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# Aramaic and Greek Targum as Witness to Early Massorah Dynamics

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# **Aramaic and Greek Targum as Witness to Early Massorah Dynamics**

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## ARAMAIC AND GREEK TARGUM AS WITNESS TO EARLY MASSORAH DYNAMICS

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The purpose of this presentation is to unveil the governing dynamics of early Massoretic activities that are attested to by the complementary work of Targum in Greek and in Aramaic from the Second Temple period. The primary concern of the Massorettes was the preservation of the scriptural intent that was encapsulated in key teachings of the early scribes, from the days of the Men of the Great Synagogue until the days of Rabbi Akiva. The Soferic age had dawned in the latter years of the Persian Period during the days of Ezra the scribe. At that time the prophetic age had already waned, in the view of early rabbinic historiography (*Seder Olam Rabah*). Scribal activities led to the Biblical collection of canonical works and their affective usage in early Hasmonean days, and later, following the destruction of the Temple, a similar effort was pursued by the rabbis at Yavneh to collect the halakhic teachings of the Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel.

A dual Torah of written and oral traditions enjoyed a process of collection leading to canonization that was similarly guided by the concern for proper preservation. The development for the written tradition was already well established before the Destruction. However, the oral tradition enjoys an evolvement from Yavneh to Rabbi Akiva's academy that was represented by the disciples remaining following the Bar Kochba revolt. It was the collection of Rabbi Meir's Mishnah that led to the official publication of the Mishnah by Rabbi Yehudah the Patriarch at the beginning of the third century, which achieved canonicity in the Amoraic schools of Babylon and Galilee. However, the standardized canonical text of Hebrew Scriptures with its accompanying massoretic material already guided the earlier Tannaitic schools in their midrashic study, and the literal distinction between the oral transmission of the Mishnah and the written transcription of the Bible was still maintained.

Yet, the initial view of the dual Torah was primarily associated with the Massoretic work of the scribes. Since the consonantal text of the Torah was read publicly in the synagogue and in the Temple, as it was studied by the schools and the courts. The public reading of scriptures was called *Miqra*, and it was determined by the verbal tradition of vocalization, punctuation and division. This reflected an affective reception by the community via hearing and doing that bonded the written text with its oral presentation, i.e., a Torah that is written (*Biketav*) and that is by the mouth (*Beal Peh*). Such is the depiction in Exodus 34:27: “write unto you these words, that upon the verbalization of these words I make the covenant through you with Israel.” This statement is juxtaposed to the end of the Ritual Decalogue that proscribes the mixing of dairy with meat. The proscription is written as *bhllb*, which are consonants that can be vocalized either as *behaleb* (with milk) or *beheleb* (in the fat). However, only the former vocalization is intended, and that can only be determined by the verbal tradition that accompanies the written text.

A similar phenomenon occurs when Moses is commanded to write down the Amalekite affair in the book, as well as to place its instruction in Joshua's ears (Ex 17:14): “write this as remembrance in the book and place (it) in the ears of Joshua, saying...” The instruction needs to be verbalized in order to understand its intent. Since the text presents a dual reading for “I shall wipe out the *zchr* of Amalak,” either *zekher* (the memory) or *zakhar* (the males). The intended meaning is to read “the memory,” i.e. both the males and females, which is confirmed by Samuel's reproof of Saul (I Sam 15:3, “men and

women”). These two examples of the proper reading to preserve the Mosaic intent are described by the early rabbinic tradition. The Miqra initially exhibited a dual Torah tradition, and its complement Targum eventually transmitted its intended meaning.

Such observation is made by Rabbi Judah’s disciple, Rav (a.b. Talmud Megillah 32, Nedahrim 37b). He massoretically describes the intentional act of Torah reading by Ezra the scribe, on the Temple Mount during the New Year day (Neh 8:8) “They read from the scroll of God’s Torah,” i.e. the Miqra. “Rendering the explanation,” i.e. the Targum. “Bestowing the sense,” via the verses “and they made them understand the reading, via the cantillations or the Massorah. The latter signifies both the chanting of the verse by its proper punctuation and division (from the root YaSaR) and the accompanying tradition to preserve its intent (from the root MaSaR). Ezra was reading from the scroll, while the Levitical teachers who surrounded him were offering the translation. Such became the practice for public reading, verses to be rendered by the reader as the meturgemman (or hermeneutes) accompanied him with the Targum in Aramaic or in Greek, per each verse. This practice is verified by the first century elder Papias, who describes Mark as Peter’s meturgamman in the synagogue, when he preached following the public reading. The very rudiments of the Massorah were affectively used for the proper reception of public reading. Targum itself attests to the proper intent, which Miqra with its Messorah preserved, and the true meaning can only be derived from the initial combination of written and oral tradition.

Indeed Ezra instituted the distinct square script for the written text, while he also expanded the cycle of public reading on a weekly basis. Ezra and the Men of the Great Synagogue represent the very legislative body that was responsible for the canonical collection, its redacted arrangement and the seminal massoretic tradition, in the early rabbinic historiography. Moreover, the Men of the Great Synagogue have formulated a triadic saying of guiding principles that determined the course of judicial, educational and legislative development of the theocratic state. Their seminal teaching appears at the outset of tractate Avot that described the transmission of the dual Torah tradition.

“Be deliberate in judgment, raise many disciples and make a hedge to the Torah.” The first and last governing principles are usually applied to the procedural and legislative development of the Oral Law. However, Avot de Rabbi Nathan relates their teaching, most significantly, to the primary concern of preservation of the intentionality of Biblical text by the initial verbal tradition, as I have already mentioned. “Be deliberate in judgment” is said to refer to the massoretic work of the Great Synagogue. These scribes admitted the Hagiographical works of Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes into the Canon. These works were originally transcribed by Hezekiah the Judaeh King and his council but remained undisclosed (*genuzim*). The Men of the Great Synagogue brought them into conformity with the biblically intended view by their redacted arrangement. Their act of “metunim” (deliberation) determined the incorporation of the delayed biblical works to be included in the canon. “Kanon” in Greek means measuring yard and it captures the Hebrew meaning of the word “Din.”

Interestingly Ecclesiastes’ conclusion (12:11-14) offers the theological reason for its inclusion: “The sum of matter, all is heard so have awe of God.” The summary statement appears appropriately in this canonical ending to the last part of the Hagiographa, as penned by the early scribes. For the very work of Ecclesiastes ends with the same introductory principal teaching on vanity. What follows then is the principle of inclusion and exclusion as well as the principle of the dual Torah from the same shepherd, Moses. These principles guide the early Messorettes.

In light of this development, the early account in the Hebrew canon (Bab. Talmud B.B 15a) relates that the Men of the Great Synagogue also transcribed the prophetic work of Ezekial, i.e. the redacted arrangement of the various parts, and the collection of the twelve Minor Prophets, which closes the second division of the canon. There too appears a canonical ending in Malachi (3:22-24), whose oracle closes with the prophetic formula, "thus said the Lord of Hosts." These last verses, following the formula, capture the affective signification of the canonical Torah and Prophets. The Mosaic Torah is to be governed by the principle of Zikkaron: "Remember the Torah of Moses." The performative meaning of *zakhor*, according to the early rabbinic tradition, is to effect a proper hearing through the verbal reading (*bapeh*). Thus, the initial linkage of the written with the oral guide the Massoretic work. Torah of Moses is to be read publicly, as the community binds itself to the sacred covenant of the past, and this reading correlates to the Prophets, who offer in their writings the prospect for the future. Accordingly, the canonical ending of Malachi introduces the principle of prophetic restoration by Elijah redivivus. It serves also as a distinguishing guide between the prophetic works and the later apocalyptic writings. Daniel is said to be transcribed by the Men of the Great Synagogue, and they do relegate the writing to the last division of the Canon. In addition, they also admit the scroll of Esther into the Hagiographa. Both works of the late Persian period are now included, whereas in other Jewish communities Daniel was associated with Prophets and Esther was not included.

According to rabbinic tradition, Torah reading (the *sidra*) were concluded with a correlative Prophetic lection (the *Haftarah*) during the early Hasmonean period. The emergence of this practice came to affect the unitive principle of the Hebrew canon for the Torah and Prophets. The sacred covenant of the past with the prophetic prospect for the future impacts theistic consciousness of the community here and now. The centrality of public readings of the annual religious calendar gave rise to the institution of public preaching that addresses the issue of fulfillment in their life of praxis and thought. Luke's dual work offers a witness to their development. In his Gospel (4:16-21), he describes how Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth correlated the Torah reading to the prophetic conclusion and delivered a homily on fulfillment. In Acts (15:21), James asserts that the institution of preaching that follows public reading of Torah and prophets already existed from Mosaic time. He echoes the early rabbinic account of the development, and he applies the principle of fulfillment that guided the preachers. Massoretic work enjoyed initially its *sitz im leben* in public reading, translating and preaching. How significant must have been their dynamics that came to preserve the proper intent of Scripture.

The principle of "metunim" gave rise to conformity and unitive purpose that governed the three parts of the Hebrew canon. However, the applied dynamics are captured in the third key teaching of the Men of the Great Synagogue. The principle of making a hedge to the Torah (the *seyyag*) usually is seen to guide the rabbinic dynamics in the issuance of *taqqanoth* and *gezeroth* (enactments and cautionary measures). Again, Avot de Rav Nathan ascribes the rule of hedging also to the initial activities of the massorah. This early rabbinic commentary to Avot describes different aspects of "hedging," which examples can be separated into two distinct areas.

One area determines the basic dynamics of Massoretic concerns, namely the divine intentionality in wording the biblical text ("God applies a *seyyag* to his words"), as well as the principle of hedging in the three divisions of the Hebrew canon ("the Torah, the Prophets and the Hagiographa apply *seyyag* to their words"). The other area related understandably to the development of Oral Law by the rabbinic principle of *seyyag*. Here, it offers the contrast between the human application of restrictiveness and the rabbinic approach. Adam's behavior represents the human act of constraint and Job's behavior suggests

the extreme act of restrictions by a God-fearer. Both are faulted in contradistinction to the rabbinic application of Seyyag that is concerned mainly with human behavior due to habit, drives and physical limitation. Indeed the rabbinic seyrag determines Mishanaic halakha, and R. Yehudah the Patriarch opens the first tractate Berakhot with the guiding principle that "comes to remove the human being from transgression."

What is significant for our study is to examine the principle of Seyyag that guides Massoretic dynamics, which is attested to by the early Targum in Greek and in Aramaic, confirming said concern. First, we observe that seyrag comes to determine the divine intentionality. For the greatest challenge to the theistic faith is the issue of theodicy. Since ultimate reliance on God's will and justice determines human acceptance of the ultimate authority, that rests with a transcendental God who creates and provides. Accordingly, Avot de Rabbi Nathan offers this example of God's intent in Scriptures, namely how this special literature, standing apart from all other religious texts, promotes its theistic view. After all, the Biblical works emerged in a pagan world of nature worship that described their gods' behavior personalistically. The wrath of gods is the steam of their huge nostrils and accordingly the polytheistic nations worded their theological question in a mythopoeic speech.

Thus, Avot de Rabbi Nathan (ADRN) cites the pagan mythopoeic question from Deut 29:23 "and the nations will say: why did YHWH do so to this land? Why such steam from his huge nostril?" However, in biblical thought God's intent is his fore knowledge and not a capricious act of vengeance. His human creatures enjoy freedom of choice, whether good or bad, and their creator is compassionate and patient. Thus explains ADRN, God's intent for the scriptural response to be recorded by Moses for the future generations, when the theodical question depends on how humanity behaves with a theistic awareness. The following verses 24, 25 offer such a response: "They will say: Because they abandoned YHWH's covenant, and they went and worshipped other gods and bowed to them, gods whom they not know and not assigned to them." Evidently the following v. 26 should proceed the above mythopoeic wording of the theodical question. For it picks up on the personification of gods. "And Y's nostril issued steam upon that land," with the explanation "in order to bring upon her all the curses that were written in this book." The Deuteronomic Admonition already detailed the divine punishment due to human transgression. However, such an early prosaic account or even the poetic prophecy of "Haazinu" that forecast Israelite history of rise and fall under God can leave the non-biblically oriented people with a totally different impression. This is how ADRN captures the pagan reaction." Now (following the catastrophe of Israel) all mortal people will say about the Torah of Moses, God of Israel is a tyrant, i.e. a vengeful god. He kills whom He please." Due to this misconstruction of event, it was necessary to insert into the text the theodical response that promotes theistic understanding. Evil results mainly from human freedom to commit wrong by their arrogant behavior due to mythopoeic rationalization.

The purpose of the Massoretic seyrag is to buttress the text with a theistic view, that stands apart and in contrast with all other religious writings in their days, i.e. Greco-Roman time. Thus the contrast appears in that reply reserved for future generations, where "YHWH," the holy name of God, is contrasted with "elohim aherim" (other gods) the secular name of god, as it appears in the first two commandments of the Decalogue. These "elohim aherim," they did not know and most significantly that God of Israel "did not assign to them." The second clause is in the singular form, to be contrasted with "other gods" governing the plural of the first clause. Indeed given texts of the Torah come to buttress this distinctive orientation of Massoretic intent and, as we shall demonstrate, that the early Greek Targum sought to preserve this intended meaning.

The rabbinic tradition of early Greek translation of the Torah (Bab Tal Megillah and Yerushalmi, *ibid*, Soferim 1 and Massoretic manuals) correlate to the Letter of Aristeas' account on the origin of the Septuagint. Eighteen differences with the Hebrew text are listed by the Massorettes to indicate a purposeful change for the proper reception of the Torah reading. One in particular appears in Deut 4:19, which cautions not to be persuaded to embrace astrological or heliocentric worship. In their days astral orientation was the common religious expression among the Greeks and the Romans. Thus, the verse reads: "lest you lift your eyes to heaven and you see the sun and the moon and the stars, the entire heavenly galaxy and you will be led astray and you will bow to them and worship them;" then the verse concludes with the relative clause "that YHWH your God allotted them, for all the people below the heaven." At this juncture the priestly elders of Jerusalem translate the verb *halaq* differently from the *halaq* in the Deuteronomic response to the theodical question. Here they preferred the meaning of "dealing out" or "distributed" (*apeneime*) rather than "assigned" (*dieneimen*) choosing a different prefix to *nemo* in Greek. This particular meaning suggests that God has intended the astral kingdom, as his creation, to be in the service of humanity; as the list adds "to shine" upon the earth in the view of the story of creation, Gen 1 (see also Midrash Hagadol to the above text). However if the other meaning would be rendered, then the view would be that at Creation God shared his divinity with his superior heavenly bodies for the purpose of human adoration and worship. This view was perceived by the rabbis to be the human rationale for polytheism. Midrash Hagadol suggests that the scriptural intent was to prohibit such orientation to the Noahides.

Semantic distinctions between similar wording occur again in the list of early Greek translation, with reference to *Sahaq* that enjoys both the negative and positive connotation of laughter; "*sahaq*" mean either "mocking jest" or "joyous wonderment." In the case of Sarah (Gen 18:12), the reference is to laughter of jest, i.e. with her belly (or at her stomach), thus the priestly elders rendered "Sarah laughed with her belly" rather than "Sarah laughed within herself." Sarah's laughter is contrasted with Abraham's act of joyous wonderment. Gen 17:17 reads he laughed as he relaxed his heart, the expression of astonishment. Thus, the canonical Aramaic Targum offered for the Sarah "*vehaykhat*" and for Abraham "*vehadi*" or in Neofitti Yerushalmi Targum "*vetamah*." The Greek Targum to 18:12 offers eagles for Sarah. However after the birth (21:6) it offers "*synchareitai*" (rejoice). In light of this distinction, God reprimanded Sarah but not Abraham.

In both cases the Greek and Aramaic translations attest to a Hebrew *vorlage* that can cause the misunderstanding of the wrong semantic equivalence. Thus, the Massorah resorted to listing similar and unique expressions, and the work of "Soferim" was associated with "*sefuroth*" (enumerative listing). Enumerative materials already appear in Tannaitic literature (so in Avot de Rabbi Natthan and in Ma'aseh Torah). Massorah parva also reveals the form of *miqra soferim* (particular sounding of the word) that appears with Abraham's act of laughter "*Vayishaq*" is vocalized with a long vowel of *a*, that is cantillized with a pausal sound. This appears in contrast to Sarah "*vatishaq*," which is vocalized with a short vowel. However at Issac's birth, Sarah acknowledged the event with joyous wonderment (21:6). Both the noun and verb of *sahaq* connote in the Targum "*hedva*" for *Sehoq* and "*yehdi*" for "*yisahaq*" (in the Septuagint, only the latter). The name of the child appears with the pausal sound of a long vowel *a*, *Yishaq*. His name connotes a child of joyous wonderment. In light of this, the critical change in God's words to Abraham (18:13) requires an explanation in view of Sarah's thought (18:12). She thought in jest "my master is old," and God reveals her mind to Abraham that she laughed at herself: "I am old." The letter *dalet* is omitted from *v'dny* to *v'ny*. The removal of a letter suggests a moral lesson in the pursuit of peace between husband and wife which God demonstrates with his speech. God prescribes the

removal of his holy name from the scroll through the sotah ritual, when husbands suspect his wife of adultery (Num 5:23; see pereq Hashalom).

These observations of the way Massoretic dynamics capture the seyyag approach to the canonical text. The early soferic approach is confirmed by Rabbi Akiva of the early Second Century. He rephrases the third part of the Great Synagogue's key teaching. "Massorah is the hedge to the Torah" (Avot 3:13). This capsulated saying is to be understood within the context of his enumerative teaching by the catchword seyyag (ADRN II 33) "silence is the hedge to wisdom; frivolity is to be hedged in the show of reverence, purity is the hedge to sanctities, vows are the hedge to set-apartness." The phenomenon of seyyag entails two aspects, the act of constraint and the virtue of concealment. Silence, humility and altruism are virtues of concealment, but verbal commitment, purification and no levity are the virtues of constraint. Thus, Massoretic seyyag in the preservation of the Torah text is guided by both aspects.

I shall demonstrate one example of each aspect to unveil the massoretic dynamics of seyyag. "Silence is the virtue of wisdom," because in the act of concealment it preserves a deeper insight. Surface reading of the text can only lead to a hasty but unwarranted conclusion. Rabbinic massorah is well aware of this textual phenomenon as "the scripture is silent." At times, the silence comes to secret information, but at other times, the scripture prefers a challenging expression over the obvious intent.

In the above analysis of Abraham's and Sarah's laughter, we noted here a change in the wording by the removal of a letter secrets a significant moral lesson on peace by the ethical principle of imitatio Dei. The biblical God offers the model for human behavior by absolute standards. In the Stories of Creation and the Tower of Babel, we note another aspect of secretion by its challenging wording. There appear the plural formation of the conjugated verb that is governed by the singular subject, namely God. This phenomenon concerns the list of Greek translations different from the Hebrew text. Gen 1:26 reads in the Hebrew: "Let us make Adam in our image and our likeness" and Gen 11:7 reads in the Hebrew: "Let us go down and confuse their speech." In both cases the subject is God; "elohim" in the former and YHWH in the latter. The priestly elders translate both sayings in the singular. However, the rabbinic view of the challenging forms come to teach a lesson of "Derekh Eres," the proper human behavior. God consults his own creation in making his decision. Thus, all critical issues should be considered by the deliberation and consultation. For "Derekh Eres precedes Torah law" and its aim is to produce wholesomeness in all human relationships. It stresses the ethical consideration over the theological perplexity.

Aside from the principle of concealment as exhibited by silence, there is the aspect of constraint via circumlocution. Massorah avoids indecent speech and evades disrespectful phrasing in the face of God or even a human being. "frivolity is to be hedged in the show of respect." It guides the Massoretic seyyag of "tikkune soferim." The Greek Targum is said by the rabbinic account to have avoided the translation of Hebrew "Arnevet," (the rabbit) as unclean animal. It offers "dasypous" (the hairy legged) instead of "lagos" as the Greek term. The circumlocutory translation avoids disrespect for the Egyptian Queen, the wife of Ptolemy Philadelphus, whose family name was "Lagos." The rabbit was dedicated to Aphrodite in the Hellenistic culture, and the priestly elders were cautious not to offend their host in Alexandria. A known circumlocution avoiding disrespect to God's presence occurs in Gen 18:22. God appeared to Abraham as he sat at the tent on the third day, following his circumcision. Abraham departs from God to welcome three men on the horizon in the act of hospitality. As they departed, the text

reads, "and Abraham was still standing before Y." This reading replaces the original wording "and Y is still standing before Abraham." Massorah records this emendation as one of eighteen circumlocutions.

The *seyyag* principle reveals, therefore, that Massoretic activities preserved also the undisclosed meanings, the "sitre" Torah. In the Pentateuch we find several such examples, of which I shall present three. 1.) The actual number of years that Israel was in Egyptian bondage. The Greek Targum of the Septuagint, in conformity with Rabbinic account, that four hundred thirty years include several settlements. In Rabbinic view the years are reduced to less than a half, 210 years that is captured in the word ReDW ("go down") numerologically. 2.) What was said between Cain and Abel is not recorded in the Hebrew text of Gen. 4:8. However the Greek Septuagint and the Syriac Peshitto relate that Cain asked Abel "to go out into the plain", which is repeated in their action. However, the Hebrew "nese" (to go out) can connote "to remove oneself" from core belief in "shaddai" (God), a homonym of "Sadeh" (the plain). Thus, the Yerushalmi Targum of Codex Neofitti offers an atheistic rejection by Cain in his saying to Abel. 3.) The abrupt terse poetic lines from the Book of YHWH's Wars prior to the Song of the Well secrete given events in Num 21:14, 15. However, Tannaitic tradition details early accounts that point to miraculous events at the strait of Moab and at the river Arnon. These events point to actual occurrences that can halakhically elicit prayer of thanksgiving upon visiting these sites (Mishnah and Talmud Berakhot 54a and Targum Yerushalmi, ad loc).

Torah text in general does not seek to secrete additional information by allusive terms. Not so in the case of Prophetic texts that record many symbolic and allusive references that generate also parabolic and allegorical speech. Thus, ADRN refers to the *seyyag* principle in Prophets. It becomes necessary to unveil the secreted meanings, when the predictive prospects can mislead the worshipping community. This was indeed the case with the Aramaic Targum to the Prophets that is attributed to Yonathan ben Uziel of early Herodian time. An early rabbinic account (Bab Talmud Megillah 3a) relates how Yonathan, the prime disciple of Hillel the Elder, decided to record in the Aramaic vernacular the transmitted tradition of Prophetic collection. He transmitted it from the latter prophets. At that time the land of Israel was shaken by an earthquake over the area of 400 square parasang (the entire land.) A heavenly voice came out and declared: "Who is the one who revealed my secrets (*setarim*) to human beings?" Yonathan stood on his feet and said: "I am he who has revealed your secrets to human beings. It is manifest and known to you that I did not do it for my glory or the glory of my family, but for your glory I did it, in order there should no division among the Jews." The epilogue to this account informs us that Yonathan also sought to reveal an Aramaic Targum to the Hagiographa but the heavenly voice deterred him, saying: "It is enough." The reason is given, because in the Hagiographa, Daniel's work has secreted the actual time of Messianic advent.

The secrets that Yonathan had revealed in the Targum to Prophets appear in Zech 12:11, where it states: "On that day, the (pierced one) funeral will be so severe in Jerusalem as the funeral of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." This cryptic reference is offered as the example, since it relates to the eschatological vision concerning the warrior Messiah who will be pierced in Jerusalem. His death will evoke bitter mourning among the people. Targum Yonathan offers the secreted information by the alluded terms. "Hadadrimmon" represents the event, when said Syrian king put to death Ahab, the Israelite king in the heights of Gilead (IV g 22:35-37). "Valley of Megiddon" represents a second event where the Judean King Josiah was killed at Armageddon (II Chr. 35: 23, 24). Jeremiah the prophet bitterly eulogized this righteous king, who was slain. These two events left bitter memories for Israel, that now the prophet Zechariah utilizes to refer to the coming warrior Messiah's death. He is now

prefigured by two types: the anointed king of Israel and the anointed king of Judea. The first is referred to as the son of Joseph and the son of David in the second. Such a view of dual Messiah appears in early Rabbinic writings, especially following the Bar Kochba revolt. The earlier witness to this typology is found in Christian writings, that speaks of Jesus as the son of Joseph (Lk 4:22) and as the son of David (Matt 1:11). In fact Zechariah's reference to the "pierced one" is mentioned as a fulfillment text in Jn 19:37.

Targum Yonathan secretes other traditions from the past that are bound to the Massoretic dynamic of seyyag. In this case, I will show how a dual reading of the consonantal work, due to its vocalization appear in the Targum. Deutero-Zechariah offers the final vision concerning the fate of Jerusalem in Ch 14. God himself will appear to fight the armies of many nations. As "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem from the East and the Olivet Mount will split into half, from East to West producing a great valley and causing half the Mount to move northward and the other half south ward" (v.4).

Indeed the scene depicts a natural catastrophe, at the behest of God producing a severe earthquake in Jerusalem. Most decisively for Yonathan's work on the Targum to Prophets was the earthquake event in the year 38 BCE leading to Herod's assuming kingship over the Jews. This event is described by Josephus, *Bellum*. Due to this catastrophe, Yonathan seeks to reveal the secrets of the Prophetic text, as it stirred religious fervor and division among the Jews. Disturbing events were clearly projected on Prophetic works in view of their fulfillment by God's prospect. Such is the case with the recent discovery of Qumran pesharim, who also viewed the catastrophe as God's rejection of the Temple and its Hasmonean priest-kings to be followed by an Edomian usurper of the Davidic throne, namely Herod. Severe earthquake was viewed as God's displeasure with his people, who fled to the hills of Judea. The breach between movements within Judaism became more violent, and following the death of Herod, Zealots and Messianists began to appear.

Concerning the future, Zech 14:5, also reads "You shall flee towards the breach in the mountains...and you shall flee as you fled because of the earthquake in the days of Uzariah, the King of Judea." The Judeans of Jerusalem knew already that at time of earthquakes, a great fleeing from the city to the Judean hills took place. A severe earthquake occurred in the days of Uzaiah, 610 BCE, at a time when the king resigned for he polluted the Temple, and Isaiah's initial call by God's presence took place (Is. 6: 1-8 in view of II Chr 26: 16-20) Such occurrences become pivotal also in Jesus' apocalypse (Mk 13: 15-20); fleeing indicates a great crisis. So in the time leading to Herod's reign, the catastrophe was seen as a prelude to the end. However, Yonathan's Targum offered an alternative sign for the earthquake as recorded in Zechariah's vision "venastem" (fleeing) should be read "venistam" (filled up). Accordingly, the Targum reads: "And the breach of the mountains will be filled, for the breach will reach the mountains toward Asal." The Mount of Olives will flatten out over the Kidron valley to be leveled with the Temple mount. Such an event will demonstrate God's hand that seeks to rebuild his Temple on a greater surface. Thus "the arrival of God with all his holy ones will take place" (Zech 14:5).

The consummating event of human transformation will be ushered in, which affects the temporal-spatial dimension of human existence. The signaling natural happening will be the leveling of the mountains surrounding the Temple area and this is what Targum to the prophet Zechariah indicates. Yet, the very time of its occurrence Yonathan did not wish to reveal, as the epilogue to the above rabbinic account (Tal Megillah 3a) maintains. This eschatological distinction seems to have impacted synagogal Judaism

of the first century. Jesus, who preaches in the synagogues, offered apocalyptic teachings to his disciples. He spoke of the imminent destruction of Herod's Temple that was considered by certain pietistic Jews to be polluted, as the Qumran texts of Pesharim, the Epistle of their teacher and manuals reflect. Jesus refers to new Temple "not made form human hands" (Mk 14:58) and this becomes the basis for the accusation by the Temple priests of Jerusalem. Jesus also taught his disciples, after his death that the very time of Messianic transformation cannot be revealed (Acts 1: 6, 7). However, they should remain in Jerusalem to await the realization of the divine prospect (*epangelion*). This guided the disciples in the face of Parousia, which delay due to the Deconstruction of the Temple led to the publication of the Gospels. The Pharisaic Rabbis, who taught in the synagogue as well as in the academy, did not tolerate those who sought to force God's hand in their determination of Messianic fulfillment in a given time. They spoke of the delay of Messianic advent, and the rebuilding of the final temple in Jerusalem will only be determined by God's will. The very nature of Bar Kochba's revolt against Rome and religious persecution was put into question. Rabbi Akiva designated Simeon bar Koseba as Bar Kochba (the Son of the Star, Num 24:17), a messianic figure. Later, he was challenged by his own disciples.

The emergence of various movements or sects in the pre-Destruction period reflects the fear Yonathan, the translator, harbored that division will deepen among the Jews on the messianic prospects. This reveals one aspect of Massoretic Dynamics that sought to preserve the intentionality of the divine text by the seyyag approach. Otherwise surface reading of the text will prevail with its various translations and interpretations that affect public reception and divisive response through preaching god's words. The last two centuries before the destruction gave rise to variegated Judaism that was rooted in the common ground of canonical scriptures. The Dead Sea community in particular with its pesheric understanding and oracular reading of Scriptures came to challenge the Massoretic activities of the Pharisees, whose seyyag approach guided the later rabbinic schools in their exegesis. Conformity to the dual Torah in its initial combination of the written and the verbal gave rise to the Miqra and the Targum. Thus, the witness of early Targum in Greek or in Aramaic or the witness if early commentaries, such as Qumranic pesharim and the Rabbinic midrashim, in addition to the witness of the early Christian writings as rooted in the fulfillment of canonical writings, as well as varied expansions or arrangements of the canonical material such as the Temple Scroll or Dead Sea Psalms respectively, will allow the scholar to uncover the dynamics that govern the Massoretic activities of the early period, that comes to preserve the very intentionality of these sacred compositions. The agenda of phenomenological study of the Massorah focuses on depth study that reveals a mindset of the Hebrew language of the preserved text from early time, with its morphological and syntactical aspects of a distinct literature standing apart from all other writings.

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