

Histoire Épistémologie Langage

45-2 | 2023

Aux racines des dictionnaires de l'hébreu : traduire, transcrire,
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Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/hel/4301>

ISSN: 1638-1580

Publisher

Société d'histoire et d'épistémologie des sciences du langage (SHESL)

Printed version

Date of publication: December 1, 2023

Number of pages: 87-104

ISBN: 979-10-91587-22-8

ISSN: 0750-8069

Electronic reference

Saverio Campanini, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Origins of Hebrew-Latin Lexicography", *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* [Online], 45-2 | 2023, Online since 01 January 2024, connection on 23 January 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/hel/4301>



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SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE ORIGINS OF HEBREW-LATIN LEXICOGRAPHY

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Abstract — The article deals with the beginnings of Hebrew-Latin lexicography and shows, on the basis of chosen examples, the decisive and understudied importance of the glossaries, more often than not interlinear or in the form of word-lists with one translation for each entry, in the vernacular. The tortuous process which led, emerging from the collaboration of Johannes Reuchlin and Konrad Pellikan, to the compilation and publication in print of the *De rudimentis linguae Hebraicae*, appeared in print in 1506, is briefly sketched and evaluated among other things in relation to the contemporary Hebrew-German and Hebrew-Latin glossaries, produced in Southern Germany in the circles of Johannes Boeschenstein and Caspar Amman. Although the Latin of the Vulgata is always present, explicitly or implicitly, in any lexicographical equivalence aimed at rendering the Latin semantic equivalent of a given Hebrew term, the *lingua franca* used by the Christian Hebraists for their exchanges with Jewish or converted informants, easily identified with a shared vernacular, must be kept in mind in order to understand the choices made by the lexicographers especially when they depart from the traditional rendering of the Biblical text.

Keywords — Hebrew-Latin lexicography, vernacular glossaries, Christian Hebraists of the Renaissance

Résumé — L'article examine les débuts de la lexicographie hébréo-latine et montre, à partir de quelques exemples choisis, l'importance, peu étudiée et pourtant difficile à sous-estimer, des glossaires, qui souvent se réduisent à des listes de mots avec une seule traduction en langue vernaculaire. L'auteur y décrit le procès compliqué qui, à partir de la collaboration entre Johannes Reuchlin et Konrad Pellikan et la publication du *De rudimentis linguae Hebraicae* (1506) arrive jusqu'aux glossaires hébréo-allemands et hébréo-latins préparés dans l'Allemagne du Sud par/pour Johannes Boeschenstein et Caspar Amman. Bien que le latin de la Vulgate soit toujours présent, de façon implicite ou explicite, dans chaque équivalence lexicale tendant à expliciter la correspondance sémantique pour un mot hébreu donné, la *lingua franca* utilisée par les hébraisants chrétiens dans leurs échanges avec les informateurs juifs ou convertis devait être un vernaculaire commun et cela doit être considéré si l'on veut comprendre les choix faits par les lexicographes en particulier s'ils s'éloignent de la traduction biblique reçue.

Mots-clés — lexicographie hébréo-latine, glossaires vernaculaires de la Bible, hébraisants chrétiens de la Renaissance

שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום

Tb *Berakhot* 8a

In the year 2010 a remarkable jubilee was celebrated in Halle: the 200th anniversary of the first edition (of the first volume) of Wilhelm Gesenius' pathbreaking *Hebräisch-deutsches Handwörterbuch über die Schriften des Alten Testaments*

(Gesenius 1810).¹ The event was solemnized by a congress and the proceedings have been published in 2013 (Schorch & Waschke 2013). If one would like to celebrate the feats of early modern Hebrew-Latin lexicography, there would be a vast choice of dates: one of the achievements of Johann Buxtorf, be it the quite modest *Epitome* of 1600 (Buxtorf 1600),² the enlarged *Epitome radicum Hebraicarum et Chaldaicarum* of 1607 (Buxtorf 1607), or the *Manuale Hebraicum et Chaldaicum* (Buxtorf 1613), the *Lexicon Hebraicum et Chaldaicum* of 1615 (Buxtorf 1615),³ or, indeed, the monumental *Lexicon rabbinicum* posthumously published in 1639-1640 by his homonymous son (Buxtorf 1639).⁴ Curiously, the second title page affirms that upon Buxtorf's death, ten years earlier, he had celebrated 30 years of work on this dictionary, meaning that preparations for it started already in 1609, forty years before its publication, already an anniversary and an occasion to celebrate. Even if one would like to commemorate the first Hebrew-Latin dictionary that appeared in print, one would not hesitate, knowing that it was Johannes Reuchlin's *De rudimentis Hebraicis*, published by Thomas Anshelm in 1506 (Reuchlin 1506).⁵ Much more difficult it would be to determine the anniversary of the first Hebrew-Latin dictionary, since we do not know when it was prepared, where or by whom.

One thing can be held for certain: whenever the first Hebrew-Latin dictionary in history was compiled, it had the form of a glossary, that is to say an alphabetical list of Hebrew words, associated with one or more Latin equivalents. The features of such a glossary reveal already how it was constructed and to what purpose it could serve: it was a mere extraction of equivalences, that is to say an alphabetical arrangement of *lemmata* in Hebrew and their correspondent rendering in a more or less authoritative already existing translation. Such glossaries serve a humble purpose, they are used for learning, as a quick reference if one encounters a text in the original Hebrew source without interlinear or marginal glosses.⁶ These are the features of the few extant glossaries that have survived from the Middle Ages as it is confirmed as well in the most prominent, and for a very long time forgotten

1 The second volume was published in 1812.

2 Cf. Burnett 1996: 123.

3 On the differences between the *Epitome* and the *Lexicon*, cf. Burnett 1996: 124, n. 115.

4 The first frontispiece, decorated with an etching, is dated 1639 whereas the second frontispiece is dated 1640. It is not surprising that such a massive work would take several months to print.

5 For a summary (not exhaustive) bibliographic aperçu of the history of Hebrew lexicography one can see Brisman 2000.

6 A different, much more articulated situation is offered by the Hebrew-Arabic and Hebrew-vernacular glossaries designed for a Jewish readership. There one finds exegetical glossaries on specific Biblical or Rabbinic texts, full-blown dictionaries and one observes also an oscillation between the two ideal poles of exegesis and grammar, that characterizes the dialectical relationship between glossaries and dictionaries in the more sophisticated Arabic speaking milieu; see the pertinent observations by Olszowy-Schlanger 2011. It is certainly not by chance that no examples of Hebrew-Latin glossaries are mentioned in this survey.

“Dictionary” in Hebrew, Latin and Old French (with some additions in Old English), published by Judith Olszowy-Schlanger and others (Olszowy-Schlanger *et al.* 2008).

Another form assumed by ancient world-lists, going back to the very beginnings of Biblical philology, to the school of Origenes and Eusebius through the mediation of Jerome for the Latin world, are the *onomastica*, a very peculiar genre of lexicography, listing only words with apparently no need for translation, or untranslatable, since personal names and geographical designations do not need, at least in principle, to be translated, but simply adapted to the phonetics of the target language, be it Latin or otherwise.⁷ As it is well-known, a peculiar characteristic of the Biblical narrative itself no less than Jewish exegesis, is the frequent occurrence of etymologies, plays on words devised to reveal or “explain” the semantic or theological meaning of a given proper name. Therefore, the *onomastica* are, at least in theory, a more refined form of Hebrew-Latin dictionary, since in order to understand why Dan, to name a random example, should mean *iudicans sive iudicium*, we need to know, theoretically, the import of the “root” ך in Hebrew. In fact, these lists were abridged into monolingual names-lists without the Hebrew correspondent and the etymology was dogmatically given rather than demonstrated. These *onomastica*, especially the *Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum* penned by Jerome (cf. Lagarde 1887) and the anonymous, medieval *Interpretationes Hebraicorum nominum* attributed to the Venerable Bede, to Remi of Auxerres or to Stephan Langton (Murano 2010, see also Dahan 1996) (which would bring us again to England), the quite accurate and revised *Philippicus*⁸ of Ralph Niger and others,⁹ which is a very wide-spread compilation of previous sources. The typical *onomasticon*, quite often copied in the apparatus, either at the beginning or on the final pages of late Medieval Bibles and in many early prints, was conflated and accumulated by adding, uncritically, several etymologies for a single name.

The latest trace of this peculiar genre of Biblical lexicographic exegesis is offered by the *Interpretationes Hebraicorum, Chaldeorum, Grecorumque nominum* found in the 6th volume of the Polyglot of Alcalá,¹⁰ later printed separately by Robert Estienne in the 16th century: as a typical sign of the influence of Christian Hebraism, this *onomasticon* prints also the original of the names it lists in Hebrew characters

7 On the bibliography of the early *onomastica* it is still useful to consult Wolf 1705: 228-240 and Wolf 1733: 233-248.

8 The title is a tribute of honour from the author (or compiler) to the converted Jew named Philippus, who instructed him in Hebrew and introduced him to Hebrew lexicography.

9 Cf. Flahiff 1940: 120-121; Dahan 1993.

10 Anonymous 1515: ff. Air-DVIv. In the general preface the *onomasticon* is called *Tractatus de nominum propriorum interpretatione*, whereas it begins at f. AIr thus: *Incipiunt interpretationes hebraicorum, chaldeorum, grecorumque nominum, veteris ac novi testamenti secundum ordinem alphabeti*. Although the Hebrew forms of the names are printed in the margins, the alphabetic order followed here is the Latin one.

(Anonymous 1537).¹¹ The work, which added also some already standardized references to the passages of the Bible where the names could be found, was issued once more, without mention of the name of the compiler, in Antwerp in 1565 by Christophe Plantin (Anonymous 1565). An ambitious attempt at analysing Hebrew Biblical names and to establish their etymology is offered by Gregor Francke in his *Lexicon sanctum* published in Hanau in 1634, which promised, from the title page, that the study of the proper names would ease the task of learning the holy language (Francus 1634).

In any event, if one had to learn Hebrew from these *onomastica* or *libri interpretationis*, one would not make significant progresses without first learning Hebrew elsewhere. It might seem counterintuitive, but learning Hebrew for adults and without the background of a living tradition poses somehow always this mainly implicit question: how can one learn Hebrew, which is often written without vowels, without already knowing it? To learn it from someone who does (be he a convert or a Jew) has been the usual solution, but it was not always possible or advisable, for theological and sociological reasons, to approach Jews in order to be instructed by them, not to mention the fact that not all Jews were ready to offer this kind of instruction.¹² This explains why in most cases we find, mentioned or unmentioned, converted Jews behind every renaissance of Hebrew studies among the Christians. One has to speak of renaissances in the plural since historical evidence teaches us that, among the Latin Christians, Hebrew was re-discovered many times. There has been without doubt a renaissance of Hebrew in the personal life of Jerome who went to Syria-Palestine in order to deepen his competence in Hebrew. This re-discovery was quite personal and even monastic in nature, in any case it did not create a school although the personal prestige of the Church father caused his works to be copied many times, beside his *Onomasticon* especially his *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Lagarde 1868), that constituted for many together with Isidor of Seville's Etymologies, one of the few occasions to see, albeit in transcription, a Hebrew word in the Latin world (if one excepts the few Hebrew or Aramaic words and names in transcription found in the New Testament itself). There are signs of a renewed interest in Hebrew in early medieval Ireland, especially, once again, in the form of rudimentary word lists (Moran 2010). A further, very significant, renaissance took place in the 12th century, especially in England (Olszowy-Schlanger *et al.* 2008). This was followed, in the 13th century, by a very robust and more wide-spread renaissance of interest for Hebrew, led by the well-known plaidoyer for reading the Bible in its original languages made by Roger Bacon (Hirsch 1899; Nolan & Hirsch

11 The list had appeared already in the 1528 edition of the Bible and it was reissued, in different formats in 1540, 1541 and 1549.

12 Cf. Kaufmann 1897.

1902; Geiger 2015), but also promoted by groups of monks and friars learning the language, for exegetical purposes, especially from glossed Psalters, of which several copies have survived (Dahan 1999b; Olszowy-Schlanger 2001; Olszowy-Schlanger & Stirnemann 2008; Olszowy-Schlanger 2009a; Olszowy-Schlanger 2014). Interestingly enough, as Judith Olszowy-Schlanger has noted, these glossed Psalters and the compilation or dictionary derived by abbreviation from them, now at Longleat House, does not seem to depend from the earlier labours of the most notable Hebraists of 12th century England: Herbert of Bosham or Alexander Neckham.¹³ Olszowy-Schlanger deems that it was a deliberate act, but it seems to me that, since no polemical note is found, and not even the mention of the names of these “predecessors”, it was rather that Hebrew, had been re-discovered once again, as it is most likely, by some Benedictine Monks at Ramsey abbey, as if no Christian Hebraism existed before their times. In the same century the mendicant orders, especially the Dominicans started their campaign for the conversion of the Jews, which brought about a renewal of interest for Jewish literature: learning Hebrew was seen once again as a necessary task for the accomplished controversialist. Whereas, as already recalled, the monastic activity produced glossaries, I am not aware that there should still be in existence some lexical remnants of the mendicant Orders conversionist activity.¹⁴ Nevertheless, a number of manuscript copies of the *Pugio Fidei* is preserved, in which the original Hebrew of numerous quotations is preserved and in one case, the ms. 720 of the Biblioteca Geral da Universidade in Coimbra, has even the beginning of a Castilian parallel translation. Although a column is left for inserting the Castilian translation for the entire work, two pages only are translated, a remarkable trace indeed of the growing role of the vernacular in Christian-Jewish polemics, but also the proof that Latin was bypassed, or inserted by competent friars, in order to take advantage of the assistance of converted Jews.¹⁵ It is far from unlikely that such a spectacular programme of translation should be accomplished with the support of lexicographic tools, but the Castilian rendering suggests that also “living glossaries” could be used in order to check the meaning of rare, ambiguous or difficult words. Even in the major European Universities there should have been a need for didactic tools, if one considers the decree promulgated by the Council of Vienne and inserted in the Clementine Constitutions, according to which it was prescribed that in Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca, beside the place where the holy see should reside (an allusion to the beginning of the Avignonese “captivity”) at least two instructors would teach Hebrew Arabic and Aramaic, in order to correct the Latin translations of the Holy Scriptures. The reality of this teaching of Hebrew

13 Cf., on the English Hebraists, Loewe 1953a; 1953b; 1957; 1959.

14 See, in general, on medieval Hebrew glossaries, Dahan 1999a: 256-267.

15 Cf. Fidora & Vernet i Pons 2017.

ordered by the Papal authority looked less triumphant, but some traces are left that, at least in Paris and in Bologna such courses were offered.

Much is left to be done in this field, but, as it seems, no impulse to Hebrew-Latin lexicography came from the initiative. Be that as it may, when the following renaissance of Hebrew did take place, almost no trace of the efforts made by earlier generations toward the construction of a Hebrew-Latin glossary, if not of a proper dictionary, seem recognizable. There is one exception to this general rule, but it is difficult to date with precision, represented by Robert Wakefield (Olszowy-Schlanger 2006; Olszowy-Schlanger 2009a; 2009b), who, as it seems, “inherited” some products of the English Hebraist renaissance of the 13th century but, and this confirms once again the rule, he did not produce, as far as we know, a Hebrew-Latin dictionary, he only perused quite cursorily the Longleat House “grammaticizing glossary” but he was not a pioneer of Hebrew-Latin lexicography, since his Hebrew studies started, at the earliest, in 1512, when Hebrew-Latin lexicography was already re-born, this time on the continent, between Alsace, northern Switzerland and the region of Baden-Württemberg at the end of the 15th century. Thus, the heir of the glorious tradition of the English Hebrew-Latin renaissance of the XIII century ended up as an epigone (Lloyd Jones 1983; Wakefield 1989).

We are exceptionally well informed about the first steps of Hebrew-Latin lexicography due to the preservation of Konrad Pellikan’s autobiography (Riggenbach 1877; Vulpinus 1892; Silberstein 1900; Kluge 1931; Ego & Betz 1991; Campanini 2014: 14-15). The central facts of this new configuration, that brought, in 1506, to the publication of the *De rudimentis Hebraicis* are known, but deserve to be briefly summarized: the renewed interest for Jewish literature prompted by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his promise of a conciliation of the Humanistic ideal of a return to the sources and Christianity found a fertile soil in Germany, but the interest for Hebrew was also triggered by negative facts, especially the vastly discussed process in Trent (1475-1478), following the death of a child, Simone, the accusations to the Jewish community of that town, and its tragic end. To this event, which caused turmoil and vast waves of indignation triggered by a campaign of anti-Jewish propaganda, also the epoch-making expulsion of the Jews from Spain (1492) and from Portugal (1497) should be added. How are these facts connected? At about the time of the process in Trent, the Dominican Petrus Nigri (Peter Schwartz) produced two anti-Jewish tractates, the *Tractatus contra perfidos Judaeos* (1475) and the *Stern des Messias* (1477). The element of novelty in these pamphlets was certainly not the centuries old array of arguments against the Jews, but the presence, in both booklets, of rudimentary Hebrew grammars in Latin. The method adopted for introducing the readers to Hebrew grammar, for polemical purposes, was to present a biblical text, in Nigri’s case, the first chapter of Isaiah, in Hebrew, in a

transcription in Latin characters, and in a Latin translation. The same Petrus Nigri was summoned to Trent as a translator, in order to verify the documents confiscated to the Jews of the town and the Hebrew words the Jewish defendants reported to the judges. Nigri, as he himself tells us, had learned Hebrew in Salamanca, by sitting with the children of a Jewish *heder* in that town, before the expulsion.¹⁶ In Trent was also present a pupil of Nigri, the Dominican Erhard of Pappenheim, who prepared a translation of the Haggadah, in a very tendentious way, connecting the ritual of Pessach with the accusation that the Jews would use Christian blood to season the *matzot*.¹⁷ Once again, and especially among the Dominicans, the necessity of learning Hebrew was felt for polemical reasons, renewing one of the aspects of the Hebraistic renaissance of the 13th century. Johannes Reuchlin, the founding father of Hebrew-Latin lexicography, was connected with the Humanistic interest for Hebrew and met Pico della Mirandola in 1490 but at the same time he was also firmly connected to Erhard of Pappenheim, for whom he wrote a poem as a dedication of Marsuppini's translation of the *Batracomyomachia* of Pseudo-Homer (Knauer 1996; Price 2010: 276). The consequences of the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula are explicitly mentioned in Reuchlin's dedicatory epistle to his brother Dionysius, prefacing the *De rudimentis Hebraicis*: the event in itself and the perspective of an entire continent or the whole Christendom without Jews was becoming palpable (Price 2009). For Reuchlin this was a dangerous situation, but not because he would show any empathy for the Jews,¹⁸ he was rather concerned by the fact that, without Jews and without a method for teaching or self-teaching Hebrew, the Christian could end up in a situation in which learning Hebrew would become utterly impossible, for desirable that it might be. The perspective of easing conversion, which would be, in a world without Jews, quite remote, was thus not the only reason for learning Hebrew, since in Reuchlin's eyes the treasures contained in Jewish literature offered the opportunity of understanding the deep meaning of Scripture behind the at times misleading veil of Jerome's translation.¹⁹

The way towards the first Hebrew-Latin lexicon that appeared in print was, in fact, far less linear and direct as it might appear from this necessarily abridged account. We are fortunate enough to have the already mentioned autobiography of Konrad Pellikan, a precious document especially for its humorous sincerity. Pellikan snapped, as it is well known, from Reuchlin, who was his senior and much more advanced in Hebrew learning, the glory of having been the first to publish a Hebrew

16 Nestle 1893a [the page numbers start anew for every section of this miscellaneous volume]. Of the same contribution it appeared also an enlarged version with a facsimile of Pellikan's Hebrew primer (Nestle 1893b).

17 Cf. Stern, Markshies & Shalev-Eyni 2015. See also the review by the present writer in Campanini 2016.

18 On Reuchlin's attitude towards the Jews it is still useful to consult Herzog, Schoeps & Rohde 1996.

19 Cf. Campanini 2006.

primer in Latin, if one excludes Petrus Nigri's very short introduction, with his *De modo legendi et intelligendi Hebraeum*, published as an appendix to the fortunate encyclopaedia entitled *Margarita Philosophica* of Gregor Reisch, in a pirate edition appeared in print in Strasburg in 1504. The preface, a dedicatory epistle to the Strasburger Jurist Jacobus Gallus, is dated 1503 and in it the author affirms that the booklet was written two years earlier, so that the beginning of this grammatical and lexicographic enterprise can be dated to 1501. As a matter of fact, the *De modo legendi* is completed by a quite short glossary on three columns, since it is trilingual: Hebrew on the left, Latin with laconic Biblical references in the middle and Greek on the right. Now, in his autobiographical *Chronikon*, Pellikan narrates the origins of his interest for the Hebrew language and how he, a young and quite busy Franciscan friar went about the much-desired task of learning Hebrew and producing first for himself and then also for the public, a Hebrew primer and a rudimental Hebrew-Latin lexicon. Since he desired from his earlier years to learn Hebrew, Pellikan, after having managed to obtain a Biblical manuscript, containing the Prophets, started his work with the *Stella Messiae* of Petrus Nigri (Riggenbach 1877: 14-15). That Nigri's primer was insufficient is amply demonstrated by Pellikan himself, who says quite candidly that he started producing his own glossary-lexicon. This means that at the time he had none, thus confirming the already stated conclusion that each and every Hebrew renaissance until the late 15th century was initiated almost from scratch. Since Nigri provided in print an interlinear version of the first verse of Isaiah, Pellikan started distributing the words he found, according to the Hebrew alphabet: חזון *visio*, was the first, one should add, lucky entry, ישעיהו, transcribed as "Ieschaejahu", that is Isaiah, is a proper name and fills the first line under the letter *yod*, בן *ben* goes under *bet* and means *filius*. Then he omits two words: the name Amotz, and the relative pronoun אשר (*asher*), which he must have taken to mean *quam*, הזה *hazah* must have meant *vidit*; then על *'al*, meaning *supra*, et cetera (Riggenbach 1877: 17-18). He worked through the first two chapters of Isaiah and was convinced he could produce a meaningful lexicon, which is actually rather a concordance. Far less fortunate was he with a fragmentary Hebrew Psalter which he found, containing the first third of the book, that is Psalms 1 to 50. Since it was purely in Hebrew, in order to make sense of it, that is to say, in order to construct his lexicon, he borrowed a precious manuscript from the library of the Franciscan convent in Tübingen, containing Jerome's version of the Psalms *ad Hebraicam veritatem*, in the persuasion, only partly justified, that this translation would be more adherent to the Masoretic text, which it certainly was if compared to the *Secundum LXX* version of the Psalter, but it was hopeless to use it as an *ad verbum* translation, or as an interlinear version, due to the choices of the translator, the pressure of liturgical tradition and, especially, the divergence of Latin and Hebrew syntax (Riggenbach

1877: 18). The problems he was facing were actually of a more fundamental nature: since he approached his lexicographic extraction without sufficient grammatical preparation, he confesses that after אֲשֶׁרִי *ashrei* which must have meant *beatus*, the second word of the Psalter, הָאִישׁ *ha-ish*, (understood, most probably, as *vir*), landed under the letter הֶ *he*, because he did not know that הֶ was the prefixed definite article. He concludes this retrospective anecdote, written almost fifty years after his clumsy early attempts at Hebrew lexicography took place, recalling that he was at pains with the fact that he very seldom found the first person of the singular in verbs, and that his glossary was full with third persons, taken from the narrative, historic or gnomic parts of the texts he was excerpting (Riggenbach 1877: 18). He was looking for an equivalent to the usual form listed in Latin dictionaries: *amo, lego, audio* (love, read, listen or hear, these are his examples) until, upon his first meeting with Johannes Reuchlin, who had started his Hebrew learning much earlier and who told him that in Hebrew one lists rather the third person of the perfect and most likely he told him also for what reason (Riggenbach 1877: 19). From their collaboration, a fact upon which Reuchlin kept silent, the first Hebrew-Latin dictionary was to emerge.

Pellikan, who was born in 1478, started working on his lexicon in 1499, met Reuchlin for the first time in 1500 and a second time in the same year. During the second meeting, always in the presence of the jurist Konrad Summenhard, who, together with Reuchlin had been among the perplexed pupils of Flavius Mithridates in Tübingen in 1484, before the latter became the private translator of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (Mithridates 1963: 28), Reuchlin revealed that he was already compiling a dictionary but the pace he could keep was very slow: he had, so far, only completed the letter *aleph* (Riggenbach 1877: 21). From Pellikan we learn how Reuchlin was working and what difficulties he was meeting. Only from him do we understand how the Hebrew-Latin dictionary of the *De rudimentis* was composed. We learn that Reuchlin extracted the words from a Hebrew Bible and tried to conjecture their meaning from a Hebrew-German glossary, that is to say, once again as in the earlier medieval centuries, the passage from one dead language, as Biblical Hebrew at the time and in any case for these would-be Hebraists undoubtedly was, to another dead language, such as Latin, was mediated by a living, shared tongue, in this case German or Yiddish. Pellikan tells us that their meeting was providential since he had annotated all occurrences of a given word in his dictionary, made after having acquired the books of Johann Boehm (Nestle 1893a; Walde 1916; Steimann 2017; Steimann 2020), among which there was a copy of the *Sefer ha-Shorashim* by David Kimchi, and thus having learned a little more grammar. Now, since the system of the numeration of Biblical verses was still not prevalent at the time, he had added small caps letters to the chapter number in order to identify, approximately, their position within a chapter. Reuchlin was admired in hearing that, since he was experiencing

great difficulties with his Hebrew-German glossary, due to the fact that he could not easily retrieve the immediate context of the usage of a given expression in the Bible. Thus, Pellikan was charged to copy Reuchlin's notes and he states that he completed his task up to the letter *het* (Riggenbach 1877: 22), before other commitments would distract him from this time-consuming activity, which might explain why it took five more years before Reuchlin's dictionary could appear in print.

As to the difficulties with the glossary, Pellikan offers a particularly interesting example. Reuchlin complained that his Hebrew-German glossary did not cite the exact passage where a given word occurred: he had found the word קצף *qetsah* and its German (dialectal) rendering as *Ratten*. He knew that the word was found in the Book of Isaiah, since his glossary must have been organized according to the biblical books and not in alphabetical order, although, among the books that used to belong to him, now preserved at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (Cod. Hebr. Mon. 425) a copy of the *Mahberet Menaḥem* is preserved, which follows the Hebrew alphabet. Nevertheless, in order to find where the word appeared in Isaiah, he would have had to read the entire book to find this single word. If one asks why he was so particular about determining the exact chapter and verse where the term occurred, the reason is to be searched not only in the obvious idea that the immediate context of a word can give clues as to its usage and meaning, but also and especially since only thus could he have checked the Latin rendering of the Vulgate. Of course, Reuchlin knew the meaning of the word *Ratten*, which is what in modern German is rather called *Schwarzkümmel* or black cummin also known as fitch, but as long as he did not know how Jerome translated it, it would not have been sufficient to know that it meant *nigella* in Latin. Pellikan adds, to prove the helpfulness of his home-made concordance, that Jerome, in Is. 28,27,²⁰ translated the word with *gith*, understood as *nigella* or, as others prefer, *lollium* (Riggenbach 1877: 21). It is not easy, unfortunately, to check, whether the Hebrew-German lexicon Pellikan was referring to is still preserved. Among the books that used to belong to Johannes Reuchlin, three Hebrew-German glossaries are still three extant, but one of them²¹ is incomplete and the other one²² ends abruptly with the letter *ayin*, so that one cannot verify how the term קצף *qetsah* was translated. The only one which is preserved and contains the word in question is the Cod. Reuchlin 9 found at the Badische

20 *Non enim in serris triturbatur gith, nec rota plaustris super cyminum circuibit; sed in virga excutietur gith, et cyminum in baculo.* The King James Version renders: "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod".

21 It is the Cod. Reuchlin 8 of the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe; cf. Molter 1798: XXIII-XXIV; Ginsburger 1930; Von Abel & Leicht 2005: 167-171.

22 Cod. Hebr. Mon. 425 (part C) of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. Cf. Christ 1924: 23-24; Róth 1965: 235-237; Von Abel & Leicht 2005: 177-182.

Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe,²³ and, on f. 173v, one reads קצח ראדין, vocalised *radin*. If this is the glossary used by Reuchlin one has to suppose that Pellikan, in his recollections, superposed his own dialectal pronunciation of the term (Ratten). It is nevertheless doubtful that, in 1500, Reuchlin already had this lexical aid, or that Pellikan referred to it, since the terms are here ordered according to the chapters of the Biblical book and a Christian hand has added the number of the chapter in Roman numerals, so that the difficulty of finding the relevant passage would have been almost entirely eliminated and Reuchlin's supposed difficulty of having to search the entire book would have been greatly exaggerated or misplaced.

Be that as it may, a relevant number of similar glossaries is preserved and they would certainly justify a thorough comparative study, since they might reveal interesting details not only about the origins of Hebrew-Latin lexicography, but also concerning their eventual interdependence or their derivation from marginal and interlinear translations. Glossaries, but even dictionaries of a sacred language based on a limited and holy corpus, are a peculiar form of "frozen exegesis": the study of the principles upon which they are based reveals that the impression of stability they communicate is rather deceiving. As it is well-known, the names of plants and animals oscillate already in ancient works such as the *Historia plantarum* of Dioscorides or the *Naturalis historia* of Pliny and even more so in Medieval or Early Modern repertories and compilations such as the *Hortus sanitatis* with long lists of Greek, Latin, Arab and vulgar equivalences or diverging interpretations for one and the same item. Thus, it is far from surprising, for example, to find in a trilingual dictionary of the 16th century preserved at the British Library,²⁴ in which the Latin is followed by the German, that the term *gith* (corresponding to the Vulgate) is associated to German *Wicken*, which would be in Latin *vicia*, English *vetch*, Italian *veccia*. A curious case is represented by the Hebrew-Latin-German dictionary compiled in 1511 by Caspar Amman. In a preface, Amman, a pupil of Johannes Boeschstein, states that he has compiled it from Reuchlin's dictionary, that is to say from a printed source, but he has added the handwritten corrections inserted by a pupil of Reuchlin, Johann Renhart and, most notable, from a vulgar glossary compiled by an unnamed Rabbi:²⁵ in this case, the strata of the composition become almost visible, since the קצח entry reads as follows: *nigella melanthion gith ysa 28*, this reproduces exactly Reuchlin's entry (Reuchlin 1506: 474), then *vulgariter Wiken nomen fructus*.²⁶ In a reverse glossary, a Latin-Hebrew from the

23 Cf. Von Abel & Leicht 2005: 172-176.

24 Add. 19893.

25 Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. 4° 759, f. 1r. See also Steimann 2020.

26 Cf. Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. 759, f. 114r.

same circle,²⁷ one finds the botanically less than accurate definition of *gith* as a *legumen* (legume), but the circularity of the Vulgate to the Masoretic text and vice versa is respected. It would be easy to follow the destiny of this humble plant from Alonso de Zamora's Complutensian dictionary (1515),²⁸ to the various editions of Sebastian Muenster's lexicographic works,²⁹ to Sante Pagnini's most erudite tractate on the virtues of the black cumin for sick sheep³⁰ – copied entirely (in spite of what its title boasts) by Johann Forster in his eccentric *Dictionarium Hebraicum novum* of 1557 (Forster 1557: 740) – to Johann Avenarius' *Sefer ha-Shorashim* published in Wittemberg in 1568³¹ to Johann Buxtorf who breaks with the Vulgate tradition and avoids altogether the lemma *gith*.³²

In a recent article David J. A. Clines observed that not only “comparative Hebrew Lexicography” is a quite neglected field, he adds that even the establishment of a complete list of Hebrew dictionaries published from Buxtorf to the 20th century is a desideratum of research (Clines 2017: 227-246). Much more so this is the case for Hebrew-Latin dictionaries, lexica and glossaries of the 15th and 16th centuries. What I have tried to show in this brief survey is that by deconstructing early Hebrew-Latin dictionaries, we find at least three elements, two of them very much expected, the third, perhaps a little more surprising and still ill-defined, sorely in need of further reflection and systematization. First of all, a Hebrew-Latin dictionary much more than analogous dictionaries of other kinds, can be reduced to an extraction from a corpus of written translations, in our case the Vulgate, since even when alternative translations are suggested or explored, this is done always against the backdrop of the familiar Biblical text recited in liturgy and in private piety. Moreover, the available dictionaries, deriving entirely or partially from written or mental glossaries, summarize also a long exegetical tradition, especially the *Postillae* of Nicolaus of Lyra and the corrections of Paul of Burgos, but virtually an entire library of Patristic

27 Ms. Munich, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. 757, f. 35v.

28 Anonymous 1515: f. 113v: קצח *Césach*, *genus frumenti vel leguminis, pro quo beatus Hieronymus transtulit git.*

29 Münster 1523: 423: קצח *Gith*, *species seminis, quam Iudaei Germanice וויקקן vocant.* Only two years later the definition was corrected and integrated: Münster 1525: ff. O5v-O6r: קצח *Gith*, *species seminis quod secundum Kimhi est nigrum, et utitur eo homo pro condimento cibi, et vocari solet nigella: Isa. 28. Iudaei nostrates interpretantur wicken.* In the following, definitive, third edition (Münster 1535: f. X7r) one finds the following addition: *Aben Ezra dicit formam habere cymini, nisi quod est subtilior et nigra.*

30 Pagnini 1529: col. 2187: קצח *est gith, aut nigella. Est specied leguminis cuius granum est nigrum inquit Rab. David in libro radicum. Columel[la] lib. 7: Interdum fastidio ciborum languescit pecus. Eius remedium genus seminis quod gith appellant. Plinius scribit aliquos melanthion, alios malaspernion appellare. Optimumque et excitatissimi odoris, et quam nigerrimum. Nigella alio nomine dicitur lolium inter frumenta nascens.*

31 Avenarius 1568: 676: קצח *Gith*, *nigella romana, vitia.*

32 Buxtorf 1615: 678: קצח *m. Melanthion, Nigella, Jesa. 28 v. 25. Aben Ezra scribit, eius semen esse cymino minus et nigrum.*

and medieval exegesis is somehow present or must be considered in evaluating each and every translating choice. With the growing competence of Christian Hebraists in the Renaissance, the exegetical corpus was enriched with Jewish exegetical and lexicographical sources, such as the *Maḥberet Menaḥem*, David Qimḥi's *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, Nathan ben Yehiel's *ʿArukh* and the commentaries by Rashi, Abraham Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, Bahya ben Asher et cetera. Finally, as the evidence I have presented strongly suggests, the passage from Hebrew to Latin was constantly mediated by a living language, a *lingua franca*, leaving sometimes traces in the glossaries themselves, in the commentary of Jewish exegetes and “behind the scenes” of the compilation of dictionaries, in the mind of the compiler, for whom Latin was never a native language, in the intermediate glossaries he was using to make sense of Hebrew roots and words, but also in the living exchange with Jewish informants, for whom Latin was more often than not an unassailable fortress. Even when they did learn Latin, as we know that some of them did, one can think of Obadiah Sforzo (Campanini 1996), to name only one example, it is rather likely that they were not familiar, a part from a few polemically relevant passages, with the Vulgate. A different case is represented by converted Jews, who could bridge several worlds within their own life experience and linguistic expertise, but even their case demonstrates that the connection between two sacred languages could only be successfully attempted with the mediation of a third one, be it German, French or Italian, the linguistic medium of everyday life or profanity.³³ A homogeneous linguistic ground, mostly vernacular, is always present in these dictionaries of the late 15th and early 16th century, even if it is not always immediately visible, and this offers an analogy for a different kind of cooperative space, that Christian Hebraists, converts and Jews must have shared if the enterprise of a Hebrew-Latin lexicon should not fail in its infancy: an equal desire, although for different and often opposed reasons, of understanding and being faithful to the sacred word.

33 Cf. Campanini 2022a; Campanini 2022b.

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