

(4) Our survey of the Targums of Targum Canticles seems to show, at least in the case of this biblical book, that secondary Targumism in the form of direct translation of the Aramaic *targumim* emerges later than secondary Targumism in the form of new vernacular versions in the spirit and style of the Aramaic *targumim*. What is remarkable is how late all the Targums of Targum Canticles appear to be. We very tentatively suggested that the Ladino version may have played a crucial role in the development of the other versions. The Ladino version may go back to pre-expulsion Spain. It was then carried abroad by the Sefardi diaspora, and may have provided the inspiration for the other versions. The probable absence of a Targum of Targum Canticles in the Yemen is significant in this regard. The Arabic Targum of the Targum may have been produced in Syria, North Africa or even southern Italy, within the orbit of Sefardi influence. Whether Targums of Targums are attested for all the other biblical books in the same way as they are attested for Canticles, and whether this phenomenon is generally late, as in Canticles, remains to be seen. Canticles may be something of a special case. However, our preliminary study has thrown up a useful hypothesis that can be tested.

(5) Finally the Targums of the Targums may also prove to be important not only for the history of Targumism, but also for the content of the old, primary *targumim*. In a number of cases they offer interesting interpretations of obscure passages in the old *targumim*, well worth the notice of modern scholarship. They may also, in some cases, provide interesting textual evidence for the old Targum, either in the form of variant readings, or in the form of evidence for the localization of text-types of specific *targumim*. As we noted earlier, Yona Sabar has suggested that the Neo-Aramaic version of Targum Song of Songs points in certain places to a divergent form of the old Targum not apparently otherwise attested. The suggestion is interesting, since the Kurdish Jewish communities could well have preserved old Babylonian traditions which would otherwise have been lost. Their version of the old Targum of *Shir ha-Shirim* is potentially particularly important since, unusually, it has been suggested that the old Targum of *Shir ha-Shirim* was produced in Babylonia in the early Middle Ages. So the possibility of early traditions divergent from the *textus receptus* circulating in the west should be seriously considered. However, the detailed and painstaking work needed to make good this case has still to be done. The few examples which Sabar adduces do not prove much. There is much to be learned from a study of the Targums of the Targums. Just as the Septuagint, the Peshitta and the other early versions of the Hebrew Bible are rightly seen as an integral part of the study of the Hebrew Bible at the linguistic, textual and hermeneutical levels, so the Targums of the Targums should be brought into the study of the *targumim* and made an integral part of that discipline.

Targum Lamentations 1:1-4: A Theological Prologue

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Targum Lamentations (TgLam) has often been seen as being extremely paraphrastic, to such an extent that Sperber was led to claim that "these texts are not Targum-texts but Midrash-texts in the disguise of Targum."¹ This is somewhat of an overstatement, but TgLam does seem to be "top heavy" with liberal additions of *aggadot* in the first chapter and hardly any in the last four. This is, in fact, only partially true. TgLam actually sustains rather vigorous—although often subtle—exegetical activity throughout the text. Chapter One, however, is clearly much more expansive and this deserves an explanation. After a cursory look at the number of words added to the Targum Text (TT) and some observations based upon that data, I will proceed to demonstrate that there is a reason for the imbalance apparent within our targum.

Some preliminary comments are required. First, I am working from the Western Text (WT) as typified by the *editio princeps* of TgLam, the first Rabbinic Bible, edited by Felix Pratensis and printed by Daniel Bomberg (Bomb1), as well as with the manuscript Codex Urbinates 1 (Urb. 1).² The WT has been chosen rather than the Yemenite Text (YT) since, as Van der Heide points out, the YT "is in all probability a text revised on the basis of WT."³ P.S. Alexander furthers the argument saying, "there can be no doubt, [that] if we are concerned with the aggadic content of the Targum, then our starting-point must be the western recension."⁴ Second, I will consider the text as a final-form, only incidentally commenting upon its possible recensional history. While this can be defended on a number of grounds, for this investigation it is sufficient to recognize that the sources for WT present a remarkably unified tradition, particularly in reference to our exceptional cases of aggadic additions.

WORD COUNT

In an attempt to quantify the additional material that the targumist has incorporated into his translation, I have employed a simple, but useful, method. By simply counting up the number of words in MT and then in TT (using Levine), some

¹ A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. IVA (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. viii.

² E. Levine's *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (New York: Hermon Press, 1976) is a transcription of Urb. 1.

³ Van der Heide, *Lamentations*, p. 35.

⁴ Alexander, "Lamentations," p. 10. This article contains a full discussion of the issues surrounding the textual tradition of TgLam.

surprising evidence comes to light. Table 1 shows by chapter the number of words in each text, the number of words added to MT in order to achieve TT, and the ratio of the number of words in TT to the number of words in MT.

Chapter	MT	TT	Difference	Ratio TT/MT
1	376	932	556	2.5
2	381	648	267	1.7
3	381	607	226	1.6
4	257	438	181	1.7
5	144	250	106	1.7

Table 1

The most obvious conclusion to come from this data is that Chapter One, as we would expect, has the most significant addition with 556 words being added to TT and this results in a ratio of 2.5. But what is perhaps more startling is that the ratio for the four subsequent chapters is very nearly the same, 1.7. This is due to the fact that although there are fewer words added to create the Aramaic version of Chapters Four and Five than were added to the previous three chapters, Chapters Four and Five of the biblical text itself are much shorter than the three previous chapters. It would appear that the targum is actually following the proportions of MT. This observation becomes even more significant when Lamentations Rabbah is considered alongside the targum. Excluding the 34 *petihtaot*, the midrash exhibits the same trend of including more material towards the beginning of the text than at the end.

CHAPTER ONE AS INTRODUCTION

A closer look at Chapter One reveals that the vast bulk of additional material is to be found in the first four verses and that if we exclude those four verses from the calculation, the ratio for Chapter One closely matches those of the subsequent four chapters (Table 2).

Verses	MT	TT	Difference	Ratio TT/MT
1:1-4	64	322	258	5.0
1:5-12	312	610	298	2.0

Table 2

It is therefore clear that the greatest amount of additional material is to be found in the first four verses of Chapter One. Our concern is to determine how this peculiar

structure came about. Is it a result of random accretion of traditions or the exegetical tool by which a particular theological point is being made?

One possibility is that the first chapter alone was the focus of rabbinic interest and it was only a later attempt at creating a complete work which led to the translation and commentary upon the subsequent chapters. I find this highly unlikely since, although this might be the result if only the first chapter was read in the synagogue on Tisha B'Av, Lamentations is such a short work it seems likely that the whole text was read and therefore would have been translated. This conclusion seems to be supported in the traditional sources since, although no specific instructions have come down to us from early rabbinic Judaism, B Ta'anit 30a lists those texts which were prohibited and allowed to be studied on Tisha B'Av.

It is also forbidden to read the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (בכורבים) or to study Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, *Halachot*, or *Aggadot*; he may, however, read such parts of Scripture which he does not usually read and study, such parts of Mishnah which he usually does not study; and he may also read Lamentations (בקינה), Job and the sad parts of Jeremiah; and the school children are free from school for it is said, *The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart*. R. Judah said: "Even such parts of Scripture which he usually read he may not read, nor study parts of Mishnah which he does not usually study, but he may read Job, Lamentations and the sad parts of Jeremiah; and the school children are free, *The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart*."

Another possible explanation for our targum's unique form is that the translation was begun by one targumist and subsequently completed by someone else who did not feel that they had the authority to add aggadic material to the text. This too I think is unlikely since the remainder of TT, although it does not contain the same amount of additional material as found in Chapter One, still displays vigorous exegetical activity.

The form of Chapter One cannot be a result of random exegetical activity. Rather it reveals a thoughtful presentation of select traditions collected in order to convey a particular message. Chapter One is—I argue—an introduction to the targum and provides both an historical and theological setting to the occasion of the destruction of the First Temple and, more specifically, verses 1-4 are intended as a theological prologue to Lamentations, the purpose of which is to provide what the targumist understands as the "correct" reading of the text.

TGLAM 1:1-4 – A PROLOGUE TO LAMENTATIONS

In order to understand why such an introduction is necessary let us consider the *Sitz im Leben* of our targum. It seems reasonable that this targum originated within the liturgy of the synagogue and that at least some (if not most) of these synagogues were located outside of *Eretz Yisrael*. Although the dating of this targum is very difficult and must be set aside for another discussion, it is quite easy to conceive of

a time when the Jewish community was both physically and temporally distant from the destruction of the Temple. If the targum was begun before 70 CE then all of the Jewish community, both within and without *Eretz Yisrael*, would have been very far removed from the events of the destruction of the first Temple. On the other hand, we know that the targum did not take its final form until centuries after 70 CE, in which case the Jewish community would again be very distant from the destruction of the Temple.

This temporal and physical distance is important since the audience, and this might be particularly true in the synagogue, would be unlikely to have detailed knowledge of biblical history and the actual events of the destruction. The targumist provides this background material within his translation, drawing most heavily upon other passages within the Bible, notably 2 Chron 35:25. In any event, the destruction of the Temple requires theological explanation. How could God have allowed this to happen? The biblical text of Lamentations does not attempt to answer this question, it is instead a true lament, an outpouring of grief, and as such contains passages which appear to blame God. The targumist's task then is not only to translate the text, but to provide the proper theological and historical context within which Lamentations must be read and interpreted.

TgLam 1:1

אמר ירמיהו – The targumist reflects the ancient tradition that Jeremiah was the author of Lamentations, but he does not expand upon it here.⁵ Instead Jeremiah is depicted as prophet rather than minstrel or author with איכה (אִיכָה in TT) now incorporated into the text to describe Jeremiah's role in prophesying Jerusalem's impending destruction and exile. The Hebrew word איכה is still present in the targum, but by now, as a result of the Book of Lamentations, it has become a noun meaning simply "a lamentation."

Note that Jeremiah is said to have reported not only that "it was decreed against Jerusalem and all her people to be punished with banishments," but also that "they would be eulogized with lamentation" (ולמספד עליהן איכה). This allows the targumist to then compare this situation with the way in which God eulogized over Adam and Eve (ואספד עליהן) after he had to punish and expel them from the Garden of Eden. This aggadah is based upon the use of the consonants א י כ ה in Gen 3:9 when God comes looking for Adam and Eve "and He said to him 'Where are you?'" (ויומר לו איכה).

The practical result of including this aggadah is twofold. First, the targumist effectively transfers the subject of the second occurrence of the verb ספד (God) back onto the impersonal verb of the first phrase, thus inferring that God lamented over Jerusalem's rebellion just as he had over the rebellion of Adam and Eve. The second result builds upon the first. By comparing these two events the targumist is placing the destruction of Jerusalem within a history of God's punishing those he loves, as a father might reprimand his wayward child. It is an act of love rather than of

⁵ This tradition is represented in TgLam 1:18 where the targumist draws upon 2 Chron 35:25.

hatred. One might even conjecture that the targumist had Prov 3:11-2 in the back of his mind: "My son do not despise the LORD'S discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." This is *the* theme which will be elaborated and built upon throughout TT.

ענה מדה דינא וכן אמרה על סניאיה חובה ואשרדה – In MT the context of Lamentations (the destruction of Jerusalem) is assumed, but not given. MT simply begins "How lonely..." which tells the hearer/reader very little about the setting of this work. The targumist makes this explicit, setting the stage and even going further to explain why Jerusalem had been destroyed. The answer is that Jerusalem had sinned greatly and the verdict is placed into the mouth of the Attribute of Justice evoking the image of a celestial court. But it is important to note the emphasis on the reason for her punishment.

The Attribute of Justice spoke and said, "Because of the greatness of her rebellious sin which was within her...."

There is a reason for Jerusalem's condition and it is not God's capriciousness. She has sinned and therefore she must suffer the consequences.

In a similar manner, the comparison of Jerusalem's separation with that of an unclean man (based upon the use of בדר in Lev 13:46) is intended to emphasize further that her punishment is part of God's ordained structure. There are consequences for her sin. The targum continues to follow MT, offering slight, but significant changes which serve to make explicit the relationship between God's love for his people and the punishment which he has allowed to come upon them.

The remainder of the verse contains other expansions, such as the additional information that Jerusalem received tribute from the provinces over which she ruled, but they are "prosaic expansions." Such expansionist elements are the result of the consistent targumic method of translating poetic texts as prose and include non-literal translations (such as the reduplicated rendering of העיד רבתי עם with וקרתי יהוה בליא איכלסין ועממין סניאין) and such additions do not effect either the textual or theological message.

TgLam 1:2

Building upon the similarity between the Hebrew phrase בלילה here and בכור הבכה בלילה in Num 14:1, the targumist inserts at the beginning of verse 2 the aggadah to Num 14:1.⁶ This is also found in talmudic and midrashic sources. The targumist and the rabbis read MT's בלילה as referring to a specific night (apparently inserting יהוה from Num 14:1), so the question arose, "Which night?" As the Talmud phrases it:

"In the Night"—on account of what happened at night. For it is written, *And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried, and the people wept that night.* Rabbah observed in R. Jochanan's name: It was the ninth of Ab, and the

⁶ Cf. Midrash Rabbah, XVI.20; B Sanhedrin 104b; and B Ta'anit 29a.

Almighty said to Israel, "Ye have wept without cause: therefore will I appoint a weeping to your future generations."⁷

This attribution of historical precedence for a religiously important date is also found in relation to other festivals (e.g., Passover, Rosh Hashanah, etc.).⁸ In this case the aggadah not only validates the traditional festival date, but it also serves to strengthen the conviction that all of history is worked out by the Lord and that there is a reason for all subsequent actions.

The targumist then adroitly moves from Israel's rebellion at Kadesh to Bet Yisrael's rejection of Jeremiah's appeal for repentance. The use of כד to introduce both the aggadah on Num 14:1 and the addition of Jeremiah's appeal to Israel helps to create a parallelism between the two accounts which is further strengthened by presenting Jeremiah in a role similar to that of Joshua and Caleb in Num 14:6-9. Again, as in the previous verse, we find the targumist appealing to biblical history in order to show not only that the destruction of Jerusalem is in keeping with God's method of dealing with his people, but that it was a result of Israel's own rebellion.

These points are strengthened and deepened by this verse in two ways. First, the aggadah to Num 14:1 shows that the destruction of the Temple was *preordained* as a result of Israel's previous lack of faith that God would deliver Canaan over to them. Secondly, God was patient with his people, offering them the opportunity to repent to which Jeremiah responded quickly (אוכח לעמא בית ישראל), but instead they refused and so his wrath was kindled. The end result being that God is not at fault. Again we might be justified in assuming that the targumist has a specific biblical text in mind and is recasting in a narrative form Moses' statement that:

The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.

Num 14:18

TgLam 1:3

While the targum interprets the Hebrew מעני ומרב עבדה as being causal and therefore renders 1:3a "Judah went into exile *because* they oppressed the orphans... and *because* of the hard labour which they levied upon their brothers," the targumist still understands the original meaning of the Hebrew (that it was *with* affliction and hard labour that they went into exile) as is evident by the texts alluded to in cataloguing Judah's sins.⁹

The first sin mentioned is the oppression of the orphan and widow, an allusion to Ex 22:22-4. "You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them,

⁷ B Sanhedrin 104b, *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Neziḥin*, vol. 2 (London: The Soncino Press, 1935), p. 710.

⁸ Cf., Levine, pp. 82-3 and references.

⁹ Gordis, "Lamentations," pp. 273.

when they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows, and your children orphans." In this verse we find the principle that the sinner's punishment will match the sin. The same is the case with reference to Judah's sin of overworking fellow Israelites.

The biblical texts alluded to are 1 Kgs 12:4 (which tells of Solomon's oppression of the northern tribes and Rehoboam's insistence that he would do the same), Deut 15:12 (the law that a Hebrew slave must be freed in the seventh year), and Jer 34:8ff (when King Zedekiah declared the release of all slaves, but the people later changed their minds and took back their slaves). This last passage is the most important since it is not only in the context the destruction of the first Temple, but it also includes a specific reason for Jerusalem's fall.

Therefore, thus says the LORD: you have not obeyed me by granting a release to your neighbours and friends; I am going to grant a release to you, says the LORD—a release to sword, to pestilence, and to famine.... I am going to command, says the LORD, and will bring [the Babylonians] back to the city; and they will fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire. The towns of Judah I will make a desolation without inhabitant.

The targum makes this cause and effect relationship explicit by giving a rather clear paraphrase of this passage. "And they did not declare freedom for their male and female slaves which were from the seed of Israel, therefore they themselves were given over into the hand of the nations."

By rendering the text as he does, the targumist is able to reassert the original meaning of MT through various examples of Judah's sin. Although the targum appears at first to be a monovalent, causal reading of MT (Judah sinned and has therefore gone into exile), once the verses alluded to are considered we find that the targumist has brought us back to the original reading (Judah went into exile *with* affliction and hard labour) since they are punished as they had sinned. This may seem convoluted, but it is simply further evidence of rabbinic methods which allow multiple interpretations of a single verse. What makes this case unique is that, with only very rare exceptions, targums do not contain multiple interpretations. In TgLam, however, we find that the targumist has managed to maintain this basic principle of targumic method while still providing a dual reading of the text.

TgLam 1:4

The expansions within this verse complete the catalogue of Jerusalem's sins. It is again a matter of the targum "putting flesh" on the bones of MT by reading the type of punishment described in MT as a direct result of the nature of Israel's sins. Therefore, when MT says that the "roads to Zion mourn because there is no one to come up to her festivals," the targumist interprets this as meaning that even when the Temple was standing the people refused to keep the three pilgrimage festivals (Ex 23:14-9).

Interestingly the targum does not interpret Lam 1:4bβ, "the priests groaned," as meaning that, for example, the priests had not performed the sacrifices as they

ought, but rather the priests groaned because “the sacrifices *had* ceased” (על (רבשילו קירבניא). This is also the case with regards to the maidens. They grieve, so the targumist tells us, because they can no longer go forth to dance at the festivals of the fifteenth of Ab and Yom Kippur. For the audience of the mishnaic period this statement demonstrated the magnitude of the situation. “Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel said: ‘There were no happier days for Israel than the 15th of Ab and the day of Atonement, for on them the daughters of Jerusalem used to go forth in white raiments...and the daughters of Jerusalem went forth to dance in the vineyard.’”¹⁰

The targum has, in one form or another, a notion of glorious days when the maidens would dance at the festivals as the background to this textual expansion. These times are now gone as a result of Israel’s refusal to go up “to be seen before the LORD.” The fact that the references in MT to both the priests and the maidens are not used to describe a sinful act serves to underline that Israel’s sin was committed by the community as a whole, with their national indifference to keeping the feasts.

CONCLUSION

Within verses 1-4 of TgLam Chapter One, the targumist has begun to give us the historical and theological setting within which the destruction of the Temple is to be understood. Up until this point, however, the “historical” setting has been one, not of true history, but of *Heilsgeschichte*. The targumist has carefully placed this event within a theological history of God working with and chastising his people. And so the targumist makes it clear that the destruction of the Temple was not the result of kings and men. Jerusalem suffered because of her own sins and this punishment was decreed by God alone. Furthermore, the *Heilsgeschichte* presented by the targumist demonstrates that this is completely consistent with the nature of God as revealed in the Bible.

The first four verses of the targum have thus established for the audience the precise theological setting for the correct reading of Lamentations. Throughout the rest of Chapter One the targumist will begin to bring out more of the *Realgeschichte* (as opposed to *Heilsgeschichte*) setting and will introduce the main characters, but these remaining additions are relatively solitary in nature. In fact, in terms of additional material, TgLam 1:1-4 is the only sustained section of expansion within the targum. And this, I have shown, is the fundamental exegetical purpose of this section: it is intended to set the stage for the theological interpretation of the work as a whole. As a result, the amount of expansion diminishes as the targum proceeds, while continuing to underline the major theological points already introduced in TgLam 1:1-4.

¹⁰ M. Ta’anit 4:8.

“Introductions” within other Targumim

It is possible that the use of an introduction is more commonplace within the targumim than hitherto acknowledged. Prof. Alexander has informed me that he finds the same sort of “theological introduction” within the very expansive first chapter of Targum Shir Hashirim. A cursory glance at the targum to Hosea reveals that a similar activity is at work there as well. We might assume that practical needs would have confined such exegesis to the smaller works therefore a thorough investigation of this theory in relation to the rest of the Megillot is required.