



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the 'Targum'-Tradition

Kooij, A. van der

Citation

Kooij, A. van der. (1991). Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the 'Targum'-Tradition. In . Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/10322>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/10322>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

ORBIS BIBLICUS ET ORIENTALIS

Published by the Biblical Institute of the University
of Fribourg Switzerland
the Seminar für Biblische Zeitgeschichte
of the *University of Münster i.W.* Federal Republic of Germany
and the Schweizerische Gesellschaft
für orientalische Altertumswissenschaft
Editor: Othmar Keel
Coeditors: Erich Zenger and Albert de Pury

Gerard J. Norton – Stephen Pisano (eds.)

Tradition of the Text

Studies offered to Dominique Barthélemy
in Celebration of his 70th Birthday

With a Preface by
Carlo Maria Card. Martini

Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Carlo Maria Card. MARTINI	Preface.	ix
	Editors' Foreword.	xi
Pierre-Maurice BOGAERT:		
Les trois formes de Jérémie 52 (TM, LXX et VL).		1
Luis DIEZ MERINO		
Los Tiqqune Soferim en la Tradición Targúmica.		18
Gilles DORIVAL		
La Bible des Septante : 70 ou 72 traducteurs ?		45
Marguerite HARL		
Le péché irrémissible de l'idolâtre arrogant:		
Dt 29,19-20 dans la Septante et chez d'autres témoins.		63
Arie van der KOOIJ		
Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the 'Targum'-Tradition.		79
Johan LUST		
"For Man Shall His Blood Be Shed" :		
Gen 9:6 in Hebrew and in Greek.		91
Carmel McCARTHY		
Gospel Exegesis from a Semitic Church :		
Ephrem's Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.		103
Eugene A. NIDA		
Textual Criticism and Entropy.		122

Gerard J. NORTON	
Cautionary Reflections on a Re-edition of Fragments of Hexaplaric Material.	129
Bruno OGNIBENI	
La Collezione Massoretica <i>hlkaw hlka</i> .	156
A. PIETERSMA	
Articulation in the Greek Psalms : the Evidence of Papyrus Bodmer xxiv.	184
James A. SANDERS	
Stability and Fluidity in Text and Canon.	203
Adrian SCHENKER	
La Relation d'Esdras A' au texte massorétique d'Esdras-Néhémie	218
Emanuel TOV	
4QJer ^c (4Q72)	249
Jan de WAARD	
The Interim and Final HOTTP Reports and the Translator : a Preliminary Investigation.	277
Richard D. WEIS	
Angels, Altars and Angles of Vision : The Case of $\mu\text{L};\text{a},\text{r}^{\text{a}}$, in Isaiah 33:7.	285
John William WEVERS	
The Lectionary Texts of Exodus.	293
Stephen PISANO	
'Egypt' in the Septuagint Text of Hosea.	301
Simon SZYSZMAN	
Une Pâque chrétienne célébrée mercredi au XIII ^e siècle	309

PREFACE

La storia della critica testuale, che ormai ha alle spalle un lungo e consolidato itinerario, ha certamente in P. Dominique Barthélemy O.P. uno dei suoi punti di riferimento capitale.

La sua straordinaria e qualificata bibliografia, la sua stessa biografia scientifica e le testimonianze raccolte all'interno di questa ricca collezione di studi in onore dei suoi settant'anni attestano in modo diretto l'incidenza dell'opera rigorosa e appassionata del docente di Friburg. Non è nostro compito ora ricostruire i percorsi di una investigazione che ha sempre coniugato alla trasparenza la più intensa acribia, all'originalità la più accurata documentazione.

Vorremmo solo evocare qualche momento di questo percorso scientifico che ci sembra particolarmente suggestivo, attingendo a quella specie di primo bilancio dell'attività di Barthélemy che è stata nel 1978 la raccolta delle *Etudes d'Histoire du Texte de l'Ancien Testament*. Il pensiero, allora, corre come a primo esempio a quell'articolo, che sapeva fondere insieme filologia e teologia, *l'Ancien Testament a mûri à Alexandrie* (TZ 21, 1965, 358-370), in cui si profilava la funzione canonica dei Settanta. Quella versione, a cui Barthélemy dedicherà molteplici analisi, veniva collocata nella sua posizione significativa di tappa fondamentale nell'accoglienza delle Scritture da parte della comunità credente. Come è evidente affiorava all'interno di quel saggio un'istanza metodologica rilevante, quella di considerare la storia dell'evoluzione testuale non semplicemente come una questione meramente critico-filologica ma anche come una vicenda che coinvolgeva altre dimensioni, che era indizio di istanze squisitamente teologiche ed ermeneutiche.

In questa linea vogliamo estrarre dalla vasta produzione di Barthélemy anche un altro scritto a nostro avviso emblematico, l'ormai famoso *Les devanciers d'Aquila*, apparso nel 1963 nel *Vetus Testamentum Supplementum* (n.10). Certo, lo scritto si presentava innanzitutto come una puntuale prima edizione del *Dodekapropheton* di Nahal Hever che lo studioso collocava alla metà del I secolo d.C. Ma in filigrana a quest'opera Barthélemy riusciva a intravedere un orizzonte ben più complesso e provocatorio. Da quel documento era possibile identificare un vero e proprio programma di revisione del testo dei Settanta condotto tra il I

Ces versets sont restés propres à la tradition juive. Les chrétiens n'ont pas fait de ce texte un exemple du péché irrémissible et ne l'ont pas utilisé comme modèle. Ils auraient pu le faire pour donner la règle d'exclusion de l'hérétique qui risque de contaminer la communauté.

La figure de l'idolâtre arrogant de Dt 29 apparaît chez les exégètes chrétiens qui pratiquent une lecture de type historique: ils ont reconnu en ce passage la figure du roi idolâtre "qui ne s'est pas humilié", le fils de Manassé, Amôn. Il serait intéressant de reconstituer la filière exégétique, juive puis chrétienne, qui a exploité ce qui est une addition caractéristique du livre des Chroniques (=2 Paralipomènes 33,23) et a fait du roi Amôn le contremodèle opposé au roi repent et pardonné, Manassé.

Nehemiah 8:8 and the Question of the 'Targum'-Tradition

Arie van der KOOIJ

Leiden.

I

Early Judaism is known for an impressive tradition of translations of the Hebrew Bible, translations both in Greek and in Aramaic. This tradition covers a long period, from the third century B.C. up to the early Middle Ages. As far as we know the earliest translations are the Old Greek version of the Pentateuch and of other books of the Hebrew Bible as well, and 'targumim', Aramaic versions, found at Qumran, all dating from the third to second century B.C.

According to rabbinic sources the usage of translating the Hebrew text is as old as the time of Ezra, the priest. This opinion is based on Nehemiah 8:8, a passage being part of the pericope of Neh 8:1-8 in which it is told that Ezra and the Levites were reading aloud the Law for the people at Jerusalem, on the first day of the 7th month. The text of vs 8 reads in Hebrew as follows:

וַיִּקְרְאוּ בַסֵּפֶר בְּתוֹרַת הָאֱלֹהִים מִפֶּרֶשׁ שׁוֹם שֶׁכֶּל וַיְבִינּוּ בַמִּקְרָא

In translation this passage reads:

'They (i.e. the Levites of vs 7) read from the book,
from the Law of God, clearly and by giving the sense;
and they (i.e. the people) understood the reading'
[or: 'they (i.e. the Levites) gave (them, the people)
understanding in the reading'].

The crucial word in this text is מִפֶּרֶשׁ. According to Jewish tradition this word refers to 'targum', i.e. translation (see below). This interpretation is also part of modern exegesis. Many scholars consider this interpretation to be the probable one, particularly because of the publications by H.H. Schaeder in the year

1930.¹ So, in his most recent edition of *Der Text des Alten Testaments*, E. Würthwein states: 'Vielleicht ist die jüdische Tradition, die sie (i.e. Targum, vdK) aufgrund von Neh 8,8 mit Esra verbindet, im Recht',² and, in the first volume of the *Cambridge History of Judaism*, J. Naveh makes the following remark: 'The need to translate the law into Aramaic (for that is surely the meaning of *mephorash*, Neh. 8:8; compare Ezra 4:18) bears witness to the widespread use of Aramaic among the Jews of Jerusalem during this period'.³ Others, however, have doubts,⁴ or reject the thesis that תרגום of Neh 8:8 should refer to the practice of 'targum'.⁵ It is with this question I will deal in my contribution in honour of Dominique Barthélemy, because of his deep interest in text and translations of the Hebrew Bible.

¹ H.H. Schaefer, *Iranische Beiträge I* (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft 6. Jahr, Heft 5), Halle 1930; id., *Esra der Schreiber* (Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 5), Tübingen 1930 (= reprint 1966).

² 5. Auflage, Stuttgart 1988, 90.

³ J. Naveh, Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period, in: *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Ed. by W.D. Davies, L. Finkelstein. Vol. I: Introduction; the Persian Period. Cambridge e.a., 1984, 119. See further: H.J. Polotsky, Aramäisch prs und das <<Huzvaresht>>, *Le Muséon* 45 (1932), 273; W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia* (HAT I,20), Tübingen 1949, 147; K. Gallig, *Die Bücher der Chronik, Esra, Nehemia* (ATD XII), Göttingen 1954, 232f.; id., *Studien zur Geschichte Israels im Persischen Zeitalter*, Tübingen 1964, 177; J.M. Myers, *Esra. Nehemiah* (Anchor Bible), New York 1965, 151; R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la Littérature targumique*, Rome 1966, 29f.; U. Kellermann, *Nehemia-Quellen, Überlieferung und Geschichte* (BZAW 102), Berlin 1967, 29; B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1968, 57; K.F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra* (FRLANT 104), Göttingen 1970, 133; F.C. Fensham, *The Books of Esra and Nehemiah*, Grand Rapids 1982, 217; P. Schäfer, Targumim, in: *TRE* Bd. 6, Berlin 1980, 216; *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*, 3. Aufl., Lief. III, Leiden 1983, s.v.; A.H.J. Gunneweg, *Nehemia* (KAT XIX,2), Gütersloh 1987, 112 (in Ezra 4:18, 'to translate'; Neh 8:8: 'Esras Leviten-Lehrer übersetzten zwar nicht, aber sie <<verdolmetschten>> die Tora').

⁴ G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, 1953, 13f.; L.W. Batten, *The Books of Esra and Nehemiah* (ICC), Edinburgh 1949 (=1913), 356f.; M.J. Mulder, in: *Bijbels Handboek*, deel IIb: Tussen Oude en Nieuwe Testament, Kampen 1983, 249; M. Smith, Jewish religious life in the Persian Period, in: *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. I, 259.

⁵ F. Altheim-R. Stiehl, *Die aramäische Sprache unter den Achämeniden*. Bd. I, Frankfurt am Main 1963, 4ff.; J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1968, 39; W.Th. In der Smitten, *Esra - Quellen, Überlieferung und Geschichte* (SSN 15), Assen 1973, 42f.; J. Blenkinsopp, *Esra-Nehemiah. A Commentary* (OTL), Philadelphia 1988, 288.

II

Let us, first of all, study the evidence for the rabbinic view on Neh 8:8, especially as to the matter of the 'targum'-tradition. The passages involved are the following: BT Meg. 3a; BT Ned. 37b; PT Meg. 4,1-74d, and Gen. R. 36,8.

1. *BT Meg. 3a* has the tradition, that Rab (c. 200)⁶ interpreted Neh 8:8 in the following way:

- (a) 'And they read in the book, in the Law of God': this refers to the [Hebrew] text (מקרא);
- (b) 'clearly/with an interpretation' (בפירוש): this refers to targum (תרגום);
- (c) 'and they gave the sense' (והוא שכל): this refers to the division of sentences (verses) (רמסין);
- (d) 'and caused them to understand the reading' (ורבינו במקרא): this refers to the division of words into clauses in accordance with the sense (פירסי' פסמים), or, according to another version, to traditional text (רמסורית).⁷

Though this passage offers in (c) and (d) most interesting details concerning the reading aloud of the Hebrew text, for our subject only section (b) is important. The question arises, which translation is meant here. Contextually our passage serves as an answer to the following question: 'But did Onkelos the proselyte compose (אמר, lit. 'say') the targum to the Pentateuch?' In its turn, this question is related to the preceding context in which the well-known tradition, ascribed to R. Jeremiah (c. 320) 'or according to some' to R. Hiyya b. Abba (c. 280), is recorded about the Targum to the Pentateuch as being the work of Onkelos, about the Targum to the Prophets as being the work of Jonathan ben Uziel, and about the prohibition of a targum to the Writings. It is said that Onkelos 'spoke' (אמר) the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch 'from the mouth of' R. Eleazar and R. Joshua (end 1st cent. A.D.), which means that this translation is considered to have been translated orally.⁸

In the light of this tradition it seems impossible to regard the interpretation of Neh 8:8 as the answer to the just cited question about Onkelos, for Neh 8:8 refers to the time of Ezra, whereas the tradition about Onkelos refers to the end of the first century A.D. The solution to this problem, however, lies in the remark following the passage on Neh 8:8: 'These had been forgotten, and were now established again'. So the suggestion is that the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, being an *oral* translation, goes back to the time of Ezra, but that it was forgotten and was established again in a later period.

⁶ On Rab, i.e. Abba Arikha, see H.L. Strack/G. Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*. 7. Aufl., München 1982, 90.

⁷ For the rendering of the technical terms sub (c) and (d) see Jastrow, s.v.

⁸ On this passage from *BT Meg. 3a*, see D. Barthélemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila* (SVT 10), Leiden 1963, 148ff.; A. van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches* (OBO 35), Fribourg/Göttingen 1981, 144ff. 183f.

2. *BT Ned. 37b* has the same interpretation of Neh 8:8, also ascribed to Rab. The context however is different: the passage on Neh 8:8 is cited as an argument for the assumption that 'the teaching accents are biblical'.

3. In *BT Meg. 4,1-74d* the tradition on Neh 8:8, including the explanation of targum for תרגום, figures as the answer to the question about the scriptural basis for the practice of the oral translation into Aramaic as part of synagogal worship. The tradition on Neh 8:8, be it with some variation in comparison to *BT Meg. 3a*, is ascribed here to R. Hananel (c. 260), without the remark, to be found in both passages from *BT*, that he had the tradition from Rab.

4. In *Gen. Rabba 36,8* the situation is as follows: after the statement by Bar Qappara (Pal.; pupil of Rabbi), 'Let the words of the Torah be uttered in the language of Japheth [sc. Greek] in the tents of Shem',⁹ R. Judan (4th cent.; Pal.) is cited: 'From this we learn that a translation (targum) [of the Bible is permitted]'.¹⁰ Then the tradition on Neh 8:8, with the explanation of 'targum' for תרגום, is given. The interesting thing of this passage is that the 'targum'-tradition of Neh 8:8 is related to the possibility of an oral translation of the Bible into Greek.

Summarizing, our four passages testify to a rabbinic tradition on Neh 8:8, containing the explanation of 'targum' for תרגום. According to *BT* this tradition goes back to Rab, whom we know of as a Babylonian sage who, in the early 3rd century, was in Palestine to learn from Rabbi (Judah the Prince). In each of the four passages, the exegetical tradition on Neh. 8:8 serves a different context. With the exception of *BT Ned. 37b*, the 'targum'-exegesis of Neh 8:8 is related, quite explicitly, to a context dealing with 'targum'. In my opinion, the context both in *BT Meg. 3a* and in *Gen. R.* is of a secondary nature: in both cases rather late traditions have been brought in connection with the tradition on Neh 8:8 (the preceding section on Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan in *BT Meg. 3a* dates from the 4th century; moreover, this tradition has been derived from *PT*¹¹; the composition of *Gen. R.* also reflects a later stage because of R. Judan¹²). On the other hand, the context of *PT Meg. 4,1-74d* seems to be the more primary one: the 'targum'-exegesis of Neh 8:8 is related here to the oral translation into Aramaic as part of the synagogal liturgy. It is nevertheless quite interesting to see that the attested rabbinic exegesis of Neh 8:8 in one instance (*Gen. R.*) refers to a practice of oral translation into Greek.

⁹ *Midrash Rabba. Genesis I*. Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices under the Editorship of Rabbi H. Freedman and M. Simon, London 1951, 294.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *PT Meg. 1,11-71c*. See A. van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches*, 146.

¹² Compare, in this case too, the corresponding tradition in *PT Meg. 1,11-71b*.

III

As indicated at the beginning of this article, several scholars are of the opinion that, in line with the rabbinic tradition, the text of Neh 8:8 refers to the practice of translation of the Bible into Aramaic as being part of the public reading of the Law. This assumption took root in particular since the year 1930, when H.H. Schaefer, on the basis of linguistic and historical considerations, argued that מִסְרָה of Neh 8:8 refers to a translation into Aramaic.¹³ His line of argumentation runs as follows: the Achaemenid kings ruled an empire with many peoples, cultures and languages. Darius I introduced Aramaic as the official language, the language of the chancellery. It meant that the scribes of the royal court were supposed to know several languages, (a) to be able to translate official, non-Aramaic documents into Aramaic, and (b) to be able also, to translate an Aramaic text, 'unmittelbar, 'vom Blatt weg', in die Sprache des Adressaten'.¹⁴ It is against this background that Schaefer interpretes the following passage from Ezra 4:18, being part of an official document in Aramaic: וְשִׁמְעוּ רִי שְׁלֹחֶיךָ עֲלֵינוּ מִסְרָה קִרִּי קִרְסִי. Having made the remark that the verb פִּרַשׁ (pa'el) conveys inter alia the meaning of 'to explain, interpret', he explains this passage from Ezra 4 thus: 'das Schreiben ist mir vom Kanzlisten 'interpretiert', d.h. gemäss der Gepflogenheit der achämenidischen Kanzleibeamten ex tempore aus dem Aramäischen ins Persische übersetzt, vorgelesen worden'.¹⁵

He then discusses Neh 8:8, where the Aramaic מִסְרָה is to be found 'in hebraisierter Form'.¹⁶ As to וִיקְרָא, at the beginning of vs 8, he is of the opinion that this reading is a secondary one, due to the chronistic insertion of vs 7 about the Levites; in the original text the verb was in the singular, with Ezra as subject.¹⁷ As for the word מִסְרָה he uses his interpretation of Ezra 4:18: 'Ezra las das Gezetz 'interpretiert', d.h. indem er so übersetzte, wie es die Schreiber in den Kanzleien mit Urkunden taten'.¹⁸ According to Schaefer, such a practice of oral translation was necessary, because the Jews from Babylonia did not understand Hebrew any longer; they only spoke Aramaic. So, Ezra, 'der Schreiber', 'verfuhr also bei der Gesetzesverlesung so wie ein Schreiber der Regierungskanzlei'.¹⁹ The explanation in BT Meg. 3a is 'ganz richtig' indeed, so he remarks.²⁰

¹³ See note 1.

¹⁴ *Iranische Beiträge I*, 204.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 204.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 205.

¹⁷ *Ezra der Schreiber*, 52f.

¹⁸ *Iranische Beiträge I*, 205.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 205.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 205.

IV

The thesis of Schaeder with regard to Neh 8:8 does arise some questions.

- Is Ezra really to be seen as a scribe of the Persian court?
- What about the emendation of the plural reading, at the beginning of vs 8, into a singular reading?
- What is the linguistic evidence for the assumption that the verb *פָּרַשׁ*, both in Aramaic (Ezra 4:18) and in Hebrew (Neh 8:8), can convey the meaning of 'to translate'?

As far as the first question is concerned, it may suffice here to point to the fact that, today, opinions differ very much about the historical figure of Ezra. This means that the theory of Schaeder about the position of Ezra within the Persian setting is, at least, open to question.²¹ For our purpose, the second and third questions are the most important.²²

According to Schaeder the rabbinic interpretation of *מִפְרָשׁ* in Neh 8:8, as referring to targum, is quite right. In our discussion of the third question we will check whether the Greek translations of Neh 8:8, being written by Jewish authors and reflecting an earlier, pre-rabbinic stage, do support the later 'targum'-tradition. Because of the matter of 'targum' we will further pay special attention to the use of *פָּרַשׁ*, and in particular to the form *מִפְרָשׁ*, in the targumim.

(A) First of all, the question of the plural form at the beginning of Neh 8:8. As we have seen, Schaeder argues that, originally, the verb stood in the singular: it was Ezra himself, who read the Law; only in a later stage, due to the chronistic insertion of vs 7, was the verb changed into a plural reading: the Levites of vs 7 became the subject of the verb. This matter is crucial to the theory of Schaeder. For, if Ezra is the subject, Ezra whom he considers to be a royal scribe, then his interpretation of the word *מִפְרָשׁ* gets the background he needs: the (assumed) practice of translating documents by royal scribes. Without the person of Ezra his argumentation lacks this basis.

From a textcritical point of view, there is no reason to doubt the plural reading at all. There are no textual witnesses, supporting the singular form

²¹ See inter alia the divergent views of: K. Koch, *Ezra and the Origin of Judaism*, *JSS* 19 (1974), 173-197; P. Ackroyd, *The Jewish community in Palestine in the Persian Period*, in: *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. Vol. I, 143-147; J.C.H. Lebram, *Die Traditionsgeschichte der Esragerstellung und die Frage nach dem historischen Esra*, in: H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (ed.), *Achaemenid History I: Sources, Structures and Syntheses*. Leiden 1987, 103-138.

²² For these questions, see also F. Altheim-R. Stiehl, *Die aramäische Sprache unter den Achaemeniden*. Bd. I, 4ff.

(except for a secondary tradition within the LXX).²³ So the matter is a literary-critical one. Within the actual context, it is the Levites who read the Law. These Levites are introduced in vs 7, where they are called *לְהוֹדִיעַ לָעָם לְדַרְשׁוֹתָם*, 'those who cause the people to understand the Law'. The manner in which they did it, is referred to in vs 8a, the result being that the people 'did understand the reading' (vs 8 [end]). The verses 7 and 8 together do make perfect sense. There is no compelling reason to assume with Schaefer, and others as well,²⁴ that vs 7 should be seen as a chronistic addition. Moreover, this assumption presupposes the idea of a pre-chronistic source of Neh 8, but the chapter does not offer sufficient indications for an earlier written source.²⁵ This is not to deny that Neh 8 is of a rather complicated nature, but as a whole it can be regarded as having been written in a chronistic style.²⁶

So the best thing to do is to retain the plural form at the beginning of vs 8. Consequently, a crucial part of the argumentation of Schaefer appears to lack a solid basis. It is not Ezra, 'the scribe', but the Levites, who read the Law.

(B) The next question concerns the interpretation of *מִפֶּרֶשׁ* in Ezra 4:18 and in Neh. 8:8 by Schaefer. In his view this participle should be taken as a terminus technicus from the chancellery of the Persian court, denoting the practice of translation by royal scribes: a royal scribe read a text 'interpreted' (*מִפֶּרֶשׁ*), i.e. 'translated'. Here the crucial matter to be discussed is: are there other examples where the verb *פָּרַשׁ*, in Aramaic and in Hebrew as well, is used in the sense of 'to translate'? And what about the verb *תָּרַם*, which has the meaning 'to translate'? This verb does occur in Ezra 4:7 (Hebrew section), and one should expect this verb in vs 18 also, if indeed in this verse the meaning of 'translating' documents is intended. Schaefer's answer to this objection is, that the verb *תָּרַם* is a word used by the (later) chronicler.²⁷

Consulting the dictionaries, in Aramaic and in Hebrew as well, one finds the following meanings of *פָּרַשׁ*: to divide, to separate, to distinguish, to interpret, to make clear.²⁸ Some examples, from both languages and from different periods, may serve as an illustration.

As for the Official (Imperial) Aramaic an interesting example is Cowley 17, a letter from the Persian period, found at Assuan. L. 3 has the participle *מִפֶּרֶשׁ*

²³ See D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l'Ancien Testament*, Vol. 1 (OBO 50/1), Fribourg/Göttingen 1982, 566. The Antiochian text (mss be2) reads καὶ ἀνεγύη Εὐδραα.

²⁴ W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemia*, 147; S. Mowinckel, *Studien zu dem Buche Esra-Nehemia III*, Oslo 1965, 53f.

²⁵ W.Th. In der Smitten, *Esra*, 41.

²⁶ Some hold the view that vs 7 is a post-chronistic insertion; see K.F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum dritten Esra*, 133. But see In der Smitten, *Esra*, 41 (note 133).

²⁷ *Iranische Beiträge I*, 210.

²⁸ See HAL3; E. Vogt, *Lexicon*; Jean-Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire*; Jastrow, *Dictionary*.

(pa. pass.), with the meaning 'plainly set forth' or 'separately'.²⁹ A slightly damaged ostrakon (RES 1792) has the reading לְמַסְרֵשׁ : in line with Schaefer's interpretation of Ezra 4:18, B. Porten's rendering is 'to translate',³⁰ but according to others the passage is to be translated by 'to explain'.³¹ For another example of the verb involved, see further Ahikar, Saying 110: פִּרְשֵׁה [ה], 'different'.³²

In texts found at Qumran, our verb is used in several places, both in (a) Aramaic and (b) Hebrew texts.

Ad (a): In passages from the Aramaic fragments of the Book of Enoch, one finds the word פִּרְשֵׁשׁ , 'explanation',³³ the expression סֵפֶר פִּרְשֵׁשׁ 'the distinguished scribe',³⁴ and also the participle מַפְרִישֵׁן , 'dividing'.³⁵ The Gen. Apocryphon has our verb in two places (21:5.7), in the meaning of 'to separate' (cf. MT פָּרַד ni.). See further Targ Job: col. 26:6 (35:11) פִּרְשֵׁנֵי (MT מַלְפֵּנֵי); col. 36:3 (41:9) יִפְרֹשֵׁן (MT יִפְרֹשֵׁן).

Ad (b): in CD the word פִּרְשֵׁשׁ does occur several times (4,8; 6,14; 13,6; 18,2); it is translated by '(exact) interpretation (of the law)'.³⁶ More interesting is 4Q 177 1-4,11: $\text{מַפְרִישֵׁים בְּשֵׁמֵיהֶם}$, 'clearly set out by name'.³⁷ See further 4QMMT, the famous, but not yet published halakhic letter, written by the leader of the community: $\text{פִּרְשֵׁנֵי מִרֵּיבֵינוּ}$, 'we have separated ourselves from the majority of the people ...'.³⁸

As for the LXX, Lev. 24:12 (ἀποκρίσας [MT לְפָרֵשׁ]) and Num. 15:34 (ἀποκρίσας [MT פָּרַשׁ]) reflect the meaning of 'to judge' and 'to determine' respectively. Of particular interest are the two LXX versions of Neh 8:8 itself: (a) (LXX) 1 Esdras, and (b) the Old Greek of Ezra-Nehemiah, LXX 2 Ezra. (As to Ezra 4:18, it is to be noted that both versions do not offer a rendering of מַסְרֵשׁ .)

²⁹ See now B. Porten, *The Address Formulae in Aramaic Letters: A New Collation of Cowley 17*, RB 84 (1983), 401f.411.

³⁰ B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine*, 58.

³¹ See Jean-Hoftijzer, s.v.; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, Göttingen 1984, 672.

³² J.M. Lindenberger, *The Aramaic Proverbs of Ahikar*, Baltimore and London 1983, 209.

³³ J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch. Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*. Oxford 1976, 289 [4QEnastr^b 23:2].

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 305 [4QEnGiants^b ii:14].315 [4QEnGiants^a 8:4].

³⁵ *Ibid.* 295 [4QEnastr^b 28:4].

³⁶ J. Bowker, *Jesus and the Pharisees*, Cambridge 1975, 173f.; P.R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant. An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document"* (JSOT SS 25), Sheffield 1983, 100. See further L.H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran* (SJLA 16), Leiden 1975, 36 ('term for the law derived from Scripture by interpretation'), and E.J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom* (WUNT 2.16), Tübingen 1985, 183 (an exegetical technique 'which made it possible to derive (new) relevant laws from biblical verses without the use of proof-text').

³⁷ DJD Vol. V, 67f.

³⁸ E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *An Unpublished Halakhic Letter from Qumran*, in: J. Amitai (ed.), *Biblical Archaeology Today*. Jerusalem 1985, 402.

Ad (a): 1 Esdras 9:48:

... ἀνεγίνωσκον τὸν νόμον κυρίου
ἐμφυστοῦντες ἅμα τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν

[וְקָרָא בְּסֵפֶר בְּחֹזֶק הַאָּזְנוֹת]
שָׁמָּה שֶׁל כָּל וְיָבִיט בְּמִקְרָא

As is well known 1 Esdras is a rather free and literary translation. This holds also for our text. One gets the impression that the Hebrew text, from ספרש onwards, has been rendered in a free and summarizing way by ἐμφυστοῦντες ἅμα τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν, i.e. 'at the same time instilling into their minds what was read'. Though this translation does not contain a literal rendering of שָׁמָּה, from the phrase as a whole it seems that this word, together with וְיָבִיט, has been interpreted as indicating the way of reading aloud: clearly and with understanding. There is no suggestion of a translation practice of the Law.

Ad (b): LXX 2 Ezra 18:8:

καὶ ἐδίδασκεν Εσδρας

[ספרש]

This rendering presupposes a vocalization different from MT: part. pi'el act., with the addition of Ezra as explicit subject. The translator has taken the Hebrew participle on its own, and not (as in MT) as a participle, describing the way of reading aloud by the Levites. According to the Greek, the Levites were reading aloud the text of the Law, but Ezra was the one who was teaching (the Law; cf. the following part of the verse: καὶ διέστελλεν ἐν ἐπιστήμῃ κυρίου, i.e. 'and he instructed (them) distinctly ...').

The meaning of 'to teach' for ספרש pi. is best understood in relation to the meaning 'to explain'. Quite interestingly, this meaning is attested for in LXX 2 Ezra 5:6 and 7:11: here the word ספרש is rendered by διασάφης, 'explanation' (instead of ἀντίγραφον), apparently via etymological exegesis. Teaching and explaining the Law by Ezra: one is reminded here of Moses, of whom it is said in LXX Deut 1:5:

... ἤρξατο Μωυσης διασαφῆσαι (באר) τὸν νόμον τούτου... ('... Moses began to instruct plainly this law ...').

As our last field of examples we will deal with the targumim, in particular with Targ Onkelos (Pentateuch) and Targ Jonathan (Prophets).³⁹

To begin with the text just quoted, Targ Deut 1:5 reads thus:

... שָׁרִי מֹשֶׁה פָּרִישׁ יָד אֶלְפִין אֲרִיזָא דְדִי

This translation is very close to the Greek rendering of the the same verb (באר): '... did Moses begin to instruct plainly the teaching of this Law ...'.⁴⁰ For this meaning, see also Ez 18:25.29. In Isa 21:11; Hab 2:2 the verb involved does occur in the sense of 'to explain, interpret'. In Isa 21:11 the Aramaic text reads:

³⁹ These targumim are the most interesting Aramaic versions, because their Aramaic is closer to the Aramaic of the Persian period and of Qumran, than that of Targ Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan.

⁴⁰ Targ Neof 1 reads: לְסַפְּרָא, and Targ PsJon: לְסַפְּרָא.

פִּרְשׁ לָדוֹן יֵה נְבִיאִים, '(prophet,) interpret for them the prophecy',⁴¹ and in Hab 2:2: מִפְּרָשָׁא עַל סִפְרָא דְאִוְרִימָא, (the written prophecy) 'explained in the book of the Law'.

For our purpose cases in which the pa'el of פִּרְשׁ is used in connexion with writing and speaking are of particular importance. As to writing, see Ex 32:16 (וְדָוָא מִפְּרָשׁ עַל לִדְוּא); 39:30 (כָּתַב מִפְּרָשׁ); Deut 27:8 (פִּרְשׁ יֵאָחַז); and Isa 8:1 (כָּתַב מִפְּרָשׁ). In these places, פִּרְשׁ (ם) has the meaning of 'clear', i.e. 'clear writing', referring to texts written clearly. In relation to the act of speaking the pa'el of our verb is used in the sense of 'to express clearly'; see Gen 30:28; Lev 22:21.

For other well known denotations of our verb which are used in both targumim, (and in other targumim as well,) it may suffice to refer to the dictionaries in which the following, additional meanings are to be found: 'to separate, to abstain, to distinguish, to decide explicitly, to make wonderful, to make a distinction'.⁴²

In summary, the verb פִּרְשׁ has, both in Aramaic and in Hebrew, several connotations of meaning, as we know from the dictionaries and as has been illustrated, to some extent, by examples. There is however, no evidence for the meaning of 'to translate'.⁴³

Of particular importance is the fact that the two Greek translations of Neh 8:8, being the earliest interpretations of this text within Judaism, do not offer any indication of 'translating' the Law at the moment of being read aloud in liturgy. That is to say, the pre-rabbinic exegesis of our text does not know (yet) the interpretation of 'targum' for מִפְּרָשׁ. Further, dealing with the matter of 'targum', it is interesting to see that Targ Onk and Jon, while testifying well known connotations of our verb, contain no evidence for the meaning of 'to translate' at all. On the contrary, this meaning is expressed by the verb תִּרְגַּם (Gen 42:23; Ex 3:16; 7:1), which is also used in Ezra 4:7.⁴⁴

V

What does all this mean for our text, Neh 8:8? How to translate this text as far as the word מִפְּרָשׁ is concerned?

(1) It may have become clear, that there is no linguistic basis at all for the interpretation of מִפְּרָשׁ in the sense of 'translated'. Even if Ezra were to be regarded as a royal scribe, the fact remains that there is no linguistic evidence

⁴¹ On this text, see A. van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches*, 197f.

⁴² See the dictionaries of Levy and Jastrow.

⁴³ On פִּרְשׁ, see also W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur*. Teil I. Darmstadt 1965 (= Leipzig 1899), 154-157; A.I. Baumgarten, *The Name of the Pharisees*, *JBL* 102 (1983), 418f.

⁴⁴ For a text in one of the later targumim, in which both verbs (פִּרְשׁ and תִּרְגַּם) are used, see Targ Pseudo-Jonathan Deut 27:8.

for the theory of Schaefer. On the contrary, the root conveying the meaning of 'to translate', both in Aramaic and in Hebrew, is a different one: תרגם. The argument of Schaefer that the use of this verb in Ezra 4:7 should be due to the (later) chronicler is far from convincing, because the root involved not only goes back to the Imperial Aramaic, but has been derived from an even older linguistic milieu, that of the Babylonian language.⁴⁵

Both in Ezra 4:18 and in Neh 8:8 the part. *מסור* is used in connexion with the public reading of a written document. Together with *לום סכל* it defines in Neh 8:8 the manner in which the Law was read by the Levites. In my view the part. is best understood in the sense of a reading 'expressed clearly'. This is in line with the use of *פרש* (pa.) in Targ Onk and Targ Jon concerning writing and speaking, as has been noted above. It means that the Levites were reading the Law clearly and plainly. The practice of reading aloud was to be performed with a clear pronunciation of each word, not by murmuring (*דמה*).⁴⁶ Or to put it with the words of E.J. Vogt in his Lexicon, on the part. pass. in Ezra 4:18: 'lecta est verbatim, i.e. singillatim, discretim, non solum summatim'.⁴⁷ It is to be noted, however, that such a careful reading of an *unvocalised* text does involve an element of interpretation in the sense of linguistic exegesis.⁴⁸

(2) From all this it follows that Neh 8:8 does not testify to a 'targum'-tradition. Our text does not refer to the practice of an oral translation into Aramaic, when the Law was read publicly.

As we have seen, the rabbinic tradition relates Neh 8:8 to the practice of oral translation as being part of the synagogal liturgy. According to this tradition, the exegesis involved goes back to Rab (c. 200 A.D.). The first testimonies for the practice of oral translation in the synagogue are to be found in the Mishnah, dating also from about the same period. As a matter of fact, we have no attestations for this practice in earlier Jewish sources. LXX 2 Ezra 18:8, a pre-rabbinic and pre-Mishnaic text, dating from about the beginning of the common

⁴⁵ See S.A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Assyriological Studies, 19), Chicago and London 1974, 107.

⁴⁶ See Altheim-Stiehl, *Die aramäische Sprache*, 6.

⁴⁷ *Lexicon Linguae Aramaeae Veteris Testamenti*, Roma 1971, 140. Compare also K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer*, 672: *pa'el* part. pass. 'Stück für Stück'. See further M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1985, 109: 'Such a lection ... involved care for exact pronunciations, intonation, and phrasing, so as to make the units of the piece and its traditional sense readily comprehensible.' Cf. also the Vulgate: '(et legerunt ...) distincte'; the Peshitta however reflects a different reading/interpretation: *kd prys*, 'being unrolled (nl. the book of the Law)'; this rendering supposes the root *פרש* (instead of *פרש*).

⁴⁸ See L.H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, 37, and compare, in the quotation from Fishbane in the preceding note, the element of 'the traditional sense'. - As to the suggestion that *מסור* should refer to the 'sections' (*parashot*) of the Hebrew text (see inter alia D.C. Siegfried, *Ezra, Nehemia und Esther*, Göttingen 1901, 101 ['abschnittsweise']), it must be said that we don't have any indication for this meaning in the period of the Second Temple. On the matter of *מסור*, see J.M. Oesch, *Petucha und Setuma* (OBO 27), Freiburg/Schweiz und Göttingen 1979, 38f.

era,⁴⁹ does not reflect the usage of translation; it stresses the aspect of teaching as accompanying the reading of the text.⁵⁰

It is often argued that, in the time of Ezra, a translation into Aramaic was necessary, because many Jews did not understand Hebrew any longer. A text such as Neh 13:23 seems to point into that direction: 'Jews who had married women of Ashdod ... spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah'. However, the tendency of this passage is not in favour of the practice of oral translation in the liturgy of the temple! In fact, we know next to nothing about the matter of languages in Jerusalem and Judea during the Persian period.⁵¹ And even if Aramaic became more and more important, the question remains whether the leaders of the Judean people, in particular the priests of the temple, were in favour of the use of that language in the temple area. It should not be forgotten that books like Chronicles were written in Hebrew, not in Aramaic. (It should be emphasized that, in the above, we referred to the practice of *oral* translation into Aramaic within a liturgical setting. In my view, the matter of *written* translations is something different from translations delivered orally in liturgical situations.⁵² For example, it is quite improbable, that LXX Pent, the first written translation we know of, resulted from a translation practice in the synagogal worship in Alexandria.)⁵³

(3) Our last point concerns the rabbinic tradition: how to explain the interpretation of מִתְּרֻמָּה as indicating 'targum'? One may assume that this interpretation served the purpose of legitimizing an already existing practice, by dating it back to the time of Ezra. Presumably, this was particularly important for the Jews in Mesopotamia. As far as the philological level is concerned, W. Bacher may be right in stating that the relation between מִתְּרֻמָּה and 'targum' is based on the assumption, 'dass der Bibeltext durch das Targum erklärt wird, und תְּרֻמָּה bedeutet: die Bibel erklären'.⁵⁴

49 LXX 2 Ezra has much in common with the so called kaige-recension. See F.M. Cross, A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration, *JBL* 94 (1975), 8.

50 Quite interestingly, this is in line with the famous Theodotos inscription, dating from the first century A.D., in which it is said that '... build the synagogue [n.l. in Jerusalem, vdK] for the purpose of the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments (ἐκ τῶν ἐντολῶν)'. For this inscription see A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten*. 4. Aufl., Tübingen 1923, 378-380.

51 See now J. Naveh, Hebrew and Aramaic in the Persian Period, in: *Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol. I, 115-129.

52 Cf. D.M. Golomb, *A Grammar of Targum Neofiti* (HSM 34), Chico 1985, 2-8.

53 See G. Dorival, M. Harl, O. Munnich, *La Bible Grecque des Septante*, Paris 1988, 67-77. The same can be said of the targumim found at Qumran.

54 *Terminologie*, I, 156 [Anm. 3].

"For Man Shall His Blood Be Shed"
Gen 9:6 in Hebrew and in Greek¹

Johan LUST.

Katholieke Univ. Leuven

The saying in Gen 9:6 is usually rendered somewhat as follows: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image" (RSV). The first part of the verse has a tight chiasmic formulation repeating each word of the first clause in reverse order in the second. Continuing the line of thought of verse 5, it appears to express the absolute inviolability of human life. Furthermore it is often inferred that the sentence offers a perfect example of the principle of talion, the chiasmic structure emphasizing the strict correspondence of punishment to offense.² We can agree about that.

Some other characteristics are more debatable. It is frequently stated that the verse justifies capital punishment. Man is responsible for the punishment of murder. The expression "by man" is supposed to answer the very important question about whether any human being is at all justified in killing another human person or whether God has reserved this for himself. According to Von Rad, the answer contains both a negative and a positive aspect: God himself will not avenge murder, but He empowers man to do it.³

The tensions are obvious: How can God state the absolute inviolability of human life, and at the same time allow human beings to execute capital punishment? The problem is enhanced by the second half of the verse, since it

¹ References to monographs and articles are given in abbreviated form. Full references are provided in the bibliographical list at the end of the paper.

² Wenham 1987, 193; comp. Westermann 1974, 625; Gispén 1974, 296; McEvenue 1971, 70-71; Von Rad 1961, 128; Jacob 1934, 246 ("die vollkommenste Illustration zu dem Prinzip der Talion"); Pedersen 1964 (1926), 397.

³ Von Rad 1961 (1956), 129; comp. Westermann 1974, 469; Stachowiak 1981, 404; Wenham 1987, 193-194.