, *Etymologia*, 1:29:1-2; Isidore and Barney, p. 55). The idea that the name may be indicative of the character and destiny of its bearer was current among the ancient Greeks and Hebrews, and is already found in the Bible. In the mid-twelfth century, the *derivatio*, which was a method close to *etymologia* that consisted in compiling words of the same root, progressively replaced *etymologia* in the study of the origins of words. See O. Weijers, *Dictionnaires et répertoires au moyen âge. Une étude du vocabulaire* (Turnhout 1991) p. 76.


27 One must add that some principles used by Hugucio relied on pure fantasy (Weijers, “Lexicography in the Middle Ages,” p. 149).

he probably borrowed tables of paradigms for his *Mahalakh*\(^{29}\) in order to answer the practical need for educational tools.\(^{30}\) Although a similar trend can be observed in the Karaite grammars, already in the classical period, where “comprehensive scholarly grammars … were followed by pedagogical grammars (second half of the eleventh century) intended to teach Biblical Hebrew to beginning students,” it seems hard to consider that they influenced the Provençal school of grammar.\(^{31}\)

4. *SEFER HA-SHORASHIM*: A STEP TOWARDS MEANING-MINIMALISM

Beyond a didactic approach, one can also discern Qimḥi’s ideological attitude toward the semantic aspect of words in *Sefer ha-Shorashim*. Strikingly, whenever possible, Qimḥi seeks to reduce the plurality of meanings to a single semantic root which can be described as the common denominator; at the same time, he also tries to avoid comparative philology and turns to classical traditional texts.\(^{32}\)

In his article, “Saadia vs. Rashi: On the Shift from Meaning-maximalism to Meaning-minimalism in Medieval Biblical Lexicology,” published in 1998,\(^{33}\) Richard Steiner demonstrated how different Saadia and Rashi’s lexicological approaches were. Saadia, under the influence of Arab lexicographers, thought that words have many meanings, whereas

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\(^{32}\) Among recent articles on the subject, see M. Kahan, “Homonymy vs. Polysemy in Medieval Hebrew Lexicography: Between David Qimḥi’s *Sefer ha-Shorashim* and Yonah ibn Janah’s *Kitāb al-ʿUṣūl*,” *Lešonenu* 77:2-3-4 (2015 [in Hebrew]) pp. 223-240.

Rashi held that they often have one basic meaning. Rashi’s approach is chiefly rooted in rabbinic literature, since the tannaitic definitions found in the Talmud and Midrash (‘X means none other than Y at every place’ [Sifre Bemidbar 99]) clearly indicate that a word retains the same meaning in different contexts. This shift from meaning-maximalism to meaning-minimalism is not specific to Ashkenazi linguistic thought; indeed, it also occurred, but more gradually, in Spain and Provence, “proceeding in small steps from Menahem ben Saruq to Ibn Janah to Abraham ibn Ezra and David Kimhi to Joseph ibn Kaspi.”

In the particular case of Ibn Janah to Kimhi, this phenomenon goes hand in hand with a significant reduction in vernacular glosses in Arabic and increased quotations of rabbinic texts. Let us examine some entries, טבח and סחר, first in Ibn Janah’s work and then in Kimhi’s.

Ibn Janah:

טבחו או מכרו. שרכב טבוח לעתהטת והבית והחתיך. יובל לטבוח. שר הטבחים. כצאן לטבוחה. הכינו לבניו מطبוח כלו זבח.طبיחת לא חמלת. וطبיחו או מכרו. שarkan טבוח לעהטת והבית והחתיך. יובל לטבוח. שר הטבחים. כצאן לטבוחה. הכינו לבניו מطيبו כלו זבח.

The division of the entry corresponds to the different meanings of the root, slaughtering (כלו זבח) and cooking (כלו בשול), whether the occurrences are verbs, adjective noun, or nouns. Some of these occurrences

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35 See note 18.
could in fact be classified differently, namely, an expression that can be rendered either as “chief butcher,” “captain of the guard,” or “head chef.” In the first three quotations for the second meaning, the root ṬBH (טבח) appears twice, as a verb and as a noun. Because there is no ambiguity concerning the meaning of טבחה, “butchery” or “meat of the beast,” which implies that the animal has already been slaughtered, Ibn Janāḥ choose to translate the verb as “cooking.”

The organization of Qimḥi’s dictionary is totally different: what prevails is the classification according to parts of speech and morphological patterns. The author lists the different binyanim in which the verbs are conjugated, followed by some examples, and arranges the nouns according to the presence of various elements, preformatives, suffixes, or specific vowels. The polysemous meanings of a root tend to disappear before the common denominator as identified by Qimḥi.

David Qimḥi:

טבח. טבחת ולא מתול, וטבחת לא McCarthy. שורכ טבחת לעיניך. וטבחת טבח.
ניקול טבחה. הותרו欢迎您 טבחה (את והтопו או כלים seriית).瑞 טבחים. לק’une טבחה.
חת טבחות. חסם לשת (אתן טבחב), סנה טבחה. טבחה טבחה.
 ביקשה יקטנה, בובק ואת טבחים אומט טבחה. ומשתורי טבחה. ולפי דעה טבחה.
לבני מטבח כלכל עני וברך. ימי חלק פ functionName עלון. ומי עלבר
המשנה דזר建築 למשה וברך, סנהוריסו נמות הבשר טבון, ועוד.
ובני כי עבר. עלי דעה אין פוך, כי כל יпередיו עינך וביה.

ṬBH. You slaughtered [tabahēta] without pity (Lam. 2:21); and slaughters it [u-tēvah] or sells it (Exod. 21:37); your ox shall be slaughtered [tavaih] before your eyes (Deut. 28:31); slaughter an animal [u-tevahō] and make it ready (Gen. 43:16); led to the slaughter [li-tevah] (Jer. 11:19). And the adjective noun: the cook [ha-tabah] took up [the leg and what was on it] (1 Sam. 9:24); the captain of the guard [ha-tabahim] (Gen. 37:36); to be perfumers and cooks [u-lē-tabahot] (1 Sam. 8:13). And the noun: like a lamb that is led to the slaughter [la-ṭevah] (Isa. 53:7) with a segol under the tēt; she has slaughtered her beasts [ṭivēḥah] (Prov. 9:2), and with the feminine ending he, as sheep for the slaughter [ṭivēḥah]36 (Ps. 44:23); and my meat [ṭivēḥati] that I have killed for my shearers (1 Sam. 25:11); and another pattern: pre-
pare slaughter [matbeah] for his sons (Isa. 14:21), all of them have the meaning of slaughtering. And R. Jonah [Ibn Janāḥ] has classified some of them as meaning cooking and so did the majority of the exegetes who compared them to Arabic, since the person who cooks the meat is called מץ [in Arabic] and the Hebrew het corresponds to the Arabic kaf. And in my opinion, it is not necessary, since they can all be interpreted as related to slaughtering.

This entry’s final sentence is particularly interesting and constitutes none other than a methodological statement. Although one can divide the occurrences of the words into two groups, Qimḥi favours one core meaning “slaughtering” since “they can all be interpreted as related to slaughtering.” He also acknowledges the motivation of the exegetes who based their interpretation on the Arabic term for cook. Although he does not mention him, Qimḥi probably knew Abraham Ibn Ezra’s explanation and criticism of Ibn Janāḥ’s classification as reflected in his commentary on Dan. 2:14:

Potiphar, the chief of Pharaoh’s tabahim; in my opinion this cannot be the same as rav tabahia’ since the biblical word tabah can be understood as having two different meanings; the first is murdering as in rav tabahim (2 Kings 25:8 and alii) and the proof is that he went to kill, and it is the case for like a gentle lamb [li-tévoah] led to the slaughter (Jer. 11:19); like a lamb [la-tevah] (Isa. 53:7) and numerous other cases; and the second meaning resembles the Arabic, like cook the meat of the beast [u-tévoah] and make ready (Gen. 43:16), since there was no sheep slaughterer at that time in Egypt, or like to be perfumers and [u-lè-tabahot] cooks (1 Sam. 8:13), since women do not slaughter; this is also the case for [ha-tabah] the cook took up [the leg and what was on it] (1 Sam. 9:24) and since the chief baker was baking the bread and the chief cupbearer was his friend, therefore I said that the king placed them in a friendly house, of the chief cook, and did not place them in the prison (Gen. 40:2) …
As a Talmud teacher, Qimḥi could neither ignore the Talmudic usage of this root in *bKetub* 3b – “his meat for the feast is ready [for cooking]” –, in *bBer* 56a – “you shall prepare and not eat,” etc. The question that arises is whether Qimḥi deliberately chose to highlight a single meaning for ideological or for pedagogical reasons. It will probably not be possible to answer this question but what seems obvious to me is that Qimḥi was an outstanding teacher who understood how to help his students remember a great number of biblical words, including *hapax legomena*, as we shall see in the next example, entry סחר SHR.

They saḥaru through the land and had no knowledge (Jer. 14:18), that is they circulated. *My heart throbs* (Ps. 38:11), in other words it was going round and round and was unsettled because of distress. And the Aramaic translation of *[he led me] around around* (Ezek. 37:2) is סהחר סהחר and of *he turned away from them* (Gen. 42:24) is וּכִּסְחֵר. And this is the reason why the merchant is called סחר, because he continuously circulates through the lands, back and forth […] And the noun the trade of many isles were under your dependence (Ezek. 27:15); and another [noun] pattern her merchandise and her wages (Isa. 23:18); and another [noun] pattern the gain of the silver (Prov. 3:14), the merchant of the nations (Isa. 23:3) […] and with the adjunction of a mem, the business [mishâr] of the merchants (1 Kings 10:15). And this is the reason why (deriving from this meaning) the shield which is completely round is called סהרא, his truth is a shield and a round buckler [soḥerâ] (Ps. 91:4), *rodela* [in the vernacular]; mother of pearl and soḥaret (Esth. 1:6), a precious stone, and it is possible


36 Provençal word for ‘shield’ derived from the Latin *rotula*, ‘wheel’.

that it was kept permanently in the hands of the merchants and therefore it is called soḥaret. As our rabbis of blessed memory said regarding [the expression] dar we-soḥaret, this is a precious stone which granted remission of taxes to all who dealt with merchandise (bMeg 12b).  

For this root, Ibn Janāḥ hesitated between three or four meanings. For the last one, סחרת, Ibn Janāḥ quoted an Arabic translation: فرش ر بحرف وحرف كسرى. Qimḥi did not take into account the Arabic equivalent but offered a popular etymology which finds support in a Talmudic quotation. And this is another feature of Qimḥi’s lexicological approach: the tendency, whenever possible, to avoid recourse to an Arabic equivalent, as was true for the first example mentioned at the beginning of this article, דַּוְיָא שְׁכָדְרָא.

Once again it is difficult to decide if Qimḥi’s method was intended to offer mnemonic devices to learners who could memorize the meanings of various words by connecting them to a single root and by establishing, in some way, a parallel between the morphological and semantic derivations. This method of minimizing the number of meanings whenever possible and, consequently, giving weight to an underlying meaning, as for soḥaret, is situated in the continuity of the Talmudic approach, as Steiner has already indicated. This was also Rashi’s attitude. Was Qimḥi influenced by Rashi’s approach or do the same causes produce the same effects? As we know, Qimḥi was well versed in Talmud and composed his grammatical books while he was engaged in his principal occupation, the teaching of Talmud.

One can also ask if homonyms have a place in Qimḥi’s linguistic thought. The case of three words attributed by Kaspi to the same semantic field may provide some indication, although the present article does not strive to provide a definitive answer. As Aslanov has pointed out, Kaspi notes that the words חלד / ḥeled, עלם / ’olam and תבל / tevel have a close

39 Curiously, David Qimhi merges two Talmudic interpretations, that of Shmuel (“there is a precious stone …”) and that of R. Ishmael (“he gave a remission of taxes [dēror] to all who dealt in merchandise [sēḥorāl]”), a discussion which also appears in Yalqut Shimoni, Esther 247.

meaning, but what about his predecessors? It seems quite clear that for Ibn Janāḥ, עולם has a temporal meaning (כל ימי / kol yēmē) and a spatial one, although he does not provide an equivalent for this last root, for which he only cites two occurrences, Job 34:13 and Ps. 9:9. For the root חלד, he seems to hesitate between a temporal and a spatial meaning: Ibn Janāḥ explains the word חלדו (Ps. 39:6) as זמני / zemani, “my lifetime,” whereas the expression חלד חלד (Ps. 49:2) is equated with ממתי הם חלד (Ps. 17:14) with מתשי斯顿 המר (Ps. 17:14) with / me-anšê ha-‘olam, “from the men of the world.”

For Qimḥi, these three terms שבל, עולם and חלד have distinct meanings. חלד has a temporal meaning, and Qimḥi quotes five occurrences which he systematically explains to clarify his position (Ps. 17:14; 19:6; 89:48; 49:2; Job 11:17). Namely, he opposes Ibn Janāḥ’s interpretation of the expression אנס חלד and explains it as signifying הזמן / anšê ha-zēman, “the men of the time,” whose meaning is not evident. Does the locution אנס חלד mean “mortal”? The term שבל is equated with זמני or זמנים לארוך Thời / zeman rav, “a long time,” whereas the word חלד is explained as שבל לכל ימי העולם / šem kēl lēḵol’aršott ha-yišuv, “a general word for all the inhabited countries of the world.” By relying on this example, it is possible to assume that Qimḥi probably believed

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41 Kaspi also considers the root חלד as belonging to the same semantic field, as he explains in this very entry: "אנס חלד חלד, he will be his servant for all his days," namely in the verse עבדו ועשה עולם (Exod. 21:6), “he will be his servant for all his days,” either those of the servant or of the master. This is also how he understands the verse עבדו כל ימי (Ps. 89:3), “that is all the days.”

42 JANĀḤ, Shorashim, p. 372. Ibn Janāḥ stresses through a few examples that signify “all the days” שבל, as in the verse עבדו ועשה עולם (Exod. 21:6), “he will be his servant for all his days,” either those of the servant or of the master. This is also how he understands the verse עבדו כל ימי (Ps. 89:3), “that is all the days.”

43 JANĀḤ, Shorashim, p. 540.
44 JANĀḤ, Shorashim, p. 154.
45 QIMḤI, Shorashim, p. 105.
46 QIMḤI, Shorashim, p. 268.
47 QIMḤI, Shorashim, p. 409.
that if different words originating from the same root share a common denominator, those originating from different roots must have a different meaning, a hypothesis which still needs to be confirmed.

5. CONCLUSION

Qimḥi was not an innovator in grammatical or lexicographical research but was an ingenious compiler of the knowledge of his day. His main aim was not originality but to achieve accessibility, by producing practical instruments for the study of the Hebrew language. Indeed, his dictionary, a model didactic work, easy to consult, with a clear structure, became a reference work for study of the Hebrew Bible for hundreds of years, first, among Jews, until the mid-sixteenth century, and among Christian humanists, from the early Renaissance. Qimḥi was the first author to introduce the derivation method into a Hebrew lexicographical work, and by so doing, he stressed the existence of a shared semantic root for families of words. As any dictionary, Sefer ha-Shorashim is also underpinned by an ideological attitude that it will in turn help to perpetuate. While seeking the underlying meaning, the core-meaning (the common denominator) of the Hebrew roots, this work conveys the image of a traditional man who favors pseudo-linguistic teachings to be found in rabbinical literature and puts aside, as much as possible, the elements exogenous to Jewish tradition (comparative philology).

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