

## **On the Life of Biblical *hapax legomena* in Medieval and Modern Hebrew**

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Interest in *hapax legomena*, especially biblical *hapax legomena*, usually derives from the difficulty and the challenge they present to correct interpretation of the text. This is especially the case when the context is not entirely clear. However, this is not the only reason these words hold interest in the history of the Hebrew language.

Quite a few biblical *hapax legomena* (or near *hapax legomena*) are attested in post-biblical Hebrew. Those occurring in Mishnaic Hebrew usually form part of the natural development of the language. Those only occurring in later layers of Hebrew are outside the scope of natural semantic development. Their renewed use reflects, for the most part, artificial usage. The semantic values attached to these words are not necessarily their original meanings.

The new life of these biblical *hapax legomena* demonstrates two features of Medieval Hebrew: the affinity to biblical exegesis and the affinity to the Arabic language. It also demonstrates the importance of Medieval Hebrew as a bridge between Biblical Hebrew and today's language. In my paper, I will present a number of these words and their interpretation in medieval biblical exegesis. I will examine how they entered Hebrew usage (by way of original or translated works) in Medieval Hebrew and Modern Hebrew.