# Creating and disrupting verbal connections in the Targumic stories of Hagar and Ishmael

Biblical narratives utilize the associative meanings of words, connotations, recurring motifs, as well as analogies to create connections with other stories in the Bible. Some of the narratives’ messages are conveyed by means of these same associations, connotations, analogies, and motifs.

When the Targum selects which word is the most appropriate to translate a certain biblical word, it does not always do so consistently and in accordance with the Bible’s own lexical choices; sometimes within the same story, two identical Hebrew words will be translated by two entirely different Aramaic terms, or two different Hebrew words will be translated by the same word in Aramaic. Thus, even as the Targum unravels connotations and allusions woven by the Bible, it also creates others that are not found in the original text.

In this paper, I will attempt to reveal the web of connections and connotations that the Targum creates within the story of Hagar and Ishmael, who are central characters in two chapters, Genesis 16 and 21, and are also mentioned in passing elsewhere, and between it and other sources. I will also investigate the differences between the Bible’s own semantic network and that of the Targum—both in cases where the Targum disrupts biblical connections and where it creates new ones. The connections made or broken by the Targum are instructive of how the Targumic audience understood the story and linked together its various parts.

While the paper focuses on Targum Onkelos, it also includes a comparison with other Targumim and translations from the period, with literature from Qumran, and with rabbinic midrash, in order to explore the affinities between different traditions within the Targumim and other literatures that share a similar semantic network.