18th of Nisan, 5479

23/04/2019

To

Israel Science Foundation

Jabotinsky, 43

Jerusalem

Re:

A review of research proposal no. 929/19: The Attitudes of Mediaval Commentators to Biblical Ambiguity.

The recent generation of researchers has a great interest in how literary devices are reflected in medieval peshat commentary. Research proposal no. 929/19 by Prof. X and Prof. Y is concerned with the attitudes of medieval commentators to biblical ambiguity.

Numerous literary and linguistic phenomena fall under the definition of ambiguity. X and Y are interested in cases where the commentator presents two (or more) peshat interpretations of a single textual unit (one word, several words or a verse). They intend to gather such examples from peshat commentary written in Europe, focusing on the 12th and 13th centuries.

This research proposal continues and expands on X’s previous work, in which he gathered examples of ambiguities of this nature in the commentary of R. Joseph Bekhor Shor. A systematic examination of earlier commentary, such as Karaite and Geonim commentary, may reveal much more interesting material. The influence of Quran commentary is briefly (and inaccurately) mentioned in the introduction, and the influence of Muslim aesthtic perception, which is not mentioned at all, may be a necessary background.

The discussion of the history of ambiguity in ancient literature is poor and insufficient. The description of the phenomenon in Sages’ literature is inaccurate, as is the description of Ibn Ezra’s attitude to the issue. The researchers cite examples meant to clarify what peshat ambiguities are and how they are different from other categories of ambiguity, but these are not always fitting.

As mentioned, Prof. X has dealt with the relevant phenomena in the commentary of Joseph Bekhor Shor, and is the most suitable researcher to lead the proposed project. Prof. Y has dealt with ambiguity in the Tanakh, and his contribution to the project is essential.