

English Abstract

The Exegesis of Rabbi Yosef Chayun – In Light of his Commentary to the Second Psalm

Amos Frisch

This article is dedicated to the Biblical exegesis methods employed by Rabbi Yosef Chayun in his writings on the Book of Psalms. He was a Portuguese rabbinic scholar and leader of Lisbon's Jewish community during the 15th century. Rabbi Yosef Chayun- the Ri"ch, was the student of Rabbi Yitzchak Knopenton, and the teacher of Don Yitzchak Abarbanel. Instead of collecting a variety of sporadic examples from his broad range of commentaries, we will focus on Psalm 2, and thus be able to delve into its deeper understanding.

The starting point of this essay is the explanation of the Ri"ch to verse four, in which he determines that both the verbs that appear in it are in fact synonymous. Seemingly this is a deviation from one of the basic characteristics of his exegetical method- his fundamental opposition to duplication of meaning in seemingly repetitious terms.

But, it has already been observed that his main focus is not the distinction between the literal meanings of the individual words, but rather to prevent repetition in different parts of the verse. He does this also in this interpretation, by means of drawing a distinction between the motives for both of the verbs' actions. This "specific" distinction which was used in order to solve this repetition problem, does not stand on its own as simply solving a singular difficulty, but rather is viewed as a link in a chain which supports the interrelational structure throughout this psalm. From here we will transition to follow his various attitudes towards "Against Hashem and against his anointed" (Psalms 2:2) as a unifying motif in the psalm.

The aspiration to strive for the cohesion of the psalm brings to mind the exegetic style of another, later commentator- the Malbim. It appears one can compare them, not only regarding the issue of 'repetition of the matter in other words', but also in striving to

coherently plot the literary unit, a style found in the Malbim that I have already referred to in my previous research on him.

Towards the end of this article we review the attitude of the Ri"ch to three of the greatest commentators, whose affinity to them he declared in the introduction to his book- Rashi, Ibn Ezra and the Radak.