

“Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”
On the Reception of the *Sefer ha-Shorashim* in Latin

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«NO SUSTENTAS TÚ A LA RAÍZ, SINO LA RAÍZ A TI». SOBRE LA RECEPCIÓN EN LATÍN DEL *SÉFER HA-ŠORAŠIM*. Este artículo se ocupa de los principales capítulos de la recepción del *Sefer ha-šorašim* de David Quimḥi en el mundo cristiano durante el Renacimiento. Un testimonio menos conocido de este interés, que combina el examen crítico con la apropiación, es la traducción latina integral compuesta por, o para, el cardenal Egidio de Viterbo, probablemente durante la segunda década del siglo XVI, y conservada en dos manuscritos. En este artículo se ofrece, junto a una rápida presentación de la situación de la lexicografía hebrea al principio del Renacimiento y de su profunda transformación debida a la problemática adopción del modelo de Quimḥi, una visión sintética de los diferentes enfoques de las varias versiones del diccionario de Quimḥi en el mundo cristiano: de la simple adaptación al moldeo, bastante complicado, de un diccionario bilingüe de hebreo bíblico, al fenómeno paradójico de la traducción de un léxico monolingüe en un idioma diferente. En este último, la pérdida semántica es evidente: lo que sigue siendo de interés prioritario es el provecho exegético esperado de la investigación sobre esta adaptación, y no menos importante, el avance de nuestro conocimiento de la comprensión humanista de la Biblia en una época de cambios paradigmáticos radicales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Traducciones hebreo-latinas; David Quimḥi; Egidio de Viterbo.

This paper deals with the main chapters of the reception of David Kimchi's *Sefer ha-shorashim* within the Christian world during the Renaissance. A less known testimony of this interest, blending critical examination and appropriation is the integral Latin translation made by, or rather for, Cardinal Giles of Viterbo preserved in two mss., beside a rapid presentation of the situation of Hebrew lexicography in Latin at the beginning of the Renaissance and its deep change through the contested adoption of Kimchi's model, a synthetic view of the various approaches to Kimchi's dictionary, from simple adaptation

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to the rather complex moulding of a bilingual dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, to the paradoxical phenomenon of the translation of a monolingual lexicon in a different language. In the latter, the semantic loss is evident: what remains worth investigating is the expected exegetical gain for the Humanistic understanding of the Bible in an age of upheavals.

KEYWORDS: Hebrew-Latin Translations; David Kimchi; Giles of Viterbo.

An imaginary contest designed to find out who was the most “popular” medieval rabbi among Christian intellectuals during the centuries from the Renaissance to the 18th century, would turn out as a quite narrow one. Rashi, Maimonides and Abraham Ibn Ezra would certainly be among the most likely candidates, but very close to the top one would find also rabbi David Kimchi, who is perhaps less known today than the other three, but undoubtedly deserves a mention in this ideal hall of fame.

Speaking of mentions or citations, it is perhaps curious to note that the very first occurrence of the verb “to cite” in English is used in connection with David Kimchi. It is found, according to the Oxford English Dictionary,¹ in a rare tract, printed in 1535 and violently opposed due to the heterodox opinions it contained. The booklet, confiscated and destroyed to such an extent that only very few copies survive, was authored by George Joye and bore the title *An Apology Made to Satisfy, If It May Be, William Tyndale* and was a polemical pamphlet criticizing Tyndale’s English translation of the New Testament.² The disputation revolved around the resurrection of the body and one of the *loci* of this controversy was Ps. 1,5: על כן לא יקומו רשעים במשפט, in this case not so much the *yaqumu*, understood variously among the Christians, to rise, to stand or to rise from the dead, but specifically about *mishpat*, which the German Reformer Martin Bucer, in his commentary on the Psalms according to the *Hebraica Veritas*,³ analyzed on the basis of David Kimchi’s Commentary on the Psalms,⁴ one of his best known

¹ Cfr. J. WILLINSKY, *Empire of Words. The Reign of the OED* (Princeton 1994) p. 4.

² See the modern edition by Edward ARBER (ed.), G. JOY, *An Apology made by George Joy to satisfy, if it may be, W. Tyndale* (Westminster 1882); cfr. G. M. JUHÁSZ, *Translating Resurrection. The Debate between William Tyndale and George Joye in Its Historical and Theological Context* (Leiden – Boston 2014).

³ M. BUCER, *Sacrorum Psalmorum libri quinque*, ed. Hervagius (Basel 1547) p. 11.

⁴ Ed. Saloniki 1522, f. 42, ad locum.

works for Christian readers, especially because of the polemical, overtly anti-Christian attitude of several passages of his exegesis of the Psalms. Kimchi’s commentary on the Psalms has had for a long time a double identity: it was quoted and utilized by all the principal Hebraists of the Renaissance and Reformation. At the same time, it was the object of an implacable censorship with the paradoxical result that, in the edition of the *Sefer Nitzzachon* of Yom Tov Lippman Mülhausen, published by Theodor Hackspan in Altdorf and Nuremberg in 1644, the last pages are occupied by a collection of the censored passages,⁵ without the innocent or neutral ones, constituting a sort of “enfer” of Kimchian exegese.

It would be indeed very easy to find other Christian authors, of different ages and countries, who quote David Kimchi at the most unexpected places, simply because his works, soon translated into Latin, belonged to the standards of good humanist education, not only to the erudite discussions of the Reformation. In order to illustrate this point one could give countless examples but, within the given limits of the present contribution, I will only allude to a couple of instances. In the 1850 edition of the *Divers voyages touching the discovery of America* by Richard Hakluyt (first published in London in 1582), a passage concerning Brazil, is commented upon by the general editor John Winter Jones with a reference to Kimchi’s *Liber radicum*, in order to demonstrate that the use of the word Brazil for a type of wood predated that the denomination of the country, on the sole ground that Kimchi, long before the discovery of America, quotes the term ברזיל as a gloss (*lo‘ez*) for a reddish type of wood.⁶ This late occurrence of Kimchi’s reception among a Christian cultivated readership served not only to illustrate the diffusion of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* among Christians in contexts as various as geography or botany, but also *pars pro toto* the question of the vernacular glosses, which forms one of the motivations of Christian interest of Kimchi and the subject of some of the following observations.

As a last example of the reception of Kimchi’s works among the Christians, I would like to refer to one of the most beloved masterpieces

⁵ Th. HACKSPAN, *Liber Nizachon* (Altdorf – Nuremberg 1644) pp. 196-200.

⁶ Cfr. R. HACKLUYT, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent*. Edited with Notes and Introduction by J. WINTER JONES (London 1850) p. 46.

of the English literature, James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.⁷ The faithful author refers, in the preface, to Kimchi's interpretation of the first Psalm ("His leaf also shall not wither"), as to mean that even the idle talk of a good man should not be neglected, in order to justify his generosity in reporting the apparently irrelevant *obiter dicta* and the most contingent "table talks" of his protagonist, the famous Samuel Johnson.⁸

Rather than investigating the vast field of Kimchi's fortunes across the ages, I will focus here on the beginnings of the reception of his dictionary, the *Sefer ha-shorashim* or *Book of the Hebrew Roots* in the 16th century, since it is a still poorly researched chapter of a rich story.

Our knowledge of Hebrew lexicography among non-Jewish scholars has been improved in many significant ways since Ludwig Geiger's monograph on the study of Hebrew in Germany in Germany between the end of the 15th and the first half of the 16th century.⁹ One central piece of evidence widening our knowledge of Medieval Hebraism is afforded undoubtedly by the manuscripts studied by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger: her work documents with abundance that the study of Hebrew in the Middle Ages was far from virtually non-existent, as it had been previously assumed.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as far as Hebrew lexicography is concerned, the prevailing model was rather the *Glossarium*, a sort of interlinear or marginal aid to the understanding of a text, usually the Bible, with an *ad hoc* rendering, be it in Latin or in a vernacular language, not very different from the

⁷ J. BOSWELL, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. including a Journal of His Tour to the Hebrides*. Vol. I (London 1835) p. 27.

⁸ It should not be necessary to recall that Samuel Johnson compiled the celebrated *Dictionary of the English Language*, the ancestor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, mentioned above.

⁹ L. GEIGER, *Das Studium des Hebräischen in Deutschland vom Ende des XV. bis zur Mitte des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Breslau 1870).

¹⁰ J. OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER et al., *Dictionnaire hébreu-latin-français de la Bible Hébraïque de l'Abbaye de Ramsey (XIIIe siècle)* (Turnhout 2008); J. OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER and P. STIRNEMANN, "The Twelfth-Century Trilingual Psalter in Leiden," *Scripta* 1 (2008) pp. 103-112; and J. OLSZOWY-SCHLANGER, "A School of Christian Hebraists in 13th Century England," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1:2 (2008) pp. 249-277, and "Christian Hebraism in Thirteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Hebrew-Latin Manuscripts," in *Crossing Borders. Hebrew Manuscripts as a Meeting-place of Cultures*, eds. P. VAN BOXEL and S. ARNDT (Oxford 2009) pp. 115-122.

many Hebrew-vernacular glossaries in use among the Jews. A novel approach to Hebrew lexicography was not implemented before the end of the 15th century.

The fact of having bought a dictionary does not seem to us worthy of being annotated in our diary but in the *Annales Suevici*, a Chronical of the history of the German region of Schwaben (Suebia) penned by Martin Crusius and published in 1595-96, we find duly reported that, more than a hundred years earlier, in 1490 a priest and cantor born in Aub (Franconia) and resident of Ulm, Johannes Behaim (or Böhlm), bought from the local Jews, shortly before their expulsion from that town, a fact which is in itself a significant detail, some grammatical books and a dictionary.¹¹ As a matter of fact, the annotation by Crusius, as he duly added,¹² derives from the *Bibliotheca instituta et collecta*, a revised version of the *Bibliotheca universalis* of Conrad Gesner, published in 1574 by Josias Simmler.¹³ That dictionary, with glosses in Latin and in German, would later be put to the disposal of Konrad Pellikan and subsequently of Johann Reuchlin.¹⁴ However, as Moritz

¹¹ M. CRUSIUS, *Annales Suevici* (Frankfurt am Main 1596) p. 489: “Ioannes Beham Ulmensis, primus omnium in Germania Hebr. Lexicon, et libros aliquot Grammaticos, a Iudaeis comparavit, quibus Capnioni, Pellicano et aliis profuit. Gesn. in Biblioth.”

¹² It is still commonplace that the source of that information should be Crusius and not Gesner-Simmler; cfr. R. LEICHT, “Von allen und yegklichen iuden büchern und schrifften nichts vßgenommen,” and “Johannes Reuchlin und die *Bücher der Juden* an Vorabend des Bücherstreits,” in *Reuchlins Freunde und Gegner. Kommunikative Konstellationen eines Frühnezeitlichen Medienereignisses*, ed. W. KÜHLMANN (Ostfildern 2010) pp. 45-68: 57-58.

¹³ *Bibliotheca instituta et collecta primum a Conrado Gesnero, deinde in Epitomen redacta et novorum Librorum accessione locupletata, iam vero postremo recognita, et in duplum post priores editiones aucta, per Iosiam Simlerum Tigurinum* (Tiguri 1574) p. 344: “Ioannes Beham Ulmensis, primus omnium in Germania Hebraeum lexicon et grammaticos aliquot libros a Iudaeis magno pretio comparavit, et curavit in Germanicam linguam transferri, circa annum Domini 1490, atque ea deinde Capnioni, Pellicano, aliisque communicans eorum in Hebraismo studia atque industriam excitavit.”

¹⁴ Cfr. J. CH. WOLF, דעת ספרי שרשים, *Historia Lexicorum Hebraicorum* (Wittemberg 1705) p. 74.

Steinschneider,¹⁵ Joseph Perles¹⁶ and Eberhard Nestle¹⁷ have shown, it was not a copy of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* of David Kimchi, but rather an abridged version of the ‘*Aruk*, a Talmudic dictionary, still preserved at the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Hebr. 204).¹⁸ As a matter of course one cannot rule out that Böhm, among his “grammatical works” also possessed a copy of Kimchi’s *Miklol* that included the *Sefer ha-shorashim*. Be it as it may, although the claim has often been repeated,¹⁹ neither Konrad Pellikan, nor Johannes Reuchlin used Kimchi as the unique basis of their lexicographical works. The former, as he himself states in his autobiography, produced rather a concordance of the Psalms with Latin or vernacular glosses but, as he confesses, he was not even able to make sense of the different forms he collected from the Biblical text, before Reuchlin explained to him the principle of radical triliteralism.²⁰

Reuchlin, for his part, did use in his introductory Hebrew grammar cum dictionary bearing the title *De rudimentis Hebraicis* (Pforzheim 1506) several grammatical works in Hebrew, which he obtained during

¹⁵ M. STEINSCHNEIDER, “Jüdisch-Deutsche Litteratur und Jüdisch-Deutsch mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Ave-Lallemant. 3. Artikel: Nahchräge,” *Serapeum* 30 (1869) pp. 145-159: 156-157.

¹⁶ J. PERLES, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Hebräischen und Aramäischen Studien* (München 1884) p. 19.

¹⁷ E. NESTLE, “Johannes Böhm und sein hebräisches Wörterbuch von 1490,” in *Marginalien und Materialien* (Tübingen 1893) pp. 28-33.

¹⁸ Cfr. M. STEINSCHNEIDER, *Die hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München*. 2. Grossenteils umgearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage (München 1895) p. 88.

¹⁹ Cfr. S. BURNETT, “Reassessing the ‘Basel-Wittenberg Conflict’: Dimensions of the Reformation-Era Discussion of Hebrew Scholarship,” in *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe*, eds. A. COUDERT and J. SHOULSON (Philadelphia 2004) pp. 181-201: 185-186. For a most recent occurrence cfr. M. L. CRAIG, “Hebrew Lexicography. Pre-Modern Period,” in *Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, ed. G. KHAN (Leiden – Boston 2013) vol. II, p. 515.

²⁰ Cfr. *Das Chronikon des Konrad Pellikan*. Zur vierten Säkularfeier der Universität Tübingen herausgegeben von B. Riggensbach (Basel 1877) pp. 18-19; *Die Hauschronik Konrad Pellikans von Rufach. Ein Lebensbild aus der Reformationszeit*. Deutsch von T. Vulpinus (Strassburg 1892) pp. 20-22.

his Italian travels²¹ and from the court of the bishop of Worms Johann von Dalberg. Among these grammars there was certainly the *Miklol* by David Kimchi. As it is known, Reuchlin gave to his pioneering Hebrew Grammar, a similar, but not identical, structure to that of David Kimchi.²² In fact, Kimchi's *Miklol* contains a grammatical introduction followed by a dictionary whereas Reuchlin has a primer, followed by the dictionary and, in the last place, an extensive grammar. However, if we check the structure and the semantic equivalences suggested in his dictionary, we will quickly see that Reuchlin adopted a completely different method and did not translate Hebrew into Latin systematically according to the lexical observations of Kimchi. The very fact that in Reuchlin's dictionary the opinion of Kimchi is sometimes quoted explicitly proves that the works of the latter, as an exegete no less than as a lexicographer, should not be viewed as the sole source of the former's very essential dictionary.²³ It would be much more accurate to conclude that Kimchi's dictionary served as a model for Reuchlin's own re-elaboration of Hebrew lexicography and, certainly, that there is more of Kimchi in Reuchlin's dictionary than of any other Hebrew lexicographer, be it Jonah Ibn Janach or Joseph Ibn Caspi. This fact finds an explanation in the circumstance that among the Jews, especially in Italy, and even more so after the immigration of many Sefardic Jews expelled from Spain (1492), Kimchi's lexicon was the dictionary *par*

²¹ We know from early records of his library that Reuchlin acquired Kimchi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim* in the Naples edition in 1498; Cfr. K. CHRIST, *Die Bibliothek Reuchlins in Pforzheim* (Leipzig 1924) p. 41. Moreover, he also acquired a copy of Kimchi's Commentary on the 12 prophets during his stay in Rome in the same year; cfr. K. PREISENDANZ, "Die Bibliothek Johannes Reuchlins," in *Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522)*, Nachdruck der 1955 von Manfred Krebs herausgegebenen Festgabe. Neu herausgegeben und erweitert von H. Kling und S. Rhein (Sigmaringen 1994) pp. 35-82: 75. See now W. VON ABEL and R. LEICHT (eds.), *Verzeichnis der Hebraica in der Bibliothek Johannes Reuchlins* (Ostfildern 2005).

²² Cfr. H. GREIVE, "Die Hebräische Grammatik Johannes Reuchlins: De Rudimentis Hebraicis," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 90 (1978) pp. 395-409.

²³ Cfr. L. GEIGER, *Johann Reuchlin, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Leipzig 1871) pp. 110-126; the article of S. A. HIRSCH, "Johann Reuchlin, the Father of the Study of Hebrew among Christians," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 8 (1896) pp. 445-470, reprinted in his *A Book of Essays* (London 1905) pp. 116-150, derives mainly from Geiger's considerations.

excellence. As I have shown elsewhere, Reuchlin's beginnings as a Hebraist lie in Italy, or to be more precise, among Italian Jews²⁴ and at the same time, as it will be shown further on, it was in Italy that the *Sefer ha-shorashim* was first translated into Latin.

It is safe to assume, as a result of a survey of Western Hebrew lexicography, that no Latin dictionary of Hebrew published between 1506 and 1600, in which Johann Buxtorf's *Epitome radicum hebraicarum* was published, was exempt from the influence of the *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, although the degree of that influence varied greatly. The convert Pablo Nuñez Coronel, for example, who authored a Hebrew dictionary, accompanying the Hebrew grammar written by yet another convert, Alfonso de Zamora, for the Polyglot Bible of Alcalá, published in 1515,²⁵ was certainly aware of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* and his lexical interpretations are very often in accordance with Kimchi's interpretive solutions. On the other hand, Sebastian Münster's first attempt (of a long series) at Hebrew lexicography (the ערוך השרשות *Dictionarium hebraicum nunc primum editum*, published in Basel in 1523) did not derive from Kimchi but rather from Konrad Pellikan's glossary-like word-list and can be described as an unsophisticated primer. Later on in his brilliant career as a Hebrew scholar, Münster, a former Franciscan friar who adhered fervently to the Reformation, turned his attention to Kimchi's *Sefer ha-shorashim* as the model for Hebrew lexicography. In order to explain this shift one should not forget that Kimchi was held in high esteem among the first reformers, especially Zwingli, Bucer and Calvin, who in their exegetical work quote him as one of the most authoritative rabbinical exegetes. Martin Luther himself observed in his *marginalia* to his edition of the Psalms, that Kimchi was, with a slightly exaggerated formulation, "the god of the rabbis" (*rabi Kimchi est deus rabinorum*).²⁶ However, already in 1525 Münster published another dictionary, bearing the title

²⁴ S. CAMPANINI, "Reuchlins jüdische Lehrer aus Italien," in *Reuchlin und Italien*, ed. G. DÖRNER (Stuttgart 1999) pp. 69-85.

²⁵ *Vocabularium Hebraicum atque Chaldaicum totius Veteris Testamenti* (Alcalá 1515), published as part of the final volume of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible.

²⁶ *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Deutsche Bibel*. Vol. 3 (Weimar 1911) p. 574 (translation minutes to Ps. 127). Cfr. BURNETT, "Reassessing the 'Basel-Wittenberg Conflict'," p. 200.

מקרי דרדקי, *Dictionarium hebraicum ex rabbinorum commentariis collectum* (at Froben’s press in Basel) where, still on the basis of Pellikan’s work, a growing number of annotations, variant translations and lexical comments are derived from the *Sefer ha-shorashim*. The same Münster published, in 1530, a trilingual dictionary (שילוש לשונות, *Dictionarium trilingue*), listing Latin words with their Greek and Hebrew translation. This work was intended to ease, for the benefit of the humanists, the then quite fashionable Hebrew composition, especially of letters. Only in 1535 Münster edited his own first dictionary, which he nevertheless called “third,” signalling the unity of his lexical project, choosing the title *Sefer ha-shorashim ‘im nizgarim*, which expressed clearly his will of adapting and not simply translating Kimchi’s work into Latin. The title is rendered in Latin as *Liber radicum et compositorum*, that is to say “Book of the roots,” according to the demand of the flourishing market, but adding the derivatives, a complete lexicon of the Bible. What had convinced Münster to rename his dictionary and to put a reference to Kimchi’s lexicon on the title page?

Münster’s answer to this question is clearly stated in his preface to the reader: it was the publication, in 1529 of Santi Pagnini’s *Thesaurus linguae sanctae*, printed by the press of Sebastianus Gryphius in Lyon. Pagnini (1470-1536) was a Dominican friar from Lucca and studied Hebrew with some converted Jews in Florence. He lived in Rome from 1515 to 1523, working under Leo X and side by side with Giles of Viterbo and Elijah Levita, on a vast and ambitious project towards the publication of a polyglot Bible. Pagnini had also collected, on the basis of the *Sefer ha-shorashim*, a tremendous quantity of rabbinic sources, both published and in manuscript, in order to produce a dictionary, which was at the same time a sort of encyclopaedia of rabbinical exegesis. On the other hand, the vast dimensions of this dictionary and the variety of possible interpretations of one and the same root made of it an unpractical tool especially for beginners, not to mention the theological difficulties that could arise from the different and often mutually exclusive interpretations and contradicting opinions about the meaning of biblical Hebrew words that Pagnini had assembled. The latter tendency is particularly visible in Pagnini’s (very literal) translation of the Bible, in which the translator added alternative renderings in the footnotes, so much that the printer Gryphius felt compelled to justify, in an elegant way,

this exegetical behaviour, stating in the preface that variety should not scare or scandalize, because it is a trace of the infinite potential of the divine word.²⁷

To this well-meant defence, the pragmatic spirit of Münster could respond, as he did, that on the same basis of David Kimchi's dictionary, which was used by Pagnini, he could arrange a more practical dictionary than Pagnini's, because the *magnum opus* of the latter is too extensive to be of any use for students of Hebrew.²⁸ In his preface Münster points out that the most significant advancement of Hebrew learning was caused by Elia Levita's edition of the Hebrew text of the *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, which appeared in Venice in 1529.²⁹ Now Levita was not uncritical towards the *Sefer ha-shorashim*, but used it as the basis for his own lexicographical works and, as it is well known, left on a copy of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* published in Naples in 1490 the earliest trace of his handwriting.³⁰ One can be certain that he studied this work very carefully and was thus very well prepared, once returned to Venice after the Sack of Rome (1527), to help Daniel Bomberg publish a very elegant and useful edition of the Hebrew text of the dictionary. This very edition was reprinted at Bomberg's shop in 1546.³¹ The following year a new edition of the Hebrew text was published in Venice, this time at the printing press of Bomberg's competitor Marco Antonio Giustiniani.³² This edition, with its eloquent bi-lingual title page, was conceived from the very beginning as a pedagogical and exegetical aid for Christians, as is demonstrated by the fact that on the external margins,

²⁷ On Pagnini, see T. M. CENTI, "L'attività letteraria di Santi Pagnini (1470-1536) nel campo delle scienze bibliche," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 15 (1945) pp. 5-51, and S. CAMPANINI, "Pagnini, Antonio Baldino," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (Rome 2015), online edition at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-baldino-pagnini_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/antonio-baldino-pagnini_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

²⁸ In Münster's words: "Conflavit et Santes inde [that is to say from Kimchi's *Shorashim*] ingens suum lexicon, sed quod ob sui immensam extensionem parum frugi esse poterit Hebraice studiosis"; cfr. S. MÜNSTER, *Sefer ha-shorashim 'im nigzarim* (Basel 1535) f. a3.

²⁹ *Sefer ha-shorashim we-hu cheleq sheni me-ha-miklol* (Venice 1529).

³⁰ Now at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (shelf mark Inc. 25, F. 2). Cfr. A. Z. SCHWARZ, "Zur Biographie Elia Levitas," *Archiv für jüdische Familienforschung* 2:1-3 (1913) pp. 24-27; G. WEIL, *Élie Lévitá, humaniste et massorète* (Leiden 1963) pp. 3 and 9.

³¹ *Sefer ha-shorashim we-hu ha-cheleq ha-sheni me-ha-miklol* (Venice 1546).

³² *Sefer ha-shorashim. Thesaurus linguae sanctae sive Dictionarium* (Venice 1547).

a Latin synthetic translation of the roots is offered. Moreover, Elijah Levita was also intensely involved in this project, since the number and quality of his interventions is much higher and ranks from an isolated comment to a more articulated appendix to a single root and to the accumulation of Italian or Venetian vernacular glosses in addition to the Provençal or Arabic equivalents offered by Kimchi in the original text.

Giustiniani's edition³³ is the actual culmination point of Kimchi's influence on the development of a Christian Hebrew lexicography, since it succeeded in putting at the disposal of a mature public the original lexicon, with a few complements and some hints to a semantic rendering of the roots in Latin. The quality of the enterprise was warranted by the participation of Levita, an excellent grammarian who had enjoyed the admiration and the full support of a Cardinal such as Giles of Viterbo, an excellent relationship with Sebastian Münster, who became also his publisher in Basel, not to mention his fruitful collaboration with Daniel Bomberg, Marco Antonio Giustiniani and Paulus Fagius. The latter, after having published the post-Biblical dictionary called *Tishby* by Levita (Isny 1541), went on to publish the commentary on the Psalms and the one on the minor prophets by no one other than David Kimchi (Isny 1541 and 1542).

The names and the bibliographic references we have skimmed so far would be more than sufficient to substantiate the claim that Kimchi's dictionary was at the very core of the Christian Renaissance of Jewish studies not only in the field of Biblical exegesis but also as a fundamental tool for acquiring Hebrew proficiency. The dictionary, which enjoyed an almost monopolistic predominance among the Jews, especially in the Iberian Peninsula before the expulsion and in Italy, could not be ignored by the many Christians approaching Hebrew in the Renaissance especially since Kimchi's prestige grew due to the positive evaluation of his activity as Biblical exegete during the controversies on the text and the optimal translation of the Bible

³³ It served also the basis of the only modern edition of the work, prepared by two Jewish converts, J. H. R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht, published in Berlin in 1847 (*Sefer ha-shorashim. Rabbi Davidis Kimchi Radicum Liber sive Hebraeum Bibliorum Lexicon cum animadversionibus Eliae Levitae*, ediderunt Jo. H. R. Biesenthal et F. Lebrecht, Impensis G. Bethge [Berlin 1847]).

triggered by the Reformation. The success of the title itself was so enduring that when Johann Habermann (Avenarius) published his own dictionary in which Greek and Latin words were explained with a Hebrew etymology, according to the theory of Hebrew as the origin of all languages, he could not think of a more befitting title than “*Liber radicum*” (Wittenberg 1568).³⁴

This brief historical survey would amply suffice to justify a research project devoted to the role of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* among European Christians during the Renaissance, but there is a further chapter, left virtually untouched by scholarship to this very day. I refer to a literal Latin translation of the complete *Sefer ha-shorashim*. As we will see at least two attempts at a literal translation of this dictionary are preserved in manuscript, apparently originating from two independent projects. Here I will concentrate my attention on the first one, which seems to have been produced in the second decade of the 16th century, that is to say under the pontificate of Leo X Medici, most probably in Rome, for the General of the Augustinian order, elected in 1517 Cardinal of the Catholic Church, Giles of Viterbo. The translation, preserved in two manuscripts (the ms. Latin 3 of the Biblioteca Angelica in Rome and the ms. CC. 8. 43 of the St. Andrews University library) is an absolutely literal, word to word translation of the *Sefer ha-shorashim*, or *Liber radicum*, which is almost useless, because unintelligible, without the original Hebrew at hand. The following example, chosen randomly, will contribute, it is hoped, to showing the exact meaning of the previous contention. Upon commenting the root טוש, Kimchi wrote:

טוש כְּנֶשֶׁר יְטוֹשׁ עַל־אֶבֶל: פִּירוּשׁוֹ יְחוּשׁ. תְּרַגּוּם כְּנֶשֶׁר חֵשׁ לְאִכּוּל
כְּנֶשֶׁרָא דְטָאִיס לְמִיכָל³⁶

The Laconic but functional words of the Provençal grammarian are rendered in Latin as follows:

³⁴ The same title appears on the front page of yet another harmony, the one of Leonhard Reckenberger, Jena 1749.

³⁵ Job 9,26.

³⁶ Habakuk 1,8.

טוש Festinavit sicut aquila festinabit, Iob, expo., festinabit targum suum sicut aquila festinavit ad comedere, sicut aquila qui festinat ad comedere.³⁷

It will be useful, by way of comparison, to quote Pagnini’s rendering of the same root, much closer to the original than Münster’s various adaptations and still not only intelligible but also perspicuous:

טוש est חוש idest festinare, accelerare, Iob 9,26. Sicut aquila יטוש id est, festinabit ad escam pro festinat. Thargum, sic aquila דטיס id est, quae volat ad escam. Rabbi vero Levi, et Rabbi Abraham iunior³⁸ exponunt יעף idest volabit. Hierony. volans.³⁹

Not only did Pagnini avoid translating the Hebrew and the Targum of Habakuk twice with the same terms, as the translator of the Angelica and Saint Andrews manuscripts had done, but he also provided the reason for the discussion: the comparison with the Vulgate, according to which טוש meant ‘to fly’ whereas Kimchi deemed it to mean ‘to accelerate’. The very gist of the discussion is missing from the literal translation that was made by, or rather for, Giles of Viterbo. The peculiarity of this translation is that it refuses, certainly not by chance but rather with the highest degree of intentionality, to abide by one of the basic principles of monolingual lexicography, which is to provide synonyms, flattening them to sheer homonyms.

In order to illustrate the plain meaning of this theoretical formula, one can point to a peculiar feature of Giles’ dictionary: the vernacular glosses and their treatment in Latin translation. In the Hebrew text of the *Sefer ha-Shorashim* one finds, with the purpose of identifying objects, living beings, tools and many Biblical *realia*, almost 300 Provençal glosses, plus a certain number of Arabic and Aramaic equivalents, that, in the original context, constitute the bilingual section of the dictionary. In the Latin *ad verbum* translation, these terms constitute an obvious source of puzzlement for the translator: in some cases they are rendered into Latin, sometimes they are Italianized (for example, the term שלו,

³⁷ Ms. St. Andrews, CC. 8. 43, f. 109r.

³⁸ That is, Abraham Ibn Ezra.

³⁹ S. PAGNINI, *Otzar Leshon ha-Qodesh, hoc est Thesaurus linguae sanctae* (Lyon 1529) col. 751.

meaning ‘quail’ is paraphrased incongruously as “quod vocant in latino quaglia,” where one would rather expect *coturnix*, the Latin equivalent of the Provençal *calha*). Quite often the glosses are rendered with a phonetic equivalent that is certainly neither Latin nor Italian, but a sort of imaginary Provençal (for example: קצף, meaning ‘foam’, is glossed as “scuma in lingua,” instead of “spuma”). In some other cases they are rendered, curiously, with a Spanish equivalent (חֲמִטָּה, meaning ‘snail’ is rendered as *caracol* instead of *limasa* or *limaca*, although the usual translation of the Hebrew is rather ‘lizard’). At any rate, the whole point of adding a romance word is, obviously, lost in translation, producing odd chains of homonyms that are not only redundant but, in themselves, completely pointless. This is the case when the translations differ (for example the Hebrew אַזְבִּיב is glossed as “hyssopus in latino origano”), but also, and even more so, when they are identical (אֵגֶבֶת “stagnum in latino stagnum”), with amusing and even absurd short-circuits such as in the case of the conjunction אוּ, meaning ‘or’, by chance identical with the Italian equivalent *o*. Now Kimchi wrote: עֲנִינוּ יָדוּעַ וְכִמּוּ שֶׁהוּא בְּלִשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ כֵּן לְעֵינֵינוּ אֹתוֹ, rendered by the faithful translator as “significatum eius notum est et sic quod ipsum lingua sancta sic latinant ipsum:” as it were: “its meaning is known and as the holy tongue has it, so it is Latinized.” This is factually not accurate, because אוּ is rendered in Latin with *vel* or *aut*. Instead, it is rather likely that the translator did not distinguish very carefully between Italian and Latin.

The term לעי״ו, used technically by Kimchi to introduce his glosses, is rendered in many ways in Latin, as the following statistics show: most of the times it is translated as “in lingua” (152 times); “in latino” (70 times; as to its meaning, we have already observed that the expression is used to refer to the vernacular rather than to Latin, and quite often to plain Italian such as in פֶּרַא פֶּרְלֶר ‘fare parlare’); “in barbaro / in barbara” (9 times); “in Gallico” (once); “in vulgare” (sic for “in vulgari,” once).

The main endeavour of the lexicographers among the Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance was rather to adapt the *Sefer ha-shorashim* to a Latin and Christian context. What this literal translation of the dictionary provides, however, is a sort of “interlinear translation *in absentia*,” as I have called the phenomenon in a different context, concerning the quite similar translations made by Flavius Mithridates for Giovanni Pico

della Mirandola.⁴⁰ This translation could only be of utility to beginners striving to understand the original Hebrew of the dictionary itself in its exact wording if it was used alongside and together with that Hebrew original. That this type of learning aid was not as bizarre as it may seem at first sight is indirectly proven by the fact that, as recalled above, a second literal translation, independent from the first one,⁴¹ is known, in an incomplete copy, among the oriental manuscripts of Merton College, Oxford (ms. Or. 5). All we know of this manuscript is that it had once belonged to Sir Henry Savile, a Hellenist, fellow at Merton, and one of the best known translators of the King James Bible. If a further proof was needed to establish the centrality of Kimchi’s dictionary for the Western understanding of the Bible in the modern age, one could not think of a more convincing one. The fact that, towards the end the 16th century, a literal translation of a dictionary was not superseded by Giustiniani’s edition, nor by Pagnini’s or Münster’s adaptations, prompts us to ask one of the two questions on which one can provisionally conclude this survey, offering as well a tentative answer to them: what was the context and the purpose of the translation made for Giles of Viterbo, known for his passion for Kabbalah, and in particular for the intersection of grammar and mystical interpretation of the Scripture and of the very language of Revelation, that is to say Hebrew? And, secondly, who was the author of that translation?

To start with the latter question, one can rule out the hypothesis, which could be advanced on the basis of some allusions within the manuscripts, that Giles himself produced the translation. It is quite unlikely that Giles could find the time, among his many other projects and his duties as the General of the Augustinians, to translate hundreds of pages of Hebrew all alone. It is perhaps too early, at this stage of the research fostered by the “Racines” project, located at the Institut de Recherche et d’Histoire des Textes in Paris and aimed at studying the text and the reception of

⁴⁰ S. CAMPANINI, “Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada (alias Flavio Mitridate) traduttore di opere cabbalistiche,” in *Guglielmo Raimondo Moncada alias Flavio Mitridate. Un ebreo converso siciliano*, ed. M. PERANI (Palermo 2008) pp. 49-88.

⁴¹ A quick look at Coxe’s catalogue (H. O. COXE, *Catalogus codicum mss. qui in collegiis aulisque Oxonienibus hodie adservantur*. Vol. I (Oxonii 1852), [Merton, Or. V], p. 130) suffices to ascertain that this translation was based on the Naples 1490 edition.

the *Sefer ha-shorashim*, to propose a definitive answer to the question of the authorship of the translation. Nonetheless, one might be allowed to speculate on one possible candidate, even if the hypothesis is still in need of more stringent confirmations. I am referring to the well-known Hebraist of Calabrese origin, Agathius Guidacerius, who was professor of Hebrew at the University in Rome by appointment of Leo X Medici during the first decades of the 16th century. After the Sack of Rome in 1527 he went to Paris where he became professor of Hebrew at the Collège Royal. We know from his prefaces to the Hebrew primers and grammars that he published the high esteem in which he held Giles of Viterbo, who was largely responsible for the renewal of university studies in Rome, and with whom Agathius probably collaborated. Shortly before his death, in 1542, Agathius managed to publish the first instalment of a project in which he was engaged, as he writes in the preface to his translation of the *Miklol*,⁴² since his early years in Rome, after having learnt Hebrew from a Portuguese Jew, Ya'aqov Gabbay. Gabbay taught him Hebrew using the *Miklol* of David Kimchi and Guidacerius was convinced during his entire career that there was no better method for penetrating the spirit and the letter of the Hebrew Bible than Kimchi's combination of Grammar and Dictionary. Nevertheless, in his first attempts at writing a Hebrew grammar in Latin, especially for his Parisian students, he preferred to produce an adaptation, always stating his indebtedness towards Kimchi's works.⁴³ Only at the end of his life did he dispose of the technical means and of the credibility that allowed him to produce the first part of a much larger project, which was left incomplete because of his death: the production and publication of a complete edition of the *Miklol* (which was probably conceived to include also the *Sefer ha-shorashim*) in a bilingual edition, with the Hebrew original on one page facing a very literal Latin translation. The study of the style and the features of this translation is still in its infancy but on the basis of a quick survey, one can cautiously state that the similarities in the translation choices are quite striking. Moreover,

⁴² *Liber Michlol grammatices linguae sanctae R. David Kimhi, quo eam integram docet, et absolvit, per Agathium Guidacerium sacrae Theologiae Regium in universitate Parisiensi professorem* (Paris 1540).

⁴³ Cfr. *Institutiones grammaticae hebraicae linguae Agathio Guidacerio autore* (Paris 1529); *Peculium Agathii* (Paris 1537).

exactly as Giles’ *Liber radicum*, Guidacerius’ *Michlol* would be virtually unreadable without the constant reference to the Hebrew original, here printed, fully vocalized, alongside the Latin text.

This leads to the first question left unanswered: what was the purpose of the literal translation of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* and, did it have one and only one translator? I believe that the context in which Giles’ translation originated, and the motivations behind the decision of having it translated can provide substantial help towards answering this rather complex question in a satisfactory way.

What is the use of an *ad verbum* Latin translation from a language that is so different, especially from a syntactical point of view, as Hebrew? After all the *Sefer ha-shorashim* is “just” a dictionary, certainly not a holy book. Its function is rather to help understand a sacred book, and it should be, as the usage of the glosses in the original prove, aimed at the comprehension of the language and of the literary corpus it is commenting upon. The case of the glosses, translated or transcribed back into Latin or vernacular shows abundantly that, *de facto*, the *Sefer ha-shorashim* in the circle around Giles of Viterbo – probably to the astonishment of Elijah Levita – was “sacralized” to such a degree that it had to be treated with the utmost respect. At the same time, however, a simpler technical explanation should complete the picture: a literal, pedestrian translation is also, by definition and within certain limits, an almost perfectly “reversible” translation, such that its function is not so much to supersede the original but rather to guide the reader towards a full apprehension of it. Moreover, a mechanical translation can be more easily confided to a team of translators, and the latter could have been the modality chosen by Giles, as it was certainly the case for the copy. In point of fact, the Angelica manuscript has been copied by two different hands, each one of which copied half of the quite voluminous work.

As to the motivation for the first literal translation of the *Sefer ha-shorashim* into Latin, knowing the interests of Giles and his Roman circle, it will not be surprising to find out that the mystical interpretation of the Bible and particularly the Kabbalistic hermeneutics of every linguistic phenomenon connected with Hebrew as the language of Creation and of Revelation was the driving force behind the vast programme of Hebrew-

to-Latin translations promoted by Giles of Viterbo. As a note found in both copies of the *Liber radicum* openly states,⁴⁴ Giles had it copied and wanted to ensure that it was not only preserved but also used by his brethren of the Order of the Augustinians. He specified that, although the dictionary could seem totally boring, concerned with petty problems and beneath any conceivable standard of Latin elegance (*inepta, insulsa et minus latina*), the study of Scripture is an unmistakable command and one that can only be observed with the help of grammatical tools for the language and arcane commentaries for its mystical meaning. One should keep in mind that, for Giles, the *Sefer ha-shorashim*, which in turn can be seen as a sustained attempt at reducing the diversity of the Biblical language to the commanding principle of the triliteral roots, was in itself a mystical commentary to the Bible, and not only a mere grammatical tool. Giles' own works in the field, especially the *Libellus de litteris hebraicis*,⁴⁵ a primer on the shape of the Hebrew letters and a mystical commentary at the same time, prove it abundantly. More generally, the core of Giles' enduring interest in grammatical and scribal particulars, such as the cantillation signs, the vowel points, or the *tagin*, is justified by his understanding of these phenomena as integral parts of a mystical revelation. In fact, one finds in the margins of the dictionary, a special attention to the word *qabbalah*, used by Kimchi to allude to rabbinical tradition, but awakening every time Giles' attention for mysticism. For instance, in the St. Andrews manuscript, the word *cabala* appearing in the text is always highlighted on the margins, with the addition of one or two letters *qof*, for *qabbalah*, only to ensure the proper intensification of the reader's attention.

⁴⁴ Cfr. L. G. PÉLISSIER, "Manuscrits de Gilles de Viterbe à la Bibliothèque Angélique (Rome)," *Revue des bibliothèques* 2 (1892) pp. 228-240: 232 and, more recently, E. ABATE, "Filologia e qabbalah. La collezione ebraica di Egidio da Viterbo alla Biblioteca Angelica di Roma," *Archivio italiano per la storia della piet * 26 (2014) pp. 409-446: 434-437.

⁴⁵ Published for the first time by F. SECRET in Egidio da Viterbo. *Scechina e Libellus de litteris Hebraicis. Inediti*. Vol. I (Roma 1959) pp. 23-55. See also Y. LIEBES (ed.), Egidio da Viterbo. *Sifron 'al ha-otiot ha-'ivriyot* (Yerushalayim 2012), and my review in *Materia Giudaica* 17-18 (2012-2013) pp. 281-284. See also B. COPENHAVER and D. STEIN KOKIN, "Egidio da Viterbo's Book on Hebrew Letters: Christian Kabbalah in Papal Rome," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67 (2014) pp. 1-42.

Now, considering that David Kimchi, all his merits notwithstanding, is not known as an adept of Kabbalah, it seems appropriate to ask one last question: is this peculiar interest of one of his prominent early modern readers, Giles of Viterbo, a mere wishful projection onto the work of an author who could not and would not have wanted anything to do with mysticism, or is there some kind of *fundamentum in re*? The topic of Kimchi’s eventual mystical leanings is still open to question but one should at least recall that, to quote one instance only, at the very beginning of the *Miklol* the author, after having delineated 32 categories of different suffixation and prefixation models in Hebrew, observed, with his habitual laconism: these are 32 (grammatical forms) equal in number to the 32 paths of wisdom,⁴⁶ which is a clear allusion to the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the fundamental breviary, as it were, of Jewish mysticism in late Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Is it a sign of an anti-mystical reduction of mysticism to grammar or, the other way around, does this imply a reference to a mystical theology of Hebrew linguistic facts such as letters and roots, as the building-blocks of creation, which allow the reader to transform the real world no less than to understand the intimate workings of the Holy Writ? If a paraphrase of a celebrated verse by Mallarmé should be allowed: the world, being made with words, must end up in a dictionary.

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⁴⁶ D. KIMCHI, *Sefer Miklol*, Bomberg (Venezia 1544) f. 4r; cfr. *Liber Michlol [...] R. David Kimhi, [...] per Agathium Guidacerium* (Paris 1540) p. 22.