“To pass over in silence”:
דָּמֶה דַּמֶּה in LXX of Jeremiah and Minor Prophets

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According to the conviction which already prevailed before the times of Schleusner\(^1\) and is widely accepted today, LXX translated forms of the roots דָּמֶה/דָּמֶה by ἀποφθέγματιν “to throw away,” a compound verb of πίπτειν “to throw,” supposedly reading or misreading different forms (qal, nip̄al, hiph̄il) of the root דָּמֶה “to throw” in the following eight instances:\(^3\)

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2 and according to HALOT.


[Textus 22 (2005) 77–86]
The Hebrew root הָרָם is attested only once in MT: Exod 15:1 (=21) בָּשָׁם הָרָם "he threw into the sea." A synonym of this qal הָרָם is the frequent hipil of חָשַׁל, translated 19 times by ἄπορρίσσειν, not only in instances where חָשַׁל has the same literal sense like הָרָם, as e.g. Jonah 2:4 “thou hast cast (ἄπορρίσσεσα) me into the deep, in the midst of the sea,” (KJV) or Mi 7:19 “and thou wilt cast (ἄπορρίσσει) into the depth of the sea” (KJV); similarly in the five occurrences, in which חָשַׁל has the figurative sense of “to reject (men)”: 2 Kgs 13:23; 17:20; Jer 7:15 (twice); Ps 51:13. In classical Greek ἄπορρίσσειν frequently connotes “to set at naught, to disregard, to despise, to reject,” as e.g. Demosthenes 25,75: “when villainy is honoured and virtue spurned (ἀπορρισσηται),” Sophocles, Electra 1017–1018: “I well knew that thou wouldst reject (σφ’ ἄπορρισσουσαν)

4 BHK and BHS note LXX הָרָם in only three instances: BHK Jer 8:14 (twice); BHK and BHS Jer 47:5.

5 The Aramaic cognate of הָרָם occurs several times in Dan: “to cast (into… a… fiery furnace)” 3:6, 11, 15, 20, 21; or “to cast (into the den of lions)” 6:8, 13, 17, 25. In ch. 6 it is also translated by forms of πίστευω.

6 Note 3rd person in parallelism!

7 GB (1915) 835: “verwerfen,” as all German editions of KBL; BDB (1906) 1021: “reject.”


what I proffered." Dio Chrysostomus uses this term to characterize socially despised people: "they are among the outcast (τῶν ἀπερριμένων) and lowest group...; they happen to occupy the lowest station in a city of the lowest grade." Demosthenes 18:48 uses the word ἀπερριμένοι ("outcasts") in a double entendre: He speaks about certain "man cast forth from their country "i.e. "banished, exiled men," and at the same time he calls them "contemptible ones." The very well read Aquila usually rendered Hebrew שְׁפִּיטָה "to reject by ἀπορρίπτειν." In view of these facts it seems inevitable to accept the communis opinio that in the above cited cases LXX read ἄρρετα instead of בָּרָה/בר. The equation—

11 For these principal parts of the verb ἔπιτειν (ἔπιος, ἔπιφα, ἔπριμαι, ἔπρίφη) see H.W. Smyth, Greek Grammar (rev. G. M. Messing; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956) 714.
15 J. Reider and N. Turner, An Index to Aquila (VTSup 12; Leiden: Brill 1966) 28, 288. In LXX, ἀπορρίπτειν is found only once as equivalent of שׁפִּית in the hexaplaric manuscripts filling in, here on the basis of Aquila, the missing translation of the half-stichs 2 Kgs 17:14–15 ( homeroteleuton in LXX). In LXX, however, the most common equivalent of שׁפִּית is ἄποτομον (21 times) 2 Kgs, Jer, Ezek, Hos, Amos, Ps, Job, Lam. The verb ἄποτομον exhibits the same semantic development as ἀπορρίπτειν: ἔπιτειν “to throw”, ἀπορρίπτειν “to throw away”→ “to despise, to reject”; ἄποτομον “to push,” ἄποτομον “to push off”→ “to refuse, to reject,” cf. e.g. ἄποτομον three times in Sophocles: Trachiniae 216: “I will not reject” (Jebb, The Tragedies, 286); Electra 944: “I will not refuse” (Jebb, op. cit. 254); Trachiniae 1249: “then will I do it, and refuse not” (Jebb, op. cit. 322).
16 This is apparently corroborated by instances in which LXX undoubtedly read forms of the root שׁפָּה instead of MT שׁפָּה or שׁפָּה: The noun שָׁפָה “height” Isa 38:10; Jer 6:2; the verb ἄρρετα “to lift high, to exalt” Hab 2:19; Ps 131:2; the verb ἐπαίρεται "to lift up" Jer 47 (LXX 29:6).
“to throw” equals "to reject"—is quite convincing. But I shall propose a different explanation.

In all the above cases the dictionaries give דמה/דהו the meaning “to destroy, to be destroyed, to perish,” the “traditional” explanation of the semantic development being: “to silence” → “to cause to cease” → “to destroy,” or: “to be still, to become silent, to be made silent” → “to cease” → “to cease to exist” → “to be destroyed, to perish.” However, among the twenty Greek renditions of דמה/דהו in LXX there is none which indicates that the translators were aware of such a development. None of these equivalents has the meaning “to destroy”. Therefore I would suggest a different semantic development, which was known to LXX, as I shall show.

The translator of Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets knew that דמה/דהו means “to stand still, to cease,” διαλειφέω, παύω: Jer 14:17; 25:37 (LXX 32:23); 48 (LXX 31):2. In Amos 5:13 מֵשָׁה is rendered σιωπάμαι viz. “shall keep silence,”20 as expected. σιωπάμαι translates 18 times שָׁשַׂה, שָׁשׂ, שָׂשׁ (Num, Judg, 1–2 Sam, Isa, Jer). The compound verb πράσσω σιωπάν translates שָׂשָׁה Hos 10:11, 13; Amos 6:12; Hab 1:13;21 as the compound κοσμιωμάν translates the שָׂשָׁה Num 13:1, הַשָּׁשָׁה Neh 8:11. In classical Greek κοσμιωμάν, πράσσω σιωπάν frequently have the meaning “to pass over in


19 Similarly the translator of Josh 10:12, 13 and 1 Sam 14:9.

20 Similarly the translator of Lev 10:3; Isa 6:5; 47:5; Ps 4:5; 30:13; 35:15; Job 30:27; 29:21; Lam 2:10; 3:26, 28, 3:49.

21 So Gen, Num, 1 Sam, Ps; Hos 10:11, 13 and Amos 6:12. The translation is based upon a confusion between שָׁשָׁה "to plough" and שָׁשְׁה "to be silent"; cf. J. Joosten, “Exegesis in the Septuagint Version of Hosea,” in Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel (ed. J.C. Moor; OTS; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 67.
silence,” which then develops into “to despise, to reject, to condemn.” These compounds become almost synonyms of ἀπορρίπτειν used figuratively, as e.g. Isocrates 4:27: “those (scil. benefactions) which because of their slight importance have...been passed over in silence” (κατασκηνοθείσας).

Another compound of σιωτάνω, with the same meaning “to pass over in silence,” is διασκωτάνω. Pindar uses this verb in Olympian Odes 13,91 in order to abstain from telling a myth containing the idea of ὑβρίς, viz. of insolence arising from the pride of strength. The same idea occurs in Olympian Odes 9,35s., where Pindar uses the expression ἀπορρίπτειν τὸν λόγον viz. “to reject the myth.” In the Thirteenth Olympian Ode, lines 84–90, Pindar relates in 42 words the myth about the heroic deeds of Bellerophon riding the winged horse Pegasos (in Doric the same as Pegasus). But line 91 reads: διασκωτάσσομαιοι μόρον ἐγώ viz. “On his doom I shall keep silence.” The scholion explains: “He (scil. Pindar) avoids speaking about the end (scil. of Bellerophon’s life)” (my translation). In the Ninth Olympian Ode, lines 29–35, Pindar gives expression to his perplexity about the myths of Hercules ὑβρίς: “How could Herakles have... brandished a club in his hand against Poseidon... and Apollon... and Death...?” He continues: ἀπό μοι λόγον τοῦτον, στόμαι, ῥήψον, viz. “Fling this tale away, my lips!” (Bowra). Then he adds: “For to

26 Bowra (The Odes of Pindar, 175) writes in his notes: “Bellerophon tries to scale the sky on Pegasos, and is thrown. Pindar may suggest a warning against pride.”
27 Bowra, The Odes of Pindar, 153.
28 For the poetical “timesis” ἀπό...ῥήψον instead of ἀπόρριψον, cf. Smyth, Greek Grammar §1650.
revile the Gods is an odious art, and to boast beyond measure is a tune for the song of madness” (Bowra). The scholion begins: “stop uttering such things about the gods; for speaking blasphemies about the gods is distasteful to wise men, but dear to mindless ones” (my translation). Bowra comments: “Pindar rejects stories that Herakles fought against the gods.”

The most instructive example is Dio Chrysostomos 39,28: “Theophilus, they say,... preserved silence toward you (scil. the inhabitants of Alexandria)..., being aware that you were extremely poor, not in money, but in judgment and understanding. Well, then, he is dead, having by his silence passed adverse judgment on your city.” The last part of the sentence, “having... city,” is a rather condensed English rendering of κατασκοπήσας υμῶν τὴν πόλιν, τούτ’ ἦστι καταδικάσας αὐτήν, viz. “passing in silence over your city, that is to say condemning her.”

Such an association of ideas was also vivid in the mind of LXX-translators, as shown by the use of the compound παρασιωπάν in the Greek rendition of Prov 12:2, “a man of wicked devices will he (scil. the Lord) condemn.” The translator of Proverbs “was a classical scholar and, happily, put much of his work into verse.”

29 Drachmann, Scholia vetera, 279–280.
31 It makes no difference whether we take the elucidation “that is to say...” as the author’s own one or, with editors since J.J. Reiske (Leipzig, 1784), a scholiastic gloss. For the first possibility see e.g. Plutarch 2,64,c: οὐ δύνασαι μοι καὶ φίλον χρησάσει καὶ κόλασι, τούτου καὶ φίλον καὶ μή φίλον viz. “You cannot use me as both friend and flatterer, that is as friend and not a friend.” (F.C. Babbitt, Plutarch’s Moralia [15 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927–1969] 1:342–343). It is evident that καταδικάζειν “to condemn” is used here in the sense “to reject” and not in its common juridical sense; cf. Josephus, Against Apion 1,24,222 in the translation of H. St. J. Thackeray et al., Josephus (10 vols.; LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1926–1981) 252–253: “In this expectation they (scil. the critics of Judaism) find fools who do not disappoint them; by men of sound judgment their depravity is severely condemned (καταδικάζουσι).”

The phrase:

\[ \text{ἀνὴρ παράνομος παρασιωπῆται} \]

viz. “a transgressor shall be passed over in silence,” \(^{33}\) or “l’homme criminel sera passé sous silence,” \(^{34}\) is a perfect Euripidean trimeter iambicus, \(^{35}\) the felicitous exegetic change of semantics, \(^{36}\) syntax and style (paronomasia) being made metri causa. Where Dio Chrysostomos explains: “to pass over in silence (κατασιωπάν)" equals “to condemn (καταδικάζειν),” the LXX inverted the statement: “to be condemned (καταδίκασθήμαι)" equals “to be passed over in silence (παρασιωπήμαι).” \(^{37}\)

This results in the following conclusion: In seven of the above eight cases one can easily comprehend the translator’s thought sequence—

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35 Surprisingly this verse is not mentioned in H. St. J. Thackeray, “The Poetry of the Greek Book of Proverbs,” JTS 13 (1911–1912) 46–66 nor in the metrical introduction of d’Hannoville, Proverbes, 92–97. The verse has to be scanned as follows (I am using here the sign of accentus acutus as symbol for the six metrical ictus of the trimeter iambicus): \[ \text{ἀνὴρ παράνομος παρασιωπῆται}. \] For the “metrical solution” \( \text{παράνομος} \) cf. Euripides, Bakchis 1275: \( \text{τίς όν έν οἴκοις παις έγένετο αξία πόσι} \); One finds more Euripidean examples in W. Christ, Metrik der Griechen und Römer, (2nd ed; Leipzig: Teubner, 1879) 324(6). After \( \text{ἐν} \) the manuscripts have \( \text{δι} \), which would be unmetrical in this place of the verse in Greek tragedy. Therefore I have omitted it, following Thackeray (58, n. 1) who proposed to omit \( \text{δι} \) in Prov 1:21 for the same reason. In my opinion \( \text{δι} \) was inserted here by scribes in order to confirm with MT \( \text{ψωπος} \) and the 159 instances of \( \text{waw} " \text{but} \) in the clauses of contrast appearing in the 184 verses of Prov 10–15; there the Greek manuscripts add \( \text{δι} \) to MT 14 times (10:5, 15, 16, 20; 11:13; 12:5; 13:3, 14; 14:24, 27; 15:3, 10, 12, 30).

36 Schleusner, Novus Thesaurus, 4:217: “No need to claim that they read \( \text{ψωπος} \) or something similar” (my translation).

37 The verb \( \text{καταδικάζειν} \) translates the verb \( \text{עשיכו} \) in Ps 37:33; 94:21; Aquila Isa 54:13; Theodotion Job 34:29.
“to be silent” equals “to pass over in silence.” This expression would be considered too figurative and could be misunderstood; it needed an elucidation like that of Dio Chrysostomos: παραιτώθην τούτι ἐστὶν ἀπορρίπτειν viz. “to pass over in silence,” that is to say “to reject.” That makes sense in Hos 10:7 “Samaria rejected her king,” Jer 8:14 “God rejected us,” Jer 47 (LXX 29):5 “Ascalon was rejected,” Hos 10:15 (LXX 11:1) “the king of Israel was rejected,” Jer 8:14 “and we would be rejected ,” Jer 51(LXX 28):6 “in order that you would not be rejected,” Hos 10:15 “they were rejected.”

Obad 5 is a different case: viz. “if thieves came to you if plunderers by night, how you have been destroyed!” In this English rendition ἀνενεμήθη is understood as an exclamatory clause. LXX translates: εἰ κλέπται εἰσήλθαν πρός σέ ἣ λῃσταὶ λυκτός, ποῦ ἄν ἀπερρίφης; The syntactic structure is a classic example of a rhetorical interrogative sentence expressed as past unreal condition with indicative aorist in protasis and in apodosis, there with ἄν: εἰ εἰσήλθαν..., ποῦ ἄν (ἀπερρίφης) viz. “if...would have come..., how would you have been...?” Concerning the translation of ἀπερρίφης, correct with

39 GKC § 148; Joüon § 162.
40 Cf. Smyth, Greek Grammar, §§ 2302–2309, 2662; the same structure (with indicative imperfect) is found in Xenophon, Hieron 1,9: εἰ γὰρ ὦτος τοῦτ’ εἶχε, ποῦ ἄν πολλοί μὲν ἐπιθυμοῦν τυφανέει; “Were it so, how should a despot’s throne be an object of desire to many?” (E.C. Marchant, Xenophon [7 vols.; 2nd ed.; LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1968] 7:4–5).
41 The English and French translations of LXX make no sense here: “If thieves came into thee, or robbers by night, where wouldest thou have been cast away?” (Brenton, Septuagint, 1093) and “si des voleurs avaient pénétré chez toi, ou des brigands de nuit, ou aurais-tu été précipité?” (Harl, Les douze prophéttes, 100–101). Noteworthy is the explanation of Obad 5 ἀπορρίπτειν in Muraoka, Lexicon: “thrown out of a house by thieves or robbers.” One would expect the negation οὐκ in the Greek ironic question and apt translations of it. The renditions of ποῦ, “where” and “ou”, are mistaken (cf. the comment in La Bible d’Alexandrie: “l’adverbe de lieu poû, ‘ou’, ne
regard to person, tense and diathese, the translator remarkably made the already habitual mental transition from παρασιωτάνω to ἀπορρίπτειν once too often. Here it would have been more suitable to keep παρασιωτάνω — “if thieves would have come to you, if robbers by night, how would you have been passed over (scil. by them) in silence?” or “how would you have escaped (their) notice?” — meaning “you would certainly not have escaped (their) attention!” But the translator perhaps used ἀπορρίπτειν here in the sense of “to reject as not worth mentioning” or “to reject as uninteresting

correspond pas au mot du TM, ἡθοντα, interrogative (‘comment?’) ou exclamative (‘comment!’),” for according to the large dictionaries ποῦ “where” and πόθεν “whence” frequently have in classical Greek the meaning “how” e.g. Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis 406: “δεῖξεις δὲ ποῦ μοι πατρὸς ἐκ ταύτως γεγονός;” viz. “How wilt thou prove thyself our father’s son?” (A.S. Way, Euripides [4 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912–1965] 1:40–41). This question equals the negative statement: “you cannot prove...”. In Plato, Cratylus 398e Sokrates says to Hermogenes: “That is easy to understand; but the case of men (το τῶν ἀνθρώπων), and the reason why they are called men (ἀνθρώποι) is more difficult. Can you tell me what it is?” Hermogenes: “No, my friend, I cannot” (πόθεν, ὡγάθη, ἱχχο;) (H.N. Fowler, Plato [12 vols.; LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1926] 4:56–57). In German this idiom can be literally translated: “Woher doch, du Guter, sollte ich es wissen?” (F. Schleiermacher; his translation was published between 1804 and 1810, reprinted Platon: Sämtliche Werke [6 vols.; München: Rowohlt, 1957–1959] 2:141). Such a question could be translated into English only by “How do I come to know that?” See LSJ, 1456, ποὺ... “how”... to express an inference very strongly: “how then would it not...,” i.e. “it certainly would...,” in indignant questions; LSJ, 1427, πόθεν “how can it be” to express surprise or negation. LXX translates Jer 36 (LXX 43):17 ὡς μήτε γίτησίν ἐν ποὺ ἐγραφαὶς or πόθεν ἐγραϕαί — ποὺ in codex Vaticanus, πόθεν in the other manuscripts (codex Sinaiticus first wrote ποὶ, then πόθεν). BHS writes: “Gi pothene = ἡθοντα, G codex B ποὶ = ἡθοντα”; HUB, more elegantly, but also unnecessarily: ἡθοντα on the assumption of haplography ποὴν ραθανα. Cf. Jud 20:3 ἡθοντα ποὐ.

42 We find παρασιωτάνω in this more literal sense in Hab 1:13 ἤττζαν πειρατεῖα ἕλκων...ἡθοντα ἵνα τί... παρασιωτάνω ἐν τῷ κατοικίων ἁσβεί τιν δικαιον; viz. “why will you pass over in silence” or “why will you not take notice, when the ungodly swallows up the just?” In this translation I followed Brenton, Septuagint, 1106, who wrote “wilt thou be silent.” Cf. also Hos 10:13 ἤττζαν ἐν ποὶ ἁσβείτω ἤνα τί παρασιωτάνω ἁσβείτω. J. Joosten (“Exegesis,” 67) translates the Greek: “Why have you passed in silence over impiety?”
(i.e. for thieves and robbers).” Cf. e.g. Herodianus 4,12,2: “he (scil. the emperor Antoninus) found out that (the gourmet) Macrinus intensely disliked the ordinary and uninteresting (ἀπτερμμένα) dishes and beverages which he, Antoninus, professed to enjoy as a military man.”

The importance of following the exegetical train of thought of LXX (often similar to that of famous Greek authors) before assuming different readings can be demonstrated by another example which involves the root דָא, the cases of Ps 37:7 and Ps 62:6.

Cf. e.g. Ps 37:7: דָא יִתָּנָה יִתָּנָה תֹּקַעְּרָו and Ps 62:6: דָא יִתָּנָה יִתָּנָה תֹּקַעְּרָו. יִתָּנָה is the regular singular imperative middle-passive of יִתָּנָה “to subject,” which translates רוּד in Ps 144:2: רוּד עַד אֲשֶׁר עָקָד אָנֶה תְּחִיף. “who subdues my people under me.”

T. Muraoka suggested that LXX also read a form of רוּד in Ps 37:7 and 62:6. But יִתָּנָה means “submit yourself (to divine providence),” or even “refrain from complaints,” and is in this chain of thought an apt step from “to be silent” or “to grow quiet.” An exhaustive discussion of this case is not in the scope of the present paper.

43 C. R. Whittaker, Herodian (2 vols.; LCL: London: W. Heinemann, 1969) 1:410–411; “the ordinary and uninteresting dishes and beverages” is my translation instead of Whittaker’s misleading “the rough scraps of food and drink.” For Herodian tells us only that the emperor enjoyed eating food which reminded him of the officers’ mess, and not that he particularly enjoyed eating other people’s scraps, i.e. the remains of their meals; cf. OED 14:708.

44 Brenton, Septuagint, 787.

45 Similarly Ps 62:2; Muraoka, “Hebrew/Aramaic Index,” 246, 343.

46 This is a paraphrase of Schleusner, Novus Thesaurus, 4:217: “silere sive quiescere Deo est: se submittere providentiae divinae, adeoque abstinere a querelis.”