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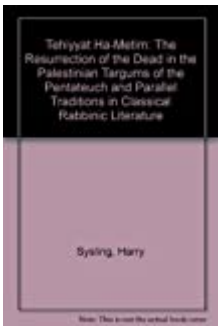

Harry Sysling. *Tehiyyat Ha-Metim: The Resurrection of the Dead in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch and Parallel Traditions in Classical Rabbinic Literature.* TÖ¼bingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996. xx + 329 pp. ISBN 978-3-16-146583-3.

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A Commentary on the Palestinian Targum

The title of this book does not really reflect its contents, which is actually a commentary on nine passages found in the Aramaic translations of the Bible whose assumed provenance is Palestine. The common denominator of these passages is that they all have something or other to do with the concept of resurrection of the dead, although at times, this connection is rather tenuous. It is of interest to note that the book's title contains the Hebrew term, *Tehiyyat Ha-Metim*, which does not appear in the targums at all, rather than the Aramaic form *Tehiyyat Metayya*, which does appear in the targums, although in the texts commented on in this book it appears but once (p. 116).

The book was originally presented as a dissertation at Leiden in 1991. The English translation is very readable but a few passages are retained in their original language. It is legitimate, although awkward for the reader, to give short quotes from secondary literature in its original language, but it is strange to find a a source, the *Apocalypse of Moses*, cited in its French translation (p. 74). A further inconsistency of this type is the translation of the Aramaic *tehiyyat metayya* as *tehiyyat hametim* in an English context (p. 117).

The first chapter of the book serves as an introduction and shows something of the main thrust of the work. The introduction contains thirty-eight pages of which two introduce the theme of resurrection of the dead, with a quote from Saadia Gaon's explanation of the concept, while the other thirty-six pages discuss the targums. Sysling discusses the origin of the targum and differentiates between the various targums known to us today. Although there does not seem to be any original material in this chapter, it serves as a useful introduction to the targum literature. Its usefulness would have been enhanced if the author had included bibliographical information about the actual texts; this information, however, can be found in the bibliography.

The following eight chapters of the book follow a common pattern. Each one presents a passage of the targum in synopsis of the various versions in Hebrew characters, together with an English translation. The chapter opens with an introduction presenting the exegetical problem which will be discussed in the chapter, and there is an extended discussion of all the exegetical elements in

the passage, whether related to the discussion of the resurrection of the dead or not.

The second chapter, for example, is a commentary on the passage found in the Pseudo-Yonatan targum to Genesis 1:21. The report of the Bible that God created the great sea monsters is enhanced in this targum by the information that these sea monsters were "Leviathan and its mate, which were made for the Day of Consolation" [Yoma de-nehemata]. The author shows that the Day of Consolation is the day of salvation and he refers to other Rabbinic material to show the connection between this day and the resurrection of the dead. Most of the chapter is devoted to the legends about the Leviathan and the Messianic banquet, with subsections on Leviathan as a plaything of God, the dimensions of the chaos monster, and the arena combat between the monsters. In this section, the author does not claim that the Messianic banquet is connected with the resurrection of the dead, and some of the sources refer to this banquet as being held in "the world to come," with no precise definition of what they thought this term meant.

The following chapters continue in the same pattern. The passages which serve as their basis are the targums to Genesis 3:19, 19:26, 25:19-34, 30:22 (Deut. 28: 12), Exod 15:12, Deut 31:16, 33:6. The penultimate chapter deals with several passages in which quickening of the dead is mentioned: such as Exodus 20:16(!) in which the sounding of the *shofar* on Mount Sinai is reported as having brought the dead back to life, and the author here enlarges on the eschatological shofar and its meaning.

The third chapter is devoted to the targumic enhancement of Genesis 3:19. A number of targumic traditions added to the statement of God that man was dust and that he would return to dust, that he would eventually rise again from the dust to give an account of all that he had done. The fourth chapter is devoted to Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26) to which some of the targums add that this pillar will exist until the dead are quickened. The author discusses the meaning of Lot's wife looking back, the meaning of salt, and, finally, the significance of the targumic statement that this pillar will exist until the dead are quickened. Although statements of this type have been used to impress the listener with the permanence of the situation (see E. E. Urbach, *Hazal* [Hebrew edition], p. 594 and references), the author assumes that we have here a reference to the Rabbinic discussion of whether the sinners of Sodom will stand to judgment on the day of quickening.

In summary, the greatest part of the book its commentary on the targumic exegesis rather than its analysis of *tehiyyat hametim.* The final chapter, entitled "Summary and conclusions," is more of a summary than a conclusion. My own conclusion is that the tenuous relationship of most of the sources passages to *tehiyyat hametim* would cause one to wonder whether the extent of ancient interest in quickening of the dead is reflected in targumic literature. Although this book does not answer this question, I think that the reader will find the commentary well done, and it is a useful contribution to the study of biblical legends as preserved in Rabbinic and non-Rabbinic sources.

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