NAHMANNIDES' AMENDMENTS TO HIS COMMENTARY ON THE TORAH

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I. Introduction

This celebrated passage\(^1\) from Rabbi Moses Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah establishes the fact that Nahmanides wrote his commentary before he arrived in Jerusalem and added material after his arrival.\(^2\) In addition, a number of manuscripts of Nahmanides' commentary, present us with lists of passages which he added to his commentary while he lived in Acre.\(^3\) The composite list from all of these manuscripts totals some 134 comments.\(^4\)


2 The standard dates of birth and death given for Nahmanides are 1194-1270. He arrived in Israel in 1267. See the evidence presented by C. Chavel, Rabbenu Moshe ben Nahman: Toledot Hayyav, Zemanno ve-Hibburav (Jerusalem, 1967): 31-32, 168-169, 221. Nahmanides' commentary was apparently written toward the end of his life. See Chavel, Perush, 8, and Rabbenu, 153, who attempts to prove that the commentary on Exodus was completed when Nahmanides was at least seventy years old from the concluding poem appended to that book. Chavel attempts to buttress this claim from the passage cited above (בראשית ל"ה:ט"ז). As noted, this passage cannot serve as evidence regarding the entire commentary, as it is a later addition. It, along with the passages added in Acre, does prove however, that Nahmanides completed his commentary before his arrival in Israel. Hence, the majority of the commentary was probably composed between the years 1264 and 1267.

3 These lists were collated and published by Kahana, 31-39.

4 Kahana's composite list does not claim to exhaust all of Nahmanides' interpolations. Kahana himself notes that the
The phenomenon of an author updating and revising his or her work is neither a surprising nor an uncommon occurrence. Many of the classic Jewish medieval codes and commentaries were the subjects of considerable editing by their authors. Yet, the case of Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah is unusual in two respects:

1. We possess evidence which clearly identifies the corpus of Nahmanides' later additions, and we can determine the final stage of the commentary.

2. We know that Nahmanides' location when he updated his commentary was different than when he authored the original version. This unique aspect obligates us to examine the possibility that a portion of the insertions may have been generated by this interim change of residence.

My paper will begin the work of categorizing and analyzing Nahmanides' additions. I will pay particular attention to cases in which the added comment may have resulted from his change of locale and I will illustrate the various factors which may be involved in this change. In cases where there is no overt relation to his new location, I will search for other distinguishing characteristics which might explain why these comments were only incorporated at a later stage.

II. Additions Related to Change of Residence

For Nahmanides, the move to Israel revealed potential new sources of information, of great value for his written works, and particularly, for his Torah commentary. These included the new capability of

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passage cited earlier from Nahmanides' commentary to בראשית ל"ה:ט"ז as well as Nahmanides' addendum to בראשית ל"ה:ט"ז and önce ד'בריאתת ל"ה:ט"ז as places in which the variance between manuscripts suggests multiple stages in the writing of Nahmanides commentary. See Kahana, 46. Also See Kahana, 40, note 28, regarding the "אם יחיינו הממית והמחיה" in the addition to בראשית י"ט:ה despite the referred to comment on ויקרא י"ח:כ"ה not being identified as a later addition. One suspects that a careful analysis of all of the various manuscripts will provide many additional instances of revisions. It is possible that Kahana's composite list contains only the additions written in Acre, but not those added in Jerusalem or prior to Nahmanides' arrival in Israel.
surveying the actual places described in the Bible as well coming into contact with new people and previously unavailable literature.

A. Firsthand Knowledge of the Ancient Near East

The above citation from "בראשיתו ל"ה:ט"ז" is the clearest illustration of the impact which newly obtained geographical information had on Nahmanides' commentary. However, it is by no means the only example where insertions of Nahmanides could have resulted only from newly acquired knowledge of Israel. Other instances are:

There are two other additions which may also be a product of Nahmanides' arrival in Israel:

However, it is possible to maintain that in the preceding two cases, Nahmanides' interpretation is derived
only from scriptural verses and that concrete geographical knowledge was unnecessary for the interpretation.

**B. Secondhand Knowledge of the Ancient Near East**

In one additional case, Nahmanides' insertion may have resulted from geographical knowledge obtained upon his arrival in Israel, though not through first-hand observation, but rather from information he received from others.\(^5\) The text of this insertion reads:

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\text{ךְ֜נָבִ֥י בְּרָאוּשַּׁתְּ פַּרְקָּאַ֥ה פָּסְקָאֶֽה}
\]

ונ недо חוכן וידענו על פי תלמידים רבים שחי יושבי האזור ההוא. כי חוה עיר דינלה בך חור ומי אשר

רוחות המקדנים אבל, ובננה בני חור כוף ישש ימים, ואילו היא לכללה בעובר חמור בך ארמ נרירם

ובנ נדה פרת נבקל ארי ישראל, בנ חור הלוחל קדהא אשוור.

**C. Newly Obtained Literature**

Nahmanides' insertions to his Biblical commentary also display a different array of sources than the earlier portion of his commentary. Undoubtedly, the fact that Nahmanides mentioned a particular source only in his insertions does not prove beyond a doubt that he did not have the source at his disposal at an earlier date. It could be argued that when he wrote the original commentary, he simply chose not to make use of this source. However, we will suggest below that certain additional factors may argue in favor of the explanation that he only obtained these sources upon his arrival in Israel.

"חכמי הצרפתים"

Nahmanides mentions "חכמי הצרפתים" or "חכמי הצורפים" only twice in his entire commentary. Both of these cases are later insertions:

\(^5\) This suggestion was already made by Kahana, 40.
The opinion cited in the first case may be found in the commentary of R. Samson of Sens on Tractate Nega`im (10:10). As Nahmanides upon his arrival in Acre was in contact with the students of the Tosafist academy, which had been established by R. Samson himself only fifty years earlier, it appears reasonable that at least the first addition resulted from Nahmanides obtaining access to new scholarship. In fact, in his Derashah on Rosh Hashanah, which he presented in Acre, Nahmanides mentions that it was there that he viewed a Tosafist commentary on the Talmud for the very first time: "ועכשיו בעיר הזאת ראיתי התוספות הארוכות של הרב ר' אלחנן ז"ל...".7

Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor

In seven instances,8 or five percent of the total additions, the added comments of Nahmanides parallel exegesis found in the commentary of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor. The following are the four most striking examples:

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6 The exegesis in the second case appears also in the commentary of Hizkuni.

7 See Kitvei Ramban I, ed. C. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1963): 228. However, in the preceding paragraph, Nahmanides mentions that in his youth, he was informed by some of the Tosafists of another explanation of R. Samson.

8 In addition to the four examples cited in their entirety below, the additions of Nahmanides to ויקרא יט:י, במדבר כ:א, דברים יא:ד are also similar to comments of Bekhor Shor on those respective verses. In these three cases, the parallelism is less distinctive, and it is easier to attribute the similarity in interpretation to mere coincidence.
1) רמב"ן בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
מעש השכמתם והלכתם לדרככם – לחדיד לכם שאם ת MySqlCommand את אהרן בנקה, כי ידוע билין ונאש עדיר.
והשם, בכלי המש(expression) כי✏️ ייבין אוחי וכנף הבקר ייעשה.

2) רמב"ן בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
וסewn the Hebrew text here.

3) רמב"ן בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
ר"י בכור שור בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
לא תביי אוחי שבธนา מונה ויתם דומם.

4) רמב"ן בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
ר"י בכור שור בראשית פרק יט פסוק ב
ואלה הוא לידע מהorsche, ולא לידע את הרובים,
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וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראובארבע כתיב כן, לפי אין
וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראובארבע כתיב כן, לפי אין
וכל ישראל ישמעו וירא...
In light of our earlier suggestion that Nahmanides may have obtained certain Tosafist material only upon his arrival in Israel, we must consider the possibility that he became aware of these comments of Bekhor Shor only at that same time. However, the case of Bekhor Shor is significantly more complex since despite the similarity of interpretation and the fact that such interpretations are not found in other commentaries, it is still possible that Nahmanides arrived at his interpretation independently and not as a result of Bekhor Shor's influence.

Furthermore, there are many additional parallels between Bekhor Shor's exegesis and the original material of Nahmanides' commentary, making it difficult to claim that Nahmanides received the commentary of Bekhor Shor only in Israel, even were one to postulate that there indeed was influence at all.

On the other hand, it is worth noting that the above examples are some of the closest parallels between the two commentaries. For this reason, the possibility that Nahmanides received oral transmissions of some of Bekhor Shor's interpretations while still in Spain, but only obtained a written copy of Bekhor Shor's commentary in Israel, should still be investigated further.

Rabbenu Hananel and Geonic Material

Nahmanides cites Rabbenu Hananel's Torah commentary in six places. As all six of these instances are later additions, Kahana (42) suggests that Nahmanides obtained Rabbenu Hananel's commentary only after arriving in Israel. Kahana's suggestion may also be supported by the fact that Nahmanides does not

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9 In fact, in three of the above cases (בראשית ל"ז:כ"ב, ויקרא י"ט:י"ד, ה"ז), material which was apparently present in Nahmanides' first draft also parallels Bekhor Shor's exegesis.

10 As noted earlier in note 4, there may be many other interpolations of Nahmanides besides those contained in Kahana's list. This may possibly account for yet other parallels between Bekhor Shor and Nahmanides.

11 They are in his comments to: שמות ו"ד, ויקרא כ"ג:ז, כ"ג:א, ח"ג, במדבר ט"ז:ה, ט"ז:כ"א, כ':א-ח.

12 In the case of ויקרא כ"ג:ז, it is apparent that Nahmanides became aware of Rabbenu Hananel's position only after composing the original draft of his commentary from the fact that Nahmanides first presents the very same interpretation as his own.
quote Geonic Biblical commentaries such as those of Rav Sa`adia Gaon and Rav Samuel ben Hofni Gaon from their original texts but rather, secondhand, from their citation by Ibn Ezra.13 Presumably, the original commentaries were unavailable to Nahmanides. Additionally, Nahmanides' lone citation of Rabbenu Nissim14 is a later addition. Thus it would seem very plausible that when writing the first draft of his commentary, in Spain, Nahmanides did not have any Geonic or Tunisian commentaries at his disposal.15

**Targum Yerushalmi**

Nahmanides cites the Biblical Targum Yerushalmi on ten occasions in his commentary.16 Five of these cases17 are later insertions to his commentary. Of the remaining five cases,18 four appear in our version of the Targum Yonatan but not in our version of the Targum Yerushalmi.19 Here too, there exists a possibility that, in Israel, Nahmanides came into possession of a Targum Yerushalmi to which he had not previously had access.

13 See Nahmanides' citations of Rav Sa`adia Gaon in his comments on בְּרָאשִׁית ב''א, מ''א, שְׁמוֹת ס''א, י''א, וְיִקְרָא א''א, בְּמִדְבָּר כ''א, וְיִקְרָא ר''א, כ''א.
The one exception is the citation of Rav Sa`adia in שְׁמוֹת ח''א which does not appear in Ibn Ezra. This interpretation of Rav Sa`adia is cited in the commentary of Abraham Maimonides as originating in both Sa`adia's translation and commentary. This anomaly requires further investigation.

14 See Nahmanides' commentary to בְּמִדְבָּר ה''ב.

15 Interestingly, Nahmanides' later addition of his comment on בְּרָאשִׁית ה''ז is almost identical with the interpretation of Rav Samuel ben Hofni Gaon cited by Abraham Maimonides.

16 In three additional cases (שם ה'ל''ד, וְיִקְרָא א''א, בְּמִדְבָּר ח''א), Nahmanides uses the term "המְתַרְגִּים הָיוּ וּרְאוּשָׁלְמָיו" when referring to the separate Targumim on מִשְׁלי שִׁיר הָעֵשִׁרִים, אֶלֶף.

17 These are his comments to בְּרָאשִׁית ה''ד:ז, שְׁמוֹת מ''א:ג, בְּמִדְבָּר י''א:ג, וְיִקְרָא ר''א:ה.

18 These are Nahmanides' comments to בְּרָאשִׁית א''ז:ו, בְּמִדְבָּר מ''א:ג, וְיִקְרָא ר''א:ד.

19 בְּרָאשִׁית א''ז:ו is the only instance in which Nahmanides, in the first draft of his commentary, cites a Targum Yerushalmi which is found in our Targum Yerushalmi.
Miscellaneous Works

Nahmanides never cites the Midrash Lekah Tov by name. However in two instances he cites exegesis which can be found in no other exegete or Midrash but is found almost verbatim in the Lekah Tov. Both of these cases are later additions of Nahmanides, leaving open the possibility that this work also may have been accessible only upon his arrival in Israel. The two cases are:

1) רמב"ן בראשית פרק יא פסוק לב
לכתח טוב ויקרא (ד': בהוצ' באבאר)
וכן מצאתי במדרש כל העצים כשרים חוץ משל זית
ושל גפן, שניהם קרבין על גבי המזבח.
והם מציינים באנדרפדר מגזרא את הרוח.
שנאמר ואותה התoba אל אחיה קשר:
בשלח:

2) רמב"ן דברים פרק טו פסוק א
לכתח טוב דברים (נ"ג. בהוצ' באבאר)
orachi לא כתוב במחברי ספר דבריudent הנגזרת
מלמד שמשתמשי על הקדר ומשמה נוהגת זה
והمنهج של שם משתמש.
נושט שמות משמודים.

Finally, there are two works cited by Nahmanides only on one occasion, each being an Israeli addition to the commentary. The ספר הנסיונות is cited in the addition to ויקרא י"א:י"ג and the ספר הלבנה is cited in the addition to דברים י"ח:ט.

III. Editorial Revisions Unrelated to Locale

While a significant fraction of Nahmanides' additions to his commentary may be related to his move to Israel, the vast majority are merely a continuation of the methods and analysis of the first version of the commentary. Thus, in these additions, we find analysis of Midrash and Targum, appraisal of the earlier

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exegesis of Rashi and Ibn Ezra, presentation of alternative new interpretations and development of earlier interpretations with new prooftexts and added details. In most of these cases no distinctive patterns emerge which would differentiate the additions from the earlier layer of the commentary.

However, in the area of Nahmanides' relating to passages from the rest of the Scriptures, there appears to be a distinguishing characteristic of the later additions. In the earlier draft of the commentary, it is very rare for Nahmanides to digress and relate at length to a Biblical passage, even one connected to his subject. Other texts are cited to shed light on the particular text under examination.\textsuperscript{20} In contrast, in some of his additions to his commentary, Nahmanides shows a much greater inclination to expand on other Biblical passages.\textsuperscript{21} It is possible that originally Nahmanides intended to author a commentary on the entire Bible. While in Israel, he realized that this goal was not likely to be realized and he therefore inserted some of the pieces of the potential commentary into his Torah commentary.

\textbf{IV. Influences Not Present in the Later Additions}

It is perhaps valuable to focus not only on the influences which are present in the additions to Nahmanides' commentary, but also on those which are found only rarely in the interpolations, but often in the earlier portion of the commentary.

The influence of Rabbi David Kimhi, while prevalent throughout the commentary, is conspicuously absent in the later additions. I have found only one case among the additions in which there is possibly an influence of Radak's commentary.\textsuperscript{22} This finding would be consistent with the theory that Nahmanides used

\textsuperscript{20} Nahmanides' excursions in the middle of his interpretations to שמות כ'ג and במדבר ל'ג may be the only exceptions to this rule.

\textsuperscript{21} Examples of this are his excurses in the midst of his interpretations of בראשית יט:ח', מט:ה', ומית:'מ"ד, במדבר א:ג', ט:כ"א, כ:נ"ד.

\textsuperscript{22} In that case, Nahmanides significantly expands on Radak's terse four word comment. It is very possible that in fact there is no influence here at all.
Radak’s works systematically in the composition of his commentary. As a result, most of what Nahmanides wished to incorporate from them was already absorbed in the initial development of the commentary and there was little need to utilize them in the later additions. Similarly, Nahmanides’ additions only rarely deal with Kabbalistic interpretations; it is possible that there was little new involvement in that discipline after his arrival in Israel.

V. Conclusion

Analysis of Nahmanides' later additions to his commentary may shed light on the development of the commentary and the sources of its various intellectual influences. In general brush strokes, it would appear likely that Nahmanides' analysis of Midrashim, Rashi and Ibn Ezra, his use of Radak's works and his Kabbalistic investigations form the foundation of his commentary. In contrast, the availability of and, consequently, the influence of Geonic and Tosafist material should probably be dated to the refining stage of the commentary, which took place in Israel.

A more complete analysis must await a thorough examination of the various manuscripts of Nahmanides’ commentary in order to ascertain the extent of the later interpolations. Such an analysis should also shed light on the critical issue of which later additions are completely new interpolations and which are simply reworkings of older material.

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23 Nahmanides' additions to בְּרָאָשִׁית טָהְרָה, שְׁמוֹת כִּיָּוָם, וּדְבַרְרֵי אָהִיל are the rare exceptions.