

# STUDIEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT UND SEINER UMWELT (SNTU)

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**Early Exegesis in the Palestinian Targum (Neofiti)  
Numbers Chapter 21**

*1. The Palestinian Targums in Recent Exegesis*

The use of the Targums (i.e. Jewish Aramaic translations or paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures) for a knowledge of the environment (*Umwelt*) of the New Testament, and for New Testament study, has vacillated through the centuries, since they were first used for this purpose in the sixteenth century, if not earlier. Already in the seventeenth century, in the twelfth prolegomenon to the London Polyglot (1657), Brian Walton expressed serious reservations on any such use. He grants that there are numerous places in which the Targums speak of the Word of God (i.e. the *Memra*) as a distinct person; they bear clear and numerous testimonies to Christ, to the person, advent and mission of the Messiah. None the less, not everything in the Targums can be accepted as old, and some passages (in particular in Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragment Targums) which can be used for New Testament study are to be reckoned rather as remnants of old traditions, going back even to the Prophets, preserved in writings which must be regarded as later compositions.<sup>1</sup>

In those centuries, and for long after, the only Targums of the Pentateuch known to scholars were Onkelos and that known as Pseudo-Jonathan on the entire Pentateuch, and the fragments of Targums for all five books, commonly known as the Fragment Targum. During the Golden Age of Jewish literature both Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragment Targums were regarded as later compositions, the former not earlier than the seventh century of our era, the Targum represented by the fragments possibly from the third or fourth. It was granted that these, however, may contain traditions older than the compositions themselves. From such a critical position it was obvious that the works could be used for New Testament studies only with the greatest of caution.

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<sup>1</sup> See further *M. McNamara*, Targumic Studies, in: CBQ 28 (1966) 1-19, esp. 2f.; *id.*, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch (AnBib, 27), Rom 1966 (reprint, with supplement 1978), 5-7.

The early thirties saw a certain change of attitude regarding the Targums, with regard to the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch in particular. For one thing a new approach towards tradition developed, which led to greater respect for the antiquity of the Palestinian Targum tradition, even if the manuscripts in which this is now enshrined are more recent. Even with regard to the manuscripts the situation changed with the publication by Paul Kahle of large sections of Palestinian Targum manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, the oldest of which he dated to the seventh century.

With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 and later our picture of Palestinian Judaism of the New Testament era and earlier was radically changed. We now had contemporary evidence for another Jewish tradition. It is worth recalling that about this same time a new era also began for the study of the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch with the finding in 1949 of Codex Neofiti 1 in the Vatican Library (falsely catalogued as Onkelos) and the discovery by Alejandro Díez Macho in 1956 that it contained the full text (a few verses apart) of the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch, and this in a form of Aramaic that appeared to be quite ancient.

Renewed interest in the relevance of the Palestinian Targum tradition for New Testament studies was increasing before the discovery of Neofiti 1. As was to be expected, new impetus was added to this interest by this discovery. The study of the language, traditions and exegetical technique of Neofiti 1 went hand in hand with research on the relevance of the targumic tradition for New Testament studies, with special emphasis on the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch. This position was particularly strong in the mid-sixties.

A reaction was soon to set in, especially from specialists in the history of Aramaic and in Qumran studies. The form of Aramaic found in the Palestinian Targums was reckoned to be the same as that of the Palestinian Talmud and the midrashim, and to be assigned a date more recent than New Testament times, after 200 C.E. at the earliest. While the traditions which these targums contain may be earlier, of course, even this was called into doubt with regard to some key concepts, e.g. the title *Memra* when used of God (*The Memra of the Lord*).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *A.D. York*, The Dating of Targumic Literature, in: *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 5 (1974) 49-62; *J.A. Fitzmyer*, The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament, in: *A Wandering Aramean. Collected Aramaic Essays*, Missoula 1979, 94-95, and note 48 (p. 111) (on *Memra*, *Shekinah*); summary of views in *M. McNamara*, Targum and Te-

At times even well-founded targumic traditions, of no particular interest for New Testament studies, have come to be regarded on examination to be attestably later developments within Jewish tradition, even though their origins can be traced to early rabbinic times. A case in question would be the targumic paraphrase of Gen 4:26 on the time of Enosh, son of Sheth. The MT reads: 'az hûhal liqro' b<sup>e</sup>šem YHWH, "At that time people began (lit.: 'it was begun') to invoke the name of the Lord".<sup>3</sup> In earlier Jewish, as in Christian tradition, this invocation of the divine name by those of Enosh's time was looked at in a positive sense: they called on the name of the true God. It is quite the opposite in the Palestinian Targum texts, which understand the passage to refer to the beginning of idolatry: "Then, men began to make idols for themselves, calling them by the name of Memra of the Lord" (*Neofiti I*); "In his days, then, men began worshipping foreign cults and calling them by the name of the Memra of the Lord" (*Fragment Targums*); "That was the generation in whose days they began to go astray, making idols for themselves, and calling their idols by the name of the Memra of the Lord" (*Pseudo-Jonathan*). This tradition is also that found in early rabbinic texts (from the second century CE and later), and represents a very specific viewpoint on the relationship of the early (pre-Abraham) ante-diluvian and post-diluvian patriarchal tradition to the cult of God. The targumic interpretation of Gen 4:26 fits into this rabbinic tradition. A question that arises is whether this particular understanding of the biblical text originated after the first century C.E. or earlier.

The reservations regarding the date to be assigned to Palestinian Targum Aramaic, indeed to part at least of this Targums interpretative tradition, have led many scholars to neglect the Palestinian Targums in the study of New Testament exegesis.<sup>4</sup> This neglect of the Palestinian Pentateuch Targum tradition

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stament, Shannon 1972, 14f.; *id.*, Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament, Wilmington 1983, 214-217.

<sup>3</sup> On this text see the monograph of S.D. Fraade, Enosh and his Generation. Pre-Israelite Hero and History in Postbiblical Interpretation (SBL MS, 30), Chico 1984.

<sup>4</sup> As an example I may instance C. Deutsch, Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke. Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11.25-30 (JSNT SS, 18), Sheffield 1987, 20: "Targumic materials do not appear in this thesis. The Palestinian Targums, in particular, contain traditions which bear striking resemblance to certain New Testament materials, and there is internal evidence for the use of targumic techniques in the Second Temple era. However, a conservative estimate places the earliest redaction, even of Neofiti, in the third century

as a representative of Judaism of the New Testament period is to be regretted. The question at issue is not principally what light these texts might throw on the New Testament itself. Our principal concern should rather be the Palestinian Jewish approach to the sacred text in so far as this can be reconstructed from the sources at our disposal. Sometimes this Jewish exegesis is plain from documents from the period, as in the case of the texts from the monks of Qumran. At other times we can reconstruct a system of exegesis, or at least certain exegetical traditions, from similar contemporary documents, such as Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (*Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*). By a judicious use of such contemporary texts, and others besides, it may be possible pass beyond this limited information to larger and more extended exegetical traditions, such as those in the rabbinic tradition and in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch. It is on this last-mentioned tradition I intend to concentrate in this essay. I shall first of all, however, treat briefly of some different forms of Palestinian Jewish biblical exegesis during the New Testament period and earlier.

## 2. *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran*

It could probably be accepted as a principle of the history of biblical interpretation that the Bible text has rarely if ever existed in isolation. In the mind of the faithful, the text has always been accompanied by some or other interpretation. Thus it is that from isolated interpretations of texts we may be able to reconstruct various exegetical traditions.

The principle I have just given could be abundantly illustrated from the rich collection of patristic and early medieval interpretations collected by the patient researches of the members of the Vetus Latina Institute, Beuron, in the systematic reconstruction of the Vetus Latina translation of the Bible. I believe it can be applied to early Jewish texts as well, and hope to illustrate the point with regard to the Qumran texts, but particularly with regard to the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo.

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of the Common Era, and 'no effective method has as yet been devised to distinguish between the recension of a particular targumic text and the tradition that underlies that text'" (citing *York, Dating*, 49, with reference also to *E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, Philadelphia 1977, 25f).

The biblical exegesis of the Qumran monks need not detain us here. It has already been the subject of much study.<sup>5</sup> In the *pesher* method of interpretation a text is taken and interpreted of the life and history of the Qumran community. This is a constant in the method. Another feature of the texts known to us is that certain key words are understood as denoting certain important realities or functionaries in Israel. Thus Num 21:18 in *The Damascus Rule* (CD 6:6-8):

But God remembered his Covenant with the forefathers, and he raised up from Aaron men of discernment and from Israel men of wisdom, and he caused them to hear. And they dug the Well; *the well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with the stave* (Num 21:18). The *Well* is the Law, and those who dug it were the converts of Israel who went out of the land of Judah to sojourn in the land of Damascus... The *Stave* is the Interpreter of the Law...; and the *nobles of the people* are those who come to dig the *Well* with the staves with which the *Stave* ordained that they should walk in all the age of wickedness...

The tradition of interpretation on the meaning to be ascribed to the key words (*Well*, *Stave*, etc.), which in this text are applied to the Qumran covenanters' history, must be older and more widespread than the Qumran community itself.<sup>6</sup> We find it equally deeply established in rabbinic and targumic tradition.

The same holds true for another equivalent in the Qumran texts, that of *geber*<sup>7</sup> of the Hebrew Text. The older English translations would render this term as "a man"; later literal translations, with an eye to inclusive language, as "a person". An early Jewish understanding regarded the Hebrew term as denoting more than an ordinary man or person. Thus already in the Qumran *pesher* on Ps 37 (4QpPs<sup>a</sup>; also known as 4Q171) where *geber* of v. 23 is interpreted of the Teacher of Righteousness: "*The (steps of a man; or: of the Man) are confirmed by the Lord...*". Interpreted, this concerns the Priest, the Teacher of (Righteousness... whom) he established to build for himself the congregation of

<sup>5</sup> See the standard studies on the Qumran Scrolls. The Qumran texts on biblical interpretation are listed in *G. Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls. Qumran in Perspective*, London <sup>2</sup>1982, 66-83.

<sup>6</sup> Some of them have been studied by *G. Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism. Haggadic Studies (Studia Post Biblica, 4)*, Leiden 1962 (rev. ed. 1983), 11-66 ("The Symbolism of Words").

<sup>7</sup> See *G. Vermes, Scripture*, 56-63 ("man"; *gbr, zkr, pl' yw's, 'yš*). The "four hundred men" (Heb. *'nšym*) of Gen 32:7 are understood in the Pal. Targ. as "400 war generals" (*polemarchoi*); in *Genesis Rabba* 75, 12 as "kings bearing crowns", "prefects" or "generals"; likewise Nf Gen 12:20 where *'nšym* ("men") of the HT is rendered as "leading men".

..." (text broken). A similar understanding of this Hebrew word is also found in rabbinic Judaism. Similarly, the paraphrase of the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch works on the principle that 'yš (generally understood as "man") of the Hebrew Text means more than an ordinary man.

### 3. *Biblical Interpretation among the Zealots*<sup>8</sup>

In the religious mentality evidenced in the Qumran *pesher* or rabbinic midrash type of exegesis, the biblical text can be applied to the contemporary situation in a variety of ways. Behind all such exegesis, however, lies the belief that the Bible contains the mind and the will of God for his people. The task of the expositor is to bring the divine message to the attention of the believing faithful. An obvious danger in any such approach to the Bible is that the interpreter takes his or her own desires as those of God and makes the Bible serve the interpreter's desires or ambitions.

Looking on the Bible, in particular on the Torah, as divine oracles must have been well established in Israel already in Maccabean times. It probably explains 1 Mac 3:48 where we read that at Mizpah Judas Maccabee and his brothers "opened the book of the law to inquire into the matters about which the Gentiles were consulting their idols".<sup>9</sup> The Zealots of the first century C.E. had what we may call an oracular approach to the Scriptures. They believed that the sacred text contained certain prophecies to which effect should be given by the members of the Zealot movement. We cannot say whether this approach to the Scriptures formed part of part of this "Fourth Philosophy" since its foundation by Judas the Galilean in 6 C.E.

We know from Josephus that among the main causes of the final rebellion against Rome in 66 C.E. stood:

an ambiguous oracular pronouncement, which had also been found in Holy Scripture, that one from their country would at that time be given command over the world. This they applied to a member of their people and many wise men erred in their interpretation (*War* 6, 312f.).

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<sup>8</sup> For a study of the Zealots, see *M. Hengel, The Zealots. Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod 1 until 70 A. D.*, Edinburgh; for their charismatic and eschatological interpretation of Scripture esp. 62-64.

<sup>9</sup> On the Bible itself regarded as predictive prophecy during the late Second Temple period, see also *McNamara, Palestinian Judaism*, esp. 62-64.

The Jewish belief in the existence of this oracle, and the fact that it was to be realised at that particular point of time, must have been widespread since it is also attested by the Roman historians Tacitus (*Hist.* 5,13) and Suetonius (*Vesp.* 4,5) who cannot be presumed to have got it from Josephus. Tacitus writes of the Jews at the revolt:

Most people held the belief that, according to the ancient priestly writings, this was the moment at which the east was fated to prevail: they would now start forth from Judea and conquer the world. This enigmatic prophecy really applied to Vespasian and Titus. But men are blinded by their hopes. The Jews took to themselves the promised destiny, and even defeat could not convince them of the truth.<sup>10</sup>

Likewise Suetonius (*Vesp.* 4,5):

An ancient superstition was current in the east, that out of Judea at this time would come the rulers of the world. This prediction, as the event later proved, referred to a Roman Emperor, but the rebellious Jews, who read it as referring to themselves, murdered their Governor, routed the Governor of Syria when he came down to restore order, and captured an Eagle.<sup>11</sup>

The biblical text on which this expectation was based is a matter of debate.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars believe that the messianic prophecy in question is Dan 7:13ff. on the Son of Man and the kingdom, or kinship, he is to receive. Others think that the text intended is Num 24:17ff., i.e. Balaam's oracle on the star to arise out of Jacob, who is first to subjugate the nations surrounding Israel and finally, apparently (24:24) destroy entirely all world powers.

Other oracles besides this were used by Zealot prophets during the final siege encouraging the defenders to believe that a miraculous divine intervention on their behalf was to take place. The past intervention against Sennacherib (2

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<sup>10</sup> *Tacitus, Hist.* 5,13: pluribus persuasio inerat antiquis sacerdotum litteris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore ut valesceret Oriens profectique Iudea rerum potirentur, quae ambages Vespasianum ac Titum praedixerat, sed vulgus more humanae cupidinis sibi tantam fatorum magnitudinem interpretati ne adversis quidem ad vera mutabantur.

<sup>11</sup> *Suetonius, Vesp.* 4,5: percreebrerat Oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis ut eo tempore Iudea profecti rerum potirentur. Id de imperatore Romano, quantum postea eventu paruit, praedictum Iudaei ad se trahentes rebellarunt.

<sup>12</sup> See *Hengel, Zealots*, 237-240.

Kgs 18:17-19:36=Isa 37) was recalled and the prophecies of Zech 12:2-6 and 14:2-5.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. *Biblical Interpretation in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*

Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (often referred to under its Latin title *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*) is almost universally believed by scholars to have been composed in the first century of the common era.<sup>14</sup> The latest possible date for the composition would be 100 C.E. While some believe it was composed after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. there are strong arguments for an earlier dating. In D. J. Harrington's words: "A date around the time of Jesus seems most likely".<sup>15</sup> Palestine is also the most probable place of composition.

The writing does not appear to have originated with any of the specific groups or sects in Palestine (Pharisees, Essenes, Qumran Covenanters, Samaritans, anti-Samaritans, Hellenists, Gnostics, etc.). As D. J. Harrington notes,<sup>16</sup> rather Pseudo-Philo seems to reflect the milieu of the Palestinian synagogues at the turn of the common era. It is the earliest witness for motifs frequently repeated in the Jewish tradition: Abraham's escape from Ur (6), Israel's being spared from the water of the Flood (7:4), Dinah's husband as Job (8:8), Moses' being born circumcised (9:13), the writing on the tablets of the Law fleeing away (12:5), Balaam as an interpreter of dreams ((18:2), the sacrifice of Isaac (18:5; 32:2-4; 40:2), Isaac's birth in the seventh month (23:8), the concealment of the precious stones until the last day (26:13), the equation of Phinehas and Elijah (48:1), the identification of Saul with the fleeing Benjaminite of 1 Samuel 4:12 (54:4), and Saul's death as an atonement for his sins (64:9).

What I have said earlier about the biblical text generally being accompanied with an interpretation can be amply illustrated from Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities*. The most obvious example is probably the midrash on the binding

<sup>13</sup> See Hengel, *Zealots*, 240-244.

<sup>14</sup> For this work see the translation, with introduction and notes, by D.J. Harrington in: J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, London 1985, 297-377 (with further bibliographical references, p. 303).

<sup>15</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* II, 299; for Palestine as likely place of origin, *ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>16</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* II, 300.

of Isaac which goes far beyond the biblical text itself. This midrash is deeply rooted in rabbinic and targumic tradition. In his brief summary of sacred history from Canaan to Egypt, in chapter 8, Pseudo-Philo makes passing mention of the conception and birth of Isaac. In this passage, however, he omits any mention of the sacrifice of Isaac. Elsewhere, outside of its proper context, he mentions this sacrifice three times, and on each occasion he passes beyond the biblical text to the midrash deriving from it.

The first occurrence is in 18:5, in a context dealing at length with Balaam. Here in the midrash on Balaam we have a midrashic elaboration of Gen 22:17. God is made to say to Balaam:<sup>17</sup>

"Is it not regarding this people that I spoke to Abraham in a vision, saying, '*Your seed will be like the stars of the heaven*' (Gen 22:17), when I lifted him above the firmament and showed him the arrangements of all the stars? And I demanded his son as a holocaust (Gen 22:1ff.). And he brought him and he placed him on the altar, but I gave him back to his father and, because he did not refuse, his offering was acceptable before me, and on account of his blood I choose them.

We find a much more developed form of the midrash in 32:2-4, this time woven, with other midrashim on Abraham, into a text on the hymn of Deborah (Judges 5:1).<sup>18</sup>

"Behold the Lord has shown us his glory from on high...And he chose our nation and took Abraham our father out of the fire and freed him from the bricks destined for building the tower... And he gave him a son at the end of his old age and took him out of a sterile womb. And all the angels were jealous of him, and the worshipping hosts envied him. And since they were jealous of him, God said to him, 'Kill the fruit of your body for me, and offer for me as a sacrifice what has been given to you by me'. And Abraham did not argue, but set out immediately. And as he was setting out, he said to his son, 'Behold now, my son, I am offering you as a holocaust and am delivering you into the hands that gave you to me.' But the son said to the father, 'Hear me, father. If a lamb of the flock is accepted as sacrifice to the Lord with an odour of sweetness and if for the wicked deeds of men animals are appointed to be killed, but man is designed to inherit the world, how then do you say to me, "Come and inherit life without limit and time without measure"? Yet have I not been born into the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him who made me? Now my blessedness will be above that of all men, because there will be nothing like this; and about me future generations will be instructed and

<sup>17</sup> In Harrington, in: Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha II, 325.

<sup>18</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha II, 345f.

through me peoples will understand that the Lord has made the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice.' And when he had offered his son upon the altar and had bound his feet so as to kill him, the Most Powerful hastened and sent forth his voice from on high saying, '.....Now your memory will be before me always, and your name and his will remain from one generation to another'".

There is a reference to the sacrifice again in 40:2, in a passage on the sacrifice of the daughter of Jephthah, with sections of a midrashic paraphrase extremely similar to that of the Palestinian Targum Gen 22:10.14. The text of *Biblical Antiquities* 40:2 reads:<sup>19</sup>

And Seila his (i. e. Jephthah's) daughter said to him, "And who is there who would be sad in death, seeing the people freed? Or do you not remember what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a holocaust, and he did not refuse but gladly gave consent to him, the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing?"

We move far closer to targumic tradition and paraphrase in *Biblical Antiquities* 20:8, in a section dealing with Joshua and the division of the land:<sup>20</sup>

And after Moses died, *the manna stopped descending upon the sons of Israel* (cf. Josh 5:12), and then they began *to eat from the fruits of the land*. And these are the three things that God gave to his people on account of the three persons: that is, the well of the water of Marah for Miriam and the pillar of cloud for Aaron and the manna for Moses. And when these came to their end, these three things were taken away from them.

This is a midrash that has arisen from what appears to be sustained reflection on the biblical text. The death of Miriam, narrated in Num 20:1, is immediately followed by the remark that there was no water for the congregation. The death of Aaron is narrated in Num 20:29, and the cessation of the manna, narrated in Josh 5:12 follows in a certain sense, though not immediately, on the death of Moses. What is very significant is that this midrash of the *Biblical Antiquities* is found in almost identical fashion in the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch, e.g. Neofiti Num 21:1 (additional paraphrase indicated by italics):

When the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who was dwelling in the South, heard *that Aaron, the pious man for whose merits the clouds of the glory surrounded Israel, had been removed, and that Miriam the prophetess, for whose merits the well used to come up for them had been removed*, that Is-

<sup>19</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* II, 353.

<sup>20</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha* II, 329.

rael had reached the route through which which the spies had come up, they waged war on Israel and took captives.

Or again Neofiti Num 12:12, 16 on Miriam's merits: because she stood at the bank of the river to see the fate of Moses, Israel became sixty myriads (Neofiti Num 12:16); while she was leprous the clouds of glory and the well did not come up.

We have a much closer relationship between the Palestinian Targum and the *Biblical Antiquities* in the tradition concerning the well which was believed to have accompanied Israel during the desert wanderings, called Miriam's well in both texts. Thus in *Biblical Antiquities* 10:7:<sup>21</sup>

Now he led his people out into the wilderness; for forty years *he rained down for them bread from heaven* and brought *quail* to them *from the sea* and brought forth a well of water to follow them. *Now with a pillar of cloud he led them by day, and with a pillar of fire he gave them light by night.*

Here we have brought together the main gifts given by God to Israel in the wilderness, based on Ex 16:13-17:6; Ps 76:24, 27; Num 21:16-20; Ex 13:21; Neh 9:12. They are also brought together in the Palestinian Targum Num 21:6,<sup>22</sup> as an introduction to the punishment by the brazen serpents:

The divine voice came forth from the earth and its voice was heard on high: 'Come and see, all you creatures; and come, give ear, all you sons of the flesh; the serpent was cursed from the beginning and I said to it: 'Dust shall be your food.' I brought my people up from the land of Egypt and I had manna come down from the abyss, and I carried quail from the sea for them; and my people has turned to murmur before me concerning the manna, that its nourishment is little. Let the serpent which does not murmur concerning its food come and rule over the people which has murmured concerning their food.

In *Biblical Antiquities* in 11:15, at the end of a section on the gift of the Law and on the Decalogue we have a further occurrence of the midrash on the Well:<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Harrington, in: Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha II, 317.

<sup>22</sup> For a study of this text see H. Maneschg, Die Erzählung von der ehernen Schlange (Num 21,4-9) in der Auslegung der frühen jüdischen Literatur. Eine traditions-geschichtliche Studie (EH), Frankfurt/M. 1981; esp. 253-272 for a text analysis of Num 21:4-9.

<sup>23</sup> In Harrington, in: Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha II, 319.

Then God told him his statutes and his judgements, and he detained him *forty days and forty nights*. And there he commanded him many things and *showed him the tree* of life, from which he cut off and took and *threw into Marah, and the water of Marah became sweet*. And it followed them in the wilderness forty years and went up to the mountain with them and went down with them into the plains. And he commanded him about the tabernacle...

The end of this text on the well going up to the mountain and down to the plains represents a paraphrase of Num 21:19 in which words of the Hebrew Text, now generally taken as place names (RSV: "and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamoth"), are interpreted as common nouns. The original text has almost been lost sight of in this paraphrase, which interprets the passage of the well. This way of regarding this particular section of the Hebrew Text must have been general in New Testament Judaism. We find it also in Tosefta, *Sukka* 3, 11. It is found almost verbatim as in *LAB* in the Palestinian Targum of Num 21:19, which reads:

And after the well had been given them as a gift, it went on to become for them swelling torrents; and after it had become swelling torrents, it went on to go up with them to the tops of the mountains and to go down with them to the deep valleys.

### 5. Continuity in Rabbinical Biblical Interpretation

Rabbinical literature was once a favourite source for scholars in their interpretation of New Testament texts. In this regard one thinks automatically of the classic work by H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. The current thought was that these rabbinical sources represented one section, even the central section, of Jewish thought during the New Testament period. Present-day scholars are much more cautious in their use of rabbinical sources in New Testament studies - again because of the uncertainty of the date to be assigned to rabbinical texts. While caution must be exercised in the use of rabbinic literature, it would be unwise to ignore it simply because of the uncertainty about the date to be assigned to any particular element of it. It is *a priori* unlikely that the bulk of this literature was created *ab ovo* by the rabbis of the tannaitic or talmudic periods. What we know of this literature stresses the respect given to tradition, to what has been handed down. While we must be open to the existence of exegetical creativity among the rabbis, it seems unlikely that the bulk of the tradition was created after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. A combination of studies on the continuity

of tradition and of creativity seems to be called for: on the one hand the elements in rabbinic tradition that can be traced back even to the time of Sirach,<sup>24</sup> and on the other the new syntheses on some points at least (for instance the generation of Enosh) that point towards rabbinic exegetical creativity.

#### 6. *Antiquity of interpretation tradition in the Palestinian Targum Numbers 21*

As I noted at the outset of this essay, many scholars today are loathe to use the Palestinian Targum tradition for New Testament studies because of the difficulties in assigning a date to both the texts themselves and the traditions they enshrine. I believe that a study of the the Palestinian Targum of Numbers 21 argues against too hastily dismissing this exegetical tradition. In this particular chapter we have a text that linguistically does not seem to differ significantly from the remainder of the Targum. And yet almost the entire paraphrase can be shown by the parallels in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo to be extremely old, and well established in Palestinian Judaism at least in the first century of our era. It is not that the exegetical paraphrases seem imported into the translation. Rather do they grow out of it, flow from it, so to speak.<sup>25</sup> In this particular section of the Targum we have a good instance of Renée Bloch's contention that the Palestinian Targum was the articulation point of midrash,

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<sup>24</sup> In this regard see what *M. Hengel* has to say on Wisdom in Ben Sirach and Rabbinic Judaism in: *Judaism and Hellenism. Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period, I*, Philadelphia 1974, 157-162.169-175.

<sup>25</sup> *B.B. Levy* has made a detailed study of the text of Neofiti 1 in: *Targum Neophyti 1. A Textual Study, I: Introduction, Genesis, Exodus, II: Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (Studies in Judaism)*, New York-London 1986.1987. One of his contentions in this study is that together with the basic translation of the Hebrew Text, we have in Neofiti a number of midrashic developments which are to be regarded as later interpolations into this basic text. While it may be granted that from the textual point of view we may have to distinguish between the basic translation and added midrash, the fact remains that this midrash in quite a number of cases (if not in most) flows from a definite understanding of the Hebrew Text, even if not immediately from the translation of Neofiti. In few places is this clearer than in the paraphrase of Pal. Targ. Num 21.

the way in which midrash grew from the biblical text.<sup>26</sup> The text of the paraphrase of this chapter which I give here will show the close relationship with the biblical interpretation we find in the *Biblical Antiquities*.

From this it would seem to follow that in the Palestinian Targum of Numbers 21 we have evidence of Jewish reflection on the Scriptures from the age of Christ and the Apostles. It is a form of scriptural interpretation as real as that of Qumran, the Zealots or any other Jewish group. It does not follow from the evidence of this single chapter that all the paraphrase of the Palestinian of the Pentateuch is equally ancient. The evidence of this chapter, however, might indicate that the current scepticism on the relevance of these Targums as witnesses to Jewish interpretation of Jesus' day may not be all that well founded.

#### **Text of Palestinian Targum (Neofiti 1) Numbers 21:**

*Paraphrase which adds to the Hebrew Text is indicated by italics*

1. And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who was dwelling in the south heard *that Aaron, the pious man for whose merits the clouds of the glory used to lead Israel forth, had been removed; and that Miriam the prophetess, for whose merits the well used to come up for them had been removed;* that Israel had reached the route *through which the spies had come up.* And they waged war on Israel and took captives from among them. 2. And Israel vowed a vow to the Lord and said: If you will indeed deliver this people into our hands, I will blot out their cities". 3. And the Lord heard the voice of Israel's *prayer* and delivered the Canaanites *into their hands*, and they blotted out them and their cities; and they called the name of the place Hormah. 4. And they journeyed from Hor the Mountain by the way of the Red Sea to go around the land of the Edomites: and the soul of the people was *distressed on the way.* 5. *And the people spoke against the Memra of the Lord and murmured* against Moses: "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt to kill us in the wilderness? For *we have* neither bread *to eat* not water *to drink*, and our soul is distressed by this bread, *the nourishment of which is little*". 6. *The Bath Qol came forth from the earth and its voice was heard on high: "Come, see, all you creatures; and come, give ear, all you sons of the flesh; the serpent was cursed from the beginning and I said to it: 'Dust*

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<sup>26</sup> See R. Bloch, "Midrash", in: Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément III, Paris 1957, cols. 1278f.

shall be your food.' I brought my people up from the lands of Egypt and I had manna come down from Heaven, and I made a well come up for them from the abyss, and I carried quail from the sea for them; and my people has turned to murmur before me concerning the manna, that its nourishment is little. The serpent which does not murmur concerning its food will come and rule over the people which has murmured concerning their food". Wherefore the Lord let loose burning serpents among the people: and they bit the people and many people of Israel died. 7. And the people came to Moses and said: "We have sinned, for we have *murmured* against you. *Pray before* the Lord that he make the serpents pass from us". And Moses prayed for the people. 8. And the *Lord* said to Moses: "Make a *bronze serpent* and set it on an *elevated place*; <and it shall come to pass that every one who is bitten by the serpent and looks on it, shall live". 9. And Moses make a bronze serpent and put it on an *elevated place*>; and if the serpent bit anyone, he used to look on the bronze serpent and live. 10. And the children of Israel (set out) and encamped in Oboth. 11. And they set out from Oboth and encamped in the Valley of the Hebrews, in the wilderness which is opposite the Moabites towards the sunrise. 12. They set out from there and encamped in the wady of of Zered 13. They set out from there and encamped beyond the Arnon which is in the wilderness, which goes forth from the boundaries of the Amorites; for the Arnon is the boundary of the Moabites, between the Moabites and the Amorites. 14. For this reason *written and explained in the Book of the Law of the Lord - which is compared to the Book of the Wars - are the wonders which the Lord wrought with Israel when they stood by the Red Sea, and the mighty deeds he worked with them when they crossed the wadies of the Arnon.* 15. *When Israel was crossing the wadies of the Arnon the Amorites hid themselves within the caves of the wadies of the Arnon, saying: "When the children of Israel are crossing we will go out against them and kill them". But the master of all worlds, the Lord, who knows what is in the hearts, and before whom what is in the kidneys is manifest, made a signal; he signalled to the mountains and their summits were joined one to the other and crushed the heads of their heroes; and the torrents overflowed with their blood; but they did not know the wonders and mighty deeds that the Lord had wrought with them in the wadies (of the Arnon); and after that they were explained (to them), and they went to their places. Lahavath, the city that was not in their counsel, was spared; and behold it is near the boundaries of the Moabites.* 16. And from there the well was given to them. This is the well of which the Lord said to Moses: "Gather the people together and I will give them water". 17. Then Israel sung this song of praise. "Spring up,

O well", they sang to it; *and it sprang up*. 18. It is the well which the princes of the world, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, dug from the beginning; the intelligent ones of the people perfected it, the seventy sages who were distinguished; the scribes of Israel, Moses and Aaron measured it with their rods; and from the wilderness it was given to them (as) a gift. 19. And after the well had been given to them as a gift, it went on to become for them swelling torrents; and after it had become swelling torrents, it went on to go up with them to the tops of the mountains and to go down with them to the deep valleys; 20. and after it had gone up with them to the tops of the high mountains and had gone down with them to the deep glens, it was hidden from them in the valley which is at the boundaries of the Moabites, the top of the height which looks out opposite Beth Jeshimon. 21. And Israel sent messengers to Sihon, the king of the Amorites, saying: 22. "I would now pass through your land; we will not turn aside into fields or vineyards, not will we drink water of the cisterns. We will walk on the King's Highway until such time as we have passed through your territory". 23. But Sihon did not permit Israel to pass through his territory; and Sihon gathered together all his people and went out against Israel into the wilderness, and he came to Jahza and they waged war with Israel. 24. And Israel blotted him out at the edge of the sword and took possession of his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok, to the boundaries of the children of Ammon; for the boundaries of the sons of the Ammonites were strong. 25. And Israel took all these cities and Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorites, in Heshbon and in all its villages. 26. For Heshbon was the city of Sihon, the king of the Amorites, and he had waged war with the first king of the Moabites and had taken the land from him as far as the Arnon. 27. For this reason the poets say: "Go into Heshbon; the city of Sihon has been constructed and perfected. 28. For a people of heroes burning like the fire have gone forth from Heshbon; fighting men have gone forth like the flame from the city of Sihon; they have blotted out Lehawwath of the Moabites (and slain the priests) who sacrificed before the bamoth of the Arnon. 29. Woe to you, Moabites!; the people that has sacrificed before the idol Kemosh has come to an end, has been blotted out; he has handed over their sons chained in neck-irons and their daughters in captivity to the king of the Amorites, Sihon. 30. And the kingdom has ceased for Heshbon and the dominion for Dibon, and its highways are desolated as far as the Fortress of Nephahayya which is near Madeba". 31 And Israel dwelt in the land of the Amorites. 32. And Moses sent to spy out Jazer and they conquered its villages and blotted out the Amorites who were dwelling there. 33. And they went up towards Butnim; and Og, the king of Butnim, came out

against them, he and all his people, to wage war at Edrei. 34. *And it came to pass that when Moses saw Og, the king of Butnim, he feared and trembled before him, and said: "Is not this Og who jeered at Abraham and Sarah, saying to them: 'Abraham and Sarah are like beautiful trees standing beside springs of water, but producing no fruit.'" Because of this the Lord has preserved him alive until he saw their children and their children's children; and he came and fell into their hands. And after this the Lord said to Moses: "Do not fear before him, for I have delivered him and all his people into your hand; and you shall do to him as you have done to Sihon, the king of the Amorites who dwelt in Heshbon. 35. And they blotted out him and his sons and all his people until there was not a survivor left to him, and they possessed his land.*

*Notes on Translation of Neofiti Numbers 21*

*Abbreviations used:* HT, Hebrew Text; LAB, *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*; MT, Massoretic Text; Nf, Neofiti; Nfmg, marginal gloss on Neofiti; Onq, Onqelos; Pal. Targ (or, Tg), Palestinian Targum; PVN, the Paris, Vatican or Nürnberg manuscripts of the Fragment Targums.

21:1 "(heard) that Aaron...had been removed"; the midrash is artificially inserted into the translation and breaks the syntax; the end of the translation ("that Israel...") takes up naturally after the insertion. The inserted midrash is on the connection of the clouds of glory with Aaron and of the well with Miriam. The tradition linking the well with Miriam and the cloud with Aaron (and the manna with Moses), and the cessation of each with the death of the person in question, is very old, already clearly stated in LAB 20, 8 (1st cent. CE?). See text in introduction (I,4) above.

21:1 "for whose merits"; *d-bzkwt...*; the Aramaic term can be understood as "for whose sake", or "for whose merit". Sometimes the Aramaic is to be rendered simply as "because of". However, when there is reference to the patriarchs, or the mothers of Israel, it is probably to be rendered as "for whose merits".

21:1 "had been removed"; *'stlq(t)*; lit. "had been taken up". Here it means: "had departed"; "had died".

21:1 "through which the spies had come up"; HT: "(the way of) Atharim". (*drk h-trym*). a place name of unknown meaning. All the Targums (Onq., Ps.-J.; Nf, VN, Nfmg) understand the Hebrew as derived from *twr*, "to seek out, spy out, explore"; likewise the Syriac and Vg (*per exploratorum viam*).

- 21:3 "voice of Israel in prayer". The explicit mention of divine response is in keeping with Nf's style of translation.
- 21:5 "against the Memra of the Lord..... Moses"; HT: "against God and against Moses".
- 21:5 "(our soul) is distressed"; HT:"loathes" (*qsh*). Nf here, as in the other occurrences (Gen 27:46; Ex 1:12; Lev 20:22; Num 21:5; 22:3) translates HT *qwš* ("loath") through the verb 'wq "to be distressed".
- 21:6 On the *bath Qol*, or "heavenly voice", for the tradition on the serpent, a study of this midrash, and its bearing on the NT see *Maneschg*, *Erzählung*, note 22. A thorough examination of the manna tradition has been made by *B.J. Malina*, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition. The Manna Tradition in the Palestinian Targums and its Relationship to the New Testament* (AGSU, 7), Leiden 1968: pp. 42-93 for "The Manna Tradition in the Palestinian Targums"; pp. 67-70 for Pal. Tg. Num 21:5-6. As regard v. 6, he notes (p. 68) that the (manna) haggada there seems to be proper to the Pal. Targ. tradition. Its date would have to be that of the origin of these Targums, since there is no datable rabbinic tradition, to our knowledge that might serve as a parallel. For a detailed literary and textual study of the midrash in Nf, Num 21:6, see *B.B. Levy*, *Targum Neophyti 1, II*, 107-111 (see note 25 above). He considers the opening four lines as rhymed, parallel stichs. The point of the midrash is that the snake of Gen 3 will dominate the ungrateful people. God cursed the serpent of Gen 3 but blessed his people through the gift of the Exodus, the manna, the well and the quails. But while the serpent did not complain about dust being given it as its food, the people complain about the manna. Hence, the serpent will rule over the people. The midrash makes clear reference to other biblical texts: Gen 3:14 (HT: "and dust shall you eat") which it gives as paraphrased in Nf (and the Pal Tg. except in Ps.-J. which is influenced by Onq.); Num 11:26; Ex 16; 17:1ff. There is a clear connection between the paraphrase of Gen 3:14 ("dust shall be your food") here and Nf Gen 3:14, whether by direct dependence of one on the other, or dependence of both on a common translation is less certain. The rendering of Gen 3:14 apart, significant linguistic differences have been noted between the bulk of this midrash, and Nf's usual style. This may indicate that the midrash originated outside of the Neofiti tradition; see *Levy*, *Targum Neophyti 1, II*, 111. The gifts of food through manna, water and quails are also linked together in Ex 16-17; Ps 78:20ff and Ps 105:40-41. "Its voice was heard

on high" seems to echo Jer 31:15. While the midrash is on the serpent (of Gen 3:14) ruling over Israel, it is linked with the central idea of Num 21:6, and it serves as an introduction to the narrative of the fiery serpents, even though these are not said to be "descendants" of, or related to, the serpent of the Genesis narrative.

21:7 "murmured"; HT: "spoken".

21:8 "a bronze serpent"; HT: "a seraph".

21:9 "on an elevated place"; HT: *ʿlhns*; RSV: "on a pole"; Nf renders *ns* in Ex 17:14 as *ns* ("sign, miracles", and in Num 26:10 as *nswyn*, "a trial"; "a test".

21:11 "valley of the Hebrews"; MT: *ʿlye ha-ʿAbarim*; cf Num 27:12; 33:44; Deut 32:49.

21:14 The HT (RSV) has: "wherefore it is written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: 'Waheb in Shaphah, and the valleys of the Arnon, (13) and the slope of the valleys that extends to the seat of Ar, and leans to the borders of Moab.'"

21:14-15 Apart from the introductory words, these verses in the Hebrew text are particularly difficult. None the less, from the central unity in the Targumic renderings (Onqelos; Pal. Targs, Ps.-Jonathan) it appears that a targumic exegesis of the verses come into being very early. Verse 14 is rendered in the RSV: "Wherefore it is written in the Book of the Wars of the Lord: "Waheb in Shaphah (*ʿt whb bswph*) and the valleys of the Arnon" (*wʿt hnhlym ʿrnwn*). For a study of Nf text, see *Levy*, Targum Neophyti 1, II, 112-115. In 21:14 we are moving more deeply into a feature of the Pal. Targ. treatment of Num 21, which is that the paraphrase is a free development of a deep understanding of the text and instead of being translated the underlying HT is woven into free-flowing midrash. "Written and explained", *ktyb wm prš*, or "explicitly written" (*M. Sokoloff*, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period, Ramat-Gan 1990, 51, taking the last word as coming from *prs* 4, "to specify"). In Nf the paraphrase occurs generally to introduce a scripture citation: Nf Ex 28:17; Lev 22:27. Dt 27:8. (a related formula is: *dkn ktbh mprš wʿmr*, "for scripture specifically says", Frag Tg 35:9). "The Book" of the HT is identified in Nf (and Pal Targ) as "the Book of the Law of the Lord". The HT *spr mlhmt yyy* is generally taken by scholars today as one phrase: the book of the Wars of the Lord. The Targumic traditions seem to have taken "book" as in the absolute case,

and the "wars of the Lord" as the Book's content; cf. Onq.: "the Book concerning the Wars"; for the Pal. Targs. (Nf, Frag. Tg.) these wars are the wonders of "Suph" and "Arnon", Suph being understood as "the Sea of Suph", i.e. of Reeds, and Arnon as the River Arnon. Thus also Onq. and Vg. The Pal. Targ. tradition (Nf, P, V) and also Onqelos, omit *'t whb* of the HT.

21:15 In v. 15 we move more deeply still into the characteristic texture of Nf (Pal Tg) Num 21, with the underlying HT scarcely recognisable in the paraphrase. At first sight, the Targum in v. 15 would seem to have little connection with the Hebrew text. The contact with the Hebrew is probably to be found towards the end: "and the torrents overflowed with their blood". Behind this probably lies HT *w'sd nhl̄ym*, rendered in the RSV as "and the slope of the valleys". The HT word *'šd* is understood through the Aramaic root *'šd*, "pour out" (cf. Nfmg Dt 24:6; *'šdwt*, shedding [innocent blood]) and rendered *stp*: "the wadis were awash with their blood" (*Sokoloff*, Dictionary, 545). Onq. understood the HT in the same manner: "and the flowing (*spwk*) of the streams", but not in the sense of shedding blood, as Nf (and the Pal Tg) does. Ar of the HT (*n̄th lšbt 'r*; RSV: "that extends to the seat of Ar"), is taken to be Ar Moab, a natural understanding in this context. Ar Moab of Dt 2:9, 29, and Aroer of Dt 2:36; 4:48 are rendered in Nf (and the Pal. Tg) as Lehayyath (*lhyt, lhyyt*) Moab, as is Ar of Num 21:15, 28. It is also so rendered in Onq. Num 21:28 and as Lehayyath in Onq. Num 21:15. Lehayyath seems to be a place name. Its root meaning is uncertain. *M. Jastrow*, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature, New York 1950, s.v. pp. 702f gives as meaning, "palisades, in general fortresses", instancing Tg. Esth. 9:27. (Likewise *B.B. Levy*, Chald. Wörterbuch über die Targumim, 1881, p. 408.) The word is not registered in *Sokoloff*, Dictionary. The HT *wnš' n lgbwl m'b* RSV: "and extends to the borders of Moab" is rendered "and behold it is near the boundaries of the Moabites". In keeping with this basic paraphrase of the verse, Nf (and the others Pal. Tg. texts) insert a midrash on miracles believed to be worked for the Israelites when crossing the Arnon, a tradition found in other Jewish (and also in Christian) texts. See also Num 21:24, 26, 28, 36; Dt. 2.

21:16-20 This is a midrash on the well that was believed to have followed the Israelites during the desert wanderings. It is inserted into the present context and developed especially through the interpretation of place names as common names, beginning with the place-name Beer (meaning "well") in v. 16.

While the greater part of vv. 16-17 is translated, very little of the original of vv. 18, 19, 20a remains unchanged. In this v. 19 in particular represents a further stage in the transformation of the original Hebrew in the interests of midrash, already in evidence in earlier verses. The Pal. Targ. paraphrase is for the greater part found also in Onqelos, in Pseudo-Philo, LAB (see text in introduction above), and the Tosephta, all evidence of the early date of its composition.

21:16 V. 16 in the HT reads: "And from there to Beer"; a Hebrew word meaning well. Onq. (and Ps.-Jon.) understand as Nf and the Pal Tg.: "At that time the well was given to them". See *G. Vermes*, Haggadah in the Onkelos Targum, in: *JJS* 8 (1963) 159-169, reproduced in *G. Vermes*, Post-Biblical Jewish Studies (StJLA), Leiden 1975, 127-138.

21:17 "song of praise", Nf's usual translation of *šyr(h)* of the HT; also in Nf Ex 15:1; Dt 31:19, 22, 32, 34. (*šbh šyrth*, "praise of (this) song"). There is a different rendering, however, in Nf Dt 21:30.

21:17 "and it sprung up"; an addition in Nf.

21:18 The HT (RSV) has: "The well which the princes, which the nobles of the people derived, with the sceptre (*bmḥqq*; MT *bimḥoqeq*) and with their staves. And from the wilderness they (they went on to) Mattanah". In the Pal. Targ. midrash the princes of the HT are understood as the patriarchs and the nobles as the sages. HT *mehoqeq* is taken as deriving from *ḥq* "statute", and rendered as "scribe"; so also in the other two occurrences of the word, in Gen 49:10 and Dt 33:21. Onqelos is similar, Num 21:18: "the leaders of the people dug, the scribes with their staffs". There is a similar interpretation in the Damascus Document (CD V 1,7): "the Mehoqeq is the interpreter of the Torah"; see *Vermes*, Scripture, 45-55.

21:18b-19: "And from the wilderness it was given to them (as) a gift..." The HT has a series of place names: "And from the wilderness (to) Mattanah. And from Mattanah to Nahaliel and from Nahaliel to Bamoth". As already noted in the introduction, the paraphrase of the place names of Num 21:18b-19 in the light of the well midrash is found already in LAB (10:7) "for forty years he brought forth a well of water to follow them"; 11,15. "And it followed them in the wilderness forty years and went up to the mountain with them and went down into the plains". So also Onq. Num 21:19: "Now since it was given to them, it went down with them to the valleys, and from the valleys it

went up with them to the high country". The paraphrase of Num 21:19 is also found in Tosefta, *Sukka* 3,11: "travelling with them up the mountains and going down with them to the valleys", going on to cite Num 21:18 in Hebrew. On 21:19-20 see also *Levy*, Targum Neophyti 1, II, 117f.

21:20 The HT (RSV) has: "And from Bamoth to the valley lying in the region of Moab by the top of Pisqah which looks down upon the desert" (*ha-yešimon*). The paraphrase in Nf (and Pal. Tg.), continues the description of the well of v. 19 and again treats the biblical narrative rather freely, in the overall interest of the midrash which is to give a rather full account of the well and insert it here by reason of the occurrence of the name Beer in 21:17. In one tradition the well ("Miriam's well") ceased to come up at the death of Miriam which occurred at Kadesh (i.e. Reqem; i.e. Petra) (Num 20:1), while here its disappearance is said to have been at the boundaries of the Moabites.

21:22 "of the cisterns", *gwbyn* as in 20:17; HT: "from a well".

21:24 "boundaries", *thwmyhwn* (instead of *thwmhwn*), plur.; HT sing. This is one of the many instances in Nf in which the *yod* is probably intended to indicate a vocalic shewa. An *aleph* is used for the same purpose in Nf Gen 26:1.

21:25 "villages"; HT, lit: "daughters"

21:26 "king of the Moabites", *mlkyhwn d* or lit. "kings (of the Moabites, *mlkyhwn dmw'byy*). As in 21:24 (see note) the *yod* merely denotes a vocalic shewa.

21:27 *mtlyyh*, also in VN; HT: *mšlym* (RSV, "ballad singers").

21:28 "a people of heroes...like fire; fighting men... like flame". "fire" and "flame" of the HT are taken as symbols for warriors.

21:28 "blotted out Lehawwath"; HT: "it devoured Ar of Moab", As in 21:15, in PVN and Nfmg, we should probably read "Lehayyath". See note to 21:15.

21:28 "slain the priests...bamoth", HT: "the lords of the heights of the Arnon", the "heights", *bamoth*, being understood in the cultic high places, and the "lords" their priests.

21:29 "chained in neck-irons", *qwtry*; a Greek or Latin loan word (*kollarion*, *collare*); HT: "he has made his sons fugitives". There is a similar understanding in Onq.

- 21:29 "king of..," *mlkyhwn d'mwryy*. Here again the yod is intended to indicate a vocal shewa; see 21:24
- 21:30 "the kingdom has ceased" etc. In the HT verse 30 (*wnyrm 'bd hsbwn 'd dybwn wnssym 'd nph 'sr 'd-mydb'*) has a number of obscurities, and has been variously understood and rendered. Nf takes *nyrm* (? "we have shot at them") as deriving from *nyr*, in Aramaic, "a yoke", but apparently as a symbol of royalty. It joins *hsbwn* ("Heshbon") with this and gives its translation a poetic symmetry. Onq. understands here as Nf; "royalty has ceased at Heshbon". Nf inserts *wsltwn*, "dominion", for poetic balance, (*mlkw* and *sltwn*, *mlk wshyt* often occurring as a pair in Nf. See Levy, Targum Neophyti 1, II, 119f. In general Onqelos for this verse is in the same interpretative tradition, but keeps closer to the underlying HT.
- 21:30 Nf understands *w-nssym* (RSV, margin, "we have laid waste"), as derived from *šmm*, "to lay waste", and expands by inserting as subject "its highways". Onqelos understands in a similar manner: "and desolation was laid".
- 21:31 "The Fortress of Nephahayya"; MT: "Nophah". The names occur only here in the HT and Targums. Possibly Nf is a mere transformation of the HT name, and is not intended as an actual identification. Onq. has: "Nophah".
- 21:33 *Butnim*; (written *btyn*, and *bwtyn*): HT: Bashan; in Nf Num 32:33 *mwt-nyn*. This is the regular rendering of Bashan in Nf (apart from Num 32:33 which has *mwtyn*) is *bwtyn* (Num 21:33 Dt 1:4; 3:3, 4, 10, 11, 13, 14 11:43, 29:6 or *bwtynyn* Num 34:15; Dt 3:1; 4:47; 33:2; *bny btyny* in Dt 32:14). It is rendered *Batnin* in the Samaritan Targum; as *Matnan* in Onqelos, and as *Matnin* in the Syriac. See note on Onqelos Num 21:31 in *B. Grossfeld*, The Aramaic Bible, 129, with reference to *D. Raphael*, Beth Miqra 96 (1983) 73 (in Hebrew). See also *McNamara*, Targum, 192.