

VINDICATING GOD:
THE INTENT OF TARGUM LAMENTATIONS

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The destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE was a devastating blow to Israelite religion. It has become common place in introductory text books to comment that the deportation and depopulation of Judah and her inhabitants by the Babylonians was probably not as great as the biblical text would lead us to believe. However, I think that one would be hard pressed to overestimate the importance of the destruction of the Temple for the development of Judaism and Jewish thought. This was the House of the Lord, the very footstool of God. The fact that it was utterly destroyed and laid desolate raised for the Judeans the most fundamental of questions concerning their deity. If the Lord was indeed the creator-god of the all the universe, how could such a catastrophe have occurred? Has God abandoned his people? No doubt some were even suggesting that the Lord had been bested by Marduk, the god of the Babylonians, since they were the victors and David's son had been blinded and led away into captivity.

Some sought to respond to the destruction of 586 BCE through the composition of laments and the Bible preserves five such poems in the book of Lamentations. These poems (with perhaps the exception of portions of ch. 3) are raw, emotive replies to the atrocities that the authors had just survived. The authors are overwhelmed with anger and disbelief, feeling that they have been utterly destroyed and abandoned. As they cry out in their lament they describe the pain of starvation they experienced during the 18-month-long siege: 'the tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything' (4.4). And they graphically depict the pathetic attempts by some to survive by eating their own young: 'the hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food in the destruction of my people' (4.10).

The responses to the destruction of the Temple in rabbinic literature were fairly direct and monovalent: Israel sinned therefore God punished his people by removing his presence from the Temple, allowing it and Jerusalem to be destroyed.¹ An interpretation of the book of Lamentations that is required to represent all of the biblical text, even if greatly altered through translation and addition, does not have the luxury of such a facile reading. The book of Lamentations presents an exceptionally chilling and challenging text to interpret and one in which the central question, how and why did God allow this to happen to his people, had not been answered. Thus the targumist was faced with an extremely difficult task, but one that was made all the more necessary since the reading of the book of Lamentations had become an institutionalized part of the ninth of Ab service. This honest yet theologically problematic text had to be rendered in such a way that the community would not view God as having 'utterly rejected' his people (Lam. 5.22), but rather, in keeping with rabbinic belief of the time, that the Lord God was just in punishing his children who had disobeyed his Law.

In previous studies I have examined how the targumist carefully presented this interpretation of the book of Lamentations using several key translational techniques such as the use of the *מדה דינא*, the interpretation of a passage using the interpretive principle of *מדה כנגד מדה*, and dramatic heightening.² But as important as these observations is the fact that the targumist's reading of Lamentations is predicated upon and informed by two factors.

The first is that the audience of Targ. Lam. was the synagogal congregation. That is to say, the text that we have before us was not produced for private study by scholars and sages, but instead was written for and directed towards the general populace. As such, Targ. Lam. had a very important pedagogical role to play in the community's ob-

¹This is stated in many and various ways throughout Targ. Lam., beginning with 1.1 ('Because of the greatness of her rebellious sin which was within her') to 5.7 ('Our fathers sinned and are no longer in the world, but we have borne their sins after them'). The description of God's removing his Presence from Jerusalem in order to allow the destruction of his Temple is found in, e.g., Lam. R. Proem 25. See also Targ. Lam. 3.41 and my commentary 'Targum Lamentation's Reading of the book of Lamentations' (DPhil dissertation Oxon 2000), pp. 149-50. For a detailed survey, see P. Kuhn, *Gottes Trauer und Klage in der rabbinischen Überlieferung* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978).

²See my doctoral thesis, 'Targum Lamentation's Reading', *passim*, and 'The Role of the *מדה דינא* in Targum Lamentations', in C.A. Evans (ed.), *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 364-74.

servance and understanding of the ninth of Ab. The second point is that our targum is presenting a specifically *rabbinic* understanding not only of the book of Lamentations, but also of how one was to conduct a meritorious life through bearing the 'yoke of the Commandments... for the sake of the unity of the name of the Lord' (Targ. Lam. 3.27-8). The focus of this paper then, will be demonstrating these two factors that form and influence the exegetical activity of Targ. Lam.

The Synagogue

It is well known that the talmudim dictate that the reading of the biblical text in a synagogue was to be accompanied with an appropriate translation so that all might understand the text being read.³ The talmudic texts also state that the *meturgeman* was not allowed to read from a written text, lest the congregation confuse the translation with the actual holy, written word. As a result, it is still an open question as to how accurately the physical texts that we study today represent the Aramaic translations that accompanied the biblical readings in the ancient synagogue. In the case of Targ. Lam., however, the text itself indicates that it was carefully created with a synagogal audience in mind, whether or not it was actually read from a copy of the text or recited from memory.

Targumic Testimony

Our earliest explicit reference to the use of a targum with the reading of the book of Lamentations is found in Soferim (seventh C CE).⁴ Soferim 42b describes the ninth of Ab service, stating that 'On the ninth day of Ab [the reading consists] of four verses of Jeremiah *Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? to For thou hast made all these things* [14.19-22] and the following two psalms, *O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance* and *By the rivers of Babylon* [Pss. 79 and 137]'. An earlier passage of Soferim (42a) states that the Torah reading for the ninth of Ab and 'the last seven days in connection with droughts... [is] the section of the blessings and curses [Lev. 26.3-46]'. Furthermore, Soferim describes how the book of Lamentations was read and translated.⁵

³See, for example, y. Meg. 74d, 75a, and b. Meg. 23a-b. For Targ. Lam. specifically, see below and Sop. 42b.

⁴This does not, of course, preclude the use of a targum to Lam. earlier, but is simply the earliest specific reference to a translation of Lam. that we have within rabbinic literature.

⁵Sop. 42b. Note also that this passage allows the reader to also be the translator, contrary to normal practice (see y. Meg. 74d and b. Meg. 21b).

So here we have a description of a mournful service of commemoration which, in addition to fasting, involved the reading of Torah (Lev. 26.3-46), Haftarah (Jer. 14.19-22), Psalms (79 and 137), and the book of Lamentations with its translation. There is at the time of Soferim's composition flexibility in how the congregations ordered their service and even in the readings assigned for the day, but by the time Soferim was composed we find that Lamentations is assumed to be read and that its reading *must* include a translation.⁶ Although the order of the service (including whether Lamentations is read on the evening or on the morning of the ninth)⁷ is allowed to vary, the comprehension of the book of Lamentations is considered an obligation which must be met by the entire congregation; men, women, and children.

As Soferim 42b demonstrates, by the seventh century CE the ninth of Ab was commemorated with a service in which the book of Lamentations was read with its translation. It is important to remember, however, that this does not necessarily mean that our written targum is the same as that used in the service. The rabbinic material simply states that when the book of Lamentations was read on the ninth of Ab it was to be followed by a translation. It does not indicate that there was an official or sanctioned version which should be used as opposed to an *ad hoc* recitation, but rather it must be translated 'properly' so that 'the rest of the people, the women and children may understand it'. It is the text of Targ. Lam. itself that most clearly demonstrates that it was, in fact, composed for use within the synagogue.⁸

In the synagogue, the primary purpose of the targum was for comprehension. Soferim 42b clearly expresses this principle. In this context a literal translation would be suitable, but we know that a literal translation does not always provide 'understanding' of a text. Furthermore, a targum is rarely so simple and often incorporates aggadic additions,

⁶Rabbinic rules would dictate that this translation would be oral and not written (y. Meg. 74d); however, Soferim appears to contradict the talmudic ruling concerning the need for a separate reader and translator (see above), so we cannot exclude the possibility of a written targum developing at this time.

⁷In Seder R. Amram Gaon 44a the book of Lamentations is to be read in the evening. See Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (trans. R.P. Scheindlin; ed. Joseph Heinemann et al.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993), p. 107.

⁸The 'text' is that represented by the manuscript Urb. 1. There are, of course, variant manuscripts, but none reveal marked differences that would impact this discussion. For detailed discussion of the manuscript tradition of Targ. Lam. see, P. S. Alexander, 'Textual Tradition of Targum Lamentations', in *AbrN* 24 (1986), pp. 1-24; A. van der Heide, *The Yemenite Tradition of the Targum of Lamentations* (SPB, 32; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981).

the purpose of which was to impart to an unlearned congregation the appropriate meaning and interpretation of a passage. As Paul Flesher has asserted, the 'targums become the perfect vehicle for propagating the rabbinic world view not only to adherents of the rabbinic movement, but more important, to Jews who do not participate in the rabbinic movement'.⁹ In the case of the Palestinian targumim, Shinan has demonstrated that aggadic expansions occur more frequently at the beginning or end of sedarim, which suggests a synagogal setting.¹⁰ These sorts of additions would be particularly important in circumstances where expository sermons were not the norm. So we might expect that a targum primarily intended for use in the synagogue would incorporate many aggadic additions, particularly at the beginning of the reading or to those passages which might have been deemed problematic. Such is the case with Targ. Lam.

Even a cursory examination of the structural form of Targ. Lam. reveals that the first four verses are particularly expansive. The purpose of this exegetical activity at the beginning of the targum was to provide the audience with a theological prolegomenon to the book of Lamentations. We can compare this to the aggadic expansions found at the beginning of sedarim in the Palestinian targumim.¹¹ The targumist prepares the audience for the content of Lamentations by presenting an abbreviated history of God's dealing with his people's rebellion. In each verse the targumist presents evidence of Israel's sins in order to demonstrate that God's harsh punishment was justified. While such a prolegomenon would be as effective for one reading the text in private as for a synagogal audience hearing it, such a device would be particularly appropriate for educating the community which had gathered to commemorate the ninth of Ab. This peculiar form of Targ. Lam. is therefore best understood as the result of its creation for use within the synagogue. The synagogue as the 'community of Israel', direct heirs of the history outlined in vv. 1-4, is a theme developed throughout Targ. Lam.

⁹P. Flesher, 'The Targumim', in J. Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), pp. 609-29 (627).

¹⁰A. Shinan, *אגדתם של מתורגמנים* (*The Aggadah in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch*) (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), pp. 30-38. See R. Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim and their Sitz im Leben', in *Proceedings the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Panel Sessions: Bible Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 75-85 (76).

¹¹See my doctoral thesis, §4.1, and 'Targum Lamentations 1.1-4: A Theological Prologue', in P.V.M. Flesher (ed.), *Targum Studies. III. Ernie Clarke Memorial* (forthcoming).

כְּנִשְׁתָּא and Community

We can see, for example, how the targumist's choice of translational equivalent for בַּת is intended to influence the reception of the text within the contemporary community. The Hebrew term בַּת occurs 21 times in the biblical text and of those 21 times the targumist translated the term 14 times as כְּנִשְׁתָּא. In the remaining instances בַּת was translated three times as בֵּיתָא (1.15; 2.2, 5), twice as קִרְתָּא (2.18a, 'wall of daughter Zion'; 4.21, 'O daughter Edom'), once as בְּנִי (4.22b, a reference to the Edomites), and once as meaning 'daughter' (2.18c, rendering the Hebrew idiom בַּת עֵינֶיךָ). The targumist also added the term כְּנִשְׁתָּא to the biblical material in six other instances.¹² A survey of Targ. Jon. reveals that כְּנִשְׁתָּא is the standard translational equivalent for the Hebrew בַּת when it is used in construct with צִיּוֹן, יְהוּדָה, or עַמִּי, but the recurrent use of כְּנִשְׁתָּא throughout Targ. Lam. (especially the fact that it is frequently added to the text even when it is not translating בַּת) suggests that its use in Targ. Lam. goes beyond standard translational practice. The targumist is employing and introducing the term in order to include his audience in the text that they are hearing.

When the congregation present during the ninth of Ab service heard that as Nebuchadnezzar entered Jerusalem 'on the night of the ninth of Ab, the *Congregation* of Israel wept bitterly' (1.2),¹³ the congregation hearing the targum would identify themselves with their ancestors and the experience of communal mourning would be amplified. Similar descriptions of mourning are found in Targ. Lam. 1.10 ('the *Congregation* of Israel began to howl for she saw foreign nations go into her Temple'),¹⁴ 1.16 ('because of the babies who were smashed . . . the *Congregation* of Israel said, "I weep and my eyes flow with tears"'), 2.10 ('the Elders of the *Congregation* of Zion sit on the ground in silence'), and 3.48 ('my eye weeps tears because of the destruction of the *Congregation* of my people'). The recitation of such texts would presumably intensify the worshippers' sense of grief and mourning as they identify with those who had endured God's wrath.

כְּנִשְׁתָּא therefore has the effect of updating the text. In a time when a large percentage of Jews would have lived outside of the land of Israel, the statement that 'the *Congregation* of the House of Judah dwells among the nations' (1.3) would resonate with an audience who were

¹²They are 1.2, 3, 10, 16; 2.5, 19.

¹³For the sake of identification the '*Congregation*' found in the text of Targ. Lam. will be capitalized while the targumist's 'congregation' (the audience) will not. The words in italics indicate the targumic deviations from MT.

¹⁴This text is an addition to the biblical text.

themselves far from Jerusalem. In Targ. Lam. 2.19, for example, we find a direct reference to the targumist's audience as the 'Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile'. The use of כְּנִשְׁתָּא in conjunction with reference to the Diaspora would encourage the targumist's audience to identify themselves with the Congregation described in Targ. Lam. This story is about *them*.

This use of כְּנִשְׁתָּא in Targ. Lam. also serves to draw the targumist's audience into repentance as they are told 'the sin of the Congregation of my people is greater than the sin of Sodom' (4.6) and that as a result of their sin God 'detested the Congregation of Zion' (2.1) and that he poured out his wrath 'in the Sanctuary of the Congregation of Zion' (2.4). Thus confronted with the sins of the past the 'Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile' is called to repent in the *present* and to follow the traditions of their fathers, as defined by the rabbis. Again we turn to Targ. Lam. 2.19.

Arise, O Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile. Busy yourself with Mishnah in the night, for the Shekinah of the Lord is dwelling before you, and with the words of Torah at the beginning of the morning watch. Pour out like water the crookedness of your heart and turn in repentance. And pray in the synagogue before the face of the Lord. Raise your hands to him in prayer for the life of your children who thirst with hunger at the head of every open market.

It is important to note that this verse has been completely reworked by the targumist and that the references to the 'Congregation of Israel' and the 'synagogue' (lit. 'House of the Congregation', בֵּית כְּנִשְׁתָּא) and, needless to say, the reference to the study of Mishnah, are all additions to the base text and do not represent the Hebrew בָּרַח. This verse, perhaps more than any other, indicates the presence of an audience and demonstrates the use of כְּנִשְׁתָּא as a method of drawing the contemporary congregation into the text so that they are encouraged, as the Congregation of Israel, to participate in mourning and repentance. Furthermore, the call to busy themselves with Mishnah, to study the Torah, and to pray in the synagogue all indicate a thoroughly rabbinic context and agenda on the part of our targumist.

Rabbinic Context

Targ. Lam. is replete with specifically rabbinic practices and concepts including the presence of מִדַּת דִּינָא (the 'Attribute of Justice'), the use of מִיִּמְרָא to indicate commands or edicts from God that Israel

had transgressed, and the application of the interpretative principle of מדה כנגד מדה, to name just a few. The study and obedience to Torah was, of course, of central importance to rabbinic Judaism and our targum reflects this in its condemnation of Jerusalem and its exhortation to her people. Thus in 1.17, 2.9, 17, we find that the House of Jacob is sent into exile *because* they did not 'keep the Commandments and Torah'. On the other hand, in 2.19, 3.25, and 27, the targum encourages the 'Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile' (2.19) to repent, busy themselves with the study of Torah (2.19) and to take up 'the yoke of the Commandments' (3.27).

The penalty for disobeying Torah is already found within the biblical text¹⁵ and thus provides a ready explanation for Jerusalem's fate. Our targumist, however, uses his interpretation of Lamentations as an opportunity to encourage his audience to adhere to traditions that are specifically rabbinic. Thus the exhortation in 2.19 that the people should study Torah is prefaced with the command to busy themselves with Mishnah and the phrase 'yoke of the Commandments' in 3.27 is clearly related to the rabbinic understanding of the *Shema*.¹⁶

Although Deut. 30.17-18 already speaks of exile as punishment for disobeying God's commandments, our targumist provides detailed explanations for Israel's punishment based upon the nature of their sin. This principle of מדה כנגד מדה is widely attested in rabbinic literature and is found most prominently in Targ. Lam. 1.3, 4, and 2.20.¹⁷ In 1.3, for example, the targumist has interpreted the problematic biblical phrase גלותה יחורר מעני ומרעב עבדה so that 'suffering and hard servitude' which Judah endured was caused by *their* oppression of others. The form and nature of their punishment were determined by their own sins. By rendering the text in this manner our targumist has followed a clearly established rabbinic method of interpretation.

The targumist also uses the figure of מדה דינא as a type of prosecuting attorney who announces the indictments against Jerusalem.¹⁸ This figure appears three times in Targ. Lam., but we will look at just one example, Targ. Lam. 2.20. The biblical text of v. 20 contains serious charges against God. The fact that women are driven to eat their children and priests and prophets are killed in the sanctuary are the direct result of God's allowing this calamity to befall his people.

¹⁵See, e.g., Deut. 30.15-18.

¹⁶See m. Ber. 2.2.

¹⁷For other examples in rabbinic literature see Lam. R. Proem 21, Gen. R. to 1.31, and Exod. R. to 1.22. Within the Talmud see b. Shab. 105b, Ned. 32a, Soṭ. 9b, 11a.

¹⁸See Brady, 'מדה דינא in Targum Lamentations'.

Look, O Lord, and consider!

To whom have you done this?

Should women eat their offspring,
the children they have borne?

Should priest and prophet be killed
in the sanctuary of the Lord?

ראה יהוה והביטה

למי עוללת כה

אם תאכלנה נשים פרים
עללי טפחים

אם יהרג במקדש אדני
כהן ונביא

The targumist represents the initial argument of v. 20 with a few minor changes.

חזי יי ותדי מסתכל מן שמיא למן אסתקפתא כדנן אם חזי לבנאתא דישרי למיכל
בכפנא פירי בטניהון עולימא רגיתא דהוו מתלפפין בסדינין דמילתין

See, O Lord, and observe from heaven against whom have you turned.
Thus is it right for the Daughters of Israel to eat the fruit of their wombs
due to starvation, lovely children wrapped in fine linen?

But the final stich is placed in the mouth of the Attribute of Justice as he responds to the charges.

ענת מדה דינא וכן אמרה אם חזי למקטל בבית מקדשא דיי כהנא ונבייא כמה
דקטלתון לזכריה בר עדוא כהנא רבא ונביא מהימן בבית מקדש דיי ביומא
דכפוריא על דאוכח יחכון דלא תעבדון דביש קדם יי:

The Attribute of Justice answered and said, 'Is it right to kill priest and prophet in the Temple of the Lord, as when you killed Zechariah son of Iddo, the High Priest and faithful prophet in the Temple of the Lord on the Day of Atonement because he told you not to do evil before the Lord?'

As in Targ. Lam. 1.1 the Attribute of Justice is employed by our targumist in order to explain why these atrocities have been allowed to happen to Israel. In this instance,¹⁹ the targumist is recasting the biblical text (Lam. 2.20c), transforming its meaning by changing the identity of the speaker. The Attribute of Justice goes on to specify the crimes for which Jerusalem and her people were being punished: 'you killed Zechariah son of Iddo. . . because he told you not to do evil before the Lord'. Thus, in addition to the use of the Attribute of Justice, we also find that the principal of מדה כנגד מדה is applied and Jerusalem's punishment is defined by her crime.

The central portion of ch. 3, specifically vv. 25-30, is perhaps the most revealing passage with regard to the relationship between this targum and other rabbinic traditions. MT Lam. 3.25-30 and its targum read as follows:

¹⁹In 1.1 the Attribute of Justice's speech is not based on the biblical text.

MT: The LORD is good to those who trust in Him,	טוב יהוה לקו
To the one who seeks Him;	לנפש תדרשנו:
It is good to wait patiently	טוב ויחיל ודומם
Till rescue comes from the LORD.	לחשועת יהוה:
It is good for a man, when young, To bear a yoke;	טוב לנבר כי ישא על
	בנעוריו: ס
Let him sit alone and be patient,	ישב בודד וידם
When He has laid it upon him.	כי נטל עליו:
Let him put his mouth to the dust	יתן בעפר פיהו
There may yet be hope.	אולי יש תקוה:
Let him offer his cheek to the smiter; Let him	יתן למכהו לחי ישבע
be surfeited with mockery.	בחרפה: ס

Targ.: טב הוא יי לסברין לפורקניה לנפשא דחבע אולפניה:
 טב לאורכא ולמשתק עד כרו דחמשי פורקנא דיי:
 טב הוא לנברא ארום יאלף נפשיה לסוכרא ניר פקודיא בשליחיה:
 יתיב בלחודוהי וישתיק ויסבול אסורין דאתיין עלוהי בגין יחודא דשמא דיי
 דמשתלחין לאתפרעא מניה על חובא קלילא דחב בעלמא הדין עד כרו די יחוס
 עלוהי וישלנון מניה ויקבל אפי שלים לעלמא דאתי:
 יתן בעפרא פומיה וישחטח קדם ריבוניה מאים אית סבר:
 ושיט למחי ליה ליסתא בגין דחלחא דיי יסבע דקלנא:

The Lord is good to those who hope *for his salvation*; to the soul who seeks his *instruction*.

It is good to wait and be silent until the salvation of the Lord *comes*.

It is good for a man *to train himself* to bear the yoke of the *Commandments* in his youth.

Let him sit alone and be silent, bearing *the corrections which have come* upon him, *for the sake of the unity of the name of the Lord, which have been sent to punish him for the minor sins which he has committed in this world, until he has mercy upon him and lift them from him so that he may receive him perfected in the World to Come.*

Let him put his mouth to the dust *and prostrate himself before his master*, perhaps there is hope.

Let him turn his cheek to the one that smites; *for the sake of the fear of the Lord*, let him be filled with insult.

In expanding ch. 3 our targumist has used specifically rabbinic terms and phrases in order to represent his argument. In vv. 40 and 41 the audience is called to 'turn in repentance' (בתיובתא) and to 'repent before God the dwelling of whose Shekinah is in heaven above'. It is well known that the terms תשובה and שכינתא (and their Hebrew equivalents)

are extremely important terms and concepts in rabbinic Judaism.²⁰ The reference to God's Shekinah 'in heaven above' reminds the audience of the rabbinic belief that the sin of God's people had caused God to remove his presence from their midst, while the call to repentance provides a rare glimpse of hope in Targ. Lam. In Targ. Lam. 1.2 God offers the people a chance to repent through the warnings of Jeremiah, but they refuse and therefore bring upon themselves God's judgment. The central portion of ch. 3, however, speaks directly to the audience encouraging them to repent and change their ways, becoming obedient to God's Commandments. Thus, in Targ. Lam. 3.25-30 the targumist expands and specifies the exhortation found in the biblical text. The audience is counselled that the righteous will wait patiently for God's salvation. In that time they are to be silent, seek God's instruction while they 'bear the yoke of the Commandments', and endure the corrections which God has sent. The corrections are to be endured 'for the sake of the unity of the name of the Lord' and by enduring their punishment in this world they will be received by God 'perfected in the World to Come'.

It would be redundant to say that the concept of 'the yoke of the Commandments' and repentance are of great importance within rabbinic Judaism, but these concepts are also central to this section of Targ. Lam. The importance of obeying the commandments is already evident within the Bible itself and is perhaps nowhere more explicit than the *Shema*. Within the rabbinic liturgy the *Shema* was composed of Deut. 6.4-9, 11.13-21, and Num. 15.37-41, and was preceded by two blessings and followed by a third blessing.²¹ The rabbis referred to the

²⁰See E.E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995 [repr. of edition published by Magnes Press, 1975]), pp. 462-71, and S. Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 313-15. As Urbach points out, 'The term חֲסוּכָה was coined by the Sages, but the concept it signifies is a cardinal principle of the biblical legacy' (*The Sages*, p. 462). See, e.g., Lam. R. Proem 25 (below), b. Sanh. 97b-98a, and PRE 20 ('Adam said before the Holy One, blessed be He, Sovereign of all worlds! Remove, I pray thee, my sins from me and accept my repentance, and all the generations will learn that repentance is a reality' [Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1916), p. 147]); see, however, Gen. R. to 30.22 which states that Reuben was the first man to repent.)

²¹See R. Kimelman, 'The *Shema* and its Blessings: The Realization of God's Kingship', in L. Levine (ed.), *The Synagogue and Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), pp. 73-86; J. Petuchowski, 'The Liturgy of the Synagogue: History, Structure, and Contents', in W.S. Green (ed.), *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), IV, pp. 1-64 (18-33); Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 400-402.

second passage (Deut. 11.13-21) as 'the Acceptance of the Yoke of the Commandments'.²² The first section of the *Shema*, Deut. 6.4-9, is referred to as the 'kingdom of Heaven' and emphasizes the unity and uniqueness of God (m. Ber. 2.2). We find both ideas present in Targ. Lam. 3.27 and 28. Verse 27 encourages the audience to be obedient to God's Commandments, while v. 28 urges them to be faithful in accepting their punishment 'for the sake of the unity of the name of the Lord'. The basic tenets of the *Shema* are thus presented as the ideal behaviour for the devout. The rabbinic nature of this portion of the targum is further highlighted by the reference to 'the World to Come' at the end of v. 28.²³

The remainder of the verse explains what the burdens are and why the sufferer should bear them. While the sufferer is to bear his corrections 'for the sake of the unity of the name' they also serve to prepare him for the World to Come. By suffering these punishments now, in this world, the targumist tells us that God will be able to receive the sufferer 'perfected in the World to Come'. The principle that the righteous pay for their minor sins in this world in order to receive complete blessing in the world to come is found throughout rabbinic literature.²⁴ In Gen. R. to 8.1, for example, R. Akiba explains that God,

... deals strictly with both [the righteous and the wicked], even to the great deep. He deals strictly with the righteous, calling them to account for the few wrongs which they commit in this world, in order to lavish bliss upon and give them a goodly reward in the world to come; He grants ease to the wicked and rewards them for the few good deeds which they have performed in this world in order to punish them in the future world.

²²See m. Ber. 2.2: 'R. Joshua b. Karha said: Why does the section *Hear, O Israel* precede *And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken?*—so that a man may first take upon him the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and afterwards take upon him the yoke of the commandments.' That the *Shema* itself was a central element of the rabbinic liturgy is clear from the beginning of the Mishnah: 'From what time in the evening may the *Shema* be recited?' (m. Ber. 1.1). The *Shema* was, in fact, recited twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening, since Deut. 6.7 states, 'recite [these words] to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise' (m. Ber. 1.3).

²³See, e.g., m. Sanh. 10.1; m. Ab. 4.17; b. Ber. 4a.

²⁴The references in rabbinic literature are few too numerous to recount here. See, however, Lam. R. to 1.5 and 3.3; b. Ber. 4a-5b; m. Sanh. 10 (esp. 10.1), and m. Ab. 4.17 ('[R. Jacob] used to say: Better is one hour of repentance and good works in this world than the whole life of the world to come; and better is one hour of bliss in the world to come than the whole life of this world'). See also Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 649-92.

The overall effect of v. 28 is to encourage the community even in a time of strife. The purpose and reason for this period of suffering is so that the unity of the name of the Lord might be proclaimed and that Israel might enter the World to Come perfected and purified.

Once again the additions of our targumist are not only within the rabbinic context, they urge the audience to adhere to specifically rabbinic practices ('bearing the yoke of the Commandments', the recitation of the *Shema*) and beliefs (acceptance into the World to Come). This central portion of ch. 3 has been transformed by the targumist into a exhortation to adhere to rabbinic values. The targumist urges the audience to hope for salvation (vv. 25, 26, 28) and turn in repentance (v. 40) before the Lord 'whose Shekinah is in heaven above' (v. 41). While they seek God's instruction (v. 25) and obey Torah (v. 27), they are also to accept the chastisement from God for the sake of the unity of his name (v. 28) and 'for the sake of the fear of the Lord' (v. 30). These corrections will, in turn, result in their being accepted by God in the World to Come (v. 28) as the Lord has mercy upon his people (vv. 28, 31, 32). This highly developed presentation of the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness places Targ. Lam. well within the rabbinic milieu.²⁵ In calling the audience to repent and return to God and obedience to Torah the targumist is calling them to the rabbinic traditions and understanding of redemption.²⁶

Conclusions

The targum to Lamentations was thus created specifically for the synagogal context and the targumist uses the phrase כְּנִשְׁתָּא in order to draw the audience into the experience of the book of Lamentations. *They* are the continuation of the House of Israel who heard the wicked report of the spies and wept bitterly in the night and the House of Judah that went into exile because they were oppressing the widows and the orphans. And *they* are the 'Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile' that is to busy itself 'with Mishnah in the night, for the Shekinah of the Lord is dwelling before [them]'. Furthermore, the additions found in Targ. Lam. are intended to encourage the audience to adhere to beliefs and practices that are specifically rabbinic. The targum calls the audience to repentance and obedience to Torah while exhorting

²⁵See Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 436-47, 462-70; Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, pp. 293-95.

²⁶From elsewhere in Targ. Lam., we may add to this list of rabbinic terms and values the call to study Mishnah at night and the Shekinah of the Lord being with them at such times (1.19).

them to be patient and accept the punishment which God metes out because through this suffering they are being prepared to be received by God into the World to Come. These sermonic admonitions present a catalogue of rabbinic values that are to be upheld by the audience and clearly indicates that the targumist espoused the rabbinic views that we find represented in the classical sources.

This is the evidence we find within Targ. Lam. itself. It is my assertion therefore that this material is present because the targumist had two primary goals before him in rendering the text of Lamentations into Aramaic. (1) It was to be used in the synagogue and it therefore needed to provide the congregation with a version that would enable everyone, men, women, and children, to comprehend the book of Lamentations (Sop. 42b). (2) Lamentations is not, however, a simple text theologically and therefore it was necessary not only to provide an Aramaic version of the text, but also to interpret it so that it would be in harmony with the theological views held by our targumist which are thoroughly rabbinic.