ВОПРОСЫ ТЕОЛОГИИ

Bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā (Psalms 84:7) interpreted as 'Vale of tears' in early Jewish exegesis and beyond*

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The present study tracks the genealogy of the figurative-paronymic interpretation that considers בָּכָא *bākā* (Psalms 84:7) a reference to tears and weeping from the Septuagint to several rabbinic Jewish sources where the term *ʿēmeq ha-bākā* has been identified either as a reference to the Gehenna (Targum and Talmud), as a metaphoric denomination of the mundane Vale of tears in the liturgical poem שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק אֲיוּמָה *Šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh* or as a figurative denomination of the Exile in Isaiah of Trani's commentary to Psalms 84:7, as well as by two Renaissance Jewish authors, Joseph Ha-Kohen Ha-Rofe and Rabbi Shelomo Alqabeṣ. Following David Qimḥi's interpretation of the verse, the author suggests rereading the hemistich in Psalms 84:7 in a more litteral way through the identification of בָּכָא *bākā* with the mulberry tree. Qimḥi's isolated interpretation is all the more tempting in that the Latin term *bacca/bāca* "berry" itself could be viewed as the borrowing of the Phoenician or Punic word *bākā*, parallel to Hebrew בָּכָא *bākā*.

Keywords: Septuagint, Targum, Talmud, classical *piyyuṭ*, Isaiah of Trani, Joseph Ha-Kohen Ha-Rofe, Shelomo Alqabeṣ, Punic loanwords in Latin.

Introduction

The first hemistich of Psalms 84:7 עֹבְרֵי בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *ʿobrē bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* "Who passing through the valley of Baca..." (KJV) contains the mysterious term בָּכָא *bākā* that was understood as a mere toponym and therefore left untranslated in the King James Version (see quote above). Perhaps because this term is so obscure, it was paronymically connected with the Hebrew root בכי h-/בכי *bky/-h* "to cry". From this psychological understanding of בָּכָא *bākā,* an allegorical exegesis of the whole phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* emerged. Instead of referring to

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a concrete valley planted with a tree named בָּכָא *bākā* (as in II Samuel 5:23–24 where the form is used twice in the plural בְּכָאִים *bəkā'īm*), עֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *ʿēmeq ha-bā-kā* was perceived as meaning "the valley of weeping". The first attested occurrence of such an interpretation is found in the Septuagint where בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* was rendered by εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος "to the valley of weeping". Likewise, the above-mentioned occurrence of the plural form בְּכָאִים *bə-kā'īm* in II Samuel 5:23–24 is translated by the same word κλαυθμών "weeping" (also in the singular though the original בְּכָאִים *bəkā'īm* appears in the plural). This figurative reading of the hemistich that probably relies on wordplay[1], has been reproduced by the various Latin translations of the Psalms: *in convalle plorationis* in the *Vetus Latina*; *in convalle lacrimarum* in Jerome's translation *juxta LXX*; and *in valle fletus* in his translation *juxta Hebraeos*.

Parallel to this exegetical twist that goes back to Hellenistic Judaism and its Christian continuation, the interpretation of the first hemistich of Psalms 84:7 as referring to "the valley of tears" is well attested in rabbinic Judaism. The present study will try to track the genealogy of the figurative-paronymic interpretation that views בָּכָא *bākā* as a reference to tears and weeping in several rabbinic Jewish sources: i) the classical Palestinian *piyyuṭ* exemplified by a piece traditionally ascribed to Eleʿazar Ha-Kalir (c. 570–c. 640); ii) two sixteenth-century Jewish sources, the historical treatise עֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *ʿEmeq ha-bākā* by Joseph Ha-Kohen Ha-Rofe (1496–c. 1575) and Rabbi Shelomo Alqabeṣ's (1505–1584) renowned hymn *Lekha Dodi* that celebrates the entrance of Shabbath; iii) a more recent secularized recycling of the term עֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *ʿēmeq ha-bākā* in order to refer to the murderous tank battle waged on the Golan Heights in October 1973.

Lastly, this article will suggest rereading the hemistich in Psalms 84:7 in a more litteral way through the identification of בָּכָא *bākā* as a specific tree species whose name does not have anything to do with the root בכי/-ה *bky/-h* "to cry".

Rabbinic echoing of the paronomasia between אכב *bkʾ* and הכב *bkh*

The paronymic way of interpreting בָּכָא *bākā* as connected with the root בכי/-ה *bky/-h* "to cry" was not limited to the Septuagint and the Christian exegesis founded in the text of the Alexandrine Bible. Indeed, an interesting parallel may be traced between the early Christian crystallization of the motive of the Vale of tears on the one hand, and similar motives in the core of Rabbinic literature on the other hand. Before the more recent extrapolation of the concept of the Vale of tears as a metaphor for earthly life, it seems that Late Antiquity Jewish and Christian commentaries both stressed another signification of the Vale of tears, that of penitence in the afterworld. Thus in an explanation to Psalm

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[1] On wordplay in the Hebrew original Book of Psalms and its rendering in the Septuagint, see: *Backfish E. H. P.* Hebrew Wordplay and Septuagint Translation Technique in the Fourth Book of the Psalter. London: T&T Clark, 2019.

83(84) spuriously attributed to John Chrysostom[2], the phrase εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος is glossed as ἐν τῷ χωρίῳ τῆς μετάνοιας "in the place of penitence". Such a mention would be too laconic to be understood as a mention of penitence in the afterworld if it were not for an explicit connection between the phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* of Psalm 84:7 and the Gehenna in a word-by-word commentary of the verse in the Talmud of Babylon (*'Eruvin* 19a):

'עוברי': אלו בני אדם שעוברין על רצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא; 'עמק': שמעמיקין להם גיהנם; 'הבכא': שבוכין ומורידין דמעות כמעין של שיתין; 'גם ברכות יעטה מורה': שמצדיקין עליהם את הדין ואומרים לפניו: 'רבונו של עולם, יפה דנת, יפה זכית, יפה חייבת ויפה תקנת גיהנם לרשעים, גן עדן לצדיקים'.

ʾōvrē': ēllū bənē ādām šə-ʿōvrīn ʿal rəṣōnō šel haq-qādōš bārūk hū; 'ēmeq': šə-maʿamīqīm lāhem gēhinnom; 'ha-bākā': šə-bōkīn u-mōrīdīn dəmāʿōt kə-maʿyān šel šītīn; 'gam bərākōt yaʿṭeh mōreh': šə-maṣdīqīn ʿalēhem et ha-dīn və-ōmrīm lə-fānāv: 'Ribōnō šel ʿōlām, yāfeh dantā, yāfeh zikītā, yāfeh ḥiyyavtā və-yāfe tiqqantā gēhinnom la-rəšā ʿīm, gan ʿēden laṣ-ṣadīqīm'.

'Passing' (*ōvrē*): those are the people who trespass (*ōvrīn*) the will of the Holy one, blessed be He; 'valley' (*ēmeq*): because they make the Gehenna deeper (*maʿamīqīn*) for themselves; ha-bākā: because they cry (*bōkīn*) and shed tears like the flowing of the altar pits; 'the rain also filleth blessings': because they accept the justice on themselves and they say him: 'Lord of the universe, you properly judged, you properly acquitted; you properly condemned; and you properly prepared the Gehenna for the wicked and the Paradise for the justs'.

The identification of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* with the Gehenna, a place of crying and repentance, goes back to Palestinian Jewish traditions. Indeed it is reverberated in an old Targum, the *Targum Tehillim* ("Targum of Psalms") that is of clearly Palestinian Jewish origin, as shown by the specific blend of Aramaic in which it was written:

רְשִׁיעַיָּא דְעָבְרִין עַל עוּמְקֵי גֵיהִנָּם בָּכְיָן בִּכְיִיתָא הֵיךְ מַעֲיָינָא יְשַׁוּוּנֵיהּ; לְחוֹד בִּירְכָן יַעֲטוֹף לִדְתָיְיבִין לְאוּלְפַן אוֹרַיְיתֵיהּ.

rēšiʿayyā də-ʿāvrīn ʿal ʿūmqē gēhinnām bākyān bikyəitā hēk maʿāyāinā yəšavūnēh; lə-ḥōd birkān yaʿaṭōf li-də-tāyīvīn lə-ūlpan ōraitēh.

"The wicked who cross over the valleys of Gehenna, weeping — he will make their weeping like a fountain; but those who return to the teaching of his Torah, he will cover them with blessings".

This interpretation is further reverberated in later commentaries: Rashi (1040–1105) and David Qimḥi (1160–1235) *ad locum*. However, as we will see

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[2] Joannis Chrysostomi opera omnia quae exstant / ed. Bernard de Montfaucon. Paris: Gaume, 1836. Vol. V, part II. P. 935. — Psalm 83 (84) does not figure among the 58 psalms figuring in his *Commentary of the Psalms*. See: *Hill R. C.* Saint John Chrysostom Commentary on the Psalms. Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998.

at the end of the article, the latter who eclectically compiled various exegetical traditions, also recognizes merely a botanic term in the noun *bākā* of *ʿēmeq ha-bākā*.

It seems that the identification of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* with the Gehenna has been conditioned by the etymology of the Hebrew term גֵּיהִנּוֹם *gē-hinnōm* "Gehenna" etymologically or paretymologically related to גֵּיא בֶן הִנֹּם *gey ben hinnom* "the valley of the son of Hinnom"[3]. Since עֵמֶק *ʿēmeq* and גֵּיא *gēy* are synonymous, the phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* could have been perceived as referring to the infernal valley of גֵּיהִנּוֹם *gehinnōm*, probably connected to גֵּיא בֶן הִנֹּם *gēy ben hinnom*, the place where the sacrifices to Moloch were perpetrated (II Kings 23:10) and where Jeremiah prophetized the eschatological massacre of the wicked (Jeremiah 7:32).

The paronomosia between בכא *bk'* and בכה *bkh* in an early medieval liturgical poem: from the afterworld to this world

A significant semantic shift occurred when בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* was reinterpreted not only as the afterlife infernal valley, the Gehenna or the place of punishment of the wicked after their death, but as the mundane Vale of tears. The change from the afterlife to the world here below is illustrated in the liturgical poem שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק אֲיֻמָה *Šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh*, traditionally recited during the additional prayer (*Musaf*) of the Day of Atonement in the Ashkenazi tradition, that is, during a solemnity that stresses the nothingness of the human being in comparison to God's almightiness. This *piyyuṭ,* that Abraham Ibn ʿEzra erroneously attributed to Eleʿazar Ha-Kalir, was most likely composed after Kalir's death (c. 640), but before 900 (*terminus ad quem*) in a Byzantine Jewish context (Palestine or Southern Italy) where the Septuagint rendering of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* as εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος was certainly known in spite of the rabbinic reluctance toward the text of the Septuagint, identified with the Christian appropriation of the Jewish Torah.

Some formal anomalies in the incipit of this poem confirm that its Hebrew phrasing was shaped by latent poetic devices directly inspired by the Greek rhetoric legacy[4]. First of all, it displays a strange lack of agreement between שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק *šōšan ʿēmeq* "lily of the valleys" and אֲיֻמָה *ayūmāh* "awful" or rather אוּיְמָה *ūyyəmāh* "threatened". This anomaly has already drawn the attention of Abraham Ibn ʿEzra (c. 1089–1167) in his commentary to Ecclesiastes 5:1. According to Ibn ʿEzra, the use of the feminine is wrong with שׁוֹשַׁן *šōšan*[5]. However, this morphosyntactic irregularity is perfectly legitimate from the vantage point of

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[3] See: *Kutscher Y.* Millim u-toldoteihen. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1961. P. 66.

[4] On the influence of Greek rhetoric on the Hebrew *piyyuṭ* in Byzantine Palestine, see: *Aslanov C.* Romanos the Melodist and Palestinian *Piyyut*: Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic Perspectives // Bonfil R., Irshai O., Stroumsa G. G., Talgam R. (eds) Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011. P. 613–628, especially p. 617–622.

[5] *Gómez Aranda M.* Grammatical Remarks in *The Commentary of Abraham Ibn Ezra on Qohelet* // Sefarad. 1996. Vol. 56, fasc. 1. P. 61–82, especially p. 76.

Greek rhetoric where this agreement according to the meaning and in spite of the gender is called κατὰ σύνεσιν "according to the understanding".

Moreover, the incipit *šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh* (*ūyyəmāh*) does not just reverberate the translation of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bāḵā* as εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος. It also conflates together two Biblical phrases integrated in the text of the poem by dint of the poetical device known as *šibuṣ* "cento": שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים *šōšannat hā-ʿamāqīm* "the lily of the valleys" (Song of Songs 2:1), which the allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs identifies with the Assembly of Israel, and עֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *ʿēmeq ha-bāḵā* understood as "vale of tears". Beyond the phrase *šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh* (*ūyyəmāh*) it is possible to recognize a formula such as שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק הַבָּכא *šōšan ʿēmeq ha-bāḵā* "the lily of the vale of tears", which is implicit in *šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh* (*ūyyəmāh*) "the threatened lily of the valley" or maybe "the lily of the threatened valley" or possibly "the lily of the awful valley" if the reading אֵיוּמָה *ayūmāh* "awful" is to be preferred to אוּיְמָה *ūyyəmāh* "threatened".

Moreover, the transformation of the phrase שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעֲמָקִים *šōšannat hā-ʿamāqīm* of Song of Songs 2:1 implicitly alluded to in the formula שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק *šōšan ʿēmeq*, obeys a specific device of the arsenal of Greek rhetoric, namely the apocope or to use the same term as Aristoteles in his *Poetics* (1457b), the aphaeresis (the exact term used by Aristoteles is ἀφῃρημένον "shortened"). By means of this recognized device of Greek rhetoric, שׁוֹשַׁנָּה *šōšannāh* is truncated to שׁוֹשַׁן *šōšan* and the determined plural הָעֲמָקִים *hā-ʿamāqīm* becomes the singular עֵמֶק *ʿēmeq* without the article. This could be an explanation for the lack of gender agreement between שׁוֹשַׁן *šōšan* and אֵיוּמָה/אוּיְמָה *ayūmāh/ūyyəmāh*: not only an agreement κατὰ σύνεσιν, but the use of a masculine שׁוֹשַׁן that is actually a shortened feminine. In addition to this manipulation of the signifier that replaced the long form שׁוֹשַׁנָּה *šōšannāh* by the shortened one שׁוֹשַׁן *šōšan*, there might also be a repercussion of the semantic shift that led שׁוֹשַׁנָּה *šōšannāh* to become a synonym of וֶרֶד *vered* "rose", which is attested since Mishnaic Hebrew[6].

The fact that the *piyyuṭ* שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק אֵיוּמָה *Šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh* clearly relies on Greek rhetorical devices corroborates the assumption that it was composed in a Hellenized atmosphere where the influence of the Septuagint rendering of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bāḵā* as εἰς τὴν κοιλάδα τοῦ κλαυθμῶνος is likely to have reactivated the paronomasia between בכא *bkʾ* and בכה *bkh*.

Later reverberations of the paronomasia between בכא *bkʾ* and בכה *bkh* in medieval and Renaissance Hebrew literature

The transition from the Talmudic-Midrashic eschatological interpretation to the Classical Hebrew *piyyuṭ* of Byzantine Palestine was characterized by a shift from the identification of בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bāḵā* as a reference to the Gehenna to its reinterpretation as the mundane Vale of tears. A further step

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[6] On this semantic evolution, see: *Aslanov C.* L'apocryphe réintégré: une réminiscence de *Siracide* 50, 1–21 dans l'hymnologie juive // Mimouni S. (ed.) Apocryphité. Histoire d'un concept transversal aux religions du Livre: En hommage à Pierre Geoltrain. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002. P. 31–43, especially p. 35–41.

in those changes of signification was made when the metaphysical meaning of mundane Vale of tears was restricted to a specifically national-politic dimension, that of גלות *galut* "Exile". The first attestation of this recentering from the general meaning of mundane Vale of tears to that of Exile appears in Isaiah of Trani's (c. 1165–c. 1240) commentary *ad locum*:

'עוברי בעמק הבכא' — ישראל, שהם עוברים בעמק הבכא, וזהו הגלות, שדומה לעמק מסוגרת.

ʿōvrē bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā — Yiśrāēl, šə-hēm ʿōvrīm bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā, və-zehū ha-galūt, šə-dōmāh lə-ʿēmeq məsugeret.

"'Who passing through the valley of Baca...' — The Israelites, because they pass in the Valley of Baca, which is the Exile, that is similar to a closed valley".

With the substantial laconism that characterizes his exegetical method and without entering into eschatological-metaphysical considerations, Isaiah of Trani simply identifies the mysterious "Valley of Baca" with the Exile. Incidentally, it is interesting to see that in the medieval blend of Hebrew used by this Jewish Italian commentator, the word עֵמֶק *ēmeq* is perceived as feminine, probably under the influence of the Italo-Romance word *valle*: עמק מסוגרת *ēmeq məsugeret* "closed valley" instead of the expected עמק מסוגר *ēmeq mesugar*. In light of this lack of gender agreement motivated by Isaiah of Trani's Italo-Romance surroundings, one could apply the same explanation in order to provide an account for the lack of gender agreement in the incipit of the afore-mentioned *piyyuṭ* שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק אֲיוּמָה *Šōšan ēmeq ayūmāh*. In addition to or instead of the interpretation that recognizes the lack of gender agreement between *ēmeq* and *ayūmāh*, one also could ascribe this violation of the Hebrew grammatical rules to the Proto-Italo-Romance surroundings, which makes sense if this liturgical poem had been composed shortly before 900 in Byzantine Italy.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the term עמק מסוגרת *ēmeq məsugeret* "closed valley" seems to translate the toponym *Vallis clausa* (Provençal *Vau-clusa*), literally "closed valley", which is the name given to the highest part of the gorge of the river Sorgue in Provence, near Avignon.

It was precisely Avignon that gave birth to the above-mentioned Renaissance Jewish scholar Joseph Ha-Kohen whose historiographical treatise bears a title and a subtitle that clearly subscribe to the exegetical tradition initiated by Isaiah of Trani: עמק הבכא: ספר הקורות והתלאות אשר עברו על בית ישרראל *ʿEmeq ha-bākā: sēfer haq-qōrōt və-ha-təlāōt ašer ʿāvrū ʿal Bēt Yiśrāēl* "The Vale of tears: The book of the history and the tribulations that passed over the House of Israel"[7].

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[7] For a critical edition of this books, see: *Joseph Ha-Kohen*. Sefer ʿEmeq Ha-Bakha (The Vale of Tears) with the chronicle of the anonymous Corrector / ed. by K. Almbladh. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1981. — On Joseph Ha-Kohen's messianic inspiration, see: *Yerushalmi Y. H.* Messianic Impulses in Joseph Ha-Kohen // Cooperman B. D. (ed.) Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983. P. 460–487.

A similar interpretation of the phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* as a reference to Exile is found in the above-mentioned sabbatical hymn *Lekha Dodi* composed by a contemporary of Yosef Ha-Kohen, the above-mentioned Shelomo Alqabeṣ. In the 3rd verse of the 3rd strophe of the poem (v. 13) רב לָךְ שֶׁבֶת בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *rab lāk šebet bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā*, two verses were merged together according to the poetical device of the double cento. Indeed, the phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* was combined with another verse of the Bible רַב-לָכֶם שֶׁבֶת בָּהָר הַזֶּה *rab lāk šebet bā-hār haz-zeh* "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount" (Deuteronomy 1:6; KJV).

Both Yosef Ha-Kohen and Shelomo Alqabeṣ were born a few years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain the former 4 years later and the latter 13 years later. For those Spanish Jews who had been brutally thrown out of their country, the equivalence stated by Isaiah of Trani between בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* and גלות *galut* "Exile" was doubly meaningful inasmuch as it symbolized not only the long Exile of the whole Jewish nation far away from Zion after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, but also more specifically, the very recent banishment of Spanish Jewry out of *Sefarad* that seems to have unleashed eschatological hopes in the hearts of the expelled Iberian Jews[8].

Contemporary developments: between the figurative and the literal meaning

Closer to modern day, the phrase בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* has undergone two opposite developments: on the one hand, the figurative meaning of "Vale of tears" was recycled in order to concretely refer to the tank battle held on at the eastern slopes of the Golan Heights between the 6th and 9th of October 1973; on the other hand, the literal meaning of בָּכָא *bākā* was reassessed by modern Bible scholars, which allowed for the redemption of the phrase and the verse in which it appears from the negative connotations that were associated therewith from the time of the Septuagint translation at least.

It seems that the use of the term בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā* as a reference to the tank battle appeared for the first time in Ronen Schorr's press chronicle published two months after the event (December 1973) in the IDF magazine *Bamahane*[9].

Parallel to this recycling of an old metaphor transmitted by generations of Biblical interpreters, our time has witnessed an interesting come back of a non-metaphorical reading of the term בָּכָא *bākā* in the meaning of a species of tree. As a matter of fact, such an identification has been already suggested by David Qimḥi both for Psalms 84:7 and for II Samuel 5:23–24. The Narbonese commentator suggested to identify בָּכָא *bākā*/בְּכָאִים *bəkā'īm* with the term תּוּתִים *tūtīm* "berries" that Qimḥi probably intended in the meaning of "mulberry trees". This

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[8] *Scholem G.* Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. New York: Schocken Books, 1961. P. 244–250.

[9] *Benaya Y.* Koḥaḥ šel millah // Bamahane. 2013. September 12. URL: http://www.gvura.org/a345093-%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%97%D7%94- (accessed: 25.01.2020).

reading is all the more tempting inasmuch as the word תּוּתִים *tūtīm*, not attested before the *Mishnah* (e. g. *Maʿaśrōt* 1, 2), is not genuinely Semitic. It is likelier to be an Iranian loanword in Aramaic and Hebrew rather than an Aramaic loanword in Persian. Indeed, the syllabic structure of Aramaic תּוּתָא *tūtā* with the repetition of the same consonant in the 1st and 3rd positions makes it unlikely to be of Semitic origin.

It seems, therefore, that the concept of "berry" is apparently lacking in Biblical Hebrew unless we accept Qimḥi's equivalence between the Biblical word בָּכָא *bākā*/בְּכָאִים *bəkāʾīm* on the one hand, and the Mishnaic term תּוּתִים *tūtīm* on the other hand. When Qimḥi proposed such an interpretation of the rare word בָּכָא *bākā*/בְּכָאִים *bəkāʾīm*, he was probably influenced by his own linguistic background. Indeed, Old Provençal and Catalan *baia*, Spanish *baya* and their Latin etymon *bāca/bacca* may have induced the Languedocian Jew of Andalusian origin Qimḥi to recognize in בָּכָא *bākā*/בְּכָאִים *bəkāʾīm* a plant name. Curiously enough, what could be considered a haphazard paronymy motivated by a superficial likeness between the Hebrew and the Latin signifier may rely on a serious foundation inasmuch as in Latin itself, the word *bāca/bacca* could be a Punic loanword. The connection reverberated by Varro (*vinum in Hispania bacca* "wine in Hispania <is> bacca") could corroborate this Semitic etymology of Latin *bāca/bacca* since the Latin lexicographer did not specifically mention which of the languages in use in ancient Hispania is represented by *bacca*, a metonymic way to refer to the product of the grape considered a sort of berry[10]. Given the strong Phoenician, later Carthaginian, presence in a significant part of the Iberian Peninsula, the Semitic origin of *bāca/bacca* is very likely. What makes it even likelier is the variation between *bāca* and *bacca* at the level of Latin, as well as the fact that Varro gave the form *bacca* as the name of the wine in Hispania. This form with its geminated <cc> is a quite precise approximation for the *dageš* before the *begedkefat* lenition started to be felt in some of the Northwest Semitic languages, that is, first and foremost in Aramaic, then in Aramaic-influenced Hebrew, and only to a lesser extent in Late Phoenician and Late Punic (c. third century BC). Admittedly, the Latin loanword *sūfes/sŭffes* < Punic *šufeṭ/sufeṭ* "judge; magistrate", parallel to Hebrew שֹׁפֵט *šofeṭ*, seems to reflect a Late Punic form that underwent the spirantization of [p] to [f]. However, it is possible that the loanword בָּכָא *bākā* pertains to an older contingent of Semitic loanwords in Latin, words that had been borrowed from Phoenician and not necessarily from its Late Punic development. Lastly, it should be noted that in Latin itself, the sequence -V̄C-permutes with the sequence -V̆CC as in *lītera* "letter" alternating with *littera*[11]. The alternation *bāca/bacca* could be interpreted in the same way with the only difference that if it is a Semitic loanword, the form *bacca* is probably older than *bāca*. In the case of *lītera/littera*, however, the former precedes

[10] *Varro Marcus Terentius.* De lingua Latina: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary / ed. by W. D. C. de Melo. Oxford: Oxford University Press. VII 87.

[11] *Leumann M., Hofmann J. B., Szantyr A.* Lateinische Grammatik (1. Band: Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre). 5th ed. Munich: C. H. Beck, 1926–1928. § 184c.

the latter, as shown by the archaic form *leitera* whose diphthong was eventually monophthongized in [-ī-].

Whatever it might be, David Qimḥi's reading of בָּכָא *bākā*/בְּכָאִים *bəkā'īm,* as referring to the mulberry tree, remains in clear contradiction with the allegorical/moralizing interpretation of the first hemistich of Psalms 84:7. Incidentally, in his commentary of the Prophets and Hagiographs, the Narbonese rabbi also suggests an allegorical reading of עֹבְרֵי בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *'obrē bə-'ēmeq ha-bākā* whereby he connects the word בָּכָא *bākā* with the word נִבְכֵי יָם *nibkē yām* "springs of the sea" in Job 38:16. Since the sea is a metaphor for the Torah, he interprets בְּעֵמֶק הַבָּכָא *bə -'ēmeq ha-bākā* as

בעמק מבועי החכמה
bə -'ēmeq məbō 'ē ha-ḥokmāh
"in the valley of the wells of wisdom"

However, this alternative interpretation, though still adopting the allegorical mode, is not connected at all with the lachrymose understanding of בָּכָא *bākā* as deriving from the root/בכי -ה *bky/-h* "to cry". Whatever it may be, the identification of בָּכָא *bākā* as "mulberry tree" appears after the allegory of the "springs of wisdom", as if it came to correct it and to provide the last word. In his concern to put the text he commented in an historical perspective without renouncing the allegoric dimension altogether, Qimḥi anticipates Joseph Kaspi's ultra-rationalist commentaries of the Bible[12].

Conclusion

The text of the Bible is no less the final result of the long elaboration process that preceded the historical moment when it was written down than the starting point of the exegetical chain that elaborates on the meaning of the words and phrases in an atomistic way, taking isolated elements of the text as pretexts for the promotion of ideological representations reflecting the agenda of the various religions and of the competing trends within them.

This fundamental difference between an archaeological reading of the textual data and an approach more interested in the *Nachleben* of the text throughout its translations or interpretations, goes back to another basic dilemma of literary studies: what matters more between the genesis of the text, that is, its prehistory, its sources of influence, the creative act that brought it to existence as an oral or written text, or the study of its reception and reappropriations? Beyond this dilemma, it is easy to perceive the concurrence between a philological approach and an ideological one. The former considers the text a literary source able to reflect the cotext and the context within which it emerged, whereas the latter implicitly takes it for granted that the text was revealed or at

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[12] On Joseph ibn Kaspi's historical perspectivism, see: *Aslanov C.* Le provençal des Juifs et l'hébreu en Provence: le dictionnaire *Šaršot Ha-Kesef* de Joseph Caspi. Leuven; Paris: Peeters Editions, 2001. P. 118.

least, divinely inspired. For this second approach, which is actually the earliest one in terms of relative chronology, the reception of the text is more important because it unravels all the treasures of meaning concealed in the revealed text.

Turning back to Psalms 84:7, the main danger implied by the second approach is that it contributed to congealing inveterate habits of reading a certain verse instead of scouring the text from the scorias of transmission that often blurred the inner logic that preceded its creation. The alliteration between בָּכָא *bākā* and the root *bky/-h* "to cry" is a good example of the way the rhetoric of interpretation (paronomasia and allegorizing) obliterated the genuine meaning of some very concrete places both in Judaism and Christianity.

David Qimḥi's return to the literal meaning of the hemistich allows to connect it in a more satisfactory way to the overall context of Psalm 84 that is characterized by the joyous atmosphere pervading the evocation of the Temple starting from verse 2: מַה-יְּדִידוֹת מִשְׁכְּנוֹתֶיךָ *mah-yyədīdōt miškənōtēḵā* "How amiable are thy tabernacles!" (KJV). Admittedly, it has been suggested that in the microcontext of Book III of Psalms (Psalms 84–89), Psalm 84 might express a hopeless longing to the destroyed Temple in a postexilic situation rather than the rejoicing provoked by the frequentation of God's dwelling place[13]. In this hypothesis, the first hemistich of Psalms 84:7 could indeed involve a pessimistic note. However, such a reading has been likely conditioned by the lachrymose interpretation of the word בָּכָא *bākā* as connected to the root *bky/-h* "to cry". Therefore, Robert E. Wallace's reading of Psalms 84 could constitute a further example of the impact exerted by an allegoric-paronomastic interpretation that fails to understand the literal meaning of the mysterious term בָּכָא *bākā*.

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Bə-ʿēmeq ha-bākā (Пс 84:7) как «юдоль плачевная» в ранней и поздней еврейской экзегезе*

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Настоящая статья исследует генеалогию аллегорического-парономастического толкования, согласно которому слово בָּכָא *bākā* (Пс 84 [83]:7) связано с юдолью плачевной, начиная с Септуагинты вплоть до раввинистических источников. В них термин *ʿēmeq ha-bākā* восприннимается либо как название геенны (Таргум и Талмуд), либо как метафора земного существа в литургической поэме שׁוֹשַׁן עֵמֶק אֲיוּמָה *Šōšan ʿēmeq ayūmāh*, либо как намек на Изгнание — например, у Исаии из Трани и у двух раввинов XVI в. Йосефа ха-Коен ха-Рофе и Шломо Алькабеца. Следуя предложенному Давидом Кимхи толкованию стиха Пс 84:7, автор предлагает понимать первое полустишие этого стиха более буквально, переводя слово בָּכָא *bākā* как «тутовое дерево». Это изолированное средневековое толкование любопытно тем, что латинское слово *bacca/bāca* «ягода» само может считаться заим-

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ствованием финикийского или пунического слова *bākā*, соответствующего древнееврейскому בָּכָא *bākā*.

Ключевые слова: Септуагинта, Таргум, Талмуд, классический *piyyuṭ*, Исаия из Трани, Йосеф ха-Коен ха-Рофе, Шломо Алькабец, пунические заимствования в латыни.

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