TOOLS AND CRITICAL EDITIONS


The Aramaic Bible series continues to produce excellent and useful volumes devoted to the various Targumim of the Jewish Bible. In the present volume, two leading scholars of targumic studies offer their work on the Palestinian Targumim to Numbers, with Martin McNamara responsible for Targum Neofiti and Ernest Clarke responsible for Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The now familiar system of this series continues here. Both authors provide an English translation of their targumic texts, with italics used to indicate additions not corresponding to anything in the Hebrew original; a notes section provides explanations of how the targumist arrived at his wording, parallels in midrashic literature, and so on. McNamara’s portion includes a detailed apparatus that presents English translations of significant variants in the Neofiti glosses (both marginal and interlinear) and in the Fragment Targum manuscripts.

McNamara already had translated Neofiti for the editio princeps of Alejandro Diez Macho in 1970, but the current work represents a “completely revised” translation (p. ix).

Numbers abounds in toponyms, and thus McNamara (with information on Pseudo-Jonathan provided by Clarke) includes a very useful survey of the rendering of the seventy-one place-names in the Palestinian Targumim to Numbers (pp. 8–21).

Space limitations allow me to discuss only one translation issue, though it is a very crucial one. In the introduction (p. 5) and again in the text (p. 89 n. 10), McNamara translates Hebrew תְּרוֹן as “fire-offering” with an obvious eye to Hebrew נֶפֶר, “fire” (of course, this view is standard in biblical scholarship). But he then notes, “However, Nf invariably renders by qrbn ‘offering,’ without mention of fire, and so also Onq., Ps.-J., and other Pal. Tg. texts,” and that LXX and Vulgate approach this word similarly. The simple fact is that Hebrew תְּרוֹן is not related to נֶפֶר, but rather to a Ugaritic cognate itt, “offering” (see most recently J. C. Greenfield, “Etymological Semantics,” ZAH 6 [1993] 33–34). Accordingly, biblical scholars should surrender any connection between the sacrificial term נֶפֶר and fire. As the evidence that McNamara presents makes ever so clear, this conclusion is consistent with the manner in which the Targumim understood the word.

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