

Andreas Lehnardt, *Shevi'it -- Siebentjahr. Übersetzung des Talmud Yerushalmi*, vol. I.5. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023. ISBN 978-3-16-162611-1, eISBN 978-3-16-162612-8. Pp. LVI + 277.

This volume is the most recent addition to the German translation of the Talmud Yerushalmi, which has been edited since the 1980s by the German Jewish Studies scholars Friedrich Avemarie, Hans-Jürgen Becker, Martin Hengel, Frowald G. Hüttenmeister, and Peter Schäfer and published by Mohr Siebeck. The tractate Shevi'it belongs to the Talmud's first order *Zeraim* (Seeds), which is now almost completely translated into German (only the translation of tractate Kilayim is still missing). In contrast to the English translation of the Talmud Yerushalmi by Jacob Neusner (*The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, 35 vols., Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982-93; a few individual tractates are translated by other authors and are generally preferable to Neusner's own), the German translation is based on a careful comparison of the text witnesses available for the respective tractate today. It contains detailed footnotes referring to textual variants, parallels in the Yerushalmi and other rabbinic texts, commentaries and prior studies. It can therefore be considered a truly scientific translation that starts with evaluating the text evidence and indicates different ways of understanding it. While the text is divided into thematic units, in contrast to Neusner's translation the individual statements within a *sugya* are not separated from one another. This challenges the reader to determine the logical connection between the statements and to figure out the argumentative coherence.

In his "Introduction" to the volume Lehnardt gives an overview of the available manuscripts, editions, and other textual witnesses and explains his methodological approach. He also provides a thematic introduction to the issues discussed in the tractate. Thematically, Yerushalmi Shevi'it contains rabbinic discussions and elaborations of the biblical institution of the Seventh or Sabbatical Year, in which plots of agricultural land are supposed to be left fallow.

The biblical Seventh Year is also associated with certain social measures (the release of debts and the manumission of slaves). Of particular interest is how the biblical provisions anchored in Israelite land ownership, agrarian law, and religious ritual were interpreted, expanded and changed by the rabbis after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and especially in late antiquity. Lehnardt prefaces his translation of *Yerushalmi Shevi'it* with the mosaic floor inscription of the synagogue of Rehov, which provides evidence of the wider public reception of rabbinic discussions of Seventh Year rules, as well as earlier treatments of the Seventh Year in the writings of Philo and Josephus, to demonstrate the thematic and literary context of the talmudic discussions.

The translation is based not only on the Leiden manuscript and the first printed edition of the Talmud Yerushalmi but on all available text witnesses, including quotations in medieval Jewish literature, compiled in a research project conducted by Lehnardt together with Leib Moscovitz at Bar Ilan University. For interpretive purposes, traditional commentaries on the Talmud Yerushalmi and modern secondary literature were used and are mentioned in the footnotes.

The translation of the *gemara* is preceded by a new translation of the respective *mishnah*. Even besides the existence of textual variants and corruptions, the Hebrew-Aramaic Yerushalmi text is very elliptic and difficult to understand. It presents modern translators with great challenges and requires a constant weighing of interpretive options in the respective literary and argumentative context. When translating the concise Hebrew-Aramaic text into a modern western language, some biblical references and rabbinic formulations must be supplemented to enable the modern reader to understand. Such a procedure can easily lead to argumentative closure and misunderstandings. In contrast to Neusner's translation, which consists largely of the translator's own conjectures and hypotheses, in Lehnardt's translation the explanatory additions (in parentheses) are limited to the necessary minimum. This enables

the reader to develop his or her own understanding, which may coincide or divert from that of the translator, especially if he/she is able to read the original text and uses the translation as a mere tool.

While certain words, formulations, and sentences could also be translated and understood differently -- as is often the case when reading and interpreting the Talmud Yerushalmi -- Lehnardt's translation is generally solid and well-founded. Text variants are indicated in footnotes and manuscript errors are pointed out. Comparisons with parallel sugyot and traditions within the Talmud Yerushalmi itself, in Midrashim, and in the Babylonian Talmud support one's understanding and indicate editorial changes and expansions. The comparison of manuscript variants and textual parallels is also relevant in connection with variant (spellings of) rabbis' names in attributions. The detailed footnotes accompanying Lehnardt's translation are very useful for the reader, since they enable him/her to gain an immediate impression of the textual situation and range of understandings of a word, formulation, and argument.

For example, the contextual meaning of the term *mishnah* (a teaching of the Torah or rabbinic instruction?) is sometimes uncertain and can be understood in different ways (see *ibid.* 3 with regard to *y. Shevi. 1:1, 33a*). When the Yerushalmi text mentions certain locations and the division of the Land of Israel into regions (e.g. in *y. Shevi. 6:1, 36c*), some of them are difficult to identify, with several possible options. In such cases, the detailed footnotes also refer to previous discussions and translations, topographical and archaeological studies (e.g., *ibid.* 121-3), in addition to manuscript variants and textual parallels, to help make sense of the text. Sometimes the text refers to ancient agricultural procedures that modern readers would not be familiar with (e.g., *ma'avaqim* in *y. Shevi'it 2:2, 33d*). Lehnardt refers to studies of ancient agriculture to support his chosen translation but also indicates other commentators' variant understanding of the text (24 n. 23).

The usefulness of the volume is supported by various indexes at its end (Scriptural quotations, Mishnah quotations, Tosefta parallels, Yerushalmi parallels, *mishnayot* and *baraitot* in other rabbinic documents, rabbis' names, references to other people and groups, geographical locations). The list of geographical locations takes variants into account (e.g., Bet Karsana/Bet Barsana, Sedoqa/Sadoqi, and Gebalitis/Yabluna) and provides transcriptions (e.g., Sor) together with identifications (Tyrus). The detailed locations index makes the translation a useful tool for geographical studies.

Overall, the translation can be highly recommended to all readers interested in the Talmud Yerushalmi and rabbinic literature in general as well as to ancient historians and biblical scholars. Even those who are able to read and understand the original Hebrew-Aramaic text will benefit from the detailed footnotes. The volume is a valuable addition to the German translation of the Talmud Yerushalmi, which can be considered the only truly scientific translation of the Talmud into a western language.

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