

**Arguing the Concept of the Trinity  
from the Hebrew Bible: Luther's Comments  
on the Plural Grammatical Forms Touching  
the Divine in the Prophets Situated against Their  
Jewish and Christian Reception until  
the Age of the Reformation**

**Matthew Oseka**

Concordia Theological Seminary, Hong Kong

"אחד ואין יחיד כיחודו נעלם וגם אין סוף לאחדתו"<sup>1</sup>.

## **I. Introduction**

Despite the fact, that the 16th-century Reformation precipitated the development of Christian Hebrew studies, most Protestant exegetes of that era did not hesitate to use their knowledge of the sacred language to argue distinctive Christian concepts (such as the doctrine of the Trinity) from certain passages taken out of the *Tanakh*, ignoring or quashing the interpretation of them propounded by the Jewish exegetical tradition.

---

<sup>1</sup> "הפלה שחריה" in *The Standard Prayer Book*, ed. and trans. Simeon Singer (New York: Bloch, 1958), 2 [2].

The present paper is aimed at exploring Luther's comments on the plural grammatical forms touching the Divine, which he was able to identify in the Prophets (Josh. 24:19; 2 Sam. 7:23; Jer. 10:10, 23:36; Hos. 12:1), in light of their Jewish and Christian reception until the age of the reformation. Luther's "christological" handling of the Hebrew scholarship in the process of interpreting the Hebrew Bible was exemplified by his exposition of Genesis 49:10 because his treatment of that verse provided an overview of his mature approach to the *Tanakh*.

The literature on the Jewish-Christian relations<sup>2</sup> in the Graeco-Roman world and in the Middle Ages, on the Christian encounter with the Jewish exegesis<sup>3</sup> and on the development of Jewish<sup>4</sup> and

---

<sup>2</sup> Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak, ed., *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa, ed., *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996); Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1978); James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2010); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); Jeffrey S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991). Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Wolfgang Bunte, *Rabbinische Traditionen bei Nikolaus von Lyra: Ein Beitrag zur Schriftauslegung des Spätmittelalters* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994); Herman Hailperin, *Rashi and the Christian Scholars* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963); Alberdina Houtman, Eveline van Staaldoune-Sulman and Hans-Martin Kirn, ed., *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Deena Copeland Klepper, *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Reading of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Louis Israel Newman, *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925); Eva De Visscher, *Reading the Rabbis: Christian Hebraism in the Works of Herbert of Bosham* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Bernhard Walde, *Christliche Hebraisten Deutschlands am Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1916).

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Bacher, *Abraham ibn Ezra als Grammatiker: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der hebräischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strasbourg and London: Trübner, 1882); Wilhelm Bacher, *Die Anfänge der hebräischen Grammatik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1895); Wilhelm Bacher, *Die hebräische Sprachwissenschaft vom 10. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Trier: Mayer, 1892); Michael Friedländer, *Ibn Ezra Literature: Essays on the Writings of Abraham ibn Ezra* (London: Society of Hebrew Literature, 1877); Ludwig Geiger, *Das Studium der hebräischen Sprache in Deutschland vom Ende*

Christian<sup>5</sup> Hebrew scholarship is immense, yet a particular exposure of the Reformers to the Jewish Hebrew scholarship still awaits further scrutiny. Thus, on the one hand, Luther's study of the *Tanakh*<sup>6</sup> and

---

*des XV. bis zur Mitte des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Breslau: Schletter, 1870); William Horbury, ed., *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1999); Yonatan Kolatch, *Masters of the Word: Traditional Jewish Bible Commentary from the First through Tenth Centuries*, vol. 1 (Jersey City: KTAV, 2006); Nicholas De Lange, ed., *Hebrew Scholarship and the Medieval World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Karl Heinz Burmeister, "Johannes Campensis und Sebastian Münster: Ihre Stellung in der Geschichte der Hebräischen Sprachstudien," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 46:3-4 (1970): 441-60; Stephen G. Burnett, *Christian Hebraism in the Reformation Era 1500-1660: Authors, Books and the Transmission of Jewish Learning* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Allison P. Coudert and Jeffrey S. Shoulson, ed., *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Jerome Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983); G. Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); Magne Sæbø et al., eds., *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008). Emil Silberstein, *Conrad Pellicanus: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Studiums der hebräischen Sprache in der ersten Hälfte des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1900); Giuseppe Veltri and Gerold Necker, ed., *Gottes Sprache in der philologischen Werkstatt: Hebraistik vom 15. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric W. Gritsch and Ruth C. Gritsch, ed. Victor I. Gruhn (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969); Hans-Martin Kirm, "Traces of Targum Reception in the Work of Martin Luther," in *A Jewish Targum in a Christian World*, 266-88. Gottlob Wilhelm Meyer, *Geschichte der Schrifterklärung seit der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften*, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Röwer, 1802), 176-86 [I, IV, I, Martin Luther]; Meyer, *Geschichte der Schrifterklärung seit der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften*, vol. 2, 346-78 [I, IV, I, Luther]; Jaroslav Pelikan, "Luther - The Expositor: Introduction to the Reformer's Exegetical Writings," in Martin Luther, *Works*, Companion Volume (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 5-134 [I]; Siegfried Raeder, *Die Benutzung des masoretischen Textes bei Luther in der Zeit zwischen der ersten und zweiten Psalmenvorlesung 1515-1518* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967); Siegfried Raeder, *Grammatica theologica: Studien zu Luthers Operationes in Psalmos* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1977); Siegfried Raeder, *Das Hebräische bei Luther untersucht bis zum Ende der ersten Psalmenvorlesung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1961); Arnold Schleiff, "Theologisch-exegetische Einleitung," in WADB, vol. 9/1, ix-xxxvii. See the evolution of Luther's trinitarian concept: Christine Helmer, *The Trinity and Martin Luther: A Study on the Relationship between Genre, Language and the Trinity in Luther's Works 1523-1546* (Mainz: Zabern, 1999); Christine Helmer, "Luther's Trinitarian Hermeneutic and the Old Testament," *Modern Theology* 18 (2002): 49-73; Mickey L. Mattox, "From Faith to the Text and Back Again: Martin Luther on the Trinity in the Old Testament," *Pro Ecclesia* 15:3 (2006): 281-303; John Thomas Slotemaker, "The Trinitarian House of David: Martin Luther's Anti-Jewish Exegesis of 2 Samuel 23:1-7," *Harvard Theological Review* 104:2 (2011): 233-54.

his attitude to the Jews<sup>7</sup> were meticulously examined in the literature of the subject, on the other hand, particular loci adduced by him as proof of his christological or trinitarian claims on the Hebrew Bible were seldom situated against their Jewish and Christian interpretation preceding the Age of the Reformation. The present paper is focused on Luther's approach to the plural forms touching the Divine only within the Prophets because his exegesis of such forms in the Book of Genesis was vast and it deserves a separate analysis.

## II. Luther's Appeal to the Hebrew Grammar in his Christological Interpretation of the *Tanakh*

Luther's interpretation of the Hebrew Bible was radically christological and could never prescind from the messianic claim to Jesus laid in the Christian Scriptures. However, this was true of the most exegetes of the ancient and mediaeval church. Distinctive features of Luther's approach to the *Tanakh* culminated in his idiosyncratic appeal to the Hebrew grammar.

Since arguments evoked or invented by Luther in favour of his trinitarian reading of the plural grammatical forms touching the Divine in the Prophets (Josh. 24:19; 2 Sam. 7:23; Jer. 10:10, 23:36; Hos. 12:1) were construed by him as "purely grammatical," it is legitimate to cite the example of Luther's exegesis of Genesis 49:10 as illustrative of his peculiar concept of the Hebrew "grammar."

---

<sup>7</sup> Martin H. Bertram, "Introduction (On the Jews and their Lies)," in Luther, *Works*, vol. 47, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 121-36; Walther Bienert, *Martin Luther und die Juden: Ein Quellenbuch mit zeitgenössischen Illustrationen, mit Einführungen und Erläuterungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1982); Thomas Kaufmann, *Luthers Judenschriften: Ein Beitrag zu ihrer historischen Kontextualisierung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2011); Heinz Kremers, ed., *Die Juden und Martin Luther, Martin Luther und die Juden: Geschichte, Wirkungsweise, Herausforderung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985); Bernhard Lohse, *Luthers Theologie in ihrer historischen Entwicklung und in ihrem systematischen Zusammenhang* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 356-67 [III, 16].

Both the Jewish exegetical tradition and the Christian theology lavished attention on Genesis 49:10 which is one of the most intriguing passages in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>8</sup> Granted that a complex history of the interpretation of Genesis 49:10 is beyond the compass of the present paper, the focus is on what Luther inferred from that verse as far as his views on the credibility of the Jewish Hebrew scholarship were concerned.

Genesis 49:10 continues to challenge expositors not only in terms of its meaning but also in textual terms<sup>9</sup> because an exact signification of the Masoretic apparatus pertinent to that verse is debatable. The Rabbinic Bible (מקראות גדולות) of 1524 edited by Jacob ben Hayyim (יעקב בן חיים)<sup>10</sup> provided שִׁלְהָ as the *ketiv* (כתיב) endowed with the vowels stemming from the *qere* (קרי) and שָׁלוּ as the unpointed *qere* which should be invested with the vowels lent previously to the *ketiv*.

The reconstruction of the unpointed *ketiv* and of the pointed *qere* is a complex process and it might be visualised as follows:

---

<sup>8</sup> Gustav Baur, *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Weissagung*, vol. 1 (Giessen: Ricker, 1861), 227-90 [I, 3, c]; Samuel Rolles Driver, "Genesis xlix. 10: An Exegetical Study," *Journal of Philology* 14:27 (1885), 1-28; August Dillmann, *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded*, vol. 2, trans. William Black Stevenson (Edinburgh: Clark, 1897), 461-65 [Genesis 49:10]; Raymond de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in Its Literary and Historical Context* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1904); Christianus Werliin, *De laudibus Judae Gen. c. XLIX, v. 8-12 celebratis* (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1838).

<sup>9</sup> An overview of the manuscripts containing the Masoretic text: Giovanni Bernardo De Rossi, *Scholia critica in V. T. libros: Seu supplementa ad varias sacri textus lectiones* (Parma: Ex Regio Typographeo, 1798), 8 [Genesis 49:10]; Posnanski, *Schiloh*, vol. 1, 1-3 [Einleitung]; Driver, "Genesis xlix. 10: An Exegetical Study,"

<sup>10</sup> Jacob ben Hayyim, ed., *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 1 (Venice: Bomberg, 1524), [s. p.] [Genesis 49:10].

	<i>Ketiv</i> invested with vowels taken from the <i>qere</i> (as printed in the body text of the Rabbinic Bible of 1524)	<i>Qere</i> destitute of vowels which were transferred to the <i>ketiv</i> (as printed in the margin of the Rabbinic Bible of 1524)
	שִׁלָּה	שָׁלוּ
Option	The reconstructed (i. e. unpointed) <i>ketiv</i>	The reconstructed (i. e. pointed) <i>qere</i>
1	שִׁלָּה	שִׁלּוֹ
2	שִׁלָּה	שָׁלוּ
3	שָׁל	שִׁלּוּהָ
4	שִׁל	שִׁלּוּהָ

The options no. 3 and 4 appear to be implausible because although הָא belongs to mater lectionis, it is unlikely to be transferred as a vowel from the *qere* to the *ketiv*.

The 2nd option (שָׁלוּ) seems to be evidenced by the Masora Magna<sup>11</sup> because it provided a list of passages (Judg. 21:19; 1 Sam. 1:24, 3:21; Jer. 7:14, 26:9, 41:5; Ps. 78:60) containing the name of the city "Shiloh" which in the Masoretic text was notated as שִׁלָּה, שִׁלּוֹ or שָׁלוּ. Although biblical cross-references found in the Masora Magna might not have determined how the Masoretes understood that particular *qere*, by citing such passages with reference to Genesis 49:10 they plausibly implied that this word should be interpreted as the name of the city.

However, such a reconstruction of the Masoretic *qere* of Genesis 49:10 (videlicet the option no. 2) would run counter to the mainstream Jewish exegetical tradition which seldom took that *qere* for the name of the city. It should be noted that Rashi<sup>12</sup> explained the *qere* as שִׁלּוֹ (=אֲשֶׁר לָרְ) implying that שִׁלָּה was the one (אֲשֶׁר) to whom (לָרְ) the kingdom belonged.

<sup>11</sup> "ספר בראשית" in חמשה חומשי תורה, vol. 1 (Lviv: Balaban, 1869), 274v-75r [Genesis 49:10 (מסורה גדולה)].

<sup>12</sup> Rashi, "Bereschit," in *Der Pentateuch: Die Fünf Bücher Mosche mit wortreuer deutscher Übersetzung nebst dem Raschi-Kommentar*, vol. 1, trans. and ed. Julius Dessauer (Budapest: Schlesinger, 1905), 400-401 [Genesis 49:10].

Since the history of the reception both of *שִׁילָה* and of *עַד כִּי* in Genesis 49:10 is complex and vast, it could be supposed that the mainstream Jewish exegesis as perpetuated in the Targumim, in the LXX cum its revisions, in the Midrashim, in the Talmud and in the countless Jewish commentaries was inclined to interpret that passage as pertinent to a messianic king on the stipulation that the multi-faceted Jewish concept of Messiah should not be equated with the messianic concept embodied in the Christian Scriptures.

Therefore, some Jewish expositors felt free to identify the said king, for instance, with David. On the contrary, the ancient and mediaeval Christian exegetes were intent on demonstrating that Genesis 49:10 was prophetic of Jesus and from that point of view they were combating the Jewish interpretations of that passage particularly the Jewish denial of the Christian identification of Jesus as the Messiah and the Jewish objection to equating the figure of the Messiah with the LORD.

Referring to Genesis 49:10, Luther claimed that on account of Jesus the Jewish exegetes resolved to deny the messianic signification of that passage and subsequently perverted the vocalic and consonantal form of the word which in Luther's view denoted the Messiah. Actually, Luther's assertions were completely unsubstantiated.

The fact, that in the course of time Luther's grammatical explanation of Genesis 49:10 was evolving,<sup>13</sup> is not surprising or unusual provided that even the Jewish exposition of that passage was

---

<sup>13</sup> Luther, "Predigten über das erste Buch Mose gehalten (1523-1524)," in WA, vol. 14, 481-82 [Genesis 49:10]; Luther, "Evangelium in der Christnachtmesse: Lukas 2:1-14 (Stephan Roths Festpostille 1527)," in WA, vol. 17/2, 300-301; Luther, "Der Prophet Sacharja ausgelegt (1527)," in WA, vol. 23, 531-36 [Zechariah 2:8]; Luther, "In Genesin declamationes (1527)," in WA, vol. 24, 686-88 [Genesis 49:10]; Luther, "Praelectio in Psalmum 45 (1532-1533)," in WA, vol. 40/II, 563-79 [Psalm 45:11]; Luther, "Vorlesungen über 1. Mose (1535-1545)," in WA, vol. 44, 51-55 [Genesis 31:42]; 119-22 [Genesis 33:1b-3]; 753-59 [Genesis 49:10]; 759-79 [Genesis 49:11-12]; Luther, "Von den Juden und ihren Lügen (1543)," in WA, vol. 53, 450-552; Luther, "Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi (1543)," in WA, vol. 53, 639-46.

multi-faceted and diverse. Nonetheless, Luther's insistence that the Jews rejected the ostensibly self-evident fulfilment of the messianic prophecy supposedly enshrined in Genesis 49:10 and his allegation that the Jewish divines tampered with the original text of the Scripture were fatal to his exegetical endeavours as far as the Hebrew Bible was concerned. Luther's trinitarian interpretation of the plural grammatical forms linked to the Divine in the Prophets was conditioned by the same christocentric paradigm as evidenced by his reading of Genesis 49:10.

### **III. A History of the Reception of the Plural Forms in Joshua 24:19, 2 Samuel 7:23, Jeremiah 10:10, 23:36 and Hosea 12:1**

Similarly to Deuteronomy 4:7 [אֱלֹהִים קַרְבִּים], 5:26(23) [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], 1 Samuel 17:26 [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים] and Jeremiah 10:10 [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], 23:36 [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], the plural form of the adjective [קַדְשִׁים] was modifying אֱלֹהִים in Joshua 24:19. Such a phenomenon was anticipated from the grammatical point of view because the noun אֱלֹהִים was plural in terms of parsing<sup>14</sup> and it could denote not only the LORD but also the human or angelic agent(s) or even the idol(s), depending on the context. Irrespective of its meaning, אֱלֹהִים might be connected to singular or plural verbal, participial or adjectival forms, yet אֱלֹהִים signifying the LORD usually occurred with the singular forms. In the Targum Jonathan,<sup>15</sup> in the Septuagint<sup>16</sup> and in the Vulgate<sup>17</sup> the

---

<sup>14</sup> For instance, the construct state of אֱלֹהִים is אֱלֹהֵי. Abraham ibn Ezra, "ספר דברים," in מִקְרָאוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת סֵפֶר דְּבָרִים (New York: פְּרִיעֵדְמָאן, 1970-1971), 79 [Deuteronomy 5:26(23)].

<sup>15</sup> Paul de Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1872), 32 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>16</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887), 473 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>17</sup> Konstantin Tischendorf and Theodor Heyse, ed., *Biblia sacra Latina Veteris Testamenti Hieronymo interprete ex antiquissima auctoritate in stichos descripta* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1873), 219 [Joshua 24:19].

singular form of the adjective stood for the plural form of the Hebrew original of Joshua 24:19.

Commenting upon Joshua 24:19, Rashi remarked that the plural forms concomitant with the generic name of God (אלהים) were indicative of the majesty characteristic of its plural form.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Rashi referred to Genesis 39:20, 42:33 and Exodus 22:14(15) where the plural forms of אֲדוֹן and בַּעַל expressed the fullness of human authority and to 2 Samuel 7:23 [הֵלְכוּ אֱלֹהִים] as treating of the divine authority. Scrutinising Genesis 20:13 [הִתְעַוְּרָה אֱלֹהִים], Rashi listed the same passages as above, adding Exodus 21:29 [בְּבַעַלְיוֹ] as illustrative of a terrestrial splendour and Deuteronomy 5:26(23) [אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים], 10:17 [וְאֵלֹהֵי הָאֲדָמָה] as demonstrative of the supermundane glory.<sup>19</sup> The Targumim<sup>20</sup> and the Septuagint<sup>21</sup> as to the passages cited above generally corroborated Rashi's observation that in Hebrew the plural might dignify a single agent of power unless the concept of the heavenly court was resorted to.

Examining Joshua 24:19, David Kimhi<sup>22</sup> asserted that the plural form of the adjective (קְדוּשִׁים) modifying אֱלֹהִים was designed to convey a sense of the divine majesty. Furthermore, Kimhi adverted to Psalm 149:2 (בְּעִשָׂיו) and Job 35:10 (עֲשֵׂי) where the plural forms of the participles referred to God's very Name (יְיָ mentioned in Psalm 149:1) and to one of the generic names of God (אֱלֹהֵי in Job 35:10).

---

<sup>18</sup> Rashi, "ספר יהושע," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 7 (Warsaw: Schrifgiesser, 1874), 74 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>19</sup> Rashi, "ספר בראשית," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Berger, 1879), 186 [Genesis 20:13].

<sup>20</sup> "Targum Onkelos," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 1, ed. Brian Walton (London: Roycroft, 1653), 175 [Genesis 39:20]; 191 [Genesis 42:33]; 319 [Exodus 21:29]; 321 [Exodus 22:14(15)]; 763 [Deuteronomy 10:17]; "Targum Jonathan" in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 4, ed. Walton (London: Roycroft, 1657), 77 [Genesis 39:20]; 84 [Genesis 42:33]; 143 [Exodus 21:29]; 144 [Exodus 22:14(15)]; 337 [Deuteronomy 10:17]; Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice*, 117 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>21</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 77 [Genesis 39:20]; 84 [Genesis 42:33]; 146 [Exodus 21:29]; 148 [Exodus 22:14(15)]; 364 [Deuteronomy 10:17]; 625 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>22</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר יהושע," in *מקראות גדולות ספר יהושע* (Lublin: Schneidermesser, [s. a.]), 168 [Joshua 24:19].

Relying either on the Septuagint or on the Vulgate, the ancient and mediaeval Christian exegetes did not notice that in Joshua 24:19 אלהים was modified by the plural form of the adjective. However, the concept of the Trinity was argued from the plural form of the aforementioned adjective in the mediaeval anti-Jewish literature produced by Raimundus Martini<sup>23</sup> († 1284), Nicolaus de Lyra<sup>24</sup> († 1340), Paul of Burgos<sup>25</sup> [Paulus de Santa Maria] († 1435) and Pietro Galatino<sup>26</sup> († 1539). In fact, that literature enjoyed considerable popularity and was known to Luther.

In the Age of the Reformation the plural form of the adjective modifying God's generic name in Joshua 24:19 did not pass unnoticed. In his annotated Latin translation of the Hebrew Bible Sebastian Münster<sup>27</sup> admitted that the Christian expositors were inclined to construe that phenomenon as suggestive of the trinitarian concept, while the Jewish commentators, who safeguarded the absolute unity of the Godhead, explicated it in terms of the plural of majesty (לשון תפארה). In his commentary upon the Tanakh Konrad Pellikan<sup>28</sup> also recalled the trinitarian argumentation based on the plural form of that adjective.

---

<sup>23</sup> Raimundus Martini, *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos*, ed. Joseph de Voisin and Johann Benedict Carpzov (Leipzig: Lanckisus, 1687), 484-88 [II, I, III, II-IV]; 550-56 [III, II, II].

<sup>24</sup> Nicolaus de Lyra, *Elegantissime quaestiones disputate contra Hebreos* ([Naples]: [s. n.], [1477]), passim.

<sup>25</sup> Paul of Burgos, *Scrutinium Scripturarum* (Burgos: Junta, 1591), 272-306 [I, VIII, XIII - I, IX, IX (Paulus)].

<sup>26</sup> Pietro Galatino, *Opus de arcanis catholicae veritatis: Hoc est in omnia difficilia loca Veteris Testamenti ex Talmud, aliisque Hebraicis libris quum ante natum Christum tum post scriptis contra obstinatam Iudaeorum perfidiam absolutissimus commentarius* (Basel: Herwagen, 1550), 41-103 [II], especially, 65-74 [II, VIII-IX].

<sup>27</sup> Sebastian Münster, ed. and trans., *Hebraica Biblia*, vol. 1 (Basel: Isingrin and Petri, 1546), 462 (n. "e") [Joshua 24:19]; Editio princeps: 1534-35.

<sup>28</sup> Konrad Pellikan, *Commentaria bibliorum*, vol. 2 (Zurich: Froschauer, 1538), 27v [Joshua 24:19].

The Masoretic text of 2 Samuel 7:23 contained the plural form of the verb (הִלְכוּ) linked to אֱלֹהִים, whereas 1 Chronicles 17:21 offered the text parallel to 2 Samuel 7:23 but with the singular form of the same verb (הִלֵּךְ הָאֱלֹהִים) which could imply either that in the tradition of the Book of Chronicles the plural form of the verb (הִלְכוּ) attested in 2 Samuel 7:23 was construed as equivalent to the singular one (הִלֵּךְ) or that the Chronicles' tradition found the aforementioned plural form challenging and refined it accordingly.

The Septuagint<sup>29</sup> remodelled the syntax of 2 Samuel 7:23 but this was peripheral to the plural form of the verb because the parallel text in 1 Chronicles 17:21<sup>30</sup> was reshaped in the LXX similarly though it contained the singular form thereof. It seems that the Septuagint evaded the interpretation of the plural form הִלְכוּ, highlighting God's action upon Israel aimed at making them his own people (λαός), videlicet, his unique nation (ἔθνος) among other nations. The Targum Jonathan<sup>31</sup> to 2 Samuel 7:23 ("the messengers departed from the LORD in order to redeem for him a people") assigned the action of liberating Israel and securing its status as God's unique people to the angels coming from the LORD's throne and representing the LORD.

Interpreting 2 Samuel 7:23, Rashi<sup>32</sup> cited the Targum Jonathan and contended that the messengers, who departed from the LORD in order to redeem for him a people, could be identified with Moses and Aaron in light of Exodus 7:1 where in the LORD's speech Moses was depicted as אֱלֹהִים (i.e. the mighty one) in relation to Pharaoh. Given that the redemption referred to in 2 Samuel 7:23 was specified as the

---

<sup>29</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 625 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>30</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 39 [1 Chronicles 17:21].

<sup>31</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetae chaldaice*, 117 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>32</sup> Rashi, "ספר שמואל ב," in *ספר שמואל גדולות* (Lublin: Schneidersmeyer, [s. a.]), 301-302 [2 Samuel 7:23].

LORD's deliverance of his people out of Egypt, Rashi concluded that the agents, by means of whom God carried out his rescue plan, were Moses and Aaron. In Rashi's opinion, those two messengers (i. e. Moses and Aaron) proclaimed to Israel that the Holy One sent them in order to redeem for himself a people. Thus, by delivering Israel from captivity in Egypt and by rendering Israel a great, unique nation, the LORD established his glorious name in the world and particularly among his own people. It appears that Rashi based his identification of the messengers mentioned in the Targum as Moses and Aaron upon the Midrash Samuel<sup>33</sup> (מדרש שמואל) in which two propositions coexisted. The first proposition was that the Holy One went to redeem Israel, while the other one – that Moses and Aaron did it on the LORD's behalf.

Although David Kimhi<sup>34</sup> quoted the Targum Jonathan and summarised Rashi's explanation, he maintained that in 2 Samuel 7:23 the plural form of the verb (הִלְכוּ) must be elucidated by the singular form thereof in 1 Chronicles 17:21 and therefore viewed as the plural of majesty (לשון רבים דרך כבוד) after the fashion of Psalm 149:2 (בְּעִשְׂרֵי). To the same Psalm Kimhi referred, commenting upon the plural form in Joshua 24:19.<sup>35</sup> Speaking of God establishing his name by bringing Israel out of Egypt, Kimhi observed that although God's name was sacred in itself and did not require vetting on the LORD's side, God resolved to vindicate his own name, to wit, his will and power as far as humankind was concerned, by vanquishing Pharaoh in order to liberate his beloved children. Thus, the vindication of God's name took place not for God's own sake but rather for the sake of his people and against their enemies.

---

<sup>33</sup> Salomon Buber, ed., מדרש שמואל (Vilnius: Romm, 1925), 84 [§ 27, 3 (2 Samuel 7:23)].

<sup>34</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר שמואל ב," in מקראות גדולות ספר שמואל (Lublin: Schneidmessenger, [s. a.]), 301-302 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>35</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר יהושע," in מקראות גדולות ספר יהושע (Lublin: Schneidmessenger, [s. a.]), 168 [Joshua 24:19].

Kimhi's assertion, that in 2 Samuel 7:23 the plural form of the verb was indicative of the plural of majesty, coincided with that of Gersonides<sup>36</sup> (רלב"ג), who declared the LORD was the One, who went to redeem for himself a people, and with that of Joseph Kara<sup>37</sup> (יוסף קרא), who avowed that God, in whom Israel trusted, was the One who went to redeem them.

Joseph ibn Caspi<sup>38</sup> (יוסף אבן קספי) pointed out that in light of 1 Chronicles 17:21 and in view of the comments on אלהים in Genesis 1:1 made by Abraham ibn Ezra<sup>39</sup> the LORD himself should be recognised as the One who went to redeem Israel. Isaac Abravanel<sup>40</sup> (יצחק אברבנאל) encapsulated the classic Jewish expositions of the plural form of the verb encountered in 2 Samuel 7:23. According to the first interpretation delineated by Abravanel, in view of 1 Chronicles 17:21 and Psalm 149:2 the aforementioned form should be regarded as the plural of majesty granted that God was designated as the subject of that verb. According to the second interpretation identified by Abravanel, the Targum construed God's messengers as the subject of that verb. Abravanel added that the Midrash Samuel<sup>41</sup> identified those messengers as Moses and Aaron.<sup>42</sup> Plausibly, on that Midrash Rashi drew, commenting on 2 Samuel 7:23.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Gersonides, "ספר שמואל ב", in *מקראות גדולות ספר שמואל* (Lublin: Schneidersmessenger, [s. a.]), 301 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Kara, "ספר שמואל ב", in *מקראות גדולות ספר שמואל* (Lublin: Schneidersmessenger, [s. a.]), 301 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>38</sup> Joseph ibn Caspi, *Adne Kesepeh: Kommentar zu den prophetischen Büchern der heiligen Schrift*, vol. 2, ed. Isaac Last (London: Narodiczky, 1912), 34 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>39</sup> Abraham ibn Ezra, "ספר בראשית", in *מקראות גדולות ספר בראשית* (New York: פרידמאן, 1970-1971), 4 [Genesis 1:1 [אלהים]].

<sup>40</sup> Isaac Abravanel, *פירוש על נביאים ראשונים* (Jerusalem: ודעה, תורה, 1960), 334 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>41</sup> Buber, ed., *מדרש שמואל*, 84 [§ 27, 3 (2 Samuel 7:23)].

<sup>42</sup> In fact, the Midrash Samuel was pregnant with two interpretations.

<sup>43</sup> Rashi, "ספר שמואל ב", 301-2 [2 Samuel 7:23].

Given the dependence of the Christian exegetes on the Septuagint and on the Vulgate, it is hardly surprising that no trace of the trinitarian interpretation of 2 Samuel 7:23 was found prior to Petrus Alphonsi<sup>44</sup> († 1110) who knew Hebrew. Subsequently, the mediaeval anti-Jewish literature<sup>45</sup> commenced explicating that verse in trinitarian terms.

Nicolaus de Lyra<sup>46</sup> duly paraphrased Rashi's commentary on 2 Samuel 7:23 and evoked 1 Chronicles 17:21 referred to by most of the Jewish literati who were elucidating that passage. Besides, Lyra mentioned the trinitarian interpretation of the plural form of the verb in 2 Samuel 7:23 as if three divine persons went to redeem Israel. This, in Lyra's opinion, could be perceived as an external activity (*opera ad extra*) of the Trinity which in the edifice of an advanced trinitarian doctrine might be predicated of every person within the Trinity. Consequently, Lyra's comment on the plural form of the verb was relevant to the Christian exegetes and later it was cited by Denis the Carthusian<sup>47</sup> († 1471) in his commentary.

In the Age of the Reformation Sebastian Münster<sup>48</sup> observed that, on the one hand, following the Targum, Rashi interpreted אֱלֹהִים in 2 Samuel 7:23 as the messengers identified with Moses and Aaron, on

---

<sup>44</sup> Petrus Alphonsi, *Dialogi lectu dignissimi in quibus impiae Iudaeorum opiniones eidentissimis cum naturalis tum coelestis philosophiae argumentis confutantur* (Cologne: Gymnich, 1536), 166-81 [VI].

<sup>45</sup> Petrus Blesensis [Peter of Blois], "Contra perfidiam Iudaeorum," in PL, vol. 207, 825-70; Raimundus Martini, *Pugio*, 484-88 [II, I, III, II-IV]; 550-56 [III, II, II]; Hieronymus de Sancta Fide, "Quaestio de probatione adventus Christi," in *Hebraeomastyx vindex impietatis ac perfidiae Iudaicae* (Frankfurt am Main: Brathering, 1602), 157-74 [II]; Pietro Galatino, *Opus*, 41-103 [III], especially, 65-74 [II, VIII-IX].

<sup>46</sup> Nicolaus de Lyra, "II Regum," in *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria*, vol. 2, ed. Nicolaus de Lyra, Paul of Burgos and Matthias Döring (Lyons: Vincent, 1545), 105v [h-i (2 Samuel 7:23)].

<sup>47</sup> Dionysius Carthusianus, "In Secundum Librum Regum enarratio," in *Enarrationes pie ac eruditae in libros Iosuae, Iudicum, Ruth, Regum primum, secundum, tertium et quartum, item Paralipomenon primum et secundum* (Cologne: Quentel, 1552), 290 [XII (2 Samuel 7:23)].

<sup>48</sup> Münster, ed. and trans., *Hebraica*, vol. 1, 587 (n. "i") [2 Samuel 7:23].

the other hand, David Kimhi espoused the idea of the plural of majesty, explaining אֱלֹהִים in that verse as denoting the LORD by virtue of 1 Chronicles 17:21 which conveyed the same message, yet by means of the singular form of the verb.

The phrase אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים is found in Jeremiah 10:10 and 23:36. Given the grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים, in Theodotion's revision<sup>49</sup> of Jeremiah 23:36 the singular form of the adjective was applied. As regards Jeremiah 10:10, Theodotion's revision<sup>50</sup> read either θεός ζῶν (living God) or θεός ζώντων (God of the living). The latter variant was cited by Theodoret of Cyrus<sup>51</sup> and attested in Aquila's revision.<sup>52</sup> However, the reading θεός ζώντων would necessitate אֱלֹהֵי חַיִּים as the original wording which is textually unsubstantiated. The text of the Targum Jonathan to Jeremiah 10:10 printed in the Lagarde's edition contained the singular form of the adjective (אלה קימא),<sup>53</sup> whereas the text found in the Second Rabbinic Bible provided the plural form thereof (אלה קיים).<sup>54</sup> In Jeremiah 23:36 (אלהא קיימא) the Targum Jonathan<sup>55</sup> employed the singular form of the adjective.

Because of the grammatical features of אֱלֹהִים evident to the Jewish exegetes, most of them did not elaborate upon the plural form of the adjective (חַיִּים) in Jeremiah 10:10 and 23:36. Expatiating upon Jeremiah 10:10, David Kimhi<sup>56</sup> maintained that the plural form of

---

<sup>49</sup> Frederick Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 635 [Jeremiah 23:36].

<sup>50</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 598 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>51</sup> Theodoretus Cyrensis, "Explanatio in Isaiam," in PG, vol. 81, 565-66 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>52</sup> "Auctarium ad Origenis Hexapla," in *Origenis*, vol. 2, 40 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>53</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetiae chaldaice*, 306 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>54</sup> Jacob ben Hayyim, ed., *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 3 (Venice: Bomberg, 1524), [s. p.] [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>55</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetiae chaldaice*, 324 [Jeremiah 23:36].

<sup>56</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר ירמיה," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 9 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 38-39 [Jeremiah 10:10].

the adjective (חיים) was meant to demonstrate the divine majesty of the Godhead inherent in the plural form of אלהים, and he alluded to Joshua 24:19 where the plural form of another adjective (קדשים) modified אלהים.

The plural forms of the adjective in Jeremiah 10:10 and 23:36 were identified in the mediaeval anti-Jewish literature<sup>57</sup> and adduced as proof of the presence of the trinitarian concept within the Tanakh. In his commentary Lyra<sup>58</sup> stated that the Hebrew original read "the words of living Gods", and alleged that the plural form of the adjective qualifying אלהים rendered the latter plural, investing it with the trinitarian significance as if the "living Gods" communicated the idea of the plurality of three persons within the single and indivisible divine substance.

An exact function of the plural appellation קדושים, which occurred in Hosea 12:1 as well as in Proverbs 9:10, 30:3 and in Daniel 4:14, is vague. In the apocrypha οἱ ἅγιοι (the holy ones) or οἱ μακάρες (the blessed ones) might refer to the idea of the heavenly court<sup>59</sup> which was also attested in the Tanakh but this construction could not be put on קדושים in all the passages listed above and certainly it did not reflect a complex reception thereof.

---

<sup>57</sup> Petrus Alphonsi, *Dialogi*, 166-181 [VI]. Petrus Blesensis, "Contra perfidiam Judaeorum," 825-70; Raimundus Martini, *Pugio*, 484-488 [II, I, III, II-IV]; 550-56 [III, II, II]; Nicolaus de Lyra, *Elegantissime*, passim; Paul of Burgos, *Scrutinium*, 272-306 [I, VIII, XIII - I, IX, IX (Paulus)]; Pietro Galatino, *Opus*, 41-103 [II], especially, 65-74 [II, VIII-IX].

<sup>58</sup> Nicolaus de Lyra, "Jeremiae," in *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria*, vol. 4, ed. Nicolaus de Lyra, Paul of Burgos and Matthias Döring (Lyons: Vincent, 1545), 143v-44r [f (Jeremiah 23:36)].

<sup>59</sup> Sirach 42:17. Konstantin Tischendorf, ed., *Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1869), 204 [Sirach 42:17]; "The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 576 [75].

In fact, most grammatical features of Hosea 12:1(11:12) are still debated by scholars.<sup>60</sup> The root of the verb (רדה versus רוד) is disputed, while the meaning of the stem רוד is unclear.<sup>61</sup> This obscures the function of the preposition עם in the sentence. Furthermore, it is not clear what part of speech is modified by נאמן. In view of Isaiah 49:7 (אשר נאמן) could qualify קדושים on the stipulation that the prepositional phrase עם קדושים was parallel to אל עם, videlicet, that קדושים was synonymous with אל and thus was invested with the singular meaning which would allow of the singular form of נאמן on the strength of constructio ad sensum.

Irrespective of a definite denotation of קדושים in Hosea 12:1 (11:12) the context permits of two interpretations. Consequently, the passage reads either "unlike Ephraim and the house of Israel, Judah continued to rule [רד stemming from רדה] in company with God and with קדושים" or "like Ephraim and the house of Israel, Judah continued to go counter to [רד stemming from רוד] God and counter to קדושים." By virtue of the literary structure the relationship between אל עם and עם קדושים might be either parallel or inferential regardless of the signification of the verb רד. In the former case (parallel) קדושים would communicate a sense of אל by means of the plural of majesty. In the latter case (inferential) the meaning of קדושים would be related to אל in the sense that Judah's attitude to God was concomitant with Judah's attitude to קדושים interpreted as God's heavenly court (e.g. Zech. 14:5), God's holy people (e.g. Ps. 34:10; Dan. 7:21) or God's priests (e.g. 2 Chron. 35:3).

---

<sup>60</sup> Carl Friedrich Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar über die zwölf kleinen Propheten* (Leipzig: Dörffling and Franke, 1888), 102-104 [Hosea 12:1 (11:12)]; Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 205-11 [Hosea 12:1 (11:12)].

<sup>61</sup> Wilhelm Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1872), 966 [s. v. רוד].

Although Hosea 12:3 (2) appears to specify the LORD's attitude to Judah, the noun **יָבִיב**, the prepositional phrase (**עִם יְהוָה**) and the infinitive **לְפָקֵד** occurring in the Hebrew original were susceptible of various interpretations. It could be noted that the Septuagint with its revisions<sup>62</sup> conveyed a sense of God's disapproval of Judah's conduct, whereas the Targumic rendition,<sup>63</sup> the Vulgate<sup>64</sup> and Jerome's commentary ad loco<sup>65</sup> leant towards the idea of the LORD's approval of Judah's performance. Similarly, in the initial version of his German Bible<sup>66</sup> Luther indicated that the LORD was to protect Judah and to reward Judah according to its merits, while in the final version thereof<sup>67</sup> Luther stated that the LORD was to conduct Judah's case against its enemies and to reward Judah according to its merits as well. The classic Jewish commentaries upon that verse vacillated between the idea that the LORD cautioned Judah against departing from him<sup>68</sup> and the proposition that the LORD vindicated Judah against its enemies.<sup>69</sup>

The Septuagint<sup>70</sup> provided a complex translation of Hosea 12:1(11:12)<sup>71</sup> which allows of two interpretations. According to the first

---

<sup>62</sup> Henry Barclay Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1894), 12 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>63</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetae chaldaice*, 442 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>64</sup> Tischendorf and Heyse, ed., *Biblia sacra Latina*, 905 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>65</sup> Hieronymus Stridonensis, "Commentariorum in Osee prophetam libri tres," in PL, vol. 25, 924-25 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>66</sup> Luther, "Die Propheten alle Deutsch (1532)," in WA DB, vol. 11/2, 206 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>67</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 11/2, 207 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>68</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר הושע," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 197 [Hosea 12:3(2)].

<sup>69</sup> Abraham ibn Ezra, "ספר הושע," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 197 [Hosea 12:3(2)]. Abraham ibn Ezra remarked that in the context of Hosea 12:3(2) **עִם יְהוָה** implied that the LORD was judging along with (**עִם**) Judah, not against (**עַל**) Judah.

<sup>70</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3, 12 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>71</sup> Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, trans., *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with an English Translation* (London: Bagster, 1879), 1078 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)]: "Ephraim has compassed me with falsehood, and the house of Israel and Judah with ungodliness: but now God knows them, and they shall be called God's holy people [*λαὸς ἅγιος κεκλησεται Θεοῦ*]."

one, God knew those who were faithful to him within the tribes (namely within Ephraim, Israel and Judah) marked by sin. Consequently, only those regarded by God as faithful deserved to be called his holy people. According to the other interpretation of the LXX favoured by the church fathers, God called Ephraim, Israel and Judah his holy people despite their sins, thus affirming their indelible and irrevocable status enshrined in the Covenant. Naturally, for the church fathers Israel's status was redefined with Jesus' emergence.

Commenting upon Hosea 12:1(11:12), Jerome<sup>72</sup> recapitulated Aquila's revision<sup>73</sup> in which according to his testimony קָדְשׁ was derived from קָדְשׁ, while Judah, unlike disobedient Ephraim and Israel, continued to rule in company with God and in company with all people faithful to God.

The Vulgate<sup>74</sup> offered an intriguing rendition independent of the Septuagint. According to the Vulgate, unlike the rebellious Ephraim and Israel, Judah alone was a witness (plausibly to Ephraim's and Israel's spiritual desolation) who descended with God and who was faithful to or with the holy people. Consequently, the Vulgate perceived נְאֻמֵּךְ not as appositive to אֱלֹהִים or to קְדוֹשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים but rather as the verb, which was modified by the prepositional phrase (עִמָּם קְדוֹשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים) and which was pertinent to Judah as its subject. Thus, Judah was faithful (נְאֻמֵּךְ) to or with the holy people (עִמָּם קְדוֹשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים) by whom probably believers within the other tribes were meant.

It appears that in the Vulgate the verb קָדְשׁ was derived from the stem יָרַד (to descend), while קְדוֹשֵׁי אֱלֹהִים was viewed not as parallel to אֱלֹהִים but rather as denoting the "holy people." It is however unclear in what

---

<sup>72</sup> Hieronymus Stridonensis, "Commentariorum in Osee prophetam libri tres," 922-23 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>73</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 959 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>74</sup> Tischendorf and Heyse, ed., *Biblia sacra Latina*, 905 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

sense Judah contrasted both to Ephraim and to Israel was "descending" as a witness to or with God because in the Hebrew Bible a descent was hardly an indication of any triumph. Moreover, it is difficult to ascertain the relationship between the Vulgate rendition and the aforementioned comment made by Jerome.

The Targum Jonathan<sup>75</sup> to Hosea 12:1(11:12) offered a descriptive interpretation of that verse in which the unfaithfulness both of Ephraim and of Israel was exposed. Regarding Judah, the Targum stipulated that the residents of Judah were to worship God as long as they were living in their land. Furthermore, the Targum affirmed that those, who were serving in front of God in the most holy Temple, deserved to be called the "holy people" (עמא קדישא) and therefore were to stay alive. Since the "holy people" (עמא קדישא) referred to in the Targum were not termed priests, it is legitimate to identify them with all believers gathered around the Temple and committed to the pure worship and teaching enforced there. Although the Targum Jonathan and Aquila's revision recognised the house of Judah as faithful to God, while the Septuagint did not differentiate the tribes, all three renditions concurred in explicating קדושים as God's holy people.

Expounding Hosea 12:1(11:12), Rashi<sup>76</sup> maintained that unlike Ephraim and Israel, the house of Judah was still ruling (מורש) due to its fear of God. Rashi identified רך as a form of the verb רדה which in his opinion was also attested in Numbers 24:19 (רַךְ).<sup>77</sup> According to Rashi, since Judah's kings were "with the Holy One" (עם הקדוש), namely were faithful to God, Judah could enjoy ruling despite Ephraim's and Israel's disobedience. Therefore, it seems that Rashi construed קדושים as identical to אל.

---

<sup>75</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetae chaldaice*, 442 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>76</sup> Rashi, "ספר הושע," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 197 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>77</sup> The Targumim (i. e. Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan) as well as the LXX did not contradict such a reading of רַךְ in Numbers 24:19. "Targum Onkelos," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 1, 655 [Numbers 24:19]; "Targum Jonathan" in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 4, 289 [Numbers 24:19]; Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 310 [Numbers 24:19].

David Kimhi<sup>78</sup> acceded to Rashi's exposition, emphasising that since Judah served (עֹבֵד) the LORD, the house of Judah could rule with God's approval in contrast to Ephraim and Israel worshipping idols. Referring to Joshua 24:19, David Kimhi asserted that in Hosea 12:1(11:12) קְדוֹשִׁים was tantamount to אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים granted that the latter was taken for the plural of majesty signifying God (אֵל). Besides, he remarked that his father, Joseph Kimhi (יֹסֵף קִמְחִי), explicated נְאֻמָּן in terms of God's blessing, assurance and provision which dovetailed with the phrase "נְאֻם" in Hosea 11:11.

Furthermore, David Kimhi recognised רָדַד from Hosea 12:1(11:12) and רָדַנָּה from Jeremiah 2:31 as derived from the same stem denoting "to rule" (משל). Nowadays, Kimhi's parsing of רָדַנָּה in Jeremiah 2:31 seems to be problematic both in view of the context and in light of the Targum<sup>79</sup> and the Septuagint<sup>80</sup> cum its revisions.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Kimhi juxtaposed אֵל עִם רָדַד from Hosea 12:1(11:12) with כִּי שָׂיֵת עִם אֵל from Genesis 32:29(28), yet it appears that the function of the preposition עִם in the former passage according to Kimhi's interpretation (in company with) might be different from that in the latter (against). Nonetheless, it should be noted that the Septuagint<sup>82</sup> cum its revisions<sup>83</sup> and the Targumim (i.e. Onkelos<sup>84</sup> and Pseudo-Jonathan<sup>85</sup>) interpreted עִם in Genesis 32:29(28) [כִּי שָׂרִיֵת עִם אֱלֹהִים] not as expressive of a conflict but rather as indicative of an association.

---

<sup>78</sup> David Kimhi, "ספר הושע," in *מקראות גדולות*, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 197 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>79</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetae chaldaice*, 295 [Jeremiah 2:31].

<sup>80</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3, 227 [Jeremiah 2:31].

<sup>81</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 577 [Jeremiah 2:31].

<sup>82</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 62 [Genesis 32:29(28)].

<sup>83</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1875), 48 [Genesis 32:29(28)].

<sup>84</sup> "Targum Onkelos," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 1, 145 [Genesis 32:29(28)].

<sup>85</sup> "Targum Jonathan" in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 4, 64 [Genesis 32:29(28)].

David Kimhi pointed out that on account of its faithfulness Judah could still enjoy the fellowship with (עם) God (האל) who was depicted as the Holy One (קדושים) by virtue of his unfathomable glory. Moreover, working on Hosea 12:1(11:12), Kimhi scrutinised the Targumic rendition thereof. In his opinion, the Targum vocalised the unpointed אל עם as אל עם (God's people) in place of the Masoretic אל עם (with God). However, since the Targum to the Book of Hosea, particularly to Hosea 12:1(11:12), was an interpretative, non-literal rendition, it is not necessary to construe the Targumic עמא דאלהא as equivalent to the original אל עם. Additionally, the reading אל עם would make no sense within the parameters of the original sentence, while another appearance of "people" (עמא קדישא [the holy people]) in the Targum could not be accounted for by an alternative vocalisation of the unpointed biblical text. Therefore, the contemporary scholarship emphasises that the Targumim except for the Targum Onkelos should be viewed not as literal translations (word by word) but rather as explanatory translations (sense-for-sense) meant to illuminate difficult features of the original text.

Commenting upon Hosea 12:1(11:12), Joseph ibn Caspi<sup>86</sup> asserted that in אל עם רד the verb and the preposition signified "to rule [משל] in company with God" like עמ אלהים in Genesis 32:29(28) according to his own interpretation of that passage which was representative of the Jewish exegesis.

Caspi reasoned that in Genesis 32:29(28) the verb שרית did not occur with the preposition על because in this instance it would denote "to rule over God". According to Caspi, even in Hosea 12:5(4) [יִשְׂרָאֵל מִלְּאֵד], which drew on Genesis 32:29(28), the preposition אל modifying the same verb (יִשְׂרָאֵל) was simply synonymous with עם. Such

---

<sup>86</sup> Joseph ibn Caspi, *Adne Keseph: Kommentar zu den prophetischen Büchern der heiligen Schrift*, vol. 1, ed. Isaac Last (London: Narodiczky, 1911), 69 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

a view is indeed reflected in the Targum<sup>87</sup> and in the Septuagint<sup>88</sup> cum its revisions.<sup>89</sup>

Actually, Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31) was intricately mirrored in Hosea 12:4(3)-5(4) which however cannot be explored in the present paper. In short, the Hebrew original of Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31) suggested that Jacob physically encountered an angel who even asked Jacob to send him away [Genesis 32:26(27): שְׁלַחֲנִי]. The fact, that in Genesis 32:28(29) and 32:30(31) Jacob's companion was depicted as אֱלֹהִים, does not have to invalidate that suggestion because in the Tanakh אֱלֹהִים could denote the angel(s). Such an exposition of Genesis is recorded in the Targum Onkelos<sup>90</sup> and in the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the Septuagint<sup>92</sup> interpreted אֱלֹהִים in Genesis 32:28(29) and 32:30(31) as θεός which was not contested in the LXX revisions.<sup>93</sup>

In Hosea 12:4(3)-5(4) the story was retold in an intricate way. Consequently, in Hosea 12:5(4) Jacob's companion was identified as an angel, while in Hosea 12:4(3) he was called אֱלֹהִים. Moreover, it is unclear whether Hosea 12:6(5) should be viewed as parallel to the previous sentence. If so, אֱלֹהִים in the analysed narrative would denote the LORD. Furthermore, it is uncertain who was referred to by עִמָּנוּ (with us) in Hosea 12:5(4) because עִמָּנוּ could either signify "with אֱלֹהִים" on the strength of its plural grammatical form (whence Jacob would be the subject of יִדְבָּר) or communicate "with us namely the Covenant People" (whence an angel would be the subject of יִדְבָּר).

---

<sup>87</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice*, 442 [Hosea 12:5(4)].

<sup>88</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3, 12 [Hosea 12:5(4)].

<sup>89</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 959-60 [Hosea 12:5(4)].

<sup>90</sup> "Targum Onkelos," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 1, 145 [Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31)].

<sup>91</sup> "Targum Jonathan" in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 4, 64 [Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31)].

<sup>92</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 62 [Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31)].

<sup>93</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 1, 48 [Genesis 32:24(25)-30(31)].

In either case the identification of אַלְוֵהִים as an angel appears to be established. The Targum<sup>94</sup> to Hosea 12:4(3) [שָׁרָה אֶת אֱלֹהִים] interpreted אַלְוֵהִים as an angel, explicated שָׁרָה in terms of ruling and construed אֶת as the preposition denoting עִם (in company with) like אֶת in Genesis 4:1c. The Septuagint<sup>95</sup> was not opposed to such an understanding both of the verb (שָׁרָה) and of אֶת in Hosea 12:4(3), yet rendered אֱלֹהִים as θεός. As regards Hosea 12:4(3) [שָׁרָה אֶת אֱלֹהִים], Aquila's revision<sup>96</sup> interpreted אֱלֹהִים as an angel. Additionally, in Hosea 12:5(4) [וַיִּשָׂר אֱלֹהִים מִלְאָךְ] Aquila's and Theodotion's revisions<sup>97</sup> rendered מִלְאָךְ as God despite the LXX rendition thereof as an angel, while Symmachus' revision implied that Jacob prevailed over an angel.

In Caspi's opinion, unlike unbelieving Ephraim and Israel, Judah could still hold sway (בממשלתו) on account of its sincere faith in God and in his Temple (המקדש). For Caspi, עִם קְדוֹשִׁים in Hosea 12:1(11:12) might imply the allegiance to the Temple which was a prerequisite for Judah's ruling along with God (רַד עִם אֱלֹהִים).

Aaron ben Joseph (אֶהְרֹן בֶּן יוֹסֵף)<sup>98</sup> explained that Judah was privileged to rule with (מִלְכָּה עִם) God on account of its obedience to the LORD, and derived רַד from the stem רָדָה. In Aaron's view, קְדוֹשִׁים should be interpreted in light of Joshua 24:19 (אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים) as the plural of majesty. Consequently, Aaron contended that נְאֻמָּן qualified קְדוֹשִׁים, so עִם קְדוֹשִׁים נְאֻמָּן meant "with the holy God who was faithful". Nonetheless, he admitted that the unpointed אֱלֹהִים could

---

<sup>94</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice*, 442 [Hosea 12:4(3)].

<sup>95</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3, 12 [Hosea 12:4(3)].

<sup>96</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 959 [Hosea 12:4(3)]. The Vulgate likewise. Tischendorf and Heyse, ed., *Biblia sacra Latina*, 905 [Hosea 12:4(3)].

<sup>97</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 959-60 [Hosea 5(4)].

<sup>98</sup> Aaron ben Joseph, "ספר הרשע," in *הקדמת המבאר*, ed. Abraham Firkovich (Eupatoria: Firkovich, 1833-1834), 14r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

also be vocalised אֱלֹהֵי (God's people) counter to the Masoretic text. In this instance, Judah would continue to preponderate over God's people dispersed throughout all the tribes. Such an interpretation is not persuasive from the contemporary point of view because it would imply that אֱלֹהֵי was the direct object of רָדַח which would not correspond to the meanings commonly attributed to that verb.

Examining Hosea 12:1(11:12), Joseph Kara<sup>99</sup> concluded that among the tribes only Judah cleaved to its God, and proposed an interface between רָדַח from Hosea 12:1(11:12) and וַיִּרְדַּח from 1 Kings 6:32 which is however debatable in light of the Targum<sup>100</sup> and in view of the Septuagint<sup>101</sup> cum its revisions.<sup>102</sup> Eliezer of Beaugency<sup>103</sup> (אליעזר מבלגנציי) ascertained that אֱלֹהֵי עַד רָדַח עִם אֱלֹהֵי should be interpreted as "Judah still communed with the LORD (עַד רָדַח עִם יְיָ)," while עִם קְדוֹשִׁים must be understood as "with the holy God (עִם אֱלֹהֵי קְדוֹשִׁים)" after the fashion of Joshua 24:19 (אֱלֹהֵי קְדוֹשִׁים). To illuminate the verb רָדַח, Eliezer cited 1 Kings 6:32 (וַיִּרְדַּח) and Judges 14:9 (וַיִּרְדַּח), yet in both instances the Targum<sup>104</sup> and the Septuagint<sup>105</sup> cum its revisions<sup>106</sup> did not corroborate the idea of connecting רָדַח from Hosea 12:1(11:12) to וַיִּרְדַּח from 1 Kings 6:32 or to וַיִּרְדַּח from Judges 14:9.

---

<sup>99</sup> Joseph Kara, *In Hoseam commentarius* (Breslau: Grassius, 1861), 7v [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>100</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice*, 154 [1 Kings (= Regnum III) 6:32].

<sup>101</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 686-87 [1 Kings (= Βασιλείων Γ) 6:32].

<sup>102</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 1, 606 [1 Kings (= Regum III) 6:32].

<sup>103</sup> Eliezer of Beaugency, "הרשע," in *Kommentar zu Ezechiel und den XII kleinen Propheten* (Warsaw: Verein Mekize Nirdamim, 1910), 135 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>104</sup> Lagarde, ed., *Prophetæ chaldaice*, 154 [1 Kings (= Regnum III) 6:32]. Ibidem, 54 [Judges 14:9].

<sup>105</sup> Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 686-87 [1 Kings (= Βασιλείων Γ) 6:32]; 515 [Judges 14:9].

<sup>106</sup> Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quæ supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 1, 606 [1 Kings (= Regum III) 6:32]; 447 [Judges 14:9].

Labouring on Hosea 12:1(11:12), Isaac Abravanel<sup>107</sup> made use of the commentaries authored by David Kimhi, Rashi, Abraham ibn Ezra and Saadia Gaon (סעריה גאון). As a matter of fact, in his exposition Abraham ibn Ezra<sup>108</sup> was focused on Hosea 12:2, not on Hosea 12:1(11:12), while Saadia Gaon's commentary on the Minor Prophets is either no longer extant or could not be localised by the author of the present paper.<sup>109</sup>

Abravanel evoked numerous passages in order to cast light upon that verse, and contended that in contrast to the unfaithful Ephraim and Israel, Judah was in fellowship with God (היה עם אל) and therefore God made Judah רר meaning "rule" (משל). The prepositional phrase עם קדושים was perceived by Abravanel as parallel to עם אל. Thus, in his opinion קדושים was to be interpreted as synonymous with אל on the pattern of Joshua 24:19 (אלהים קדשים). Nevertheless, Abravanel mentioned that קדושים could also denote "holy people" like in Psalm 16:3 (LXX: 15:3)<sup>110</sup> or "[fore]fathers in faith".

Parsing רר, Abravanel followed Rashi<sup>111</sup> and referred to Numbers 24:19 (וירר) because he assumed that one and the same verb occurred both in Numbers 24:19 and in Hosea 12:1(11:12), conveying a sense of ruling. Abravanel admitted that the verb רר could also be viewed as cognate of ירדה denoting the idea of descent or decrease, and pointed

---

<sup>107</sup> Isaac Abravanel, פירוש על נביאים וכתובים (Jerusalem: אלישע, 1959-1960), 57 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>108</sup> Abraham ibn Ezra, "ספר הושע", in מקראות גדולות, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 196-97 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>109</sup> Saadia's exposition of Hosea 12:1(11:12) was encapsulated by Lyra. Nicolaus de Lyra, "Hoseae," in *Biblia sacra cum*, vol. 4, 347r-47v [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the interpretation of לקדושים in Psalm 16:3 (LXX: 15:3) as the "holy people" coincided with the Targum and with the Septuagint cum its revisions. "Targum," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 3, ed. Walton (London: Roycroft, 1656), 102 [Psalm 16:3 (LXX: 15:3)]; Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 2, 226 [Psalm 16:3 (LXX: 15:3)]; Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 106 [Psalm 16:3 (LXX: 15:3)].

<sup>111</sup> Rashi, "ספר הושע", in מקראות גדולות, vol. 10 (Warsaw: Schriftgiesser, 1874), 197 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

to Judges 19:11 (רַך) <sup>112</sup> and Jeremiah 2:31 (רַךְנִי). <sup>113</sup> In this instance, רַך in Hosea 12:1(11:12) would be prophetic of the ultimate political demise of Judah.

Commenting upon Hosea 12:1(11:12), Theodore of Mopsuestia, <sup>114</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus <sup>115</sup> and Cyril of Alexandria <sup>116</sup> based their interpretation solely on the Septuagint given that Cyril of Alexandria probably misread ναός (the Temple) for λαός (the people). Nonetheless, Cyril's appeal to ναός might arise from taking cognisance of מִקְדָּשׁ (meaning the Temple) which originated from the same stem as קְדוּשִׁים.

All of them avowed that notwithstanding the unfaithfulness of Ephraim, of Israel and of Judah, God called those tribes his holy people because He loved them selflessly, continued to care for them and desired to make them again his own people by means of repentance. A Byzantine mediaeval exegete, Theophylact of Ohrid, <sup>117</sup> followed in the wake of the Greek church fathers, emphasising that although Ephraim, Israel and Judah were estranged from God on account of their sins, God

---

<sup>112</sup> The Targum and the Septuagint cum its revisions lend credence to such an understanding of רַך in Judges 19:11. "Targum Jonathan," in *Biblia sacra polyglotta*, vol. 2, ed. Walton (London: Roycroft, 1655), 166 [Judges 19:11]; Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 1, 528 [Judges 19:11]. Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 1, 464 [Judges 19:11].

<sup>113</sup> It seems that the Targum and the LXX with its revisions did not corroborate such an interpretation of רַךְנִי in Jeremiah 2:31. Lagarde, ed., *Prophetae chaldaice*, 295 [Jeremiah 2:31]. Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt: sive veterum interpretum Graecorum in totum Vetus Testamentum fragmenta*, vol. 2, 577 [Jeremiah 2:31]; Swete, ed., *The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint*, vol. 3, 227 [Jeremiah 2:31].

<sup>114</sup> Theodorus Mopsuestenus, "Commentarius in Oseae," in PG, vol. 66, 193-94 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>115</sup> Theodoretus Cyrensis, "Enarratio in Oseam prophetam," in PG, vol. 81, 1613-14 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>116</sup> Cyrillus Alexandrinus, "Commentarius in Oseam prophetam," in PG, vol. 71, 277-80 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>117</sup> Theophylactus de Achrida, "Expositio in prophetam Oseam," in PG, vol. 126, 769-70 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

continued to love them and therefore he called them his own people with a view to their anticipated correction (διὰ παιδείας). In addition, Theophylact alleged that Hosea 12:1(11:12) must be construed as prophetic of Christ because in his opinion only those Jews, who would believe in Jesus, deserved to be called God's people.

The Latin church fathers were dependent on the Vulgate which for that reason was mirrored in their commentaries. In the exposition ascribed to Rufinus of Aquileia<sup>118</sup> the Vulgate interpretation of that verse was elaborated upon and it appears that קדושי עם (Vulgate: "cum sanctis") was explained there as "with the holy fathers".

Although Haymo of Halberstadt<sup>119</sup> paraphrased the original version of the Vulgate ("cum sanctis fidelis"), he proposed a modified version thereof ("cum sanctis fidelibus" [with the holy and faithful people]). Thus, Haymo viewed קדושי אבות as an adjective qualifying קדושי עם and identified the "holy and faithful people" as the forefathers in faith. Moreover, he added that Judah was a witness (testis) to God's words received by its prophets, and specified that Judah descended with God in the sense that following in the wake of God, Judah humbled itself in order not to become haughty by observing the outrageous impiety of Ephraim and Israel.

Rupert of Deutz (Rupertus Tuitensis)<sup>120</sup> insignificantly altered the original version of the Vulgate by adding the possessive pronoun to אלו ("cum Deo suo" [with its /i.e. Judah's/ God]). He also remarked that Ephraim and Israel betrayed the LORD, while Judah continued to worship him and to obey his precepts. Therefore, to retain a humble

---

<sup>118</sup> Rufinus Aquileiensis, "In Oseam commentarius," in PL, vol. 21, 1021-22 [III, XII (Hosea 12:1 /11:12/)].

<sup>119</sup> Haimo Halberstadensis, "Enarratio in Osee prophetam," in PL, vol. 117, 84 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>120</sup> Rupertus Tuitensis, "In Osee prophetam commentarius," in PL, vol. 168, 178-80 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

attitude, Judah had to humble itself which in Rupert's opinion was a godly thing in view of the self-exinanition attributed by the Christian Scriptures to Christ.

Annotating Hosea 12:1(11:12), Nicolaus de Lyra<sup>121</sup> cleaved to the Vulgate but he vacillated between "cum sanctis fidelis" (the Vulgate) and "cum sanctis fidelibus" as Haymo of Halberstadt did previously. Actually, in Lyra's exposition and in the glossa ordinaria<sup>122</sup> provided therein main commentaries produced earlier by the Western church fathers were utilised. According to Lyra, to evade a sinful sense of pride, which could easily be elicited by the stark deviation of Ephraim and Israel from God's truth, the faithful Judah humbled itself which was depicted as descending with God and with the holy people represented by Moses and Aaron. Thus, following in the footsteps of forefathers in faith, Judah was fulfilling God's will.

Lyra reported that Saadia Gaon interpreted עִם קְדוֹשִׁים as parallel to אֵל עִם and therefore denoting "with the holy God". Besides, Lyra admitted that some Christian expositors would explicate עִם קְדוֹשִׁים in terms of the trinitarian idea which in their opinion was present in the Tanakh. He also noted the interpretation according to which Judah was descending with God in the sense that Judah's reign was inevitably diminishing. The latter exposition posited that קָדַךְ originated from the stem יָרַךְ. Examining Hosea 12:1(11:12), Hugh of Saint-Cher<sup>123</sup> basically epitomised Lyra's commentary, without mentioning the trinitarian interpretation of עִם קְדוֹשִׁים propounded by some Christian commentators.

---

<sup>121</sup> Nicolaus de Lyra, "Hoseae," 347r-47v [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>122</sup> "Glossa Ordinaria," in *Biblia sacra cum*, vol. 4, 347r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>123</sup> Hugh of Saint-Cher, "Liber Oseae," in *Opera omnia in universum Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, vol. 5 (Venice: Pezzana, 1703), 176v [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

Denis the Carthusian<sup>124</sup> explained that Judah bore testimony (Vulgate: "testis") to God by living out his law revealed in his Word. In Denis' opinion, Judah descended with God and with the holy prophets and patriarchs in the sense that Judah subjugated itself to the divine precepts and imitated the forefathers in faith exemplified by Moses and Aaron. Consequently, Denis preferred "cum sanctis fidelibus" to "cum sanctis fidelis" (the Vulgate).

The inference from the study of the patristic and mediaeval reception of Hosea 12:1(11:12) is that the trinitarian interpretation of קָדוֹשׁ יְיָ did not dominate the mainstream Christian exegesis but was rather characteristic of the anti-Jewish literature produced by Raimundus Martini<sup>125</sup> and Pietro Galatino.<sup>126</sup>

Although in the Age of the Reformation most commentators were attentive to the trinitarian exposition of קָדוֹשׁ יְיָ in Hosea 12:1(11:12), they did not ignore the Jewish interpretation of that passage. In fact, Konrad Pellikan's<sup>127</sup> commentary and a new, annotated Latin translation of the Scripture edited by Robert Estienne<sup>128</sup> (Robertus Stephanus) offered an explanation of Hosea 12:1(11:12) entirely compatible with the mainstream Jewish exegesis of that verse.

A Latin translation of the Tanakh prepared by Sante Pagnini<sup>129</sup> enhanced the clarity of the Vulgate in terms of syntax and lexis. Thus, "descendit" ([Judah] descended) was replaced with "dominatur"

---

<sup>124</sup> Dionysius Carthusianus, "In Oseam prophetam enarratio," in *Enarrationes pie ac eruditae in Duodecim Prophetas quos vocant Minores* (Cologne: Quentel, 1549), 64-65 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>125</sup> Raimundus Martini, *Pugio*, 484-88 [II, I, III, II-IV].

<sup>126</sup> Pietro Galatino, *Opus*, 41-103 [III], especially, 65-74 [II, VIII-IX].

<sup>127</sup> Pellikan, *Commentaria bibliorum*, vol. 3 (Zurich: Froschauer, 1540), 245r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>128</sup> Robert Estienne (Robertus Stephanus), ed., *Biblia utriusque Testamenti* (Geneva: Stephanus [Estienne], 1557), 346 (n. 12) [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>129</sup> Sante Pagnini, ed. and trans., *Biblia* (Leiden: Ry, 1528), 290r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

([Judah] dominated), while "est" was added to cast light upon a vague predicate in the Vulgate rendition ("cum sanctis fidelis"), specifying that Judah was faithful to or with the holy people. A new, annotated (in the margin) Latin translation of the Hebrew Bible,<sup>130</sup> which was supervised by Leo Jud and which was later called the Zurich Vulgate, imitated Pagnini's version and provided a marginal note conceding that in Hosea 12:1(11:12) some exegetes interpreted קדושים as denoting God. Furthermore, Pagnini's Latin rendition of Hosea 12:1(11:12) was adopted in a new, annotated Latin version of the Tanakh prepared by Sebastian Münster.<sup>131</sup>

Johannes Oecolampadius<sup>132</sup> taught that unlike faithless Ephraim and Israel, Judah was holding sway in company with God (dominatur cum Deo) who was portrayed as the Holy and Faithful One (cum sancto fidei). Consequently, Oecolampadius explicated קדו in terms of exerting authority, while קדושים עם was recognised by him as parallel to עם אל. Nonetheless, Oecolampadius claimed that the parallelism between the singular אל and the plural קדושים should be harnessed to the trinitarian concept as if the former singular noun (אל) was demonstrative of the unity of the divine essence, whereas the latter plural form of the substantive adjective (קדושים) was corroborative of the existence of three divine persons. In his annotated Latin translation of the Tanakh Sebastian Münster<sup>133</sup> summarised a typical Jewish exegesis of that passage, yet he averred that in Hosea 12:1(11:12) the plural form of the substantive adjective (קדושים) was expressive of the trinitarian "mystery."

---

<sup>130</sup> Leo Jud et al., ed., *Biblia sacrosancta Testamenti Veteris et Novi* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1543), 314r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)]: "[...] autem Iehuda dominatur adhuc cum Deo et cum sanctis est fidelis". Ibidem, (n. "a") [Hosea 12:1(11:12)]: "Aliqui קדושים pro Deo exponunt".

<sup>131</sup> Münster, ed. and trans., *Hebraica Biblia*, vol. 2 (Basel: Isingrin and Petri, 1546), 1073 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>132</sup> Johannes Oecolampadius, "In Hoseam," in *Annotationes piissimae doctissimaeque in Joseam, Joelem, Amos, Abdiam* etc. (Basel: Cratander, 1535), 85v-86r [XXIV (Hosea 12:1/11:12)].

<sup>133</sup> Münster, ed. and trans., *Hebraica*, vol. 2, 1073 (n. "h") [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

#### **IV. Luther Arguing the Trinitarian Concept from the Plural Forms in Joshua 24:19, 2 Samuel 7:23, Jeremiah 10:10, 23:36 and Hosea 12:1**

In his programmatic exposition of the ancient Christian creeds Luther<sup>134</sup> argued the doctrine of the Trinity from the plural forms pertinent to the Divine registered in the passages of the Tanakh listed there. Among those passages Joshua 24:19 and 2 Samuel 7:23 were found as far as the Prophets were concerned.

In the aforementioned treatise Luther alleged that the authors of the Hebrew Bible really captured the patristic doctrine of the Trinity which he regarded as identical with the concept(s) of the Divine perpetuated in the Christian Scriptures.<sup>135</sup> In fact, Luther did not distinguish between a sophisticated patristic formulation of the trinitarian concept and the view(s) on the Godhead recorded in the Christian Scriptures.

Luther claimed that despite their clear comprehension of the trinitarian doctrine the authors of the Tanakh were obliged to present that doctrine less explicitly than the authors of the Christian Scriptures due to the vicious character which he attributed to the Jews of all ages. According to Luther, a less explicit mode of conveying the concept of the Trinity in the Tanakh was conditioned by a permanent, self-induced disobedience of the original audience of the Hebrew Bible.

Nevertheless, Luther did not regard a mode of communicating the doctrine of the Trinity in the Tanakh, which he espoused, as implicit or opaque. Providing the verses, which in his opinion were indicative of the trinitarian idea in the Hebrew Bible, Luther claimed that his

---

<sup>134</sup> Luther, "Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi (1538)," in WA, vol. 50, 262-83, especially, 280-81.

<sup>135</sup> Luther, "Vorlesungen über 1. Mose (1535-1545)," in WA, vol. 42, 6-13 [Genesis 1:2]; 41-49 [Genesis 1:26]; 421-23 [Genesis 11:7-9]; Luther, "Vorlesungen über 1. Mose (1535-1545)," in WA, vol. 43, 50-54 [Genesis 19:2-3]; 127-31 [Genesis 20:11-13]; Luther, "Vorlesungen über 1. Mose (1535-1545)," in WA, vol. 44, 182-86 [Genesis 35:6-7].

arguments were self-evident<sup>136</sup> and compelling not only from the spiritual (Christian to be precise) point of view but also in grammatical terms. Therefore, since at least 1538 Luther had been vehemently opposed to every non-trinitarian interpretation of loci containing the plural forms related to the Divine and he had been particularly hostile to the Jewish exposition of them.

Referring to Joshua 24:19 between 1524 and 1526, Luther<sup>137</sup> made no trinitarian claims, declaring that in Hebrew it was customary to speak of the Divinity in the plural. However, in 1538 Luther<sup>138</sup> announced that the doctrine of the Trinity was doubtless embodied in Joshua 24:19 because in his opinion God's very Name (יְהוָה), which he viewed as singular, was evoked therein to underscore the unity of the Godhead, while אֱלֹהִים, which he parsed as the plural noun (Götter [Gods]) modified by the plural form of the adjective (קְדוֹשִׁים), was proof of the trinitarian idea within the Hebrew Bible. As regards Joshua 24:19, in the initial<sup>139</sup> and final<sup>140</sup> versions of Luther German Bible and in the Wittenberg revision of the Vulgate<sup>141</sup> supervised by Luther the singular forms were utilised to render אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים.

Adverting to 2 Samuel 7:23 in 1538, Luther<sup>142</sup> stated that אֱלֹהִים, which he notoriously classified as the plural noun (Götter), was the subject of the plural form of the verb (הִלְכֵם). For Luther, this was sufficient to vindicate the idea of three persons within the Godhead, whereas the singular forms of the personal pronouns (i.e. לִי used

---

<sup>136</sup> Luther, "Vorlesungen über 1. Mose (1535-1545)," in WA, vol. 42, 100 [Genesis 2:22]; 166-68 [Genesis 3:22]; Luther, "Von den letzten Worten Davids (1543)," in WA, vol. 54, 39.

<sup>137</sup> Luther, "Praelectiones in Prophetas Minores (1524-1526)," in WA, vol. 13, 55-56 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>138</sup> Luther, "Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi (1538)," 280.

<sup>139</sup> Luther, "Das Alte Testament (1524)," in WA DB, vol. 9/1, 80 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>140</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 9/1, 81 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>141</sup> "Text der Vulgata-Revision von 1529," in WA DB, vol. 5, 285 [Joshua 24:19].

<sup>142</sup> Luther, "Die drei Symbola oder Bekenntnisse des Glaubens Christi (1538)," 281.

twice and אֱלֹהִים - once) standing for God were meant to buttress the unity of the divine essence. Actually, Luther presupposed that אֱלֹהִים was simply the noun in the plural and on that account he used it as the universal instrument for validating his claims of the presence of the trinitarian concept in the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, when אֱלֹהִים was connected to the plural form of any part of speech, Luther acclaimed the plurality within the Godhead but when אֱלֹהִים was connected to the singular form of any part of speech, Luther concluded that the unity of the Godhead was highlighted by that.

Regarding 2 Samuel 7:23, the initial<sup>143</sup> and final<sup>144</sup> versions of Luther German Bible and the Wittenberg revision of the Vulgate<sup>145</sup> did not attempt to invest the translation with the trinitarian flavour which would reflect Luther's own interpretation of that verse. The Zurich Vulgate<sup>146</sup> however clarified that in 2 Samuel 7:23 אֱלֹהִים denoted "Gods" (dii).

Lecturing between 1524 and 1526, Luther<sup>147</sup> conceded that the plural forms of the adjective (אֱלֹהִים) qualifying אֱלֹהִים, which occurred in Jeremiah 10:10 and 23:36, were the plural of majesty peculiar to the Divinity in Hebrew. Moreover, Luther's initial<sup>148</sup> and ultimate<sup>149</sup> German renditions of Jeremiah 10:10 were free of trinitarian features. In case of Jeremiah 23:36 his initial translation<sup>150</sup> was void of any trinitarian trait, yet in the final version of his German Bible<sup>151</sup> Luther provided the following annotation:

---

<sup>143</sup> Luther, "Das Alte Testament (1524)," in WA DB, vol. 9/1, 318 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>144</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 9/1, 319 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>145</sup> "Text der Vulgata-Revision von 1529," 371 [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>146</sup> Leo Jud et al., ed., *Biblia sacrosancta Testamenti Veteris et Novi*, 140v (n. "f") [2 Samuel 7:23].

<sup>147</sup> Luther, "Praelectiones in Prophetas Minores (1524-1526)," 55-56 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>148</sup> Luther, "Die Propheten alle Deutsch (1532)," in WA DB, vol. 11/1, 228 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>149</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 11/1, 229 [Jeremiah 10:10].

<sup>150</sup> Luther, "Die Propheten alle Deutsch (1532)," in WA DB, vol. 11/1, 268 [Jeremiah 23:36].

<sup>151</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 11/1, 269 (n. "b") [Jeremiah 23:36].

In Hebrew it is written >of the living Gods< as if those many [Gods], yet [there is] only one LORD of hosts, indicated three persons within one Godhead.

Lecturing upon Hosea 12:1(11:12), Luther<sup>152</sup> dealt with the complex interpretation of that passage and contended that unlike the disobedient and unfaithful Ephraim and Israel, Judah proved to believe in the LORD and to take his will seriously.

Luther utilised and modified Pagnini's Latin translation of Hosea 12:1(11:12). While Pagnini proposed that "Judah dominated with God and was faithful to or with the holy people," Luther combined his own insights with the rendition "cum sanctis fidelibus" (with the faithful and holy people) evidenced in some mediaeval commentaries discussed previously in the present paper. Accordingly, Luther interpreted "cum sanctis fidelibus" as "cum sacris rebus" (with the holy things). Obviously, the mediaeval version ("cum sanctis fidelibus") was treating of people, whereas Luther explicated it in impersonal terms as if "cum sanctis fidelibus" meant "with the faithful and holy things". Grammatically, both "sanctis" and "fidelibus" could be either masculine or neuter but in the context of that passage the neuter (whence impersonal) reading appears to be implausible. Moreover, in Hebrew the masculine plural form of the substantive adjective (קְדוֹשִׁים) could hardly convey an abstract sense within the parameters of Hosea 12:1(11:12).

Since Luther interpreted קְדוֹשִׁים עִם as "with the holy things," he presumed that Hosea 12:1(11:12) communicated that facing God (apud Deum), Judah ruled and administered the people by means of God's Word, yet it is uncertain who was meant by the "people" over whom Judah was supposed to rule according to Luther.

---

<sup>152</sup> Luther, "Praelectiones in Prophetas Minores (1524-1526)," 55-56 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

Additionally, Luther mentioned two other interpretations of קְדוֹשִׁים. Firstly, קְדוֹשִׁים might denote priests (e. g. 2 Chronicles 35:3) who were preserving and preaching God's Word. Secondly, Luther admitted that according to Lyra's commentary *ad loco* עַם קְדוֹשִׁים could be parallel to אֱלֹהִים and therefore might signify "with the Holy and Faithful One, namely, with God." At that time (i.e. 1524-1526) Luther did not object to Lyra's interpretation which in this respect was consistent with the mainstream Jewish understanding of that verse but rather conceded that in Hebrew the Divine could be spoken of in the plural for the sake of majesty and cited the example of Joshua 24:19 (אֱלֹהִים קְדוֹשִׁים).

Surprisingly, recapitulating Lyra's exposition of Hosea 12:1(11:12), Luther omitted the trinitarian thread mentioned therein and looked with favour on the interpretation, which viewed קְדוֹשִׁים as the plural of majesty, realising that this approach originated from the Jewish divines.<sup>153</sup> In the initial version of his German Bible Luther<sup>154</sup> announced that "Judah adhered to God and to the true and holy divine service (Gottesdienst)." The same rendition was embraced in the ultimate version of his German Bible<sup>155</sup> where that part of the verse was annotated as follows: "In Hebrew: [Judah] still ruled with God." Speaking of "the true and holy divine service (Gottesdienst)." Luther might allude to the idea Judah's devotion to the Temple which surfaced in the Targum and in some Jewish commentaries studied earlier in the present paper. The Zurich German Bible<sup>156</sup> drew on Luther's translation but the vocabulary employed therein was partially altered ("Judah clung relentlessly to God and to the true and holy things"), yet in compliance with Luther's understanding of that verse.

---

<sup>153</sup> Luther, "Praelectiones in Prophetas Minores (1524-1526)," 56 (n. 1 "B") [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>154</sup> Luther, "Die Propheten alle Deutsch (1532)," in WA DB, vol. 11/2, 204 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>155</sup> Luther, "Bibel (1545)," in WA DB, vol. 11/2, 205 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>156</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, trans. and ed., *Bibel Deutsch* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1534), 153r [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

Exploring Hosea 12:1(11:12), Calvin<sup>157</sup> agreed that in the aforementioned passage Judah's faithfulness was contrasted with Ephraim's and Israel's disobedience to God and to his Word. Calvin explicated קָדַשׁ in terms of reign (dominatur vel principatum tenet [to dominate namely to hold sway]). Although Calvin referred to the priesthood as a means of preserving the true worship of the LORD, he did not indicate that in Hosea 12:1(11:12) קְדוֹשִׁים might denote priests. Analysing קְדוֹשִׁים, Calvin listed different interpretations thereof, favouring the second exposition as the most plain and as the most anchored to the context of the Book of Hosea.

According to the first interpretation, קְדוֹשִׁים was parallel to אֱלֹהִים and should be construed as a typical plural of majesty like אֱלֹהִים in Joshua 24:19. In Calvin's opinion, the aforementioned proposition was admissible but did not preclude other interpretations because in his view the use of the plural of majesty in the Hebrew Bible was rare and limited.

According to the second interpretation, קְדוֹשִׁים signified in the narrow sense the forefathers in faith and in the wider sense all beings marked by the divine holiness, to wit, all believers accompanied by good angels. According to the third interpretation, קְדוֹשִׁים stood for the Temple (מִקְדָּשׁ). In this regard, Calvin reasoned that those two words differed despite their common stem. Treating of the Temple, Calvin might allude to Cyril of Alexandria<sup>158</sup> who read ναός (the Temple) in lieu of λαός (the people).

---

<sup>157</sup> Jean Calvin, "In Hoseam," in *Opera quae supersunt omnia (Corpus Reformatorum)*, vol. 42 (70), ed. Wilhelm Baum, Edouard Cunitz and Eduard Reuss (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1890), 447-49 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

<sup>158</sup> Cyrillus Alexandrinus, "Commentarius in Oseam prophetam," 277-80 [Hosea 12:1(11:12)].

## V. Conclusion

An unfamiliarity with Hebrew or an insufficient command of that language placed limitations on the ancient and mediaeval Christian exegetes who were for the most part relying on the Septuagint or on the Vulgate. Consequently, the mainstream Christian exegesis in antiquity and in the Middle Ages attempted to vindicate Christian claims on the Tanakh by projecting distinctive Christian concepts, which were of ecclesiastical making or at best were only adumbrated in the Christian Scriptures, into the Hebrew Bible.

A grammatical argumentation, unless it was founded on the Septuagint or on the Vulgate, did not inform the mainstream Christian exegesis but surfaced as a part of the mediaeval anti-Jewish literature which was usually produced by authors well-versed in Hebrew. Most of those authors were also acquainted with the Jewish exegetical tradition. Luther, who was well-read in the aforementioned literature, resorted to the arguments, which he acknowledged to be purely grammatical, in order to prove that the concept of the Trinity as enunciated by the advanced patristic theology was laid down in the Tanakh.

From the Jewish perspective, the arguments, which some Christian exegetes labelled as "grammatical," adducing them as proof of the presence of the trinitarian concept in the Tanakh, were untenable for three reasons. Firstly, what certain Christian expositors considered to be the Hebrew grammar was for the Jewish scholars a speculative reasoning designed to support Christian claims. Secondly, a christological or trinitarian interpretation of the plural forms touching the Divine run counter to the literary context of the passages containing such forms. Thirdly, any interpretation contravening or undermining the absolute and unconditional unity of the Godhead could not be accepted within the parameters of the Jewish exegesis.

It appears that a theological dimension of Luther's attitude to the Jews and to the Jewish religion did not evolve significantly over the years albeit in practical terms it manifested itself differently. Luther was convinced that due to an unbelief, which he attributed to the Jews,

the latter were rejected by the LORD and replaced with the Christian church (supersessionism).<sup>159</sup> On that account, Luther alleged that the Jews lost their ability to study and to expound the Hebrew Bible unless they converted to the Christianity.

Although it is widely assumed that Luther became anti-Semitic in the evening of his life, his early tract *That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew*<sup>160</sup> (1523) was not disengaged from the anti-Jewish tenets. In that writing Luther declared that in the past the Christian mission to the Jews was inefficient because it was putting religious and social pressure upon the Jews instead of preaching what he denominated as a pure Gospel to them. Consequently, Luther presumed that if the Christians tempered their persecutions against the Jews, the latter could be more amenable to conversion which in his opinion would be caused by preaching in accord with the Christian Scriptures and could be facilitated by a Christian appeal to the Jewish ancestry of Jesus. Therefore, Luther clarified that lack of favourable Jewish response to a new Christian approach would compel Christians to use other (i.e. less amicable) means of converting the Jewry.

Notwithstanding a relative continuity of Luther's theological perception of the Jews, both his appeal to the plural forms touching the Divine and his evaluation of the Jewish exegesis of those forms were changing over the years. It transpires that until at least 1526 Luther had not been opposed to the concept of the plural of majesty which was often employed by the Jewish literati to illuminate the plural forms adjacent to the Divine.

A change in Luther's approach to such forms became palpable around 1538, yet he was not meticulous about applying his trinitarian

---

<sup>159</sup> Luther, "Von den Juden und ihren Lügen (1543)," 412-52; Luther, "Von den letzten Worten Davids (1543)," 28-100, Luther, "Vom Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi (1543)," 573-48.

<sup>160</sup> Luther, "Dass Jesus Christus ein geborener Jude sei (1523)," in WA, vol. 11, 314-36.

interpretation of those forms to his German Bible by translating or annotating all of them accordingly. Therefore, Luther's trinitarian exposition of the plural forms related to the Divine, which he was able to discern in the Prophets, was not fully reflected in his German Bible or in the Wittenberg revision of the Vulgate which came true under his auspices. Clearly, adducing the plural forms touching the Godhead as proof of the presence of the trinitarian idea within the Tanakh, Luther was focused on such forms found in the Pentateuch (especially in the Book of Genesis), not in the Prophets or in the Writings.

The 16th-century Reformation, on the one hand, enhanced the Christian Hebrew scholarship revived by the Renaissance (e.g. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola or Johann Reuchlin), on the other hand, lacked the courage to dovetail a new, emergent Protestant exegesis of the Hebrew Bible with the Jewish exegetical tradition which was the most natural environment for the exposition of the Tanakh. Among the Reformation exegetes perhaps only Sebastian Münster, Paul Fagius<sup>161</sup> and John Calvin<sup>162</sup> ventured to embrace the Jewish Hebrew scholarship and exegesis to a considerable extent, yet being mindful of their own Christian hermeneutical presuppositions.

Luther, the first one, who actually shook the mediaeval theology to its foundations, missed a golden opportunity to engraft the Jewish Hebrew scholarship and exegesis accrued through the centuries in a renewed Christian (Protestant to be exact) exegesis which was theoretically aspiring to go back to the original sources of theological knowledge (*ad fontes*).

---

<sup>161</sup> Friedman, *The Most Ancient Testimony: Sixteenth-Century Christian-Hebraica in the Age of Renaissance Nostalgia*, *passim*.

<sup>162</sup> Joseph Haroutunian, *Calvin: Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958); Peter Opitz, *Calvins theologische Hermeneutik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1994); G. Sujin Pak, *The Judaizing Calvin: Sixteenth-Century Debates over the Messianic Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Thomas Henry Louis Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1986); David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Philip Schaff, "Calvin as a Commentator," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 3 (1892); August Tholuck, "Calvin as an Interpreter of the Holy Scriptures," in John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), 339-75.

Instead of deepening his exposure to the Targumim and to the Jewish commentaries in Hebrew apart from their Latin summaries contained in the works of Christian Hebraists, Luther preferred to feed on the mediaeval anti-Jewish literature and to be confined to the second-hand information. Encumbered with the supersessionism characteristic of the ancient and mediaeval Christianity, Luther did not even realise that the Christian Scriptures made no reference to any plural grammatical form touching the Divine to argue what he was keen on arguing. Nonetheless, in the Age of the Reformation the treasure bequeathed by the Jewish tradition commenced seeping into the edifice of Christian theology so that Israel's testimony to the LORD and the LORD's testimony to Israel could be heard beyond the pale of settlement.

All Right Reserved

### ABSTRACT

The present paper examines Luther's comments on the plural grammatical forms touching the Divine, which he was able to identify in the Prophets (Josh. 24:19; 2 Sam. 7:23; Jer. 10:10, 23:36; Hos. 12:1), in light of their Jewish and Christian reception until the Age of the Reformation. Luther's christological handling of the Hebrew scholarship in the process of interpreting the Hebrew Bible was exemplified by his exposition of Genesis 49:10 because his exegesis of that verse provided an overview of his mature approach to the Tanakh.

### 撮 要

本文檢視了路德如何解釋有關上帝的複數語法形式，這些稱呼取自先知書（約二十四19；撒下七23；耶十10，二十三36；何十二1），並參考宗教改革時代之前的猶太教和基督教的用法。在路德對創世記四十九章10節的闡釋中，我們尤其看到他對於希伯來學者在解釋希伯來聖經的過程，有關基督論的處理，因為他對於該節經文的注釋讓我們全面地看到他怎樣成熟地看《塔納赫》。