Dutch Studies in the Targum

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Some Remarks on the Analysis of the Interpretative Character of Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, with particular attention to Targum Isaiah XXIII

A. VAN DER KOOIJ

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that as a translation Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (henceforth: TJP) has a distinct interpretative nature, in particular in the books of the Latter Prophets. Up to the present several studies on exegetical elements in TJP have appeared, written by scholars like P. Churgin, Y. Komlosh, L. Smolar, M. Aberbach, B.D. Chilton and E. Levine. In this connection, also the volumes of The Aramaic Bible are to be mentioned, because they offer a great number of important notes on the exegetical nature of passages in the Aramaic translation.

In dealing with the matter of interpretation, two aspects are to be distinguished: (a) the exegetical techniques or methods employed, and (b) the contents of the interpretation.

The first aspect concerns the question of the means by which the translator tried to reach his goal, that is a specific interpretation of the Hebrew text. Accordingly the study of this aspect deals with the relationship between the Aramaic text (translation) and the Hebrew text (Vorlage). It is not the aim of this paper to enter into this area of research. It may suffice to refer to some studies in which scholars

have paid attention to the issue of exegetical methods used by translators.\(^2\) It stands to reason that one can only speak of a translator’s ‘means’, if it is sufficiently clear that a particular interpretation is involved; if not, one has to reckon with the possibility of a different Vorlage, or an inner-Aramaic corruption.\(^3\)

As a matter of fact, in Targum research more attention is paid to the second aspect, the contents of interpretation. These contents are of a varied nature: one can distinguish between theological concepts and motives, cases of halakhic or haggadic exegesis, and exegesis in the sense of actualisation (e.g. historical and geographical allusions). It is of course most important to study these elements, as has been done in recent years, in the light of agreements or parallels in Jewish sources outside the targum itself, pre- or non-rabbinical and rabbinical sources included.\(^4\) However, the emphasis on the use of sources outside the targum with regard to elements of interpretation in the targum has an adverse effect: it leads to what I would call, a ‘fragmentation’ of the targum text. Only parts or certain elements of the targum text are dealt with, and such an overexposure involves underexposure: too little attention is paid to the literary context of the targum itself,\(^5\) and to the question of the internal coherence of the targum text. It is not to be denied that, for instance in the case of conceptual matters, research carried out by Churgin and by Smolar and Aberbach offers important observations about relations between several passages in TJP as a whole. But again, one misses the examination of the contextual aspect, relating to questions such as: how are interpretative elements like theological terms and expressions embedded in their own context? Moreover, the relations between several passages involved do concern relations between

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\(^3\) In speaking about the exegetical methods I do not use the term ‘translation technique’, because by this term as a rule the linguistic aspects of the translation process are referred to.

\(^4\) See Komlosh, op. cit. (n. 1); Chilton, op. cit. (n. 1); Smolar and Aberbach, op. cit. (n. 1).

\(^5\) ‘Context’ is used here in the sense of the literary context, and not in the sense of ‘the history of the community’ as is the case with E. Levine, op. cit. (n. 1).
passages which lie far apart; the question of the internal coherence of a pericope or chapter is left aside.

It is therefore the aim of this paper to deal with this question of internal coherence and textual relations within TJP by analysing Isaiah 23 as a sample text, in a twofold way:
(a) by paying attention to textual relations within that chapter;
(b) by paying attention to relations between TJ Isa. 23 and the rest of TJP.

A. Examples of textual relations within TJ Isa. 23

1. In MT verses 1 and 14 are partly identical. The same applies to TJP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targ</th>
<th>MT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v 1</td>
<td>יהוֹלֶל לְאַנְוָהָה תְרֵשְׁשׁ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>אָרָי אָתְבּוֹתָו מְזוֹנָה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v 14</td>
<td>יהוֹלֶל לְאַנְוָהָה תְרֵשְׁשׁ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      | אָרָי אָתְבּוֹתָו מְזוֹנָה | ...


2. In MT ‘Tarshish’ occurs in verses 1.6.10.14. TJP displays in this instance an internal coherence too, be it with some variation:
The Interpretative Character of Targum Jonathan

In MT Tarshish seems to be the name of a city (whatever city is meant). TJP offers twice the well-known Jewish interpretation of ‘the sea’ (verses 1.14), and twice the expression ‘the province of the sea’. Unlike MT TJP suggests a particular relationship between verses 6 and 10. See also below (B. 2.), both on this relationship, and on the interpretation of Tarshish in general.

3. Far from being a literal translation TJP verse 3 [beginning] reads:

דְרָהַת מַמְסֵא מֳחוּרְאָר לְעֵמְמֵי עֲנִיאִים

“She who used to satisfy many nations with merchandise” (J.F. Stenning). The same phrase is to be found in TJP verse 17 (again different from MT):

וְזָהָה מַמְסֵא מֳחוּרְאָר לְכָל מָלְעָבִים הָעָפָה דְּעָל עֲמָה אַרְעָא

Whereas in both verses MT is not identical, TJP verse 17 has the same expression as in verse 3. The only difference is that verse 3 refers to the past of Tyre’s international position, and verse 17 to the new future of the city. This agreement between both verses clearly furthers the internal coherence, apparently intended by the translator.

4. In TJP verse 17 the passage just quoted is preceded by:

תִּבְרֹע לְאָתוֹרַה

Here the meaning of TJP differs widely from MT: according to the Aramaic text ‘she [Tyre] will return to her place’ (MT: ‘she shall return to (her ) hire’). A close reading of TJ Isa 23. reveals that this part of verse 17 fits into a particular pattern: TJP verses 6.10.12

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7 That in verse 3 the city of Tyre is meant is not only clear from the correspondence between this verse and verse 17, but see also below (B. 3.).
contain the idea of ‘to go away/into exile’ (ןָּעָר or ‘to flee’ןָּעָר/ַעָר) (MT verses 6.10.12). Tyre is called upon to go away (to the province of the sea, verses 6.10), but in the future she will return (from there) to her own place.

It is to be observed that, as to verses 6 and 10, TJP displays a particular agreement on the level of contents, which is not present in MT:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targ</th>
<th>MT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v 6</td>
<td>עבר תורשושה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַעֲר</td>
<td>עבר ארצה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v 10</td>
<td>עירך לחצרת נמא</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נַעֲר</td>
<td>בח חצרש</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MT verse 10 contains a call to the city of Tarshish (‘the daughter of Tarshish’) ‘to pass through her (own) country’ (whatever that may mean), and not, as is the case in verse 6, an urgent appeal to cross the sea to Tarshish. In TJP, however, both verses are in agreement: both are about going away from ‘your country’, or ‘fleeing’ to ‘the province of the sea’. The same element is to be found in TJP verse 16: ריאשה למדיז אמ (≠ MT): ‘(your glory) has been cast away to a province’.

5. In TJP the internal coherence within Isa. 23 is further strengthened by the repetition of the root קְפָח in various forms (verbal and nominal):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targ</th>
<th>MT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v 4</td>
<td>מַעְיַת חֲקָף יָמָא</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>תֶּקֶיפָתָא צָדֵר</td>
<td>עילוח</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v 10</td>
<td>קֵמָה קְפָח קָעַד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>תַּכְפָּד</td>
<td>מַעְיַה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v 11</td>
<td>הַלָּמְחָק</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ומַעְיַת תַּכְפָּבָן</td>
<td>מַעְיַה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| v 14 | Whereas MT shows a variety of words, TJP always uses identical words in these places, which has the effect of emphasizing the power of Tyre. (For verse 4, see below, and for verse 11-12 as referring to Tyre, see the next item.)

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6. Verse 12a is an interesting case. In MT we read:

The city of Sidon is addressed here: ‘You will no more exult, o oppressed daughter of Sidon’ (RSV). This passage links up with the preceding text, verse 11, where it is said that JHWH has given command to destroy the strongholds (plur.) of Canaan. Verse 12a then concentrates on Sidon, presumably because this city is seen as the first-born of Canaan (cf. Gen. 10:15).

In TJP the tendency of verse 12a is quite a different one: Sidon is no longer the addressed one, but is considered the object of the participle:

‘And he said, ‘You shall be powerful no more, (you) that used to oppress the people that were in Sidon’.’ Contextually ‘you’ (plur.) refers to ‘its power/its stronghold’ in verse 11, i.e. the power of Canaan by which in TJ Isa. 23 the city of Tyre is meant. In line with the context of TJP this verse has also been taken as referring to the strength of Tyre, and to that purpose Sidon has been understood as an object, by reading the participle as active (pi‘el), and not as passive (so MT).

7. Finally an example of internal coherence resulting from the repetition of the same idiomatic expression:

It will be clear that this correspondence between verse 16 and verse 17 connects both verses in a way more direct than in MT. (For the equivalence between MT npa and TJP mp iuDn by, see also Isa. 24:22.)

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8 The translation of Chilton has a mistake here: “the people who were in Zion” (op. cit. (n. 6), p. 46).
9 Compare TJ Zach. 9:3.
B. Examples of textual relations between TJ Isa. 23 and the rest of TJP

1. The heading of verse 1 is typical of TJP:

See also the headings of other chapters containing oracles against foreign nations (Isa 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:11,13), and see further TJ Isa. 51:17,22 (and MT as well), and TJ Jer. 1:5 and 25:15.

2. In the above (A. 2.) the renderings of Tarshish in TJ Isa. 23 have been noted. We will now have a look at the interpretation of Tarshish in the context of TJP as a whole. One may distinguish three categories of passages:

(a) Tarshish // ‘the sea’
   Isa. 2:16 (var.); 23:1,14; 60:19; Ez. 27:12,25; 38:13; Jona 1:3; 4:2.

(b) Tarshish // ‘the province of the sea’
   Isa. 23:6,10 and 66:19.

(c) Tarshish // ‘Africa’ (אפריקה)

In their recent study on TJP Smolar and Aberbach make the following remark on the rendering of Tarshish: “Tarshish, in 1 Kings 10:22; 22:49a; and Jer. 10:9a... is arbitrarily rendered ‘Africa’ in TJ; while elsewhere it is translated נמל (‘sea’)”. In the light of the data, however, this statement is incomplete, because it does not mention rendering (b), and it raises the question of why (c) should be seen as being “arbitrary”. One gets the impression that rendering (a) is considered to be the standard one (Tarshish = the sea), the result being that an alternative such as (c) is evaluated in a negative way. However, from a methodological point of view all occurrences of Tarshish sub (a) - (c) should be studied within their own context instead of giving a comment based on a presupposed standard rendering. Since such a detailed treatment remains outside the scope

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of this paper, it may suffice to make a few general statements. In
some instances the variation between (a) and (b,c) has to do with the
fact that (a) does not suit the actual context, because this context asks
for a certain country. See e.g. our chapter Isa. 23 (verses 6 and 10),
and Isa. 66:19. Besides, the variation between (a) and (b,c) is part of
an older exegetical tradition within Judaism, as becomes clear from
the Old Greek of Isaiah (2:16: rendering (a), and 23:1,14: rendering
‘Carthage’, city in Africa, cf. (c)). Anyhow, the two-fold rendering
of Tarshish in Isa. 23 turns out to be part of a pattern of TJP.

3. TJ Isa. 23:3 (beginning) has the following reading, quite
different from MT:

See also verse 17 (see above, sub A. 3.). This expression is also to be
found elsewhere in TJP: in TJ Ez. 26:2 and 27:3:

Both places are part of chapters containing oracles on Tyre, just
as is the case with Isa. 23. Because of the close relationship between
TJP and MT in both texts from Ez. (in particular in the case of Ez.
27:3) one may assume that the interpretative rendering of Isa.
23:3,17 is based upon these texts. This parallelism has the effect of
creating an element of coherence in TJP.

4. TJ Isa. 23:4 did already come up in connection with the use of
the root כְּנַח (see above, sub A. 5.). MT, ‘the stronghold of the sea’,
is rendered here by:

As to this expression the text of TJ Ez. 26:17 is most important:

12 See also LXX Ez. 27:12,25 (‘Carthaginians’).
Because of the close relationship between TJP and MT in Ez. 26:17 one may assume that, also in this case, the translator of Isa. 23 phrased his interpretative rendering in the light of Ez. 26:17.

Within the context of Ez. 26 it is quite clear that the cited passage from verse 17 refers to the city of Tyre. The parallelism between both passages indicates that the quoted part of TJ Isa. 23:4, including the preceding word ‘the western (man)’ (_mt[n] [MT מְרַעֲבָּא]; is to be taken as denoting Tyre, and not the city of Rome, as Chilton assumes. 13

5. Finally, a nice example of textual relations concerns the element of ‘harbours’ in TJ Isa. 23:1,14. We have already pointed out that, even more than in MT, the verses 1 and 14 of TJ Isa. 23 are closely related to each other, particularly so by the interpretative element ‘harbours’:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targ</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v 1</td>
<td>מְרוֹרִים</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v 14</td>
<td>מְרוֹרִים תָּקִפְּסָן</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These texts are about the harbours of them ‘who go down into the ships of the sea’ (verse 1), the harbours at which the ships used to put in for trading purposes. Verse 14 makes clear that the power and strength of Tyre (cf. the root מְרַעֲבָּא) depend on these harbours; it was through them that she could be someone ‘who used to satisfy many nations with merchandise’ (verse 3, Stenning). But, since the harbours ‘are plundered’ by those who ‘came from the land of Kittim’ (verse 1), the power of Tyre as trading city is broken down, at least for some time (cf. verse 15-18).

As to these harbours, there appears to be a clear and interesting relationship between Isa. 23 and Ez. 27: in TJ Ez. 27:3 we read the following text:

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13 Chilton, op. cit. (n. 6), p. 45. His translation of מְרוֹרִים by ‘from the west’ is incorrect; the word means ‘the westerner/the man from the west’.

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"(Tyre), which sits at the entrance of the harbours of the sea" (S.H. Levey).\(^\text{14}\) This illustrates the most important position of Tyre as being the centre of a trading empire, ‘sitting at the entrance of the harbours of the sea’. Presumably, the underlying Hebrew text has been understood in the following way: Tyre is sitting near the ‘entrances’ (המְבוֹאָת, plur.), i.e. harbours, of the sea. Compare also the passage from Ez. 26:2 cited earlier, where the underlying Hebrew, ‘the doors of the nations’, seems to have been understood as having access (of Tyre as a merchant) to ‘the doors’, i.e. the harbours, of the nations.

Summary

The above is not meant as a denial of the importance of studying interpretative elements in TJP in the light of sources outside the targum. Nevertheless, it seems important to me that, before doing so, one should study a certain passage or chapter first of all in its own right, especially as to the internal relations, and relations between parts of a chapter and the rest of TJP as well. TJ Isa. 23 proves it to be worthwhile to do so. The examples given, particularly sub A, point to a coherence aimed at by the translator. The phenomenon of these internal parallels (‘parallelizing’) as such has been mentioned in studies of the past, such as the one by T. Jansma.\(^\text{15}\) We are in need of a closer study of this feature, in which the contextual function is examined in detail, including the relationship between translation and Vorlage.

As will be clear, the above discussion of TJ Isa. 23 does not offer a full analysis of this chapter. The contextual function of interpretative elements should be studied more in detail. Furthermore, beside the relationship between translation and Hebrew text, and the matter of exegetical techniques employed,

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attention should be paid to the question whether TJ Isa. 23 alludes to specific historical events in Roman times.

In short, the above is meant as a plea to study TJP, more so than has been done so far, as a literary text in its own right. It will contribute to a better understanding of the nature and characteristics of TJP, which in its turn may help us find an answer to an old question: is TJP the result of a 'progressive composition', based on a tradition of oral translations in the synagogical service, or is it just a written translation, being part of the tradition of written translations (e.g. targumim from Qumran), made by learned scribes?

Poëzie in de Targum: de voorzegging over Juda in Targum Onkelos op Genesis 49:8-12

J. W. WESSELIUS

De verhalende gedeelten van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel in het grote historische werk dat de periode van de schepping van de wereld in Genesis 1 tot de Babylonische ballingschap aan het eind van 2 Koningen beschrijft, in de traditionele joodse ordening de boeken van de Tora of Pentateuch gevolgd door die van de Vroegere Profeten, zijn gewoonlijk in een qua woordkeus en zinsbouw tamelijk eenvoudig proza vervat. Ze worden echter op een aantal plaatsen onderbroken door passages die er in stijl en inhoud ver vanaf lijken te staan. Het gaat hier om poëtische onderdelen die in de mond gelegd worden van een of meer van de hoofdpersonen van de vertelling, waarin reflectie gepleegd wordt op de vertelde gebeurtenissen en op zaken die op het ogenblik van de vertelling in het verleden of — interessanter nog in de toekomst liggen. Zo wordt, om maar een paar voorbeelden te noemen, in Genesis 49, de toespraak van de bejaarde Jacob tot zijn zonen, en Exodus 15, het door Mozes en de Israëlieten gezongen Lied bij de Zee, duidelijk gepreludeerd op de inbezitneming van het Heilige Land door de Israëlieten, is er in de orakels van Bileam in Numeri 22-24 sprake van veel latere staatkundige ontwikkelingen, en wordt er in het Lied van Hanna in 1 Samuel 2 gesproken over de gezalfde koning van Israël, die er op dat ogenblik nog helemaal niet is. In het algemeen kan men verder nog opmerken dat deze hoofdstukken moeilijk te duiden zouden zijn geweest, vooral wegens hun uitzonderlijk woordgebruik en zeer impliciete aanduidingen van personen en situaties, als we ze niet over hadden binnen het raamwerk van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel als geheel. Deze bijzondere hoofdstukken en passages worden in het moderne onderzoek met een zekere vanzelfsprekendheid losgemaakt uit de context waarin ze nu staan en