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What's in a Name: The Symbolic Rendering of Toponyms in Targum Isaiah

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1. Introduction

What's in a name? Well, sometimes just nothing. According to Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, 'That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet'.¹ A name may just be a name that was once given to a person or a place and has served since then as designation of that person or place. But names may also change due to a variety of reasons. If we restrict ourselves to place names, we see that they may get conquered and be given a new name by the occupying force, for instance Jerusalem, which was renamed Aelia Capitolina after it was conquered by Hadrian. Or names might be translated or adapted to the ruling language, like the Arabic *Iliyā'* for Aelia Capitolina. They also may get a symbolic nickname, like *Al-Quds* 'the Holy one' for Jerusalem in Islamic usage.² Therefore specific toponyms may reveal some of the historic or ideologic background of a literary work. This holds true even more for the

¹ Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 1-2.

² This may in itself be a translation of the Hebrew nickname עיר הקדש, 'the holy city', or 'the city of holiness' (Isa. 52:1, Neh. 11:1).

Targums, which besides a translation at times also give interpretations.³ The study of toponyms in the Targum may thus be helpful in determining the background of certain translations.

I started my research for this paper by making a full inventory of the toponyms in the Hebrew version of Isaiah. Then I paired these names with their rendering in the Targum. I categorized the findings in six groups, 1. Literal or Aramaized renderings, 2. Personified renderings where the place name is conceived as the king or the inhabitants of that place, 3. Allegorical interpretations, 4. Vague or general renderings of toponyms such as e.g. 'sea' for Tarshis, 5. Specifications of general terms, like 'the river Euphrates' for 'the river'. In the present paper I will concentrate on the third category, the allegorical or symbolic interrelation of toponyms.⁴ I will try to discover the reasons behind the interpretations, but also the hermeneutic and translational rules the meturgeman applied to come to his result.

³ For Targum Jonathan, see Z. Frankel, *Zu dem Targum der Propheten* (Breslau: Schletter'sche Buchhandlung, 1872) pp. 25-28; L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York/Baltimore: Ktav Pub Inc, 1983) pp. 111-128; L. Díez Merino, 'Interpretación de la toponimia como método hermenéutico en el Targum de Jonás, Miqueas, Nahum, Habaquq, Ageo Y Sofonías', *EstBib* 59 (2001), pp. 79-100; C.A. Dray, *Translation and Interpretation in the Targum to the Books of Kings* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) pp. 32-60.

⁴ The other categories will be treated in my book on Targum Isaiah, which is still work in progress.

2. Place Names in Isaiah

When the biblical book of Isaiah was translated into Aramaic, the translators had to decide what to do with the toponyms. The obvious choice seemed to leave them untranslated, and just transcribe them or adapt them to Aramaic usage. And that was in fact what they mostly did. From the 442 place names I counted,⁵ 327 were simply transcribed or Aramaized, such as for instance שילוחא for שילוח (Isa 8:6), or הר ציון דציון for הר ציון (Isa 8:18). That counts for a large majority of 74%. One place,⁶ Cush, occurred sometimes in its original name, while in other cases it was rendered as Hodu.⁷ Lebanon was rendered literally in five cases, while in four cases it was interpreted metaphorically.⁸

⁵ This count may be disputed. In some cases, it is not entirely clear whether a toponym is meant. Sometimes there is no difference between tribe or region, like for instance Judah. In other cases, it is not clear whether a word should be read as a toponym or a noun, like, for example, Kir. I followed my own interpretation.

⁶ Another, but arguable, place is Edom, that is rendered literally in Isa. 11:14, 34:5-6, and 63:1, while in Isa. 34:9, where it is not mentioned but clearly implied, it is rendered as Rome.

⁷ Cush occurred mostly its original form (Isa. 20:3,4,5, 37:9, 43:3, 45:14.) while at two occasions it was rendered as Hodu, (Isa. 11:11, 18:1).

⁸ Literally in Isa. 29:17, 33:9, 35:2, 40:16, 60:13, symbolically in Isa. 2:13, 10:34, 14:8, 37:24.

Ten places got a name that was probably better known to the translator and his audience.⁹ For instance, the ancient Egyptian city of Zoan is always rendered in the Targums by its contemporary Hellenistic name, Tanis.¹⁰

Sometimes the meturgeman obviously did not know exactly which place was meant. He then chose a quite general translation, like 'south' for Sinim (Isa. 49:12), and 'sea' or 'city of the sea' for Tarshis (Isa. 2:16, 23:1, 23:6, 23:14, 23:10, 60:9, 66:19).

In still some other cases a vague or general description was further specified, such as 'hills of the House of Judah' for 'hills' (Isa 7:25), 'Reed Sea' for 'water' (Isa 43:2, 63:12), and 'river Euphrates' for 'river' (Isa. 27:12).

Apart from these more or less straightforward cases and interpretations, there are also more complicated cases of metaphors that are interpreted as places, such as for instance the 'barren woman' in Isa. 54:1 that is interpreted as Jerusalem, or the 'hemmed-in stream' in Isa. 59:19 that is interpreted as the Euphrates.¹¹ But the exact opposite occurs as well, namely actual places that are interpreted figuratively. This phenomenon is the main theme

⁹ An additional case is found in a Tosefta Targum to Isa. 11:11 in Codex Reuchlin, where Hamath is translated as Antiochia (אנטוכיא).

¹⁰ Conform the Septuagint, see e.g. R.L. Troxel, 'What's in a Name? Contemporization and Toponyms in Lxx-Isaiah', in R.L. Troxel, K.G. Friebel, and D.R. Magary (eds.) *Seeking out the Wisdom of the Ancients : Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 330. The other toponyms that are contemporized are Ararat, Bashan, Cush, Ephah, Hamath, Hanes, Heres, Noph, and Shinar.

¹¹ Strictly speaking these cases do not belong to my study of toponyms that starts from the Hebrew Bible.

of this paper. But before we turn to the discussion of the cases concerned, first a few words on metaphors and allegories as translational challenges and opportunities.

3. *Metaphors and Allegories*

The Bible is a book of words and of images. Especially the books of the Prophets are full of figurative speech. The revelations the prophets received, were sometimes visions in the real sense of the word (מראה, חזון), but in order to convey them to the audience they had to translate them into words (גבא). In Isaiah we may think for instance of the throne vision in Isaiah 6. Apart from visions, the Prophets also received auditory revelations (משא) concerning their own life and mission, and messages which they had to pass on to individuals or the people at large. And in this transmission the prophets often used figurative language because it allows to convey the unspeakable and may help to understand the incomprehensible. But there is also a certain danger, for figurative language may be multi-interpretable, and it may lose some of its power through time. When it was decided to translate the Bible into Aramaic, the meturgemanim had a difficult mission. On the one hand they strove to give an exact rendering of the words of the biblical text in Aramaic, while on the other hand they also wanted to render the apparent meaning, which sometimes inevitably led to interpretative paraphrases.¹² The Targum's tendency to substitute figurative

¹² This is the 'mission impossible' that lies behind the famous saying of Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai in t.Meg 3:41: 'He who translates a verse literally is a liar, while he who adds anything thereto is a blasphemer'.

speech with factual statements was recognized early on.¹³ The meturgemanim had in general a dislike for metaphoric language, because it was apt to be misunderstood. Therefore, in their translations they often chose to give a realistic substitution of metaphors or to use the figure of extended simile.

The opposite of the realistic substitution of metaphors is the allegoric interpretation.¹⁴ In the former, a conscious metaphor is explained in realistic terms, whereas in the latter an apparent matter-of-fact description is interpreted allegorically. This is also a common feature of all the Targums, to all parts of the Bible.¹⁵ The decision to interpret a passage allegorically is often inspired by educational motives, for instance when the meturgeman recognized in the text a handle for introducing one of his favorite theological themes.

4. The Symbolic Interpretation of Toponyms in Targum Isaiah

Let us now proceed to discuss the cases of symbolic interpretation of actual places. I discerned thirty cases, which will all be discussed, though some only briefly in connection to other cases. We start with figurative interpretation by means of wordplay on resemblant roots.

¹³ E.g. Frankel, *Zu Dem Targum Der Propheten*, 29-32; P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1907 [i.e. 1927]) 84-92; J.F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949) xiii-xiv.

¹⁴ See Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets*, 80-84.

¹⁵ F. Böhl, 'Die Metaphorisierung (Metila) in Den Targumim Zum Pentateuch', *FJB* 15 (1987); R. Kasher, 'Metaphor and Allegory in the Aramaic Translations of the Bible', *JAB* 1 (1999).

Resemblant roots

Within the 'Tyre Pronouncement' of Isa. 23, we find a remarkable paraphrase in the third verse.

וּבְמַיִם רַבִּים זָרַע שִׁיחֹר	קִצִּיר יְאֹר תְּבוּאָתָהּ	וְנָתַתְּ סִתְרֵי גֹזִים	HT
דְּהוּת מִסַּפְקָא סַחֲוֵרָא לְעַמְמִין סְגִיֵּאִין	דְּבַחְצַד כְּנִישַׁת נְהֵרָא עֲלִלְתָּהּ	וְהוּת סַחֲוֵרָא לְעַמְמֵיֵא	TgJon

The difficult Hebrew text may be translated as 'Over many waters [came] the grain of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile being her revenue, and she was the gain of nations'. The first part of the verse is rephrased rather freely as 'who was supplying trade for many nations'. The place name Shihor has been replaced here by the noun סַחֲוֵרָא 'trade'. The first reason is obviously the acoustic resemblance between the toponym Shihor and the noun סַחֲוֵרָא. This substitution is probably further triggered by the occurrence of the word סִתְרֵי at the end of the verse. Thirdly, the expression מִסַּפְקָא סַחֲוֵרָא 'to supply trade' is an expression that occurs regularly within the context of Tyre. Along with this place it occurs in Isa. 23:17, and in a few

cases in Ezekiel.¹⁶ This is a case of associative translation to strengthen the internal coherence of the biblical text.¹⁷

Another case of wordplay on resemblant roots may probably be at work in the rendering of the town names Ar Moab and Kir Moab and the cognates of the latter, namely Kir-heres and Kir-hareseth. We must, however, keep open the option that Ar and Kir are not toponyms in the true sense of the word, since they also have a fitting nominal meaning, that is if Ar (עַר) is considered a variant form of עִיר. It is perhaps telling that both Ar and Kir are never rendered as place names in the Septuagint.¹⁸ But let us focus on what our Targum does with these names. In Isa. 15:1b both Ar Moab and Kir Moab occur. The Hebrew is difficult to interpret, but a possible rendering is ‘Ah, in the night Ar Moab is sacked [and] silenced. Ah, in the night Kir Moab is sacked [and] silenced’. TgJon translated this as ‘Ah, in the night *the fort of Moab* is sacked *while they sleep*, and in the night *the fortress of Moab* is *conquered while they are*

¹⁶ Ezek. 26:2, 27:3. See A. van der Kooij, ‘Some Remarks on the Analysis of the Interpretative Character of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, with Particular Attention to Targum Isaiah XXIII’, in I.E. Zwiép and A. Kuyt (eds.), *Dutch Studies in the Targum. Papers read at a workshop held at the Juda Palache Institute, University of Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: 1993) pp.78-88 (81, 85). In the first rabbinic Bibles it also occurs in Ezek. 27:34 (see the critical apparatus in Sperber’s edition).

¹⁷ A similar translational choice was made by the translator(s) of the Septuagint, using the word μεταβόλων ‘traders’, see e.g. A. van der Kooij, *Die Alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981) p. 68.

¹⁸ T. Muraoka, *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint* (Louvain: Peeters, 2010) pp. 307, 333.

benumbed'. Ar is rendered by the substantive לְתֵיטָא, meaning 'fort'.¹⁹ This is probably based on the likeness of the name ער 'Ar' to the word עיר, which originally meant 'watchtower, ford'.²⁰ Kir is rendered by the substantive כְּרִכָּא, which also means 'fort/fortress'. This is probably founded on the meaning of the Hebrew word קיר, which means 'wall' or 'surrounding, enclosure'. So, in this case the sound of the place names gave the meturgeman room for his interpretation. It might be argued that Lehayyat is simply the Aramaic name for Ar, as some dictionaries seem to suggest.²¹ Since we know on the basis of Numbers 21:15 that Ar was on the border of Moab, it is easy to understand why it would be nicknamed Lehayyat, 'fort'. The same holds true for Kir, which is presently known as Kerak, after the Aramaic word כְּרִכָּא, 'fortress'. So probably the nicknames became names. In chapter 16 we find the towns Kir-hareseth (16:7) and Kir-heres (16:11), which are variant names for the same town.²² In TgJon the names are rendered in both cases as כַּרְךְ תְּקִפְהוֹן

¹⁹ D. Rappel, 'Geographic and Ethnic Names in the Translation of Onkelos', *Beit Mikra* 29.1 (1983-1984), p 80.

²⁰ Smolar and Aberbach suggest a confusion with nearby Aroer, which in the Palestinian Targums to the Pentateuch is sometimes translated as *Lehayyat*, see Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies* p. 115.

²¹ See B.D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible (Edinburgh: Michael Glazier, 1987) p. 34.

²² L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: Brill, 1958) p. 838.

'their strong fortress'.²³ Apparently the meturgemanim read Kir-heres/hareseth as 'brick fortress' and was it known as strong.

In the Damascus pronouncement of Isa. 17, we find in verse 2 a mention of the 'towns of Aroer'.²⁴

ואין מחריד	ורבצו	לעדריים תהיינה	עזבות ערי ערער	HT
ולית דמניד	וישרון	לבית משרי עדרין דען יהויין	שבקין קרויהון וחרבן	TgJon

The Hebrew text that reads 'the towns of Aroer shall be deserted' is problematic. There are three places in the Bible that go by the name of Aroer,²⁵ but none of them seems to fit into the oracle against Damascus. So, this may be a case of textual corruption. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the Septuagint seems to have had a *Vorlage* that read עריה עדי עד 'her cities forever'. Koehler Baumgartner proposes a reading עזבת עד עריה 'forsaken forever [will be] her cities.'²⁶ The *Vorlage* of the Targum may have had a reading עריה, but it certainly does not reflect a reading עדי עד. The translation חרבן 'desolate' seems rather to be based on the root ערער in the meaning 'to lay bare, strip, denude, to make lonely'.²⁷ The

²³ See also the occurrences in Jer. 48:31, 36. In 2 Kgs 3:25 Kir-hareseth is translated as כותלא דלא פגרוהא 'the wall they did not break'.

²⁴ The Isaiah scroll of Qumran reads עורערו.

²⁵ <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6177.htm>

²⁶ Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon* p. 735.

²⁷ M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: The Judaica Press, Inc., 1989) pp. 1121-1122.

meturgeman assumedly chose to translate the toponym according to the meaning of the root because he was aware of the discrepancy of the toponym in the present context.

The Hill of Perazim in Isa. 28:21 is associated by means of the root פָּרַץ 'break through, burst' with seismic activity. This association afforded the meturgeman a peg to hang on the story of the earthquake at the time of King Uzziah 'Behold, just as the mountains *shook when the Glory of the Lord revealed itself in the days of King Uzziah*'.

In Isa. 37:13 the toponyms Hena and Ivah are interpreted allegorically as '*did they not cast them out and exile them*'. This is also done by means of a resemblance of roots. The town הַנֶּע is read as *hifil* of the root נָוַע 'toss about', while עוּה is read as *piel* 'disconcert'.

Doubtful are the occurrences of Kir in Isa. 22:5, 6. Most translations and commentaries read Kir in Isa. 22:5 as a noun, i.e. 'wall', but the JPS translation treats it as a personified toponym. Targum Jonathan translates the problematic Hebrew מִקְרָקֵר קֵר as מְבַלְשִׁין בְּתֵיָא 'they are searching through houses'. So obviously the meturgeman also read קֵר here as a (collective) noun, rather than as toponym. This rather specific rendering seems to be triggered by an actual situation, such as the plunder after the fall of Jerusalem in 63 BCE or 70 CE.²⁸ In 22:6 Kir is mostly considered as a variant of Kyra which is identified as Cyrene (Κυρήνη), an ancient Greek and later Roman city near present-day Shahhat, Libya. But where Kyr/Kyra is rendered in the other biblical occurrences, namely 2 Kgs 16:9, and Amos 1:5, 9:7 as Cyrene (קִירַיִנִי), in Isa. 22:6 it is as translated as if it were a noun, namely 'wall, fortification' (שׁוּרָא).

²⁸ Van der Kooij proposes 63 BCE, see Van der Kooij, *Alten Textzeugen* pp. 166-167. Smolar and Aberbach suggest 70 BCE, see Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies* p. 79.

Association

Another form of wordplay is found in the semantic field. I start with two examples of the toponym Sela, which is known in the Vulgate Version, and until nowadays, as Petra.

First, Isa. 16:1a

מִסְלַע מְדִבְרָה	מִשַׁל-אֶרֶץ	שְׁלַחוּ-כֶּר	HT
דַּתְקִיף עַל דְּהוּוּ בַּמְדַּבְרָא	לְמַשִּׁיחָא דִּישְׂרָאֵל	יְהוּוֹן מַסְקִי מַסִּין	TgJon

The Targum translates the difficult Hebrew text²⁹ as ‘They shall bring tribute to the Messiah of Israel, who has prevailed over those who were in the wilderness’.³⁰

It seems that the meturgeman has read **שכר** משל ארץ ‘send the wages of the land’s ruler’, reading שכר instead of כר. Next, the land’s ruler is – not surprisingly – interpreted as the Messiah of Israel. The toponym Sela is used in an attributive adjunct to the Messiah, who is accordingly depicted as ‘the one who has prevailed over those who were in the wilderness’. Sela, which taken as a noun means ‘rock’, is used here as a symbol of strength and hardness.³¹

²⁹ RSV translates for instance “Send lambs to the ruler of the land, from Sela, by way of the desert.”

³⁰ There are some text-critical problems here. This is the reading of the Rabbinic Bibles, see the apparatus in Sperber’s edition.

³¹ Although the textual witnesses vary between a noun, an adjective, or a verbal form, they all use the **תקף**. There may also be a loose association with Zech. 4:7, where the *even rosha*

The same toponym is interpreted in Isa. 42:11b in quite a different way by means of several translational moves. Let us first look at the text.

מְרֵאשׁ הָרִים יִצְנְחוּ	יִרְנוּ יִשְׁבֵי סֵלַע	HT
מְרֵישׁ טוֹרִיא יִרְיִמוּן קְלֵהוֹן	יִשְׁבַּחוּן מִתִּיא כַד יִפְקוּן מִבְּתֵי עֲלֻמִּיהוֹן	TgJon

“Let *the dead* sing praises *when they come forth from their tombs*, call out from the peaks of the mountains.”

In the first move, the meturgeman chose to read Sela as a noun with the meaning ‘rock’.³² In the second move, he interpreted the construct phrase ‘inhabitants of rock’ as a metaphor for the dead. Then he translated Sela a second time as ‘tombs’. This translation reflects the belief in a bodily resurrection.³³

Another case of associative translation is found in Isa. 17:5, where the Valley of Rephaim is translated as מִישַׁר גִּבְרִיא ‘Valley of Warriors. This translation is probably an association with the legendary pre-Israelite dwellers of Palestine who were called *rephaim*, which was

stone is associated with the Messiah. See A. Houtman, ‘He Will Reveal His Messiah – Messianism in Targum Jonathan to the Twelve’, in H.-J. Fabry (ed.), *The Books of the Twelve Prophets* (Louvain: Peeters, 2018), pp. 250-251.

³² See also TgJon Judg. 1:36 and TgJon 1 Sam. 23:28.

³³ Frankel, *Zu Dem Targum Der Propheten* p. 25; É. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of the Bible : Contents and Context* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1988) p. 221. See also Isa. 45:8.

rendered as גיבריא 'warriors' in Targum Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan. So, by associative translation, also here the word רפאים is translated as גיבריא.³⁴

An interesting case of association is found in Isa. 21:11, where Seir is translated as 'heaven.' After the header 'The Dumah Pronouncement', the text reads 'He calls upon me from Seir'. Targum Jonathan translates this as 'He calls upon me from heaven'. Seir is interpreted here as the place of revelation based on Deut. 33:2 and Judg. 5:4 where Sinai and Seir are treated as synonyms for the place where God revealed himself.

Pars pro toto

A special case are the occurrences of a literal reading of what was probably meant as a pars pro toto.

Isaiah 29 starts with an invocation of Ariel: "Ah, Ariel, Ariel, city where David camped!"

קַרְנֵת חֲנָה דָוִד	הוּי אַרְיֵאל אַרְיֵאל	MT
דָּבְנוּ בְקִרְתָּא דְשֵׂרָא בְּהַ דָּוִד	” מְדַבְּחָא מְדַבְּחָא	TgJon

In this chapter Ariel is clearly used as a reference to Jerusalem. The original meaning of the name is uncertain. It may be either 'lion of God' or 'altar hearth'. The latter seems more probable in view of Ezek. 43:15, where the noun אַרְיֵאל occurs in the meaning of 'altar hearth', and of the Mesha stele line 12, where the word אַרְיֵאל occurs with the same

³⁴ Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies* p. 125.

meaning.³⁵ The word Ariel in the meaning of ‘altar hearth’, can probably be seen as pars pro toto for Jerusalem, the city of the Temple service. The Targum renders ‘Ah *altar, that was built in the city where David camped*’. In Isa. 29:2 and 29:7, the meturgeman translates Ariel as ‘city where the altar is’, unambiguously referring to the city of Jerusalem as a whole. The interpretation of these verses probably reflects the destruction of the Temple and the cessation of Temple service in 70 CE.³⁶

Explanation of a metaphor

Lebanon is in the prophetic literature of the Bible often used in a metaphoric sense and are accordingly explained in the Targum.³⁷ As mentioned above, the meturgeman(im) of Isaiah considered Lebanon as metaphor in four out of the nine occurrences. It is thereby remarkable that in each of the four cases it is interpreted differently. Let us start with the first occurrence in Isa 2:13, which occurs in a long diatribe against the proud and the arrogant. We see the following:

וְעַל כָּל-אֱלוֹהֵי הַבָּשָׁן	הַרְמִים וְהַנְּשָׂאִים	וְעַל כָּל-אֲרָזֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן	HT
וְעַל כָּל טוֹרְנֵי מְדִינַתָּא	תְּקִיפֵיא וְחַסִּינֵיא	וְעַל כָּל מַלְכֵי עַמְמֵיא	TgJon

³⁵ J.A. Dearman, *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989) p. 94.

³⁶ See Smolar and Aberbach, *Studies* p. 76.

³⁷ G. Vermes, ‘Lebanon. The Historical Development of an Exegetical Tradition’, in G. Vermes *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) pp. 26-39.

The biblical 'Against all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and stately, and against all the oaks of Bashan' is rendered by the meturgeman as 'Against all the *kings of the nations, strong and hard*, and against all the *magistrates of the provinces*'.

The cedars of Lebanon are interpreted as kings of nations, and the oaks of Bashan are understood as magistrates of the provinces. From the alignment of the words we see at a glance that this is a mere substitution of the image of the metaphor by its supposed meaning. In this case there is no textual trigger, but rather a theological need to explain that only people are brought to justice.

In Isa. 10:34, within a prophecy of the miraculous failure of the Assyrian attack, the prediction 'the Lebanon shall fall in its majesty', is translated as 'his *warriors will be cast on the land of Israel*'. We see here a double exegetical movement: Lebanon is interpreted as a cipher for Assyria's army, while the word 'majesty' is interpreted as the land of Israel.

In the song of scorn over the king of Babylon in Isa. 14, verse 8 poetizes about the pines and the cedars of the Lebanon who rejoice at his fate. TgJon translates this as 'Even *rulers* rejoice at your fate, and those who are *rich in property*'.

Finally, in Isa. 37:22-29, a prophecy about the fate of King Sennacherib of Assyria, verse 24 puts the following words in the mouth of Sennacherib 'It is I who have climbed the highest mountains, to the remotest parts of the Lebanon'. This is rendered in TgJon 'It is I who have gone up to *the stronghold of their fortresses, and I will also seize their Temple*'. Lebanon is

connected here with the Temple.³⁸ This equation is very frequent throughout the early Jewish exegetical literature and is probably based on the biblical tradition that the Temple was built from wood of the Lebanon.³⁹

Text critical problem

Sometimes a text presents a text critical problem which has to be dealt with. A case in question is the much discussed verse Isa. 19:18 where there are variant readings of the town that is mentioned. The JPS translation reads 'In that day, there shall be five towns in the Land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan and swearing loyalty to the LORD of Hosts; one shall be called Town of Heres'. Targum Jonathan renders 'In that *time*,⁴⁰ there shall be five towns in the land of Egypt speaking the language of Canaan and swearing loyalty to the LORD of Hosts; the city of House of the Sun, *that shall be destroyed*⁴¹, is said to be one of

³⁸ See also 2 Kgs 19:23

³⁹ 1 Kgs 7:2, 2 Chron. 2:7, Isa. 60:13.

⁴⁰ The frequent biblical expression ביום ההוא 'in that day' is nearly always translated by בעדנא ההוא 'at that time'. This is in accordance with a tendency that is also found in the New Testament, namely that the expression 'in that day' is reserved for Judgment Day. See e.g. J.B. van Zijl, *The Eschatology of Targum Isaiah* (Stellenbosch: Dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, 1963) p. 36. The targumic 'at that time' points rather to a period, as for example the messianic era.

⁴¹ The construction ל עתיד is difficult to translate. Scholars are divided on its meaning. For an overview see C.E. Morrison, 'When God Intervenes in History: The Grammar of עתיד in Targum Neofity and Its Theological Import', *Aramaic Studies* 9.2 (2011), pp. 291-308. |

them'.⁴² There are three main variant readings in the biblical text of what the JPS-translation renders as 'Town of Heres'.⁴³ The MT reads עיר ההרס, 'Town of Destruction',⁴⁴ 1QIsa^a and 4QIsa^b and the supposed *Vorlage* of the Vulgate have עיר ההרס 'Town of the Sun',⁴⁵ and the Septuagint has a reading πόλις ἀσεδεια, which means 'Town of Righteousness'⁴⁶, or, possibly, 'Town of the Zadokite'⁴⁷. For our purposes we will only focus on the first two variants between which the connection between can easily be explained. The reading עיר ההרס, 'Town of Destruction', is likely a secondary dysphemism of an original עיר ההרס 'Town of the

follow here the interpretation of Kutty, see R. Kutty, *Studies in the Syntax of Targum Jonathan to Samuel*, vol. 30, Ancient Near Eastern Studies (Leuven [etc.]: Peeters, 2010) p. 178.

⁴² This interpretation is cited in b.Men. 110a in the name of Rav Joseph, an important Babylonian rabbi (died 333), who is in the Talmud connected with the coming about of Targum Jonathan.

⁴³ For complete references, see C. McCarthy, *The Tiqqune Sopherim and Other Theological Corrections in the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament* (Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1981) pp. 238-240.

⁴⁴ Followed by e.g. the English Standard Version.

⁴⁵ Followed by e.g. Vulgate, JPS 1917 and the New International Version

⁴⁶ I.L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah: A Discussion of Its Problems* (Leiden: Brill, 1948) p. 68.

⁴⁷ E.g. A. Geiger, *Urschrift Und Übersetzungen Der Bibel in Ihrer Abhängigkeit Von Der Innern Entwicklung Des Judenthums* (Breslau: J. Hainauer, 1857; repr., Elibron Classics series 2006) pp. 77-81; G.R. Driver, *The Judaean Scrolls: The Problem and a Solution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) pp. 227-228.

Sun'.⁴⁸ The 'Town of the Sun' probably referred to Leontopolis, a town in the nome of Heliopolis, where Onias IV built a Temple for the God of Israel, half-way the second century BCE.⁴⁹ It is not unlikely that the erection of this Temple was the direct cause for the opponents of the Oniads to change the reading into עיר ההרס, 'Town of Destruction', in order to put it – as it were – under a curse.⁵⁰

We must assume that the meturgeman was aware of the different readings of הרס and הרס and decided to honor them both. He achieved this by means of a so-called 'double translation', translating עיר ההרס as קרתא בית שמש, which means as much as 'the city of House of the Sun',⁵¹ and alluding to ההרס by the subordinate clause 'that shall be destroyed'.⁵² In

⁴⁸ Van de Kooij considers it a conscious emendation by the scribes, see A. van der Kooij, 'Standardization or Preservation? Some Comments on the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Josephus and Rabbinic Literature', in E. Martin-Contreras and L. Miralles-Macia (eds.), *The Text of the Hebrew Bible from the Rabbis to the Masoretes* ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014) pp. 63-78 (72).

⁴⁹ According to Driver, *The Judean Scrolls* p. 227, he obtained permission to rebuild a disused Temple to dedicate it to the God of the Jews c. 154 BCE. For a reconstruction of the life of Onias IV, see J.C. VanderKam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas : High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis, Minn: Augsburg Fortress, 2004) pp. 214-222.

⁵⁰ McCarthy, *Tiqqune Sopherim* p. 240.

⁵¹ Whereas mostly On is used as the Hebrew equivalent for Heliopolis, the designation Beit Shemesh also occurs, namely in Jer. 43:13.

⁵² See Van der Kooij, *Alten Textzeugen* pp. 180, 216. For the phenomenon of multiple renderings, see J.C. de Moor, 'Multiple Renderings in the Targum of Isaiah', *JAB* 3.1&2 (2001), pp. 161-180.

this way the meturgeman not only solved a text critical problem, but also made a theological statement of disapproval of competitive temples.⁵³

Elliptical expression

According to the ninth rule of R. Eliezer, דרך קצרה or 'short path', abbreviated or elliptical phraseology in a text may necessitate the addition of missing words.⁵⁴ Pinkhos Churgin calls this an exegetical complement. In his opinion this technique was in the first place intended to fill the gaps created by the poetical contraction of the prophetic style.⁵⁵

We see this principle at work in TgJon to Isa. 8:23, where in the last part of the verse the 'Way of the Sea', the 'other side of the Jordan', and 'Galilee of the Nations', are interpreted as ciphers for respectively the passage through the Sea of Reeds (Exod. 14), the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 3), and the war against the nations (Judges 3-4). This difficult verse is in this way interpreted as reference to miraculous incidents in the history of the Jewish people. The first two interpretations are pretty obvious, but the third needs some explanation. The

⁵³ G. Vermes, 'Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis' in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (eds.), *From the Beginnings to Jerome* (The Cambridge History of the Bible, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) pp. 223-225. See also m.Men. 13:10 about how the rabbis assess this Temple.

⁵⁴ W. Bacher, *Die bibelexegetische Terminologie der Tannaiten* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1899) p. 25; E.Z. Melammed, *Bible Commentators*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: At the Magnus Press, 1978) pp. I.312-15; D. Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, (Texte Und Studien Zum Antiken Judentum 30, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [P. Siebeck], 1992) p. 229.

⁵⁵ Churgin, *Targum Jonathan*, 88.

Hebrew 'Galilee of the nations' is rendered here as כרכי עממיה 'fortresses of the nations'. This same expression occurs in Judg. 4:13 as translation of Haroseth-goiim,⁵⁶ which was the Galilee base of Sisera, the notorious army commander of King Jabin of Canaan. The people of Israel are commanded time and again to remember what God did for them. In the targumic rendering of this verse the negligence of this commandment is therefore seen as a cause for exile.

Another example of the same principle is the interpretation of the header of Isa. 21:1, which in the Hebrew Bible reads משא מדבר ים, 'The Desert of the Sea Pronouncement'. This cryptic header is translated in Targum Jonathan as 'The march of armies which are coming from the wilderness is like waters of the sea that come in storms'. The Hebrew technical term משא that is generally translated as 'oracle' is reduced to the root נשא and translated accordingly with its Aramaic equivalent root מטל as מטלך that may be rendered as 'march'. The construct מדבר-ים is divided among two parts of a metaphor. The armies that advance from the desert are the main subject, which in the second part are likened to water that is pushed up by a tsunami. So, each part of the header is expanded to a phrase. By doing so, the meturgeman probably actualized the cryptic heading – and with it the whole prophecy - to a contemporary situation, namely the Trajan's Parthian campaign.⁵⁷

5. Summary

The rendering of toponyms in an old canonic work that moreover makes ample use of figurative language is difficult. Different devices have been used to handle the problem. We

⁵⁶ This reminds of the interpretations of Kir-hareseth (Isa. 16:6) and Kir-heres (Isa. 16:11).

⁵⁷ See Van der Kooij, *Die Alten Textzeugen* p. 193.

saw that in a number of cases places that were known under a different name to the audience were actualized. Sometimes there was a need to give sense to texts that are hard to understand, such as e.g. in Isa. 15:1, 17:2, 23:3. In cases where, according to the interpreters, a place name had another – or deeper – meaning than just a geographical or historical one, the names were interpreted and explained accordingly, using word play, association, and specification. At other times stories from history were read into the text as exhortation to the audience, such as in Isa. 8:23, 28:21. References to actual historical situations, e.g. in Isa. 22:5, and the verses about Ariel in Isa. 29, gave the texts new meaning. The meturgemanim sometimes used texts as pegs to hang favorite theological themes like the Messiah or the resurrection of the dead, such as *se/a* in Isa. 16:1 and 42:11. In cases of a text critical problem like in Isa. 19:18, a double translation could accommodate two different readings without the need to choose. Behind these interpretations lies the wish to make the text accessible and relevant to new generations. We may conclude therefore that the famous saying of Juliet with which we started does not hold true for targumic literature, where the rendering of a name may contain a great deal of information which gives it an entirely different smell.

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