VARIANT READINGS IN MEDIAEVAL HEBREW COMMENTARIES

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It may be stated with certainty that nowadays scholars unanimously agree that the wording of Biblical passages quoted in the Talmudic and Midrashic literature sometimes deviate from the MT.¹ But in regard to the value of variant readings contained in mediaeval Rabbinic literature, opinions are still divided. For our purpose it will suffice to cite some of the opinions held. Some scholars tend to explain such Biblical quotations which do not conform with MT as mere lapsus memoriae or calami unless the author explicitly states that his reading deviates from MT, e.g. in the vocalization. David Rosin, the editor of the only extant MS of Rashbam’s commentary on the Pentateuch,² was inclined to dismiss most of its variant readings as errors of the kinds mentioned.³ In our days, E. E. Urbach seems to be of a similar opinion. In his edition of R. Abraham ben R. "Azriel’s "Arugat haBosem he dully lists the variant readings in Biblical quotations found in the MSS before him, generally without paying further attention to them.⁴ In the Introduction to his edition he states that the author of "Arugat haBosem quoted Biblical passages by heart as did most

* The following abbreviations will be used:


Kutscher E. Y. Kutscher, ההלשנ ומרק החלשם של מכילם משיעית (Jerusalem 1959)

Rosin David Rosin, R. Samuel b. Meir (ראבסקי–אוסטר) als Schriftenklärer, Jahresbericht des jüdisch-theologischen Seminars "Fraenckelscher Stiftung" (Breslau 1880)

RSBM Der Pentateuch-Commentar des R. Samuel ben Meir, ed. David Rosin (Breslau 1881).

1 Aptowitzter listed the literature up to his time, I, 8–21.

2 The MS in fact consists of fragments of four MSS; see Rosin, 25 ff.

3 Ib. p. 58 ff. Only with regard to fourteen passages is Rosin prepared to acknowledge that they are genuine variant readings. Of these passages three are found in a commentary on Eccl. edited by A. Jellinek, and attributed by him to Rashbam (A. Jellinek, Kommentar zu Kohelet und dem Hohen Liebe von R. Samuel ben Meir [Leipzig 1855]). But the latter’s authorship is not recognized by Rosin (19 ff.). Of the remaining eleven passages, two, i.e. c and h, must be deleted. The other nine passages are included in the 39 variant readings which I present below.

mediaeval authors, and that as a result there is no lack in errors and faults, as may be expected in quotations from memory. Aptowitzer's approach seems to be quite different as may be gained from his Schriftwort, unfortunately unfinished, and also from his other works. Similarly, variant readings in mediaeval literature were listed by L. Ginzberg.

There are of course different degrees of certainty with regard to the genuineness of variant readings, and not all readings listed below can claim the same degree of originality. Basically, Aptowitzer's five categories system may be used for their classification. In ten cases (i.e. almost a fourth of all readings listed), Rashbam's testimony is explicit, and cannot be disputed. In most of the other instances, Rashbam's reading is supported by other sources as will be pointed out.

The variant readings found in Rashbam's commentary may be classified as follows.

Differences in:
1. Accents and/or stress: Nos. 14, 23;
2. Vocalization: Nos. 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 24, 25, 31;
3. Letters: a. addition of one letter or more: Nos. 20, 28;
   aa. addition of the consecutive waw: Nos. 1, 9, 12, 22, 35;
   b. interchange of one letter or more: Nos. 2, 11, 57, 18, 19,
      21, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38;
4. Words: a. addition of one word or more: Nos. 4, 6, 26;
   b. omission of one word or more: No. 20;
   c. word substitutions: Nos. 16, 21, 39;
   d. inverted order of words: No. 19.

Some support for the additional waw might be found in TY: יָּהַד אֶלֶּה, and in some MSS and editions of TO: יָּהַד מִכְּרֵי מָשָּׂא בִּשְׁלֵמָּה. However, A. Sperber's critical text reads: יָּהַד מִכְּרֵי מָשָּׂא בִּשְׁלֵמָּה. The waw also is absent from Frag. Targ.: יָּהַד מִכְּרֵי מָשָּׂא בִּשְׁלֵמָּה.

5 Ib. IV (Jerusalem 1963) 150.
6 Cp. e.g. the list of variant readings contained in his מִכְּרֵי מָשָּׂא רָבָּב (Jerusalem 1938) 474 ff.
7 For Midrashic literature cp. e.g. the lists by M. Friedmann, Seder Eliahu Rabba (Wien 1902) 133 ff. (variant readings are marked by asterisks); H. Albeck, Einleitung und Register zum Bereschit Rabba II (Berlin 1936) (variants are marked by letterspacing).
8 Genizah Studies I: Midrash and Haggadah (New York 1928) Index, 523, s.v. לִדַּעַת בַּמה קְדֵמָה
9 Aptowitzler I, 28; III, p. VI.
10 Nos. 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25.
2. Gen. 49: 13 MT: רָשָׁבָּם רָשָׁבָּם. Rashbam’s reading was known to the Massoretes (see Mas. Marginalis and Norzi’s Minhah Shay), and is found in some MSS of MT. It is also reflected in the renditions of the VSS.11

3. Ex. 5: 16 MT: רָשָׁבָּם רָשָׁבָּם. This latter vocalization is known from Rashi’s commentary (ad loc.)12 and apparently is reflected in TY: רָשָׁבָּם. Rashbam’s comment and its leaves room for yet another vocalization: רָשָׁבָּם, which is indeed mentioned by him later on, and which also Rashi had considered.

4. Ex. 12: 3 MT: רָשָׁבָּם (ad Gen. 1: 22): RSV. This variant is extant in MSS and is reflected in G, S and TY. TO agrees with MT to the exception of one important MS, as recorded by Sperber. This reading was known to the author of Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, pp. 9, 10), and to the Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoḥai (ed. Epstein-Melamed, p. 9).

5. Ex. 12: 14 MT: רְשָׁבָּם RSV: RASH. Rashbam is cognizant with the vocalization with qamas from manuscripts “of other countries” (i.e. Spain, Germany), and prefers it. I.e., in French Bible MSS which were known to him the šet was apparently vocalized with patah.13

6. Ex. 14: 20 MT: רְשָׁבָּם RSV: RASH. It seems that Rashbam’s reading or a similar one underlies TO: יָדָוָה מַלֶּהוּ and TY: יָדָוָה מַלֶּהוּ.

7. Ex. 23: 21 MT: רְשָׁבָּם RSV: RASH. Rashbam links with מַלֶּהוּ (Lev. 27: 33), i.e. derives it from מַלֶּהוּ. But he also considers the possibility of providing the mem with a dagesh. From here follows that in the (or some) MSS at his disposal the mem was rafa.14

8. Ex. 23: 24 MT: RSV: RASH. Here as well as in Nos. 5 and 7, Rashbam accepts the vocalization repre-

11 On the interchange of qamas see H. Graetz, MGWI 30 (1881) 218 ff.; for 1 QIsa consult Kutscher, 313, no. 26. The words interchange not infrequently in the Talmudic literature, see J. N. Epstein, דֵּינֵי הָעֵונות (Jerusalem 1948) 1227 ff.
12 Cp. also W. Heidenheim’s super-commentary אַשָּׁרַה, ad loc.
13 See Rosin, 59, n. 1.
14 Thus Rosin, ib. The variant vocalizations were already noticed by Norzi in his Minhah Shay, ad loc.
sented in MT. He claims that in French MSS the *hē* was vocalized with a *patah* and that he changed it to *gamas*. Subsequently he found this very vocalization in Spanish and German MSS. In his — apparently later — grammatical work, the *Dayqut*\(^{15}\), he reiterates his opinion with regard to the pointing of the above word.

The reading with a conjunctive *waw* is also found in MSS and is reflected in S.

In this case I have been unable to support Rashbam’s vocalization of the word from any other source. However, for his own textual tradition this vocalization is confirmed by the fact that he quotes it in a list of words in the MT which are vocalized with *patah*.

11. *Num.* 23: 7 MT: הַנְּגֹר RSBM: הַנְּגֹר
Here Rashbam appears to advocate a vocalization for which he cannot ad-duce manuscriptal support. He again refers to it without any discussion in his *Dayqut*.\(^ {16}\)

12. *Num.* 31: 2 MT: רְחָא RSBM (ad v. 5): רְחָא
Rashbam’s reading is one of the ‘*Itture Soferim*’\(^ {17}\) which are listed in Bab. Tal. Ned. 37b. The reading with conjunctive *waw* is supported by some MSS and by Sam., and is reflected in the renditions of G, V, S, TY. The verse is quoted with this reading in *Sifre* on *Num.*, ch. 157 (only *editio princeps* and *Yalqu*, see ed. Horovitz, p. 209).

Rashbam’s special pleading for the vocalization of the word in question *qamaš — qamaš* which, he reports, he discovered subsequently in Spanish MSS (i.e. MT), indicates that he found a different vocalization in the French MSS which he perused. So far I have been unable to find a vocalization which differs from MT, and the nature of the deviant reading to which Rashbam seems to hint, cannot be established.

From Rashbam’s comments we may infer that in the French (and German?)

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\(^{16}\) According to Stein (see previous note), the *Dayqut* was written later than the commentary on the Pentateuch. Rashbam listed the above vocalization (op. cit., 26), without any reference to the Pentateuchal text (cp. also Yalon, loc. cit.).

MSS which he perused the stress was on the bet. He then goes on to explain that for grammatical reasons, the stress should be on the penultima, i.e. on the bet, and declares that later he indeed found the word stressed in this way in Spanish Bibles.\textsuperscript{18}

15. Jud. 3: 25 MT: רֵיחַ הַלָּדֶת \textit{RSBM (ad Num. 30: 3): רֵיחַ הַלָּדֶת \textit{Rashbam's reading would seem to be merely a lapsus memoriae but for the fact that he adduces here the sing. of Num. 30: 3, together with other instances of it: הָלְיוֹן (Ps. 130: 7) and הָלְיוֹן (Gen. 8: 10), in order to explain the word which he had before him in Jud. 3: 25.\textsuperscript{19}}

16. Jud. 17: 3 MT: רָפְאֵה אָרְמָא \textit{RSBM (ad Ex. 19: 8): רָפְאֵה אָרְמָא Also this reading\textsuperscript{20} might be classified as an erroneous quotation. However, its authenticity seems to be vouchsafed for by the fact that Rashbam quotes it twice. It is further buttressed by its rendering with “ei” in V.}

17. Jud. 21: 19 MT: מִמְחֵדָה.. וַעֲבֹדָה \textit{RSBM (ad Deut. 1: 1): מִמְחֵדָה.. וַעֲבֹדָה This variant coincides with the reading underlying S: מִמְחֵדָה.. וַעֲבֹדָה.\textsuperscript{21}}

18. 1 Sam. 21: 14 MT: יָרְדֵּה יָרְדֵּהּ אֲלִיזָבֶת \textit{RSBM (ad Lev. 15: 3): יָרְדֵּה יָרְדֵּהּ אֲלִיזָבֶת The reading is mirrored in TY,\textsuperscript{22} and is quoted by Rashi, \textit{ad Bab. Tal. Nidda 56a}, in his comment on the word (Lev. 15: 3): יָרְדֵּה יָרְדֵּהּ אֲלִיזָבֶת.}

19. 2 Sam. 16: 13 MT: לְעָמָה הַלָּדֶת וַקָּלָלָה רָשָׁכֵל \textit{RSBM (ad Ex. 8: 22): לְעָמָה הַלָּדֶת וַקָּלָלָה For the variant appears to be reflected in the Arabic Version,\textsuperscript{23} one may compare TY which also renders the verbs as active participles though in the same order as MT: אָאוֹלִיָּה וְלִמְדִים מְרָגָיִם בַּאֲבָהָה לַכַּכָּלָה.\textsuperscript{24}}

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{... לחיה אֲבָטָה אָבָרָי נְכֵנָּה as read by Porges, MGWJ 32 (1883) 280. An explicit testimony for the vocalization which laid the stress on the \textit{ultima}, is found in the quotation of Rashbam (apparently from his lost commentary on Psalms), in R. Abraham ben 'Azriel, \textit{Arugat haBosem III}, 146 f. (see n. 4).}

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{This quotation was not listed by Aptowitzter V, \textit{ad loc. Op. cit.}, p. 48, Aptowitzter quotes for Jud. 13, 22 (1) (MT: כְּרֵי מִרְאֵי) from RSBM on Gen. 19: 7, but this seems definitely to be a lapsus memoriae of Rashbam or of the copyist.}

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Cp. Aptowitzter, V, 62.}

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Aptowitzter V, 81. In MS. A manuscript is written on an erasure (communication by Mr. Isaiah Maorii).}

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Aptowitzter (II, 45) recorded the variant from TY, but not the quotation from Rashi or Rashbam. According to Kutscher (305, n. 352) it is doubtful that the Targum in such cases attests to a Hebrew \textit{Vorlage} by since there is no ב ל in Aramaic.}

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Aptowitzter III, 51.}

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Not too much weight can be attributed to this translation since also in 2 Sam. 23: 6 TY has כְּרֵי (following up מָלֵשׁ of v. 5) for MT: כְּרֵי.
20. 2 Sam. 23:21 (= 1 Chr. 11:23) MT: רַמִּיָּהוּ כִּי אָבַ֖ד רְשָׁבִ֥י (ad Lev. 19:13): מִרְדֵּד
Rashbam’s reading is listed by Aptowitzer (III, 78) who further draws attention to the variant מִרְדֵּד in the Arabic Version. 25

No support could be found for this reading. 26 Rosin (59, n. 1) considers it a scribal error.

This reading probably was known also to R. Isaiah di-Trani, who comments: 27

23. Is. 32:11 MT: וּלְעַ֥בְרָה RSBM: הַעֶבְרָה
This stress-variant is quoted by R. Abraham b.’Azriel, in his ‘Arugat ha-Bosem (I, 110), from Rashbam’s lost commentary on Isaiah.

24. Is. 34:3 MT: בַּשֵׁ֫עַרְשֹׁמֵם RSBM: בַּשֵׁ֫עַרְשֹׁמֵם
R. Abraham b.’Azriel (op. cit. I, 86) quotes Rashbam’s comment, apparently again from his commentary on Is.: “I don’t know why the ש of בַּשֵׁ֫עַרְשֹׁמֵם has a dagesh.” This dagesh yet can be seen quite clearly in the Cod. Reuchl. 28

Alsot his vocalization is attested to by the author of ‘Arugat haBosem. 29 Attention should be drawn to the fact, that other mediaeval commentators (Rashi, Ibn ’Ezra, Isaiah di-Trani) compare בְּשֵׁ֫עַרְשֹׁמֵם with בְּשֵׁ֫עַרְשֹׁמֵם (Ex. 13:19).

This latter reading is extant also in some MSS.

25 Mr. I. Maori informs me that in the Massora Parva of MS. A. ad loc.: שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא the figure ש is written on an erasure. The uncertainty in regard to the number of verses which exhibit the sequence שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא possibly indicates a reading alternate to שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא (Is. 22:15) instead of MT: שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא. From the variant שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא Rashbam’s reading שְׁמוּאֵל רוּבֵא רוּבֵא might have developed. However, also a direct development may be assumed, as it is found by the comparison of MT with Isaac’s (see Kutscher, 311, no. 20; 313, no. 25).

26 Commentary on the Prophets and the Hagiographa I (Jerusalem 5719–1959).


28 I, 255. My thanks are due to Prof. Urbach for locating the quotation, not listed in the index to his edition of ‘Arugat haBosem (IV, 221), but known to me from Pe les’ article in MGWJ 26 (1877) 368.
27. Ez. 27: 7 MT: שֵׁרָקֵם רַסְפִּים רַסְפִּים RSBM (ad Gen. 41: 42): משורקְמוֹ רַסִּפִּים. Rashbam’s reading seems to underlie also TY: בֶּן וּרְאָרוּן.

28. Ez. 37: 7 MT: שֵׁרָקֵם RSBM (ad Gen. 30: 38): שֵׁרָקֵם. This variant is supported by some MSS and by G: τό ὀστα. It recurs in Rashbam’s Dayqut, p. 63.

29. Hos. 4: 8 MT: בְּשֵׁרָקֵם RSBM (ad Deut. 24: 15): בְּשֵׁרָקֵם. This variant is extant in some MSS. Cod. Reuchl. has it as the Kethib, with בְּשֵׁרָקֵם as the Qere. In one MS published by Sperber the basic reading which to all appearances was בְּשֵׁרָקֵם, was subsequently changed to בְּשֵׁרָקֵם. The variant Рентош is further attested to by the Karaite commentator Daniel al-Kumissi, and is present in Kimhi’s commentary (ad loc.) where two lemmata are recorded, one reading בְּשֵׁרָקֵם, the other נֶסֶם. This latter variant is reflected in TY: עַל חַרְבּ נָמְשֵׁים, and in G: τός ψυχάς αὐτῶν.


31. Hos. 12: 5 MT: נֶשֶם כֹּל כָּדוֹר NRSB (ad Gen. 32: 29): נֶשֶם כֹּל כָּדוֹר. Though Rashbam does not refer explicitly to this latter vocalization of נֶשֶם, it may be inferred from his comparing נֶשֶם with רַסְפִּים, רַסְפִּים, all of which are derived — according to Rashbam’s Hebrew grammar — from “two letter” roots. The vocalization qamas qama is extant in Cod. Reuchl. and the Parma Bible.

32. Mi. 5: 2 MT: נֶשֶם כֹּל כָּדוֹר RSBM (ad Gen. 18: 10): נֶשֶם כֹּל כָּדוֹר. Perhaps some support for this — apparently otherwise not attested — variant could be found in TY to Mi. 5: 2: בְּשֵׁרָקֵם, which renders Hebrew כֹּל כָּזוּ, as in TO and TY to Gen. 18: 10.

33. Ps. 18: 14 MT: נֶשֶם מָשֵׁם מַשֵּׁמִים RSBM (ad Lev. 19: 16): נֶשֶם מָשֵׁם מַשֵּׁמִים. Rashbam’s quotation could be suspected to have emanated from the parallel reading in MT of 2 Sam. 22: 14: יְשִׁירָאָל מַשֵּׁמִים which probably influenced T: מַשֵּׁמִים מַשֵּׁמִים and G: εἴσ ὁπράπαι on Ps. However, the contracted form יְשִׁירָאָל is not attested for 2 Sam. 22: 14, whereas in Ps. the reading מַשֵּׁמִים is supported by some.

31 Ed. I. D. Markon (Hierosolymis 1957).  
32 See also Porges’ remarks, MGWJ 32 (1883) 173, n. 2.  
33 TY of Cod. Reuchl. and Kimhi ad Mi. 5: 2 read: בְּשֵׁרָקְמִים.
MSS. Moreover, it is explicitly quoted from Psalms in a comment by R. Eli-  
ezer of Beaugency, preserved in an anonymous commentary on Job (26: 14).  

34. Ps. 49: 13, 21 MT: דָּבַר רְבָּעִים RSBM (ad Gen. 1: 26): דָּבַר  
This variant is exhibited by some MSS. It is known also from quotations in Rab-  
bbinic literature (see Norzi), e.g. from Midrash Koh. Rab. ad Eccl. 10: 3. In a  
parallel version of this Midrash in Lev. Rabba. par. 37, 2 (ed. M. Margulies) only  
some editions reflect the reading דָּבַר. Interesting is a remark with reference  
to the above verse, by R. Moses of Coucy (13th ct.) in the introduction to his  
Sefer Miqwat Gadol, part Miqwat, that the Kethib is דָּבַר, whereas the  
Qerê is דָּבַר.  

35. Ps. 58: 6 MT: הָרוֹךְ RSBM (ad Deut. 18: 11): הָרוֹךְ  
This variant occurs twice in Rashbam’s commentary. The Parma Bible  
has Rashbam’s reading p.m. with a subsequent deletion of the conjunctive waw.  

36. Ps. 59: 10 MT: בֹּשָׁהוּ RSBM (ad Ex. 15: 2): בֹּשָׁהוּ  
The reading בֹּשָׁהוּ is quoted also by Rashi (Rashbam’s grandfather)  
in his commentary on the Pent. adיִּשָּׁן  
(Ex. 15: 2). Both Rashi and Rashbam  
distinguish between the בֹּשָׁהוּ which is a mere prolonged form of בֹּשָׁהוּ, and  
which is כֹּשֶׁר with the possessive pronoun. Neither Berliner, in his edition of Rashi’s  
commentary (Frankfurt a/M. 1905), nor Rosin, drew attention to this deviation  
of Rashi’s from MT. H. Brody, in his glossae to Berliner’s edition (p. XXV)  
explained it as a lapsus calami and substituted כֹּשֶׁר for כֹּשֶׁר.  
In accordance with MT of Ps. 59: 18: כֹּשֶׁר כֹּשֶׁר. But he did not pay attention to the fact  
that כֹּשֶׁר is well attested by various MSS of Rashi’s commentary,  
nor did he mention its concurrence with Rashbam’s reading. Moreover, in  
this case the Massora can be cited in support of the variant — the Massora  
Parva notes ad Ps. 59: 10: כֹּשֶׁר and ad 59: 18: כֹּשֶׁר.  
According to the Massora Magna (ad 2 Ki. 11: 4) Ps. 59 contains the third  
“pair”, and the relevant passage from v. 10 is quoted there: כֹּשֶׁר  
exactly as by Rashi and Rashbam.  

Rashbam’s reading is supported by one MS and is quoted in Bab. Tal.  

34 Ed. W. A. Wright (London 1905) 76. Therefore Poznanski’s correction of the reading  
in accord with MT is gratuitous (Kommentar zu Ezechiel [Warschau 1910] 223, n. 7).  
35 In: Pentateuch with Rashi’s commentary II (London 1930) 75a, ed. A. M. Silberman,  
the quotation was tacitly “corrected” according to MT in Ps. 59: 10.
B. B. 75a, and likewise in Rashbam’s commentary on B.B. *ad loc.*, as well as in the slightly earlier commentary, attributed to R. Gershom Me’or ha-Gola.

38. Lam. 3:16 MT: דָּרוֹשׁ RSBM (*ad Lev. 2:14*): דָּרוֹשׁ The variant seems to concur with the *Vorlage* of G: καὶ ἐξῆραν which mistook the *sin* for *shin*, and apparently read: מָרַּה.

39. Dan. 1:7 MT: רַעְשָׁם לְדָנָא בּוּלְשֶׁשֹּׁפֶר RSBM (*ad Gen. 1:5; 41:45; Num. 13:17*): כְּרַא (שֶׁבֶט) Therefore, though unsupported, his variant reading seems worth listing. Rashbam adduces this verse three times for the explanation of כְּרַא. Therefore, though unsupported, his variant reading seems worth listing. Of Dan. 1:7 was not rendered at all by some versions (G, Th., V).

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36. Also *En Ya’akov, ad loc.*, but Haggadoth haTalmud (fol. 36b col. 2) reads: המְשַׁךְ לְדוֹת נַחֲרוֹן MS. Munich of the Bab. Tal. has: מַהֲשַׁךְ; MS. Hamburg of Bab. Tal. Nezikin = MT.

37. On this commentary see now the remarks by D. Genachowski in the introduction to his edition of Rashba (Jerusalem 1964), esp. p. 24, where earlier literature has been listed.

38. For variant readings based on the confusion ש and כ cp. e.g. Aptowitz I, 37 (1 Sam. 1:16); III, 85 (2 Sam. 1:22).