

The Commentary on Proverbs in MS Vatican Ebr. 89 and the Early Exegesis of Radak*

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In the sixteenth century, R. Solomon Ibn Melekh, author of *Mikhlah Yofi*,¹ referred to several commentaries of the eminent Provençal exegete R. David Kimh□i (Radak; c. 1160–1235) that were unavailable to him and apparently not widely circulated. Four centuries later, Umberto Cassuto identified a work preserved in MS Vatican Ebr. 89 as Radak’s commentary on Proverbs, one of the elusive works mentioned by Ibn Melekh.² In his groundbreaking monograph on Radak, Frank Talmage endorsed this identification;³ and in a volume published posthumously, Talmage

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¹ Solomon Ibn Melekh, *Mikhlah Yofi*, Amsterdam 1684 (repr. Jerusalem: Makor, 1969), 219b. For information regarding earlier and subsequent printings, see Eliezer Schlossberg, “*Mikhlah Yofi* of R. Solomon ben Melekh—Compiler of Medieval Philological Interpretation of the Bible” (Hebrew), *Megadim* 5 (1988): 45-46. The vocalization *Mikhlah Yofi* appears on the cover and title page of the 1969 reprint, but has no apparent justification.

² Umberto Cassuto, *Codices Vaticani Hebraici*, Vatican City: Vatican Library, 1956, 129-130.

³ Frank E. Talmage, *David Kimh□i: The Man and the Commentaries*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975, 60.

reproduced this commentary on Proverbs together with those of Radak's father and brother, R. Joseph and R. Moses Kimhī.⁴

Recently, Naomi Grunhaus, in the most sensitive treatment of the matter to date, has vigorously challenged the attribution of this work to Radak, based on a range of arguments that primarily concern exegetical and compositional style.⁵ In the present study, mindful of Grunhaus's many important observations, I offer an alternative perspective on the commentary that strongly supports the position of Cassuto and Talmage affirming Radak's authorship.⁶

The Commentary as Its Author's First Exegetical Work

Before evaluating the direct evidence, we shall consider the opening paragraph of the work. Here, the author presents his motive for writing a commentary, along with his exegetical objective:⁷

Joseph Kimhī the Spaniard said:⁸ When I considered the commentaries on the Holy Scriptures and examined all that my predecessors produced in them, I found flowing expositions of each and every book, many of them accurate and straightforward in their approach: each [commentator] provides interpretations in keeping with how God directed him. But on the book of Proverbs I found conflicting expositions reflecting the [unique] perspective of each one of the commentators—one says one thing and one says

⁴ Frank E. Talmage, *The Commentaries on Proverbs of the Kimhī Family* (Hebrew), Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990. See his endorsement of Radak's authorship, 18-19.

⁵ Naomi Grunhaus, "The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Proverbs: A Case of Mistaken Attribution," *JJS* 54/2 (2003): 311-327.

⁶ Prof. Herbert Basser, who assisted considerably in the preparation of Talmage's edition, reports in an oral communication that Talmage himself experienced periods of doubt regarding the question of authorship. The new perspective offered here attempts to neutralize all apparently conflicting evidence.

⁷ As first noted to me by Grunhaus, the material on page 328 of Talmage's edition that precedes the paragraph reproduced below is in fact the epilogue to R. Moses Kimhī's commentary, despite appearing under the heading פירוש ר' דוד קמחי לספר משלי.

⁸ As we shall observe shortly, this opening formula is clearly problematic, and there is excellent reason to think that it originally read "David ben Joseph Kimhī the Spaniard said," as reconstructed by Talmage in his edition.

another—to the point where the masses have become confounded as to the book’s meaning. For some of the commentators say that Solomon likened the Torah to a good intelligent woman, and idol-worship to an evil foreign woman; and some explain that he likened physical matter to a harlot, and the intellect to a good intelligent woman.⁹ Indeed, each of them cites proofs to support his claim, proofs that I do not mention here since this is not my purpose. What has emerged, in any event, is that [these commentators] do not even provide explanations of the verses that accord with their meaning, and readers misunderstand them¹⁰ because the verses do not end up flowing coherently.... Having seen this, I decided to expound this book according to its straightforward meaning, so that the masses might benefit from it in line with one of the two meanings intended by Solomon when he wrote it (כפי הכונה האחת משתי הכונות שחברו שלמה (ע"ה)).¹¹

At the beginning of this passage, the author distinguishes between Proverbs, which required a better commentary, and the other books of the Bible, which he found to be adequately interpreted by his predecessors. This would appear to suggest that the author had not previously composed biblical commentaries. If Radak is the author, then this was probably his first commentary; and this consideration ought to inform any evaluation of Radak’s authorship: disparities between this work and Radak’s commentaries on other biblical books might reflect his development and maturation as an exegete, rather than point to there being a different author.

While Grunhaus does not address the seeming *likelihood* that this is the author’s first commentary, she does relate to the argument that if Radak

⁹ In his notes *ad loc.*, Talmage identifies these exegetes as Rashi and R. Jonah ibn Janah□, respectively. To be sure, Rashi at 1:6 does emphasize the importance of the literal meaning, but he nonetheless saw fit to include and even favor metaphoric interpretation in his commentary. For example, contrast Rashi’s comment at 2:16 to that of our commentator. See also the discussion below of our commentator’s use of the term *peshat*, particularly the examples where he resists metaphoric readings found in Rashi.

¹⁰ This pronoun appears to refer to the commentators, not the verses.

¹¹ The “two meanings” are the literal and the metaphoric.

composed the work relatively early, this could account for its distinctive characteristics:

If Radak had in fact written *the commentary*, he would have had to have written it after the grammatical works because of the mention of [Radak's *Mikhlol*] in the comment on Prov. 5:22.¹² On the other hand, the commentary's primitive, rudimentary nature relative to Radak's works and lack of reference to those works implies that if he had written it at all, he would have to have done it *before* the grammatical works, which leaves the example of the comment on Prov. 5:22 without explanation.¹³ On balance, then, the most logical conclusion is that Radak did not write *the commentary* [italics in the original].¹⁴

It is generally agreed that Radak composed his biblical commentaries after *Mikhlol*,¹⁵ and this reference to the grammatical work indeed implies that the Proverbs commentary, if indeed authored by Radak, would be no exception.

It is difficult, however, to accept the parallel claim that in light of the commentary's relatively "primitive and rudimentary nature," it would have had to predate the philological works if Radak were its author. Even if Radak's *Mikhlol* and *Sefer ha-Shorashim* are seen to exhibit greater breadth and expansiveness,¹⁶ the argument would have to be made carefully taking into account the basic difference between a lexicon or

¹² We shall evaluate this citation in detail below.

¹³ It is unclear to me what is intended by "lack of reference to those works." *Mikhlol* is indeed mentioned, and the absence of references to Radak's exegetical works does not imply that the Proverbs commentary preceded his grammatical works.

¹⁴ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 326. Grunhaus's references to "*the commentary*" are always italicized, with no emphasis intended.

¹⁵ See, for example, Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 54. In this context, see also Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 326 n. 73. For the purpose of such discussions, it should be noted that Radak's precise dates are not known, even though Talmage's estimate of 1160-1235 (in several of his writings; see, e.g., his "R. David Kimh□i as Polemicist," *HUCA* 38: 1967, 213) is widely utilized.

¹⁶ The standard editions of Radak's *Mikhlol* and *Shorashim* are Isaac Rittenberg ed., *Sefer Mikhlol*, Lyck, 1862 (repr. Jerusalem, 1966); and Jo. H.R. Biesenthal and F. Lebrecht eds., *Sefer ha-Shorashim*, Berlin, 1847 (repr. Jerusalem, 1967).

grammatical treatise and a commentary. It is quite doubtful that this could be done persuasively. Furthermore, as we shall see, there is growing evidence that Radak did not hesitate to add material to works that he had already completed—including *Shorashim*—to the point where the final version might look rather different from the original.¹⁷ Accordingly, based on evidence currently available, we cannot confidently determine the compositional history of *Shorashim*—particularly in the case of many of its more expansive entries—or, for that matter, of *Mikhlol*, which was originally part of the same work. Moreover, it cannot be ruled out that the reference to *Mikhlol* in the Proverbs commentary is itself a later insertion, which would reopen the possibility that Radak composed the core of the commentary before producing *Mikhlol*.¹⁸

¹⁷ We will consider Radak's substantial revisions of the Chronicles commentary at several points in the discussion. Regarding later insertions into the Kings commentary, first noted by Dr. Bryna Levy in research shared with me, see Yitzhak Berger, "Peshat and the Authority of *H□azal* in the Commentaries of Radak," *AJS Review* 31/1 (2007): 41-59. For some preliminary evidence of revisions of *Shorashim* see the brief remarks in Berger, "Radak's Commentary to Chronicles and the Development of His Exegetical Programme," *JJS* 37/1 (2006): 80-81 n. 4. Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 59, observes that in general, Radak's commentaries show signs of "reworking and revision." There also appear to be occasional insertions by a *later* hand in Radak's commentaries. See, for example, the argument in Jordan S. Penkower, "The Textual Transmission of Targum Jonathan and Qimh□i to Ezekiel 23:20 and 34:18" (Hebrew), *Shnaton le-H□efer ha-Miqra ve-ha-Mizrah□ ha-Qadum* 13 (2002): 247-270.

¹⁸ The grammatical observation and reference to *Mikhlol*, which involve a word in the first half of the verse, appear only at the *end* of the Radak's treatment of the verse, after a comment addressing its *second* half. This does not prove conclusively that the grammatical remark was added at a subsequent stage (Radak might have wanted to complete his explanation of the full verse before addressing a philological matter), but such later insertions of Radak are indeed often placed awkwardly. Among many examples, see the note on his comment at II Chronicles 5:5 in Yitzhak Berger, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimh□i to Chronicles: A Translation with Introduction and Supercommentary*, Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007. See also at II Chronicles 13:10, an example of a philological comment and reference to *Mikhlol* that Radak clearly added at a later point. There is at least one strong indication that material was in fact added to an earlier version of the Proverbs commentary. At 6:3 (not long after the reference to *Mikhlol*), concerning the phrase ורהב רעין, one interpretation is presented that (following Rashi) appears to explain

In my opinion, Radak did write the commentary on Proverbs, and it was his first exegetical work. The commentary's early composition indeed accounts for its distinctiveness: as will be seen, many of the work's exceptional features reflect an earlier style found in Radak's commentary on Chronicles, which is widely assumed to have preceded his other commentaries.¹⁹ This is especially true regarding the earlier versions of the Chronicles commentary attested in MSS Paris 198 and Munich 363, which I have discussed elsewhere in detail.²⁰ We shall see that a comparison of the Proverbs commentary and Radak's commentary on Chronicles not only neutralizes the force of numerous arguments against the attribution, but actually yields positive evidence in favor of Radak's authorship.

Radak's remarks toward the end of his introduction to the Chronicles commentary are instructive:

This book contains very obscure matters, and matters contradicting those in Samuel and Kings. And since this book is an historical account, people have not regularly studied it, nor have I seen any of the early commentators attempt to elucidate it. I did, however, find some commentaries on this book here in Narbonne (I do not know the names of their authors); but I saw that they mostly follow a midrashic approach. So when a certain scholar from Gerona, a student of my master, my father, of blessed memory, asked me to write a commentary on it, I saw fit to grant his request.

רהב in the sense of רבה; yet shortly thereafter a fundamentally distinct reading is slipped in which presumes otherwise—probably that רהב is like חזק—with no indication that it is a different alternative. Compare the varied interpretations in Radak's *Shorashim* entries רהב and רפט. For another example where, in a later addition, Radak awkwardly slips in a new interpretation without saying so, see his comment at II Chronicles 36:6 and the note in Berger, *Translation and Supercommentary*.

¹⁹ See Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 58-59, and earlier, Louis Finkelstein, *The Commentary of David Kimhī on Isaiah*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1926: XCIV-XCVI. The Proverbs commentary has not previously been considered in discussions about the order of Radak's compositions.

²⁰ Berger, "Exegetical Programme," 80-92.

This explanation of the need for a new commentary on Chronicles, as Grunhaus acknowledges,²¹ is not unlike the one provided in connection with Proverbs: the book presents difficulties, people do not appreciate it properly, and prior treatments do not offer straightforward enough interpretation. This similarity is especially consistent with our claim that Radak authored the commentary on Proverbs, and that it is comparable to the Chronicles commentary in important respects.

What, then, are the core arguments for ascribing the Proverbs commentary to Radak? I shall now present these arguments, and discuss their merits and the efforts made to challenge them.

Evidence in Support of Radak's Authorship

Direct Attributions to Radak

Cassuto observes that at the end of the commentary, on folio 62b, the manuscript contains a marginal comment stating *עד כאן פירוש ר' יוסף קמחי*—“until here is the commentary of R. Joseph Kimh□i”—with the name “Joseph” changed to “David” by a later hand.²² This reference to R. Joseph almost certainly reflects the influence of the commentary's opening phrase, *אמר יוסף קמחי הספרדי*—“Joseph Kimh□i the Spaniard said.”²³ The commentary in the manuscript, however, is not the same as the well-attested Proverbs commentary of this elder Kimh□i.²⁴ It remains, therefore, that the only plausible attribution in the manuscript itself is to R. David Kimh□i.

²¹ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 317 n. 35.

²² Cassuto, *Codices*, 129-130. Cassuto's notation—“(corr. דוד)” —clearly means that “Joseph” was corrected to “David.” I thank Prof. Moshe Bernstein for his help on this matter. I am especially grateful to R. Meir Wunder, who confirmed for me, in consultation with Prof. Malachi Beit-Arié, that Cassuto's reading appears to be correct, notwithstanding my strong initial impression that the original comment actually read “David” and was later changed to “Joseph.” I also thank Prof. David Berger, Dr. Ezra Chwat, Mr. Benjamin Richler and Mr. Pinchas Roth for their help at various stages of inquiry.

²³ A barely discernible interlinear insertion appears to emend “Joseph” to “David” in this opening phrase as well. While Cassuto and Talmage make no mention of this, Basser reports that Talmage was aware of the matter.

²⁴ Compare Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 311 and n. 5. R. Joseph's commentary is a source from which our author appears to have drawn material, but there is general agreement that R. Joseph and our author cannot be one and the same.

Yet for the purpose of our argument, the opening reference to R. Joseph Kimhī is actually even more instructive than the later marginal reference to Radak. The assumption of Talmage (and presumably of Cassuto) is that the phrase originally read *אמר דוד בן יוסף קמחי הספרדי*—“David son of Joseph Kimhī the Spaniard said,” the standard formula by which Radak begins his biblical commentaries, and that the words *בן דוד* were erroneously omitted at some point in the transmission of the text.²⁵ As R. Joseph was more commonly associated with an exposition of Proverbs (witness the many surviving manuscripts that attest to his commentary²⁶), it is indeed conceivable that a scribe thought he was copying R. Joseph’s work, and this misconception could well have contributed to an error in transcription. On the other hand, it strains credibility that the commentary contained no opening formula alluding to a Kimhī, and that a scribal emendation is responsible for the insertion of the full Kimhīian *self*-reference at the opening of the commentary. In all probability, this consideration weighed seriously in Cassuto’s and Talmage’s inclination to favor Radak’s authorship.²⁷

²⁵ See Talmage’s reconstruction at the beginning of the commentary.

²⁶ See Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 43-45.

²⁷ Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 192-193, makes a similar observation concerning the “Commentary on *Pittum ha-Qetoret*.” He indicates that this work is attested in different forms in MSS Parma 2785 and Montefiore 217, both of which contain a self-attribution to Radak at the end. (See Talmage’s full discussion for additional bibliographical information and some remarks on the different versions of the work. According to catalogue information at the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem, the work also appears in MSS Vatican 270 and Parma 3175.) While scholars have questioned Radak’s authorship of this work in the forms that we have it, the closing attribution prompts Talmage to write that “one might be justified in assuming” Radak to have been its author in some early form. As for the possibility of multiple authorship of the Proverbs commentary, Grunhaus rightly observes that the general consistency of its style militates against such an option. Seeing its “Kimhian elements” as “easily...isolated from the rest of *the commentary* and...only a small portion of it,” she at best allows for “some rudimentary notes on the book of Proverbs written by Radak or an outline of a Kimhian commentary to Proverbs around which the author shaped his own work” (“Commentary on Proverbs,” 327). My own conclusions regarding the style of the commentary, it will be seen, are sharply at odds with this limited view of its Kimhīian features. If the work appears to be largely—more likely entirely—of a single author, this would appear to be none other than Radak himself.

Strikingly, Grunhaus acknowledges this phrase only in a footnote, where her comment only confirms our point: “The manuscript asserts on its front cover that it contains Joseph Kimhi’s commentary on Proverbs, and the commentary begins יוסף קמחי הספרדי ‘Joseph Kimhi the Sefardi said.’ Apparently there was some confusion *between the various Kimhi commentaries* even in the medieval period [italics added].”²⁸ Such confusion, of course, might indeed account for the mistaken attribution of Radak’s commentary to his father (and help explain the omission of דוד בן דוד), just as certain comments in R. Joseph’s work, cited subsequently in the footnote, were misattributed to Radak. But it emphatically would not explain how the self-attribution to a Kimh□i emerged in the first line of text if the author were not a Kimh□i at all.²⁹

The Phrase “My Mentor, My Brother”

Two other specific phrases have added considerably to the conviction that Radak is the author. First, at 20:25, an interpretation is attributed to רבי אהי—“my mentor, my brother.” Radak’s brother, R. Moses Kimh□i, was indeed his mentor, and on several occasions, Radak refers to him in his works with the distinctive phrase רבי אהי רבי משה—“my mentor, my brother, R. Moses.”³⁰ And while this interpretation does not appear in R. Moses’ own work on Proverbs,³¹ it does—like several others in our

²⁸ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 311 n. 3.

²⁹ In a footnote in her conclusion, without referring explicitly to the commentary’s opening formula, Grunhaus suggests that the work’s “Kimhian elements” led to its attribution to R. Joseph Kimh□i (ibid., 317 n. 76). However, this too does not explain the emergence of the *self*-attribution, nor does it account for the features of the commentary that, as we shall see, are characteristic of Radak in particular.

³⁰ On this argument, see Cassuto, *Codices*, 129, and Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 19. A list of Radak’s citations of his brother appears in Harry Cohen, *The Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Hosea*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1929, xxiii. See also the sources cited in Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 313 n. 12.

³¹ This possibly accounts for why here, specifically, Radak would have chosen to mention his brother. Other interpretations that he appears to have drawn from his brother are attested in R. Moses’ own Proverbs commentary; but since this one is not, Radak cites it in his capacity as a brother-student familiar with explanations not otherwise recorded.

commentary—find a parallel in Radak’s *Shorashim* (entry ליוע), albeit without any attribution.

In fact, the commentary in question exhibits a strong enough relationship to *Shorashim* that if Radak himself did not compose this work on Proverbs, its author must have been closely familiar with the popular lexicon. Indeed, this affinity to *Shorashim*—together with other affinities to Radak’s works—is compelling enough to prompt Grunhaus, when attempting to deflect the significance of the reference to רבי אחי, to concede the correlation to the entry in *Shorashim*. She explains, however, that the unknown author, “in his fondness for Radak and/or his works,” lifted this interpretation from *Shorashim*, and in this case—unlike any other—*referred* to Radak as רבי אחי. And, she adds, “the reference to Radak as a family member is not unique. Abraham Ibn Hasdai applied the term אבי, ‘my father,’ to Radak in his introduction to his translation of the ספר היסודות”³².

Such an option must be considered highly unlikely, the proposed analogy notwithstanding. Moreover, Ibn H□asdai’s comment, which appears in the course of his apology for undertaking the task of translation despite professed inadequacy, is in reality hardly comparable to the phrase רבי אחי in the Proverbs commentary. Ibn H□asdai writes:

...אכיר ערכי וערך מקומי...וידעתי כי מלאכת ההעתקה נשגבה ממני ורחוקה ויכול הייתי לעצור במלי ולהסיר עולם מעלי אבל מה אעשה ואבי גזר עלי הוא החכם הגדול...ר' דוד בן החכם יוסף קמחי הוא העתיר עלי דברו ושיחו...לעשות אשר לא עלה על רוחי...
 ...I recognize my value and my place...and I know that the work of translation is beyond my ability. I could have held back and removed the weight of the world from my shoulders; but what can I do, for my father has decreed upon me, that is...R. David son of the sage Joseph Kimh□i—he implored me...to do what would not have occurred to me....³³

The key phrase here, “what can I do, for my father has decreed upon me,” is a play on a well-known rabbinic statement teaching the proper response

³² Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 327.

³³ “*Sefer ha-Yesodot*” of R. Isaac b. Solomon ha-Yisra’eli (Hebrew), ed. Salomon Fried, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1900 (repr. Jerusalem, 1968), 2.

toward certain prohibitions: “My desires notwithstanding, what can I do, for my Father in heaven has decreed upon me (מה אעשה ואבי שבשמים גזר) (עלי)” (Sifra *Qedoshim* 9:10). And indeed, Ibn H^oadsai’s citation of this is appropriate in the context of his humble, deferent remarks. Accordingly, his attendant adaptation of the “father” metaphor—followed appropriately by a clarification that he is referring to Radak—must be seen as markedly different from the allusion to רבי אחי in the Proverbs commentary, which there is every reason to think refers to the author’s actual brother.

There does, of course, remain the disparity between the phrase רבי אחי elsewhere in Radak’s works and the shorter רבי אחי here; but as will become increasingly clear, this is representative of a more general preference for anonymity throughout the commentary.³⁴ Without resort to speculation that the author of the work was effusively devoted to Radak, the term רבי אחי—coupled with the comment’s similarity to the passage in *Shorashim*—remains distinctly suggestive of Radak’s authorship, particularly when considered in conjunction with the Kimh^oian self-attribution in the opening line of the commentary.

Reference to Mikhlol

No less significant is the allusion to *Mikhlol* already mentioned.³⁵ Addressing the last syllable in the word יִלְפְּדֵנוּ—“will trap him,” our commentator writes: בא בחלם והוא רפה שלא כמנהג ודקדוקו מבואר בחלק הדקדוק: “Uncharacteristically, it appears with a *h^oolem* and is not geminated. Its grammatical explanation is provided in the section on grammar.” He is referring here to *Mikhlol* 35a, which contains the parallel phrase באה הנון —“Uncharacteristically, the *nun* appears without gemination and with a *h^oolem*.” And indeed, Radak commonly refers to explanations provided in *Mikhlol* in this way, albeit with two differences highlighted by Grunhaus: elsewhere in his commentaries, he invariably employs a first-person verb (e.g., כמו שבארתי...—“as I explained...”), and

³⁴ As will be seen, this preference is manifest to an appreciable extent in the Chronicles commentary too, and thus cannot be considered fundamentally inconsistent with Radak’s style.

³⁵ See Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 209 n. 56, and idem, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 19 n. 41.

almost always mentions *Mikhlol* by name (e.g., בספר מכלול בחלק הדקדוק—“in *Mikhlol* in the section on grammar”).³⁶

If, however, we succeed in tracing a general preference for anonymity in this commentary, the first difference will emerge far less significant, if not the second as well. The verb מבואר is depersonalized by virtue of the passive voice, and even the name *Mikhlol* is omitted. Beyond this, however, at least three other considerations render the very omission of the name *Mikhlol* not only consistent with the assumption of Radak’s authorship, but supportive of it, even powerfully so. The first consideration is rather obvious: even for a devotee of Radak, it would be immensely strange to refer to *Mikhlol* merely as חלק הדקדוק, without a clearer indication of which work is intended. However, if Radak is the author, it is far more plausible that he would refer to his earlier composition more elliptically, relying on the reader to recognize that חלק הדקדוק alludes to a section of the writer’s own philological work. Indeed, this is even less surprising if *Mikhlol-Shorashim* was Radak’s only work in circulation when the commentary was written.

Even more tellingly, in *Shorashim*, Radak regularly refers to *Mikhlol* as just חלק הדקדוק (indeed, in at least one case, he employs the same word ודקדוק that appears in this one reference in the Proverbs commentary³⁷), since *Mikhlol* originally included *Shorashim* (known as חלק הענין—“the section on meaning”). If the Proverbs commentary is Radak’s first exegetical work, then it need not strike us as odd that he would have continued to use the phrase חלק הדקדוק to refer to his grammatical treatise. Only in subsequent works, after his literary output had begun to grow, did he employ the term ספר מכלול to specify more clearly the reference to his philological work. This option is decidedly more reasonable than that a different author referred to *Mikhlol* merely as חלק הדקדוק, without mentioning the name of the work.

There remains one more essential consideration. As noted peripherally by Grunhaus,³⁸ the first reference to *Mikhlol* in the Chronicles commentary, at I 1:7, is also nonstandard: it is the only other example where the term *Mikhlol* does not appear, and instead, as attested in a majority of manuscripts, the work is called ספר הדקדוק (“the grammar

³⁶ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 313-314.

³⁷ See the entry אבד near the very beginning of *Shorashim*.

³⁸ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 315 n. 19.

book”). Moreover, in text-witnesses reflecting this commentary’s earliest stage of composition, the term that appears is in fact חלק הדקדוק, just as in the Proverbs commentary.³⁹ This lends valuable support to our suggestion that only later did Radak begin to refer to his grammatical treatise as *Mikhlol*. That is, it is not coincidental that the term *Mikhlol* appears neither in this initial citation in Radak’s commentary on Chronicles nor in the Proverbs commentary which, if we are correct, was likewise written at an early stage of Radak’s career. And furthermore, the Chronicles commentary in its *earliest* form refers to *Mikhlol* with the very same oblique phrase חלק הדקדוק that appears in the commentary on Proverbs.

Proverbs 5:19-20 and Shorashim Entry שגה

Talmage briefly alludes to another important similarity to Radak’s philological works. This involves the entry שגה in *Shorashim*, and an analogous comment in Proverbs 5:19-20, addressing the lines באהבתה תשגה (“in her love *tishgeh* constantly / Why, my son, *tishgeh* with a foreign woman”).⁴⁰ Regrettably, Talmage chose not to present the actual texts side by side or to elaborate upon the parallel, and in turn, Grunhaus dismisses the matter in a single sentence: “While the same opinion of Rabbi Jonah [ibn Janah □] is considered similarly in both places, this only proves that the author of *the commentary* had seen the entry in the *Shorashim*, not that he had written it himself.”⁴¹ In reality, however, a closer look at the sources shows the correlation to be decidedly more instructive than this remark would suggest.

The relevant part of the entry in *Shorashim* reads as follows:

ורבי יונה הרחיק ענין באהבתה תשגה תמיד מענין זה מאד לפי שבעינינו ענין הפסוק על ענין החכמה. והנכון כי ענין הפסוק מדבר על אשתו כמו שאמר למעלה... ואף על פי שעל דרך המשל יתכן שידבר על החכמה, המליצה היא על אשת האדם וכונת

³⁹ See Berger, “Critical Edition,” *ad loc.* The reading חלק הדקדוק appears in MS Paris 198, which attests to the earliest version of the commentary in our possession, as well as in printed texts, all of which are based—directly or not—on this manuscript.

⁴⁰ Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 209 n. 59. In this connection, see also Mordechai Z. Cohen, *Three Approaches to Biblical Metaphor: From Maimonides and Ibn Ezra to David Kimhi*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2003, 153-154.

⁴¹ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 314.

המחבר לשני העניינים, ואם כן הטוב והישר שיהיה תשגה תמיד מענין שגגה כמו שפירשנו.

Rabbi Jonah explained “in her love *tishgeh* constantly” far differently, since in his opinion the topic of the verse concerns wisdom. But in truth, the topic of the verse concerns [an individual’s] wife as it says above.... And even though metaphorically it is possible that it concerns wisdom, the language denotes a person’s wife, so that the author’s intention would include both matters. Therefore, it is best to assume that “*tishgeh* constantly” has the sense of שגגה [fault], as we have explained.

In the comment on Proverbs, the author begins with the suggestion that שגגה is the equivalent of עסק, denoting involvement, a view highlighted by Rashi *ad loc.* and cited at the end of the entry in *Shorashim*. He then remarks:

ור' יונה פירשו דרך משל על החכמה, ואפשר שמחבר הספר חברו על שתי הכונות. אבל מן הנראה שהוא דבר על האשה, ואמר שהעסק עם האשה היא שגייה, ואף על פי כן אמר טוב שתשגה באשתך משתשגה בזרה.

But Rabbi Jonah explained it metaphorically, so that it concerns wisdom. It is possible that the author of the book wrote it with both intentions. But it appears that he is referring to women: he says that to be involved with women is to transgress [שגייה], but adds that it is still better for you to transgress with your wife than with a foreign woman.

The similarities between these two passages are especially striking: a citation of Ibn Janah□ by name; the assertion that, along with the literal meaning, the author of Proverbs might have had in mind the metaphoric one proposed by Ibn Janah□; and finally, an expression of preference for a particular literal interpretation of the verse which presumes that *tishgeh* has the sense of fault/transgression. This is surely more than a matter of Ibn Janah□’s position having been “considered similarly in both places”: if Radak is not the author of the Proverbs commentary, this comment on 5:19-20 could only be described as a systematic adaptation of *Shorashim* without any form of acknowledgment. And notwithstanding the author’s

preference for anonymity, there is no borrowing of this scale elsewhere in the work, acknowledged or not.⁴²

What is more, the phrase *וכונת המחבר לשני הענינים* in *Shorashim*, which parallels *ואפשר שמחבר הספר חברו על שתי הכונות* in the comment on Proverbs,⁴³ recalls a similar phrase cited above in the introduction to the commentary: *כפי הכונה האחת משתי הכונות שחברו שלמה ע"ה*. All of these formulations allude to the book's two intended layers of meaning—the literal one and the metaphoric one. Indeed, this duality informs the author's fundamental approach to Proverbs, even if his primary objective is to explain the text's literal meaning specifically.⁴⁴ If the comment at 5:19-20 is really another author's adaptation of *Shorashim*, it would appear to follow that without attribution, this author derived from this *one* entry in *Shorashim* the distinctive language by which he characterizes his dual approach to the entire Book of Proverbs.⁴⁵ There seems to be only one remotely credible alternative to this most unlikely conclusion. That is, one might speculate that this terminology was more widely employed by Radak (or another figure within the same exegetical tradition) either orally or in writings no longer extant, so that it was not exclusively *Shorashim* that

⁴² Indeed, I will argue below that in cases of verbatim or near verbatim quotation—where acknowledgment is especially called for—our commentator departs from his policy of anonymity.

⁴³ Note that the phrase *וכונת המחבר לשני ענינים* in *Shorashim* follows Radak's citation of Ibn Janah's metaphoric reading, which Radak prefaces with the word *יתכן* ("it is possible"). I am inclined, therefore, to think that he does not intend to assert with confidence that there are two layers of meaning here, and I have accordingly translated the phrase as a running continuation of his presentation of the "possible" merits of Ibn Janah's view: "so that the author's intention *would* include both matters" (emphasis added). This would emerge consistent with the noncommittal suggestion of dual layers of meaning in the Proverbs commentary indicated by the phrase *וכונות* ("It is *possible* that the author of the book wrote it with both intentions"). Regardless, I doubt that any substantial conclusions can be drawn from the difference between the phrase in *Shorashim* and in our commentary.

⁴⁴ As noted by Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 40-41, Radak presents such metaphoric readings of Proverbs elsewhere in his writings, such as in the introduction to his commentary on Genesis.

⁴⁵ As above, n. 9, Rashi already emphasizes literal and metaphoric layers of meaning; but he does not employ this terminology. See Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 149-154.

served as the Proverbs commentator's source. The far more persuasive option, of course, remains that Radak himself composed the commentary on Proverbs.

The Evidence of Qav ve-Naqi

Before assessing further similarities between the Proverbs commentary and Radak's writings, we now turn our attention to one proof of a different sort. Talmage attempted to add credibility to the claim that Radak composed a commentary on Proverbs, based on the testimony of three later figures: Ibn Melekh, R. David Ibn Yah□ya (d. 1524), and R. Gedaliah Ibn Yah□ya (1515-1587).⁴⁶ Grunhaus justly denies R. Gedaliah's alleged reference to such a work.⁴⁷ However, R. David's reference in the introduction to his own commentary on Proverbs called *Qav ve-Naqi*⁴⁸ is not so easily dismissed, and provides additional evidence in favor of Radak's authorship of the commentary in question.

In his introduction to *Qav ve-Naqi*, Ibn Yah□ya states that his objective is to cull material from prior works and present it with clarity. Among rabbinic collections, these works include "the *Yalqut* and others." As for Ibn Yah□ya's use of medieval works, he provides the following detailed passage:

I sought the works of the commentators, both old and new, including our teacher Rashi...; ...the sage R. Abraham Ibn Ezra; the masters of philology and interpreters of Scripture, the sage R. Joseph [Kimh□i] and his son R. David, about whom it is said wittily, "If there is no flour (*qemah*□) there is no Torah"; Gersonides...; the sage R. Sheshet who resided in the land of Ishmael; R. Immanuel...; ...the sage R. Menah□em ha-Meiri...; and our master, the elder in wisdom and years of our day...the sage R. Joseph H□ayyun.

Grunhaus notes that in the nineteenth century, Abraham Geiger allowed for the possibility that when Ibn Yah□ya mentions Radak, he is referring

⁴⁶ Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 18.

⁴⁷ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 315.

⁴⁸ David Ibn Yah□ya, *Qav ve-Naqi*, Lisbon, 1492; and reproduced in the *Qehillot Mosheh* Rabbinic Bible, Amsterdam, 1724-1727.

to *Shorashim*, rather than to a commentary as in the case of the other figures on his list.⁴⁹ However, Geiger appropriately raised this option only begrudgingly, having been unable to locate a commentary of Radak on Proverbs.

More important, at least one distinctive interpretation in *Qav ve-Naqi*, prefaced by the phrase “And some say,” appears in the commentary on Proverbs attributed to Radak—and we have no evidence of its appearance in any of the other works that Ibn Yah[□]ya claims to have utilized. In all probability, Ibn Yah[□]ya derived this explanation from our commentary, and when he claims to have used a commentary of Radak, he is referring to our own.

The interpretation in question addresses the obscure statement in Proverbs 15:24, ארה חיים למעלה למשכיל למען סור משאול מטה—“The way of life of one who is intelligent is upward, so that he turns away from the Sheol below.”⁵⁰ Our Proverbs commentary reads as follows:

המשכיל הוא מכוין דעתו ודרכיו בענין שתעלה נפשו למעלה אל מקום הכבוד, וזה הדרך מוכן לפני האדם המשכיל, והחכם המשכיל ידורך זה הדרך כדי שלא תרד נפשו למטה לגיהנם.

One who is intelligent directs his mind and his ways so that his soul will go upward to the place of honor. This path is set before an intelligent person, and one who is wise and intelligent will follow this path so that his soul will not descend below, to Gehinnom.

Among the widely varied interpretations presented by Ibn Yah[□]ya, he includes the following:

וי"א אורה חיים למעלה למשכלו – אם ילך בה יזכה לשבת בכסא כבוד של מעלה, וינצל משאול מטה והוא גיהנם.

And some say: “The way of life” of one who approaches it intelligently is “upward”: if he follows [this intelligent approach] he

⁴⁹ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 315; Abraham Geiger, “A Biography of Radak” (Hebrew), *Os[□]ar Neh[□]mad 2* (1857), 164.

⁵⁰ It must be emphasized that the language and substance of the comments of Radak’s father and brother on this verse are markedly different from that found in our Proverbs commentary, despite Talmage’s perception of a philosophical similarity (*Commentaries on Proverbs*, 39).

will merit sitting in the chair of honor that is up above, and will be saved from Sheol below, that is, Gehinnom.

Both the substance of Ibn Yah[□]ya's citation and its language ("place/chair of honor," "Gehinnom"), make it highly probable that the reference is to our Proverbs commentary. To be sure, there is a minimal possibility that this unique interpretation—with its distinct terminology—passed from our commentary to Ibn Yah[□]ya through H[□]ayyun, whose commentary is the only one on Ibn Yah[□]ya's list that is no longer extant. It remains decidedly more likely, however, that Ibn Yah[□]ya derived this explanation directly from our commentary—it being the work of Radak that he had by his side.⁵¹

Radak on Psalms 19:11

Before we turn our attention to the crucial matter of the terminology found in the Proverbs commentary and its consistency with that of Radak, let us consider another striking substantive parallel—between a comment of Radak on Psalms 19:11 and a line in the Proverbs commentary on 3:15. This verse in Proverbs, in reference to wisdom, contains the innocent statement *וְכָל הַפְּצִיךְ לֹא יִשׁוּ בָהּ*—"and all the objects of your desire do not match up to it." Our commentary contains the following elaboration of this value judgment:

כלומר, לא יוכלו לערוך אליה, כי היא מטמון שלא יוכל [ל] להאבד כשאר עניני העולם שנגנבים לפעמים מן האדם או יגזלו ממנו.

⁵¹ The only genuinely plausible way to deflect this proof, in my view, would be to suggest that Ibn Yah[□]ya already had a manuscript that *misattributed* our commentary to Radak. However, even if we bear in mind such a possibility, this remains a decidedly important addition to the accumulation of evidence *suggestive* of Radak's authorship. Two other possibilities, however remote, bear mentioning: (1) Radak wrote a different commentary on Proverbs that served as a source for Ibn Yah[□]ya, *and* for our Proverbs commentator—who reproduced the explanation in question as did Ibn Yah[□]ya, but without any kind of acknowledgment; (2) there was another commentator that Ibn Yah[□]ya utilized, whom he left out of his seemingly comprehensive list and who, again, reproduced the same interpretation found in the Proverbs commentary using similar terms. Even the cumulative likelihood of these two alternatives would appear to be exceedingly minimal.

That is, they cannot match its value, for it is a hidden thing that cannot become lost like other worldly possessions, which are sometimes stolen from a person or taken forcibly from him.

In much the same way, Radak on Psalms, citing the verse in Proverbs, explains:

וכן אמר שלמה "וכל הפציד לא ישוו בה", כי הממון הוא בעולם הזה ולא בעולם הבא, והחכמה בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא; והממון יגזלו אותו או יגנבו אותו מהאדם ממנו בים או ביבשה, והחכמה לא תהיה נגזלת ונגנבת.

And so said Solomon, “and all the objects of your desire do not match up to it.” For money exists in this world but not in the next world, while wisdom exists in this world and in the next world; and money can be taken forcibly or stolen from a person at sea or on land, while wisdom cannot be taken forcibly or stolen.

Once more, we encounter comments that are markedly similar in both substance and terminology. If Radak and the Proverbs commentator are not one and the same, we are again left with some unlikely alternatives: either both exegetes drew from a no longer extant common source to which neither made any kind of attribution; or the Proverbs commentator unearthed this creative interpretation from an essentially unrelated context within Radak’s magisterial commentary on Psalms,⁵² and presented it in his own work on Proverbs without acknowledgment. Such explanations become increasingly implausible with each apparent parallel.

Terminology and Style

In discussing the question of authorship, Talmage remarks that “one should not build worlds upon stylistic proofs, since such worlds are easily destroyed.”⁵³ Nevertheless, in that very context, he invokes certain stylistic features of the commentary to support his position attributing the work to Radak. At the same time, considerations of style play a significant role in Grunhaus’s *denial* of the attribution. In this section, we shall evaluate a

⁵² It is telling that for all his mastery of Radak’s writings, Talmage overlooked this obscure parallel when annotating the Proverbs commentary.

⁵³ Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 19.

range of evidence relating to terminology and compositional style, including many items not addressed in prior treatments. Needless to say, where examples appear that are suggestive of Radak's style, Grunhaus will generally attribute these to the renowned exegete's influence on our commentary's unknown author. I contend, on the other hand, that where we find genuine discrepancies, they reflect an early stage of Radak's exegetical career. In the final analysis, the stylistic evidence adds forcefully to the conviction that Radak composed the work, in keeping with the sense conveyed by Cassuto and Talmage.

A. References to Earlier Figures

A small group of stylistic arguments appears in Grunhaus's discussion of the author's "use of earlier sources."⁵⁴ The first of these concerns the rarity with which he cites his medieval predecessors by name, in contrast to Radak's wider tendency to identify his sources. In the Proverbs commentary, there are eight explicit references to Rashi, one to R. Jonah ibn Janah□, and one to R. Moses the Preacher.⁵⁵ However, on fifty occasions, the author uses the expressions *יש מי שפרש*, *יש מפרשים*, or *יש אומרים*, alluding to his source without naming it. In Radak's works, by contrast, there is generally a more even balance between named and unnamed citations. As for the term *יש מי שפרש* itself, this appears eleven times in the Proverbs commentary, but only once in Radak on other biblical books (at Joshua 3:11).

How does the Proverbs commentary compare, however, to Radak's other *early* compositions in these respects? Most strikingly, *יש מי שפרש*, despite appearing just once elsewhere in Radak's commentaries, may be found numerous times in *Shorashim*, in a ratio slightly more pronounced than what we find in the Proverbs commentary. In the *'alef* entries, for example, I count twenty-four appearances of *יש מפרשים אומרים*, and eight of *יש מי שפרש אפרשו*. This undoubtedly reflects an earlier style of Radak, and if our theory is correct, Radak's early work on Proverbs fittingly exhibits the same kind of breakdown: a large number of appearances of the more common type of referent, along with a liberal sprinkling of the

⁵⁴ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 320-322.

⁵⁵ Citations of Rashi appear at 4:23, 4:24, 5:6, 11:18, 11:21, 12:16, 13:8, and 20:6. R. Moses the Preacher and Ibn Janah□ are mentioned within one context, at 5:19-20.

alternative one. If, however, the author was merely influenced by Radak's terminology, this correlation emerges rather difficult in light of two considerations. First, it follows that our Radak devotee not only adopted the distinguished exegete's essentially interchangeable terms, but also ended up employing them with suspiciously similar frequency. More important, his sporadic use of *יש מי שפרש* must reflect the influence of *Shorashim* specifically, even though Radak effectively abandoned the phrase in the overwhelming majority of his writings, including all of his commentaries.

Concerning the ratio of named to unnamed citations, consider the distribution in Radak's commentary on Chronicles: one mention of Rashi,⁵⁶ four of Ibn Janah□, two of Ibn Ezra,⁵⁷ and thirty-four of *ש מפרשים\אומרים*. That is, of these forty-one citations in the Chronicles commentary, seven contain a named source, essentially the same ratio as the ten out of sixty-two enumerated above in the case of Proverbs. To be sure, this correlation might not be quite as strong as it appears; for on Chronicles, Radak was working with a number of prior commentaries, most notably Pseudo-Rashi, whose authors he did not know and *could* not cite by name.⁵⁸ But the evidence remains strikingly suggestive; and I do not hesitate to argue that in his biblical commentaries, Radak's initial tendency, beginning in the case of Proverbs, was to leave out the names of his sources, and that this continued to a significant extent in his commentary on Chronicles.

In connection with the preference for anonymity in the Proverbs commentary, it should be added that the explicit references to Rashi, which comprise the vast majority of named citations, clearly follow a special rule.

⁵⁶ This, of course, does not refer to a commentary of Rashi on Chronicles itself. The commentary attributed to Rashi on Chronicles was in fact authored by a later figure, and Radak makes clear in the introduction to his own Chronicles commentary that he did not possess any expositions of the book by standard exegetes. See recently Berger, "Exegetical Programme," 84, 92.

⁵⁷ Radak mentions Rashi at II Chronicles 2:1; Ibn Janah□ at I 2:13, I 12:33, II 1:13, and II 2:9; and Ibn Ezra at I 2:15 and II 30:18. He refers to R. Joseph Kimh□i as "my master, my father" at I 15:18 and I 20:6; but I have left this out of the tally, much as I have left out the reference to "my mentor, my brother" in the Proverbs commentary.

⁵⁸ See Berger, "Exegetical Programme," 92.

In all eight examples, contrary to other instances where the author drew from Rashi, a substantial comment of the great French exegete is cited essentially verbatim.⁵⁹ And indeed, at least toward the beginning, this tendency appears in the Chronicles commentary too, most conspicuously in the case of one of the citations of Ibn Ezra, at I 2:15. In that comment, Radak makes his first named references, including a citation of Ibn Janah of unknown origin, and an uncharacteristically lengthy verbatim quotation of Ibn Ezra's *Sefer S□ah□ot*, which Radak follows with וכן פרש אותו החכם—“and thus did the sage R. Abraham ibn Ezra explain it.” Moreover, while Pseudo-Rashi's influence is apparent in a number of places, it is specifically at I 1:13—where Radak presents an *especially* close adaptation of a comment of Pseudo-Rashi—that he gives as much credit as he can muster to this unknown exegete, prefacing the citation with the unique and long-winded phrase ראיתי לאחד מן המפרשים שכתב—“I saw that one of the commentators has written.” If a preference for anonymous

⁵⁹ The citation of R. Moses the Preacher, at 5:19, is also largely a verbatim quotation of Rashi's own citation of the renowned midrashist. Compare Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 320 n. 47. If verbatim citation was the motive for mentioning Rashi by name, this accounts for the unusually high number of explicit references to Rashi. Elsewhere in Radak, too, there appear some clusters of named citations of Rashi; see Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 322 and n. 55. In that context, she raises some additional arguments against Radak's authorship that concern citations of Rashi: the reference to him as ר"ש rather than רש"י, the absence of ז"ל, and a case at 12:16 where an interpretation cited from Rashi is—according to Grunhaus—oddly similar to the author's own. In fact, a search of the *Haketer* database suggests that רבינו שלמה is Radak's common way of referring to Rashi (contrast Grunhaus, *ibid.*, n. 56); and ר"ש (also the term appearing in the one reference to Rashi in the Chronicles commentary—at II 2:1—according to more reliable text-witnesses), as well as the absence of ז"ל, might well owe to scribal preferences. (The occasional appearance of the term פשוט instead of פשוטו is of similarly questionable significance; contrast Grunhaus, “Commentary of Proverbs,” 320 n. 45.) The alleged similarity between Rashi's interpretation and the author's own at 12:16 is not apparent to me, and no further clarification is provided for this claim. There remains only Grunhaus's general sense that this commentary relies more on Rashi than does Radak—an argument that would require systematic consideration of all of Radak's commentaries, and which might again be neutralized if the Proverbs commentary reflects Radak's earlier tendencies. (Chronicles, on which there is no commentary of Rashi, provides no basis for comparison in this case.)

citation indeed characterizes both the Proverbs and Chronicles commentaries, the similarity would also extend to this particular exception to the rule.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Ezra Z. Melamed, in volume 2 of *Bible Commentators* (Hebrew), Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978, 740, observes that when offering a direct quote of another named commentator, Radak tends to provide careful verbatim citation. More important for us here, however, is the converse question: where Radak cites his sources verbatim, does he commonly see fit to name them—as I am claiming here in the case of the commentaries to Proverbs and Chronicles? Only one scholarly treatment seems to address this question in any way. In a separate study, “The Dependence of Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak) on Rashi in His Quotation of Midrashic Traditions,” *JQR* 93/3-4 (2003), 415-430, Grunhaus argues correctly that Rashi served as a source for many of Radak’s midrashic citations. Of relevance to us, she maintains that Radak sometimes copied Rashi’s liberal paraphrases of the Midrash without checking the original and *without* citing Rashi as his source. However, I dispute the one example offered as decisive evidence of this claim (423-424). At Isaiah 8:8, concerning Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah, Midrash Tanhūma (*Tazria’* 8) offers an explanation of the phrase *והיה מטות כנפיו מלא רחב ארצך*—“the radial bones of his wings will span the entire breadth of your land”: the Midrash says that just as the radial bones comprise one-sixtieth of a rooster’s wings, Judah will be subdued by just one-sixtieth of the Assyrian army. Radak presents this explanation in the following language, which is quite different from that found in our editions of the Tanhūma: *ובדרש: כמה הם מוטות התרנגול? אחד מששים בכנפיו; אחד בששים באוכלוסי*—“And in the Midrash: How many are the radial bones of the rooster? One-sixtieth of its wings. One-sixtieth of Sennacherib’s army will span the entire breadth of the land of Judah.” This same language appears in nearly all printed texts of Rashi, but *מלא רחב* is presented as a separate lemma on which *ארץ יהודה* appears as an independent comment. According to Grunhaus, this demonstrates that Radak (without acknowledgment) copied Rashi’s paraphrase of the Midrash verbatim and—without the original Midrash at hand—mistakenly assumed that this next lemma was a part of the interpretation itself. In fact, however, it is abundantly clear that *מלא רחב* in Rashi should indeed not be a new lemma, and that Radak either copied from Rashi correctly—perhaps having checked the Midrash for verification of its intent—or reproduced the same line in the Midrash that Rashi did, a line that is not extant in our versions of the Tanhūma. For according to the printed texts of Rashi, his midrashic citation is not syntactically or substantively coherent, and his comment on *מלא רחב* is decidedly superfluous. Indeed, all manuscripts of Rashi on Isaiah that I have checked, including the four generally preferred by the editors of the recent *Haketer* edition (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1996), confirm that Rashi’s remarks comprise a single comment, and this is almost certainly the text of

Within this category, Grunhaus raises one more distinctive feature of the Proverbs commentary: the author's occasional mention, using uncharacteristic terminology, of works of ethics and wisdom. These include a citation prefaced by אמר במוסר—"it says in an ethical work"—at 14:9, and two assertions, at 13:12 and 15:17, ascribed to ההחכם—"the sage." The term ההחכם without further specification does appear in Radak in a small handful of instances, including one that Grunhaus acknowledges to be fundamentally similar to the examples in the Proverbs commentary,⁶¹ while אמר במוסר does not appear at all. However, such terms should hardly surprise us: it is only natural that a hortatory book like Proverbs would have provided occasion for Radak to cite ethical works (as he does elsewhere sporadically); and in keeping with his inclination to cite anonymously, it is unremarkable that he would employ phrases like אמר במוסר and אמר ההחכם when drawing from them, departing from his more common policy of specifying the author or sage to whom he is referring.

B. Phraseology

Grunhaus mentions only a few additional phrases that do not conform to Radak's usual style,⁶² while acknowledging some others that are consistent with it.⁶³ The first of the nonconforming phrases appears just one time, in the introduction: מלה אחת מדברת על עצמה ובשרה ומושכת אחרת עמה—"one word speaks of itself and draws another with it." This is a poetic adaptation of the principle מושך עצמו ואחר עמו, which, Grunhaus rightly notes, is used periodically by Ibn Ezra and R. Moses Kimh□i to refer to a word that

Rashi that Radak had before him. The presentation of מלא רהב as a separate lemma in the *Haketer* edition itself is undoubtedly an oversight. The need to combine the two comments in Rashi was noticed, without the benefit of manuscript evidence, by the editors of the *Neh□mad le-Mar'eh* Rabbinic Bible, Jerusalem, 1993.

⁶¹ See Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 321 n. 53. In addition to the examples cited there, in Radak's introduction to his allegorical commentary on Genesis 2:7-5:1, when alluding to scientists, he makes several references to החכמים, one to ההחכם, and one to אחד החכם, all without further specification. See Hannah Kasher, "The Introduction Found in Manuscripts to Radak's Allegorical Commentary on the Creation Story" (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 62/3-4 (1998-99), 873-885. (Kasher demonstrates that the reference to ההחכם הגדול at the beginning of this introduction might well be of the pen of a student of Radak.)

⁶² Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 323-324.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 316.

serves a dual syntactic function. Radak, on the other hand, regularly utilizes the phrase עומד במקום שנים—“stands in place of two”—when referring to this literary feature.⁶⁴ Another unique phrase, also appearing only once (at 19:16), is נכתב בחסרון—“it is written deficiently”—in reference to an elliptical syntactic construction, which differs from Radak’s usual expressions זרך קצרה and מקרא קצר that call attention to the brevity of the biblical formulation. Finally, where the author uses the phrase סמך על המבין—“it relies on the reader’s understanding,”⁶⁵ he does not provide elaboration as Radak generally does.⁶⁶

The significance of these observations, however, is highly questionable. In the first two cases, we are confronted with only one appearance of the phrase in question,⁶⁷ and the example from the introduction appears to be no more than a poetic flourish, reminiscent of the style found, for instance, in Radak’s introduction to his commentary on Joshua.⁶⁸ The full phrase נכתב בחסרון indeed does not appear in Radak, but the word חסרון itself appears many times in reference to an elision. Furthermore, in most instances, the commentary actually does employ Radak’s more common

⁶⁴ The phrase עומד במקום שנים appears over sixty times in Radak’s commentaries. The phrase עמו ואחר עמו appears in the glossary of Radak’s terminology in the standard edition of *Shorashim*, but I have not located it within the work itself. Melamed, in volume 2 of *Bible Commentators*, 846, mentions the appearance of this phrase in Radak at Genesis 1:10 and expresses skepticism of its authenticity. Melamed, however, was unwittingly referring to a line from *Mikhlal Yofi* that was incorporated into Abraham Ginzburg’s 1842 edition of Radak on Genesis (repr. Jerusalem, 1967).

⁶⁵ See, for example, at 7:8.

⁶⁶ In a footnote, Grunhaus mentions the phrase כבר פירשתי אותו at 16:25, noting that Radak “regularly uses the smoother כבר פירשתי.” A search produces just two instances of כבר פירשתי in Radak.

⁶⁷ Grunhaus, in a footnote in her conclusion (“Commentary on Proverbs,” 327 n. 74), adds that the additional phrase דרך דוגמא, which also appears just one time (at 8:30-31), is not found in Radak, and speculates that this occurrence owes to the influence of Rashi on the commentary’s author.

⁶⁸ That introduction too is written largely in straight prose, but with an occasional poetic flair. For example, concerning the need to put one’s contribution into writing, Radak poetically avers that had the Sages not recorded their words, כבר אבדו החכמות, וספו המזמות, ובטלו התורות והמצות.

phrase *מקרא קצר* when calling attention to an elliptical construction.⁶⁹ As for the use of *על המבין סמך* without elaboration, which is arguably not unique in Radak's works,⁷⁰ we shall have occasion below to address the generally less elaborate style both of this commentary and, to a somewhat lesser extent, of Radak on Chronicles.⁷¹ Moreover, the phrase itself, which appears four times in the Proverbs commentary and only eleven other times in the commentaries of Radak,⁷² does not appear in any other medieval works that I can find; so it is likely that its influence on our commentator—as a follower of Radak—would have to owe to just a small number of occurrences within the prolific exegete's voluminous works.

On the other hand, a great many phrases in the Proverbs commentary do recall Radak's terminology, beyond those already mentioned. To begin with a set of examples mostly acknowledged by Grunhaus,⁷³ certain expressions that describe biblical metaphor match those of Radak. These include the arguably unexceptional phrase *דרך משל*—"by way of

⁶⁹ See, for example, at 3:21. Grunhaus only acknowledges Radak's other term for this, *דרך קצרה*, which indeed does not appear in the Proverbs commentary.

⁷⁰ See Radak at Ezekiel 32:21, where he employs *על המבין סמך* when referring to the prophet's rather oblique reference to a stinging greeting bestowed upon a newcomer to Sheol. There Radak cites a parallel prophetic image in Isaiah, but it is far from clear that this is intended to address how the enigmatic formulation in Ezekiel is justified.

⁷¹ The same restrained style accounts for the common appearance of the phrase *כפל לשון* ("double language") without further elaboration, which, as Grunhaus points out ("Commentary on Proverbs," 313 n. 16), appears less frequently in Radak's works generally. On the other hand, see below concerning several phrases in the commentary relating to doubled language that are especially consistent with Radak's terminology. Compare also below, n. 78, concerning the terse phrase *כפל ואמר*: this phrase appears in the Proverbs commentary with far greater frequency than elsewhere in Radak, where he prefers more expansive formulations like *כפל הענין במלים שונות ואמר*.

⁷² For all such tallies, I utilized the invaluable database of the *Haketer* Rabbinic Bible. I thank Prof. Menachem Cohen for making this available to me. Other databases do not include Radak on Genesis or Proverbs. Note that I was careful to check for alternative spellings, and for appearances of words both with and without prefixes. It will be necessary to do the same in order to duplicate our results.

⁷³ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 316.

metaphor,”⁷⁴ the construction “...כמו...כן...”—“just as...so too...,”⁷⁵ and the adoption of Rashi’s rendering of מליצה as literal meaning and משל as figurative meaning.⁷⁶

Among other notable expressions in the commentary, some appear largely or exclusively in Radak specifically, while others are consistent with Radak’s style but appear reasonably often among other exegetes as well. We shall survey these phrases based on results produced by the database of the *Haketer* Rabbinic Bible, which contains an especially broad array of medieval commentaries.

The following phrases from the Proverbs commentary appear exclusively in Radak’s works or nearly so:⁷⁷ חסר בי"ת השימוש (“the prepositional *bet* is elided”), חסר כ"ף הדמיון (“the comparative *kaf* is elided”), כמו הפוך [פירושו] (“it is [to be interpreted] as if it were reversed”), כפל ואמר (“it doubles it and says”), וכפל עוד ואמר (“it doubles it saying further”), כפל הענין במלים\במלות שונות ואמר (“it doubles the matter in different terms and says”), לחזק הענין\הדבר, כמו (“to strengthen the point/matter”), בה"א\באל"ף (“as with a *hei/alef*”), במפיק הה"א (“the *hei* has a *mappiq*”), מקום\במקום אות הכפל (“in place of the doubled letter”), תוספת ביאור (“it adds elaboration”), and כלל ואמר (“it says inclusively”).⁷⁸ In some cases, like this

⁷⁴ משל appears 386 times in Radak, including 19 in the Proverbs commentary. See, for example, at 1:9.

⁷⁵ See, for example, at Proverbs 1:8. On Radak’s use of this formula elsewhere, see Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 146-147 and n. 37, and 165 n. 104.

⁷⁶ See Rashi and our commentary at 1:6. Indeed, Cohen, *Three Approaches*, 147 n. 41, in the context of his analysis of Radak’s use of these terms, expresses his disinclination to reject Radak’s authorship of the Proverbs commentary, citing the discussion that appeared in my dissertation.

⁷⁷ In the case of some of the grammatical terminology, I occasionally have found similar expressions in medieval philological works, but this softens the force of the total picture only mildly.

⁷⁸ השימוש appears twenty-one times in Radak, twice in the Proverbs commentary (at 3:10 and 3:23), and among no other commentators. חסר כ"ף הדמיון appears eleven times in Radak, including twice in our commentary (at 3:18 and 20:5), and appears a total of just five other times among three other commentators. כמו הפוך appears forty-three times in Radak, including three times in our commentary (at 3:26, 7:22, and 19:6), and appears just four other times among two other exegetes. (With the word פירושו, the phrase appears six times in Radak, including once in our work [at 19:6], and among no other commentators.) כפל ואמר appears fifteen times in

last example, the phrase appears in Radak's commentaries alone, but only rarely, so that once again, the possibility of its impact on the terminology of another commentator is quite small.

Expressions in the commentary that, while typical of at least some other exegetes, are distinctly characteristic of Radak,⁷⁹ include: כמו שאמר ("as it says"), לא די...אלא אבל ("it is not only...but also"), דבק למעלה ("it connects to the above"), כלומר ("that is to say"),⁸⁰ כמו שמספר והולך ("as it continues to say"), או פירושו ("or its meaning is"), חסר הנסמך ("it elides the noun governed by the one in the construct state"), משפטו ("it would normally be"), פירושו כמשמעו ("its meaning is just as it says"), על שני פנים ("in two senses"), המפרשים פירשו ("the commentators have explained"), פירשתיו ("I have explained it above"), היה לו לומר ("it should have said"), and

Radak, eleven of them in this work (for example, at 1:18), and just once in one other commentary. וכפל עוד ואמר appears six times in Radak, including twice in the Proverbs commentary (at 4:12 and 9:5), and among no other commentators. כפל הענין appears nineteen times in Radak, twice in this work (at 5:3 and 5:5), and among no other commentators. לחזק הענין\הדבר appears forty-five times in Radak, two of them in this work (at 4:16 and 5:15), and once in the works of each of three other exegetes. כמו בה"א\באל"ף appears twelve times in Radak, one of them in the Proverbs commentary (at 1:10), and once in the work of another commentator. במפיק הה"א appears three times in Radak, one of them in this work (at 7:8), and among no other commentators. מקום\במקום אות הכפל appears six times in Radak, including once in this work (at 8:3), and once in the works of each of two other exegetes. חוספת ביאור appears twenty-one times in Radak, one of them in this work (at 5:20), and a total of six times among three other commentators. Finally, כלל ואמר appears four times in Radak, one of them in this work (at 8:11), and among no other commentators.

⁷⁹ I include in this category phrases from the Proverbs commentary that appear especially frequently in Radak, as well as others that appear with more moderate frequency but are *comparatively* uncommon among all or nearly all other commentators. Once again, I am referring to the wide range of medieval commentaries available on the *Haketer* database.

⁸⁰ Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 38, and Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 316, acknowledge the significance of the seemingly innocent term כלומר, an especially common one in Radak. A search produces 2,975 appearances of the term in Radak's commentaries, 194 of them in the Proverbs commentary (of which only the first twenty and a half chapters are preserved). Contrast, for example, just 513 appearances of כלומר in all of Rashi's biblical commentaries, thirty-seven of them in his commentary on the thirty-one chapters of Proverbs.

לפי מקומו (“based on its position”).⁸¹ It is also worth noting a string of Radak-like phrases at 1:19, חסר הנסמך כי סמך על המבין והרבה תמצא כמוהו בספר הזה (“it elides the noun governed by the one in the construct state, since it relies on the reader’s understanding; and you can find many such cases in this book”). The particular combination of הרבה תמצא כמוהו and בספר הזה, or its close equivalent, appears several times *specifically* in Radak on Chronicles,⁸² which again proves far more consistent with our claim that Radak himself composed the commentary on Proverbs—toward the beginning of his career.⁸³

Finally, while as Grunhaus observes, the handful of rabbinic citations that appear in the commentary are mostly taken from Rashi,⁸⁴ the author generally introduces them using his own expressions. And indeed, the terms that appear are strikingly reminiscent of those employed by Radak. These include: יש בו דרש (“there is a midrashic interpretation of it”), which

⁸¹ Of 2,600 appearances of כמו שאמר on the *Haketer* database, 1,771 are in Radak, thirteen of them in the Proverbs commentary (for example, at 1:4). Of forty-five appearances of לא די...אלא\אבל, fourteen are in Radak, three on Proverbs (at 1:25, 3:24 and 10:24). דבק למעלה appears twenty-four times, eight of them in Radak, one of which is on Proverbs (at 3:3). כמו שמספר והולך appears six times: twice in R. Joseph Kara, and four times in Radak—one of them on Proverbs (at 1:2). Of 352 appearances of או פירושו, 243 are in Radak, twenty-one of them on Proverbs (for example, at 3:6). חסר הנסמך appears fifty times, twenty-nine of them in Radak—three on Proverbs (at 1:19, 6:5 and 11:2). משפטו appears 301 times, 108 of them in Radak, including two on Proverbs (at 8:3 and 8:17). פירושו כמשמעו appears fourteen times, nine in Radak, one of which is on Proverbs (at 11:25). על שני פנים appears eleven times: three in Ralbag, and eight in Radak—including one on Proverbs (at 13:7). המפרשים פירושו appears twenty-seven times, eighteen in Radak, one of them on Proverbs (this too at 13:7). Of thirteen appearances of פירשתיו למעלה, five are in Radak, including two on Proverbs (at 16:8 and 19:9), and there are no more than two appearances in the works of any other exegete. Of 169 appearances of היה לו לומר, fourteen are in Radak, one of them on Proverbs (at 4:14). Finally, לפי מקומו appears thirty-two times, fifteen of them in Radak—one on Proverbs (at 17:14).

⁸² See Radak at I Chronicles 4:11, 6:13, 7:14, 8:1, 8:8, and 23:8.

⁸³ It would again appear that a follower of Radak would need to have derived such terminology from the Chronicles commentary alone, a most unlikely proposition.

⁸⁴ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 318. See note 38 there for a full list of rabbinic citations in the commentary. I address the general matter of citation of the rabbis below.

is unique to Radak; **וּבְדֶרֶשׁ** (“and in the midrashic literature”), Radak’s most common phrase; **דְּרָשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל \ רַז”ל דְּרָשׁוּ** (“our Sages, of blessed memory, explained homiletically”) and **וְכֵן אָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל** (“and so said our Sages, of blessed memory”), which are common in Radak; **וּמְדַרְשׁוּ** (“and its homiletic explanation is”) and **אָמְרוּ ז”ל** (“they, of blessed memory, said”), which appear in Radak albeit rarely; and **דְּרָשׁוּ ז”ל** (“they, of blessed memory, explained homiletically”), which appears once in the Proverbs commentary and recalls Radak’s more common phrase **דְּרָשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל** (“our Sages, of blessed memory, explained homiletically”).⁸⁵

All things considered, the many phrases we have seen are highly suggestive of Radak’s authorship, and Cassuto and Talmage undoubtedly had at least some of these in mind when, in making the attribution, they alluded to unspecified markings of Radak’s style.⁸⁶ On the other hand—crucially—it appears that Grunhaus’s judgment on the matter of phraseology rested upon only a small percentage of relevant terms.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ **יש בו דרש** appears fifty-one times in Radak, including twice on Proverbs (at 12:13 and 12:16), and—as mentioned—does not appear in the works of other exegetes. **וּבְדֶרֶשׁ** appears 349 times in Radak, including four on Proverbs (at 14:10, 15:6, 15:30-31 and 20:21). **דְּרָשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל \ רַז”ל דְּרָשׁוּ** appears seventy times in Radak, one of them on Proverbs (at 3:16), and no more than twice in the works of any other commentator. (It must be acknowledged that the unique phrase **דְּרָשׁוּ ז”ל** appears at 5:18, at least in the manuscript that has preserved our commentary.) **וְכֵן אָמְרוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל** appears forty-three times in Radak, one of them on Proverbs (at 15:30-31). **וּמְדַרְשׁוּ** appears four times in Radak, including two on Proverbs (at 5:9 and 8:30-31). **אָמְרוּ ז”ל** appears four times in Radak, one of them on Proverbs (at 14:9). Finally, **דְּרָשׁוּ ז”ל** appears in the Proverbs commentary at 9:1, while **דְּרָשׁוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ ז”ל** appears fifteen times in Radak.

⁸⁶ Cassuto, *Codices*, 129; Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 19.

⁸⁷ Under the category “Discrepancies in Style,” Grunhaus adds that the Proverbs commentator explains terms that Radak would not, but does not explain others that Radak would. The examples offered, however, are problematic. At 11:26, the word **בַּר** is explained to mean produce, while according to Grunhaus, Radak leaves it unexplained at Jeremiah 11:28 and uses the term himself without clarification at II Samuel 24:14. In reality, the comment on Proverbs merely clarifies the term’s use according to the second explanation provided for the verse; for according to the first explanation—adapted from Rashi—the term **בַּר** appears to refer to a **בֶּן** (“son”) to whom one fails to teach Torah. Moreover, in the comment on Jeremiah, Radak does indicate that **בַּר** refers to food fit for human consumption. Finally, the occurrence in Radak’s comment on Samuel does not appear in the *Haketer* edition, the most

However, what is probably her more central stylistic objection to attributing the work to Radak relates to something far more fundamental, to which we shall now direct our attention.

C. A Simplistic Style and a Moralizing Objective?

According to Grunhaus, the writing style of the author of the commentary “is conversational and loose, not crisp and analytical as in Radak’s commentaries.” His “verbosity and informal style is the antithesis of Radak’s investigative approach.” Furthermore, “*the commentary* has a personal quality to it, as opposed to Radak’s objective, detached analysis.”⁸⁸ She encapsulates her impression of the style and attendant purpose of the commentary in the following lucid and forceful passage:

The style of *the commentary* is simplistic and the tone is homiletical and flat—not rich, crisp, and analytical as Radak’s commentaries are. The author uses the book of Proverbs as a tool to urge his readers to live an upright, God-fearing life. He persistently reiterates themes of the struggle between good and evil, reward and punishment, and the world to come and reflects on the prerequisites for the proper functioning of the different castes of society.

While Radak addresses many of these themes in his Bible commentaries, they are incidental and used merely to explicate the biblical text. In *the commentary*, though, the encouragement of moral rectitude is the dominant goal and the explication of the verses is incidental. The correlation of the words in the Bible to the ideas that they convey is limited and artless.⁸⁹

The boldest and most crucial claim here—that the primary goal of the work is hortatory and that its exegetical component is incidental—is one with which I strongly disagree. Rather, in keeping with the commentary’s introductory statement, it is my powerful sense that the author’s chief

reliable one to date. Grunhaus also claims that the “difficult, irregular word” בֹּטֵה at Proverbs 12:18 is left unexplained. In fact, our commentator does indicate that it means to speak (in keeping with the wide consensus)—even if he does not explicitly clarify its relationship to the root בָּטָא (as in *Shorashim* entry בָּטָא).

⁸⁸ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 324.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 317-318.

objective is to explain the text and its flow. Indeed, he follows through on this program quite consistently.

To obtain a sense of the style in question, it is essential to consider a sizable sequence of comments. On chapter 1 verses 2-3, the beginning of the actual commentary,⁹⁰ we read as follows:

(2) “To know *hokhmah* and *musar*”—that is, to know the benefit attained by a person from *hokhmah* [=wisdom], as the text continues to explain. “And *musar*”—this means the punishment, that is, the afflictions that come upon a person from foolishness, which is the opposite of *hokhmah*. “*Le-havin* [=to understand] matters of *binah*”—that is, the matters upon which a person ought to reflect (*le-hitbonen*) before performing them, so that he will know what his future will be, and he will choose the good and reject the bad. (3) “*Laqahat musar haskel*”—*Laqahat* means to learn, as in “May my *leqahat* come down as the rain” (Deut 32:2), which the Targum renders “my teaching.” “*Musar haskel*”—that is, to learn well the proper way to conduct oneself with people—with *haskel* [=good sense] and with the best effort—specifically “*s’edeq u-mishpat u-mesharim*”: “*s’edeq*”—to be honest in one’s dealings and not veer from this to the right or to the left; “*u-mishpat*”—this is a warning to judges and kings to judge righteously, placing the rich and the poor equal before the law; “*u-mesharim*”—that all your deeds be with integrity, without cunning and deceit. These are the things that kings should do so that their kingship should last; and the people too should conduct themselves in this way with one another so that there should be peace between them, each one peacefully in his place. It is of these matters that *hokhmah* is comprised.

It is fair to say that this selection, quite representative of the author’s style, is very much an effort at interpretation of both language and content. Little if anything can fairly be called nonanalytical, and as I see it, the connection between the text and the ideas presented is not at all unartful. The didactic flavor is a direct result of the book’s subject matter, and only toward the end does our commentator elaborate upon the book’s message in a manner

⁹⁰ Verse 1 is addressed in the introduction.

not fundamentally connected to his explanation of the flow of the text. Indeed, he acknowledges the specific hortatory objective of the book in the latter part of his introduction, and it will be instructive to cite from this briefly:

[The redactor (הסופר), in the first few verses,] writes of the intention of the book's author (המחבר הספר):⁹¹ his intention was to benefit people interested in hearing his admonishment, so that their energies should be appropriately pure in the worship of their Creator, in order that each [person] should attain his reward—which is life in the world to come—and so that they should conduct themselves with integrity in all their matters and dealings...

If these are the goals of the author of Proverbs, then it is only to be expected that an exposition of the book's content would contain a moralistic dimension.

To the extent that there is a “personal quality” to the commentary (e.g., “that all your deeds be with integrity” in the selection above), this also reflects the nature of the material. Indeed, much of the book itself is written in the form of admonishment in second-person form. It is telling, in fact, that the one example that Grunhaus cites in the text of her article—allegedly among the author's “direct addresses to the reader”—is really no more than an explanatory comment that adopts the grammatical form of the verse.⁹² In this example, at 6:6, the text exhorts a lazy individual to derive a lesson from the industrious ant. In what I see as a moderate elaboration of this that is typical of Radak, our commentator, liberally paraphrasing the verse, instructs this individual (in second person) to draw a simple inference regarding himself: if an ant prepares its food, then all

⁹¹ המחבר הספר is what appears in the manuscript. For a list of these and other similar phrases in Radak alluding to biblical authors and redactors, see Richard C. Steiner, “A Jewish Theory of Biblical Redaction from Byzantium: Its Rabbinic Roots, Its Diffusion and Its Encounter with the Muslim Doctrine of Falsification,” *JSIJ* 2 (2003): 148 (<http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ/2-2003/Steiner.pdf>). Note also that Radak at Jeremiah 51:64 acknowledges the possibility of a redactor (מי שכתב הספר) who composed the book's final (historical) chapter.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 324-335 and n. 66. The same is true of all the examples cited in the footnote, with the lone exception of the second-person verb השמר at 15:3.

the more so I, who possess the power of reason, ought to place genuine effort into matters of concern to me.

Finally, the sweeping assertion that moralistic themes in Radak's commentaries are "incidental and used merely to explicate the biblical text" is inaccurate. For our purposes, it is of considerable relevance that even on biblical books that are not essentially hortatory, Radak will periodically go beyond strict interpretation to provide a moral lesson.⁹³ For example, in the course of Radak's comment on Psalms 40:13, where King David attributes his sufferings to his own misconduct, the eminent commentator-pedagogue makes a remark that is similar to the occasional asides found in the Proverbs commentary:

And likewise, it is proper for every pious individual, when praying before God, to emphasize his sins and play down his merits, to say that he is full of sins, and to appeal for atonement and mercy.⁹⁴

When the nature of the Book of Proverbs is properly taken into account, then, the commentary's compositional style provides us with little reason to doubt that Radak authored the work. The sum total of all stylistic considerations, in fact, tilts the evidence rather decisively in the direction of Radak's authorship.

⁹³ See especially Melamed, volume 2 of *Bible Commentators*, 789-792; and Mordechai Cohen, "The Qimhi Family," volume 1 part 2 of *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. M. Sæbø, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000, 410-412. The rather emphatic examples cited by these scholars are from Radak on the Genesis narratives; but note the example from Psalms below, which is more like those found in the Proverbs commentary. Note also Cohen's observation ("The Qimhi Family," 412) that even Radak's father, "in his Proverbs commentary, regularly digresses from his linguistic analysis to provide moral guidance..." and that this might have influenced Radak's inclination to go beyond the quest for strict *peshat* interpretation.

⁹⁴ In most places, the subject matter of Psalms is not similar to the hortatory content of Proverbs, so that it not surprising that in the Psalms commentary such examples are only sporadic. Contrast the remarks of Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 318 n. 36.

Challenges to the Attribution to Radak

The Meaning of “Peshat”

The distinctive subject matter of Proverbs will remain significant as we turn our attention to a terminological matter that merits independent consideration: our commentator’s use of the term *peshat*. Grunhaus correctly observes that *peshat* in this commentary refers to the literal, non-figurative sense of the text (although not exclusively so in my opinion), including in the introduction, where the author sets forth his agenda of providing non-figurative interpretation.⁹⁵ On the other hand, she writes, “Radak’s complex tradition of the meaning of the term *peshat*” draws on “grammar, philology, lexicography, biblical stylistics, and comparison to other biblical texts.”⁹⁶ This is more a (partly redundant) list of certain criteria that a *peshat* interpretation must meet than an attempt at defining the concept; and the main point appears to be that the term *peshat* in Radak signifies the opposite of *derash*, which need not meet these criteria, rather than excluding figurative meaning (*mashal*), the term’s usual function in the Proverbs commentary.

Crucially, however, there are numerous instances where Radak does use the term *peshat* to mean the opposite of *mashal*. To cite but one example, at Ezekiel 9:1-2 Radak provides a literal interpretation, and then writes, “We have explained it in the manner of its *peshat*. And in the manner of *mashal*....” While it is true that Radak generally prefers the alternative term *ke-mashma’o* to denote literal meaning, he will less commonly employ the term *peshat* in effectively the same way. Indeed, in the Proverbs commentary itself, both expressions appear in this sense.⁹⁷ And even though the term *peshat* emerges as the dominant one in this work, this falls well short of suggesting that Radak is not its author—for an entirely reasonable explanation is readily at hand. Since the primary opposition that one finds in Radak’s other commentaries is between the text’s simple meaning and its homiletic one, most often the term *peshat* stands in contrast to *derash*, and the alternative *ke-mashma’o* becomes the more common expression distinguishing literal meaning from *mashal*. In the

⁹⁵ In the commentary itself, the term appears at 5:3, 11:22, 12:11, 15:30 and 18:21. At 18:21, it is fairly clear to me that it signifies an interpretation that stands in contrast to more midrashic alternatives, not to figurative ones.

⁹⁶ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 319.

⁹⁷ The phrase *perusho ke-mashma’o* appears at 11:25.

case of Proverbs, however, where the distinction between literal and figurative meaning takes center stage, *peshat* becomes Radak's primary term for denoting non-figurative interpretation. It is not surprising that in setting out to fill a need for a non-figurative commentary, Radak would tell us that he will explain the text according to *peshuto* ("its straightforward sense")—a distinctly more forceful term than *mashma'ot* ("how it sounds")—and that he would carry through with this terminology throughout the work.

Yet—what is it that prompts our commentator periodically to distinguish *peshat* from *mashal*? Is not his sole objective, as he says, to provide literal interpretation? Why, for example, at 12:11, do we find a non-figurative interpretation standing alone and identified as *peshat*, when, as Grunhaus observes, the point "of the whole commentary is to provide such non-figurative interpretations"?⁹⁸ And if, in that instance, the author does not even mention the alternative figurative interpretation provided by others, is not his identification of his own explanation as *peshat* especially superfluous—and, as Grunhaus implies, inconsistent with Radak's usual practice when providing a freestanding interpretation?

The answer to this problem is, I think, quite straightforward, and indeed essential to appreciating how and when the author speaks of *peshat*. As he indicates in the introduction, our commentator resists the sort of sweeping figurative approach that entails, for example, understanding the oft-mentioned seductive woman as a metaphor for idol worship. On the other hand, many individual phrases appear in the book that plainly do not allow for non-figurative interpretation. Thus, if in 1:9 we read that admonishment and instruction are "a necklace around your throat," our commentator can only offer that this is a *mashal* suggesting that any wisdom one acquires becomes a source of pride and grandeur.

Significantly, however, in a number of borderline cases, it is not obvious whether a figurative reading can be avoided. Accordingly, the author of the commentary might provide different options, or simply insist that the correct explanation in fact follows the literal meaning. It is in such cases where he will employ the term *peshat*, using expressions like פירושו כפשוטו ("the explanation follows the *peshat*"; 12:11) and והראשון נכון לפי פשוטו ("the first one is correct according to the *peshat*"; 15:30). Indeed, it is clear that both expressions are meant to exclude figurative alternatives that

⁹⁸ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 320.

Rashi chose to incorporate in accordance with his own two-layered approach to the text of Proverbs.⁹⁹ Most important for us, this feature of the commentary, thus properly understood, presents little challenge to the attribution of the work to Radak. In general, Radak saw no need to indicate explicitly that he is following the method of *peshat* rather than of *derash* when presenting just one explanation of a verse. But since Proverbs is a book laden with figurative language, it is hardly remarkable that in Radak's commentary on it, where he tried valiantly to limit the scope of metaphoric interpretation, he would make explicit mention of his preference for the literal meaning—that is, the *peshat*—precisely when confronting these kinds of ambiguous cases.

Inadequate Acknowledgment of Radak's Father and Brother

As one would expect if Radak authored the commentary, the works on Proverbs of R. Joseph and R. Moses Kimḥi, Radak's father and brother, appear to have influenced it considerably.¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, Grunhaus raises two problems: the author's failure (1) to cite R. Joseph (and to a lesser extent R. Moses) explicitly as Radak does elsewhere, and (2) to discuss the contributions of the earlier Kimḥis when critiquing prior commentaries in the introduction.¹⁰¹

The first of these concerns, of course, presents no problem if the author's standard policy was to cite anonymously. As for the absence of any acknowledgment of the prior Kimḥis in the introduction, it must first be recognized that this remains in need of explanation irrespective of authorship. For if our commentator wished to make clear the necessity of a new exposition, then why do these Kimḥi commentaries—with which he appears to have been closely familiar—not figure in the discussion? My own sense is that Radak's father and brother, as philologists, did not provide consistent enough explanations of the book's substance to satisfy our author.¹⁰² Therefore, he set out to provide an elucidation of the book's hortatory content from which “the masses might benefit”; and in turn, the primary objects of his critique needed to be the more metaphoric

⁹⁹ In the latter case, the term לפי פשוטו itself is borrowed from Rashi.

¹⁰⁰ See Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 317 n. 34.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 317.

¹⁰² Compare Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 36, who sees Radak as reacting to his brother's work, and in turn, keeping philological comments to a minimum.

commentaries, which did concentrate on the substance of the book but in a way that he considered to be fundamentally inadequate.

Whatever the merits of this explanation, is the lack of reference to R. Joseph and R. Moses Kimḥi in the introduction a *greater* problem if our author is Radak? This strikes me as a highly questionable proposition. After all, a family member, particularly one who was also a close disciple, might have been especially reluctant to spell out why he considered his older relatives' works insufficient. In fact, if Radak is the author, this might actually *better* explain why the earlier Kimḥis do not figure in the introduction. By way of illustration, consider the awkward effort made by R. Joseph Ibn Yahya (1494-1534), in the introduction to his own Proverbs commentary,¹⁰³ to balance his sweeping criticism of the work of his older relative with glowing praises of the individual:

I turned to face the wilderness...I found no satisfaction in [prior commentaries]—I was like a stranger in their eyes, for they do not provide connections between the verses.... Among them is the greatest of the generation...the elder Rabbi Don David Yahya my relative, who has fangs as a lion: he too did as they did—he is no different from them!—in his commentary *Qav ve-Naqi*.

Quite probably, this author would have been better advised to stick to his general characterization of prior treatments, and leave well enough alone.

Treatment of Philological and Masoretic Issues

Grunhaus opens her discussion of evidence against Radak's authorship with some brief remarks concerning philology and Masorah:

Firstly, certain hallmarks of Radak's commentaries are missing. There is comparatively little [assessment] of biblical stylistics and when biblical stylistics are [assessed], Radak's standard citation of the same [stylistic feature elsewhere in the Bible] is completely absent. קרי וכתוב, 'words that are read differently from the way they

¹⁰³ This commentary is reproduced in the *'Orim Gedolim* Rabbinic Bible, Jerusalem, 1992.

are written', is not mentioned at all in *the commentary*, although it is almost never overlooked by Radak in his commentaries.¹⁰⁴

Now it is true that discussion of biblical style is somewhat less frequent in the Proverbs commentary than in Radak's works in general,¹⁰⁵ but this is probably the result of an early, less expansive exegetical program—to be discussed shortly—made even narrower by the author's focused objective of providing a non-figurative exposition of the book's content.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the assertion that citation of stylistic parallels is "completely absent" is misleading and not quite accurate. As does Radak, the author regularly provides parallels relating to lexicography, if not to syntax; and at 6:5, there appears, in a style especially consistent with Radak's, a parallel for the elision of a noun governed by a prior noun in the construct state ("חסר הנסמך" followed by the presentation of an analogous case).

While our commentator indeed does not address *qerei-ketiv* disparities, this is one of several features of the commentary that match those of Radak on Chronicles, where he similarly ignores this type of Masoretic uncertainty. For as I have argued elsewhere, explanation of *qerei-ketiv* alternatives was evidently not part of Radak's exegetical program in the earliest stages of his career.¹⁰⁷ An exception does appear at II Chronicles 24:27, where Radak indeed addresses the different options presented by the *qerei* and the *ketiv*. But the relevant part of the comment is missing from MSS Paris and Munich, and was apparently not in the earliest version of the commentary—that is, the one predictably closest to the Proverbs commentary in its exegetical and compositional style.

¹⁰⁴ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 316. See n. 31, where she acknowledges one case where the *qerei* and *ketiv* are both explained in keeping with Radak's practice, even though the author does not indicate, as Radak generally does, "that the alternative readings are due to קרי וכתוב."

¹⁰⁵ Since, as Grunhaus indicates in her remarks, Radak commonly cites other biblical verses, especially in philological contexts, it is not surprising—given our commentator's comparatively infrequent discussion of stylistic issues—that biblical citations appear less commonly here than in Radak's other works. Contrast her argument in "Commentary on Proverbs," 325.

¹⁰⁶ As above, n. 102, Talmage suggests that Radak deliberately limited his discussion of philological matters.

¹⁰⁷ See Berger, "Exegetical Programme," 90.

Utilization of Targum

Grunhaus counts twenty-four citations of Targum Onkelos in the Proverbs commentary,¹⁰⁸ and seven of Targum Jonathan. This, she argues, is inconsistent with the practice of Radak, whose citations of Jonathan are innumerable and who, according to Harry Cohen, cites Onkelos only thirty-three times in his commentaries on the Prophets and Writings.¹⁰⁹

In fact, however, this tally of thirty-three (itself a moderate undercount¹¹⁰) includes only citations of Onkelos by name. On the other hand, none of the citations in the Proverbs commentary makes explicit mention of Onkelos. A proper comparison, therefore, would require that unnamed references to Onkelos in Radak—which are distinctly more common—also be considered. Now while it remains true that Radak’s citations of Jonathan in commentaries other than Proverbs—explicitly noted or not—far outnumber his references to Onkelos, this apparent inconsistency with the Proverbs commentary is entirely neutralized by another crucial consideration. When composing his works on the Prophets and Writings, Radak was clearly working with Targum Jonathan at his side, except in the case of the commentary on Chronicles and—if Radak is its author—of the commentary on Proverbs.¹¹¹ Accordingly, in the

¹⁰⁸ She does not provide a list. My own count produces twenty-two, an inconsequential difference.

¹⁰⁹ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 323 and n. 59; Cohen, *Commentary on Hosea*, xxiv n. 5.

¹¹⁰ A search of אונקלוס and אונקלוס in the *Haketer* database produces forty-one appearances in Radak’s commentaries to the Prophets and Writings.

¹¹¹ On Chronicles, it is clear that no Targum was available to Radak; see Pinkhos Churgin, *The Targum to Hagiographa* (Hebrew), New York: Horeb, 1945, 236, as well as the citations in Berger, “Exegetical Programme,” 84 n. 9. For a discussion of the lone case where Radak cites the Targum on Proverbs, at I Samuel 11:8 (and in a parallel remark in *Shorashim*, entry בזק), see Bryna J. Levy, “Rashi’s Commentary on the Book of Samuel: Critical Edition and Supercommentary,” Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva University, 1987, 60. Levy demonstrates that Radak’s entire comment appears to be adapted from an earlier source. It therefore remains highly unlikely that Radak possessed this Targum. An identical citation of the Targum on Proverbs appears in printed texts of Rashi on the same verse in Samuel. However, as noted by Abraham Berliner, “Toward a History of Rashi’s Commentaries,” translated into Hebrew from German in Berliner, *Selected Writings*, Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1969, 210—and as confirmed by Levy—the comment in Rashi does not appear to be authentic, and he too seems not to have had this Targum. Contrast

majority of his works, when Radak cites a targumic rendering it is generally *on the verse he is interpreting*. However, when he needs to seek elsewhere for an Aramaic rendering that serves his purpose, it is actually his *standard practice* to go to the Pentateuch and Onkelos first.¹¹² Indeed, without a running Targum on Proverbs having been available, it is precisely this policy that accounts for the comparatively high number of references to Onkelos in the Proverbs commentary. As for the Chronicles commentary, the distribution one finds is consistent with this pattern, if unique in its own right. The majority of Radak's targumic citations are of Jonathan on the verse in the Former Prophets that *parallels* the one in Chronicles; but of the others, only two are of Jonathan,¹¹³ while the remaining eight are either of Onkelos or are generic targumic renderings of terms that appear throughout the Bible.¹¹⁴ When the matter is properly evaluated, then, the utilization of Targum in the Proverbs commentary, if anything, contributes further to the impression that Radak is its author.¹¹⁵

Churgin, *Targum*, 85, who endorses an earlier claim that Rashi had the Targum on Proverbs based on the citation in printed editions of the Samuel commentary.

¹¹² Radak's commentary on the short Book of Malachi provides a neat, contained sample. In that work, I count fifteen citations of Jonathan, all from the Targum on the verse Radak is interpreting, and three citations (at 1:9, 1:13 and 1:14) of targumic renderings from elsewhere—all of Onkelos.

¹¹³ These appear at I 7:8 and II 32:28. Another, at I 2:55, is merely a citation of Pseudo-Rashi's reference to Jonathan. Still another, at I 15:27, follows Radak's citation of Jonathan's rendering of the verse that parallels Chronicles, and serves to clarify Jonathan's terminology.

¹¹⁴ These appear at II 2:6, 2:9, 2:15, 15:13, 16:14, 27:4, 29:11, and 36:16.

¹¹⁵ As a secondary matter, Grunhaus adds that our commentator repeats some targumic citations in different places in the work, "which does not seem to be the case with Radak." Even if this could be shown to be uncharacteristic of Radak in his later works, the evidence relating to targumic citations would appear to remain no worse than neutral for the purposes of our argument.

Citation of Rabbinic Literature

Grunhaus observes that the overwhelming majority of citations of rabbinic literature in the Proverbs commentary already appear in Rashi.¹¹⁶ That Radak would incorporate a fair number of Rashi's rabbinic citations is not shocking in itself: as Grunhaus has argued in another study, Rashi served as an important source for rabbinic interpretations that appear in Radak;¹¹⁷ and as should be clear by now, our commentator was working closely with Rashi on Proverbs. The more important point, rather, is that there appear strikingly few citations of the rabbis *not* taken from Rashi, while Radak's usual practice is to cite the rabbis more liberally and give expression to his own broad knowledge of rabbinic texts. Indeed, according to Grunhaus, it may be inferred that the Proverbs commentator's familiarity with rabbinic literature was severely limited.

Again, however, I call attention to the tendencies exhibited in the early versions of Radak on Chronicles. As I have shown elsewhere, after composing his original commentary on Chronicles, Radak appears to have markedly expanded his exegetical program, particularly with respect to his incorporation of rabbinic exegesis.¹¹⁸ Thus, an especially large percentage of the rabbinic citations in the Chronicles commentary are later additions. The citations in the earlier versions, furthermore, are also limited in type. Most notably, midrashic expositions are offered only in response to textual difficulties otherwise addressed by Radak. It is only in the later versions that one finds homiletic citations not prompted by problems in the text, halakhic derivations from the Talmud, and matters raised by the rabbis—or information they convey—that are likewise unrelated to exegetical concerns. As I concluded in the context of that discussion,

the most dramatic and sizeable modifications of the commentary reflected in Radak's later insertions involve the addition of rabbinic material [emphasis in the original]. While it is likely that some of this results from Radak's incorporation of rabbinic material that he came across only later, the extent to which the later additions tend to be rabbinic and the rabbinic material tends to have been inserted late points suggestively toward a programmatic shift. Radak's

¹¹⁶ Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 318-319.

¹¹⁷ Grunhaus, "Dependence of Radak on Rashi."

¹¹⁸ Berger, "Exegetical Programme," 90-92.

utilisation of rabbinic sources, like other aspects of his programme, would appear to have developed appreciably as his exegetical career progressed.

In the Proverbs commentary too, rabbinic citations appear specifically in the context of the author's treatment of exegetical issues, generally either for support or as alternatives worthy of consideration.¹¹⁹ In keeping with our stance that the Proverbs commentary was Radak's very first exegetical undertaking, I suggest that his program with respect to citation of rabbinic literature was similarly—if more intensely—limited. Particularly since his stated objective was to provide a flowing, literal exposition of the book, Radak, at this most primitive stage of his development as an exegete, did not aggressively pursue rabbinic interpretation beyond what he found in Rashi. If this is correct, then the paucity of citations of the rabbis not borrowed from Rashi does not result from the author's minimal proficiency in classical texts, but from programmatic limitations that best served his purposes in this commentary—and that, most important, mark the very earliest stage of Radak's exegetical career.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ A full list of these citations appears in Grunhaus, "Commentary on Proverbs," 318 n. 38.

¹²⁰ The absence in the Proverbs commentary of what Grunhaus calls the *perush kaful*, said to be Radak's "most common format for quotation of rabbinic passages" ("Commentary on Proverbs," 318), is of little significance. She is referring to Radak's presentation of a *peshat* followed by a *derash*, both of which he labels accordingly. Even if a plurality of Radak's rabbinic citations follow this format, such instances remain only a small percentage of all his references to rabbinic literature. In the Chronicles commentary there are just two such examples; and given the especially small number of rabbinic citations in the Proverbs commentary, it is not at all exceptional that this method of presentation does not appear. As for the additional claim (*ibid.*) that "cases in which a rabbinic interpretation is quoted before a supposed *peshat*, such as the comments on Prov. 9:1 and 18:21, do not function like comments of the same structure in Radak's known commentaries," no further explanation is provided. It must be recalled that when weighing alternatives, our commentator is often concerned with the question of literal vs. figurative interpretation, as he is at least in part at 9:1; and there is little in Radak's known works to serve as a basis for comparison. The same must be said of Grunhaus's related comments on page 320 concerning the "ordering of interpretations." A further assertion (*ibid.*, 319) that most rabbinic citations support a preaching goal

Brevity of Comments and Lack of Philosophical Content

Grunhaus makes passing reference to the absence of “Radak’s characteristic philosophical musings or lengthy digressions” in the Proverbs commentary.¹²¹ Again, it is necessary to evaluate this in light of Radak’s work on Chronicles, its earlier versions in particular.

We have seen that in his citations of rabbinic literature in the Chronicles commentary, Radak initially limited himself to material addressing textual concerns. This restrictive focus on acute problems in the text, in fact, characterizes the commentary more generally.¹²² In the introduction to his commentary on Samuel, Abravanel already complained of the minimal breadth of Radak’s comments on Chronicles, considering them to be lacking in profundity and “meager to the point of insignificance.” Large stretches of reasonably lucid text prompt no comment from Radak at all, and his typical sensitivity to the intricacies of narrative rarely finds expression. Individual comments too may be uncharacteristically terse, such as at I 14:14: “ממול הבכאים: פרשו בו תותים” (“Opposite the bushes’: They have explained this to mean mulberry bushes”). The brevity of this remark contrasts sharply with the length of Radak’s parallel comment at II Samuel 5:24, where he adds a citation of the Targum, a rabbinic precedent for the use of the term תותים, and a biblical parallel for בכאים.

Accordingly, while the precise definition of a “lengthy digression” for these purposes must remain subjective, it is quite fair to say that just as in the case of Proverbs, diversions from the exegetical issue under consideration do not, as a rule, appear in the early versions of the Chronicles commentary, where Radak’s comments remain closely connected to his discussions of the text. If the exegetical style in the Proverbs commentary, then, is more tightly constrained than that in

rather than an exegetical one is accompanied by an example from a comment at 6:33; but it is not clear to me how this example corroborates the claim in question.

¹²¹ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 324 n. 62. As observed by Talmage, *Commentaries on Proverbs*, 38-40, while there are no actual philosophical deliberations in the work, there is a philosophical dimension to many of its hortatory comments, some of which are notably consistent with Radak’s remarks elsewhere. In particular, see Talmage’s discussion of the author’s prescription that one study Torah before other branches of knowledge.

¹²² Berger, “Exegetical Programme,” 84-92.

Radak's works more generally, it remains fundamentally consistent with the more restrictive program found in the commentary on Chronicles.¹²³

With respect to treatment of philosophical matters, it is especially striking that the few philosophical remarks in Radak on Chronicles are *all later additions* not found in MSS Paris and Munich—including several reinterpretations of the biblical text motivated by rationalism, generally a trademark of Radak's exegesis.¹²⁴ Once again, the similar absence of this feature in the Proverbs commentary raises no problem at all if the work represents his first exegetical effort; for as the Chronicles commentary suggests, it is only later that this became a critical part of Radak's program.

Discrepancies with Radak's Shorashim

Grunhaus observes that the Proverbs commentary contains several interpretations at odds with those appearing in Radak's *Shorashim*. While rightly acknowledging that such inconsistencies with the lexicon are not uncommon in Radak's works, she indicates that in the case of the commentary on Proverbs, two specific departures from *Shorashim* are especially suggestive.¹²⁵

First, at 20:25 the Proverbs commentator offers a secondary interpretation of the phrase אָחַר נִדְרִים לְבַקֵּר (literally: “after vows, to scrutinize”) in the name of another unspecified exegete: the verse, according to this view, admonishes an individual who evaluates his ability to fulfill a vow only after having uttered it. In *Shorashim* (entry לוֹעַ),

¹²³ Ibid., 84 n. 9. Like Abravanel, who reacted to Radak's relatively unelaborate commentary on Chronicles, Talmage, *Man and Commentaries*, 60, alludes to unspecified limitations of the Proverbs commentary, and implies that these account for its apparently minimal circulation. Contrast Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 316, for whom the work's restricted availability raises questions about the attribution to Radak. A more curt style in the Proverbs commentary is also manifest, as Grunhaus observes (ibid., 321), in the relative absence of reflection upon and categorization of interpretations cited from others. As she indicates in that context (n. 48), the commentary contains instances where a comment prefaced by יש מפרשים is simply followed by another of the same, which is unusual in Radak. But consider the chain of *three* interpretations prefaced by יש מפרשים in Radak at I Chronicles 2:52.

¹²⁴ Berger, “Exegetical Programme,” 88-89.

¹²⁵ Grunhaus, “Commentary on Proverbs,” 325-326.

however, this interpretation is the only one that appears, which suggests to Grunhaus that “Radak did not write that entry in *the commentary*.”

Now even without further argument, such a disparity need not mean much: if Radak initially considered this interpretation to be the simple one, and only later came to prefer another, it is unexceptional that he would present it first in *Shorashim* unacknowledged, and then in the commentary—having changed his mind—cite it merely as an alternative favored by someone else.¹²⁶ What is more, though, a closer look at *Shorashim* reveals that even in that work, the interpretation in question is probably not the preferred one. Rather, Radak presents it as the logical continuation of the verse according to a *secondary* interpretation that he offers for the term ילע: if—and only if—the verb ילע means “to utter,” then the full verse—מוקש אדם ילע קדש ואחר נדרים לבקר—reads as one continuous sentence: “It is a failure for a person to utter a vow to consecrate [an item] and only later to evaluate [the feasibility of] the vow.”

There remains, then, only one serious example, concerning the meaning of the phrase לב שמח ייטיב גהה in Proverbs 17:22. Grunhaus correctly notes that in *Shorashim* (entry גהה), Radak’s preferred rendering of this—following R. Moses Kimh□i on Proverbs—is “a happy heart benefits [the body like] medicine,” and that he cites this in several places in his commentaries as an instance of elision of the comparative *kaf*. On the other hand, at Proverbs 15:13, “the suggestion of addition of a [comparative *kaf*] to the word גהה is quoted as a secondary explanation of the verse¹²⁷ in the name of יש מפרשים ‘there are those who explain,’ and in the doublet of the same verse, 17:22, no mention at all is made of the addition of a [*kaf*].” And indeed, the favored interpretation in both places in the Proverbs commentary is quite distinct: the phrase means “a happy heart enhances

¹²⁶ Compare Melamed, volume 2 of *Bible Commentators*, 740. To be sure, recall that earlier I presented the possibility that the Proverbs commentary actually pre-dated *Mikhlol-Shorashim*. (See also n. 128 below.) If it is indeed the case that Radak wrote the Proverbs commentary first, it would emerge that he later became—if anything—more confident of the interpretation under discussion, not less so. In either event, I argue in what follows that there is probably no discrepancy between the two passages in Radak.

¹²⁷ As I note below, our texts of the phrase in 15:13 actually read לב שמח ייטיב פנים and do not contain the word גהה, even as the lemma in the Proverbs commentary does read ייטיב גהה. The lemma probably reflects some type of error (see next note) rather than a different biblical variant.

the brightness [of one's face/complexion]" (גהה deriving from the root נגה)—a view adopted by Rashi, and by others cited in Talmage's note at 17:22.

Nevertheless, if we are correct that the Proverbs commentary is Radak's first work of exegesis, then it need not be considered problematic that he departs from an interpretation that serves as a favored paradigm in his *later* works specifically. Radak indeed preferred this interpretation in *Shorashim* and later employed it as a standard example of elision of *kaf*; but when he composed the commentary on Proverbs, the influence of Rashi—and perhaps of others—prompted him to give preference to an alternative explanation. In fact, for another reason too, this alternative might have been especially attractive to Radak when composing a running commentary on Proverbs. In place of גהה, the biblical text in 15:13 actually reads פנים—"face"—even as the remainder of the phrase is identical to that in 17:22. The similarity between the two phrases could well have prompted our commentator to interpret גהה in the sense of brightness of complexion, so that it parallels the reference to a face in 15:13. Quite possibly, it is only when reflecting on the phrase in isolation—when composing *Shorashim* and when later seeking a paradigm for elision of *kaf*—that Radak, following his brother, was inclined to render גהה as "medicine." And indeed, after he completed the Proverbs commentary early in his career, this latter interpretation became Radak's routine example—one to which he adhered consistently without further reevaluation.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ As I noted near the beginning, it cannot be ruled out that the Proverbs commentary actually preceded Radak's grammatical works—the reference to *Mikhlol* at 5:22 having been added later. I would not be at all surprised if the explanation of גהה in the sense of brightness of complexion reflects Radak's initial position, and that his acceptance of his brother's position in *Shorashim* and in his remaining works *all* represent his later thinking. His incorporation of his brother's position at Proverbs 15:13 (prefaced by יש מפרשים) might well be a later addition reflecting Radak's serious consideration of that option—erroneously inserted there rather than at 17:22, where the word גהה actually appears (compare above, n. 18, concerning the awkward placement of some of Radak's later additions). This insertion, then, might have prompted a subsequent "correction" of the lemma, from ייטיב גהה to ייטיב פנים. Indeed, the rest of the comment, contrary to the one at 17:22, does not consider the word גהה specifically, and probably addresses the phrase as we have it, with the word פנים in place of גהה. In fact, I cannot think of a more persuasive explanation of how גהה emerged in the lemma at 15:13.

Conclusion

If, as its opening paragraph suggests, the Proverbs commentary is its author's first exegetical composition, then we remain with little reason to question the position of Cassuto and Talmage, for whom the work's Kimhian features pointed toward Radak's authorship. Indeed, in my opinion, the many specific observations we have added to the discussion lend decisive support to this position. At the same time, the many counterarguments we have seen, while insufficient to challenge this conclusion, remain important for the worthy contribution they provide, if indirectly, to our understanding of the early exegesis of Radak and its subsequent development.