EXERCISES IN TARGUM AND PESHITTA I

Moshe Goshen-Gottstein

This series of exercises is meant as the first stage of annotations to my volumes published as part of The Hebrew University Bible (HUB). These will mainly be published in our house publication, Textus, and there is no specific plan of publication as yet. I shall base myself in these exercises on the material as it has appeared or will do so in the future, culled from our findings for the Latter Prophets.

Although I serve as Editor in Chief for the entire project, these annotations will deal exclusively with those prophets on which I work personally. At present, I have finished the material on Isaiah and Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets are almost ready. Since Jeremiah was years ago allotted to other editors who may wish to publish their remarks in their own way, I shall not touch in these exercises on material concerning Jeremiah.

This self-limitation is connected to our master plan. For understandable reasons we steered clear of the Pentateuch, but at present we cannot even plan on finishing with the entire rest of the Bible. Bearing in mind that the Göttingen Septuagint is not finished almost a century after its start, and that the edition of the Rome Vulgate is stuck in the middle, we thought it wiser not to bite off more than we can ever hope to chew. Only the Leiden edition of the Peshitta promises a brighter future.

At the present stage, three members of our original editorial board have dropped out due to retirement or death, and since I myself must raise all the money from foundations, some of which have indicated they cannot continue supporting us forever, we thought it better not to raise our hopes too high, and plan for additional volumes in our lifetimes.

Another factor for limitation is the system and costs of printing. We have moved, up to now, through three systems of typesetting, for each of which we
had to arrange for fonts in Hebrew, Greek, Syriac and Arabic. We hope that, with the third fascicle of Isaiah and the first of Jeremiah, our search for typesetting facilities has come to an end. The present volume has been produced "in-house" on our Macintosh computer at the Bible Project itself, using custom-designed laser fonts for non-English text, and the coming fascicles of the HUBP edition, though considerably more involved a project, is also being prepared "in-house."

The exercises published here are meant to stress a specific point, which should be obvious to every text-critic. All comprehensive text-critical editions must rely on the material existing for other versions. At present, we have critical editions for the Septuagint, Targum and Peshitta. For much of the time we had as yet no critical edition for the Peshitta and we were forced to arrange the raw material out of manuscripts by ourselves.

As for the Targum (T), we saw no point in going beyond the edition of Sperber, unsatisfactory as it often is. The point I wish to make on this occasion is to stress that for text-critical work in the Prophets, only the Septuagint is of real interest. Leave the Septuagint aside and there remains little to work with. In this exercise, largely based on our edition, Septuagint and Vulgate are only mentioned as foils.

As indicated in the title pages of each fascicle, our edition is the result of teamwork for which I myself must bear the ultimate responsibility. As can be seen at first sight, Peshitta (P) is the more fertile of the two versions chosen for our purpose, as could have been expected on purely chronological grounds. For this occasion, I have decided to ignore whatever material from the Palestinian version of Targumic quotes I have published in my volumes on Lost Targumim (Bar Ilan 1983-1989), since those fragmentary quotes would not have enriched the material used.

Another point should be noted. Of all the versions, one might have assumed that P and T are nearest to the material in rabbinic literature. However, this point is valid only when we look specifically at common details of hermeneutics. Regarding text-critical work, our comparisons with rabbinic literature turn out to be rather non-convincing. Our specific interest is always text-critical.

Let us now look at a few examples from chapters not yet published (the abbreviations and symbols used are, hopefully, self-evident):
Isaiah Chapter 45

v. 1 MT: נָּא הָאָרָא יַהֲנָה אֶתֶּלֶת הָדוֹקֵטַיִּי יַהֲנָה הָלֹּאֵט הָאֶלֶתֶּלֶת הָדוֹקֵטַיִּי יַהֲנָה הָלֹּאֵט הָדַּסִּי יַהֲנָה הָלֹּאֵט הָדַּסִּי יַהֲנָה הָלֹּאֵט הָדַּסִּי יַהֲנָה הָלֹּאֵט

P:
The first point we notice is that P had some difficulty in rendering the Hebrew word by word and preferred to reformulate the contents. Reformulation cannot serve as witness to a different reading, as long as there is no obvious sign for a different reading.

On the other hand, the manuscripts of P do not indicate a notation of seyame for נָּא. There seems to be an obvious difference between the Hebrew and the Syriac idiom. MT always uses this noun in the plural, whereas Syriac may use either singular or plural. The question remains: which usage is more prevalent in P? In any event, this difference cannot have any text-critical significance.

It is much more significant that P does not show a clear equivalent for אֲפָתַת. This may either have been dropped as the result of the following הָלֹּאֵט, or else is represented by the following הָלֹּאֵט הָדַּסִּי with a change of the break between the two units considered. This seems reasonable in light of T אֲפָתַת הָלֹּאֵט.

As for T, it keeps the plural form for רָדִית. LXX solves the issue by using אְסֶחְוָן which fits the sense just like V dorsa but neither is a verbatim rendering of "loins."

v. 3 MT

P

In this case P again reconstructs according to sense and avoids an awkward syntactical verbal rendering. Similarly, T avoids the exact syntactic rendering and uses רָדִית. Only LXX renders בְּרַקְרַק as אְסֶחְוָן exactly. V fits the verb by adjusting the person: qui voco.

v. 4 MT

In this case, P renders the verb perfectly, מַכְּסַת, whereas T seems to veer aside, rendering מַכְּסַת תָּרָא. Obviously, this rendering has no relation to the issue of "name-calling," but means something like "set straight," which somehow fits the sense. As far as modern exegetes are concerned, the form אֲפָתַת is built from the root יָכָל or יָכְלֶנָה—depending on the system of grammatical analysis. How, then, does T render this root by the Aramaic root יָכָל, with the letter פ?
Here a new T fact enters. Our previous knowledge of the ways the versions analyzed the verbs shows that the root כן, which for us can represent both הנע and כדן, is rendered by the Targum usually by the root כַּנָּה which was apparently chosen because of similarity of sound. In our case, the root כְּנָה, meaning "set straight," apparently was not chosen because of its sense but because of similarity of sound which had become an established feature of targumic rendering. This feature does not occur in P ωκεῖον, nor in LXX προσδέξομαι nor in V adsimilavi all of which render כְּנָה in a sense acceptable to us.

v. 5  MT

אָמַרְתָּ לֵאמֹר אֲנִיָּ הָעָנָן
For the textual critic, the identity of the endings of v. 4 and v. 5, יָנָה יָעָה, raises certain suspicions. But the main problem for us here is the form אָמַרְתָּ, "I girded you." To be sure, in the beginning of our chapter the prophet speaks of Cyrus as the warrior whom God leads in his way to conquest, and 'girding' seems suitable for this picture.

This form is rendered by T כַּנָּה, which seems to reflect כַּנָּה, "I helped you," rather than כַּנָּה. It should be stressed that this rendering which reflects an obvious textual difference is not entered into the apparatus of BHS. As far as I see, this is the first instance in our sample where T offers us a clear variant-connected reading which could make sense.

As for P, the rendering כַּנָּה, "I strengthened you," seems a fair rendering of the sense. While this part of our verse does not appear in the main text of Ziegler’s edition of LXX, there is considerable evidence for an interpretation in most hexaplaric and Lucianic manuscripts: εὐπρεπον σε. The sense in V, accinxi te, "I girded you," fits MT exactly.

It should be noted that for all these cases, I refrain from adding examples from Saadya’s rendering since, for this version, we have no reliable critical edition and neither I nor the reader can check the details of the makeshift collection of readings we are using for our edition.

v. 6  MT

מִנָּהוּ דְּרָשָׁה וְמְמַכְּרָה
The form appears in MT without mappiq in the heh which is obviously contrary to what we would expect since the resulting form is rather irregular in this context, as one can also learn from the entry in BHS. In this case, both P and some
manuscripts of T supply the missing pronominal suffix. Similarly LXX renders ἀπὸ δυσμῶν and so do a few medieval Hebrew manuscripts.

The form in the end of this verse, יָנָא בֵּיתוֹ is rather difficult to translate. Sensewise, it must mean "there is none but me." In this case there are discrepancies between manuscripts of P; some add the subject מֶנָא, and some do not. The state is similar in LXX. But these facts are of no importance for the nature of the text.

v. 8 MT

The sense of MT is the address to heaven to "pour out" the rain. P renders מָגְלֶה יָנָא, "rejoice," similar to LXX εὐφρανθηκὼ. This certainly does not represent וּתְמֹא בַּיְתֵךְ, but it may reflect a reading וּתְמֹא בַּיְתֵךְ. Since in this case both P and LXX have the same sense, this may indicate an early loss of the letter ב. Since the picture of rejoicing is widespread in these chapters of Isaiah, this interchange is not difficult to understand.

The rendering of T, יָנָא שִׁמַּש, is an exegetical guess not reflecting any of those readings. Nearer to the picture of P is V, rorate, 'drop dew'. In the remainder, T veers away to include some midrashic elements which can be understood from the context but are of no textual significance.

v. 9 MT

The rhetorical question is rendered by T in the negative: לא עבדתי. This difference does not reflect any different text. P reformulates the end of the verse, וְאָלָם, into יִדְמָה לִי מִי מָה, "I am not the work of your hands." A similar reformulation is found in LXX at the end of the verse.

v. 12 MT

In MT this stich stands in perfect harmony to the first stich. P simply adds the pronoun to the preposition and renders by מַה מֵאָדָם עַלְיוֹן בָּרָאתָי. Had this only been the case in MT that could have been a normal mishap. But the same omission occurs in LXX. If such a text does not appear in both early versions, one cannot treat the omission lightly. The fact remains that the user of BHS does not get any intimation of these facts.
v. 12 MT

This is in Hebrew a special extrapositional construction including two forms representing the subject, the pronominal suffix taking up what seems to be the subject (cf. Gesenius § 143). This way the text can emphasize that the sentence really intends to stress God as "I" and not "my hands." This intention seems blurred by P which reads יָדוֹ "I with my hands (stretched the heavens)." A similar change occurs in T, but there the circumscription כָּלָה יָדוֹ soften the change.

v. 14 MT

In MT the subject is an abstract noun parallel to עֵינֶי. This construct form is usually assumed to be the construct of יָדוֹ which, however, does nowhere appear in this form in MT. Thus some versions could assume this to refer to the construct form of the plural which, regarding the context continuation, seems rather acceptable. Thus P reads מעָּבָּרִים, "the merchants of Kush," and similarly T. Only LXX and V use the abstract noun.

In the end of this verse all versions have difficulties with the particle כָּלָה. P uses a simple subordinating כִּי, while T renders כִּי־כְּשֶׁרֶאשָׁ, thus identifying כָּלָה with כְּשֶׁרֶאשָׁ.

v. 15 MT

P renders only כְּשֶׁרֶאשָׁ as the predicate in the first stich. T does not at all render the notion of God hiding himself but uses as an adjective אַלָּה אֲשֶר יְהָבָרֵאָ, a form which elsewhere is used to describe God resting his Shekinah.

v. 16 MT

MT has a clear notation of the final accent after כָּלָה. Contrary to MT, P connects כְּשֶׁרֶאשָׁ to the beginning of the verse as an adverb to כָּלָה and starts the next unit with the rendering of כָּלָה. While this different division is pronounced in P, T and LXX leave the issue unclear. On the other hand V puts the division like P.

v. 17 MT

This reformulation expresses the contents not verbally but nominally, whereas T follows the syntactical formulation of MT, as do LXX and V. While P does not
suggest any textual difference one cannot offer an explanation why it is P that uses a nominal clause.

v. 20 MT

_asmal

P omits the possessive pronoun and renders simply \textit{כִּמּוּכָּה יְלַעְגָּה} ‘carved wood’ which exactly fits the picture of idol-worship.

v. 21 MT

מַאָה חֲבֵדָה חֲבֵדָה אָבָי ה

P reformulates by using a common picture \textit{הִיא} שֻׁמְלָא שֻׁמְלָא שֻׁמְלָא שֻׁמְלָא}. In this reformation there is no remnant of the expression \textit{מַאָה חֲבֵדָה}.

v. 24 MT

אָכַּב הֶלְךָ אֲדֻמֵּה הַמַּדַּמְכָּה הַמַּדַּמְכָּה

P \textit{אֲכַּב הֶלְךָ אֲדֻמֵּה הַמַּדַּמְכָּה}. This difference is based solely on the syntax of the verbs and does not indicate anything of textual value.

v. 25 MT

בֹּחֵל יָדֵךְ יָתָתָל

P \textit{בֹּחֵל יָדֵךְ יָתָתָל}. Obviously there is a clear difference between MT and P. In P God is identified with the pronoun of the first person. In this case all the other versions join MT. Whether originally \textit{בָּחוֹל בָּחוֹל} was intended to represent \textit{בָּחוֹל יָתָתָל} is not our problem in this context.

Isaiah Chapter 51

v. 2 MT

כְּאָדָר קְרָעָתִי

P \textit{כְּאָדָר קְרָעָתִי}. In this instance P stresses the point much more than MT by adding \textit{כְּאָדָר קְרָעָתִי} and disconnecting the rest by a copulative \textit{ו}. Similarly T phrases \textit{וְזֹא אַבָּרָהָם} and \textit{זֹא אַבָּרָהָם}. The continuation is attested only in the Antwerp polyglot which, as we know today, hardly reflects a different manuscript. However LXX and V are
completely similar to MT. The rendering of אָשֶׁר קרֹר by T קֹרְר has no textual significance but is a common exegetical phenomenon in T.

v. 3 MT
P

Sensewise, P is more suitable than MT since "will be found" is less expressive as a predicate of joy, as can also be seen in the text of MT itself in ch. 65:19, קָרַר נִב. True enough, in the latter instance the subject "voice," makes the predicate "hear" mandatory. All other versions render the picture of MT verbatim.

v. 4 MT
P

Instead of the personal suffix of MT, P reads plural forms which in this case even have been noted in BHS. T follows MT in both cases whereas LXX follows S for the second example only. To be sure, there is some fluctuation in the manuscripts of LXX.

v. 5 MT
P

Instead of the predicative adjective in MT, P seems to suggest the cognate verb in the perfect which can be easily explained by the loss of one mater lectionis. T reads the adjective similar to MT. On the other hand, LXX and V are similar to P, whereas V apparently reads like MT. Of course, these are hardly meaningful variant readings since the difference between קרֹר and קרֹר is negligible.

v. 6 MT
P

The reading of P is paler even though the stich expresses the same. T reads the same as MT, as do LXX and V.

v. 6 MT

P renders the predicate הָמַך הָמַך "pass," whereas T renders הָמַך הָמַך "linger." Bearing in mind the ancient versions with the root used in MT, both versions can make sense, but neither manages to offer the meaning which most Jewish exegetes at-
tribute to צות. Both LXX and V cannot render the sense of צות and אָלָפָרָת may possibly reflect a different root.

v. 8

כִּי כְּבָדָי אָכַלְתָּ עָלָי וְכִּבְּרָי אָכַלְתָּ עָלָי

The end of this stich ב can only be guessed at by its parallel ע. P uses the same word as MT whereas T guesses at רַכְבָּה. LXX guesses at another word by sound similarity.

Obviously, our findings are not world-shaking. Had we included all the versions just as they will be used in HUB, the result would have looked a bit more impressive.