

BROADENED RESEARCH HORIZONS OF THE EDITION PROJECT ON YOSEF QARA'S COMMENTARY ON THE MINOR PROPHETS (*TERE ASAR*)

BIBLE COMMENTARIES AS COMPILATORY LITERATURE?

In recent years, the problem of a fluctuating textual transmission, and the question whether we can trace back the origin of an exegetical commentary to an (un-)known single 'author', has reached its peak with the debate on the commentaries of Rashi, R. Yosef Qara, and Rashbam. Sara Japhet and Martin Lockshin – with Elazar Touitou today's leading scholars of Rashbam's œuvre – have discussed whether the Job-Commentary in the New York manuscript (MS Lutzki 778) could be attributed to Rashbam. The question at stake was, whether the commentary is an 'author's [Rashbam's] commentary,' as Japhet maintains, or an exegetical compilation by an unknown redactor/compilator, a 'Rashbam-type commentary,' as Lockshin claims. In another instance, Sara Japhet has disputed the attribution by Moshe Ahrend of a body of writing as Yosef Qara's Job commentaries, instead postulating that they were a 'compilatory commentary.' In 2007, shortly before Japhet's edition of the commentary on the Song of Songs appeared, the academic advisor of the current research project on Qara's *Tere-Asar*-commentary, Hanna Liss, reopened the debate on the authorship of the commentary on the Song of Songs as found in MS Hamburg hebr. 32. Liss challenged Japhet's attribution to Rashbam, reaching the conclusion that "for the present, we might (...) call our assumed author or compilator 'Ps.-Rashbam.'" Until today, however, researcher still lack the satisfactory and compelling methodological criteria needed to reach a decisive conclusion.

To date, academic research on 'compilatory literature' has retraced the beginnings of the northern-French commentary almost exclusively to the Christian-Latin contextual network. Despite the fact that we must take acknowledge that the Medieval French exegetes might have had at least a personal and, therefore, *oral* access to the coeval Christian literary tradition, problems arise in regard to a formal and contextual comparison of Hebrew and Latin literature. This holds true primarily to the use by contemporary scholars of literary-theoretical terminology largely stemming from the Latin tradition, which is then often simply applied to commentaries written in Hebrew. For a start, we should be cautious about adopting the term 'compilatory literature,' which refers back to the Latin *compilatio*, unconditionally. The subject of its Hebrew equivalent has never been seriously considered, probably due to the fact that the Hebrew commentaries do not reveal a distinct terminology. Which Hebrew term can be taken as equivalent to *compilatio*: *yalqut* (ילקוט) 'anthology?' *quntres* (קונטרס) 'booklet/brochure?' Poznanski often made use of the term *quntres(-im)* when characterizing what has been termed 'compilatory literature.' In his writings, the expression bears almost exclusively pejorative connotations. However, compilers/authors never use *quntres(-im)* as a self definition of their literary work within the primary sources. Following Leopold Zunz, Abraham Berliner refers to R. Yosef Qara as a 'glossator,' an 'editor,' or an 'exegete.' As far as I could investigate, Qara had never referred to himself as a '*sofer*.' R. Eliezer of Beaugency used the term *sofer* in the sense of a (final) 'redactor' and assumed the *sofer* to be the one who undertook the task of editing the compilation of an individual prophet's words. One could assume that the Jewish scholars had not yet sufficiently developed technical terms for their literary activity. However, it is striking that in contrast to halakhic compilations and collections, the Bible commentaries in particular lack almost any other technical idiom describing such literary activity and the development of textual traditions. This also applies to the term *siddur*, סדר, סידור, pi. (סדר/סידור), which even features an inner-Hebrew semantic modification from 'arrangement/order' to

our contemporary conventional understanding as a ‘prayerbook,’ which also holds true for $\sqrt{\text{סד}}$ ho. or $\sqrt{\text{נוה}}$ ho. To offer a comparison: Giovanni Bonaventura (1221-1274) carefully distinguishes between *scriptor*, *compilator*, *commentator*, and *auctor*.

Beyond these terminology problems, R. and M. Rouse have elucidated in great detail that even within the Latin semantic context it remains unclear whether *compilatio* denotes a principle, a genre, or a literary form. Latin *compilatio* encompasses more than (English) ‘compilation,’ which usually simply refers to some kind of ‘collection.’ These issues are even more vital to Bible- and Talmud commentary literature since through the entire Jewish High Middle Ages, i.e. in Rashi’s time and well beyond, Midrash-collections were composed that match exactly the category of ‘compilatory commentary’ (*Yalqut Shim’oni*; *Beresbit Rabbati*; *Midrash ha-Gadol* a.o.) with a single author being responsible for the compilation.

THE EDITION PROJECT

Based on these problems, we have in the current project decided to turn things on their head and attempt to go *backward*, investigating the text of Rashi’s closest “Talmid-Chaverim“ in relation to Rashi’s commentary. The point of departure, thus, is not the path from Rashi to his successors but rather the exact opposite: effectively moving backwards – starting with the successors. A key figure here is R. Yosef Qara. Our first investigations conducted at the *Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts*, Jerusalem, led us to suspect that it will not necessarily be possible to distinguish between Qara’s and Rashi’s commentaries in the sense of a literature by two clearly distinct authors, as has been assumed until now. When we started investigating all existing manuscripts, two completely different outcomes were possible:

1. A clearly recognizable profile of commentaries written by Yosef Qara, which are contextually different from Rashi’s commentaries both in regard to his rationalistic interpretation and to his *torat ha-lashon* (key exegetical concepts, linguistic system). The comparison of the usage of the Old French glosses (*Leazim*) in the text is still included.
2. The dismissal of the idea of ‘Qara’-commentar(ies). Such an outcome would affect the central medieval distinction between authors and (their) literary traditions and would once again put the current methodological approaches to Bible commentary literature to test. The critical edition of the commentaries on the Books of the Minor Prophets (*Tere Asar*) can only have an indicative function here.

Based on the commentary of the Books of the Minor Prophets, the contents of this project serve to ascertain more precisely the scope, literary genesis, claim and particularities of the commentaries, by juxtaposing, more stringently than has been the case until now, the commentaries of Yosef Qara and Rashi. In addition to lexicological, Bible exegetical-theological and objective explanations in the translation, the advanced scholarly research on these texts will concentrate, above all, on the literary historical question of the extent to which we might still speak of “compilatory literature” regarding Bible commentaries, as well as which literary-theoretical taxonomy should be brought to bear here.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS AND SAMPLER VIEWS

Having worked on the edition and translation of the text for the last two years, our first and probably most important result is that the commentary on the Minor Prophets (*Tere*

Asar) reveals a stable and consistent textual tradition and does not show any sign of fluctuating transmission. The commentary will be published from seven manuscripts:

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| 1. MS JTS; Lutzki 777 | A |
| 2. MS Breslau 104 II | B |
| 3. MS Firenze, Laurentiana Plut.II.24 | C |
| 4. MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 162 | D |
| 5. MS Parma 2995, de Rossi 255 | E |
| 6. MS Modena, Estense Q.6.20 | F |
| 7. MS Firenze, Laurentiana Plut.III.8 | G |

The manuscripts – the oldest one dating from 1268 – offer more or less the same wording, the ‘less’ simply referring to deviations that occurred by haplography, dittography, or minor cases of *aberratio oculi*. The edition will present a distinct and consistent exegetical profile of R. Yosef Qara as the ‘author’ of this gloss-commentary (the question of a Bible commentary as a gloss and the commentaries’ *mise-en-page* will be dealt with in detail in the forthcoming publication). The layout of the edition will present several apparatuses that provide the reader with the following information:

Apparatus I: Biblical quotations and the question of the *nusab ha-miqra* (including the *masora*) being revealed in Medieval manuscripts

Apparatus 2: Biblical, rabbinic, and other references

Apparatus 3: the critical apparatus for the manuscripts A-G

As our basic manuscript for the edition we chose MS Jewish Theological Seminary New York, Lutzki 777 from 1268. In contrast to other textual witnesses, JTS Lutzki 777, which has already been investigated at the Jewish Theological Seminary, offers the *vernacular* (Old-French) glosses with vocalization throughout, which is especially important since Qara very often proposed Three-, Four-, or Five-word glosses. The investigation of the glosses in regard to their morphological and phonological characteristics, and in relation to the preservation of Old French archaisms such as the Old French Case system or diphthongs, is currently undertaken by Dr. Marc Kiwitt, *Dictionnaire étymologique de l'ancien français* (DEAF), Heidelberg.

As our sampler edition for the public, we here present Qara’s commentary on the book of Jonah. The edition is prepared with the Classical Text Editor (CTE), The word-processor for critical editions, commentaries and electronic publishing: <http://www.oeaw.ac.at/kvk/cte/>