The translation technique and the translation of verbal forms in Psalm 84 of the Masoretic Text as employed by the Peshitta

This article was inspired by the study of translation techniques and verbal systems in Book 3 of The Book of Psalms in the Peshitta. In addition, the article focuses on Psalm 84 due to the broad scope of such a study. Psalm 84 opens the second group of Korah Psalms (Ps 84–85, 87–88) and shows a number of similarities to the first group of Korah Psalms (Ps 42–49). The differences between Psalm 84 and Psalms 42–43 are as striking as their similarities because of the fact that they are identified as Korah Psalms (cf. Goldingay 2007:587; Wallace 2009:140). This article argues that the translation technique, employed by the Peshitta, resulted in important differences at some points. As expected, the Peshitta uses the conjunctive verb at times in places where it is absent from the Masoretic Text. In addition, the Peshitta does not have the waw consecutive construction found in the Masoretic Text and uses the conjunctive waw in most instances. This article further argues that different verbal forms are used in a sensible way in both the Masoretic Text and the Peshitta, and that the content of verses also differs. In some places, certain parts of the verses, as they appear in the Masoretic Text, are omitted by the Peshitta. Some of these omissions may be ascribed to different Hebrew Vorlagen while others may be ascribed to the translation technique followed.

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that the Psalter in both the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Peshitta (P) did not come to us in its original version, but in the form of manuscripts (MSS) that came from the hands of the last scribe who, in some way, brought this poetic book to a close (cf. Carabosha 2008:1). Nearly 900 scrolls of Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts were discovered at Qumran. The Book of Psalms is included in more of these manuscripts than in any other book. This provides clear evidence that the Psalter was of fundamental importance to the people of Qumran (cf. Flint 2007:157). The Psalter is included in manuscripts containing the ancient versions. The Hebrew manuscripts are direct witnesses to the ‘original’ text while the ancient versions are widely accepted as ‘indirect witnesses’.1 It is therefore crucial to consider a series of issues that arise before using the ancient versions for the textual criticism of the Old Testament. The fact that the Syriac language was one of the early Semitic languages next to the Hebrew and that the ‘original’ Hebrew or Aramaic canon was translated into this language, marks its importance in relation to the larger textual history (cf. Hiebert 2005:505; Weitzman 1999:2).

Since investigations of the P started, most of the investigations concentrated on influences from other versions thereof, especially the Septuagint (LXX) and the Targum (T). This is also the case when it comes to research on the P version of the Book of Psalms. The influence of other versions on the Syriac versions conditioned the research performed. The aim of this article is to pay attention to the translation technique employed in the translation of the P-psalms (Peshitta psalm).

With regard to the translation technique, this article pays special attention to the Syriac variants as compared to the MT, especially those variants that does not coincide with the LXX and/or the T or vice versa. The lectiones that can be attributed to the translation technique and other aspects that may point to a different Hebrew Vorlage are also explored. These are two different options for variants – a different Vorlage or a translation technique.

1. When an abbreviation is given in brackets, only the abbreviation will be used further on in the article.
2. ‘Us’ is used in this text to refer to today’s readers.
3. Goshen-Gottstein (1963:132) argues that the variants of the Hebrew MSS and the testimonies of the ancient versions should not be mixed with the critical apparatus of the Hebrew Bible.
This investigation is based on the Leiden edition of the P-psalms and follows the divisions of psalms and numbering of verses characteristic of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) (Elliger & Rudolph 1967). The P psalter differs slightly from these divisions when compared to the MT on the one hand and compared to the LXX on the other hand. Another reason for the choice to follow the numbering of the BHS is that the Leiden edition does not include the Syriac titles of the psalms. The investigation did not pay attention to titles as they are not dependent on the MT.

Psalm 84 marks the beginning of the second Korah collection (Ps 84–89). It is a well-known and loved psalm, but it presents several problems. This article aims to address some of these problems by looking at the verbs as they are employed in both the MT and the P. Not all the verses are used in this attempt. Verses were chosen that could make a significant contribution to this research. The following verses are used for this purpose: 6–8 and 10–11. Some words or phrases in verses 2, 3, 4 and 5 also received attention. In an attempt to solve the problem of the interpretation of some of the words or verbs used in the P translation, the discussion is divided into the following sections:

- The translation technique
- An interpretation of problematic terms
- An analysis of the verbal system
- Conclusion

**The translation technique**

Before assessing the value of variant readings by comparing the MT with the P, it is perhaps important to pay attention to the translation technique employed. Gordon (2006:255) argues that it is difficult to generalise meaningfully about such a large undertaking as the P translation of the Old Testament. He further argues that the translators inevitably made mistakes, sometimes found their task too difficult and occasionally took liberties with the text. The P, as witness to the MT, is to be investigated in relation to the MT as a base text in order to determine the similarities and deviations between the two. Studies in the field of ancient translations are generally interested in distinguishing the techniques used to arrive at a translation based on two primary criteria: fidelity and intelligibility. The balance within a given translation is often indicated by describing it as either literal or free (Weitzman 1999:22). Literalism is subdivided into different categories that each receives special attention from translators. Ultimately, a translation may be literal in one of these categories and free in another. Weitzman (1999:22–26) classifies these categories as first, the segmentation of a text; second, quantitative correspondence; third, imitation of the form of the Hebrew present in the source text; and fourth, consistency of equivalences. Adair (1997:181, 187) suggests what he describes as ‘a much more nuanced description of the translation technique’ aimed at producing a fully quantitative description. He (Adair 1997:187) proposes that the four above-mentioned categories, referred to by Weitzman, should be quantitatively analysed to determine upon which descriptive evaluation these categories are based. In my view, this statistical approach is instructive and receives acceptance in textual studies.

The investigation made use of a comparative text-critical method to determine the translation technique used in the P version of Psalm 84. The P-psalm is compared to the MT by employing a critical and literary analysis as a tool to arrive at an interpretive description. The internal evidence, found in the two texts, has already shown that the P version is based on a Hebrew text (cf. Weitzman 1999:1). For this reason the investigation viewed the MT as a hypothetical Vorlage of the translation of the P-psalm. Even if this is the case, one cannot ignore the fact that some scholars frequently characterise the P as directly influenced by the LXX and that the influence is clearly visible in the psalms (cf. Barnes 1901:187; Lund 1995:85; Weitzman 1999:68ff.). As a result, the article also compared the P with the LXX, taking into consideration other versions that may shed light where the Hebrew and the Syriac cannot lead to a convincing conclusion.

The central focus was on the Syriac variants that differ when compared with the MT due to the requirements of the language and the technique that the translator of the version employed (that is, the difference is not as a result of influence, but due to language structure). The Syriac agreements with the MT, which do not coincide with either the LXX or T, were also investigated. Aspects that can be attributed to the translation technique employed also received attention. The interpretations of problematic terms were explored in an attempt to offer some solutions. To achieve this goal, the investigation looked briefly at syntactic, morphological and semantic relations.

**Syntactic function**

**Word order and specific phrases**

Syriac is a flexible and a free language, and one may expect that the word order will follow the MT closely (cf. Lambdin 1973:39; Van der Merwe, Naudé & Kroeze 1996:273; Nöldke 1966:248; Muraoka 1987:40–69). However, this is not the case. In some instances, the Syriac version deviates from the MT. The P-psalm 84 is a particularly striking example of such a deviation, as its word order is not fixed.

When considering specific phrases it is important to note, for instance, how the different versions use different terms in verse 2. The following abbreviations are used onwards when examples are provided: Masoretic Text = MT; Peshitta = P; Septuagint = LXX; and Targum = T. The following examples illustrate the use of different terms in the following verses:

**Verse 2**

- The MT uses ‘Lord of Hosts (YHWH Sabaoth)’.
- The P uses ‘Lord Almighty’ (marya chayltana).
- The LXX uses ‘Lord Almighty’ (τοῦ θεοῦ οὐρανῶν).
The P translates Hebrew in its own way with the use of נמשכת – an adjective meaning strong or powerful. This is the common translation in the P for this Hebrew phrase. The P agrees with the LXX translation in this regard. Psalm 84 refers to God as ‘Lord of Hosts’ four times. The term Lord of Hosts (Briggs 1976:226; Tate 1990:353) is associated with the ark that is the symbol of God’s willingness to sojourn among his people.

Verse 3
Word order:
- MT: ישפכו [my soul yearns and faints].
- P: sakayt nafšy wa’etrgargat [my soul yearns and faints].
- LXX: εξίσθηται καὶ ἐκλειπεῖ ὁ ντύχων μου [my soul yearns and faints] (Taylor 2009; Bagster 1870).

The P moves the subject nafšy from after the second verb to after the first verb. This change in word order makes the sentence easier to read and can be viewed as an example of simplification. The LXX retains the word order of the MT. However, the P does not follow the word order of the MT in this instance.

Verse 4
Word order:

In the first line of this verse, the MT places the preposition ב at the end of the line, that is, in the second half of the line. The LXX places the preposition in both halves of the line (Ka γὰρ στροφῆναι έλενον έαυτόι oίκιον καὶ τριγών vοσσιών έαυτή). In this instance, the P and LXX differ from each other and serve as an argument against the influence of the LXX on the P. The same mechanism appears in verse 10.

Interpretation problems with regard to Psalm 84

Verse 5:
- MT: The MT has a construct chain in the first line of the verse: ‘dwellers of your house’ or ‘they who dwell in your house’ י渑ֵן יְשִׁיתוּו.
- NIV: Blessed are those who dwell in your house.
- Vulgate: beatit qui habitant in domo tua [Blessed are they who dwell in your house]. The Vulgate has a relative sentence with a preposition ‘in your house’.
- T: This constitutes another case of simplification in the P.

Verse 6:
- At the end of the verse, the MT makes use of the following sentence: θαύματα ταῖς κατοικοῦντες [There are highways in their heart]. The P changes the suffix 3 masculine plural to 3 masculine singular. The MT uses a plural suffix together with a noun in the singular (the person) in the first half of the line. In this instance, the P harmonises the second part of the verse with the first part by adding a suffix to ‘highways’ (Your highways are in his heart).
- P: ἐν ἑαυτῷ ζητεῖται. (an sbhlyg blhh). Both readings are very difficult to understand and making this sentence difficult to interpret. θαύματα (Mesiloth) is viewed by most commentators as the plural form of θαύμα (Mesilla) [highway]. It can have various interpretations:
  - (your) ways are in their heart(s), or
  - high praises are in their heart. Thus taking θαύμα the plural form of θαύμα from the root θαύμα (raise, lift up, a technical term for (re)building road).

The LXX differs so much from the Hebrew in this verse that a comparison is not possible. The T translates θαύμα with μακροκίνητα [trust]. It changes the metaphor to an abstract idea. Merrill (1997:1003) argues that the noun θαύμα – though generally used as a designation for a literal highway – occurs at least twice as a metaphor for spiritual pilgrimage. In 84:5(6) the psalmist speaks of the righteous who have set their hearts on the things of God. The upright are said to pursue a highway that leads away from evil, the one that preserves them as they hold fast to its way (Pr 16:17). It is important to maintain the reading as it is found in the MT. The translator of the P probably had the reading of the MT before him, but tried to simplify and harmonise it.

Verse 7
The most problematic aspect with verse 7 is the interpretation or translation of מְסִלָּה.
- MT: מְסִלָּה נֶשֶׁר בְּעֵמֶק ובּוֹ רָעָה נַפְשִׁי וּגַם־כׇּלְתׇה [They will go through the valley of Baca, they make it a dwelling place. Also the law-giver will cover it with blessings.]
LXX: εἰς τὴν κοιλαίαν τοῦ κλαυθμόνος εἰς τὸν τόπον ὑπὲρ καὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσιος δόσις ὁ νομοθέτων. [In the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed, for there the law-giver will grant blessings.]

MT: נַגֵּף [Baca]

P: ‘of weeping’ (עָקֵף)

LXX: ‘of weeping’ (κλαυθμόνος)

The P differs from the MT. The interpretation of the P is based on a different understanding of an unvocalised Hebrew text, perhaps pointing to the influence of the LXX. The Hebrew word can be regarded as the name of an unknown valley.

It seems that the Vulgate, Aquila, Jerome and the Syriac accept that the word is נַגֵּף [weeping], as used in Ezra 10:1. The LXX uses ‘in a hollow/valley of a place of weeping’.

Although the Old Testament does not mention this unknown valley, it is fair in this regard to translate the Hebrew text as ‘the valley of Baca’ – in other words as a proper noun (cf. Hossfeld & Zengen 2005:355; Kraus 1993:169). The other problem in this verse is the word נִירֵךְ [blessings]. Some propose that it should read: נִירֵךְ [pools]. נִירֵךְ is translated by the LXX and Jerome as ‘blessings’ while both the New International Version (NIV) and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translate it as ‘pools’. Both the NIV and NRSV viewed the word in a plural form: נָגְף [pool] Hebrew for the Greek translation κοιλάδα. However, this is not what one finds in the MT. Robinson (1974:379), in his attempt to interpret this verse, argues that נִירֵךְ should be translated as ‘tender shoots’. According to Robinson, the word should be viewed as the feminine plural of the root נָר [tender, frail, weak, shoot], preceded by the preposition נֶ. This viewpoint is influenced by the fact that the same word should be viewed as the feminine plural of the root נָר (tender shoots). According to Robinson, the verb or vice versa (please see 11.3 in 1).

What is of significance here is that one must remember that the P, LXX and T were all translated from an unvocalised text. This means that the consonants can be interpreted in different ways. In this instance, the different versions all had the same Hebrew text as the source, but translators interpreted the consonants differently. In some instances, the difference between the MT and the P can be ascribed to different interpretations of the same unvocalised text.

Verse 11

MT: רָבָּה יִהְיֶה חַרוּתְךָ, וּמוֹקֵם חַבוּלֶתָךְ יִהְיֶה בְּבֵית הַבָּכָא: [For better is a day in your courts than a thousand, I have chosen to stand at the threshold in the house of my God rather than dwell in tents of wickedness.]

NIV (10): Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

P: ἵνα ἐπιτύπωσόν ἐμεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ σε παρήγγειλαν ἵνα ἐπιτυπώσῃ ἐμεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ. [For better is one day in your dwelling than a thousand, I desire to dwell in the house of God. It is better than to dwell in the tent of the wicked.]

LXX: ὅτι κράτοισιν ἡμέρα μία ἐν ταῖς αἰώνις σου ὑπὸ κλαυθμὸν ἕξολεξημένη παραπροτεσθία ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ τοῦ θεοῦ μᾶλλον ἢ ὀικέῖν με ἐπὶ σκηνώμεναι ἀμαρτωλῶν. [For one day in your courts is more profitable (or better) than a thousand. I choose rather to be at the threshold in the house of God, than dwell (or sojourn) in the tents of sinners (wicked people).]

Even though the meaning of this verse is clear, the interpretation of נִירֵךְ is problematic. Several articles have been published in an attempt to solve this problem. Traditionally, it is accepted as a verb attached to the next line, as used in the NRSV. It is also possible to view it as a verb attached to the line where it stands as used in the BHS (cf. Robinson 1974:380). Booij (1986:117–120) concentrated on this verse, as a tradition of conjecture is associated with this verse. He (Booij 1986:118) proposes that הבַּרְטִי (_assigned) be read as הבַּרְטִי (bāḥaḏōrāḏ) for he believes the second consonant must have fallen away (ḥāṣer) and that the sentence should be translated as ‘For better is one day in your court than a thousand in my courts’. His proposal of changing the MT is based on literary rather than on linguistic grounds. The greatest desire of the psalmist is to return to the house of God.

In another attempt, Grollenberg (1959:312) proposes that one should read here the noun with the sense of liberty and/or freedom. He deduces this from, hem [free man], noble] and with a local connotation, his domain or estate.

Another difficulty is the rarity of the two verbs in the infinitive (אַחֲרָה, וַתַּאֲרוּ[א]הוֹלִית) which only appears here. The psalmist is reduced to a beggar and hence standing on the threshold.-pills, although a Qal, occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. It means ‘to dwell’. When one considers the way in which this word is translated in these versions, there is no support found in the various versions for the proposal of the BHS (my room/dwelling) and all the other proposals to change the text. In this instance, the P and the other versions confirm the MT, but with the verb linked to the second part of the verse. This is an example of a different division of sentences in the P.

To summarise: As seen in the discussion of the above verses, the P has variants absent in Hebrew and does not always keep to the word order of the MT, but can be viewed as free and flexible. As seen in verse 6, the P employs the use of different suffixes from what is found in the Hebrew source text. When confronted with difficult Hebrew word(s), for example verbs not found in Syriac, the P sometimes employs the use of any word form with a meaning close to Hebrew. At times, the P follows Greek, for example in verse 6 regarding נִירֵךְ. Moreover, the P uses a verbal form that completely differs in tense from what is found in Hebrew; for example one would find an imperfect verb in Hebrew and the P translates it with a perfect verb or vice versa (please see 11.3 in 1).
Both Hebrew and the Syriac language are from the North-West Semitic language group. As a cluster, they share a basic verbal system based on the existence of personal forms: the perfect and imperfect, and impersonal participles and infinitives (cf. Carbajosa 2008:46). This sharing of a verbal system creates an expectation that the Hebrew perfect will be translated with the Syriac perfect, the Hebrew imperfect with the Syriac imperfect and that the Hebrew participle and infinitive will also be translated with the Syriac participle and infinitive. However, is this true and is the expectation fully met at all times? Does the P-psalm correspond with the Hebrew verbal system? To answer these above-mentioned questions, the research focused on the analysis of verbal forms in Hebrew as used in the MT and how the Syriac language translates into the P.

An analysis of the verbal system

The verbal system of Semitic languages is very complex, which makes the tenses used very complicated. This complication resulted from the development of various tense forms and causes confusion regarding meaning and the relationship among these tenses. The P mostly translates perfect with perfect and imperfect with imperfect, but there are instances where the P translates Hebrew perfect with the imperfect. In many instances, the P uses the verbal form that corresponds with Hebrew. However, the Table 1 concentrates on examples where differences are indicated.

In Psalm 84, Hebrew has 23 verbal forms. Table 1 list these forms with the Syriac equivalents as employed in the P in the second column.

In verse 3, the MT has two verbs in the perfect followed by a verb in the imperfect (3.3) whereas the P keeps the verbs consistently in the perfect tense. In this case, the P is probably harmonising verse 3.3 with the first two verbal forms.

Verse 4:
- MT: ‘where she can place/have her young’ קָפָֽלֵֽה יִשֵּׁת עֹֽבְּרֵי
- P: ‘her chicks grew up on the side of your altar’

The MT offers a strange use of the verb יִשֵּׁת. The P simplifies this by changing the subject and uses a different verb – the perfect is used (like the MT), but simplification criteria are also used to change the subject.

Verse 7

In verse 7.1, the MT uses a participle to continue from the previous verse instead of a relative clause. The P starts a new sentence with the perfect. In verse 7.2, the MT uses the imperfect while the P translates it as a perfect to maintain the same tense as in verse 7.1.

Verse 7.3 הנני

Here it seems as if the translators did not understand Hebrew and tried to make sense of it.

### Table 1: Hebrew and Syriac verbal forms compared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Hebrew form</th>
<th>Parsing</th>
<th>Syriac form</th>
<th>Parsing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 (3.1)</td>
<td>נַפֶּלֶת</td>
<td>Nipf perf 3fs</td>
<td>שָׁתָה</td>
<td>Pael perf 3fs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>נַפֶּלֶת</td>
<td>Qal perf 3fs</td>
<td>ֶֽהָלֵ֑ת</td>
<td>Pael perf 3fs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (3)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Piel Impf 3mpl</td>
<td>יְשִׁיתוּהוּ</td>
<td>Pael perf 3mpl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (4.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal perf 3fs</td>
<td>יַקְּפֵּה</td>
<td>Pael perf 3fs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal perf 3fs</td>
<td>נְקִט</td>
<td>Pael perf 3mpl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (5.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal part mpl const.</td>
<td>יַמְרֵץ</td>
<td>Pael part not a cs, but relative clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Piel Impf 3 mpl</td>
<td>יָפֵֽג</td>
<td>Pael Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (7.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal part mpl in const.</td>
<td>וַתֶּאֲמַר</td>
<td>Pael perf 3mpl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 3mpl + suff pointing to the past</td>
<td>וַתֶּאֲמַר בְּצֵֽה</td>
<td>Peal perf instead of an Impf (cf. 3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (3)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 3ms</td>
<td>וַתְּאַמֵּר</td>
<td>Peal perf instead of an Impf (cf. 3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (8.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 3mpl</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Peal perf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Nipf perf 3mpl</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Etpeel Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (9.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 2ms</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Peal Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>High Impf 2ms</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Peal Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (10.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 2ms</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Peal Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>High Impf 2ms</td>
<td>וַתֹּאמֶר</td>
<td>Peal Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (11.1)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal perf 1cs</td>
<td>וַתֶּאֶמְר</td>
<td>Peal perf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 (2)</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Inf Const</td>
<td>וַתֶּאֶמְר</td>
<td>Peal Inf Const – use Inf, common verb, for uncommon Hebrew, but meaning fits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Impf 3ms</td>
<td>נְיֵֽו</td>
<td>Peal Impf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>יִפְטֵה</td>
<td>Qal Part mpl</td>
<td>דְמַר</td>
<td>Peal part, relative clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: These dictionaries, MT (Hebrew Bible) and P (Syriac Bible) were not only used in the table for the Hebrew and Syriac meaning of words but also in the text for translation.
In addition, the blessing covers (Ethpael of the verb atp) the one who gives the law (participle swm). ‘One who gives the law’ (Hiphil) means ‘to teach’. This highlights a possible influence from the LXX. The LXX uses νομοδατίον [law-giver] and combines פָרָה with הָוָה – the translation ‘law-giver’ is used. The P followed the LXX in this regard or it was probably revised to reflect the LXX more closely at a later stage. The Hebrew word פָרָה used in the MT is best translated with ‘early rain’ (cf. J 2:23) and should be translated here as such.

In conclusion, the P does not correspond directly with the Hebrew verbal system at all times, but deviates from it either narrowly or completely. In the above Table, the P translates the Hebrew imperfect with the perfect or vice versa. The P translator remained faithful to the Syriac verbal system or Syriac structure and allowed him- or herself to be directed by the Syriac context rather than following Hebrew to the letter.

Regarding the grouping of verbs as in Table 1 the following characteristics can be found in P.

**Verse 3**
In the MT, the verbs in 3.1 and 3.2 are used in the perfect tense and the same happens in the P. The MT employs the imperfect for verb in 3.3 while the P uses the perfect tense. It is clear here that the P is harmonising with the first two preceding verbs.

**Verse 4**
Both the MT and the P use the same tense.

**Verse 5**
In this verse, the Hebrew translation makes use of a participle in the construct state whereas the P uses a participle after ‘d’ (תרשדנ) and uses the preposition י instead of the construct chain as is the case in the MT. This can be viewed as an example of simplification.

**Verse 7**
In some instances, a phrase with a participle in the MT is translated in the P as a verb in the perfect, for example in verse 7.1.

Verses 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 all use verbs in the same tense corresponding with one another in the two versions, although there are deviations at certain points in these verses.

**Conclusion**
As expected, the P uses mostly the perfect for the perfect and the imperative for the imperative. However, the P sometimes uses the perfect for imperfect, especially with the intention of harmonising (please see verbs in 3.3 and 7.2 in the Table 1).

The translation characteristics that emerge when one studies the P are as follows:

- When faced with difficulties, the translator opted to simplify the text by employing the perfect (cf. verses 3 and 7).
- Particiles in construct chains in the MT are translated by particiles in a non-construct state, but after relative ‘d’, especially in verses 5, 12 and 13.
- In some instances, the translator harmonised the text, for example by translating a perfect for a perfect or imperfect for imperfect.
- In most cases, it seems that deviations cannot be ascribed to a different Vorlage, but to the fact that the P translator misunderstood Hebrew. Verse 7 provides a perfect example of such a misunderstanding. As a result, the translator may have introduced a variant text that occurs nowhere else among other versions or witnesses.
- With the above-mentioned characteristics in mind, one can argue that the P used a source text similar to the MT. Most of the differences can be ascribed to either the translation technique employed or to a misunderstanding of Hebrew.

The P is a testimony of quite a number of examples of simplification and harmonisation as far as verbs are concerned. The P uses, for example, the perfect where the MT uses the imperfect form – pointing to the past and particiles not in a construct state.

**References**


Bagster, S., 1870, The analytical Greek lexicon, Samuel Bagster & Sons, London.


