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# Tamar's Legacy: The Early Reception of Genesis 38

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This research is a product of the Master of Arts in Theological Studies (MATS) program at George Fox University. [Find out more](#) about the program.

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Tamar's Legacy: The Early Reception of Genesis 38

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Masters of Arts at Portland Seminary of  
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By

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Thesis Committee

Roger Nam, Advisor and Lisa Cleath

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## ABSTRACT

The story of Tamar and Judah is one of the Torah's more morally complicated narratives. As such, interpreters throughout history, but specifically early Jewish interpreters, grappled with how to relay this story in their translations of the Hebrew Bible. Using the theories and methods of reception history, this study demonstrates how the translations these early interpreters produced shed light on the dynamic relationship between a text and those who interpret it. Examining both the Greek Septuagint and Aramaic Targumim, the study identifies places in the translations where hints of the socio-historical position and theological commitments of the translators and their communities are woven into the Greek and Aramaic versions of the text.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family who have endured yet another round of education and are graciously accepting a final round.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“You see, Julianna, I never let my husband know when I give money to the poor people at church because Jesus said not to tell your husband when you do things like this,” Um Hani declared confidently as we had another one of our long chats sitting on her bed at her flat in one of Cairo’s peripheral industrial neighborhoods. Um Hani was from rural Upper Egypt, migrated to Cairo in the 1980’s and belonged to a Christian community in the city. Many in her context faced extreme financial pressure as a result of their social status and failing economy. As she elaborated on her interpretation of Jesus, I racked my brain trying to think to which scripture she could possibly be referring. Finally, I asked, “Um Hani, where did Jesus say this?” She responded, “Jesus said, ‘Do not let your right hand know what your left is doing.’”

I want to acknowledge Um Hani, the woman who first taught me about reception theory. Roger Nam helped to provide an academic framework for the phenomenon Um Hani first taught me. Nijay Gupta graciously worked with me on some aspects of my section on the Septuagint going above and beyond his duties as an instructor. Lisa Cleath, bringing her Aramaic expertise, offered an additional perspective to the project.

Brenda Smith patiently read draft after draft helping me weed out syntactical errors- thanks mom! I can confidently say, she did not do this for her deep love of targumic Aramaic. If there are any errors remaining, they are not her fault. A mother like her should be considered for sainthood.

## INTRODUCTION

From Flavius Josephus to modern children's Bible authors, the Gen 38 story of Tamar and Judah has posed challenges for people of faith wishing to retell the biblical narrative. In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus' first-century, twenty-book history of the Jewish people stretching back to the time setting of the Pentateuch, the entire Gen 38 tale has been expunged from his retelling of the Genesis story.<sup>1</sup> Writing centuries later and for a vastly different audience, many children's Bible authors, likely unconsciously, follow the great Josephus' example and do not include the story in their recounting of Genesis.<sup>2</sup> The main features of the story- death by God's hands, solicitation of prostitution, incestuous relations, deception and a near immolation- almost universally defy people's moral sensibilities. Given this text's controversial nature, exploring how the earliest interpreters of the Hebrew Bible dealt with it deepens modern reader's understanding of the original text, the historical consciousness of the communities that interpret it as well as the new interpretive possibilities of that text resulting from those communities' interaction with the text.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas W. Franxman, *Genesis and the Jewish Antiquities of Flavius Josephus*, *Biblica et Orientalia*, no. 45, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1979), 26. Given another omission in Josephus' account of the book, it seems as if the author was uncomfortable with the incestuous nature of the story.

<sup>2</sup> This has become an informal research project of mine. After scouring my niece's collection of children's Bibles to see how the story was dealt with, I broadened my search to the church library and Christian bookstores. I have yet to find it in any print edition. I would be happy to find any Children's Bible in which the story is included.

<sup>3</sup> The astute reader is right to hear echoes of Hans-Georg Gadamer's idea of 'horizon,' an individual's or text's understanding of the "relative significance" of everything within the horizon. Gadamer argues that a new horizon emerges out of a fusion between the interpreter's horizon and the text's horizon. Paul Nobel, *The Canonical Approach: A Critical Reconstruction of the Hermeneutics of Brevard S. Childs*, *Biblical Interpretation Series*, vol. 16, (New York: E.J. Brill, 1995), 250.



One of the ways to discover how Jewish communities thought about the story is to look at the translations they produced of it, both the Greek Septuagint (*LXX*) and Aramaic Targums (in Aramaic referred to by the plural noun Targumim). This study critically explores those texts and identifies places in which the translation departs from the Hebrew text or otherwise betrays the translator's and the immediate audience's social and historical context. This study is asking the questions how does this text change and what do those changes indicate about the translator and audience? Specifically, the changes in the character of Tamar are of utmost interest as the nature of her moral character is unclear in the Hebrew text. Analyses of her character typically fall into two categories that of the righteous ancestor of David and that of the wicked woman using her cunning ways.<sup>4</sup> In addition to mapping the general development of the plot in the translations, one of the main areas of exploration in this study is to determine whether the way the story has been retold in these new context affects the portrayal of Tamar, tipping the balance either toward the righteous ancestor or toward the wicked woman.

Through the process of exploring this story in these texts, the research highlights ways in which the Gen 38 story in the *LXX* and Targums reflect general patterns of translation in these two documents, and on occasion, breaks with the translation norms. With respect to the findings presented on the *LXX*, this study challenges the interpretation of *LXX*'s presentation of Gen 38 put forth in the only other reception history of the text. The current study argues that *LXX*'s Gen 38 adheres rather tightly to the Hebrew text. In the majority of the instances the *LXX* does not follow the Hebrew text in Gen 38, it is less reflective of a translator's culturally

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<sup>4</sup> Chi Wai Chan, "The Ultimate Trickster in the Story of Tamar from a Feminist Perspective" *Feminist Theology* 24, no. 1 (2015): 93.

constructed view of that particular text and more a product of general translation conventions for the *LXX*. Through this adherence to the Hebrew text, the *LXX* translation of Gen 38 reflects the values of the culture that produced it. In contrast to the *LXX* and as has been demonstrated in other studies, the writers of the Targums, in general, took far greater liberties with shaping a new interpretation of the text through translation and narrative expansion. With regards to this particular narrative, the writers recast Tamar and Judah as paragons of virtue. The study suggests that this reinterpretation of the characters is reflective of the historical and social context of the community which produced it.

## METHODOLOGY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Terminology*

Two main approaches to reading and interpreting biblical texts inform this research, inner-biblical exegesis and reception theory. With respect to the former, this approach to studying the text and its transmission owes much to Fishbane. Fishbane is primarily concerned with the relationship between texts within the Hebrew canon and argues that “the Hebrew Bible is a composite source” wherein one can find traces of exegetical notes interwoven with the biblical text.<sup>5</sup> He describes a dynamic relationship between source material and later interpretations, making the point that the older material is dependent on the later transmission for its continued relevance in new social and cultural contexts.<sup>6</sup> The dynamic relationship between source material and its interpretation, whether born out within the Hebrew text itself or in later translations or interpretations of the text, lies at the heart of this study.

Reception theory, more specifically reception history, also guides the approach to the current study. The former, developed in the field of literary studies, is broadly concerned with any audience’s interpretation of an art form or text.<sup>7</sup> The latter is typically the work of the academic attempting to establish a framework or find the links between various receptions of a

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 10. Using the language of tradition-history Fishbane distinguishes between *traditum* or tradition and *tradio* or transmission. Within Fishbane’s work, tradition can be thought of as source material and transmission can be thought of as an interpretation. Others have used the concept of *tradio* to describe the transmission process that resulted in a written text, but for Fishbane *tradio* represents a later interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> For a succinct description of reception theory as it was articulated by Hans-Robert Jauss and its relationship to Biblical Studies, see William Schniedewind, *Society and The Promise to David: The Reception History of 2 Samuel 7:1-17*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

piece throughout history.<sup>8</sup> Reception history as it relates to the biblical text is a field of growing importance within biblical studies. Developed in reaction to the previous generation's approach to the text which focused on "the art of understanding" and "avoiding misunderstanding" the original text, reception theory, articulated well by Hans-Georg Gadamer, recognizes a dynamic relationship between the original text and its later readers.<sup>9</sup> If the twentieth century was the age of the author in biblical studies, the twenty-first century is the age of the audience- the hearers and the readers. In some sense, one might argue that the twentieth century's preoccupation with original meaning is, at least, a non-traditional approach to the text if not entirely unfaithful to the tradition whence it came. According to Fishbane there is a "preoccupation with interpretation" within in early Jewish contexts.<sup>10</sup> The role of the person interacting with the text was to interpret it in a way that would allow the text to impact, even regulate, daily life.<sup>11</sup>

The impact of Gadamer and others working at the intersection of reception theory and philosophical hermeneutics is evidenced in the seminal work of James Kugel *In Potiphar's House: The interpretive life of biblical texts*.<sup>12</sup> The significance of Kugel's work is that he took the

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<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Roberts, "Introduction" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, ed. Michael Leib, Jonathan Roberts, and Emma Mason, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), accessed September 14, 2017, Oxford Handbooks Online, 2.

<sup>9</sup> In his work, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, Hans-Georg Gadamer critiques Friedrich Schleiermacher's approach to the biblical text. According to Gadamer, Schleiermacher's project of seeking to eliminate all "prejudice" when exegeting the text was misguided. Gadamer sought to rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and give it a positive role in modern hermeneutics. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem (1966)." in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. and ed. David E. Linge, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Fishbane, *Biblical*, 2; see also James Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that, while this work has focused on the contributions of Fishbane and Gadamer to this approach to biblical studies, if the scope of this project was greater, it could have focused on other influential thinkers not here mentioned.

presuppositions of people like Fishbane and Gadamer and expressed them in a set of methodological steps for studying texts.<sup>13</sup> As the field currently stands, Kugel is not alone in his approach to the Bible. Many others have produced their own reception histories. William Schniedewind's work, *Society and The Promise to David: The reception history of 2 Samuel 7:1-17*, can be counted as a significant contribution to the field if not least for his articulation of the interplay between the ideas of the methods of innerbiblical exegesis and reception theory. Concisely, he notes that the "ongoing dialogue" between the fixed text and the community of interpretation understood in innerbiblical exegesis is like the "process of reception" relating new texts to the older ones in a given genre.<sup>14</sup> Schniedewind deals with the early reception of the text, walking his readers down the chronological path of interpretation from the earliest articulation of the promise to the second temple period. While Kugel organizes his work by specific narrative expansions, Schniedewind favors chronology.<sup>15</sup>

The ideas of Fishbane and reception theorists are not limited to discrete monographs on specific passages, but issues of innerbiblical exegesis and the role of the interpretation within the canon has also begun to be incorporated into traditional commentary series which previously favored text critical approaches. One such example is the work of Carol Newsome and Brennan Breed on the book of Daniel.<sup>16</sup> One might argue that the book of Daniel lends itself to discussions of innerbiblical exegesis and issues of reception more than other books

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<sup>13</sup> Kugel, *In Potiphar's*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Schniedewind, *Society*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> The idea of "narrative expansion" is more fully explored in the section on the Targums.

<sup>16</sup> Carol A. Newsome and Brennan W. Breed. *Daniel: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014). Another quality example not addressed here is Choon Leong Seow, *Job 1-21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013).

given that the text was canonized as a bilingual text and that the book of Daniel included in the Hebrew canon is only one example of a larger body of Danielic literature.<sup>17</sup> For these reasons and others, the book certainly holds a unique place in the canon. Those points aside, however, Newsome and Breed are highly intentional in the way they address the reception of the text. At the end of each section of verses, they address the history of the section's reception.

Although there are various approaches to undertaking studies on early biblical interpretation, the current project follows the reception history model set out by Schniedewind, one closely aligned with the chronological development of a text in Jewish history.<sup>18</sup> Outlining the study, the following chapter examines the Hebrew text, delving into its narrative contours and lexical nuances. Specifically, this chapter highlights the portions of the text that are recast in a different light by later communities. The next chapter takes an in-depth look at the *LXX* version of Gen 38. Notably, that chapter reinterprets the dominant understanding of *LXX*'s Gen 38 within the field of reception history. This chapter offers a different interpretation of what the author of the *LXX* was doing in Gen 38 and how that fit into the community using that text. Finally, the next chapter deals with the Targums and the varied ways those authors approached translation as a practice in addition to the way each approached interpreting the narrative. Even with their varied approaches to translating and interpreting the text, some patterns emerge that shed light on the social and theological concerns of that community.

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<sup>17</sup> Newsome and Breed, *Daniel*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> The issue of redaction in the Hebrew text and issues of dating the various layers of the text is addressed in the following chapter. It is sufficient at this point to state that the complexities in dating a text like Genesis and issues of chronology within the Hebrew text is not overlooked in this research.

At this point it is important to address terminology, specifically the concepts of translation and interpretation, and make explicit the claims of this research. Those who study the reception history of the Hebrew Bible take seriously the work of the translator, recognizing that those who penned the *LXX* and Targums were not simply migrating the Hebrew text into Greek and Aramaic. Rather, these scribes were making interpretive decisions with each word and phrase.<sup>19</sup> To be sure, there is no “plain translation” of a text. In the following pages, translations are discussed and scrutinized. While the term “translation” is used liberally, it should be understood that these texts--the *LXX* and Targums--are understood to be interpretations in their nature.

Finally, a certain set of readers will be interested in which primary language texts were consulted for this project. With respect to the Hebrew text, this study has used *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensis* exclusively. Weaver’s *Genesis* in the series *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum* is used for the section on *LXX*. A variety of primary language sources for the Targums were consulted including Alexandri Diez Macho’s *Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia*, Bernard Grossfeld’s *Targum Neofiti 1: An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis*, Michael Klein’s *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* and Alexander Sperber’s *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> James Kugel, *The Bible As It Was*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 38.

<sup>20</sup> Alexandri Diez Macho, ed. *Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia* Series IV, Targum Palestinense in Pentateuchum, L. 1 Genesis, (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1988); Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti 1: An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis*, (New York: Sepher Hermon Press, 2000); Michael Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, vol. 1, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986); Alexander Sperber, ed., *The Bible in Aramaic Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts*, vol. 1 The Pentateuch according to Targum Onkelos Second Impression, (New York: Brill, 1992).

## *Literature Review*

This project draws upon work from a broad range of scholars specializing in Hebraic studies, *LXX* and targumic literature. Two works, however, stand out as being particularly germane to the current project, namely those of Esther Menn and Esther Blachman.<sup>21</sup> Writing in 1997, Menn provides a tight analysis of three Jewish interpretations of the account written in both Hellenistic and Palestinian contexts.<sup>22</sup> As a student of Fishbane, the influence of his approach to biblical text is present throughout her work, but the predominant analytical paradigm present in her work is comparative Midrash, a field focused on post-biblical interpretive texts as opposed to the biblical text itself.<sup>23</sup>

Blachman utilizes a methodology more closely aligned with the one used in this project. She states explicitly that she is modeling her work after Kugel's seminal work but is certainly more concerned with chronology than Kugel.<sup>24</sup> Blachman is concerned with tracing the long arch of interpretation of the text from its earliest reception to the twentieth century. The scope of Blachman's work is impressive as she examines a variety of genres from Greek Second Temple period texts to Judaeo-Arabic exegetical work to Kabbalah literature. Blachman's concern is not detailed analysis of one period; rather, she is distilling the broad trends in how the encounter between Tamar and Judah has been interpreted over centuries. Possibly as a result of the broad scope of her project, she misinterprets *LXX*'s presentation of the characters

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<sup>21</sup> Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 51, (New York: Brill, 1997); Esther Blachman, *The Transformation of Tamar (Genesis 38) in the History of Jewish Interpretation*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, (Wanepol, MA: Peeters, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 4.



and seeks to harmonize her interpretation with other pieces dealing with Tamar and Judah in Second Temple Greek literature. In the following pages the picture of the LXX as presented by Blachman is re-examined and a new interpretation is given.

Finally, Margaret Cowan's dissertation deserves a brief note in this literature review. While Cowan's work is not a reception history like that of Menn and Blachman, her work is notable in that it is heavily focused on narratology and, more significantly, issues of intertextuality. Cowan is concerned with how an intertextual reading can show how the text "seeks to shape the response of the reader."<sup>25</sup> Her dissertation represents one of the first analyses done on the chapter using the methods of intertextuality.

Although the current research is most concerned with thoroughly analyzing the primary texts, it does make use of some secondary literature, mainly commentaries, related to each of the primary texts it deals with. Those secondary sources are explored within each of the following chapters as this literature review is concerned with secondary texts that are classified as reception histories. The current research locates itself in this constellation of reception histories on the story of Tamar and Judah. Unlike Menn's research, Midrash literature does not fall into the current research's remit. Different than Blachman's comprehensive undertaking of the reception history of Genesis 38, this research is more narrowly focused on its early reception. Finally, unlike Cowan's work, this study goes beyond the bounds of the Hebrew corpus.

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<sup>25</sup> Margaret Parks Cowan, "Genesis 38: The Story of Judah and Tamar and Its Role in the Ancestral Narratives of Genesis," Ph.D. diss., (Vanderbilt University, 1990), 246.

## HEBREW SCRIPTURES

### *Introduction*

The story of Tamar and Judah comes out of the Hebrew tradition and was first fixed within that tradition in the book of Genesis.<sup>26</sup> This section briefly explores theories of authorship and source material and considers the canonical position of the tale as well as some of its literary features. Furthermore, the chapter addresses various exegetical issues within the text including language, social-historical features, political issues and new issues which have come to light as a result of more recent feminist biblical criticism.

### *Hebrew Text and Translation*

#### English Translation<sup>27</sup>

1 It happened at that time Judah went down and settled beside an Adullamite man whose name was Hirah.

2 There, Judah saw the daughter of a Canaanite man whose name was Shua'. He took her (as his wife) and went in to her.

3 She conceived and bore a son. He named him 'Ar.

4 She conceived again and bore a son. She named him Onan.

5 Yet again (conceiving) she bore a son. She named him Shelah. She was in Kheziv when she bore him.

#### Hebrew Text<sup>28</sup>

1 ויהי בעת ההוא וירד יהודה מאת אחיו ויט עד־  
איש עדלמי ושמו חירה:

2 וירא־שם יהודה בת־איש כנעני ושמו שוע  
ויקחה ויבא אליה:

3 ותהר ותלד בן ויקרא את־שמו ער:

4 ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותקרא את־שמו אונן:

5 ותסף עוד ותלד בן ותקרא את־שמו שלה והיה  
בכזיב בלדתה אתו

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<sup>26</sup> Theories of source material will be addressed later in this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> The translation is my own.

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 38:1-30 HMT-W4.

6 Judah took a wife for 'Ar his firstborn. Her name was Tamar.

6 ויקח יהודה אשה לער בכורו ושמה תמר:

7 Then 'Ar, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the eyes of the LORD and the LORD caused him to die.

7 ויהי ער בכור יהודה רע בעיני יהוה וימתהו יהוה:

8 Judah said to Onan go in to your brother's wife, do the duty of the brother-in-law to her and raise up offspring for your brother.

8 ויאמר יהודה לאונן בא אל־אשת אחיך ויבם אתה והקם זרע לאחיך:

9 Onan knew that the offspring was not his. Whenever he went into his brother's wife, he wasted (the semen) on the ground in order to not give offspring to his brother.

9 וידע אונן כי לא לו יהיה הזרע והיה א־בא אל־אשת אחיו ושחת ארצה לבלתי נתן־זרע לאחיו:

10 That which he did was evil in the eyes of the LORD and he caused him also to die.

10 וירע בעיני יהוה אשר עשה וימת גם־אתו:

11 Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in the house of your father until Selah my son grows because he thought he might also die like his brothers. Tamar left and remained in the house of her father.

11 ויאמר יהודה לתמר כלתו שבי אלמנה בית־אביך עד־יגדל שלה בני כי אמר פְּרִימוֹת גַּם־הוא כאחיו ותלך תמר ותשב בית אביה:

12 The days increased and the daughter of Shua', the wife of Judah died. When Judah was comforted he went up to Timnah to the sheep shearers of his flock, he and his friend Hīrah, the Adullamite.

12 וירבו הימים ותמת בת־שוע אשת־יהודה וינחם יהודה ויעל על־גְּזֵי צֶאֱנוּ הוא וחירה רעהו העדלמי תמנתה:

13 When it was reported to Tamar, "Behold! Your father-in-law went up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

13 ויגד לתמר לאמר הנה חמיך עלה תמנתה לגז צאנו:

14 She took off her widow garments, put on a veil, wrapped herself and sat at the entrance of 'Ainain which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that Selah had grown and she had not been given to him as a wife.

14 ותסר בגדי אלמנותה מעליה ותכס בצעיף ותתעלף ותשב בפתח עינים אשר על־דרך תמנתה כי ראתה כִּי־גדל שלה והוא לא־נתנה לו לאשה:

15 Judah saw her and thought her to be a prostitute because she covered her face.

15 ויראה יהודה ויחשבה לזונה כי כסתה פניה:

16 He approached her on the way and said, "Come please, let me go in to you," because he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. She said, "What will you give me so that you might come in to me?"

16 ויט אליה אל־הדרך ויאמר הבה־נא אבוא אליך כי לא ידע כי כלתו הוא ותאמר מה־תתן־לי כי תבוא אלי:

17 He said, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, "Only if you give a pledge until you send it."

17 ויאמר אנכי אשלח גדי־עזים מן־הצאן ותאמר אם־תתן ערבון עד שלחך:

18 He said, "What pledge shall I give to you?" She said, "Your seal, your cord and your staff which is in your hand." He gave them to her and went into her. She conceived by him.

18 ויאמר מה הערבון אשר אתן־לך ותאמר חתמך ופתילך ומטך אשר בידך ויתן־לה ויבא אליה ותהר לו:

19 She rose, left and took off her veil. She dressed in her widow garments.

19 ותקם ותלך ותסר צעיפה מעליה ותלבש בגדי אלמנותה:

20 Judah sent a young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite to take the pledge from the hand of the woman, but he did not find her.

20 וישלח יהודה את־גדי העזים ביד רעהו העדלמי לקחת הערבון מיד האשה ולא מצאה:

21 He asked the people in her area, "Where is the woman associated with temple activity who is by 'Ainaim on the road?" They said, "There is no woman associated with temple activity here."

21 וישאל את־אנשי מקמה לאמר איה הקדשה הוא בעינים על־הדרך ויאמרו לא־היתה בזה קדשה:

22 He returned to Judah and said, "I did not find her. Also, the people of the area said there was no woman associated with temple activity there."

22 וישב אל־יהודה ויאמר לא מצאתיה וגם אנשי המקום אמרו לא־היתה בזה קדשה:

23 Judah said, "Let her keep for herself (the things) lest we be an object of contempt. Behold! I sent this kid and you did not find her."

23 ויאמר יהודה תקח־לה פן נהיה לבזו הנה שלחתי הגדי הזה ואתה לא מצאתה:

24 After three months, Judah was told, "Your

24 ויהי | כמשלש חדשים ויגד ליהודה לאמר

daughter-in-law, Tamar, has been sexually promiscuous and has also conceived through sexually promiscuous actions.” Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned.”

זנתה תמר כלתך וגם הנה הרה לזנונים ויאמר יהודה הוציאוה ותשרף:

25 As she was brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law saying, “By the man who possesses these, I conceived.” She said, “Identify please to whom these, the seal, the cord and the staff belong.”

25 הוא מוצאת והיא שלחה אל־חמיה לאמר לאיש אשר־אלה לו אנכי הרה ותאמר הכר־נא למי החתמת והפתילים והמטה האלה:

26 Judah recognized and said, “She is more in the right than I because I did not give her Selah, my son, and he did not again know her.”

26 ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני כִּי־על־כן לא־נתתיה לשלה בני ולא־ייסוף עוד לדעתה :

27 At that time of her delivery, twins were found to be in her womb.

27 ויהי בעת לדתה והנה תאומים בבטנה:

28 While she was delivering, one put out a hand. The midwife took it and tied a crimson thread around his hand saying, “This one came out first.”

28 ויהי בלדתה ויתן־יד ותקח המילדת ותקשר על־ידו שני לאמר זה יצא ראשונה:

29 As his hand returned, behold, his brother came out. She said, “What a breach you made for yourself!” and he named him Perez.

29 ויהי | כמשיב ידו והנה יצא אחיו ותאמר מה־פרצת עליך פרץ ויקרא שמו פרץ:

30 After his brother who had the crimson thread around his hand came out, he called him Zerah.

30 ואחר יצא אחיו אשר על־ידו השני ויקרא שמו זרח: ס

### *Form and Source Criticism*

One of the major projects of the eighteenth through twentieth centuries in biblical scholarship was to identify all of the components or sources which went into creating the fixed

text.<sup>29</sup> While the twentieth century project has heightened scholars' awareness to the complex process through which the text was produced, few definitive statements can be made about source material due to lack of evidence. Recognizing the limitations of source criticism, the current study is primarily focused on the text in its final form and the later reception of it. Nevertheless, a few comments on earlier scholars' research in this area is appropriate.

Following the documentary theory in its classic form, commentators universally agree that the story of Tamar and Judah was penned by the Yahwist.<sup>30</sup> Like with all of the Yahwist work, it is suggested that the writer compiled much older oral traditions that were floating among the people for many years.<sup>31</sup>

### *Literary Criticism*

The odd placement of the story within the larger narrative between the sale of Joseph into slavery and Joseph's incident in Potiphar's house has caused many commentators consternation. Prior to the modern concerns with dating and the historical accuracy of the text, the medieval Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra puzzled over the chronology of the story within its broader literary context. In his writing, Ibn Ezra tried to determine to when the opening line "it happened at that time" was referring.<sup>32</sup> He reasons it could not possibly refer to the time of Joseph's sale due to other issues of chronology later in the narrative. In the current era,

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<sup>29</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 138.

<sup>30</sup> For a brief introduction to documentary theory see Ephraim Speiser, *Genesis*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. vol. 1, Anchor Bible, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), xx-xxvii; Hermann Gunkel and Mark E. Biddle, *Genesis*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 395; Gerhard Von Rad and John H. Marks, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Revised Edition, Old Testament Library, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 357.

<sup>31</sup> Von Rad, *Genesis*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Jean Louis Ska, "The Study of the Book of Genesis: The Beginning of Critical Reading," in *The Book of Genesis Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*. *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements*, eds. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), Accessed September 14, 2017. Ebook Central Academic Complete, 9.

scholars are still grappling with the placement of this particular story within the larger Joseph narrative in Genesis 37-50 using the tools of literary criticism to work out the solution.

Some scholars hold that the story is not at all a part of the Joseph narrative on either side of it. Gerhard Von Rad writes, “Every attentive reader can see that the story of Judah and Tamar has no connection at all with the strictly organized Joseph story.”<sup>33</sup> While others do agree with Von Rad’s analysis including Ephriam Speiser and Hermann Gunkel, his assertion that *every* reader sees as he does is certainly an overstatement.<sup>34</sup> In opposition to Von Rad’s analysis, Nahum Sarna notes that this chapter is linked to those on either side of it through the use of verbs stemming from the same roots including *y-r-d*, *n-kh-r* and *n-ḥ-m*.<sup>35</sup> Others see other points of connection between the story and the surrounding text, but perhaps the clearest way to link all of the stories is through the framing phrase at the beginning of chapter 37, “And these are the descendants of Jacob.” Richard Clifford argues that the reader is to expect stories of more than one child because of this framing verse.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Detailed Analysis*

The opening of the story establishes the basic facts in quick succession laying the groundwork for the more involved plot that follows. The setting of the tale is in the area that would become known as Judah after the male protagonist in this story later in the biblical narrative. With the identification of the Adullamite in the opening verse, the story is likely to be

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<sup>33</sup> Von Rad and Marks, *Genesis*, 356.

<sup>34</sup> Gunkel and Biddle, *Genesis*, 380; Speiser, *Genesis*, 300.

<sup>35</sup> Nahum Sarna, *Be-reshit*, vol. 1, *The JPS Torah Commentary: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., eds. Chaim Potok, Nahum Sarna, Jacob Milgrom, Jeffrey Tigay, and Jewish Publication Society, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 264.

<sup>36</sup> Richard Clifford, “Genesis 37-50: Joseph or Jacob Story?” in Evans, Lohr, and Petersen, 213.

understood as happening in the Shephelah.<sup>37</sup> The narrator informs the reader of another group of people in the area, the Canaanites, amongst whom Judah finds a wife. Some Jewish commentators have rejected the view that the adjective modifying woman is referring to a people rather understanding the word כנעני in a generic sense to mean merchant. According to Sarna, however, that view is less based on the text itself and more on the commentators understanding of the later ban on intermarriage.<sup>38</sup> The identification of the Canaanites, however, is significant in the larger context of the Hebrew Bible. While there are certainly texts that one can point to which paint the Canaanite neighbors in a negative light, this text counters that narrative. Ultimately it is not the Adullamites or the Canaanites who act in an unrighteous manner, it is Judah himself.<sup>39</sup>

Quickly setting out all of the characters, the reader learns Judah has three sons. According to the Hebrew text, Judah names the first child, and his wife, Shua, name the other two. Although all of the names have meanings outside of their use as proper names, the names of some of the characters bear special significance. The first son, 'Ar (ער) is an inversion of the word evil (רע), thus, creating a word play in Gen 38:7 where evil is used to describe the son's actions.<sup>40</sup> Judah finds the oldest son a wife, her family and tribe unknown. Her name Tamar (תמר), however, is the word for a date tree and might have some reference to the fertility theme in the story.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 265.

<sup>38</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 265.

<sup>39</sup> Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible*, (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 265.

<sup>40</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 266.

<sup>41</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 266.



The plot of the story begins to take a more complex turn with the death of Judah's first-born son at the hands of God as a result of his wickedness. Using a circumlocution for sexual intercourse, Judah asks his second son to impregnate his brother's widow.<sup>42</sup> This request of Judah's, while odd to the modern reader, has precedence in the ancient world and falls into a category of marriage called levirate marriage. In a levirate marriage, a man marries his brother's widow.<sup>43</sup> Some have suggested the reason behind this being the preservation of the brother's name while others emphasize the property implications.<sup>44</sup> Whatever the motivation, this practice is well-attested in the region at that time and is found in Middle Assyrian law, Hittite law as well as a contract from Nuzi.<sup>45</sup>

Acting in accordance with his father's will and the broader culture, the second brother goes to Tamar, but deliberately does not impregnate her spilling his semen on the ground. The reader is never told what earned the first son death at the hands of God, but the text does tell the reader this act of *coitus interruptus* earns the second brother, Onan, death by God's hands. The narrator of the Hebrew text indicates that Onan was motivated to do this because he knew that the child would not be his. Although the text does not explicitly mention concerns surrounding inheritance, modern commentaries suggest that early audiences would understand the inheritance implications. It is possible that Onan did not want to diminish his own proportion of inheritance by having it split with a child understood to be his deceased brother's child and not his own.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Speiser, *Genesis*, 298.

<sup>43</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 267.

<sup>44</sup> Von Rad, *Genesis*, 357.

<sup>45</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 266; Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 267.

<sup>46</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 267.

With two sons dead and only one left, Judah takes control of the situation. Believing that Tamar is the reason for his other son's death, he devises a plan to protect his last son.<sup>47</sup> Telling Tamar that his last son is too young for marriage, he sends her back to her family home of origin presumably until the youngest is old enough to marry. Based on the way the story unfolds, however, the reader understands Judah's reasoning to be only a pretense; he does not intend to send his youngest son to Tamar. Tamar's status as a widow in her father's house leaves her in a position of perpetual uncertainty and unable to marry anyone else.<sup>48</sup>

The text suggests that a long period of time passes before the action resumes. Judah's wife has passed away and he is now a widow. While travelling out of town for a sheep-shearing festival, Tamar hears word that he will be passing through her area.<sup>49</sup> Hearing this news, she takes off her widow's garments, wraps herself in a veil and sits down by the gate 'Aynim (עינים) waiting for her father-in-law. The name of the gate is likely significant as it means two eyes and plays into themes of seeing and recognizing.<sup>50</sup> The Hebrew text is "deliberately suggestive and opaque" making no mention of Tamar's motive for putting on the veil and sitting by the gate.<sup>51</sup> It is certainly not clear that she was intending to play the prostitute. Seeing Judah's third son, Shelah, matured the narrator indicates that she knows Judah has deceived her.

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<sup>47</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 267; Gunkel and Biddle, *Genesis*, 398.

<sup>48</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 268.

<sup>49</sup> Sarna, highlighting another reference to sheep shearing in Genesis 31:19, indicates that these were festive times in the ancient world; Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 267.

<sup>50</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 269.

<sup>51</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, "The Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts," in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel*, Overtures to Biblical Theology, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 203.

Not recognizing Tamar because her face is covered, Judah thought her to be a זונה. The word זונה is often translated into English as "prostitute." As pointed out by feminist commentators, this translation, however, is problematic as the concept of a prostitute is highly contextual to each culture, and Phyllis Bird warns against importing a modern understanding of the word.<sup>52</sup> It is probably safe to assume that, like many ancient institutions and professions, prostitution functioned in a way not analogous to modern Western prostitution. Judah then propositions Tamar. The narrator reiterates that Judah is unaware of Tamar's true identity. Some have suggested that the text is attempting to maintain some of Judah's moral stature by underscoring his ignorance.<sup>53</sup>

Tamar takes advantage of her veiled encounter with Judah and asks him what he will give her in exchange for intercourse. He offers her a kid from his flock which she accepts as long as he leaves with her collateral. Specifically, she requests his signet ring, cord and staff. Modern scholars can only speculate as to what these pieces of the material culture looked like, but the context would indicate that these were highly personal and therefore identifying pieces.<sup>54</sup> Sarna takes his analysis of the exchange a step farther in saying that Judah's willingness to give Tamar these should be understood as proof of his moral substance.<sup>55</sup> Earlier details of the story, namely his deceptive behavior, raise serious questions about the depth of this moral substance.

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<sup>52</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, "'To Play the Harlot': An Inquiry into an Old Testament Metaphor" in *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel, Overtures to Biblical Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 224.

<sup>53</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 268.

<sup>54</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 268.

<sup>55</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 269.

Judah and Tamar's sexual encounter results in conception. Tamar leaves Judah and changes her clothing back to her widow's garment. Following through on his offer of a kid goat, Judah sends his friend, the Adullamite from the beginning of the story, to find the woman and exchange the kid for his identifying objects. His friend is unable to find Tamar. As he asks the people of that area for the קדשה, they tell him that such woman does not exist in their area. The use of this Hebrew term קדשה to identify Tamar is significant in that it differs from Judah's private assessment of Tamar as a זונה. Bird suggests that part of the significance in this shift in terminology lies in the fact that it is used between Canaanites (as opposed to Judahites) and that it is used in a public setting (as opposed to Judah's private assessment).<sup>56</sup> The קדשה is certainly a more respectable figure to inquire after. According to Frymer-Kensky a קדשה has a number of roles from garment making to birthing children, Judah could be paying her for any number of services. A זונה, on the other hand, is most certainly only for sexual favors.<sup>57</sup>

Judah's friend returns with the news that he was unable to find the woman and that nobody knew anything about the קדשה. In order to save face, Judah instructs his friend to let the woman keep his valuable items. After three months, it becomes evident that Tamar is pregnant. Judah is told that she has sexually misbehaved (זנתה) and as a result of her sexual misbehavior (זנונים) is pregnant. Judah responds by having her brought out to be burned. This request has perplexed some commentators as a more standard form of punishment for the

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<sup>56</sup> Bird, "The Harlot," 207.

<sup>57</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 272.

action of which Tamar is accused is either strangulation or stoning.<sup>58</sup> The text uses a rare passive participle (מוצאת) to underscore Tamar's perceived powerlessness in this situation.<sup>59</sup>

It is at this juncture Tamar reveals the signet ring, cord and staff to her father-in-law telling him that the owner of those items impregnated her asking him to identify whose they are. At this point Judah confesses his ownership of the items and makes the important statement, "She is more right/righteous than I" because he withheld his son from her.

The story resolves in the birth of twins. According to Gunkel the presence of twins indicates Yahweh's blessing on her womb and are a reward for her heroism.<sup>60</sup> Others suggest that the presence of twins is a way of compensating Judah for the loss of his two sons.<sup>61</sup> In terms of the story's canonical significance the birth of the first twin, Perez, as an indicator of the pre-eminence of that clan in Judah's tribe.<sup>62</sup>

### *Conclusion*

This short explanation of the text certainly does not explore Gen 38 from every possible angle. The text is rich with highly complex characters, the main two of which engage in morally questionable behavior. The text portrays Judah as making multiple misjudgments such as not understanding that Tamar had no responsibility for his children's' death, mistaking Tamar for a prostitute, and unjustly calling for her execution in public. Tamar, for her part, although not being judged by the text harshly, her actions most certainly would be called into question in cultures where the sexual activity of women is highly regulated as in Judah's culture. That said,

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<sup>58</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 270.

<sup>59</sup> Frymer-Kensky, *Reading*, 273.

<sup>60</sup> Gunkel and Biddle, *Genesis*, 402.

<sup>61</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 270.

<sup>62</sup> Sarna, *Be-reshit*, 270.

the language the narrator of the text uses with respect to Tamar has a neutral quality to it. The judgments leveled against Tamar in the text only come from the morally compromised Judah.

As is demonstrated in the following sections, this presentation of the story changes with each successive reiteration of the narrative in Greek and Aramaic. The way in which the narration of the plot and characters changes and through those changes one can see the connections to the people who created it and the environment in which they produced it.

## SEPTUAGINT

### *Introduction*

Within the field of reception history of the Hebrew Bible, little work has been done on the *LXX*'s rendering of Gen 38. Given the dearth of material on the topic, Blachman's small section devoted to the topic stands out as the authoritative analysis on the topic.<sup>63</sup> Blachman's work on Gen 38 in the *LXX*, however, makes claims about the text that are difficult to substantiate paying close attention to the details of the Greek text. In this section, a more thorough analysis than the one presented in Blachman's work is undertaken and a critique of Blachman's claims is put forth. While Blachman's analysis of the text presents the writer of the *LXX* as downplaying the character of Tamar or presenting her in a more negative light than the Hebrew text, the current research demonstrates that those claims are unsubstantiated. Instead, it is more appropriate to argue that Gen 38 in the *LXX* is reflective of broader trends in the *LXX* translation, and, unlike the Targum, the author of the *LXX* is less interested in altering the specific characters of Judah and Tamar in any idiosyncratic way and more interested in conforming the translation of this story in the *LXX* to broader patterns of translation of the Hebrew text into Greek.

The *LXX* is often thought of as the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures. This understanding, however, might be somewhat of a misrepresentation of a much more complex work. The *LXX* was formed over hundreds of years starting in the mid-fourth century BCE by

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<sup>63</sup> Blachman's section on the *LXX* is short and contains sparse citations which are mostly focused on sources dealing with targumic and pseudepigraphical literature, *The Transformation*, 104.

several writers; the details of this complex process of composition are obscure.<sup>64</sup> With respect to the translation of the Pentateuch, the text at hand, it was probably the earliest text translated into Greek during the mid-fourth century BCE in Alexandria, Egypt.<sup>65</sup> The translations of each section were first put onto scrolls, but during the second century CE with the development of the codex, the translations of the individual books of the Hebrew scriptures were able to be bound together in a single work.<sup>66</sup>

The reason for the translation of the Torah came about as a result of the circumstances of the Jewish community. Due to successive waves of dislocation from the land of Palestine, starting with the Babylonian exile, the speech and scribal communities using the Hebrew language underwent major changes.<sup>67</sup> These communities were required by the imperial powers that ruled over them to adopt their languages, notably Aramaic during the Persian period in Palestine and Greek during the Hellenistic period in Alexandria.<sup>68</sup> Although Jewish communities maintained some connection to the Hebrew language through the Hellenistic period in Alexandria, Greek was certainly the dominant language and Jews there were using it as their own.<sup>69</sup>

The translation of the Torah into Greek raises particularly challenging historical questions such as how, why, and by whom was this translation undertaken. The *Letter of*

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<sup>64</sup> Karen H. Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 30.

<sup>65</sup> Jobes and Silva, *Invitation*, 45.

<sup>66</sup> Jobes and Silva, *Invitation*, 31.

<sup>67</sup> William Schniedewind, *A Social History of the Hebrew Language*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 126.

<sup>68</sup> Schniedewind, *A Social*, 139.

<sup>69</sup> Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 77. Modrzejewski substantiates this claim by pointing to the number of Greek Jewish writings (more than five hundred) from the period, to the number of Aramaic pieces (three or four).



*Aristeas*, one of the main texts directly dealing with these questions paints a picture of the LXX's *raison d'être*. According to the letter dating to the second century BCE, the translation was produced at the behest of the Ptolemaic king.<sup>70</sup> Gathering a group of Jewish men learned in Greek, Hebrew and the Law, seventy-two to be exact, the letter describes the process by which they develop an authoritative translation. The letter states, "the translation has been well and piously made and is in every respect accurate, it is right that it should remain in its present form and that no revision take place."<sup>71</sup>

Scholars, however, tend to not take this description at face value, because of the more extraordinary elements; the piece reads like a legend and not a "history" the way this term is understood in the modern period. Thus, scholars continue to raise questions like who undertook the project of translating the Hebrew Torah into Greek? For whom was it undertaken and for what purpose? Different schools of thought exist with respect to how these questions should be answered. Sebastian Brock suggests that Jewish institutional concerns motivated the translation, and that the *primary* goal of the text was educational but not precluding any liturgical function.<sup>72</sup> Joseph Modrzejewski suggests that needs of the royal administration, as well as genuine curiosity possibly, motivated the translation.<sup>73</sup> Henry St. John Thackery confidently claims that the translation was produced in connection with synagogue

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<sup>70</sup> Arie van der Kooij, "The Promulgation of the Pentateuch in Greek According to the Letter of Aristeas," in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, eds. Jutta Jokiranta, Anssi Voitila and Raija Sollamo, (Leiden: Brill, 2008), eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed November 20, 2017), 179.

<sup>71</sup> Translation of this section of the *Letter of Aristeas* taken from Van Der Kooij, "The Promulgation," 180.

<sup>72</sup> Sebastian Brock, "The Phenomenon of the Septuagint," in *The Witness of Tradition: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference Held at Woudschoten, 1970*, ed. M.A. Beek, OtSt 17, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 16.

<sup>73</sup> Modrzejewski, *The Jews*, 104.

worship.<sup>74</sup> Combining these different strands of thinking Leonard Greenspoon argues that the translation likely emerges out of different contexts and that it is possible various factors, internal to the Jewish community and external in the political sphere, motivated the translation.<sup>75</sup>

While many sections of the Hebrew scriptures as preserved in the Masoretic Text closely mirror those in the *LXX*, others are substantially different. Moreover, there are parts of the *LXX* that do not have parallel text in the Masoretic Text. Various hypotheses have been developed for why this is the case, but generally fall into two categories of explanations. One is that the Greek author(s) was making intentional editorial decisions.<sup>76</sup> The second option is that the author(s) was working off of a different *vorlage*, a prior version of the Hebrew text and one different than that of the Masoretes.<sup>77</sup> This raises questions for those who study the differences between texts and what those differences might mean. When comparing the two texts, the researcher must hold out the possibility that the Greek author(s) was creating a translation of the Hebrew text which closely mirrored the Hebrew text, but possibly not the Hebrew text of the Masoretes. Simultaneously, they must entertain the idea that the author(s) were not attempting to hold to the Hebrew text in a particularly rigorous way.

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<sup>74</sup> Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship: A Study in Origins*, Schweich Lectures; 1920 (Munich: Kraus Reprint, 1980), 11.

<sup>75</sup> Leonard Greenspoon, "At the Beginning: The Septuagint as a Jewish Bible Translation," in *"Translation is Required:" The Septuagint in Retrospect and Prospect*, no. 56 *Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, ed. Robert J.V. Hiebert, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 168.

<sup>76</sup> Greenspoon, "At the Beginning," 161.

<sup>77</sup> Greenspoon, "At the Beginning," 161; Jobes and Silva, *Invitation*, 21.

### *Common Septuagint Features in Genesis 38*

The translation of this section of Genesis is typical of *LXX* translation in many ways. The proper names and toponyms have been adjusted to their Greek equivalents.<sup>78</sup> For example, יודה becomes Ἰούδας, and עינימים becomes Αἰνάμ. Of course, in the latter example, the double entendre present in the Hebrew is not present in the Greek. While these alterations suggest that there were no direct equivalents in Greek, *LXX*'s rendering of Gen: 38:12 demonstrates a misreading of the Hebrew text. The *LXX* seems to mistake the Hebrew word friend (רַעֵה in construct form) used in Gen 38:12 for the word shepherd (רֹעֶה).<sup>79</sup> *LXX* offers the translation ποιμὴν which means shepherd. The translation error seems clearly to be a misreading of the Hebrew text as opposed to an ideological alteration or substantive misunderstanding.

One of the areas where the *LXX* often does not align well with the Hebrew text is the issue of translating particular religious practices.<sup>80</sup> In this passage, levirate marriage would be an area where one might expect to find an unfit translation or gloss explaining the term.<sup>81</sup> While the *LXX* stumbles over the translation of this word in other passages, Gen 38:8 renders the verb fittingly as γάμβρεύω.<sup>82</sup> Blachman states that the *LXX* “offers an explanation” as “non-Jews of the time may not have been familiar with the levirate custom or the vocabulary connected with its practice.”<sup>83</sup> It is difficult, however, to support this claim using the Greek text as it would appear no additional or explanatory wording has been inserted.

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<sup>78</sup> Natalio Fernández Marcos, *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*, trans. Wilfred G.E. Watson, (Boston: Brill, 2000), 24.

<sup>79</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 105.

<sup>80</sup> E. Kutsch, “יבם”, *TDOT* 5:370; *GELS*, s.v. “γάμβρεύω.”

<sup>81</sup> See Deuteronomy 25:7 in which the *LXX* translates the Hebrew verb יבם as a noun.

<sup>82</sup> E. Kutsch, “יבם”, *TDOT* 5:370;

<sup>83</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 104.

Finally, the *LXX*, mirroring targumic literature, avoids anthropomorphic language.<sup>84</sup> This is demonstrated in the way the *LXX* renders the Hebraic “the eyes of the Lord” (בעיני יהוה) idiomatic expression in Gen 38:10 as “before the Lord” ἐναντίον τοῦ θεοῦ. What is notable about this translation in the *LXX* context is not that it avoided a literal translation of the Hebrew but that it used the word θεός for יהוה. Typically, the translator of the Pentateuch uses κύριος for the tetragrammaton, and, particularly for this idiomatic expression, the use of θεός is unique.<sup>85</sup> Although there does not seem to be any discernible agenda on the author’s part for choosing this translation, the author does break with convention.

### *Veiling and Adorning*

One of the key differences between the texts with respect to how Tamar is portrayed is the addition of the verb καλλοπίζω to describe Tamar’s taking of the veil in Gen 38:14.<sup>86</sup> In contrast to the *LXX* description of her action, the Hebrew describes her action using the verb התעלף. The difference in the connotations of the two verbs is substantial. This particular Hebrew verb is only found in one other context in the Hebrew Bible in the book of Jonah. In that context, it carries the connotation of becoming faint. In its Genesis context, it means to wrap or cover as suggested by its root, עלף. The Greek word καλλοπίζω, however, carries an entirely different connotation. Like its Hebrew counterpart, it has limited use in biblical literature, but the word it most commonly corresponds to in the Hebrew corpus is יפה which is often translated as being beautiful. Its other use in the biblical corpus is the apocryphal book of

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<sup>84</sup> Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 66; Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 20.

<sup>85</sup> Marcos, *The Septuagint*, 27.

<sup>86</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 105.

Judith to describe how the protagonist adorns herself with the express intent to seduce the men of the camp. The very plot of the story depends on and is built around the protagonist's seductive abilities.

The Greek word selected for translation of the Genesis text is not neutral in connotation, but very clearly suggests that the translator had an understanding of what Tamar's action of wrapping herself in a veil was intended to accomplish, the seduction of her father-in-law. The Hebrew text, however, in no way suggests that her intent in donning the veil was intended as a seductive act or serve as a signal to Judah that she was a prostitute. In neighboring cultures, it was strictly prohibited for prostitutes to wear a veil.<sup>87</sup> The importance of this fact is of course debatable as Bird notes that the dress is highly specific to culture, what can be argued is that this prohibition in neighboring cultures can at least raise questions regarding how the veil might be understood in this context.<sup>88</sup>

#### *What Type of Woman?*

As discussed in the previous section, the Hebrew text uses two different words, זונה and קדשה, to describe what Tamar was thought to be as she sat by the gate.<sup>89</sup> The former, often rendered in English as prostitute, is what the narrator indicates Judah believed while the latter is what Judah's Adullamite friend (or in *LXX* his shepherd) uses to describe the mysterious woman sitting by the gate to the townspeople. Contextually in this story, it seems as if קדשה might have been more socially acceptable- either in language only or role- than זונה because

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<sup>87</sup> Sarna, *Genesis*, 268. Sarna notes that Middle Assyrian law requires an unmarried cult prostitute to not be veiled with the punishment of violation being flogging.

<sup>88</sup> Bird, "The Harlot," 204 n. 17.

<sup>89</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 105.

the friend intentionally alters his language for the public audience. The *LXX*, however, flattens this nuance by using πόρνη for both words without any qualifying adjective or explanatory gloss.

The distinction between the two words stands out in Hebrew, why would a Greek translator not make any attempt to distinguish between the two words?<sup>90</sup> First, this suggests that the culture which made the distinction between those two social roles as well as the language that described them was erased from memory by the second century BCE. Second, and more importantly, it either suggests that the translator did not know how to render the difference in translation or that the translator did not believe the difference to be important. For the translator, there was no more or less socially acceptable form of prostitution; there was one type and that was the only type Tamar could be in translation. The flattening of the nuance constrains the audience's thinking about the story. The use of the two different terms raises questions about whether or not Judah was attempting to save face. It also suggests that Tamar might have understood her own action as mimicking that of a קדשה and not a זונה. Does this possibility matter to the reader and the interpreter and could it cause them to understand the character and action of Tamar differently than the Greek text even allows by its language?

#### *A Grievous Act?*

One of the claims Blachman makes about the *LXX*'s translation of the Gen 38 narrative is that “a meaningful addition” is made in verse 24. Blachman writes that Judah hears Tamar “has *grievously* played the harlot, and behold, she is with child by whoredom.<sup>91</sup>” The emphasis

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<sup>90</sup> English translations often address the difference by using “prostitute” for זונה and “temple prostitute” for קדשה as the root of the word suggests the role was tied to cultic activity in some way.

<sup>91</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 106.

above is of course added by Blachman to highlight the word that was added in the *LXX*'s translation. The claim that this word was added, however, is unwarranted. The verse in the *LXX* reads, ἐγένετο δὲ μετὰ τρίμηνον ἀπηγγέλη τῷ Ἰούδα λέγοντες Ἐκπεπόρνευκεν Θαμὰρ ἡ νύμφη σου, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχει ἕκ πορνείας. εἶπεν δὲ Ἰούδας Ἐξαγάγετε αὐτήν καὶ κατακαυθήτω.<sup>92</sup> An analysis of the critical apparatus in Weaver's edition of the Greek Genesis does not note any variant manuscript containing this addition. Moreover, nothing within the Greek words themselves contains any hint of additional weight or grievousness to the activity. The Greek verb, ἐκπεπόρνευκεν, chosen to translate the Hebrew, הַנִּיחַ, is an absolutely fitting translation.<sup>93</sup> Blachman's claim that "grievously" was added into the Greek text is likely rooted in the English translation of the *LXX* produced by Brenton which adds the word "grievously."<sup>94</sup> Unfortunately, as can be seen, this English translation is not reflective of the Greek text.

#### *Not More Righteous than I?*

Blachman also makes the claim in her writing that specific details of the *LXX*'s interpretation of verse 26 "indicate that the author is not very interested in Tamar's character."<sup>95</sup> The English translation of the verse she cites reads "And Judas knew *them*, and said, Tamar *is cleared* rather than I, for as much as I gave her not to Selom my son, and he knew her not again." As in the last example, Blachman seems to be relying on Brenton's English translation of the Greek text to support this claim. Unfortunately, with respect to her argument, the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts she identifies are not actually differences.

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<sup>92</sup> John William Weavers, *Genesis*, SVTG 1, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 367.

<sup>93</sup> One can consult GELS, s.v. "ἐκπορνεύω."

<sup>94</sup> Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986).

<sup>95</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 106.

The issues she raises are issues with Brenton's English translation of the Greek text and in the Greek text itself.

First, Blachman claims that the author of the *LXX* portrays Judah as being more interested in his pledge articles than in Tamar. The Hebrew text does not attach a pronoun to the verb recognize (נכר) which allows for ambiguity about what exactly Judah recognized. While Blachman is right, that the Hebrew text could be understood as referring to Tamar, it does not necessarily have to be referring to Tamar. Even if, however, Blachman's argument is absolutely accurate, the claim that the *LXX* changes the focus to the pledge articles through the use of a plural pronoun is entirely erroneous. The *LXX* omits the pronoun exactly like the Hebrew text and reads "ἐπέγνω δὲ Ἰούδας καὶ..."<sup>96</sup> Through the omission of the pronoun, the Greek text leaves the interpretation up to the reader and does not attempt to decipher what the Hebrew text left opaque.

Blachman also supports the claim that the author is less interested in Tamar's character by using a weaker word "cleared" instead of the Hebrew קצץ which she translates as "righteous." The word used in the *LXX* is δικαιώω which is given a gloss "to declare just and righteous" and is a common word used to translate the Hebrew root קצץ in the *LXX*.<sup>97</sup> Blachman's claim that there was an authorial agenda to downplay the character of Tamar in no way is borne out in the Greek text. One can only make this claim by looking only at the Brenton's English translation of the Greek text.

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<sup>96</sup> Weavers, *Genesis*, 368. The critical apparatus in the text does not indicate any variant manuscripts which use the pronoun.

<sup>97</sup> *GELS*, s.v. "δικαιώω." If one runs a search for uses of קצץ in the Hebrew Bible on a Bible software program like Accordance and examines the parallel verses in the *LXX*, it is clear that the author of Genesis was following translating convention in using δικαιώω.



### *Conclusion*

In many ways, Gen 38 in the *LXX* possesses many of the same features as other parts of the Greek Pentateuch. It alters some characters' names and toponyms to fit the Greek alphabetic system and removes the idiomatic, anthropomorphic phrase in reference to the divine.<sup>98</sup> In the area of describing Jewish religious custom, namely the practice of levirate marriage, it gives a more appropriate translation than found in the Pentateuchal legal text describing the custom.

Although the text does well in accurately translating this particular custom, there are a couple significant areas in which the text is less than faithful to the Hebrew version, one concerning the issue of veiling and the second concerning the type of woman Judah believed Tamar to be. With respect to the issue of veiling, the Greek text certainly implies that Tamar had an agenda to seduce her father-in-law which is inconsistent with the message of the Hebrew text. This might indicate that in the social world of Alexandrian, Greek-speaking Jews, they could conceive of no other reason for Tamar to take a veil than for the express purpose of seduction. Underlying this could be a broader cultural understanding of women in society although this point needs further research to substantiate it. It is telling, however, that the other place this word is used is in the apocryphal text of Judith as her character is much more explicitly a seductress than the Hebrew version of Tamar.

With respect to the *LXX*'s obfuscation of the nuances of קדשה and זונה, it is clear that the current confusion surrounding the exact social location of these categories of women is not

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<sup>98</sup> Marcos, *The Septuagint*, 24.

new to modern biblical scholarship.<sup>99</sup> By the time the *LXX* was translated, these categories had already been lost along with suitable vocabulary. These issues do not suggest an authorial intent to alter the sense of the text; however, it does indicate that there was a significant cultural gap between the Hebrew speaking community that wrote the story and the Greek speaking community rewriting the story that the translator was unable to bridge.

Although these alterations are significant, on the whole, the translation offered in the *LXX* does not indicate, as Blachman suggests, that the author is either downplaying or uninterested in the character of Tamar. As demonstrated in this section, the majority of the evidence to which Blachman points in order to support these claims are misinterpretation of the Greek text on her part. A more accurate statement of the author's relationship to Tamar is that the understanding of her was likely filtered through a cultural lens provided by the author's social location.

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<sup>99</sup> Bird, in her article, describes in great detail some of the manifest differences in the terms for a modern English-speaking audience for whom the terms are not intuitive. Bird, "To Play."

## TARGUMIM

### *Introduction*

The *LXX* gives the reader hints that the social world of the translator is different than the world in which the Hebrew Bible was composed. The Targums, however, demonstrate in explicit terms that the Jewish community in Palestine (or at least segments of its leadership) believed a modified text should replace the Hebrew text filled with deficiencies in light of the new social situation. The following section explores the numerous ways in which the writers of the Targums purposefully shape the narrative through their method of translation and interpretation to fit the new context.

In its plain meaning the Aramaic word *targum* means translation, but it has come to represent a genre of literature which deals with translation and interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures in Aramaic.<sup>100</sup> Like with the Greek *LXX*, the need for these translations came with the rise of an imperial power. As Aramaic became the language of administration, it replaced Hebrew for doing any type of official business or trade in Palestine.<sup>101</sup> It also displaced it as a sacred tongue; Bowker writes, "Translation became a part of the attempt to make scripture meaningful in the present."<sup>102</sup> Aramaic was embraced early on as it was interwoven with the Hebrew text as in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel.<sup>103</sup>

Targum represents a unique genre. Like the *LXX*, Targums are translations of the Hebrew text. That said, the genre goes beyond word-for-word translation and offers interpretation

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<sup>100</sup> John Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 3.

<sup>101</sup> Schniedewind, *A Social*, 140.

<sup>102</sup> Bowker, *The Targums*, 8.

<sup>103</sup> Bowker, *The Targums*, 3.

through word glosses and expansions as well.<sup>104</sup> Targumic literature is different, however, than another type of genre called the pseudepigrapha which are texts that claim the authority of a well-known figure from the Hebrew Bible and retell biblical stories.<sup>105</sup> In regards to the Targum of the Pentateuch, there are five major groups which include: Targum Onqelos (TO), Targum Neofiti (TN), The Fragmentary Targum (FT), The Cairo Geniza Fragments (CG), and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (PJ).<sup>106</sup> Of all the Targums, it has been argued that TO follows the Hebrew text most precisely.<sup>107</sup> This Targum stands in contrast to the others as it became the official text of the Jewish community in Babylon and gained a certain level of authority through established religious leaders during the first century of the common era. It was later fixed in the third century.<sup>108</sup>

Although TO had a privileged status in the liturgical sphere, a group of Pentateuchal Targum described by scholars as the Palestinian Targum circulated in the early centuries of the common era and includes the remainder of the Targums mentioned above.<sup>109</sup> In specific reference to Palestinian Targum fragments, Paul Kahle writes, "It would be a mistake to think of

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<sup>104</sup> Bowker, *The Targums*, 8; Paul V. M. Flesher describes the non-translated material as "expansions" or "additions" in "Exploring the Sources to the Synoptic Targums to the Pentateuch," in *Targum Studies Volume One: Textual and Contextual Studies in the Pentateuchal Targums*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, ed. Paul V.M. Flesher, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 106.

<sup>105</sup> Kugel, *The Bible*, 599.

<sup>106</sup> Bowker, *The Targums*, 28.

<sup>107</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 78.

<sup>108</sup> Bernard Grossfeld, Introduction to *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis: Translated with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes*, vol.6, *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1988), 8. Paul Kahle has argued that the text was fixed not before the fifth century CE, but that it was written during the second century. Paul Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1947).

<sup>109</sup> The term Palestinian Targum is one that arises out of the Jewish tradition originating at the turn of the 2nd century. For a history of the development of the term Palestinian Targum see Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis Translated with Apparatus and Notes*, *The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 1A, eds. Martin McNamara, Kevin Cathcart and Michael Maher (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 1.

this old Palestinian Targum of the Tora as analogous to Targum Onkelos. The Palestinian Targum was no authorized version; it was made for practical purposes and had no fixed text."<sup>110</sup> This practical purpose was to serve as a help for an Aramaic speaking community in their attempts to understand a Hebrew Torah. Kahle describes how TO employs a more artificial Aramaic, a literary Aramaic, as it is written to conform to the Hebrew text. The Palestinian Targums, on the other hand, reflect the spoken language of the Jewish, Aramaic-speaking communities in Palestine. TO was the religious establishment's version of the text, but it did not take hold in Palestine.<sup>111</sup> This study, as it is concerned with the dynamic relationship between communities and texts as described by Fishbane, finds value in examining both the official version and the popular versions. The Palestinian Targum, although not recognized by the establishment, were, albeit unofficially, recognized by the Jewish community and shaped their understanding of the text. Its recognition by the establishment is far less important than the question of whether or not it was produced and used by the Jewish community, and thus is a representation of that dynamic relationship between text and people.

The relationship between these texts has been compared to the relationship between the synoptic gospels of the New Testament; they are brought together by their compelling similarities, but in bringing them together their differences become more pronounced.<sup>112</sup> TJ contains the most expansions out of the set and appears to be a longer version of TN.<sup>113</sup> A study conducted on Genesis 28-50 in the Palestinian Targums demonstrated that the expansions

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<sup>110</sup> Kahle, *The Cairo*, 125.

<sup>111</sup> Kahle, *The Cairo*, 125.

<sup>112</sup> Flesher, "Exploring," 102.

<sup>113</sup> Flesher, "Exploring," 116.

found in FT which were not contained in TN were shared with CG.<sup>114</sup> This as well as other textual evidence indicates that FT and CG share a source text.<sup>115</sup> It is important to highlight at this point the great number of similarities between the texts because the current research exploits the differences for its analytical value. To be sure, the texts mirror one another well. Appreciating the extent of the shared material in the texts helps the reader to understand why the differences matter.

To this point, only vague references have been made to the time period in which these texts were produced and used. This is because the evidence concerning the origins of the text is opaque. The oldest manuscripts of the Palestinian Targum come from the eighth century CE and extend through the sixteenth century, a period well past the early first millennium which is the focus of the current study.<sup>116</sup> That noted, there are strong indicators suggesting that these manuscripts are rooted in a much earlier tradition. One such indicator is the Targums found at Qumran which include portions of Job from the second century BCE and Leviticus from the first century BCE.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, multiple rabbinic sources during the early centuries of the first millennium CE make mention of the Targums.<sup>118</sup> The existence of these texts is undergirded by the abundant evidence, including the Aramaic portions of Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, that the Jewish community were users of Aramaic. These facts support the hypothesis that the manuscripts currently available are witnesses to a much older tradition.

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<sup>114</sup> Flesher, "Exploring," 102.

<sup>115</sup> Flesher, "Exploring," 121.

<sup>116</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 43.

<sup>117</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 43.

<sup>118</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 44.

Some scholars, however, are uncomfortable with unequivocally giving the Targums an early date without sufficient physical evidence. Menn has put forth a nuanced position on dating. Working specifically with Gen 38, she recognizes that extant evidence points to an early dating of the material found in the Targum. However, she holds out the possibility that some verses within the work might be later (3rd-5th century CE) additions based on McNamara's analysis of the Aramaic used in TN.<sup>119</sup>

In the following sections, this study examines some of the features of the targumic interpretations of these verses, both commonalities and idiosyncrasies. Because of the number of differences from the Hebrew text in each of the five Targums, this will not be a comprehensive discussion of each of the variants from the Hebrew; rather, it will be a selection representing broader trends in the literature.

### *Onqelos*

As stated, TO stands apart from the other Targums as the official version of the Pentateuch recognized by the Jewish establishment, and it most closely conforms to the Hebrew text. It is said to be authored by Aquila, the same author of the Greek version of the Torah produced after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (70 CE) in accordance with the newly fixed version of the Hebrew Torah based on the oldest manuscripts from the temple.<sup>120</sup> According to Kahle, Targums are not generally penned by a single author, but this one seems to have been. The intent of the text appears to have been to give the Aramaic-speaking Jewish

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<sup>119</sup> Esther M. Menn, "Sanctification of the (Divine) Name: Targum Neofiti's 'Translation' of Gen 38:25-26" in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition*, eds. James A. Sanders and Craig A. Evans, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), eBook Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed January 26, 2018), 207; McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 3.

<sup>120</sup> Kahle, *The Cairo*, 117.

community a proper understanding of the Holy Law commensurate with the translation that was created for the Greek-speaking Jewish community by Aquila.<sup>121</sup> While the text does not have any radical breaks with its Hebrew equivalent like some of the other Targums explored in the following sections, there are certainly aspects of the translation that raise questions about the social location of the translator and the audience which are explored in this section.

One of the significant changes made in four of the manuscripts of TO is a change from describing Judah's wife as the daughter of a Canaanite man to being the daughter of a merchant. As noted in the previous section, in Hebrew the two words come from identical roots, כנעני. In Aramaic, the adjective Canaanite is the same as its Hebrew counterpart. The word for merchant (תגר), however, is clearly different than the adjective.<sup>122</sup> Of the extant manuscripts, four render the Hebrew description of Canaanite as merchant.<sup>123</sup> The adjustment, although not appearing in all of the manuscripts, is significant in that it could suggest a certain discomfort with foreign people being a part of what would become the Judahites, which would later become the royal line, the line of David.<sup>124</sup> It could also reflect a certain anxiety surrounding intermarriage when one is living under the power of and amongst a dominant group. The writer of TO might have brought to the translation an understanding of the text filtered through what one might describe as an "Ezra sensibility" concerning intermarriage with

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<sup>121</sup> Kahle, *The Cairo*, 118.

<sup>122</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 84.

<sup>123</sup> Sperber, *The Bible*, 63. While the main text reflects the reading with Canaanite, the critical apparatus names the manuscripts that reflect the alternative merchant.

<sup>124</sup> In his commentary, Sarna indicates that interpreting כנעני as merchant continued to be a way of interpreting the Hebrew even later in the Jewish tradition. *Be-reshit*, 264.



foreigners.<sup>125</sup> Because of the author's own social location living as a minority under empire, the thought that the patriarch would marry a foreign woman was unthinkable, certainly in light of the communal efforts to eliminate foreign influence. Whether out of embarrassment of the Hebrew account or out of a sincere read of the Hebrew text through a corrective lens, the writer's own social location appears to have impacted the author's translation of the text.

As in the *LXX* rendering of Genesis 38:14, TO adjusts the message communicated in the Hebrew by translating the Hebrew verb *התעלף* into Aramaic as *איתקן*, describing in more detail Tamar clothing herself. With respect to the Hebrew, as previously discussed in the previous section, this particular conjugation of the verb is only found in one other context in the Hebrew Bible in the book of Jonah. In that context, it carries the connotation of becoming faint. In its Genesis context, it means to wrap or cover as suggested by its root, *עלף*. Concerning the Aramaic verb, according to Edward Cook, this word should be understood as meaning to be dressed or arranged.<sup>126</sup> Bernard Grossfeld, however, renders the word as "adorned herself" in his translation.<sup>127</sup> Blachman adopts Grossfeld's translation in her own work and supports that decision by citing a similar use of the verb in Song 5:14 in which a *pual* participle from the root *עלף* in the Hebrew text is replaced by *איתקן* in the Aramaic version. The *pual* form of the Hebrew *עלף* is used in contexts in which it has the sense of adornment as opposed to merely

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<sup>125</sup> Ezra 9-10 describe how Ezra instructed the community to purge itself of foreign women and children, specifically naming Canaanites as intermarriage had allowed into the community abhorrent elements.

<sup>126</sup> Edward M. Cook, *Glossary of Targum Onkelos: According to Alexander Sperber's Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), Accessed November 28, 2017, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>127</sup> Grossfeld, *The Targum*, 130.

wrapped like its *hitpael* form.<sup>128</sup> Like in the *LXX*, there seems to be slight shift in the portrayal of Tamar suggesting a certain intention to seduce her father-in-law by adorning herself with a veil.

Although TO follows closely with the Hebrew text, there are two somewhat significant breaks with the original. The first suggests that there might have been a level of discomfort with the mention of outsiders being included in the Judahite line, and the second concerns the portrayal of Tamar. It would be difficult to tie these two alterations together in a way that demonstrates any type of consistent underlying agenda on the author's part. These slight changes, however, demonstrate that even in a translation where, like the *LXX*, the author's intent seems to be to produce a text which faithfully mirrors the original, the resultant text will betray aspects of the author's own social location.

### *Neofiti*

Neofiti is one of the most recent Targums to be examined by modern scholars as it hid for years in the Vatican library misidentified as TO.<sup>129</sup> A cursory review of the text, however, demonstrates clearly that this Targum is an entirely different tradition as it includes numerous expansions TO does not include. The most salient difference between TO and TN along with the other Palestinian Targums is an extensive expansion toward the end of the narrative.<sup>130</sup> In translation it reads,

And Judah said: "Bring her out and let her be burned." And Tamar went out to be burned by fire and she asked for three witnesses but did not find them. She lifted up her eyes on high and said: "I beseech by the mercies from before you, O Lord, you are he

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<sup>128</sup> BDB, 5968.

<sup>129</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 8.

<sup>130</sup> PJ, FT and CG all preserve this expansion with slight variations between them. It is outside the scope of this research to do a full analysis on the variations between the PT on this expansion, but it would be an area for future research.

who answers the afflicted in the hour of their affliction; answer me in this hour, which is the hour of my distress. O God who answers the distressed, enlighten my eyes and give me three witnesses and I promise you three just men in the valley of Dura: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. When they go down into the burning fire they will sanctify your holy name.” And immediately the Lord heard the voice of her supplication, and he said to Michael: “Go down and give her three witnesses.” And her eyes were enlightened and she saw them and she gave them into the hands of the judges and said: By the very man to whom those things belong am I with child. But although I may be burned I will not make him known. And the witness that is between me and him will put in his heart to see them in this hour, and will deliver me from this great judgement.” Judah immediately stood upon his feet and said: “I beg of you brothers and men of my father’s house, listen to me: It is better for me to burn in this world, with extinguishable fire, that I may not be burned in the world to come whose fire is inextinguishable. It is better for me to blush in this world that is a passing world, that I may not blush before my just fathers in the world to come. And listen to me, my brothers and house of my father: In the measure in which a man measures it shall be measure to him, whether it be a good measure or a bad measure. Blessed is every man who reveals his works. Inasmuch as I took the ornamented garment of my brother Joseph and dipped it in blood of the kid-goat and I said to Jacob: ‘Examine, examine I pray whether this is the ornamented garment of your son or not.’ And (as for) me it is now said to me: ‘To whom this signet-ring and cord and staff belong, by him am I with child.’ Tamar, my daughter-in-law--to conceive sons of harlotry.” But a Bath Qol came forth from heaven and said: ‘They are both just; from before the Lord the thing has come about.’” And Judah acknowledged them and said: “Tamar, my daughter-in-law, is innocent; for this reason I did not give her to Shelah, my son.”<sup>131</sup>

This is an impressive expansion not only for its length but for the ways in which it alters the narrative, develops a distinct theology not articulated by the Hebrew text, links to other aspects of Jewish tradition, and builds on the characters. The following paragraphs analyze some of the more poignant elements of the expansion and end with a discussion on the ways in which the character of Tamar was transformed particularly.

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<sup>131</sup> Translation taken directly from McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 177.

One of the profound theological statements the text makes is that it portrays God as responsive to humans, specifically a woman in a vulnerable state. Within the context of targumic literature the phrase “the Lord heard” (שמע יי) is possibly more significant because of the anti-anthropomorphic theological tendency in the tradition.<sup>132</sup> This tendency is evidenced earlier in the same narrative, Gen 38:7. The Hebrew text states that the Lord killed ‘Ar, TN alters it to say that “he died by decree of the Lord” (במימר מן קדם יי). This expansion in TN as well as many others throughout the Pentateuch underscore the translators reticence to ascribing any human attribute or behavior to the divine.<sup>133</sup> When the Hebrew text does state that the Lord saw or the Lord heard with an active verb, the Aramaic translators of the text often make the theological “correction” by using a passive verb with the former object as the subject (i.e. it was made manifest before the Lord).<sup>134</sup> A clear and germane example of this particular point can be seen in TN’s treatment of Gen 16, the story of another vulnerable woman, Hagar. The Hebrew text’s recounting of the narrative in many ways is built upon the Lord hearing, speaking and seeing. In TN’s rendition of the Hagar story, passive verbs for hearing and speaking are inserted where the Hebrew text uses active verbs. When Hagar names this God who heard and spoke to her אל-ראי, a God of seeing, the Aramaic has Hagar name this God, את הוא אלהאקיים כל עלמיין, the God who sustains.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> The divine name is represented by יי in transcriptions of Ms Neofiti 1 which represents the tetragrammaton through an arrangement of *yods*.

<sup>133</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 8.

<sup>134</sup> These types of statements can even be seen in the Gen 38:25-26 expansion, see “from before the Lord the thing has come about” at the end of the present expansion; McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 35

<sup>135</sup> Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 149. Another viable translation for God who sustains is God who lives.

One is left with the question, why do the writers of this tradition of Tamar include this expansion, with its anthropomorphic language, when they have gone to great lengths to remove anthropomorphic language in other sections of the same book? Part of the reason might rest on the resolution of the story. The community desired to see a God who intervened in tangible ways in order to enact justice on behalf of characters integral to the Jewish story, members of the Davidic line. Judah, as previously stated, is the progenitor of a nation and Tamar is the woman through whom Judah's line is born. Given the status of Judah and Tamar, there might have been reason to portray a God who gets physically involved. While this explanation is speculative, other elements of the expansion support a desire to elevate Tamar and Judah in some way.

This expansion also finds connections to other Jewish traditions which were not a part of the Hebrew text. The clear example from this passage is Tamar's reference to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, all part of Danielic literature.<sup>136</sup> In summary, Dan 3 recounts a story of three pious Jews, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, living in exile under the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, who ordered those living under his rule to worship a golden statue. Being God-fearing, the three men refuse to worship the statue and as a result are sentenced to death by burning. It is in the furnace God intervenes, sparing the men's lives and establishing God's self as the deity worthy of worship in Babylon. How is it that the tradition of these three moral exemplars comes to be interwoven with Judah and Tamar, individuals who at their best might be described as morally ambiguous, but possibly more morally depraved?

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<sup>136</sup> These three men are also known as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan 1:7).

The purpose of integrating these two stories with one another is likely multifaceted. One motivation might have to do with the socio-political context of this narrative development. For the majority of the years during which this text could have been constructed, the community of Jews was living under occupation from the Persians with an early dating to the Byzantines with a later dating. The story of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah was a story of particular relevance to the community as they were the “heroes of the Babylonian exile,” another moment when the community grappled with an overwhelming imperial political power.<sup>137</sup> Although not specifically addressing the Dan 3 story’s reception in TN, Breed argues that readers through history “have been nearly unanimous” in understanding the story to be about “religious, political, and cultural defiance.”<sup>138</sup> Given the consensus in the reception history on this point, it is likely that the socio-political context for this expansion was one in which the Jewish community had resistance on their minds.

Another argument for this expansion might be that heroes needed to be added to sanitize the Hebrew account. Menn argues convincingly that this Jewish tradition of the three faithful witnesses of God was added because of the embarrassment of Judah and Tamar. She writes of the textual development,

This development shifts attention from the royal ancestors’ morally ambiguous characters of the biblical narrative to conscientious individuals who exemplify the most principled adherence to ethical standards through their willingness to give their lives...(it) shifts attention from the royal ancestors’ alarming involvement with deception, prostitution, incest, and perversion of justice and resignifies Judah and Tamar as exemplars of post-biblical piety...<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Menn, "Sanctification," 214.

<sup>138</sup> Newsome and Breed, *Daniel*, 115.

<sup>139</sup> Menn, "Sanctification," 239.

Menn specifically and rightly notes that Judah and Tamar are not ordinary figures in the tradition; rather, they are the ‘royal ancestors’ of David. Their connection to the Davidic dynasty is not incidental to this particular textual development in TN. Much like the writer of Chronicles had a royal agenda guiding his presentation of David and Solomon, so does the writer of TN have an agenda to present those in the line of David as righteous.<sup>140</sup>

This discussion of the expansion linking the text to other parts of the Jewish tradition is connected to the character development in this text. As stated, there is a focused effort to elevate the moral level of Judah and Tamar through association with the exile exemplars of faithfulness. TN makes other narrative adjustments to transform the characters from their state in the Hebrew text to an elevated version of themselves. For example, in Gen 38:15 TN adds the phrase, “her face was covered in Judah’s house and he did not know her”

(בסייית אפין הוות בבייתיה יהודה ולא היה יהודה חכם יתה).<sup>141</sup>

The text offers an explanatory note which simultaneously gives a reason for Judah’s ignorance, namely that her face was covered in his home, and underscores the fact that he did not recognize her. It seems as if the translator is intent on making it clear that Judah was not cognizant of all of the situation’s complicated dynamics. This suggests that there could be a moral dimension to this expansion. To be clear, the Hebrew text also demonstrates Judah did not rightly understand the situation as he thought Tamar to be a prostitute (Gen 38:15). The Hebrew narrative also “subtly passes judgment” on Judah by noting his familial responsibility to

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<sup>140</sup> Sarah Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 48.

<sup>141</sup> The italicized portion is the explanatory expansion while the remainder of the verse is a translation of the Hebrew text. Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti*, 247.

his daughter-in-law.<sup>142</sup> By its strong emphasis on Judah's ignorance, TN is pushing the narrative to exonerate him. This narrative agenda is pushed even further through the Gen 38:25-26 expansion explored above.

With respect to the development of Tamar in TN, because of the extensive material in the Gen 38:25-26 expansion, one could explore numerous subtle ways in which Tamar's character changes. That noted, this analysis focuses on how TN's narrative presents her as a victim of oppression deserving of divine rescue. This status of Tamar is most clearly demonstrated through her prayer. She pleads, הוא דעני לעיקי בשעת עקיתהון (י) echoing the words of Abraham in TN's rendition of Gen 22, the binding of Isaac.<sup>143</sup> She identifies herself with the afflicted party and aligns herself with Abraham in addition to the exemplars of the Babylonian exile. The subsequent deliverance through the appearance of three witnesses as well as the confirmation of Tamar's innocence (זכאה) by Judah elucidates the aim to depict Tamar as a victim in need of exculpation. In the Hebrew narrative, there is a pronouncement of Tamar's righteousness, but it is a comparative righteousness between two morally ambiguous characters. TN goes to great lengths to ensure there is no ambiguity in Tamar's moral status; she is an innocent victim.<sup>144</sup>

#### *Pseudo-Jonathan*

Pseudo-Jonathan, as stated, incorporates many of the expansions of the other Targums, but also has unique features. One might reasonably posit that it incorporates many of the expansions of the other Targums because it was the last of this set of Targums to be

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<sup>142</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 30.

<sup>143</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 235.

<sup>144</sup> Blachman, *The Transformation*, 94.



produced.<sup>145</sup> The dating on PJ has been debated with the range of dates being as early as the Persian period all the way to the time of the Crusades. Reasons for a late date primarily stem from sections of the text possessing an anti-Islamic polemic (primarily Gen 25).<sup>146</sup> Despite the possibility of it having a late date, the text most certainly is comprised of material written at much earlier dates.<sup>147</sup> With respect to the analysis on this chapter of the work, it is important to note that the wide-range for the text's dating will necessarily limit the depth of socio-historical analysis that can be done on it. It is far outside the scope of this project to develop a hypothesis for a date, but it will offer ideas to be considered in the dating conversation.

As stated PJ contains numerous expansions not found in all of the other Targums. Throughout the text, small additions are made the purpose of which arguably could be to clarify elements of the original. For example, Gen 38:23 adds a direct object, the pledges, while the Hebrew text omits the object and other Targums including TO and TN use a pronoun. Other additions, however, are a clear departure from the Hebrew text and an attempt to build upon the existing narrative. The additions make historical, mythological and theological claims which are extraneous to the Hebrew *vorlage*. In the opening of the narrative, the text inserts that Judah proselytized her (גייר) before he went into her (Gen 38:2).<sup>148</sup> The function of this insertion, similar to the function of TO's use of merchant, is likely to defend and underscore the Jewishness of Judah's line. By demonstrating Judah's attention to maintaining the cultic purity of his bloodline feeds into the larger message of who the Jewish people are as they are faced

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<sup>145</sup> Flesher, "Exploring," 125.

<sup>146</sup> Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 11.

<sup>147</sup> Flesher argues that Pseudo-Jonathan is a composite of a proto Palestinian Targum (used also by Neofiti, Cairo Geniza which ultimately went into the Fragmentary Targum) and a proto Pseudo-Jonathan. See "Exploring," 125.

<sup>148</sup> This is a unique expansion in Pseudo-Jonathan; Blachman, *The Transformation*, 86.

with cultural threats from imperial powers. Whether this insertion was made under the Persians, the Greeks or the Arabs, this historical and socio-historical context of occupation and living under foreign empire holds true.

One of the more substantive additions made to the text is its identification of Tamar's father as Shem the Great in Gen 38:6. Within targumic literature, this addition is unique to PJ.<sup>149</sup> However, in the larger context of Jewish folklore and literature, speculation on Tamar's familial origin is common.<sup>150</sup> Rabbinic sources are in agreement with PJ in naming Shem, who by tradition was a priest, as Tamar's father.<sup>151</sup> A salient reason for this expansion is wrapped up in the peculiar, by the standards of Jewish law, judgement of burning for Tamar's alleged sexual indiscretions. Death by burning for זנות was only reserved for the daughters of priests (Lev 21:9) but not the general population. This suggests that the Jewish community that produced this text was working out the details of its own tradition, creating a coherent narrative for itself. The insertion of this material in some ways could be viewed as pedagogical with the Gen 38 narrative serving as an example for the legal principle. Concerning Tamar specifically, this expansion solidifies her place in the Jewish story by linking the Hebrew text to other Jewish texts and traditions. Moreover, it fills out her identity by giving her a family of origin.

Finally, the text makes new theological claims. Gen 38:7 states that the anger of the Lord blazed forth against 'Ar (תקף חגא דה עליה) because he did not have intercourse (משמש) with his wife according to the way (אורח) of all the earth; therefore, the Lord killed him. Again,

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<sup>149</sup> Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 128.

<sup>150</sup> Pseudepigraphal texts state Aram is Tamar's father, thus making Shem her grandfather. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 5, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 333.

<sup>151</sup> Ginzberg, *The Legends*, 225, 333.

this expansion is unique to PJ and demonstrates that the writers were thinking about the nature of humans and their relationship with God. The text underscores a need to explain God's activity, even justify it. That noted, the text does not attempt to take away death as a form of divine judgment. This particular addition is more striking when it is contrasted with TN's alteration to the Hebrew text state that 'Ar died by decree from before the Lord (במימר מן קדם). The intent of this alteration seems to be to relieve the divine of the culpability for killing.<sup>152</sup> The differences suggest that the Jewish community was wrestling with how to understand a God who, as the Hebrew text describes, is directly responsible for the death of humans.

The addition also suggests that the community has a strongly developed ethic for familial relations and the role of sexual intercourse. The goal is unequivocally to produce children. One might argue that in antiquity survival of a family or tribe was a consistent priority and any member undermining that priority is, at best, not adequately contributing the community and at worst placing it at risk of extinction. This concern for activities that lead to survival, however, are potentially more important for a community fighting for survival against external threats. This expansion could serve as an indicator of one of these mortal threats.

#### *Fragmentary Targum*

The FT and the CG are distinct in the genre because they are incomplete versions of the Torah generally and the book of Genesis specifically.<sup>153</sup> It is important to be clear about what is meant by FT and CG. FT is a group of manuscripts, some of which were found in the larger Cairo Genizah collection, representing a sub-genre within targumic literature. These manuscripts are

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<sup>152</sup> Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 245.

<sup>153</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 217.

“collections of selected phrases, verses and passages of the Palestinian Targum.”<sup>154</sup> Although they are incomplete in their presentation of the Hebrew Bible, they are distinctive in their content and arrangement, thus making them a recognizable subset of targumic literature. Of the extant material, three distinct recensions have been identified.<sup>155</sup>

The reason for this body of literature’s existence is contested, but various theories have been put forth. One theory is that the FT represents variations to PJ, and another theory suggests they represent variations to TO. Neither of these theories is particularly satisfying. The one feature of the FT (as well as all of the Palestinian Targums) that seems to be agreed upon is their “synagogal-liturgical nature.”<sup>156</sup> They were used by the Jewish community in worship.

Klein identified that each of the manuscripts of the FT fell into two main recensions.<sup>157</sup> With respect to Gen 38, both recensions recorded expansions in 38:5 as well as the extensive expansion in 38:25-26. One recension records expansions in 38:15 and 38:19. The expansion covered by 38:5 is an expansion in which the redactors took the place name in the Hebrew text, כזיב, and interprets it as the Aramaic verb for ceasing from, פסק. TN and PJ also make this interpretation, but the reasons for which are unclear as the standard meaning of the Hebrew root is in the semantic range of deceiving as opposed to ceasing.<sup>158</sup> The significance of the maintenance of Gen 38:25-26 is explored in the following section.

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<sup>154</sup> Klein, *Genizah*, XXIII.

<sup>155</sup> Michael Klein, "The Extant Sources of the Fragmentary Targum to the Pentateuch." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46, (1975): 115.

<sup>156</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 6.

<sup>157</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 5.

<sup>158</sup> Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti*, 244. Interestingly, the Vulgate maintains a similar translation.

Regarding the expansions in Gen 38:15 and Gen 38:19, they fit into a larger theme in this research of an attention to Tamar's wardrobe in translation. For Gen 38:15 the FT provides a gloss for the Hebrew פניה בסתה in Aramaic being צמצמת אפה. In Gen 38:19 the redactors again clarify how Tamar covers her face, specifying that the Hebrew for veil, עציף, is רדיד in Aramaic. When compared to the expansion in Gen 38:25-26, these glosses appear to be rather insignificant. Given what little is known about the reason these texts even exist, any explanation for why glosses and expansions for specific verses within the text were selected is purely speculative. With respect to the texts notes on Gen 38:15 and 38:19, it is possible these specific Hebrew words had been more foreign to the Aramaic speaking community than the rest of those in the text, and thus made it into the selective FT corpus. Another explanation might be that the redactor wanted to make clear to the audience that Tamar's identity was concealed from Judah. In this way, Judah becomes less morally culpable for his sexual misdeed. Without more context for the FT, however, it is difficult to come to any hard conclusions.

#### *Cairo Genizah Targums*

In the late nineteenth century European scholars became aware of a large collection of manuscripts found in an upper storage room, the *genizah*, of a synagogue in Old Cairo. The subsequent collection and study of these manuscripts in the West led to a flurry of activity in the area of targumic studies.<sup>159</sup> Among the manuscripts, scholars identified five different types of texts relating to the Palestinian Targums including: proper Targum, fragment Targums (discussed above), festival/liturgical collections, targumic *toseftot* and introductory targumic

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<sup>159</sup> Klein, *Genizah*, XIX.

poems.<sup>160</sup> This study is concerned with the first two, and this section is concerned with the first of those, proper Targum.<sup>161</sup> In this context, proper Targum refers to the fragments of Targum presented in the standard order of the Hebrew Bible. The CG manuscripts in this category are presently incomplete, although it is believed they were at one time full copies of the Torah.<sup>162</sup> Unlike the FT, the fragments found in this collection are a more “haphazard” collection of verses.<sup>163</sup> Two of the extant manuscripts contain the passage at hand.

The importance of CG cannot be overemphasized. Even though these are incomplete documents, they are some of the oldest manuscripts bearing witness to certain targumic traditions as they date back to eighth century.<sup>164</sup> Pertinent to this thesis, both of the CG manuscripts contain a nearly identical version of TN’s Gen 38:25-26 expansion.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, the two *toseftot* manuscripts found in the same collection also preserve this expansion. Fleisher, writing from a text critical perspective, has noted this connection between TN and the CG manuscripts and has shown that connection is important to understanding the textual history of the Palestinian Targum.<sup>166</sup> Coming from a different angle, this research uses this same connection to make a different type of argument, one about the community using the text. The fact that this expansion exists in both the CG and TN as well as FT and PJ demonstrates that the expansion is not the work of a lone redactor, but that the expansion had a certain resonance

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<sup>160</sup> These are the categories that Klein identifies in his study. Klein, *Genizah*, XXII.

<sup>161</sup> The fragment Targums found in the Cairo Genizah cache were limited to two short manuscripts neither of which covered any portion of Genesis. Klein, *Genizah*, XXVI.

<sup>162</sup> Klein, *Genizah*, XXII.

<sup>163</sup> Klein, *Genizah*, XXII.

<sup>164</sup> McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1*, 5; Fleisher, "Exploring," 117.

<sup>165</sup> Menn, *Judah*, 217.

<sup>166</sup> Fleisher, "Exploring," 119.

among the community using this genre of text. The Gen 38:25-26 expansion's appearance in the *toseftot* adds another level of confidence to this statement.

### *Conclusion*

This overview of the Targums' varied renditions of the Gen 38 narrative reveal an approach to translation of Biblical text in Judaism that defies most modern sensibilities about the act of translating. With the exception of TO, the authors of these texts saw it as the goal to create texts that better reflected their theological and social sensibilities. The changes they make to the narrative reflect an overt awareness of their presuppositions, far from slips of the pen or minor mistranslations, these writers are activists in the tradition.

The changes they make are both social and theological in nature. Regarding the social changes, the writers of the Targums reflect a change in attitude toward foreigners. Even the conservative translation of TO, in some manuscripts, revises the Hebrew mention of a Canaanite present in Judah's lineage. PJ echoes TO's concern by adding in that Judah proselytized his wife before having intercourse with her. Like the LXX, these Targums raise questions about Tamar's wardrobe. Even the FT which deal with so little text overall touch on the issue of Tamar's veil. Attempting to harmonize the legal tradition of the community with the text, PJ makes Tamar the daughter of a priest to make sense of Judah's call to burn her.

The various ways in which the authors rewrite the story to place both Judah and Tamar in a better light speaks to their concern for the legacy of those who gave birth to their line. From the subtle insertion demonstrating that Judah did not know Tamar while she was in his house to the extended prayer put into the mouth of Tamar, the writers find ways of making the two less morally problematic than in the Hebrew text. Moreover, the authors connect Tamar to

the heroes of the exile which not only raises her moral status, but also grafts these characters into the royal line.

With respect to the theological changes TN breaks with the anti-anthropomorphic tendency of the Targum allowing God to hear Tamar. PJ alters the text with reference to how the divine's anger, provoked by Judah's son, resulted in God putting the son to death. This differs from the Hebrew text which makes no mention of God's anger burning against Judah's son.



## CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to trace the development of the story of Judah and Tamar found in Gen 38 in the earliest translations of the text, both the *LXX* and the Targums. Specifically, it was concerned with the development of Tamar as the Hebrew text paints her in a way which has led to widely divergent interpretations of her moral character. The study revealed that the *LXX* possesses many of the same features as other parts of the Greek Pentateuch, and, sometimes, reflects the Hebrew text with more accuracy than might be expected given general trends in *LXX* translation. That said, with respect to the portrayal of Tamar, the way in which the text handles the issue of her veiling presents her more as a seductress than does the Hebrew text. Moreover, it limits the interpretive possibility in the story concerning the perception of Tamar as the Hebrew words קדשה and זונה are given the same Greek gloss. These nuances of the story in the *LXX* suggests that the understanding of women and the social roles available to them were different than those of the Judahite context in which the Hebrew text was produced.

Concerning the Targums, with the exception of TO, the authors of these texts saw it as the goal to create texts that better reflected their theological convictions and social understanding. The changes made to the story are not a case of misunderstanding or confusion on translations. The writers are intentionally shaping the tradition. They make theological changes as well as changes to better connect with their current social location. Regarding the social changes, the Targums reflect a change in attitude toward foreigners as well as an updated understanding of Jewish law. Most significantly, the text shows concern for the

portrayal of Judah and Tamar. In numerous ways from the prayer of Tamar to the voice from heaven declaring both Tamar and Judah righteous, the text recreates a more virtuous pair.

While looking at these traditions in isolation can give one insight into the communities which developed the translations. Possibly the greater insight to be gained in this study comes from thinking about the way the communities approached the task of translation and interpretation. The Greek writers in Alexandria clearly believed that close adherence to the Hebrew text was of some inherent value. The establishment preferred Targum, TO, also adhered tightly to the Hebrew text. While the exact purpose of the *LXX* is debated, there seems to be no debate on the text being connected to either religious or political establishment. Those translations connected to the establishment--whether commissioned by the establishment to be that way or merely recognized by it--are less malleable. The Palestinian Targum, however, did not follow as closely to the Hebrew text. These texts, of course, did not achieve the status of being officially sanctioned by religious authorities; nonetheless, the tradition proliferated. Outside of the establishment, the interpretation of the text seemed to be driven less by the content of the original text and more by the context of the interpreting community. To state this in Gadamerian terms, in the fusion of the text and interpreters' horizons, religious establishments try to prioritize the text's horizons while those outside the establishment allow more space for their own horizon.

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