Profile Targum Genesis Onqelos

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Editions, translations and selected studies

Editions: A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic: The Pentateuch According to Targum Onqelos*, I (Leiden: Brill, 1959). Facsimile of Manuscripts: *Targum Onkelos to the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1976); I. Gafni, *The Pentateuch with the Masorah Parva and the Masorah Magna and with Targum Onkelos: Ms. Vat. Heb. 448* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1977).

Online text of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon: http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/ (accessed 23/02/11), based on the *Miqraot Gedolot Ha-Keter* (Bar Ilan, 1992–).

Traditional text in the rabbinic Bibles: *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, I. Bereshit (Vilna: Romm, 1927).

Translations: B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible, 6; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); M. Aberbach and B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (New York: Ktav, 1982); M. Aberbach and B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos on Genesis 49* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1976); for a list of manuscripts of Onqelos Genesis, see http://www.targum.nl/MSDB/searchMS.aspx (accessed 16/09/10).

Studies (in addition to the books listed under translations): M. Aberbach, 'Patriotic Tendencies in Targum Onkelos', *Journal of Hebraic Studies* 1 (1969), pp. 13–24.

The sign # is used for entries which the Targum would share with the entry for the biblical Book 'Genesis', that is, points which, while important

to the structure of Targum Onqelos Genesis, are recreated directly from the original Hebrew text by producing very largely the same sentences in the same sequence.

1. Self-Presentation of the text

1.2. # The text presents its internal sequence of sentences (or larger parts) as mirroring the objective relationships of components in the projected world (an objective order), or projects its subject matter as self-limiting (see further under 4): the text is a narrative which is told in chronological order. While this narrative is episodic, it begins at a radical beginning (the creation of the world, introduced by 'be-qadmin' for 'bereshit'); and while it does not present the relevant events (told in their order) as finished with Joseph's generation (the first generation after the three partriarchs of Israel), it does end precisely at the point where the death of Joseph occurs. There is thus at least the possibility that the narrative has a *caesura* at this point.

1.6. The approximate word count or other indication of comparative size is: *c.* 21,200 words, marginally larger than the Biblical Genesis. The figure was obtained from the Bar Ilan Responsa text copied and counted as a word document, with the approximate number of words devoted to chapter/verse information (*c.* 1500) deducted from the total.

2. Perspective, knowledge limitations or presuppositions of the governing voice(s)

2.1. The information conveyed in the text defines the perspective of the governing voice in the following way:

2.1.1. # The text does not thematize how the governing voice comes to know the text's contents (or its right to command obedience from the addressee), but suggests that its knowledge (or authority) is unlimited.

2.1.1.1. # In narrative, the governing voice's perspective tacitly is that of someone 'present' at all events equally, regardless of their time, place, or nature (e.g. thoughts or private utterances of characters).

2.1.7. # The governing voice (whether first or third person) is anonymous, that is, is not presented as tied to a specific personal identity (or to personhood in general).

2.1.8. # The governing voice speaks at no point in the first person (except for any 2.2.4.3) and all persons/objects are mentioned from a third-person perspective.

2.4. The governing voice projects a horizon of knowledge as shared with the addressee by taking for granted the meaning of the following linguistic usages or references (in selection):

2.4.1. Persons or unique objects referred to by proper name or by technical expression: in addition to the objects and concepts mentioned in the Hebrew text, the following occur (often only once or twice): the Temple (only in Onqelos Gen. 49.11, *hekhleh*); 'the righteous' (Gen. 49.11); more often, but still not frequently, occur: *orayta* (Torah, 'law',

e.g. Onqelos Gen. 12.5, 27.40; Onqelos Gen. 49.11, 24), prophecy (Onqelos Gen. 15.1, Onqelos Gen. 49.24), 'holy spirit' (Onqelos Gen. 45.27); see also 'scribe' (*safra*), Onqelos Gen. 49.10.

2.4.1.1. For persons mentioned or presented in narrative usage; as characters; or topics: in addition to those of the Hebrew original of Genesis one finds these among others: the Messiah, Onqelos Gen. 49.10, taking the place of 'Shilo' in the Hebrew; there are also persons which are not mentioned in Targum Onqelos but are mentioned in the Hebrew text of Genesis, e.g. in Onqelos Gen. 19.38 the proper name 'Ben-Ammi' is not retained as a name, but rendered, as Bar-Ammi; the proper name 'Ahuzzath' is rendered as 'company [of his friends]' in Onqelos Gen. 26.26; 'Arabs' for Ishmaelites (Onqelos Gen. 37.27).

2.4.1.3. For Gods/mythical figures/supernatural beings, etc., for example: in addition to the Hebrew Bible references to God and angels, the following modifications or circumlocutions in particular are occasionally found, both in the narrator's voice and in the speech of characters: (a) the Memra ('word') of the Lord (e.g. Onqelos Gen. 8.21, 15.6, 20.3, 21.20); in several places it is clear that the 'Memra' is not presented as a separate character in the narrative, e.g. when there are substitutions with other divine names, or through self-reference in the divine speech; (b) *yeqara* ('glory') of the Lord (fewer occurrences than 'Memra', e.g. Onqelos Gen. 17.22, 18.33, 28.13, 35.13—mostly for God in the act of leaving a person—in the narrator's voice); (c) *shekhinta* (e.g. Onqelos Gen. 9.27, in quoted speech; also Onqelos Genesis 49.27); the 'holy spirit' is reported as resting upon Jacob in Onqelos Gen. 45.27 (Hebrew just *ruach*). Grossfeld summarizes the research on such terms, pp. 25–30. Additionally, biblical 'Elohim' is usually represented by the Tetragrammaton in the Targum.

2.4.1.4. For locations, for example: in addition to or in the place of names found in the Hebrew text, the following are found: Kardu (for Ararat, which is not mentioned) in Onqelos Gen. 8.4; Jerusalem (for Salem, Onqelos Gen. 14.18); Babylonia (e.g. Onqelos Gen. 10.10, 11.2, 14.1), Euphrates (e.g. Onqelos Gen. 24.10, Onqelos Gen. 36.37); the names disappearing from the text because of substitutions include Hasasson-Tamar (Onqelos Gen. 14.7 has En-Gedi in its stead), Shur (becoming Hagra in Onqelos Gen. 16.7); land of the Temanites (becoming: of the south), Onqelos Gen. 36.34; Arabs for Ishmaelites (Onqelos Gen. 37.27; 39.1).

2.4.2. Circumlocutions, names or descriptions employed as 'code' names: Samson is not named but referred to clearly, by way of an 'oracular' or coded description as a person of the future (Onqelos Gen. 49.16–17, in direct speech).

2.4.3. The text as a whole routinely employs the following language(s), knowledge of which is taken for granted: Aramaic.

2.4.3.1. Additional language(s) taken for granted in quoted speech or certain parts of the text are: occasionally, the Aramaic text giving a (Hebrew) name's etymology presupposes an understanding of that name's Hebrew meaning (as one side of a semantic equation); see e.g., Peretz in Onqelos Gen. 38.29 (although פרץ occurs in Babylonian Aramaic).

2.5. # The text contains deictic or other expressions referring to the governing voice's time or place, or place it after/before some key event:

2.5.1. # As part of the words of the governing voice: several of the deictic references to facts or names that are valid 'to this day' (and similar) which occur in the Biblical Hebrew original are reproduced in the Aramaic, e.g. Onqelos Gen. 22.14, Onqelos Gen. 32.33, 35.21, 47.26.

2.7. # All information concerning the epistemic stance, knowledge horizon, moral stance and identity of the governing voice, and concerning the projected addressee, is entirely implicit.

4. Narrative coherence or narrative aggregation

4.2. The event sequence is projected as related to the sequence of text parts as follows:

4.2.1. # The report sequence mirrors the projected chronological sequence of events mostly or wholly, not precluding 4.2.2–5.

4.2.2. # There is use of prolepsis or analepsis: Gen. 2.5 introduces an analepsis; Gen. 14.4 is the central point of another analepsis.

4.2.4. # There are chronological gaps which are merely implied, or indicated but left vague.

4.3. # The text presents several sets of internally complex episodes with no explicit or manifest causal or motivational nexus between them. Where characters are identical, or linked, they do not figure in one continuous set of events.

4.3.1. # The episodes have a common main character, or several characters of approximately equal narrative prominence, who is the subject of the action: the narrative focus moves from one character to another (or a cluster of characters), starting with God (in the creation narrative) and Adam and ending with Joseph and his brothers.

4.6. # There are meta-narrative explanations occurring in the narrative (editorial comments by narrator): see 4.9.

4.8. # The text provides scene-setting information, other than the introduction of an I-narration: it could be argued that the creation narrative (plus the appearance of first humans) creates a kind of scene-setting for everything that follows, a history of humanity, narrowed down in due course to that of the ancestors of Israel. However, for none of the specific narrative units (episodes) is there a specific setting of the scene in the sense of temporal or spatial markers, or introduction of main characters (except indirectly by way of genealogies, e.g. Abram in Onqelos Gen. 11.26).

4.9. # There is prominent or sustained characterization of key figures in the narrative: editorial comment is made occasionally, as for Noah or Abraham. The Targum's narrator is—selectively—less forthright than the biblical one or 'tones down', reports of actions which could reflect badly on certain characters, e.g. avoiding the word choice of 'to steal' (in Rachel's case, Onqelos Gen. 31.19), replacing 'guile' with 'wisdom' in Onqelos Gen. 34.13,

etc. (see Aberbach, 'Patriotic Tendencies'). However, as a feature of the overall attitude of the narrator to characterization, this manner of characterization is perhaps only visible in comparison with the Hebrew, and not necessarily within the literary stance of Onqelos itself.

4.9.1. # There is editorial comment on the qualities of a character from a third-person narrator.

4.9.3. # A figure is characterized by her or his moral or religious traits—this happens implicitly on several occasions when biblical characters and groups are portrayed as behaving in a way that is pleasing or not to God. In the case of Jacob, the additional information in Onqelos Gen. 49 characterizes him more clearly as a man with the gift to see specific events in the future than does his speech in MT.

4.9.3.2. # Moral/religious traits are not manifestly linked to the ethnicity and/or gender of the figure.

4.10. # A character's relations to her/his community are foregrounded, including any two-fold social environment (e.g. a diaspora setting): this is clearly the case only for the figure of Joseph, although traces of it are also found for Noah, Abraham (in Ur, at Pharaoh, Abimelekh, the Hittites), and Jacob (in Laban's place and with respect to Rachel's taking of Laban's idols).

4.10.4. # A main character is portrayed as in conflict with his/her environment (or as being an 'Other'), whether the environment is single or doubled: this is particularly clear in the case of Joseph who is in conflict with his brothers, then with Potiphar, and later, from a position of integration in Egypt, again with his brothers before their reconciliation.

4.11. # Supernatural characters appear in the narrative, whether introduced casually, or accounted for elaborately: apart from the direct agency of God and angels, there is the use of natural powers by God in the flood narrative, and the creation narrative as a whole; later on, God's guiding hand in the Joseph narrative, while in the episodes of the three patriarchs it is mostly in acts of direct communication/revelation that supernatural events happen (e.g. Gen. 15).

4.13. # The narrative pace is slowed down or changed by frequent or prominent quotation of speech, thought or text.

4.13.1. # The quotation constitutes a plot-driving event in its own right: dialogue is perhaps the single most important plot-driving event. In one case, the speech is not a dialogue at all, and also extensive, namely Gen. 49.

4.13.4. # The quotation differs from the surrounding text in its form (e.g. poetry), style or language: see 4.15.1 on the language of Onqelos Gen. 49 (some of the poetic devices of the Hebrew are mirrored in the Aramaic).

4.15. # There are imbalances in the level of detail provided between adjacent parts of a continuous narrative, in the absence of narrative developments or conventions that obviously account for them: probably already in the Hebrew original, but certainly in the Targumic version, the death bed speech of Jacob is unusually extended, providing a particularly long suspension of the physical action.

4.15.1. # This coincides with the occurrence of unique literary forms, more detail for narrative contents absent from a biblical partner text (see 7.1.2.1.4.1), recurrence of information or wording, etc.: There appears to be sufficient poetic and heightened language in Onqelos Gen. 49 to meet the description 'unique literary forms', although the contrast is not as clear as for the poetic language of biblical Gen. 49 (within direct speech).

6. Lemmatic coherence or lemmatic aggregation

6.10.4. The text implies or explicates a hermeneutic stance concerning the accuracy of the base text:

> 6.10.4.2. The base text wording is tacitly or explicitly treated under the assumption that it cannot be inaccurate/insincere/invalid.

6.13. The text constitutes a complete and sequential representation, in another language and in object-oriented perspective, of the perceived meaning of all or almost all verbal matter of a complete set of base text segments, rendering the sentences of the Hebrew Bible Genesis into Aramaic: This is the case, and apparently without any omissions. Insofar as this 'automatically' recreates structurally important features of the biblical book of Genesis, the respective entries in this Profile of Onqelos Genesis are marked by #.

> 6.13.1. The statements of the text are displayed in manuscripts as alternating in mere juxtaposition with segments of verbal matter from the base text (without linking quotation formulae).

> 6.13.2. The text's governing voice is almost always identical with, or a consistent extension of, the persona projected by the governing voice of the base text.

> 6.13.3. The text tends to use the sentence structure of the base text to accommodate any additional or modified object information.

> 6.13.4. The text creates new syntactic structures within which the words of the base text can be recognized: this only holds for Onqelos Gen. 49.

7. Correspondences and wording overlap between texts

7.1. Narrative or thematic correspondences, or overlap of specific wording, occur between a non-biblical text and one or more biblical texts in a manner that is prominent or pervasive. See 6.13 for details.

> 7.1.5. The projected persona of the governing voice of the text, whether a narrative or not, is also known from a biblical text, or the governing voice assumes an epistemic stance similar to that of a biblical text.

>> 7.1.5.3. The epistemic stance of the governing voice (narrative or not, first person or not) can be interpreted as falling into the same generic category as one of the following stances also adopted in biblical texts:

>>> 7.1.5.3.2. The omniscient narration, as in Genesis-Joshua; or unrestricted knowledge of a described reality, similar to Genesis 1: this holds true for the occasional

provision of narrative information for which there is no equivalence in the Hebrew original of Genesis. There are also slight differences in the characterization of certain biblical characters (which are entirely identical between biblical and targumic narrative), which are treated in somewhat less openly critical manner in the dramatic characterization by the Targumic narrator than that of the biblical narrator (e.g. avoidance of the descriptor 'stole' for Rachel, see point 4.9), although this usually only emerges from a direct comparison with the Hebrew wording, not as conspicuous narrative choice in itself within the Targum.

7.2. Narrative or thematic correspondences, or overlap of specific wording, occur between the non-biblical text under discussion and other non-biblical texts in a manner that is prominent or pervasive.

7.2.4. The wording or specific theme of self-contained thematic units is occasionally identical to those of another non-biblical text (or part-text), without being marked as quotations from that other text (does not apply if 7.2.6, 7.2.8 or 7.2.9 applies; not applied to Mishnah/Tosefta Tracates): there is overlap of narrative and other ideas (insofar as these are not entirely and manifestly identical with the biblical original ones) with many parts of rabbinic literature, in particular the Midrashic works, and here in particular Bereshit Rabbah.

7.2.4.1. Such overlapping units are found in text types which differ from each other in their thematic arrangement: this holds for parallels with Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud, and with Midrashic works.

7.2.4.2. It is common for such overlapping units to be marked as the speech of a character or as anonymous quoted speech in one or both of the non-biblical texts: this only occurs in the non-Targumic partner text, not in the Targum itself.

8. Characteristic small forms

8.1.10. # List sentence (enumerating items by lexeme, phrase or incomplete clause): the narrative is occasionally punctuated by genealogical lists.

11. Dominant contents

11.2. The text is dominated by the reporting of events of the past (or of the future, but not of norms).

11.2.1. The reported events are those of a biblical past, or a biblically foretold future.

12. Sampling of scholarly genre labels

12.1. Examples: Aramaic translation, paraphrase, paraphrastic rendering into Aramaic.