

Did Rashbam Know the Vulgate Latin Translation of the Song of Songs?

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I.

The biblical commentaries of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam, ca. 1080–after 1159)¹ disclose his acquaintance with, attention to, and involvement in the social and intellectual reality of his time.² His very methodology of interpreting the biblical text in accord with “the way of the world” (דרך ארץ) and the “prevalent custom” (מנהג העולם), turns his acquaintance with the

¹ Of Rashbam’s extensive exegetical endeavor only four (or five) complete commentaries have survived: on the Pentateuch, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. His commentary on Esther is still in manuscript, and no research has been dedicated to it. There are also segments of and quotations from some of his other commentaries, in particular those on Ruth and Lamentations. For critical editions of his commentaries see: D. Rosin, *Der Pentateuch-Commentar des R. Samuel ben Meir* (Breslau: S. Schottlaender, 1881 [Heb.]); S. Japhet and R.B. Salters, *The Commentary of R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on Qoheleth* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press; Leiden: Brill, 1985); S. Japhet, *The Commentary of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam) on the Book of Job* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2000 [Heb.]); idem, *The Commentary of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir on the Song of Songs* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies and the Rabbi David Moses and Amalia Rosen Foundation, 2008 [Heb.]). For his life and works see D. Rosin, *R. Samuel ben Meir (רשב"ם) als Schrifterklärer* (Breslau: Wilhelm Koebner, 1880), 3–22; S. Poznanski, *Kommentar zu Ezechiel und den XII Kleinen Propheten von Eliezer aus Beauagency* (Warsaw: H. Eppelberg, 1913), XXXIX–XLIX (Heb.); E.Z. Melammed, *Bible Commentators* (2 vols.; 2nd ed.; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1978), 1:449–513 (Heb.); Japhet and Salters, *ibid.*, 11–18.

² See, among others, Rosin, *Rashbam*, 125–126; Poznanski, *Kommentar*, XLIX, and n. 3; E. Touitou, “Rashbam’s Exegetical Method Against the Historical Background of his Times,” in *Studies in Rabbinical Literature, Bible and Jewish History, Dedicated to Prof. Ezra Zion Melammed* (ed. Y.D. Gilat et al.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 59–74.

world around him into a major tool in the interpretation of Scripture.³ Moreover, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, Rashbam refers explicitly to visits that he paid to different places in France and to his discourses there,⁴ and mentions his debates with Christian scholars on the interpretation of Scripture.⁵

One of the interesting questions in this context is the degree of the Jews' involvement in the culture of their time.⁶ It is generally agreed that the everyday language of the French Jews was French.⁷ Did the intellectuals

³ On the precise meaning of these exegetical terms, their implications for the *Peshat* interpretation of Scripture, and their use by Rashbam, see, among others, M.S. Berger, "The Torah Commentary of Rabbi Samuel ben Meir" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), 76–126; Y. Thompson, "The Commentary of Samuel ben Meir on the Song of Songs" (D.H.L. thesis, Jewish Theological Seminary, 1988), 144–150; E. Touitou, *Exegesis in Perpetual Motion: Studies in the Pentateuchal Commentary of Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 134–145 (Heb.); idem, "Rashbam's Exegetical Method," 65–66; Japhet, *Rashbam on Job*, 68–71, 87–90; Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 100–104, 133–135.

⁴ He explicitly mentions a visit to Paris: "I was asked about it in Paris and I explained it in a sermon" (on Num 11:35; the English translation is by M.I. Lockshin, *Rashbam's Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers* [BJS 30; Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001], 196). He also mentions a visit to Loudun, in the district of Anjou (comment on Num 30:9). On his residence in and visits to other French cities, such as Rouen, Caen, Rheims and more, see N. Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 226–239.

⁵ See below pp. 265–266.

⁶ See A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of France: Their Lives, Leadership and Works* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1996), 24–29 (Heb.); A. Grabois, "The Hebraica Veritas and Jewish Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century," *Speculum* 50 (1975): 613–634; E. Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 72–73. For an interesting example of the degree to which the general culture is reflected in Jewish biblical exegesis, see S. Japhet, "'The Lovers' Way': Cultural Symbiosis in a Medieval Commentary on the Song of Songs," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 863–880.

⁷ See, among others, Rosin, *Rashbam*, 125, 91–97; M. Banitt, "Rashi's Commentary to Scripture and Vernacular Translations," in *Benjamin de Vries Memorial Volume*

among the Jews also know Latin, the literary and scholarly language of their time? Did they have access to the primary sources of Christian exegesis and theology?⁸

In his commentary on the Pentateuch, Rashbam defines some of his interpretations as “answers to the heretics” (לתשובת המינים), a euphemistic term for anti-Christian views.⁹ In his other commentaries these terms do not recur, neither the titles “Christians” or “heretics” (מינים), nor the definition of certain interpretations as “answers to the heretics.” However, as has been already pointed out in earlier studies, the debate with Christian exegesis and theology was one of the major motivations for the *Peshat* school of exegesis in general and Rashbam’s exegetical enterprise in particular, even when it is not explicitly stated.¹⁰ Elazar Touitou demonstrated in great detail the operation of this debate in Rashbam’s commentary on the Pentateuch, but it is to be found in his other commentaries as well, and in particular and most strongly in his commentary on the Song of Songs.¹¹

Rashbam mentions the Latin language by name only once, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, where he refers to a case of inaccurate

(ed. E.Z. Melammed; Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University Research Authority, 1968), 252–267 (Heb.), 1–15; idem, “Les *Poterim*,” *REJ* 125 (1966): 21–33; also, Touitou, *Exegesis*, 38–39; D. Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 589–590; B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et Chrétiens dans le Monde Occidental 430–1096* (Paris: Mouton, 1960), 5.

⁸ On the knowledge of Latin among Jewish medieval scholars, see Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education*, 72, 169–170 n. 37.

⁹ Exod 3:22; Lev 11:3, 34; 19:19; Deut 20:16; 22:6. On the double meaning of this term, see E. Touitou, “The Meaning of תשובת המינים in the Writings of our French Masters,” *Sinai* 99 (1986): 144–148 (Heb.).

¹⁰ See in particular, Touitou, *Exegesis*, 18–21, 34–45, 122–125, 164–176, 181–188, 246–248; Grossman, *French Sages*, 476–497.

¹¹ For Rashbam’s commentary on Job, see Japhet, *Rashbam on Job*, 52–53, 64–65, 133; for his commentary on the Song of Songs, see S. Japhet, “Exegesis and Polemic in Rashbam’s Commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context* (eds. N.B. Dohrmann and D. Stern; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 182–195; idem, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 66–68, 172–182.

translation in the Vulgate as part of his debate with Christian scholars. He refers to Latin also on another occasion, by the term לעז. The first reference deals with a linguistic detail. In his commentary on Exod 20:13 he states: "You shall not murder. The verb רצה always—wherever it appears—refers to unjustified homicide ... But the verbs הרג and מות sometimes refer to unjustified homicide ... and sometimes to justifiable homicide ... I offered this explanation to the heretics and they admitted that I was right.¹² Even though in their Latin books the same verb is used to translate the verb מות as in ... (Deut 32:39), and the verb רצה in this verse, their translations are inaccurate."¹³

The second note, although of linguistic nature, has broader theological implications. Rashbam states in his commentary on Genesis 49:10: "This *Peshat* is an answer to the heretics. Shiloh that is written here is just the name of a city, for there are no foreign words in the Bible (שאיין לעז במקרא). It is neither written here שלו, as claimed by the Jews, nor שליה, as claimed by the Christians."¹⁴

Notwithstanding the small number of these remarks, the majority of scholars concluded that Rashbam knew Latin.¹⁵ Grabois would go even

¹² This is a clear indication of actual debates between Rashbam and Christian scholars on the interpretation of Scripture. A similar statement may be found in his commentary on Lev 19:19.

¹³ The English translation of Rashbam's commentary follows, with slight changes, M.I. Lockshin, *Rashbam's Commentary on Exodus* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 217–219.

¹⁴ The English translation follows with slight changes, M.I. Lockshin, *Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir's Commentary on Genesis* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 362–363. On the meaning of this interpretation and its function in the context of Jewish-Christian polemics, see Rosin, *Rashbam*, 98; idem, *Der Pentateuch*, 72; A. Poznanski, *Shiloh, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1904), 127–128; D. Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979), 249–252; Lockshin, *ibid*, 360–361.

¹⁵ See Rosin, *Rashbam*, 125; Poznanski, *Kommentar*, XLVII–XLIX; J. Klausner, "The Fighting Commentator of the Middle Ages," *Lešonenu* 21 (1957): 201, 205 (Heb.); N. Golb, *History and Culture of the Jews of Rouen in the Middle Ages* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976), 136 and n. 382 (Heb.); E. Touitou, *Rashbam's Exegetical Method*, 72 n. 145. For another opinion, see, among others, Lockshin, *Rashbam on Exodus*, 219 n. 24.

further and claim that not only did Rashbam know Latin, but that he learned the language in order to read the Christian commentaries in their original language.¹⁶ As Rashbam very rarely spoke about himself, and rather seldom mentioned his sources, no further information may be gleaned from his explicit remarks as to how thorough his knowledge of Latin was, who his teachers were, and what motivated him to acquire the language. Nevertheless, Grabois' conclusion seems rather plausible, for what else would lead a 12th century traditional Jewish Rabbi to learn Latin, if not his direct contacts with Christian scholars and the debate with their views?

As stated above, Rashbam mentioned the Latin translation of the Bible only in his commentary on the Pentateuch. In view of his actual debates with Christian scholars, and his general polemical attitude to Christian exegesis and theology, the question should be asked also in regard to his other commentaries. In this context I will confine my study to Rashbam's commentary on the Song of Songs: Did Rashbam know the Vulgate's translation of the Song of Songs, and was he influenced by it in any way?

II.

A comparison between Rashbam's commentary on the Song of Songs and the Vulgate discloses quite a few cases of similarity, most of them in interpretations where Rashbam deviates from the prior commentary of his grandfather Rashi and goes his own way. Before embarking on the study of these similarities, a few preliminary remarks are indicated.

(1) Rashbam stands out among medieval Jewish commentators in his awareness of the textual transmission of the biblical text, in a way that brings to mind modern scholarship on these issues.¹⁷ His remarks on this

¹⁶ G.A. Grabois, "L'exégèse rabbinique," in *Le moyen age et la bible* (ed. P. Riché and G. Lobrichon; Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), 233-260, on p. 253.

¹⁷ See in particular, Rosin, *Rashbam*, 59-60, and n. 2; S. Japhet, "Variant Readings in the Biblical Text in Light of Rashbam's Commentary on the Book of Job," in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis Presented to Menachem Cohen* (ed. S. Vargon et al.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005), 62-65 (Heb.).

aspect of the text are not many, and are all prompted by exegetical or grammatical questions, but his understanding of “transmission” as a phenomenon in and of itself is unequivocal. However, all his remarks relate to problems emanating from the Hebrew text, and from comparison with alternative traditions of transmission of this text. The procedure followed by modern scholars, who solve problems of transmission by consulting the ancient Versions, propose “variant readings” and even suggest “original readings” that deviate from the Masoretic version, was not followed by Rashbam, and did not exist for him even as a possibility.

(2) Differently from Rashbam’s commentaries on the Pentateuch and on Job, and similar to his commentary on Qoheleth, there are no explicit remarks on matters of transmission in his commentary on the Song of Songs. Although this commentary contains (in the version of MS Hamburg 32)¹⁸ about a hundred and ten deviations from the MT, they are all matters of spelling: most of them are changes from defective spelling to plene, a few are changes from plene to defective, there are some omissions or additions of a letter (like copulative *waw* or the determinative *he*), occasional omission of a word within a biblical quotation, and some errors.¹⁹ All the biblical excerpts found in the commentary—as either lemmas or quotations—conform to the Masoretic text; not even one among them may be regarded as reflecting a variant reading.²⁰ Therefore, the similarities between Rashbam’s commentary and the Vulgate are not expressed in common

¹⁸ I used this manuscript as the principal text for the critical edition of the commentary (see above, n. 1). On the other manuscripts and textual witnesses, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 209-218.

¹⁹ The deviations from the MT are recorded in full in the new edition of the commentary.

²⁰ For variant readings in Rashbam’s commentary on the Pentateuch, see S. Esh, “Variant Readings in Mediaeval Hebrew Commentaries: R. Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam),” *Textus* 5 (1966): 84-92; for Qoheleth see R.B. Salters, “Possible Variant Readings in a Mediaeval Commentary,” *JSS* 30 (1979): 85-90; and S. Japhet, “‘Goes to the South and turns to the North’ (Ecclesiastes 1:6): The Sources and History of the Exegetical Traditions,” *JSQ* 1 (1993/4): 159-160; for Job, see Japhet, “Variant Readings,” 61-78.

variant readings but in the commentary as such, where Rashbam's interpretation conforms to the reading of the Vulgate.

(3) The study of the ancient Versions demonstrated long ago that the readings of these Versions were determined by various factors, only part of which—not necessarily the largest part—reflect variant Hebrew readings. Many readings in the Versions are expressions of interpretations, which in themselves are determined by several factors. For example, when the Hebrew text is multivalent, and the translation cannot by its very nature accommodate the range of meanings, the version it proposes is by force a result of interpretative selection. This interpretation may sometimes be the translator's own, or reflect existing interpretative traditions.²¹

The question posed in this study has thus several aspects: What precisely are the resemblances between Rashbam's commentary on the Song of Songs and the translation of the Vulgate? Are the resemblances exclusive to these two documents, or are they shared by other sources? Should these similarities be interpreted as a proof that Rashbam was acquainted with the Vulgate and influenced by it, or should they be explained otherwise? In the following I will try to answer some of the questions through a detailed discussion of these similarities.

III.

(1) The first example is the most complex, as it appears on the face of the matter to be a case of a variant reading.

Song 1:7: כַּעֲטִיָּה

The word כַּעֲטִיָּה is a *hapax legomenon* but its root, עֲטָה, appears in the Bible sixteen (or seventeen) times more, fifteen in the *Qal* conjugation and one (or two) in the *hiph'il*.²² Its basic meaning, as presented in the dictionaries, is "to

²¹ See E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 124–128.

²² In the *Qal* conjugation: Lev 13:45; 1 Sam 28:14; Isa 22:17 (twice); 59:17; Jer 43:12 (twice); Ezek 24:17, 22; Mic 3:7; Ps 71:13; 84:2; 104:2; 109:19, 29; in the *hiph'il*: Ps 89:46, and the re-vocalized form in Isa 61:10.

wrap up, envelop,” and a recurrent idiom is *עטה על שפם*, “cover the beard,” a sign of mourning or shame.²³

The form of the word *עֲטִיָּה* is generally considered to be the feminine participle of *עטה*, with the preservation of the original final *yôd* of the tertia *yôd* verbs.²⁴ However, in the few words that reflect this form, the vowel of the medial consonant is *hîreq*, and the *yôd* is accented by a *dagesh*, (such as *בוֹכִיָּה* [Lam 1:16]; *הוֹמִיָּה* [Isa 22:2] etc.), while in *עֲטִיָּה* the *tet* is silent and the *yôd* does not have a *dagesh*. Commentators have treated this word in three different ways: some regarded the unique vocalization as an analogy to the conjugation of the strong verbs and thus a feminine participle of the root *עטה*;²⁵ some suggested that the vocalization is corrupt and should be reconstructed, as illustrated above, to *עֲטִיָּה*;²⁶ the third group regards the word as corrupt in both vocalization and order of letters, and reconstruct an “original” word, *טוֹעִיָּה*.²⁷

Traditional Jewish exegesis, as displayed in the homiletic literature, interpreted the word as expressing the idea of “covering, wrapping,”²⁸ and Rashi followed the same line: “It is not your honor that I be as a mourner,

²³ BDB, 741–2; HALOT, 813; M.Z. Kaddari, *A Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006), 792 (Heb.). For the specific idiom see Lev 13:45; Ezek 24:17, 22, and more.

²⁴ See, among others, GKC, § 75v, 212.

²⁵ See, for instance, A. Hacham, “The Song of Songs,” in *The Five Scrolls* (ed. A. Mirski et al.; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1974), 8*; Gesenius, *ibid*.

²⁶ See, for instance, W. Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth, Das Hohe Lied, Die Klagelieder* (KHT 17; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 125.

²⁷ See, for instance, K. Gallig, *Die fünf Megilloth* (HAT 1.18; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1910, 1940), 26; H. Ringgren, *Das Hohe Lied* (3rd ed.; ATD 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 260. Gesenius proposes all three possibilities (*ibid*).

²⁸ “Let me not be like a mourner who covers (*’oteh*) his upper lip and weeps ... Another explanation: ... let me not be like a shepherd whose flock is attacked ... while he folds ... his garment and escapes” (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah* 1:44; English translation by Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah, Esther and the Song of Songs* [London: Soncino, 1939], 62).

covering the beard, weeping for my sheep.”²⁹ In his dictionary Ibn Saruq listed Song 1:8 in the fourth group under the root עט. He did not propose a definition of this division but all the other verses included in this group contain the name of the bird עיט.³⁰

Rashbam suggested a different interpretation, and repeated it three times, at each level of the commentary: in the general paraphrase of the verse, in the division of the commentary that deals with selected details, and in the allegorical interpretation.³¹

In the paraphrase: אשר למה אהיה צאן גולה ומטולטלת לטלטל ולילך אצל עדרי צאן חביריך הרועים (“Why should I be an exiled and shaken sheep, moving around the flocks of your companions the shepherds”).

In the details: כעטייה. לשון מטולטלת. כמ’הנה ה’ מטלטלך טלטל ועטך עטה.³² (“כעטייה” has the meaning like מטולטלת [shaken, moved from one place to another], as in ‘The Lord is about to hurl you away violently and move you around’ [Isa 22:17]).³³

²⁹ Rashi’s interpretation is quoted in the Glossary of Leipzig. See: M. Banitt, *Le glossaire de Leipzig* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2001), 3:1583, no. 20537.

³⁰ Gen 15:11; Isa 18:6; Jer 12:9; Ezek 39:4. See A. Sáenz-Badillos, *Menahem Ben Saruq Mahberet* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1986), 280*. It seems that Menahem regarded עטה as a metathesis of עטה, the feminine form of עיט.

³¹ Rashbam’s commentary on the Song of Songs has a specific structure. He divides the Song of Songs into textual units, and explains each unit in three parts: a paraphrase of the unit, interpretation of some details (the contents of which are incorporated into the paraphrase), and an allegorical interpretation. For this structure, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 186-187; eadem, “Exegesis and Polemic,” 113-115.

³² The text of Rashbam’s commentary follows the new critical edition, mentioned in n. 1.

³³ Rashbam’s specific interpretation of Isa 22:17 is not represented in the English translations of the verse. Therefore, I follow the NRSV in the first part of the verse but deviate from it in the second part. Rashbam omitted two words from the quotation.

In the allegorical interpretation: ומדוע אהיה מטלטלת וגולה בין האומות ללכת: לעבוד את הגוים האלה ("why should I be moved around, exiled among the nations, serving these people").

The meaning Rashbam proposes for the root עטה is thus "shaken, moved," and metaphorically "exiled." The basis of this interpretation is the parallelism between this root and טלטל in Isa 22:17.³⁴ Since this is the only case in which Rashbam refers to this verb, it is impossible to know how he interpreted the other occurrences of the root. It is quite likely, however, that he applied here the rule, "Most words in the Torah have two categories of meaning," expressed in his commentary on the Pentateuch,³⁵ and that he insisted here on the less common meaning of the verb.³⁶

Rashbam's interpretation is reflected in the reading of the Vulgate, *vagari*—"roaming, wandering." Many commentators regarded the Vulgate's translation as a reflection of a textual variant, and assumed that the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Vulgate was the root טעה. Accordingly, they restored the Hebrew text to read טועיה, as mentioned above.³⁷ The most striking evidence for the acceptance of this restoration is its reflection in the dictionaries of biblical Hebrew, where the root טעה is ascribed the meaning "wander" on the basis of this reconstruction alone.³⁸

³⁴ On the function of parallelism as a major exegetical tool in Rashbam's exegesis, see for example Japhet, *Rashbam on Job*, 177–200; idem, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 147–157; R.A. Harris, *Discerning Parallelism: A Study in Northern French Medieval Jewish Biblical Exegesis* (BJS 341; Providence: Brown University Press, 2004), 55–73.

³⁵ On Exod 34:29: כִּי שְׁתֵּי מַחֲלָקוֹת הֵם בְּרוּב תִּיבוֹת שְׁבִתוֹרָה. As he states there, the rule follows Ibn Saruq's practice in the dictionary.

³⁶ One may see here an anticipation of the modern biblical dictionaries, which find in biblical Hebrew two roots עטה, I and II (e.g. BDB, 742; HALOT, 813–814), although they ascribe to עטה II a different meaning. BDB includes in this category both Isa 22:17 and Song 1:7.

³⁷ See among others, BHS; HALOT, 814; BDB, 380; above n. 27, and more. BHS (and others) support this reconstruction by adducing the reading of Symmachus (ὥς ῥεμβομένη), the Peshitta, and the Aramaic Targum, but see further below.

³⁸ BDB, 380; HALOT, 814.

Notwithstanding this wide consensus, the assumption that the Vulgate reflects a variant reading (original or not) is quite problematic. Nowhere in the Bible does the root טעה mean “loss of way, roaming, wandering.” The root appears in the Bible only once (Ezek 13:10), in the *hiph’il* conjugation, and its meaning there is “deceive, lie to.” “Loss of way, wander” is expressed in biblical Hebrew by the root תעה which appears in the Bible fifty times in different conjugations. Only in post-biblical, Rabbinic Hebrew, as a result of phonetic assimilation, is there evidence for the semantic shift which caused טעה to occasionally assume the meaning of “wandering,” side by side with תעה.³⁹ An original biblical טועֵיָה is thus hardly plausible.

The explanation proposed by Rashbam increases the improbability of the theoretical “variant reading” which supposedly underlay the Vulgate’s version. As we saw, Rashbam indeed understands the sense of the verb here as “wandering, exiled,” but ascribes this meaning to the word as is, that is עטיה, derived from עטה, and bases this meaning on the solid interpretative principle of parallelism. This interpretation provides the correct way to explain the Vulgate’s version: a reflection of interpretation, rather than a quite improbable variant reading.

This suggestion is supported by the translations of the other Versions, quoted by scholars in support of this reconstructed variant reading.⁴⁰ Among them is the Aramaic Targum, a late allegorical paraphrase of the Song of Songs.⁴¹ The reading of the Targum reflects an interpretation similar to that of the Vulgate and Rashbam: “Why they should wander (מטלטלין)

³⁹ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1972), 542, 1683. Levi, however, distinguishes between the two roots even in rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic. See J. Levi, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midrashim I-IV* (2nd ed.; Berlin and Vienna: Benjamin Harz, 1924), 2:170; 4:657.

⁴⁰ See above n. 37.

⁴¹ On the nature of the Targum, see P.S. Alexander, *The Targum of Canticles* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 19–33; on the date and provenance of the Targum see *ibid.*, 55–60. See also Y. Komlosh, *The Bible in the Light of the Aramaic Translations* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1973), 77–81 (Heb.).

among the flocks of Esau and Ishmael?"⁴² Naturally, neither the Vulgate nor the Targum mark the affinity with Isa 22:17, but this affinity is perhaps suggested by the verb טלטל, chosen by the Targum to represent the Hebrew עטיה.

To sum up: The similarity between Rashbam's interpretation and the Vulgate is unequivocal, and is emphasized by the fact that Rashbam's view differs from most, if not all, of his immediate sources—the Midrash, Rashi, and Ibn Saruq. However, it is less certain that the Vulgate was the origin of Rashbam's interpretation. Rashbam could have arrived at this understanding by himself, on the basis of the parallelism with Isa 22:17. He could also have been influenced by the interpretation of the Aramaic Targum—although his general method differs substantially from that of the Targum, and there are no obvious traces of the Targum in his commentary on the Song of Songs. Nevertheless, the possibility of a local adoption of a detail should not be ruled out;⁴³ Rashbam may have accepted the Targum's version and reinforced it by the parallelism with Isa 22:17. And finally it is possible that what we have here is an exegetical tradition, which has not been documented in earlier Jewish sources but has come to light by the combination of these sources: the Vulgate, the Targum, and Rashbam's commentary on the Song of Songs.

(2) Song 1:9: לַסֹּסִי

The word סוס (horse) appears in the Bible over 130 times, always in the masculine. The feminine form is not attested in the Bible, so that סוסתי of Song 1:9 is a *hapax legomenon*. How should it be interpreted?

The most common way is to see the word as the feminine form of סוס, with the possessive *yôd*: "my mare."⁴⁴ It is thus presented in the dictionaries

⁴² The English translation follows Alexander, *Targum*, 84.

⁴³ On the question of Rashbam's acquaintance with and use of the Targum, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 58-60.

⁴⁴ For another view of the *yôd*, as *yôd compaginis*—a survival of the case-ending—see Rudolph, *Hohe Lied*, 133. Gesenius does not include this word in his examples (GKC §90k-l, 252-254).

and commentaries on the Song of Songs, and is also reflected in the homiletic Jewish tradition.⁴⁵

An alternative to the prevailing interpretation may be found, with some nuances, in the Vulgate on the one hand, and in the commentaries of Rashi and Rashbam on the other hand. In the Vulgate the word is represented by a collective noun with the possessive pronoun: *equitatus meo*—"to my cavalry." It is difficult to decide what prompted this rendering: was it specifically because of the word's unique feminine form,⁴⁶ or because the singular as such may represent a collective?⁴⁷

The Vulgate's interpretation is suggested by Rashi in his comments on the verse. In order to make his point absolutely clear, Rashi repeats his idea three times, twice in Hebrew and once by a French gloss:

"לססתי: to a group of many horses; I assembled my camps to go toward you ... to save you, as it is said: 'You trampled the sea with your horses' (Hab 3:15), many horses ... לססתי: a group of horses; in the foreign language: *cavaleish* (קבלייִשא)."⁴⁸

Rashi's comments represent the rendering of the Vulgate in its two aspects: the feminine form *סוסה* is seen as a collective noun, and the final *yôd* is regarded as the possessive pronoun: *סוסה* = many horses; *סוסתי* = "my horses."

⁴⁵ See, among others, *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1:48: "The Israelites appeared like mares and the wicked Egyptians who pursued them were like stallions eager with desire, and they ran after them until they were sunk in the sea" (English translation by Simon, §I 9, 6; 71).

⁴⁶ For the use of feminine singular nouns as expression of the collective, see GKC §12s, 394. Gesenius does not include the word *סוסה* among his examples.

⁴⁷ The use of the singular noun in both individual and collective meaning is common in Hebrew (GKC §123b, 395). In the Vulgate, the singular masculine *סוס* is also represented by the collective *equitatus* in Exod 14: 9, 23; Deut 17:16, and more. See S. Kamin and A. Saltman, *Secundum Salomonem: A 13th Century Latin Commentary on the Song of Songs* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1989), 44 (in Hebrew letters), vs. 1:9, n. 1.

⁴⁸ This interpretation is repeated in the *Leipzig Glossary*, 1583, no. 20545, but the gloss is written somewhat differently: *אָה קוֹלֵרִיאָה* – *à ma cavalerie*.

Rashbam's interpretation is similar to that of the Vulgate and Rashi in its main point, but deviates from it in one detail: he explains the final *yôd* not as a possessive pronoun but as a form of emphasis.⁴⁹ He regards סוסה as a collective noun, and presents this meaning in the paraphrastic interpretation in two ways: by an explicit definition and by the use of the plural: "לססתי: ... I compared you to the time of the assembling of horses (לעת קביצת סוסים) in Pharaoh's cavalry ... for I gave you all the ornaments and jewelry of the king's horses."

There is a complete identity between Rashi's interpretation and that of the Vulgate, and a partial—yet significant—resemblance of Rashbam's interpretation to the other two. How should this resemblance be accounted for? It seems likely that Rashbam based himself on Rashi, deviating from him only in the understanding of the *yôd*. Should we conclude that Rashi knew Latin and was acquainted with the version of the Vulgate? Most scholars who specialize in Rashi's work deny the possibility that he knew Latin,⁵⁰ and would surely deny that he actually used the Vulgate as a source.⁵¹ The decision is therefore not easy. While the interpretation of סוסה

⁴⁹ Thus, like some modern scholars, Rashbam is aware of the fact that the *yôd* may not represent the possessive pronoun but have another function. For a discussion of his view on the matter, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 37–39.

⁵⁰ Yitzhak Baer insisted that Rashi knew Latin and read the Christian works in their original language, but his views were rejected by later scholars. For a summary of the discussion see S. Kamin, "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs and the Jewish-Christian Polemic," *Shnaton: An Annual for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 7–8 (1983–1984): 246 n. 121 (= *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible* [Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1992], 59 n. 121 [Heb.]); Touitou, *Exegesis*, 37. Touitou's conclusion is that "we are unable to offer an unequivocal authoritative answer to the question whether Rashi knew Latin or not" (*ibid.*).

⁵¹ According to Banitt, Rashi "was more than familiar with the VV, for it had been the medium by which he had learnt the Bible" (M. Banitt, *Rashi Interpreter of the Biblical Text* [Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1985], 7). However, with the symbol VV Banitt refers to "the Jewish Old French Vulgate Version of the Bible," that is, a French translation of the Vulgate rather than the original Latin version. See in detail, Banitt, *ibid.*, 6–30; *idem*, "The Study of the Biblical Glossaries of the

in the plural may be found in Jewish sources, such as the Midrash and the Aramaic Targum,⁵² none of these sources represent the word specifically as a collective, “a group of horses.” Does it nevertheless reflect an unknown Jewish exegetical tradition? Is it Rashi’s own innovation? The simplest and most straightforward answer, at least until other documentation is forwarded, is that Rashi followed the Vulgate, while Rashbam based himself on Rashi’s interpretation.⁵³

(3) Song 2:12: הזמיר

The noun זמיר may be derived from either זמר I and mean “singing,” or זמר II and mean “pruning”; most dictionaries of biblical Hebrew and commentaries on the Song of Songs choose between these alternatives.⁵⁴

In the Jewish exegetical tradition the two interpretations appear side by side, as in *Song of Songs Rabbah*: “The time has come for the uncircumcision to be cut; the time has come for the Egyptians to be pruned; the time has come for their idolatry to be uprooted ... the time has come for song to be chanted ... the time has come for songs to be chanted to the Holy One blessed be He.”⁵⁵ The Aramaic Targum and Ibn Saruq chose the meaning of

French Jews in the Middle Ages,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 2 (1968): 188–210.

⁵² For the Midrash see above n. 45. The Targum to this verse is extremely paraphrastic but still includes “mares” in the feminine plural.

⁵³ For another, quite striking, example of Rashi’s affinity to Christian exegesis see Japhet, “Goes to the South and Turns to the North,” 313–314.

⁵⁴ Thus BDB, 274; HALOT, 273. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (ed. David J. A. Clines; 5 vols.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–2001), 3:117, proposes also the meaning “guardian,” while Kaddari, *Dictionary*, 253–54, proposes the additional meanings “summer” (following the Gezer tablet) and “mighty.” See also A. Lemaire, “Zamir dans la tablette de Gezer et le Cantique des Cantiques,” *VT* 25 (1975): 15–26.

⁵⁵ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 2:25; also 2:26–28. English translation follows Simon, *Midrash Rabbah*, II 12, 1, 122.

“pruning,”⁵⁶ while Rashi and Ibn Ezra prefer “singing”: “the birds give songs and their voice is pleasant to people on the roads.”⁵⁷

Rashbam explains the word as “pruning” and refers to it twice, in the paraphrase of the verse and in the interpretation of the details:

In the paraphrase: “And the time of זמיר, the pruning of the vineyards has arrived.”

In the details: “עת הזמיר: it has the meaning of ‘pruning,’ as in ‘you shall not prune your untrimmed vines’ (Lev 25:5).”⁵⁸

The interpretation of the word זמיר as “pruning” is reflected also in the Septuagint (καρπὸς τῆς τομῆς) and the Vulgate (*tempus putationis*).⁵⁹ Does this similarity indicate that Rashbam knew the Vulgate and followed it? It is of course possible but certainly not necessary, as the same interpretation may be found in many Jewish sources such as the Midrash, the Aramaic Targum, and in particular in Ibn Saruq’s dictionary. Not only is Rashbam greatly influenced by this dictionary,⁶⁰ but in this case the phrasing of the two texts is almost identical: לשון קטף in Ibn Saruq, לשון קטורף by Rashbam.

Again, while the similarity between Rashbam and the Vulgate is unequivocal, there is no compelling reason to see the Vulgate as Rashbam’s source.

⁵⁶ The rendering of the Aramaic Targum is: “the time for cutting the first born has arrived” (עת קטורף בוכריא) (Alexander, *Targum*, 109). Ibn Saruq: “לשון קטף” (*Mahberet*, second division of זמר, 154*).

⁵⁷ Rashi’s comment on the verse. The interpretation is quoted in the *Leipzig Glossary*, 1587, no. 20600. Ibn Ezra justifies this interpretation: “Its meaning is the singing of birds. Some say that it is like: ‘You shall not prune your vineyard’ (Lev 25:4), but this is not the season.”

⁵⁸ The quotation is inaccurate, as the verb of vs. 4 (prune) was introduced into the phrase of vs. 5. See already S. Salfeld, *Das Hohelied Salomo’s bei den jüdischen Erklärer des Mittelalters* (Berlin: Julius Benzian, 1879), 168.

⁵⁹ The difference between the Vulgate and Rashi’s commentary was pointed out already by the anonymous author of *Secundum Salomonem* (see Kamin and Saltman, *Secundum Salomonem*, 16*). For him, Rashi’s view represents the “interpretation of the Jews.”

⁶⁰ On the extensive use of Ibn Saruq’s *Mahberet* in Rashbam’s commentary on the Song of Songs, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 60-63.

(4a–b) Song 2:13: סמדר

(a) The word סמדר is peculiar to the Song of Songs and appears there three times in similar phrases (2:13, 15; 7:13). The word is documented also in epigraphic findings, and appears several times in rabbinic Hebrew: in the Midrash, the Mishnah and the Talmud.⁶¹ The Mishnah hints at the meaning of the word: “Rabbi Yosi says: The סמדר is forbidden because it is a fruit” (*m. Orlah* 1:7). The word is presented in the translations of the Mishnah as “budding berries” (Neusner), or “newly fashioned berries” (Danby).⁶²

Rashi refers to the word סמדר in each of its occurrences and, following the rabbinic sources, offers a detailed interpretation: “When the flower falls down and the grapes are distinct from one another and each grape is seen on its own, they are called סמדר” (on Song 2:13). Then, on 2:15 he explains “when the grapes are small”, and further on: “When the flower falls and the grapes are distinct, this is the opening of the סמדר” (on 7:13). Rashi repeats this interpretation briefly in his commentary on the Talmud.⁶³

Rashbam does not follow Rashi’s interpretation and explains the word סמדר as flower: עניין פרח ונצה הוא: it means a flower and a blossom” (on Song 2:13, in the interpretation of the details). He offers a longer interpretation in his comment on 7:13: “פתח: *Espanie*. One uses ‘opening’ with סמדר because, before the blossoms of the grapes are seen, the סמדר is round like a small nut, and is also closed. When it opens, its smell spreads and is pleasant.”

For Rashbam, then, סמדר is the blossom of the vine’s flower before its opening, rather than the grape in its earliest stage, after the flower has fallen off.

⁶¹ See S. Ahituv, “The Meaning of Sēmadar,” *Lěšonēnu* 39 (1974–1975): 37–40 (Hebrew with English summary). For rabbinic sources see, e.g. *Sifra Qidd* 5:3; *m. Orlah* 1:7; *m. Gittin* 2:5; *b. B. Qam* 58b; 59a, and more.

⁶² For a different interpretation of the rabbinic sources, see Ahituv, “Meaning of Sēmadar.”

⁶³ On *b. B. Qam*. 58b: “small grapes in their beginning.” See also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 998; Levi, *Wörterbuch*, 540.

Rashbam's interpretation is similar to that of the Vulgate, although the Vulgate's translation is somewhat ambiguous. At 2:13, 15 the Vulgate translates the word by the verb denoting flowering (s.v. *floro*).⁶⁴ However, in 7:13 the translation includes both "flower" and "fruit," and סמדר seems to be represented by the fruit which the flower produces, rather than by the flower: *si flores fructus parturiunt* ("if the flowers yielded fruit").⁶⁵ Thus, while the Vulgate interprets סמדר as "flower" in Song 2:13, 15, it presents it as "fruit" in 7:13.

(b) On the other hand, there is a great similarity between Rashbam and the Vulgate in understanding the syntax of Song 7:13, and in supplementing the interrogative word "if" in the third and fourth colons of the verse. The MT פתח הסדר / הנצו הרמונים / אם פרח הגפן / אם נפתחו פתחי סמדר ואם הנצו הרמונים is presented in Rashbam's paraphrase as אם פרח הגפן ואם נפתחו פתחי סמדר ואם הנצו הרמונים. This interrogative word is present also in the reading of the Vulgate: *si floruit... si flores ... si floruerunt*.⁶⁶

May we see the Vulgate as the origin of Rashbam's interpretation? The answer is not straightforward. On the one hand, the interpretation of the word סמדר as flower is a precise quotation from Ibn Saruq's dictionary: פרח ונצה. ענין פרח ונצה. סמדר. והגפנים סמדר.⁶⁷ and I have already mentioned the great influence of Ibn Saruq's dictionary on Rashbam's Song of Songs commentary.⁶⁸ This interpretation is then repeated in later Spanish sources, like Ibn Janach, and Ibn Ezra on the Song of Songs.⁶⁹ Thus, although

⁶⁴ Song 2:13: *vineae florent*; 2:15: *vinea nostra floruit*. The Septuagint employs "bloom" in all three verses (2:13: ἄμπελοι κυπρίζουσι; 2:15: ἄμπελοι... κυπρίζουσι; 7:13: κυπρισμός).

⁶⁵ Kamin and Saltman are unaware of the ambiguity of the Vulgate's reading, and join Song 7:13 to the other two verses (*Secundum Salomonem*, 48*, Song 2:13, n. 5). They nevertheless refer to Rashi's comment on the verse in their note to 7:13 (Vulgate: 7:12), *ibid*, 75*.

⁶⁶ But not in the other sources: neither the Septuagint on the one hand, nor Rashi or Ibn Ezra on the other.

⁶⁷ *Mahberet*, 267*.

⁶⁸ See above p. 278, and Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 60-63.

⁶⁹ W. Bacher, *Sepher Haschoraschim ... von Abulwalid Merwan Ibn Ganah* (Berlin: Itzkowski, 1896), 348 (Heb.); Ibn Ezra on Songs 2:13. This is the interpretation of

Rashbam deviates from the rabbinic tradition and Rashi's interpretation, and his interpretation resembles the reading of the Vulgate at least partially, the source of his interpretation is not the Vulgate. It seems rather that two alternative exegetical approaches existed within the Jewish tradition. The similarity between Ibn Saruq's dictionary on the one hand and the Septuagint and Vulgate on the other is interesting in itself, but it is more likely that Rashbam's source was Ibn Saruq's dictionary rather than the Vulgate.

As for the repetition of the interrogative word in all the colons of the verse, although the similarity is striking, Rashbam is hardly dependent on the Vulgate. The verse illustrates the structure called in modern terminology "defective parallelism," of which Rashbam is aware in all his commentaries.⁷⁰ It seems rather that a similar linguistic sensitivity led both the Vulgate and Rashbam to their syntactical solution.

(5) Song 4:1: שגלשו

The root גלש is peculiar to the Song of Songs and appears there twice in similar phrases (also 6:5). It is explained by the dictionaries of biblical Hebrew on the basis of cognate languages and Rabbinic Hebrew as: "sit, sit up, possibly also recline" (BDB);⁷¹ "move down" or "hop" (HALOT),⁷² "flow" or "leap,"⁷³ "a wave-like movement."⁷⁴

the modern dictionaries of biblical Hebrew (see BDB, 701; HALOT, 759). So also Hacham, *Song of Songs*, 21*, 65*; Y. Zakovitch, *The Song of Songs* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1992), 68-69 [Heb.].

⁷⁰ See Japhet, *Rashbam on Job*, 187-191. For the addition of the interrogative word, see his comments on Job 9:20; 12:14-15; 30:25. This is the only instance in the Song of Songs where the interrogative word is missing in a parallel structure. For other cases of defective parallelism in the Song of Songs, see Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 151-154.

⁷¹ Page 167: "Construction and sense rather awkward."

⁷² Page 195, referring to Rabbinic Hebrew: "to boil."

⁷³ *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, 2:357, with no etymological or cognate affinities, following the Dictionary's general procedure.

⁷⁴ Kaddari, *Dictionary*, 159, on the basis of the Midrash.

Both Rashi and Rashbam explain the word on the basis of the Aramaic of the Targum, but their interpretations are different. Rashi follows the midrashic tradition and explains the verb as “became bald. גבח is translated [in Aramaic] גלוש. When the animals descend from the mountain, the mountain becomes bald and shorn of them” (on 4:1).⁷⁵

Rashbam explains the word as expressing the idea of seeing, and repeats it three times. Twice in the section of the details: “שגלשו מהר גלעד: in the land of Gilad there are goats ... and when they descend from the mountain they are all seen by those who stand at the bottom of the mountain and it is a nice thing to look at.” “שגלשו: like were seen ... and this is the Targum of גבח.” He repeats the interpretation in the paraphrase: “and their hair looks beautiful and bright when they are seen from the mountain of Gilad. The one standing at the bottom of the mountain sees them all bright and it is fair in his eyes.”

The interpretation “seen, revealed” is reflected in the Septuagint in two different verbs (ἀπεκαλύφθησαν, ανεφάνεσαν), whereas in the Vulgate, 4:1 is rendered “came up” (*quae ascenderunt*) and 6:5 (the Vulgate 6:4): “were seen” (*quae apparuerunt*). Notwithstanding the similarity between Rashbam’s interpretation and the Versions (the Septuagint more than the Vulgate), here, too the direct origin of his interpretation is rather Ibn Saruq’s dictionary, which writes on this verse: “שגלשו מן הגלעד: this word is a *hapax legomenon* and should be interpreted according to context. שגלשו is like ‘were seen,’ they came up from the Gilad.”⁷⁶ Rashbam is clearly dependent on Ibn Saruq but goes one step further. He bases his interpretation not merely on the context, as does Ibn Saruq, but on linguistic evidence: גלש in

⁷⁵ See *Song of Songs Rabbah* to Song 4:1. Rashi’s interpretation is repeated in the *Leipzig Glossary*, 1591, no. 20637.

⁷⁶ *Mahberet* 107*. It is interesting that, although Menahem explains the word גלשו as “seen” (גראו), he also includes in his comment the verb “came up” (עלו), exactly the two verbs reflected in the Vulgate. Rashbam’s comment on Song 4:1 includes an explicit reference to “*Mahberet Menahem*,” but the words seem to be a later gloss. See Japhet, *Rashbam on the Song of Songs*, 76.

Aramaic actually means “to be seen.”⁷⁷ He also deviates from Ibn Saruq by picturing the goats as “descending from the mountain” rather than “ascending.”

As we noted in the preceding example, the similarity between Ibn Saruq and the Vulgate is interesting in itself, but it is more likely that Ibn Saruq rather than the Vulgate served as Rashbam’s point of departure.

(6) Song 8:9: לוח ארז ... טירת כסף

In the Hebrew text, the nouns *טירת* and *לוח* are in the singular (silver battlement, cedar panel), and this is how they are interpreted by Rashi. Rashbam, however, regards them as collectives and renders them in the plural: “*טירת* mansions and palaces” (in the section of the details), “we shall build and prepare for her mansions and palaces” (in the paraphrase); “a house of cedars” (*בית של ארזים*, in the paraphrase). The Septuagint and the Vulgate render the two nouns in the plural (Septuagint: ἐπάλξεις, σαυίδας; Vulgate: *propugnacula, tabulis*). May we conclude that Rashbam was aware of the Versions and was influenced by their readings?

The study of Rashbam’s commentary on the Song of Songs reveals that he viewed many other singular nouns as collectives. We saw above the case of *סוסתי* (1:9)⁷⁸, and the same approach is seen in 2:11, where the singular *גשם* (“rain”) is rendered in the plural (*ימי הגשמים*, “days of rains”), in 6:4, where *עדר* (“flock”) is rendered in the plural (*עדרי עזים*—“flocks of goats”) and more.⁷⁹ It would thus seem that both the ancient Versions and Rashbam were motivated by the same linguistic drive, to explain the singular noun as a collective. This common linguistic sensitivity seems to be a better

⁷⁷ Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 251. For Rashbam’s use of Aramaic see S. Japhet, “Multilingualism: Theory and Practice in Rashbam’s Biblical Commentaries,” in *Language Studies VIII in Memory of David Téné* (ed. A. Maman and S. Fassberg, 2001), 291–296 (Heb.).

⁷⁸ Above pp. 274–277.

⁷⁹ 5:1: perfume (*בשם*) rendered perfumes (*בשמים*); 6:11: nut (*אגוז*), rendered: nut trees (*עצי אגוז*) (None of these is found in Rashi’s commentary, who either renders the nouns in the singular or does not represent the words at all). The Vulgate, too, renders these nouns in the singular.

explanation of the similarity than the assumption of a direct influence of the Versions on Rashbam's comments.

IV.

We may sum up. The seven different examples analyzed above demonstrate an unequivocal similarity between Rashbam's commentary on the Song of Songs and the Vulgate. Common to all these cases is the fact that they reflect the Masoretic text and belong to the sphere of exegesis. They all relate to strictly exegetical issues, with no theological or polemical implications. Rashbam's interpretation is either identical or very close to that displayed by the reading of the Vulgate.

The examples brought above differ in nature. In all cases but one (number 2, ססתי), Rashbam's interpretation deviates from that of Rashi, in some of them also from the prevalent Jewish exegetical tradition (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5). Nevertheless, it is difficult to regard the Vulgate as the source of Rashbam's views. Some of the interpretations have equivalents in Jewish sources; specifically, the Aramaic Targum in number 1 (עוטיה), Ibn Saruq's dictionary in numbers 3, 4a, 5 (זמיר, סמדר, גלשור); and Targum and Midrash in no. 3 (זמיר). Nos. 4b and 6 are better explained as common linguistic phenomena rather than the result of influence by one source or another.

The most compelling similarity between the Vulgate and Rashbam's commentary is displayed in numbers 1 (עוטיה) and 2 (ססתי). However, example no. 1 is not exclusive to the Vulgate and is attested also in other Versions, specifically the Targum, while in example 2 it is Rashi's commentary that shows the greater proximity to the Vulgate, while Rashbam's interpretation may be regarded as built on that of his predecessor.

The results of our investigation are thus rather inconclusive. On the one hand, the similarity between Rashbam's commentary and the Vulgate is straightforward. On the other hand, the detailed analysis of the examples does not lead necessarily to the conclusion that Rashbam derived his interpretations from the Vulgate. While Rashbam's acquaintance with the

Vulgate is possible and even probable, the actual similarities may all be explained on other grounds. At the end we have to leave the question with no conclusive, authoritative answer, neither positive nor negative.

