

THE DATE, PROVENANCE, AND SITZ IM LEBEN OF TARGUM LAMENTATIONS

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When considering the origins of a targumic text, Ezekiel's vision of wheels within wheels is likely to be called to mind. Many of the issues relating to the date of a targum are of equal importance in considering its provenance, and these issues inform our views as to the *Sitz im Leben* of a targumic text. The date and provenance of a targumic text are, in turn, related to the recensional history of the text and its language. These difficulties are magnified in Targum Lamentations (Targ. Lam.) which has two clear textual traditions. I will therefore begin by examining the textual tradition of Targ. Lam. and identify which MS will form the basis of this study. I will then examine the language of Targ. Lam. with specific reference to date and provenance. From there I will focus upon the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of Targ. Lam.¹

Textual Tradition

The textual tradition of Targ. Lam. is a complex one and I shall merely outline the current state of affairs and present justification for assuming the primacy of the chosen text.² Targ. Lam. is attested in two distinct textual traditions, the western text (WT) and the Yemenite

¹It is important to remember that Targ. Lam. underwent many changes over the centuries (see Albert Van der Heide, *The Yemenite Tradition of the Targum of Lamentations* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981], pp. 11-14). The goal of this study is to determine, as far as possible, the *origins* of Targ. Lam. We will therefore focus on the earliest texts and traditions relating to Targ. Lam.

²For a more detailed study of the recensional history of Targ. Lam. see P.S. Alexander, 'The Textual Tradition of Targum Lamentations', *Abr-Nahrain* 24 (1986), pp. 1-26; and Van der Heide's exhaustive study of the Yemenite tradition of Targ. Lam., especially pp. 23-36.

text (YT),³ which are identified by their provenance rather than by linguistic characteristics. WT exists in European and North African MSS such as the beautiful Codex Urbanates Ebr. 1 (Urb. 1), which was copied in 1294 CE by Yitzak ben Shimeon ha-Levi.⁴ To my knowledge, this is the earliest MS of Targ. Lam. regardless of textual tradition. To date, the best printed edition representing WT is the *editio princeps* of Targ. Lam. in the Rabbinic Bible, prepared by Felix Pratensis and printed in 1517 by Daniel Bomberg and reprinted without Tiberian pointing (and other minor alterations) by Lagarde in 1872.⁵ The MSS which lie behind this text are not known. YT is attested by a number of MSS from Yemen. These have been studied and collated into a critical edition by Van der Heide and differ in many ways from WT. It is currently maintained by the majority of scholars that WT represents the older text.

Alexander and Van der Heide both provide a comparison of the textual traditions of WT and YT. Alexander examined 1.1-3 in great detail, demonstrating that YT presents a truncated form of WT. For example, in YT 1.1 begins as follows:⁶

איכדין על ירושלם ועל עמה לאיתדנא בתירוכין ולמספד עליהון איכה הוה כמא
דאתדנו אדם וחיה דאתרכו מנינתא דעדן ואספד עליהון קדשא בריך הוא איכה...

Alexander points out that in YT 'we run straight into a grammatical problem: Where is the verb in the איכדין clause?'⁷ The most likely candidate is הוה at the end of the clause, but this is awkward and is likely to be a corruption of WT's היכמה. 'היכמה must be the original here, and the Yem. readings corruptions of it. Perhaps הוה כמא was deliberately read by a scribe desperately searching for a verb.'⁸

In WT the clause is governed by the verb ארתור:

³When quoting other scholars I will follow their method of abbreviation. The texts referred to will be self-evident.

⁴See the facsimile introduced and translated by Étan Levine, *The Targum of the Five Megillot: Codex Vatican Urbanati I* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1977).

⁵The only modern editions of Targ. Lam. are Étan Levine, *The Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (New York: Hermon Press, 1981), based upon Urb. 1; A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic. IV.A. The Hagiographa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), which is based upon YT of British Library Or. 2375 with additions from the WT (but 'no attempt has been made in this volume to offer the texts published here in a critical edition', p. viii); and Van der Heide, based upon British Library Or. 1476.

⁶Following Van der Heide's text.

⁷Alexander, 'Textual Tradition', p.13.

⁸Alexander, 'Textual Tradition', p.13.

אמר ירמיהו נבייא וכהנא רבא איכרין אתנור על ירושלם ועל עממא לאתדנא
 בתירוכין ולמספד עליהון איכה היכמה דאתדני אדם וחיה דאיתרכו מגינתא דערן
 ואספיד מרי עלמא עליהון איכה...

The impression given is that YT has merely shortened WT, removing the reference to Jeremiah and the governing verb with it. Alexander then examines vv. 2 and 3 of ch. 1 with similar results. He concludes,

there can be no doubt, however, that if we are concerned with the aggadic content of the Targum, then our starting-point must be the western recension. Of the two recensions of Targ. Lam., West. is the older and Yem. the younger, in that West. takes us further back into the tradition.⁹

In a similar treatment Van der Heide summarizes a comparison of the two traditions of the entire targum. Breaking his study into four sections, Van der Heide examines the one-word variants, instances where WT is substantially longer than YT, occurrences of texts which are shorter in WT, and the way in which the two traditions are mutually related.¹⁰ The translation technique of YT is to provide a simpler text, which is often closer to that of MT. WT, on the other hand, often uses a variety of terms that would have required a greater knowledge of Aramaic from the reader. For example, in 1.3, MT has מצרים and WT has תחומיא, but YT has the etymologically related מצרינא.¹¹ In the many instances where WT is longer than YT it is due to aggadic additions by WT and a more literal rendering by YT.¹²

Van der Heide also takes note of several instances where YT is a shorter, but not necessarily better, text. For example, in 2.4, where WT introduces Nebuchadnezzar as God's agent of retribution (אתעחד על יד 'ימינה דנבוכד נצר וסייעיה כאילו הוה מעיק לעממיה בית ישראל), YT removes the reference to Nebuchadnezzar. In so doing YT has difficulties with the verb אתעחד ('to take position, stand ready') and so the majority of the YT MSS use the Af. form: אעחד יד 'ימינה כמעיק', 'He positioned his right hand as an oppressor'. This is not a very satisfactory reading and is again best viewed as a simplification of WT.¹³ There are also verses that are omitted by YT MSS.¹⁴ The instances where YT is longer than

⁹Alexander, 'Textual Tradition', p. 10.

¹⁰Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 23-36.

¹¹For a full list of one-word variants see Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 27-28.

¹²Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, p. 29-30.

¹³Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 30-32.

¹⁴Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, p. 77. 'A striking phenomenon is the omission of complete verses: 4.17 is omitted by all our manuscripts (but extant in all

WT are few and insignificant with the exception of 1.9 where WT fails to represent MT אֶת־עֲנִי.¹⁵ Van der Heide concludes that while the two traditions share many readings, 'Yem offers a text which in textual respect [sic] is less interesting than WT'. Furthermore, 'the text of Yem is in all probability a text revised on the basis of WT (or some version very similar to WT) with the aim of achieving a closer resemblance to MT'.¹⁶

Thus both Alexander and Van der Heide have come to the same conclusion: WT is to be preferred as the older text and the most interesting from an exegetical perspective. Since this study is concerned with the original context of Targ. Lam. I will use the WT since it is universally recognized as the oldest witness. Furthermore, my discussion of the language of Targ. Lam. will focus on WT as found in the oldest extant MSS, Urb. 1.¹⁷

The Language of Targum Lamentations

In this brief study of the language of Targ. Lam., the grammar and vocabulary of the text will be analyzed to see what they reveal about its origins, both historically and geographically. The debate concerning the relationship between the language of a targum and its date and provenance continues to rage within scholarship. The arguments have primarily centered upon the major targumim. While a summary of all the various positions maintained in these debates is beyond the scope of this work,¹⁸ it is important to note that the targumim to the Hagiographa are rarely given more than a cursory comment. Black, in summarizing the views held by the 'Kahle school of targumic and Aramaic studies' states merely that, 'what held for Onkelos [Targ. Onq.] was also true of the so-called Targum of Jonathan [Targ. Jon.] to the Prophets or the Targum to the Hagiographa'.¹⁹ York points out that

the representatives of WT known to me).² Other verses omitted by various MSS are 3.5, 3.53, 3.61 and 4.7.

¹⁵Our chosen manuscript, Urb. 1, does have an additional omission at the end of 1.3, but this error is not found in other western MSS.

¹⁶Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, p. 35.

¹⁷For detailed analysis of the language of YT of Targ. Lam. see Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 73ff.

¹⁸Smelik's first chapter of *The Targum of Judges* (OTS, 36; Leiden: Brill, 1995; pp. 1-23) provides an excellent survey of the current state of affairs with particular reference to Targ. Jon. See also Uwe Glessmer, *Einleitung in die Targume zum Pentateuch*, (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995).

¹⁹'Aramaic Studies and the Language of Jesus', in M. Black and G. Fohrer (eds.), *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1968), p.18.

in publication Kahle himself had merely stated, 'Von den uns bekannten Targumen scheinen nur diese zwei [Targ. Onq. and Targ. Jon.] in Babylonien gebraucht worden zu sein'.²⁰ Thus, in terms of general linguistic studies of targumic literature, although not completely ignored, the targumim to the Hagiographa have been marginalized.

There is good reason for excluding these texts from the usual linguistic surveys. For while it is clear that even the monolithic works such as Targ. Onq., Targ. Jon. and Targ. Neof. are linguistically diverse and contain many hands, each targum within the Megillot is equally unique and presents its own peculiarities and difficulties. As we have seen, Targ. Lam. has an extremely diverse textual testimony and the two versions of Targ. Esth. are well known.²¹ It is therefore appropriate to deal with each targum on its own terms and then to place it within the larger picture of Aramaic linguistic studies.

Although the debate formerly characterized by the views of Dalman and Kahle continues in more nuanced forms, most scholars now agree that the so-called Babylonian targumim, Targ. Onq. and Targ. Jon., originated in Palestine and were later brought to Babylon where they then underwent further redaction.²² The mixed form of Aramaic characteristic of these texts is thus explained as a substratum of Palestinian Aramaic that has been reworked and brought into line with the Babylonian dialect. It would be very convenient if the language of Targ. Lam. fit neatly into the category of either Eastern or Western Aramaic so that we might avoid the difficulties that we find in attempting to define the language of Targ. Onq. and Targ. Jon. Unfortunately this is not the case.

²⁰P. Kahle, 'Das palästinische Pentateuchtargum und das zur Zeit Jesu gesprochene Aramäisch', *ZNW* 49 (1958), p. 100. See A. York, 'The Dating of Targumic Literature', *JSJ* 5 (1975), p. 50. In Kahle's Third Schweich Lecture he begins by stating, 'if we speak of Targums, we think in the first instance of Targum Onkelos to the Tora and of Targum Jonathan to the prophets. These are the two official Jewish Targums, and there is no doubt that they were composed in Babylonia' (P. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, The Schweich lectures of the British Academy, 1941, [London: OUP, 1947], p. 117).

²¹See Bernard Grossfeld, *The Two Targums of Esther* (The Aramaic Bible, 18; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991).

²²E. Kutscher, 'The Language of the Genesis Apocryphon', *ScriHie* 4 (1958), pp. 1-35. See also Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, pp. 14-17, and P.S. Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures', in S. Safrai *et al.* (eds.), *Mikra: Text Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum; Section 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), pp. 42-44.

The language is clearly of a mixed type. For example, Targ. Lam. uses the third person masculine suffixes הוּם and הוּן interchangeably. Similarly, *הוּא occurs 19 times in Targ. Lam. while *הוּמא occurs only four times. Van der Heide interprets this as a western contamination, but this conclusion is impossible to substantiate.²³ Although this is a very small sampling, it is enough to demonstrate that the language of Targ. Lam. is ambiguous, offering no conclusive proof of either western or eastern origin.

The use of loanwords in Targ. Lam. is slightly more illuminating. Greek loanwords include ὄχλος (1.1 and 4.21), ἐπαρχία (1.1), χαρακωμα (1.19), πέταλον (4.1), and πλατεία (4.18). There is also the Arabic loanword *kharij* (כרנא, 1.1) and the Latin *lectica* (גלגדקא, 2.1).²⁴ There is also the occurrence of the place-names ארמיניא and אשיליא (4.21-22). The presence of Greek and Latin loanwords suggests a western origin of the targum. The term אוכלוסין, which occurs twice (1.1 and 4.21), occurs eight times in the Palestinian Talmud,²⁵ but never in the Babylonian Talmud. It also occurs four times in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Targ. Ps.-J.)²⁶ and yet it appears that it is completely absent from Targ. Onq. and Targ. Jon.²⁷ It does appear, however, in several of the targumim to the Ketuvim. The term occurs four times in the Targ. Psalms, four times in Targ. Job, and, with a zayin for samekh, it occurs three times in Targ. 1 Chron.²⁸ Furthermore, in the first instance (1.1) the term is followed immediately by the phrase ועממין כניאין, which could be construed as an Aramaic translation of the Greek loanword, suggesting that this portion of the text originated in the West and was then 'translated' into an eastern dialect. It should be noted, however, that there is no such 'translation' provided for אוכלוסין in 4.21 nor for אפרכיא in 1.1. On the other hand, the term כרנא (1.1) is found only in Babylonian Aramaic and does not appear to be present in any

²³Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, p. 97.

²⁴M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Pardes Publishing House, 1950 [reprint]), p. 246a.

²⁵y. Ber. 63a and 63b; Dem. 17b (two occurrences); San. 52b; Mak. 6b; and Hor. 7a (two occurrences).

²⁶Exod. 34.10; Num. 21.6, 34; and 24.24.

²⁷I have executed a wildcard search of the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, and Targ. Onq. with the CD-ROM *The Judaic Classics: Deluxe Edition* (Chicago: Davka, 1995). This collection does not include Targ. Jon., however, and my manual search may not have been exhaustive.

²⁸Targ. Psalms 48.14, 89.7, 113.9, and 144.7; Targ. Job 1.16, 17, 19.12, and 25.3; and Targ. 1 Chron. 11.6, 20.1, and 12.22. I am grateful to W.F. Smelik for making me aware of these references.

Palestinian Rabbinic sources.²⁹ This might suggest if not an eastern origin, then at least an eastern redaction. This is further supported by the fact that the final clause of 1.1 (ולמתן לה כרנא בחר דנא) is not found in any of YT's MSS, suggesting that it was a later addition.³⁰

A study of the language of Targ. Lam. (Urb. 1) reveals an Aramaic of mixed type, exhibiting characteristics normally associated with both western and eastern Aramaic. Similarly, the presence of both Greek and Arabic loanwords contributes little to determining the linguistic origin of Targ. Lam. The way in which these loanwords are used may, however, suggest that our targum originated in a region where western Aramaic was the norm and was later redacted under the linguistic influence of eastern Aramaic. Unfortunately the orthographic and grammatical variants between WT and YT MSS (and even within the two textual traditions) are significant. The confused nature of the textual tradition of Targ. Lam. makes it impossible to argue with any certainty based upon the linguistic evidence.³¹

Sitz im Leben

Within the last twenty years the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of the targumim has been re-opened by scholars such as Anthony York, Rimon Kasher, Philip Alexander and Willem Smelik.³² Most recently, Alexander has argued that 'the original *Sitz im Leben* of the Targum was the *Bet Sefer*, and that it was only subsequently taken over from

²⁹See Alexander, 'The Textual Tradition', pp. 1-2.

³⁰We might also note the reference to the 'Parkevi', Constantinople and Armenia in 4.21; see below. A counter argument to this would be the fact that YT MSS are most closely related to the Babylonian traditions, see Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 37ff.

³¹These variants also indicate that the text was open to correction and suggests that Targ. Lam. did not hold a particularly authoritative position. For a complete discussion of the variants found in YT see Van der Heide, *Yemenite Tradition*, pp. 73-181.

³²Anthony D. York, 'The Targum in the Synagogue and in the Bet Midrash', *JSJ* 10 (1979), pp. 74-86; Rimon Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim and their *Sitz im Leben*', in M.H. Goshen-Gottstein (ed.), *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem 1985). Panel session: Bible Studies and Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), pp. 75-85; P.S. Alexander, 'The Targumim and the Rabbinic Rules for the Delivery of the Targum', in J.A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume Salamanca 1983* (VT.S, 36; Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 14-28; Smelik, *The Targum of Judges*, pp. 24-41, 180-88, 634-38 and 656. See S. Safrai, 'Education and the Study of Torah', and 'The Synagogue', both in S. Safrai and M. Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century* (CRINT, 1/2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), pp. 945-70.

there as part of the reading of Torah in synagogue'.³³ Scholars agree that there were three main contexts within which the targumim were used: (1) the synagogue (y. Meg. 74d, b. Meg. 23a-b, and y. Meg. 75a); (2) private devotion (b. Ber. 8a); and (3) within the Bet Sefer (Sifre Deut. 17.19; ARN, B Text, 12; b. Kidd. 49a). Determining the *Sitz im Leben* of a specific targum, however, is more difficult.

In determining the *Sitz im Leben* of Targ. Lam. there are two sources of evidence that must be considered: (1) rabbinic statements regarding the use of the Book of Lamentations and its targum and (2) the targum itself. With regards to the rabbinic sources, it is important to remember that they come from a variety of historical and geographical (not to mention ideological) perspectives and they must therefore be treated with caution when attempting to use them as historical sources. Although it is also important to remember that the rabbinic sources are often prescriptive rather than descriptive, in this specific instance it is likely to be the other way around. As we shall see, the rabbinic sources are more often describing current practices than prescribing an ideal method of commemorating the ninth of Ab, the day the Temple was destroyed.

Rabbinic Sources

If we want to determine when a targum came into use we must also ask when the biblical book upon which it is based was employed in synagogal worship and study. The first question regarding the Book of Lamentations and its use in the synagogue is when was its reading institutionalized as part of the service? Considering the subject matter of the Book of Lamentations it is reasonable to assume that it would have entered into the liturgy as part of a service that commemorated the destruction of the Temple. But did Jews commemorate the destruction of the First Temple before the Second Temple was destroyed or only after? Once we have established this date, we must determine how it was used in the service. Sources external to Targ. Lam. provide our primary evidence for answering these questions.

We can begin our investigation in the Bible. Zech. 7.2-3 refers to a period of mourning during the fifth month.

Now the people of Bethel had sent Sarezzer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to ask the priests of the house

³³'How did the Rabbis Learn Hebrew?', presented to the BAJIS Annual Conference, Cambridge, 9 July, 1996. Soon to be published. For an earlier stage of Alexander's argument see 'The Targumim', p. 23. See also Smelik, *The Targum of Judges* (above, n. 32).

of the Lord of hosts and the prophets, 'Should I mourn and practice abstinence in the fifth month [Ab], as I have done for so many years?'

The word of the Lord comes to Zechariah and he responds saying that it is righteousness and mercy that the Lord wants and not mourning and abstinence, which are self-gratifying. So it seems that a time of mourning for the destruction of the First Temple *was* kept during the period of the Second Temple, but it was not universally observed; moreover this passage does not provide us with any information regarding the manner in which the ninth of Ab was commemorated.

The Mishnah is surprisingly silent as regards the actual liturgy for the ninth of Ab. m. Ta'an. 2.10 describes the manner of fasting to be observed and m. Ta'an. 4.6-7 lists the five things that occurred on the ninth of Ab,³⁴ but it is not until several centuries later with the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud that we find an explicit statement concerning the liturgy of the ninth of Ab:

It is also forbidden [on the ninth of Ab] to read the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa (בכתובים) or to study Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Halachot, or Aggadot; he may, however, read such parts of Scripture which he does not usually read and study such parts of Mishnah which he usually does not study; and he may also read Lamentations (בקינות), Job and the sad parts of Jeremiah; and the school children are free from school for it is said, *The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart* (Ps. 19.9). R. Judah said: Even such parts of Scripture which he does not usually read he may not read, nor study parts of Mishnah which he does not usually study, but he may read Job, Lamentations and the sad parts of Jeremiah; and the Bet Midrash children are free, *The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart*.³⁵

Note the lack of form and authority with which these statements are being made. The injunctions against reading certain passages are quite clear, but there is no effort to prescribe precisely what should be read. Instead the devout student *may* read any passages of Job, Lamentations, or 'the sad parts of Jeremiah'. We know from other sources and contemporary practice that these texts are not, in fact, part of the

³⁴On the 9th of Ab it was decreed against our fathers that they should not enter into the Land [of Israel], and the Temple was destroyed the first and the second time, and Beth-Tor was captured and the City was ploughed up. When Ab comes in, gladness must be diminished.' Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 200. All translations of the Mishnah are from Danby unless otherwise noted.

³⁵b. Ta'an. 30a. All quotes from the Talmud are from the Soncino Edition *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1938), unless otherwise indicated.

normal lectionary cycle and so fulfill the injunction to read only those passages which are not usually studied.

The only other discussion within Ta'an. concerning the form of the liturgy to be used on the ninth of Ab is found in b. Ta'an. 29b.

Should [the ninth of Ab] fall on a Monday or on a Thursday three people read the Law, and one also reads the prophetic lesson. R. Jose says: Invariably three persons read the Law and the last one of these also reads the prophetic lesson.

There is no mention of what those lessons are to be, nor is there any mention of Lamentations. The primary focus of b. Ta'an. with regard to the ninth of Ab is how one should observe the fast.

In b. Meg. 31b we find a more formal liturgy listed, but one that still appears to be in flux.

On the ninth of Ab itself what is the haftarah? Rab said: *How is she become a harlot* (Isa. 1.21) What is the section taken from the Torah? It has been taught: Others say, *But if ye will not hearken unto me* (Lev. 26.14ff). R. Nathan b Joseph says, *How long will this people despise me* (Num. 14.11) and some say, *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation* (Num 14.27). Abaye said: Nowadays the custom has been adopted of reading *When thou shalt beget children* (Deut. 4.25) and for haftarah, *I will utterly consume them* (Jer. 8.13).

Unlike b. Ta'an. there is no mention of Lamentations. Moreover, one would assume that the readings from the Torah mentioned here would have been part of the normal lectionary cycle and would therefore contradict the ruling of b. Ta'an. 30a. The intricacies of the relationship of these two talmudic passages is beyond the scope of this study, so it will suffice to note that, while the form of worship for the ninth of Ab is clearly evolving, by the closing of the Bavli there is still no official role for the Book of Lamentations or (we may assume) its targum. It is not until the compilation of Soferim that mention is made of the targum to Lamentations.

Soferim 42b states that 'On the ninth day of Ab [the reading consists] of four verses of Jeremiah *Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? to For thou hast made all these things* [14.19-22] and the following two psalms, *O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance* and *By the rivers of Babylon* [Pss. 79 and 137].' An earlier passage of Soferim states that the Torah reading for the ninth of Ab and 'the last seven days in connection with droughts . . . [is] the section of the blessings and

curses' [Lev. 26.3-46].³⁶ So like b. Meg. 31b, we find here the Torah and the Haftarah readings listed for commemorating the ninth of Ab, but the texts are different than those listed in b. Meg. and two additional readings from Psalms are prescribed by Soferim as well. Furthermore, Soferim describes how one is to read and translate the Book of Lamentations:

Some [congregations] read the Book of Lamentations in the evening while others postpone it to the [following] morning after the reading of Torah, when the reader stands, his head covered with ashes, his clothes torn, and reads it with weeping and lamentation. If he is able to translate it, well and good; but if he is unable he entrusts it to one who knows how to translate properly and [that person] does the translation, so that the rest of the people, the women and children may understand it; women being under the obligation to listen to the reading of the Book the same as men, and much more so male persons.³⁷

So here we have a description of a mournful service of commemoration which, in addition to fasting, involved the reading of Torah (Lev. 26.3-46), Haftarah (Jer. 14.19-22), Psalms (79 and 137) and the Book of Lamentations with its translation. There is still flexibility in how the congregations ordered their service and even in the readings assigned for the day, but we now find that Lamentations is assumed to be read and that its reading *must* include a translation.³⁸ Although the order of the service (including whether Lamentations is read on the evening of the ninth or on the morning of the tenth)³⁹ is allowed to vary, the reading of the Book of Lamentations is considered an obligation that must be met by both men and women.

Finally, there is the possibility that a targum of Lamentations would have been used in private study. The evidence for such individual use is difficult to discern,⁴⁰ but there are two possibilities to consider. In

³⁶Sof. 42a.

³⁷Sof. 42b. Note that the reader can also be the translator, contrary to normal practice (see y. Meg. 74d and b. Meg. 21b).

³⁸Rabbinic rules would dictate that this translation would be oral and not written (y. Meg. 74d), but we cannot rule out the possibility of a written targum developing at this time.

³⁹In Seder R. Amram Gaon 44a the Book of Lamentations is to be read in the evening. See Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, ed. Joseph Heinemann, et al. (New York: JPS, 1993), p. 107.

⁴⁰See b. Ber. 8a for a reference to the general practice of one reading the targum of the weekly lection before attending services. 'Rab Huna bar Judah said in the name of Rabbi Ammi: A man should always complete his *parashiyot* with the

y. Shab. 16.1 a story is told of Rabbi, R. Hiyya the Elder, and R. Ishmael b. R. Yose studying Lamentations prior to the ninth of Ab.⁴¹ No mention is made of the targum, but it is important to note that this passage is a (relatively) early attestation of the study of Lamentations before the ninth of Ab. It would not be unreasonable to think that a targum of Lamentations might have been part of their study. It has also been suggested that Targ. Lam. might have been used in the private devotion of the 'Mourners for Zion'.⁴² Little is known about this group, but the earliest reference to them in rabbinic texts occurs in Pes. R. 34.⁴³ They apparently maintained a state of mourning due to the destruction of the Temple and had very strong messianic beliefs. Pes. R. 34 speaks of how they suffered distress at the hands of other Jews for their devotion, but that ultimately they would be justified. 'Then at last [the Jews] will understand that it was because of the unending prayers of the Mourners for Zion that the Messiah will appear.'⁴⁴ Here again we have no direct evidence that states that they studied Targ. Lam. as part of their private devotions, but it would not be beyond reason to think that a group whose sole focus was the contemplation of the destruction of the Temple might have used a targum to the Book of Lamentations. If that were the case it is possible that Targ. Lam. was first used in the private liturgies of the 'Mourners for Zion' and then incorporated into the public liturgy of the synagogue. Unfortunately, the evidence for the use of Targ. Lam. in personal study is inconclusive and any such assertions must remain conjecture.

So what conclusions *can* we draw from the rabbinic sources? (1) The Talmud offers a varied picture of how the ninth of Ab was to be com-

congregation—twice in the Hebrew and once in the Targum.' See Alexander, 'The targumim', p. 22.

⁴¹y. Shab. 16.1 (according to Neusner's reference system in *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation*, II [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], p. 410). 'There was an incident in which Rabbi, R. Hiyya the Elder, and R. Ishmael b. R. Yose were in session and reviewing the scroll of Lamentations on the eve of the ninth of Ab which coincided with the sabbath, doing so from the time of the afternoon offering and onward. They omitted one alphabetical chapter, saying, "Tomorrow we will go and complete it".' The passage then goes on to describe an accident, attributed to their having left their study incomplete, and the quotation of Lam. 4.20 as justification for their 'punishment'.

⁴²By Alexander in private communication. I am grateful for his suggestion of this intriguing possibility. For a discussion of the Mourners for Zion, see J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine Under the Fatimid Caliphs*, I (London, 1920), pp. 47-48. The phrase 'Mourners for Zion' is based upon Isa. 61.3.

⁴³See also Midr. Ps. 137.6 and b. B. Bat. 60b.

⁴⁴Pes. R. 34.

memorated. Furthermore, the Talmud neither describes nor prescribes any definite use of Lamentations in commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem on the ninth of Ab. It is merely offered that 'Lamentations, Job, or the sad parts of Jeremiah' are appropriate readings for this day. There does not appear to have been any requirement concerning Lamentations by the time of the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud therefore little can be deduced concerning the role of the targum within the synagogal service prior to the sixth century. (2) Soferim presents a fluid, yet definable, service that required the reading of the Book of Lamentations and its targum. Whether or not the targum existed prior to the redaction of Soferim, we may be certain that it played a key role in the ninth of Ab service. And finally, (3) since the Talmud does not seem to be concerned or aware of any consistent use of the Book of Lamentations and its targum on the ninth of Ab and since Soferim presents a prescription of how Lamentations is to be read along with its translation, we may conjecture that the practice of reading the Book of Lamentations and its targum as part of the synagogal worship became institutionalized sometime between the closing of the Babylonian Talmud and the composition of Soferim, roughly the seventh century CE.

Targumic Testimony

The task of reading a targum in order to discover its *Sitz im Leben* is exceedingly difficult. First of all, we must bear in mind that we are dealing with a written text that developed over hundreds of years (the earliest MS of Targ. Lam. is only 700 years old) and presumably underwent many changes during this period. Secondly, when historical references are made it is often very difficult to use them for the purposes of dating the targum. In some cases, such as 4.21-22 where the enigmatic 'Parkevi' are referred to,⁴⁵ the references are cryptic in form. But in most instances, references to known historical figures or events, such as Titus and Vespasian in 1.19, are clearly additions to an earlier text that are intended to broaden the context for interpreting Lamentations. A specific methodology would be difficult to create since each text is unique, but the general approach required can be summarized in a single question: can particular features better be understood as appropriate for the synagogue or the school? If this question is asked of every feature found in a given targum, by the end of the analysis we

⁴⁵See below.

should have enough data to determine with reasonable confidence the context in which this targum was created.

In a manner similar to Shinan's method of looking for what 'is by its nature un-targumic'⁴⁶ in determining which expansions in a targum are original or derived from the midrashim, we must look for what is most similar or dissimilar to what we would expect to find if the targum was created for the synagogue or the school. Our first step, therefore, must be to determine what traits we would expect the targum to exhibit that would be unique (or better suited) to these two contexts. It is important to note that these are broad generalizations and are merely intended as a starting point.

In the synagogue, the primary purpose of the targum was for comprehension. As this principle was expressed in Soferim 42b in relation to the Book of Lamentations, the text must be translated properly 'so that the rest of the people, the women and children may understand it'. In this context a literal translation would be suitable, but since there were strict rules prescribing the reading of the targum during a service,⁴⁷ some deviance from a *verbatim* translation would be expected. Furthermore, we know that targum is rarely so simple and often incorporates aggadic additions, the purpose of which was, most likely, to impart to an unlearned congregation the appropriate meaning and interpretation of a passage. In the case of the Palestinian targumim, Shinan has demonstrated how midrashic expansions occur more frequently at the beginning or end of sederim, which suggests a synagogal setting.⁴⁸ These sorts of additions would be particularly important in circumstances where expository sermons were not the norm. So we might expect that a targum primarily intended for use in the synagogue would incorporate many aggadic additions, particularly to those passages that might have been deemed problematic.

In the school setting, however, the situation would have been much different. In the Bet Sefer, the primary school,⁴⁹ the students were

⁴⁶ Avigdor Shinan, 'The Aggadah of the Palestinian Targums', in D.R.G. Beattie and M.J. McNamara (eds.), *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), p. 212.

⁴⁷ y. Meg. 74d, b. Meg. 32a, b. Sof. 39b, and m. Meg. 4.4. See Alexander, 'The Targumim', pp. 23-25.

⁴⁸ A. Shinan, *The Aggadah in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Makor, 1979), pp. 30-38 (in Hebrew). See Kashner, 'The Aramaic Targumim', p. 76.

⁴⁹ Specifically, the teaching of Hebrew and the Bible would have taken place in the Bet Sefer and the study of the midrashim would occur in the Bet Midrash. In the Bet Midrash the situation would be similar to that of the synagogues. The targum would help to elucidate the difficult passages for the older students who would already have studied the biblical text. See Safrai, 'Education and the Study

learning Bible in a dynamic situation, with the knowledge of their teachers at hand for explaining difficult portions of the text. So why would such students need a targum at all? The answer lies in teaching methods. Given that the teacher did not have Hebrew grammars and lexicons at his disposal as we do today, how would he have taught his students biblical Hebrew? Although they would learn the texts through repetition, the meaning of the language is not so easily conveyed. Alexander has demonstrated quite convincingly that Jewish students probably learned biblical Hebrew in a manner similar to that of other students elsewhere in antiquity; that is, by using slavishly literal translations of the primary texts.⁵⁰ This practice is found within Greek schools where the students used literal translations of Vergil in order to learn Latin. Viewed in this light, the primary purpose of the targum within the Bet Sefer would be to provide the students with a 'crib' for learning biblical Hebrew. A more literal translation would best serve that purpose; as Sebastian Brock has written, 'in the *uerbum e uerbo* translation the original acts, as it were, as Aristotle's unmoved mover, and the psychological effect is to bring the reader to the original'.⁵¹

One final note concerning the dating and the nature of targumic literature is appropriate at this point. In attempting to determine the date and provenance of midrashic material, it is common practice to catalogue the names and dates of the authorities cited and then make a judgment based upon such evidence.⁵² Since targumim rarely cite the source of their midrashim this technique is of little help and scholars of targumic literature must rely upon linguistic and textual features which, as we have seen, are often difficult to interpret.⁵³ In this section

of Torah', pp. 945-70; and Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim', pp. 80-81, where he distinguishes between verbatim translations, which would be used in the Bet Sefer, and targumim that contain midrashic additions and which would be more fitting in the context of the Bet Midrash or Bet Talmud.

⁵⁰Alexander, 'How Did the Rabbis', *passim*.

⁵¹Sebastian Brock, 'Aspects of Translation Technique in Antiquity', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979), pp. 69-87 (73). see also Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim', pp. 78-79: 'It will not be far from the truth to argue that the *verbatim* translation—a word in Aramaic for each Hebrew word—originated with the study of the Bible in school'; and Alexander, 'How Did the Rabbis', *passim*.

⁵²For example, with regard to *Pesiqta deRab Kahana* (Pes. K.) Braude writes, 'Since Palestinian Rabbis are cited more frequently than Babylonian and since no Rabbis who lived later than the fifth century CE, the work is believed to have been compiled in Palestine sometime during the fifth century CE.' William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana: R. Kahana's Compilation of Discourses for Sabbaths and Festal Days* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. xlv-xlvi.

⁵³This is not to imply that methods of dating midrashic works are more precise.

I will not only look for explicit historical references, but I will also take into account the development of the aggadic features of the targum as well. That is to say, when an aggadah found within our targum can be compared with one found within a midrashic collection, the *terminus a quo* may often be established for the aggadah, if not for the targum itself. In order to facilitate such an assessment I will follow a general chronological order in analyzing the midrashic sources.⁵⁴

*Targ. Lam. 1.1-4: A Theological Prologue*⁵⁵

1 אמר ירמיהו נביא וכהנא רבא איכדין אתגור על ירושלם ועל עמאה לאתדנא בתירוכין ולמספד עליהון איכה היכמה דאתדנן אדם וחיה דאתרכו מנחא דעדן ואספד עליהון מרי עלמא איכה ענת מרת דינא וכן אמרת על סגיאות חובהא אשתדר ומה דבגוהא בנין תהא יתבא בלחודהא כגבר דמכתש סגירו על בסריה דבלחודיה יתיב וקרתא דהוה מליא אוכלוסין ועממין סגיאין אתרוקנת מנהון והוה דמיא כארמלא ודמחרברבא בעמאי ושלישא באפרכיא והוון מסקין לה מסין הדרת למהוי מסיכא ולמתן לה כרנא בחר דנא:

2 כד שלח משה נביא עוגדין לאללא ית ארעא תבו עוגדיא ואסיקן טיב ביש על ארעא דישראל וההוא ליליא תשעא יומין באב הוה וכד שמעו עמא בית ישראל ית בשורתא בישתא הדא דאתבשרו על ארעא דישראל נטלו עמא ית קלחון ובכו עמא בית ישראל בליליא ההוא מן יד תקיף רוגזא דיי עליהון וגזר למהוי בכן בליליא הדא לדריהון על חורבן בית מוקדשא וכדו אחאמר בנבואה לירמיהו כהנא רבא למהוי חריבא ירושלם על ידי דנבוכד נצר רשיעא אין לא תייבין בתחובא מן יד עאל אוכה לעמא בית ישראל וסריבו לקבלא בכן עאל נבוכד נצר רשיעא וצדא ית ירושלם ובית מוקדשא אוקיד בנורא בתשע יומין בירחא דאב וביה בליליא בכיאת כנשתא דישראל בכותא ודמעא זליג על לסתהא לית די ימלל תנחומין על לכהא מן כל טעוהא די רחימת למיזל בתריהון ובנין כן כל חברהא ארשיעו בהא אתהפכו למהוי לה לבעיל דבבין:

3 אזלו בית יהודה בגלותא על דהוו מענן יתמין וארמלן ועל סגיאות פולחנא דהוו מפלחין באחיהון בני ישראל דאודבנו להון ולא קרו חירותא לעבדיהון ולאמהתהון דהוו מזרעית ישראל ובנין כן אף אנון אתמסרו ביד עממאי וכנשתא דבית יהודה יתבא בנו עממאי ולא אשכחת נייח מפולחנא קשא דשעבירו יתה נוכל דהוה רדיף

A quick survey of the literature regarding the date of Pesikta Rabbati (Pes. R.) proves that such is not the case.

⁵⁴I have followed the majority view on the dating of the rabbinic sources as found in H.L. Strack and G. Stemmerger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991). The dates of most rabbinic texts are still hotly debated so all dating based upon comparison with the rabbinic material must be considered tentative.

⁵⁵The following translation is the author's based upon Urb. 1 with corrections where noted. The words in italics indicate the targumic additions to the Hebrew text.

יתה אדביקו יתה⁵⁶ כד היא מתחבאה בין תחומא ואעיקן לה:

4 כל זמן דהות ירושלם מתבניא סריבו בני ישראל למסך לאתחזאה קדם יי תלת זמנין בשתא ועל חוביהון דישראל אתצדיאת ירושלם ואתעבדו שבילי ציון אבילן מדלית עאיל בה בזמן מועדיא כל תרעהא צדיין וכחנתא אניחן על דבטילו קורבניא בתולתא ספרן על דפסקו למפק בחמשא עשר יומא באב וביומא דכפור דהוא בעשרא יומין בתשרי לחנא בחננין אף איהיא מריר לבא לחדא:

¹Jeremiah the Prophet and High Priest told how it was decreed that Jerusalem and her people should be punished with banishment and that they should be mourned with 'ekah. Just as when Adam and Eve were punished and expelled from the Garden of Eden and the Master of the Universe mourned them with 'ekah.

The Attribute of Justice spoke and said, 'Because of the greatness of her rebellious sin which was within her, thus she will dwell alone as a man plagued with leprosy upon his skin who sits alone.'

And the city which was full of crowds and many peoples has been emptied of them and she has become like a widow. She who was great among the nations and a ruler over provinces which had brought her tribute has become lowly again and gives head tax to them from thereafter.

²When Moses the Prophet sent messengers to spy out the land the messengers returned and gave forth a bad report concerning the land of Israel. This was the night of the ninth of Ab. When the people of the House of Israel heard this bad report which they had received concerning the land of Israel, the people lifted up their voice and the people of the House of Israel wept during that night. Immediately the anger of the Lord was kindled against them and he decreed that it should be thus in that night throughout their generations over the destruction of the Temple.

When it was told through prophecy to Jeremiah the High Priest that Jerusalem would be destroyed at the hand of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar unless they repented, he immediately entered and rebuked the people of the House of Israel, but they refused to accept it. Therefore the wicked Nebuchadnezzar entered and razed Jerusalem and set fire to the Temple on the ninth day in the month of Ab. On that night, the Congregation of Israel wept bitterly and her tears flowed down her cheeks. There was no one to speak comfortingly to her heart from among all her idols which she loved to follow after. As a result, all her friends were wicked to her; they turned against her and became her enemies.

³The House of Judah went into exile because they were oppressing the orphans and the widows and because of the great servitude to which they were subjecting their brothers, the sons of Israel, who had been sold to them. And they did not declare freedom to their servants and handmaids

⁵⁶Found in Lagarde and necessary in order to match MT.

who were of the seed of Israel. As a result they themselves were delivered into the hand of the nations. And the Congregation of the House of Judah dwells among the nations and finds no rest from the hard labor to which they subject her. [All who pursued her overtook her]⁵⁷ as she was hiding in the border regions and they persecuted her.

⁴All the while that Jerusalem was built, the sons of Israel refused to go up to be seen before the Lord three times a year. Because of Israel's sins Jerusalem was destroyed and the roads to Zion are made mournful, for there is no one entering her at the time of the festivals. All the gates are desolate and her priests groan because the sacrifices have ceased. Her virgins mourn because they have stopped going out on the fifteenth of Ab and on the Day of Atonement (which is on the tenth day of Tishri) to dance the dances. Therefore she too is very bitter in her heart.

When first encountering Targ. Lam. one is struck by the extensive amount of midrashic material that the targumist has accumulated in the first four verses of ch. 1. As a result, Targ. Lam. has often been described as being extremely paraphrastic, to such an extent that Sperber was led to claim that the targumim to the Megillot 'are not Targum-texts but Midrash-texts in the disguise of Targum'.⁵⁸ This is something of an overstatement, although at first sight Targ. Lam. does seem to be 'top heavy' with liberal additions of midrashim in the first chapter and relatively few in the last four. This is, in fact, only partially true. On closer examination it becomes clear that Targ. Lam. actually sustains rather vigorous, although often subtle, exegetical activity throughout the text.⁵⁹ A closer look at ch. 1 of the targum reveals that the vast bulk of additional material is to be found in the first four verses. My present concern is to determine how this peculiar structure came about and, in particular, does the present form of the targum have any bearing on its historical development?

When the material added to the first four verses is examined it becomes clear that each addition serves to support one exegetical purpose: the destruction of Jerusalem was the direct result of Israel having sinned greatly. In v. 1, the targumist uses the consonantal similarities between אֲנִי of Lam. 1.1 and אֵינִי ('Where are you?') of Gen. 3.9 in order to compare the manner and method of Jerusalem's punishment

⁵⁷Found in Lagarde and necessary in order to represent all of MT.

⁵⁸A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*. IV.A. *The Hagiographa* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), p. viii.

⁵⁹An extensive study of these midrashic additions is beyond this work, but see my 'Targum Lamentations 1.1-4: A Theological Prologue', in P.V.M. Flesher (ed.), *Targum Studies*, III, Ernie Clarke memorial (Atlanta: Scholars Press, forthcoming), for a more detailed discussion of this passage.

with that of Adam and Eve when they were expelled from the Garden of Eden. This midrash is found in several sources including Pes. K. 15, Gen. R. 19.9, and Lam. R. Proem 4, all of which are early sources dating to the fifth century CE. Finally, the targumist tells us that the Attribute of Justice reported her great sinfulness and she was evicted. Like Adam and Eve's banishment from Eden, Jerusalem's punishment and the banishment of her people was deserved.

In v. 2 an aggadic tradition based upon Num. 14.1 (and also found in Num. R. to 14.1; b. San. 104b; and b. Ta'an. 29a) is inserted that attributes God's decision to allow Jerusalem to be destroyed to the Israelite's lack of faith that God would deliver Canaan into their hands. The connection between Lam. 1.2 and Num. 14.1 is based upon the similarity between the Hebrew phrase בָּכּוּ חֲבֻכָּה בַּלַּיְלָהּ of Lamentations and וַיִּבְכּוּ הָעָם בַּלַּיְלָהּ הַהוּא of Numbers. As with the midrash from Targ. Lam. 1.1, there are several parallels within rabbinic literature, the earliest of which is Lam. R., again from the fifth century CE.⁶⁰

In v. 3 the targumist reads the text back upon itself. Where MT reads, 'Judah has gone into exile *with* suffering and hard servitude', the targum tells us that it was because Judah had *caused* widows and orphans to suffer and because they had levied excessive servitude upon their brothers that Judah went into exile. Here the targumist does not appear to be alluding to any midrashic source, but rather he relies upon the biblical text itself. By identifying Judah's sins as oppression of the orphans and widows, the targumist calls to mind verses such as Exod. 22.22-24, Jer. 7.6, 22.3 and Jeremiah's plea to the Lord that, since they had not helped the widow and the orphan, 'therefore give their children over to famine, hurl them out to the power of the sword, let their wives become childless and widowed' (Jer. 18.21).

Finally, in v. 4 MT is expanded to complete the catalogue of Judah's sins and has no overt connection with other rabbinic sources. Instead, the principle of מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה is applied. Just as Judah had sinned, so was she punished. Since even when Jerusalem stood the Israelites *refused* (סָרְיִבּוּ) to go up for the appointed festivals, so now 'the roads to Zion are made mournful, for there is no one entering her for the festivals'.

⁶⁰See Num. R. to 14.1; Lam. R. Proem 33 and *ad. loc.*; Laqach Tob *ad. loc.*, b. San. 104b; and b. Ta'an. 29a. The Mishnah (Ta'an. 4.6.) also mentions this incident as one of the five tragedies that occurred to 'our ancestors': בַּתְּשֻׁעָה בָּאָב נָמוּר עַל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ: 'שֶׁלֹּא יָכִסּוּ לָאָרֶץ'.

It is important to note that none of these four verses in the Bible is especially problematic in theological terms. Unlike elsewhere in Lamentations, God is not here described as 'an enemy' (2.4) nor is he depicted in the role of persecutor (2.1, 2; 4.16). These verses are emotive and compelling, but they are not particularly worthy of explanation; so why did the targumist expend so much time and effort on these four verses? When we consider the distribution and the theological meaning of the additions we find that the targumist has created a theological prolegomenon to Lamentations. The biblical text of Lamentations is one of grief and pain, and later in the book God is accused of being an enemy and bringing destruction down upon Jerusalem. This picture does not sit easily with the targumist so he inserts additional material at the beginning of the targum in order to provide his audience with the proper context within which they are to interpret the text. It is likely that even if the entire scroll of Lamentations were not read in the service, the reading would have begun with ch. 1. Accordingly, we can compare this trait of Targ. Lam. with the Palestinian targumim and their habit of introducing *sedarim* with midrashic expansions. This peculiar form of Targ. Lam. is therefore best understood as the result of its use within the synagogue.

The Ninth of Ab Service

There are other expansions, found elsewhere in the text, that are of particular relevance to this current enquiry. Targ. Lam. 2.19 is particularly intriguing and suggestive of a possible reconstruction of the ninth of Ab service.⁶¹

Arise, O Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile. Busy yourself with Mishnah in the night, for the Presence of the Lord is dwelling before you, and with the words of Torah at the beginning of the morning watch. Pour out like water the crookedness of your heart and turn in repentance. And pray in the House of the Congregation before the face of the Lord. Raise your hands to him in prayer for the life of your children who thirst with hunger at the head of every open market.

Targ. Lam. 2.19 identifies the subject of 'Arise!' as the 'Congregation of Israel dwelling in exile'. This indicates that the targum is aimed at Jews scattered throughout the ancient world, rather than at those who

⁶¹Since we do not possess clear evidence of how the ninth of Ab was commemorated, any suggestions made will remain speculative.

live in Jerusalem or Palestine. When considering the two main possible contexts for this targum, it is ironic that within this one verse we should find reference to both the study of Mishnah and Torah as well as the entreaty that they should go and pray in the synagogue! As is the case elsewhere in the targum, the audience is encouraged to repent and seek the Lord's forgiveness, but in this case the targumist also prescribes the study of Mishnah and Torah. Since the establishment of both the school and the synagogue are very early within our time frame, this information is of little use in dating the text. It does, however, suggest that by the final redaction of Targ. Lam. the text may have been used in *both* the Bet Midrash and the synagogue.

The fact that the audience is called to get up and study Mishnah at night may suggest a break in the ninth of Ab service. Soferim 42b states that 'some [congregations] read the Book of Lamentations in the evening while others postpone it to the [following] morning'.⁶² Or perhaps some congregations did both. Targ. Lam. 2.19 may represent a liturgical device for announcing to the congregation a transition in the service from the reading of Lamentations to the study of Mishnah (presumably they would have read to the end of ch. 2, which ends on a positive note, 'may you declare freedom to your people, the House of Israel, by the Messiah King'). They would then return the following morning to finish the reading of the Book of Lamentations. While this reconstruction of the structure of the ninth of Ab service must remain purely speculative and these references to study would be appropriate in any context within rabbinic Judaism, it is not unreasonable to suggest that 2.19 reflects an annual vigil during which the congregation would study Mishnah at night ('such parts which he does not usually study')⁶³ and would conclude their night of remembrance with a Torah reading the following morning.

It was observed earlier that, when one views the work as a whole, there is very little material added to the last four chapters of Lamentations. Chapter 3 is a prime example, in that it is extremely literal throughout all 66 of its verses with the exception of v. 28. In MT, 3.25-30 is an encouragement to those who suffer, saying that 'it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord; it is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young; let him sit alone in silence for the Lord has laid it upon him'. In the targum the verse reads,

⁶²See above.

⁶³b. Ta'an. 30a.

Let him sit alone and be silent, bearing the corrections which have come upon him, for the sake of the unity of the name of the LORD, which have been sent to punish him for the minor sins which he has committed in this world, until he have mercy upon him and lift them from him so that he may receive him perfected in the World to Come.

The targumist takes this theme and extends it by identifying what the Lord has 'laid upon him' as 'the corrections' intended to allow his sins to be expiated in this world so that '[the Lord] may receive him perfected in the world to come'. This concept of the expiation of sins is rather advanced and its tone of encouragement makes it suitable for any context, but it would certainly be appropriate for a synagogal service the aim of which is repentance and reflection.

Finally, in 4.21-22 we find an extremely complex reference to Constantinople, Edom and the Edomites, Rome and Italy, Persians, and a group referred to as the 'Parkevi' (פרכוי).

²¹Rejoice and be of good cheer *Constantinople*, city of wicked Edom, which is built in the land of Armenia with large forces from the people of Edom. Retribution is about to come upon even you, and the Parkevi will destroy you and the accursed cup shall pass to you and you shall become drunk and exposed.

²²And after this your iniquity will be finished, O Congregation of Zion. But you will be freed by the hands of the Messiah King and Elijah the High Priest and the LORD will no longer exile you. And at that time I will punish your iniquities, wicked Rome, built in Italy and filled with crowds of Edomites. And the Persians will come and oppress you and destroy you for your sins have been made known before the LORD.

Alexander has identified this last group with the Parthians and argues against emending the text to פרסאי.⁶⁴ He goes on to suggest that the text we now have was originally two alternative readings of 4.21, which have both been incorporated into the text by a confused scribe. Alexander argues that the dates and events alluded to are likely to be the conflicts over Armenia between Rome and Parthia (third century CE) and between Byzantium and Sassanian Persia (early seventh century CE).⁶⁵ However one interprets this difficult passage, the latest event

⁶⁴P.S. Alexander, 'The Toponymy of the Targumim' (D.Phil., Oxford, 1974), pp. 110-12.

⁶⁵Alexander, 'Toponymy', p. 112. 'There are elements which relate to the conflict between Byzantium and Sassanian Persia over Armenia (קונשטנטינא [v. 21] ארמיניאה [v. 21]/פרסאי [v. 22]); there are other elements, however, which allude to the conflict between Rome and Parthia over Armenia (רומי [v. 22] ארמיניאה [v. 21]/פרכוי [v. 21]). A reference to the earlier struggle has been redefined to apply to the latter.'

referred to is the seventh-century CE conflict between the Byzantine Empire and Sassanian Persia. For this reason Komlosh dates Targ. Lam. to between 600 and 629 (when Jerusalem was recaptured from Sassanian Persia).⁶⁶

Regardless of the historical context it is clear that our targumist expected God to bring retribution upon Israel's enemies and free Jerusalem. 'And after this your iniquity will be finished, O Congregation of Zion. But you will be freed by the hands of the Messiah King and Elijah the High Priest and the LORD will no longer exile you.' The liberation of God's people will be accomplished by the 'Messiah King',⁶⁷ but in this instance he is aided by Elijah the High Priest.⁶⁸ Landauer views this reference to Elijah as High Priest as evidence for dating Targ. Lam. to the Islamic period since the only other texts that refer to Elijah in this manner are found in Targ. Ps.-J., the final redaction of which took place no earlier than the seventh century CE.⁶⁹ This does not militate against an earlier date, since Targ. Ps.-J. contains material that is much earlier and it seems certain that Targ. Lam. does as well. But when considered in combination with the conflict between Sassanian Persia and the Byzantine Empire, we have sufficient evidence to suggest that Targ. Lam. was *redacted* in the seventh century CE and may have had particular importance for Jews in the region most affected by these conflicts, that is, northern Mesopotamia.⁷⁰

⁶⁶Y. Komlosh, *The Bible in the light of the Aramaic Translations* (Tel-Aviv: DVIR, 1973) (Hebrew), p. 90.

⁶⁷For a similar statement of deliverance by the 'Messiah King', see Targ. Lam. 2.22.

⁶⁸It should be noted that Urb. 1 reads משיחא דאליהו דאליהו רבא, but De Lagarde and the Walton Polyglot both read ואליהו. YT does not contain these additions. The fact that the Messiah is listed first is probably not an indication that the targumist believed that the Messiah would arrive before his herald Elijah, contra Levine, *The Aramaic Version*, p. 176. The role of Elijah in ushering in the Messianic age is well known and beyond the scope of this study. For ample citations see Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, IV (Philadelphia: JPS, 1968), pp. 195-235, and the accompanying notes in volume 5.

⁶⁹S. Landauer, 'Zum Targum der Klagelieder', in C. Bezold (ed.), *Orientalischer Studien Theodor Nöldeke I*, [Giessen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1906], p. 506. This article contains variant readings from MSS Parma 3218, 3231, 2867, 3235, 3189; Kennicott 198; The Complutensian Polyglot (1514-7); and quotations from the Arukh. The major sources for this tradition are found in Targ. Ps.-J. (Exod. 6.18, 40.10 and Num. 30.4). For the dates of Targ. Ps.-J. see Alexander, 'Jewish Aramaic Translations', p. 219.

⁷⁰Although one must be cautious in employing an 'argument from silence', it may be significant, and further justification of dating the targum to the first half of the seventh century CE, that there is *no* reference to Arabs or Muslims.

Conclusions

The historical development of Targ. Lam. was undoubtedly long and complex. Any date, provenance or *Sitz im Leben* offered must therefore remain tentative. This does not, however, mean that such investigation is not fruitful. Indeed, even if the following suggestions concerning the development of Targ. Lam. must remain somewhat speculative, this study has revealed much about the character and nature of Targ. Lam. Like all targumim, Targ. Lam. contains passages that have been expanded greatly and some that have been rendered more or less *verbatim*. What makes this targum unique is the distribution of its material. Targ. Lam. has been massively re-worked at the beginning in order to provide a theological prologue while the rest of the text is largely *verbatim* in its rendering. This expansive prologue would be most affective in a synagogal setting. The congregation would have consisted of men, women and children and, although at least some of the men would have received training in the Bet Midrash, none of the women or children would have had the necessary theological training to enable them to understand the Book of Lamentations 'properly'. In order to prevent them from coming to any erroneous conclusions concerning the nature and character of God, the targumist introduces the text with a series of aggadot, which convey the fundamental message that no matter what God did in punishing Israel, she deserved it because she had 'sinned greatly'. These additions have parallels in midrashim dating from the fifth century CE.

On the other hand, the vast majority of the text is remarkably literal in its rendering of the Hebrew and, as I noted earlier, a *verbatim* translation is ideal if the purpose of the translation is to try to teach students biblical Hebrew. This is tempered, however, by the fact that the Aramaic of Targ. Lam. is a mixed dialect and probably does not represent a spoken form of Aramaic. It should also be remembered that some of the midrashim that are present in Targ. Lam. are extremely graphic depictions of the horrors of war and may not have been appropriate for young school boys.⁷¹ Thus if Targ. Lam. was used in a

⁷¹For example, Targ. Lam. 1.15: 'The Lord has crushed all my mighty ones within me; he has established a time against me to shatter the strength of my young men. The nations entered by decree of the Memra of the LORD and defiled the virgins of the house of Judah until their blood of their virginity was caused to flow like wine from a wine press when a man is treading grapes and grape-wine flows.' Such intensification of the biblical text may represent a sermonic element as the targumist sought to emphasize the penalties of sin. It must also be pointed out that presumably the school children would also be in the synagogue, so they would still be exposed to the graphic texts.

school setting, it would have been more appropriate for the Bet Midrash rather than the Bet Sefer. Furthermore, the expansions found in 2.19 and 3.25-28 are ambiguous, but appropriate within a Bet Midrash setting where Mishnah was studied.⁷²

Targ. Lam. represents a relatively literal rendering of the biblical text, but with certain key midrashic additions. An explanation for this unique form may be found in the historical development of Targ. Lam. Considering the date of the midrashic parallels and the rather late date at which the Book of Lamentations was institutionalized as part of the ninth of Ab service, it seems likely that the book was originally studied in the Bet Sefer with a primarily (or perhaps even completely) literal translation, which aided them in learning both the content of the book and the biblical Hebrew in which it was originally written. This is likely to have begun as early as the first schools and possibly in Palestine. A targum to Lamentations may also have been used privately, possibly by the 'Mourners for Zion'. Later, when the Book of Lamentations was incorporated into the synagogal service, the targum was expanded and, to a certain extent, rewritten. Much of the expanded material flows well and does not appear to indicate that it was just 'cut and pasted' into the text, but rather a thorough redaction has taken place which resulted in a remarkably unified work. The MSS that have been preserved represent this later stage of development and, considering the historical references found in 4.21-22, this final redaction may have taken place in the region of northern Mesopotamia during the seventh century CE.

⁷²See Kasher, 'The Aramaic Targumim', pp. 81-82.

