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## TARGUM JONATHAN TO HOSEA 1-3

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The interpretation of Hosea's marriage has preoccupied students of the Bible for centuries. In 1975 S. Bitter published his work Die Ehe des Propheten Hosea (Gottingen, 1975) which is a study of the history of the interpretation of Hosea's marriage in Judaism and Christianity. Because of the vast amount of material which he had to survey, his comments on the Targum are necessarily brief. In this article we shall offer a translation of certain passages in Targum Jonathan to Hosea 1-3 and offer appropriate comment with a view to giving not only the thrust of the Targumist's understanding of the text of the Hebrew scriptures but also to illustrate various Targumic devices and techniques.

The Targumist's allegorical interpretation of the marriage of Hosea begins immediately in Hos 1:2:

Go and speak a prophecy against the inhabitants of the idolatrous city, who continue to sin.

For the inhabitants of the land surely go astray from the worship of the Lord.

The divine commands of MT "Go, get yourself a wife of whoredom and children of whoredom" and 3:1 "Go, love a woman beloved of a companion, an adultress" raised serious problems for rabbinic minds. How could God give such commands, especially to a prophet? The Targumist transposes the command to perform a symbolic act into a commission to prophesy. Other examples of this are found in Zech. 11:4, 15. It should be mentioned at this point that Ms p.116 of the Montefiore Library, Jews College, London (Sperber's Ms c)<sup>1</sup> there is a long addition to Hos.1:2 in the form of a passage known from b. Pes. 87b. There the interpretation of Hosea's marriage is quite different from that of the Targum.<sup>2</sup>

Hos:1-3 So he went and prophesied concerning them that if they repented, they would be forgiven; but if not they would fall as the leaves of a fig tree fall. But they continued to do wicked deeds.

This is a considerable departure from MT which involves an homiletical interpretation that associates the proper name Diblaim of MT with Heb. dbylh, "a cake of pressed figs". Cf. b. Pes. 87b.<sup>3</sup> The principles of repentance and forgiveness so important in Judaism, are well established in the Targum.<sup>4</sup>

Hos.1:4 And the Lord said to him, "Call their name 'scattered ones' for in yet a little while I will avenge the blood of the idolators, which Jehu shed in Jezreel, when he put them to death because they had worshipped Baal. Now they themselves have turned back to go astray after the calves in Bethel. Therefore I will account it as innocent blood upon the house of Jehu and I will abolish kingship from the house of Israel.

The Targumist's apologetic effort is interesting here. According to 2 Kings 9-10, Jehu acted at the command of the Lord when he destroyed the house of Ahab, so Hos. 1:4 presents an interpretative problem which must be sorted out. This is done by various additions. Those who killed the idolators had also turned to the worship of false gods and had to be punished accordingly.

Hos.1:6 They continued to do wicked deeds, and he said to him, "Call their name 'Not pitied' because of their deeds. For I will no more have pity on the house of Israel; yet if they repent, I will surely forgive them."

The first clause is for MT "And she conceived again and bore a daughter". In line with the Targumist's allegorical interpretation, however, reference to the harlot is avoided. The meaning of the last part of the verse in MT is uncertain but whether it means "I will never again pardon them" or "on the contrary I will withdraw it from them", Targum reverses the meaning. This is close to the phenomenon of "converse translation" described by M.L. Klein.<sup>5</sup>

Hos.1:8 And their inhabitants who had been deported among the nations were forgotten, for they were not pitied because of their deeds; and they continued to do wicked deeds.

All this is for MT "After weaning 'Not pitied', she conceived and bore a son". As with v.6 the reference to the harlot is avoided. The clause "and they continued to do wicked deeds" has appeared already in vv.3 and 6.

Hos.1:9 (last part only)...because you do not fulfil the words of my law, my Memra has not been your support.

This is for MT "and I will not be your God". The Targum removes the finality of the previous words of MT "you are not my people" and the words that follow by referring to the present non-fulfilment of the law, and thereby implying that repentance will alter the situation. Targum 'wryt, "law, Torah" in this verse is the first of many references to study and fulfilment of the law in Targum to Hosea. Cf. 2:1, 3, 5, 16f.; 4:6, 14; 5:4, 6, 9; 7:16; 8:1, 12; 10:1, 12; 11:7; 13:9, 14. In the MT however, the only references are 4:6; 8:1, 12.<sup>6</sup> Now the transgression of the law appears in the next verse.

Hos.2:1 (a part only): And from the land where they were exiled among the nations, where they transgressed the law, and it was said to them, "You are not my people", they shall return and be made great.

Most of this is expansion of the biblical text, and is especially noticeable in the interpretation of MT bmqwm "instead of" as literally "in the place of", that is, in the land of exile. The punishment of exile for the transgression of the law (cf. Hos. 7:4; 10:1) will come to an end and a Messianic age will follow. There is an appropriate reference to the Davidic house in Targum to the next verse.

Hos.2:4 Reprove the congregation of Israel and say to her, because she does not humble herself in my worship, my Memra will not accept her prayer, until she removes her evil deeds from before her face and the worship of idols from among her towns.

In this interpretation "harlotry" becomes "evil deeds", "adultery" is "worship of idols" and "breasts" is conveniently replaced by "towns". The view of the Targumist is that prayer is not acceptable to God if it is not accompanied by repentance. Cf. Ps. 66:18. <sup>7</sup>

Hos.2:5 Else I will remove my Shekinah from her and will take away her glory. I will make her abandoned as in former days, until she drew near to my worship. My anger will fall on her as it fell on the people of the generation that transgressed my law in the wilderness. I will make the land desolate and kill her with dearth.

The ultimate sanction and punishment on Israel for its sins is the removal of the Shekinah. It is noteworthy, however, that in the following part of the verse the Targumist is careful to qualify the threat of abandonment by observing that Israel had turned to the worship of God in earlier times, and there is at least a hint at the benefit of return. But in view of what is said in the previous verse about the unacceptability of prayer without repentance, one must assume that in the present verse return to worship implies repentance.

Hos.2:7 (first part): For their congregation has gone astray after false prophets, their teachers are ashamed.

As in v.4 "your mother" is interpreted as "the congregation of Israel". But the Targumist derives MT hwrtm, "she that conceived them" from the root yrh, "teach"; cf. mwrh, "teacher".

Hos. 2:9 (second part): Then she will say, "I will go and return to the worship of my former Master, for it was better for me when I was worshipping before him; from now on I will not worship idols .

In line with its interpretation Targum substitutes "Master" for "husband" of the MT. This includes naturally the insertion of the typical Targumic term plhn , "worship", "service", whose role can be illustrated further by passages like 2:5 and 14:3 ("Return to the worship of the Lord"). Thus the clear statement of the rejection of idol-worship indicates complete repentance and a promise not to sin in the future. <sup>8</sup>

Hos.2:11 Therefore my Memra will return to curse the grain at the time of its harvest, and the wine at the time of its pressing. And I will remove the clothing of fine wool and linen which I gave to her to cover her shame.

Not unexpectedly, the Targumist uses the Memra device but takes Heb. šwb literally as "return" (MT šwb means "I will take back").<sup>9</sup> According to b. Ber. 35b, to take in corn as commanded in Deut. 11:4 was fulfilment of the will of God. But God takes back the corn when his will has not been fulfilled, for corn belongs to him. "Fine wool" and "linen" already appear in v.7. Targum myl, "fine wool" denotes wool from Miletus. Because of its quality it was much sought after throughout the Roman Empire. Note that in the LXX the "wool" and "flax" of the MT become "clothes" and "linen", and at Ezek 28:18 Heb. šmr šhr ("white wool") becomes "wool from Miletus".

Hos.3:1 The Lord said to me again, "Go and prophesy a prophecy concerning the house of Israel, who are like a woman loved by her husband, but she betrays him. And just as he loves her and does not wish to send her away, so does the Lord love the people of Israel, although they turn

after the idols of the nations. However, if they repent, they will be forgiven and they shall be like a man who made a mistake and said something while intoxicated with wine.

This is a considerable expansion of the Hebrew text, but the problems of interpretation which this verse raised for the Targumist have already been noted in the comments on 1:2. However, a further point of interest is the significance of the words "while intoxicated with wine" which render Aramaic bhmryh (lit. "in his wine"). From this it is clear that the misdeed of Israel is classified as a "sin of ignorance".

Hos.3:2 And I redeemed them by my Memra on the fifteenth day of the month of Nisan, and I gave the silver shekel as atonement for them, and I said that they should bring before me the omer of the offering from the produce of barley.

The Targumist interprets "fifteen" (in the phrase "fifteen shekels of silver") as referring to the date of the Exodus from Egypt, that is, the fifteenth of Nisan. Cf. b.Hull 92a; Num. Rab. 13:20.

It is hoped that this examination of selected verses of the Targum to Hos 1-3 has illustrated in some way how the Targumist dealt with a text like this.

#### NOTES:

1. A. Sperber, The Bible in Aramaic (4 vols. Brill, 1959-1973).
2. Cf. L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (New York, 1983).
3. Smolar and Aberbach, Studies 216.
4. Smolar and Aberbach, Studies 210-221.
5. "Converse Translation: A Targumic Technique," Biblica 57 (1976) 515-537.

6. Cf. P. Churgin, Targum Jonathan to the Prophets (New Haven, 1927) 122f.; B.D. Chilton, The Glory of Israel (Sheffield, 1983) 13-18; Smolar and Aberbach, Studies 159-164 ("Torah and Good Deeds").
7. Cf. Smolar and Aberbach, Studies 167, 211.
8. Smolar and Aberbach, Studies 211.
9. Cf. H.W. Wolff, Hosea (Philadelphia, 1974) 31.