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Semantic Field of God's Righteousness in Original and in Aramaic, Greek and Latin Translations of the Book of Isaiah

Abstract: Vocabulary expressing God's righteousness occurs with especially great frequency in the book of Isaiah, exceeded in number only in the book of Psalms. The passages expressing God's righteousness with derivatives from the root *ṣdq* are: Isa 1:27; 5:16; 10:22; 24:16; 28:17; 33:5; 41:2, 10; 42:6, 21; 45:8, 13, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25; 46:12, 13; 48:18; 50:8; 51:1, 5, 6, 7, 8; 54:14; 56:1; 58:2, 8; 59:9, 14, 16, 17; 61:3, 10, 11; 62:1, 2; 63:1. It is striking that the majority of examples occur in Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40–55) and Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56–66). Because the context is similar in most cases, the basic meaning can usually be established in a straightforward enough way. Synonyms and antonyms are of great help in determining the semantic range of *ṣdq* vocabulary. Ancient translations of the Bible are all based on the formulaic principle of translating vocabulary and set expressions. Some reports state that translators made an agreement already at the outset to preserve relative unity of vocabulary and phrases in their translation. The article addresses the issue of unity of vocabulary and of characteristic biblical style by presenting equivalents for the concept of God's righteousness in Hebrew original and in Aramaic (Tg), Greek (LXX) and Latin (Vg) translations from the book of Isaiah. The point is that vocabulary is intrinsically connected with the phenomenon of biblical style and basic literary forms. The challenge of Bible translation is therefore presented from a broader perspective of biblical style and literary tradition of the Northwest Semitic languages. The existence of numerous synonyms and antonyms, set expressions and the importance of tradition of biblical exegesis in Jewish and Christian cultures are the main reasons for the tendency to unify basic vocabulary in Bible translation.

Key words: vocabulary, synonyms, antonyms, style, literary form, original, translation, tradition

Povzetek: **Semantično polje Božje pravičnosti v izvirniku in v aramejskih, grških in latinskih prevodih Izaijeve knjige**

Besedišče, ki izraža Božjo pravičnost, se pojavlja posebno pogosto v Izaijevi knjigi, po številu jo presega samo knjiga Psalmov. Mesta, ki izražajo Božjo pravičnost z izpeljankami iz korena *ṣdq*, so: Iz 1:27; 5:16; 10,22; 24,16; 28,17; 33,5; 41,2.10; 42,6.21; 45,8.13.19.21.23.24.25; 46,12.13; 48,18; 50,8; 51,1.5.6.7.8;

54,14; 56,1; 58,2.8; 59,9.14.16.17; 61,3.10.11; 62,1.2; 63,1. Opazno je, da se večina primerov pojavlja v Drugem Izaiju (poglavje 40–55) in v Tretjem Izaiju (poglavje 56–66). Ker je kontekst v večini primerov podoben, je osnovni pomen običajno mogoče ugotoviti dovolj enostavno. Sopomenke in protipomenke so v veliko pomoč v določanju semantičnega obsega besedišča *ṣdq.* Stari prevodi Svetega pisma temeljijo na formularnem načelu prevajanja besedišča in ustaljenih izrazov. Nekateri razlagalci ugotavljajo, da so prevajalci dosegli soglasje že v izhodišču, da bi ohranili relativno enotnost besedišča in besednih zvez v svojem prevodu. Članek obravnava problem enotnosti besedišča in značilnega bibličnega sloga s predstavitvijo ustreznic za koncept Božje pravičnosti v hebrejskem izvirniku in v aramejskih (Tg), grških (LXX) in latinskih (Vg) prevodih iz Izaijeve knjige. Osnovno spoznanje je, da je besedišče notranje povezano s pojavom bibličnega sloga in osnovnih literarnih oblik. Izziv v prevajanju Svetega pisma je torej predstavljen s širše perspektive bibličnega sloga in literarne tradicije severnozahodnih semitskih jezikov. Številne sopomenke in protipomenke, ustaljeni izrazi in pomembnost tradicije biblične eksegeze v judovski in krščanski kulturi so poglavitni razlogi za težnjo po poenotenju osnovnega besedišča v prevajanju Svetega pisma

Ključne besede: besedišče, sinonimi, antonimi, slog, literarne oblike, izvirnik, prevod, tradicija

1. Introduction

A survey of the vocabulary used to translate most important biblical concepts requires some appreciation of individual types of the original text and of its translation. The classical ancient and some recent translations testify to the fact that their translators were professional biblical scholars or specialists in literature in general as well as faithful adherents of exegetical traditions. They were therefore capable of grasping the original meaning and of finding appropriate equivalents in any receptor language. Equally important is scrutiny in conveying the formulaic use of vocabulary and the basic forms of biblical style in Bible translations. Both aspects concern the role of tradition and the idea of relative originality when we refer them to something which is imitated by translators in relation to the original text. (Krašovec 1988; 2010; 2013)

2. Vocabulary of God's righteousness in the Book of Isaiah

My interest in the semantics of God's righteousness has led me to undertake extensive and comparative studies of its semantic field in the Bible. In order to establish the meaning of God's righteousness as expressed in the Hebrew words derived from the root *ṣdq* I examined first of all their context and larger semantic field, including their synonyms and antonyms. I undertook also a survey of the

history of interpretation of these words in ancient translations – the Septuagint, the Targums and the Vulgate – as well as ancient Jewish, Patristic and Renaissance commentaries. My monographic study *La justice (ṣdq) de Dieu* (1988) deals with the history of interpretation in general, and here I would like to focus on the interpretation of those passages containing the *ṣdq* vocabulary in Isaiah as attested by the major translations from antiquity until today in the framework of the literary context of the texts in question. Such a survey reveals the dilemmas faced by translators in interpreting the meaning of the concept in the source language and in creating corresponding expressions and literary forms in the receptor language. The Septuagint, the Targums and the Vulgate are especially important for understanding the history of Jewish and Christian interpretations respectively (Jobes and Silva 2000; Schenker 2003; Dimitrov et al. 2004).

Vocabulary expressing God's righteousness occurs with especially great frequency in Isaiah, and it is exceeded in number only in the book of Psalms. The passages expressing God's righteousness with derivatives from the root *ṣdq* are: Isa 1:27; 5:16; 10:22; 24:16; 28:17; 33:5; 41:2, 10; 42:6, 21; 45:8, 13, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25; 46:12, 13; 48:18; 50:8; 51:1, 5, 6, 7, 8; 54:14; 56:1; 58:2, 8; 59:9, 14, 16, 17; 61:3, 10, 11; 62:1, 2; 63:1. It is striking that the majority of examples occur in Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40–55) and Trito-Isaiah (chapters 56–66). Because context is similar in most cases, the basic meaning can usually be established in a straightforward enough way. Synonyms and antonyms are of great help in determining the semantic range of the *ṣdq* vocabulary.

An analysis of passages containing words denoting God's righteousness has shown that the fundamental meaning of the Hebrew words always remains essentially the same. It designates God's redemptive plan and fidelity to a faithful people, God's steadfast love, saving help and victory against oppressors. God's righteousness is an expression of a loving God's attitude towards the covenant people, an attitude which is based on God's sovereignty and which is independent of human norms, knowledge and merit. God's righteousness means the finest fruits of God's self-revelation and actions among God's people. In the final analysis, divine righteousness is the distinctive mark of the Creator and the Redeemer, who is indisputably the beginning and the end of history as a whole. In view of all this, the semantic range of the *ṣdq* vocabulary is extremely broad and yet indefinite. In different contexts it expresses various aspects of the one and the same divine truth that shows itself to be the only object worthy of human righteousness, which includes faith, hope and love towards God and our fellow human beings.

God's righteousness is of a universal and positive nature. It cannot therefore be valid for the covenant people and humankind unconditionally. Only the righteous, that is, only the faithful can participate in it. But because righteous people are frequently victims of godless individuals or groups, redemptive divine righteousness implies judgment upon these individuals or groups whenever God confronts them in saving the righteous. Being a manifestation of God's generosity towards the righteous, God's saving acts unavoidably imply a verdict on their oppressors. In this sense, God's righteousness may manifest itself as an agent of retributive justice.

3. Synonyms and antonyms of the concept of God's righteousness in Isaiah

Synonyms and antonyms are of great help in ascertaining the basic meaning of the root *ṣdq*. In Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah (Isa 40–66), the characteristic synonyms are words deriving from the root *yšʿ*, »to redeem« (45:8, 21; 46:13; 51:5, 6, 8; 56:1; 59:16, 17; 61:10; 62:1; 63:1). Apart from the broader, explicitly redemptive context, this synonym confirms the basic redemptive meaning of the root *ṣdq*. This also applies to synonyms which appear less frequently: *šālôm,* »peace, prosperity« (48:18; 54:13), *ʿōz,* »strength« (45:24) and *kābôd,* »honour, glory« (62:2). The synonym *mêšārîm,* »uprightness« (Germ. *Geradheit*), strongly confirms the impression that *ṣedeq* in Isa 45:19 can be most appropriately translated with the word »truth«.

The other most frequent synonym *mišpāṭ* (1:27; 5:16; 28:17; 33:5; 58:2; 59:9, 14) is more problematical. In dictionaries, we find designations such as »decision, judgment, dispute, legal measure, law« (Germ. *Schiedspruch*, *Rechtsentscheid*, *Recht*, *Rechtsanspruch*). These words convey little, and some of them might even misguide the reader. The structure and the context of the above mentioned passages show that *mišpāṭ* expresses God's protection of the righteous people. This word then has a fundamentally redemptive meaning, valid only for the righteous. »Righteous judgment« manifests itself in relation to the covenant people, who remain faithful in spite of difficulties and who therefore dare to express their hope or petition for a judgment of a benevolent God's righteousness. Each of these examples shows that the pair »righteousness«/»justice« generally designates the exaltation of the God of Israel and his arbitration of salvation for the covenant people above all other forces. God's supremacy and his redemptive arbitration result in an irreconcilable conflict with the godless forces that resist God's sanctity and make the righteous suffer.

Turning to the antonyms, the root *ršʿ* appears in Hiphʿil (50:9). The sentences *qārôb maṣdîqî,* »he who vindicates me is near« (50:8) and *mî-hûʾ yaršîʿēnî,* »who will declare me guilty?« (50:9) express the opposition between God, who takes the part of the faithful, and God's enemies, who aim to destroy the faithful. If God forgives and saves, any attempt at accusation on the part of the evil will end in failure (54:17). The antithesis between the pairs *ṣedāqâ + yešûʿâ* and *nāqām + qinʾâ* appears in Isa 59:17a/17b. The antithetical statement presents the judicial side of God. Nevertheless, God is »righteous« only towards God's own faithful people. Those who are not faithful, the wicked, experience God's »anger« and »revenge, vengeance«. Here again we can see that God's »righteousness« does not primarily have a judicial meaning, even though it frequently appears in a judicial context. In such cases it is used only to express the positive part of judicial activity: the deliverance of the faithful people.

4. Interpretation of the meaning of God's righteousness in Aramaic, Greek and Latin translations

The affinity of Aramaic with Hebrew leads us to begin with the Targum. Unlike the Targum of the book of Psalms, the Targum of the book of Isaiah does not render the words from the root *ṣdq* with the appropriate Aramaic words of the same root. Instead it employs the root *zkh* in various forms: z*ᵉkût/z(ā)ᵉkûtāʾ/zākû* in the singular (1:27; 5:16; 10:22; 28:17; 33:5; 45:8c, 23; 46:12, 13; 48:18; 50:8; 51:5, 6, 8; 54:14, 17; 56:1b; 58:8; 59:14; 61:11; 62:2; 63:1) and *zakwān* in the plural (45:24; 59:9, 17). Derivatives from the root *zkh* are: the noun *zakkāʾûtāʾ* (42:21), the adjective *zakkay* (45:21), and the verbal form *yizkôn* (45:25). Apart from these terms, some other words appear: *qᵉšôṭ/qûštāʾ* (41:10; 42:6; 45:13, 19; 51:1, 7; 58:2; 61:3), *ṭûbāʾ* (45:8a), *mêmār* (59:16), and *nᵉhôrāʾ* (62:1). In Isa 24:16 and 41:2, the Targumist relates the concept of righteousness to a human subject – whether in the plural *ṣaddîqayyāʾ* or in the singular *ṣidqāʾ*.

The Septuagint and the Vulgate characteristically employ the typically Greek and Latin words for righteousness/justice: *dikaiosýne*, *díkaios*, and *dikaioûn*; *iustitia*, *iustus*, and *iustificare(i)*. Occasionally, however, they use other terms. In *the Septuagint* we find: *eleemosýne* (1:27; 28:17; 59:16), *éleos* (56:1b), *krísis* (51:7), *euphrosýne* (61:10), and the adjective *eusebés* (24:16). *The Vulgate* departs from the root *ius-* only once by using the verb *sanctificare* (42:21).

The Renaissance translators display the same consistency in translation as the ancient versions. *Luther's Bible* (1545) determined for the following centuries that the words *gerecht* and *Gerechtigkeit* be used for righteousness. This is especially true for the book of Isaiah. The only exception is to be found in Isa 50:8: »Er is nahe, der mich recht spricht.« In the English tradition of translating the Bible, such uniformity is less common because English language offers two possible words for the original: *righteousness* and *justice*. The AKJV published in 1611 under the auspices of James I of England (Norton 2005), renders the noun *ṣedeq/ṣᵉdāqâ* almost consistently by *righteousness*. In Isa 58:2; 59:9, 14, however, we find the word *justice*. In Isa 58:2, the Lord laments the sinfulness of the people, saying: »they ask of me the ordinances of justice (*mišpᵉṭê-ṣedeq*).« In Isa 59:9, 14, the people lament the consequences of their apostasy: »Therefore is judgment (*mišpāṭ*) far from us, neither doth justice (*ṣᵉdāqâ*) overtake us.« »And judgment (*mišpāṭ*) is turned away backward, and justice (*ṣᵉdāqâ*) standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.« For the Hebrew *ṣaddîq* one may expect consistent rendering by the word *righteous*, but the few cases of this adjective relating to God in Isaiah (24:16; 45:21) are expressed by two words. In Isa 24:16, the writer mentions the songs of »glory to the righteous«, but in Isa 45:21 the Lord declares: »no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour (*ʾēl-ṣaddîq ûmôšîaʿ*).« The two passages containing the verb form (45:25; 50:8) are rendered by the appropriate forms of the verb »to justify«: God justifies Israel (45:25) and the psalmist (50:8).

In my discussion of recent translations, I pay attention particularly to the versions: Martin Buber, *Die Schrift: Verdeutscht von Martin Buber gemeinsam mit Franz*

Rosenzweig (2007), the RSV (1995), the NRSV (1990), and the NIV (1984). Buber and Rosenzweig are completely consistent in rendering the Hebrew root *ṣdq* by various forms of the same German root *wahr*: *Bewahrheitung* (45:24; 48:18; 58:2; 61:10; 62:1), *bewahrheitet* (45:25), der *Bewährte* (24:16), *Bewährtes* (45:23), *Bewährung* (1:27; 10:22; 28:17; 42:6; 45:8; 46:12, 13; 51:6, 8; 54:14, 17; 56:1; 59:14; 61:11), *bewährspricht* (50:8), *Bewährtsprechung* (59:9), *Siegbewährung* (63:1), *wahrhaftig* (45:21), *Wahrhaftiges* (56:1), *Wahrhaftigkeit* (41:2, 10; 42:21; 45:8, 13, 19; 51:1, 7; 58:8; 59:16, 17; 62:2), *Wahrheit* (33:5; 51:5; 61:3), *Wahrspruch* (5:16). In his »In Memoriam Franz Rosenzweig« in his book *Gedenkbuch für Franz Rosenzweig* (1930), Martin Buber explained quite clearly the reasons for choosing these words.

The RSV and the NRSV are exceptionally good examples of how to preserve tradition and modernize the translation language in line with the latest results of scholarship. Both versions observe the metrical rules and employ the literary devices of the original but use a slightly more varied vocabulary than the AKJV. In these versions of the book of Isaiah, we find the following words for the concept of *ṣdq*: *deliverance* (46:12, 13; 51:1 [RSV], 5, 6, 8; 56:1), *righteous* (24:16; 45:21; 58:2), *righteousness* (1:27; 5:16; 10:22; 28:17; 33:5; 42:6, 21; 45:8, 13, 23, 14; 48:18 [RSV]; 51:1 [NRSV]; 51:7; 54:14; 58:8 [RSV]; 59:9, 14, 16, 17; 61:3, 10, 11), *success* (48:18 [NRSV]), *truth* (45:19), *victor* (Cyrus) (41:2), *victorious* (right hand) (41:10), *to vindicate* (50:7), *vindicator/vindication* (58:8 [NRSV]; 62:1, 2; 63:1).

The RSV and the NRSV show a strong tendency to variation within the semantic field of God's »righteousness«, which expresses God's sovereign being and divine activity in relation to the covenant people and humankind in general. This tendency does not, however, affect the original literary structure and the poetic device of parallelism within it, which is the basic form of biblical poetry and important also in narrative and law. The same is true for other generally accepted versions: BJ, EIN, NIV, etc. It is surprising that a number of recent translations based on the principle of content equivalence neglect the basic forms of Semitic poetry and rhetoric and the homogeneity of vocabulary. As far as the vocabulary of divine righteousness is concerned, the range found is extremely varied. Generally speaking, an agreement with contemporary exegesis is noticeable in the choice of words, yet there are also cases of obvious misunderstanding or confusion.

5. The historical right of the original form and the status of a Sacred Word

The first observation to be made is that ancient, Renaissance and most recent standard versions are all based on the formulaic principle of translation: vocabulary and phrasing is relatively uniform. We may assume that relative uniformity of ancient translations of the Bible reflects a living tradition. It is, however, clear that Martin Luther or Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, for example, deliberately used the same translation equivalents. In such cases, consistency was more or less possible because one person or a committee coordinated and edited the

whole work. Views were harmonized in joint discussions and decision-making, as is shown by various reports on the work of translation. We have no direct evidence of a unifying editorial work in preparation of ancient translations. We have, however, good reasons for surmising an effective living literary and exegetical tradition underlying the work of the first Bible translators. Translation of particular words in ancient translations must not be judged to be isolated from the attitude of translators to biblical, often formulaic style. Translators felt that no text has just one, so-called »literal« sense, and they realized all the more that the Bible's literal sense must have primacy. Consequently, most translators decided to give preference to the primary meaning (*Grundbedeutung*) and to established vocabulary and style in rendering the various linguistic and literary components of the original. In general, translators of recognized standard versions of the Bible made great efforts to render the same Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek key words and standard phrases with the same equivalents when the meaning was obviously the same. They tended also to choose the most general meanings for words with a wide semantic range unless the context clearly required specificity. (Krašovec 2013)

Due to cultural differences, it is unavoidable that each conversion creates something different out of an earlier text version. The words of the translation language cover only a part of the original concept and do not convey information from the same perspective. It appears that words and expressions may be similar in one way but dissimilar or distant in another. They function, however, in a special way in any new literary system. But the more a translation incorporates the features of the source language, the more it fulfils its potential to express all that can be expressed. Leading words possess associations across a text and in their historical relations. Since the diverse languages share a common structure at the root level of languages and in preservation of a common tradition, it is all the more important to translate words according to their etymological or root meanings. These root meanings form the best common ground of all languages.

This does not imply the rigidly literal method of translating, characteristic of the Greek translation by Aquila, the English version by John Wycliffe, and in certain respects the German version by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. Concerning the key concepts, ancient translations adopted a middle course by combining the literal and idiomatic modes of translation. In this way they covered the widest possible spectrum of literary features. Today it is generally recognized that in Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, other Canaanite inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible numerous key words and identical literary forms are used. Nevertheless, the content and spirit of the Hebrew Bible are original and unique within the whole of the ancient Near East. Content and spirit are more or less undistorted when mediated also in translations.

The justification for the attempt to convey as faithfully as possible both the content and the form of the original derives primarily from the historical right of the original form. The more certain literary forms are used in any great cultural tradition, the more it is obvious that they are capable of expressing universal contents. The

basic metaphorical expressions and literary forms of the Northwest Semitic world are such as to make it clear that they were established over a very long period of oral and written transmission. The occurrence of particular words, word pairs and literary motifs or structures in different bodies of literature also shows that these elements were not used in the same manner in the Canaanite and Hebrew cultures. The underlying beliefs and values, the intention, and other influences upon the authors concerned drastically affected the use of literary and cultural forms. Because of a different manner of use they could receive in the Hebrew Bible the status of a sacred word. There are, then, many reasons for giving them preference over all assumed interpretative equivalents in the translation language. Historically well attested and therefore universal means of expression are the best unifying ground among languages and cultures. In an attempt to identify universal or common spiritual and literary features we are more certain about the uncommon.

Such thinking made us aware that unusual expressions should not be translated literally but idiomatically: the translator must find the best possible semantic equivalent in the translation language. In order to enable the reader to form his own judgment concerning the original expressions and literary forms, in preparing the latest Slovenian translation of the Bible we have followed the classical way of commenting on the text. In principle, unusual expressions and literary forms translated idiomatically are cited in the notes in their literal wording. The purpose of this practice is not to rebut any criticism that the translator did not translate accurately; rather, providing additional information regarding more than one version of the same text means enhancing the reader's chances of penetrating the full meaning of the expression. Herein lies the reason why philological notes are generally considered the most important. Even versions that are not annotated in the proper sense tend to have more or less philological annotations, mainly providing information about the literal wording of unusual expressions and forms.

6.   The basic forms of parallelism and rhythm

Parallelism (*parallelismus membrorum*) in both form and sense, and rhythm, which is defined in terms of the number of stressed syllables, are two cardinal features of Hebrew verse. Hebrew Poetry uses grammatical parallelism as its basic method in linking successive verses. The term parallelism signifies that the second or third line of a distich or tristich consistently provides an interpretation or a paraphrase or a simple repetition of a thought, figure, or metaphor contained in the preceding verse or verses. Robert Lowth was the first to recognize the parallelistic principle in Hebrew poetry in his work *De sacra poesi Hebraeorum* (1753) and made systematic efforts to fathom the structure of Hebrew grammatical parallelism – i.e, interconnections between the paralleled lines – and he realized that parallelism is a fundamental form in ancient Hebrew poetry. He also defined three types of parallelism: synonymous, antithetic, and synthetic parallels. It follows that the distich is the basic structural unit. Single lines or monostichs are rarely found in

the Bible, tristichs being much more frequent. Synonymous parallelism means repetition or duplication of thought by means of synonymous thinking and terms, whereas antithetic parallelism involves opposition of thought and corresponding terms. Lowth used the term »synthetic« parallelism to describe incomplete parallels. Among the more recent scholars are for investigation of *parallelismus membrorum* relevant George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1972), Michael Patrick O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (1997) and others.

The laws of Hebrew metre have always been and remain matters of dispute. It is, however, generally recognized that a sustained use of parallelism defines both divisions of ideas and rhythmical periods. It is true to say that

> »Parallelism both associates and dissociates; it associates two lines by the correspondence of ideas which it implies; it dissociates them by the differentiation of the terms by means of which the corresponding ideas are expressed as well as by the fact that the one parallel line is fundamentally a repetition of the other. The effect of dissociation is a constant occurrence of breaks or pauses, or rather a constant recurrence of two different types of breaks or pauses: (1) the break between the two parallel and corresponding lines; and (2) the greater break at the end of the second line before the thought is resumed and carried forward in another combination of parallel lines. And even when strict parallelism disappears, the regular recurrence of these two types of pauses is maintained.« (Gray 1972, 126)

We can distinguish two main types of rhythm: balancing and echoing. The former occurs when a distich consists of equal lines with two, three or four stresses in each line (Isa 2:2; 3:3; 4:4); the latter when one line (generally the second) is shorter than the other (3:2; 4:3). It is noteworthy that a single type of parallelism and rhythm may not be sustained throughout a poem. There may be both distichs and tristichs, or a balancing rhythm may change to an echoing rhythm. In modern commentaries concern for equality and regularity has caused considerable emendation of the received text. Some scholars hold that Hebrew poetry was absolutely regular. The consequence of applying this theory universally is that particular poetic texts are divided into mathematically equal strophes, each containing the same number of lines, all parallels are reduced to a single type of distich, and single words are excluded from lines. Fortunately, translators rarely accept so unhappy an outcome.

Parallelismus membrorum is such a fundamental form of expressing thought that it can be reproduced in translation. It follows that the translator has to identify both the division between the stichs that form a parallelism and the relationship between the lines paralleled. It should be noted that the division of cola in general corresponds to the parallelistic structure of the original text. This applies to all cases that exhibit clear parallelism of meaning and terminology. In these cases there is a more or less complete correspondence between the ancient versions – such as the Septuagint and Vulgate, which were the point of departure for all Christian translators in Europe

until recent times. The received Hebrew text probably served only as a corrective. But poetic texts are replete with passages that are obscure from a linguistic point of view and therefore controversial. Such cases provided earlier translators with a special reason to follow the Septuagint or Vulgate. For my part, I have tried to exploit all available Hebrew material, especially evidences of parallelistic structure, in order to establish the most probable meaning and therefore the best rendering in Slovenian. Sometimes, however, recourse to the Septuagint and to the Vulgate was the most reasonable solution.

Concerning the structure of synonymous parallelism the question must always arise whether the poet is adding to the substance of a passage when expressing a thought in parallel lines. It seems very probable that such lines are really parallel statements of the same thought. But the conjunction »and« in translation may suggest to the reader that they in fact express two or even three distinct ideas. It is therefore questionable whether every *waw*, »and«, in the original text has to be accounted for in translation. Some translations use a comma rather than the conjunction to divide lines expressing parallel statements of the same thought, and the rhythm then emerges much more clearly.

7.   Literary and stylistic unity of biblical texts

When we examine biblical literature among the closely related languages of the Northwest Semitic linguistic area we are struck by the fact that idioms and expressions, forms and usages, rhetorical and stylistic forms are largely alike throughout its length. The newly discovered Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, and other Canaanite inscriptions show very clearly that Hebrew literature is heir to the highly developed Canaanite literary tradition. In all Northwest Semitic literatures we find not only numerous common words and phrases but also much common use of literary expressions. There are many special nominal and verbal forms, metaphorical expressions and similes occurring in identical form in Ugaritic and Hebrew literature. There are therefore many reasons for considering ancient Hebrew texts as a constituent part of a common living Northwest Semitic cultural patrimony.

Especially striking are the correlated synonyms, standard formulas and repetitive patterns. Since parallelism is the basic form of the poetry of the Northwest Semitic literature, two synonymous or antithetical words usually occur in the two parallel parts of a verse. The standardized division of statements in this way gave rise to a great number of correlated synonyms and antonyms. Synonymous parallelism and therefore correlated synonyms are far more frequent in the Hebrew Bible than are antithetical parallelism and correlated antonyms. In Canaanite literature antithetical parallelism hardly exists, whereas synonymous parallelism is even more standardized than in the Bible. Thus, hundreds of correlated fixed synonyms are common to both literatures: dew-rain, enemy-adversary, king-ruler, tent-dwelling, widow-orphan, earth-heaven, fire-sword, silver-gold, left hand-right hand, to know-to understand, etc. (Fisher and Rummel, 1974–1981)

Consistency in and the frequency of using correlated synonymous words resulted in a number of synonymous formulas, i.e., a repeated phrase that is the length of a line or a colon. Such formulas recur in the same form whenever the poet speaks of the same or a similar theme, situation or action. Repeated phrases are subject to two ways of interpretation. Some scholars suggest that borrowing has taken place, others tend to speak of traditional or conventional language. The basic literary structure of parallelism may point back to a common heritage of established phraseology. (Culley 1967; Bendavid 1972)

The frequent use of stereotyped formulas in poetry explains why they also occur in biblical narrative prose. We can only agree with Umberto Cassuto's view:

> »In the history of the literatures of most peoples the initial development of literary prose emerges, as a rule, later than poetry and follows in its footsteps and the earliest prose evinces most traces of its origin in the poetic works that precede it. Particularly in the language of ancient narrative prose there are often to be heard echoes of expressions that frequently occur in the antecedent epic poetry.« (1971, 36)

In the Hebrew Bible we find residual elements of an ancient formulaic style. Expressions like *wayyiśśā' 'ênâw wayyar'* »He looked up and saw« (Gen 18:2; 24:63; 37:25; 43:29) and many other formulas characteristic of the Hebrew Bible are also found in Ugaritic literature. In prophetic literature we find some formulas that are used both in poetry and in prose to introduce prophetic speeches. A frequent example is the formula *kōh 'āmar yhwh* »Thus says the Lord« (Isa 8:11; 18:4; 29:22; 37:21,33; 43,14,16; 56:1; 65:8; 66:12; Jer 2:2, 5; 6:16, 21, 22, etc.). Another very frequent visitant in the prophetic literature is *wayĕhî dĕbar yhwh 'ēlay l'ēmōr* »And the word of the Lord came to me saying« (Jer 1:4,11,13; 2:1; 13:8; 16:1; Ezek 3:16; 6:1; 7:1; 11:14; 12:1, 17, 21, 26; 13:1; 14:2, 12:15). Such formulas were faithfully rendered in the Targums, in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate.

Since formulas are conspicuous, it would be intolerable if in translations the wording had to be changed each time. The same applies to the passages cited in the New Testament from the Old Testament. Since formulas recur so vastly throughout the whole Bible, many in slight variations, standard versions are nearly totally consistent in rendering the same phrases and citations. Translators in general are well aware of the phenomenon of repetitive patterns and succeed fairly well in rendering the original text properly. We can be happy that the new Slovenian translation of the Bible does not show too many deviations in this respect.

A special issue is the relationship between the Hebrew and Greek parts of the Bible. Deuterocanonical/apocryphal books and the New Testament are written in Greek but their ideological background and the fundamental literary and rhetorical style are Semitic. A number of linguistic and stylistic devices deviate from known Greek usage and suggest the influence of Aramaic or Hebrew. There are two reasons for Semitic components in the Greek Bible: 1) bilingualism of the writers; 2) translation from an Aramaic or Hebrew original. In both cases authors were bilingual

Jews; their own writings or their work of translation must reflect the Jewish way of thinking, the characteristic spirit of the Bible, and knowledge of Jewish exegetical traditions. It would therefore be inadmissible to ignore Semitic traits in their writings when translating them into other languages.

8. Conclusion

The paper has dealt with the role of key words, of formulaic phrases and of basic stylistic devices of biblical texts in view of the way they are rendered in standard translations of the Bible. The point is that the way of dealing with the formulaic language of the original in transliteration most clearly reflects the attitude toward tradition of underlying biblical texts. The nature of biblical languages and of semantic, stylistic and literary devices of biblical literature implies that translators of the Bible must handle with great care vocabulary, imagery, similes, metaphors, and repetitions of key words and phrases, for these components are found almost universally and very often have a crucial function within the structure of a text, whether in whole or in part. Many translators distort original imagery or similes by rendering them in abstract language or in arbitrary interpretation by introducing paraphrases. Those who are not attentive to literary and stylistic and literary devices in general very often ignore repetitions of words and formulaic phrases that function as key words on account of sound, relative position within the text, and meaning.

All grammatical components can be relevant: nouns, verbs, prepositions, particles, adverbs and the like. Repetition has numerous functions: asserting the principal theme, linking together the whole structure of the text, creating dramatic emphasis expressing completeness. A profusion of stylistic and literary devices requires care in evaluation of their particular function at various levels within the context of short sentences, a parallelism, a strophe or a whole poem. Poetic devices do not occur in isolation but within the context of a poem, discourse or narrative. The function of particular devices is best shown by the full analysis of a complete passage or poem. As Irena Avsenik Nabergoj pointed out in her study of semantics of reality and truth in the Bible:

> »Semantic analysis of the vocabulary for reality and truth is not done only within the narrow confines of individual texts that are mostly short statements in a limited oral and literary context, but in a broader context of the entire Bible considering the various literary species and types.« (2014, 29)

Generally speaking, repetition of various components is the most conspicuous feature both of prose and poetry: repetition of a sound, syllable, word, phrase, line stanza, or metrical pattern. Repetition is a basic unifying device in all poetry, but many kinds of repetition appear also in prose. Good translations are the best way of preserving a unifying biblical tradition in all its constituent elements throughout the centuries and the various cultures of the world.

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