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Targum and Translation: A New Approach to a Classic Problem

by

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Introduction

The targums to the Pentateuch have often been called a kind of translation literature. In part, this is due to the lexicography of the term *targum*, according to which this literature is known.[1] Although this association between targumic literature and the term *translation* has been long-standing, "translation," as it has been used in the field of targum studies, is greatly undertheorized. Within recent years, scholars have used the word *translation* to describe the interlinguistic rendering of specific Hebrew Bible words and phrases. Some discussion has been given to the complexities of this dynamic in the targums, but the meaning of the term *translation* has yet to be addressed explicitly.[2] In this article, I propose that to use

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1. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim and the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Press, 1996), 1695. Jastrow defines the word *targum* (תרגום) as "interpretation, translation, version, especially Targum, the Chaldaic (Aramaic) versions of the Scriptures." Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 2nd ed. (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 590–91; Sokoloff in this dictionary defines the same term as "translation, especially Aramaic Bible translation." Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), 1231; in the Babylonian context, Sokoloff finds תרגום to have a slightly different meaning, insofar as he defines it as "Aramaic version, interpretation," and later as "the Aramaic portions of the Bible." Although the term *translation* is already included in the definition of the term תרגום in each of these cases, the semantics of the term indicate that it can be used to mean something else. This topic, however, is not going to be addressed in the context of this article as the lexicography of תרגום is not completely helpful in defining the targumic genre. The targums themselves never use this term to describe their relationship with the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, *our* definition of the targumic genre should arise from what can be observed in relation to how targumic literature interacts with the Bible. The question of which general term can best describe these dynamics is precisely the question of this article.

2. Paul V. M. Flesher, "The Targumim in the Context of Rabbinic Literature," in *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 611–29. In this article, Flesher assumes a meaning of "translation" without explicating the term. For a different approach, see Michael L. Klein, "Associative and Complementary Translation in the Targumim," *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographical Studies* 16, Orlinsky Memorial Volume (1982): 134–40; Michael

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translation as a meaningful descriptive category for targumic literature, it is necessary to unpack it and examine its ambiguities and problematic status even within the context of discussions about translation studies.[3] By exploring the contours of this term, I hope to indicate how a more nuanced understanding of "translation" can help describe the targumic genre, as well as the targums' underlying hermeneutic orientation toward the Hebrew Bible.

I. Targum and/as Translation

In previous generations of scholarship, scholars have at times assumed that the targums were a kind of translation literature; however, analyses did not discuss how this classification worked itself out in the context of specific targum texts. For example, Paul Kahle in *The Cairo Geniza* conflates the concepts of "translation" and "interpretation" in the targums, stating that a targumic "translation" of Exodus 21:5 and 6 matches the "official interpretation of the text."[4] In contrast, Geza Vermes makes a distinction between "translation" and "haggadah" in his famous examination of Targum Onqelos.[5] John Bowker similarly writes, "the [biblical] text and its interpretation were woven together, and the interpretation often extended and amplified the text greatly."[6] This distinction between translation and interpretation has often been maintained in recent studies of the targums, and has been used by scholars such as Paul V. M. Flesher and Philip Alexander in one way or another.[7] In making this distinction, these scholars

L. Klein, "Converse Translation: A Targumic Technique," *Biblica* 57 (1976): 515–37; Willem F. Smelik, "Translation and Commentary in One: The Interplay of Pluses and Substitutions in the Targum of the Prophets," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 29 (1998): 245–60. Admittedly the Flesher article is found in an encyclopedia, a context in which the conceptual nuances of targumic literature cannot be explored thoroughly. And although Klein and Smelik's articles allow for a more nuanced approach, they, too, do not define *translation* or explore the extent to which it can be applied to the targums as a whole.

3. Douglas Robinson, *What Is Translation? Centrifugal Theories, Critical Interventions* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997). In this volume, Robinson explores the ideas of several influential translation scholars, not so much with the intention of creating a unified theory of translation, but rather to see where they overlap with and differ from one another. This exploration reveals a diversity of views concerning the nature and purpose of translation, both in descriptive and prescriptive terms.

4. Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1959), 206.

5. Geza Vermes, "Haggadah in the Onkelos Targum," in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, ed. Geza Vermes (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 127–38.

6. John Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 8.

7. Flesher, "The Targumim," in Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*. Flesher is perhaps the most obvious example of a targum scholar making this kind of conceptual move, but Philip Alexander also makes a similar distinction using the term *paraphrase* instead of *interpretation*. Cf. Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin J. Mulder and Harry Sysling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 217–53. Making a strong distinction between "translation" and "interpretation" is not without theoretical justification, however, insofar as Umberto Eco has attempted to maintain such a distinction, arguing that these phenomena manifest very different

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have attempted to identify different kinds of relationships between the targums and the Hebrew Bible: the one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic on the one hand, and targumic narrative expansions on the other.[8] As it stands, the translation–interpretation distinction is both too general and too exclusive. It is general in the sense that it opens up a discursive space in which descriptions of specific hermeneutical–interpretative moves can be made. Yet it is too exclusive, in that it indicates, perhaps unintentionally, that targumic phenomena are *either* translation *or* interpretation–paraphrase. What happens to borderline cases in this conceptual framework? Is it possible that some targumic phenomena incorporate aspects of both translation and interpretation? Is it furthermore possible that some targumic phenomena undermine this distinction altogether? My answers to these latter two questions are both yes. As I seek to demonstrate in the rest of this essay, a strong distinction between translation and interpretation, as articulated by a figure such as Umberto Eco,[9] when held in targum studies is ill-founded and imprecise. This becomes evident simply when we examine two different targumic versions of the same passage, in this case Genesis 22:1.[10] Here is the Targum Onqelus version of Genesis 22:1:

semiotic relationships with their source texts. Umberto Eco, *Experiences in Translation*, Toronto Italian Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 67–130. The irony of Eco's position is that he undermines it himself when he discusses his own experiences as an author whose works have been translated. The result is that "translation" and "interpretation" are shown to have a very complex, interconnected relationship, the contours of which Eco does not sufficiently explore in the theoretical section of his book.

8. Philip S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures" in Mulder and Sysling, *Mikra.* Alexander attempts to distinguish between the targumic one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible, on the one hand, and targumic narrative expansions, on the other, in the manner described in n. 7 above. Again there are conceptual problems with this distinction insofar as semantically and practically *translation* and *paraphrase* shade into one another in contexts other than the targums. Alexander Samely attempts to overcome this conceptual problem by introducing the terminology of a "close" and "far" relationship between certain portions of the targums and the Hebrew Bible source text. Alexander Samely, "Writing in an (Almost) Classical Vein: The Art of Targum in an Aramaic Paraphrase of the Amidah," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library* 75 (1993): 175–264. Again, the result of this kind of distinction is to break the targumic versions down into their constituent parts without discussing how the different relationships with the Hebrew Bible text might be categorized using a single term. Samely continues this trend in a later article in which he discusses different hermeneutic attitudes toward the Hebrew Bible. Alexander Samely, "Scripture's Segments and Topicality in Rabbinic Discourse and the Pentateuch Targum," *Journal of the Aramaic Bible* 1 (1999): 87–123. Among these hermeneutic attitudes, Samely lists "translational rendering," but again he argues that this is one among several attitudes manifest in targumic literature.

9. Cf. note 7.

10. Genesis 22 has received a great deal of attention among scholars. Cf., e.g., Geza Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis xxii—the Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus," in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, 2nd ed., ed. Geza Vermes (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 193–227; P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 514–46; Robert Hayward, "The Present State of Research into the Targumic Account of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 32, no. 2 (1981): 127–50; Alan F. Segal, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Early Judaism and Christianity," in *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity*, ed.

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וַהֲוָה בָתַר פִּתְגָמַיָא הָאִילֵין וַיווי נַסֵי יָת אַבְרָהָם וַאֲמַר לֵיה אַבְרָהָם וַאֲמַר הָאֲנָא׃

After these things the LORD tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham." And he said, "Here I am."[11]

To compare, the Hebrew Bible version reads:

וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּנִי׃

By and large, this version of Genesis 22:1 is a one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible source text. In fact, the two versions have such close lexical and syntactic similarities that it is unnecessary to reprint the Hebrew Bible version in English; in English, the two are indistinguishable, with the exception of the divine names. The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan version of the same passage, however, is quite different:

והוה בתר פיתגמיא האילין מן דינצו יצחק וישמעאל ישמעאל הוה אמר לי חמי למירות ית אבא דאנא בריה בוכרי{ז}יא{ה} ויצחק הוה אמר לי חמי למירות ית אבא דאנא בר שרה אינתתיה ואנת בר הגר אמתא דאימי עני ישמעאל ואמר אנא זכאי יתיר מינך דאנא איתגזרית לתלסירי שנין ואין הוה צבותי למעכבא לא הוינא מסר נפשי לאתגזרא ואנת אתגזרת בר תמניא יומין אילו הוה בך מנדעא דילמא לא הוית מסר נפשך לאתגזרא מתיב יצחק ואמר האנא יומנא בר תלתין ושב שנין ואילו בעי קודשא בריך הוא לכולי איבריי לא הויתי מעכב מן־יד אישתמטו פיתגמיא האילין קדם מרי עלמא ומן־יד מימרא דיי נסי ית אברהם ואמר ליה אברהם ואמר ליה האנא

And it was after these things when Isaac and Ishmael quarreled. Ishmael said, "To me it is fitting that I should inherit my father for I am his firstborn son." And Isaac said, "To me it is fitting to inherit my father because I am the son of Sarah his wife, whereas you are the son of Hagar the maidservant of my mother." Ishmael answered and said, "I am more worthy to inherit than you because I was circumcised at thirteen years, and if it was my will to refuse I would not have handed myself over to be circumcised. But you were circumcised at eight days. If you had had knowledge, perhaps you would have not handed yourself over to be circumcised." Isaac replied and said, "Look, today I am thirty-seven years old. If the Holy One, Blessed

Alan F. Segal (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 109–30; C. T. R. Hayward, "The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic against Christianity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 292–306. For a lengthy study dealing with the targumic versions of the *'aqedah*, see Roger Le Déaut, *La Nuit Pascale: Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII 42* (Rome: Institute Biblique Pontifical, 1963).

11. Targum Onqelos (ed. Sperber). Unless otherwise stated, all translations in this article are my own.

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> be He, were to request all my limbs, I would not refuse." Immediately these words were heard before the Master of the World, and immediately the Memra of the Lord tested Abraham. And he said to him, "Abraham." And he said to him, "Here I am."[12]

For those familiar with both the Hebrew Bible version of this passage, as well as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, it is easy to determine how the targum produced its version. In short, the targum has inquired after the meaning of the Hebrew phrase אחר הדברים האלא, "after these things." Taking the word הדברים to mean "words," Targum Pseudo-Jonathan produces the dispute between Ishmael and Isaac.[13] In this dispute, the targum carries forward the theme of inheritance, a subject that had caused Sarah to urge Abraham to drive Hagar and Ishmael from their camp in the previous chapter. Furthermore, it sets up the narrative in this chapter to continue dealing with this theme, insofar as Genesis 22 in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is just as much concerned with demonstrating Isaac's worthiness to be Abraham's heir as it is with demonstrating Abraham's righteousness. Within much targum studies literature, this kind of passage would probably be called an interpretation or paraphrase of the biblical narrative, partially because it is based on a readily identifiable exegetical move, and partially because it significantly expands the narrative of the Hebrew Bible. In contrast, the Targum Onqelos version of this passage would be called a translation, because of its close relationship with the Hebrew antecedent.

In cases such as these, the translation–interpretation distinction appears to be justifiable and unproblematic. This is because the Targum Onqelus and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan versions seem to manifest qualitatively different relationships with the Hebrew Bible.[14] To a certain extent, I agree with this position. However, implicit within the translation–interpretation distinction is the judgment that somehow translation does not involve interpretation, and vice versa. Yet, both translation and interpretation involve certain decisions about how the source text will be represented in the target language and culture. In his hermeneutical magnum opus *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer claimed that every translation is an interpretation.[15] Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas, in his phenomenological ethics articulated in *Totality and Infinity*, emphasized that every act of human communication involves some sort of revelation of the other, which George Steiner later

12. This translation of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is based upon the Clarke edition.

13. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 55.

14. Cf. Samely's notion of different hermeneutic attitudes in Samely, "Scripture's Segments and Topicality." It is interesting to note that in an earlier article, Samely avoided using the word *translation* because to him it did not adequately capture the dynamics he sought to describe in Targum. Alexander Samely, "Is Targumic Aramaic Rabbinic Hebrew? A Reflection on Midrashic and Targumic Rewording of Scripture," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 45 (1994): 92–100.

15. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1989), 384–88, 396.

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associated with translation.[16] From Levinas's perspective, this revelatory aspect of communication occurs because there is a gulf of alterity and otherness separating all human subjects. Language is the medium used to bridge this gulf. But given that the otherness of the Other is infinite, the language of the Other must be "translated" in order to be understood by either party in the face-to-face encounter. In this way, translation and interpretation describe hermeneutical movements that have as their goal understanding, whether it be in an interlinguistic and intercultural context, or in the context of everyday human interactions. Engaging in these movements may produce radically different results, depending on the interpreter and his or her skills and attitudes. But the goal of understanding remains constant. When creating the targums, the targumists probably asked how the Hebrew Bible text and narratives could be best represented in Aramaic. Here, Aramaic refers not only to the language of the target targumic text, but also to the Aramaic-speaking culture of early Palestinian Judaism. As such, the moves accomplished by both Targum Onqelos and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan are simultaneously interlinguistic and intercultural. Admittedly Targum Onqelos significantly masks the intercultural aspects of its version by maintaining a close lexical and syntactic relationship to the

16. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 72–73. As mentioned earlier, for Levinas one of the fundamental ways in which humans relate to one another is through discourse. Because there is a gulf of difference separating oneself from the Other, some sort of translation must take place in order for understanding to occur even within the context of a single language. This is especially the case given that Levinas believes that every communicative act involves a revelation of the Other. Levinas writes:

> But to make of the thinker a moment of thought is to limit the revealing function of language to its coherence, conveying the coherence of concepts. In this coherence the unique I of the thinker volatilizes. The function of language would amount to suppressing 'the other,' who breaks this coherence and is hence essentially irrational. A curious result: language would consist in suppressing the other, in making the other agree with the same! But in its expressive function language precisely maintains the other—to whom it is addressed, whom it calls upon or invokes. To be sure, language does not consist in invoking him as a being represented and thought. But this is why language institutes a relation irreducible to the subject–object relation: the *revelation* of the other. In this revelation only can language as a system of signs be constituted. The other called upon is not something represented, is not a given, is not a particular, through one side already open to generalization. Language far from presupposing universality and generality, first makes them possible. Language presupposes interlocutors, a plurality. Their commerce is not a representation of the one by the other, nor a participation in universality, on the common plane of language. Their commerce, as we shall show shortly, is ethical (emphasis in original).

Steiner later remarked of Levinas, "When Levinas writes that "le langage est la dépassement incessant de la Sinngebung par la signification" (significance constantly transcends designation), he comes near to equating all speech-acts with translation in the way indicated at the outset of this study. Phenomenological ontologies look very much like meditations on the "transportability of meanings"; George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 278. What Steiner is referring to in this quotation is his notion that even within specific languages translation must take place, both because of diachronic differences between the source text and the target speaker, and because of expressions used with local or individual particularity.

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Hebrew antecedent. Yet this very closeness of relationship implies that a decision has been made concerning how the target targum text should appear in Aramaic. From my perspective, that decision is just as interpretative–hermeneutical as is the decision to represent the Hebrew Bible narrative with the passage in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan surveyed earlier.[17]

There are several questions that emerge from my preliminary argument: (1) If translation and interpretation are linked, if not synonymous, as I have argued, how does one describe the seemingly different formal relationship between the Hebrew Bible and the targum texts as manifest in the preceding examples? (2) Are there any conceptual resources available that can aid targum scholars with these descriptive problems? (3) If conceptual resources do exist, how might they inform how we understand targumic literature to be functioning, both in relation to the Hebrew Bible text, as well as in relation to their variegated social and historical contexts? And (4) Is it possible that targumic literature had greater cultural importance than targum scholars have typically thought?

II. The Dynamics of Translation

To develop my argument, I will begin by acknowledging that the word *translation*, as it is used to describe both interlinguistic and intercultural phenomena, is difficult to define conceptually. This dynamic of translation, although readily acknowledged in translation studies discussions and literature,[18] has received little explicit attention in the field of targum studies. At times it would seem that targum scholars have often assumed that "translation" is a perspicuous category that needs little exploring or explanation.[19] This has sometimes resulted in a lack of understanding of the kinds of phenomena that can be described by the term *translation*. In the field of translation studies, an area in which many scholars are also practicing translators, "translation" includes much more than the one-to-one rendering of the source text into the target language. It is for this reason that the definition and the meaning of the term is such a contentious issue in translation studies discussions.[20] Not only is defining "translation" a descriptive task, but it can also sometimes take on prescriptive overtones. Some scholars have very clear ideas of what translation can and cannot include, and these definitions often inform their own translation practices. Given this situation,

17. This is precisely the point argued by Samely in "Scripture's Segments and Topicality."

18. Cf., e.g., the presuppositions of the following translation studies volumes: Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996); Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, eds., *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1999); Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre, eds., *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Postcolonial Era* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000); Robinson, *What Is Translation?*; Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (London: Routledge, 2006).

19. The articles by Smelik and Klein cited in n. 2 above go a long way to complicating definitions of *translation* held by targum scholars. However, to my knowledge there has yet to be an explicit exploration of the term *translation* in the targum studies literature in the manner I am suggesting here.

20. Cf., e.g., Robinson, *What Is Translation?*

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a definition of *translation* cannot be assumed; it must be articulated and rearticulated depending on the situation in which it is being used. Furthermore, as descriptive translation theories become more and more informed by translation practices, fundamental shifts in the meaning of *translation* become increasingly probable. When I articulate my understanding of translation, therefore, I am fully aware that I am entering a theoretically contentious space. My role in this space is not to provide a completely original understanding of the term, but rather to explicate some aspects of it that might be useful for targum scholars.

These caveats being stated, for me "translation" involves a fundamental carrying across, a movement over and beyond linguistic and cultural boundaries, which ultimately facilitates cultural and linguistic growth on the target side of the translation process.[21] Being simultaneously interlinguistic and intercultural, "translation" concerns itself not only with semantic equivalence (if such a thing is possible), syntactic and stylistic coherence and transferability, and other interlinguistic problems. Translation also concerns itself with the questions of what are culturally acceptable and understandable forms of literature. Translators therefore ask: How can I make both the language and form of the source text understandable and acceptable to the target audience? By engaging in this type of questioning, translators open up a realm of numerous possibilities concerning how the final form of their target texts may appear. For most professional translators, translation is not just a matter of approximating semantic and pragmatic equivalence between the source and target texts; it is also a process of adaptation and modification to, in a sense, clothe the source text in the target language and culture, making that which is foreign not quite so foreign, thereby exposing new avenues of expression and understanding in the target language and culture. This process of adaptation and modification explores, at first, the potential meanings that a source text might have within the source culture. It then moves to ask which of these potential meanings might be effectively brought across into the target language and culture. Because the process of "bringing across" in some ways narrows down or at least

21. This definition can be found in Maria Tymoczko, "Post-colonial Writing and Literary Translation," in *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London: Routledge, 1999), 19–20. Making a comparison between translation and postcolonial writing, Tymoczko writes:

> Translation as metaphor for post-colonial writing, for example, invokes the sort of activity associated with the etymological meaning of the word: translation as the activity of *carrying across*, for instance, the transportation and relocation of bones and other remains of saints. In this sense post-colonial writing might be imaged as a form of translation (attended with much ceremony and pomp, to be sure) in which venerable and holy (historical, mythic and literary) relics are moved from one sanctified spot of worship to another more central and more secure (because more powerful) location, at which the cult is intended to be preserved, to take root and find new life (emphasis hers).

In the case of the targums, one might argue that the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic served to democratize the cult by making it accessible to those who would not otherwise have access to sacred scripture. Cf., e.g., Frederick E. Greenspahn, "Why Jews Translate the Bible," in *Biblical Interpretation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Peter J. Haas (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 179–95.

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solidifies the meanings of the source text, one could very well ask if the process of "translation" is ever complete or final.[22] For as soon as one translation is brought into being, another could be produced, representing the meanings of the source text in a way that is drastically different from the first translation. Translators must choose between the many possible interpretations of their source texts and then present their chosen interpretations in their target texts to the extent that their target languages and cultures will allow.

Matters are further complicated when considering poststructuralist critiques of language and language use, such as those articulated by Jacques Derrida. Derrida's critique of the Saussurean distinction between the signifier and the signified as constituent parts of the linguistic sign[23] proves devastating to traditional notions of translation. These notions of translation are somewhat similar to the description I articulated in the preceding paragraph. According to these traditional accounts, translation amounts to the recovery of the transcendental signified or logos from the source text.[24] The transcendental signified or logos is that which the specific signifiers of a particular language refer to. The transcendental signified is outside language, but it is that which gives particular languages their meaning. In translation, once the transcendental signified has been identified, it is then clothed in the particular signifier of the target language, thereby becoming "translated." However, by arguing against the presence of a transcendental signified, Derrida forces translation theorists to rethink their understanding of translation. Ironically, Derrida states in an interview with Julia Kristeva that only within the phenomenon of translation is it possible to maintain a notion of a transcendental signified.[25]

22. Cf. the discussion of Jacques Derrida's translated texts below.

23. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 27–73. For a good explanation of this critique in easy-to-understand terms, see Geoffrey Bennington and Jacques Derrida, *Jacques Derrida*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 23–42.

24. Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish–Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 42. In a discussion concerning the LXX's translation of the Hebrew עלמה in Isaiah 7:14, Seidman neatly summarizes Derrida's position on translation, emphasizing the undecidability that is present between languages, which for her is figured with the image of a pregnant virgin. Seidman writes:

> That virginity is sometimes difficult to prove is at the root of a rich and various body of folklore and ritual practice; as we shall see, internal Christian as well as Jewish–Christian discussions of the birth of Jesus revolve around this uncertainty. Indeed, for Derrida, the word 'hymen' becomes the very site of the undecidable. The concept of virginity, then, disorders meaning *within* a language as well as destabilizing the fixed relations between languages. Pregnancy and virginity, and *a fortiori* the paradoxical sign of the pregnant virgin, suggest the workings of difference in language, the unstable borders between appearance and reality, between lack and supplement, and between self and other (emphasis hers).

The image of the virgin returns in Derrida's own discussion of translation, quoted in n. 25 below.

25. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 20. Derrida states:

> That this opposition or difference [between signifier and signified] cannot be radical or absolute does not prevent it from functioning, and even from being indispensable within

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I call this position ironic because Derrida's texts themselves resist this notion of translation. Given that Derrida's texts call into question conventional notions of reading, interpretation, and the traditionally held boundary between philosophy and literature, his writings are notoriously difficult to translate. His incessant wordplays in French and his allusions to philosophical literature, both from classical Greece and early Modern Europe, without using the tools of explicit quotation, raise the question of whether the fullness of Derrida's texts can be adequately communicated in languages other than French. Often Derrida's translators have attempted to overcome these difficulties by providing lengthy introductions to his translated works, sometimes giving the readers extensive instructions on how to read the texts contained therein so as to gain the most from them.[26] Despite these attempts to generate understanding for the target audiences, some of Derrida's translators have considered their task an impossible possibility; impossible because there is so much lost in the translation, but possible because at least some fragments of meaning may be communicated in the target text.

Although this last example may seem extreme, it does raise the important and difficult issue of fidelity in translation. There are two aspects to this issue. First is the issue of whether absolute fidelity is possible, even in a theoretical sense. Finding a solution to this problem is unlikely, given that there is always something that cannot be carried between languages and cultures. No matter how much a translator attempts to be faithful to his or her source text, the fullness of the source text can never be communicated completely for the target audience. Given the reality of this situation, the second aspect of the fidelity issue comes to the fore. Because absolute fidelity is impossible, what does it mean to be faithful to the source text? How can one ensure that the "essence" of the source text has been communicated in the target language and culture? [27] In previous generations, these questions were answered with reference to the now highly problematized concept

certain limits—very wide limits. For example, no translation would be possible without it. In effect the theme of a transcendental signified took shape within the horizon of an absolutely pure, transparent and unequivocal translatability. In the limits to which it is possible, or at least *appears* possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.

26. Cf. the various models of how to translate Derrida's work in Kathleen Davis, *Deconstruction and Translation: Translation Theories Explained* (Manchester, England: St. Jerome, 2001), 8.

27. Robinson, *What is Translation?*, chaps. 8–11. Robinson's discussion on the tensions between "foreignizing" and domesticating tendencies in "translation" is instructive in this issue. In both cases, translators are attempting to communicate what they understand the meaning of the source text to be, but they have very different ways of going about it. In the former case they will often use terminology from the source language to give the impression of foreignness in the target text. In the latter case they will often use extremely colloquial language from the target culture to convey the impact of the source text in the target language. In both cases, Robinson refuses to

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of the transcendental signified or logos. But now, as indicated above, the dynamics of this discussion have shifted. Today, fidelity to the source text is discussed in terms of conformity to social or communal norms governing what is acceptable within the context of translation. This new emphasis furthermore brings to light the political aspects of translation, insofar as "translation" can be used either to confirm and substantiate or undermine and subvert the ideological and hegemonic norms of a given society or culture. As such, translation becomes a highly contested issue, as it takes place at the boundaries of society and can therefore be used either to reinforce those boundaries or call them into question.[28]

Although none of these considerations completely eliminates the fundamental "carrying across" of translation, they do significantly complicate it. In all, the term *translation* should be understood to denote a somewhat empty conceptual space that has been filled in partially by the articulation of translation's etymology as "carrying across." The remainder of the conceptual space is filled by various articulations of "translation" phenomena, all of which have some bearing on the notion of "carrying across." Translation experience certainly plays an important role in articulating these concepts. But ultimately experience complicates concepts, making it impossible to bring closure to them. As a result, this open-endedness should caution scholars against making hasty assumptions about what is meant by the term *translation*. It should also prepare scholars for the possibility that certain phenomena that have not been considered "translational" in the past might, in fact, be covered by the term *translation*. When translation is understood to be both an interlinguistic and intercultural phenomenon involving a fundamental "carrying across," many phenomena typically called "interpretation" can be described under the term *translation*. In making this move, I have broadened out the term, and somewhat conflated it with the term *interpretation*. This is not to deny that there are different ways in which the targums interact with the biblical text and narratives. Rather, I distinguish between what has typically been called "translation" and "interpretation" in the targums by using the terms *one-to-one interlinguistic rendering* and *narrative expansion*, because

suggest which technique is superior to the other, but does discuss how each introduces problems for the task of creating a universally acceptable definition of translation.

28. Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 1–38. In this context, Simon outlines a number of feminist translation practices that are explicitly designed to undermine the supposed mastery of the author over the work being translated, a mastery that left undisturbed would be considered a propagation of a masculinist ideology according to some feminist translators. Cf. also Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). In this volume, Niranjana outlines a translation theory that she argues will resist the colonizing influence of English translators of Indian poetry. Neither Simon nor Niranjana's position would be possible if translation were controlled exclusively by cultural elites. For Simon and Niranjana, translation must become a decentered practice, taking place on the margins of society and culture, for it is in those locations where some of the most creative cultural innovations take place. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–27. Cf. also Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia, eds., *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (London: T & T Clark, 2005).

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I believe these terms better describe how the targums are engaging the biblical text, while still maintaining an overall translational dynamic. From my perspective, this can be demonstrated from specific interactions between the targums and the Hebrew Bible.

III. Translation and the Targums

The case I want to examine in this section is Genesis 3:24, as it illustrates both the interlinguistic and intercultural aspects of translation quite well. In the Hebrew Bible this verse reads:

וַיְגָ֣רֶשׁ אֶת־הָאָדָ֔ם וַיַּשְׁכֵּ֣ן׀ מִקֶּ֗דֶם לְגַן־עֵדֶן֙ אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִ֔ים וְאֵ֖ת לַהַ֣ט הַחֶ֑רֶב
הַמִּתְהַפֶּכֶת֙ לִשְׁמֹ֔ר אֶת־דֶּ֖רֶךְ עֵ֥ץ הַחַיִּֽים׃

> And he [God] drove out the humans and stationed the cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden, as well as the flaming whirling sword to guard the way of the tree of life.

This verse presents several difficulties in the Hebrew, insofar as it uses the unusual verb וישכן to describe God's actions. It also employs strange descriptive terms in conjunction with the sword that God stations to guard the way to the tree of life. Even the notion of the tree of life is difficult, because it has only appeared once in the narrative at this point, in the previous chapter.[29] In response to these various problems, Targum Neofiti renders this verse as follows:

וטרד ית אדם ואשרי יקר שכינתיה ⸢מן⸣ מלקדמין מן מדנ׳ לגנתה דעדן מן בני
תרין כרוביה קדם־על־לא יברא עלמא תרין אלפין דשנין ברא אוריתא אתקן
גנת עדן לצדיקיא וגהינם לרשיעיא אתקן גנת עדן לצדיקיא דייכלון
ויתפרנקון מן פרי אילנ׳ על די נטרו מצוותה דאורייתא בעלמא הדין וקיימו
פקודיה אתקן גהינם לרשיעיא דהיא מדמיה לחרב שנונה אכלה מן תרין
סיטריה אתקן בגוה זיקוקין דנור וגומרין מבערן לרשיעיא למתפרעה מנהון
לעלמא דאתי על די לא נטרו מצותה דאוריתא בעלמא הדין ארום אילן
דחיין היא אורייתא לכל מן דלעי בה ונטר פקודיה הוי חי וקיים כאילן
חייא לעלמא דאתי טבא היא אוריתא לפלחי ‹ה› בעלמא הדין היך פירי
אילן חייא׃

> And he [God] drove out Adam and placed the glory of his Shekhinah from former times at the east of the Garden of Eden between his two cherubim. Two thousand years before he created the world he created Torah. He established the Garden of Eden for the righteous and Gehenna for the wicked. He established the Garden of Eden for the righteous who eat and enjoy the fruit of

29. Wisdom, which is often equated with Torah in postbiblical Jewish literature, is referred to as a tree of life in Proverbs 3:18. Furthermore, Proverbs 11:30 states that the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life. From these biblical references it is not difficult to determine how Targum Neofiti produced its rendering of this passage, as will be discussed below.

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> the tree from which they keep the precepts of Torah in this world and maintain his commandments. He established Gehenna for the wicked, for it is like a sharp sword that consumes with two edges. He established in the middle of it sparks of fire and burning coals for the wicked to exact retribution from them in the world to come because they did not keep the precepts of Torah in this world. For Torah is a tree of life for all who work it and keep his commandments: he [the keeper of Torah] lives and exists like a tree of life in the world to come. It is good to work Torah in this world, just like the fruit of the tree of life.[30]

As in the case of the Pseudo-Jonathan rendering of Genesis 22:1 examined above, it is easy here to observe which elements of the Hebrew antecedent have been brought into the Neofiti version. The verb וישכן has prompted the reference to the Shekinah (שכינתיה); the motif of the whirling flaming sword has provided the basis for some of the targumic images of Gehenna; and the notion of the tree of life has been metaphorically equated to Torah. There is also a double interpretation of the word קדם in the targum's introduction of the ideas of "former times" and "east." Nevertheless, it is impossible to discern the origin of the figure of "two thousand years" if one remains narrowly within the dynamics of targumic exegesis.[31] The same can be said of the distinction between "this world" and "the world to come." Evidently, the targum has integrated narrative motifs from the Hebrew Bible with motifs from other sources, the specific origins of which probably cannot be identified.

The precise dynamics of the targum's complex move become evident when one places this passage in the context of the episode of which it is a part. In the Genesis 3 episode, the themes of commandment, disobedience, rewards, and punishments have already been expressed in various ways, even though these terms are never used explicitly. By the time we reach Genesis 3:24, the woman and the man have already disobeyed God's command not to eat of the fruit of the tree, and they have had punishments placed upon them. The Targum Neofiti version of Genesis 3:24 explicitly introduces the key thematic terms, and demonstrates how they are to be understood in the context of the targum's own narrative by placing them into a paradigmatic relationship with the motifs of Torah and Gehenna. Certainly this move is based on specific interactions between the worldview of the targumists and the narrative world of the Hebrew Bible source text. From my perspective, these moves are just as "translational" as the one-to-one rendering of the first phrase of the Hebrew verse into Aramaic. By integrating the

30. Targum Neofiti (ed. CAL).

31. Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 63, n. 28. McNamara writes of the date of two thousand years: "Belief in the pre-existence of Torah, Garden of Eden, Gehenna, etc., was widespread in Jewish tradition but various dates were assigned for their creation. The age of two thousand years before creation assigned to Torah was arrived at by identification of Torah and wisdom; wisdom rejoicing before God daily (lit.: day day = two days) before creation; one day = one thousand years (Psalms 90:40) (a tradition associated with R. Huna, 350 CE, and Resh Lakish, 270 CE)."

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preceding biblical motifs with the early Jewish motifs I have identified, the targum has bridged the gap between the biblical text and world and the world of early Judaism.[32] When comparing Targum Neofiti Genesis 3:24 with other passages dealing with similar topics, it becomes evident that the themes of merit, reward and punishment, and obedience to Torah are significant priorities in the targum's narrative world. By stressing these themes, the targum reinforces a worldview wherein individual Jews will receive rewards for righteous actions and punishments for failing to obey Torah. Not only does the emphasis on these ideas correspond with similar emphases from other early Jewish literature, but it also serves to generate conformity to the communal norms assigned positive value by the paradigms of the targumic narrative. Yet it is also important to acknowledge that Targum Neofiti's version of Genesis 3:24 is not completely transparent, given that there are conceptual and practical gaps that are not addressed by this passage. What does obedience to Torah look like? Are there particular expressions of Jewish practice that lie behind the targum's exhortation to keep Torah? As crucial as these questions are for the reconstruction of Targum Neofiti's narrative and ideological world, Targum Neofiti does begin to bridge the linguistic, cultural, and conceptual gaps separating its readers/audiences from the Hebrew Bible source text. In this sense, it has "carried" its understanding of the Hebrew Bible source text "across" to a new linguistic and cultural setting. From the perspective of the targumist, and perhaps from the perspective of Targum Neofiti's readers/audiences, Targum Neofiti has articulated the religious and ideological meaning of the Hebrew Bible text in early Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. In this respect, it has "translated" Genesis 3:24.

This description of Targum Neofiti Genesis 3:24 as translation is dependent upon the way I understand this passage to be explicating and articulating the themes evident in the Genesis 3 episode as a whole. In fact, the idea that the targums are by and large translational rests almost entirely on the theory that there are large-scale coherence structures found in targumic literature that both overlap with and develop the themes of Hebrew Bible.[33] In this particular case, the biblical themes gain their specific postbiblical targumic nuance in Targum Neofiti conclusion to this chapter in 3:24. Targum Neofiti's rendering of Genesis 3:24 thereby rearticulates the themes of the Hebrew Bible in an early Jewish context and develops them according to its own discursive goals and desires. This tension between updating biblical material for the early Jewish audience and remaining within the bounds of one-to-one interlinguistic renderings is evident throughout the Palestinian targums to the Pentateuch; it is a constituent part of their translational relationship with the Hebrew Bible.

32. Targum Neofiti Numbers 12:16 manifests a similar kind of contemporizing move, except in that case the moral lesson is directed to "sages" and "keepers of Torah," whereas here the intended audience of the moral lesson is more generalized, despite the implied message that all good Jews should obey Torah.

33. I developed this theme in my doctoral dissertation: Simon G. D. A. Lasair, "A Narratological Approach to the Pentateuch Targums" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester, 2008), 117–23.

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IV. A Complicating Example

The tension between updating and remaining close to the source text is felt acutely by many modern translators, and is recorded in translation studies literature.[34] In what follows I examine one targumic approach to this problem where Targum Pseudo-Jonathan makes a strong distinction between its own narrative material and the one-to-one interlinguistic rendering of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, as I will argue, this move is no less "translational" than the phenomena examined in this article so far. In fact, my example conforms quite closely to a "translational" move that is beginning to receive some discussion in translation studies circles. And although the targumic example I use manifests an exceptional targumic phenomenon, both the rarity of the phenomenon and its extremity help to show how encompassing the concept of translation can be. The "translational" move examined in this section is called *selective appropriation*, and, as I will demonstrate, it both confirms and complicates what I have been already arguing about the connection between "translation" and "interpretation."

V. Selective Appropriation

Mona Baker introduced the term selective appropriation to translation studies in *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (2006). According to Baker, selective appropriation in its most basic form is a phenomenon that determines which details or sources are included or not included in target documents or languages. It can manifest itself within a single translation in which translators only translate certain portions of the source document for reasons of relevance, intelligibility, or ideological agreement or disagreement.[35] Or it can manifest itself on a larger scale when translators choose to translate some documents and not others from a certain culture to create a particular narrative concerning that culture. In this latter case, Baker cites the example of the Middle East Media Research Institute, or MEMRI. According to Baker, MEMRI only translates Arabic media sources that portray Arabs as religious extremists and/or anti-Semites.[36] Baker also states that selective appropriation can involve the active intervention of translators to add to or correct texts perceived to be deficient in one way or another. She accordingly remarks, "Selecting, and in some cases 'inventing,' texts that help elaborate a particular narrative of an 'enemy' culture, then, is a well-documented practice that often relies heavily on the services of translators and interpreters."[37] Baker later returns to this theme of inventing narratives when she discusses a court case in Israel in which a witness testifies that the Russo-German war began in 1921. In this case, both the translator and the judge correct the witness and have the real date of 1941 entered into the court record.[38] According to Baker, these kinds of examples are common in translation practice. Not only

34. Cf. Robinson, *What Is Translation?*, chapters 8–11.
35. Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 71–73.
36. Ibid., 74.
37. Ibid., 75.
38. Ibid., 122.

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do they indicate a difference of opinion between the translator and the source text or person, but they also show that "translation" is an active and, at times, creative practice wherein facts and stories may be modified to conform to the translator's presuppositions concerning the matters being translated.

VI. Selective Appropriation and the Targums

In approaching the targums, it is somewhat difficult to know precisely which cultural or ideological functions they played as translations, since their various temporal and geographical provenances are vague and in any case contested among targum scholars.[39] There is also no extratargumic evidence to indicate how people in the targums' own contexts might have interpreted specific targumic passages. There is some evidence as to how the rabbis might have received the targums,[40] but given that the relationship between the targums and the rabbis has been called into question recently, this evidence must be approached cautiously.[41] As a result, describing the cultural and ideological functions of the targums is to hypothesize and rely upon internal evidence provided by the targums themselves. Nevertheless, I believe it is possible to determine, at least in part, how the targums might have functioned culturally and ideologically by extracting evidence from their literary structures. Selective appropriation, as described earlier, provides a helpful framework for analyzing the complex relationship between the Hebrew Bible and various targum texts. To observe this dynamic at work, I examine Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's version of Numbers 21:35. This passage is interesting for my purposes because it manifests a rare targumic phenomenon: a large narrative expansion followed by an explicit quotation of the corresponding Hebrew Bible verse framed as a quotation. As I will argue, this phenomenon conforms in a

39. An example of this problematic status would be the now famous debate between Avigdor Shinan and Robert Hayward concerning the date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. For articles participating in this debate, see e.g., Avigdor Shinan, "The "Palestinian" Targums—Repetitions, Internal Unity, Contradictions," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36 (1985): 72–87; Robert Hayward, "The Date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Some Comments," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (1989): 7–30; Avigdor Shinan, "Dating Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Some More Comments," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 41 (1990): 57–61; Robert Hayward, "Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 42 (1991): 215–46; C. T. R. Hayward, "Inconsistencies and Contradictions in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: The Case of Eliezer and Nimrod," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 38 (1992): 31–55.

40. Willem F. Smelik, "The Rabbinic Reception of Early Bible Translations as Holy Writings and Oral Torah," *Journal of the Aramaic Bible* 1 (1999): 249–72; also, Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third–Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York and Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86.

41. Cf. Paul V. M. Flesher, "The Literary Legacy of Priests? The Pentateuchal Targums of Israel in their Social and Linguistic Context," in *The Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 CE: Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University October 14–17, 2001*, ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2003), 467–508; Beverly P. Mortensen, *The Priesthood in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Renewing the Profession* (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Also, Simon Adnams Lasair, "Review of Beverly P. Mortensen, *The Priesthood in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 54 (2009): 287–89.

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variety of different ways to Baker's understanding of selective appropriation. If, then, a passage such as this, in both its rarity and extremity, conforms to a "translational" dynamic, cannot the same be argued for many passages that are less extreme in their relationship with the Hebrew Bible? I will answer this question in the affirmative, for reasons stated below. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:35 reads as follows:

> וחוה כיוון דחמא עוג רשיעא ית משׁירייתא דישׂראל דהוה שׁיתא פרסי אמר ליה אנא מסדר סידרי קרבא כלו־קבל עמא הדין דילמא יעבדון לי היכמא דעבדו לסיחן אזל ועקר טוורא בר שׁיתא פרסי ואחתיה על רישׁיה למיטלוק עלידון מזך יד זמין מימרא דיי׳ וחלא ופכר טוורא ונקריה וטמע רישׁיה בגויה בעא למשׁלפיה מן רישׁיה ולא יכיל מזך בגלל דמשׁכי ככיה ושׁיניה פמיה הלכא והלכא אזל משׁה ונסב נרגא ברת עישׂרתי אמין וטפז עישׂרתי אמין ומחייה בקרסוליה ונפל ומית מן לדאל למשׁריתא דישׂראל דהכין כתיב ומחו יתיה וית בנוי וית כל עמיה עד די לא שׁיירו ליה משׁיזיב ויריתו ית ארעיה

> When Og the wicked saw the camp of Israel which was six parsangs, he said to himself, "I shall set the orders of war against this people lest they do to me just as they did to Sihon." He went and uprooted a mountain that was six parsangs and he placed it upon his head to throw upon them. Immediately the Memra of the Lord appointed a worm and it took apart the mountain and bored it. And his head sank in the midst of it. He sought to remove it from his head but he was not able because his teeth and the molars of his mouth were pulling hither and thither. Moses went and took an axe that was ten cubits and he leapt ten cubits and smote him on the ankle and he fell and died further on from the camp of Israel. Just as it is written: "And they smote him and his sons and all his people until there were none left for him as a deliverer. And they took possession of his land."[42]

For comparison, the following is the Hebrew Bible version of this verse:

> וַיַּכּוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וְאֶת־כָּל־עַמּוֹ עַד־בִּלְתִּי הִשְׁאִיר־לוֹ שָׂרִיד וַיִּירְשׁוּ אֶת־אַרְצוֹ׃

42. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3, *Bible Times and Characters from the Exodus to the Death of Moses*, trans. Paul Radin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 345–46. Ginzberg records a similar narrative concerning the death of Og, indicating that this narrative exists in a number of different sources. His narrative reads:

> Og met his death in this fashion. When he discovered that Israel's camp was three parsangs in circumference, he said: 'I shall now tear up a mountain of three parsangs, and cast it upon Israel's camp, and crush them.' He did as he had planned, pulled up a mountain of three parsangs, laid it upon his head, and came marching in the direction of the Israelite camp, to hurl it upon them. But what did God do? He caused ants to perforate the mountain, so that it slipped from Og's head down upon his neck, and when he attempted to shake it off, his teeth pushed out and extended to left and right, and did not let the mountain pass, so that he now stood there with the mountain, unable to throw it from him. When Moses saw this, he took an axe twelve cubits long, leaped ten cubits into the air, and dealt a blow to Og's ankle, which caused the giant's death.

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> And they smote him and his sons and all his people until there were no survivors left over for him. And they took possession of his land.

The structural division in the targumic passage that serves as the starting point of my analysis is the division between the targumic narrative expansion and the one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible framed as a quotation.[43] The narrative expansion relates Og's response to seeing the camp of Israel, his actions following that response, God's actions to protect the people of Israel, Moses' actions against Og, and Og's subsequent death. Then comes the quotation from scripture, which is very brief and quite elliptical, describing events not narrated by the extrabiblical material. It indicates that the people of Israel themselves attacked Og, Og's sons, and all his people, defeating them. It then states that Israel took possession of Og's land, another detail not supplied by the narrative expansion. The relationship between the narrative expansion and the one-to-one rendering of scripture framed as a quotation is quite complex. On the surface, it would appear that the quotation is used to confirm what the targum has narrated in its own words. Yet when it is scrutinized more closely, we find that there are evidently a number of tensions between the two, if not outright contradictions, as indicated by my summary.

One way to resolve these tensions may be to state that the quotation is meant to supplement the targumic material, in that it fills in details omitted by the targumist. If this is indeed the case, the relationship between the two within the structure of the narrative must be sequential and chronological in a narrative sense: Og prepares to attack the Israelites, God intervenes, Moses attacks and defeats Og, and then the Israelites themselves complete the job, as is reported in scripture. There is a certain appeal to this interpretation, insofar as it harmonizes the two accounts without erasing their differences. But this raises the question: Why did the targumist frame the quotation from scripture as a quotation from scripture? Presumably this was not necessary, especially given the general targumic tendency to more fully integrate narrative expansions with one-to-one renderings of the Hebrew Bible.[44] We must, therefore, see the quotation formula הכין כתיב, "just as it is written . . ." as playing a crucial role in the structure of this passage. It separates the narrative expansion from the Hebrew Bible narrative and indicates that these two narratives are quite different. On the one hand, the narrative expansion describes the details of Og's encounter with the Israelites. Yet on the other

43. This quotation formula appears seven times in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, in Numbers 21:35, Deuteronomy 9:19, Deuteronomy 26:17, Deuteronomy 26:18, Deuteronomy 31:14, Deuteronomy 32:1, and Deuteronomy 32:4. Deuteronomy 9:19 follows the pattern outlined in Numbers 21:35, where there is a long narrative expansion followed by a one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible verse in Aramaic framed as a quotation from scripture. The relationship between the narrative expansion and the quotation from scripture seems to manifest the same complex dynamics as in Numbers 21:35. The same is true of Deuteronomy 32:1 and Deuteronomy 32:4. The other cases listed here quote passages from the Hebrew Bible not found in the immediate co-text, in each case used to substantiate claims of God's uniqueness and Israel's status as God's chosen people.

44. As an example of this phenomenon, see the Targum Neofiti version of Genesis 3:24 above.

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hand, the quotation from scripture links the targumic version of Numbers 21:35 to the corresponding Hebrew Bible verse. Without this quotation and its quotation formula, the connection between the targumic narrative material and the biblical verse would be tenuous at best; the only words linking the two are the Hebrew word נכה and the Aramaic word מחי, which both mean "to smite." In this passage, the mechanism of selective appropriation allows the targumist to add the new material through selecting this verse as one to expand upon as opposed to others that might receive expansions. Selective appropriation also determines that the quotation from scripture must appear as a quotation from scripture by selecting to frame it as one. Together they form the single literary unit representing Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's appropriation of Numbers 21:35. And, according to the dynamics of selective appropriation, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's rendering is "translational" in nature.

VII. The dynamics of Selective Appropriation in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

When a translator uses selective appropriation, he or she makes several judgments concerning the relevance and/or meaning of the phrase or document being translated. In the targumic passage I have been discussing, the targumist has made several judgments about Numbers 21:35 as it is manifest in the Hebrew Bible. First, there is the judgment that the actual Hebrew words in this verse should be represented in Aramaic in one way or another. Second, there is the judgment that in some ways the Hebrew words by themselves are insufficient to describe the events that happened when Israel encountered Og. And third, there is the judgment that an expansion on the Hebrew words would be appropriate to make up for this perceived insufficiency. By including both the narrative expansion and the one-to-one rendering of the biblical words, the targumist displays a loyalty to his own knowledge, as well to the actual words of the Bible. According to Baker, this kind of double loyalty is typical of selective appropriation. As mentioned, sometimes translators will omit certain details in their translations because these details in the source texts do not conform to the translator's own understanding of history.[45] In other cases, translators will add or correct details to make up for perceived inadequacies in the source documents.[46] Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's targumist practices selective appropriation in this passage when he adds his own narrative material. The complicating factor is that the targumist holds his added details in tension with his one-to-one rendering of the Hebrew Bible verse. By framing his rendering of the Hebrew Bible text as a quotation from scripture, the targumist draws attention to the fact that the narrative expansion is extrabiblical material, or at least something that does not conform to the established targumic norm of one-to-one renderings of the Hebrew Bible source text. This is in contrast to the many instances when exclusively targumic

45. Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 72–73.
46. Ibid., 75, 120–22.

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narrative material is more fully integrated with one-to-one renderings of the biblical text.

VIII. Linking Targum Pseudo-Jonathan with modern "translation" practices

In modern contexts, Baker cites several examples in which the translator does not think that the source document has provided correct or accurate information. The translator there feels obligated to translate the source document regardless, along with a correction.[47] In such cases, the translator often notes explicitly that his or her correction of the source document is a correction. This is quite similar to what Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's targumist has done in Numbers 21:35 in structuring his text in such a way as to clearly indicate that he has added his own narrative material. The most significant difference between Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's text and the examples cited by Baker is that the latter have the emended or expanded information following the "direct translation" of the source document; in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the reverse is the case. This ordering of material could perform various functions in the text of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. But one function appears most likely. Although Targum Pseudo-Jonathan's targumist probably considered his narrative material an accurate representation of the Israelites' encounter with Og, he nevertheless used the one-to-one rendering of scripture in an authoritative way. This authority was indicated by the one-to-one rendering, framed as a quotation from scripture. This aspect of presentation indicates that for the targumist, scripture narrated the correct version of events, as opposed to the exclusively targumic material that may or may not have been correct. The only way the targumic material could have been accepted was if it were seen to accurately unpack the meaning of the biblical wording. By including the one-to-one rendering in his text and by framing it as a quotation from scripture, the targumist provided a way for his readers or audiences to evaluate the appropriateness of his added narrative material. Because the quotation differs on several points with the new material, those attentive to these differences might have stated that the added narrative, not the Hebrew Bible, potentially needed revision.

IX. Differentiating between past and present practices

In the move I just described, we might want to see an inversion of the process of selective appropriation as Baker explicates it. From Baker's perspective, selective appropriation determines the value and relevance of the source documents translated by translators. In the targumic context, however, the value and relevance of the Hebrew Bible was taken for granted in terms of its retaining priority. What was at issue for the targumists was the value and relevance of their target targumic texts insofar as the texts differed from that of the Hebrew Bible. Given the different versions of specific biblical verses in various targumic contexts, there was likely some flexibility granted to the targumists in how they

47. Ibid., 120–22.

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would render the Hebrew Bible into Aramaic.[48] But at the same time, the actual biblical words were the control that prevented targumic renderings from completely abandoning the Hebrew original. No matter what the targumist did to alter the content and form of the biblical narrative, the biblical words themselves questioned the validity of the targumic content by remaining ever present, in one form or another, within the targum texts. The biblical words also remained present outside the targum texts in the text of the Hebrew Bible, the canonical document of the targumic communities. To preserve the biblical wording in a targumic context, the targums manifested a painstaking literalness when representing the Hebrew words in Aramaic. This is evident in the one-to-one Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew Bible in the targumic target texts. In effect, the Hebrew words remained more or less intact in both their triconsonantal root forms as well as in their morphology, at least in the Pentateuch targums, insofar as that was possible in a "translational" context.[49] In contrast, there was some variety between the different targums in the exclusively targumic narrative material associated with a particular biblical verse. As such, there was a great deal of provisionality in targum texts as a whole. The way in which biblical words and ideas were combined with targumic words and ideas varied from targum to targum. Yet most targum scholars assume that each targum accurately represented its community's understanding of the biblical narrative by combining one-to-one renderings with added targumic narratives. Whether we can confirm this assumption with the available historical evidence is a question that extends beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, as the foregoing reflections demonstrate, there are some limits to selective appropriation when it is examined in a targumic context. I will conclude this section by discussing one further limit of selective appropriation.

One of Baker's many concerns is to make explicit some of the moral and ethical implications of various translation practices. Her description of selective appropriation thus focuses on contexts where the target audiences have no access to the source documents except through the process of translation. As a result, selective appropriation, at least in Baker's examples, plays a significant role in constructing the target audiences' impressions of the source documents and the cultures that produced them. Within a targumic context, selective appropriation would play this role only if the targums' readers or audience members had no access to the Hebrew Bible. But as I have demonstrated already, the Bible was accessible to the targumic communities in a variety of different forms. In this way, a targumist's situation was not like that of many twenty-first century translators. His translation practice would have supplemented and further developed knowledge of the Hebrew Bible already possessed by his target audience. In short, the targumist was not working in a vacuum. Rather,

48. Targum Neofiti does not represent Numbers 21:35 in the same way as Pseudo-Jonathan. As far as I am aware, among the targums this narrative expansion is unique to Pseudo-Jonathan.

49. Paul V. M. Flesher, "Targum as Scripture," in *Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translation and Interpretation in Memory of Ernest G. Clarke*, ed. Paul V. M. Flesher (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 61–75.

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his activities would have been one part of the ongoing, multifaceted discussions surrounding the Hebrew Bible in early Jewish communities.[50] Selective appropriation would only have been at work in this context when the translator was determining which biblical verses and passages would have been expanded upon with new narrative material. Selective appropriation would not have excluded certain parts of the Bible from being rendered targumically.[51] Presumably every part of the Hebrew Bible would have been available for targumic rendering within that social and historical context. The conclusion to draw from these reflections is that Baker's concept of selective appropriation is relevant to targum studies only insofar as it can be seen to structure the shape and content of the targumic narratives. With regard to the social dynamics surrounding the targums, selective appropriation is relevant insofar as the Hebrew Bible was determined to be the authoritative document of early Jewish communities. As a result, the Hebrew Bible deserved to be translated targumically, adding narrative expansions where necessary. Therefore, even though its application must be limited by the caveats just stated, selective appropriation as manifest in the Pentateuch Targums calls into question the strong distinction between translation and interpretation held by many targum scholars. There are many other phenomena discussed by translation scholars that similarly deconstruct this distinction. What remains is to ask what implications this conceptual insight may have for the study of the Pentateuch Targums specifically, and targumic literature more generally.

X. Conclusion

Assuming that scholars accept the argument presented in this article, I think there is one significant outcome of the ideas presented herein: The production of the targums can no longer be described in mechanical terms relying on a strong distinction between translation and interpretation. It is possible to maintain the difference between one-to-one interlinguistic rendering on the one hand, and narrative expansion on the other. But these two phenomena must be seen as inexorably intertwined, producing a complex dynamic of interlinguistic and intercultural negotiation that might rightly be called "translation." My use of the term *translation* is both similar to and different from Samely's.[52] *Translation* is indeed a hermeneutic attitude, but it is not one hermeneutic attitude among many manifest in the targums. It is, rather, the overriding hermeneutic attitude that governs all targumic renderings of Hebrew Bible passages into early Jewish Aramaic languages and cultures.

Because the fundamental translational dynamic is one of interlinguistic and intercultural negotiation, it is necessary to again discuss the theme of provisionality in specific targums, already mentioned in this article. Given that the targums in

50. This statement rests on the presupposition that Bible interpretation and discussion of biblical topics was not an exclusive activity of Jewish elites, despite the high social value placed upon such activities.

51. One notable exception to this general statement may be the Fragment Targum.

52. Samely, "Scripture's Segments and Topicality."

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their specificity were most likely highly provisional, it is possible that certain communities may have had their favorite targum as opposed to those possessed by other communities.[53] It is also possible that these favored targums may have disagreed in their particular representations of specific Hebrew Bible verses, both in terms of their narrative expansions as well as their one-to-one interlinguistic renderings. How early Jewish communities might have discussed or engaged with these differences may never be known due to the lack of extratargumic evidence. At present, the only evidence to suggest an attempt to centralize the institution of Targum is talmudic, and this evidence is problematic at best because it only suggests that there were a diversity of practices associated with targumic literature.[54] Nevertheless, the very possibility of differences between specific targumic renderings and the communal understandings of scripture that they probably represent raises a number of methodological and historical issues that targum scholars may consider worth pursuing. Among these issues is the complicated question of which early Jewish group or groups produced the targums.[55]

Regardless of how one approaches the outcomes of this article, by describing the targums as "translations" I have attempted to raise the important question of how the targums might have functioned within the world of early Judaism, both culturally and politically. The field of translation studies may provide targum scholars with many useful concepts, such as those discussed by Baker and others. It is my hope that this article has introduced some of these concepts. Furthermore, if accepted, the brief interdisciplinary discussion in this article might be an initial move toward redescribing targumic literature in a more nuanced and inclusive manner. The ideas I have suggested need to be developed, but my desire is that what is outlined here will begin a conceptual, methodological, and historical discussion that from my perspective is long overdue.

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53. Both the similarities and differences between Targums Onqelus, Neofiti, and Pseudo-Jonathan are enough to make this possibility probable, regardless of the different dates usually assigned these targums.

54. Cf. Willem F. Smelik, "The Rabbinic Reception of Early Bible Translations"; also Willem F. Smelik, "Orality, Manuscript Reproduction, and the Targums," in *Paratext and Megatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions: The Textual Markers of Contextualization*, ed. A. A. den Hollander, U. B. Schmid, and W. F. Smelik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 49–81.

55. Cf. note 41.

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