

# A Thematic Study of Doctrines on Death and Afterlife according to Targum Qohelet

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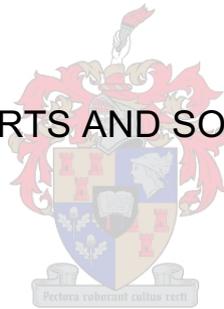
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## Declaration

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## Abstract

This dissertation examined how the Targum radically transformed Qohelet's pessimistic, secular and cynical views on the human condition by introducing a composite rabbinical theology throughout the translation with the purpose of refuting the futility of human existence and the finality of death. The Targum overturned the personal observations of Qohelet and in its place proposed a practical guide for the living according to the principles of rabbinic theological principles. While BibQoh provided few if any solutions for the many pitfalls and challenges of life and lacking any clear references to an eschatology, the Targum on the other hand promoted the promise of everlasting life as a model for a beatific eschatological future.

The dissertation demonstrated how the targumist exploited a specific translation strategy to introduce rabbinic ideologies to present the targum as an alternative context to the ideologies of wisdom literature as presented in Biblical Qohelet.

The translation follows the Hebrew original but includes numerous additions and expansions from other sources of rabbinic literature. However, it is difficult to follow the original Hebrew text in the mass of disjointed additions. In order to analyse and make sense of the translator's purpose and strategy, it was necessary to find an analytical tool to organise the many disparate elements of the Targum in order to understand its purpose and intent.

For this study, the decision was taken to analyse the theological system as a whole in TgQoh, as it became clear that the targumist had created a unitary approach to the afterlife themes as these could not easily be separated from afterlife passages. I

decided to follow the method of Jacob Neusner's concept of finding religious paradigms as a means to analyse and explain the rabbinic system and its inherent complexity. The paradigms therefore became the building blocks for understanding the cognitive elements of religious experience in the form of a unifying taxonomy. Furthermore, the mass of information concerning an explanatory framework for the pattern of life-death-afterlife-resurrection as a theological system is massive and spread over sources that comprise the entire biblical canon and all the commentaries on it. The aim was to find a suitable method for collating and aggregating the range of topics and then to explain the system.

The use of a paradigmatic approach introduced a structured means for explaining the complexity and range of rabbinic beliefs and how these relate to the promise of an afterlife in terms of the Targum and as a means of comparison against the Hebrew version. The use of paradigms drawn from religious experience and the underlying theology enabled the research to connect all the different elements of rabbinical religious categories that feature in the targum. These religious commands became the ultimate guidelines suggested by the Targum for humankind to follow on a progressive path towards living righteous lives according to the Torah in the earthly or mortal phase as the means to achieve the reward of an everlasting life in the world to come.

## Opsomming

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek die wyse waarop die Targum Qohelet se pessimistiese, sekulêre en siniese siening van die menslike kondisie radikaal aanpas deur 'n saamgestelde rabbynse teologie regdeur die vertaling in te stel met die doel om die sinloosheid van die menslike bestaan en die finaliteit van die dood teen te werk.

Die Targum werp die persoonlike sienings van Qohelet omver en stel in die plek daarvan 'n praktiese gids vir die lewe voor volgens die beginsels van die rabbynse teologie. Waar BybQoh weinig, indien enige, oplossings vir die vele gevare en uitdagings van die lewe bied en geen duidelike verwysing na 'n eskatologie het nie, beveel die Targum die belofte van die ewige lewe aan as 'n model vir 'n salige eskatologiese toekoms.

Die proefskrif demonstreer hoe die Targumis 'n vertalingstrategie aanwend ten opsigte van rabbynse ideologieë om die Targum as 'n alternatiewe konteks tov die ideologieë van die Wysheidsliteratuur soos in Bybelse Qohelet voorgestel is, aan te bied.

Die vertaling volg die Hebreeuse/Semitiese oorspronklike, maar sluit tallose toevoegings en uitbreidings van ander bronne van die rabbynse literatuur in. Dit is egter moeilik om die oorspronklike Hebreeuse teks te midde van die massiewe ongeordende toevoegings te volg. Ten einde sin te maak van die vertaler se doel en strategie, was dit nodig om 'n analitiese instrument te skep om die talle uiteenlopende elemente in die Targum te organiseer in 'n poging om hulle doel en intensie te begryp.

Vir hierdie studie is die besluit geneem om die teologiese sisteem as geheel in TgQoh te analiseer, aangesien dit bekend geword het dat die Targumis 'n eenvormige teologiese sisteem ontwerp het vir die temas oor die lewe na die dood. Ek het besluit om die metode van Jacob Neusner te volg waarvolgens die identifisering van godsdienstige paradigmas as 'n wyse van analise en uitleg van die rabbynse sisteem en die se inherente kompleksiteit geld. Die paradigmas het daarom die boustene geword om die kognitiewe elemente van godsdienstige ervaring in die vorm van 'n verenigende taksonomie te bepaal. Boonop is die informasie rakende 'n verklarende raamwerk vir die patroon lewe-dood-lewe na die dood-opstanding as 'n teologiese sisteem enorm en versprei oor talle bronne wat die hele Bybelse kanon en al die kommentare daaroor, dek. Die oogmerk was om 'n geskikte metode van insameling van die omvang van die topoi te vind en daarna die komplekse sisteem te verduidelik.

Die aanwending van 'n paradigmatische benadering het 'n gestruktureerde werkwyse vir die verduideliking van die kompleksiteit en omvang van rabbynse geloofstukke en hoe dit verband hou met die belofte van 'n lewe na die dood, ingelei, in terme van die Targum en as 'n wyse van vergelyking met die Hebreeuse weergawe. Die gebruik van paradigmas verkry van godsdienstige ervaring en die onderliggende teologie het die navorser in staat gestel om al die uiteenlopende elemente van rabbynse religieuse kategorieë wat in die Targum voorkom, te gebruik. Hierdie religieuse bevel het die finale riglyne geword wat deur die Targum gesuggereer word vir die mensdom om na te volg langs 'n progressiewe weg om regverdige lewens te lei volgens die Wet in die aardse of kortstondige fase, as die wyse om die ewige lewe as beloning te verkry in die eeu wat kom.

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On a personal level, I wish to acknowledge my mother, Bella Lincoln זכרונה לברכה (1926 – 2013) who unfortunately did not live to see the outcome of this dissertation. Her quiet encouragement and interest in my activities will always be cherished.

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## Table of contents

Declaration.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of contents.....	iv
Abbreviations.....	vii
Chapter 1.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research Objectives.....	13
1.3 Research Proposals.....	14
1.4 Research Methods.....	15
1.5 TgQoh Literature Sources.....	16
Chapter 2.....	18
2.1 Targums: Historical Context.....	18
2.2 The necessity for Aramaic translations.....	20
2.3 The Oral Tradition.....	28
Chapter 3.....	32
3.1 What are Targums?.....	32
Chapter 4.....	42
4.1 Literary Analysis of TgQoh.....	42
4.2 Analysis of TgQoh.....	44
4.3 Manuscript history and translations.....	46
4.3.1 Manuscripts.....	47
4.3.2 English translations.....	48
4.3.3 French Translations.....	49
4.3.4 Spanish Translation.....	49
4.4 The Ketuvim.....	50
4.5 The Aramaic of the Megillot.....	50
4.6 The Aramaic of TgQoh.....	51
4.7 Targum and Midrash.....	53
4.8 Targum Qohelet: Its structure and literary features.....	56
	iv

Chapter 5.....	64
5.1.    Death and afterlife in the Hebrew Bible.....	64
5.2.    Sheol.....	73
5.3.    Early notions of an eschatology.....	73
5.2.    Qohelet and Death.....	76
5.3.    Qohelet and the Afterlife.....	88
Chapter 6.....	96
6. 1 Rabbinical Theology and Targum Qohelet.....	96
6.2 Religious Language.....	100
6.3 Rabbinic Judaism.....	105
6.4 Rabbinic Theology.....	107
6.5 Exploring the theological character of TgQoh.....	111
6.6 Creating a Perfect World.....	113
6.7 The Theory of Last Things.....	118
6.8 An Imperfect World.....	119
6.9 Sin.....	120
6.10 Repentance.....	122
6. 11 The World to Come.....	126
6.12 Judgement.....	130
Chapter 7.....	132
7.1 Death and Afterlife in TgQoh.....	132
7.1.2 Solomon and the Voice of Prophecy.....	137
7.1.3 <i>Hebel</i> as Symbol and Metaphor.....	146
7.1.4 TgQoh and <i>Hebel</i> .....	153
7.1.5 <i>Hebel</i> - In this world and under the sun.....	155
7.1.6 Death in TgQoh.....	161
7.1.7 Fear of God.....	164
7.1.8 Torah and Torah study.....	166
7.1.9 Labour.....	167
7.1.10 Sin in TgQoh.....	168
7.1.11 Yeşer Ha ‘Ra.....	174
7.1.12 Repentance.....	178
7.1.13 The Righteous and Charity.....	183
7.1.14 The World to Come.....	192
7.1.15 Restoring the world to perfection.....	200

7.1.16 Making vows.....	204
7.1.17 Gehenna .....	206
7.1.17 Characteristics of Gehenna .....	209
8. Conclusion .....	212
Bibliography .....	229

## Abbreviations

AS	Aramaic Studies
BibQoh	Hebrew Qohelet
CantRab	Canticles Rabbah
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
Ex Rab	Exodus Rabbah
Gen. Rab	Genesis Rabbah
HB	Hebrew Bible
HebSt	Hebrew Studies
JBA	Jewish Biblical Aramaic
JER	Jeremiah
<i>JJS</i>	Journal of Jewish Studies
JLA	Jewish Literary Aramaic
JNES	Journal for Near Eastern Studies
JNSL	Journal of Semitic Languages
LHBOTS	Library of the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament
OT	Old Testament
MT	Masoretic text
Neh.	Nehemiah
NEB	New English Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTS	Old Testament Studies
PLA	Palestinian Literary Aramaic
PT(s)	Palestinian Targum(s)

PsYon	Targum Pseudo Yonatan
QohRab	Qohelet Rabbah
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
TgLam	Targum Lamentations
TgQoh	Targum Qohelet
TgOnq	Targum Onqelos
TgEsther	Targum Esther
TgRuth	Targum Ruth
LJLA	Late Jewish Literary Aramaic
LXX	The Septuagint
Pesh	Peshitta
Vg	The Vulgate
VT	Vetus Testamentum
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
WBCA	World Biblical Commentary

# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

Targum Qohelet (TgQoh)<sup>1</sup> is a profusely theological book with hardly any verses that do not refer to Jewish theological themes.<sup>2</sup> The theology found in TgQoh is identical to rabbinic orthodox Judaism. Only a few verses are translated literally from the Hebrew into Aramaic, but the remainder of the narrative is transformed to reflect rabbinic theology by means of additional and expansive renderings of the text. The theological motif is readily evident from the opening verse and continues unabated until the end of the book. TgQoh completely undermines the Qohelet's wisdom teachings and reorders wisdom teachings into identifiable rabbinical teachings and traditions.

In TgQoh the afterlife takes place in the world to come, where the dead will undergo a great day of judgement and will then be resurrected. This is in stark contrast with BibQoh, in which the afterlife is mentioned obliquely and the focus is on worldly pursuits.

This study will investigate the nature of the Aramaic translation and attempt to understand the strategy and purpose of the targum presenting itself as a quasi-theological document.

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<sup>1</sup> I have used the abbreviations TgQoh and BibQoh throughout this dissertation. To the best of my knowledge, they were first used in a series of two articles by Philip Alexander in *Aramaic Studies* Vol. 9: No. 1 (2011), 83-101, 102-115. BibQoh, refers to sections from the Hebrew Bible and MT, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> Flesher (2001: 75-100); Flesher (1999: 311-330); Flesher & Chilton (2011: 242); Levine (1978: 68-72, 1988): 20-30; Alexander (2011: 84-93;) Knobel (1991: 14).

Qohelet's acceptance into the Jewish canon sparked controversy and debate, as is evident from a number of comments seen in rabbinical commentaries. The problem for the rabbinical authorities was the lack of a recognisably religious quality in the book and an absence of the most fundamental tenets of the Jewish belief system. For example, Qohelet's view on the issue of retributive justice was entirely contradictory of the rabbinic understanding of the teachings that formed part of the concept of sin and punishment as understood in orthodox Judaism. In BibQoh Qohelet investigated the concept of justice based on his observations of man's behaviour and conduct, and arrived at the conclusion that the fate of humankind did not depend on whether a person was wealthy, nor on whether they were wicked or righteous (9: 11- 18). For Qohelet, life and the cosmos in general were essentially an inscrutable and profound mystery that remained hidden in God (9:1). Therefore, Qohelet proclaimed that any attempts to unravel the mystery of life by wisdom would fail and man's fate was ultimately futile (*hebel*). Ultimately Qohelet proposed that all that mankind could do was to enjoy life, and be thankful to God who made this enjoyment possible (BibQoh 5: 12-18; 6:1-3; 9: 7-10). He offers a religious scepticism that rejected any solution to the mystery of life and God's ways. Qohelet repeatedly returns to the notion that life is uncertain, capricious and unknowable, and the ultimate fate of all living beings, man and beast, is death. The book repeatedly states that God and his role in the lives of men are hidden and incomprehensible. The theme of *hebel*, futility, is mentioned 38 times in most of the chapters and combines with the theme of 'death' to give this book an aura of pessimism.

The only compensation for humankind is to accept the mysteries of life and the fate of mortality by pursuing the small pleasures that life affords one. Once life ceases, there

is oblivion and there is no continuation in an afterlife.<sup>3</sup> However, by the time of the compilation of the targums, Jewish theology had fully accepted the doctrine of a life after death as one of the fundamental cornerstones of religious faith. It is therefore no surprise that the compilers of the TgQoh, and other works in this genre, were inclined to introduce the doctrines of a future life after death.

The early historical commentaries record these grounds for concern and reservations about the book's acceptance into the Jewish canon. Among the comments from orthodox authorities were the Tannaim, who believed BibQoh contained numerous contradictions and that this made it unsuitable for general public reading and they therefore tried to restrict access to it.<sup>4</sup>

*R. Judah b. Samuel Shilath said in Rav's name: The sages sought to withdraw the book of Qohelet because its words are mutually contradictory. Why did they then not withdraw it? Because it begins with words of Torah and ends with words of Torah (b. Shab.30b).*

This comment appears in QohRab:

*R. Samuel b. Isaac said: The sages sought to suppress the Book of Koheleth because they discovered therein words which savor of heresy (QohRab 1.3).*

The problem for the rabbinical commentators was probably not so much the potential for heretical behaviour, "but in the susceptibility of these verses to misinterpretation

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<sup>3</sup> In BibQoh 9: 1-10 and 12: 7 there are undeveloped suggestions that there is a form of a post-mortem in the hereafter.

<sup>4</sup> In Avot de R. Natan A 1: 4 the following passage is found: "Originally, they used to say, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Qohelet had been withdrawn, because they speak proverbs and do not belong to scripture. So, they withdrew them, *until the men of the Knesset Ha-g'dola* came and interpreted them".

that might have practical consequences” (Fox: 1999: 2). Two verses “the rabbis apparently feared” were 1:3 and 9:9:

“What real value is there for a man  
In all the gains he makes under the sun?” (BibQoh 1: 3).

“O Youth, enjoy yourself while you are young! Let your heart lead you to enjoyment in the days of your youth. Follow the desires of your heart and the glances of your eyes – but know well that God will call you to account for all such things – and banish care from your mind, and pluck sorrow out of your flesh! For your youth and black hair are fleeting” (BibQoh 9:9).<sup>5</sup>

The ‘contradictions’ in the view of the orthodox authorities were based on the notion that they challenged the prevailing orthodox approach views.

These contradictions were eventually resolved by pointing to the figure of Solomon, who was said to have given the book its divine context, or according to Fox, an “orthodox frame”, with the portrayal of Solomon as prophet-author writing in the name of the Holy Spirit (Fox 1999: 2).

Seow calls Qohelet’s treatment of God as a “theology from below” focused mainly on humans, the cosmos and society. “The author begins not with divine revelation, nor with divine demands, but with the cosmos that the deity has brought into being. It is a

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<sup>5</sup> BibQoh was not the only work that was controversial until it became an acceptable addition to the biblical collection. The targum to Job was similarly questioned as possibly heretical and in *Shab.* 115a Gamaliel commanded that it be placed in genizah; also in[?] TB. *Shab.* 30b, Qohelet and Proverbs were deemed to be heretical books; the Book of Ezekiel too was problematic regarding the Book of Genealogies in *Pes.* 62 and *Shab.* 13b and that they too should be hidden. (Fox 1999: 2-3).

world with no discernible design, no order. Everything seems to be in the hands of the deity who determines it all” (Seow 1997: 54-5). Enns claims that “God poses a theological problem” for Qohelet. God’s presence is maintained throughout the book, but never seems to take centre stage in the narrative over humanity – but “God is not a source of comfort, but the one that is ultimately responsible for his (Qohelet’s) distress” (Enns 2011: 123-4).<sup>6</sup>

The reaction to the book in general was varied because of its cynical nature, its perception about the human condition as well as its literary structure and language (Seow 1997: 11). Antoon Schoors, for example, notes that “The reader of the Bible who is used to the prophets or Psalms cannot easily integrate this book into his or her idea of the Bible: it is so different that one can hardly believe that it is part of the Bible” (Schoors 2013: 19). Qohelet is nevertheless accepted as a wisdom book comparable in some respects to Proverbs. Qohelet has been called an atheist, an agnostic, a sceptic, pessimist, an Epicurean, a philosopher, a theologian and a God-fearing man, amongst other things (Williams 1997: 23; Whybray 1998: 87-9). The controversial nature of the book resulted in a trend amongst commentators to discover ‘hidden meanings and contexts’ in Qohelet’s message and to seek appropriate labels by which to denote the author as either ‘pessimistic’ or ‘optimistic’, thereby opening up such views to a great deal of selectivity and subjectivity (Yesudian- Storfjell 2003: 2; Murphy: 1992: 1).

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed treatment on Job’s and Qohelet’s interpretation on God’s responsibility for the travails of Job, and in BibQoh on humankind in general, see Ehrman (2008: 195).

From the targumic perspective, Qohelet existed at “the edges of faith”; in the words of Schoors (2013: 20), “he remains a searching believer, he asks many questions but gives few answers” (*ibid*). This lies at the heart of what the targum sets out to do with the translation – to reinterpret BibQoh by providing the book with the answers and solutions that will render an ordered universe in which the relationship between man and God is determined according to a structure based on the framework and system provided by orthodox rabbinic theology.

The targum allows the biblical base text to remain more or less as is, with numerous additions and amendments to the original Hebrew version. It clearly demonstrates that the targumists were not reluctant to suppress the original version, but purposely intended it to reveal itself as a translated version based on an interpretation with other rabbinic documents. “It is going to be hard for the Targum to escape the gravitational pull of its base text. By definition it is a text which is constituted by another text” (Alexander 2011: 84). According to the classification of the “Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in the Anonymous and Pseudoepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity”,<sup>7</sup> TgQoh corresponds with the literary features numbered as 6.1 and 6.13 on the inventory. Literary feature 6.1 states:

The text’s most basic thematic progression consists of alternations of (a) quotations from a base text in their original sequence, and (b) statements which comment on or add to the meaning of these quotations (227).

Literary feature 6.13 states the text:

... constitutes a complete and sequential representation in another language and in object-oriented perspective, of the perceived meaning of all or almost all

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<sup>7</sup> Discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

verbal matter of a complete set of base text segments. Thus, the resulting sentences do not thematize the base text in a meta-linguistic perspective, but recreate the thematic or narrative progression of the original (219).

For example, God is mentioned in different chapters of BibQoh, but it is very difficult to draw clear conclusions on Qohelet's personal relationship to God, and most important, there is no suggested relationship between God and man, beyond generic references. For Qohelet, God has a determinative role, in that he makes all things happen (11:5) although this is found to be beyond the comprehension of man (8:17).<sup>8</sup>

“Only this I have found, is a good: that one should eat and drink and get pleasure with all the gains he makes under the sun, during the numbered days of his life that God had given him; for that is his portion. Also, whenever a man is given riches and property by God, and is also permitted by Him to enjoy his portion and get his pleasure for his gains – that is a gift of God” (BibQoh 11: 5-17).

Death as an end to life is an integral part of the existential experience. The creation story is therefore a central element as it is the starting point from which life begins and it culminates in the end of biological life. These are profound philosophical issues that most human beings, as sentient creatures, confront and seek answers for, in particular, as a means to understand their own mortality. Creation myths in many cultures all feature elements of how human life began and the roles of a deity in the creation stories and in the nature of explaining how death came about. Narratives on

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<sup>8</sup> For other references to God, see also, 1:13; 2:26; 3:11, 17; 8:15; 9:1, 9;11:9; 12:7

the origins of life and death are deeply rooted in social and anthropological contexts found in most ancient cultures throughout all historical periods.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of an afterlife, whether by resurrection and a return to bodily life, or a post-death form of immortality of the soul, have no precedent in Jewish theology before the late second temple period, when it started to appear in a handful of texts.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of some form of continuation of life in any form has no early foundation in the Hebrew Bible except for a handful of passages, which may have been later amendments.

In early biblical times death was seen as oblivion when life came to an end. People died and they were consigned to a shadowy existence in a netherworld – mostly described by the term ‘sheol’, a place from which there was no return to the world of the living.

Changing historical conditions through conquest and exile, and political and cultural developments, consistently challenged the Israelite relationship with its deity, especially as the people came into contact with different cultures and languages of the ancient Near East. Cultural influences from Egypt, and Zoroastrianism, for example,

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<sup>9</sup> Of particular value are the works by Susan Niditch (1985, 1966, 1997) on Israelite mythology and life in community contexts (1-12); on myth (1985), myth and magic in creation and their impact on the cosmos as related to Genesis 1:11, 65-67. J. Bowker (1993) offers an expansive examination of how communities responded to and tried to make sense of death. N. Tromp (1969) conducted an important study on death in the ancient world and deals with a wide range of early mankind’s responses and attitudes across many ancient cultures.

<sup>10</sup> The book of Job addressed individual suffering and hints at an immortal existence after death (Job: 19: 25 – 26). The roots of a collective eschatology or a national resurrection are to be found in Isaiah (Isaiah: 26: 19) Jeremiah and Ezekiel (37: 11 – 13), Daniel (12: 1 – 2) and are regarded as the forerunners of the notion of *Tehiyat ha-metim*. On eschatology See Charles (1963), Raphael (1994), Tromp (1969), Spronk (1986) and Sysling (1996).

played a role in the development of a distinctive Jewish approach to explaining the fate of people after death.<sup>11</sup>

Neil Gillman has identified the role played by the notion of creation in the formation of an eschatological system:

All eschatology complements our thinking about creation.<sup>12</sup> Together they deal with the beginning and endings of all things, with the “beyond” before and after. Thus, they provide a frame for the “in between” which, in classic Jewish religious thinking, is understood as the “age of history” (Gillman 2013: 251).

However, the development of a distinctly Jewish worldview of the afterlife can be difficult to pin down with any measure of exactitude. From the textual evidence in the Hebrew Bible, a fixed Jewish view of an afterlife that encompasses a composite position of an existence after death is a product of a later development of rabbinic Jewish culture and theology. Christianity, on the other hand, was able to relate concretely to a concept of resurrection as a theological notion based on the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus. The various phases of the development of this concept of an afterlife are documented in scattered Jewish writings, each of which responded to numerous internal and external pressures and thereby represent different epochs and views within the historical and cultural settings reaching back almost four millennia (Raphael 1996: 3).

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<sup>11</sup> The literature on this topic is too extensive and wide-ranging to single out at this stage of this dissertation. However, a number of these works that have played a significant role in the research process will be credited for their contribution to this study and their overall importance to the topic during the course of this dissertation. See the footnote above for a sample of the secondary literature most used for this study.

<sup>12</sup> My emphasis here is on how the targumists also understood this as part of classical Jewish interpretation of how these two dualities as described in the Bible were integral to an understanding of Jewish eschatology and God’s role in the fate of all humankind.

An interesting and well-researched aspect of the Pentateuchal books of the Hebrew Bible is the almost total lack of a conceptual framework dealing with the existence of life beyond the grave. The afterlife and related cultural practices involving after death experiences are dominant themes in most ancient religions in the sense that they define the cosmos of a specific culture and religion. It is interesting that neighbouring cultures around the Israelite regions already displayed very well developed religious and cultural systems in which afterlife beliefs and practices formed a significant part of their religious systems.<sup>13</sup> Despite few direct textual references to afterlife beliefs in the books of the HB, however, there are some scattered and indirect references to an afterlife that provide no more than a hint as to what the situation may have been.<sup>14</sup>

It would be incorrect to claim that there was no interest in what happens to people after death at all. We just do not know what the views and thoughts were of a people who lived some three and half millennia ago. But we can draw inferences from non-textual sources such as archaeological remains.

Death is therefore introduced into the world during the creation story, and with it a theological basis for understanding that whatever happens to humankind is based on the causality of what they do and how they conduct their lives. It also introduces the

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<sup>13</sup> R. Friedman describes this void in the literary and material remains as enigmatic as a belief in an afterlife system was an intrinsic part of both Mesopotamian and Egyptian religions, both of which were nations with whom the Israelites had regular contact (Friedman 2000: 35).

<sup>14</sup> Friedman calls these references “suggestive texts” and that instead of a “biblical silence” they should rather be seen as “a faint whisper” (36).

concept of man having to make moral choices and be accountable for these, which is an especially important theme in the targum.<sup>15</sup>

Although eating of the fruit of life does not in itself “create” death as a concept related to the human condition, it did result in the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. No one died as such in the Genesis tale until Cain killed Abel. Given the sparse nature of the story, it is assumed that this was the first instance of a person dying. Adam and Eve were forced to leave specifically because of the insights they gained into the knowledge of good and evil, and with this action, they became mortal beings. Death thereby became a reality for all human beings and they lost the opportunity to gain life eternal (Gen. 3:22-23):

And Lord God said, now that man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever (21).

So, the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken (22).

He drove the man out, and stationed East of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life (23).

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<sup>15</sup> Although the eating of the fruit does not in itself “create” death as a concept that relates to the human condition, it led to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. No one died as such until Cain killed Abel. Adam and Eve were forced to leave specifically because of the insights into knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge would have enabled Adam to live forever (3:22-23). See Gillman (2000: 41).

Theologically these are challenging issues. In the creation narrative and post-creation events in Genesis God did not specifically and consciously introduce the notion of death into the world. Death only entered the world through the actions of humans after the idyllic life in Eden had come to an abrupt end.<sup>16</sup> In other words, humans carried on with their lives, but still retained responsibility and accountability for their conduct and deeds.<sup>17</sup>

The phrase “knowledge of good and evil” is perplexing and somewhat ambiguous. Barr proposed that the phrase refers rather to “the power of rational and especially ethical discrimination” and essentially “knowing the difference between good and bad” (Barr 1968: 62-73). This is what makes humans uniquely different from all other beings on earth: Adam and Eve discerned that they were different from God; thus, the relationship with God had changed: “And the Lord God said, “now that the man has become like one of us knowing good and bad” led to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. God set limits on their existence as human beings and since, they were no longer immortal like God, they were compelled to exist within the rules and conditions set by God, as they discerned that the changes that emanated from their disobedience had brought suffering and death into the world (Gillman 2000: 43-44).

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<sup>16</sup> In the targumim, the notion of ‘divine justice’ is an element of God’s mercy, which is the founding principle of creation. “At the very creation of the world the spirit of mercy from before God hovers over the world “(PsYon. Gen. 1: 2). (Levine 1978: 87).

<sup>17</sup> See Ezekiel 18 in which the issue of individual responsibility and moral choice is raised in a prophetic context.

According to Gillman, “Eschatology is tied to theodicy, to the need to make sense of the presence of evil and suffering in a world created and ruled by God “(Gillman 2000: 52).

## 1.2 Research Objectives

Qohelet never stepped out of his frame of reference in his search to solve the problems of the world, despite all his attempts to find a solution for a happy existence for humankind “There is nothing new under the sun” 1: 9, ...<sup>18</sup>

I set my mind to study and probe with wisdom all that happened under the sun – an unhappy business that which God gave men to be concerned with ... and I found that all was futile (1: 12- 14).

One of the inherent problems concerning studies on BibQoh itself is the lack of a clear faith-based connection to some sort of systematic theology. This may serve to explain to some extent the approach undertaken by the rabbinically-inclined translators. Some scholars have attempted to find orthodox interpretations in BibQoh, by suggesting that in Qohelet there were semblances of a ‘faith in God’, thereby rescuing Qohelet from those who interpreted the book as starkly secular in nature.<sup>19</sup>

A major challenge to overcome is the range and complexity within the Jewish experience of death and the afterlife, since this had become a fundamental tenet of

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<sup>18</sup> For a summary of the history of the interpretation of Ecclesiastes, see Roland E. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes, WBCA 23A* (1992).

<sup>19</sup> Enns, P (2011); Eaton, M. A. (1983).

Judaism. Death and the afterlife became organically part of a ‘thought world’ reflected as a system that incorporated a range of key theological categories that describe how man and God relate to one another as God had intended from the beginning of eternity (Neusner 2003: 293). The complexity of this cosmic relationship is based on the interconnectedness of death and afterlife topics to many related sub-topics: for example, sin, repentance, resurrection, atonement. In order to be able to methodically identify and explain these numerous interrelated theological phenomena related to rabbinic eschatology, as found throughout TgQoh, requires a systematic approach by which the parts of the whole can be organised and connected. I will therefore use the system employed by Jacob Neusner in *Handbook of Rabbinic Theology: Language, Systems and Structure* (2003), which provides for a process of ‘native categories,’ each of which is incorporated into an all-encompassing organic model.

### **1.3 Research Proposals**

1. This study shows that the targumist, in line with the rabbinic system, set out to overcome this lack of coherence as well as the inconsistencies in BibQoh. This dissertation shows how the targum adopted a strategic approach to reinterpret the fundamental principles of normative Judaism that were absent in BibQoh. To this end, the targum included a model for a framework of conduct, behaviours and social relations based on the rabbinic belief system to negate the overall negativity and inherent pessimism of BibQoh.
2. The study examines the TgQoh’s methodology and its key literary features to better understand the approach used by the translators and their objectives in respect of the book’s expansive translation style. This may allow conclusions

to be drawn about the nature of this targum as an example of a work of late provenance within the targum genre and, hopefully, contribute to targum studies in general.

3. When dealing with the topics of death and the hereafter, this study investigates the thematic elements in the book to show how these concepts in the text all have an organic relationship to one another as well as to other related concepts. It is argued that the world to come, for example, is intrinsically linked to God's loving-kindness, justice, Torah and Israel, amongst others, and is theologically presented as an organic whole.

## 1.4 Research Methods

The number of studies on TgQoh specifically is quite sparse and there are few secondary works to engage with. It is to be hoped that this dissertation will contribute to filling that gap.

There are as yet few studies to be found on TgQoh in general, and none that have dealt in depth with the topic of death and the afterlife. This work examines in detail the relationship between the rabbinic literature and its influences on TgQoh.

1. Given that this is a study based on a translation, it identifies the key terms and phrases from BibQoh that are directly or indirectly related to the themes of death and the afterlife. These will include *hebel*, Solomon (in his role as interlocutor and prophet), phrases concerning the meaning and impact of 'in this world', 'in the next

world' and 'under the sun' and a number of others that are important and have been included in TgQoh.

2. The analysis of the translation of TgQoh is compared to the original Hebrew. This includes explaining how these terms have been applied to introduce a theological hermeneutic into the original narrative. Comparisons on individual commentaries explain the relationship between TgQoh and rabbinic sources to understand the relationship between the targum and its sources and other literary influences.
3. This study focusses on the language deployed in the targum in order to highlight the two 'thought worlds' of the author of BibQoh and that of the rabbinically influenced targumists. Neusner writes that "theology is to religion as language is to experience and perception" (Neusner 2003: 22). George Lindbeck (cited in Neusner 2003 *ibid*, states: "A religion can be viewed as a kind of cultural and/or linguistic framework or medium that shapes the entirety of life and thought ... it is similar to an idiom that makes possible the description of realities, the formation of beliefs, and the experiencing of inner attitudes, feelings and sentiments. It comprises a vocabulary of discursive and non-discursive symbols together with a distinctive logic or grammar in terms of which this vocabulary can be meaningfully deployed" (Neusner 2003: 22). This study uses a specific analytical tool as means to systematically collect a wide range of data and explain it by a paradigmatic approach that will demonstrate rabbinic eschatology as an integral part of Jewish theology.

4.

## 1.5 TgQoh Literature Sources

The primary texts used for this study are:

- Biblical Qohelet (BibQoh)
- Targum Qohelet (TgQoh)
- Qohelet Rabbah (QohRab)
- The Mishnah
- The Talmuds

A great deal of reliance is placed on the 2011 journal Volume 9, *Aramaic Studies* consisting of the “Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in the Anonymous and Pseudoepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity.” This comprehensive body of research is of inestimable value to targum scholars and has played a significant role in the research for this study. Philip Alexander researched and documented two chapters on Targum Qohelet (101-114; 84-96). These have been of great assistance towards developing an understanding of the structure of the Aramaic text and an analysis of its main features. Additional secondary studies have been referenced and acknowledged in the appropriate places.

## Chapter 2

### 2.1 Targums: Historical Context

The use of an historical context to explain the targum genre is an exercise fraught with complexity and frustration. The targum genre, its nature, purpose, extensive scope, dating and the social milieu in which it operated in its earlier formative period are, at best, guesswork. For instance, actual evidence for the existence of *specific* Palestinian targums does not exist, nor does evidence of their links to extant targumim<sup>20</sup> (Flesher & Chilton 2011: 132; Flesher 2002: 61-63). “But the Palestinian rabbinic texts mention no named Aramaic Targums, nor do they discuss creating or translating Targums (or identification of the original translators), nor do they indicate knowledge of any known Targum texts”.<sup>21</sup> Targum texts are historically connected to the books of the Hebrew Bible, but the nature of this relationship does not always operate chronologically, exegetically or linguistically within the genre (Samely 2011: 15-16).

“Was the historical and temporal continuity (between the Hebrew Bible and post-biblical Judaism) also a logical and mental continuity?” (Barr 1968: 3). This is an important question, because targum, as a genre on its own, is most likely the product of that idea and process. With each book of the Hebrew canon, representing a specific socio-historical process within the development of Judaism, there is a kind of

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<sup>20</sup> There is no indication in the earlier rabbinical writings that Palestinian targumim actually existed (Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragmentary Targums). However, there are some references in the Palestinian Talmud and Tosefta that do mention the existence of specific written targumim. A Tosefta names a written targum to Job, for instance (Tos. Shab. 13: 2-3).

<sup>21</sup> See also Flesher (2002: 61-63), and Flesher and Chilton (2011: 31).

interconnectedness with others that translates into a distinctive ‘Judaism-ness’. It can be no better stated than in this excerpt from Fishbane:

Is it possible that the origins of the Jewish exegetical tradition are native and ancient, that they developed diversely in ancient Israel, in many centres and at many times, and that these tributaries met in the exile and its aftermath to set a new stage for biblical culture which was redirected, rationalised and systematised in the lively environment of the Greco-Roman world? To ask the question this way is *almost* to answer it (Fishbane 1985: 19).

TgQoh and some other targums to the *Megillot* are largely representative of non-literal examples of translational approaches to their source texts; they are nevertheless identifiable as part of this same exegetical tradition (or ‘continuity’) that had its origins in the ancient foundational phases of Israelitic identity leading eventually to a form of recognisable normative Judaism (Samely 1992:14; Flesher and Chilton 2011: 8, Bowker 1969:14). David Brewer provides an example: “The exegetical techniques used at Qumran and Alexandria are similar both to each other and to those found in the LXX, Targumim and in what M. Fishbane calls ‘the mantological’ interpretations throughout the Ancient Near East” (Brewer 1992: 213).<sup>22</sup> This is, in my view, partly the answer to Barr’s question quoted earlier: targum in its widest sense, as is evident in the extant books, became the historical and temporal continuity between the early oral

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<sup>22</sup> Fishbane categorises the concept of inner-biblical exegetical activity as scribal, haggadic, legal and mantological. Fishbane’s work has been influential on this subject, although not accepted by all scholars. J. Kugel, for example, is of the view that Fishbane has focused largely on rabbinic approaches instead of providing an historical view of exegetical activities (Kugel 1987: 274-276). In similar vein, see W. Schniedewind (1995: 541)

renditions until the stage of what eventually became the canon of the Old Testament and the genres of post-biblical literature.

## **2.2 The necessity for Aramaic translations**

Research has shown that the language situation in Palestine and the Ancient Near East was far more complex than originally proposed by earlier scholars of this subject. The language landscape became more confusing and complex particularly before and after the exile, as well as with the growth of a Jewish diaspora.

The necessity for Aramaic translations has been based on the assumption that the Israelites, mainly those from Judea who had returned from exile, and possibly also those who had remained in the Palestinian region, had lost their functional ability to understand the Torah in its original Hebrew form and were for the most part mainly conversant in Aramaic or other local dialects. When the Judeans were allowed to return to their homeland from exile, the focus of the religious leaders (chiefly Ezra and Nehemiah according to the biblical accounts) was on how to recreate their religious world based on the precepts and traditions of the Torah. The question facing the returnees from exile and the communities who had remained behind was how to recreate a 'living' theology in a situation in which the temple-based religious practices traditions and its cultural symbols were no longer in existence.<sup>23</sup>

Gudrun Lier describes the linguistic situation as being one in which Aramaic had become the colloquial language of the common Jews and Hebrew was the language

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<sup>23</sup> Kasher refers to the expectation of a renewal of the Temple and its rituals (Kasher 2007: 412)

of the intellectuals (Lier 2008: 72). She continues: “Since Aramaic was the language that Jews *mostly* spoke during their time of captivity, it is *natural* that this dialect was *chosen* to submit the sacred text in translation for Jews living in Palestine after their return from exile” (*ibid.*, my emphases). Lier isn’t alone in proposing this seemingly artificial solution to what may have been (or not even been) an impediment in the religious transformation that ensued. Etan Levine referred to “an inevitable decline in the knowledge and use of Hebrew as the spoken language of Jewry ... because of the erosion in the use and understanding Hebrew, “Judaism could not possibly survive” (Levine 1988: 8-9).<sup>24</sup>

The concept of need for translations of the Hebrew texts into Aramaic, first orally and later in written forms, has been propagated by a number of earlier scholars of targum studies based on a flawed assumption, in my view, of the actual language situation prevailing in Palestine after the return to Judea and up to the close of the second century C. E.<sup>25</sup>

J. A. Fitzmyer’s important work on the language situation was quite clear about his view that “the most commonly used language in Palestine in the first century A.D. was Aramaic ... but pockets of Palestinian Jews also used Hebrew, even though its use was not widespread: the emergence of the Targum supports this” (Fitzmyer 1979:46).

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<sup>24</sup> See also Grintz (1960: 32-47); M. Black (1954).

<sup>25</sup> Zunz (1892: 65); Levine (1988: 1-7); Klein (1980: 33-44); Safrai (1987: 36). This view has been a thread running through most studies on targum. Regarding the decline of Hebrew, see also S. Levinson (2013), “Essay on the Grammar of the Language of the Mishnah.”

Later research has revealed that while some of these assumptions may have some valid basis, up to a point, the language situation prevailing in Palestine was most likely more nuanced and complex during the years after the exilic period and leading up to the Bar Kochba revolt. From this argument, it can be adduced that the reasons for the existence and expansion for Aramaic translations of Holy Scripture were more complex than merely the problems of language proficiency.

#### Tov notes

Some of the Targumim were originally created orally and were committed to writing only at a later stage. From the outset, it seems surprising that Aramaic translations were made at all, since this language is so close to Hebrew. The usual explanation given is that the knowledge of Hebrew began to wane during the second temple period, at which point, it was replaced by Aramaic, the vernacular language (2012:148).

The conventional view has been that targums evolved on a synchronistic basis from an oral stage to eventually written formats, and that their main use was primarily for synagogue congregants who had little or no knowledge of Hebrew. This view was challenged by Steven Fraade, who commented that both Aramaic and Hebrew constituted two 'voices' that function in counterpoint as a bilingual text (Fraade 2006: 61-70). He explains that the audience did not substitute one text for the other, but that they saw them working in tandem – the one represented the actual reading of the Hebrew from the Torah scrolls, while the other operated as an interpretation of the verses read. On this basis, it may be said that participants in synagogue worship most

likely regarded these readings as liturgical units.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, targumim were actively used in schools and the *Batei Midrash* as the language of exegesis and pedagogy. The use of both languages initially as exegetical media would surely have contributed to a large extent to strengthen both languages and not diminish one over the other (Fraade 2006: 61-70).

An argument can therefore be made that in most of Palestine bilingualism was more prevalent than originally proposed.<sup>27</sup> This implies a situation of a *diaglossia*, where two languages exist side-by-side and where each language has its own specific function within a defined hierarchy (Rajak 2009: 152).<sup>28</sup> Rajak suggests further that in a place like Alexandria, for example, there could have existed a situation of *triglossia* amongst Greek-speaking Jews, with “Aramaic in the background”.<sup>29</sup> This could very well also have been the case in Palestine, particular in urban communities, where Greek co-existed with Hebrew and Aramaic.

That translations became a “living” and conscious process can be confirmed by the translation of the Hebrew Bible into other languages, such as Greek (Schwartz 1995: 3-47). Greek translations were common<sup>30</sup> and the elders placed no ban on these translations, as they did with later translations and their use in the synagogues. Greek

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<sup>26</sup> See also P. Alexander (1985: 14-28) on the use of targum and the Hebrew version within the context of the synagogue.

<sup>27</sup> See S. Fraade (1992) for more on the multilingual world of Jewish Palestine and the survival of Hebrew alongside Aramaic as the background to the targum. Also, Willem Smelik (1995: 9) suggests that Hebrew was probably in less use in the Galilee; Smelik highlights the fragmented nature of Hebrew usage, thereby emphasizing the more diverse aspects of language use.

<sup>28</sup> Smelik, on a similar point supporting the idea of a ‘hierarchy’ of languages in which one is superior to the others, notes that the Sages made sure to “subordinate the practice of targum to the recitation of the Hebrew Bible by promulgating the translation as Oral Torah, to be distinguished from the Written Torah,” and uses BT. Tem. 14b as the authority (1999: 3-4).

<sup>29</sup> Horbury (1994: 9:43) discusses the survival of Aramaic in Ptolemaic Alexandria.

<sup>30</sup> (M. Meg. 1.8)

and Aramaic thus served a particular purpose at a particular time and context in the ever-evolving processes of refining the texts in line with the changing historical and social and cultural traditions that Jews experienced in Palestine and the Diaspora. As Smelik has noted, Palestine made use of both Greek and Aramaic as languages of liturgy and debate in the synagogues (Smelik 2013: 200).

Taking this argument, a step further, the various restrictions placed on translations of the written Torah are based on Halakhic points, as Alexander has observed, they became points of rabbinic jurisprudence (Alexander 2014: 232-234). They were also meant to stress the independence of the Hebrew version only and the authority of the rabbis to reinforce their authority as to which translation would be permitted or not.

This does not mean that translations were trifling matters and easily permissible, even as late as the Babylonian Talmud; b. Meg.3at states that “On the eighth of *Tevet* the Torah was written in Greek in the days of King Talmai and darkness came upon the earth for 3 days”.

Rabbinic sources on this are numerous and are found from early Tannaitic material including up to and including Amoraic material and embodied the development of the inner rabbinic struggle for control of dominance of the Hebrew text on the one hand, and internal debates in establishing themselves as the primary religious authority on issues of Halakhic correctness. This would have included the struggle between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

At first sight, it appears that the various random passages regarding targums show a degree of ambivalence towards the Aramaic translations; the impression is one of great unease and displays a range of views.<sup>31</sup> James Kugel situates “the beginnings of biblical interpretation” in the aftermath of Cyrus’s famous edict (ca. 538 BCE). Of particular significance is the great moment when the Judeans attended a lengthy public reading of “the book of the Law of Moses” (Neh. 8:1-8), for, as Kugel points out, this public reading is accompanied by a public *explanation* of the text (Kugel 1974: 9). Kugel also identified “four assumptions” shared on the part of the early Jewish biblical exegetes: that the Bible is a cryptic document; it is a great book of lessons, it is perfectly consistent and free of error or internal contradiction; and it derives from God.

Willem Smelik (2013), Abraham Tal (1975), Bruce Chilton(1982) and Paul Flesher (2002), and Philip Alexander (1988), amongst other scholars in targumic studies, thought that the Aramaic translations were primarily a product of the Oral Torah and the rabbis, in different guises, accepted this but their major objective was to establish the Hebrew text as the only sacrosanct version of normative Judaism, while the targums provided a “safe” space for the oral tradition both in the synagogue, the home and the schools.

The situation for the later targums, that is those clearly composed in Babylon and especially the targums to the *Megillot*, are easier to contextualise as by that stage

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<sup>31</sup> The rabbinic sources themselves are immensely extensive and individual relevant sources will be used in the appropriate sections of this dissertation. The secondary literature on the various rabbinic writings is vast and the many references to targumic issues vast and too wide ranging for this study.

rabbinical commentaries and the forms of normative Judaism had been clearly drawn.<sup>32</sup>

When interest in targum studies began, the view of early scholars was that the Aramaic translations arose from the need to make the Law, i.e. the Pentateuchal books, understandable to an audience, and here we presume the masses, that had possibly lost the ability to speak and understand Hebrew. This returns to the issue of the earlier versions of targums and that no actual evidence explains how and what they were used for – and hence, why there was a need for rendering these scriptures into Aramaic. It may sound somewhat trite, but Aramaic had become the lingua franca for most of the Ancient Near East, including Egypt, and it is a Semitic language as much as Hebrew was at the time before and after the periods of exile. This is now purely conjecture, but the question is: why embark on a difficult and lengthy process of translation on the part of the priests when they could have invested their energy in teaching Hebrew and improving the Hebrew skills of those who had retained a basic familiarity of Hebrew? This is an important question, because the same can be asked of the late targums, one of which was TgQoh, written probably after the fifth century CE or later. An interpretative text could have been produced in Hebrew (a late version of a midrash?), or in a local vernacular in the diaspora? This bears testimony to the endurance, of the targum as an acknowledged literary form by the rabbis and the organic nature of Jewish literature, as one informing the other. These points will be expanded in the conclusion to this dissertation.

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<sup>32</sup> The picture is more certain as to the Babylonian Talmud. Onqelos and Targum Jonathan are claimed as “our Targum” (Quid. 49a, B. Naz. 39a). The Babylonian rabbis clearly saw them as belonging to the Babylonian rabbinical movement as can be seen in B. Meg 3a and B. San. 106b.

The evolution of the sacred writings became the focus of regenerating Jewish consciousness, starting with and including its oral traditions and leading eventually to fixed written texts. This tradition of study, teaching, explaining and interpretation of its intrinsic values (laws) became the accepted definition and embodiment of what it meant to be a Jew. As Levine has written, “It was *this process*, rather than its specific *content*, that provided the Jews with a functioning aggregate of metaphors, symbols, concepts, values and behavioural norms so that a conversation known as ‘Judaism’ had continuing integrity and coherence” (Levine 1988: 6).

According to Etan Levine, the loss of statehood<sup>33</sup> resulted in a community bound by the ‘book’ or “people of the book”, and later still after the events of 70 C.E., “a textual community: a diasporic nation-in-exile united only by a sacred text” (Levine 1988: 3).<sup>34</sup>

The formation of sacred texts emerged in oral forms and later evolved into an incredibly rich tradition of study, teaching, explaining and interpretation as a means of preserving and extending its existence as the faith of the Jews.

With a thriving oral tradition as background, the leaders of the communities embarked on a long and continuous process of stabilising and entrenching the scriptures, such

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<sup>33</sup> Its northern neighbours, Galilee, Transjordan and Samaria, and its Israelite population remained largely untouched by the consequences of the Babylonian invasion and destruction. Its religious system was relatively syncretistic in comparison with the traditions and laws of the Jerusalem cultus, although there were elements which still recognised Jerusalem and the Temple as central to its religious practices (see Jer. 41:5).

<sup>34</sup> Levine describes this historical approach in the introductory essays to his book on the *Aramaic Version of the Bible* (1988); Lier states that these developments later had a direct impact on the formation of Judaism’s new religious structures and the development of its subsequent exegetical traditions (2008: 29).

as they were during their periods of development, into what would eventually become a collection of authoritative Jewish books, the canon.

## 2.3 The Oral Tradition

In its most basic sense, an oral tradition is one by which a community's cultural heritage, laws and regulations, as well as myths and practices, are passed on by word of mouth to its members thereby ensuring a continuity of tradition. Communities and their members thus became the transmitters and protectors of folklore, by means of which traditions – especially religious traditions – were passed on down the generations.<sup>35</sup> This practice was a common sociological phenomenon throughout the ancient Near East and in communal entities throughout the known world.<sup>36</sup> The telling of these communal stories and the explanations and discussions surrounding them, eventually became the role of specialists within a community. These could have been priests, wise men, shamans or revered elders (Gerhardsson 1961: 71-84).

Susan Niditch writes about the interplay between the oral and the written worlds (Niditch 1996: 79- 88). Similar to Barr on Jewish literary tradition, Niditch asserts “Our study of nonbiblical Israelite literature supports the contention that while writing becomes an increasingly important resource in the late monarchies (eighth century BCE on), the conceptual framework and social settings for this writing nevertheless

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<sup>35</sup> The literature on oral traditions is vast both in biblical studies and in the fields of anthropology, languages and many more areas of study involving the human condition and social development. I have focused mainly on the works of Gerhardsson (1961), Susan Niditch (1996) and Willem Smelik with respect to the oral tradition (2013).

<sup>36</sup> The oral concept as the forerunner of pre-biblical forms could be interpreted as a romantic notion of wandering nomads and idyllic pastoral life, as noted by Niditch (1996: 109). Some scholars have downplayed the oral origins and claimed the existence of very early crude written forms. Peckham for instance, wrote about prophecy as the heir to popular oral tradition, “...but it was written”, “...and although it contains poetry, drama and oratory composed in direct discourse, all the signs of oral composition and transmission and the clues to an oral society are missing” (Peckham 1993: 21).

must be understood in the context of an oral world” (Niditch 1996: 78), in other words, a continuum.<sup>37</sup> Later, Niditch wrote that “some of the works of the Hebrew Bible were composed as oral performance in accordance with certain conventions of composition, content, structure and style” (1996: 117). Hermann Gunkel noted that prophets were originally orators and this can be ascertained from the number of times the expression ‘hear’ was used to begin their orations (Gunkel 1969: 61).

The transformation from an oral to written formats meant that non-oral forms became the domain of only a limited number of individuals, namely scribes and later rabbis. Ben Zvi called these literate individuals ‘brokers’ of knowledge of the sacred texts, as only they could pass on and preserve the divine message through teaching and oral representations (Ben Zvi 2000: 8). This transference from oral to written created a new basis of power and social transformation, which can be clearly seen by the necessity to reinvent the cultural and social basis of Judaism after the end of the exile (Ong 1986: 23 – 50)<sup>38</sup>

This continuum eventually took on a hierarchy or order of ranking in which the written forms of the Hebrew text maintained its primacy as the “official” and only original version of the Torah given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The Bible itself provides an early justification for both a written and an oral law (although this may be mere conjecture),

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<sup>37</sup> Niditch emphasises how the transformative nature of words impacts on the oral narration and how this was understood at the time of the composition of certain texts. Examples are Ezek. 37: 16, 17; Num. 17: 17-20; Deut. 21: 1-9; Num. 5:11-31, 23, 24. These are examples where the commands to write things down transform symbol and metaphor into practical consequences, in one way or another (Niditch 83-84).

<sup>38</sup> The responsibility for religious instruction became the domain of the Levites after the exile. Later, with the introduction of Aramaic translations, this role was taken over by the Meturgeman, who also interpreted the text for those listeners who had had no formal training in the Torah or Hebrew, and for whom some terms and concepts could have been confusing. It is not known what the situation was in those communities where Hebrew predominated. Possibly the Meturgeman provided a sermon or lesson.

as can be found in the verse from Ex. 24.12:12: “And the Lord said to Moses, come up to me into the mount, and be there, and I will give you tables of stones, and a law, and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.” Deut. 31.19: “Now therefore *write* לכתבם ועתה כתבו לכם this *song* את־השירה for you and teach it to the children of Israel, *put this song into their mouths that this song* may be a witness for me against the children of Israel” (my emphases) further suggests that a world of performative orality existed side by side with the written texts from early Israelite antiquity.<sup>39</sup>

Few Palestinians could read or had the benefit of some forms of education.<sup>40</sup> Besides, the cost of producing a Torah scroll itself must have been an expensive endeavour and a serious obstacle to many smaller Jewish communities, especially those in rural communities and on the periphery of urban settlements to actually acquire *Torot* of their own (Smelik 1999: 221).<sup>41</sup> The same can be said of having a competent person available who could read the Torah in Hebrew and a competent translator who would have been required to simultaneously translate and explain the passages in Aramaic (Gerhardsson 1961: 163-164).<sup>42</sup>

The traditional view, and that of the rabbis later, was that Aramaic translations arose out of a need to make the sacred Hebrew literature meaningful and relevant to an

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<sup>39</sup> See Brewer (1992: 109): “Here the written and oral law are found in two phrases which both apparently refer to the oral stage. This may be based on ‘teach’ and ‘put in their mouth’ which were synonymous in scribal schools.” See also Schiffman (1991: 188).

<sup>40</sup> See t. Meg. 3:12; t. Pes. 10:8.

<sup>41</sup> Readings were done in public spaces such as synagogues or markets, and as Smelik has commented on this point, the reason would have been the lack of sufficient literate readers. Smelik presumes that in late antiquity probably only a tenth of the population was literate (1992: 221).

<sup>42</sup> See my article on the complexity of translating and writing in ancient times, L. Lincoln, “The Septuagint: The Origin Debate Revisited” in *JSEM* Vol. 20 No. 1 (2011) pp. 283-299.

audience for whom Hebrew was no longer their mother tongue. From here arose the tradition that Aramaic had to be subordinate to the Torah in all respects and thus arose a dual form of transmitting the liturgical readings.<sup>43</sup> Listening to the Hebrew implied knowledge of the language, but having “an accurate knowledge”, according to Flesher and Chilton (2011: 5).

The acceptance by the rabbis of the role of an oral form of Torah (*Torah she' be' al pe*)<sup>44</sup> became the basis upon which vast exegetical traditions and elaborate practices were thus formulated.<sup>45</sup> It would be difficult to suggest how much of the תורה שלעב הפ existed in Aramaic, or combinations of Hebrew and Aramaic, and at which times. The extant Aramaic portions in the MT point to the acceptance of Aramaic as one of the languages in current use from the earliest times of Old Aramaic (2Kgs.18: 26).<sup>46</sup> An early confirmation of a “hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, but every week” in fact is found in Josephus (*A. Ap.* 2: 175, *Ant.* 16: 43) and during the time of the Pharisees (ca. 150 BCE – ca. 70 CE) and later its usurpation by the Tannaim (ca. 50 BCE – ca. 200 CE).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> m. Meg 2:1

<sup>44</sup> Tannaitic tradition understood the dual-Torah concept to be confirmed by the Bible. This concept shows that the Tannaim maintained that God had given both Torahs to Israel. This is explained in *Sifre Deut.* 351: “And thy law to Israel” (They shall teach Jacob your judgments and Israel your law” (Deut. 33:10). This teaches that two laws were given to Israel, one orally and the other in writing. Agnitos the general asked Rabban Gamliel, “How many laws were given to Israel?” [Rabban Gamliel] said to him: “Two; one in writing and one orally.”

<sup>45</sup> See also Jaffee (2001) and Alexander (2006, 2007).

<sup>46</sup> Gen. 31:37, Jeremiah 10:11, Daniel 2:4 and Ezra 4: 8- 16 and 7: 12 – 26.

<sup>47</sup> See Schiffman (1991: 188) for a table of the periods of the oral law and their relationship to the rabbinic movements.

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 What are Targums?

Ezra and Nehemiah in their account of the events following on the return of Judeans to their former territories asserted: “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, (מפרש) and caused them to understand the reading” (Neh. 8:8; 2 Chron. 17: 8-9).<sup>48</sup> The word מפרש is problematic (it also occurs in Ezra 4:18: “The letter you have sent us has been plainly read מפרש before me”). Neh. 8: 8 in fact refers to the reading of the Torah, based on making sure that the explanations (מפרש) were an accurate rendition of what was written in the scrolls of Law. This would have depended on the availability of a proficient Aramaic translator. Given the rabbinic abhorrence of translations in general, it did not exclude other languages even Greek translations of the Torah could have taken place in Palestine (Smelik 2013: 180). This is an indication of language fluidity, in spite of the rabbinic

Nehemiah does not specifically mention the actual language that was used for this purpose.<sup>49</sup> In Nehemiah 13: 23-24 there is a comment on the language situation concerning a number of localities in which Jews resided: “In those days I also saw Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Amnon and of Moab and their children

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<sup>48</sup> It is not known when an organised pattern of reading of the Torah and *Haphtaroth* began but, according to Tov, it can probably be dated to the second century BCE (Tov 2012: 198, fn. 13). See also Perrot (1998) in Mulder in *Mikra*, “A Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue” (137-59).

<sup>49</sup> Tradition has ascribed the origin of the first targum to Ezra. However, the earliest manuscript evidence goes back to the Targum Fragments (4QtgLev = 4Q156) that were found at Qumran and dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. Fragments from Job and dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE have also been excavated, 4QtgJob = 11Q157. See Tov: 148, *DJD* VI, 86-9 for 4QtgLev; also, Fitzmyer 1978: 5-23.

spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people."<sup>50</sup>

A brief examination of the origins of the term 'targum' provides early insights into the Semitic cultural context of orality in the Ancient Near East.

The derivation of 'targum' has been a topic of debate, with some commentators claiming it originally developed out of the Akkadian root *ragamu*, meaning to 'call out' and the source for the term *targummanu(m)* – 'translator' or 'interpreter', hence its later connotation referring to the act of 'reading aloud' or 'declaiming' (Lambert 1987: 409-413; Gelb 1968: 92-103). However, Safrai had refuted this connection between the two words as tenuous (1987: 244). Smelik asserted that the Akkadian derivation is wrong and the probable origin for *targummanu(m)*<sup>51</sup> is most likely based on a loan word from *Luwian* by way of Akkadian and later adopted into Hebrew and Arabic (Smelik 2013: 140).

Targum has several meanings: it can mean, on the one hand, to 'speak', 'utter' and 'proclaim,' all terms which indicate the oral functions of declaring loudly and or publicly, in other words, a performative function. Martin Jaffee refers to the rabbinic

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<sup>50</sup> Nehemiah's verses here are open to interpretation. Was Nehemiah referring to the problem of intermarriage, as the previous verses related to non-Sabbath observances, the role of the Levites and the sanctification of the holy places? If Hebrew had by this time diminished in stature as the holy tongue, why the emphasis on the people of Ashdod, Moab and Ammon? I would suggest that the context of these two verses may be detected in the opening verse of chapter 13, namely, "on the day that they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever." Here I disagree with Bowker (1985: 3 fn. 5) that it was only a lament for the decline of the Hebrew language. Clearly, Nehemiah was thus conscious of the diversity of languages, but his focus was rather on the prohibition on intermarriages and this can be proven by the fact that verses 23-24 are preceded by "Did Solomon king of Israel not sin by these things?" (13: 25 - 30).

<sup>51</sup> For more on the Akkadian connection see S. Kaufman (1974: 107); also, Díez Macho (1972: 5).

perspectives on the oral-performative culture of Palestinian Judaism and how this formed part of the educational system of that time (Jaffee 2001).<sup>52</sup> The other meanings are 'to translate and 'to interpret'. In this sense, it also became used to refer to the Aramaic passages left in the Hebrew Bible.

Targum as a literary genre usually refers to the translations of the Hebrew bible into Aramaic. In the early rabbinic period targum was used to refer to any written translations in any language, as in m. Meg. 2:1:

If a man read the scroll in wrong order, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he read it by heart, he has not fulfilled his obligation. But it may be read in a foreign tongue to them that speak a foreign tongue; and if one that spoke a foreign tongue heard [the scroll read in Hebrew] in [a roll written in] Assyrian he has fulfilled his obligation.

However, for rabbinic literature 'targum' has wider meanings than merely 'translation', as indicated by Smelik (2013: 142). There are a number of variant meanings, for example, when it refers to 'Aramaic Bible translation' in terms that refer to 'Aramaic' as a distinct language and the concept of 'halakhic interpretative statements' and as a 'declamation'. Smelik has further commented on m. Meg. 2:1 that the rabbinical meaning was that 'targum' in fact refers to "Both the oral nature of translation and the use of any language other than Hebrew contravene the prescribed procedure" (2013: 143).

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<sup>52</sup> See Smelik on orality and performance (2013:227-228). Also, Jaffee in Elman and Gershoni (2000: 27-73) on the oral and cultural context of the Babylonian Talmud. For a detailed treatment of the ancient world and oral cultures see Niditch (1996) and Gerhardsson (1998).

Flesher and Chilton provide a basic description of targum as the “Aramaic translations of books of the Hebrew Bible done by Jews during the rabbinic period” (2011: 8). All of these elements presented by Flesher and Chilton, however, address the *historical origins* rather than describe what targum actually *is*. This raises the question of the nature of the Aramaic translations’ relationships to their target texts (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 9-11). The Flesher-Chilton description is also somewhat limiting in that it encompasses all texts related in some way to scripture, such as the Genesis Apocryphon (*1QapGen*) (Bernstein 2010: 337-338).<sup>53</sup> This narrow definition of ‘targum’ creates the overall impression that targums are, in a *general* sense, purely Bible translations.<sup>54</sup> This restricted definition does not allow for the internal characteristics that set the targums apart as a translation genre in their own right from other translations of scripture, such as the LXX, which has become “definitionally fixed” as a distinct Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Bernasconi 2011:139-141).

In the Babylonian Talmud, targum is used only for translations of the Bible and the Aramaic passages from the Bible such as those in Daniel and Ezra (BT. *Kidd* 1.59; y. *Meg.* 1.71c). In contrast, the rabbinic designation of the Hebrew *tirgem* refers to any translation from Hebrew into any language (*Yad.* 4.5).

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<sup>53</sup> Part of the problem with Genesis Apocryphon is its lack of textual uniformity. See also the Targum of Job, which is also a multi-text variant. Trying to slot this text into a literary type has been problematic and it has been described variously as ‘targum’, ‘midrash’ ‘apocalyptic text’, amongst other descriptions, or multi-generic, as suggested by Bernstein (2010: 337-338). For a detailed and more structured approach to the question on the problems of providing definitions and labels to literary genres, see the detailed study on Genesis Apocryphon by Rocco Bernasconi (2011: 139-198). Bernasconi uses the “Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in the Anonymous and Pseudoepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity” as an analytical tool in what appears to be the first formal approach at describing its multi-literary characteristics (Samely, Alexander, Bernasconi and Hayward 2011).

<sup>54</sup> Flesher and Chilton 2011: 8)

If it is accepted that targums are *per se* texts produced through translational techniques, the defining element is that at the core of their existence is their inseparability from the wording of the biblical text. This absolute requirement refers to all types of targumim, whether literal or non-literal. To continue with this definition derived from the combined efforts of the contributors to *Aramaic Studies* Vol. 9 No. 1 (2011), the editor in the introduction to this indispensable research publication continues – “...the Targums must be the result of a meta-linguistic attitude assumed towards Scripture’s verbal matter as verbal matter” (14). In other words, it doesn’t matter how absurd and startling the Aramaic reading may be, the targum in question cannot exist as a targum text without its verbal connection to its base text in some form or another. This point is crucial for this study and it is intended to demonstrate how the TgQoh remained true to its base text, even though this targum is representative of one of the most non-literal examples of the targum genre.

Samely has therefore proposed the following definition, which appears to offer the most cogent description and encompasses the full breadth of targumic-type textual formats.

Targum is an Aramaic narrative paraphrase of the biblical text in exegetical dependence on its wording (Samely 1992: 180).

Houtman and Sysling have extended the Samely definition by rephrasing it as:

Targum is a Jewish Aramaic narrative paraphrase of the biblical text in exegetical dependence on its wording (2009: 18).

In Houtman and Sysling's view, Samely's definition failed to address the Jewish cultural characteristics of targumic texts, hence the addition of 'Jewish'. They then go a step further and stress the dependence of the targum on the wording from the Bible as central to its identity. The definition required an adaptation to emphasize that:

Targum is a Jewish Aramaic interpretative word-by-word translation of the biblical text in exegetical dependence on its wording (Houtman & Sysling 2009: 18).<sup>55</sup>

It appears that the definition provided by Samely and Houtman and Sysling's first definition meet the basic requirements of definitional clarity. Moving away from the early basic definitions/descriptions of the targum as merely translations of the Hebrew Bible allows for a measure of relativity to enter this debate. As Houtman and Sysling have noted (16-18), some modern definitions have tried to identify targum either as overtly Jewish or as bearing some importance for Christian translations. Roger le Déaut, stressed the intrinsically Jewish nature of targums.

...il désigne la traduction d'un texte biblique en araméen (ce qui exclut la Septante), fait par des Juifs pour des Juifs (ce qui élimine la Peshitta, dans son ensemble) pour l'usage dans le culte synagogal ou l'enseignement" (Le Déaut 1984 : 153).

Klaus Beyer, however, saw the targum as having some significance for a Christian understanding of the Old Testament:

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<sup>55</sup> Houtman and Sysling then propose that in order to widen the net, so to speak, a more nuanced approach be adopted by defining the text according to sub-categories. This somewhat complicates the problem of defining targums even further but serves as an example of how complex the relationship actually was to its Hebrew base texts (Houtman & Sysling 2009: 17-25). The wider the range of definitions, the more confusing and unfocused the notion of targum becomes.

Unter Targumen versteht man die jüdisch-aramäischen Übersetzungen des Alten Testaments, im weiteren Sinne auch die christlich-aramäischen (Beyer 1983: 273).

The use of targums and their roles in general have been well documented and a concise description of their main functions should suffice, as this is not the main area of research for this dissertation. However, there it is still debatable to what extent the later targums, and with special reference the targums on the Ketuvim, were actively used since it appears that they no longer played a need in liturgical settings.

- Targums were used in the synagogue setting and for purposes of study. Lier (2008: 37) has suggested that different types of targums were used for these distinct activities as the priestly schools already used a version (Proto-O) that differed from the Onkelos already being used for liturgical practices in the synagogue.<sup>56</sup> This is an argument I intend to follow up later regarding the actual use of the targums to the Megillot.
- A translator, or Meturgeman,<sup>57</sup> would stand next to the reader of the Torah who read from a scroll and the Meturgeman would translate from memory. This distinguished between the written and the oral law. Rabbinical rules stipulated exactly how this was to be performed, ensuring always that the Written Torah never became subordinate to the words or actions of the Meturgeman (Lier 2008: 79; Levine 1988: 11 -12; Bowker 1969: 13-14; Smelik 2013: 158-170, 221).

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<sup>56</sup> Lier's theory is supported by Flesher (2001: 7, 28) and Schäfer (1973: 398-99).

<sup>57</sup> Also, 'public speaker' or 'spokesman' and not just a translator of the Hebrew during prayer services; see Smelik (2013: 158-171).

Smelik has observed that the “oral performance had great significance for the composition and transmission of texts” (Smelik 2013: 221).

- Schools, and *batei midrash*, became major centres of learning, transmission and interpretation, and operated very differently from the practice in centres of formal worship. Schools in this sense do not refer to buildings, but to centres of learning based on programmatic and methodical activities for the study and teaching of Torah (Gerhardsson 1961: 72-78; Lier 2008: 79).

Bible translations were deeply rooted in the oral tradition and kept alive for a long time, if we take into account the stream of Mishnaic and later Talmudic rules regarding translation activities. However, there were significant differences over long period of evolution regarding terminology, emphasis and translation. One only needs to ask the question of the necessity for targumim to the Megillot, most of which had a much lesser role to play in the canon and their part in the liturgical hierarchy.<sup>58</sup> Then too the differences in interpretation, attitude and historical and social factors between the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis also emphasises the difficulties in trying to find easy solutions or a one-size-fits-all approach to the targumim.

The contexts of the translations of the Pentateuchal and prophetic books differed hugely when compared to the targumim to the Megillot. Similarly, the insistence that the decline in the use of Hebrew became the leading factor for the rise of and the reason for Aramaic and Greek translations; the impression this has generated in turn is that were it not for the targums, the Hebrew would have fallen into disuse except

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<sup>58</sup> Esther was recited on Purim, Lamentations on Ninth of Av, Ruth on Shavuot, Song of Songs on Passover and Qohelet on the Shabbat of Sukkot.

amongst a small number of elites. The suggestion that one of the key roles of targums was as oral performances of biblical books during the first two centuries CE has been questioned recently (Kasher 1988: 75-85; Smelik 1995: 1-41, 180-88; Safrai 1990: 187-193; Alexander 1999: 71-89).

During this period, there was no standard lectionary and the Rabbis had not yet gained control over the synagogues; the multi-lingual nature of the languages used was complicated and almost impossible to verify because of a lack of evidence for that period and a uniform and standardised form interpretation is simply unlikely to have been in force in this early period (Smelik 2013: 269). Smelik notes that oral translations probably varied between regions and communities, and those combinations of languages were used in conjunction with Hebrew (*ibid.*). Taking Willem Smelik's argument further, it therefore seems likely that a standardised version of the targum (some of them) was introduced into the synagogues only during the second half of the second century CE. He continues,

Because these translations had been in use for generations, they could not simply be rejected and taken out of circulation. Nonetheless the rabbis succeeded in insisting upon Hebrew as the exclusive language of scriptural readings. By the time of the Byzantine era, the Torah was being read in Hebrew in Greek Synagogues, while the use of Greek translations had become controversial. This succeeded in promulgating the Targum as part of the Oral Torah... These Targums now represented the public face of rabbinic discourse to the wider audience of synagogue attendants...thus spreading the authorised reception of the Hebrew Bible. To set their seal on the synagogue liturgy the

rabbis required to read the Torah in Hebrew and accorded the translation the emphatic status of Oral Torah (Smelik 2013: 270).

TgQoh, like the other targumim, remained in character as a translation and as such it stood alone as exactly that (Alexander 2011: 87). However, the earlier versions of the Old Greek translations of the Torah probably attained inspired status without the need to refer to the original or to call for a new version (Tov 1999: 183).

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Literary Analysis of TgQoh

Although the focus of this study is on the Aramaic translation of Qohelet, the Hebrew text looms large and cannot be ignored as the eschatological theme of death and resurrection cannot be separated from its biblical or historical origins.

This study has the advantage of using a literary analytical tool on which work commenced in 2007 (Samely 2011: 1). The project's full title is the *Typology of Anonymous and Pseudoepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity (TAPJLA) 200 BCE to c. 700 CE*. The fruits of these endeavours were finally published in *Aramaic Studies* in 2011. The outcome of this massive study of the later Jewish works produced a structured inventory for use as a research tool for examining the literary features of selected works within the period of the later Jewish and rabbinic texts. In Alex Samely's description, it provides a "conceptual framework" with a standardised terminology that can be used for identifying and describing these works' "concrete features and a means to identifying the unifying features of these texts as specific literary phenomena" (Samely 2011: 5). The title of the inventory list is: *The Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in the Anonymous and Pseudoepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity*.

Philip Alexander assumed the task of applying this inventory to TgQoh as part of his contributions (2011: 84-96, 101-126). This is the only such literary analysis of the TgQoh text thus far available to researchers and scholars, and its contribution provides an invaluable aid towards a better understanding of the structural elements of the

targum text and the methodological approaches of the translators, especially within the context of the later rabbinic period.<sup>59</sup>

The two primary outcomes of this project have been identified as the formation of a structured inventory contained within a database that allows for online access for reasons of research and analysis (Samely 2011: 6). *The Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features* consists of “hundreds of individually defined literary features” (7), which have been incorporated into a structured and systematic arrangement into twelve types consisting of twelve discrete elements.

These are:

1. The self-preservation of the text as a verbal entity
2. The perspective of the governing voice
3. Poetic or communicative-rhetorical formation
4. Narrative coherence or narrative aggregation
5. Thematic coherence or thematic aggregation
6. Lemmatic coherence or lemmatic aggregation
7. Correspondences and wording overlap between texts
8. Characteristic small forms
9. Characteristic small-scale coherence or aggregation for thematic discourse
10. Compounds of juxtaposed part-texts
11. Dominant subject matter or contents
12. Sampling of scholarly genre labels

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<sup>59</sup> This work can be accessed in a special edition of *Aramaic Studies* (Vol. 9 No. 1: 2011) which presents a ground-breaking approach in its attempt to investigate and codify “Features of the non-biblical texts that include complete or non-complete works of Jewish literature outside the rabbinic bible to the end of the Talmud” (Samely 2011: 1). The four participants in this study were: Alexander Samely, Robert Hayward, Philip Alexander and Rocco Bernasconi.

With this literary inventory at hand, the contributors to this project set about applying these criteria to profile the following texts:

- Targum Genesis Onqelos (Alexander Samely)<sup>60</sup>
- Targum Sheni of Esther (Robert Hayward)<sup>61</sup>
- Targums to Canticles, Lamentations and Qohelet (Philip Alexander)<sup>62</sup>
- Targum Qohelet (Philip Alexander)
- Targum Canticles (Philip Alexander)
- Targum Lamentations (Philip Alexander)<sup>63</sup>
- Genesis Apocryphon (Rocco Bernasconi).

## 4.2 Analysis of TgQoh

By the time that TgQoh had come into existence, BibQoh had already been part of the Hebrew canon for approximately 800 years, and this meant that by the time that the composers of the targum version set to work, it could only have been done on the basis that TgQoh could not in any way replace or dominate over the Hebrew version, but could only be used in a subservient role, most probably as a commentary for study purposes.

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<sup>60</sup> The full titles of the articles and profiles are: Professor Samley's article is "Profile Targum Onqelos". A Samely, R. Bernasconi, P. Alexander and R. Hayward.

<sup>61</sup> "Targum a Misnomer for Midrash? Towards a Typology for the Targum Sheni of Esther", (47-64) and a "Profile Targum Esther Sheni" (48-65).

<sup>62</sup> The chapters by P Alexander: "Translation and Midrash Completely Fused Together? The Form of the Targums to Canticles, Lamentations and Qohelet", (83-100) and "Profile Targum Qohelet", (101-114). Also, "Profile Targum Canticles", (115-126); "Profile Targum Lamentations", (127-138).

<sup>63</sup> Professor Bernasconi's five articles are: "A Literary Analysis of the Genesis Apocryphon", (139-162); "Profile Genesis Apocryphon Overall (Fragment)" (163-176); "Profile Genesis Apocryphon Lamech Part-Text (Fragment)", (177-182); "Profile Genesis Apocryphon Noah Part-Text (Fragment)," (183-190); "Profile Genesis Apocryphon Abram Part-Text (Fragment)", (191-198).

The targumist faced the challenge of transforming a wisdom-type text into a manifestly rabbinical text. Unlike the earlier targums, the later targums were indisputable creations of authors who were part of the rabbinic world in all its forms (Flesher 2010: 270; Alexander 2011: 88-90).

For example, Qohelet asks in the introduction to BibQoh (1:3): “What adequate gain does a man get through all his toil at which he toils under the sun?” The conclusion given by the author is that everything man does in this physical world is ultimately *hebel* (1:2), and this same message of futility or pointlessness continues as a motif throughout the book until its conclusion where the same point is made again in 12:8.<sup>64</sup>

As is self-evident from a cursory reading only, the targumist radically altered the tenor of the book. BibQoh presented a worldview of a pessimistic universe in which human beings had little control over their destiny during their lifespans, or when their demise would come about. According to Qohelet, humans will die exactly like the beasts, with no recourse to an afterlife.<sup>65</sup>

The translation strategy adopted by TgQoh was based on transforming BibQoh into a text reflecting a largely religious outlook throughout. Alexander noted that because BibQoh had already been in existence as a canonical book, the targum would

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<sup>64</sup> Translational equivalents for ‘*hebel*’ have been much debated, with ‘vain’ ‘absurd’ the most frequently preferred as metaphorical equivalents, but I think that in the context of the opening verse, it conveys more a sense of ‘there is no point to it all’, and the English ‘it is pointless’, while ‘*sinnlos*’ in German has more cogency than ‘absurd’ ‘vain’ or ‘absurdity’, ‘breath of wind’ and similar equivalents. The term has been translated in Greek as ματαιότης or *vanitas* in Latin. *Hebel* is dealt with in detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>65</sup> See BibQoh 9: 1- 10 on Qohelet’s bleak views on death; in 12: 7 there is a vague allusion that there may be some form of an afterlife, “Then shall the dust return to earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

therefore have had to ensure that it remained subservient to the BibQoh and that “he intended it as some sort of commentary on the biblical text” (Alexander 2011: 88).

### **4.3 Manuscript history and translations**

The manuscripts to the targums of the Ketuvim are represented by two distinct groups of manuscripts, the Western (European) and Eastern, of which the Eastern are also referred to as the Yemenite tradition. These manuscripts, composed between approximately the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7th centuries C.E., are remote from their possible earlier editions that were prepared in Palestine. The Western manuscripts are considered more coherent and usable than their Eastern counterparts (Alexander 2011: 101). The Yemenite texts appear to be later compositions than their Western counterparts and in some cases, depend on their Western counterparts (Beattie 1985: 222-229).<sup>66</sup> Alexander also argues this point, stating that “there is greater textual fluidity – a lack of textual stability reminiscent of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch. Quite diverse recensions exist for most of the Targumim to the Writings.” Alexander also makes the point that “if we ignore the superior vocalisation of the Yemenite MSS, the western recension is arguably older and better than the Yemenite” (Alexander 1988: 224).

According to Etan Levine, the targum manuscripts to the Ketuvim feature a wide range of divergences and are characterised in particular by numerous differences in syntax, morphology and orthography. The texts vary in many respects in terms of grammatical

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<sup>66</sup> According to Beattie, of the thirty Ruth manuscripts, only nine conform to the Yemenite tradition and they depend on the European versions (1985: 226).

style and feature variances as well as in the thematic differences between them (Levine 1978: 85).<sup>67</sup>

When it comes to the manuscripts on TgQoh itself, there is relative coherence between the range of texts and the differences between them are not very wide-ranging or controversial, except for a number of differences in only a few verses (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 233; Knobel 1991: 3).<sup>68</sup>

### 4.3.1 Manuscripts

The following manuscripts are extant:

- Ms 110 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris
- Ms Cod. Vat. Erb. Urb. 1 of the Vatican Library, which was used by Etan Levine for his translation into English
- Ms Or 2375 of the British Museum
- Ms Or 1302 of the British Museum
- Ms Opp. Add. 4 to 139 of the Bodleian Library
- Ms Lutski 431 of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
- Ms Lutski 472b of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
- Ms 17 of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris
- Ms 383 of the David Sassoon Collection
- Ms 11 of the Danish Royal Library in Copenhagen.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Other materials on manuscript research include Levine (1962: 3-13); Le Deaut (1966: 32-41); Knobel (1991: 2-4, 16).

<sup>68</sup> Major differences are 2:4, 20; 7:15; 11:20. Minor variations appear in verses 5:8; 7:7, 19 (Knobel 1991: 3).

<sup>69</sup> This list of manuscripts has been adapted from Knobel's introduction to his translation into English and as such provides a reference to those codices most relevant to TgQoh, in the opinion and approach adopted by Knobel.

Alexander singled out Ms 110 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris as the most reliable for the targum to the writings and by implication for TgQoh (2011: 101). Ms 110 forms the basis of the first printed and published edition of Bomberg's *Biblia Rabbinica* of 1517.<sup>70</sup> A transcription of this manuscript was produced by E.G. Clark and is available on the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Database based on corrections made by J Lund.<sup>71</sup> The only two English translations are those by Etan Levine (1978) and P Knobel (1991).

In comparison to the Pentateuchal Targum books of the Bible, there are at present only a handful of translations of TgQoh.

#### 4.3.2 English translations

- The earliest is by C. D. Ginsburg and was based on the *Biblia Rabbinica* and published in 1861: *Cohemoth, Commonly Called the Book of Ecclesiastes* London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts.
- Etan Levine (1978), *The Aramaic Version of Qohelet*, used the Ms Codex Vat. Erb. Urb. 1 of the Vatican Library that was written in 1294 C.E. or 15 Kislew 5055, as annotated in the margins by *Yitzhak ben Shimon HaLevi* for his English translation (Levine 1978 and 1988).<sup>72</sup>
- D. Corré (1953) in an unpublished Master's dissertation based on MS 10302 from the British Library, in a study called *The Sources of Targum Qohelet*.

<sup>70</sup> Published by Bomberg (Venice 1517). Paul de Lagarde later republished this as a consonantal edition. P. de Lagarde 1873, *Hagiographa Chaldaicae*, Leipzig: Tuebner.

<sup>71</sup> [www.cal1.cn.huc.edu](http://www.cal1.cn.huc.edu)

<sup>72</sup> This codex contains the entire O.T. Hebrew text verse by verse, and "alternating with the Aramaic version following each Hebrew verse" (Levine 1978: 84). Levine describes this manuscript as being of good quality, "the most competently written", although he also used additional supporting manuscripts in the production of his English version and these are accordingly listed, but played a lesser role in his eventual final edition (Levine 1978: 85). As an interesting aside, this manuscript was acquired by Pope Alexander VII and subsequently stored in the Vatican Library in 1658.

- P. S. Knobel is the most recent of the English versions and was published in the Aramaic Bible Series No. 15 by the Liturgical Press in 1991. Knobel used a combination of eleven manuscripts in both the Western and Yemenite traditions.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4.3.3 French Translations

- F. Manns, *Le Targum de Qohelet – manuscript Urbinati I: Traduction et commentaire*, Liber Annuus 42 (1992).
- M. Taradach and J. Ferrer, *Un Targum de Qohelet: Edition Princeps du Ms. m-2 de Salamanca* (1998).

#### 4.3.4 Spanish Translation

- A Spanish translation by Luis Diez Merino was published in 1987.

A brief publishing history of printed versions of TgQoh began with Bomberg's *editio princeps*. It contained the first printed version of TgQoh in his *Mikraot Gedolot* of the Tanakh in 1517. In 1873 Paul de la Garde published a revised version of *editio princeps* in the *Hagiographa Chaldaice*. In 1905 A. Levy published a critical edition of TgQoh *Das Targum zu Qohelet nach südarabischen Handschriften herausgegeben*. In 1968 Alexander Sperber used Ms.2375 in *The Bible in Aramaic IVA* for TgQoh and in 1978 Etan Levine followed with his publication of *The Aramaic Version of Qohelet* in 1978, in which he relied on Ms. EBR. *Urb. Ebr.* 1 (Knobel 2-3).

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<sup>73</sup> Knobel's use of a multi-manuscript approach broaching European and Eastern traditions has come in for some criticism, most notably from Ernst Clarke. The consensus seems to be that Levine's translation, based on one manuscript only, is preferable for study purposes. During the IOSOT Conference held at Stellenbosch University in 2017, this was discussed during the course of my presentation and the delegates present, all targum specialists, echoed a similar view.

## 4.4 The Ketuvim

The Ketuvim is the third and final unit of the Hebrew Bible. The books contained within this unit are the Poetic books, Psalms, Proverbs and Job; the Five Megillot – or scrolls of the Megillot – Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Qohelet and Esther, with Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 & 2 Chronicles completing the last section of the Ketuvim and the *Tanakh*.

The Megillot, according to the later Jewish tradition, are placed in the following order: Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Qohelet and Esther. In the Rabbinic Bible of 1525 the Five Scrolls are found in the order of the festivals they are linked with and this has become the order found in modern editions (Samely 2009: 494).<sup>74</sup>

## 4.5 The Aramaic of the Megillot

The Aramaic used in the Ketuvim as a whole seems to be a mix of Aramaic types, with Jewish Palestinian Aramaic being the original dialect with elements of Jewish Literary Aramaic and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.<sup>75</sup> For example, in the *Aramaic Version of Lamentations* (1978), Levine summed up the Aramaic in TgLam as follows: “Each of the mss. is a mixed text: a substratum of the original Palestinian Aramaic within a text which in transmission was recurrently altered in conformity with the Aramaic known to the scribes” (1978: 20).

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<sup>74</sup> H. Ginsburg has shown that this is in fact to be found in the “early editions”, i.e. Soncino of 1488, Naples 1491-93, Brescia 1492-94 as well as the second and third editions of Bomberg’s Quarto Bible – Venice 1521 and 1525 (1896: 3-4).

<sup>75</sup> For a detailed and useful summary of the Aramaic in the Ketuvim, see Flesher & Chilton (2011: 233-235).

Beattie concurs in his study on TgRuth that the language consists of a “mixture of PLA and ‘official’ or Babylonian forms” (1994: 10). While it is commonly agreed that the Aramaic of the Ketuvim and indeed the Megillot contain a mix of dialects, Kaufman (1993: 363-382) and E. Cook (1986) examined the assortment of language styles and concluded that the Aramaic exhibited clear evidence of a combination of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPLA), Jewish Literary Aramaic (JLA) with lexical items from Jewish Biblical Aramaic (JBA), Syriac, Hebrew and other archaic Aramaic forms. (Kaufman 1993: 64-69) identified this dialect as Late Jewish Literary Aramaic (LJLA). According to CAL, LJLA is the form of dialect found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and all the books of the Ketuvim (except Proverbs). Grossfeld commenting on Targum Esther (1991: 7) and Knobel on TgQoh (1991: 9-10) also concur that Palestinian Literary Aramaic (PLA) constituted the original dialect upon which later scribes/translators inserted later forms of Aramaic, in particular Jewish Biblical Aramaic (JBA) and Babylonian Aramaic. This applies in the main to Targum Onqelos and to TgQoh (Kutscher 1950: 201-202).

#### **4.6 The Aramaic of TgQoh**

TgQoh specifically, as with the other targumim, remained largely in character as a translation, but was able to stand on its own as a unique text (Alexander 2011: 87). Although some evidence of western Aramaic words (Palestinian) and influences are still noticeable, scribes and copyists over time emended the text to conform to the eastern, i.e. the Babylonian, forms of later Aramaic (see above). Knobel (1976: 428-429; 430-431; 1991: 9-12) provides a comprehensive summary of some of the linguistic evidence of words and phrases of Palestinian origin that continued into the

later texts of TgQoh. The language in TgQoh is thus not a pure dialect of the Aramaic forms mentioned above. Due to its use in liturgical practices, the targum was extensively copied and amended and dialectical modifications were most likely influenced by the Aramaic known to individual copyists. “This evolution into Eastern Aramaic developed to the extent that only remnants of the original language have been preserved” (Knobel 1991: 9). Knobel asserted further that “The Palestinian substratum of the language is still visible. The Western Aramaic words and forms which do occur in TgQoh are explicable only if it had its origin in Palestine” (*ibid.*). Stephen Kaufman commenting on the dialect found in Pseudo-Jonathan that it too borrowed from other Aramaic dialects, but these were eventually combined into a single unified dialect found in Pseudo-Jonathan, as well as some of the targums of the Ketuvim as LJLA (Kaufman 2013: 145-148).

Further evidence of an editing process in which categories of scriptural texts were assigned places in the Bible is the mention made by Josephus in *Contra Apionem* (1.38-41), where he speaks of the “remaining four books”, possibly Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes (Seow 1997: 3-4). According to Josephus, these were assigned to a third division (or *Ketuvim*) after the five books of Moses, followed by the thirteen books describing the subsequent history of the Jews after the death of Moses and until the reign of Artaxerxes (*Contra Apionem* 1.39).

The Hebrew Bible as a literary entity consisting of a set of authorised sacred books probably came into being at the end of the third century B.C.E. How the Palestinian religious authorities came to the common conclusion to establish an authorised canon is not totally clear, but a likely explanation could have been the ever-growing

“secondary” compositions. The ascendancy of the role of interpretations of the biblical texts was probably the most cogent reason for establishing an official canon as such, and so eradicate the risk of confusion between the sacred and the non-sacred elements (Vermes 1975: 59).

Beyond a small number of comments, the rabbinical literature does not appear to express any sustained and clear opinions about the targumim or, for that matter translations, as a whole. Flesher and Chilton have pointed out that in the Mishnah there are only eight pericopae regarding targum and translation, the Palestinian Talmud has eighteen, the Babylonian Talmud twenty-nine and the Tosefta twelve. When weighed against the vast repository of the rabbinic corpus, this is an insignificant contribution (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 285-286). Rabbinical responses are difficult to gauge as these attributions to early rabbis were mostly the work of rabbis from the Amoraic period and beyond (Smelik 1990: 1-2).<sup>76</sup>

## 4.7 Targum and Midrash

Alexander Sperber raised the question of whether the later expansive targumim, like TgQoh, are in fact more Midrash than targum: “These texts are not Targum texts but Midrash-texts in the disguise of Targum” (Sperber 1968: 4: viii). Le Déaut asked whether it would indeed have been possible to separate targum from Midrash and his response was that they were in fact not only parallel, but inseparable (Le Déaut 1969: 395-4).<sup>77</sup> Le Déaut saw an organic relationship between all forms of exegetical works

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<sup>76</sup> BT Meg. 3a

<sup>77</sup> Leopold Zunz had earlier also made the claim that Targum Sheni of Esther was more Midrash than targum, (1892: 83).

and regarded the targums and the Septuagint as similar in their exegetical techniques and purpose (1969: 484).<sup>78</sup>

Midrashic influence was substantial on the targumim, as noted by Etan Levine and these included expansive additions to the texts of the targumim to the Megillot: “As a popular interpretation of scripture, it includes illustrations, explanations, hortatory exhortations, juridical and homelitical elaborations, i.e., the Jewish exegesis called Midrash” (Levine 1997: 8). Levine apparently agrees with Sperber’s assessment on the Megillot: “Similarly, aggadic paraphrases and lengthy addenda were incorporated, to the extent that the Hagiographa Targum extant today - and most markedly the Targum to the Five Megillot – are the most midrash than they are targum in that they combine extensive aggadah and paraphrase with Aramaic translation” (1997: 10).<sup>79</sup>

The views of the scholars mentioned above are understandable if one undertakes a surface reading and notes the extensive number of Midrashic interpolations in the targums to the Megillot. For example, an examination of the text of TgQoh reveals 70 allusions/parallels between Qohelet *Rabbah* and 12 with other Midrashim<sup>80</sup> as found in TgQoh.<sup>81</sup> As a genre, targum presents a bewildering array of additional material that takes it beyond just translations, as they represent interpretative exegetical modes combining many alternative additions to convey the rabbinic agendas (Smelik 1995: 86-880).

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<sup>78</sup> Le Déaut did revisit his stance and changed this view in a later article (1983), ‘La Septante, un Targum?’

<sup>79</sup> Additional comment on this issue cited by Levine (1997) and also found in A. G. Wright (1967).

<sup>80</sup> Midrashim to Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus and Canticles.

<sup>81</sup> This observation is based on Knobel’s (1991) English translation of TgQoh and the footnotes, where Midrashic elements have been cited.

In spite of many additions, both short and long, targum texts seldom lose sight of the fact that they are interpretative translations of the Hebrew source, expanding on and explaining the Hebrew texts (Levine 1988: 6). Targumim stand as an independent genre with its own sets of rules and conventions. The seven Rules of Targum as devised by Flesher and Chilton (2011: 39-54) provides a useful summary of the characteristics of the targum genre.<sup>82</sup> These rules provide structural forms and a targum taxonomy that allows for incorporating and explaining their relationship to the Hebrew text and their relationships with other rabbinical writings.

Alexander (2011), in his analysis of TgQoh with the *Inventory of Literary Features* at hand, concludes that although TgQoh contains numerous midrashic materials interwoven into the text, TgQoh is an independent text that can stand on its own (BibQoh plus targum), even when the midrashic passages have been removed. However, the opposite situation arises when the midrashic passages are left on their own; they become a meaningless mixture of random “disconnected statements” (Alexander 2011: 86-87). The result is that although TgQoh contains numerous midrashic elements, the relationship is not a dependent one and the targum survives intact as a document clearly related more strongly to the Hebrew source text.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 1. When a Targum translates or presents the original text, it does so literally.

2. When a Targum adds material into the translation, it integrates the addition smoothly so as not to interrupt its flow

3. A word or phrase may be substituted for one in the original without disturbing the form of the surrounding translation.

4. An addition may be drawn from, imitate, or relate to material elsewhere in the book.

5. A large addition may be placed near the beginning or end of a narrative to emphasize its message.

6. Poetic passages are often expanded rather than translated.

7. Some words of the original text may be left out (Adapted from Flesher & Chilton (2011: 40).

<sup>83</sup> See also, for instance, Robert Hayward who concluded, after a detailed linguistic analysis of Targum Sheni, that it is not a “misnomer for Midrash” as asserted by Sperber, but an Aramaic narrative that largely follows the Hebrew base text with a number of additions that do not detract from its Targumic nature (Hayward 2011: 47-63).

Over and above these arguments, there are distinct structural differences between midrash and targum. The targums never mention any rabbinical authorities and do not make use of introductory formulas, different interpretations are not placed in contrast to each other and the translations are carefully blended together with additional material (Smelik 1995: 89-90).

There was a great deal of antipathy towards any type of translations of sacred texts. A translation was not regarded as a sacred object (Levine 1988: 14-17).<sup>84</sup> In the thought world of the rabbis, the status of Hebrew as the ‘holy tongue’ (לְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ) conveyed the sacredness and credibility to a text. “The element of sacredness which religion conveys is human will expressed in sacred symbols, verbal and otherwise. Again, the linguistic ‘medium’ and the ‘message’ are inseparable” (Levine 1988: 17). However, it “may be extrapolated that by the time of later rabbinic literary activity, the rabbis had reached a stage wherein a normative position had been established and most textual and scriptural inconsistencies had ceased to pose any doctrinal threats” (*ibid.*).<sup>85</sup>

#### 4.8 Targum Qohelet: Its structure and literary features

The structure of TgQoh is similar in terms of the number of chapters - twelve – and the number of verses per chapter are also in line with BibQoh. The one difference is

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<sup>84</sup> Talmudic opposition is found in BT Meg. 8b, 9a; BT Shab. 116a; Megillat Ta’anit; Masseket Soferim 1. On importance of translation see, m. Sotah 7: 5; BT Kid. 49a; B. Meg. 9a

<sup>85</sup> For more on the Midrashim to the Megillot, see Strack and Stemberger (1991: 342-349). The authors suggest a probable date of eighth century B.C.E. Palestine for QohRab.

that the extensive additional expansions make the book somewhat longer in terms of the lexical items inserted into the Aramaic version.

One of the questions that this study will attempt to answer is that of the nature of the translation. Alexander's analysis of this topic provides most of the technical textual data (2011: 102-114). However, this study will seek further to try and discover methodological considerations that may have been pursued by the targumists in order to meet certain translational, hermeneutical and exegetical goals. The study will attempt to reveal the possible existence of a translation strategy that underpinned translations of certain books such as TgQoh that challenged the normative exegetical and religious dogma with regards to doctrines of the afterlife.

Some researchers in the field of translation studies, e.g. Lörscher (1991) and Chesterman (1997), have proposed that a translation strategy consists of the following characteristics: it is goal-oriented; it is problem-centred; it requires making coordinated decisions; and it involves text manipulation (Sanjun Sun 2012).

In a paper that was published in 2011 I raised the issue of the complexity of translating the Hebrew Bible into Greek. I concluded that it was a far more onerous and difficult undertaking than the Aristeas narrative and other historical sources have led many scholars to believe. In some ways, the translation project of the Septuagint was comparable to some of the complex processes of modern-day project management activities (Lincoln 2011: 288-291).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Sysling also explored this topic (2007: 279).

Targum Qohelet (TgQoh) is a translation based on a Hebrew text (BibQoh). The translation of TgQoh was made by using a Hebrew base text or texts, attributable to a period between 500 C.E. as *terminus a quo*, and 1101 as the *terminus ad quem*. One view has held that the targum was composed in Babylon but before the Islamic period (Knobel 1991: 9; Grossfeld 1973: V; Levine 1978: 68). Knobel suggested that the date of composition of TgQoh and its midrash to be "...Somewhere in the seventh century. Given the fact that the Targum was designed originally for synagogue use, it is unlikely that it was redacted later than the seventh century" (Knobel 1991: 15). To add to Knobel, Levine has suggested that the TgQoh was compiled before the Arab conquest: "A more precise dating may be warranted for examination of parallel sources reveals that the targum was utilized by the ninth century *Pesiqta Rabbati* and by the eighth century *Sheilot*" (Levine 1978: 68). However, the linguistic evidence is problematic, as after the conquest of Palestine, Aramaic did not simply disappear from the region and one can assume that language change was a gradual process. The *Piyuttim* were still being composed in both Hebrew and Aramaic well into the eleventh century (Knobel *ibid*).

Recent opinion suggests a more advanced later date for the later argums. L. Gottlieb proposed that the targums were compiled later than originally thought. His argues that targum remained in active use long after the decline of Aramaic as a spoken and written language. This supports the idea that targums were an active component of teaching and as an exegetical tool in the *batei midrash*. "Centuries after its decline as a popular spoken language, Aramaic was utilized uninterruptedly, albeit in varying degrees, by the scholarly stratum of Jewish society throughout the diaspora (5) ... These later Targums were not intended to be read out aloud in a public hearing, nor

did they target the uneducated masses. They were composed as a type of commentary, to be accessed and studied by Jewish scholars who were schooled in the authoritative texts of Rabbinic Judaism (Gottlieb 2014: 5, 8).

Educated readers of the bible may have understood these targumim as part of the complex of interrelated literatures of holy books and as practitioners of the hermeneutic processes, were aware how texts randomly included and combined biblical verses into a targum. The targum was therefore another way of revealing the biblical past, and making the core elements of the bible more relevant in the present in linguistically creative ways.

The targum authors, or compilers, according to Levine (1978: 6), did not attempt to reconcile divergent sources, but they continuously rewrote targum texts in later centuries, therefore making a *terminus ante quem* difficult to determine with a measure of certainty (*ibid*). The targum compilers applied the latest and most reliable current texts (Levine 1978: 6; Knobel 1991: V). Dating the targums based solely on historical events and language factors may be misleading, given the effects of continuous revisions and ongoing developments in what Houtman and Sysling (2009: 48–50) have termed the “literature of the synagogue”. They also have given the label of “literature of the Beit Midrash” to the Mishnah, Talmud and the Midrashim.

TgQoh is essentially a text founded upon another text. In this respect, it fits in with the Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features (Inventory), as item 6.1. Item 6 refers to a category in the Inventory labelled as “Meta-linguistic structuring of a text according to another text (either 6.1 or 6.13 must apply)”.

Inventory item 6.13 describes the nature of the relationship between BibQoh and its Aramaic translation equivalent. “The text constitutes a complete and sequential representation, in another language and in object-oriented perspective, of the perceived meaning of all or almost all verbal matter of a complete set of base text segments. Thus, the resulting sentences do not thematize the base text in a meta-linguistic perspective, but recreate the thematic or narrative progression of the original” (Alexander 2011: 227).<sup>87</sup> This clearly indicates that TgQoh is totally dependent on its base text without specifically alluding to its dependence on BibQoh, or any other text,<sup>88</sup> yet it could be read entirely independently of its Hebrew equivalent and, even though a translation, it can stand entirely on its own (Alexander 2011: 85). This allows for the retention of the sense and underlying cultural significance of the source text, yet is clearly identifiable as a work of translation. This type of strategic approach to translation activities involves elements of intent and purpose, as well as a method combined with a specific framework of procedures in order to achieve the predetermined desired result. In the case of TgQoh, the desired result was to align BibQoh with the prevailing rabbinic religious doctrines.

However, it is debatable as to what were the intent and underlying strategy that dictated the terms of the translation approach for BibQoh. Reading TgQoh on its own would militate against its value as a translation, as translations should intrinsically be

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<sup>87</sup> An interesting observation is that LXX (a work that falls outside of the ambit of the Inventory, but is still a translation) could also be placed under the rubric of 6.13 to describe the nature of its composition as a translation.

<sup>88</sup> Following Alexander (2011: 85), there is only specific mention of a quotation from Deut. 19.15 in chapter 12.10. However, the quotation here does not agree with Onqelos or Pseudo-Jonathan and, as observed by Knobel, could have been an incorrect reading of the Hebrew or misquoted from memory by the targumist (Knobel: 55: fn 7).

a *reasonable* replica of the source text and be read as such and, in this way, can be read on its own. Interlinear translations, on the other hand, allow the text to be read both as the translated text and the original at the same time, as for example the translation of Aquila.<sup>89</sup> The Old Greek translation could be read independently without reference to the Torah and was accepted by some circles as a divinely inspired document. Klein has identified one type of approach which he calls “converse translation,” whereby the biblical text overrides the Hebrew in a variety of ways, particularly when any reference is made to God’s power and role in the affairs of men (Klein 1976: 515-537; Metzger 1993: 35; Levine 1988: 33-36).<sup>90</sup>

An example from BibQoh would be verses 3:18–19:

“For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.”

becomes

*“For the fate of guilty people and the fate of the unclean beast is the same for all of them. And, as an unclean beast dies, so dies the one who does not turn in repentance before his death.”*

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<sup>89</sup> It has been argued that the reason for the composition of the Letter of Aristeas was to legitimize the LXX as divinely inspired version of the Hebrew Torah, since it was read out aloud in the sense of the meaning of Ex. 24.3-7. Davies & Finkelstein (1999); also, Honigman (2004) and Orlinsky (1973). The legend of the translation from Hebrew to Greek is mentioned in B. Meg. 9a, and other sources in rabbinic literature on questions of the legitimacy of the translations of Torah into other tongues, e.g. M. Sotah 7: 2-4, 8:1; Y. Meg. 71c, 71 d. Also, Mark 7:13.

<sup>90</sup> Klein describes converse translation as a process of inserting or omitting a negative particle when desiring to say the exact opposite of what the text says.

The nature of the translation is achieved by rendering one verse from the biblical text followed by one from the targum that incorporates highly paraphrastic sections, or as Alexander noted, TgQoh's dependence on its base text could best be described as a translation that can be described as Bible + targum (2011: 86). Using the Inventory in subheading 6.13.1 as "the statements of the text are displayed in manuscripts as alternating in mere juxtaposition with segments *of verbal matter from the base texts (without linking quotation formulae)*" (Alexander 2011: 86, my emphasis).<sup>91</sup> The Inventory recognises the importance of the governing voice, in the case of TgQoh, King Solomon, as a significant contributor to its narrative consistency (at least in respect of TgQoh), by the following description in 6.13.2: "The text's governing voice almost always is identical with, or a consistent extension of, the persona projected by the governing voice of the base text" (Alexander 2011: 86).<sup>92</sup>

The targumists ensured that, although TgQoh remained coherent and identifiable as a translation, it would not accrue to itself the same level of sacredness and reverence as the original version in Hebrew, or in any way supplant the biblical text in any form and thereby challenge the veracity or sanctity of canonised books.<sup>93</sup> That targums and the matter of translations and specifically translations containing interpretations in general were a vexing issue for the rabbis can be found in the Talmud in two places: Meg. 3: 41 and Kid 49a comment on the problems encountered with the translation of scripture in the form of interpretative renditions:

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<sup>91</sup> Besides including 'mot' Targums, it is also descriptive of Neofiti and Targum Esther Sheni.

<sup>92</sup> The Inventory notes state that the governing voice applies to the Pentateuchal Targum 'most of the time' and as well as Targum Genesis Onqelos (Alexander 2011: 227).

<sup>93</sup> BibQoh acceptance into the canon as Jewish (rabbinical) scripture had a somewhat controversial path possibly due to the controversial nature of its message and its overt lack of divine inspiration.

Rabbi Yehuda says: One who translates a verse literally is a liar, since he distorts the meaning of the text, and conversely, one who adds his own translation is tantamount to one who curses and blasphemes God. Rather, to which translation is Rabbi Yehuda referring? He is referring to our accepted translation (BT Kid. 49a).

## Chapter 5

### Biblical Qohelet on Death and Afterlife

This chapter addresses two different contexts concerning death and post-mortem states: those ranging from descriptions from early biblical times to those of the rabbinical normative doctrines on Jewish eschatological themes. BibQoh is a narrative of Qohelet's "spiritual odyssey" in which he seeks answers to some of the perplexing existential philosophical issues of his day. It is unlikely this targum was used to explain the Hebrew version to an audience who was not familiar with rabbinic concepts and deep knowledge of exegetical literature. Whatever its use, TgQoh required an astute knowledge of the true meanings of the targum.

#### 5.1. Death and afterlife in the Hebrew Bible

Since the beginning of time human beings have struggled to understand the paradox that within life itself exists death. Goethe wrote that "*It is quite impossible for a thinking being to imagine nonbeing, a cessation of thought and life*" (attributed to Goethe). The human intellect struggles to cope with the idea of the state of non-existence, the end of being and the end of all the things that define each human being's existence.<sup>94</sup> This

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<sup>94</sup> These are naturally profoundly philosophical matters that some of the greatest minds in philosophy and religion have pondered on. A more modern example is provided by Steven Cave, who in his book, *Immortality: The Quest to Live Forever and How It Drives Civilization* (2012), explores the ancient quest for human immortality since the beginnings of recorded literature. Montaigne regarded death as necessary for understanding life itself (Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays* (2017), available as an eBook: Neeland Media). Freud too, devoted a large part of his psychoanalytic theories to how man rationalizes his attitudes towards the expectation of death, "The school of psychoanalysis could thus assert that at bottom no one believes in his own death, which amounts to saying: in the unconscious, every one of us is convinced of his immortality" (Freud 1918: 2: 2)

paradox is also relevant in that human beings have a psychological desire and a need to believe that they are immortal.

The irrationality of life and the fact that it carries within it the seeds of 'non-being' are what perplexed Qohelet in his philosophical musings about the human (and non-human) condition. Qohelet sought answers to this existential problem, but found none that would make sense of human existence and as a result he came to the conclusion that life (being) was all there was to hope for (1: 5-7, 1: 11; 3: 2, 18-21).

Death in the HB is characterised by its different periods of development and features a large number of disparate historical events, conditions and narratives. Modern scholarship has not been able to definitively agree on the most effective approach on how best to render and explain the great diversity of representations of death as a phenomenon in the HB (Lategan 2009: 10; Richardson 1992: 108, 110). Whereas the Descriptions of death and burials are found in HB but these are not depicted systematically or as a comprehensive statement of the cultural or religious views of the Israelites. This created the impression that the ancient Israelite religion was 'primitive' when compared to the surrounding cultures of the neighbouring regions. The vast amounts of textual material on death and the afterlife "reveal remnants of an aboriginal Israelite death or ancestor cults in the biblical texts" (Friedman and Overton 2000: 36). Despite the faint whisper (Friedman and Overton *supra*) of a religious and sociological approach to the phenomenon of death, a combination of the biblical texts, together with archaeological evidence, reveals that there was a belief in the afterlife

(*ibid.*).<sup>95</sup> The HB has no comprehensive descriptions and narratives on death and an afterlife, and this has resulted in little consensus but a great deal of diversity of opinions amongst scholars. There are only a few indirect references to a post-mortem experience concerning the deceased: “It is possible to give only a disjointed statement of religious beliefs and expectations with large lacunae and unintelligible changes, and lacking that coherence and orderly development without which the mind cannot be satisfied” (Charles 1963: 2).

Except for scattered references such as in Isa 25: 8, in which we find a hint of eschatological hope for the dead, “he will destroy death forever” and then in 26: 19, “Oh, let your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake and shout for joy, you who dwell in the dust!”<sup>96</sup>

The HB abounds with stories of death, dying and customs concerning mourning and burial traditions. The overall focus in the biblical texts from the region of the Mediterranean West Asian cultures is on the physical remains of the deceased and a ‘going down’ to a place under the ground called Sheol, where the dead shall remain forever, cut off from the living (Schmidt 2000: 87). When somebody dies, God who gave the breath of life, takes it back at the moment of death. For the ancient Hebrews

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<sup>95</sup> Friedman and Overton (2000) describe some examples of modern scholarship that have disagreed on the concept that the Bible is largely silent on the topics of death and the afterlife, like Gillman (2000), who categorically asserted that – except for three passages – there is no evidence in the Bible of an afterlife. Spronk (1986: 281) also claimed that, “in comparison to Canaanite religion, *Yahwism* is remarkably silent with regard to the afterlife.” With reference to later Jewish literature, Goldingay (1999: 61), writing on “Death and Afterlife in the Psalms,” asserts that the Psalms do not reveal a “worthwhile afterlife as the focus of the Psalms and other wisdom books, focused on living life to its fullest”.

<sup>96</sup> For similar early biblical references to a concept of eschatology, see 1Sam: 2: 6; PS. 22: 19; Ezek. 37: 1-14; Dan. 12: 2; Hos. 13: 14.

death entailed 'sleeping with their fathers: "And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin" (Gen. 25: 8); but we read that Jacob was inconsolable when told that Joseph had been devoured by animals: "... No, I will go down mourning to my son in Sheol" (Gen. 37: 35). In the book of Job, one finds a man who struggled to come to terms with the fact of his death: "Or why was I not like a buried still birth, like babies who never saw the light? (Job 3: 16).

A similar sentiment also expressed by Qohelet in 4: 2-3.

Then I accounted those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living; and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun (BibQoh 4: 2-3).

I ... say: the stillbirth, though it was not even accorded a burial, is more fortunate than he (BibQoh 6: 3).

Israel was culturally and historically connected to its regional neighbours and absorbed many of their social and cultural practices and traditions. Some of the main influences on early Israelite traditions concerning the dead arose from Mesopotamian folklore and religion (Hallote 2001: 102-122). For example, both cultures shared a horror of death and they shared some similar burial practices, as revealed through archaeological records. In terms of written records, the Epic of Gilgamesh, for instance, has many similarities to the story of the Garden of Eden in that both describe

a forbidden fruit and a snake.<sup>97</sup> This tale most likely contributing to the Israelite belief in Sheol as the abode of the dead, which is a dark place from which the deceased will never return. There is evidence that the Gilgamesh epic was known in Palestine by the late Bronze Age from fragments discovered in the region of Megiddo (Goren et al. 2009: 763-773)<sup>98</sup> and BibQoh 9: 7-9 is a virtual paraphrase of the words of Shiduri from the Gilgamesh Epic (10.3.6-14) concerning the purpose of life (Day 2013 35-37).<sup>99</sup> Burkes states that, in dealing with death and post-death traditions, early Israel incorporated these and other traditional practices from the surrounding societies and cultures into the biblical narratives of the HB (Burkes 1999: 10).<sup>100</sup> Rachel Hallote (2001) describes the varied burial and cultic practices by which the dead continued to play an active role in the memories of their families they left behind.<sup>101</sup> Charles (1963: 20-21) also claimed that the Israelites followed the customs and traditions regarding death and burial practices they had in common with the various traditions of the wider Semitic world in which they lived.

Although belief in an afterlife was an active constituent of Mesopotamian and Egyptian religious systems,<sup>102</sup> there are almost no direct traces of this to be found in the HB in the historical narrative of early Israel (Friedman and Overton 2000: 35). Despite the physical nature of the elaborate burial cults and funerary rituals, there appears to be

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<sup>97</sup> The netherworld in Gilgamesh is described as 'dismal' and 'dark', as a 'land of no return,' and the 'house which none leaves who enters,' 'with dust on its door and bolt' (Dalley S. 1998: 155).

<sup>98</sup> Barton proposed that the verses 9: 7-9 in BibQoh could possibly have been a translation of Siduri's instructions to Gilgamesh (Barton 1908: 39).

<sup>99</sup> John Day (1995: 59-60) identified six parallels in identical order between Qohelet 9: 7 -9 and Shiduri. S.H. Hooke also described the numerous similarities in burial traditions across Semitic cultures (1965: 236).

<sup>100</sup> This is seen too in the similarity of the archaeological remains of graves and tombs and burial artefacts.

<sup>101</sup> For detailed treatments of burial cults and practices in Ancient Israel and the wider Near East, see Bloch-Smith (1992: 213-224).

<sup>102</sup> For a detailed account of Egyptian death and afterlife beliefs, see Burkes (1999).

no signs of this influencing any type of familial afterlife reunions beyond the grave (Hallote 2001: 43). Israelites followed the customs and traditions regarding death and burial practices – such as communing with deceased family members – found in various traditions in the wider Semitic world in which they lived (Charles 1963: 20-21).

Death is first introduced in the HB in Genesis 3: 19<sup>103</sup> following the story of the creation; this description of death and its effects becomes the leitmotif for the later understanding of the consequences of death.

*By the sweat of your brow  
Shall you get bread to eat,  
Until you return to the ground –  
For from it you were taken,  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return  
(Gen. 3:19)*

The biblical record is unambiguously consistent that all human beings die and that death is the end and final state (Gilman 2000: 60). The Bible treats death as a commonplace biological outcome in unemotional terms and does not inveigh against its consequences. In fact, the Bible describes the deaths of the patriarchs, matriarchs and leading protagonists in rather laconic terms, for example:

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<sup>103</sup> BibQoh 12: 7, by Qohelet in similar words to Gen. 3: 19.

*This was the total span of Abraham's life: he lived a hundred and seventy-five years.<sup>8</sup> And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin (Gen. 25: 7-9).*

Enoch, the father of Methuselah, lived for 365 years,<sup>104</sup> according to Genesis 5: 18-24: "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more for God took him."<sup>105</sup>

So, Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, at the command of the Lord.<sup>6</sup> He buried him in the valley in the land of, near Bet-peor; and no one knows his burial place to this day (Deut. 34: 5-7).

In one of the earliest references to resurrection, Elijah was said to have ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot, "*As they kept on walking and talking, a fiery chariot with fiery horses suddenly appeared and separated one from the other; and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind*" (II Kgs. 2: 11).<sup>106</sup>

The dearth of textual information compared to the overall size of the HB canon and the limited archaeological evidence on ancient views and practices on death and afterlife have been described as "the biblical silence" (Friedman and Overton 2000:

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<sup>104</sup> Enoch died at a relatively 'young' age when compared to other individuals in Genesis: Jared 962 years, Methuselah 969, Lamech 777. The targum, it should be noted, tried to downplay this passage in order to avoid the contradictions inherent in Enoch's relationship with God and the implication that he may have been sent to heaven while still alive, which would not have been aligned with later rabbinic doctrines on the afterlife (Grossfeld 1998: 51ff).

<sup>105</sup> The biblical expressions 'with God' and 'walking with God', 'walking after God' and 'walking before God' are most likely used idiomatically to describe forms of worship and paraphrased in the Targum Onqelos according to the Talmud – b. Sota 14a (Grossfeld 1988: 51). Targum Onqelos adds the word 'reverence', for example, "and Enoch walked in reverence of the Lord."

<sup>106</sup> Similar biblical verses early references alluding to resurrection involving chariots and fire are Gen. 5: 24; 2 Kgs. 2: 1, 6: 17; Ps. 104: 4.

35). Gillman noted that this was possibly due to the view that death was final and there were no compelling reasons for biblical writers to engage with matters of life beyond that (Gillman 2000: 23). Sacchi argued that prior to the Babylonian exile, death did not present itself as a particular issue for the Israelites, at least according to the written record, prior to the Babylonian exile (Sacchi 2000: 426). Some of these statements could be somewhat misleading as the Bible consists of the records of the lives and stories of human existence over centuries. The contextual nature and means of transmission precludes any systematic categorisation of the information into neat classifications, but death as a phenomenon and its anthropological significance were recorded in many different ways. The HB mentions numerous instances of burials in tombs, graves and other forms of interment, communing with the dead, relationships with next of kin, instances of grief, death in battle, at a young or old age, and of grief. Studies of archaeological burial practices, tomb structures, amulets and burial accessories reveal a variety of ancestor veneration practices and suggest that, although the HB has been characterised as “silent” on matters of thanatology in the ancient Near East, the truth may have been very different in reality.<sup>107</sup> Elizabeth Bloch-Smith commented on iron-age Judahite thanatology as essentially a cult of the dead and the “culture of the dead were an integral part of the social organisation” (1992: 132). It is difficult to determine exactly how and when, but it became ‘inevitable’ that the ‘authorities in Judah sought to undermine the influences of neighbouring practices concerning the dead and different forms of burials and cultic practices (Davies 1999:

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<sup>107</sup> Amongst the scholars who have produced comprehensive works on the topic of Early Israelite responses to death and post-mortem experiences are: Lloyd Bailey (1979), Joseph Blenkinsopp (1995), H. Brichto (1973), B. Lang (1973) T. J. Lewis (1989), K. Spronk (1986) and N. J. Tromp (1969) as well as a plethora of other scholars. This area of biblical studies is exceptionally full and the list of sources would take up a great deal of space in this study. On the topic of Israelite archaeology and physical artefacts, most notable is the work of Elizabeth Bloch-Smith (1992) and Eric Meyers (2010). Most recent complete and useful studies can be found in the various contributions to the *Study Death and the Afterlife*, edited by J. Neusner and A. J. Avery-Peck (2000).

63-4). Both Nicholas Tromp (1969) and Alexander Heidel (1975) discuss the extent of Israelite and other Near Eastern thanatologies influences on each other (Davies: 1999: 63).

Canaanites and Israelites lived amongst each other in their earlier past and this could possibly account for certain similarities in their traditions related to attitudes to death. In Canaan, the god of their underworld was called *Mot*, which is also the Hebrew for dead, “*Met*” (מֹת). The past tense of this word is “*Mot*” and another variant is “*Mavet*”, which is also read as “*Mot*” (Hallote 2001:113). The etymological origins of the word *sheol* are unclear. One possibility is that it derives from the Hebrew root *sha'al*, ‘to ask’, as where one asks of the dead (Gillman 1997:52).<sup>108</sup> Another linguistic similarity suggested by Hallote extends to the Syrian goddess of death, *Shu’wala*. This word is cognate with Sheol, which is in fact a feminine noun in Hebrew (*ibid.*). Hallote further suggests that *Shu’wala* and *Mot* may have been active as gods during the early biblical period, and provides examples from the HB to support this possibility in Isa. 28:15 and Isa. 28:17-19.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Another suggestion by Gillman is very speculative; this is the Hebrew word *sha’ol*, ‘a hollow hand’, signifying a grave under the ground (1997: 52).

<sup>109</sup> “We have made a covenant with Death (*Mot*) and with Sheol we have made an agreement” (Isa. 28:15); “...Then your covenant with Death (*Mot*) will be annulled and your agreement with Sheol will not stand” (28:17-19). These terms may have been used metaphorically and the argument for these passages signifying an older tradition is not convincing. Also, the Semitic world shared many similar words and linguistic features. *Mot* is of Ugaritic derivation and so indicates that use across cultures is not unusual and may further be evidence of the sharing of cultures over relatively large geographical areas. Johnston disagrees, however, that the term Sheol derived from the name of a deity (2002: 85).

## 5.2. Sheol

Essentially *Sheol* came to mean ‘the underworld’ presumably based on burial traditions in which the deceased were entombed underground in graves or, for those who could afford a more elaborate place of rest, in tombs,<sup>110</sup> or sometimes caves.

*Sheol* is a place of darkness to which all the dead go (Johnston 2002: 80-82). It was an amoral abode that included both the righteous and sinners with no reference to their actions and conduct while alive. Sheol was a place of total darkness and stillness. Once in Sheol, they were totally cut off from the living and from the life they knew. Once a person had departed for *Sheol*, they ceased having a relationship with God.<sup>111</sup> Synonyms for *Sheol* are *bōr*, (pit), *be’ēr* (also pit), *šahaṭ* (pit and usually used as a place for the wicked); another term that signified the underworld was *Ābaddōn*.

## 5.3. Early notions of an eschatology

The factors that eventually culminated in a Jewish eschatology had its earliest roots in events from ideas developed in stages from about the twelfth century onwards as new teachings emerged after the establishment of a monotheistic theology and the emergence of a national identity following the revelation at Mount Sinai. This was based on the belief in one God, who had committed himself to redeem His chosen people. The development of Israel’s religion was based on the notion of an “intense awareness” of a relationship between The Lord (YAHVEH) and the people whom he

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<sup>110</sup> For example, in Gen. 23 there is mention of Abraham being interred in a tomb.

<sup>111</sup> A comprehensive and detailed study on Sheol can be found in P. S. Johnston’s book *Shades of Sheol* (2002).

had chosen and to whom they had in turn committed themselves, that is Israel, to serving (Bright 1980: 144).

This idea of a collective community became an extension of existing belief, which united all whether living or dead. Instead of death as a limited tribal, family or individual experience in Sheol, it was eventually regarded as a 'communal ancestral realm' of the dead that collectively became known as Sheol (Charles 1963: 33; Gillman 1997: 52; Pederson 1949: 461-62).

The socio-political changes that came with the fall of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century B.C.E. and then the conquest by Babylonia and subsequent exile some two hundred years later of the southern Kingdom of Judah, resulted in an altered view of the post-mortem world. The function of Sheol changed from being a place of annihilation to one of post-mortem retribution and punishment for the enemies of Israel and God (Charles 1963: 53). Gillman has noted that this was the first indication of "a teaching in which there is an association of Sheol, death and retribution" (1997: 61).<sup>112</sup>

The notion of individual retribution is the next stage in Jewish teachings on the afterlife. For the first time in the biblical record, individuals are given moral freedom to influence their ultimate destiny and this places them in a direct relationship with God (Gillman 1997: 62). The development of the notion of individual responsibility and freedom of choice introduced the doctrine of sin and punishment, and righteousness leading to rewards, as amongst the central pillars of rabbinic Judaism. At this stage of the

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<sup>112</sup> Specifically, in Isaiah where those who have risen up against Israel are threatened with condemnation to Sheol: "Instead, you are brought down to Sheol, to the bottom of the Pit" (14: 15); see also 14: 9; Ez. 32: 18.

development, 'rewards' as such, are still based on avoiding descent into the pit, or Sheol, to which mankind had been condemned to spend eternity. "For an intelligent man the path of life leads upward, in order to avoid Sheol below" (Prov. 15: 24).

Theological thought developed further amongst Jewish communities who came into contact with Hellenistic influences and led to experimentation with and borrowing from Greek and Iranian<sup>113</sup> concepts of the hereafter, some of which slowly gained traction in Jewish theology (Bright 1980: 446; Moore 1927: 311; Charles 1963:142-56; Johnston 2002: 230-37; Gillman 1997: 75 -6; 96).

Rabbinic teachings on life after death have their roots in the collective eschatology of the biblical period Raphael (1996: 66-7); Charles (1963: 86-104). In the late biblical period, there is a final synthesis of the various religious and philosophical strands that sees the emergence of a complex system of interlinked conceptions including the last judgement, mythic-historical end-of-days and an elaborate doctrine of resurrection. This was inclusive of the individual, the world and the entire cosmic order. There is only a single reference to it in this form in Dan. 12: 2:<sup>114</sup> "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence."<sup>115</sup> Raphael concludes that, "after centuries of concurrent but separate development, collective and individual eschatology – notions about the nation and the individual – finally emerged into one elaborate system" (Raphael 1996: 68).

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<sup>113</sup> On Persian influences, see W. Eichrodt (1966: 130-35) and Martin-Achard (1960: 77).

<sup>114</sup> This verse from Dan.12: 2 is the very first declaration of an afterlife in all of the books of the HB.

<sup>115</sup> See also 2Macc. 7:14, 23; 12:43; 14:46.

The shadow of the OT heritage looms large over Israel's experience as a nation and its adoption of rabbinic theology and its doctrine as the accepted norms. Unlike the narrative of BibQoh with its universalistic wisdom propositions, TgQoh is a reflection of Israel's past experiences and its personages. Its experiences as revealed in the rabbinical nature of TgQoh are related to God's judgment, mercy, destruction, restoration, exile and return (Johnston 2002: 238). Although national resurrection was part of that experience, once Israel had lost its national independence, the post-exilic focus developed into a belief in an individual resurrection – and this would be the ultimate victory over the sheol (Johnston 2002: 239).

#### **5.4 Qohelet and Death**

For Qohelet death was a threat to the meaning of life and the order and purpose of man in his world. This was at the heart of his attempted empirical observations. As a genre, wisdom sought to find and explain a meaningful order in the world (Collins 1978: 177). Death on its own challenged the ordered reality of the wisdom tradition. "So, I reflected: 'The fate of the fool is also destined for me; to what advantage, then, have I been wise?' And I came to the conclusion that that too was futile, because the wise man, just like the fool, is not remembered forever; for as the succeeding days roll by, both are forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies just like the fool!" (BibQoh 2: 15-16).

The subjects of death, afterlife and immortality are inextricably connected to existentialist issues and the way that man deals with his destiny. These were issues common to wisdom literature in general, especially Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Sirach as well as Qohelet. This is not to say that the books of the genre are structurally or

thematically similar, “but there is an impressionistic, intuitive grouping of books that seem to have something in common” (Collins 1997: 1).

The HB wisdom tradition concerned itself with the realities and conditions of life confronted by humankind and the challenges of human existence. The collected works of the wisdom tradition therefore concerned themselves with the innate universal concerns of humankind, with death being one of them (Lategan 2009: 2).<sup>116</sup>

Despite this, the individual wisdom books lack a systematic approach to explaining death or post-mortem conditions, but offer a wide variety and range of responses to these topics (Lategan 2009: 14; Collins 1978: 177-192; Murphy 1992: 103 -105). At the opposite biological extreme is life, the state of being alive, and while the importance of life, may be obvious, for the purposes of this study it is critical for understanding its later significance in TgQoh, which sought to create a totally different theology compared to those in the wisdom texts. In the wisdom genre, the primary focus was on life and the earthly pursuits and conditions which mankind experienced and endured.

BibQoh addresses the cosmic order of the world and the destiny of all living beings in it, human and non-human. The book is on the whole dispassionate about the fate of humans (and animals) and accepts the inevitable futility of life as nothing other than

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<sup>116</sup> Two primary works on the conceptual and biblical nature of death and its theological meanings are the works of N.J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Netherworld in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969) and J. Bowker, *The Meanings of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). A later collection of contributions edited by J. Peck and Jacob Neusner (Eds.) in the Brill series on *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (2000) has been a most important guide for this dissertation.

the natural order of existence (3: 16 – 22). Qohelet's reaction echoed the resigned acceptance of the finality of death (Murphy 1992:107; Collins 1997: 14). Yet Qohelet displays great despair and anger about mankind's pessimistic fate: "That is the sad thing about all that goes on under the sun: that the same fate is in store for all. Not only that, but men's hearts are full of sadness, and their minds of madness, while they live; and then to- the dead!" (BibQoh 9: 3). Qohelet was not preoccupied with the afterlife, as with the other wisdom books in which life after death was described as a gloomy, shadowy form of existence in Sheol (BibQoh 9: 10). Qohelet compiled his work during the Hellenistic period, when apocalyptic works had started to circulate (Crenshaw 1978: 205-16; Crenshaw 1995: 49-50; Collins 1997: 14-15; Gordis 1968: 63-8, 307; Schoors 2013: 4- 5).

Shannon Burkes claims that Qohelet's views about death are unique in the Bible as nowhere else is death so persistently questioned and presented as in Qohelet (Burkes 1999: 58).<sup>117</sup> "Qohelet does choose an imagery of a vast catastrophe to evoke a vision of death, that most ordinary of tragedies; and the angst he thereby reveals is not restricted to this poem (12: 3 -8). Throughout the book, Qohelet reveals an obsession with death unparalleled in biblical literature" (Fox 1989: 294).<sup>118</sup>

Ogden commented, "One of the major themes which weave its way through Qoheleth's thoughts about life is that of death. It intrudes into life in an inexorable way, but it comes at its own time, and often before God's justice is seen to be exercised in

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<sup>117</sup> "Qohelet reveals an obsession with death unparalleled in biblical literature" (Fox 1989: 294) and quoted in Burkes (1999: 58, fn. 98).

<sup>118</sup> Fox refers here specifically to the poem in vs. 12: 3- 8. However, the references to death in other sections of the book are also laden with imagery and metaphorical statements concerning dying and death, although none as dramatic as the final poem in the concluding chapter of the book.

situations where the person of faith would expect to witness it. Therefore, Qoheleth wonders whether there is any *yitrôn* at all, when it is demonstrably true that so often in this present life there appears to be *yitrôn*" (Ogden 2007:18). "In Qoheleth we find a completely distinctive radical consideration of death" (Zimmerli 1976: 129). For Crenshaw, when Qohelet addresses the topic of death, his approach is both neutral and at other times bitter. This creates a measure of 'darkness' and 'gloom' over the narrative and "death possesses a full measure of existential angst" (Crenshaw 1995: 573-785).

But he goes beyond the tradition in his belief that physical death is the end of every other conceivable means of continuation as well. The symbolic immortalities offered elsewhere in the Bible, the memory and endurance of a good name, survival through one's children and other people, even the qualitative good life that negates the "death" of folly and unrighteousness – these all fail utterly in Qohelet's opinion. He emphasises that memory is discontinuous from one generation to the next," as in 1:11, 2:16 and 9:5 (Burkes 1997: 74-75). Burkes states that in 2:18-19 and 6:1-2 Qohelet negates the traditions on inheritances; the folly of planning one's life and making planned choices (Burkes 1997: 75)

As man cannot even know his time. As fishes are enmeshed in a fatal net, and as birds are trapped in a snare, so men are caught at the time of calamity, when it comes upon them without warning (BibQoh 9:12).

Burkes comments extensively on this:

The argument is not that the rest of the biblical texts have no grievances and make no protests, only that death had not figured among these. With Qoheleth, however, death makes its entrance into the Hebrew traditions as a phenomenon to be reckoned with. The difference does not lie in his view of what death is; he agrees with his predecessors that physical death is the end of individual consciousness. But he goes beyond the tradition in his belief that physical death is the end of every other conceivable means of continuation as well. The symbolic mortalities offered elsewhere in the Bible, the memory and endurance of a good name, survival through one's children and people, even the qualitative good life that negates the "death" of folly and unrighteousness, fail utterly in Qoheleth's opinion (Burkes 1999: 75)

Qohelet was resigned about the pre-ordained, inevitable fate of *all* living beings and the fleeting nature of their existence (BibQoh 3:18; 9:2,12). This is evident from the first chapter on the inevitability of all things: "...there is nothing new under the sun" (1:4 -9) and "all is *hebel*..." (1:14). Brevity or the fleeting nature of life is a theme repeatedly raised as in 2:3, where Qohelet confirms that life is short: "...their few days of life under heaven;" "a time for being born and a time to die" (3:2); "...the few days of his fleeting life..." (6:12).

This is the approach found in most wisdom literature as in Proverbs, and Job and also in Ben Sira (Gordis 1963: 22-38). The afterlife in wisdom literature, according to Murphy, referred to "what is beyond death," or "afterdeath" and the response to that is "non-life" (Murphy 1992: 101). As noted by Murphy (*ibid.*), God provides the breath of

life (Gen. 2: 7; BibQoh 12: 7) and it is then taken back by God, after which the corpse is left to be reduced to dust in its grave (Gen. 3: 19).

Qohelet established death as a relevant theme to be investigated and questioned throughout the text. It is no surprise therefore that direct and overt references to death can be found in all chapters.<sup>119</sup> “The centrality of death as a theological theme in Qohelet might seem exaggerated if the frequency of terms related to death is considered, since it does not point to an obsession with death” (Lategan 2009: 177).

Qohelet furthermore compares death to the social and political conditions of the living with words of great despair

Then I accounted for those who died long since more fortunate than those who are still living, and happier than either are those who have not yet come into being and have never witnessed the miseries that go on under the sun.<sup>120</sup>

It does not seem that this statement is a critique of life itself, but rather of the conditions pertaining ‘under the sun’ (Seow 1997: 186-7). A person who has never been born will not experience the evil, the injustice and the oppressive conditions on earth, as is borne out by Qohelet’s earlier comment in 2: 17: “And so I loathed life. For I was distressed by all that goes on under the sun, because all is futile and pursuit of the

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<sup>119</sup> The relevant chapters are identified by Burkes (1997: 59) as 2:14-16; 3:2, 19-21; 4:2-3; 5:14-15; 6:3; 7:1-2, 4, 17, 26; 8:8; 9:2-12 and 11: 8. Chapter 1 does not refer to death directly but its poetic reading implies the impermanence and transitory cycles of the natural world – generations come and go. Overall, the references and situations concerning death result in a sad futility and inevitability to the limitations of life; BibQoh 1: 3-9 is “the parade example of Qoheleth’s basic thesis – the futility of all human endeavour” (Grossberg 2000: 48).

<sup>120</sup> Also, Job 3: 1, “Perish the day on which I was born ...” and Job 3: 13 -16.

wind". A unique view is that of Schoors, who understands this passage as an indication of Qohelet's compassion for the oppressed and the lack of a solution to their suffering (Schoors 2013; 318). Seow calls the verses a 'hyperbole' that are not meant to be taken literally, but as a comment on the "pervasiveness of oppression" (Seow: 1997:186). According to Barton, supporting Schoors, this is "evidence of his profound sympathies with the lower classes" (1908: 114). Similar verses on this theme are 6: 3-5 on a stillbirth that is more fortunate than a man of wealth, and 7: 1, "A good name is better than a fragrant oil, and the day of death than the day of birth".

The targum presents a more nuanced response in its interpretation of this verse:

And I praised the dead who have long since died, and do not see the punishment which comes into the world after their death, more than the living in this world in so much misery, till now (TgQoh 4: 2).

And better than both of them is he who has not yet lived, and has not been created, who does not see the bad doings which are done in this world under the sun (TgQoh 4: 3).<sup>121</sup>

Qohelet contemplates the fate of an unhappy and penniless person, and muses, "He must depart just as he came. As he came out of his mother's womb, so he must depart

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<sup>121</sup> In 6: 3-5, Qohelet also similarly expresses the futility of life in which he exclaims a stillborn is more fortunate than one who had lived a long life. Even in the Talmud in Eruvin 13b, we find questions on the creation in statements such as "It would have been preferable had (mankind) not been created than to have been created."

at last, naked as he came. He can take nothing of his wealth with him” (BibQoh 5: 14).<sup>122</sup> “So, what is the good of his toiling for the wind?” (BibQoh 5: 15).

Gordis in a section titled “There is no Justice” summarises this verse, “The spectacle of wickedness in the seats of justice and the fruitless tears of the oppressed fill Koheleth’s heart with despair. Nor can he find consolation in the shadowy doctrine in another world, which he dismisses with a shrug of his shoulders. Only the pursuit of personal happiness is a sensible goal for him” (Gordis 1963: 158-9). Therefore, the only reasonable action is to enjoy the benefits of earthly life.

Burkes notes the contradiction that Qohelet never wishes for death yet considers the death as ‘fortunate’ – “Then I accounted those who had died more fortunate than those who are still living” (BibQoh 4: 2); Qohelet also regards the unborn and the stillborn (4: 3) as better off than the living (BibQoh 6: 3-5) (Burkes 1999: 70; Fox 1999: 218-29; Fox 1989: 219-21).

Qohelet returns to the concept of the sheer futility of life itself and laments that death is the ultimate leveller whereby distinctions of wealth, virtue or superior intelligence mean nothing in the inevitable truth that all humans face the same end: naked and helpless in death; the frustration is that anything a human being achieves is meaningless and therein lies the ultimate *hebel* (Burkes 1997: 166; Fox 1999: 215-16). Schoors brings a more balanced perspective to the argument that may possibly

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<sup>122</sup> This is a familiar theme in wisdom genre, as in Job 1: 21: “He said, ‘Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord has given, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’.” And again, Job poses the question, “Or why was I not like a buried still birth, like babies who never saw the light?” (3: 16).

be closer to Qohelet's understanding of this conundrum: "In opposition to traditional Israelite wisdom and to the Deuteronomistic ideology, where wealth is a reward for piety (e.g. PS. 128: 1-4; Job 42: 10-17; Deut. 28: 1-13), Qohelet exposes its unreliability and the concerns it carries: it creates a restless desire to acquire more ... it brings worries, it can be lost again, and finally at his death, the possessor 'will carry away nothing of his toil that he might take in his possession'" (Schoors 2013: 418).

However, it may also be that Qohelet was displaying his frustration at the phenomenon of death balanced against man's toil, in particular when striving to accumulate material goods. Evil things, or misfortunes, happen and one is left with nothing, in which case the metaphorical sense of being born naked into the world and dying (naked) when departing it, may have been Qohelet's way of expressing that everything that happens between birth and death is essentially meaningless. Qohelet's subsequent advice may be his solution, namely that death can be compensated for or 'beaten' in this world, "... that one should eat and drink and get pleasure with all the gains he makes under the sun, during the numbered days of life that God has given him, for that is his portion" (BibQoh: 5: 17).<sup>123</sup>

A great deal of BibQoh is focused on the existentialist thoughts concerning the mortal state of man. However, the random and inconsistent structure of the book makes it difficult to establish a coherent pattern. The main obstacle is that Qohelet has used the concept of *hebel* as the arbiter that determines his overall approach for explaining

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<sup>123</sup> Also, Ogden's argument which returns to his proposition on the central role of *yitrôn*. Ogden argues that Qohelet was probably seeking *yitrôn* in both a material and non-material sense from the positive enjoyment that comes from a God-given life (Ogden 2007: 91).

man's conditions in the world. Qohelet is careful never to undermine the concept of *hebel* to the point at which this theme is compromised.<sup>124</sup>

Qohelet appears to struggle with the idea that in reality life is meaningless (futile) by the frequency of statements that all point to states in which different stages of life and human endeavours are simply just pointless (*hebel*). Longman's interpretation supports this view that for Qohelet, the promise of life is nullified by the inevitability of death that renders all man's activities meaningless and the same can be said for Qohelet's approach to wisdom, that this too would ultimately be rendered as *hebel* (Longman 1997: 34).

Qohelet asserted that some people lived longer than others regardless of their ethical and moral conduct (the righteous), but in general there was no especial advantage in choosing to consciously live according to a particular moral code. This ambivalence is expressed in 7: 15 -18: Don't overdo wickedness and don't be a fool, or you may die before your time. It is best you grasp the one without letting go of the other, for one who fears God will do his duty by both (7: 18).

There has been much comment on this specific verse as it could be understood as advocating wicked acts and the warning that it could shorten one's lifespan (Ogden 2007: 124; Seow 1997: 353-4; Fox 1999: 216-2). In my view, Qohelet, ever the realist, was most likely expressing caution that a person should be aware of one's actions and behaviour and knowingly follow a moderate path. Qohelet has repeatedly described a

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<sup>124</sup> Whybray addressed the problem of *hebel* and how this concept was to be reconciled between the pessimism and optimism expressed and balanced against the contradictions these implied (Whybray 1989: 64-5). For a detailed exposition on *hebel*, see D. B. Miller (2002).

world filled with evil and oppression and here is saying that one should cautiously navigate a way through life, lest one should meet an untimely end. This is possible when read together with his warning not to use wisdom to attract unwanted attention: “So don’t overdo goodness, and don’t act the wise man to excess ...” (BibQoh 7: 16) and then the same advice is given, “*Don’t overdo wickedness and don’t be a fool ...*” (BibQoh 7: 17). He could be recommending therefore to choose a middle way and not overreach either way. The various contexts that this may have applied to in Qohelet’s time has been covered in detail, most notably by Gordis (1963) and Seow (1997).<sup>125</sup>

The targum, taking human nature into account, and within the confines of its traditional role of explaining the inner meaning of each verse, reinterpreted the elements it regarded as unacceptable according to rabbinic theology and thereby restored the pre-eminence of righteous living as an antidote to the despair evoked by Qohelet’s words:

Why should you destroy your life? Do not follow your thought to sin much, and do not veer from the teaching of the law of God to become a fool. Why should you cause death to your soul, and the years of your life to be shortened, to die, before your time comes to die? (TgQoh 7: 17).

In terms of Qohelet’s conclusions, the quality of life a person leads and the labour one engages in will have no influence on the inevitable extinction of life. Qohelet’s extreme

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<sup>125</sup> The argument put forward here is also discussed by Whybray (1989: 65), who calls it the golden mean in human behaviour – one should not be too evil or too good. I do not agree with this and similar arguments, as I do not think that Qohelet meant for people to do ‘a little good’ and when necessary a ‘little evil.’ It does not make sense that one could have too much wisdom or be too foolish. In my opinion, Qohelet is advocating choosing between two polar opposites.

pessimism is not countered by any concrete plan for coping with these circumstances other than the suggestion to devote oneself to the enjoyment of life. Qohelet has little positive input on the advantages of hard work and he remains largely negative on this point in chapter 4, which consists of a number of wide-ranging unconnected topics such as wealth, work, oppression, youth, companionship and others.<sup>126</sup> There is some hope to be found in the advice given in 4: 6, where he urges moderation (Enns 2011: 61),<sup>127</sup> presumably in opposition to greed and jealousy (4:4). The HB uses the term *naḥat*, ‘rest’, presumably in the sense of ‘do not overwork yourself but achieve a balance’. Fox interestingly suggests it refers to an “inner repose without a flurry of activity,” “an inner state, composure.” This is in contradiction to ‘labour’ or ‘*amal*, characterised as toil or arduous work (Fox 1989: 203). In opposition to Fox’s view on *naḥat*, my understanding is that it most likely refers back to vs. 4: 4, in which Qohelet warns that hard work, (“labour and skilful enterprise”) attracts envy and greed amongst people, both of which result in futility or *hebel*. It appears that here Qohelet has taken a moral standpoint on the evils of labour that can be corrupted by the accumulation of excess and exploitation of others; *naḥat*, maybe refers to mankind finding a suitable ‘balance’ between work and peace of mind and the avoidance of excesses that could cause imbalances (the lack of *naḥat*,) in communities.

In chapter 4, Qohelet is shown to be unremittingly bleak with few hints of positivity and his focus is almost exclusively on the grievous elements he sees in the world around him (Enns 2011: 60-65; Schoors 2013: 318-19; Fox 1999: 97-99, 126-2). This is

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<sup>126</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the structure of chapter 4, see the suggestion by Ingram (2006: 195) Ingram’s comment is “This structure implies that the overall theme of ch. 4 is ‘what is better in light of what I have seen?’ “Also, Schoors (2013: 319).

<sup>127</sup> Qohelet returns to the theme of moderation and extremes in 7:15-18.

evident, for example, in Qohelet's views on the political, social and economic structures, where he castigates the rich in terms of social injustices, corruption and exploitation of the poor (BibQoh 5: 7-13). This could possibly have been the situation of the period between the second half of the 3rd century BCE, when Qohelet compiled the book, at a time when social and economic conditions for the ordinary people were under stress (Schoors 2013: 7-9 and Seow and 1997: 23-36).

## 5.5 Qohelet and the Afterlife

Qohelet shows little interest in what happens to humans after death, once the human remains have been disposed of, but he is wholly focused on the human condition of the living rather than their inevitable death. The ultimate assessment is clearly stated in BibQoh 9: 1-10 and 12: 7-8, and reinforced by the verdict that from birth to death it is all *hebel* (BibQoh 1: 2, 12: 8); after dying, the dead are forgotten (BibQoh1: 11; 2: 16): "For the living know they will die; they have no more recompense, for the dead not know nothing, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory of them is forgotten" (9:5). The dead are relegated to a place of darkness or oblivion, Sheol: despite the joys of life even if it were a two-thousand-year lifespan, it will end eventually in Sheol, "the same place" (6: 6): 9: 10). In BibQoh 12: 7-8 the statements that the dust returns to the ground and the life breath to God imply that there is no possibility of life continuing in any other form. After the mourning period has passed, memory and remembrance fades, or in another biblical sense, 'oblivion', "his eternal abode" (BibQoh12: 5).<sup>128</sup> For Qohelet, death and afterlife are one and the same,

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<sup>128</sup> See also Is. 26:14; Ps. 88:13: "Your wonders made known in the netherworld, Your beneficent deeds in the land of oblivion?"

without making a distinction or providing any noticeable benefit once life has ceased to exist, other than death as a release from a world of toil and its travails. Even though “a live dog is better than a dead lion” (9: 4), the finality of death overshadows the value of life (BibQoh 2: 17; 4: 1-3; 6: 3-4; 7: 1) (Lategan 2009:178-9).

Even if a man lives many years, let him enjoy himself in all of the remembering how many days of darkness are going to be. The only future is nothingness – (*hebel*) (BibQoh11: 8).

... For there is no action, no reasoning, no learning, no wisdom in Sheol, where you are going (BibQoh 9: 10).

And the dust returns to the ground as it was, and the life breath returns to God who bestowed it (BibQoh12: 7, also 3: 20).

Qohelet does not directly and explicitly elaborate on his views of the hereafter or explain its nature and form other than traditional descriptions of sheol. The apparent lack of fairness in the world and the banality of death was a worrisome aspect for Qohelet as he considered the realities of a world lacking justice and the absence of a positive role of the deity in the affairs of mankind. This caused him a great deal of anguish as neither traditional wisdom nor his own observations were able to provide solutions to the existentialist issues he raised (BibQoh 8: 11 – 14). This lack of justice or fairness in the world applies to the fool as much as to the wise (2: 14 – 16). However, his frustration reaches its apotheosis in 3: 17, where he stated that even though “God will doom both righteous and wicked” ... so I decided, as regards men, to dissociate

them from divine beings and to face the fact they are beasts ... the fate of man and the fate of beasts, as the one dies so does the other... of the other, and both have the same life breath ... both go to the same place ... both came from and both return to dust" (BibQoh 3: 17 – 20).<sup>129</sup>

Once man dies, he is forgotten and all his endeavours come to naught (BibQoh 9:1-3). Death can be unexpected and whatever happens, it is God's doing and must be accepted as final (BibQoh 7:13, 8:7). In terms of what Qohelet has observed from his investigations, there appears to be little in terms of a relationship with God to change mankind's inevitable destiny, despite all that he does and the arbitrary nature of God's effect on the world (BibQoh 2:24-26; 3:9-17; 4:17; 5:1, 3-4, 18-19; 6:2; 7:18, 29; 8:12-13; 9:7; 11:5; 12:13).

Qohelet consistently overturns any argument that there is a possibility of some form of continuation of human life after death, since all must die and since man is no different from animals, there is no discernible afterlife (Schoors 2013: 284; Seow 1997: 175-6; Fox 1989: 197). Any other solution, especially one promoting the notion of life after death, in whatever form, would have negated Qohelet's principal thesis of *hebel*.

<sup>130</sup> From a practical perspective, Qohelet engaged solely with matters that were in the

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<sup>129</sup> Qohelet's concerns aren't unique within the wisdom genre and biblical literature in general. Injustices were essentially observable realities and deeply concerned prophets and sages in Israel (see Crenshaw 1970: "Popular Questioning of God in Ancient Israel", in *ZAW* 82: 380 – 95). According to Fox, wisdom literature clearly advocated that the wicked will be punished and the righteous rewarded with good fortune (Fox 1999: 59). However, in reality justice and order was not always achieved due to the errant behaviours of humans, as noted by Fox, who quotes from Jeremiah: "Why are the wicked successful, and the treacherous at ease?" (Jer 12: 1). Also, Ps. 73: 2-5, which expresses the belief that the wicked too may prosper, and of course, Job struggled with the issue of injustice in the world.

<sup>130</sup> Barton (1908:108, 111), following the comments of others, notes that the "righteous and the wicked God will judge" to be the work of "the Chasid glossator". Their argument is based on the notion that God's judgement is "out of harmony with the overall context of this and preceding verses. The justification is that it refers to the time clauses in vss. 2-3.

realm of reasoned conclusions based on his own observations and experiences. Qohelet was preoccupied with the physical and not with any further understanding of what happened after the life spirit (breath) returned to its source. His uncertainty is mirrored in the question he subsequently posed and one to which he doesn't provide an answer: "Who knows if a man's life breath does rise upward and if a beast's breath sinks down into the earth?" (BibQoh 3:21).<sup>131</sup> Qohelet never questioned 'upward' or 'downward' as there was no framework of inquiry predating this to guide his investigation (Barton 1908: 109; Fox 1999: 215).<sup>132</sup>

"Qohelet shows no interest in an afterlife. At most he may be said to be sceptical towards it" (Fox 1999: 210). Concerning the topic of death, Qohelet appears to be in line with the traditional wisdom view that all humankind, without exception, and regardless of their conduct, pass on to a netherworld, or Sheol.<sup>133</sup> Ps. 49: 13 echoes a similar view: "Man does not abide in honor; he is like the beasts that perish"<sup>134</sup>. Lategan comments on 9: 10 that although Sheol is equated to nothingness and darkness, in 4: 2, it "is viewed as redemptive or liberating" (Lategan 2009: 179).

Most commentators are in agreement that for Qohelet death is final and there is no affirmation in BibQoh of a resurrection or any form of afterlife, although there appear to be some oblique hints in the book (BibQoh12: 7). Their understanding, however,

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<sup>131</sup> According to Fox (1989: 308, and cited in Burkes 1997: 57-8), this verse is in fact one of Qohelet's contradictory statements, but there is hardly evidence of an afterlife that can be read into this verse.

<sup>132</sup> On the breath of life, in general, Qohelet is in line with the biblical narratives, e.g. Ps. 104: 29-30

<sup>133</sup> The biblical tradition of Sheol as the final resting point for the deceased is also expressed in Ps. 49: 15 in combination with an animal metaphor, "Sheeplike they head for Sheol, with death as their shepherd. The upright shall rule over them at daybreak, and their form shall waste away in Sheol till its nobility be gone."

<sup>134</sup> Also Ps.49: 20: "Man does not understand honour; he is like the beasts that perish".

depends on subjective interpretations by the reader and cannot be construed as direct or even indirect evidence. But a small number of commentators who have dissenting views read more into the book, especially the crucial verses 3: 18 -21 and 12: 7. For a detailed commentary on the connection between the *rûah* as a God-given life force and its return to its source (Schoors 2013: 295-303).<sup>135</sup>

Ogden has a slightly more positive view that if Qoheleth did in fact allude to the idea, however vague, that there might be something beyond death, at least for the 'wise,' this would be one of the earliest formal steps in the formulation of the thesis of the resurrection to life beyond the grave for the wise. It would be the first book to represent the earliest Old Testament document in this respect, and this makes Qohelet the forerunner of views shared by the Pharisees and Jesus two or three centuries later (Ogden 2007:18). Murphy (1992: 109 304-5) concerning 3: 18 – 22, "while these verses may appear to be a categorical denial of afterlife, such an interpretation would miss the mark ... Ecclesiastes does not deny afterlife but does force the reader to take death seriously.

However, Qohelet remains true to form and relies only on experience and observation in the articulation of the thematic elements of the book. He concludes emphatically that "the same fate is in store for all ... since the living know they will die. But the dead know nothing; they have no recompense, for even the memory of them has died

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<sup>135</sup> "And the dust returns to the ground as it was, and the life breath returns to God who bestowed it." On this verse see the comments by Gordis (1963: 339), Crenshaw (1978:188-89) and Whybray (1989:168), all of whom agree that this verse is not an indication of some sort of afterlife. Burkes states that the reference to the final breath returning to its source may have been a traditional way of describing death at its final moments (Burkes 1997: 58).

... and they have no more share till the end of time in all that goes on under the sun”  
(BibQoh 9: 3 – 6; 2: 15-16).

In conclusion, to what extent can one trace elements of a theological impetus in Qohelet’s thoughts? Qohelet consistently argued that life takes precedence over death as the state of death represents ‘nothingness’ and as such, if taken to its logical conclusion, cannot be part of an all-encompassing theology. For Qohelet, God determines everything that happens – Schoors calls him a ‘determinist’ (Schoors 2013: 21). For Qohelet, God and his doings are incomprehensible to humankind. In this case, God ‘makes’ things happen (הַעֲשֶׂה), but this precludes the existence of a close relationship with humans and there are no references in the book of an active means of communication that connects people to God, such as liturgical practices. Qohelet is trapped by the concept of *hebel*, as it continuously agitates for a fatalistic outcome for people and their abilities to find peace and self-actualisation. Schoors poses the question if the generic god referred to is actually the God known as YHWH? Qohelet never uses the term *Adonai*, but the generic *Elohim* (seven times) and *Ha-elohim* (29 times). TgQoh on the other hand, presents an active relationship with God by means of a range of religious practices that enable people in normative Judaism, to participate in activities that could result in positive outcomes most prominently that of a life after death in a world to come, thus nullifying the hopelessness (*hebel*) as in Qohelet’s dour and pessimistic world view.

Qohelet’s consistent focus on earthly pursuits to seek earthly pleasure and acquire material possessions as a philosophy is not untypical of the view found in ancient literature, as in the Epic of Gilgamesh: "*Fill your belly. Day and night make merry. Let*

*days be full of joy. Dance and make music day and night [...] These things alone are the concern of men*<sup>136</sup> (1: 3)."<sup>137</sup>

Qohelet, like the other wisdom and biblical books, has been compared to other works from ancient literature as evidence of the long history of their cultural development. Qohelet is no exception and Barton in particular has provided a detailed exposition on different possible philosophical and historical influences on Qohelet's thought. These include Greek thought chiefly through the Stoics (Barton 1908: 32), Epicureanism (38-39), and Babylonian and Egyptian philosophy (39-43).

Absent from Qohelet are notably any Jewish theological motifs, namely references to Zion and the Land of Israel, centrality of Torah, a doctrine of retribution or a deed-consequence formulation as found in the other genres of the Hebrew canon. In spite of this, Qohelet displays knowledge of biblical tradition in a few scattered verses. For example, BibQoh 5: 3-5, he considers the problems of the making of vows which is linked to Ex. 23: 22-24. In BibQoh 12: 7, Qohelet wrote about the dust returning to the ground it came from as it related Gen. 2: 7 and 3: 19. Although these are concepts older than the Hebrew bible.

In terms of a definition of what is construed by the meaning of knowledge, in broad terms, Neusner has defined this as "The reasoned knowledge of God" (Neusner 2003:

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<sup>136</sup> Parallel to verse 9: 7-8 in BibQoh.

<sup>137</sup> Also, *The Complaint of a Sage over the Injustice of the World* (15<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> BCE), sometimes called the "Babylonian Koheleth," contains themes seen in Qohelet and other wisdom books, according to Gordis, who further noted the connections and influences of the cultures of the ANE in the development of biblical wisdom literature (Gordis 1955: 12-13).

1). This implies a relationship between the creator (God) and man, or as described by Lategan, as the “divine-human relation” (2009:180). In BibQoh this is a distant relationship in which God rules from heaven and man in the final act is little more than dust, although *Elohim* is the giver and reclamer of life (12: 7).<sup>138</sup> The relationship with God is not described in much more detail than that (Lategan *ibid.*). This precludes the possibility of a “reasoned knowledge of God” according to BibQoh, in that although God/*Elohim* rules in matters of life of death, he does so without any structured framework that governs the relationship between humankind and the divine.

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<sup>138</sup> In BibQoh God is referred to mostly in the impersonal with the article *Ha’ Elohim* 30 times and without the article, *Elohim* only 8 times, with no occurrence of *Adonai* (Lategan 2009: 166; Schoors 2013: 22)

## Chapter 6

### 6. 1 Rabbinical Theology and Targum Qohelet

The wholly pessimistic view and the cynicism of BibQoh could not have been ignored by the targumist. Levine wrote that the translation into Aramaic can be described as an “exegesis campaign” and “there was a virtual unanimous ‘conspiracy of tradition’ to pervert the message of Qohelet” (1978: 66-7).

The approach by the targumist seems to be the imposition of rabbinical ideology onto the original Hebrew text. This becomes a challenge from an analytical perspective because of the complexity of the large amount of additional material imposed on the original text. TgQoh’s additions include most of the key theological doctrines of rabbinic Judaism. This includes the topic of rabbinic eschatological doctrines on the afterlife. To analyse TgQoh will require a more ‘clinical’ approach than is normally sought in studies of this nature. To analyse the theological components as a whole and their parts separately requires a systematic method to identify, classify and group different theological inputs in order to understand how the rabbinic process unfolded within the dialogue of TgQoh.

This study will rely on Jacob Neusner’s model from *A Handbook of Rabbinic Theology* (2003). It provides a conceptual methodology including an appropriate classification system specifically developed for theological studies for collecting different subject categories and placing them into an inventory that will enable a means to sort and classify related sets of data. In philosophical terms this would be a complete list of

everything that “there is”, from “the highest *genera* of activities” to the lower orders.<sup>139</sup>

In the context of theology, for instance, a ‘god’ would be at the apex of the system and from this point many other categories derive from this point?

In terms of the practical application in the field of theological research, Neusner advocated this approach as an effective means of demonstrating how theological categories generate and or interlink with sub-categories, thereby creating a network of interconnected relationships out of which arises a complete and distinctive theological system joined in a binding relationship. These predicates, or relationships, when taken together, provide the conceptual foundation for defining the ‘religious framework’ of what becomes ‘Jewish theology’ (Neusner 2003: 39-45).

Neusner’s method of category formation is essential for a study that involves an immense collection of literary data in order to reveal how the data sets are organised and connected.<sup>140</sup> Neusner understood that the sheer volume of rabbinical literature required some form of ‘uber- organising’ system (my term, not his) to identify and analyse categories such as, for example, ‘the world to come’ and its sub-cognates, such as Sheol, Gehenna, sin, repentance and so on. By using Neusner’s methodology, the categories become the “principal organisers of inchoate data” of a theological system (Neusner 2003: 36).

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<sup>139</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/categories>

<sup>140</sup> This is similar to systems used in other fields of research in which category formation provides an effective form of organisational coherence by which to identify and describe patterns, structures and frameworks as systems of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions (Olsen, Lodwick, and Dunlop 1992:16).

The categories taken together can be used in this study to determine, organise and explain the rabbinic theological system encompassing the topics concerning all aspects of death and post-mortem forms of existence in TgQoh.<sup>141</sup> Reading TgQoh, it is immediately obvious that the book represents statements closely aligned with the language, imagery, idioms and principles of rabbinic doctrines, in particular those concerning matters of death and the afterlife. The context of these references to death and related connections is derived from a host of sources from the Jewish canon reflecting the exegesis, sayings and narrated stories of the sages of many centuries.

Once the multitude of 'bits of data' spread throughout TgQoh can be identified and confirmed according to their appropriate rabbinic explanations, it becomes possible to explain the intended religious meanings implied by the targumist (Neusner 2003: 48).

In TgQoh, for example, 'world to come' is mentioned thirty-two times and in each of these instances it is used consistently to convey a number of sub-topics related to the afterlife, such as study of Torah, sin, repentance, atonement judgement, wisdom and rewards, amongst others, to create an entirely different *Weltanschauung* from that of Qohelet in the Hebrew original. "When we know the native categories, we find ourselves at the very heart of the theological system that identifies those categories and defines and organises religious reality in accord with them" (Neusner 2003: 48). What is of interest is the relationship (if any) and purpose that exists between the sub-topic category – *world to come* (as a part of a theological category) and its relevance to the context of the way the targum functioned as a translation.

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<sup>141</sup> According to Neusner, categories are the "principal organisers of inchoate data" of a theological system (2003: 36).

This study will demonstrate that theological categories are fixed and are consistent in most cases across the rabbinic corpus. Thus, the world to come is immediately identifiable as, firstly, a religious concept and, secondly, as one that is connected to a range of other elements. The same can now be claimed for the other principal categories in TgQoh concerning the chain of concepts allied to a rabbinical eschatology.

The background to the development of a resurrection doctrine in Jewish theology is the product of thousands of years of history. According to rabbinic tradition, this included the early biblical period from Abraham and ended with the Exodus and finally with the onset of the rabbinic period.<sup>142</sup> During this extremely long period a large body of biblical traditions evolved in oral and written forms until they were encoded in written formats from the tenth to the fifth century B.C.E. (Raphael 1996: 41).

During this extremely long period, a large body of biblical traditions evolved in oral and written forms until they were encoded in written formats from the tenth to the fifth century B.C.E. (Raphael 1996: 41).<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> The biblical chronology can be divided into three periods: Early biblical – from Abraham to the Exodus, c. 1800 – 1250 B.C.E.; pre-exilic period – from the conquest of Canaan by Joshua to the Babylonian exile c. 1250 – 586 B.C.E.; post-exilic period extending from the Babylonian exile to the Hellenistic era, c. 586 – 200 B.C.E. These dates have been adapted from Schiffman (1991: 20, 64).

<sup>143</sup> The classical study by Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, originally published in 1878; see also, N. K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations* (1959). A more modern work is that by R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (1987).

## 6.2 Religious Language

TgQoh as a translation introduces a completely separate ‘thought world’<sup>144</sup> from that of BibQoh by introducing the theology of rabbinic doctrines and belief systems. BibQoh can be identified as typical of books belonging to the wisdom genre,<sup>145</sup> and it shared a thought world with Job, Song of Songs and to some degree with Psalms, Proverbs and a number of other non-canonical works, for example, Ben Sira. TgQoh, on the other hand, subsumed its wisdom elements into the Aramaic translation and identified the key doctrines of normative Jewish theology. The targum introduced a theodicy that was lacking in BibQoh by establishing the principles of how God related to humankind and humankind to God. God was an entity that was actively involved with what humans did – he was therefore a moral God that rewarded or punished as appropriate, both in the earthly sphere and in a world to come (Levine 1978: 74-5). That required a completely new way of communicating religious principles and ideas through an identifiable religious language. “Like a language, a theology then begins with [1] a vocabulary that permits the classification of religious knowledge (discrete data) and experience, the organisation and categorisation of that knowledge and experience into intelligible sense-units” ... [2] the units then combine and recombine in sentences ... and “[3] the semantics then dictate how to generate meaning” and intelligibility (Neusner 2003: 20). An example of how a religious language system creates a new intelligibility and meaning is this extract from the two Qohelet versions:

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<sup>144</sup> “Thought World” in this context of theology is the concept described by Jacob Neusner (2003: 293). A definition is: “The combination of mental attitudes, beliefs, presuppositions and concepts about the world characteristic of any particular people, time place” (English *Oxford Dictionary*).

<sup>145</sup> Fox 1999: 5-6.

A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death than day of birth  
(BibQoh 7: 1)

Better the good name which the righteous acquire in this world, than the anointing oil which was poured upon the heads of kings and priests; and the day wherein a man dies and departs to the grave with a good name and merits, than the day wherein the wicked is born into the world (TgQoh 7: 1)

Theological meanings begin to coalesce when words in a category are grouped together in sets of paradigms in such a way that they can be identified as belonging to a specific religious concept, or as Neusner termed it, a “native category” (Neusner 2003: 47). Besides the format of TgQoh as a ‘translation’, its prime characteristic is that it reveals the thought structures of the rabbinic worldview concerning matters that had become characteristic of the writings and sayings of the sages and their followers over time. For instance, in terms of rabbinic thought, wisdom signified the Torah; death is no longer seen as the end of human existence but merely a step towards a life after death; a person’s moral conduct becomes contingent upon the laws and tenets of the Torah accompanied with good deeds and Solomon became the personification of the sages of old and akin to the rabbis of the day.

Neusner further explains (2003: 43) that religious meanings arise when the use of selected principal words (e.g. sin, repentance, judgement etc.) combined with sets of predicate terms (e.g. the ‘the Great day of Judgement’, the ‘world to come’ etc.) are employed in fixed relationships and rules to reveal the thought processes that became logical expressions of traditional rabbinic communication. Over time these

combinations developed into an established 'theological vocabulary' (*ibid.*) that form principal head-words; for example, 'repentance' and the discourse around the concept of 'repentance' generates a range of related sub-concepts, such as sin, judgement, forgiveness and God. The power of the category dictates its ability to enlarge and form a vocabulary for the rabbinic canon (Neusner 2003: 43.).

In the case of theology, native categories bring about the theological discourse upon religious encounter and experience. The categories of the Rabbinic canon provide an account of what takes place in meeting God in the Torah. In both realms – the head-words (a.k.a. nouns) of a language, the native categories of a theological corpus – the generative particles of language and the structural categories of religion alike impart meaning, order, and structure to otherwise inchoate, even impalpable, data: things of the world, experiences of religious encounter, respectively (Neusner 2003: 44).

By means of a paradigmatic approach to the research of rabbinical texts, one can begin to understand the theological system in its entirety and thus identify religious experiences holistically. It furthermore enables the research document to distinguish to examine the entire corpus of the Rabbinic canon by connecting the theological paradigms and how they function as a working system.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Paradigms and paradigmatic thinking and approaches in research was first suggested by Thomas Kuhn. He defined paradigms as: "universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions for a community of researchers," (Kuhn 1996: X). In terms of theological adaptations, Hans Küng applied Kuhn's theory of paradigm change to the entire history of Christian thought and theology (Küng 1990). There has been some opposition to forms of paradigmatic thinking, mainly in the area of the sciences. Martin Cohen (2015) claimed that Kuhn's concept of paradigms was not well conceived and that he had no idea where it would end, while Paul

The metaphors and idiomatic speech in TgQoh concerning death/afterlife in particular take on a unitary character throughout the text. They develop their own unique vocabulary and metaphors in TgQoh separate from those in BibQoh. As an example, metaphors of a secular nature in BibQoh are amended in translation to reflect a different meaning, although a trace of the original phraseology remains, as in 7: 1:

A good name is better than fragrant oil, and the day of death than the day of birth (BibQoh 7:1)<sup>147</sup>

Better the good name which the *righteous* acquire in *this world* than the *anointing oil* which was poured upon the heads of kings and priests;<sup>148</sup> and the day wherein a man dies and departs to the grave with a good name and merits, the day wherein the wicked is born into the world (TgQoh 7:1).

TgQoh overflows with a vocabulary replete with terminology that would immediately be identified by its reading and listening audience as ‘religious’ in tone and character.

A worker’s sleep is sweet, whether he has much or little to eat; but the rich man’s abundance doesn’t let him sleep (BibQoh 5: 11).

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Feyeraber (2011), an American philosopher, claimed paradigms posing as facts, are unreliable, as even in science, facts are essentially opinions and opinions change.

<sup>147</sup> 7: 1-8 consists of a number of similar ‘better than’ proverbs from the wisdom genre, Prov. 10: 7, 16: 8, 21: 9, 22: 9; Sir. 10: 27, 41: 11-13.

<sup>148</sup> QohRab stresses the importance of a ‘good name’. R. Judah b. Simon said: We find men who had been anointed with good oil entered the place of life and came out burnt, while men of good name entered the place of the dead and came out alive. Nadab and Abihu entered the place of life [the sanctuary] and died (Lev. 10: 1), whereas Hananiah and Azariah entered the furnace and came out alive. Therefore, it is said, A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN GOOD OIL (QohRab. *Ad. Loc.*)

Sweet is the sleep of a man who serves the Lord of the world with all his heart; and he has rest in his grave, whether he lives few years or many years. After having served the Lord of the world, he will inherit in the world to come a reward for the works of his hand. And the wisdom of the law of God belongs to the man who is rich in wisdom. In the same manner as he occupies himself with it in the world, and exerts himself in learning, so will it rest with him in the grave, and not leave him alone; just as woman does not leave her husband to sleep alone (TgQoh 5: 11).

The targum introduced a 'new' vocabulary and radically altered the meaning of the verse from the one that appears to be a commentary on the social and economic conditions of Qohelet's day between two social strata, the wealthy landowners and the workers on the land, as well as being the author's own observations on greed and consumption and the effects thereof on oneself and the quality of life of others. These are the outcomes of Qohelet's observations of his world and such forms of expression were not an uncommon phenomenon in classical literature. Barton (1908: 127) and Schoors (2013: 428-9) quote from Seneca (*De brevitate vitae* II. 4) and Horace, (*Odes* III: 1, 21-23); below is an excerpt from Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* VIII, 3, 35-44:

You are not aware that it gives not one whit more pleasure to eat and drink and sleep now than it did when I was poor. My only gain from having so much is that I am obliged to take care of more, distribute more to others, and have the trouble of looking after more than I used to have (Xenophon, (*Cyropaedia* VIII, 3, 35-43).

This is comparable to BibQoh 5: 10

As his substance increases, so do those who consume it; what, then, does the success of its owner amount to but feasting his eyes?

For Qohelet, these were philosophical musings about the inherent unfairness and injustices in the world; in verse 5: 9 he claims, “A lover of money never has his fill of money, nor a lover of wealth his fill of income. That too is futile” (BibQoh 5: 9).<sup>149</sup>

From about the second century C. E. there is evidence in some of the literature of the beginning of a uniquely Jewish doctrine of resurrection that combined the metaphysical, philosophical and supernatural traits of a theological system that included the ethical and moral values of the Torah and selected writings of the sages (Davies J 1999: 189-193).

### **6.3 Rabbinic Judaism**

Rabbinic Judaism refers to the Judaism that developed under the guidance of the Pharisees and which became the dominant form after the destruction of the Second Temple. Rabbinic Judaism includes all the normative religious foundations of the Jewish belief system: its piety, forms of worship, morality, laws and observances, all of which were derived and extrapolated from its collections of scriptures and the vast corpus of related commentaries. Rabbinic Judaism eventually became what is called

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<sup>149</sup> BibQoh 8-11 as a unit has been widely commented on – cf. Seow on the socioeconomic context (1997: 21-36, 215-220), Schoors (2013: 426-429) Miller (2002: 118, 162) and Barton (1908: 127).

the 'normative', the form of Judaism whose theology and practices have been universally accepted as authoritative.<sup>150</sup>

The term 'rabbis' and 'rabbinical' is used frequently in this study to refer to the concept of the group of individuals loosely known as such, but in fact were a widespread grouping of individuals and schools of thought who traced their roots to the ancient Judaisms of the past. In Gabriel Boccaccini's assessment:

Rabbinic Judaism had its roots neither in the sceptical wisdom of Job, Jonah and Qoheleth nor in the priestly opposition of the Enochians. It was the theology of the Zadokite Judaism which offered to the sages the basic, covenantal framework of their system of thought and the idea that God's will was embodied in a book – the Mosaic Torah. It would take a long journey and many steps, however, before the rabbinic building would take its shape (Boccaccini 1958: 205-6).<sup>151</sup>

As a grouping, the concept of 'the rabbis' is large, vague and amorphous *not* to refer to anything specific and it cannot be said that all rabbis over the first seven centuries of the common era all shared the same thoughts, topics and ideas (Raphael 1996: 118). Nor do we find anywhere in the foundational documents of the rabbinic sages – the Mishnah and two great commentaries on them, the *Yerushalmi* and the *Bavli* – a clear exposition on the generative issues of what constitutes the foundations of Jewish

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<sup>150</sup> For a history of early rabbinic Judaism, see Neusner (1975), Moore (1970, Vol. 1: 3-110), Urbach (1979: 400-511), Schiffman (1991) and Schechter (1958).

<sup>151</sup> For Neusner's detailed argument on the problems on defining rabbinism, see his *Method and meaning in Judaism* (1979: 41-58).

theology (Neusner 2003: 8). What we find in the literature is only a selected fraction of centuries of continuous debates (*ibid.*).

## 6.4 Rabbinic Theology

The study of Jewish eschatology is dependent on a reasoned knowledge of God and the intellectual thought system that supports the theological basis upon which it was founded (Neusner 2003: 2-3). All that we know about the system of theology, its ideas, doctrines and practices can be gleaned from the thought world of rabbinic literature.

Gillman noted that the “distinction between text and theology is very much a modern invention ... The Talmudic rabbis knew no such distinction” (Gillman 1997: 128; Sysling 1996: 71-2). However, the problem for the rabbis was the duality of man’s mortality and transitoriness, who was created in God’s image yet possessed human frailties. Even more of an issue was the contradiction found between Isaiah (26: 19) and Daniel 12: 2), when read together with Gen 3: 19, “For dust you are, and to dust shall return.”<sup>152</sup>

The rabbinic sources most important to this study on TgQoh are the early rabbinic writings: the Mishnah, Tosefta, Midrash and later the Talmuds. Their concerns were to theologially justify the reasons for the death of individuals and how the deaths of individuals theologially affected the nation of Israel; this includes an eschatological theology focussed on the dead who will inhabit a world to come and a resurrection

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<sup>152</sup> For a comprehensive treatment of Gen 3: 19 and Is. 26: 19 in both the Tanakh and in PsYon Gen. as well as the Samaritan text and additional selected scriptural references, see Sysling (1996: 67-90).

after an obligatory judgement, with hints of larger messianic themes. Furthermore, life in this world, as it is expressed in the Mishnah and the Tosefta, clarifies that entry to a world to come is a precursor to a judgment and resurrection that depends wholly on the observance of commandments and Torah study (Avery-Peck 2000: 244). These outcomes are compressed within the translation of TgQoh.

For who is the man who adheres to all the words of the law, and has hope to acquire the life of the world to come? For a living dog is better than a dead lion (TgQoh 9: 4).

What value is there to a man, after his death, from all his labor he has labored under the sun in this world, other than if he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the world to come from before the Lord of the World? (TgQoh 1:3).

Raphael is probably accurate in that nowhere in biblical literature or the apocryphal works is there a definitive statement or a structured framework to guide the theology of the hereafter to be found. There isn't even a clear rabbinic view on the afterlife, according to Raphael: "it is unrealistic to speak of the rabbinic view of the afterlife" (Raphael 1996: 120); "Over the course of centuries the rabbis formulated and elucidated a wide variety of diverse and often contradictory ideas on life after death and the legacy is in no way systematic or monolithic" (120). However, I do not completely agree with this in its entirety; from all the numerous written comments by the sages and rabbinical authorities, there ultimately emerged the programmatic principles of normative/rabbinic theological ideas, traditions and practices that have

come as close as possible, by consensus, to be called an end of days eschatology. It is agreed that the nature of the world to come is uncertain in the literature; the rabbinical literature did not concern itself with who should die or not, nor is it certain how long an individual would reside in the world to come, the nature of the judgement and how the final resurrection would take place. The rabbinical focus was always on the living component and how people related to God and Torah, as living beings. Death is the end of the deceased's involvement with God and Torah and likewise all connection with worldly activities ceases. In the world to come we do not hear of an eternity spent studying Torah:

So long as a sage endures, his wisdom endures with him. When the sage dies, his wisdom dies with him.

So, we find that R. Nathan died, his wisdom died with him (*Mekhilta deR. Ishmael Amalek* 4, XLVI: II. 1.3 (quoted in Avery-Peck 1999: 256).

The rabbis were eminently practical: "They use the idea of a world to come to promote their own distinctive agenda; to accomplish this, they utilize, but hardly develop a commonplace and entirely general idea of resurrection and a world to come" (Avery-Peck 2000: 253). The focus was always the relationship between the living man and God, and the daily moral conduct of man according to the laws of Torah. Only by following all the precepts of Torah, as defined by the rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash, during a person's lifetime would an individual qualify to earn the right to the world to come. "The dead cannot praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence (Sheol)" (Ps. 115: 17,).<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Also, Ps. 6: 5, 30: 9-10.

These concerns are repeatedly expressed by TgQoh:

... And I asked nothing of him except wisdom, to know the difference between good and evil, and the knowledge of what was done in this world. Then I saw all the works of wicked children of men, a bad business which God gave to the children of men to be afflicted by (TgQoh 1: 13).

And I did not keep my heart from the joy of the law, because I had the inclination to enjoy the wisdom given me by God more than any man, and rejoiced in all my labour. And this was my good portion assigned to me, so that I might receive for it a good reward in the world to come, more than for all my labor. ... (TgQoh 2:10).

For who knows what does man good in this world, other than to study the Law, is the life of the world. For all the days of his vain life which he lives, are in the time of his death considered like a shadow. For who can tell man what there is before him in this world under the sun? (TgQoh 6: 12)

Therefore, fear the word of the Lord, and keep his commandments, that you sin not in secret. But if you sin be admonished to repent. For behold, this ought to be the way of every man. For the Lord will bring every work before the great day of judgement, and make public the thing which is hid from mankind, whether good or evil (TgQoh12: 14)

The impact of these beliefs implied that eschatological principles fostered a relationship between man and God that were based not on threats and chastisements, but rather on finding God's favour, or as indicated by Moore, "chastisements of love" (Moore 1970:120). For the wicked this meant that the more prosperity they accumulated in this world, the less the chances that they would be rewarded in the post-mortem world. Each person therefore is personally responsible for their own fate, individually and in terms of the good of the religious community as a whole (Moore 1970: 118-121).

## **6.5 Exploring the theological character of TgQoh**

The documents of the early rabbinical period are those of the Tannaim, and comprise two types of literature: the legal sources, the Mishnah and Tosefta, on the one hand, and the early Midrashic compilations, Sifra, Mekhilta deR. Ishmael, Sifre Numbers and Sifre Deuteronomy, on the other (Avery-Peck 2000: 243; Raphael 1996: 119). Avery-Peck notes that given the wide-ranging nature of these autonomous and disparate writings, they do not as such bring to life a "unitary theology" of resurrection (*ibid.*).

In the case of TgQoh, the key doctrines of the rabbinical afterlife beliefs are randomly dispersed throughout all the twelve verses of TgQoh. These are not found in any specific order nor with any direct literary purpose, except as additions or expansions to the verse-by-verse flow of the translation. The result is that we find a collection of similar rabbinical themes repeated in different verses arranged in order to introduce rabbinical teachings in such a way that gave the text a completely different outlook and message from its original. TgQoh's translation strategy appears to have been to

fuse biblical history with religious themes and eschatological doctrines to repurpose the book from one that echoed traditional wisdom to that of a rabbinically-inspired discourse. Despite a deep-seated rabbinic aversion to most forms of translations of scriptural documents persisted, TgQoh nevertheless became a source for teaching and propagating rabbinic beliefs without in any denigrating the value of the Hebrew version.<sup>154</sup>

The early period in the development of Jewish eschatology acknowledged the concept of a world to come; it was left to the later rabbinic periods during which developments concerning matters of the immortality of souls, corporeality and other more esoteric aspects, such as revivification of the dead. Earlier rabbinic thinking focused rather on the nature of the responsibilities of the living in this world and their ultimate effect on the individual in a world to come. "The Hebrew Bible had represented the desire to classify, abstract, manipulate and otherwise organize information in a distinctive manner. The Aramaic paraphrase actually proclaims a new way of dealing with problems, of handling ideas, of stimulating intellectual discourse. It is no wonder that originally the only acceptable attitude was one of aristocratic contempt!" (Levine 1988: 18).

The Mishnah and Tosefta and early midrashim expressed themselves on the fundamental tenet: that all of humankind are destined to die. However, death is not the final end of the journey but the means to an afterlife in the form of a world to come (*olam ha'ba*) for the individual. Access to the afterlife world is conditional upon humans maintaining a required level of ethical and religious conduct during the course of their

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<sup>154</sup> TB Meg. 8b, 9a; Kid. 49a; Shab. 116a.

lives. (Avery-Peck 2000: 243; Neusner 1999: 267 – 292; Raphael 1996: 163-218; Gillman 1997: 140–142, 146-49, 160-163).

From these earlier rabbinical musings arose the fundamental tenets of orthodox Jewish faith in the belief in the resurrection – based on the notion of a world to come as the entry point to life after death. By the first century C.E. this had become a key fundamental rabbinic tenet of Judaism. The resurrection evolved into a post-mortem form of reward or punishment, in which the soul ceased to exist when a person died (Josephus *Wars*, 22: 8). It was the view of the Pharisees that developed into a doctrine of reward and punishment culminating in a world to come that became the predominant one in the first century C.E.

## 6.6 Creating a Perfect World

The targum as a translation sets out to replace the world of BibQoh, which is characterised by injustices, uncertainties about the future, doubts about the efficacy of learning and wisdom, and one in which there seems to be little to be pleased about, since everything is depicted as *hebel*. This is clearly set out in the opening chapter, in which Qohelet describes the world as:

I set my mind to study and probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun. An unhappy business, that, which God gave men to be concerned with! I observed all the happenings beneath the sun, and I found that all is futile and breaking of the spirit<sup>155</sup> (BibQoh 1: 13-14).

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<sup>155</sup> The Targum translation is עורות רוח 'breaking of spirit' from the Hebrew 'pursuit of wind' בירתות רוחה.

These verses are theologically problematic as they imply that the world as created by God is inherently without order or any discernible purpose. Inevitably, life itself is a negative experience and the question then is how does one compensate for this failure of creation to find some form of happiness. This is the response in the targum's translation:

And I devoted myself to seeking instruction from God when he appeared to me in Gibeon, to try me, and to ask me what I desired of him. And I asked nothing of him except wisdom, to know the difference between good and evil, and knowledge of what was done under the sun in this world. Then I saw all the works of the wicked children of men, a bad business which God gave to the children of men to be afflicted by. I saw all the works of the children of men under the sun in this world. Behold, all is vanity and breaking of the spirit (TgQoh. 1: 13-14).

While Qohelet's search for wisdom is wholly secular, the targum's is totally theological – Solomon as the divinely imbued prophet becomes the ideal sage-like figure to be followed (Levine 1978: 78). God relates to man through the Torah, and by Torah man is able to reason with God and in order to understand God one had to devote oneself to selfless lifelong study.

Torah wisdom replaces secular wisdom and wisdom becomes Torah (Levine 1978: 78-9). This is an example where the targum shifts the focus of traditional wisdom and replaces it in its entirety with revelation and expressions of God's promises to the

righteous. For the rabbis, the Torah contained all that man needed to know in order to comprehend life and to draw closer to God (Schechter 1961: 127-137). Rabbinical thought equates wisdom to the Law, i.e. Torah, and when TgQoh speaks of wisdom, it is always in relation to Torah wisdom. This notion of wisdom as integral and deriving from the Law/Torah has ancient roots and can exegetically be traced back to Deut. 4: 6, 30: 11-18. In an interpretation, wisdom was present as an active participant with God at the time of the world's creation (Prov. 8: 22-30) (Moore 1970: 263-7; Schechter 1961:116).

The targumist established a direct relationship between man and God conveyed through the agency of Solomon as prophet, who is depicted as continuing in the role of a prophet by his involvement in events mentioned in the Tanakh, in this case the example from TgQoh 1: 13-14, where God spoke to Solomon in a dream at Gibeon (1Kgs. 3: 5-9). In the targum biblical history is thus connected to the present in a timeless manner.

In TgQoh the world is depicted as it ought to be. The targumist reorganised the material in the chapters and verses to align them with the rabbinic worldview of what a 'perfect world' in the eyes of God should be (Neusner 2003: 188-198). Where Qohelet describes the temporal conditions as he perceived them to be in a general sense to be, TgQoh presents the condition of man in *this world* in perfect union with God as it was in the past, present *and* in the future world to come: "*After having served the Lord of the world, he will inherit the world to come as a reward for the works of his hand.*" In a perfect world, economic and social conditions and matters of justice are frozen and endure for all time, ensuring that relationships between man and God and

between man and man are perfected, as they were in Eden. This is not directly mentioned in TgQoh 5:11, but the implication is one that was core to rabbinic faith. Rabbis understood wealth in terms of Torah learning as infinite and accessible to everyone, unlike property that was limited to only a few and was of limited duration. It was only lifelong devotion to Torah study and performance of righteous deeds by which individuals could earn the required rewards for access to the world to come for both regardless if one was rich or poor in life (Neusner 2003: 198-201).

The rabbinic sages maintained that, in a world without change, justice required that each person should emerge from a transaction exactly as he entered it. A perfect world – beyond time – also is world wholly at rest, in a steady state so far as wealth is concerned. .... Since the Rabbinic sages took it as their task to reveal the perfection of justice in all dimensions of the world that God made, they naturally turned to questions of a material order. The Rabbinic sages' theology of the commonwealth, of political economy, forms the equivalent of the principle of measure for measure in establishing justice for crime and sin, but it applies to everyday affairs. Based on the viewpoint of the Rabbinic sages,' the theology of justice and enduring stability of the world is governed by the perfection of all relationships as they existed for the people of Israel as they were in Eden at the time of the creation (Neusner 2003: 198).<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> This theme also appears in TgQoh in 6: 8, where a poor man who studies the Law will be among the righteous in Paradise; 7: 28-29 on Abraham, the perfect just man, Adam and Eve who brought sin and death into the world, an Aggadic addition to Qohelet; 9:7 on the obligations of the wealthy and their place in paradise.

In the rabbinical worldview, where time did not exist as a linear concept, history was regarded as timeless, and the sages and prophets are as relevant in the present as they were a thousand years ago (Neusner 2003: 180). These notions created a timeless paradigm of a perfect world from the moment of the creation that included the Torah, both oral and written, in a world that existed in a state of total perfection (*ibid.*).<sup>157</sup>

In TgQoh Solomon describes an idyllic past in which he “multiplied good deeds in Jerusalem,” built houses, the temple to atone for Israel, a royal palace, a conclave, porch and “a house of judgement where the wise men sit”; he planted vineyards in Yavne;<sup>158</sup> Solomon continued by adding “so that I and the rabbis of the Sanhedrin might drink wine, and also to make libations of wine, new and old, upon the altar” (TgQoh 2 -10). TgQoh introduces the images and events from the HB and the rabbis themselves as if they had been a cast of characters who were intimately involved with the life and deeds in the story of Solomon in an unbroken narrative that included the books of 1Kings, Song of Songs, the Mishnaic interpretations and Midrashic influences. The secular nature of these passages and the self-doubt of Solomon in BibQoh is entirely altered into a religiously inspired message depicting Solomon as if he were one with the rabbis in a temple environment. Similar passages in which the targum includes additions from scripture to explain rabbinical viewpoints are found in TgQoh 3: 11–12 concerning Sheba, the son of Bichri; 4: 13-15 on Abraham the

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<sup>157</sup> Neusner (185) provides this example from Mekhilta to R. Ishmael XXXII: I: 1-7:

“Along these same lines, I, Qoheleth, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem” (Qoh 1: 12).

This [statement was made] at the outset of the sequence of events, and why then was it stated here?

It is because considerations of temporal sequence play no role in the Torah.”

<sup>158</sup> 1Kgs. 7: 1-12. Vineyards in the rabbinic context refers to the rows of judges who were arranged in rows like grapevines in a vineyard (QohRab. II. 8:1). In the targum references to the drinking of wine and of eating are metaphors for Torah and doing of good deeds. See Levine (1978: 59); an early reference for this can be found in Bavli. Shab. 30b.

patriarch; 7: 19 – Joseph in Egypt; 7: 28-29 – Adam and Eve in Eden and Abraham; 10: 9 on Manasseh and Rabshakeh; 9: 6-17 on Jeroboam and Hezekiah; 12: 10 – 11 on Moses, the Sanhedrin, Midrashim and the Halakhot.

## 6.7 The Theory of Last Things

According to the theory of last things, rabbinic doctrines compared human life to that of the existence of Israel, as Israel survived conditions of exile, so too would human individuals survive death in the world to come. Death was not the end of life, but an event in a journey in the same way that exile was not the end of the existence of the Land of Israel (Neusner 2000: 267). “Israelites will live in the age of the world to come, all Israel in the Land of Israel ... restorationist theology provides eternal life; to be in Israel means to live. So far as the individual is concerned, beyond the grave, at a determinate moment, man [1] rises from the grave in resurrection, [2] is judged, and [3] enjoys the world to come” (Neusner 2003: 286). Rabbinic interpretation is founded upon the key principle that the biblical scriptures in their entirety are based on the existence of God and the relationship of God to men and specifically to Israel (Schechter 1958: 79).<sup>159</sup>

The logic of restorationist eschatology dictated that the last things are known first.<sup>160</sup>

The logic of the restoration will restore the balance and perfection of the world again, as in the past, referring to the Garden of Eden, when the world was a perfect creation; likewise, humankind will rise from the dead, atone through death, be judged according

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<sup>159</sup> TgQoh 14: 16-17; 7: 4; 10: 6, 10, 16; 12:9

<sup>160</sup> “The wise man reflects in the beginning what there will be in the end” TgQoh 2: 14.

to their deeds and continue to live in a resurrected form (Neusner 2003: 287; Raphael 1996: 129-36; Neusner 2003: 267 -69). Thus, the world will once again retain its balance and status of perfection. This would only be possible when people accepted the dominion of God in heaven and his power over all the inhabitants of the earth coupled with complete devotion to the Torah and performance of good deeds (TgQoh 5: 1, 11, 17). In other words, what the rabbis proposed was a balanced process of one part of a relationship existing in balance with the next link in the chain (Neusner 2003: 293). This became, in theological terms, the cosmic model upon which the eschatological principles had evolved. The significance of the concept of 'the perfection of world order' in TgQoh is inescapable. The targumist employed the key elements that constituted the resurrectionist paradigm in order to present a timeless model of ethics and righteous behaviour within a divinely ordered and unchanging universe to replace the contradictory and chaotic world of the Qohelet of the Hebrew Bible.

## 6.8 An Imperfect World

Neusner described man and God as existing in a complementary relationship; "they are like one another," man being created in God's image and likeness.<sup>161</sup> According to Neusner, this is "the heart of world order" (2003: 214). A similar view was made by Solomon Schechter and Max Kadushin when they noted that the relationship with God is chiefly determined by the articles of faith in Leviticus: "You shall be holy to me, for I the Lord am holy and I have set you apart from other peoples to be mine (Lev. 20: 26) (Schechter 1958: 79; Kadushin 1972: 167-177). From this, the rabbis concluded that

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<sup>161</sup> Gen. 5: 1; Gen 3: 22.

man's conduct would need to emulate the standards of God as the physical likeness extended to an ethical one as well (Moore 1970: 446-8).

## 6.9 Sin

People are in possession of free will and have discretionary power to exercise this free will and in doing so may find themselves in conflict with the rules of the Law. Since God created a world in which order and balance prevail, it is only people who can cause disruption and imbalance in the world (Neusner 2003: 244). The key element is that free will allows people to consciously choose either to accept God's dominion or to act contrary to His will.

"Sin explains the condition of Israel" (Neusner 2003: 260). If Israel had not sinned in Eden, Israel would have kept the Torah and would have lived in a perfect world (*ibid.*).

Said R. Ada b. R. Hanina, "If the Israelites had not sinned. To them would have been given only the Five Books of the Torah and of Joshua alone, which involves the division of the Land of Israel. How come? 'For much wisdom proceeds from much anger' (Qoh. 1: 18)".<sup>162</sup>

Rabbinic theology is based on the principle that divine justice is faultless and when God punishes, it is deserved and never excessive.

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<sup>162</sup> Quotation from Neusner (2003: 261).

For to every business there is a good and evil time, and by a true judgement is the whole world judged; and when it is decreed from the Lord that punishment should be in the world, it is because of the guilt of the evil doers which is heavy upon them (TgQoh 8: 6).

The theological justification is based on the argument that sin is an act of individual disobedience against the will of God and originated with the rebellion against God's instructions in Eden. According to Schechter, sin brought death into the world as the consequence of preceding transgressions (1958: 106).<sup>163</sup> However, the story of Adam related that he and Eve were not punished with death, but instead were banished from Eden.<sup>164</sup>

A man whose ways are perverted in this world and who therefore dies, and who does not repent, has no power to be exonerated after his death. And whomsoever departs from the Law and the precepts during his life, has no power to be numbered with the righteous in paradise after his death (TgQoh 1: 15)

Ironically, sin acts as the generator that allows the system to enable forgiveness through repentance to occur and thereby initiate a process of restoration<sup>165</sup> (Neusner 2003: 260-61; Schechter 1961: 293-95).

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<sup>163</sup> For a detailed analysis of types of sin according to rabbinic thought, see Max Kadushin (1972: 167–178).

<sup>164</sup> This is a complex theological and philosophical debate with a wide range of scholarship that does not fall within the scope of this study, save to point out the theological origins that have come down through the ages to explain these phenomena.

<sup>165</sup> Ps. 25: 8.

## 6.10 Repentance

The thought world of rabbinic theology is based on an internal coherence of connecting human and divine experiences by means of logical processes. If sin results in death, this does not necessarily mean the end of things, but in rabbinic thinking it marks a beginning. In other words, when an imbalance occurs in the world due to some form of disruption, the imbalance is corrected and balance is restored to the world. If world order was disrupted by a wilfully sinful act, the state of perfection can be restored by a wilful intention and action to repent (Neusner 2003: 276).

“Repentance is the sole, but inexorable, condition of God’s forgiveness and the restoration of his favour, and the divine forgiveness and favour are never refused to genuine repentance” (Moore 1970: 520). According to Kadushin (1972: 15), repentance is an integral part of the core concept termed God’s Love.<sup>166</sup>

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said: Great is repentance, which lengthens the years of a person’s life, as it is stated: “When the wicked man turns from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he will preserve his life” (Ezek. 18: 27) *Yoma* 86b.

The process of *teshuva*, repentance, erases the sin as if it had not been committed at all. In Rabbinic theology, the focus on the evil inclination can only be overcome by

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<sup>166</sup> For repentance to be effective, the penitent must adopt an attitude of remorse, do so in good faith, and not repeat the offence.

continuous and serious study of Torah (Jacobs 1973: 243-45). This point is made in the Targum's translation of verse 1:15.<sup>167</sup>

One whoever departs from the law and the precepts during his life, has no power to be numbered with the righteous in paradise after his death (TgQoh 1: 15).

Qohelet struggled to make sense of the inherent injustice in the fact that both righteous and wicked persons endured similar fates and miseries, "Alongside justice there is wickedness, alongside righteousness there is wickedness" (3: 16),<sup>168</sup> the targum on the other hand maintained the classical rabbinic views that the righteous will be rewarded in the world to come, at least, and the wicked will earn what is due to them (Jacobs 1973: 350-367; Kadushin (1972: 218-19). The righteous in rabbinic terms are equated with those individuals who are devoted to Torah study, a *Tsaddik*, a position that guarantees them a place in the afterlife and a good judgment. Likewise, the targum attempted to portray the ideal man as some kind of righteous individual based on Solomon as the paradigm of a rabbinic sage of ancient lineage, and from whom the rabbis, down the ages, are a continuation.

In TgQoh all the doctrines of rabbinic theology are encapsulated as an organic whole – a system. This element of the translation provides the ethical and moral foundation to act as the 'road map' against which the concept of the afterlife is based and the conditions for participation in the afterlife. The notion of a 'world to come' is

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<sup>167</sup> Avot 4.1; Kidd. 30b and Zohar 1: 202a.

<sup>168</sup> 3: 16- 17; 4: 1-2; 7: 15 –18; 8: 11 –14; 9: 1- 3;

inseparable from the theological chain consisting of sin, repentance, rewards, punishment, study and love of Torah, charity and, above all, belief in a single God who created the entire universe. Verse 1: 3 is a direct response to Qohelet's *hebel* statement in the superscript "All is hebel", which it refutes and replaces all the negative implications it suggests by offering the hope of a future life on condition that man devotes his entire life in this world (under the sun) to Torah study,

What value is there to man, after his death, from all his labor which he labored under the sun in this world, other than if he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the world to come from before the Lord of the world (TgQoh 1: 3)

The rabbinical view of man is on his dualistic nature: on the one hand, man was formed in the likeness of God, but on the other, man was a mortal flesh-and-blood being. Man inhabits two spheres: the terrestrial and a celestial sphere (Sysling 1996: 67; Raphael 1996: 121- 123).<sup>169</sup> The challenge was to establish a theological system that would accommodate the two spheres in a way that would explain the creation event and God's purpose for the world and its inhabitants as justified according to the words of the Torah.

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<sup>169</sup> Ber. Rabba 12:8 reads: "And if I create him the lower ones, then the lower ones will be greater than the upper ones by one creation, and there won't be peace in the world. Rather here I am going to create him from the upper ones and the lower ones, for the sake of peace ... 'And Elohim formed him from the dirt of the ground' – from the lower ones; 'and He blew in his nostrils life's breath from the upper ones'".

The school of Shammai said: The heavens were created first and then the earth (Gen. 1: 1). But the school of Hillel said: The earth first and then the heavens (Gen. 2: 4).

The creation serves to formulate the conception of a world order in which God sits at the apex of all He created and at the moment of creation everything he ‘made’ was perfect in every sense. God as creator and originator of all there is in the universe is one of the most basic creeds of the Jewish faith (Jacobs 1973: 93).<sup>170</sup> The sages and subsequent rabbinical interpreters down the ages were concerned with the fundamental philosophical arguments about the nature of the creation and God’s role,<sup>171</sup> and their comments on this are spread through numerous teachings. The rabbis sought to transform the philosophical notions about how the universe came into being, and change these into a systematic religious excursus that generated the doctrine that everything, the physical and the non-physical arose because of the agency of God. The rabbinical outlook was that time was ahistorical, the past existed in the present,<sup>172</sup> “God looked into the Torah and created the world” (Gen. Rab. 1: 9).

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<sup>170</sup> The 16th-century formulation of the Jewish creed, the first principle reads: “I believe with perfect faith that the creator, blessed be His name, is the author and guide of everything...” (Singer’s Prayer Book: 10, based on Maimonides’ 13 Principles of Faith).

<sup>171</sup> It was only in the middle ages that Jewish thinkers speculated about the topic of ‘matter’, asking whether the world was created *ex nihilo*. Other speculations discussed the Platonic idea that matter existed and God only created form out of it (Plato: *Timaeus*: 29, 53). From the point of biblical interpretations per se, it may have been that certain verses indicated a *creatio ex nihilo*, but this was never accepted as mainstream rabbinical thought, until Maimonides later did not exclude the possibility as this having been the case (Maimonides: *Guide for the Perplexed*, II, 25). For the rabbis, the main thrust of the arguments concerned the nature of the term, *bara*, and the forming of the earth, the activities of the different days, and so on. God’s intention and purpose for creating men and women and their subsequent relationships with each other and towards the divine were the main areas of interest of the rabbinical commentators.

<sup>172</sup> Neusner (2003: 178).

## 6. 11 The World to Come

The first occurrence of the term The World to Come is found in Enoch 1: 71:15 -16 (Moore 1970: 378).<sup>173</sup>

And he he said unto me:

He proclaims unto thee peace in the name of the *world to come*;  
For from hence has proceeded peace since the creation of the world,  
And so shall it be unto thee forever and for ever and ever.

16 And all shall walk in his ways since righteousness never forsaketh him:  
With him will be their dwelling-places, and with him their heritage,  
And they shall not be separated from him for ever and ever and ever.<sup>174</sup>

Its meaning denotes a locality and time in the future whence the dead will be judged and the final resurrection will follow. The concept of the World to Come in rabbinic literature is not consistent in terms of naming conventions or specific conceptualization (Moore 1970: 377-90, Raphael 1996:125 -130). Its general meaning is to refer to a stage in the resurrection process after a person has died. Its meanings are always indefinite expressions with the meaning of an event in the future, a kind of promissory note. "The universe is governed by a strict quid pro quo obtaining after death" (Levine 1978: 82).

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<sup>173</sup> Some of the most quoted references that rabbinic literature used as biblical evidence for the resurrection and the world to come are: M. Sota. 9.15; M. Sanh. 10. 1; B. Sanh. 90b-92a; Ber. 15b; Sifre Deut. 32: 2; Pes. 68a; Ket. 111a; Kid. 39b.

<sup>174</sup> Charles R.H. *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Clarendon Press: Oxford (2004).

The concept of ‘the world to come’ appears 32 times in TgQoh. The term ‘the world to come’ (*Olam Ha- ba* in Hebrew and in Aramaic, *Le-alma d’ati*, *Alma ha-din*, *Be Alma Ha-din* and *Le’ Almah*<sup>175</sup>), refer in all cases metaphorically to a future ‘life’ after death. *Olam Ha-ba* is frequently found in counterpoint with *Olam Ha-Zeh* – “this world” as the opposite to denote the physical plane of life (Raphael 1996: 121).

*Olam Ha-Ba* is also said to be a spiritual existence divorced from the earthly plane or *Olam Ha-Zeh*, according to *Berakhot* 17a: “*Olam Ha-Zeh* is not at all like *Olam Ha-Bah*.” That it is a desirable spiritual state that one should strive for can be understood from this excerpt: “Better is one hour of bliss in *Olam Ha-Ba* than the whole of life in *Olam Ha-Zeh*” (*M. Avot* 4: 17). However, in the same passage from *Avot*, one finds the conflicting comment: “Better is one hour of repentance and good works in This World than the whole life of the World to Come?”

The dualisms in these statements suggest that both these states are complementary and one does not have primacy over the other (Raphael 1996: 122). The relationship between the two states (earthy and celestial) are organic – for an individual to gain a portion of the world to come requires that a person has to perform certain duties during their earthly life in order to enter the world to come after death. This principle, that man has to earn the right to enter into this post-mortem plane, is paramount and repeated many times in TgQoh.

What real value is there for a man

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<sup>175</sup> The Aramaic terms are derived from CAL.

In all the gains, he makes beneath the sun? (BibQoh 1: 3)<sup>176</sup>

What value is there to a man, after his death, from all his labour which he laboured under the sun in this world, other than if he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the World to Come from before the Lord of the world? (TgQoh 1: 3).

For who knows what does man good in this world, other than to study the Law, which is the life of the world (TgQoh 6: 12).

The man who keeps the commandments of the Lord shall not know any evil in the world to come (TgQoh 8: 5)

For if the life of man is many days, it behooves him to rejoice in all of them and to study the Law of the Lord; let him remember the days of the darkness of death, and not sin, for many are the days wherein he shall lie dead in the grave to receive the judgement from heaven for the life he loved, all the time punishment comes upon him for the vanity he has done (TgQoh 11: 8)

And the flesh which is created from dust returns to the earth as it was, and your breathing spirit returns to stand in judgement before the Lord who gave it to you (TgQoh 12: 7)

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<sup>176</sup> 'Under the sun' – השמש תחת should be understood as "after the sun" as according to the Talmud, "After the sun he has no reward, but before the sun he does have" (TB Shab. 30b). This is derived from the tradition that says the Torah is one of several things that were created before the world (TB Pes. 44a).

The world to come is part of the patterns of the rabbinic thought world in which one does not find sequences of events, rather paradigms arranged in a connective relationship. The crucial factor is not the sequential pattern, such as start to finish, but the balance between the elements that constantly rearrange themselves depending on circumstance, for example, using the example provided by Neusner, “the match of this to that, start to finish, Eden and the World to come” (Neusner 2003: 293).

The thought world of rabbinic theology exists beyond history and time and demands that the relationship to God be defined through the lens of sages from the past according to which the paradigm and its parameters have been determined. The principle is founded upon the perfection of the world based on the following paradigmatic model: Adam in (a perfect world) Eden, Adam lost his place in Eden, then came Israel, Eden regained, Israel is lost, Israel is punished, Israel is restored to the land and eternal life follows.<sup>177</sup> In this model sages were able to promote the notion that an end is in fact a beginning. Thus, rabbinic eschatology, by applying the concept of a world to come, was able to refute the views of BibQoh (and that of the tradition of most of the HB), that death signified the end of human existence.

The descriptions of the world to come in TgQoh are mostly in line with the earlier concepts found in rabbinic thought. In the targum rabbinic views were forcefully employed to promote the agenda of the targum and to introduce the rabbinic doctrines that were in total opposition to the secular ambit of BibQoh. Its main objectives were

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<sup>177</sup> TgQoh 10: 10.

to focus the target audience on God's justice and correct behaviours in this world for which there will be a reward in the coming world (Avery-Peck 2000: 252-3).

Sages, rabbis and even figures such as Moses and Solomon are included in elements of the paradigm as solace that even the blameless must die, thus acting as a foil should a challenge arise as to God's fairness as to the nature of the death of pious individuals (Avery-Peck 2000: 254).

## **6.12 Judgement**

TgQoh speaks of a judgment to take place in the world to come, except for those who are dispatched to Gehenna. Once in the world to come, people will undergo judgement after having atoned and repented. This is in line with the restorationist theological principles – Israel resurrects Eden (Neusner 2003: 293). The doctrine follows a process:

First comes the resurrection, of individuals, and with it, judgement of individuals one by one. Then those chosen for life having been identified, "the world to come" takes place, and that final restoration of perfection, involving all Israel in place of Adam, lasts forever (Neusner 2003: 268).

The logic of the rabbinic eschatological system based on a personal doctrine ensures that at an individual level the theology is passed on from one generation to the next. The notion of a life after death ensures that those who are righteous, pious and victims of misfortune are indeed rewarded and those who are wicked and non-deserving are

judged accordingly. Thus, in TgQoh this theme is rigorously observed to counter the many unjust and unfair incidents related by Qohelet. According to TgQoh, the righteous never die, but exist forever in a heavenly academy (TgQoh 5: 11).

Similarly did R. Bun b. Hiyya learn in twenty-eight years more Torah than an eminent scholar could learn in a hundred years. R. Joḥanan said: Whoever has laboured in the Torah in this world is not allowed to sleep [in the hereafter] but is taken to the Academy of Shem and Eber, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses and Aaron. For how long? *Until I will make thee a great name, like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth (II Sam. 7: 9).*<sup>178</sup>

In conclusion, the later rabbinic works focused on Israel as a supernatural community, embodied in the biblical icons Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses (and in TgQoh, in particular, Solomon). The targumist saw these figures as one continuous line from the creation as representing the paradigmatic elements of a perfect world in union with God. This perfect world exists in a community without end in which death was not the end but merely part of a continuing chain flowing into eternity. Death thus becomes an essential part of the divine plan.

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<sup>178</sup> QohRab. 5. 11: 5.

## Chapter 7

### 7.1 Death and Afterlife in TgQoh

This section will provide an analysis of verses from TgQoh which promote the targum's views on death and afterlife. The entire chain of interlinked elements that make up the theological components that collectively lead to a composite Rabbinic doctrine concerning what is probably best called the life–death–afterlife–judgement–resurrection chain. Each of these elements addresses in one way or another “a point at which man meets God, whether in time, or in gesture or in aspiration or intention or attitude or expectation” (Neusner 2003: 41). This study further intends to show how the targum introduced wholly rabbinical biases and a radical restructuring of the relationship between God and humankind (which in TgQoh becomes a metaphor for Israel) and thereby converted the traditional wisdom influences of the biblical book of Qohelet into a complete exposition of rabbinical theology.

The TgQoh format follows a similar seemingly unstructured narrative in which mostly fundamental topics are repeated but are not arranged according to any type of logical or thematic structure, other than the sequence as found in the source text. This is methodologically challenging as the many targumic expansions and additions require careful explication and contextualisation within the parameters of their meanings in the targum and its theological interpretations.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> The texts used in this study were noted near the beginning: Aramaic translation - *The Comprehensive Lexicon* (CAL); The English translation is that of Etan Levine, but I have included a few translations of selected verses from Knobel, where these refer to points of relevant interest. The HB translation used is the *New JPS Translation* (1985).

The opening verse of Qohelet is a dour lament on the vicissitudes of life that every human is subject to in the time given to them “beneath the sun.” The world, according to Qohelet, is impenetrable and for humans there is little to look forward to no matter all their earthly endeavours. Like other seekers of wisdom before him,<sup>180</sup> Qohelet is wholly preoccupied with these existential issues, and his conclusion is that ultimately, life is simply meaningless (*hebel*).

Utter futility! – said Koheleth –

Utter futility! All is futile!

What real value is there for a man

In all the gains he makes beneath the sun?

Qohelet suggests that the only certainty was to be found in the unceasing cycles of nature, the sea, sun and moon, and the seasons; but for mankind there is little comfort from that; there is nothing new, and there doesn't seem to be any solution that will make any difference to the sad state of human existence on earth:

All such things are wearisome

No Man can ever state them;

The eye never has enough of seeing,

Nor the ear of hearing.

Only that shall happen

Which has happened,

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<sup>180</sup> There are a number of occurrences in the HB in which similar existentialist questions arise, for example, Job 7: 16; Ps. 39: 5-7, 12; 62: 10; 94: 11; 144: 4.

Only that occur

Only that has occurred;

There I nothing new

Beneath the sun (1: 8-9).

BibQoh was limited by a narrow worldview and was thus unable to understand the workings of causality or the potential of a future, other than its self-imposed limits (Levine 1978: 72). Qohelet's views were based on an analysis of the observations he had conducted of the world and the condition of humankind, which he explained as follows: "I set my mind to study and to probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun ... (1: 13), ... I observed all the happenings beneath the sun, and I found that all is futile, and pursuit of wind" (1: 14).

The cosmos as described in TgQoh, on the other hand, was timeless, as it existed in the historical past, the present and a future life in a world to come. This world, in which the past is always in the present, made it possible for rabbinic thinking to include scriptural events and figures from the past in seamless narratives to explain and validate theological meanings in any situation in a non-linear pattern (Neusner 2003:178).<sup>181</sup> Neusner explains further that the rabbinic sages did not reveal a perfect world by following historical events, but by creating paradigms that would be valid for all time. Life was therefore understood through this form of paradigmatic thinking (Neusner *ibid*). Unlike BibQoh, the targum sought answers to mankind's existentialist

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<sup>181</sup> TgQoh refers to historical events and figures from the *Tanach* in the following verses 1: 2: 1: 3; 2: 4 -10, 15, 18; 3: 11; 4: 13, 15-16; 7: 4, 19, 28-29; 10: 9, 16-17, 2 and 12: 9-11. Sysling pointed out that references to patriarchs and matriarchs as well as the Sanhedrin also occur in other targums as in Ps. Yon Gen. 22: 19, 25: 27; Ps. Yon. 25: 32. (Sysling 1996: 9).

mysteries by calling on the intellectual thinking and vast repository of rabbinic teachings. These were reflections on the paradigms of thought that explained the world. For example, Solomon in TgQoh<sup>182</sup> became the paradigm for a righteous sage and prophet at first, and then emerged as the king of Israel in which he is portrayed as at once inspiring and then as a flawed figure.<sup>183</sup> The timeless aspect of rabbinic exegesis in TgQoh can be seen in the way that Solomon relates to his dealings with the rabbis of the Sanhedrin (TgQoh 2: 15 and 12: 11).

The targumist adopted a process of essentially free translation in much of the text and extensive interpretation to place BibQoh into a wholly different context and make it cohere with most of the values of rabbinic norms. Yet the kernel of Qohelet's questions on the search for understanding the existentialist state of human beings remained, but these were arranged in such a way that on reading TgQoh, one would immediately recognise it as upholding a totally different view of the world.

TgQoh is thus characterised by its extensive interpretations that were permeated with a distinctly 'religious language' that gave legitimacy to the messages of BibQoh (Alexander 2011: 84; Neusner 2003: 19- 80). Qohelet and his teachings were 'resuscitated' and made acceptable in their Aramaic form via the numerous rabbinic additions and expansions in order to implant blatant Jewish theological views throughout the book, yet it followed the original narrative as is to be seen in a careful reading, and as explained by Philip Alexander: "TgQoh stays in literary character, a

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<sup>182</sup> See Flesher and Chilton (2011: 241-3) for an evaluation of Solomon in BibQoh

<sup>183</sup> In TgQoh, Solomon and his historical life from the HB are portrayed in various situations as hermeneutical examples as in 1: 2, 12; 2: 4-11, 18-19; 4: 15-17; 9: 11; 10: 9. He was also presented as a prophet, sage and rabbi in TgQoh 3: 12; 9: 7, 13; 12: 8-14. Solomon in TgQoh furthermore related his dealings with the Sanhedrin. The targum also mentions additional historical examples: Adam, Eve, the Tower of Babel (7: 28); Abraham and Nimrod (4: 13-14); the wisdom of Joseph and Jacob (7: 20).

character which was carefully projected by the targumist as consonant with the historical Solomon, as the targumist understood the situation to be, and an important aspect of this was that he could not make the book of Qohelet quote itself” (Alexander 2011: 86).

The purpose of the targumist was to introduce a new thought world by means of incorporating a religious vocabulary and thereby instilling a distinctive agenda in the mind of the audience or reader. The opening statements are coherent and connect the opening remarks to the content that follows. The coherence is maintained up to the end of the work (Alexander 2011: 93).

When Solomon the king of Israel foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy that the Kingdom of Rehoboam his son would be divided with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that Jerusalem and the holy temple would be destroyed, and that the people of Israel would be exiled, he said by the divine word, “*Hebel habalim* is this world! *Hebel habalim* that I, and my father David strived for. All is *hebel* (1:2).

“What value<sup>184</sup> is there to a man in, after his death, from all his labour, which he laboured the sun in this world, other than he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the world to come from before the Lord of the world? (1:4).

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<sup>184</sup> The JPS translates *yitron* as ‘value’; Levine also has ‘value’, but Knobel translates it as ‘profit’ – “What profit does a man have ...” These are semantically related, but the question it raises is whether Qohelet refers here to life as mere commercial transactions.

The relationship with the preceding verse, '*hebel/habalim*', that links it to issues of the fate of man is echoed in the use of *hebel* in the preceding line and becomes the leitmotif through which the value of human existence is juxtaposed across two polarities – life and death, this world and the world to come. BibQoh's view is a strictly limited one in which life and death are a single inescapable continuum. "Human life and experience are both insubstantial, or frail, and fleeting" (Burkes 1999: 47). The targumist at this point introduces the concept of time and place, "under the sun in this world", which is differentiated from another time and place – "in the world to come." This becomes the theme of the events that affect mankind in the earthly physical world and the realm that belongs to the divine, in the world to come before the Lord of the world.

## 7. 2 Solomon and the Voice of Prophecy

Verse 1:1 is the introduction and commonly described as a superscription.<sup>185</sup>

דְּבַרֵי קֹהֶלֶת בֶּן־דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם:

In the words of Qohelet, son of David, king in Jerusalem (BibQoh 1:1).

פִּתְגָמֵי נְבוּאָה דְאִיתְנַבֵי קֹהֶלֶת הוּא שְׁלֵמָה בֶר דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ דְהוּא בִירוּשָׁלַם:

The words of prophecy which Qohelet, that is, the son of David the King, who was in Jerusalem, prophesied (TgQoh 1:1).<sup>186</sup>

<sup>185</sup> There is agreement among all scholars that the opening verse 1: 1 is a superscription.

<sup>186</sup> Rule 2 from Flesher and Chilton's 'Rules of targum': Primary rule 2 states that "When a targum adds material into the translation, it integrates the addition smoothly so as not to interrupt its flow" (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 40).

In Qohelet Rabbah, (QohRab 1:1) the midrash, adds a scriptural expansion to this verse:

The words of Koheleth, the son of David, King in Jerusalem. That is what scripture declares by the Holy Spirit through Solomon, King of Israel: Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before Kings (Prov. 22:29).

The opening passage of BibQoh in 1:1 is narrated by a figure called *Qohelet*. This is immediately followed by a qualifying term that states that the words of Qohelet, are spoken by “the son of King David in Jerusalem,” and by implication of that connection, King Solomon. This becomes the governing and authorial voice and is repeated a number of times in which Qohelet (Solomon) referred to himself in the first voice, 1:12, 7: 27 and 12: 8.<sup>187</sup> In BibQoh, the introduction is somewhat ambiguous at first sight. Verse 1:1 does not directly identify Solomon as the speaker or author. Rather, the verse implies that Qohelet as author created for himself the persona of a king (Fox 159; Schoors 2013: 36).<sup>188</sup> This is striking because if the author were Solomon, then he would have called him by that name as in Proverbs, Ps. 72, the Odes of Solomon, the Testament of Solomon and the Wisdom of Solomon (Fox 1999: 160).

The opening nominal clause in BibQoh, בְּרִידֵי קֹהֶלֶת, can similarly be found in Neh.1: 1; Jer. 1:1, Prov. 1: 1,<sup>189</sup> Amos 1: 1. The similar use of this nominal clause by a redactor

<sup>187</sup> On the Qohelet/Solomon governing voice and its purpose in BibQoh, see Alexander 2011: 90-91 for a detailed analysis of Solomon as the governing voice in TgQoh.

<sup>188</sup> Fox commenting on 12: 12 defines Solomon’s purpose as a “fiction that bestows on the book the prestige attached to an archetypal wise man”. Fox further states that with Solomon as narrator, the words of Qohelet become part of the “pipeline of tradition” to and from the author and such transmission therefore “in itself has legitimizing force” (Fox 1989: 96).

<sup>189</sup> Proverbs does not contain the nominal clause, “the words of,” but rather, “The proverbs of Solomon,” but in principle its intent of connecting the sapiential text to follow is derived from its connection with Solomon.

seems to indicate the intention to identify Qohelet with other sapiential and prophetic texts (Schoors 2013: 30). The use of Solomonic authorship as a device to provide legitimacy to marginal canonical texts (Targum Canticles 1: 1, 17; 7: 2; 8: 5, 13) was part of the targum tradition (Knobel 1991: 5).<sup>190</sup> The role of Solomon as a sage and king-prophet was greatly expanded in TgQoh, and especially in QohRab (Alexander 2011: 92).<sup>191</sup> Solomon's role and words were used in the sense of a distinct hermeneutic device that was easily recognisable as conforming to Jewish traditions, specifically to introduce and incorporate appropriate theological doctrines of Rabbinic Judaism into the text and align them with the views of scripture (Levine 1988: 40-41, 66-67).<sup>192</sup> The placement of the addition as the opening phrase, "*The words of prophecy*", may have been intentional in order to emphasise the importance of the message right at the opening of the text.<sup>193</sup> "A large addition may be placed near the beginning or at the end of a narrative to emphasize its message" (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 48). Towards the end of the final verse of the targum, the targumist again emphasised Solomon as Qohelet and King of Israel (vs. 12: 8 -12), and included an expansion that may have been meant to place beyond doubt the idea that TgQoh should be understood as a religious text.

The targum transforms the wisdom of BibQoh by using Solomon through this connection to Moses, and the wisdom of Qohelet becomes the wisdom of Torah and

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<sup>190</sup> The tradition pre-dates the later targums: "And he, Solomon prophesied about the Kings of the Davidic dynasty who will reign in this world and in the world of the Messiah ..." Tg. Kgs. 5: 13. (Knobel 5).

<sup>191</sup> The acknowledgement of Solomon, as king and prophet is found an additional seven times in TgQoh: 3: 11; 4: 15; 9: 7, 11; 10: 7, 9; 12: 8. In all these instances the targumist referred to Solomon as 'king' in place of the first person 'I' and third person 'he', presumably to correct any latent confusion that may arise about the governing voice and to highlight the importance of Solomon as narrator.

<sup>192</sup> "Who are the former prophets?" (TB. Sota 48b).

<sup>193</sup> See Flesher and Chilton for the Seven Rules of targum (2011: 39 – 54).

the wisdom of the rabbis and their literature. “The negative character of Qohelet’s cynical approach to wisdom becomes the positive notion of Torah” (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 242).<sup>194</sup> Qohelet juxtaposes the positive attributes of wisdom with all the negativity and uncertainty implied by *hebel*. For Qohelet, knowledge and wisdom and ‘being wise’ were no guarantee of a successful and happy life, but merely the possibility of surviving life<sup>195</sup> (Seow 1997: 250; Seow 1995: 280). By replacing the image of a ‘generic’ narrator called Qohelet/Solomon with one who is identifiable as akin to a sage-like prophet, the opposite objective is attained and the negative implications of *hebel* and *wisdom* are changed into a positive religious message that included the possibility of a future life as a reward.

There are, however, divided opinions about the identification of Qohelet in BibQoh as referring specifically to Solomon; Jastrow (2006: 201) and Ginsberg (1950: 59) contend that these were later additions to the text.<sup>196</sup> As noted by Schoors, if this was the case, the argument for a redactor having made the amendments becomes difficult to sustain as verses 1:12 and 13 contradict this approach. According to Schoors (2013: 36), the indirect allusion to Solomon as Qohelet acts as a ‘mask’ to create this ‘royal fiction’ and to provide for the prophetic legitimacy for Qohelet at the same time. Zimmer describes this as follows:

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<sup>194</sup> “The heart of the wise is to acquire the Law which was given by the hand of the Lord, and the heart of the fool is to acquire riches of silver and gold” (TgQoh. 10: 2).

<sup>195</sup> “For to be in the shelter of wisdom is to be also in the shelter of money, and the advantage of intelligence is that wisdom preserves the life of him who possesses it (BibQoh 7: 12).

<sup>196</sup> See Schoors (2013: 30-37) for a detailed commentary on verse 1 and a summary of the “Solomon” issue.

Diese Selbstvorstellung des Verfassers als König über Israel zu Jerusalem ist “eine Larve, die er sich vors Gesicht halt”; und auch die Leser, für die Qohelet keine bekannte Person war, wußten, daß es einen König Kohelet in Israel nie gegeben hat’ (Zimmer 1999: 2).

If the superscription were to be removed, then the verse 1.2 – “*Utter futility – said Qohelet –Utter futility! All is futile...*” would have been the introductory verse to this work. These are arguably extremely controversial statements for an opening passage, as they convey an even more dramatic sense of pessimism and foreboding. The possibility exists that there may have been another verse or verses preceding the extant version which could have been equally controversial, although this cannot be proven.<sup>197</sup>

TgQoh is explanatory with the opening words and is quite nuanced as it claims in the superscript that the text as presented by Qohelet (Solomon) were spoken as ‘words of prophecy’ by *Solomon*, identified as the son of “David the King who was in Jerusalem”,<sup>198</sup> thereby removing any doubts as to the identity of Qohelet/Solomon.<sup>199</sup>

One of the major functions of the targum is to remove any ambiguities with regards to contentious scriptural references and biblical figures. Just as important, it also enables the book to be identified as a work with familiar Jewish roots and part of the prophetic

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<sup>197</sup> According to Rashbam, the utterances: “the words of Qohelet” and “futility of futilities” were additions of a later editor (Rashbam: 92-3 from the commentary by Ben Meir (1987). See also Gordis (1968: 204) and Schoors (2013: 29).

<sup>198</sup> “On the day the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the sages” (*B. Baba Batra*, 12a).

<sup>199</sup> The city of Jerusalem is identified in a number of rabbinic sources as “the city of wisdom” (*Rashi*); in *Midrash Lekach Tov*, Jerusalem is named as dwelling place of the *Shechinah*, of prophecy and of Torah (in *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources*, the Art Scroll edition (Zlotowitz 1998: xlili).

tradition deriving from the long line of ancient Israelite prophetic figures, and in this case it does so without sacrificing the surface meaning of the Hebrew version.<sup>200</sup> For readers of the targum familiar with rabbinic traditions and thought, there would have been no doubt that TgQoh was to all intents and purposes, in word and symbol, immediately identifiable as a book aligned to the religious theology of prevailing rabbinic doctrines. With Qohelet, as a prophet uttering messages of divine inspiration, the rest of the prophetic tone and content remains in character and consistently in line with the principles of rabbinic traditions.

Furthermore, the Pharisees saw themselves as the rightful heirs to the prophets and priests – “On the day the Temple was destroyed, prophesy was taken from the prophets and given to the sages<sup>201</sup>. The term ‘sage’ is replaced by prophet – *nabi*, or prophetic vision (*hazôn*) replaced with ‘instruction’ *‘Ulpan* (Levine 1988: 144). In Deut. 18:15 God promised to “raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself; him shall you heed.”<sup>202</sup>

Solomon was portrayed as king, interlocutor, sage, judge, student and teacher, on the one hand, thus symbolising the period of Israelite history prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. However, the placement of Solomon in the role and context of a prophet serves an additional critical purpose in the targum genre, a purpose Levine

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<sup>200</sup> See the Inventory item 6.13, p. 227 – “The text constitutes a complete and sequential representation in another language and in object-orientated perspective, of the perceived meaning of all or almost all verbal matters of a complete set of base text segments. *Thus, the resulting sentences do not thematize the base text in a meta-linguistic perspective, but recreate the thematic or narrative progression of the original*” (emphasis added).

<sup>201</sup> TB Baba Batra 12a.

<sup>202</sup> Also, Zech. 7: 12; Sifre on Deut. 18:18. See also Tg. Is 40: 13: “Who established the holy spirit in the mouth of all the prophets, is it not the LORD?” (Chilton 1982: 77). See too the commentary on the term, “the holy spirit” in Moore (1970: 237: vol. 1).

calls “the legitimation of rabbinic authority” (Levine 1988: 142). The concept as Levine explains it is based on the rabbinic principle of the transmission of the Torah that commenced from Moses and Joshua, and then to the elders and to the prophets, who then transmitted the teachings to the members of the Sanhedrin, creating “an unbroken chain of legitimate tradition that connected the rabbis to Sinai where the entirety of Torah – both written and oral – had been divinely revealed” (Levine 1988: 143).

For the targum, therefore, the biblical figure of Solomon as the symbol of wisdom and portrayed as a prophet, was used in a partly metaphorical sense to describe the chain of revelation of the Torah from its handing down from Moses (the prophet) to Solomon the prophet. However, Solomon, in the rabbinic sense, was understood in targumic literature as the figure that represented the rabbis, the compilers of TgQoh, and who had inherited the authority of the sages and priests after the destruction of the Temple. Solomon therefore became the symbol and metaphor for rabbinical ideology within the context of targum translation.<sup>203</sup>

In the midrashim and the targums the legends surrounding Solomon were sustained and expanded. The Tannaim stressed Solomon’s imperfections and especially his downfall. For example, in Y. Sanh. 2.6 20C, Solomon’s fall from power is treated in a somewhat dour rabbinic account without explaining its intended message. In b. Gittin 68 a-b the legend is portrayed in the form of a narrative cycle about the struggle between Solomon and Ashmodai and how Solomon returned to his throne. (Sivertsev 2014: 111-112). The Talmudic references to these interpretations are the basis for

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<sup>203</sup> See Flesher and Chilton on the prophetic persona in the targumim (2011: 244).

TgQoh. 1. 2; 12 –13. Here the targum emphasises Solomon’s human weaknesses when he amassed great riches and married foreign women against the wishes of God and like all sinners, he was reproached for it by God. For which the Lord “sent to him Ashmodai, king of the demons, who drove him from his throne, and took away his ring from his hand.” This is a metaphor which will be explored later in which Solomon as king of Israel, disobeyed God and lost his kingdom, like Adam who lost Eden when he disobeyed God’s instructions. In the following verse (1:13), Solomon declares his devotion to God in an act of atonement and declares himself to be a man of wisdom who knows the difference between good and evil. This addition becomes the focus of a larger theme in TgQoh that embodies the classical rabbinic ideology concerning sin and atonement.

Furthermore, Solomon was included amongst those to whom God gave names before their birth thereby attaining the honour of being included in the category of the ‘just.’<sup>204</sup>

The rabbinic tradition of prophecy accords prophetic speech to biblical prophets, as well as the secondment of Solomon in BibQoh and TgQoh, and a range of other targums, principally targum Jonathan, is also linked to the tradition of the Meturgeman, who took it on themselves to speak with quasi-prophetic authority (Chilton 1982: 52-6).

“The disagreement among the Rabbis with regard to the personality of Solomon extends also to his future life (*“Olam ha-ba”*). According to Rab, the members of the Great Synagogue proposed including *Solomon among those denied a*

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<sup>204</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia.com: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13842-solomon>.

*share in the future life*, when the image of David appeared, imploring them not to do so. The vision, however, was not heeded; nor was a fire from heaven, which licked the seats on which they sat, regarded until a bat kol forbade them to do as they had purposed” (Sanh. 104b; Yer. Sanh. x. 2; Cant. R. i. 1). On the other hand, Solomon is considered to resemble his father in that all his sins were forgiven by God (Cant. R. *l.c.*). Moreover, David is said to have left a son worthy of him (B. B. 116a). When R. Eliezer was asked for his opinion of Solomon's future life, he gave his pupils an evasive answer, showing that he had formed no opinion concerning it (Tosef. Yeb. iii. 4; Yoma 66b; comp. Tos. *ad loc.*)” ([www.jewishencyclopedia.com](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com) – italics added).

TgQoh can therefore synthesise, midrashic, haggadic and talmudic concepts into an integrated system in which key dogma of Torah and Jewish theology have been combined in a symbiotic manner. These are: the righteous and the wicked, the wise (learned) and the ignorant, *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, idol worship *Malkut Hashamaim* and rewards and punishments (Kadushin 1972: 26-27). These concepts are interwoven to integrate matters of death and resurrection into a distinctive form of rabbinically influenced eschatology.

Solomon, however, as a traditional symbol for wisdom, became in the case of TgQoh, the biblical catalyst who typified man with all his faults, yet one who also epitomised the essence of humanity in both thought and deeds and in particular in his relationship with God.<sup>205</sup> Presenting Solomon as a person with his own inherent flaws and also a

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<sup>205</sup> “Rab Judah son of R. Samuel b. Shilath said in Rab's name: The Sages wished to hide the Book of Ecclesiastes, because its words are self-contradictory; yet why did they not hide it? Because its beginning is religious teaching and its end is religious teaching. Its beginning is religious teaching, as it

symbol of wisdom meant he could, “present the wisdom of Qohelet while flirting with the famous heterodoxy of the book” (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 243).

### 7. 3 *Hebel* as Symbol and Metaphor

After the superscription (1: 1), Qohelet inserts the principal motto or theme in vs. 1: 2. It has been accepted by all scholars to be a representation of Qohelet’s world view (Seow 1997: 112).<sup>206</sup> Schoors clarifies that the verse is the motto of the book, but also a general statement that underlines the absurdity of everything (Schoors 2013: 39). This statement of the thesis is based on the single term, *hebel*, and is used metaphorically and as a symbol that in turn refers to a range of different but related metaphorical contexts.<sup>207</sup> The immediate impression of the *hebel* metaphor and symbol is that of the transitory nature of human (and non-human) life compared to the permanence of the rest of creation of the natural world (Schoors 2013: 50). The opening proclamation is repeated in the final chapter in TgQoh again at 12: 8, where it too is translated to carefully place it in the context of Solomon.

(HebQoh 1:2)

Utter futility! – Said Qohelet –

Utter futility! All is futile

<sup>208</sup>: הבל הבלים אמר קהלת הבל הבלים

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is written, what profit hath man of all his labour wherein he labours under the sun? And the School of R. Jannai commented: Under the sun he has none, but he has it [profit] before the sun. The end thereof is religious teaching, as it is written, let us hear the conclusion of the matter, fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man...” (b. Shab 30(b).

<sup>206</sup> The literature on this lexeme is extensive. I have focused mainly on the Douglas Miller study, *Symbol and Rhetoric: The Place of Hebel in Qohelet’s Work* (2002) as a reliable and comprehensive source.

<sup>207</sup> For a detailed treatment of *hebel* and its contexts, see Douglas B. Miller (2002).

<sup>208</sup> הבל הבלים אמר קהלת הבל הבלים Genitive expressive of the superlative idea; its repetition makes it emphatic (Barton 1908: 72).

(TgQoh 1: 2)

כד איסתכל שלמה מלכא דישראל בהבלו דעלמא הדין ובהבלין דעבדין בני־נשא אמר  
קהלת במימריה כולא הבלו:

“When Solomon, the King of Israel, reflected upon the vanity of this world, and upon the vanities of which the children of men do, Qohelet said by his word, “All is vanity” (TgQoh 12: 8).

The lexeme *hebel* and the metaphorical idioms it implied were rooted in the Semitic consciousness and had a number of different contextual meanings, all of which implied negative associations (Schoors 2013: 41) and connotations which would most probably have been commonly understood as such by the intended target audience. *Hebel*, a noun, appears 73 times in the Hebrew Bible, and specifically 38 times in the BibQoh, if one includes *hebel habalim* in 1.2 and 12: 8.<sup>209</sup> Its Aramaic form is *hablā*.

*Hebel* is a noun and its literal meanings are ‘air’, ‘breath’, ‘vapour’ and ‘heat’ (Jastrow 2006: 329). In the MT, it is used metaphorically to describe specific conditions of human experience and in a few cases as a verb in the MT.<sup>210</sup> It is also used more than one hundred times in the Babylonian Talmud and other biblical texts (Miller 2002: 187-194).<sup>211</sup> The original meaning was to describe an ‘exhalation of breath’, a ‘mist’, ‘light wind’ or ‘vapour’ and even ‘steam,’ as in QohR: “Like the steam from the oven” (QohRab: 4). *Hebel* is thus meant to refer to the natural phenomenon associated with

<sup>209</sup> Some scholars believe that הכל in 9.2 should read and הבל and that at 9.9 the second הבל should be omitted because of scribal errors, as has been done in the LXX.

<sup>210</sup> Job 27.12, Ps 62.11, Jer 23.16, 2kgs 17.15, Jer 2.5.

<sup>211</sup> For instance, in b. Šabb. 88b, 119b; Yebam. 80b.

different forms of breath/vapour/mist that can be seen or felt (like a breeze) precisely because of its ephemeral presence. The term is thus used metaphorically to describe the brief and ephemeral nature of all living beings (humans and animals) and a vehicle for explaining ironic, contradictory and intellectual complexities (Seow 1997: 47).<sup>212</sup> Typical synonyms are most notably ‘ephemeral’, transient, insubstantial, incomprehensible, enigmatic and inconsistent.<sup>213</sup> When applied in the context of living beings, it implies that a life span is of a limited nature, usually in a negative sense and of fleeting and uncertain duration: “*I am sick of it. I shall not live forever; let me be, for my days are a breath*” (Job 7:16). *Hebel’s* association with death and the finite nature of human life as transient is metaphorically explained in concrete terms in QohRab:

David says: ‘Man is like vapour. Like which vapour? If the vapour (steam) of an oven, it has substance; if the vapour of a stove, it has substance. His son Solomon came and interpreted it: it is what is written; *‘hebel habalim* said Qohelet.’ R. Samuel bar Nahman taught in the name of R. Yehoshua ben Levi that it is like a person who puts seven pots one on top of the other, and the vapour of the topmost has no substance (QohRab: 4-6).

In the absence of any clear history of the development of the word within the Hebrew language, its metaphorical development is hinted at by a variety of other connotations in HB (Fox 1999: 27-30).<sup>214</sup> Some of the other biblical references in which *hebel* and

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<sup>212</sup> The section dealing with the morphology of *hebel*, its contexts and meanings has been adapted from my paper, “An Analysis of the Use of *Hebel* as a Metaphorical and Symbolic device as Interpreted in LXX Ecclesiastes” in *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint*, Cook, J. and Stipp, H.J. eds. (2002), Leiden: Brill, 157-172.

<sup>213</sup> Also, Koehler-Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*; (Leiden: Brill 1958); B. Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster 1959)

<sup>214</sup> See Ginsberg (1861: 13) and Loretz (1964: 223), who both describe *hebel* as denoting ‘nothing’, but Fox counters with the argument that *hebel* is never used in Qohelet to mean ‘nothing’ (1999: 28.) In

its variants appear are noted below.<sup>215</sup> These range from ephemeral connotations<sup>216</sup> to denote a state of denote vanity (vain).<sup>217</sup> *Hebel* is also synonymous with ‘lies’ and ‘deceit’. Whenever *šeqer*, *awen*, *ma`al* or *kazab* appear in the following verses, it includes *hebel* within the same verse to highlight the vanity of deceitful deeds and thoughts.<sup>218</sup> The theme of *hebel* where it means ‘deceit’ is expanded to include the futility of pursuing false gods.<sup>219</sup>

Different negative inferences and contexts included difficult human conditions (Job 7.21), errors of speech (Job 35.16), futile labour (Isa 49.4, Job 9.29), acquiring wealth dishonestly (Prov. 21.6) and numerous other contexts in which *hebel* was used symbolically and metaphorically (Miller 2002: 190-194). But it is a moot point whether Qohelet was influenced in any way by the passages noted above (Ogden 1998: 227-232).

The use of *hebel* in strategic places in BibQoh and as a thematic element gives it a central position in Qohelet’s exposition (Schoors 2013: 41-46). The concept of *hebel* and the philosophical and theological arguments it has engendered have been one of the most disputed and widely studied concepts in the Qohelet text.<sup>220</sup> Its place in the

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*Qohelet and His Contradictions*, Fox explains that Qohelet in fact understood *hebel* to denote the ‘absurdity’ or unreasonableness of the ‘system’ in which human actions occur, and the actions themselves (1989: 46).

<sup>215</sup> Adapted from a summary by Fox (1999: 28-9).

<sup>216</sup> Examples of ephemerality: Ps. 39.6: Surely every man walks in a vain show; surely, they are disquieted in vain אדם להבל דמה; Prov. 21.6: The obtaining of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity, הבל tossed to and fro of them who seek death; Ps. 144.4: Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow (מהלך דמה) that passes away; Job 7.16: I loathe it; I would not live forever – leave me alone, for all my days are vanity כי הבל כל ימי

<sup>217</sup> Is. 49.4: I have laboured in vain (הבל); Is. 30.7: Egypt will help only in vain (הבל) and emptily רק; See also Lam. 4.17; Job 9.29; and Ps. 94.11 for similar meanings of *hebel* as meaning ‘vanity’.

<sup>218</sup> Prov. 31.30; Job 21.34; Ps. 62.10 and Zech. 10.2.

<sup>219</sup> Jer. 16.19; Deut. 32.21; Jon. 2.9; Zech. 10.2; 2Kgs. 17.15; Jer.2.5, 8.19, 14.22.

<sup>220</sup> The study by D. Miller (2002) is a detailed and valuable aid to the understanding of *hebel* from many different perspectives and has been widely used in this study. Besides, *hebel* appears in most studies

superscript in BibQoh appears deliberate (maybe to provoke?), but certainly to draw attention to a central thought in Qohelet's view on the nature of human existence and its brief tenure on earth. The consistent use of repetition of *hebel* throughout the book gives cogency to the comment by James Barr that words judiciously used have a specific meaning in specific contexts and in relation to those who use them (Barr 1968: 171).

The nexus of Qohelet's argument is not the fact of the futility of most of life's endeavours and its injustices and absurdities, which were anyway equally surveyed in other wisdom sceptical works such as Psalms and Job, but in the way that he redefined the possibilities inherent in human wisdom of providing answers and solace. For Qohelet, therein lay his ultimate pessimism (Miller 2002: 174-6, 180).

Qohelet consistently undercuts his own epistemology and rejects the knowledge of others and then sets out to propose other ways to a better life (enjoyment, for example), but then he eventually, rejects even his own advice, unable to set aside his innately sceptical nature: "Often much talk means much *hebel*. How does it benefit a man? Who can possibly know what is best for a man to do in life – the few days of his fleeting life? For who can tell what the future holds for him under the sun? (BibQoh 6: 11-12)<sup>221</sup>

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on Qohelet in both recent and older text-critical and other forms of analysis on its central place in the philosophy of Qohelet.

<sup>221</sup> Fox (1999: 71 – 86). Fox was right when he wrote: "Qohelet conceives of knowledge as a product of thought and discovery, not as an entity independent of the individual mind. He does not phrase his idea in this way, of course, but such a notion is implied by his description of what happens when he reaches the boundaries of knowledge ... to investigate and explore with wisdom all that occurs under the heavens" (1: 13) (82).

Douglas Miller investigated the multivalent nature of the term *hebel* in BibQoh not only concerning its metaphorical characteristics, but its application as a tensive symbol. Qohelet creates areas in which there are contradictions between the different referents where *hebel* appears; for example, Qohelet states that there is justice in the world, yet then expresses doubt that there is in fact justice to be found at all on earth (3: 17-21; 8: 10-14); God is said to be fickle, yet he is also a source of ‘good gifts’ (1: 3; 3: 13). (Miller 2002: 157;161).

*Hebel* as a metaphorical and abstract concept is problematic from a translational point of view. As Miller has noted that “Qohelet employs *hebel* as a ‘symbol’, an image which holds together a set of meanings, or ‘referents’, that can neither be exhausted nor adequately expressed by any single meaning” (2002: 92), an observation that is of crucial importance for the targum, as *hebel* ran counter to rabbinical doctrines. TgQoh’s strategy therefore was to diminish the impact of *hebel*’s metaphoric power over the meaning and message of the book and replace it with a rabbinically suitable choice of metaphorical imagery. Significantly, Miller also states “*no single metaphor* has been found adequate for the range of *hebel*’s diverse usage” (2002: 14, emphasis added).

In my understanding of the concept of *hebel* in BibQoh, I do not think that the modern English equivalent of ‘vanity’ or other translational equivalents such as ‘futile’ or ‘pointlessness’ have quite the correct sense of the idiomatic meaning of the Hebrew term ‘*hebel*’.<sup>222</sup> They appear to lack the emotive power of *hebel* and its range of

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<sup>222</sup> For a detailed examination of the inherent problems concerning the differing connotations of the term, see Schoors (2013: 38 – 46).

metaphorical contexts that strengthen its idiomatic power of the lexeme in BibQoh. In my opinion, Qohelet was principally trying to convey a particular message founded upon his own interpretation of wisdom. Qohelet's view was that in spite of all the advantages to be gained from fear of God, as well as the advantages the study of wisdom and pursuit of wealth and other material pleasures of life, in spite of all these, they are all just *hebel*, as nothing lasts more than its allotted lifespan. Plainly stated, the condition of mankind is essentially pointless/absurd (*hebel*), like that of the beasts of the earth, the common destiny for all living beings is death and the grave – and it is *futile* (*hebel*) to expect more than that.

*Hebel* is suitably idiomatically descriptive and valid in its original forms as a metaphor and a symbol, and doesn't need to be translated. Schoors concurs, "None of the meanings we draw from literature ... is satisfactory, since they all go in the sense of 'futility, emptiness, vanity'" (Schoors 2013: 40-45). Seow stated that *hebel* "has no single English equivalent" (Seow 1997: 122). Schoors wrote that none of the situations or scenarios Qohelet calls *hebel* is always just futile: on the contrary, they are "grievous" (Schoors 2013: 43), and I concur with Schoors and Seow on these points. For the purpose of this study the word *hebel* and its cognates will remain in their original Hebrew and or Aramaic forms as presented in BibQoh and TgQoh. This avoids the need to explain the different idiomatic applications of *hebel* and to justify the various contexts and nuances as found in TgQoh.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> For a relatively new work with a detailed description of most of the translations and explanations of *hebel* in different languages and scholarly arguments, see Schoors 224 (2011: 40-47); also, Seow's translation and commentary, 47-8 and throughout the book, where *hebel* is mentioned; Most commentaries on Qohelet, and these are simply too numerous to all be cited here, contain expansive descriptions on *hebel* and its purported messages. In particular the book by Douglas Miller (2002) is totally devoted to *hebel* and is an invaluable resource on the lexeme Miller. See also my paper on *hebel*, but it focused on the translation of *hebel* for the LXX (Lincoln: 2011).

## 7. 4 TgQoh and *Hebel*

Where the term *hebel* occurs in TgQoh, the translations are mostly expansive and have only a tenuous relationship to the Hebrew context. All references to *hebel* from BibQoh are included in the targum, but are always framed in a different context with alternative meanings. In TgQoh *hebel* and its cognates, as well as the term 'breaking the spirit' or 'pursuit of wind'. are found in the following verses: 1: 2, 14; 2: 1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3: 19; 4: 4, 6, 7, 16; 5: 9, 10; 6: 2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7: 6, 15; 8: 10, 14; 9: 2, 9; 11: 8, 10; 12: 8. *Hebel* is not mentioned in chapter 10.

The targum could not accept the negative metaphorical meanings of *hebel* as implied in BibQoh in the sense of 'futility, vanity, hopelessness.' TgQoh, therefore, could not have undertaken a purely literal translation of the *hebel* phrases without making any changes to their contexts. *Hebel* as presented in BibQoh contradicted any notion of hope in an eschatological future. This was a non-negotiable issue for the targum, as a person's life on earth and subsequent post-mortem existence became connected in a theological relationship with God by adherence to a number of religious conditions and obligations in order to earn rewards and thereby gain access to the promise of an afterlife in the world to come. The 'afterlife promise' depended on undertakings that would have contradicted the notion of *hebel*/futile in the worldview of BibQoh. The targum could not accept that justice began and ended in this world, as this would have excluded the idea of divine intervention in the execution of justice, so TgQoh repeatedly and forcefully specified the moral codes of ethics that humankind is obliged

to obey, both as individuals and as a community (Israel) with “a strict quid pro quo obtaining after death” (Levine 1988: 82).

According to the symbolic referents inherent in BibQoh’s notions of *hebel*, existence and consciousness of such are brief, inexplicable and lacking in justice and moral implications (BibQoh 3: 16 – 22; 6: 10 – 12; 12: 1- 8). Though Qohelet’s concerns may have focused specifically on human beings in this world (Seow 1997:102; Lohfink 1980: 201-16), Qohelet’s relationship to God can be described as arbitrary, superficial though capricious, distant, unpredictable and unfathomable. Qohelet stated that God is to be feared (BibQoh 3: 14; 5: 7; 7: 18; 8: 12-13). A relationship founded upon ever-present fear of the deity was not one in which there could have been positive or life-enriching communication.<sup>224</sup> The overall characteristic of Qohelet’s view of God is that he is depicted as remote and all-powerful, and one who is quickly offended<sup>225</sup> (Levine 1978: 81; Whybray 1989: 76-80; Ogden 2007; 81-2; Schoors 2013: 20-21).<sup>226</sup>

Qohelet expresses his deep dissatisfaction with the limits of human wisdom and “here is a frustration” (*hebel*), (BibQoh 8: 14 - 15). Qohelet’s solution is “to eat and drink and enjoy himself” (8: 15). The message of these *hebel situations*, in accepting that poverty, injustices, the lack of appropriate punishment and the lack of discrimination between good and evil, were moral issues that offended the targumists (Levine 1988: 81). In reply, the targumist responded to the theologically unacceptable views implied

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<sup>224</sup> “Keep your mouth from being rash, and let not your throat be quick to bring forth speech before God. For God is in heaven; that is why your words should be few” (BibQoh 5: 1).

<sup>225</sup> BibQoh 5: 2, 6; 6: 10.

<sup>226</sup> Ogden’s view is that Qohelet does not refer to the geographical distance, but argues that Qohelet implied that the remoteness was that Qohelet’s focus on the divine transcendence placing man as unable to communicate with God as remoteness prevented any position of closeness with the deity. This argument is not supported elsewhere and is an indication of Ogden’s over-elaboration in constructing a theological view which is not realistic, given the overall nature of Qohelet’s philosophy and the record from the other wisdom books (Ogden 2007).

by *hebel* by including an expansive and elaborate theological exposition on sin, punishment, rewards and judgment (TgQoh 8: 1-6). The targum packs into these 6 verses most of the fundamental doctrines of Rabbinic theology to contradict all the negative aspects on the relationship between man and God as detailed in BibQoh, and describes the correct theological stance: “As a result, there was, and continued to be an ongoing attempt at spiritualization: reinterpreting these (the books of the 5 *Megillot*) to provide a religious, acceptable meaning, by means of additions to, and circumlocutions of these works” (Levine 1978: 13). For example, in the passage below, the targum provides a definitive ‘this worldly’ context for *hebel* in order to point out that *hebel* (vanities) are the result of human actions and not an inherent flaw in the world created by God. By implication, the destruction of the temple and the exile came about because of the deeds of humankind.

When Solomon the king of Israel foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy that the Kingdom of Rehoboam his son would be divided with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that Jerusalem and the holy temple would be destroyed, and that the people of Israel would be exiled, he said by the divine word, “Vanity of vanities is this world! Vanity of vanities is all that I and my father David strived for. All is vanity” (TgQoh 1:2).

## **7.5 *Hebel* - In this world and under the sun**

The terms ‘in this world’ and ‘under the sun’ grouped together with *hebel* can be found in 4: 7, 8; 6: 4, 9, 11, 12; 7: 15; 8: 10, 14; 9: 9; 12: 8. In TgQoh. The term ‘world to come’ appears at 5: 9; 6: 4, 9; 7: 15; 8: 14; 11: 8.

The targum refuted the notion that in a world in which Torah exists life could be without any meaning or hope. Man, in emulation of God, had free will, and thus was able to make certain choices, to study Torah and to live according to the religious conditions imposed by the Torah and rabbinic traditions. As evidence of how central and fundamental Torah study was to the targum, it was mentioned forty times in the text (Levine 1978: 77).

The following excerpts in the table below, demonstrate how *hebel* was interpreted in the targum in order to promote the doctrines of rabbinic theology. These verses illustrate how the targum introduced language customarily used in rabbinic discourse. The targumist, translating in the guise of a follower of rabbinic views and beliefs, consistently conceptualises the views expressed in the targum as representing a just society upheld by values and ethics based on Torah and commandments (Levine 1978: 76-77). The arguments concerning the wise man and the fool are nullified in TgQoh and doubts are replaced with certainties by stressing the lines between what constitutes righteousness and evil. In short, TgQoh promotes an alternative society to that represented by the views of Qohelet and personified by individuals who would live in emulation of sage-like figures inspired by the example of Solomon (Levine 1978: 76). The following extracts demonstrate how *hebel* as negative symbol is interpreted as a religious experience, and portray the generative power of rabbinic theology to solve the problems that concerned Qohelet.<sup>227</sup> In addition, the targum consistently places negative situations and consequences in the dimension of 'this world' as opposed to a world to come – a future world in which the righteous will be vindicated

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<sup>227</sup> Refer to Neusner for more on the generative powers of religious experiences (2003: 44-49).

and the evil will suffer. The cross dimensional-approach is a model that permits the righteous who may have been oppressed in this world to find eternal relief and comfort for their suffering in the future world, while the wicked who have not atoned and repented will suffer eternal punishments in the world to come.

BibQoh	TgQoh
And I have noted this further futility under the sun” (BibQoh 4: 7).	“And I turned and saw the <i>hebel (vanity)</i> which is destined to be in this world and under the sun” (TgQoh 4: 7).
The case of the man who is alone, with no companions, who neither has son or brother; yet he amasses wealth without limit, and his eye is never sated with riches. For whom, now is he amassing it while denying himself enjoyment? That too is futility and an unhappy business (BibQoh 4: 8).	There is a single man, and no second beside him. He has even no son nor brother to inherit his property, yet there is no end to all his labor, and even his eye cannot be satisfied with his riches, nor does he say in his heart, “Why am I laboring and restraining my soul from good? I will arise now, and will do charity, with it, and will be joyful in this world with the children of men, and with the righteous in the world to come.” This too, is vanity, and an evil thing (TgQoh. 4: 8).

<p>A lover of money never has his fill of money, nor a lover of wealth his fill of income. That too is futile (BibQoh 5: 9)</p>	<p>It is better for a man to rejoice about the world to come, and to do righteousness, and to see a good reward for his labors in the day of the great judgement, than to go into that world with an afflicted soul. And this is <i>hebel (vanity)</i>, and a breaking of spirit to a guilty man (TgQoh 5: 9).</p>
<p>All things I have seen in the days of my vanity; there is a just man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness (BibQoh 7: 15).</p>	<p>And I saw in the days of my <i>hebel (vanity)</i>; from the Lord are decreed good and evil to be in the world, according to the planets under which the children of men are created.<sup>228</sup> For there is a righteous man perishing in his righteousness in this world, and his merit is kept from him for the world to come (TgQoh 7: 15).</p>
<p>Here is a frustration that occurs in the world: Sometimes an upright man is</p>	<p>There is <i>hebel (a vanity)</i> that is decreed to be done upon the face of the earth;</p>

<sup>228</sup> Knobel's and Levine's translation is 'planet' for the Aramaic '*mazal*.' There are fifteen references to the term '*mazal*' in TgQoh. These astrological terms were problematic for rabbinic Judaism. In TgQoh, God was said to determine good fortune or *mazal* (5: 18; 6: 2; 10: 6); *mazal* is awarded to the deserving (5: 7; 10: 9). *Mazal* in the targum also refers to inescapable destiny (9: 2,11) and *mazal* is used to indicate the suffering of the righteous and the good life enjoyed by the wicked (8: 15). Despite rabbinic antagonism to the concept of fortune or luck, yet it is permitted most likely because of several connotations from the Talmud and Midrash where it is explained: TB Hullin 7b; GenRab 1; TB Shab. 53b. Levine concedes that *mazal* also may have referred to the movement of the planets as opposed to direct divine intervention (Levine 1978: 75). Knobel is in agreement, and includes the quotation from Levine (75): "The Mazal elements in the targum testify that the Pharisaic-Rabbinic tradition did not eradicate the grip of astrology on the popular mind" (Knobel 1991: 29). However, TgQoh also included a warning on following *mazal*: "A man who looks to sorcerers and charmers will never do good, and he who watches the planets will not reap a reward" (11: 4).

<p>requited according to the conduct of the scoundrel; and sometimes the scoundrel is requited according to the conduct of the upright. I say all that is frustration (<i>hebel</i>) (BibQoh 8: 14)</p>	<p>there are righteous to whom evil happens as if they have done like deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked to whom it happens as if they had done like the deeds of the righteous. And I saw by the Holy Spirit that the evil which happens to the righteous in this world is not for their guilt, but to free them from a slight transgression, that their reward may be perfect in the world to come. And the good that comes to the sinners in this world is not for their merits, but to render them a reward for their small merit they have acquired, but that they may eat their reward in this world, and to destroy their portion in the world to come. I said, by my word, this is also vanity (TgQoh 8: 14).</p>
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In the examples cited above *hebel* in the hands of the targumist becomes a natural extension of the theological statements attached to it. The targum emphasises a conceptual framework based on the need to establish a model of conduct in which the activities, both good and bad, have consequences in a future world after death: “*that their reward may be perfect in the world to come*” (8: 14); *And I saw by the Holy Spirit*

*that the evil which happens to the righteous in this world is not for their guilt, but to free them from a slight transgression, that their reward may be perfect in the world to come* (7: 15). This is supported by the following extract from Talmud: “He (God) will be slack in rewarding those who are absolutely righteous, as the reward for the righteous does not arrive immediately, but only in the World-to-Come” (TB. Eruvin 22a).<sup>229</sup> The targum’s approach to *hebel* introduces the audience to the thought world of the rabbinic canon and to religious experience. It is a reversal of the conditions found in BibQoh in its attempt to find solutions to general philosophical questions. In the targum one finds the typical balances and proportions that Neusner described in the section on Restoring World Order (Neusner 2003: 276 – 306).

It was by design that TgQoh would base its translation on the works of centuries of rabbinic teachings to validate the targum. This was the practice and tradition of what rabbis were trained to do. In TgQoh’s case the implications attached to *hebel* became, in a sense, a rabbinical “masterclass” to exegetically explain BibQoh’s frustrations with regards to death and afterlife by seeking validation from rabbinical literature.<sup>230</sup> The targumist achieved this by maintaining its focus on the intrinsic characteristics of the targum genre (as noted earlier in this study). TgQoh thus largely allowed the contradictory and controversial sections of the base text to remain, although it was an uneasy relationship, or as Alexander has suggested, the dependency of TgQoh on BibQoh depended on the layout of the manuscript (Alexander: 2011: 86).

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<sup>229</sup> Also, in Pirkei Avot 2: 16, “If you have learned much Torah, your reward will be much; and the Master of your work is trustworthy to pay you the wage for your activity. And know, the giving of reward to the righteous in the future to come.”

<sup>230</sup> Although for the targumist the Torah was always supreme there is only one reference in TgQoh (12: 10) to a passage from Torah, and this is a reference from Deut. 19.15 (Alexander 2011: 85). This is also an indirect reference made to the famous judgement by King Solomon in 1Kgs. 3: 16- 28 (ibid).

## 7. 6 Death in TgQoh

What real value (profit)<sup>231</sup> is there for a man

In all the gains he makes beneath the sun? (BibQoh 1: 3).

מה־יתרון לאדם בכל־עמלו שיעמל תחת השמש:

What value is there to a man, *after his death*, from all his labor which he labored under the sun in this world, other than if he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the world to come from before the Lord of the world?? (TgQoh 1: 3).

מא מותר אית לאינש בתר דימות מן כל טורחיה דהוא טרח תחות שימשא בעלמא הדין  
אילהין למעסק באוריתא לקבלא אגר שלים לעלמא דאתי קדם מרי עלמא:

The first mention of death and a post-mortem promise in TgQoh occurs in 1:3 in translation, as an addition to the base text. The verse is a radical reinterpretation and its purpose appears to be a strategic one. It places all the elements in the verse into a specific context and dimension: the general view of BibQoh is changed from a rhetorical question about the condition of man on earth, into one in which man is portrayed as an individual who has choices (to study the Torah) and in so doing, he determines the outcome of his own life. The targum is careful to qualify these vague generalities so that no blame can accrue to God.

<sup>231</sup> JPS translates *yitron* as 'value' but the most common alternatives amongst a sample of the commentators appears to be on the themes of 'profit', as in Schoors (2013: 54); 'advantage' (Fox 1989: 60; Seow 1997: 103- 4); 'gain' Barton 1908: 67).

That 1: 3 was regarded by the targumist as problematic was noted by the Talmud Bavli in TB. Shab. 30b and the response is indicative of the targum's strategy to eliminate contradictions and to clarify any obscurities. The problem of the verse from BibQoh had been raised in TB. Shab. 30b.<sup>232</sup>

Since contradictions in Ecclesiastes were mentioned, ..., the sages sought to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes and declare it apocryphal ... because its statements contradict each other and it is liable to cause confusion. And why did they not suppress it? Because its beginning consists of matters of Torah and its end consists of matters of Torah. "What profit has man of all his labors under the sun?" ... Under the sun is where man has no profit from his labor; however, before the sun, he does, i.e., when engaged in the study of Torah, which is preceded by the sun, he does have profit.

While Qohelet's depiction of death was similar to the views of traditional wisdom literature in general as it existed prior to the advent of rabbinic influence and thought. The targumist, as a representative of the theology of the Rabbinic tradition, accepted the inevitable fact that death was the end of physical existence, although man spent the allotted time of his life (in this world), in spiritual preparation for a life to come (Levine 1978: 82).

The rabbinical premise regarding death was fundamentally based on the belief that earthly life took precedence over any form of post-mortem existence. This position is

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<sup>232</sup> "The one who acquires for himself the words of the Torah also acquires for himself the life of the world to come" (m. Avot 2: 7).

based on the notion that mankind can only serve God on the earthly plane by fulfilling the precepts of Torah and divine commandments; the relationship with God begins in the earthly phase and one's conduct and attitudes determine a person's future fate in the afterlife (Raphael 1996: 122). The emphasis in the rabbinical world on earthly life was expressed in a story from the Talmud:

Since David died in the garden, Solomon sent the following question to the study hall: Father died and is lying in the sun, and the dogs of father's house are hungry. There is room for concern lest the dogs come and harm his body. What shall I do? They sent an answer to him: Cut up an animal carcass and place it before the dogs. Since the dogs are hungry, handling an animal carcass to feed them is permitted. And with reference to your father, it is prohibited to move his body directly. Place a loaf of bread or an infant on top of him, and you can move him into the shade due to the bread or the infant. And is it not appropriate what Solomon said: "For a living dog is better than a dead lion." The ultimate conclusion of this discussion is that life is preferable to death (TB Shab. 30b)<sup>233</sup>

TgQoh rejected the pessimism and secular nature of biblical Qohelet, 1: 3 by dividing the world into two separate dimensions. The first is the materialistic earthly world described as labour in this world, and with the concept of world immersed in religious 'labour'. The second dimension in the targum is the world to come, and is a spiritual world that all people strive to attain by means of wholly religious activities based on devotion to Torah accompanied by good deeds and intentions.

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<sup>233</sup> Also, TB Shab 33b. BibQoh and TgQoh 9: 4.

TgQoh presents two polarities: the wicked and the righteous, reward and punishment, and Torah and repentance after atonement. “The God of the targum reflects Pharisaic /Rabbinic theology in that he is a moral deity; he rewards and punishes, both in this world and in the world-to-come. His qualities include wisdom, Mercy and Righteousness, as well as Power. He is accessible, responsive and loving (Levine 1978: 75).<sup>234</sup> To this list of dichotomies in the targum can be added ‘life and death’ as these are found in various forms in all the chapters of the targum. TgQoh fundamentally changes BibQoh’s attitudes towards life and subsequently presents a completely different perspective on death and afterlife from the rabbinic perspective (Levine 1978: 83)

## 7.7 Fear of God

According to the wisdom tradition, the fear of God is the source of wisdom and all knowledge (Levine 1988: 72; Smolar and Aberbach 1983: 156). In the targum this is found in these selected verses:

- And I (Solomon) asked nothing of him (God) except wisdom, to know the difference between good and evil ... (TgQoh 1: 13);<sup>235</sup>
- “To enjoy the wisdom given me by God” ... (TgQoh 2: 10);
- That the children of man may fear him” (the Lord who punishes in this world) (TgQoh 3: 14);
- “... And fear before the Lord “(TgQoh 5: 6);
- “For a man fearing before the Lord ... “(TgQoh 19);

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<sup>234</sup> The capitalisation in the quote is Levine’s.

<sup>235</sup> PS. 111: 10; Prov. 1: 7.

- “Acceptance of the fear of the kingdom (TgQoh 7: 25);
- “Those that fear the Lord ...” (TgQoh 8: 13);
- Therefore, fear the word of the Lord and keep his commandments, that you sin not in secret (TgQoh 12: 13).

The fear of God stresses the personal relationship that exists between man and the deity with the overall focus is on evil and evil deeds and not on the trespassing of Halakhic commands (Levine 1988: 80).

The evil deeds mentioned in the targum are: participating in witchcraft, “A man who looks to sorcerers and charmers ... (11: 4);<sup>236</sup> in 5: 6 there is a warning not to believe in the wicked words of the false prophets and *hebel* of sorcerers as a reason to cause fear before the Lord.

The theological relevance of these verses relates to shielding and honouring the importance and role of the rabbi/sage and here the targum paraphrases scripture in TgQoh: “The words of the sages are like stimulating goads and forks ... and so are the words of the rabbis of the Sanhedrin, the Masters of the Halakhot and Midrashim which were given through Moses the prophet ... (12: 11).<sup>237</sup> Verse 10: 20 of the targum further exhorts the reader “do not to revile a sage.”

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<sup>236</sup> Sorcery and magic are additions and are not found in BibQoh. Neither does QohRab mention anything concerning charmers, magic or sorcerers. However, targumim as a whole are ambivalent on matters concerning angelology and celestial beings. Targum Onqelos avoided mention of angels unless it was scripturally essential. The attitude towards these other than divine beings such as angels and demons, created an ongoing tension amongst various Jewish circles and schisms that existed on the periphery of Jewish religious life. According to Levine (1988), “Popular targum texts echo folklore involving giants, monsters and supernatural beings” (63) ... “A frightening category of supernatural beings are those of angels that are involved with death, for as a man tarries to go to his burial place, the angels that seek your judgement walk about like mourners, wandering through the streets and writing the judgement ledger (TgQoh 12: 5) (63).

<sup>237</sup> TB. Gag. 3b.; QohRab 12: 11: 312-13.

## 7. 8 Torah and Torah study<sup>238</sup>

The targum in v. 1 firmly established Solomon in the role of prophet and sage, and as the voice of Qohelet, the narrator, whose words to follow should be regarded as coming from a divine source: "...he said by divine word" (1. 2). In v. 3 the targum introduces the concept of 'death' strategically, partly to counter the randomness of *hebel*, but mainly to introduce one of most important tenets of Jewish theology – the primacy of Torah and the study of Torah (the Word of God) as one of the crucial means to gain a reward for the world to come subsequent entry to the world to come (Flesher and Chilton 2011:104-6; Levine 1978: 77-8; Levine 1988: 135-141).

The targum introduced a number of fundamental rabbinical doctrines of Jewish theology connected to Torah study and practice (TgQoh 7: 17).

(1) Labour is metaphorically identified as referring to Torah study (Knobel 1991: 20); Torah was identified as life-affirming: "The Torah is the tree of life for all who labor in it, and whoever observes its commandments endures like the tree of life in the world to come (PsYon. 3: 24).

(2) It is the path towards receiving a reward in the world to come.<sup>239</sup>

(3) The Lord of the World, which establishes God as the final arbiter of who will earn rewards or not.

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<sup>238</sup> The counsel to commit to Torah study is mentioned forty times in TgQoh, but the focus is on study and less so on Torah practice in TgQoh (Levine 1978: 77).

<sup>239</sup> Simply studying Torah is insufficient, as TgQoh observed, "Whoever increases his knowledge and does not repent, increases the Lord's anger (TgQoh 2: 18). See also Levine (1988: 137,140).

With God portrayed thus, as Lord of the world, all the power of *hebel* is removed as the fate of men and its aftermath is thus explained as a rational process. Crucially, Levine wrote that this introduces to the targum the concept of man in a relationship with God.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, the targum removes any ambiguity concerning ‘under the sun’ by including the expression, ‘in this world’, thereby creating the logical division on what happens on earth (the world of the living) and the realm reserved for those who pass on from the earthly existence. Torah study is mostly complemented with the term, ‘world to come’. This leitmotif is found in various forms in 1: 3, also at: 2: 18, 19, 22, 24, 26.

## 7. 9 Labour <sup>241</sup>

The concept of labour is used as a metaphor for Torah study (Levine 1988: 136). Wherever food, drink and eating are mentioned, these too are metaphors for Torah study, according to rabbinic tradition<sup>242</sup> (Knobel 1999: 27 fn. 30; Levine 78).<sup>243</sup> Labour was interpreted in the targum to refer to Torah study and pursuit of wisdom. Labour in the theology of the TgQoh (and other targums) permits an ethical and moral assessment to be made concerning the deeds of man. This will take place at some time in the future in the form of God’s judgement.

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<sup>240</sup> On theodicy in TgQoh, see Levine (1978: 81).

<sup>241</sup> The Hebrew term *Yitrôn* appears 10 times in BibQoh. It has been questioned whether Qohelet used in the term in the sense of economic benefit, given that the expression “by all his toil” (*bě ămālô*) refers to commercial and practical endeavours. The term is ambiguous considering its position at the beginning of the book and following on the *hebel* statements, and it could have a wider more metaphorical meaning. Schoors (2013: 49-51, 54-56) concludes that taking into account its location so close to the introduction of the book and other compelling factors, the questions as to Qohelet’s intent remains open to debate.

<sup>242</sup> TB. Shab. 30b; Eruv. 54a.

<sup>243</sup> (4: 10, 16, 17, 18).

The importance of the aspect of Torah study takes pride of place, accompanied by the doctrine of reward and punishment, the contrast of this world and the world to come, and the approval of the righteous who do good works and the disapproval of the wicked ones who do evil works (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 104).

## **7. 10 Sin in TgQoh**

The targum introduces an integrated theological system consisting of the concepts of sin, repentance, punishment and a possible afterlife as a complete set of additions to the Hebrew text. The targum's expansive descriptions of the consequences of sin and the evil of sin for individual human beings and for the Jewish people as a whole, are found in all twelve chapters of this targum. The topics of sin, retribution and atonement as well as the afterlife consequences fundamentally and radically alter the purpose of the book to make it read like a textbook on rabbinic dogma. The targum's relevance was that it should reflect the rabbinic worldview of what encompasses the nature of the world in a correct relationship between man and God.

For he who is reckoned among the living has something to look forward to – even a living dog is better than a dead lion.

Since the living know they will die. But the dead know nothing; they have no more recompense, for even the memory of them has died (BibQoh 9: 5).

TgQoh presents a version that flirts with the original text, but its outcomes are radically different, as it is framed within a systematic theological set of linked religious conventions.

For a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the righteous know, that if they sin, they shall be regarded as dead men in the world to come, therefore they keep their ways and sin not; and if they sin, they return in repentance. But the wicked do not know any good, for they do not make good their works in their life, and do not know any good in the world to come. And they have no good after their death, for their remembrances are forgotten among the righteous (TgQoh 9: 5).

The targum declared that sin is the cause of death and suffering to humans (Kadushin 1972: 76). The targum identifies the righteous who will gain access to the world to come, while those who do evil will not. The merit for the righteous is stored for the world to come (TgQoh 7: 15).

For there is a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, in this world, and his merit is kept for him in the world to come. And there is a wicked man who prolongs his days in his guilt, and the account his evil doings is kept for him for the world to come, to be requited for it in the great day of judgement (TgQoh7: 15)

In my own brief span of life, I have seen both these things; sometimes a good man perishes in spite of his goodness, and sometimes a wicked one endures in spite of his wickedness (BibQoh 7: 15)

TgQoh emphasised that death was not the end of human life, but a journey towards finding a personal relationship with God, in which deserving individuals live in harmony in an eschatological future that was modelled on the land of Israel before the loss of Eden and resurrected in the world to come.<sup>244</sup> TgQoh rejected the claim from Qohelet that it would have been preferable if man had not been created. Any action by humankind that threatens the harmony or state of perfection of the world is to be regarded as a direct rebellion against God (Schechter 1961: 242).

TgQoh expressed the traditional rabbinic view that sin originated in the Garden of Eden when Adam ate the forbidden fruit and thereby transgressed the only rule placed upon him and Eve at the time of the creation of the world (Moore 1970: 474-6; Smolar and Aberbach 1983: 187-88) death and subsequent punishment for sin was brought into the world by Adam:

This I found: That God made the first Adam upright before him and just; and the serpent and Eve seduced him to eat of the fruit of the tree; because those who eat its fruit would be wise to discern between good and evil, and they brought upon him and all the inhabitants of the earth the day of death; and they sought

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<sup>244</sup> TB Eruv. 13b

to find many accounts in order to bring terror upon the inhabitants of the earth (TgQoh 7: 29).<sup>245</sup>

The Midrashic interpretation is interesting because it equates sin with the ‘ministering angels’, and goes further: “As it is said, That God made Adam upright, and it is written, Behold, the man was one of us ... (Gen. 3: 22), when, however, he became two, then They sought out many interventions” (QohRab 7: 29).

This emphasises the important theological notion that God did not cause sin to happen and allowed evil to enter the world because of the direct actions of humans. Adam, the only upright man and perfect man, who had been created in the image of God, could not be the cause of evil and sin, hence the careful designation of those who followed after Adam, i.e. Eve, the serpent and people throughout history since the creation (TgQoh 7: 28-9). The targum was not only concerned about man and sin, but regarded sinful actions as harmful to Israel. “Sin explains the condition of Israel” (Neusner 2003: 260). That the targumist regarded sin as a universal human experience can be understood from the statement, “For the Lord God rules over all the world, and sits upon the throne of glory in the high heavens” (TgQoh 5: 1).<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> See also TgQoh 6: 10

<sup>246</sup> The sinful nature of Israel in biblical history is lamented in: 1: 2, 13; 2: 18-20; 3: 11; 4: 13-17; 7: 19, 7: 28-9; 10: 7-10, 16.

In BibQoh wickedness and sin are general statements about the observable human condition. This is stated as a fact without any ethical attachment: For there is not one good man on earth who does what is best and doesn't err (*sin*)<sup>247</sup> (BibQoh 7: 20).<sup>248</sup>

ארום לית גבר זכאי בארעא די יעבד טב קדם יי כל יומי חייו ולא יחוב ברם גבר דיחוב קדם יי חמי  
ליה למהדר בתיובתא עד לא ימות:

For there is no righteous man in the land, who does good all his days, and sins not before the Lord. But the man who sins before the Lord, *it is incumbent* upon him<sup>249</sup> to return in repentance before the Lord (TgQoh 7: 20).

Sin is a crucial and continuous refrain in TgQoh. It is an integral chain in the unfolding paradigm of what constitutes a perfect world at rest and balance and order (Neusner 2003: 260).

Said R. Ada b. R. Hanina, "If the Israelites had not sinned, to them would have been given only the Five Books of the Torah and the Book of Joshua alone, which involves the division of the Land of Israel. How come? 'For much wisdom proceeds from much anger' (Qoh. 1: 18)"<sup>250</sup> (BT. *Ned.* 22b)

<sup>247</sup> Also, 1Kgs. 8: 46, "For there is no man who does not sin." See also Prov. 20: 9, "Who can say, 'I have cleansed my heart, I am purged of my sin'"? See B. Sanh. 101a.

<sup>248</sup> I have added alternative forms for צדיק and for יחטא to those used in the JPS version. 'Righteous' and 'sin' follow other translations (KJV) and are less ambiguous than 'good' or 'err'. Schoor's commentary also translates יחטא as 'mistake' due to the fact that it "is possible to understand יחטא as 'mistake ...'" (2013: 552-3). Schoor's argument is not convincing as he attempts to justify the word choice with examples from Sumerian wisdom texts and other instances from the MT where the term err/mistake has been found. QohRab also understands these lexemes as 'righteous' and 'sin' (QohRab 7: 20). Seow also translates the meaning of יחטא as 'err' (Seow 1997: 258).

<sup>249</sup> Levine's rendering is 'behoes' but I have used the term 'incumbent' (חמי) as more cogent, besides being stylistically more pleasing (Levine 1978: 39). Knobel has translated it as 'proper' (1991: 40). See also CAL for further lexical options and analysis of this lexeme.

<sup>250</sup> Quotation from Neusner (2003: 261).

The Talmud illustrates a basic theological premise: the transgression that occurred in Eden irrevocably changed the course of God's relationship with Adam and Israel, and brought about the need for recorded scripture. It creates within the rabbinic system a theological explanation for the existence of imperfection (God cannot be imperfect); it then permits a rationale for the creation of a system for atonement. "Sin is so defined as to accommodate the possibility of regeneration and restoration" (Neusner 2003: 261). The theology is presented as a model in which creation is the paradigm of perfection in which the first sin is committed as a rebellion against God by man, who by his own will rejected the will of God and His Torah. Man, therefore, is answerable to God for his transgressions and this occurs through a conscious process of wilful and conscious atonement through repentance (Moore 1970: 465; Neusner 2003: 276-280).<sup>251</sup> Meaningful atonement – repentance may result in the sinner gaining *zekut*, or a reward, that continues the cycle of transaction between man and God.

Murder, fornication and idolatry are classified as absolute sins (GenRab 31: 6.1), a special category because of their association with the generation of the flood. But these transgressions are to be avoided and can be forgiven, provided an act of sincere atonement takes place before a person's death (8: 12):

And when a sinner does evil a hundred years, and time is given him from the Lord that he may repent it, it is nevertheless revealed to him by the Holy Spirit (8: 12).

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<sup>251</sup> "And man cannot stand in judgment with the Lord of the world, who is stronger than he" (TgQoh 6: 11).

Sin representing chaos in the world and followed by an act of repentance becomes a systematic progression that ultimately restores balance and order in the relationship between humans and God. However, the one major sin that is totally unforgivable is that of rejection of Torah (TgQoh 1: 15; 6: 6).<sup>252</sup>

Sin and wicked deeds are an affront, or rebellion, against God (Neusner 2003: 261; Schechter 1961: 241). The rebellion against God<sup>253</sup> is either a sin of omission, most notably when the study of Torah and obedience to its commandments are ignored, or as a deliberate act of defiance. The result of God's displeasure will be death for the individual person and exile,<sup>254</sup> natural catastrophes for Israel and disruption in the harmony of the world, that is, a lack of harmony and closeness to God (Neusner 2003: 261, Moore 1970: 493-6; Kadushin 1972: 168, 224-6, 256).

## 7. 11 Yeşer Ha 'Ra<sup>255</sup>

*Yeşer Ha 'ra*, the 'evil urge', is said to be in the heart of people from the time of birth (Levine 1988: 93). The term describes the impulse to act in defiance of God's will and is present throughout Jewish literature.<sup>256</sup> The biblical source may have been from Gen. 6: 5, "The Lord saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time" (Gen. 6: 5) and "The Lord

<sup>252</sup> The soul of a person who intentionally rejects study of the Torah will go to Gehenna.

<sup>253</sup> TgQoh 7: 9.

<sup>254</sup> The notion that sin leads to death in TgQoh is pervasive, 2:17, 3: 14-19; 4: 4, 17 6: 4, 8: 12-14; 9: 5-6, 16; 10: 11

<sup>255</sup> *Yeşer Ha 'ra* is found in TgQoh in 1: 18; 11; 5: 11, 19; 7: 8; 9: 14; 10: 1, 4. See Cook (2007).

<sup>256</sup> Hebrew Sira 15: 14; Sifre Deut.11: 18; TB. Quid. 30b; TB Baba Batra 16a, TB San. 91b; TB Ber. 7d; GenRab. 4: 7, 8: 21, 34: 10, 54: 1; PsRab 9: 2; Pesiqta Rabbati 80a. These are some examples of references from Jewish sources, after Levine (1988: 93).

smelled the pleasing odour, and the Lord said to himself ‘Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devising of man’s mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done’” (Gen. 8: 21).<sup>257</sup> Because *Yeşer Ha’ra* originates from birth, it is also understood as ‘imagination’ or ‘desire’ and because it comes from the mind (imagination), it implies that the resultant transgressions are personal sins against God (Schechter 1961: 243). The evil urge is therefore an integral ingredient in the mental make-up of human beings. Kadushin explains the *yeşer* as an “inevitable phenomenon” due to the impulses in an individual’s conduct and thought that incline men to “transgress against the Torah” (Kadushin 1972: 200). “The concepts of mitzvot, ethical *Derek Eretz*, the study of Torah, and other aspects of Torah, encountered therefore such opposition *within the individual* <sup>258</sup> that the Rabbis took cognizance of” (Kadushin *ibid*). Levine, in similar vein, stated that humans as rational beings could exercise control over the *yeşer Ha’ra* if they realise the foolhardiness of transgressing against God (93.)<sup>259</sup>

The targum in 3: 1 has an expansive and lengthy addition from a legend that states that Jeroboam placed guards on a road that caused a delay in the time it took to build the Temple; it continues with Jeroboam’s placing of the golden calves in Beth El and Dan. “He also concealed from them (the pilgrims) the great name written and

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<sup>257</sup> “The evil *yeşer* that causes to sin” (PsYon. 103: 14).

<sup>258</sup> My italics as the point being made is that it must be understood that the opposition arose and existed as a result of individual conscious thought.

<sup>259</sup> Rabbinic theology also developed the theory of the “good urge” as antithesis to *yeşer ha’ra*. The good urge is personified as ‘the heart of man’ because in Jewish literature the heart is regarded as the organ from which reason and emotion arise. The wise man’s heart is said to be on the ‘right’ and from there it is extrapolated to the hands, (בידיה מדעם ביש); the left hand represents evil and the right, wisdom and justice. See BibQoh, (10: 2), “the heart of the wise man is on his right, the heart of the fool is on his left”.

expressed on the foundation stone,<sup>260</sup> the evil inclinations in their hearts being known to Him.” The transgression in this case was idolatry and damage to the name of God and His presence in the Temple.

“Therefore, let the words of your mouth be few. For as a dream comes through the thoughts (imagining)<sup>261</sup> of the heart account of the imaginings of the heart in a multitude of business, so the noise of the fool through the multitude of empty words” (TgQoh 5: 2). As noted above, the concept of the thoughts or imaginings should, in my opinion, be seen as a reference to *yeşer ha’ ra*. This verse refers to the obligation not to make unnecessary vows before God; in 5: 5 the targum exclaims, “Do not degrade your mouth’s words to cause judgements of Gehenna upon your body”. The targumist understood that vows or carelessly used words were regarded in theological terms as a personal affront to God.

The concept of free will is an essential element of rabbinic theology and is the foundation for the concept of reward and punishment.<sup>262</sup> Man is given the free will of choice to oppose evil and to choose Torah: “Man’s free will, according to the targum, endows him with the strength to rise above his evil urge ...” (Levine 1988: 97).<sup>263</sup>

The evil urge is metaphorically described as a small city that is under siege in TgQoh 9: 14: In this example, the city refers to the body of a man that has been taken over by the evil urge, an evil ruler, and causes him to depart from the way of God which will

<sup>260</sup> The foundation was the place where the Ark of the Covenant was positioned in the Temple (M. Yoma 5: 2). (See also Levine (1978: fn. 52) on this legend and its supposed origin).

<sup>261</sup> Knobel translates this as ‘imaginings’ (1991:33).

<sup>262</sup> This is explained in M. Avot 3: 15 – “Everything is foreseen, and free will is given, and with goodness the world is judged. And all is in accordance with the majority of the deed.”

<sup>263</sup> On sins with and without intention, see TB Meg. 15b; TB Hor. 10b.

result in the man being caught in the snares of Gehinnom. However, the man is imbued with a good spirit and he is able to repent and to vanquish the threat of a judgment from God that will send him to eternal damnation in Gehenna. The message from this aggadic story can be found in TgQoh 10: 1: “And the evil spirit which dwells at the gate of the heart is as a fly causing death in the world by betraying the wise...” and continues, “For the words of the law were made to be remedies in the world to remit and blot out great sins before the Lord” (TgQoh 10: 5).

Sin is not a permanent feature of human experience, but is the point at which man meets God. At this juncture, man can exercise his own free will to repent the wrongs that have taken place. However, within the scope of transgressions that people commit in the world, the one cardinal sin is the rejection of Torah and this is unforgivable (Neusner 2003: 264).<sup>264</sup> “Here is the crux of the matter: Man, by nature is sinful, and only by encounter with Torah knows how to do good” (Neusner 2003: 267). Amongst the sins committed against Torah: refusal or neglect to study Torah 6: 6-12; abstain from praying 2: 14; 4: 17; 8: 2-4; 9: 17; idolatry 4: 13; 10:9.<sup>265</sup>

General sins in the targum that will attract anger are: oppression of the needy 3: 15; distortion of justice 3: 16, 6: 6; engaging in sorcery 10: 4; not helping oppressed persons 10: 9; selfishness by not sharing food with the poor 5: 16; unable to discern good from evil 4: 17, 6: 5 (Levine 1978: 80).

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<sup>264</sup> TB Hag.

<sup>265</sup> Rabbinic theology entertained a wider range of religious transgressions that are not in this targum, such as correct observance of the Shabbat, reciting the Shema and avoiding any remarks that would humiliate the sages, amongst others.

## 7. 12 Repentance

In the targum the doctrines of sin, repentance, atonement, punishment and forgiveness are interspersed throughout the text in various contexts in the following verses: 1: 4, 15, 18; 2: 12, 14; 3: 11, 14, 18, 19; 4: 17; 6: 2, 6; 7: 2, 21; 8: 11, 14; 9: 5, 16, 18; 10: 6, 11; 12: 13. The outstanding feature is that the 'sin doctrines' are all accompanied by warnings of death unless sufficient and sincere repentance has been undertaken. On the other hand, death can be averted provided the request for forgiveness is sincere and accompanied by prayer.

Repentance had become a theological necessity, "since there is no righteous man on earth" (TgQoh 7: 20), and sin which disturbs the perfection of the world as created by God. Sin is followed by repentance or *teshuva*; its theological meaning is 'return to God' (Neusner 2003: 277). The theology of the late Amoraim is a powerful motivator to ascribe to repentance a model of the renewal of faith to even the most egregiously wicked (Cathcart and Gordon 1989: 156-7). The process of moving from wickedness and sins to repentance and to forgiveness including prayer allows a renewal of the cosmic relationship between God and man to take place and thereby harmony to reign over the world (Levine 1978: 79).

If sin is what introduces rebellion and change, and the will of man is what constitutes the variable in disrupting creation, then the theology of the rabbinic canon makes provision for restoration through the free exercise of man's will (Neusner 2003: 276).

Sin leads to punishment and punishment initiates an opportunity to repent; the sinner has to make adequate and sincere atonement and in the next stage there will be a reconciliation with God. This constitutes part of the ongoing model leading to eternal life.

According to the theology of TgQoh in general, the concept of sin and subsequent repentance and atonement follows the theological view that repentance became the one indispensable requirement for the individual and for Israel's salvation.<sup>266</sup> The full concept of forgiveness is not present in BibQoh; however, the targum introduces the concept with the thoughts, language and ideas of the rabbinic doctrines regarding repentance leading to the notion of everlasting life.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Great is repentance, which lengthens the years of a person's life, as it is stated: "When the wicked man turns from his wickedness that he has committed, and does that which is lawful and right, he will preserve his life" (Ezek. 18: 27).<sup>267</sup>

TgQoh presents the earthly realm as one that displays two contrasting states of human experience: the evil world of the wicked and the world of the righteous and their good deeds. In the realm of the wicked, people are given an opportunity to change their ways and move closer to God again, or die a permanent death in Gehenna. Only persons who have prepared themselves with righteousness will be eligible to enter the

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<sup>266</sup> Gen. 4: 7; Deut. 4: 30, 30: 2; 1Kgs. 8: 33; Hos. 14: 2; Jer. 3: 12; Ezek.

<sup>267</sup> TB Yoma 86b.

world to come and eternal life. The following passages from TgQoh discuss these themes. These are contrasted with the BibQoh in order to show how the targumist adapted the book and introduced the theological ideas of normative Judaism in this late targum.

BibQoh 1:4	One generation goes, another comes, But the earth remains the same.
TgQoh 1:4	King Solomon declared by the spirit of prophecy, the good generation of the righteous depart from the world because of the sins of the wicked generation that is to follow them, but the earth abides forever to reserve the punishment which is to come upon the world on account of the sins of men. <sup>268</sup>
BibQoh 1:15	A twisted thing that cannot be made straight, A lack that cannot be made good.
TgQoh 1:15	A man whose ways are perverted in this world and who therefore dies, and who does not repent, has no power to be exonerated after his death. And whoever departs from the law and the precepts during his life, has no power to be numbered with the righteous in paradise after his death. <sup>269</sup>
BibQoh 1:18	For as wisdom grows, vexation grows; To increase learning is to increase heartache

<sup>268</sup> “The Gemara cites an aggadic midrash based on this verse: Rabbi Shmuel bar Namani says that Rabbi Yonatan says: Calamity befalls the world only when wicked people are in the world, but the calamity begins only with the righteous first (TB Bava Kamma: 60a). See also Levine (1978: 48 fn).

<sup>269</sup> QohRab explain this verse: “In this world, one who is crooked can become straight, and one who lacking may be numbered. But in the world to come, one who is crooked cannot be made straight, and one who is lacking cannot be numbered” (QohRab 1: 15). The point made by the midrash is that the crooked individuals need to correct themselves by repentance before they reach the world to come.

TgQoh 1: 18	Because a man who increases his knowledge when he is guilty, and does not repent, increases the anger of God. And he who accumulates wisdom and dies in his youth, increases the sadness of his relations.
BibQoh 8: 12 – 13.	The fact that a sinner may do evil a hundred times and his [punishment] still be delayed. For although I am aware that “it will be well with those who revere God since they revere him.” And it will not be well with the scoundrel, and he will not live long, because he does not revere God
TgQoh 8: 12 – 13.	And when the sinner does evil one hundred years, a prolongation (of life) <i>is given to him by the Lord so that he will repent, it is nevertheless revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, And I know that it will be well in the world to come with those that fear the Lord, that fear before him, and do his will; and it shall not be well with the wicked, and there shall be no space for him in the world to come and in this world his days shall be cut off. They shall fly and pass away like a shadow because he did not fear the Lord.</i>
TgQoh 3: 18	So, I decided, as regards men, to dissociate from them[from] the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts (18). For in respect of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; man has no superiority over beast; since both amount to nothing (19).

TgQoh 3: 18 - 19	I said in my heart concerning the children of men, as to the punishments and evil events which come upon them. God sends these to try and prove them, to see whether they will return <i>in repentance</i> and are forgiven and healed (18). But the wicked who are like beasts do not repent, so they are punished by it, to their own hurt. For as to the destiny of the wicked, and the destiny of the unclean beast, it is one destiny for both of them. And as the unclean beast dies, so dies he who does not return <i>in repentance</i> before his death; and the breath of life of both is judged alike in every manner, and the advantage of sinner over an unclean beast is nothing but the burial place; for all is vanity (19). <sup>270</sup>
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The process of repentance in rabbinic theology begins once sin has been committed; God is merciful and through the study of the Law, a person will find warnings of the punishment that will be applied if the person does not make the effort to repent and acknowledge the wrongdoing. Prayer and reflection lead to atonement and a person who has done so sincerely will not die and progress to the world to come and a judgement that may result in a final resurrection. The judgement, according to Neusner, becomes a mere formality for the deserving (Neusner 2003: 281).

From rabbinic literature, it can be seen that the rabbis were focused largely on issues of retribution and a post-mortem world in which humans would be rewarded or

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<sup>270</sup> TgQoh interprets these verses to include the ethical nature of man unlike the beast for whom there can be no other outcome. In my opinion, the targumist had to divorce the beasts from the Qohelet's secular view, because to compare humankind to the beast would challenge creation and the hierarchy of living beings (Gen.1: 24 – 28). Furthermore, only humans have the faculty of rational thinking and the ability to differentiate between good and evil.

punished depending on the nature of the transgressions and subsequent attempts to atone and repent (Raphael 1996: 120). Likewise, and especially apparent in TgQoh, the focus was solidly on the individual's faithfulness and commitment to God and His commandments in this world. It was only this that became the final determining factor on one's fate between an eternal life or damnation (Raphael 1996:120; Avery-Peck: 2000: 262 -265; Neusner 2003: 279-283). As Avery-Peck has pointed out, the path to this outcome, in a world to come, resulted in a "rationalization of the life of Torah" (Avery-Peck: 2000: 244).

### 7. 13 The Righteous and Charity

The targum sets the criteria for what it regarded are the yardsticks for determining the character of a righteous or holy person. This can be seen in the following 12 verses: 2: 21; 3: 22; 4: 8; 5: 9, 12, 18; 6: 6, 9; 7: 12, 15; 9: 10. Amongst the obligations that determine the concept of 'a righteous person' is that of charity (*zedakah*).

The targum classified the 'righteous man' in terms of a number of positive precepts<sup>271</sup> it regards as equal to conduct that is acceptable to God. One of these is caring for the poor and disadvantaged of a community by giving charity. The targum recognised righteousness by the good deeds that men do to the extent that the performance of such deeds will be rewarded by the world to come.

In BibQoh 5: 17-18 Qohelet asks: "As his (a rich man) substance increases, so do those who consume it; what then, does the success of its owner amount to but feasting

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<sup>271</sup> Positive perceptions may also be called 'value concepts', according to Max Kadushin, who argued that all the actions of Jewish religious life are an organism of which there are many strands all accruing merit and combining to form true righteous behaviour (Kadushin 1952:1-14; 1938: 179-185).

with his eyes?” In the secular sphere of BibQoh, there are no satisfactory spiritual answers to the problems of society except to enjoy the pleasures offered to those who are fortunate enough to have been given them by God.

When good is multiplied in the world, the children of men who eat it are also multiplied; and what advantage is there to the owner who gathers it unless he does good with it, that he may see in the world to come the reward given with his eyes (TgQoh 5: 10).

The targum attached a moral solution to this problem presented in the form of a theological response. “According to the targum and its tradition, God is related to through human acts. He is not a *telos* to be realised ... Rather, he exists for those who are in communion with him: for those who validate him by translating his will into their act ... (and the) divine will involve the spectrum of human behaviour, including the ritualization of the distinction between the profane, of course, but emphasising the category of ethics” (Levine 1988: 115).

The targum was therefore able to expand on the original text of Qohelet by seamlessly combining matters of everyday economic and secular life into a type of theological instruction manual.

In the rabbinical world, the personal act of giving charity or sharing one’s wealth with others is regarded as an act of great ethical significance that contributed to the other conditions of righteous conduct. It is demanded from those who have amassed wealth that it should be used to support the less fortunate members of a community. In all

sections of the targum, wherever charity is mentioned, it is always accompanied by the promise of a reward in the world to come. By performing deeds of charity in this world, a righteous individual will be rewarded with everlasting life.<sup>272</sup>

I saw therefore, that there is no good in this world, but that man should rejoice in his good part in this world to acquire thereby the world to come, so that no man should say in his heart, “Why am I distributing money to charity? I had better leave it to my son after me, or be nursed for it in my old age. For who can see what will be after him?” (TgQoh 3: 22).

The rabbinical injunction to perform good works is further reinforced in TgQoh 9: 10:

Whatever good and charity your hand finds to do, do it with all your power, for after death there is no work for man, nor account, knowledge, or wisdom, in the grave whither you go. And nothing will help you *except good works and alms alone* (TgQoh 9: 10)

The targum stressed the finality of death and the notion that good deeds and ethical behaviour can only be done whilst a person is still living, but after death it is too late to make amends.

Also, any man to whom the Lord has given riches and wealth, if the Lord has given him power to eat of it in this world, and to do good with it, and to receive

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<sup>272</sup> “Know that the reward of the righteous is in the future” (M. Avot 2: 16); “Today is for doing them (good deeds) and tomorrow is for receiving the reward for them” (TB. Eruvin 22a).

a full reward in the world to come, and to rejoice in his work with the righteous, behold this is given to him in providence (TgQoh 5: 18)

TgQoh is concerned with the attitudes and conduct of the rich due to the inequalities and hardship excessive wealth could cause in communities. The targum labels this as a 'sore evil' and clearly warns the greedy and uncaring that they will not be counted among the righteous who will enter the world to come:

Here is a grave evil I have observed under the sun: riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune (BibQoh 5: 12)

There is a sore evil which I saw in this world under the sun, and there is no remedy for it, for a man who gathers riches and does no good with them, and at the end of days these riches are kept for him for his condemnation in the world to come (TgQoh 5: 12).

The theological voice of the targum is directed at the individual who is required to refrain from the pursuit of using his wealth wastefully and without giving to the needy to the point that he causes grave evil in his community. The targum's response is aimed at restoring justice and calling for individuals to adopt religious values to replace any negative behaviours. The targum uses a systematic restorationist eschatology – humans were meant to live as if they were in Eden – and the world will be as God intended it to be. Therefore, the targum specifies what a righteous man should do, amongst other things, to provide charity and use one's wealth in terms of values that

will benefit society, as is proven by the differences in approach between the HB and TgQoh.<sup>273</sup>

The elements for providing charity and treating wealth in a positive values-based system will create balance, order and proportion for individuals in the community and minimise the risks of strife.<sup>274</sup> Only those deemed righteous by their actions for doing good in this life (in emulation of God) will be considered for the world to come. Balance is therefore achieved between a man's life as it has been conducted in this world and then in the world to come. Denial of the afterlife is a warning of punishment to come and at the same time an encouragement to change. Denying the doctrine of religiously correct behaviour is a sinful deed and can only be rectified by repentance.

The targum promoted the rabbinic concept of becoming a righteous person in all aspects of one's life. In BibQoh 4: 8 Qohelet regrets the futility of the life of a lonely and wealthy man whose life is unfulfilled despite his wealth – “For whom, now is he amassing it while denying himself enjoyment? That too is futility and an unhappy business” (BibQoh 4: 8). TgQoh inserts an addition to the verse in which the wealthy individual seeks to alleviate his unhappy life by giving his money to charity.

I will arise now, and will do charity, with it, and will be joyful in this world with the children of men, and with the righteous in the world to come. This too, is vanity, and an evil thing (TgQoh. 4: 8).

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<sup>273</sup> See Neusner (2003: 286-293) for details on the concept of restorationist eschatology.

<sup>274</sup> BibQoh 6: 2: “That God sometimes grants a man riches and property and wealth. So that he does not want for anything his appetite may crave, but God does not permit him to enjoy it; instead a stranger will enjoy it. That is *hebel* and a grievous ill.” The targum's response was, in part, “All this his sins have brought upon him, because he did no good with it at all.”

Charity becomes a theological element in TgQoh as its effect is to encourage people to consciously commit themselves to doing good deeds to benefit others in the community as donors of money and alms. In doing so, they will benefit by being counted among the righteous who will earn sufficient rewards to share in the world to come (Levine 1988: 116).<sup>275</sup> The point being made in TgQoh 4: 8-9 is that *'hebel'* occurs when deeds of charity are done without conscious religious intent. In the targumim, faith and holiness are dependent on a person's behaviours and conduct supported by good intent with free will and like a man emulating God's will (Levine 1988:115).<sup>276</sup> Charitable deeds, according to rabbinic beliefs, became one of the characteristics of righteous conduct that has the potential to open the doors to the afterlife:

For as a man is sheltered under the shadow of wisdom, so he is sheltered under the shadow of money, when he does alms with it. And the advantage of knowing the wisdom of the law is that it raises its possessor from the grave for the world to come (TgQoh 7: 12).<sup>277</sup>

Whatever good and charity your hand finds to do, do it with all your power, after death, there is no work for man, nor account, knowledge, or wisdom, in the grave whither you go, and nothing will help you except good works and alms alone (TgQoh 9: 10).<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Levine explains charitable deeds in terms of the understanding of holiness "primarily in deeds reflected in the targum's declaration that God created the world for the sake of righteous deeds of Abraham." Refer to PsYon Gen. 14: 19 (Levine 1988: 116).

<sup>276</sup> M. Avot 2: 4.

<sup>277</sup> The topic of charity in TgQoh is also found in 5: 10, 16; 6: 9; 11: 1.

<sup>278</sup> M. Avot 6.9.

BibQoh Qohelet laments the frustration whereby a righteous man may be dealt with in the same way as a scoundrel: “Here is a frustration that occurs in the world: sometimes an upright man is requited according to the conduct of the scoundrel; and sometimes the scoundrel is requited according to the conduct of the upright. I say all that is frustration” (BibQoh 8: 14). TgQoh in its response provides a lengthy theological rationale that acknowledges the frustration (*hebel*) as a reality in an imperfect world, but then proceeds to offer a theological solution to the problem:

And I saw by the Holy Spirit that the evil which happens to the righteous in this world is not for their guilt, but to free them from a slight transgression, that their reward may be perfect in the world to come.<sup>279</sup>

And the good that comes to the sinners in this world is not for their merits, but to render them a reward for their small merit they have acquired, but that they may eat their reward in this world, and to destroy their portion in the world to come. I said, by my word, this is also vanity (TgQoh 8: 14).<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> The targum is careful to separate the “modes of the worlds”: In ‘this world’ and ‘under the sun’ refers to the present earthly world of the living. Under the sun/heaven can be found in BibQoh in 1: 13, 14; 2: 3, 17; 3: 14: 1, 3; 8: 9, 16,17; 9: 3, 6. In the form of ‘under heaven’ 2: 3; 3: 1; and 14 times in the MT: Gen. 1: 9; 6: 7; 7: 19; Deut. 2: 25; 4: 19; 7: 24; 25: 19; 29: 19; 2 Kgs. 14: 27; Job 28: 2437: 3; Dan. 9: 12. The expressions are similar in meaning (Schoors 2013:109, 114-16; Seow 1997: 121; Burkes 1999: 50-1; Barr1968: 78). Fox (1999: 104-5, 162) interprets under the sun to refer to “the events that occur under the sun” due to Qohelet’s interest in human activities, specifically their quest to increase their wealth.

<sup>280</sup> Also, verse 7: 15: “And I saw in the days of my *hebel* (*vanity*); from the Lord are decreed good and evil to be in the world, according to the planets under which the children of men are created. For there is a righteous man perishing in his righteousness in this world, and his merit is kept from him for the world to come” (TgQoh 7: 15).

Charity is part of a paradigm that unites Torah study, religious conduct and sin followed by repentance and judgement as a theological model to explain how rabbinic eschatology evolved in TgQoh as the replacement for the pessimistic views of Qohelet. The targum “attacks”<sup>281</sup> the most mundane elements in BibQoh that are then interpreted in such a way as to conform with appropriate religious meanings. This can be seen elsewhere in the targum where eating of food and drinking of wine become metaphors for Torah and Torah study;<sup>282</sup> freshly washed clothes (BibQoh 7: 9), which in the TgQoh becomes “white from all pollution of sin” (TgQoh 9: 8) and the ointment mentioned in vs. 9: 8 becomes “anointing oil, so a blessing will come down on your head”.

The issue of charity is also relevant in terms of the insights it gives into the rabbinic perceptions. It is probable that the targum raised these issues of poverty and the injustice of the economic and social system from BibQoh, to further expound on the attitude of Rabbinic Judaism to the conditions of the poor.<sup>283</sup>

Rabbinic tradition held that the communal authorities were responsible for feeding the poor. However, the ideal objective was to teach and encourage the poor to learn a

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<sup>281</sup> Levine describes it thus: “There was a virtually unanimous ‘conspiracy of tradition’ to pervert the message of Qohelet” (1978: 67).

<sup>282</sup> Levine (1978: 67), and see TB Shab. 30b. This is also the view in QohRab where food and wine are idiomatic references to the sustenance derived from Torah (QohRab 2: 24; 8: 15).

<sup>283</sup> According to Solomon Schechter, the rabbis were mostly recruited from artisanal and labouring classes and thus they may have experienced conditions of great poverty, unless they were able to find some sources of employment to supplement their income whilst dedicating their lives to Torah study (Schechter 1961: 110).

trade or to offer them employment to fend for themselves. Failure and neglect to care for the desperately poor could, according to the Talmud, stigmatise the community elders as murderers (TB. Sotah 38b). Considering the afterlife as but one part of the totality of the Kingdom of Heaven, poverty in society involved pain and suffering and a life of torment and, in terms of rabbinic logic, some may not have been able to share in the afterlife as a result of it:

And poverty is so harsh that it is considered like death, as it is stated: “For all the men are dead who sought your life” (Ex. 4: 19) ....

Wherever it says that the sages set their eyes on a particular individual, the result was either death or poverty. This also indicates that death and poverty are equivalent (BT. Nedarim 7b).

The concern for the economic and social condition of the rabbis and their successors was that poverty and its hardships created a theological ‘state’ akin to that of an imperfect world. This did not reflect the ideal conditions of the perfect world God brought into being at the time He created the world. The targum, as a reflection of the rabbinic worldview, likened the physical and economic conditions of life in ‘this world’ to strive for, in order to be “theologically ideal”, as the conditions that are similar to the world that prevailed in the Garden of Eden when God and man existed in perfect harmony. The hardships caused by poverty and its attendant misery was to be avoided as untenable, because it meant that human beings lived in a physical and spiritual world that was theological unacceptable to God. It therefore became binding on the people of the House of Israel to conduct themselves in a way that would return the world to a perfect state as it was in at the time of creation of Eden

(בגינתא דעדן) (Schechter 1961: 111 -115; Neusner 2003: 276-300).

## 7. 14 The World to Come

As noted earlier, the world to come as an eschatology in the earlier rabbinical documents is not expressed in a cohesive and sequential way (Neusner: 2003 267-8; Raphael 1996:119-121; Avery-Peck 2000: 243-44, 265). It appears that the model is arranged as categories based on an individual resurrection first, then a judgement of individuals, and then those chosen will go on to eternal life in the world to come, after which there will be a final restoration of all the faithful involving all of Israel (Neusner 2003: 268).

The later sources, from about the fifth to seventh centuries, including the Babylonian Talmud, provide a more doctrinally coherent view about the world to come and the resurrection processes and ideologies. Here are also found additional references from the Torah, discussions on what will happen to the gentiles as part of the resurrection of the dead, the role and time frames of the messiah in a world to come, and the restoration of Israel in the land of Israel. In TgQoh there are a number of references to events and places that clearly show the lateness of the targum and the afterlife doctrines are those that focus to a great degree on the restoration of Israel as intrinsic to the world to come. This targum discusses later rabbinical markers, such as the events that took place at Yavneh 2: 4; the *Shekinah* (7: 3; 11: 7) and there is a reference to Edom<sup>284</sup> (10: 6). Included in the targum are a number of terms that were

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<sup>284</sup> Edom as metaphor for Rome and later Christianity. See Knobel (1991: 12) and Cohen (1974: 19-48) and also cited by Knobel, *supra*.

significant to rabbinic theology, but are not mentioned in BibQoh: the Sanhedrin (2: 4); the second temple and its fall (2: 4; 3: 11; 4: 7; 7: 4) and the Messiah 1: 1; 7: 24). A more detailed study will be required to determine the extent to which TgQoh depended on the Babylonian Talmud. There are close word correlations between the two, in TgQoh 7: 3 and TB. Shab. 30b; 12: 10 and TB Rosh Hash. 21b.<sup>285</sup>

“Whoever acquires words of Torah acquires the world to come” (M. Abot 2: 8). Levine notes that the sages understood ‘under the sun’ to mean ‘after the sun’. The reason therefore was that, according to the Talmud (TB Shabbat 30b) the Torah was one of the seven things that were created before the world (Levine 1978: 48; Knobel 1991: 20).

Since contradictions in Ecclesiastes were mentioned, the Gemara cites additional relevant sources. Rav Yehuda, son of Rav Shmuel bar Sheilat, said in the name of Rav: The Sages sought to suppress the book of Ecclesiastes and declare it apocryphal because its statements contradict each other and it is liable to confuse its readers. And why did they not suppress it? Because its beginning consists of matters of Torah and its end consists of matters of Torah. The ostensibly contradictory matters are secondary to the essence of the book, which is Torah. The Gemara elaborates: Its beginning consists of matters of Torah, as it is written: What profit has a man of all his labor which he labors under the sun? (1.3) And the Sages of the school of Rabbi Yannai said: by inference: Under the sun is where man has no profit from his labor; however, before the sun, i.e. when engaged in the study of Torah, which preceded the sun, he does have profit. Its ending consists of matters of Torah, as it is written:

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<sup>285</sup> Levine 1978: 63 fn; Knobel 1991: 14.

“The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God, and keep His mitzvot; for this is the whole man” (Qohelet 12: 13). (TB. Shab. 30B)

‘Under the sun’ in TgQoh 1:3 carefully sets out the hierarchical nature of the rabbinical worldview, according to relevant rabbinic literature. In TB. Pesahim 54A and Ned. 39B the Talmud describes the seven things that were created ‘before the sun’, one of which was Torah, and the others being repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple and the Name of the Messiah (Knobel 1991: 21).

What value is there to a man, after his death, from all his labor which he labored under the sun in this world, other than if he studied the word of God, to receive a good reward in the world to come from before the Lord of the world (TgQoh 1: 3).

QohRab is more expansive and understands ‘under the sun’, as referring to ‘the world to come’ for the pious.

R. Huna and R. Aḥa said in the name of R. Ḥilfai: A man’s labour is under the sun, but his treasury of reward is above the sun (in heaven, in the afterlife). R. Judan said: Under the sun he has no profit, but he has it above the sun. R. Levi and the Rabbis comment. R. Levi said: [The meaning of the phrase is]: What advantage should there be for human beings who lay up a store of pious and benevolent acts? Sufficient for them that I [God] cause light to shine upon them (QohRab 1: 3).

TgQoh rejected the notion of the finality of death, or that it was better for man in fact not to have been created at all. It further refuted all the negative and pessimistic elements of Qohelet, such as the injustices of the world and the arbitrary reign of God over man. The targum imposes the promise of the afterlife as a solution to dealing with all the inherent evils and contradictions humankind experiences in this world. It distinguishes the righteous from the wicked and bestows favour on those who adhere to 'godlike' precepts advocated in the teachings and doctrines described in TgQoh in the final verse of the book:

In the end, whatever was done in this world in secret will altogether be made manifest, and known to all the children of men. Therefore, fear the word of the Lord, and keep His commandments, that you sin not in secret. But if you sin be admonished to repent. For behold, this ought to be the way of every man. For the Lord will bring every work before the great day of judgement, and make public the thing which is hid from mankind, whether good or evil (TgQoh 12: 14).

A person is expected to manage his temporal and spiritual life in accordance with the Law, in terms of rabbinic ideals, which require ardent prayer, repentance and a reward (portion) to enter into the world to come. There are, however, a handful of transgressions that result in excluding certain individuals from the world to come and they are consigned to Gehenna (see below).<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Rabbinic Judaism regarded repentance as a pre-existent condition that God imposed whilst in the act of creating the world. San. 28b; Pes. 54a; Ned. 39b.

The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuva* and its meaning is ‘to return.’ Neusner argued that repentance is the “reaffirmation of the self” after God’s likeness in order to nullify the effects of sin and the “estrangement from God and creation, therefore making repentance a theological category (Neusner 2003: 277). This process is an essential step towards restoration of the perfect world and provided the penitent includes the correct attitude that includes regret and feelings of remorse. “The entire process of repentance is carried on beyond the framework of religious actions, rites or rituals. The power of repentance overcomes the most heinous and otherwise unforgiveable character” (Neusner 2003: 278).

In the theology of repentance, God customarily warns potential sinners before inflicting punishments as a sign of his innate mercy:

R. Huniah in the name of R. Joshua b. Abin and R. Zechariah, son-in-law of R. Levi in the name of R. Levi: “The merciful Lord does not do injury to human beings first. [First, he exacts a penalty from property, aiming at a sinner’s repentance] (RuthRab 9: 1).

TgQoh contained the rabbinic theology of repentance including a forewarning of a punishment to come, is found in TgQoh 3:18-19:

I said in my heart concerning the children of men, as to the punishments and evil events which come upon them, God sends these to try and prove them,<sup>287</sup> to see whether they will return in repentance to be forgiven

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<sup>287</sup> The Hebrew has the word דברת ‘plague’. See Knobel (1991: 31) and Levine (1978: 53).

and healed. But the wicked who are like beasts do not repent, so they are punished by it, to their own hurt.<sup>288</sup>

The ultimate penalty for sin is death as the final atonement with its implication at the time of the resurrection, however, the Day of Atonement is also a means to revoke the penalty:

A sin offering and an unconditional guilt offering atone. Death and the Day of Atonement atone when joined with repentance. Repentance atones for minor transgressions of positive and negative commandments. And as to serious transgressions [repentance] suspends the punishment until the Day of Atonement comes along and atones (M. Yoma 8: 8).

Neusner addressed the significance of the language that encompasses the idea of a world to come. Another factor is to look at how the world to come relates to the wider contexts of the afterlife theology. His view, and I agree with his analysis is, is that as the concept of a world to come evolved slowly, over a long period of time, the most logical outcome is that it coalesced in the thought world of the rabbis as paradigms of relationships. The ultimate objective of rabbinic theology was always restorationist in character. The restoration emanates from relations with God in all the ways that man and God intersect (Neusner 2003: 293-4). Another approach, and as effective, is that of Max Kadushin (1952). In which he examined the complexity of Jewish theology and all its myriad interrelated topics, or as he called them, organic concepts. His definition

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<sup>288</sup> QohRab says that דברת refers to their wicked conduct in this world, where they revile themselves and blaspheme. The compiler of this midrash also understood the verse to mean that God “grants them abundant peace” ... “and God will sift them” as a warning to remind them of the attribute of justice (QohRab 3: 18: 105).

in brief, is: “Organic concepts are concepts in a whole complex of concepts none of which can be inferred from the others but all of which are mutually interrelated, that every individual concept, though possessing its own features, ... nevertheless depends for its character ... of the individual concepts” (1938: 184).

It becomes clear why the theology of rabbinic eschatology is not sustainable on its own, and that may be the reason for the complexity of the theology in TgQoh, over and above the problem that it is ‘merely’, a translation of another document. The world to come as a concept, or as part of a paradigm (although it can stand on its own as a paradigm), is only understandable if the study includes its interrelated connections.

The following table from TgQoh 11: 1-10 has been broken into twelve different topics, each one on its own are individual concepts, but when all are read together, each one has its own distinctive value and meaning.

- A Give your nourishing bread to the poor who go in ships upon the surface of the water, for after a period of many days you will find its reward in the world to come.
- B Give a good portion of the seed to your field in Tishri, and do not cease from sowing even in Kislev. For you know not what evil will be upon the earth, whether the early or the latter will succeed.
- C If the clouds are full of rain, they will pour the water upon the earth, because of the merit of the righteous. And if there is no merit in that generation, they will pour it into the sea and desert, so that the children of men should not enjoy it.

- D And if it is decreed from heaven that the king should fall and be removed from his dominion, it is by the word of heaven; or that plenty of famine is to be in the south or north, in the place where this counsel has been decreed there it will certainly be.
- E A man who looks to sorcerers and charmers will never do good, and he watches the planets will not reap a reward, for sorcerers are like the wind, not to be seized by human hands; and planets are like the clouds of heaven which pass away, and do not return.
- F As you don't know how the spirit of the breath of life goes into the body of an infant which rests in the womb of its pregnant mother, and as you don't know whether it is male or female until it is born, so can't you understand the work of the Lord, who made all in wisdom.
- G In the days of your youth take a wife to beget children, and in the time of your old age do not leave the wife of your lot so as not to bear children, for you know not which of them is destined to be good one or the other, or whether both will be good.
- H And sweet is the light of the law, and be able to enlighten sightless eyes to behold the glorious face of the Shekinah, which brings from her splendour the face of the righteous, that their beauty may be like the sun.
- I For if the life of a man is many days, it behooves him to rejoice in all of them, and to study the law of the Lord let him remember the days of the darkness of death and not sin

- J For many are days wherein he shall lie dead in the grave to receive the judgment from heaven for the life he loved, all the time punishment comes upon him for the vanity he has done.
- K Rejoice, O young man, in the days of your youth, and let your heart be cheerful in the days of your childhood. Act humbly in your heart, and be careful with the looking of your eyes. And do not look upon evil, and know that for all this the Lord will bring you to judgment.
- L and put away anger from your heart, and bring no evil upon your body.  
For youth and the days of black hair is vanity.

It can be seen from this short analysis how the rabbis (and targumist) thought in terms of the paradigms that express human experience from birth to death to the world to come.

## 7. 15 Restoring the world to perfection

The world to come becomes a concrete place in the form of the Garden of Eden. When Qohelet in the targum speaks of the world to come, it is a reference to Eden. In TgQoh Eden becomes a specific ideal to which the righteous and deserving should strive for, and the opposite is Gehenna, (5: 5, 6: 5, 8: 10, 9: 14 10: 11), which symbolises destruction and a fate to be avoided.

The TgQoh verses that mention the notion of Eden as the future world to come are: 1: 15, 6: 8, 7: 8, and 9: 7. The concept of a restoration, as suggested by Neusner, is the

idea that Eden, or paradise as the end of life, becomes the beginning of a new life, in the thinking of rabbinic afterlife doctrine (Neusner 2003: 296-99).

A man whose ways are perverted in this world and who therefore dies, and does not repent, has no power to be exonerated after his death. And whosoever departs from the law and the precepts during his life, has no power to be numbered with the righteous in paradise (TgQoh1: 15).

... And what is the poor man to do but to study the law of the Lord, that he may know how he will have to walk in the presence of the Lord of the righteous in paradise (TgQoh 6: 8).

Solomon said, by the spirit of prophecy from the Lord, the Lord of the world will say to all the righteous ... And drink with a good heart the wine which has been reserved for you in paradise, for the wine which you poured to the poor and needy that were thirsty; for behold, your good work has long been acceptable before the Lord (TgQoh 9: 7).

Once man has fulfilled the obligations required by the Law, repented and atoned, the relationship envisioned by the sages becomes perfect and in this process man's and God's world are in agreement. The cycle ends there, man (and Israel) repents, the world to come is realised, perfection is attained and eternal life ensues. "That act of reconciliation, prepared for countless lives of virtue and acts of merit, is realised in the world and age to come" (Neusner 2003: 296). Below is a passage from Lamentations

Rabbah that echoes exactly these restoration sentiments on how mankind can restore both the personal and communal inner life of the Jewish people:

“Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!”

Said the community of Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He,

“Lord of the world, it all depends on you:” Restore us to yourself,

O Lord.”

Said to them the Holy One, blessed be He, “it all depends on you:

‘Return to me and I will return to you, says the Lord of host’ (Mal. 3: 7)”

Said the community of Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He,

Lord of the world, it all depends on you: ‘Restore us, O God of our salvation’

(Ps. 85: 5)”

Thus, it says, “restore us to yourself, O lord, that we be restored!”

(LamRab 143: 1-4)

The vision of the world to come, as interpreted according to rabbinical ideology, is a paradigmatic view of how they experienced their daily religious tasks and way of life; thus, in the world to come man and God will be joined together as if they were feasting, eating, drinking and most of all, studying the Torah, not individually, but as components of the paradigm of Israel (Neusner 2003: 303-3). Rabbinic theology understood the world to come and its final resurrection as Israel in its entirety but as an entity of Israel through the logic of the past: what happened in Eden at the beginning becomes the logical solution for the resurrection: Eden was created as the perfect entity and was meant to exist for all time with humankind in Eden and Israel in the Land of Israel in time without end (Neusner 2003: 287). However, the tragedy of the fall after the creation postponed God’s plan, but the possibility for a restoration of Eden was still possible through the acts of repentance for sins, atonement and judgement

as well as the world to come, when man and God will join in the perfection of the world. “Israelites will live in the age or the world to come, all Israel in the Land of Israel; and Israel will comprehend all who know the true God” (Neusner 2003: 267). This is an example of how paradigmatic thinking creates a chain of continuous religiously-inspired elements connecting key events from the past into a master plan for the present and the future.

It is thus possible to claim that the eschatology in TgQoh presents a fundamental exposition of the Rabbinical view of death and the required obligations that result in the reward of an everlasting life in an Eden-like setting. (Levine 1978: 81). It is not a coherent or systematic description of the eschatological system, as these are spread throughout the translation, probably as a strategy for stressing these notions for dramatic effect and to emphasise the centrality of the afterlife doctrine. A frequent point the targum makes are warnings of death to sinners, followed by the requirement to repent as the impetus to accumulate merit to gain access to life after death. It advocates the need to be spiritually prepared in this world for the world to come (Levine 1978: 82).<sup>289</sup>

TgQoh in reality is consistent that the righteous do not die but are destined for a world to come, provided they followed the Law, studied Torah as a life-long endeavour, performed good deeds including giving alms to the needy. There will be a judgement of all humankind at which point their life's deeds will be assessed, followed by a resurrection. The timing and exact place where this will occur are vague. The only

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<sup>289</sup> Possibly influenced by M. Pirkei Avot 6: 9.

certainty was that a certain category of sinners will be transported to Gehenna as punishment for a specific category of sins.

## 7. 16 Making vows

The topic of making vows of different kinds, or choosing not to vow, is imbued with deep theological significance. This is revealed in verse TgQoh 5: 5, which is a paraphrase of the sages' interpretation of what scripture really meant about vowing – *nedarim*. In this instance, the targum goes beyond the midrashic interpretation on TgQoh 5: 5-6 and introduces the doctrinal problems encountered when making vows and how this impacts on the relationship between man and God.

The targum cedes all authority to scripture and could here simply not leave the making and fulfilling of vows without adequate scriptural justification emanating from Torah. Levine explains, “yet what it chooses to hear within that authoritative document, and how it chooses to understand it, constitutes a largely independent statement” (Levine 1988: 40). This allowed the targumist to introduce additional features into the verses: death, judgement, Gehenna, the avenging angel, shameful language and ‘work of your hands’.

This verse is a typical example of how additional information is introduced as if it were a natural extension of the original and ‘hidden’ in plain view of the reader or the audience (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 333). It is also an example how a paradigmatic system allows for explanation through the ceation of a narrative that incorporates different cognitive elements that are seamlessly joined and can be logically

understood by persons who share the same thought world as that of the rabbis. The most probable intention in the targum was to introduce the “correct” interpretation of the text according to the rabbinical tradition.

The Tractates *Nedarim* and *Nazir* in the Babylonian Talmud investigate the taxonomic power of words and the influence they have on vows when invoking the name of God or Heaven, as this has a direct influence of the relationships between the people concerned. By invoking God in a *neder*, it becomes a consecrated act thereby the vow is regarded in the same light as completing acts of halakha and failure to a vow’s fulfilment in some future time therefore becomes a sin, an *aveira*.

“The Hallakah deems language the mirror of the soul” (Neusner 2003: 399); it reveals the intentionality of the person making a vow, “and from the viewpoint of the Torah’s *Halakha*, what we intend makes all the difference: God responds to what we want, more than what we do, as the distinction murder and manslaughter shows in an obvious way” (ibid).

The entire section from TgQoh 5: 3 to end of 5: 5 reads like a rabbinic manifesto on the prohibitions and imprudence of making vows. Sages from the oral tradition onwards and throughout later rabbinic traditions explicitly disapproved of the making of vows. Making unnecessary or hasty vows displays an innate weakness on the part of the person making the vow, referred to in BibQoh 5: 3 and in TgQoh 5: 3. He, that is God, “has no pleasure in fools” (BibQoh 5: 3). TgQoh 5: 4 is an example of how the targum incorporated afterlife concepts as justification for introducing and explaining religious concepts in dramatic and colourful ways (Levine 1988: 39). This is seen with

the introduction of Gehenna into the narrative and the diverse role that this image played in the rabbinic afterlife tradition (Raphael 1996: 144).

## 7. 17 Gehenna

Gehenna or equivalents do not appear in the creation narratives, but according to later rabbinic writings, such as *Genesis Rabbah*, it was formed on the second day of creation, together with the angels, the heavens and fire (Gen. Rab 4: 6, 11: 9). It was important for the rabbis to depict the concept of Gehenna as a place of extreme purgatory for the wicked. It is thus given a profound theological basis and it is mentioned in other teachings where it was included, for example, amongst the seven things God created before the world (Pesahim 54 a; Midrash on Proverbs 8: 22 and Sifre Deuteronomy 37). In the Midrash on Psalms (90: 12), for instance, it was said that the formation of Gehenna took place two thousand years before the world was created.

The terms *Gehenna*, or *Gehinnom*,<sup>290</sup> a biblically inspired notion of a physical place of post-mortem punishment, were used interchangeably with *Sheol* in Apocryphal literature, while Gehenna itself was used in rabbinic literature to refer to a place where dire punitive retribution for the wicked is inflicted (Raphael: 1996:141).

Gehenna derived from Hebrew *Ge Hinnom*, Valley of Hinnom. The English is a phonetic representation of the Greek equivalent *ge'ena*.<sup>291</sup> According to tradition,

<sup>290</sup> Both terms were used interchangeably, with Gehenna derived from Hebrew *Ge Hinnom*, Valley of Hinnom. The English is a phonetic representation of the Greek equivalent *ge'ena*.

<sup>291</sup> This term came about as a result of the translation of the HB into the Greek Septuagint and thereby distinguished Hades from Gehenna (Bernstein 2010: 167).

Gehenna was to the South of Jerusalem “in the valley of *Hinnom*,” where children were sacrificed to the god Moloch (Jos. 15: 8; II Kgs. 23: 10; Jer. 7: 31-32, 19: 2, 6, 14). It was therefore associated with a place of punishment for the wicked in an afterlife setting, equivalent to a ‘hell, the opposite of which was paradise, Garden of Eden.<sup>292</sup>

As a result of its early associations with child sacrifice and idol worship, Gehenna became known in the Jewish imagination as a place of great suffering, pain, wickedness, shame and darkness. These attributes are derived from specific biblical passages and in one case from the Talmud, described in a list of the original names of Gehenna that was compiled by Rabbi Joshua ben Levi in *Eruvin* 19a:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Gehenna has seven names, and they are as follows: *She’ol*, *Avadon*, *Be’er Shaḥat*, *Bor Shaon*, *Tit HaYaven*, *Tzalmavet* and *‘Eretz Taḥtit*. *She’ol*, as it is written: “Out of the belly of the netherworld [she’ol] I cried and You did hear my voice.” (Jonah 2: 3). *Avadon*, as it is written: “Shall Your steadfast love be reported in the grave or Your faithfulness in destruction [Avadon]?” (Psalm. 88: 12). *Be’er Shaḥat*, as it is written: “For You will not abandon my soul to the netherworld; nor will You suffer Your pious one to see the pit, *Shaḥat*” (Psalm. 16: 10). And *Bor Shaon* and *Tit HaYaven*, as it is written: “He brought me up also out of the gruesome pit [*bor shaon*], out of the miry clay [*tit hayaven*]” (Psalm. 40: 3.) And *Tzalmavet*, as it is written: “Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of death [*tzalmavet*], bound in affliction and

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<sup>292</sup> “You have prepared Gehenna for the wicked and the Garden of Eden for the Righteous” (*Eruvin* 19a).

iron” (Psalms 107: 10). And with regard to *Eretz Tahtit*, i.e. the underworld, it is known by tradition that this is its name

The Gemara poses a question: Are there no more names? Isn't there the name Gehenna? The Gemara answers that this is not a name rather a description: A valley that is as deep as the valley [gei] of *ben Hinnom*. An alternative explanation is: Into which all descend for vain [*hinnam*] and wasteful acts, understanding the word *hinnam* as if it were written *hinnam* meaning for naught (*Eruvin* 19a).

Gehenna and the Garden of Eden are the two opposites that create a post-mortem world-to-come balance beyond the grave. The Garden of Eden awaited righteous individuals who had conformed in all respects to a righteous life in full adherence to all the commandments and precepts and the interpretations of religious life according to the interpretations of rabbinic ethical teachings, as a reward of eternal life in the world to come after death.

Gehenna, on the other hand, according to rabbinic teachings, was depicted as a place of frightening punishment for individuals who had not lived exemplary lives according to the way of the Torah. Unlike the expectation of an everlasting life in the world to come in *Gan Eden*, in Gehenna their fate was everlasting fire and the extinction of their existences, or a number of variations on that theme.

## 7.18 Characteristics of Gehenna

Besides the theological aspects of Gehenna, rabbinic literature conveys a diverse range of images and fantastical portrayals of what can be expected for those unfortunate enough to be consigned there as retribution for the sins conducted in this world. There is no uniform description of a ‘place’ called Gehenna, but a range of different images, or collections of different ‘slices’ of textual quotes, each of which contributes to an imaginary place known in modern terms as a generic form of ‘hell’. Generally, the principal elements of Gehenna are characterised as mainly fire:<sup>293</sup> “our fire is a sixtieth of the fire of Gehenna” (TB. Ber 57b); “Gehenna is half fire and half hail” (Ex. Rab 51: 7);

“The Holy One judges the wicked in Gehenna for twelve months. At first, he afflicts them with itching after that with fire, at which they cry out “O! O!” and then with snow, at which they cry out “Woe! Woe!”” (TB. Sanh. 29b).

Gehenna also contains brimstone: “Why does a man’s soul shrink from the odour of brimstone? Because it knows that it will be judged therein in the World to Come” (Gen. Rab 51: 3).<sup>294</sup> To complete the images of horror, Gehenna is also a place of darkness: “The wicked are darkness, Gehenna is darkness, the depths are darkness. I lead the wicked to Gehenna and cover them with the depths” (*Gen. Rab.* 33: 1).<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>293</sup> Detailed sources for Gehenna and the afterlife in general include Raphael, S. (1996); Cohen, A. (1974); Fox, S. (1972).

<sup>294</sup> Smoke as a choking element in Gehenna is mentioned in *Sifre Deut.* 35: 7, 149b.

<sup>295</sup> Other references to Gehenna and darkness are: Tanhuma, Noah 1; Tanhuma, Bo 2; Ex. Rabbah 14: 3 based on Gen. 1:2 “... with darkness over the surface of the deep”.

The rabbis used the concept of Gehenna in ways to encourage ethical behaviour and promote adherence to correct religious conduct demonstrated by clear and unambiguous devotion and safeguarding of the intentions of the Torah, "... the Garden of Eden awaits him who guard the Torah; however, for the one who does not, there is Gehinnom" (Ex. Rab. 2:2). Gehenna thus became part of rabbinic literature and meant "not to infuse life with fear, but to encourage godliness and holy acts" (Raphael 1996: 142). The ultimate purpose was to ensure that God's justice was established on earth in order to validate the promises made at the time of the creation. The ranges of offences that merited punishment severe enough to be assigned to Gehenna in the world to come were essentially those that could be categorised as sins of omission, or sins that failed to meet the ethical and moral standards required for righteous living according to the demands of Torah. This is in juxtaposition to acts committed between men, such as murder, assault and other criminal acts, sins that were punishable by the courts of law. Other offences for which an individual would typically be consigned to Gehenna range from making derogatory remarks about scholars after their deaths (Berakhot 19a); a teacher who causes a community to commit sins (Yoma 89a); idol worship (Taanit 5a); one who speaks lewdly (*Shabbat 33a*); *counting money into the hand of woman while looking into her eyes (Berakhot 61a)* (Raphael 1996: 142-143).<sup>296</sup>

Gehenna became an inversely 'positive' means of instruction in religious duties and at the same time a threat to reinforce in the minds of individuals of their ethical duties and obligations to conduct themselves in line with the moral code of the Torah as

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<sup>296</sup> Other sins included adultery (Taanit 5a); Pride (Avodah Zara 18b); anger and temper tantrums (Nedarim 22a); Following the advice of one's wife (Baba Metzia 59a); teaching an unworthy student (Hullin 133a).

interpreted and understood in the prevailing norms of the Judaism of the time. In essence, it wasn't the issue of the punishment that was the focus of Gehenna, but the importance of earning merits to avoid Gehenna that was important.

The punishments meted out in Gehenna were limited in time, generally twelve months duration. Eternal punishment was never accepted as the basis of a doctrinal belief in Judaism (Raphael 1996: 144).

## 8. Conclusion

TgQoh is part of a tradition of Aramaic translations of the books of the biblical canon. It is very likely that the translator took cognizance of the controversy aroused by BibQoh and the initial opposition to its existence, even though this aspect occurred probably some 800 years before the targum. TgQoh was produced by the end of the rabbinic period and after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud and this may explain the relative lateness of its compilation (Flesher and Chilton 2011: 242). By that time the controversy aroused by BibQoh had become a thing of the past. Although BibQoh was a work that presented itself as a work of wisdom, the targum transformed it into a blatant work of propaganda for Torah and Torah study and the rabbinic way of life. From the outset, it is clear that the wisdom of Qohelet had removed all the cynical, speculative negative factors and had become a manual for the living to instruct them in Torah and to perform good deeds that promoted the idea of the afterlife. This study examined the targum to explain the religious elements and how a secular book was interpreted by a translation to conform to rabbinical principles and religious doctrines.

The translation was not a totally literal version of the target text – instead the targum evolved as a product of a sustained exegetical ‘makeover.’ The end result was a book that radically excised the hedonism, pessimism and cynicism of Qohelet’s personal view of the world, and transformed it into a work that promoted most of the fundamental principles of normative rabbinic theology (Levine 1978: 68; Knobel 1991: 2).

Even though the targum's main emphasis is on the eschatological aspects of the theology, it is not a complete rendition of all the facets of Jewish eschatology. For instance, it does not include details of what happens to the soul of the dead; as stated by Levine, "One should not expect the targum to present a systematized, coherent view of death, the afterlife, the Messianic age or the world to come, since it itself notes the prohibition and futility of such speculation" (Levine 1978: 82). This issue also was raised by Paul Flesher in an article on theology and the afterlife in the Palestinian targums (Flesher 1999: 1-2). Flesher also disagrees with Sysling on the point that the targums in general are not complete expositions of the afterlife (1999: 1-2).<sup>297</sup>

The main problem seems to be the difficulty of trying to reconcile all targums in the genre in order to find a unified coherent approach to the afterlife and resurrection in general. This does not seem practical, as targums originated from both Palestine and Babylonia over different time periods and changing historical and religious developments. Add to this the fact that the targums adopted different translation approaches, some more literal, others somewhat paraphrastic,<sup>298</sup> and yet other translations that were extremely paraphrastic with many expansive additions, like Targum Lamentations, the Esther Targums, Song of Songs and, of course, TgQoh. The challenge to find a unified approach on eschatological topics is even greater when analysing the targumim in the light of the immense library of rabbinic literature.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Flesher commented on Sysling that his approach was too broad as he used other sources too extensively and his analysis ended up as mass of irreconcilable data (1992: 2). Flesher's criticism was based on Levine's including all other targums to arrive at his conclusion above, and not on evaluating TgQoh on its own merits.

<sup>298</sup> Targum Ruth has the fewest expansions of all the books in the Ketuvim.

<sup>299</sup> See Flesher's paper for his solution concerning the eschatological problems in the Palestinian targums (Flesher 2002: 61-75).

The analysis of the afterlife in TgQoh raised exactly the same difficulties that Flesher mentions in his short study. TgQoh was not only a translation of a text, but also served another purpose and that was to introduce an alternative version of the worldview of BibQoh written 'over' the target text.

Furthermore, the mass of information concerning an explanatory framework for the pattern of life-death-afterlife-resurrection as a theological system is massive and spread over sources that comprise the entire biblical canon and all the commentaries on it. The aim is to find a suitable method for collating and aggregating the range of topics and then to explain the system.

In this study, the decision was taken to analyse the theological system as a whole in TgQoh, as it became clear that the targumist had created a unitary approach to the afterlife themes as these could not easily be separated from afterlife passages. I decided to follow the method of Jacob Neusner's concept of finding religious paradigms as a means to analyse and explain the rabbinic system and its inherent complexity.<sup>300</sup>

The starting point for rabbinic eschatology was the creation event and the notion that the first sin had occurred with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The paradigm of the creation generated the essential step that made death the starting point necessary for fulfilling "the divine plan" for the entire edifice of rabbinic theological justification for the eschaton (Neusner 2003: 291).

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<sup>300</sup> Neusner, J. 2003. *The Handbook of Rabbinic Theology*, Leiden: Brill.

A man who is lacking in Torah and the commandments during his life is not permitted to be counted amongst the righteous in the Garden of Eden (TgQoh 1: 15)<sup>301</sup>

And what does a poor man have to occupy himself with the Torah of the Lord so that he will know how to walk in the presence of the righteous (TgQoh 6: 8).

This study has also placed the emphasis on the theological concept of the world to come modelled on *this world* that will be restored to a state of divine perfection in order to emulate the eschatological world to come, *olam Ha-ba*. The rabbinic eschatological model is based on a path to the world to come and eventual resurrection, that is focussed on earth, during the lifetime of an individual. The wider purpose springs from the quest to establish a kingdom of the righteous in a mythical entity called a world to come. The targum advocated religious experiences as the means to find structure and order from the incipient chaos and failure of wisdom to find a solution for the meaninglessness of mankind in a world without direction or reasons for living. BibQoh asks if it is not better if one had never been born than to face the inchoate vicissitudes of life (BibQoh 4: 2-3). Qohelet also concluded that: “And so I loathed life” (BibQoh 2: 17), which in the TgQoh is interpreted as: “And I hated all evil life, because of the evil work which is done against men under the sun in this world displeased me, for it is all vanity and soul-searching” (TgQoh 2: 17).

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<sup>301</sup> Also, TgQoh 9: 7.

Humans have a need to find order and structure in their world. This is clearly demonstrated in BibQoh in the excerpts quoted above, where we find how Qohelet, sought to find some meaning in the chaotic world he inhabited. Life made little sense as it was often brief and made a mockery of the lives of people; all endeavours were pointless (*hebel*), and justice and fairness were hard to find in a world in which God, who is acknowledged in the book as creator and determiner of mans' fate, was a mocking and unconcerned God about mankind and his existential condition. In Qohelet's thesis it was in fact humankind that was imperfect and there was nothing to be done or to expect from the deity but to enjoy life to its fullest extent (2: 24; 3: 12-13; 4: 8; 5: 17-19; 6: 2; 8: 15; 9: 9; 11: 7, 9).

Heaven, paradise, the world to come, resurrection of souls, immortality, these are all mythic creations of things that cannot be touched, found or seen. With death comes the grave, a physical manifestation of death, a confirmation of death, that confirms the perplexity that overwhelms the process of dying and end of life.<sup>302</sup> For an eschatology to be credible, it has to create myths that are essentially imaginary constructions that provide the solutions and comforts that humans need.<sup>303</sup> Geertz explained the need for myths in the development of eschatology as follows: "Man can adapt himself somehow to anything his imagination can cope with, but he cannot deal with chaos. Eschatology is a phenomenon of human hope in which the hope resides in an 'other than this world locus'. Its transcendental nature makes it a fundamental theological concern. It requires theology to provide the direction based on God's revelation to mankind and what God expects from mankind in return for certainty in the present and

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<sup>302</sup> Geertz (2004: 90) explained the need for myths in the development of eschatology as, "Man can adapt himself somehow to anything his imagination can cope with, but he cannot deal with chaos.

<sup>303</sup> See Geertz (2004) and Gillman (2000), Barbour on myths (1974).

an eschatological plan for the future after death". The contextualisation of the motivations of a life-death theology provides the coherence that explains how the entire edifice is connected and sustained.

The rabbis believed that their eschatological faith was revealed through Torah and propagated by the prophecies of the prophets. The centrepiece of classical Jewish eschatology is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Jewish eschatology slowly developed over centuries as the condition of the nation underwent long periods of historical and social development until arriving at a theology that included a normative doctrine of the afterlife. The essential elements of the eschatology of rabbinic doctrines were concentrated on the idea that when people die, certain members of the nation will go to the world to come where they will be judged by God to answer for their earthly lives, and where the righteous will be rewarded with everlasting existence, while the evil persons will be punished with eternal damnation in a place called Gehenna.

TgQoh promoted this view of the resurrection, but does not develop the theme further than that, except for instances where it mentions the coming of a messiah and the notion of Israel as part of 'the world to come' entity. The starting point for rabbinic eschatology is the creation of the world and an end point of the eschatology system is represented by the coming of the messiah, although this theme is under-developed in TgQoh.<sup>304</sup> The messiah is not a dominant presence in TgQoh or that matter in rabbinic eschatology.<sup>305</sup> The notion of the messiah itself is not a paradigm on its own but a

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<sup>304</sup> The messiah is mentioned in TgQoh at 1: 11, 7: 24.

<sup>305</sup> Neusner is of the view that the messianic theme is not a paradigmatic category on its own, but a sub-topic. An over-emphasis of the messiah may have weakened the dominance of God and his cardinal role in the drama of the targum, and obscured the driving force of God's role in the realisation of the world to come.

sub-topic, as it represents an extension of the resurrectionist theology by proving a figure that represents the resurrection of all Israel, the nation. This is where the use of a paradigmatic approach begins to reveal the ultimate objectives of rabbinic theology concerning eschatology. Besides the messiah, TgQoh makes no mention of some of the later developments in the theology, such as Jews in a world to come will never again experience exile and that they would live united in Israel where the temple will be rebuilt and where multitudes will come to study the Torah and where justice will be the order of the day (Neusner 2003: 287)

Eschatology is a natural outcome for all religions in the quest to create some semblance of order out of the chaos of existence (Geertz 2004: 90). Religions, in their anthropological and spiritual contexts, sought to provide the structures for human beings to make sense of their existence and a means to explaining the complexity of the beginnings and the endings of things of human life (Gillman 2000: 18).

Religions attempt to create eschatological promises of a future that is better than the experiences people encounter during their life on earth. They formulate frameworks of myths and belief systems to support the great 'uncertainties' of human existence and present the possibility that death is not the end, but there awaits a future mystical place where humankind will join the deity in eternal peace and happiness.<sup>306</sup>

TgQoh's main focus was to promote the fundamental elements of rabbinical eschatology. The book, from its opening chapter to the final one, contains all the normative Jewish principles that encompassed these eschatological doctrines. Its

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<sup>306</sup> This is an enduring concept in western religions, and in modern times, we often hear of the deceased as "having gone to a better place."

goals were to instruct people on how to correctly live their days on earth, gaining merits that will enable them to acquire their portion in the world to come. This emphasised the obligations on how to become righteous that was founded upon the obligation to study Torah, prayer, performing good deeds and avoiding all forms of sin. This in turn will become the mark of an individual who will qualify to be included amongst the righteous. It was shown that the idea of a righteous person was one who was comparable to a sage-like figure from the biblical past, such as Abraham, Moses and others.

In TgQoh adherence God through the Torah is the dominant pre-condition of life in this world and the world to come in the afterlife. Torah as a topic and the unifying paradigm in TgQoh and occurs 18 times with metaphorical references such as labour, eating and drinking placed at regular intervals throughout the book. Torah, God, sin, repentance, judgement are all religious terms used to reveal God and His self-manifestation. In the world of rabbis, Torah study is the predominant activity of the lives of the righteous. TgQoh can be seen as a literary encounter with God through the words and phrases of rabbinic Judaism to create the theology in the book (Neusner 2003: 26-7).<sup>307</sup>

BibQoh deals mainly with secular concepts, while TgQoh provides the conceptual basis for a religious framework to counter the pessimism and the negative impact of *hebel* and the provocative *thoughts* of Qohelet. BibQoh consists of the internal monologue of a person who dominates the narrative with his personal experience as investigator of the human experience, but in TgQoh one hears the voices of the sages

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<sup>307</sup> R. Hananiah b. Teradion says, "Two who are sitting, and words of Torah do pass between them - the Presence [of God] is with them ..." (Avot 3: 2) (cited in Neusner 2003: 27).

of Israel from the past, speaking as if they existed in the present through an interlocutor in the form of Solomon as sage-prophet.

Sinners in the targum would not be allowed in the world to come unless they repented and atoned before death. Later eschatological developments cast doubt on the applicability and context of Gehenna; for example, in later rabbinic sources, it was mooted that everyone, gentile or Jew, the righteous and the wicked, could also be eligible for resurrection (m. Avot 4: 29), while in other instances it suggested that only Israel would be destined for resurrection (GenRab: 6). The place of the resurrection was debated as well as the issue of what would happen with the physical body of the dead in the world to come:

Those who die outside the Land of Israel will not live again ... and those who die in the Land of my Delight will live again... (BT. *Ket.* 11b).

The doctrine was adjusted to include metaphorical solutions for those buried in the diaspora, including the view that they would be transported to Israel through underground chambers and would then be brought back to life (m. *Ket.* 35b; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 1: 6).

These later developments in the dogmas of eschatology are absent from TgQoh, including any references to the immortality of the soul. The notion of how the bodies would be transported to Israel for revivification are found in *Pesiqta Rabbati* that was compiled around 850 C.E., which, according to Levine (1978: 68), the targumists consulted as well as the ninth-century *Sheiltot*.

This seems to reinforce the view that the targum was careful to moderate its content to avoid contradictions with rabbinic beliefs, whilst it cautiously maintained the narrative line to remain within the context of a translation from the original Hebrew. By means of a careful reading it becomes apparent that TgQoh never loses the fundamental essence of BibQoh, but conveys to its audience an alternative reading of the text that elaborates and explains the true intent and meaning of what lay behind the original Hebrew version. Although extremely paraphrastic and at times allegorical, TgQoh remained focused on introducing the fundamental aspects of rabbinism: piety, prayer repentance, atonement, judgement, a theodicy and occasionally elements of halakha. TgQoh can be ideally described as a manual for the living on how to live according to the Torah sanctioned way in order to be righteous, so that one can attain everlasting life with the community of Israel in a world to come. Therefore, the pessimism of BibQoh is overturned and TgQoh becomes a book of hope in the present and for the future.<sup>308</sup>

At the heart of Jewish theology is the doctrine of the one God or theism. Theism is based on the doctrine that God is both transcendent and immanent; he is therefore of the universe and involved in all its processes (Kaufmann 1972: 135; Jacobs 1973: 15). One of the objectives of this study of the targum was to demonstrate how the targumists depicted certain theological concepts, one of which was the notion of time without linear limitations. Rabbinical notions of time and especially historical time,

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<sup>308</sup> M. San 10. 1 – the Tannaitic sages were explicit about who may not enter into the world to come: those who deny that the resurrection of the dead is derived from a Torah teaching, who claim that the Torah does not come from heaven, and who is an Epicurean. Also, according to R. Aqiba, one who reads heretical books, one who whispers over wounds, while Abba Saul included anyone who pronounces the divine name as it is spelled out.

Who has entry to the World to Come? According to M. San 10. 1, all Israelites will have a share in the world to come. All Jews have a share in the World to Come, as it says, (Isaiah 60:21), “Thy people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified”.

was based on the paradigm that the world existed beyond the restrictions of time, past, present and future, beyond history and historical events. The theological message the rabbis and their literature emphasised was that the world and the life given to humans by God was impervious to change regardless of time and history. God's meeting with mankind and the events that occurred in the Garden of Eden, was as relevant then and is still so, in the present as it will be in the future. The creation of religious paradigms allows key historical events from the past to connect seamlessly with others in a long chain of interconnected experiences (Neusner 2003: 178-9).

In TgQoh God reigns supreme and rules over the world based on a moral code of ethical behaviours including piety and worship that will ensure a state of balance and harmony in the physical world. TgQoh consistently counters the concept of *hebel* in the sense that all of life is basically futile, and that communal and individual harmony and wellbeing are due to the purposeful actions of what people do in order to find favour with God. This orderly world is based on a hierarchy that is clearly stressed in this targum:

For the Lord rules over the world, and sits upon the throne of glory in the high heavens, and you sit on earth (TgQoh. 5: 1).

That which has been in the world, behold, its name has long been called, and has been made known to the children of men from the day that the first man existed (TgQoh 6: 10).

For the Lord rules over the world, and sits upon the throne of glory in the high heavens, and you sit on earth (TgQoh. 5: 1).

When it concerns the Mishnah and the Tosefta, the references to resurrection as well as the afterlife are posited in “simple and unequivocal doctrinal beliefs” with little explanation or elaboration (Avery-peck 2000: 247; Raphael 1996: 125-6). The belief in some form of a resurrection of the dead is clearly stated in numerous teachings; however, the discussions around these statements are restricted, unsystematic and there are few to no details about the nature or character of what constitutes the world to come. What is covered in a great deal of depth, however, are the various qualifying criteria that will grant righteous individuals the reward to enter the world to come as well as the way that they will be judged by God.

There are infrequent references to resurrection in the earlier Midrashic works, but these follow the teachings in the Mishnah and the Tosefta: the righteous will be rewarded according to God’s justice, but here too there are no details as to when and where the resurrection will exactly happen.<sup>309</sup> Likewise, concerning the world to come, the early midrashic compilations emphasise, like the Mishnah and Tosefta, that the righteous who follow God’s commandments will have a place in the world to come (*Sifra 193 Parashat Ahare Mote Parashah 8*).

The importance of this theological system within rabbinic literature was based on the need to define a process of how man could obtain entry to a promised afterlife; this was well documented in the rabbinical texts, from the Tannaitic to the early Amoraic

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<sup>309</sup> (Sifra 98 Parashat Sav Mekhilta deMilluim “until the dead will live...,” Sifra 194 Ahare Mot Perek 13, “This day I shall resurrect the dead among them...” (Avery-Peck 2000: 261-2).

sources. The process was explained in the legal and exegetical documents, and here one must include this targum as it was a rabbinic creation; it was focused on describing human conduct during one's lifespan as the key to gaining sufficient merit for a place in the world to come. To counter the overwhelming pessimism of BibQoh, the targum rather proposed a solution for how to lead a righteous life that would result in gaining a life in the hereafter, or, as Avery-Peck has stated it: "A rationalization of the life of Torah, as defined, of course, by the Rabbinic masters themselves" (2000: 244).

The inherent logic governing the requirements for entry to a future life in the world to come is premised on the concept of creating righteous individuals in this world to prepare them for the world to come. It has been noted earlier that an eschatology is the framework for creating order, structure and harmony or balance in the world. "Since God has made an orderly world, only his counterpart on earth, man, can account for the disruption of world order" (Neusner 2003: 242). Rabbinic eschatology is the divine plan for achieving the restoration of the world. All the requirements for restoration are present in TgQoh: sin, repentance, atonement and judgement preceded by a life of Torah study and ethical behaviour and actions. This is the theological master plan for rabbinic doctrines on the afterlife. In the world to come there will be God and Israel at the apex of the hierarchy, and the righteous will be united in a like-minded way with God while studying Torah in an eternal celebration of enjoying God's presence. The theology is thus complex and multi-layered and therefore requires a suitable analytical tool by which to gather in the different parts in order to explain how the theological system actually presents itself in TgQoh. The use of paradigms is thus justified.

BibQoh has been carefully investigated by a host of commentators from different perspectives. TgQoh is a representative of rabbinic theology and the difficulty arises on how to classify BibQoh in terms of its theological components. My contention is that BibQoh is not a theologically-inclined text, if anything, it sits on the far margins of theology, but is a wisdom book in the classical sense of the Jewish canonical book. BibQoh primarily focuses on questions of philosophy and seeks answers to address universal existentialist concepts without providing any overt theological guidelines or background. It's solution, to the conundrums of human existence is resolved by the suggestion that mankind will find satisfaction by accumulating material possessions and participating in hedonistic pursuits. Qohelet's solution is a personal one based on his own investigations and lack references to other literature or influences. In fact, Qohelet opposed the "making of books" and "much study" although he also collected the sayings of the wise (BibQoh 12: 9-12).<sup>310</sup>

Some scholars have argued that Qohelet is to some degree a theological treatise, or includes theological intent. Enns, writing from a wholly Christian perspective, sees a great deal of theology in the tensions of the book and that this should have great theological value for Christians (2011: 116). Seow (1997: 54-60) on the other hand, proposed that BibQoh conforms to a "theological anthropology",<sup>311</sup> Fox (1999) states it is close to a philosophy journal; Gordis wrote that it is not a philosophical treatise but a notebook in which he jotted down his thoughts (1955: 110). The view of Gregory Thaumaturgus: "The design of Ecclesiastes is to show that all the affairs and pursuits of man which are undertaken in human things are vain and useless, in order to lead

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<sup>310</sup> Chapter 12 is widely held to be the hand of a later glossator and an addition to the book.

<sup>311</sup> Theological Anthropology described from the viewpoint of Christian theology, is the study of people and how they relate to God.

us to the contemplation of heavenly things” (quotation from Schoors 2013: 23). There are a range of other views concerning classification of Qohelet. I struggle to classify the book as a theology as it lacks the structure and the religious language or metaphorical images to be one. Qohelet does not seem to have sat down to write a theological treatise, as he stated many times, that the book is a record of his personal observations of what he saw and experienced. Qohelet’s investigations did not include religious experiences and although he was most likely aware of the Torah and biblical narratives, he chose not to include them in his book. He was troubled about the conditions of mankind and the apparent injustices and social issues he experienced and he did not prescribe a religious solution. Qohelet accepted the role of God in the world as creator and supreme Lord, but questioned this role and God’s lack of interest. There is a sense that Qohelet did not see positive solutions coming from the deity, hence a lack of a clear theodicy in his book. It appears that based on Qohelet’s empirical observations, he does not ‘give up on God’, but does not find divine solutions and therefore struggles with the concept that a closeness to God will resolve the nature of the practical problems of humankind. Qohelet’s relationship to God is fear-based, and this refers to the notion that the fear is indicative of the distance and separation between God and humanity (Seow 1997: 174). This is a concept commonly found in wisdom literature based on the principle that God is inscrutable from his abode in heaven and people are on earth where they struggle to make sense of their earthly lives.

The absence of connections to any of the objects and ideas of Jewish discourse would suggest to me that it is a wisdom book asking questions of the affairs of men but in a typically philosophical way. Michael Fox compares Qohelet to Wittgenstein’s attempt

and failure to systematically insert a structure to his philosophical Investigations (Fox 1999: 149-50).

It is uncertain how TgQoh was presented to its intended audience. The books of the Ketuvim were apportioned to be read publicly at certain festivals of the liturgical calendar. Qohelet was allocated to the intermediary Sabbath during the festival of Sukkot or on *Shemeini Atseret*, if Sukkot fell on a Sabbath. There does not appear to be a connection between the Book of Qohelet and the festival of Sukkot; however, Sukkot was the only festival available as all the other books of the Ketuvim had already been allocated to festival days.<sup>312</sup> There is no evidence from the sources if in fact TgQoh was used liturgically. By the time of its composition, the tradition of translated reading in parallel with a Hebrew original in a synagogue setting was probably no longer practised (Levine 1978: 70). With later targums (circa 500 to 1100 C.E.), the antipathy and fear of translations had long since passed and normative Jewish theology and its multiple doctrines had become predominant, so the risk of controversies about the targum had most likely disappeared.

My feeling is that it was probably used in the *batei midrash* for teaching purposes as an exegetical tool to flesh out the hidden meanings of scripture and as a means to reveal the rabbinical contexts while at the same time acting as a rebuttal against the secular nature of the Hebrew original.<sup>313</sup> Its use may have been as a hermeneutical reference during studies and debates, where students and teachers would refer to TgQoh in the same way as they would use a midrash, the Talmuds and various other

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<sup>312</sup> Song of Songs on Passover, Ruth on Shavuot, Esther on Purim and Lamentations on the Ninth of Av. The allocation of the books to festivals is found in TB 16b.

<sup>313</sup> For more on the uses of TgQoh see Alexander (2011: 89-90).

texts from rabbinical literature. <sup>314</sup>Its value as a study tool lies in the fact that it represents a different perspective on wisdom literature and for understanding the role and meaning of Torah, not only from the established sages of the rabbinic past, but from the perspective of translators who created a different dynamic of learning about Torah and understanding its many variant literatures.

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<sup>314</sup> The views of Leeor Gottlieb were included earlier in this dissertation; he proposed a late date for the compilation of TgQoh and agrees that by the time of its composition, targumim were no longer in use in liturgical settings.

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