TREATMENT OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM IN TARGUM ONKELOG
THE TREATMENT OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

IN THE

TARGUM ONKELOS

By

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FOREWORD

In the study of religion an analysis of the written documents is one of the most important and most enlightening undertakings. An investigation of ancient texts reveals original trends of thought, ideas and beliefs which tend to become lost or assimilated in oral traditions. Even when the scripts no longer can reveal the full story of the origins, because of being committed to writing at a late date, they still reveal significant information about their own times. Such information is all-important in and by itself, and from that information much can be deduced that will prove extremely relevant to a study of the pre-recorded history as well.

A study of the Targum Onkelos (the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch, dating to the beginning of the common era¹) will, therefore, prove to be a very rewarding experience with respect to a study of Western religious traditions in general and of Judaism in particular. The date of the Targum is interesting and of significance because the commitment to writing of the Targum Onkelos, in the first few centuries of the common era,² falls into an important period: normative Judaism was already a

¹Onkelos lived in the first century of the common era. For the dating and background of his Targum see A. E. Silverstone, Aquila and Onkelos, (Manchester University Press, 1931). Cf. infra, Chapter VII note 8.

²Tbid.
fairly deeply entrenched and formulated religion, Christianity had arisen and begun to establish itself drawing from its Judaic roots and spreading its religious and philosophical ideas over a vast area of the globe, and last, but by far not least, at the same time, both Judaism and Christianity encountered the influence and challenge of Greek metaphysics and mental conditioning.

An important work and tradition committed to writing in the midst of such tumultuous times must reveal something of the inner thoughts and beliefs of that age, and certainly so when that work is a translation of a (if not the) most basic text of one or more of these groups mentioned. A translation is simultaneously an interpretative commentary which acts not only as an impersonal amplifier to the original but also as a teacher who seeks to impress certain facts and facets upon his pupils and listeners.

An interpretative translation may very well be regarded as being of purely parochial character, of importance only to a certain group or individual sect. When, however, there appear notions of general philosophical significance, relevant to a study and analysis of religion and human thought (and especially so when these notions are symptomatic of their times), then even the most particular script of the most particular sect or denomination becomes an object for general study and analysis.

The Targum Onkelos falls precisely into such a category of general significance. Many of the medieval theologians and philosophers who sought to bring about a working synthesis between reason and faith, between Biblical faith based on revelation and the metaphysical reasoning
of Greek thought, refer to Onkelos as a prime example and authoritative source of verification for a pure, non-anthropomorphic conception of the Divine Being. Onkelos himself may very well have been influenced by philosophical trends current in his days and in the period immediately preceding him. 3 Maimonides in particular dedicates much space in his foremost philosophical treatise (Guide for the Perplexed) to draw attention to Onkelos' alleged anti-anthropomorphism in support of his (Maimonides') own view. Maimonides cites one example upon the other from the Targum Onkelos, and when faced with exceptions to his rule he immediately sets out to explain them away.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the assertion that the Targum Onkelos is based on philosophical premises and consciously and consistently anti-anthropomorphic. This problem has come up frequently. 4 No one, however, has yet undertaken to examine the problem on the basis of a thorough and systematic analysis of the complete text of the Targum Onkelos. The scholars that dealt with this subject based their respective theories on a very limited number of select proof-texts. 5 The medieval

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3 Many scholars hold that the anti-anthropomorphic tendency in Targum Onkelos, the other Targumim and translations of the Bible of those early times, is due to contemporary Greek influence. See, C. T. Fritsch, The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch (Princeton University Press, 1943), p. 63; though cf. infra, p. 68, note 13.

4 See the works cited infra, in Chapter V note 22, and in the text and notes of chapters VI and VII.

5 S. Maybaum's brief essay Die Anthropomorphien und Anthropopathien bei Onkelos, (Breslau 1879), part I, is a notable exception. Maybaum quotes a greater number of passages than all his predecessors, and his study comes closest to the contents of this thesis. Nevertheless, Maybaum's work is also very limited, by far not as exhaustive as this thesis, and he appears more concerned with the retention, rather than the avoidance, of anthropomorphisms in Targum Onkelos. Maybaum's essay is critically considered infra, Chapter V note 22, and Chapter VII notes 3 and 9.
scholars dealt with the subject only in passing, in the context of their discussions of the general problem of anthropomorphism. The modern scholars were more concerned with historical and philological questions and did not spend too much thought or time with the problem on hand; mostly they took it for granted that Onkelos is anti-anthropomorphic and were content with noting this as a fact and seeking a reason for it.

This thesis is the first attempt at an exhaustive analysis of the complete text of the Targum Onkelos. Though working towards the conclusion that Onkelos was governed by a motive of anti-anthropomorphism, the thesis will commit itself to this conclusion only after all the evidence (based on all relevant passages) has been presented. The conclusions of this study are discussed in the light of, and on the basis of, the principal philosophical treatises which deal with this subject.

The examination proceeds according to the following plan:

1. Some brief comments on anthropomorphism in general, with special reference to its occurrence in the Pentateuch (Chapter I);

2. A detailed examination of the Targum Onkelos with respect to how the Pentateuchal anthropomorphisms are treated in it (Chapters II-V);

3. A discussion and analysis of the most important opinions expressed by the medieval scholars (and the more important modern scholars) about the theological aspects of Onkelos' treatment of anthropomorphisms (Chapter VI); and

4. The conclusions (Chapter VII).

6. Where passages are found to be merely non-anthropomorphic, but not necessarily anti-anthropomorphic, the text of the thesis remains objective and notes it accordingly.
ON THE MEANING AND LEGITIMACY OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM, WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO ITS OCCURRENCE IN THE PENTATEUCH

Every conception concerning the Deity is, in its final
application, dependent upon a posteriori evidence, that is, upon an
inference from events and effects, or from things as they occur and
exist, to their absolute ground or reason. Hence, if any more pre-
cise definition of the Absolute can be derived only from the conscious
contents of soul-experience and world-knowledge, then the origin of
anthropomorphism finds an easy explanation. In his search for and
discovery of the author of all things, man attributes to the Author
of All the most valuable traits of which he is aware, and nothing is
so important to man as his conscious possessions, his own faculties of
thought, emotion, will, and action. While man recognizes himself to
possess these most valuable traits in a mere incomplete state only, he
attributes them to the Deity in their full measure of completeness and
perfection but still somewhat analogous to himself.

Simple-minded man, the man of a most unsophisticated and truly
naive mode of thinking and reasoning, can easily be understood to have
the most crudely anthropomorphic conception of those supreme powers he
accepts as superior to himself. There is a school of thought which goes

1 L. Ginzberg, 'Anthropomorphism and Anthropopathism', Jewish
Encyclopaedia (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 1901-6), based on Zeller's
so far as to claim that in a survey of the history of man, from the most primitive to the more 'rational' and 'scientific' stages, a gradual corresponding evolution from an extreme theriomorphism to a more sophisticated anthropomorphism-anthropopathism, and finally to the opposite extreme of a wholly abstract, spiritualized conception of the Divine as essentially unknowable and undefinable.  

Anthropomorphism cannot, however, be attributed to primitive modes of thought and naiveness only. Everyday experience shows even the emotionally and rationally more 'emancipated' man of the more 'rational' and 'scientific' stages in history — who in the confines of his thought and convictions cannot accept anthropomorphism in any form and rejects it as no more than a blatant self-contradiction — still uses anthropomorphic vocabulary without sensing any inherent contradiction between this, his action, and his true convictions. Moreover, this 'emancipated' man may be found to use and reject anthropomorphic terms at one and the same time (using anthropomorphism in his very argument for rejecting it) and he will still be regarded by others as consistent.

A sharp distinction must, therefore, be drawn between (a) a belief in anthropomorphism, that is, a literal representation or conception of Deity with human attributes, and a literal ascription of human form and characteristics to Deity, and (b) a merely symbolic

anthropomorphism, that is, an allegorical or analogical use of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms when speaking of the Being and Nature of Deity. The former is due to naiveness, to a primitive and artless simplemindedness which is restricted to the immediate self-consciousness and is mentally and emotionally unable to transcend the limitations of an empirical area. Man, in this primitive stage, may at best ascend to notions of an all-permeating Divine immanence (a notion of pantheism), but hardly to the more sophisticated idea of coupling this immanence with an abstract idea of transcendence (the notion of panentheism).

The use of symbolic anthropomorphism is due not so much to man's relative experimental limitations, as to the innate spatial-temporal restrictions super-imposed upon man and his mind. That is, whereas man is physically and mentally confined to the categories of space and time, which he cannot transcend except by way of negation, his experimental explorations and empirical probings are also limited to these same categories. Meaningful sounds and words, which are the prime matter (hyle) of thought and speech, and depend upon experience for their meaningfulness, are, therefore, also limited to these immediate categories of space and time. Without entering into the general problem of universals it is necessary to say that the terms which signify universals, abstractions, or otherwise non-empirical terms derived, and arrived at, from (and comprehended by means of) the more limited notions of our immediate experience. On their own,
as independent entities (that is, non-related to empirical notions that are grounded in concrete objects or experiences), such abstract terms are meaningless. The limitation of language for self-expression necessitates the use of explicit or implicit anthropomorphism, even when, and while recognizing (again, by way of negation, rather than by means of a positive attribution) that strictly speaking anthropomorphism is invalid and illegitimate. Where an attempt is made to avoid anthropomorphism at all costs, one is factually left with a futile exchange of meaningless sounds or combinations of letters.  

3This 'sophisticated position' is obviously more akin to the view of the so-called agnostic philosophers who deny the possibility of attaching any positive attributes to God, and limit our knowledge of God to negative attributes (via negativa). It would be unjust to ignore, at this point, the opposing view of Thomas Aquinas, who counters this agnosticism with his thesis of analogy. While a comparative and critical examination of the Thomistic position is not in place here, it should be mentioned at least in outline, inasmuch as it has a great bearing upon the general philosophical problem and consideration of anthropomorphism.

The basis for Aquinas' theory is a certain logical principle that 'no cause can confer any perfection which it does not in some manner possess itself.' That is, any conferred perfection is the result of the cause's action. An agent must, thus, possess a perfection before its action can be of such a kind as to confer it. From this premise it follows that, admitted that God is the cause of created perfections, we must of necessity agree that these perfections must be found in Him as well, in one way or another. Some mode of these perfections must be in Him actually and intrinsically.

To say 'in one way or another', is important and necessary because it does not necessarily follow from our argument that these perfections need be in Him in the same manner as they are in His creatures; rather, they need be in God in a much higher, a much more sublime and superior manner. A distinction must also be drawn between so-called 'pure', and 'mixed' perfections. 'Pure' perfections are those which do not contain any imperfection whatever (though the entity of the 'pure
It is, therefore, little surprising that canonical writings are found to contain anthropomorphisms, regardless of whether the basic tenets and beliefs of that faith affirm or reject the literalness of perfection may exist in an imperfect way, in imperfect creatures). 'Mixed' perfections are such as imply in their very notion some imperfection; they contain some 'pure perfection', that is, there is an underlying principle involved, a general idea (as opposed to a particular appearance) which serves a good (a pure) purpose. (Anger, for example, contains an element of goodness, though the instances of anger, as man understands and experiences it under most conditions, are imperfect, 'mixed' perfections).

'Pure' perfections, says Thomas Aquinas, may be affirmed of God in strict and literal truth as really being found in Him in a most sublime fashion, superior to the way they are found in man (with whom they are of necessity in a mode of imperfection). 'Mixed' perfections can be applied to God only in a metaphorical sense, that is, that which is found in them of goodness (the pure aspect) belongs to God in some sublime way. One can, thus, speak of God, in a metaphorical sense, as 'angry with sinners', meaning thereby that His action is comparable to the instance of a just person moved by a righteous indignation with crime.

Attention must be drawn not only to the important distinction between 'pure' and 'mixed' perfections, but also to an equally important distinction between univocal and analogous meaning. When these distinctions are kept in mind, it can be concluded that the perfections that are present in creatures are in God

1. really only as they are pure perfections, and metaphorically as they are mixed perfections; and

2. only in analogous manner (meaning mainly that in God these attributes have none of the limitations which adhere to them necessarily, as they belong to creatures).

St. Thomas Aquinas, thus, admits a positive knowledge of God, though emphasizing that it is but an analogous knowledge. This theory is then shown to solve all apparent contradictions, and the objections to what the agnostics would call the 'illegitimate transfer of dependent or limited perfections as they appear in creatures to the independent and unlimited Absolute, God', for now it is quite irrelevant how imperfect the creatures' attributes may be in them. It is not the particular mode of an attribute as it appears in the creatures, which we affirm of God,
such terms. At best, these anthropomorphisms are qualified one way or another (that is, they are affirmed to be taken in the literal sense, or that they are said to be merely symbolic and allegorical).

The Pentateuch is certainly no exception to that rule. It is not within the scope of this study to decide whether the original anthropomorphism in the Pentateuch is due to naive, primitive conceptions and was originally taken in a quite literal sense, or whether there has always been a more sublime and pure conception of the Deity as a transcendent Being. For the purposes of this thesis it is important to observe that

1. the Pentateuch abounds with more and less stark anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms; and

2. the Pentateuch has always been the basic code of the Jewish Faith, thus, perforce, a book of and for the masses (scholars and laity alike), taught to, and studied by all.

but a mode which is merely analogous to that. When we affirm of God some perfection which is found in creatures, we do so by what Aquinas calls: analogy of perfection, in a real (with respect to pure perfections), or metaphorical sense (with respect to mixed perfections).


The universal character of the Pentateuch needs to be considered most seriously when observing the anthropomorphic content of the Pentateuch. This universality is no doubt interrelated with the anthropomorphism of the Pentateuch in a most intimate way, and will be shown to have most relevant bearing upon the considerations of this thesis.

Leaving aside the problem of Bible-criticism and the allegation of the Pentateuch being composed of several interpolated codes, it is obvious and clear that next to the apparently very naive anthropomorphisms in the Pentateuch, there are also many instances of the Pentateuch itself expressing non-, if not outright anti-anthropomorphic conceptions. Passages are found expressing an indubitable aversion to bringing the Creator into an anthropomorphic relation with His creatures. The following quotations illustrate this point:

Exodus 16:7:

'and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord.'

Ibid., verse 10:

'and behold the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.'

The 'glory of the Lord', as opposed to the Lord, also appears as subject in Exodus 40:34f., Leviticus 9:23, Numbers 14:10 and 16:19. Furthermore, in Deuteronomy, when speaking of the Divine Indwelling (Shechina) in the Tabernacle, it is not the very Being of God that

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5 The expression 'glory of the Lord', as opposed to 'the Lord', is clearly an avoidance of anthropomorphism.
dwell there but His Name. An explicit apprehension to the cruder forms of anthropomorphism, however, makes itself felt only in the post-

 Cf. Deuteronomy 12:5, 11; ibid., 16:2, 6, 11, and 26:2.

 Quite significant to the idea of avoiding anthropomorphism, may also be the notion of intermediaries (as angels), frequently appearing in the Pentateuch. Anti-anthropomorphism may be detected most strongly in the prohibitions against graven images in general, and of Deity in particular, and in verses as 'for man cannot see Me and live' (Exodus 33:30). Of the theophany of Sinai it is emphasized that 'ye heard the voice of words but ye saw no form ... ye saw no manner of form on the day that the Lord spake unto you.' (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15) Cf. Zobel, op. cit., p. 890.

 An important observation (which, surprisingly, is not mentioned in any of the studies on Biblical anthropomorphism) is made by the famed philosopher and commentator Saadiah Gaon (882-942), in his monumental orus Kitab al-Amanath w'al Itikadat (translated from the Arabic and Hebrew under the title The Book of Beliefs and Opinions by S. Rosenblatt, Yale University Press, 4th ed. 1958). In presenting a case to show that the anthropomorphisms of the Bible are not, and never were meant to be taken literally, Saadiah Gaon notes that the very terms used in relation to Divinity are attributed not only to man but even to the vegetative and inorganic species, in which context they are most obviously a mere metaphor and allegory. Scripture thus speaks of the head of the world (Proverbs 8:26); the eye, ear, mouth, face, wing, navel, and thighs, of the earth (Exodus 10:5; Numbers 11:31, and 16:32; Isaiah 1:2, and 24:16; Ezekiel 38:12; Jeremiah 31:8). There is also reference to the hand, and the lip, of the river (Exodus 2:3; Daniel 10:4); the heart, and the womb, of the sea (Exodus 2:3; Daniel 10:4); the belly of the netherworld (Johan 2:3). See Book of Beliefs and Opinions, op. cit., II:10.

 Scripture, thus, employs anthropomorphic expressions in speaking of things which according to the testimony of our senses possess none of these organs, on which account these phrases must all be construed as mere figures of speech.

 Finally, considering the preoccupation of ancient man with the notion of nomen est omen, nothing could possibly signify the transcendence of God any more than the proper names given to Him in the Pentateuch, whether it be the Tetragrammaton or the Self-proclaimed Ehyeh asher Ehyeh; for the etymological meaning of both contains the notion of absolute transcendence, of timelessness and of undefinable Being.

biblical period of the Talmudic teachers who emphasized the metaphysical character of the anthropomorphic themes, or sought to circumscribe them.7

The early translations of the Pentateuch into the Greek and Aramaic languages contain ample evidence of this apprehension and concern in their times. At the same time, however, a disturbing amount of apparent inconsistencies to this rule of avoiding or circumscribing anthropomorphisms is to be found in these translations. There are numerous passages where the original anthropomorphism was retained without qualification. This fact raises the question whether these translations were, or were not governed by distinct rules and philosophical-theological premises, when it is found that in one place they reject and in another place they retain anthropomorphisms.8

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7Phrases as 'the Torah speaks the language of man'; 'Scripture paraphrases'; 'the Torah speaks to appease the ear'; etc., are frequent in the rabbinic texts. -- Fritsch, op. cit. pp. 6ff., (apparently on the authority of Ginsburg, op. cit.), claims that the anti-anthropomorphic trend expresses itself in as radical an act as the emendation of the Scriptural texts for that purpose, by what is known as the Tikune Soferim. M. Zobel, however, (op. cit., p. 890) already pointed out that of the 18 emendations known as Tikune Soferim there is at most one which might possibly be construed as avoiding anthropomorphism, and even that one is subject to argument.

8A study of the anti-anthropomorphisms in the Septuaginta was already undertaken by C. T. Fritsch (op. cit., supra).
CHAPTER II

ON THE CONTENTS OF THE TARGUM ONKELOS, AND ONKELOS' TREATMENT
OF THE PENTATEUCH'S SOMATIC ANTHROPOMORPHISMS

I. Targum Onkelos

The Targum Onkelos is generally regarded as the most outstanding of the ancient translations of the Pentateuch because of its rigid adherence to the original text. A cursory glance at this work, however, will already detect many deviations from the original. This Targum contains three principal classes of non-literal translations:

1. Exegetical Translations;
2. Traditional Interpretations;

Exegetical Translations. 'Exegetical translations' are to be understood as passages with which Onkelos took the liberty to translate in emended fashion by means of inserting an additional word or phrase, or by means of circumlocuting a word or phrase. This type of deviation applies to the passages where the original text is obviously not to be taken in a strictly literal sense but uses picturesque or symbolic language. The following quotations are a few typical examples of this class of translation:

The Hebrew text of Genesis 4:21, literally translated, reads:
'And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all such as handle the harp.'

For this text, Onkelos changes the phrase 'he was the father' into 'he was the master'.

While the Hebrew word abh does indeed have the dual connotation of father and master, it is nevertheless significant to note how Onkelos seeks to give the precise meaning, even when this would seem to be done at the expense of the precise letter.

Likewise, for Genesis 8:21, Onkelos replaces-paraphrases 'I will not again curse the ground for man's sake' by

'I will not again curse the ground on account of the guilt of man.'

Numbers 15:39-

'that ye go not about after your heart and after your eyes'
is translated by Onkelos by

'that ye go not about after the inclination of your heart and the sight of your eyes.'

Deuteronomy 30:6

'and the Lord will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children'
is rendered by Onkelos as

'and the Lord will remove the foolishness of your heart, and the foolishness of the heart of your children.'

Traditional Interpretations. The term traditional interpretations stands for all those instances where Onkelos deviates radically from the original text and inserts a statement which is either purely legalistic
Halachic ruling or interpretation, or offers some Aggadic-Medrashic type of hermeneutical exegesis. Neither of these two are necessarily implicit in the text, and are certainly not explicitly so, but derive from an oral tradition, and traditional interpretation of the Scriptures.

Some classical examples of Halachic interpretations would be Genesis 9:6; Exodus 23:19 (and the parallel passages in Exodus 34:23, and Deuteronomy 12:21); and Leviticus 23:15: *Genesis* 9:6 reads in the original

'whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.'

Onkelos states for this:

'whoso sheddeth man's blood before witnesses, his blood shall be shed by the decree of the court (or: judges).'

*Exodus* 23:19-

'thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk'

is rendered by Onkelos as

'ye shall not eat meat with milk.'

*Leviticus* 23:15-

'and ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath'

is rendered by Onkelos as

'and ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of the festival' (as opposed to the day of the Sabbath in the literal sense of the word).

Aggadic-Medrashic material is found in numerous places in the Targum Onkelos, and especially so in his translations of the poetical parts of the Pentateuch. The poetical passages of the Pentateuch are
generally cryptic, often ambiguous and difficult to understand, and, thus, very much in need of interpretation. Onkelos translates and paraphrases them in language and content often far removed from the explicit sense of the verses as is especially evident from the passages of Jacob’s blessings on the deathbed, the Bile‘am episode, and the final admonitions and blessings of Moses.

Circumlocutions of Biblical Anthropomorphisms. The third class of translations typical of Onkelos is the frequent circumlocution of the anthropomorphic passages of the Pentateuch. The second part of this chapter, and the chapters following, will present a detailed examination and analysis of the occurrence of such circumlocutions as well as the apparent inconsistencies of Onkelos’ failing to avoid the anthropomorphism.

II. Onkelos’ Treatment of the Pentateuch’s Somatic Anthropomorphisms

This first section on Onkelos’ treatment of anthropomorphism and anthropopathism will deal with the Scriptural representations which appear to invest the Deity with human form and organs. The relevant passages are quoted in the Hebrew original, accompanied by a literal translation, and then systematically contrasted with the Aramaic paraphrases (coupled with their English translations).¹

¹In all the quotations following, the Tetragrammaton will be represented by its initial letter (‘י in Hebrew or Aramaic, and J in English). Elohim, when appearing as a name of God, will be rendered as ‘G in Hebrew and Aramaic, and as ‘God’ in English.
The very idea of ascribing form to God is carefully avoided in the Targum. For Numbers 12:8, where such an idea presents itself —

\[ \text{and the form of J shall he behold,} \]

Onkelos rendered

\[ \text{and the likeness of the glory of J shall he behold.} \]

For Exodus 15:3, where God is called a man —

\[ \text{'J is a man of war',} \]

Onkelos translated

\[ \text{'J is the Lord of victory in battles'.} \]

The numerous occurrence of the Hebrew word (face; etymologically also before) as applied to God, is practically every-

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\[ \text{Onkelos on Deuteronomy 10:17, where he used the same word (Lord of Kings) for the Hebrew J} \]

It is interesting to note that even where the Pentateuch makes the negative statement

\[ \text{God is not a man that he should be false; neither the son of man that He should repent}, \]

Onkelos found it necessary to speak yet more abstractly and reverently by translating this verse

\[ \text{the word of God is not like the word of the sons of men — the sons of men speak and they lie; nor like the acts of the beings of flesh — who decree to do (yet) they repent and change counsels.} \]
where translated by a variant of the Aramaic word  СШ (before). This is not a far-fetched translation or paraphrase, inasmuch the Hebrew word for face is identical with the Hebrew word for before (obviously meaning the face-side), and normally it designates an appearance of the Deity. There are, however, three exceptions to this rule, that is, three other variants which Onkelos used in his translation for instances of (ן'ד). In a few places he rendered it by a more direct and forceful expression of an Erscheinungsform of God, namely the word  ה' (the term denoting the Divine Indwelling).  

For Deuteronomy 5:4—

(Note your transcription of Deuteronomy 5:4, including the Aramaic translation.

Onkelos rendered

Word with word did I speak with you;  

and in at least five places he rendered  ה' (My anger; wrath) for (ן'ד).  

3See Exodus 33:14, 15; Deuteronomy 31:17, 18, and 32:20.

4Cf. Numbers 12:8, where Onkelos renders mouth to mouth also by word with word.

5Leviticus 17:10; ibid. 20:3, 5f., and 26:17.

6The same word Onkelos used for the Hebrew  ה' (My anger); see e.g. Exodus 22:23, et passim. Cf. infra, s.v.  ה' (nostril).

7This circumlocution, however, need not necessarily be taken as an anti-anthropomorphism, but may belong to the exegetical translations, whereas it may be found in non-anthropomorphic context as well; cf. Onkelos on Genesis 32:21.
In any case, the non-(and possibly anti-) anthropomorphic notion emerges quite clearly in all these instances.\(^8\)

The bodily organs that are attached to Deity mostly are the eyes, the nose, mouth, ears, hands, fingers, and feet. With all these we find in Onkelos a distinct pattern of circumlocution as will presently be shown.

The phrase ‘\(\tilde{\tau} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r} \tau\) (in the eyes of \(\text{Y}\)), or ‘\(\tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r} \tau\) (in my eyes), in which the pronominal element refers to God, is consistently translated into the Aramaic by a variant of the word \(\tilde{r} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r}\) (before).\(^9\) This word manages to retain the full meaning of the original even while avoiding the anthropomorphism. There is but one notable exception, namely Deuteronomy 11:12–

\[\tilde{\tau} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{\kappa} \tilde{\tau} \tilde{r} \tilde{n} \tilde{\iota} \tilde{r}\]

‘the eyes of \(\text{J},\) thy God, are always upon it’.\(^10\)

The Hebrew term ‘in the eyes of’ is not necessarily overly anthropomorphic, certainly not so when seen in its normal usage; nevertheless, Onkelos did find it necessary to avoid this term as much as possible, thus eradicating even the unintended underlying anthropomorphic motive.

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\(^8\) Though cf. Numbers 6:26, where the anthropomorphism is retained in Onkelos!

\(^9\) Cf. supra, s.v. \(\tilde{r} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r}\) (face)

\(^10\) The context of this verse could not possibly allow Onkelos to use a variant of \(\tilde{r} \tilde{\gamma} \tilde{r}\), whereas the ‘eyes of \(\text{J}\)’ here refer to the Divine Providence. Consequently, Onkelos may be said to remain consistent.
'Ears of God' is never translated literally. For these organs, too, Onkelos used a variant of (חי). Thus, Numbers 11:1 (also, ibid., verse 18) —

'חי

'in the ears of J'

is rendered as

'חי

'before J.'
Numbers 14:28

'חי

'as ye have spoken in Mine ears'

is rendered as

'חי

'as ye have spoken before Me'.

The word רו (mouth), when used of God, is consistently changed into (מ) (word). As this word came to mean in Hebrew command (as 'that which from the mouth'), Onkelos sometimes adds the stronger form of (מ) (the decree of the word). Leviticus 24:12 is thus paraphrased, from

'חי

'at the command (lit.: mouth) of J'
'at the decree of the word of J'.

In other instances, as for Exodus 17:1 (where the same phrase appears), and for Numbers 27:14—

'ye rebelled against My command' (lit. mouth), the Hebrew is translated simply by (word).

The word (nostril), in Hebrew came to mean anger as well, probably by the association of heavy breathing, or snorting, in connection with this emotion. Onkelos used this secondary meaning and translated by (anger; wrath), thus obscuring the physical connotation. Onkelos is very consistent with this circumlocution, and applied it in reference to God and to man. The only exceptions to this rule are where the context demands a more literal sense of . In

12The same applies also to Numbers 14:41 and 22:18.

13See also Numbers 3:16, and 39; Deuteronomy 1:26, and 8:3; et passim.

Here again, it should be noted that this circumlocution is used in non-anthropomorphic context as well; e.g. Exodus 38:21:

'at the command (lit. mouth) of Moses'

is rendered by

by the word of Moses'.

Onkelos used the circumlocution of even for the prepositional use of ; thus, Genesis 13:17, and Exodus 34:27 — (according to these words), are translated — (according to these words), are translated

Another instance of , that should be mentioned here, is the passage cited supra, note 3.
these cases, where the pronominal element refers to man (e.g., Genesis 19:1; ibid., 24:47; et passim), Onkelos translated [h literally. In the two places (with the context demanding a more literal translation), where [h is found to refer to God, Onkelos paraphrased:
Exodus 15:8

\[\text{and with the blast (lit. breath) of Thy nostrils} \]

became:

\[\text{and by the word of Thy mouth}. \]

Deuteronomy 33:10

\[\text{they shall put incense in Thy nostrils} \]

became

\[\text{they shall put sweet incense before Thee} \].

Somewhat unusual, in the light of the evidence shown above, is that the word [h (hand) is frequently carried over into the Aramaic without any, or but (apparently) insignificant qualification. The frequent phrases of [h (the strong hand), or [h (with the strength of the hand), — and likewise [h (the out-

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14 Cf., also Exodus 15:10. — Interestingly enough, this is one instance Onkelos is found to replace one anthropomorphism by another! But even so, it would seem that the original anthropomorphism is definitely weakened by the expression Onkelos used.
stretched arm) -- are translated literally.\textsuperscript{15} Anthropomorphism is avoided only in the instances where the context itself indicates a secondary meaning, especially in the sense of a display of strength. Thus,

Exodus 9:3

\[ \text{the hand of } J \]

is rendered

\[ \text{a plague from before } J ; \]

Exodus 16:3

\[ \text{that we die by the hand of } J \]

is rendered

\[ \text{we die before } J . \]

Exodus 6:8

\[ \text{concerning which I lifted up my hand} \text{ (an oath-form) } \]

\textsuperscript{15} See Exodus 13:3, 9, 14, and 16; Deuteronomy 5:15, 7:19, and 26:8; et passim.

\textsuperscript{16} Likewise also for Exodus 3:20, 7:14, and 9:15; and Deuteronomy 2:15.
is rendered

\[
\text{which I have established (sworn) in My word}. 17
\]

There are two more interesting passages in which Onkelos avoided the anthropomorphic hand:

Exodus 24:11

\[
\text{and upon the nobles of the children of Israel, He laid not His Hand},
\]

which is rendered as

\[
\text{and unto the leaders of the children of Israel there came no harm.}
\]

Numbers 11:23

\[
\text{is the hand of J waxed short}?
\]

is translated

\[
\text{is the word of J restrained}?
\]

There are two more somatic attributions, the avoidance and circumlocution of which by Onkelos ought to be mentioned:

Exodus 8:15

\[
\text{it is the finger of God},
\]

---

17 See also Onkelos on Numbers 14:30, and cf. ibid. on Exodus 17:16.
which Onkelos rendered as

\[ \text{'it is a plague from before J'} \]

and Exodus 24:16

\[ \text{'and below His feet'} \]

which is rendered as

\[ \text{'and below the throne of His glory'} \]

The quoted instances of anthropomorphisms in the Pentateuch, and the manner in which they are dealt with by Onkelos, indicate quite clearly that the translator was governed by a desire to produce as faithful a rendering of the original as possible, but also avoided the literal meaning of the Hebrew original where it appears obnoxious for being irreverent, or otherwise disturbing to theological or philosophical sensitivity. 19

18 The phrase \( \text{'written by the finger of God'} \), (Exodus 31:18; Deuteronomy 9:10) however, is translated literally, both times!

19 It is interesting to note that a comparative study of the quoted passages as they are rendered in the Septuaginta and in Targum Onkelos, yields the conclusion that while there is surprisingly much similarity in their respective renditions, Onkelos is, however, much more consistent in his anti-anthropomorphism. Cf. Fritsch's study of the Septuaginta, opus citat. supra, especially chapter 1. See also Leo Prijs, Juedische Tradition in der Septuaginta, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1943).
CHAPTER III

ONKELOS' TREATMENT OF THE PENTATEUCH'S ANTHROPOPATHIES

The Pentateuch attributes to God not only human form and organs but also human actions and feelings. God is said to love and rejoice, to hate and to be jealous; He walks, stands, carries, and rests; He comes, descends, passes by, and meets.

Onkelos, in his Aramaic translation, avoided most of these anthropopathic conceptions because they are considered objectionable in relation to God. There are, however, some anthropopathies which one would expect to be avoided for that very reason, and yet they were retained in pretty much their literal sense. Among these retained anthropopathies, the one that comes to mind foremost is the notion of repentance which is attributed to God several times in the Pentateuch, even though that it is philosophically at variance with the omniscience of God. Genesis 6:6

'ו תיירא
'and J repented'

is but slightly softened in Targum Onkelos:

ו וננייהו 'ו דע
'and it repented J in His word'.

1 The same applies also to Genesis 6:7.
Where the same phrase appears in Exodus 32:14, Onkelos does not even use this softening, but renders it literally.  

Other emotive attributes are retained as well. Onkelos did not hesitate to ascribe to God emotions as love and compassion, hate and anger, and jealously. An interesting and noteworthy observation is that in such constructions where God appears not as subject, but as object of the sentence, or where it is man speaking of the emotions of God, Onkelos softens the anthropopathic effect by interjecting the word (') before mentioning God’s name (e.g. anger before God). This interjection of a buffer-word is successfully effective in creating a conception of the Deity as personally unaffected by human actions and may doubtlessly be regarded as an anti-anthropopathism.

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2 Cf. also Exodus 32:12. — On the other hand, where the Pentateuch itself rejects the notion of repentance in association with God, Onkelos goes still further than the Pentateuch in his rendition; see supra, Chapter II note 2.

3 See Genesis 19:16 and 32:11.

4 With respect to hate, see Deuteronomy 12:31, and 16:22; with respect to anger, see supra, ch. II, s.v. (א), and the numerous instances throughout the Pentateuch of the phrase (א) (Genesis 18:30; Exodus 22:23; Numbers 11:1; Deuteronomy 7:4; et passim). See also Leviticus 20:23, and 26:11, and 30, with respect to loathing (גפ), and 5.

5 Exodus 20:5; et passim.

6 For examples, see Genesis 32:11; Numbers 14:11; ibid. 15:30, and 16:30; Deuteronomy 1:37, 3:26, 4:21 and 25, 9:7 and 18, and 32:15.
Onkelos did change at least one emotion attributed to God:

Genesis 6:6

\[ \text{"and it grieved Him at His heart"} \]

is rendered by Onkelos as

\[ \text{"and He said in His word that He would break their strength according to His will.} \]

Verbs implying a direct, active involvement, and with connotations of space or motion (which implies a certain measure of corporeality), are treated differently than the emotive attributes.

When the verb \( \text{\'lilien} \) (to walk; go) is referred to God Onkelos interjected the term \( \text{\'k\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{\text{\'}}}}}} } \) (the Divine Indwelling, or Abiding), thus toning down the anthropomorphism:

Leviticus 26:12

\[ \text{"and I will walk among you"} \]

became

\[ \text{"and I will make My Shechinah dwell among you"} \]

Deuteronomy 23:15

\[ \text{"for J, thy God, walketh in the midst of thy camp"} \]

\footnote{\text{Ed. Sabionsta, 1557, and many other versions, omit \text{\'in His word}.}
became

"for J, thy God, His Shechinah walketh in the midst of thy camp."\(^8\)

Even where the action is indirectly and by implication only associated with God, Onkelos felt it necessary to circumscribe the original:

*Genesis 5:22* (and *ibid.*, 24)

"and Enoch walked with God"

is changed to

"and Enoch walked in the fear of J."

Likewise, *Genesis 6:9*

"Noah walked with God"

is changed to

\(^8\) *also Exodus 34:9:*

"let J, I pray Thee, go in the midst of us"

became

"let J, I pray Thee, go in the voice of God"

*Genesis 3:8* is not included among these quotations, because there the Pentateuch cites the *voice of God* (and not God Himself) as the subject.
This verb, ֶך, is thus found to be consistently circumlocuted throughout Targum Onkelos.

ֶך (to descend) appears quite frequently in association with God, and this word, too, is consistently circumscribed. Onkelos always paraphrases this word by the Aramaic equivalent for to become revealed, or manifested:

Genesis 11:5

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'and J came down'
is rendered as

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'and J became manifest';

Exodus 19:11

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'J will come down'
is rendered as

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'J will manifest Himself';

9 Cf. also the following verses:
Genesis 17:1

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'walk before Me'
became

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'worship before Me';

Ibid., 24:40

'ֶ֖כּ ֶ֖כּ ֶ֖כּ' 'before Whom I walk'
became

'ֶך עֵ֔לֶך' 'before Whom I worship.'
Numbers 11:17

'and I came down'

is rendered as

'and I became revealed'.

There is one eye-catching exception, though, namely

Genesis 46:4:

'I will descend with you to Egypt'.

In the rendition of this verse, Onkelos gives a literal translation.

This exception was noted already by Maimonides, and he suggests that

this but proves the ingenuity of Onkelos,

the perfection of this distinguished man, as well as
the fine quality of his interpretation, and his understand­
ing of things as they really are ... In view of
the fact that the beginning of the passage includes
the statement that this happened in the visions of the
night. Onkelos did not think that it would be unseemly
to conform wholly to the text in his rendering of what
was said in the visions of the night.

Maimonides, thus, drew a fine distinction with respect to prophecy

between what is said to happen in a dream, or in the visions (apparitions)

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10See also Genesis 22:14; Exodus 15:13, and 20, and 34:5;
Numbers 11:25, and 12:5.

11See Genesis 46:2.

12Torah Nebuchim, (Vilna: I. Funk, 1914), part I: ch. 27.
(English translations, under the title Guide for the Perplexed, by
M. Friedlander, London: 1881-5, and by S. Pines, Chicago: University of
of the night, and prophecies that are mentioned without qualification (as 'and the word of J came unto me, saying', or 'and J said unto me').

Other verbs implying motion and associated with God, are (to come), אִשָּׁה (to pass by), ולָיְלָה (to go out), and וְכִכָּה (to meet).

All these verbs are clearly circumlocuted in Targum Onkelos:

Genesis 20:3

'and God came to Abimelech'

became

'and the word came from before J to Abimelech'.

Exodus 19:9

'behold, I come unto you'

became

---

13Maimonides (ibid., ad loc. cit.) suggests an alternative explanation for this exception, viz. that the subject here is not God, but an angel of God (and as we find frequently that an angel is called by God's name), and, therefore, no circumlocution or paraphrase is necessary. The original explanation of Maimonides is strongly criticised by Nachmanides, in his commentary on the Pentateuch (on Gen. 46:14), who points out that there are other passages relating Divine revelations in dreams or visions of the night, and yet Onkelos paraphrases those passages, toning down the anthropomorphistic connotations. (Cf. Genesis 20:3; ibid. 28:13, and 31:24). — Maimonides' views on the Targum Onkelos, and Nachmanides' critique thereon, will still be dealt with further on, in a later chapter.

14Similar instances are Genesis 31:24, and Numbers 22:9.
Exodus 20:21

'I shall come to you and bless you.'

became

'I shall send My blessing to you, and I shall bless you.'

Deuteronomy 33:2

'I came from Sinai.'

became

'I manifested Himself from Sinai.'

Exodus 12:12

'and I shall pass through the land of Egypt.'

became

'and I shall manifest Myself in the land of Egypt.'

Exodus 11:4

'I will go out in the midst of Egypt.'

\[15\] A similar instance is Exodus 12:23.
became

\[
\text{"I will manifest Myself in the midst of Egypt";}
\]

Exodus 3:18

\[
\text{"has met with us"}
\]

became

\[
\text{"has manifested Himself to us";}^{16}
\]

Numbers 23:3

\[
\text{"I will come to meet with me"
\]

became

\[
\text{"the word from before J shall be proclaimed before me";}^{17}
\]

There are four more verbs the examination of which is relevant, namely: \(N^\text{to dwell}\), \(\text{to smell}\), \(\text{to see}\), and \(YN\).

\[^{16}\text{A similar instance is Exodus 5:3.}\]

\[^{17}\text{The Aramaic } \gamma \text{ is also equivalent to the Hebrew } \gamma \text{ (to meet), but the sense of to proclaim was preferred in order to retain the literal meaning of the word } \gamma \text{; cf. N. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature, (Berlin: Choreb, 1926), s.v. } \gamma \text{. — The same paraphrase appears also for Numbers 23:4 and 6. The distinction drawn by Bible-commentators between the revelations to a Hebrew prophet, and to a heathen (cf. Rashi, on Leviticus 1:1), may explain the difference in the paraphrases for Exodus 3:18, and Numbers 23:3, the latter being toned down in such a way as rendering that revelation inferior to the former.}\]
(to hear). All these verbs have some physical connotation, and some of them imply a subjectivity of the Divine Being. The anthropopathic connotation of the word יָשָׁר is consistently avoided by changing the subject from God to Shechinah.

Exodus 25:8

"וַיָּשַׁר אַל-וָֹא יַעַר

'and I will dwell amongst them'

is changed to

"וַיִּשְׁרֵנִי אַל-וָֹא יַעַר

'and I will make My Shechinah dwell amongst them'.

Exodus 29:46

"שָׁבָב וְשָׁבָב

'that I may dwell'

is changed to

"שָׁבָב וְשָׁבָב

'to make dwell My Shechinah'.

Numbers 5:3

"יִשָּׁר לָא יַעַר

'I dwelleth amongst them'

is changed to

"יִשָּׁר לָא יַעַר

'My Shechinah dwelleth amongst them'.

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18 See also Exodus 29:45.

19 Cf. also Deuteronomy 12:11, (et passim) on the phrase פָּדַי פָּדַי (to make His Name dwell there), which Onkelos circumcribed in like manner by יָשָׁר יָשָׁר (to make His Shechinah dwell there).
The verb to smell, as related to God, is avoided completely by Onkelos:

Genesis 8:21

'and J smelled the sweet savour'

is changed to

'and J accepted (or received) in favour the sacrifice'.

Leviticus 26:31

'and I will not smell your sweet savours'

is changed to

'and I will not accept in favour the sacrifice of your assembly'.

The words seeing and hearing, appearing in the Pentateuch with reference to God, are treated more intricately in Targum Onkelos. Maimonides found it necessary to give a long chapter dealing with Onkelos' treatment of these two words.

20 Into the same category falls also the phrase אֶמּוֹא אֹלֶה "it is a sweet savour, a fire-offering unto J," (Exodus 29:18), which Onkelos rendered as אֶמּוֹא אֹלֶה (a sacrifice which is accepted in favour). It is likewise with the frequent phrase of אֶמּוֹא אֹלֶה (a fire-offering, a sweet savour), which Onkelos rendered as אֶמּוֹא אֹלֶה (a sacrifice which is accepted in favour).

(to hear) is dealt with simply in the Targum. Whenever the notion of hearing occurs with reference to God, Onkelos avoided the word and interpreted its meaning as signifying that the matter in question (i.e. the matter 'heard' by God) reached God, or was apprehended by God, or, with respect to prayers, was accepted by God. The phrase God heard, in general context, is always translated by Onkelos as יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'יִשְׂרָאֵל (it was heard before J),\(^\text{22}\) and when this phrase appears in the context of prayer he translated that (the prayer) was received (or accepted).\(^\text{23}\) These circumlocutions appear consistently throughout the Targum Onkelos and Onkelos did not deviate from them.

The consistency in the treatment of the word יִשְׂרָאֵל is not apparent in the treatment of יִשְׂרָאֵל (to see). The occurrences of this word with reference to God Onkelos translated mostly literally (God saw), and only occasionally by substituting יִשְׂרָאֵל (it was revealed before God). It is difficult to determine any rule for this variation and even Maimonides admits to being puzzled by it. Maimonides does forward a hypothesis that 'in the cases in which the word seeing is found in conjunction with wrong-doing or harming, and committing an act of aggression, (Onkelos) interprets it as it was revealed before J. There is no doubt that the word to behold has in (Aramaic) the meaning to apprehend, and

\(^{22}\)See Genesis 21:17, and 29:33; Exodus 3:17, 6:5, and 16:8; Numbers 14:27; and Deuteronomy 5:25.

\(^{23}\)For that purpose, Onkelos often translated voice, or affliction, as prayer. — See Genesis 16:11, and 30:16; Exodus 22:22, and 26; Deuteronomy 1:45, and 3:26.
to establish the thing apprehended as it is apprehended. Therefore, when seeing is mentioned in connection with wrong-doing, (Onkelos) did not say and He beheld, but and it was revealed before J.' Maimonides cites many proof-texts, 'all the verses in which Onkelos avoids the literal meaning of seeing', namely: Genesis 29:32 and 31:12; Exodus 2:25, 3:7, and 9, 4:31, and 32:9; Deuteronomy 32:11, and 36. A study of these instances seems to bear out his thesis. Maimonides then adds, however, that this theory is spoilt for him by three passages which, if the analogy held good, ought to have been translated by Onkelos by and it was revealed before J., while all standard editions have and J beheld. These passages are Genesis 6:5 and 12, and 29:31. In view of these obvious exceptions, Maimonides wrote that 'the explanation that seems to me the most probable is that those are mistakes that have crept into the copies of the translation; for we do not have Onkelos' autograph of these passages; if we had, we should have said that perhaps he had in mind some interpretation with regard to this . . . . As far as these (three) passages are concerned, a careful investigation should be made with a view to correcting the copies of the translation. If, however, the passages are found to have

24 Maimonides purposely did not include in this list Genesis 22:8, showing cause why he does not regard it to be an exception to this thesis. He also did not include Genesis 18:21 and Exodus 5:21, probably because these are not disturbing as exceptions, whereas the context there demands the type of translation which Onkelos offers. It is strange, though that he did not include Genesis 31:42; Exodus 33:13; Deuteronomy 9:13, 26:7, and 32:20.

25 An examination of the recently published edition of Targum Onkelos 'based on old manuscripts and printed texts', The Bible in Aramaic, ed. A. Sperber, (Leiden: Brill, 1959), yielded the interesting result of showing the version which Maimonides' theory demands, for Genesis 6:5 and 29:31.
the text we cited, I do not know for him a purpose in this.\textsuperscript{26}

Two more verbs need to be considered in this chapter on anthropopathies, \( \psi \rho \) and \( \upsilon \rho \) (to remember),\textsuperscript{27} as they appear in relation to God. These two verbs appear often in the Pentateuch (related to God) in the tenses of the futurum and perfectum. This usage gives the impression of being at variance with the notion of God's omniscience and unchangeableness. In all these cases Onkelos, while retaining the literal meaning of the root-word, changed the tense to the present. This change appears so often and is so obvious, that it cannot be said to be accidental and must serve the purpose of safeguarding the omniscience and unchangeableness of God.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Soreh Nebuchim, opus cit.}, part I: ch. 48. — Nachmanides, in his critique of Maimonides, (\textit{ad loc. cit., supra}, note 13), suggests, that while Onkelos was not governed by a motive to avoid all anthropomorphism (as Maimonides claims), he paraphrases some instances of seeing because they do not refer to actual sight, but imply a notion of apprehension of a matter or condition, rather than a physical object.

\textsuperscript{27} \( \upsilon \rho \) can also mean to remember, in the sense of to visit upon, to punish, in which instances Onkelos translated it literally, with the Aramaic equivalent to this sense of the word.

\textsuperscript{28}See Genesis 8:1, 9:15, 19:29, 21:1, 50:24; Exodus 2:24, 3:16, 4:31, 6:5, 13:19; Leviticus 26:42, and 45. Cf. also Genesis 30:22, and Numbers 10:9, where Onkelos inserted a nomen (the memory of ... ascended before J). — This last observation is already made by S. D. Luzzatto, in the introduction to his \textit{Philoxenus}, (Cracoviae: I. Graeber, 1895), par. 3, who took it from the anonymous author of \textit{Pathshahen}, (a mediæval commentary on Targum Onkelos, published by N. Adler, in the Vilna edition of the Pentateuch, of 1912).
CHAPTER IV

ONKELOS' TREATMENT OF GENITIVE ASSOCIATIONS,
AND OF GOD'S NAMES

I. Genitive Associations

The genitive associations of corporeal substances with God are many and of varied types in the Pentateuch. Some of these — those which attribute human organs to God — were already dealt with earlier.¹ The others, which divide up into the three classes of personal, anthropomorphic-minded factors, impersonal, physical factors, and miscellaneous factors, are discussed in this chapter.

Genesis 1:2

'מ הנל
'the spirit of God'
is toned down by Onkelos to

'客户需求| ה'נ ה'ן
'and a spirit from before J'.²

¹Supra, Chapter II.

²Cf. also Exodus 35:31, and Numbers 42:2. Another anthropomorphic-minded association circumlocuted by Onkelos, is Numbers 24:4.
Genesis 28:17

'ק נ"ג
'House of God'
is changed to

ן י"ג קקק יארז עמק
'the place where there is favour from before J'.

Exodus 3:1

'כ נ"ג
'the mountain of God'
is changed to

'כ כ"ג קקק יארז עמק י"ג
'the mountain upon which the glory of J manifested itself'.

Exodus 4:20

'כ נ"ג
'the staff of God'
is changed to

'כ כ"ג קקק יארז עמק י"ג
'the staff wherewith miracles were performed'.

Numbers 11:3

'כ לk
'the fire of J'

3 See also Genesis 28:22 (relating the same term to the worship of God).

4 See also Exodus 18:5, and cf. Numbers 10:33.

is changed to

"א פי חק 'a fire from before J'.

Genesis 18:19

' the way of J'

is changed to

' the way established before J'.

Genesis 32:3

' the camp of God'

is changed to

' a camp from before J'.

Numbers 21:14

' in the book of wars of J'

is changed to

' in the book of the wars which J made'.

Numbers 31:3

'to execute the vengeance of J'
is changed to

\[ '\text{to execute the vengeance of this people of } J' \]

Deuteronomy 33:21

\[ '\text{the righteousness of } J' \]

is changed to

\[ '\text{the righteousness from before } J' \]

Deuteronomy 33:23

\[ '\text{the blessing of } J' \]

is changed to

\[ '\text{the blessing from before } J' \]

Onkelos' treatment of the genitive associations quoted above reaffirms his apprehension over anthropomorphic and any other type of expressions or terms which appear to belittle the wholly spiritual and transcendent character of Deity. All instances of genitive associations, of the type discussed in this chapter, again demonstrate a distinct pattern of circumlocution, the sole explanation for which is that the Targum Onkelos consciously avoids anthropomorphism. In no instance of such genitive associations did Onkelos retain the anthropomorphism of the original.
II. God’s Names

Fritsch, in his examination of the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, found that the names of God are often, though inconsistently changed in the Septuaginta from the way they appear in the original Hebrew text. It is, thus, worthwhile to consider how the Targum Onkelos deals with these.

The Tetragrammaton is always carried over into the Aramaic, without any change. The name פֶּרֶשׁ (Almighty), which appears in the Pentateuch nine times, is also carried over unchanged. The name אל is rendered either unchanged, or by its derivative of אלוהים. Onkelos’ renditions for Elohim are more complicated.

In most cases, Onkelos substituted the Tetragrammaton for the Pentateuchal occurrences of Elohim. The most obvious exception to

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6Fritsch, op. cit., ch. 3.
7For the etymology of this word, see Albright, The Names Shaddai and Abram, JBL, LIV (1935), pp. 173ff.; see also F. Zörell, Der Gottesname 'Saddai' in den alten Uebersetzungen, Biblica, VIII (1927), pp. 215ff.
8Genesis 17:1, 28:12, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, 49:25; Exodus 6:3; and Numbers 24:4 and 16.
9Extremely interesting is that the Divine proclamation of פֶּרֶשׁ (Exodus 3:14), is retained in the Targum, in the original Hebrew, as if the whole phrase is to be regarded as a name of God.
10The sole explanation that lends itself to this treatment, is that Onkelos sought to emphasize the unity of God (J=E, and E=J; anticipating Bible-criticism?)
this rule is when the text has both names adjoined. A few more exceptions to the rule, are not, at first glance, definable as clearly. Onkelos gives a more literal rendition of Elohim, in passages as Genesis 17:7, and 28:21; Exodus 6:7, and 29:45; Leviticus 11:45, 22:33, 25:38, 26:12 and 45; Numbers 15:41; Deuteronomy 4:7, 26:17, and 29:12. A closer examination of all these passages, however, quickly reveals that in all these verses Elohim is spoken of as object, and not as subject, of the sentence, that is, referring to J being God. This intended sense could not have been expressed if the Tetragrammaton had been used instead. 12

11 P. T. Genesis 2:4f. and 7ff.; et passim.

12 Onkelos also retained Elohim whenever it is modified in the text by a personal suffix (my, your, our, etc. God). For these instances the Tetragrammaton would also not lend itself, besides that it cannot be modified (because it is a nomen proprium).

The word Elohim, as appearing in various contexts in the Pentateuch, has several different meanings. It may stand for God in the literal sense, or in a strictly metaphorical sense. When it refers to God, Onkelos retains its literal sense (by substituting J, or by carrying it over into the Aramaic). When Elohim acquires a secular connotation (as in Genesis 3:5, 6:2 and 4, 33:10; Exodus 4:16, 7:1, 21:6, 22:7f. and 27), Onkelos substituted what he felt to be the intended meaning of the word (e.g., judge, prince, chief, or leader); likewise, Onkelos inserted יִּלֵּאָה (angel) in his translations of Genesis 32:31 and Exodus 4:24. (On the 'secular' meaning of elohim, cf. C. Gordon, Elohim in Its Reputed Meaning of 'Rulers, Judges', JBL, LIV (1935), pp. 139ff.)

The related topic of Onkelos' treatment of the word elohim as it appears in the Pentateuch with reference to idols or idolatry, is also noteworthy. In all such contexts, Onkelos invariably translated the word elohim by יִּלֵּאָה (fear, in a religious sense), as in Genesis 31:30 and 32; Exodus 20:20, 32: et passim, 31:17; Leviticus 19:14; Deuteronomy 29:25, 32:17 and 37; or by יִּלֵּאָה (idol; etymologically related to
There are two more appellations of God which Onkelos changed in his translation. For מין (Rock), which appears in Deuteronomy 32:4, Onkelos rendered מ"י מ"י (Rock; Strength), and for Genesis 15:1, where God is referred to as a shield,13

"I am a shield unto you!"

Onkelos paraphrased

"My word is strength unto you!"

The evidence cited in this chapter has shown again that Onkelos was extremely careful and apprehensive in his translation of the Pentateuch to avoid most of the Biblical anthropomorphisms and anthropopathies. A distinct pattern is, thus, found throughout the Targum Onkelos. This pattern can only be explained by a conscious attempt of de-anthropomorphisation.

The term God, in the Targum Onkelos, thus remains reserved for the God of the Pentateuch only, which is very significant to a determination of the character of this Targum.

13See also Deuteronomy 33:29.
CHAPTER V

PECULIAR TERMS IN TARGUM ONKELOS

An examination and discussion of the Targum Onkelos would be incomplete without drawing attention to the special terms which Onkelos interjected in his renditions of Biblical passages as intermediary elements or buffer-words. These buffer-words, peculiar to Onkelos, serve as a direct avoidance, or a softening and toning down, of the Pentateuchal anthropomorphisms, and include the following terms: *

(\(\text{p} \text{r} \text{p}\) (or: \(\text{p} \text{r} \text{p} /\text{i}\)); \(\text{i} \text{r} \text{n} /\text{w}\); \(\text{k} \text{r} \text{p}\); and \(\text{k} \text{r} /\text{f}\)).

(\(\text{r} \text{r} \text{p}\) (before; \(\text{r} \text{r} /\text{p} - \text{from before})\) is the most recurring modifying term in Targum Onkelos appearing hundreds of times prefixing God's name. Many of the passages quoted in the previous chapters of this thesis show how this word \(\text{r} \text{r} \text{p}\) is used in various contexts and how it effects a more abstract conception of the Deity. This term safeguards the essential unaffectedness of God by the acts and doings of His creatures; it expresses essential distance of, and reverence

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1 The frequently appearing word \(\text{k} \text{r} /\text{f}\) (to reveal) need not be included in this list, because it appears always in translation of a Hebrew word (albeit of many words, like seeing, hearing, descending, etc.).

2 \(\text{r} \text{r} \text{p}\) appears also in literal translation of \(\text{y} \text{r} /\text{f}\), and as a circumlocution of anthropomorphic words (cf. supra, ch. 2).
for God, an elevation of the Godhead from too intimate a contact with
creation. $\text{ן} ו$ may be said to impress the otherness of God and is
often more effective as an expression of anti-anthropomorphism than an
actual circumlocution by retaining the original phraseology of the
Pentateuch and detaching it from the Godhead per se.

$\text{ן} ו$ (word; saving) too, is used very frequently by Onkelos
and appears as either a translation, circumlocution, or as a buffer-
word. Some occurrences of this word were seen in the quotations cited
in the previous chapters. Like $\text{ן} ו$, $\text{ן} ו$ appears many times as
an interjection, but to assist in the understanding of its connotation
(as an interjection) all its instances need to be mentioned and con-
sidered. They are:

Genesis 9; 16; 17:7; 20:3; 21:20; 26:3 and 28; 28:20; 31;3, 24, and 49f.;

$\text{ן} ו$; 39:2f. and 21; 48:21; and 49:25;
Leviticus 26:9;
Numbers 14:9 and 13; 22:9 and 20; 23:13f., 16 and 21;
Deuteronomy 2:7; 4:24; 5:5; 7:3; 20:1; and 23:15.3

Practically all these sources lend to $\text{ן} ו$ a notion as if
it is some intermediary, and in practically every case it appears in
the context of some connection, or association, between God and

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3These references do not include interpretary circumlocutions
as Genesis 15:6; Exodus 14:31; Leviticus 26:14; etc., though the con-
clusion that $\text{ן} ו$ is tied to some God-man bond, holds true in
those cases as well.
man. 4

\[\text{I} \, \text{(glory)} \text{ is a less frequent buffer-word, usually adjoined to God (the glory of God), and is interjected by Onkelos in his renditions of}
\]

Genesis 17:22; 18:33; 28:13 and 16; and 35:13; Exodus 3:1 and 6; 4:27; 17:16; 18:5; 20:17\textsuperscript{f.}; 24:10\textsuperscript{e.}; and 13; and 40:38; Leviticus 9:4; Numbers 10:33\textsuperscript{e.}; 12:8; 14:14; and Deuteronomy 33:2.

\text{In all these passages } \text{is associated with a Divine revelation (as that which appears, or had appeared and withdrew), denoting a manifestation of the glory of God rather than (the anthropomorphic notion of) a revelation of God Himself.}

The fourth term peculiar to Onkelos is \( \text{I} \). This word, which later appears so often in Talmudic-Midrashic literature, is somewhat unique and usually left untranslated in English (or other languages) as Shechinah (or Shekinah). A derivative of \( \text{I} \) (to dwell), Shechinah is usually defined as the Indwelling or the earthly presence of God, or is theologically understood as the Divine manifestation through which God's presence is felt by man. 5 This word and term is first found, and

\[\text{That is, some form of God came to . . .; God is (or will be) with you; and the like, with either God or man as subject of the passage. Earlier scholars (especially (Christologists') sought to identify this term with the logos in Philo, (see infra, especially note 16).}
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frequently so, in the Targumim. In Onkelos it appears in one of four contexts:

1. in translation or circumlocution of the verb (when this verb refers to God); 6
2. as a circumlocution for the Face of God, 7
   the Hand of God, 8 and the Name of God; 9
3. as an interjection, in the context of exegetical translations; 10
4. as a buffer-word, either in association with the Name of God, or where God is said to be in the midst of the people (or some other earthly manifestation; thus, an implicit sense of 11

There is no doubt whatever, that these terms ( ֹיִּחַ יִּמְנֻּמ, ֶותֶּשֶּנֵר, and ֶביִּטֶּת ), as appearing in the contexts mentioned above,

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7 See Exodus 33:16ff. and 20; Deuteronomy 31:17ff., and 32:20.
9 See Exodus 20:21; Deuteronomy 12:5, 11, and 21; 14:23ff.; 16:2, 6, and 11; and 26:2. (In most of these instances, an indwelling is already implied in the text of the Pentateuch.)
11 See Exodus 17:7; 33:3, 5, and 16; 34:6, and 9; Leviticus 26:12; Numbers 11:20; 14:14, and 4:2; and 16:3; Deuteronomy 14:23; 31:15; 7:21; 23:15; and 31:17.
serve an anti-anthropomorphic purpose. These terms cannot possibly be held to serve any other purpose; they are in no way related to the original text and are themselves too much in need for explanation to be said to have been motivated by a desire for clarity. In the, and in the, have, however, something most peculiar about them, because they give the impression of representing intermediaries (possibly hierarchical intermediaries). Maimonides, indeed, seems to regard them as such, as he calls them 'created lights', and a number of scholars (especially of the nineteenth century) sought to identify these notions (above all with the logos in Philo, (who was an approximate contemporary of Onkelos), which serves the idea of sort of a manifest and active Deity mediating between God (the 'pure Being' and 'abstract, static unit' and 'pure immaterial intellect'), 12

12 A fifth possible buffer-word is (\(\text{\textit{\textbf{\textasteriskcentered}}} 3 \) (fear)), which appears also frequently to avoid anthropomorphic situations, (see Genesis 5:22, and 24; 6:9; 20:13; Exodus 32:26; Numbers 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:36; 4:4, 20, 294; 6:12; 8:11, 14, and 19; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5, and 11; 29:17; 30:2, 10, and 20; cf. also Genesis 50:19, and Deuteronomy 32:18). This term, though, is less peculiar, and less abstract, than the four which were typified supra.

13 See Moseh Nebuchim, op. cit., I:28; cf. also ibid., ch. 21, and beginning of ch. 27. -- This interpretation is a fitting link in Aristotelian systems like that of Maimonides (and Aquinas), which see the world-order as a hierarchy in which even the spheres are regarded as intelligent creatures which serve to bridge the gap between the infinite Creator and His finite creatures. -- Nachmanides (ad loc. cit.) rejects Maimonides' view outright as close to heretical, soundly refuting the idea that these terms denote separate entities.

14 And, thus, correlative to the idea of logos in the New Testament.
and the finite, pluralistic, material creation. Despite the apparent similarity, however, essential differences have been shown to exist between the *logos*-idea and the buffer-words of Onkelos. These differences render the comparison invalid and there is hardly a scholar nowadays who will entertain the view that *or* is either a real being or an intermediary.

Isaac ibn Arama, the fifteenth century scholar and philosopher, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, interpreted the usage of these different terms by stating that

( ) is used in reference to God's 'coming', 'appearing', 'standing', or 'ascending', out of respect and reverence for God, just as in addressing the nobility men use terms like 'your honour', 'your highness', etc.;

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17 Akedath Yitzchak, (Polack: 2nd edition, Jerusalem, 1961); the relevant passage is Gate XXXI, in comment on Genesis 46:13.
is used to denote God's Providence, in general, while 

is employed for the steady continuance of Providence.

S. D. Luzzatto quotes Arama with warm approval, but an analysis of the Targum Onkelos would seem to uphold at most the first suggestion of Arama (re (ך \( ג \)) ) and defeat his explanation for (ך \( נ \)) and (ך \( ג \)). If it were indeed as Arama claimed, then Onkelos should have used (ך \( ג \) \( ג \)), rather than (ך \( נ \)), in some of the very examples cited by Arama. Moreover, there are verses where such an explanation of (ך \( נ \)) is not possible even in forced interpretation. Finally, Onkelos should then have substituted the retained anthropomorphism of Deuteronomy 11:12 by a phrase involving (ך \( ג \)).

The difficult task of a thorough and determinative critical examination of these terms is, however, outside the scope of this thesis. For the purposes of this study it is sufficient to have noted their existence as a peculiar part of the Targum Onkelos, in general, and as a means to avoid anthropomorphism, in particular.

18 Luzzatto, Philoxenus - sive de Onkelosi, chaldaica Pentateuchi versione - Dissertatio hermeneutico critica, (Cracoviae 1895), Introduction.


20 E.g. Leviticus 26:14 and 18.

21 Cf. supra, chapter 2 note 9.

22 A brief, and rather superficial study of these terms was attempted by G. F. Moore, Judaism etc., op. cit., ad loc. cit., and M. Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1952), chapter 7.

See also Haybaum, op. cit., part II. (Haybaum's comments are less superficial than the others, but they are also more single-minded, aimed at contradicting the writings of Groerer; cit. supra, note 15).
CHAPTER VI

AN EXCURSUS OF THE OPINIONS OF THE EARLY SCHOLARS

ON THE CONTENTS OF THE TARGUM ONKELOS

Onkelos' circumlocution of anthropomorphic passages was noted already by the early Jewish theologians and philosophers, and especially by those who dealt with the problem of anthropomorphism in general, and its occurrence in the Bible in particular.

Saadiah Gaon is probably the first who expressed himself on this topic. In the second treatise of his Kitab al-Amanath w'al Itikadat (op. cit.) Saadiah discusses how all anthropomorphic epithets attributed to God in the Bible, whether they be of a substantial or of an accidental character, are applied only by way of approximation or as figures of speech; categories of substance and quantity, quality and relation, place and time, possession and position, and action and passion, are totally inapplicable to God. Saadiah offers proofs (ibid., end of ch. 9) based on reason, Scripture, and tradition; of the latter he says:

As for the proof from tradition, again we find that wherever our sages, who were considered trustworthy authorities in regard to our religion, encountered any such comparisons of God to physical beings, they did not translate them in an anthropomorphic sense, but rendered them in such a way as to correspond to the previously established principle. Now they were the disciples of the prophets and better acquainted than others with the speech of the prophets. If, therefore,
it had seemed to them that these expressions were meant to be taken in their material sense, they would have translated them literally. However, they knew for certain from the prophets, aside from what their reason dictated to them, that by means of these anthropomorphic expressions they meant to designate lofty, exalted ideas. They therefore translated them in accordance with their understanding of the underlying thoughts.

No doubt that Saadiah had in mind specifically the Targum Onkelos, because he proceeded to quote four verses of the Pentateuch with their Aramaic translations taken from the Targum Onkelos, as proof-texts.

Saadiah Gaon is thus the first to declare the anti-anthropomorphic character of the Targum Onkelos. He is followed by Bachya ibn Pakuda, the 11th century author of Kitab al-Hidaya ila Faraid al-Culub, who saw and leaned on the opinion of Saadiah:

Our rabbis, when expounding the Scriptures, paraphrased the expressions used for this class of attributes (which indicate form, bodily likeness, and bodily movements and actions), and were careful to interpret them as well as

1Saadiah, when saying our sages, probably had in mind the Talmudic statement that 'the Targum of the Pentateuch was composed by Onkelos the Proselyte under the direction of R. Eleazar and R. Joshua', (Babyl. Talmud, Tractate Herilah: folio 3a). See also A. Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God, vol. II: Essays in Anthropomorphism, (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

2Exodus 9:3, 17:1, and 24:10; and Numbers 11:18.

They could in a dignified way, and ascribed them all to the Glory of the Creator. For example (Gen. 28:13) and the Lord stood beside him is paraphrased in the Targum the glory of God was present with him. These expressions were translated in a reverential manner, and were not applied to the Creator Himself, so as to avoid imputing to Him any corporeality or accidental property.

Bachya then refers to Saadiah's elaborate treatment, directing the readers of his work to study Saadiah's lengthy analysis. Bachya himself, whose work is concerned not only with the philosophical but also with the psychological aspects of religion, then adds a psychological argument on anthropomorphism which bears striking resemblance to modern works:

What we are all agreed upon is that necessity forced us to ascribe corporeal attributes to God and to describe Him by properties belonging to His creatures so as to obtain some conception by which the thought of God's existence should be fixed in the minds of men. The books of the prophets expressed this in corporeal terms which were more easily understood by their contemporaries. Had they limited themselves to abstract terms and concepts appropriate to God, we would have understood neither the terms nor the concepts, and it would have been impossible for us to worship a Being whom we did not know, since the worship of that which is unknown is impossible. The words and ideas used had accordingly to be such as were adapted to the hearer's mental capacity, so that the subject would first sink into his mind in the corporeal sense in which the concrete terms are understood. We will then deal discreetly with him and strive to make him understand that his presentation is only approximate and metaphorical, and that the

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reality is too fine, too exalted and remote for us to comprehend its subtlety. The wise thinker will endeavour to strip the husk of the terms — their materialistic meaning — from the kernel, and will raise his conception, step by step, till he will at last attain to as much knowledge of the truth as his intellect is capable of apprehending. . . Had Scripture, when expounding this theme, employed a terminology appropriate in its exactness but only intelligible to the profound thinker, the majority of mankind, because of this intellectual deficiency and weak perception in things spiritual, would have been left without a religion. But the word which may be understood in a material sense will not hurt the intelligent person, since he recognizes its real meaning. And it will help the simple, as its use will result in fixing in his heart and mind the conception that he has a Creator whom he is bound to serve.5

The next major statement, explicitly referring to the Targum Onkelos, is made by Maimonides who expressed himself quite radically about this Targum:

(Onkelos') translation of the Bible . . . in every case in which it finds that a thing is ascribed to God to which the doctrine of corporeality or some con­comitants of this doctrine are attached, it assumes that the nomen regens has been omitted and considers that the ascription concerns something expressed by a term that is the nomen regens of the genitive God and that has been omitted.6

In a later chapter Maimonides reiterated his opinion just as explicitly:


6Mishnah Neduchim, part I: ch. 21.
Onkelos the Proselyte was very perfect in the Hebrew and
Syrian languages and directed his effort toward the
abolition of the belief in God's corporeality. Hence
he interprets in accordance with its meaning every
attribute that Scripture predicates of God and that might
lead toward the belief in corporeality. Thus whenever he
encounters one of the terms indicative of some of the
kinds of motion, he makes motion to mean the manifestation
and appearance of a created light, ...

It is clear that Maimonides used Onkelos as an anchor to his own
strict and unrelenting anti-anthropomorphism which he expressed not
only in his philosophical treatises but also in his legal code where
he included in his classification of heretics 'he who says that He is
a body and has form'. It was already shown, above, how Maimonides

7Ibid., beg. of ch. 27; see also ibid., ch. 28.

8See Mishne Torah-Yad Hachasaka, (Amsterdam: Athias, 1702),
Book One: Treatise Five (Hilchoth Teshubah), ch. 3: sect. 7; see
also ibid., Treatise One (Hilchoth Yeessode Hatorah), ch. 1: sect. 7ff.

Maimonides' great critic Abraham ibn Daud (Rabad), makes an
interesting comment on this ruling. Alluding to the Scriptural sanction
of the use of anthropomorphism, and the intensified use of anthropomorphific
descriptions by some of the rabbis, Rabad polemises: 'why has he called
such a person an heretic? There are many people who adhere to such a belief
on the basis of what they have seen in verses of Scripture and even more in the words of those aggadoth which corrupt right opinion
about religious matters.' Hanagroth Rabad, on Hilchoth Teshubah 3:7
(glossary notes in Mishne Torah, op. cit.). See on this I. Twersky,
pp. 282ff, and cf. Koreh Nebuchim (op. cit.), part I: ch. 36, and
J. Albo, Sefer Haikkarim, (ed. Husik; Phila.: J.P.S., 1946), part I:
ch. 2. See also L. Jacobs, Principles of the Jewish Faith -- An Analytical

9See supra, pp. 31, and 36ff. See also Koreh Nebuchim, op. cit.,
part I: ch. 46, on Onkelos' literal translation of Exodus 31:18 (cf.
supra, ch. 2 note 17).
dealt with apparent inconsistencies (that is, with anthropomorphic passages in Targum Onkelos) which would seem to contradict his theory.

Maimonides thus not only stressed the anti-anthropomorphic character of Onkelos' translation of the Pentateuch but went a step further to declare that anti-anthropomorphism was a central Leitmotiv of this Targum. While the first part of this allegation (that the Targum Onkelos generally de-anthropomorphises) is generally agreed upon, Maimonides was criticised for the latter part of his theory (that Onkelos intentionally and consistently sought to avoid all Biblical anthropomorphisms). Nachmanides, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, castigates Maimonides for his view on several counts, the principal charges being:

1. If Maimonides' theory would be true then Onkelos should have circumlocuted the numerous instances of  שתה (to say),  תָּא ה (to speak), and  נַע (to call), when referring to God, while, in fact, Onkelos translated all these instances literally.

2. If, as Maimonides claims, נָה (to see) is legitimately carried over into Aramaic in its literal sense because in Aramaic, as in Hebrew, this word means also to comprehend, or to apprehend, and to establish the thing apprehended as it is apprehended, then  עָנָב (to hear),

11 In comment on Genesis 46:14; see also his commentary on Exodus 20:16.
which also has a dual connotation (of to hear and to apprehend), could (and should) also have been translated literally without fear of compromising any anti-anthropomorphic motive.

3. There are quite a number of Biblical anthropomorphisms which were retained in the Targum Onkelos for which Maimonides did not account or offer an appropriate explanation, as for example many instances of 3' (hand), 12 and of 'd' (right hand), 13 and 'r' (eye). 14

Nachmanides concluded his critique with a cryptic note that the principles which guided Onkelos in these matters 'are known by tradition, and their secret (is known) to those familiar with the esoteric science'. Nachmanides left it at that without revealing any of these secrets.

Most of the later literature on this topic pivots around this argument between Maimonides and Nachmanides. Maimonides does not lack in defenders against the severe criticism of Nachmanides. Yom Tobh ibn Abraham (Rytba), a famed scholar from the school of Nachmanides, wrote an intriguing book 15 in which he undertook to defend Maimonides against

12 Cf. supra, p. 22

13 Deuteronomy 33:2; Exodus 15:6 and 12.

14 Deuteronomy 11:12 (cf. supra, p. 19). -- See also supra, ch. 3 notes 13 and 26, and ch. 5 note 13, for further points in Nachmanides' critique.

15 Sefer Hazikaron, (included in M. Y. Blau, Kithvey Rytba: New York, 1955); the relevant passages are on pp. 30ff. (sections Vayikash and Yithro).
the criticisms which Nachmanides expressed in his commentary on the Pentateuch against many comments in the Berah Nebuchim.

In a lengthy discussion of the controversy between Maimonides and Nachmanides, Rytba stated that when Maimonides is found to stress the many circumlocutions he noted in the Targum Onkelos effecting an avoidance of anthropomorphism, it is because (Maimonides) 'set all his efforts to remove anthropomorphism even from the masses (the plain people'), and he said that Onkelos did the same.'

Yom Tobh ibn Abraham, even while allaying some of Nachmanides' detailed objections, drew a distinction between potentially misleading, obnoxious anthropomorphisms, and innocent ones, of which he said that the former were circumlocuted and the latter were retained. The implication of drawing such a distinction seems to be that Onkelos was concerned more with the general conception of Biblical anthropomorphism than with the philosophical problem of anthropomorphism.

Isaac Arama16 sought to reconcile the view of Maimonides with the critique of Nachmanides by stating that Onkelos with all these circumlocutions 'did not base himself on one principle only, but was governed by many different motives: there are instances which serve to avoid anthropomorphism, and there are instances which serve to avoid active involvements (expressions implying a change in God), and there are instances of expressions out of reverence for God,' etc. Arama's

16 Akeidah Yitzchak, op. cit., vol. I, section Yavigash-Gate 31, in comment on Genesis 46:14 (pp. 250b ff.).
thesis is that when Onkelos departs from the literal sense of a verse, 'he does so for one of several reasons, and not because of an inclusive, general principle."

Arama's younger contemporary, Don Isaac Abarbanel, takes a similar position as Arama did. In his elaborate commentary on Maimonides' Moreh Nebuchim, Abarbanel works out a detailed 20-point defense of Maimonides against all the charges of Nachmanides, the principal arguments of which are:

1. The verbs יָֽעַן, יָֽעַשׁ, and יָֽעַבְר, do indeed imply an action, but only an impersonal action, that is, an action which does not per se imply a change in God, and therefore need not be circumlocuted (point 1);

2. יָֽעַבְר is a verb which does imply a change in God, and therefore it was circumlocuted by Onkelos; also, in Aramaic this verb does not have the same dual meaning of hearing and apprehending as it has in Hebrew (points 1 and 2);

3. Onkelos is not governed by one all-inclusive principle of anti-anthropomorphism only but circumlocuted (or avoided circumlocution) for any one of several reasons (point 12). 18

17 Published alongside the text in the cited edition of the Moreh Nebuchim. The relevant passage is his commentary on part 1: ch. 27. (Cf. also the other commentaries on this same chapter).

18 See also points 13, 14, 17, and 19. — In his argument under point 12, Abarbanel noted that 'hence you will know that the Master (Maimonides) did not say that it was Onkelos' intention to avoid anthropomorphism and nothing else... Nachmanides thought that the Master said that all the words of Onkelos were directed towards that end only, and not towards any other end, but that is a wrong opinion, and I showed you the truth, and many of Nachmanides' arguments against the Master will be solved thereby.'
Abarbanel, like Arama, enlarged the philosophical structure provided by Maimonides. Other commentators on the Moreh Nebuchim take generally the same position as that of Arama and Abarbanel, and, historically, matters were left at that without much further discussion of the subject or addition to what was said already, even into modern times. 19

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Above, in chapter II, it was shown that the Targum Onkelos is composed of a strictly literal translation of most of the Pentateuchal text, and three general types of non-literal translations of the remaining verses of the Pentateuch. The analysis of the Targum Onkelos in the second part of chapter II and in the chapters following was concerned with one of these three types of non-literal translations, namely the type classified as circumlocutions of Biblical anthropomorphisms. That analysis offered conclusive proof that there is an undubitable tendency in Onkelos to avoid anthropomorphism. This tendency has generally been recognised and acknowledged since early times. At the same time, however, it was shown that there is a good measure of apparent inconsistency in the Targum Onkelos with respect to the avoidance of anthropomorphisms: some words and phrases which belong to the class of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms are retained by Onkelos and carried over into the aramaic in their fully literal sense, and other words belonging to the same class sometimes are, and sometimes are not avoided.

This apparent inconsistency, when viewed in the light of the obvious and explicit care evidenced by Onkelos in his endeavour to
render as faithful and instructive an Aramaic version of the Pentateuch as possible, raises the question of what were the motives which guided Onkelos in avoiding some anthropomorphisms and retaining others. The exceptions to a rule of strict anti-anthropomorphism are too many to be mere accidents and oversights.

It was shown¹ that this question troubled already the minds of many medieval scholars, and these scholars suggested several solutions. While Maimonides stressed only the anti-anthropomorphic character of the Targum Onkelos, the scholars that came after him felt compelled to qualify the scope of this anti-anthropomorphic character and to introduce other motives as well. Without speculating on the mystery of the meaning of the 'esoteric motives' suggested by Nachmanides, it is interesting and significant to note that a close look at the various opinions cited reveals that these opinions are by no means mutually exclusive; each of the opinions cited has sufficient intrinsic value and objective substantiation that they may be regarded as complementing one another. There are two notions, however, which need to be considered above the others; they are both intricately related and to great extent implicit in the brief but pithy comments of Rytba:

1. the popular character of Targum Onkelos, that is, its special application to the laity and the general masses; and

¹See supra, ch. VI.
2. The distinction between potentially misleading anthropomorphisms and innocuous ones.²

Some modern scholars emphasized only the first of these two notions and concluded that there are no intricate philosophical considerations behind the general avoidance and occasional retention of anthropomorphisms by Onkelos; rather, they claim, the Targum Onkelos was simply written for the people, for the masses, to guide and instruct the unlearned folks, and for this simple and practical reason Onkelos translated as he did. According to these scholars this 'popular notion' is the sole motive of Onkelos and for the lack of any other, more exacting guideline, it would be wrong to seek in Onkelos a precise, and constantly consistent system.³

Though none of these modern scholars even attempted to substantiate their view, there is much to be said for it on historical grounds in relation to the introduction and use of the Aramaic language by the Hebrews. The Aramaic language is first mentioned in relation to the Hebrews in the second book of Kings⁴ in the context of an event

²See supra, p. 59

³Luzzatto, op. cit., p. 1: אִּדְמָר יֵאָּבִּד אִלְּאָב יִדְּרָה יִדְּרָה אִלְּאָב אִדְּמָר 'the Targum was composed for the ignorant masses, and not for the knowledgeable'; Fraenkel, op. cit., esp. pp. 17ff. See also S. Haybaum’s short but enlightening essay op. cit., in which he developed a highly intricate and deeply involved system along the lines of the thesis of Luzzatto and Fraenkel, but his system is too sophisticated and involved to be plausible (as already noted by Ginzberg, op. cit.).

⁴Chapter 18: verse 26; also, Isaiah 36:11.
occurring in the eighth century before the common era. At that time Aramaic was an international Verkehrssprache, the medium of commercial and diplomatic intercourse in Western Asia. From the passage cited (II-Kings) it appears that Aramaic was then well understood by the officials of the royal court at Jerusalem but it was unfamiliar to the Jerusalem populace. The subsequent exile of the Hebrews in the sixth century B.C.E. led to an assimilation of the people to the captors and a gradual replacement of Hebrew by the tongues of the neighbouring nations.\(^5\) When Ezra reestablished the practises and observances of the faith and read the teachings of Scripture (the Pentateuch) unto the people, the reading of the Hebrew text was insufficient and he was assisted by others 'to cause the people to understand the Torah:\(^6\)

'And they read in the Book, in the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading.'\(^7\) The sages of the Talmud interpreted this verse as referring to the Targum, that is, that each verse was translated for the people into the

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\(^5\) Cf. Nehemiah 13:23f: '... and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak Hebrew, but according to the language of each people.'

\(^6\) See Nehemiah, ch. 8.

\(^7\) Ibid., verse 8.
Aramaic vernacular.

Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch were, thus, necessitated by the conditions of ignorance and assimilation prevalent among the masses. On historical and traditional grounds there is, therefore, much to be said in support of the thesis of Luzzatto, Fraenkel, et al., that the Targum Onkelos was composed for the ignorant people. Such a theory can help to explain why certain anthropomorphisms were retained by Onkelos, especially those which seek to imbibe ethico-moral principles by speaking of God's love and compassion towards the good and benevolent, and the Divine wrath and anger towards the evil and wicked; when this Targum is aiming at the ignorant masses, it would have been folly, impractical and ineffective, to present too abstract a conception of

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8 Babylonian Talmud, tractate Megillah, folio 3a, and tractate Nedarim, folio 37b, and the commentaries ad loc. Cf. also ibid., tractate Sanhedrin, folio 21b: 'The Torah was given again at the time of Ezra, in Assyrian script and in Aramaic tongue.' — The sages identified the Targum Onkelos with the Targum of Ezra, adding that the Targum of Ezra was forgotten in the course of time (because it was not committed to writing, and probably because efforts were made to reestablish Hebrew as the vernacular), and was then recomposed and reestablished by Onkelos on the authority of the Talmudic sages, (see tract. Megillah, ad loc. cit.). Tradition traces the very origin of the Targum on the Torah to a still earlier period, namely Mosaic times, asserting that it was forgotten afterwards and reestablished by Ezra, (cf. tractate Kiddushin, folio 49a, and the commentary of Rashi ad loc.) Cf. also Adler, opus citat. Introduction p. 4, and M. Munk, Ezra Hanover - Ein Lebensbild nach der Beberlieferung dargestellt, (Frankfurt a. M.: Hermon, 1933), ch. 10, especially the extensive notes ad loc.

9 Cf. supra, pp. 26ff. — Maybaum's essay is essentially based on this notion, but, as already noted above, his thesis is carried too far into improbable intricacy.
the Divine Being, and a distinction must be drawn, as suggested by Rytba, between obnoxious anthropomorphisms, and onnocuous (and, practically speaking, useful) anthropomorphisms.

On the other hand, however, much of the content and the manner of presentation of the Targum Onkelos, precludes the assumption that it was composed for the illiterate only. The often subtle manner in which Onkelos circumlocuted many anthropomorphisms is philosophically reasonable and sound, and will be understood by the knowledgeable as an avoidance of anthropomorphism, but can hardly be expected to be noted and recognised as such by the unschooled masses. To the unschooled and illiterate, the insertion of subtle buffer-words which Onkelos was shown to use excessively, makes hardly a difference as far as philosophical considerations are concerned; to them 'heard before God' in no way differs from the more direct 'heard by God', and a paraphrase as \( \sqrt{\text{to become manifest}} \) does not yet spiritualize the Divine Being.\(^{11}\)

Adler\(^{12}\) also attacked the theory of Luzzatto, Fraenkel, et al., and refuted it on the evidence of Halachic and Aggadic material contained

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\(^{10}\) Cf. supra, pp. 5ff.

\(^{11}\) The only effective circumlocution would be the avoidance of the crassly anthropomorphic somatic attributions, but, as was shown, some somatic attributes are retained by Onkelos.

\(^{12}\) Opus citat., Introduction, p. 20.
in Targum Onkelos.

It is, thus, clear that no single motive can explain and solve all apparent difficulties and inconsistencies in the Targum Onkelos but only an interplay of several considerations.

Onkelos clearly appears to have been aware and apprehensive of the philosophical problem of anthropomorphism. In a way indicative of such an awareness and apprehension he skillfully avoided anthropomorphisms by philosophically acceptable circumlocutions, including the subtle and ingenious device of using buffer-words. In that sense the Targum Onkelos is anti-anthropomorphic. Onkelos, however, was also aware and apprehensive of the fact that the Pentateuch is the basic

13 The anti-anthropomorphism of the Targum Onkelos, which, thus, remains a principal motive of Onkelos, tends to support the views of Fraenkel (op. cit., ad loc.), J. Freudenthal (Are there Traces of Greek Philosophy in the Septuagint? Jewish Quarterly Review, II (1890), pp. 205ff.), P. Wendland (Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum, (Tübingen 1912), Bd. I:2, p. 203), et al., that the anti-anthropomorphic tendency of the Septuaginta is inherent in Judaism itself, as opposed to the view of A. F. Daehe (Geschichtliche Darstellung der jüdisch-alexandrinischen Religions-Philosophie, (Halle 1831), part II, pp. 1ff.), Fritsch (opus cit., pp. 63f.), Groener (Kritische Geschichte, II, pp. 1ff.), et al., who claim that it is chiefly due to Greek influence. Though, even so, it is not only possible but also probable, that contemporary Greek thought exerted some influence on the rabbis of old which expresses itself in more carefully philosophical-minded attitudes and considerations than were customary originally (cf. Marmorstein, op. cit.).
code of the Hebrew faith, applying to and to be studied and observed by the laity as much as by the schooled. For a practical reason Onkelos, therefore, retained anthropomorphic vocabulary when he felt that this was necessary for a meaningful understanding of the text and instructions of the Torah.
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