

## Radak's Role in Preserving and Spreading the Linguistic Teaching of Ḥayyūj and Ibn Janāḥ

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Ḥayyūj and Ibn Janāḥ were two masters of medieval Hebrew linguistics. Ḥayyūj constructed a comprehensive method to describe the Hebrew root; his works form the basis of Hebrew grammar. Ibn Janāḥ consolidated and perfected Ḥayyūj's teachings; his major work was *Mahberet hadiqduq* (*Ketab attanqih*) which includes Hebrew grammar, *Sefer hariqma*, and the dictionary *Sefer hashorashim*. Over the years, the works of both masters fell into neglect even though they had been translated to Hebrew. Radak's philological works took their place: his *Michlol*, or *Helek hadikduk*, and *Sefer hashorashim*, or *Helek ha'inyan*.

By examining a number of manuscripts held in various libraries, we find the broad dissemination of Radak's writings and the esteem they enjoyed among scholars. Major figures, early and late, from East and West used Radak's works – at times citing him by name, at other times anonymously.

But were Ḥayyūj and Ibn Janāḥ's works really forgotten? Close comparison of Radak's *Sefer hashorashim* to that of Ibn Janāḥ shows that the earlier master's teaching is deeply embedded in Radak's work, far beyond what a superficial reading might suggest. Radak in fact constructed his dictionary on the foundation of Ibn Janāḥ's works, as he declares in his introduction to *Michlol*. Moreover, Radak's grammatical composition *Michlol* contains most of the material presented in Ḥayyūj's works, using a similar method but formulated anew.

Clearly, then, Radak's works did not make the teaching of Ḥayyūj and Ibn Janāḥ obsolete, but they were the ones who preserved it. In his dictionary, Radak drew on Ibn Janāḥ's work and rephrased it in simple, precise style; the structured systematic nature of his writings won them popularity throughout the Diaspora. Radak followed the same practice in his grammatical descriptions in *Michlol*.

In his introduction to *Michlol*, Radak stated his intent to present, in brief, the work of the two grammarians he followed and even added that 'much of what they write is extraneous'. Comparison of the two dictionaries shows brevity in two main areas:

- a. Radak eliminated many of the grammatical discussions in Ibn Janāḥ's dictionary.
- b. Radak minimized distinctions between semantic nuances in the dictionary entries, often noting that they were superfluous.

At any rate, while Radak's works preserve the legacy of his predecessors, they are also innovative and reflect significant principles, as I have shown elsewhere.